



THEMATIC DOSSIER: Celebrating the 70th Anniversary of the Bandung Conference: The Evolving Role of Asian and African Countries in World Politics

ТЕМАТИЧЕСКОЕ ДОСЬЕ: Отмечая 70-летие Бандунгской конференции: эволюция роли стран Азии и Африки в мировой политике

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Son of Struggling Africa: On the Centenary of Patrice Lumumba's Birth (July 2, 1925 — January 17, 1961)

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Abstract. The article commemorates the 100th anniversary of the birth of Patrice Emery Lumumba, a national hero of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), one of the most prominent leaders of the African anti-colonial movement, and the first Prime Minister of an independent country. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, his homeland became an arena for confrontation between the African liberation forces and the West, which was interested in maintaining its position in the mineral-rich country in Central Africa. In modern terms, as African countries strive to assert their sovereignty and security, strengthen their presence in the global economy and politics, it is crucial for them to rely on historical experience, taking into consideration the successes and failures of the period of struggle for independence and decolonization. Using the biographical method, the article undertakes a comprehensive analysis of the development of an individual's life strategy as a social subject in interaction with society, examining how the environment and socio-cultural circumstances affect a person's beliefs and behavior, and the subsequent manifestations of a unique and typical character. The research is grounded in a comprehensive examination of P. Lumumba's speeches, correspondence, and published articles. Additionally, it draws upon annual collections of Belgian and Congolese documents on the situation in the country (1959–1961), published in Brussels. P. Lumumba's personality was shaped by a specific system of the Belgian colonial administration. P. Lumumba was a highly intelligent individual hailing from a humble peasant background. He was a talented organizer and an excellent orator. Thanks to his natural abilities, hard work and self-education, he became one of the most respected politicians of the DRC on the eve of and in the first year of its independence. P. Lumumba founded a new political party, the Congolese National Movement, which was the only party to deviate from narrow ethnic interests. The main tenets of the program can be summarized as follows: the formation of an independent, unified, integral and indivisible Congo; the organization of the public sector, which controls the mining industry, to pursue an independent course in the economic field and in foreign policy; overcoming tribalism and regionalism; creating a

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just society without poverty and exploitation. In foreign policy, he focused on neutrality and Pan-Africanism. The article analyzes how, during the Cold War, such a radical policy and uncompromising stance of P. Lumumba turned the West and pro-Western forces inside the Congo against him, which caused a crisis in the country that led to the assassination of the Prime Minister. The different assessments of P. Lumumba's activities primarily stem from the varying political positions of researchers and politicians, as well as from the contradictory worldview and the lack of formality of the politician's own program.

Key words: Democratic Republic of the Congo, DRC, anti-colonial struggle, Cold War, Congolese crisis, history of Africa, international relations, Belgian colonialism, decolonization


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Сын борющейся Африки: к столетию со дня рождения Патриса Лумумбы (02.07.1925–17.01.1961)

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Аннотация. Статья посвящена 100-летию со дня рождения Патриса Эмери Лумумбы — национального героя Демократической Республики Конго (ДРК), одного из ярчайших лидеров африканского антиколониального движения, первого премьер-министра независимой страны. В конце 1950-х — начале 1960-х гг. его родина превратилась в арену противоборства между африканскими силами освобождения и Западом, заинтересованным в сохранении позиций в богатой минеральными ресурсами стране в Центральной Африке. В современных условиях, когда африканские страны решают актуальные задачи утверждения суверенитета и безопасности, укрепления своего веса в мировой экономике и политике, им важно опираться на исторический опыт, учитывающий достижения и ошибки периода борьбы за независимость и деколонизации. С помощью биографического метода авторы анализируют формирование жизненной стратегии отдельного человека как социального актора во взаимодействии с обществом, выявляя, каким образом среда и социокультурные обстоятельства влияют на личность, ее убеждения и поведение, проявления уникального и типичного в характере. Источниковую базу исследования составили выступления, письма, статьи П. Лумумбы, издававшиеся в Брюсселе ежегодные сборники бельгийских и конголезских документов (1959–1961 гг.) о ситуации в стране. Становление личности П. Лумумбы происходило в условиях специфической системы бельгийского колониального управления. Яркий самородок из бедной крестьянской семьи, талантливый организатор, прекрасный оратор благодаря природным способностям, трудолюбию и самообразованию стал одним из самых авторитетных политиков ДРК накануне и в первый год ее независимости, создав единственную политическую партию, отошедшую от узко этнических интересов, — Национальное движение Конго (НДК). Основными положениями его программы были образование независимого, единого, целостного и неделимого Конго, организация государственного сектора, контролирующего горнодобывающую промышленность, для проведения самостоятельного курса в экономической области и во внешней политике, преодоление трайбализма и регионализма, а также создание справедливого общества без нищеты и эксплуатации. В сфере внешней политики он ориентировался на нейтралитет и panaфриканизм. Рассматривается, как в условиях холодной войны такая радикальная политика и бескомпромиссная позиция П. Лумумбы настроила против него Запад и прозападные силы внутри Конго, в результате чего в стране произошел кризис, приведший к убийству премьер-министра. Различные оценки деятельности П. Лумумбы вытекают прежде всего из противоположных политических позиций исследователей и политиков, а также из противоречивости мировоззрения и неоформленности программы самого политика.

Ключевые слова: Демократическая Республика Конго, ДРК, антиколониальная борьба, холодная война, конголезский кризис, история Африки, международные отношения, бельгийский колониализм, деколонизация

Заявление о конфликте интересов. Авторы заявляют об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

Вклад авторов. Пономаренко Л.В.: научное руководство исследованием, разработка концепции исследования, подбор и анализ источников и литературы, подбор методологии, рецензирование и редактирование рукописи. Зуева Е.Г.: подбор и анализ источников и литературы, написание основных разделов статьи. Все авторы ознакомлены с окончательной версией статьи и одобрили ее.

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Dead Lumumba ceased to be a man and became Africa in all its fullness ... [In] him the whole continent died and was resurrected.

Jean-Paul Sartre¹

Introduction

Some people's fates clearly reflect the era in which they lived. Such a person was Patrice Emery Lumumba, a hero who was unique in some ways and typical of mid-twentieth-century Africa in others.

A leader of the liberation movement in the Belgian Congo, he founded the Congolese National Movement (*Mouvement national Congolais* in French, MNC) party and became the first head of the national government of the Republic of the Congo. He was also a socio-political figure, publicist, poet, father of four children. He lived a short, but bright and eventful life, which reflected the complex and contradictory essence of the anti-colonial struggle and the early years of African independence.

He lived for only 35 years, of which he spent 10 years engaged in active socio-political action, and was at the head of the government for a little over two months. What could have been done in such a short time?

In the 1950s and 1960s, the world discovered the plethora of African freedom fighters. The year 1960 became known as the

“Year of Africa,” when 17 colonies gained independence, including the Belgian Congo. To understand the significance of Patrice Lumumba's personality for his country and all of Africa, one must clearly imagine what he was fighting against and the conditions that shaped his development as a socio-political and state leader.

Formation of a Leader and the Anti-Colonial Struggle

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC; had different names during the period of independence: the Republic of the Congo in 1960–1971, Zaire in 1971–1997) is the largest state in sub-Saharan Africa, with an area almost equal to that of Western Europe, and a population of over 105 million (data from 2021).² It is located in the Congo River basin and is extremely rich in minerals. From 1885 to 1960, the homeland of P. Lumumba was under Belgian rule. Here, Belgian colonialism had its own distinctive features.

The generation of Congolese born in the 1920s and 1930s, including P. Lumumba, did not experience the most odious period in the history of the colony, when it was the personal property of the Belgian monarch Leopold II and was called the Independent State of the Congo (ISC), where concessions were granted to Belgian and English companies that sought to squeeze out the

¹ Sartre J.-P. Preface // *La pensée politique de Patrice Lumumba : Textes et documents recueillis et présentés par J. van Lierde*. Paris : Présence africaine, 1963 P. XLIV.

² Demographic Yearbook 2023 : 74th issue. New York : United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2024. P. 138. URL: <https://www.un-ilibrary.org/content/books/9789211065749/read> (accessed: 17.02.2025).

maximum profit from the extraction of ivory, the production of rubber, cotton, coffee and palm oil (Zusmanovich, 1962, pp. 189–196, 222). To force the local population to work on plantations and in mines and to “motivate” the development of production task, the colonizers used cruel methods, including the forced herding of people, cutting off of hands and ears. The Congolese population was declining rapidly due to backbreaking labor, punitive expeditions, disease, poor living conditions, and malnutrition (Sidorova, 2024, pp. 145–148). In 1908, the Belgian government took the ISC from the king, making Congo its colony. Although the horrors of the “red rubber,” hostage families, torture, and executions went into the past, the situation was still heavy. In addition, reminders of this bloody period were preserved in the memories of relatives and friends of those who suffered from the horrors of early Belgian colonialism, and in oral tradition.

On the one hand, Congo experienced some development during the colonial period, with the establishment of mining enterprises, advancements in agriculture, and the construction of infrastructure, including roads. Christianity, literacy and European culture spread. On the other hand, in the 1930s — 1950s, the majority of Congolese were subjected to racial discrimination and segregation, were poor, suffered from high taxes and low wages, harsh working conditions on plantations and in mines, political disenfranchisement, existence as “second-class” people, as well as suffered from the absence of social mobility and life prospects. The authorities pursued a policy of paternalism — excessive care for Africans, regulation and control over all aspects of their lives. The metropolis was extremely reluctant to allow Africans to receive European education or to hold positions of responsibility. Congo was isolated from the outside world, and travel outside the colony was prohibited for Africans until the mid-1950s. Unlike Africans from the English and French colonies, the Congolese could not access higher education abroad. The first university was not founded in Congo until 1954 (Cornevin, 1978, p. 225). By the time of independence there were about 20 Africans who

had received an education in Europe and about 400 people who had graduated from centers with a higher education program in Congo, who could only obtain a secondary professional qualification as medical assistant, agricultural technician, etc. out of the approximately 12 million Congolese in the colony (Ponomarenko, 2010, p. 52). Such restrictions, guardianship and isolation hindered the development of the Congolese and their self-awareness. Political elite with at least some management experience of the country was not formed in the colony. Political organizations began to take shape very late, as they were officially permitted only in 1959. Their leaders lacked the necessary qualifications, clear ideological concepts and programs. Most of the parties were based on tribalism and regionalism, advocating for federalism, which they understood as broad autonomy for the provinces with a weak center.

Patrice Lumumba was born on July 2, 1925, in the village of Onalua in the province of Kasai, to a peasant family of the Batetela people. From the age of six, he helped his parents in the fields. This meant that his life, like that of millions of others in Congo, would have been one of hard physical labor to earn his daily bread. However, the boy’s natural talent and curiosity, prudence and discipline, hard work and perseverance, advice from relatives and examples from life led to him to choose a different path. Although P. Lumumba never completed higher education, he was self-educated throughout his life and read a lot. He studied in various full-time and part-time religious and secular schools, attended educational courses and clubs, was fond of history and philosophy, and was interested in politics, political economy and legal sciences (Zeilig, 2008, pp. 23–46).

Patrice Emery Lumumba sought himself in various activities, although the colonial reality did not open up great and varied prospects for him. He considered becoming a priest, paramedic, or railway worker, and moved between cities and provinces. He worked as a clerk for various organizations, a postal employee, commercial director for a plant, and employee of a tin mining company.

He chose work that was useful to society, which allowed him to move around the country, communicate with people of various social strata and professions, and learn about their lives and problems. He made many friends among Africans and Europeans. He accumulated people's experiences, analyzed the reasons for their poverty and instability. In the mid-1940s, he no longer wanted to passively sympathize with the troubles and needs of the Congolese, but sought to help them by action. He began writing articles on the problems of colonial society and headed several public organizations, as well as created a local section of the Liberal Party of Belgium (Vinokurov, 2015, p. 17).

From 1950 to 1960, before he began working as Prime Minister, P. Lumumba's views underwent a significant evolution. At first, he was a man who advocated for Europeanization, equalizing the rights of Belgians and Congolese, and sincerely believed that it was the Belgians who had saved Congo from "darkness" and slavery. He wanted to be like the Europeans in terms of his knowledge and skills and was recognized as an "évolué" (Europeanized African) and an immature Congolese (this status was received by those few "évolués" who passed the test for their ability to follow the European way of life). The ideas of this period were expressed in his book *"Congo, Land of the Future, Under Threat?"* (1956), which was published after his death in 1961.³

However, as P. Lumumba became increasingly involved in the problems of his country, he began to move away from his previous point of view. His views became more radical, and his assessment of the role of Belgian colonization became more realistic and harsher. He was strongly influenced by his trip to Accra in 1958, the capital of independent Ghana, to a conference of African peoples, where he met with representatives of the independence movements of other African countries (Kwame Nkrumah, Ahmed Sekou Toure, and others). Lumumba realized the scale of the problem of colonialism and the need to solve it for all of

Africa, and became a supporter of the idea of speedy independence and uniting the efforts of all African peoples to achieve this goal.

There were some events that led to radicalization of his views: the economic crisis in Congo in the mid-1950s and the deterioration of the situation of the population, the growth of unemployment, prices and taxes, the intensification of trade union activity, the mass formation of various parties and movements, the expansion of his horizons as a result of trips to Europe and a number of African countries, contacts with various party and social movement figures in Congo, events in neighboring French colonies, a deep analysis of Belgium's actions — too slow to resolve pressing issues, as well as an understanding of the artificial delay by the Belgians in making a decision to grant independence to Congo (de Vos, 1961, pp. 67–68; Ponomarenko, 2010, pp. 61–71). As a result, P. Lumumba moved to a position of sharp criticism of Belgian colonialism and the Belgian authorities and advocated for the immediate granting of independence.⁴

At the same time, the politician observed a very dangerous process: in 1957–1960 alone, over 100 parties and groups emerged in Congo, most of them were formed along ethnic lines and supported the interests of their own ethnic group only, with the main support in their place of residence (Ponomarenko, 2010, p. 64).

By the late 1950s, P. Lumumba had quickly matured as a politician, becoming an independent leader with his own vision for the goals, the struggle objectives and the future development of the Congo. In August 1958, he founded a patriotic party, the Congolese National Movement, which stood out from the narrowly ethnic parties and movements and united representatives of various ethnic groups, making it a mass and one of the most influential parties in the colony. When it became clear that Belgium wanted to drag out preparations for independence for 30 years, local political forces in the colony began to take a more decisive

³ Lumumba P. *Le Congo, terre d'avenir, est-il menacé?* Bruxelles : S.A. Editeurs, 1961.

⁴ La pensée politique de Patrice Lumumba : Textes et documents recueillis et présentés par Jean van Lierde. Paris : Présence africaine, 1963. P. 66–68.

stance, and as a result they split into progressive radicals, including Lumumba, who demanded immediate independence and moderate conservatives. There was no unity of views and plans between all the internal forces, which were supported by various external actors, and it led to a sharp struggle. Under these conditions, a round table conference on political issues took place in Brussels (January-February 1960), where all the major parties of Congo and a group of tribal leaders were represented.

By that time, P. Lumumba had been arrested. However, representatives from all parties came forward with a demand for the release of the NMC leader. A. Kashamura, the leader of the *Centre du Regroupement Africain* (CEREA) party, said: "I work with Lumumba and know him well enough. He is a great man with enormous influence. To decide any issues without him means to risk that the masses will not approve of the decisions taken ... Lumumba enjoys the trust of all segments of the population, and his presence at the conference is extremely important."⁵ As a result, P. Lumumba was released from prison and actively participated at the conference. Since its delegates came forward with a joint demand for independence for the colony, Belgium was forced to set a date for the declaration of independence on June 30, 1960. Preparations began: it was necessary to determine the foundations of the general political course of the future state, the content of the necessary reforms, and form government bodies. The Belgians developed a temporary constitution, the "Basic Law on the Structures of Congo."

Belgium hoped to maintain its position and establish a puppet government in the Congo. However, more radical parties won the national and provincial parliamentary elections in May 1960. The MNC won 41 seats (out of 137) in the Chamber of Deputies and 19 seats (out of 84) in the Senate, and, uniting with its allies, the Alliance of the Bakongo People (*Abako*), African Solidarity Party (*Parti Solidaire Africain* in

French, PSA) and CEREA, they won a majority in parliament — 61.5% of the seats.⁶ Patrice Lumumba was the most popular leader, who received the highest number of votes. However, it was not the end of the struggle, but only its beginning. Further intense rivalry unfolded during the formation of the national government. As a result of long and exhausting negotiations, discussions, disputes and compromises, the decision on the composition of the government (which was formed by P. Lumumba) was made: it included 37 people representing different social strata, political views and ethnic groups. On June 30, 1960, the colony gained independence, the Republic of Congo was proclaimed. Patrice Lumumba became its prime minister and Joseph Kasavubu its president.

As Prime Minister

P. Lumumba served as Prime Minister until September 5, 1960 and remained actively involved in the country's political life until the end of November. A lot happened during this short period of time. Former allies in the liberation struggle had sharply differing views on how the country should develop further.

P. Lumumba did not create any new political doctrine; his concept of the development of an African state was based on well-known domestic and foreign policy principles. His views were influenced by various socio-political teachings and concepts, including ideas of Enlightenment, different socialist theories, the ideology of African traditionalism, and Pan-Africanism. His views on the structure and development of the Congo and the measures he intended to take in the first years of independence can be judged from his speeches (Ponomarenko, 2010, pp. 102–109).

P. Lumumba wanted to create a strong unitary state. He did not condemn federalism, but opposed the decentralization of the country and tribalism, advocating for national unity that did not exclude the cultural characteristics of each ethnic group. He intended to unite the MNC with its parliamentary allies (PSA, CEREA) into united national party, which could subsequently

⁵ Congo, 1960. Documents belges et africains. Vol. I. Bruxelles: Centre de recherche et d'information socio-politiques, 1961. P. 30.

⁶ Ibid. P. 264–265.

absorb other parties and become a unifying force for the country.

P. Lumumba prioritized equality and social justice in society, believing that only a strong, centralized state could it ensure. He advocated improving working and living conditions, introducing fair wages, developing uniform labor legislation and solving the problem of unemployment, as well as developing housing and healthcare.

He intended to organize the public sector of the economy, thereby placing the mining industry under state control, and ensuring that the exploitation of Congo's natural resources was carried out only through the public sector. The production of strategic resources in the public sector would enable the country to pursue an independent course in the economic sphere and in foreign policy. He intended to carry out industrialization, but did not envisage immediate nationalization. He believed it was necessary to attract foreign capital without providing it with excessive privileges. The development of agriculture was to be achieved through the development of new regions and the spread of collective forms of land cultivation.

Africanization of the state apparatus and the army, as P. Lumumba believed, should become a necessary condition for the development of the national state. While Belgian specialists remained in charge of enterprises, mines, as well as in the areas of transport, communications and security, it was impossible to talk about the country's independence. At the same time, the level of competence of African employees was still very low. Therefore, P. Lumumba paid great attention to improving the education system to prepare qualified national personnel. In the sphere of foreign policy, he was guided by neutrality and Pan-Africanism, demanded the revision of all unequal treaties and agreements concluded during the colonial period, as well as the withdrawal of foreign troops from the country and the transfer of military bases under the control of the government.⁷

⁷ See: La pensée politique de Patrice Lumumba : Textes et documents recueillis et présentés par Jean van Lierde. Paris : Présence africaine, 1963. P. 65–80, 153–189; Congo, 1960. Documents belges et africains. Vol. I.

However, it cannot be said that P. Lumumba's worldview and his program acquired a complete form. His activities took place in the context of the anti-colonial movement and intense political struggle, so his views were still evolving; he believed himself that the political and ideological platform of the Congolese state needed to be adjusted, giving it a more consistent and clear character in line with the new tasks of strengthening the country's independence.

P. Lumumba was an intelligent and erudite person, a charismatic leader, a brilliant orator, a fact that was recognized even by his opponents. He freely communicated with people of different ethnic groups and social strata, knew how to persuade and be diplomatic (Lopez Alvarez, 1965, pp. 34–40). At the same time, P. Lumumba was a sincere person, often calling things by their proper names. Above all, this applied to issues that were of fundamental importance to him, on which he was adamant, and which could make him seem harsh and straightforward.

The first issue concerned the assessment of Belgian colonialism, which produced contradictory results. Of course, P. Lumumba acknowledged Belgium's contributions to the Congo's development, the cessation of the slave trade and tribal strife with its arrival, the spread of education and health care, economic progress and the creation of infrastructure. However, he also could not help but recognize the high price that the Congolese had paid for this progress. He could not ignore the continuing inequality in society between Europeans and Congolese and could not help but see how, under the pretext of helping to industrialize the Congo, Belgium tried to maintain artificially its position and opportunities in this country. Already as a prime minister, thinking about the future and sovereignty of his homeland, he called for not forgetting the painful experience of dependence in order to prevent the possibility of turning into someone's colony again.⁸

Bruxelles : Centre de recherche et d'information socio-politiques, 1961. P. 80–84; Congo, 1960. Documents belges et africains. Vol. II. Bruxelles : Centre de recherche et d'information socio-politiques, 1961. P. 566–593.

⁸ Lumumba Speech on the Declaration of Independence. 30 June 1960 // Kazan Journal of

At a ceremonial session of the national parliament dedicated to independence, when the Belgian King Baudouin I made a paternalistic speech, and President J. Kasavubu thanked him for the years that Congo had lived under Belgian rule, P. Lumumba regarded this as hypocrisy and an insult. His unplanned speech took a very different tone. While acknowledging Belgium's merits, he recalled that the independence of the Congo had not been granted by Belgium out of generosity. "Although this independence of Congo was proclaimed today by agreement with Belgium, a friendly country with which we treat as an equal, not a single inhabitant of the Congo will ever forget that independence was won by us in a struggle, in a daily, persistent, difficult struggle, in a struggle in which we were not stopped by deprivations, nor suffering, nor enormous sacrifices, nor the blood shed by our peoples. This struggle was accompanied by tears, fire and blood. We are deeply proud of our struggle, because it was a just and noble struggle, necessary to free ourselves from the humiliating slavery imposed on us by force."⁹

In the West and among pro-Western circles, this speech was perceived as aggressive. However, it was an outburst of emotional pain about decades of humiliation and discrimination of millions of Congolese, and demonstrated that Patrice Lumumba would not permit the previous policy of plundering the resources of the Congo by foreign states to be carried out.

Another fundamental issue for P. Lumumba was the unitary structure of the country. He consistently defended the view that domestic policy should aim to overcome ethnic and tribal contradictions, integrate society and form internal ties between provinces and regions, in order to prevent separatism.

His clear position was grounded in reality: Congo had a very complex ethnic composition, with more than 250 ethnic groups living there (and still living there): Bantu peoples (Bakongo, Baluba, Bakuba, Bavili, Bangala, etc.), Sudanese peoples (Azande, Banda, etc.), and Nilotic

peoples (Alur, Bari). During colonial times, hundreds of ethnic groups and peoples were united within the artificial borders of Congo created by the Belgians. The Belgian authorities resisted the rapprochement of tribes, using ethnic disunity for their own political purposes. As a result, the Congolese people did not develop a sense of belonging to a single community. Moreover, it was ethnicity that was the main factor determining their behavior, life values, and worldview for most Congolese. Ethnic diversity directly influenced both socio-economic development and the balance of power in the country. Most parties were not political, but rather ethnic organizations created to protect the interests of a certain group. This led to the preference of most of them not for a unitary state structure, but for an amorphous federation with broad rights for individual provinces. Even before and after the declaration of independence, these organizations and their leaders expressed a desire to create a number of independent states on the territory of Congo (Vinokurov, 2015, pp. 20, 29). P. Lumumba saw this as a separatist threat and tried to prevent it by consistently and reasonably defending the principles of unitarism.

Another issue of particular importance to P. Lumumba was defending African solidarity in the struggle for independence and decolonization, as well as providing mutual assistance in solving acute socio-economic and political development problems. The Prime Minister of the Congo saw the defense of the principles and implementation of the policy of Pan-Africanism as a means of strengthening the sovereignty of African countries (Heinz & Donnay, 1976, pp. 192–194).

Attempts to solve these problems split Congolese society. Although P. Lumumba managed to unite the Congolese people within the framework of the MNC to overthrow Belgian colonialism, he was no longer able to keep them together. This was prevented by many factors, including ethnic fragmentation and separatist sentiments among some ethnic groups, the opposing interests of the Congolese ethnic elites, and, last but not least, the intervention of external forces interested in controlling the extraction and use of the country's rich natural resources. In

International Law and International Relations. 2015. No. 7. P. 117–118. (In Russian). URL: https://kznjil.ru/files/kjil_07.pdf (accessed: 15.02.2025).

⁹ Ibid. P. 117.

these difficult conditions, there was no unity among the Congolese leadership, parties, and socio-political leaders. There were a number of contradictions and conflicts between the central and provincial authorities, as well as between the legislative and executive branches of government at the center and in the regions.

A coalition of ethno-regional parties began to form against the government of P. Lumumba, reflecting the interests of the local wealthy classes and willingly receiving sponsorship from Western countries and white settlers. These parties accused the government and the Prime Minister personally of dictatorial tendencies, demanding to replace the country's unitary structure by a federal one (Mazov, 2015, p. 51; Vinokurov, 2015, p. 36).

The relations between P. Lumumba and the country's president, J. Kasavubu were complicated. J. Kasavubu was from the numerous people of the western regions of the country — the Bakongo, and headed the *Abako* party. A more experienced, cautious and conservative politician, he had closer ties with the Belgians and Americans and advocated a federal structure of the state, hoping to receive an American loan for the development of the country, and also hoped that with the support of the United Nations (UN) the central government would be able to suppress separatism in the provinces. While P. Lumumba and J. Kasavubu initially found common ground and often acted together until mid-August 1960, their differing interests later led to conflict.

Another influential and authoritative politician was Moïse K. Tshombe, a representative of Katanga, the richest and most industrialized province in the country. Born into a wealthy and noble Lunda family, he received a university education, and was an excellent orator. He headed the Confederation of Katanga Associations party (*Konakat*), advocated a federal structure of the state with self-government of provinces, and was pro-Western and anti-communist. From the beginning of July 1960, the Congo began to slide into anarchy and political chaos, almost immediately after the declaration of independence. The internal situation in the country was further complicated

by a rebellion in the Congolese National Army (CNA). There were clashes between the Congolese and white settlers. On July 10, Belgium deployed troops to the country under the pretext of protecting its citizens. A mass exodus of European officials also began, which deprived the country of qualified managers and practically paralyzed various spheres of life.

On July 11, with the support of the Belgian mining company "*Union Minière du Haut Katanga*," M. Tshombe announced the region's secession from the Republic of the Congo and the establishment of an independent State of Katanga (Gérard-Libois, 1963, p. 296). Separatist sentiments also flared up in the province of Kasai, part of which separated and proclaimed the state of South Kasai. This undermined the central government's ability to pursue an independent policy, since both provinces were the main sources of raw materials and foreign exchange earnings. At the same time, M. Tshombe named fears of the spread of communism as the main reason for Katanga's secession, accusing the Prime Minister of promoting it (Gérard-Libois, 1963, pp. 328–320; Mazov, 2015, p. 52).

The crisis in the Congo escalated. In response to the escalating crisis, P. Lumumba and J. Kasavubu appealed to the UN for military assistance. The Congo crisis rapidly internationalized (Schmidt, 2013, pp. 56–77). When P. Lumumba realized that the limited UN contingent would not help to suppress separatism, he tried to maneuver between the USA and the USSR. His attempts to secure military support from the USA were unsuccessful, and the USSR, in turn, provided his government with civilian aircraft, trucks, food and medicine, bypassing the UN (Mazov, 2015, p. 53).

As a result, P. Lumumba's course no longer satisfied the majority of pro-Western politicians in the country. At the same time, P. Lumumba was unable to secure the army's support for the national government and its policies. The conspiracies against the politician began to be organized within the country, and various external forces also hatched plans to overthrow the prime minister. The declassification of

archival materials from the UN, the USA, Belgium and Great Britain made it possible to shed light on the fact, who exactly was interested and the measures taken to neutralize and then physically eliminate the undesirable politician (de Witte, 2001; de Vos et al., 2005).

P. Lumumba dreamed of his homeland as an independent unitary state with a strong central government apparatus capable of protecting the interests of all citizens. In an attempt to gain control of the country's most valuable resources and achieve economic sovereignty, he faced opposition from numerous powerful forces within and beyond the Congo.

P. Lumumba sincerely believed that the cause of true independence was in the hands of the Africans themselves. At the same time, he recognized that the Congo needed support. He tried to avoid resolving this issue in a trivial way by playing on the contradictions between the superpowers within the bipolar world and relying only on the USA or the USSR. Rather, his idealism was manifested in the fact that he tried to find some neutral force, but he made a mistake in choosing it.

P. Lumumba placed considerable hope in the United Nations in resolving the Congolese crisis, with the UN operating in the Congo with the consent of his government. The aim was to assist the legitimate government in its efforts to combat Belgian aggression and separatist forces. Even when the UN military contingent began acting in the interests of Lumumba's political opponents, he maintained his belief in the power of the international community.

In reality, the UN was not a neutral organization at that time. First of all, it reflected the interests of the United States, whose presence in the Congo increased during the World War II (Yuryev, 1966, p. 54; Baryshev, 2009, pp. 409–415, 434–438). The United States received the bulk of the extracted raw materials (especially strategic ones such as uranium, copper, tin, cobalt), and they accounted for a significant portion of the imported goods. As early as September 1942, American troops began to be stationed in the country, and military bases and airfields were built. In turn, UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld also had personal

and family interests in the Congo, which may have been a factor in his attempts to remove P. Lumumba from power (Lesiovsky, 1986; Sidorova, 2013, p. 54).

Thus, P. Lumumba's principled stance on the country's independence led to the fact that in the West and pro-Western Congolese circles he began to be considered a zealous, ungrateful anti-Westerner. He was accused of incompetence, populism, and demagoguery. In addition, the scenario unfolding in the Congo forced Lumumba to consider the possibility of turning to the USSR for help.¹⁰ This led to him being considered a communist (Chomé, 1961, pp. 41–64). The Americans spoke of him as a second Fidel Castro (Mazov, 2015, p. 53). P. Lumumba himself spoke about this as follows: "In Africa, everyone who is progressive, everyone who stands for the people and opposes imperialism, are all agents of Moscow."¹¹

Lumumba's efforts to establish a unitary state were met with fierce opposition. The lack of unity in the leadership and among the population played into the hands of those who did not want true independence for the Congo and did not want to lose the opportunity to enrich themselves at its expense. The lack of centralization and the resulting disagreements were beneficial to the Europeans and Americans, who clearly supported the Congolese separatists. It should be noted that in fact Lumumba did not condemn federalism in general, but rather condemned federalism in the understanding of the Congolese ethnic parties. He opposed the division of the Congo into small provinces, believing it was necessary to cultivate a sense of unity in people, national self-awareness, and to achieve equal rights and a fair distribution of

¹⁰ President of the Republic of the Congo Joseph Kasavubu, Prime Minister of the Republic of the Congo Patrice Lumumba to Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR N.S. Khrushchev. Telegram with information on the aggression of Belgium against Congo, July 14, 1960 // Russia and Africa: Documents and Materials. Vol. 2: 18th century – 1960. Moscow: IV RAN publ., 1999. P. 257–258. (In Russian). See also: (Mazov, 2011a, pp. 54–57; 2011b, pp. 69–70).

¹¹ Congo, 1961. Documents belges et africains. Vol. II. Bruxelles: Centre de recherche et d'information socio-politiques, 1962. P. 846.

income between ethnic groups, and establish internal ties.

In the ruling circles of the Congo, the idea of cooperating with the West to solve pressing problems was met with greater understanding and sympathy than the idea of Pan-Africanism, steps to strengthen cooperation between African countries themselves, and develop their mutual assistance, of which Lumumba was an active supporter.

Removal and Death. Assessment of Activities

On September 5, 1960, under pressure from Western partners, President J. Kasavubu illegally announced the resignation of P. Lumumba and the formation of a government headed by J. Iléo. In response the parliament (which had many P. Lumumba supporters) announced the resignation of J. Kasavubu (Ponomarenko, 2010, p. 137). A government crisis was brewing, threatening to paralyze the country's political system. On September 14, the chief of staff of the Congolese army, Joseph Désiré Mobutu, with the support of the Belgian and American intelligence services, announced his support for President J. Kasavubu and dissolved the parliament (Panaf Editors, 1973, p. 158; Vinokurov, Orlova & Subbotin, 1982, p. 213). P. Lumumba was removed from power and placed under house arrest.

This was a critical moment for P. Lumumba: the politician had been artificially isolated from the people, from his post and the opportunity to govern the country. The media were controlled by the opposition, while he himself was blocked by UN forces (Kendall, 2019, pp. 554, 558), which had been introduced into the country at his own request. However, the politician's human qualities prevented him from losing heart; his steadfastness and conviction in his own righteousness manifested itself in such circumstances, and he found the strength to explain the situation and his position to the people. He was from the eastern part of the country, where he was well-known and supported. His like-minded people gathered there, where his closest supporters, led by

Antoine Gizenga, proclaimed a new government in the city of Stanleyville in November 1960. Combat detachments were formed there, and by January 1961, they controlled half of the territory of the Congo, while the troops of J.D. Mobutu retreated in disarray. Having managed to escape from house arrest on November 27, 1960, P. Lumumba tried to reach the east, but did not succeed. On December 2, P. Lumumba was detained and sent to a military prison in the city of Thysville.

The circumstances arose when almost all of P. Lumumba's opponents and ill-wishers, both within and outside the country, agreed that the moment had come to get rid of a dangerous and authoritative political competitor. Fearing his return to power, the regime of J.D. Mobutu, in collusion with the separatists and with the support of Belgian mercenaries, on January 17, 1961, transported Patrice Lumumba and two of his associates, Joseph Okito and Maurice Mpolo, to Katanga, to the camp of the separatists M. Tshombe.

On February 13, 1961, the mutilated remains of P. Lumumba and his friends were found on the outskirts of a mining village. The horrific details of their deaths were later revealed: after being tortured and humiliated, they were shot without trial on January 17, 1961, their bodies were dismembered and dissolved in barrels of acid, and the remains were hastily buried (de Witte, 2001).

A wave of protests swept through many cities around the world as people expressed their indignation and shock that, within the 20th century, the assassination of a progressive and autonomous political figure, who had unwaveringly defended his democratic principles and values, had occurred before their very eyes. Thus, on January 17, 1961, the life of Patrice Lumumba ended, but his immortality began. The renowned Indian public and political figure Jawaharlal Nehru provided insight into this matter in his writings: "Dead Lumumba became infinitely more powerful than living Lumumba."¹² Patrice Lumumba has become a

¹² Nehru Sees Turning Point // *New York Times*. February 18, 1961. P. 3.

legendary figure, a symbol of the struggle of all African peoples for freedom (Monaville, 2019).

During his lifetime, P. Lumumba had many opponents and adversaries; many found him inconvenient due to his views, integrity and uncompromising nature. He was radical in his desire to prevent the plundering of his country's resources, which particularly displeased pro-Western Congolese politicians and the West itself. While he was alive, he influenced politics in his country; after his death, he became known around the world. His death drew the attention of the world community to events in Africa.

Interest in the personality of P. Lumumba shows no signs of waning. In fact, we could say that a whole field of "Lumumba Studies" has emerged: scientific and journalistic books and articles are written about him, documentaries and feature films are made, monuments are erected to him, streets are named after him. From 1961 to 1992, the Peoples' Friendship University was named after him (it regained this name in 2023). The first wave of interest in the personality of P. Lumumba swept the world in the 1960s, when the resonance of the events that had taken place was still acutely felt, the second wave — in the 2000s, it was associated with the investigations and the identification of the facts surrounding his death.

The world remembers Patrice Lumumba; interest in his personality does not wane, but assessments differ. Many politicians and researchers approve of his activities. All over the world P. Lumumba is primarily known as a fighter for freedom and independence. His image united not only struggling Africa, but also became a symbol of resistance to discrimination, oppression, dependence throughout the world (Monaville, 2019). However, some are skeptical about his policies and criticize him for his naivety, idealism, inexperience and inflexibility, trying to present him as a victim of circumstances. Nevertheless, as Yu. Vinokurov noted in his article that "Notorious demagogues accused him of insincerity, usurpers — of violating democratic principles of government, ignoramuses — of being unable to understand the needs of the country, and puppets of foreign monopolies — of forgetting national interests"

(Vinokurov, 2012, p. 579). It should be noted that he was accused of thinking inflexibly by people who were unable to go beyond the narrow ethnic interests of their own groups.

The most complex attitude towards P. Lumumba is observed in the Congo itself. The country's history is as dramatic as the fate of its first prime minister. After his death, the country descended into many years of turmoil and civil war. In 1965, J.D. Mobutu established an odious dictatorship, which lasted until 1997, when the country was mercilessly plundered by the dictator's entourage, the corrupt elite and foreign corporations.

Since the DRC still needs peace, and therefore the unity that Lumumba so fiercely defended, he is primarily perceived in the country as a fighter for the unification of the state. His murder revealed the true intentions of the ruling elite and their Western allies, which temporarily led to the radicalization of Congolese youth, particularly students. The memory of Lumumba was often used for their own purposes by politicians who were his opponents during his lifetime and even contributed to his death. This happened, for example, with J.D. Mobutu, who began to exploit the image of Lumumba to unite Congolese society. The country's current authorities also turn to the image of Lumumba as a unifier (Monaville, 2019). Congolese belonging to Afro-Christian churches typically venerate P. Lumumba as a martyr and the "Black Christ" (Halen & Riesz, 1997).

Patrice Lumumba has become a symbol of an entire era in the history of the African continent, which opened up completely new and complex development prospects for the liberated countries. The life of P. Lumumba, his victories and mistakes, on the one hand, were unique (as with any personality of such magnitude), and on the other, they were in some ways typical of an entire generation of independence fighters, a galaxy of African leaders who led their liberated countries during the Cold War. Their activities revealed all the contradictions of that time: the confrontation of systems, the opposite views on how the further development of the state

should proceed. This culminated in tragedy for P. Lumumba.

P. Lumumba did not have a clear program for the development of an independent state. He lacked the experience and knowledge necessary to govern the country, but he had idealistic ideas about freedom and justice. He set himself the goal of creating an independent, politically and economically self-sufficient Congo, which could be achieved by using rich natural resources while maintaining a large, united and centralized country. He saw the program as a set of specific measures to achieve this goal. However, he did not consider the long-term implications and acknowledged that these measures would need to be updated as the socio-economic and political situation evolved.¹³ He did not have a comprehensive view and a clear strategic plan for reforming the country; rather, he followed the opportunistic demands based on the specific situation.

P. Lumumba formed a government based on the important thesis that representatives of different ethnic and social groups should participate in government. This government comprised people with very different political views. However, this turned out to be more of a problem than an advantage. The government was practically incompetent, since it reflected in miniature the main contradictions of Congolese society.

Some theoretically correct ideas, when hastily implemented, did not lead to the results that the politician expected. For example, the Africanization of the state apparatus in fact entailed a mass outflow of European specialists, who could not be replaced either in management or in the economy, which caused the actual paralysis of these areas. The Africanization of the army also had negative consequences: the army did not obey the prime minister and became an active participant in the conspiracy against him.

P. Lumumba's principled stance on a unitary structure, centralized management,

preventing tribalism and establishing a public sector in the economy stipulated the impossibility of compromise with the opposition, whose main forces were the ministers of his government, the army and ethno-regional groups, and the opposition emerged victorious from this struggle. The positions of the local wealthy classes and white settlers, who were supported by Western states, proved to be more powerful. The ethno-regional elites were interested in continuing to enrich themselves through the sale of natural resources to Western partners rather than in the social change proposed by P. Lumumba, which would have been more equal and fairer.

The secession of the Congo's richest provinces, which were the main source of the country's income, undermined the path towards independent national development. This worsened the socio-economic situation and the lives of ordinary people, leading to increased social tension. In addition, cases of assault against whites became more frequent. Thus, immediately after the declaration of independence, P. Lumumba was forced to spend his energy combatting his opponents rather than implementing measures for the Congo's planned development. He had to contend with opposition from within the country, including his own ministers, the president, opponents of the unitary state, the rebellious provinces, the army, and dissatisfied peasants, workers, employees and church representatives. Many people did not understand the true reasons for what was happening and blamed the government — and therefore the prime minister — for the decline in living standards, disorganized governance and military devastation.

At the same time, P. Lumumba's opponents conducted an active propaganda against him and his supporters. Given the country's disintegration, the split in the leadership and the general hostility, it was difficult to govern exclusively by peaceful and democratic methods. P. Lumumba made unilateral decisions or delayed resolving important and urgent issues, resulting in inconsistent and sporadic leadership. As a result, his opponents accused him of using

¹³ Congo, 1960. Documents belges et africains. Vol. I. Bruxelles: Centre de recherche et d'information socio-politiques, 1961. P. 78–82.

authoritarian methods, and his supporters accused him of indecision and populism.

However, all the aggravated contradictions, the split in power, and the Congolese crisis that broke out on the 11th day of independence, as it seems to us, could not have been the result of only the miscalculations and mistakes of the then leadership and P. Lumumba personally. Too little time had passed since the beginning of their activities to have led to such catastrophic consequences.

The solution to the problems of the country's disintegration, its slide into the abyss of economic crisis, and the need to withdraw Belgian troops could no longer be found independently. In the context of the Cold War, P. Lumumba tried to find support in what he thought was a neutral institution — the United Nations. At his and President J. Kasavubu's request, UN troops were brought into the country to restore order and integrity. However, the UN pursued a pro-American policy. As the U.S. leadership hoped, with the use of the UN potential and its troops, it began to control successfully the situation in the Congo. P. Lumumba was effectively neutralized and isolated from governance. Because he had turned to the USSR for help, the Prime Minister was portrayed everywhere as an ardent communist, although it was actually A. Gizenga who had made the requests for intervention in the conflict. The Soviet leadership refused to provide Congo with direct military assistance, as it had no allies or capabilities in the region and knew it could not withstand a direct confrontation with the West.

Despite the difficult situation in the country, P. Lumumba's authority and the popularity of his ideas were high. There were serious concerns among the Western bloc and their allies in the Congo that Lumumba would regain power after being removed from his post, arrested and imprisoned in Thysville. The fear of this happening was so strong that almost all of his enemies, both within and outside the country, agreed with the decision to kill him.

In 2001, the results of the Belgian commission investigating the causes of P. Lumumba's death and the involvement of

Belgian politicians in his murder in 1961 were made public. This revealed the terrible details of his death, which had been hidden for a long time, to the world community. The authorities of the Kingdom of Belgium admitted their moral responsibility for the murder of P. Lumumba and other colonial crimes in the Congo.¹⁴ In the summer of 2022, P. Lumumba's children received the remains of their father during a ceremony in Brussels and an official apology on behalf of the Belgian government and the king for their country's role in his murder. A mausoleum was built in Kinshasa, the capital of the DRC, to house his remains (Delescluse & Nashi, 2023, pp. 863–866).

Conclusion

Patrice Lumumba was only 35 years old when he died tragically. History assigned him difficult tasks for him, and on having begun to comprehend them, he did not have time to give exhaustive answers to them; he did not have enough time for this. Of course, the young Congolese politician made mistakes in his attempts to establish an ideal independent African state in the Congo. However, it was his energetic actions that united the country's peoples and enabled Congo to liberate itself from Belgian colonialism.

Although our hero was born 100 years ago and died 64 years ago, and his active political action fell on the middle of the 20th century, his life reveals to us not only the history of the struggle against colonialism, but also the current situation in Africa and around the world. The issues he sought to resolve in the mid-20th century have become relevant again: true independence and preserving national identity. In the 21st century, Africa is becoming stronger and more independent, and its economic development is increasing its importance as an independent force in international relations. Many now perceive it as a priority partner. The

¹⁴ Belgium: Apology For Lumumba Killing // The New York Times. February 6, 2002. URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2002/02/06/world/world-briefing-europe-belgium-apology-for-lumumba-killing.html> (accessed: 01.02.2025). See also: (de Vos et al., 2005, pp. 569–580).

agenda of African countries, and the DRC in particular, includes the tasks of asserting sovereignty, strengthening its weight in the global economy and politics, and solving the security problem. In achieving these goals, Africa also relies on the lessons of its past. In a letter written in January 1961 while imprisoned in Thysville, P. Lumumba wrote: “My dear compatriots! In happiness and in sorrow, I will

always be with you. It was with you that I fought for the liberation of the country from foreign domination. With you, I am fighting to strengthen our national independence. With you, I will fight to preserve the indivisibility and national unity of the Republic of the Congo.”¹⁵

¹⁵ La pensée politique de Patrice Lumumba : Textes et documents recueillis et présentés par Jean van Lierde. Paris : Présence africaine, 1963. P. 394.

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