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The UN and the Congo Crisis of 1960

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7 April 2014

I. Introduction

In 1889, Joseph Conrad's infamous novel *Heart of Darkness* gave the world a glimpse of the horrors unfolding in King Leopold's Congo. Adam Hochschild's *King Leopold's Ghost*, a historical telling of the development of the Belgian king's hold over the territory in the late 19th Century, unearthed a rare testimonial from a Congolese willing to speak out against the atrocities. "From all the bodies killed in the field, you had to cut off the hands. He wanted to see the number of hands cut off by each soldier, who had to bring them in baskets. [...] Rubber caused these torments; that's why we no longer want to hear its name spoken," said the survivor of Leopold's Congo during an interview recorded in the 1950's.¹ Beginning in 1885, the Congo became the personal possession of King Leopold II of Belgium, who amassed a great personal fortune from the extraction of Congolese rubber. The profits from Leopold's venture were, however, based on the forced labor of the Congolese people. In the early 1900's, a publicity campaign revealing the atrocities in the Congo forced Leopold to turn over control of the territory to Belgium.² However, by the time the Belgians took control of the Congo in 1908, almost 10 million Congolese had perished as a direct result of Leopold's policies.³

Over fifty years later, Dr. Ralph Bunche proclaimed 1960 as the "year of Africa."⁴ Bunche, then working as the United Nations Under-Secretary for Political Affairs, coined the phrase in February 1960 when he was representing the UN at a symposium held at Wellesley College about the future of Africa.⁵ Explaining why he believed 1960 would be the "year of Africa," Bunche said that the UN was anticipating between four to eight new member states to

¹ Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa*

² *Ibid.*, 233.

³ *Ibid.*, 233.

⁴ Paul Hoffman, "Bunche says '60 is Year of Africa," *New York Times*, February 17, 1960, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/115051135?accountid=15172>.

⁵ *Ibid.*

join the UN that year from the decolonizing African continent.⁶ In other speeches given in the beginning months of 1960, he talked about the role of the UN in international peacekeeping. In Tokyo on March 25, he described the new concept of a United Nations “presence.” Bunche highlighted the situations in Jordan, Lebanon, and Laos as examples of countries where the UN had a “presence,” and stated, “The mere arrival of a United Nations ‘presence’ can have a quieting effect on the local situation; in fact, thus far in United Nations experience this has always been the result.”⁷ A talk Bunche gave at the Roxy Theater in Springfield, Illinois on April 8 further described the UN’s role in the peacekeeping mission in Laos. Though the Laos crisis had “complicated and delicate internal as well as external aspects,” the UN intervention in Laos was successful in calming tensions and quieting the area as a result of the cooperation between the UN and the Laotian government.⁸

Dag Hammarskjold, then serving as the Secretary-General for the United Nations, also discussed the growing number of UN member states in his introduction to the UN’s 1960 Annual Report. He noted that the “year of Africa” seemed to be exceeding expectations in terms of the number of new member states, as by that time the UN was welcoming fifteen new member states from the African continent.⁹ However, throughout 1960 there were other ways in which the “year of Africa” turned into a less than positive experience for the UN, specifically in the Congo. The crisis in the Congo developed into a UN “presence” that would become one of the largest peacekeeping missions in UN history. At that point, it was the largest UN peacekeeping

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ “The New Concept of a United Nations ‘Presence,’” March 25, 1960, Box 15, Folder 7, Ralph Bunche Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library, New York.

⁸ “The UN Road to Peace and Progress,” April 8, 1960, Box 15, Folder 8, Ralph Bunche Papers, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library, New York.

⁹ Introduction to the Annual Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization, A/4390/Add. 1, August 31, 1960, United Nations Bibliographic Information System (UNBIS), Dag Hammarskjold Library, United Nations, 1.

operation to date, involving over 20,000 troops and support from 30 different countries.¹⁰ And though Hammarskjold spoke of the UN's work in the Congo as "the greatest single task" of the UN to date, he also noted that anti-colonial sentiments and big power struggles over ideology were hampering the UN's effectiveness in mediating the crisis there.¹¹ Nevertheless, Hammarskjold saw the role of the UN as one that was to promote independence among African nations despite those influences, which he described as follows:

The Organization must further and support policies aiming at independence, not only in a constitutional sense but in every sense of the word, protecting the possibilities of the African people to choose their own way without undue influences being exercised and without attempts to abuse the situation. This must be true in all fields, the political, the economic, as well as the ideological – if independence is to have a real meaning. Working for these purposes, the United Nations can build on the confidence of the best and most responsible elements of all the countries of the continent.¹²

Three of the people most involved in fulfilling this mission of the UN in terms of the Congo were Ralph Bunche, Dag Hammarskjold, and Andrew Cordier. As the situation in the Congo developed into a full-fledged peacekeeping operation, Hammarskjold sent Bunche and then Cordier, both trusted advisors of the Secretary-General, to lead the peacekeeping operation. However, the crisis in the Congo would forever change the lives of these three men. By the end of 1960, both Bunche and Cordier had left the Congo with tarnished reputations amid accusations of being partial to western interests. In September 1961, Hammarskjold was killed in a plane crash in Zambia en route to the Congo before there was even an official resolution to the crisis. To this day, conspiracy theories questioning whether complications with the Congo Crisis were responsible for the plane crash surround the circumstances of his death.

¹⁰ Carole J L Collins, "The Cold War comes to Africa: Cordier and the 1960 Congo Crisis," *Journal of International Affairs* 47, no. 1 (1993): 244, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/220697194>.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² A/4390/Add. 1, August 31, 1960, UNBIS, 2.

The Congo Crisis, viewed through the lens of these three men, sheds light on the confluence of factors geopolitical actors had to navigate in the post-World War II era. The first factor of the Congo Crisis was the postcolonial crisis. Political instability developed in the Congo only a few days after it formally received its independence from Belgium, and the return of Belgian troops to the Congo in the days after independence created tensions within the Congolese government. The second factor of the crisis was the growing threat of the Cold War in the Third World, as newly decolonized nations were seen as malleable allies in the conflict between the US and the Soviet Union. The Congo Crisis provides an example of the intersection of these two factors, as the anti-communist Americans were perceived as favoring the Belgian colonial position, and the Soviet Union appeared to side with the anti-colonialist and allegedly communist Prime Minister of the Congo, Patrice Lumumba. These factors also came together while the UN attempted to mediate the growing crisis in Katanga, a province in the Congo that seceded in the midst of the developing political situation. The Congolese accused the Belgians of instigating the secession and argued that the UN should intervene to forcibly reunite Katanga with the rest of the Congo, as Belgian involvement made the secession an international problem in which the UN could intervene. However, the UN dismissed Congolese accusations against the Belgians and instead described Katanga's secession as an internal political crisis in which the UN could not become involved.

The UN's refusal to acknowledge the Congolese's arguments led to a deepening rift between the UN and the Congo and called into question Hammarskjöld's commitment to promoting independence on the African continent free from "undue influences." While scholars have often given attention to the postcolonial crisis and the Cold War crisis, it is also necessary to recognize that the UN was not a passive actor throughout the Congo Crisis. The UN's active

disregard for the position of the Congolese against Belgium allowed the Belgians to politically destabilize the Congo through their control of Katanga. The inability of the leadership of the UN, as demonstrated through the actions of Bunche, Hammarskjold, and Cordier, to take a firm stance against the interests of the former colonial powers revealed how western interests dominated the UN's decision-making to the detriment of Congolese independence. Finally, though Hammarskjold publicly spoke of letting "the African people choose their own way," the way in which the UN chose both to actively not intervene at certain points and to actively intervene at other points during the Congo Crisis demonstrated the extent to which the UN became an undue influence and failed to fulfill its own ideals by imposing a UN agenda that was directly contrary to the interests of independence for the Congo.

II. Ralph Bunche and the Beginning of the Congo Crisis

On July 13, 1960, at the first of many United Nations Security Council meetings about the Congo, the delegate from the Soviet Union accused Ralph Bunche, then serving as the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Representative to the Congo, of colluding with Clare Timberlake, the American Ambassador to the Congo, to further the aims of the Western powers there.¹³ As Bunche was American, it seemed logical to the Soviet representative that he would be more concerned with the American agenda than that of the UN. In some respects, the Soviet Union was right to question American involvement in the Congo. The US had been closely monitoring the situation there since before independence, and in the months after independence the US plotted to assassinate the allegedly communist Prime Minister, Patrice Lumumba. Furthermore, when the UN became officially involved in the Congo through the creation of its peacekeeping mission in early July, known as *Organisation des Nations Unies au Congo* (ONUC), the US appeared to let the UN control the operation, but behind the scenes ONUC received substantial financial support from Washington.¹⁴

Although some Americans were attempting to intervene in the internal affairs of the Congo, Ralph Bunche was not one of them, and the Soviets missed the mark in implicating him in other American machinations. In fact, Bunche would actually find himself at odds over certain decisions with the Americans in the Congo, specifically Ambassador Timberlake. For Bunche, the Cold War crisis with the Soviet Union was a minor distraction compared to the postcolonial crisis he faced in the Congo. Though the Cold War always loomed in the background and sometimes was directly discussed, it was postcolonial questions that dominated both his work and the UN Security Council discussions in the first months of the crisis.

¹³ United Nations Security Council Official Records (SCOR), Mtg. 873, July 13/14, 1960, UNBIS, 19.

¹⁴ Collins, "The Cold War comes to Africa," 256.

When the Congolese army mutinied only a few days after independence, Belgian troops invaded under the guise of maintaining law and order, which prompted President Joseph Kasavubu and Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba to appeal for a UN intervention. It was also during this time that the province of Katanga seceded from the Congolese Central Government under the leadership of Moïse Tshombe. The Congolese Central Government's appeal to the UN implicated the Belgians as the orchestrator of Katanga's secession and requested assistance to protect the entire territory of the Congo against external aggression by the Belgians.¹⁵ This appeal concerning Katanga set the scene for the issue that would come to dominate the Congo over the coming months and years, and it was the main issue that both Bunche and the Security Council faced in the first months of the crisis. While the Congolese maintained that Katanga was an international issue due to Belgian involvement, the UN and the western powers maintained that it was a domestic conflict to which the UN could not be party. Both Bunche and the Security Council's inability to recognize Belgian influence in Katanga created tensions with the Congolese Central Government, and Lumumba in particular, that hindered the overall ability of the UN to mediate the crisis in the Congo.

From the beginning, the Congo was not properly prepared for independence. As Ralph Bunche said in November 1960, "No colonial people [...] was ever so ill-prepared for independence as the Congolese."¹⁶ That same month, Andrew Cordier similarly critiqued the Belgians, saying, "If the Belgians did not train anyone by 1960, they would not have trained anyone by 1965. The record of Belgium is not good."¹⁷ Though the worst atrocities against the Congolese ended when the country became an official colony rather than a domain of the king in

¹⁵ United Nations Security Council (S), S/4382, July 13, 1960, UNBIS.

¹⁶ Note verbale dated 16 November 1960 from the Permanent Mission of Belgium to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary General, Series 370, Box 7, File 4, Ralph Bunche Congo Files, UN Archives, New York.

¹⁷ Note verbale dated 2 November 1960 from the Permanent Mission of Belgium to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, Series 370, Box 7, File 4, Ralph Bunche Congo Files, UN Archives, New York.

1908, the Congolese were treated as second-class citizens compared to the Belgians in the Congo. Belgium prevented blacks from accessing most educational opportunities and government positions.¹⁸ Until 1957 the Congolese were prohibited from voting and forming political parties, and prohibitions on free speech, travel, and assembly were maintained until independence in 1960.¹⁹ Belgium also unevenly developed mining, agricultural, and commercial interests across the country, creating great discrepancies between the economic capabilities of different areas of the Congo.²⁰ In 1960 there were still no African officers in the Congolese army, and only 16 people out of a population of 13.5 million had university degrees.²¹ Thomas Kanza, one of the few college graduates in the Congo at the time of independence who would go on to become the Congo's first representative to the UN, said that the Belgians "decided to concede [...] an independence [that was] rotten at the roots."²²

Despite Belgium's willingness to publicly see the independence of the Congo, the Belgian political elite attempted to negotiate in private for a Congolese government that would be friendly to Belgian interests. Philippe de Seynes, the UN Under-Secretary for Economic and Social Affairs, wrote to Bunche in the days before Congolese independence saying, "The Belgians are disposed to continue to play an important part in economy and administration."²³ Though the Belgians, and King Baudouin in particular, attempted to prevent Lumumba from having a prominent role in the new Congolese government as they believed he was a threat to western interests, his party won a significant number of seats in the pre-independence elections.²⁴

¹⁸ Collins, "The Cold War comes to Africa," 248.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Brian Urquhart, *Ralph Bunche: An American Life* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1993), 304.

²² Thomas Kanza, *Conflict in the Congo: The Rise and Fall of Lumumba* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972),

89.

²³ Philippe de Seynes to Ralph Bunche, June 27, 1960, Series 370, Box 12, File 4, Ralph Bunche Congo Files, UN Archives, New York.

²⁴ Kanza, *Conflict in the Congo*, 97.

Lumumba was a former postal worker who gained political power in the pre-independence period. The *Mouvement National Congolais* (MNC), which he founded in 1958, was distinct among the political parties in the Congo given its national aims and its rejection of tribal loyalties.²⁵ The only other national party was the *Parti National du Progrès* (PNP), which was openly supported by the Belgian administration.²⁶ The Belgians expected the PNP to win a significant number of seats in the pre-independence parliamentary elections, and they were shocked by the PNP's dismal performance and the MNC's electoral success.²⁷ Rumors had begun to circulate in Belgium that Lumumba had communist sympathies, and the Belgians were dismayed at the prospect of an anti-colonial communist having significant power in the new Congolese government.²⁸ As a result of the MNC's electoral success, Lumumba was selected as Prime Minister while Joseph Kasavubu, the leader of the regional but powerful ABAKO party, became President.²⁹ Nevertheless, even before the Congolese government was officially granted independence there were already deep tensions and mounting distrust between its leaders and its former colonizer.

Belgium was not the only country that attempted to wield influence throughout the process of forming the postcolonial Congolese government, however, as both the US and the Soviet Union monitored the situation in the Congo very closely in the pre-independence period. The US had a financial and national security stake in the Congo in that it provided certain materials necessary for American nuclear and aerospace industries.³⁰ The American perception of the communist threat was shaped by a memorandum written by the Department of State in

²⁵ Ibid., 35.

²⁶ Catherine Hoskyns, *The Congo since Independence*, (London: Oxford UP, 1965), 65-66.

²⁷ Ibid., 73.

²⁸ Ibid., 74.

²⁹ Kanza, *Conflict in the Congo*, 97.

³⁰ Sergey Mazov, *A Distant Front in the Cold War: The USSR in West Africa and the Congo, 1956-1964* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center, 2010), 81.

March 1960 that concluded that the Soviet Union would use the breakup of colonial empires in Africa to establish a foothold on the continent.³¹ The US subsequently dispatched CIA agents to the Congo to contact potential leaders, and a telegram from the CIA's Chief of Station in the Congo dated March 21 indicated that the CIA was already considering candidates to support.³² A CIA memo on April 18 mentioned supporting an unnamed prominent Congolese politician who was seen as working against the Communist sympathizers.³³ The memo also noted that though concerns remained about Lumumba, it would be useful to provide him with limited funding to curry favor given that he was one of few leaders with national appeal and would certainly play an important political role in the coming years.³⁴ The US worried that Lumumba was willing to accept aid from anyone, which was not an unfounded claim as he requested financial assistance from the Soviet Union during the pre-independence elections.³⁵ However, there is no evidence that the Soviets actually financed either his campaign or the campaigns of his allies.³⁶ The Kremlin announced its support of Lumumba only after he emerged as the Congo's leader, demonstrating a more cautious approach than the Americans.³⁷

Secretary-General Hammarskjold was concerned about the possibility of a political crisis developing in the Congo following independence. He had recently traveled through Africa, visiting 24 countries, territories, and regions on a trip from December 21, 1959 through the end of January 1960.³⁸ Hammarskjold saw firsthand the rushed preparations for independence in the

³¹ Ibid., 28.

³² Editorial Note, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Volume XXIII, Congo, 1960-1968, 6.

³³ Memorandum From the Chief of the Africa Division, Directorate of Plans, Central Intelligence Agency (Tweedy) to the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs (Satterthwaite), April 18, 1960, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Volume XXIII, Congo, 1960-1968, 8.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Mazov, *A Distant Front in the Cold War*, 85.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., 85-86.

³⁸ Georges Abi-Saab, *The United Nations Operation In The Congo 1960-1964* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1978),

Congo and worried that the transition might not be as smooth as others hoped.³⁹ On June 20, 1960, he formally asked Ralph Bunche, then serving as the UN Under-Secretary for Political Affairs, to depart for the Congo to advise the new government about admission to the UN and other technical questions that might arise in the immediate pre- and post-independence periods.⁴⁰ The Secretary-General's worries came true on the Congo's independence day, when tensions flared at the independence ceremony after Lumumba gave a strongly anti-colonial speech. "Who can ever forget the firing in which so many of our brothers died; or the cells where those who refused to submit any longer to the rule of a 'justice' of oppression and exploitation were put away," said Lumumba, reminding the world of the atrocities the Congolese had endured at the hands of the Belgians.⁴¹ Though he remained for the whole ceremony, the Belgian king seriously considered leaving in the middle of Lumumba's speech, and Belgian officials were irate at the ceremonial luncheon after the public festivities despite a more conciliatory address by Lumumba there that ended with a toast to King Baudouin.⁴² What little goodwill that had existed between Lumumba and the Belgian political elite was already vanished.

With the Belgians convinced that Lumumba could never be counted as an ally, they once again began to maneuver against him behind the scenes. In negotiating the Congolese constitution before independence, the Belgians limited the powers of the central government by giving significant autonomy to provincial leaders.⁴³ Now, the Belgian government used this ability to its advantage and courted Moïse Tshombe, the president of Katanga. Tshombe's province supplied two-thirds of the total value of the Congo's mineral production and was by far

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Urquhart, *Ralph Bunche*, 304.

⁴¹ Kanza, *Conflict in the Congo*, 162.

⁴² Urquhart, *Ralph Bunche*, 306.

⁴³ Kanza, *Conflict in the Congo*, 89.

the most economically developed area of the Congo.⁴⁴ Tshombe was seen as the leader of the Congolese separatists in Katanga who were ideologically and financially dependent on the Belgian mining companies.⁴⁵ When Tshombe visited Leopoldville in late June, he commented to Kanza that he was already considering secession even before independence had been officially granted.⁴⁶ From this conversation with Tshombe and others, Kanza told Lumumba the day before independence that influential religious and financial groups in Belgium, concerned that Lumumba was a communist, were determined to remove him from power as soon after June 30 as possible and that they intended for Tshombe to lead the opposition against him.⁴⁷ Given Katanga's economic contributions to the country as a whole, Lumumba and the Belgians who sought to undermine him were well aware of the political and economic instability that would occur in the Congo if Katanga were to secede. Furthermore, though the Belgians used the threat of communism to incite western fears, the underlying Belgian concern was that Lumumba would cut Belgium off from its lucrative financial resources in the Congo.

Less than a week after independence, a situation developed that provided the Belgians with the cover they needed to bring about Katanga's secession. Unlike politicians and civil servants who were officially independent from Belgian authority, the Congolese national army had retained its colonial structure as dictated by the independence agreement with Belgium. On July 4, General Janssens, a Belgian, reminded the Congolese soldiers of their subordinate position by writing on a blackboard for all of the officers and soldiers to read, "After Independence = Before Independence."⁴⁸ This led the Congolese soldiers to mutiny against their

⁴⁴ National Security Council Briefing, July 25, 1960, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Volume XXIII, Congo, 1960-1968, 13.

⁴⁵ Kanza, *Conflict in the Congo*, 136.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 179.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 181.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 187.

Belgian officers on July 5, which developed into general riots, looting, and a few attacks against Europeans in the Congo.⁴⁹ Bunche found himself caught in the upheaval, writing to his son that though he had not been harmed, on July 8 he had been forcibly removed from his hotel room “by gun-toting [Congolese] soldiers.”⁵⁰ Beginning on July 9, Belgium sent its troops back to the Congo under the guise of protecting the Belgians who remained there.⁵¹ This violated the Treaty of Friendship, a signed but un-ratified pre-independence document between the Belgian government and the new Congolese government under which a Belgian military presence could only be reestablished in the Congo after a request from the Congolese government.⁵² Nevertheless, Belgian troops began to occupy certain Congolese cities, and intermittent fighting broke out between Belgian and Congolese soldiers.⁵³ On July 13, Belgian paratroopers seized key parts of the Congo’s capital, Leopoldville, including its airport.⁵⁴ As the days progressed, Belgian actions seemed less about protecting Belgian citizens and more about reverting to the pre-independence state of Belgian hegemony.

Complicating the arrival of Belgian troops was Tshombe’s announcement on July 11 that Katanga was seceding from the rest of the Congo. A few days earlier he had welcomed a Belgian military force into Katanga, and after his announcement he invited back his Belgian advisors and ambassadors who had been expelled from the Congo before June 30, which fueled suspicion that Brussels had influenced the decision to secede.⁵⁵ The next day, Prime Minister Lumumba and President Kasavubu requested UN military assistance to specifically combat Belgian aggression

⁴⁹ Collins, “The Cold War comes to Africa,” 250.

⁵⁰ Ralph Bunche to Ralph Bunche, Jr., July 8, 1960, Ralph J. Bunche Papers, University of California, Los Angeles, Online Archive of California, <http://www.oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/hb6n39p29w/?brand=oac4>.

⁵¹ Collins, “The Cold War comes to Africa,” 250.

⁵² Brian Urquhart, *Hammaraskjold* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), 392.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 395.

⁵⁴ Urquhart, *Ralph Bunche*, 311.

⁵⁵ Kanza, *Conflict in the Congo*, 197-198.

and the Katangan secession.⁵⁶ In their cable to the UN, they argued that UN military assistance became justified when Belgium sent troops to the Congo and broke the Treaty of Friendship.⁵⁷ Kasavubu and Lumumba implicated the Belgians in Katanga's secession, stating in their request that "the Belgian Government [...] carefully prepared the secession of Katanga with a view to maintaining a hold on our country."⁵⁸ They also sent a request to the Soviet Union asking them to monitor the situation in case the Congo needed Soviet assistance.⁵⁹ Though the crisis was precipitated by postcolonial tensions, the request to the Soviet Union added a Cold War dynamic to the situation.

In accordance with Lumumba and Kasavubu's request, Hammarskjold asked the President of the Security Council to convene an urgent meeting of its members to discuss the growing crisis.⁶⁰ From the beginning of the meeting on July 13, Hammarskjold described the presence of the Belgian troops as a source of both internal and international tension.⁶¹ Given this, he stated that Belgian troops were not an acceptable stopgap security arrangement and recommended that the Security Council approve the Congo's request for military assistance.⁶² Mongi Slim, the delegate from Tunisia, further argued that the Belgian troops had only created more disorder,⁶³ and Arkady Sobolev, the delegate from the Soviet Union, accused the colonialists of being "unwilling to accept defeat."⁶⁴ Italy and France disagreed with the interpretation offered by Slim and Sobolev, and instead defended Belgium's actions.⁶⁵ Belgium, though not a voting member of the Security Council, was allowed to attend the meeting and

⁵⁶ Carl von Horn, *Soldiering for Peace* (London: Camelot, 1966), 134.

⁵⁷ S/4382, July 13, 1960, UNBIS.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Abi-Saab, *The United Nations Operation In The Congo 1960-1964*, 9.

⁶⁰ S/4381, July 13, 1960, UNBIS.

⁶¹ SCOR, Mtg. 873, July 13/14, 1960, UNBIS, 4.

⁶² Ibid., 5.

⁶³ Ibid., 12.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 16.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

explain its actions. Their representative stated that Belgian troops only intervened when the Congolese national army was no longer under the control of the Congolese government and thus could not ensure the safety of either European or Congolese people.⁶⁶ He further maintained that neither in the Congo as a whole nor in Katanga specifically were the Belgians intervening in the country's internal politics.⁶⁷ Finally, he stated that it was the intention of the Belgian government to remove its troops from the Congo as soon as UN troops could effectively maintain order and security.⁶⁸

The Security Council ultimately passed a resolution in the early hours of July 14 that no member voted against, though China, France, and the United Kingdom abstained.⁶⁹ The measure stated three objectives: (1) Belgium should withdraw its troops from the Congo, (2) the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Congolese government, would provide necessary military assistance, and (3) the Secretary-General was requested to report to the Security Council as appropriate.⁷⁰ The resolution officially created the *Organisation des Nations Unies au Congo* (ONUC), and Hammarskjold appointed Bunche, who was still in the Congo, as its head. On July 15, Hammarskjold selected Major-General Carl von Horn to lead the military aspect of ONUC, appointing him the Commander of the United Nations Forces in the Congo.⁷¹

In addition to the difficulties surrounding the postcolonial aspect of the conflict, there were also tensions brewing between East and West. American officials in the Congo perpetually wondered which Congolese ministers were actually communists, and Bunche described his compatriots in Leopoldville as “obsessed with the possibility of a communist takeover.”⁷² On

⁶⁶ Ibid., 34.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 38.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 42.

⁷⁰ S/4387, July 14, 1960, UNBIS.

⁷¹ Horn, *Soldiering for Peace*, 135.

⁷² Urquhart, *Ralph Bunche*, 307.

July 12, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev accused not just the Belgians but also NATO of sending troops to the Congo to crush the Congolese people.⁷³ During the Security Council meeting, Sobolev, the Soviet delegate, read to the Council an official statement of the Soviet government that accused the US, the UK, and France of being complicit in Belgium's attempt to undermine the Congo's independence.⁷⁴ Sobolev further accused US Ambassador Timberlake of interfering in the internal affairs of the Congo and said that Timberlake was using Bunche to further the aims of the western powers under the guise of the UN.⁷⁵ The US vehemently denied these allegations, with Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., the American representative, stating that there was no evidence to substantiate Sobolev's claim.⁷⁶ Although Bunche was an American working for the UN, some of his major disagreements were with the Americans. On one particularly important issue, that of disarming the Congolese national army in the wake of their revolt, Timberlake felt that disarmament was necessary at any cost, while Bunche insisted that the Congolese government had to consent to such an arrangement.⁷⁷ While Timberlake was later implicated in American efforts to interfere internally in the Congo, there is no evidence connecting Bunche to that aspect of American involvement.

In reality, Bunche's efforts were far more focused on Belgium than on the US or the Soviet Union. He firmly believed that the Belgian troops were the immediate problem and that until they left the chaos in the Congo would continue.⁷⁸ En route to the Congo on June 23, Bunche had a stopover in Brussels and attended a lunch in his honor, where he observed Belgian officials speaking in paternalistic and condescending tones about the Congolese.⁷⁹ The Belgians,

⁷³ Mazov, *A Distant Front in the Cold War*, 90.

⁷⁴ SCOR, Mtg. 873, July 13/14, 1960, UNBIS, 17.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁷⁷ Urquhart, *Ralph Bunche*, 314.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 315.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 304.

he noted, were especially dismissive of Lumumba.⁸⁰ Over the course of discussions with Belgians in the Congo, Bunche found many of them arrogant and prone to hysterical outbursts criticizing him and the UN.⁸¹ Moreover, the continuous delays in removing Belgian troops from the Congo led Bunche to feel that the Belgians were stalling.⁸² However, on July 19, Hammarskjold informed the Security Council that Bunche had secured an agreement with the Belgians in which Belgian forces would be completely withdrawn from the Leopoldville area by July 23.⁸³

Nevertheless, the continued presence of the Belgian troops was straining relations between Bunche and Lumumba. On July 18, Lumumba presented Bunche with a series of ultimatums, declaring that the Congolese government would appeal to the Soviet Union for assistance if all Belgians troops in the Congo were not withdrawn within 48 hours.⁸⁴ When Bunche brought up the matter with the Congolese Council of Ministers, however, they expressed their disapproval and told Bunche they wanted the UN to stay.⁸⁵ On July 20, Lumumba repeated his ultimatum over the radio.⁸⁶ That same day, when Lumumba and Bunche met to discuss the ultimatums, the Congolese premier expressed his displeasure that the Belgians would not be out of the country by July 20, the date he had demanded.⁸⁷ Still, he accepted Bunche's assurances that the Belgians would leave by July 23.⁸⁸ Though Bunche believed that the Belgian troops should leave, he did not see their presence as an attempt to undermine the Congolese state. This

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ David N. Gibbs, "Dag Hammarskjold, the United Nations, and the Congo Crisis of 1960-1: A Reinterpretation," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 31, no. 1 (1993): 167, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/161349>.

⁸² Urquhart, *Ralph Bunche*, 314.

⁸³ S/4389/Add. 1, July 19, 1960, UNBIS.

⁸⁴ Urquhart, *Ralph Bunche*, 313.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Urquhart, *Hammarskjold*, 406.

⁸⁷ Urquhart, *Ralph Bunche*, 318.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

was a fundamental difference from Lumumba's perspective that would eventually lead to a breakdown in relations between the two men.

By the time the Security Council met again on July 20, UN troops were in five of the six provinces of the Congo, with Katanga as the notable exception. The Security Council meeting began with Thomas Kanza and Pierre Wigny presenting the cases for the Congo and Belgium respectively; both countries had been invited to participate in the Security Council debate even though they were not voting members. Focusing on the postcolonial situation, Kanza argued that the Belgians were deliberately creating panic in the Congo through their instigation of Katanga's secession.⁸⁹ Wigny, on behalf of the Belgians, responded by stating that the Belgian intervention was purely for humanitarian purposes to protect Belgian nationals and that Belgium was not attempting to interfere in the domestic politics of the Congo.⁹⁰ In terms of the troops, he stated that they would withdraw as soon as UN troops could ensure order and safety.⁹¹ Despite the Congo's protests, the western and western-influenced members of the Security Council refused to acknowledge the extent to which the Belgians were interfering in the domestic political affairs of Katanga, which would increasingly frustrate Lumumba and other members of the Congolese Central Government. And though the Security Council once again came to an agreement about a resolution, this time unanimously voting for the resolution, different countries walked away from the table with different understandings of the situation. Neglecting the political interference of the Belgians in Katanga, the resolution focused solely on the influence of the Belgian troops and called upon the Government of Belgium to speedily withdraw its troops from all parts of the Congo, including Katanga.⁹²

⁸⁹ SCOR, Mtg. 877, July 20/21, 1960, UNBIS, 11-12.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² S/4405, July 22, 1960, UNBIS.

Despite Kanza's statements during the Security Council meeting, Hammarskjold and certain western members of the Security Council remained unconvinced that Belgium was behind Katanga's secession—a point of view that would lead to increasing alienation between UN officials and the Congolese Central Government. In reality, it was the Belgians who sustained Tshombe's secession. The *Union Minière du haut Katanga*, the powerful mining company that controlled Katanga's economy, gave political support, arms, and money, providing approximately 80 percent of the revenue for Tshombe's regime.⁹³ To ensure Tshombe remained in power, the Belgians also financed a mercenary force consisting of 500 expatriates, which was used to consolidate power internally against dissenters and externally against the Congolese national army and the UN.⁹⁴ Furthermore, Belgian politicians supported Tshombe's secession efforts. In a radio broadcast on July 21, King Baudouin expressed his support for the continued presence of Belgian troops in Katanga, which he said remained there at the request of Katanga's leaders.⁹⁵ Communications sent in late July by Wigny and Prime Minister Gaston Eyskens to Tshombe applauded Katanga's secession and stated their desire to see other provinces side with Katanga.⁹⁶ It was not until November 1960, after Rajeshwar Dayal, formerly the Indian permanent representative to the UN who was then Hammarskjold's assistant, became head of ONUC that the UN would criticize European interests in Katanga and directly implicate the Belgian government and private Belgian financial interests in Katanga's secession.⁹⁷ Meanwhile, the UN's refusal to publicly criticize Belgian interference in July, despite various members of the Congolese government making that argument then, meant valuable lost time and a fractured relationship between the Congolese Central Government and the UN.

⁹³ Gibbs, "Dag Hammarskjold, the United Nations, and the Congo Crisis of 1960-1," 165.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 166.

⁹⁵ Abi-Saab, *The United Nations Operation In The Congo 1960-1964*, 25.

⁹⁶ Ludo de Witte, *The Assassination of Lumumba* (London: Verso, 2001), 10.

⁹⁷ Gibbs, "Dag Hammarskjold, the United Nations, and the Congo Crisis of 1960-1," 167.

III. Hammarskjold in the Congo and the Escalating Crisis in Katanga

Hammarskjold's public statements maintained that the UN should not intervene in the internal affairs of the Congo and that Katanga's secession was an internal political matter that the Congolese needed to resolve without UN assistance. In his first report to the Security Council about ONUC on July 18, Hammarskjold agreed with the Congolese that Belgian troops needed to leave all provinces of the Congo, but he also stated that ONUC "must not become parties in internal conflicts [and] [...] cannot be used to enforce any specific political solutions of pending problems or to influence the political balance decisive to such a solution."⁹⁸ After the Security Council meetings finished on July 22, Hammarskjold left New York for the Congo to help with the negotiations about Katanga. On his way, he stopped in Belgium on July 27, and by August 2 Hammarskjold publicly stated that he had obtained the assurances of the Belgian government that they would fully comply with the Security Council resolution by withdrawing their troops from Katanga.⁹⁹

Upon arriving in Leopoldville, the capital of the Congo, on July 28, Hammarskjold met with officials from the Congolese Central Government and outlined his plan for Katanga.¹⁰⁰ During the meeting he stated that the second Security Council resolution "[left] no room for doubt as regards the legal situation; the call to the Belgian Government applied equally to Katanga Province," and he reassured the Congolese present that the Belgian government accepted that UN troops would shortly enter Katanga.¹⁰¹ To implement the resolution, Hammarskjold stated that Bunche would be sent to Elisabethville, the capital of Katanga, on

⁹⁸ S/4389, July 18, 1960, UNBIS, 5.

⁹⁹ Abi-Saab, *The United Nations Operation In The Congo 1960-1964*, 28.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁰¹ S/4417, August 6, 1960, UNBIS, 2.

August 5 to commence negotiations regarding the withdrawal of Belgian troops.¹⁰² The following day, UN military units would enter Katanga as first steps toward implementing the Security Council resolution.¹⁰³ Though Hammarskjold expected this news to be well received, he underestimated Congolese frustration with the fact that Belgian troops still remained in the country and especially in Katanga where the Belgians were seen as politically in control. At a banquet on July 31 that was supposed to be held in Hammarskjold's honor, Vice-Prime Minister Antoine Gizenga launched into an insulting speech against Hammarskjold.¹⁰⁴ Copies of the speech were even distributed to attendees, which included many members of the press.¹⁰⁵ Gizenga questioned why the Congolese soldiers had been disarmed while the Belgian soldiers had been allowed to keep their weapons and said that the UN force was enabling Katanga to consolidate its power by not removing the Belgian troops from the province.¹⁰⁶ Throughout the dinner, other Congolese officials also publicly expressed their disappointment with Hammarskjold and the UN.¹⁰⁷ Additionally, when Kasavubu met privately with Hammarskjold later, he expressed his displeasure with the failure of the UN to expel the Belgians and enter Katanga.¹⁰⁸

Hammarskjold's attempts at mediation were further complicated on August 3. That day, he received a message from Tshombe that stated, "The Katanga Government is unanimous in its determination to resist by every means the Lumumba Government, its illegal representative ... and the dispatch of United Nations forces to Katanga."¹⁰⁹ Despite this warning, the message also said that the Katanga Government would be willing to meet with Bunche to explain its

¹⁰² Ibid., 3.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Urquhart, *Ralph Bunche*, 320.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Urquhart, *Hammarskjold*, 412.

¹⁰⁷ Urquhart, *Ralph Bunche*, 168.

¹⁰⁸ Horn, *Soldiering for Peace*, 167.

¹⁰⁹ S/4417, August 6, 1960, UNBIS, 5.

position.¹¹⁰ Hammarskjold replied on August 4 reiterating that the Security Council resolutions applied to the whole territory of the Congo, including Katanga, and concluded by reminding Tshombe that as the troops would be under the control of the United Nations, they would not interfere internally in Katanga's affairs.¹¹¹ Also on August 3, Gizenga requested via a letter to the Secretary-General that three members of the Central Government accompany Bunche on his visit to Katanga.¹¹² The same request had been made to Hammarskjold two days earlier by other members of the Central Government, but he denied the request on both occasions saying that Bunche's trip to Katanga was only for UN purposes.¹¹³ This response infuriated Gizenga, who argued that the UN was treating the Congolese like children.¹¹⁴ To Gizenga and the other members of the Central Government, it seemed that the UN was replacing their ability to govern the entirety of their territory.

Bunche left for Elisabethville on the morning of August 4 without accompaniment from the Congolese Central Government. Under orders from Hammarskjold, Bunche was to negotiate with the Belgian authorities regarding the withdrawal of their troops and the entrance of three national contingents of the United Nations Force into Katanga on August 6.¹¹⁵ Though there were already UN forces ready to enter Katanga, the final determination as to whether these troops could enter was left to Bunche. The UN troops were not supposed to initiate fighting, and Hammarskjold felt that if the troops were to meet with resistance an additional resolution from the Security Council authorizing them to use force would be necessary.¹¹⁶ Nevertheless, Hammarskjold had promised the Central Government that UN troops would enter Katanga on

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 6.

¹¹² S/4417/Add. 2, August 6, 1960, UNBIS, 2.

¹¹³ Ibid., 3.

¹¹⁴ Horn, *Soldiering for Peace*, 170.

¹¹⁵ S/4417, August 6, 1960, UNBIS, 3.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 6.

August 6, and there was enormous pressure on Bunche to successfully negotiate on that timetable.

Despite that pressure, Bunche's visit was not successful. While Bunche's initial reception on August 4 in Katanga was friendly, the atmosphere of friendship didn't last long.¹¹⁷ After their first meeting Bunche felt he could convince Tshombe to allow the UN troops to land, but then Tshombe unexpectedly announced to the press that UN troops would not be entering Katanga.¹¹⁸ This forced Bunche to issue a counterstatement saying no decision had been made yet.¹¹⁹ On August 5, Bunche met with Tshombe again.¹²⁰ Though Bunche suspected that Tshombe and the Belgians were on the whole inflating the ability of their forces to resist UN entrance into Katanga, Bunche worried that there would still be some violence.¹²¹ In the report Bunche prepared after his trip to Katanga, he wrote that Tshombe continued to repeatedly warn that UN troops would be opposed by force if they entered Katanga.¹²² Furthermore, Bunche was not only told of military preparations that would oppose UN troops, he also witnessed such preparations, including men marching in the street.¹²³ None of this gave Bunche a positive feeling about UN troops entering Katanga, especially without having to use force.

The tipping point came, however, with an incident that occurred at the Elisabethville airport. When Bunche was meeting with Tshombe on August 5, he was interrupted by Belgian officials who urged him to head to the Elisabethville airport immediately because a UN plane

¹¹⁷ Report from Elisabethville, Katanga, August 4, 1960, Series 845, Box 1, File 3, Ralph Bunche Congo Files, UN Archives, New York.

¹¹⁸ Copy of message received through the Belgian Embassy, August 4, 1960, Series 370, Box 38, File 16, Ralph Bunche Congo Files, UN Archives, New York.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Addendum to Report (2), August 5, 1960, Series 845, Box 1, File 3, Ralph Bunche Congo Files, UN Archives, New York.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ralph Bunche to Secretary-General, August 6, 1960, Box 148, Folder 2, Andrew W. Cordier Papers, Columbia University, New York.

¹²³ Ralph Bunche to Secretary-General, Report on Katanga Assignment, August 6, 1960, Box 148, Folder 2, Cordier Papers.

carrying forty soldiers that was supposed to land in an hour was being opposed by the Katanga forces at the airport.¹²⁴ When Bunche arrived at the airport he found an “alarming situation” and “growing hysteria” on behalf of both Belgian and Katangan soldiers.¹²⁵ The air control tower was receiving instructions from the Katanga Minister of the Interior, Godefroid Munungo, to open fire on the aircraft and to place obstructions on the runway to prevent it from landing.¹²⁶ Bunche was able to communicate to Munungo that the plane was not dangerous and preparations were made to allow it to land.¹²⁷ However, no one was allowed to exit the plane, and Bunche was forced to board the plane and return to Leopoldville without conducting further negotiations.¹²⁸ It was clear that Bunche was rattled by the incident and that the actions taken there significantly affected his perception of the situation.

Based on the incident at the airport as well as his conversations with leaders of Katanga and the Belgians, Bunche recommended that the UN halt its plans to enter Katanga.¹²⁹ As he stated in his report, he based that recommendation on, “the unqualified and unyielding opposition of Mr. Tshombe and the Ministers and the Grand Chiefs to the coming of UN troops” and “the tangible evidence of opposition to the arrival of UN troops in the press.”¹³⁰ Hammarskjold agreed with Bunche’s recommendation and subsequently returned to New York to call another meeting of the Security Council to pass an additional mandate that would allow the UN troops to enter Katanga.¹³¹

In the report he prepared for the Security Council about Bunche’s visit to Katanga, Hammarskjold placed the blame solely on Tshombe and the Katangans for the breakdown of

¹²⁴ Ralph Bunche to Secretary-General, August 7, 1960, Box 148, Folder 2, Cordier Papers.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Horn, *Soldiering for Peace*, 171.

negotiations. He absolved the Belgians of any responsibility when he said, “The difficulty which the Council faces in the case of the Katanga does not have its root in the Belgian attitude.”¹³² Instead, Hammarskjold reiterated that the situation was “an internal political problem to which the United Nations as an organization obviously [could not] be a party.”¹³³ This infuriated the Congolese present at the meeting. Foreign Minister Justin Bomboko, who was in New York to represent the Congo at the Security Council meeting, contested Hammarskjold’s analysis of the situation and stated that the opposition to UN troops entering Katanga was the result of the Belgian forces there.¹³⁴ Given this, Bomboko said that Katanga’s secession was not an institutional or constitutional domestic issue so long as Belgian troops remained in the Congo.¹³⁵ Meanwhile, Belgium steadfastly protested Bomboko’s interpretation of the situation and maintained that it was not interfering in the domestic affairs of the country that it had helped gain independence.¹³⁶ To justify its position, the Belgian representative highlighted the Secretary-General’s report that stated that the Belgians had not obstructed him from carrying out the Security Council resolutions.¹³⁷ Though the new resolution, passed on August 9, supported the Congolese position in that it demanded that the Belgian troops withdraw from the Congo, Hammarskjold’s interpretation still disregarded the Congolese position by placing the blame squarely with Tshombe.¹³⁸

The Congolese Central Government had been furious with Hammarskjold’s decision to halt the planned entrance of UN troops into Katanga on August 6 and accused the UN of

¹³² S/4417, August 6, 1960, UNBIS, 11.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ SCOR, Mtg. 885, 3

¹³⁵ SCOR, Mtg. 885, August 8, 1960, UNBIS, 4

¹³⁶ Ibid., 4-5.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ S/4426, August 9, 1960, UNBIS.

capitulating to Tshombe.¹³⁹ Furthermore, Hammarskjold had left the Congo to return to New York without speaking to Congolese Central Government officials to explain his decision, which only further aroused suspicions among the Congolese that he was colluding with the Belgians.¹⁴⁰ Gizenga was aware that Belgian representatives had been present at meetings between Bunche and Tshombe that occurred on August 4 and 5 and said that this was troubling in light of Hammarskjold's decision to call off the entrance of UN troops into Katanga.¹⁴¹ The fact that the UN was negotiating directly with those who the Central Government believed were deliberately undermining their independence was straining the relationship between the UN and the Central Government.

Hammarskjold's return to the Congo on August 10 only hardened the belief among the Congolese that he was working with the Belgians against them when he announced that he wouldn't meet with Central Government officials and instead would travel directly to Katanga to negotiate with Tshombe.¹⁴² However, Hammarskjold agreed to meet with Lumumba in Leopoldville on August 14 after meeting with Tshombe.¹⁴³ Anticipating Congolese anger at this decision, Hammarskjold drafted an interpretation of the Security Council resolution that Bunche was to present specifically to Lumumba before his meeting with the Secretary-General in an attempt to explain the UN position.¹⁴⁴ Generally, the memo stated that the UN wouldn't be a part of the internal conflict in the Congo and that UN troops would not be used to coerce Tshombe to take any actions.¹⁴⁵ When Bunche and Lumumba met on August 12, Lumumba brought up complaints that Bunche had heard many times before, specifically, that the UN needed to do

¹³⁹ Horn, *Soldiering for Peace*, 172.

¹⁴⁰ Broadcast by Vice Premier Gizenga, August 6, 1960, Box 148, Folder 2, Cordier Papers.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² Urquhart, *Ralph Bunche*, 326.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 328.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 326.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

more to help him end the secession in Katanga and that the UN needed to remove the Belgians from the entire country.¹⁴⁶ On August 14, Lumumba abruptly cancelled the scheduled meeting with Hammarskjold and proceeded to exchange a series of angry letters with him. Lumumba accused Hammarskjold of conspiring with Tshombe and the Belgians and not acting “in consultation with” the Central Government as the original Security Council resolution stated.¹⁴⁷ He claimed that the Congolese had lost confidence with the UN and that he would ask for help from others outside the UN.¹⁴⁸ Lumumba and the UN had reached an impasse. He understood that the UN would never blame the Belgians for Katanga’s secession and began to appeal to others for help in reuniting his fracturing country. His angry letters had, however, also caused the UN to lose confidence in him, and UN officials similarly began to look for other Congolese to negotiate with instead of Lumumba.

Tshombe was also not pleased with the Security Council resolution. In response, on August 9 he announced at a press conference that while he would allow UN troops to enter Katanga, they would only be allowed in if ten specific conditions were met.¹⁴⁹ Hammarskjold replied that while he wouldn’t accept conditions, he would arrive in Elizabethville on August 12 with military and civilian advisors as well as UN troops to speak with Tshombe then.¹⁵⁰ In some respects, Hammarskjold’s visit to Elisabethville was successful in that he arranged for Belgian troops to be removed from Katanga within a week, and UN troops began to deploy to towns throughout Katanga.¹⁵¹ However, in other ways Hammarskjold’s negotiations in Katanga were not the “breakthrough” that he championed them as. First, though Hammarskjold said he

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 327.

¹⁴⁷ Urquhart, *Hammarskjold*, 430.

¹⁴⁸ Horn, *Soldiering for Peace*, 181.

¹⁴⁹ Abi-Saab, *The United Nations Operation In The Congo 1960-1964*, 36.

¹⁵⁰ Urquhart, *Ralph Bunche*, 326.

¹⁵¹ Mazov, *A Distant Front in the Cold War*, 106.

wouldn't accept Tshombe's conditions, in Katanga it was widely accepted that eight out of ten conditions had been met, which gave the perception that the UN was capitulating to Katanga's interests.¹⁵² Second, even though Tshombe accepted UN troops replacing Belgian troops, troop removal didn't involve removing Belgian officers under the direct control of Katanga or the mercenaries that Belgian money had hired.¹⁵³ The UN troops hadn't ended secession, and Tshombe was still surrounded by Belgian advisors.¹⁵⁴ Thus, though Hammarskjold's negotiations gave the appearance of progress to the rest of the world, the members of the Congolese Central Government who understood the ways in which the Belgians still maintained control over Katanga didn't believe Hammarskjold had done anything positive to expel the foreign influences dividing their country.

Complicating Hammarskjold's impartiality throughout the decisions he made surrounding Katanga was the fact that his private statements as well as his communications with the Belgians indicate that he was biased against Lumumba. While he publicly stated that the Belgian troops needed to withdraw from all parts of the Congo, including Katanga, on July 26 he sent a confidential message in which he described Tshombe of having "legitimate aims."¹⁵⁵ King Baudouin communicated directly with Hammarskjold on both July 28 and August 6, arguing that the Congolese Central Government should not be able to claim sovereignty over Katanga and that Tshombe and Lumumba should have the same constitutional rights.¹⁵⁶ After Hammarskjold's visit to Katanga on August 12, Belgian officials gloated that he was "preserving the *de facto* territorial integrity of Katanga."¹⁵⁷ Furthermore, Hammarskjold was well aware of

¹⁵² Abi-Saab, *The United Nations Operation In The Congo 1960-1964*, 45.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Urquhart, *Hammarskjold*, 428.

¹⁵⁵ Witte, *The Assassination of Lumumba*, 14.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 11-12.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 13.

the fact that the Belgians politically controlled Katanga and Tshombe. In a telegram to Hammarskjold, Bunche stated that Tshombe was “a puppet maneuvered by the Belgians [and] that he took no decision that was not inspired by the Belgians.”¹⁵⁸ During Bunche’s trip to Katanga, “no official meeting was held without the presence of a Belgian.”¹⁵⁹ Finally, Bunche communicated to Hammarskjold that “without the Belgians, [Tshombe] would never have come to power.”¹⁶⁰ Bunche’s telegrams to Hammarskjold confirm he knew the Congolese’s accusations against the Belgians were true. However, both Hammarskjold and Bunche had become convinced that Lumumba wasn’t fit to govern, with Bunche writing to his wife on August 15 that “the insane fulminations of one reckless man” could ruin the UN’s efforts to mediate the crisis in the Congo.¹⁶¹ Thus, by the beginning of August when the UN could confirm on its own that the Belgians were behind Katanga’s secession, the UN had no incentive to remove them from the Congo. Hammarskjold and Bunche’s priorities shifted to removing Lumumba from his position of power, and Belgian interference in Katanga only helped to further destabilize Lumumba.

On August 21, Hammarskjold announced that Rajeshwar Dayal of India would take Bunche’s place at the end of the month, and Andrew Cordier would fill an interim role in between Bunche’s departure and Dayal’s arrival.¹⁶² On September 1, only a few hours after arriving back in the US, Bunche gave a press conference at UN Headquarters in New York describing his experiences in the Congo. Though Bunche said that the arrival of Belgian troops was a mistake and blamed the Belgians for poorly preparing the Congolese for independence, in terms of the Katanga problem he maintained the UN position that the UN “do[es] not participate

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 14.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Urquhart, *Ralph Bunche*, 328.

¹⁶² Ibid., 331.

in civil strife.”¹⁶³ Bunche’s comments only further reinforced the fact that high-ranking UN officials were publicly committed to maintaining that Tshombe was the sole orchestrator of Katanga’s secession. Finally, Bunche addressed concerns about the Cold War crisis in the Congo. From his perspective, he said that he did not see a great deal of influence by the big powers at this point of the crisis, but he left the option open in terms of whether such influence could grow.¹⁶⁴ Bunche’s time in the Congo had predominantly been preoccupied with negotiating between the Congolese and the Belgians. While the Soviets had attempted to implicate Bunche in colluding with the American Ambassador to the Congo, there was no evidence to substantiate that claim. However, with Bunche and Hammarskjöld’s shift in priorities shortly before Bunche’s departure, which involved prioritizing removing Lumumba from power, the UN found its aims in the Congo beginning to closer align with those of the US. It would be under Cordier’s leadership, then, that the UN would find itself more enmeshed in Cold War tensions through its close collaboration with American officials.

¹⁶³ Press Conference by Dr. Ralph J. Bunche at UN Headquarters, September 1, 1960, Ralph J. Bunche Papers, University of California, Los Angeles, Online Archive of California, <http://www.oac.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/hb5x0nb625/?brand=oac4>.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

IV. Andrew Cordier and the Constitutional Crisis

The UN's response to Katanga convinced Lumumba that the UN would never come around to support his position that the Belgians were to blame for instigating the secession. During his August 14 exchange of letters with Hammarskjold, Lumumba had threatened to ask for assistance outside of the UN. And in trying to reunite the other secessionist province of Kasai with the Congolese Central Government, Lumumba turned to the Soviets. On August 9, under the leadership of Albert Kalonji, the province of Kasai had seceded from the Congo.¹⁶⁵ Kalonji declared that Kasai was an independent state that would maintain close ties with Katanga, which fueled suspicions among Central Government members as to whether the Belgians also instigated Kasai's secession.¹⁶⁶ In addition to threatening the Congolese Central Government politically, Kasai was also economically important as it contained considerable amounts of industrial diamonds and produced export revenues for the country as a whole.¹⁶⁷ Furthermore, Kasai and Katanga were neighboring territories, which led to a large and continuous section of the Congo claiming to no longer be a part of the Central Government.

On August 15, in response to Kasai's secession, Lumumba asked Khrushchev for military equipment to help the Congo maintain its threatened territorial integrity.¹⁶⁸ Though the Soviets didn't provide extensive assistance, it was enough for Lumumba to begin an invasion of the province.¹⁶⁹ On August 23 he ordered Congolese soldiers airlifted into Kasai to stop the rebellion,¹⁷⁰ and on August 25 Hammarskjold learned that Lumumba had accepted Soviet assistance in the form of 100 trucks and 16 planes.¹⁷¹ This worried Hammarskjold, who believed

¹⁶⁵ Mazov, *A Distant Front in the Cold War*, 109.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 110.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Urquhart, *Hammarskjold*, 435.

¹⁷¹ Abi-Saab, *The United Nations Operation In The Congo 1960-1964*, 54.

Lumumba's actions could bring about a direct conflict between the US and the Soviet Union that he had worked to avoid by attempting to mediate the conflict through the UN.¹⁷² Additionally, soldiers began massacring civilians as the violence in Kasai turned into ethnic warfare.¹⁷³ The incidents there only further convinced Hammarskjold that Lumumba was not an inexperienced politician in need of help but rather that he was reckless and irresponsible and also the main threat to the UN's successful mediation of the Congo Crisis.¹⁷⁴

Lumumba's acceptance of Soviet assistance also worried the Americans who had long suspected that Lumumba was colluding with them. On July 21, additional Soviet personnel were dispatched to the Congo, which the US believed was an indication of the Soviets wanting to better coordinate with Congolese officials.¹⁷⁵ The US was also aware that the Soviet Union was working to establish direct communication between Moscow and Leopoldville.¹⁷⁶ The first Soviet Ambassador to the Congo, Mikhail Yakolev, arrived on August 6 to formally submit his credentials and even handed Lumumba a personal letter from the Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev that expressed Soviet confidence in the ability of the Congolese to expel the foreign interventionists and reiterated the Soviet Union's commitment to provide the Congo with economic assistance.¹⁷⁷ As of August 11, the CIA believed that Lumumba was moving closer to the communist orbit and indicated that his removal from power would assist Western objectives.¹⁷⁸ That same telegram also reported that the CIA's Station in the Congo was counseling an unidentified person on legal means to oust Lumumba from his position as Prime

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 55.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 59

¹⁷⁵ National Security Council Briefing, July 25, 1960, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Volume XXIII, Congo, 1960-1968, 14.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Mazov, *A Distant Front in the Cold War*, 107.

¹⁷⁸ Telegram From the Station in the Congo to the Central Intelligence Agency, August 11, 1960, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Volume XXIII, Congo, 1960-1968, 14.

Minister.¹⁷⁹ In an August 18 telegram the CIA station in Leopoldville stated, “Embassy and Station believe Congo experiencing classic Communist effort [to] take over government.”¹⁸⁰ The telegram further stated that Ambassador Timberlake had been consulted about a general plan to organize against Lumumba and have him replaced by a pro-western government.¹⁸¹ At the same time that the US focused its efforts against Lumumba, the UN was doing the same. An August 17 telegram from the US permanent mission to the UN stated that Hammarskjold believed “Lumumba must be broken.”¹⁸²

It was within this atmosphere that Andrew Cordier stepped into the role of the Secretary-General’s Special Representative to the Congo. Cordier, also an American, had worked for the UN from its beginning in 1946 and was currently serving as Hammarskjold’s executive assistant.¹⁸³ Both Hammarskjold and Cordier believed that Lumumba didn’t have a valid reason to appeal to the Soviets for assistance, and both men feared that Soviet expansion in the Congo would start a Cold War crisis.¹⁸⁴ The two men also seemed to agree that Lumumba in the position of Prime Minister presented difficulties for the UN, as Cordier privately stated in August 1960 that the only solution to the Congo Crisis was a change of leadership.¹⁸⁵ Throughout the Congo Crisis, Cordier kept in close contact with officials at the State Department and the CIA, and he shared the general western anti-Soviet perspective.¹⁸⁶ He also had a close personal relationship US Ambassador Clare Timberlake.¹⁸⁷ By the end of his time in the Congo, Cordier faced accusations from members of the international community, and the Soviet Union

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 15.

¹⁸⁰ Editorial Note, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Volume XXIII, Congo, 1960-1968, 18.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Witte, *The Assassination of Lumumba*, 17.

¹⁸³ Collins, “The Cold War comes to Africa,” 245.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 255.

¹⁸⁵ Witte, *The Assassination of Lumumba*, 17.

¹⁸⁶ Collins, “The Cold War comes to Africa,” 254.

¹⁸⁷ Abi-Saab, *The United Nations Operation In The Congo 1960-1964*, 66.

in particular, that his time in the Congo had been spent advancing the American agenda, and not the UN agenda. In reality, by time Cordier arrived in the Congo, the UN agenda and the American agenda were very similar. While Bunche was criticized for not doing enough to help the Congolese, under Cordier's leadership the UN would take a much more interventionist route and become one of the parties directly interfering in the internal affairs of the Congo.

Cordier arrived in the Congo on August 28. As part of the transition, Bunche and Cordier met with Kasavubu on August 29. During the meeting, Kasavubu was extremely critical of Lumumba, but expressed his support for the work of the UN in the Congo.¹⁸⁸ On September 5, Kasavubu announced over the radio that he was dismissing Lumumba along with six other ministers.¹⁸⁹ Within a half hour after Kasavubu's radio announcement, Lumumba announced over the radio that Kasavubu was not legally allowed to dismiss the Prime Minister according to the Congolese Constitution.¹⁹⁰ He concluded his remarks with a statement that the disagreements between him and Kasavubu were internal matters and therefore neither the UN nor any other outside powers were authorized to intervene.¹⁹¹ That night, under the direction of maintaining law and order, Cordier closed the Congolese airports to all air traffic except that of the UN, and on the morning of September 6 he closed the Leopoldville radio station, which was at that time under the control of Lumumba's supporters.¹⁹² Cordier's decision to close the radio station and the airport would prove to be the most controversial decision the UN made throughout its almost four-year stay in the Congo, and it decisively tipped the balance of power in favor of Kasavubu during the Constitutional Crisis.

¹⁸⁸ Urquhart, *Ralph Bunche*, 333.

¹⁸⁹ Abi-Saab, *The United Nations Operation In The Congo 1960-1964*, 59.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 60.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

Those working for ONUC in the Congo at the time supported Cordier's decisions.¹⁹³ From the UN's perspective, the radio was the tool through which supporters could be rallied, and radio broadcasts about the crisis in Leopoldville could have spread to other parts of the country and incited civil war.¹⁹⁴ Major-General Carl von Horn, who was still leading the military aspect of ONUC, was a strong defender of Cordier's actions. Before Cordier closed the airport and the radio station, he consulted Horn who said that UN communications had to be protected and recommended closing all main airports.¹⁹⁵ Guiding this advice was Horn's worry that Soviet planes would land in defense of Lumumba.¹⁹⁶ However, though Cordier's decision to close the radio station seemed neutral on its face, as both Kasavubu and Lumumba were barred from using the facility, in reality the decision favored Kasavubu in that his supporters were allowed to use radio facilities in the neighboring country of Congo (Brazzaville), and broadcasts from there would reach Leopoldville.¹⁹⁷ Furthermore, even though the airport was supposed to be closed to all but UN forces, Kasavubu's allies were allowed to use it.¹⁹⁸

In the aftermath, the UN justified Cordier's decisions on the fact that he was faced with an emergency situation given that Kasavubu's radio declaration was broadcast without prior warning to the UN.¹⁹⁹ However, Cordier actually knew of Kasavubu's intention to dismiss Lumumba in advance. In fact, Cordier met with Kasavubu four times prior to his radio announcement precipitating the Constitutional Crisis and explained in depth how UN forces would act during a national emergency.²⁰⁰ Before his radio announcement, the US had provided Kasavubu with actions to take after dismissing Lumumba, one of which was to control the radio

¹⁹³ Horn, *Soldiering for Peace*, 193.

¹⁹⁴ Abi-Saab, *The United Nations Operation In The Congo 1960-1964*, 60.

¹⁹⁵ Horn, *Soldiering for Peace*, 193.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Collins, "The Cold War comes to Africa," 261.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Abi-Saab, *The United Nations Operation In The Congo 1960-1964*, 61.

²⁰⁰ Collins, "The Cold War comes to Africa," 260.

to ensure that Lumumba would not have access to it.²⁰¹ When Kasavubu failed to ensure that Lumumba was prevented from using the radio, Cordier used his powers as the head of ONUC to prevent Lumumba from having radio access. Directly implicating both the US and the UN in the plan to remove Lumumba was the fact that a telegram from the CIA Station in the Congo on September 5 outlined in advance Kasavubu's plan to oust Lumumba and said that Kasavubu's plan was coordinated with ONUC "at highest levels here."²⁰² Thus, in making his decision to remove Lumumba as Prime Minister, Kasavubu was assured of indirect support from both the US and the UN (through Cordier).²⁰³

Lumumba and the Soviet Union were the most vocal critics of Cordier's decisions. In a letter from Lumumba to the Secretary-General dated September 10, Lumumba accused both Hammarskjold and his workers in the Congo of interfering in internal affairs.²⁰⁴ That same day, the Soviet Union sent a letter to the Secretary-General also accusing the UN of interfering in the internal affairs of the Congo. Though the Soviets didn't mention Cordier specifically, they condemned the fact that the UN had closed the airport and occupied the radio station, both of which were actions specifically carried out under Cordier's direction.²⁰⁵ From the Soviet Union's perspective, it appeared that the Belgian colonialists were being replaced by the collective colonialism of the members of NATO, a scheme in which the UN was complicit.²⁰⁶ Unlike the Soviets' accusations against Bunche, this time Soviet accusations against UN personnel in the Congo were true.

²⁰¹ Mazov, *A Distant Front in the Cold War*, 112.

²⁰² Telegram From the Station in the Congo to the Central Intelligence Agency, September 5, 1960, *FRUS*, 1964-1968, Volume XXIII, Congo, 1960-1968, 23.

²⁰³ Mazov, *A Distant Front in the Cold War*, 112.

²⁰⁴ S/4498, September 10, 1960, UNBIS.

²⁰⁵ S/4497, September 10, 1960, UNBIS, 3.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

Rajeshwar Dayal, the Indian diplomat who was to replace Cordier as head of ONUC, assumed his official responsibilities on September 8. Under his watch, however, the Constitutional Crisis in the Congo would only escalate. On September 14, Colonel Joseph Mobutu, the Chief of Staff of the Congolese national army, announced over the radio that he was neutralizing the two rival governments led by Lumumba and Kasavubu, and he was closing Parliament until the end of the year.²⁰⁷ He also told the Soviet embassy and their allies to vacate the country within 48 hours.²⁰⁸ Making good on his threat, the following day Mobutu's troops occupied Parliament and arrested Lumumba.²⁰⁹ Though Mobutu seemed to act alone, in reality he wasn't acting unilaterally. It was the CIA who decided that Kasavubu was too cautious to lead the opposition against Lumumba, and they subsequently approached Mobutu, whom they felt would act more strongly to neutralize Lumumba's influence.²¹⁰ Larry Devlin, the CIA's Chief of Station in the Congo, met with Mobutu on September 13 and said that while the US could not support a coup d'état, it could support "a temporary government composed of civilian technocrats."²¹¹ Furthermore, Devlin said that \$5,000 would be available for Mobutu the following day for distribution among his "senior officers."²¹²

The US had been wary of Lumumba for some time, and as of a month prior to Mobutu's takeover the US was actively working to remove him from power. The US, through the CIA, was actually not just plotting to remove him from power, but was rather actively planning to assassinate him. While a later Senate investigation determined that the CIA was not directly responsible for Lumumba's death, the evidence presented did outline a very detailed

²⁰⁷ Urquhart, *Hammar skjold*, 451.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 451.

²⁰⁹ Mazov, *A Distant Front in the Cold War*, 116.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² *Ibid.*

assassination plot involving high-level government officials. Based on the evidence, it appeared that the plot against him began on August 18, 1960 during a meeting of the National Security Council.²¹³ During that meeting, President Eisenhower allegedly “expressed strong concern about Lumumba,” which was taken by then-CIA Director Allen Dulles as authority to assassinate him.²¹⁴ A few days later, Dulles signed a cable to Larry Devlin saying, “We conclude that his removal must be an urgent and prime objective and that under existing conditions should be a high priority of our covert action.”²¹⁵ A CIA scientist produced a toxic biological material and delivered it to Devlin, allegedly telling him that President Eisenhower had authorized Lumumba’s assassination.²¹⁶ Though Devlin “took ‘exploratory steps in furtherance of the assassination plot,’” he wasn’t able to access him before Lumumba, who was under house arrest in Leopoldville at that time, left to attempt to reunite with supporters in another area of the Congo.²¹⁷ Cables from Devlin demonstrate that the CIA was not present at Lumumba’s assassination, but Devlin did have some knowledge of the plan to transfer Lumumba to a location in the Congo where it was likely he would be killed.²¹⁸

Ludo de Witte, in *The Assassination of Lumumba*, outlined the events leading to Lumumba’s assassination as well as how the Belgians and the Congolese conspired to and eventually did kill him. According to Witte, “it was Belgian advice, Belgian orders, and finally Belgian hands that killed Lumumba on 17 January 1961.”²¹⁹ The Belgian plan to assassinate Lumumba, codenamed Operation Barracuda, was given official authorization on October 5.²²⁰

²¹³ Select Committee To Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, Interim Report, Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders, S. Rep. No. 94-465, 13.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 15.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 19.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 27.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 50.

²¹⁹ Witte, *The Assassination of Lumumba*, xxiv.

²²⁰ Ibid., 25.

After Mobutu's takeover, Lumumba was placed under house arrest but given UN protection, which prevented both the US and the Belgians from gaining access to him.²²¹ When he left UN protection to reunite with supporters in another area of the country, he was intercepted by forces loyal to Mobutu on December 1.²²² On December 3 Lumumba was transferred to Camp Hardy in Thysville where journalists who caught a glimpse of him said he looked like he had been beaten.²²³ He remained there for over a month, during which time the Belgians demanded that Tshombe organize Lumumba's transfer to Katanga where he awaited certain death.²²⁴ On January 17, 1961, Lumumba arrived in Katanga and was driven to a house where he was tortured for a few hours.²²⁵ That same night, he was driven to a remote location and assassinated via firing squad, in the presence of both Belgians and high-ranking members of Katanga's government, one of whom was Tshombe.²²⁶

While Cordier's time representing the UN in the Congo was characterized by too much intervention, under Dayal the UN would be complicit in Lumumba's downfall by its lack of action. Though Hammarskjold later told the Security Council that UN forces could not have prevented Lumumba's arrest, UN troops actually very easily could have prevented the Congolese national army from arresting him.²²⁷ After Mobutu's forces captured Lumumba on December 1, he escaped the next day to a camp of Ghanaian soldiers who were a part of the UN military force and asked for their protection.²²⁸ However, the Ghanaian soldiers refused to offer him protection on the order of their superiors, and they watched while soldiers from the Congolese national

²²¹ Ibid., 30.

²²² Ibid., 54.

²²³ Ibid., 59.

²²⁴ Ibid., 81.

²²⁵ Ibid., 101 & 104.

²²⁶ Ibid., 119-120.

²²⁷ Ibid., 56.

²²⁸ Ibid., 55.

army loyal to Mobutu rearrested Lumumba outside their camp.²²⁹ When Lumumba left UN protection to reunite with supporters in another area of the country, both Dayal and General Horn had issued directives that stated that the UN was only responsible for Lumumba while he was under house arrest.²³⁰ Now that he had left UN protection, UN forces were specifically told not to intervene and stop Mobutu's forces from arresting him.²³¹ The highest level of UN officials in the Congo specifically chose to allow Lumumba to be captured by forces that would likely kill him. Hammarskjold also had an opportunity to intervene when he visited Leopoldville in the beginning of January 1961. While he was there, a friend of Lumumba's attempted to give him a letter from Lumumba describing his horrible treatment at Camp Hardy.²³² However, Hammarskjold refused to directly accept the letter and instead told the man to hand the letter to a private secretary.²³³ Despite receiving a direct request for assistance from Lumumba, Hammarskjold did nothing.

²²⁹ Ibid., 56.

²³⁰ Ibid., 55.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid., 60-61.

²³³ Ibid.

V. Conclusion

Tshombe continued to work against the interests of the Congolese Central Government for a few more years after Mobutu's installation in power and Lumumba's assassination. He finally allowed UN troops to enter Katanga without protest on January 21, 1963, but it took until June 30, 1964, exactly four years after independence, for the final UN troops to leave the Congo.²³⁴ Though Tshombe's political influence faded, Mobutu remained a dominant player on the international scene as the President of the Congo (which he renamed Zaire in 1971) until shortly before his death in 1997.²³⁵ Throughout the Cold War, Mobutu retained American political and economic support for his regime by allowing the Congo to be used as a base for conflicts against the Soviets in other African countries.²³⁶ However, with the end of the Cold War in the early 1990's, the US ended their support for Mobutu, which fueled his removal from power.²³⁷ Nevertheless, 32 years of rule under the ruthless dictator had devastated the development of the Congo.²³⁸ As revenue from the lucrative mines was largely directed to foreign bank accounts that profited Mobutu and a small circle of relatives and allies, the Congo remained economically backward, lacking roads, health care, electricity, telephones, and good educational opportunities throughout the duration of his reign.²³⁹

After Mobutu's downfall, the Congo plunged into civil war. Since 1998, more than 5 million people have been killed, making it the deadliest war since World War II.²⁴⁰ In 1999, the UN launched an observer mission in the Congo that expanded over time into a peacekeeping

²³⁴ Abi-Saab, *The United Nations Operation In The Congo 1960-1964*, 192.

²³⁵ Howard W. French, "Anatomy of an Autocracy: Mobutu's 32-Year Reign," *New York Times*, May 17, 1997, <http://partners.nytimes.com/library/world/africa/051797zaire-mobutu.html>.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁰ Sudarsan Raghavan, "In volatile Congo, a new U.N. force with teeth," *Washington Post*, November 2, 2013, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/in-volatile-congo-a-new-un-force-with-teeth/2013/11/01/0cda650c-423f-11e3-b028-de922d7a3f47_story.html.

force of over 21,000 UN soldiers called the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).²⁴¹ To strengthen MONUSCO, on March 28, 2013 the UN Security Council created a specialized “intervention brigade.”²⁴² Composed of 3,000 soldiers and known as the Forward Intervention Brigade (FIB), it is a landmark in UN history as it is the first offensive combat force in UN peacekeeping.²⁴³ Furthermore, FIB is openly supporting Congolese government forces in a break with peacekeeping missions of the past in which UN forces had maintained strict neutrality.²⁴⁴ On March 28, 2014, the Security Council extended the mandates of both MONUSCO and FIB until March 31, 2015.²⁴⁵ And though some have questioned FIB’s effectiveness, others have a positive view of the force. In an article in the Washington Post, a Congolese farmer commented, “The FIB is not like other MONUSCO soldiers. I see they are strong, and here to help us.”²⁴⁶

In September 2005, Adam Hochschild wrote an afterword to his now acclaimed novel *King Leopold’s Ghost*. Hochschild described how in 2001, a Belgian parliamentary investigation acknowledged Belgian involvement in Lumumba’s assassination, and the Belgian government issued an official apology in 2002.²⁴⁷ Despite that step, the Belgians still had trouble facing their colonialist legacy. In a private memorandum circulated to Belgian diplomatic missions in response to Hochschild’s book, any questions about the book were not to be answered, and

²⁴¹ “MONUSCO Facts and Figures,” United Nations Peacekeeping, <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/monusco/facts.shtml>.

²⁴² “MONUSCO Background,” United Nations Peacekeeping, <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/monusco/background.shtml>.

²⁴³ Raghavan, “In volatile Congo, a new U.N. force with teeth.”

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ “MONUSCO Mandate,” United Nations Peacekeeping, <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/monusco/mandate.shtml>.

²⁴⁶ Raghavan, “In volatile Congo, a new U.N. force with teeth.”

²⁴⁷ Adam Hochschild, “Looking Back: A Personal Afterword,” Houghton Mifflin Books, http://www.houghtonmifflinbooks.com/readers_guides/hochschild_king_leo.shtml#afterword.

Belgium's current work for peace in Africa was to be discussed instead.²⁴⁸ Like the Belgians, the UN is also grappling with its legacy of intervention in the Congo. In 2013, through its authorization of FIB which is actively supporting the central government against rebel forces, the UN took the step that it refused to do in 1960 to solve the Congo Crisis. While the UN of 1960 refused to support the Congolese Central Government against the forces working to fracture it, in 2013 the UN is standing behind the Congolese government. When Hochschild mentioned the Belgian apology, he was also quick to note that the US government has never apologized for its interference in Congolese affairs or its attempts to assassinate Lumumba.²⁴⁹ He did not, however, call for the UN to issue an apology for its role in destabilizing the Congo.

Ludo de Witte's conclusion about UN involvement in the Congo is characteristic of the perception of the UN's role during the first months of the crisis. Though Witte goes farther than other authors in assigning blame about Lumumba's death, as his book precipitated the Belgian parliamentary investigation acknowledging and apologizing for Belgian involvement in Lumumba's assassination, he didn't see the UN as playing an active role in Lumumba's downfall. "[Lumumba's] hope, or rather his miscalculation, that the UN would be forced to thwart Western plans, was to be his downfall," said Witte.²⁵⁰ The way Witte phrased this sentence demonstrated his argument that the UN was not an active participant in Lumumba's downfall. Rather, he believed that the UN was not included in the western plans to remove Lumumba from power; its only role was to hope that international pressure did not force it to stop the Belgians and the Americans from organizing against Lumumba.

Hammarhjold, Bunche, and Cordier were three brilliant diplomats who did much to work for peace throughout the globe. Bunche talked in 1960 about the ability of a UN "presence"

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Witte, *The Assassination of Lumumba*, 182.

to quiet local tensions. That same year, Hammarskjold spoke of an independent African continent able to develop free from corrupting influences. However, the events in the Congo challenged these three men and their beliefs in unanticipated ways. Lumumba was, admittedly, a difficult personality to work with, and certain decisions and statements he made created a difficult environment that convinced those attempting to work with him that their task would be easier if he weren't there to impede progress. Nevertheless, much of Lumumba's hostility was derivative from the Belgians instigating Katanga's secession and Lumumba's correct belief that the international community was not doing all it could to reunite the province with the rest of the Congo.

When Hammarskjold spoke of the UN's support for independent Africa in his introduction to the UN's 1960 Annual Report, he also said that the UN would build on the best elements of the African countries to do so. What actually happened in the Congo was less the UN building on elements and more the UN selecting which elements it wanted to work with and removing those it saw as an obstacle to its aims. However, the way in which the UN went about doing this was subtle because more often than not it involved actively choosing to not intervene. The UN used its policy of not interfering in internal affairs when it was a convenient excuse preventing it from taking forcible actions against the Belgians, which is what happened under Bunche's leadership. Under Cordier, the UN saw that it was in its interests to work with the Americans and directly intervene in the Congo's affairs to bring about Lumumba's downfall. When Dayal led ONUC during the last months of Lumumba's life, Hammarskjold specifically chose not to intervene to save Lumumba, tacitly implicating the UN in Lumumba's death at the hands of the Belgians.

Though the US was an influential member of the UN, the Security Council debates demonstrate there were countries that supported the Congo against the Belgians and the Americans. Hammarskjold was also a powerful diplomat and a skilled negotiator whose actions and opinions carried significant weight in the international community. By the time both the US and Belgium chose to actually pursue assassination as a means of removing Lumumba from the political scene, both countries were well aware that Hammarskjold felt that Lumumba was working against the interests of the UN in the Congo. While it may never be possible to know to what extent Hammarskjold's support was critical for the assassination plans against Lumumba, what is known is that UN support was critical in facilitating Lumumba's assassination. The building tensions between Lumumba and Bunche, Cordier's decision to block Lumumba's access to the radio station to communicate with his supporters, and Dayal and Hammarskjold's refusal to provide Lumumba with protection when he faced arrest at the hands of his foes were all actions taken by the highest ranking UN officials that led to Lumumba's downfall and continued political instability in the Congo. The UN did not passively support the actions of the Belgians and the Americans working against Lumumba, but rather made active choices to intervene or not intervene at critical moments that allowed the Belgians and the Americans to manipulate the political situation in the Congo against Lumumba.

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