Army's Congo Mission Casts a Long Shadow

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ABSTRACT

The UN peacekeeping mission to the Congo in 1960 marked the Irish Army's first armed overseas mission since the foundation of the state in 1922. This represented an important milestone in Ireland's foreign-affairs policy. The Congo was granted independence on 30 June 1960 after almost a century of Belgian rule. The UN's Congo venture, known by its French acronym, ONUC (l'Opération des Nations Unies au Congo), ran from July 1960 until it was wound up in May 1964. Over 6,000 Irish troops participated in the mission, which was fraught with difficulties given that the newly independent nation swiftly descended into civil war with the mineral-rich province of Katanga declaring independence on 11 July 1960. Some 26 Irish troops died during the Congo mission, including eight as a result of the Niemba massacre on 8 November 1960—the greatest loss of life for the Irish army in a single incident.

INTRODUCTION

Almost half a century ago, in July 1960, the Irish army undertook its first active overseas role by providing an armed peacekeeping force in what was the newly independent Congo. The four-year peacekeeping mission marked a watershed in the army's modus operandi, spurring many more such armed missions in Lebanon and elsewhere, which continue to this day. If that now distant undertaking was a coming of age for our armed forces, it also defined United Nations (UN) peacekeeping policy in the succeeding decades. This mission to the Congo is still regarded in official circles as a success. However, it involved tragedy both for the indigenous people and the Irish peacekeepers. The mission still casts a long shadow into the twenty-first century.

Over 6,000 Irish troops served with the UN mission to the newly independent Congo from July 1960 to May 1964.[1] It should be noted that a relatively small number of these troops served two tours of duty in the Congo (the duration of each

[1]See appendix I.

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tour was six months), while an even smaller number served three tours of duty. The peacekeeping role of Irish soldiers in Africa has become a part of our military history. The youngest Congo veterans are now in their mid-60s and their stories relate a blend of humour and tragedy, emanating from the hair-raising experiences of a naive army with little or no experience of overseas combat.

The Congo mission evolved from a peacekeeping one initially to what would nowadays be called peace-enforcing. There is little doubt that Irish soldiers were, in effect, entering a war zone. The Congo had gained independence from Belgium on 30 June 1960, but the new country quickly descended into chaos and civil war as the army mutinied, foreigners—including missionary priests and nuns—were slaughtered and the mineral-rich province of Katanga declared its independence. (South Kasai also broke away and declared its independence, a fact that is generally overlooked in accounts of the period.) The secession of Katanga lasted officially from 11 July 1960 to 15 January 1963, despite ongoing attempts by the UN to reintegrate the province into the control of the central government in Léopoldville (now Kinshasa).[2]

The Congo's first freely elected prime minister, the charismatic ex-postal clerk Patrice Lumumba, lasted a mere 67 days in power before being overthrown. He was assassinated in January 1961. Over 40 years later, in 2002, the Belgian government formally apologised for its role in his death. This apology had essentially been forced by revelations of the government's complicity in the event in a book by a Belgian sociologist, Ludo De Witte, published in 1999, entitled *The assassination of Lumumba*.[3]

Into this literal and metaphorical minefield stepped the 32nd and 33rd battalions of the Irish army, led, respectively, by Colonel Mortimer Buckley and Colonel Dick Bunworth. Problems were immediately apparent and the army soon found it was on a steep learning curve. Apart from the lack of tropical uniforms—Irish soldiers had to wear bull's wool kits with hobnail boots—no one spoke French, Swahili or Lingala. Interpreters had to be hired to communicate with the native Congolese as well with as any remaining Belgians and assorted French-speaking civilians and mercenaries. The Swedish army—the only other white soldiers in the multinational UN force at that early stage—loaned some interpreters to our troops, but the Irish forces were often reduced to using sign language when faced with armed Baluba warriors or others. It was a recipe for trouble and, ultimately, disaster.

[2]Albert van de Kerchove, 'La sécession Katangaise: faits, reflections et anecdotes' (unpublished personal memoir), 2003. In his conclusions, van de Kerchove regrets that the decolonisation process in the Congo took place in an atmosphere of hatred, which he attributes to the lack of a period of transition that would have permitted a future [Congolese] elite to assume their responsibilities. Van de Kerchove states that the four years of UN intervention from 1960 to 1964 showed the UN's incapacity to deal with a crisis such as that in the Congo. In addition, he says that the UN intervention was not in conformity with the UN's own statutes and that the various non-Congolese parties involved in the UN intervention were, generally, more anxious to impose their ideas than to understand the situation on the ground. He concludes by saying that the challenge for today's Republic of Congo, which is emerging from a phase of pacification, is to begin a phase of reconstruction, including road building and the re-opening of factories. The author states that Katanga must play its role in this reconstruction process as it did in the days of Belgian rule.

In March 1961, Dr Conor Cruise O'Brien, who was then attached to the Department of External Affairs in Dublin, was appointed as the UN's special representative to Katanga. O'Brien resigned his post in December 1961, claiming that he was the victim of a British plot to oust him and, thus, foil the UN bid to end Katanga's secession. See Conor Cruise O'Brien, *Memoir: my life and themes* (Dublin, 1998), 242–58.

[3]Ludo De Witte, *The assassination of Lumumba* [*De Moord op Lumumba*, 1999], translated from Dutch by Ann Wright and Renée Fenby (London and New York, 2001). This book sparked a Belgian parliamentary inquiry into the events surrounding Lumumba's death.

Colonel Buckley was a rising star in the Irish army and in July 1960 found himself having to form a battalion for overseas service at short notice. The Congo was the greatest challenge the army had faced since the Emergency period of 1939–45. However, on this occasion, instead of readying itself for a possible invasion by British and/or German troops, the army was sending large numbers of troops thousands of miles away to a central African nation that had only gained independence from its former colonial masters a few weeks previously. Shortly after handing over power to the new Republic of Congo, the Belgians withdrew their troops. But within days, Belgian paratroopers were back in the Congo to protect Belgian civilians. The presence of Belgian troops in the newly independent, strife-torn Congo added to a confused and dangerous situation.

Ireland's own independence was relatively new at that stage, with the country having wrestled nationhood from British rule 38 years previously in the wake of a bloody Anglo-Irish war. Prior to the mid-1960s, however, Ireland had already sent troops abroad twice. In June 1958, the army had dispatched 50 officers as unarmed observers attached to UNOGIL, the UN Observer Group in Lebanon. That observer group was wound up in December 1958. In addition, from December 1958 army officers were being sent to serve as unarmed observers with UNTSO, the UN truce supervision organisation. That mission is still continuing, and to date some 285 officers have served with UNTSO in Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Israel, Iran and Iraq. However, the Congo mission—known by its French acronym ONUC—was different from UNOGIL and UNTSO both in scale and in that it represented the deployment of armed Irish troops abroad for the first time.

In July 1960 Ireland, which had only joined the UN in 1955, was responding to a call for peacekeeping troops from UN headquarters in New York, which in turn was responding to an urgent plea for help from the new government in Léopoldville. However, the new administration had made it clear to UN secretary-general Dag Hammarskjöld that it would not accept troops from any current, or former, colonial powers in Africa. Hence, the bulk of UN strength on the peacekeeping mission was made up of soldiers from Ireland, Sweden, India, Pakistan, Morocco, Nigeria and Ethiopia. At the same time, Lumumba made what many believe was a fatal error in also seeking assistance from Moscow. Although Khrushchev sent only a few transport planes to the Congo, it was enough to start alarm bells ringing in the US administration and to set in the train the events that led to the Congolese prime minister's downfall.

Colonel Buckley only had a few days during which to form his 32nd battalion, comprising 689 men, before embarking for Africa. The 33rd battalion, with 706 men, followed a month later, in August 1960. A total of 12 battalions, infantry groups and armoured units served in the Congo during the four difficult years from July 1960 to May 1964 when the UN peacekeeping mission was terminated. The force, rotating for six-month tours of duty, comprised a total of 6,191 personnel of which 501 were officers, 1,808 non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and 3,882 privates.

As nominal head of the armed forces, the new president, Éamon de Valera, who had only relinquished the office of taoiseach to Seán Lemass in 1959, summoned the 32nd battalion's officers to Áras an Uachtaráin before their departure for the Congo. It was a precedent that would be repeated before the departure of each succeeding tour of duty. Buckley recalls:

We had about four days in which to prepare for our departure. I was appointed on 17 July 1960 and the battalion was formed on 19 July. They met in the Curragh. One day all the officers were brought up to Áras an Uachtaráin to meet President de Valera. We had tea and coffee with him. He was talking to the chief of staff, General [Séan] McKeown,[4] and myself. Then, de Valera pulled me aside because he wanted to say a few things to me. 'I will give you this advice,' he said, 'Wherever you go, go in such strength that everybody will be aware of your presence and strength, and not of your weakness.' That is a very good solid principle of war, of course: to go with as many as you can and to make sure that you have enough. But when you are travelling long distances, you have to cut your cloth according to your measure. If you bring an extra jeep it means extra petrol, and bringing extra men means bringing extra food. Therefore, you have to cut down and balance the thing and take a calculated risk at times. De Valera's second piece of advice to me was: 'If you fire the first shot in any situation you've lost the battle. Don't ever forget that.' Of course, he was so right. I never forgot that and I saw it proved several times. I recall that occasion very well. I was an admirer of de Valera's. As president, he was commander in chief of the army. That is what he told me and I was very impressed by it.

At 6.30 a.m. on 27 July we came up from the Curragh to Castle Yard, Dublin. It was pouring rain but it cleared up around 11 o'clock and we marched through Dublin. It was the most fantastic experience I ever had. The battalion was going to the Congo but I thought there'd be no one out. I thought they might be out when we came back, if we were still alive. I was flabbergasted by the reception, marching in front of the battalion. There were fellows up on buildings cheering, and everything stopped. I was very impressed. From there we went to Baldonnel where we had a meal. We met hundreds of people and were addressed by the Archbishop of Dublin, Dr McQuaid. He gave us his blessing and told us that the Congolese people were very gentle and kind. He said they hadn't a notion of what it was they had got in this freedom, which they thought they had. He said they should be treated accordingly, with sympathy. I agreed with what the archbishop said; he was a very learned man.[5]

THE NIEMBA AMBUSH

As it turned out, the advice of de Valera, who of course had seen military action during the 1916 Rising, proved to be of more value than the archbishop's. Few people could have believed that within four months thousands of people would again line the streets of the capital, but this time to pay homage to the Irish victims of a massacre in the Congo.

The tragedy struck on 8 November 1960 near the village of Niemba in Katanga, when an eleven-man Irish patrol was ambushed by Baluba tribesmen at a river crossing. The Irish had been sent out to repair a bridge that the Baluba had destroyed the previous day to halt incursions into their territory by Katangan troops. The Baluba of northern Katanga were loyal to the central government in Léopoldville and, thus, were opposed to Katangan President Moise Tshombe's secessionist forces.

[4]Lieutenant General Seán McKeown was appointed overall UN military commander in the Congo on 1 January 1961. His mandate ran until 29 March 1962.

[5]David Ó'Donoghue, *The Irish army in the Congo 1960–1964: the far battalions* (Dublin, 2005) 16–17.

Eight members of the Irish patrol died at the scene, hit by a hail of arrows. Some were bludgeoned to death as they lay wounded. Others died within minutes from the effect of poison on the arrow tips. Not all the arrows were poisoned but those that were had been dipped in the deadly venom of the black mamba snake. Approximately 25 Baluba were killed in return fire. Three Irish soldiers managed to escape. Two of these, Tom Kenny and Joe Fitzpatrick, were found alive a few days later in a search operation. But the search parties failed to find the third man, Anthony Browne, who was initially listed as 'missing, presumed dead'.

To this day, there are conflicting accounts of the manner, date and location of Trooper Browne's death. He is officially listed by the army as having died at the scene of the massacre. In addition, the citation for the military medal for gallantry awarded to him in September 1961 (he was the first recipient of this, the army's highest honour) reads: 'He endeavoured to create an opportunity to allow an injured comrade to escape by firing his Gustaf thereby drawing attention to his own position which he must have been aware would endanger his life. He had a reasonable opportunity to escape because he was not wounded but chose to remain with an injured comrade'. The citation infers that Browne did not escape the scene, but perished there.

However, the Trooper Browne story did not end there. In late 1962 the army learned from a Belgian lawyer in Elisabethville, the capital of the province of Katanga, that Browne's remains had been discovered. A search party of Irish troops was detailed to recover the body, travelling to the area on 5 November and recovering the remains on 7 November. The army's four-page report of this operation, entitled 'Recovery of remains of Trooper Browne in the Niemba area, 5/7 November 62' contains a map showing that the missing soldier's body was found almost three miles from the massacre site.[6]

As more facts emerged about what had really happened to Trooper Browne, the 33rd battalion's unit history had to be amended in late 1962. An appendix to the battalion's unit history states: 'Information which we had received from Baluba survivors [of the 8 November 1960 incident at Niemba] in Manono hospital led us to believe that he [Browne] had been killed immediately after saving Private Kenny, and that his body had been removed from the scene by the ambushers'. After explaining how Browne's body was discovered two years after the ambush, army officials added the following wording in the appendix: 'Apparently some days after the ambush, wounded, exhausted and starving he [Browne] had called some women at the outskirts of the village [of Tundulu] and asked them for food and directions to the railway line, offering them 200 francs. They took his money but instead of helping him they told the young men of the village who came out and killed him'.[7]

Brigadier-General P.D. Hogan was in charge of the Niemba search party in November 1960. In the last interview given before his death in Cyprus in March 2004, the retired general admitted that Browne had survived the ambush only to be killed by tribesmen 'some days later' having 'travelled some miles through the bush'. Hogan added this personal view of the Niemba tragedy:

> It was a sad business. Sadder was the fact that Browne was alive—a fact which hasn't added to the gaiety of my life since, I can tell you. He travelled some miles through the bush, as Kenny did, but he didn't come out onto the road as Kenny did. Kenny was lucky to find the road. There was no road right or left of it for

[6]O'Donoghue, *Irish army in the Congo,* 215–8.
[7]O'Donoghue, *Irish army in the Congo*, 214.

20 miles. He was bloody lucky. But poor Browne didn't find the road. If he did we would have picked him up. He went back towards Niemba—whether that was by design or by accident—through the bush. Some days later on he was lying outside a village and some young women came out collecting firewood. By signs, he offered them money for food. They went back to the village but instead of bringing out food they brought out young men who beat him to death. We found his skeleton two or three years later on. I have a photograph of it, indeed. His remains were brought home and buried with full military honours in Dublin.

From Albertville, we mounted an operation to the hospital in Manono where B-company was. We raided the hospital and took out of it all the [Baluba] fellows who were wounded. Apparently the [Irish] lads felled 26 of them at the first volley but they never got a second volley off. It was because they never had to shoot before and they were too close to them by the time they fired. It goes with the job that you don't fire unless you are quite certain that you have to in self-defence. They had to wait until the first arrow was fired and then they fired but they were in amongst them in no time at that stage. I found that some of the blacks were buried on the site. I have a photograph of a heel sticking up out of the ground. So, they buried some of them but the wounded they took away with them, of course. We sent an aeroplane to Manono and had lorries from the company waiting there. We did a dash to the hospital, snatched them out of the beds, put them into the aeroplane and brought them back. There is a photograph of those fellows being taken out of the aeroplane in Albertville where they were handed over to the civil authorities who tried them. That is where the stories of the ambush came from really.

The fellows we took out of the hospital were tried in 1961. There must have been no death penalty in the Belgian Congo. They were sentenced to imprisonment; moderate sentences of three, four or five years. They were not punitive terms of imprisonment considering the deaths of our nine men. I heard that 26 Balubas were killed. That figure must have come from the fellows who were tried. The patrol had some Bren guns, of course, and the NCOs had Gustavs, but who fired what we'll never know.

As to whether Niemba could have been avoided with better intelligence, reading the signs of the unrest among the Baluba in the days before, yes—we could have stayed at home in Dublin. An about turn at the airport would have achieved that, but what were we doing there? We had a mission to keep the means of communication open and to protect the civilian population. To achieve that we guarded factories and things like that. Of course it could have been avoided by doing nothing.

We had been carrying out patrols for four months. It was not the first time a patrol had gone out without an interpreter. We had been sending patrols out under people, mostly under officers, into the wilds. They met parties of Balubas and they'd put up their hand and shout 'Jambo' [peace]. The Balubas would come forward and chat if they [Irish troops] had an interpreter, or if not, they'd exchange food.

The massacre was a shock. I will live with the fact that we failed to find poor Browne, who was alive. That's a bitter pill, very bitter. For the rest, we were there as soldiers to do things. We were not interior decorators.[8]

For over 40 years the army has been in a dilemma over Browne, having chosen him, in September 1961, to be the first ever recipient of the military medal for

[8]O'Donoghue, *Irish army in the Congo,* 63–4. The Irish army's dawn raid on Manono hospital to arrest Baluba tribesmen who had been wounded at Niemba, to which P.D. Hogan refers, was codenamed Operation Shamrock. The army's secret report on the operation has never been published.

gallantry, the state's highest military honour. From November 1962, however, it was clear that Browne had not fallen at Niemba, but died in a separate incident, some days later and almost three miles from the scene of the ambush.

The army's discomfiture over the Browne affair is reflected in the fact that it took 38 years for it to award medals to the eight men who died in the Niemba ambush. However, those medals—presented at a ceremony in Dublin's Collins Barracks in 1998—were part of a blanket award to all Irish soldiers who died on overseas duty with the UN, and were not specific to the Niemba incident.

Still shrouded in confusion to this day are the circumstances that sparked the Niemba ambush. Survivor Tom Kenny says the incident 'did not happen, it was caused' because army officers did not heed the warning signs, including 'a headhunter's hat nailed to a tree' three miles from the ambush site. Kenny also states that, in the weeks prior to Niemba, a Baluba chief's son was wounded when an Irish soldier opened fire on him. Kenny infers that Niemba may have been an act of retaliation. The shooting of the Baluba chief's son, which is recorded in the 33rd battalion's unit history, caused unrest among the Baluba tribe.

In the wake of the killings at Niemba, a Baluba statement (drafted on 9 November 1960—the day after the massacre—but not released until 15 November) claimed that Irish troops were to blame because they opened fire first.[9] The other Niemba survivor, Joe Fitzpatrick, says: 'Someone fired a shot. It could possibly have been one of ours, who knows? The other people had rifles as well, so it was hard to know who shot first'.

In the 1960–4 period a total of 26 Irish soldiers died in the Congo. Of these, four died in traffic accidents, while three were shot accidentally, two died of natural causes and one died following a medical operation. The bulk of the casualties arose from the Niemba massacre and the fighting for control of Elisabethville in 1961.[10]

On 22 November 1960 record crowds thronged the streets of Dublin for the funeral of those killed at Niemba. Although eight soldiers were killed, there were nine coffins. This was because another soldier, 19-year-old Private Patrick Davis, who was not part of the patrol, had been shot mistakenly by one of his colleagues on 10 November. His body was flown back on the same plane and was buried along with the others in Dublin's Glasnevin cemetery.

In 2005 an army report exonerated 155 Irish soldiers who had been taken prisoner after the battle of Jadotville, Katanga, in September 1961. After decades of ignoring pleas to recognise the men's actions, the army decided that they had 'acted appropriately' because 'at the time they surrendered, nothing would have been served by fighting on, except further and unnecessary bloodshed'. The army report recommended that the contribution of the 35th battalion at Jadotville 'should be given appropriate recognition'. To this end, a commemorative plaque was unveiled at Custume Barracks in Athlone. In addition, a portrait was commissioned of the commanding officer at Jadotville, Colonel Patrick J. Quinlan of the 35th battalion. Despite a fierce battle at Jadotville, lasting several days, between Katangan and Irish troops, not a single Irish soldier was killed in the encounter. The Katangan forces, on the other hand, suffered heavy losses.[11]

[9]See Appendix II for the full content of the Baluba statement of 9 November 1960 concerning the incident of the previous day at Niemba.

[10]See Appendix III, Irish fatalities in the Congo.

[11]Declan Power, *Siege at Jadotville* (Dublin, 2005). O'Donoghue, *Irish army in the Congo*, also contains eye-witness accounts of what occurred at Jadotville from an Irish soldier and a Swedish army interpreter.

CONCLUSION

The Irish army deserves credit for having answered the call to supply two battalions at short notice for the Congo peacekeeping mission in 1960. The provision of thousands of troops for the duration of the mission, from July 1960 to May 1964, was a major accomplishment that helped to stamp Ireland's authority on its fledgling international role through this watershed commitment to international peacekeeping efforts. Given that this was the army's first armed overseas mission, it was bound to involve a steep learning curve. Subsequent missions were better able to avoid the Congo's pitfalls by providing clothing suited to foreign climates and modern weaponry, together with stricter guidelines for the control and use of weapons and vehicles. Troop deployment strengths were also reviewed for patrols and other peacekeeping activities, while more attention was paid in subsequent missions to the provision of interpreters and reliable radio equipment.

Ireland's commitment to UN overseas peacekeeping work continues to this day and upholds a proud tradition of international service. As regards the Congo mission specifically, however, some questions remain unanswered. Foremost among these is the question of whether the 1960–4 mission was wound up prematurely—could it have achieved more if it continued for another year or longer? Despite the widespread unrest in the Congo in the early 1960s, it can be argued that the UN prevented the death toll (certainly from internecine fighting) from rising further. In addition, the UN forces formally brought an end to the secession of Katanga in January 1963; some two and a half years after the Belgian puppet state had declared independence. It is worth noting that no country, not even Belgium, recognised Katanga as a sovereign nation. It is also noteworthy that Moise Tshombe, the first and only president of the breakaway province, was named prime minister of the Congo on 10 July 1964, with the task of ending regional revolts.

On balance, it can be said that the presence of UN forces did help to reunite the Congo, but not under a freely-elected government, as had been foreseen in the heady days of May and June 1960. Following the withdrawal of UN forces, the internal struggle for control of the giant country continued. The ultimate victor was Lumumba's nemesis, General Mobutu, who seized power in a coup d'état on 25 November 1965. The Congo would eventually have a measure of stability, but at a terrible price. Mobutu's brutal dictatorship, supported by the Western powers that sought Katanga's mineral wealth (and Kasai's diamonds), was destined to last until he fled the country in May 1997 ahead of Rwandan-backed rebel troops loyal to Laurent-Désiré Kabila. The three decades of Mobutu's one-party rule saw much of the country's wealth being salted away into foreign bank accounts and, thus, was not much different from the 1876–1960 period of Belgian colonial rule from Brussels. On 7 September 1997, Mobutu died of prostate cancer in exile in Morocco. His place at the presidential palace was taken by Kabila who reigned until January 2001 when he was assassinated by a bodyguard. Kabila's son, Joseph has ruled the Congo since then, amid continuing unrest.

Perhaps one of the great imponderables of the twentieth century is whether a UN mandate running beyond 1964 could have prevented the Mobutu dictatorship and restored democracy in the Congo. On balance, however, the answer is probably no. This is because, as with the Katangan secession, the shots were called by multinational mining conglomerates whose focus was to profit from Congo's great mineral wealth. In Mobutu, as with Tshombe in Katanga, they had a leader who could be counted on to do their bidding.

APPENDIX I

Record of Irish Army's unit service with ONUC

(United Nations Mission to the Congo
July 1960 to May 1964)

The total number of Irish soldiers who served in ONUC, the UN mission to the Congo, was 6,191 (of which 501 were officers, 1,808 NCOs and 3,882 privates).[12]

Unit	*Number of Soldiers*	*Period of Service*
32nd Infantry Battalion	689	July 1960–January 1961
33rd Infantry Battalion	706	August 1960–January 1961
34th Infantry Battalion	648	January 1961–June 1961
1st Infantry Group	340	May 1961–November 1961
35th Infantry Battalion	654	June 1961–December 1961
36th Infantry Battalion	715	December 1961–May 1962
37th Infantry Battalion	723	May 1962–November 1962
2nd Armoured Unit	96	October 1962–April 1963
38th Infantry Battalion	730	November 1962–May 1963
3rd Armoured Unit	89	April 1963–October 1963
39th Infantry Battalion	464	April 1963–October 1963
2nd Infantry Group	337	November 1963–May 1964

[12]Statistics supplied to the author by Irish Military Archives and UN Training School Ireland.

APPENDIX II

Baluba report on Niemba massacre of 8 November 1960

Territory of Manono
Kiambi Post
Kiambi, 15 November 1960

Re: Kasanga chieftainship's war against the UN.

I, the undersigned, Louis Mambwe, commandant of the Kiambi gendarmes, present the following report:

When we left Kiambi on 9 November 1960, Chief Kasanga and his president, André Ngoie,[#] told us that they had fought that battle the day before—that is to say, on 8 November.

This is how it happened:

1 We were told that those against whom we had fought were UN people. That is not possible. If they had been UN personnel, they would not have been patrolling with some of our enemies among them. This is the third time they have come to our area, because we don't have a war here. We only want to fight the Kiambi people; those are the ones whom we seek. We have learned that they are real men and that's why we want to fight them.

2 Those Europeans from the Niemba post, came here for the third time. What was their motive? It's 35 km from Niemba to Kasanga, and at the 25-km mark there runs a small river called the Lweyeye; we destroyed the bridge spanning it because we feared our enemies would come that way to enter our territory. We are all members of the coalition here, as are the Kiambi people. Although the Europeans constantly repaired the bridge, we demolished their work each time. They asked us if the Kiambi people had come to demolish their work on the bridge and we replied, 'Yes'. Then they told us they wanted to fight against the Kiambi people. The first time they said that, they went back because it was impossible to advance.

3 Another day, they came to repair the bridge again and said they were from the UN. We let them do it but we thought that if they were from the UN, they could not fight against the coalition. They returned to Niemba saying they'd come back in three days.

4 Then we asked ourselves how we would know if they were from the UN or were our enemies, the next time they'd arrive at our barrier.

5 Our commander—an ex-sergeant major, first class—said we should dress in our coalition clothing, including leopard-skin headdress, as if preparing for combat. The UN people had already seen coalition warriors dressed like this. If they were really UN people, they would not do anything.

6 When it was time for them to go to Kiambi, our commander called his gendarmes to enact the battle. He positioned his advance guard at the barrier to our territory. Then he told us that when these men came, he would approach them dressed as a member of the coalition. If, at that moment, they fired their rifles, it would mean they weren't UN personnel but our enemies.

[#]Ngoie is the president of the Kasanga Senate, imposed by the Niemba administration to the aforementioned chief.

7 In fact, when they arrived on the other side of the Lweyeye, our commander approached them. He put a leopard-skin on his head, in the manner of the coalition [forces] and left with four gendarmes.
8 The commander went in front of their truck, with his gendarmes, and pointed to the leopard-skin on his head. All of a sudden, without warning, he was struck by bullets, as were the four gendarmes. The commander fell dead on the spot.
9 Seeing that their commander had been shot dead, along with the four others who had followed him, the remaining gendarmes, who were armed, unleashed a hail of arrows.
10 When these enemies saw the coalition forces firing arrows, they increased the firing rate of their own weapons, which included a machinegun and a Bren gun. Having seen this, the coalition forces understood that these people did not intend to flee and were behaving like enemies. They [the coalition forces] continued to fire their arrows.
11 In truth, many enemy and coalition personnel died there. The battle began at 3 o'clock and finished at 5 o'clock. Bodies were scattered everywhere.
12 Now, we are accused of having waged war against the UN, whereas it was they who were at fault: (a) it was they who started shooting; (b) they fired non-stop for two hours, until the end of the battle—why?; (c) we saw no difference between the UN and our enemies because they didn't stop firing.
13 If they were from the UN, they would have stopped firing for a second or a minute, and the battle would not have continued. In any case, there would not have been so many gendarmes killed.

Kasanga, 9 November 1960
Commandant Louis Mambwe[13]

[13]Baluba Report on Niemba Massacre of 8 November 1960. (Courtesy of Professor Daniel Despas.) The report was drafted on 9 November 1960 and made public on 15 November 1960.

APPENDIX III

Irish casualties in the Congo (ONUC)

Name	Unit	Cause of death	Date of death
Company Sergeant F. Grant	33rd battalion	Died after operation	3 October 1960
Colonel J. McCarthy	HQ ONUC	Traffic accident	27 October 1960
Lieutenant K. Gleeson	33rd battalion	Niemba ambush	8 November 1960
Sergeant H. Gaynor	33rd battalion	Niemba ambush	8 November 1960
Corporal P. Kelly	33rd battalion	Niemba ambush	8 November 1960
Corporal L. Dougan	33rd battalion	Niemba ambush	8 November 1960
Private M. Farrell	33rd battalion	Niemba ambush	8 November 1960
Trooper T. Fennell	33rd battalion	Niemba ambush	8 November 1960
Private M. McGuinn	33rd battalion	Niemba ambush	8 November 1960
Private G. Killeen	33rd battalion	Niemba ambush	8 November 1960
Private P. Davis	33rd battalion	Accidental shooting	10 November 1960
Trooper A. Browne	33rd battalion	Beaten to death at Tundulu	11 November 1960
Corporal L. Kelly	33rd battalion	Accidental shooting	24 December 1960
Corporal L. Kelly	HQ ONUC	Traffic accident	30 August 1961
Trooper E. Gaffney	35th battalion	Killed in action	13 September 1961
Trooper P. Mullins	35th battalion	Killed in action	15 September 1961
Corporal M. Nolan	35th battalion	Killed in action	15 September 1961
Corporal M. Fallon	36th battalion	Killed in action	8 December 1961
Sergeant P. Mulcahy	36th battalion	Killed in action	16 December 1961
Private A. Wickham	36th battalion	Killed in action	16 December 1961
Lieutenant P. Riordan	36th battalion	Killed in action	16 December 1961
Corporal J. Geoghegan	36th battalion	Accidental shooting	28 December 1961
Corporal J. Power	36th battalion	Natural causes	7 March 1962
Captain R. McCann	HQ ONUC	Traffic accident	9 May 1962
Corporal J. McGrath	38th battalion	Traffic accident	21 March 1963
Commandant T. McMahon	HQ ONUC	Natural causes	28 September 1963

APPENDIX IV

Selected chronology of historical events in the Congo

1275 Kingdom of the Kongo founded by King Nimi.

1641 Dutch take control of ports of San Thome and Saint-Paul. The seventeenth century marked the start of slave trafficking from southern Kasai and Katanga.

1816 Naval explorer James Kingston Tuckey (born Cork, Ireland, 1776—died Moanda, Congo, 1816) navigates the Congo River to the Yelala Falls, inaugurating the nineteenth century's scientific explorations in central and southern Africa.

1876 King Léopold II of Belgium sets up the International African Association, with the goal of 'opening Africa up to civilization and abolishing the slave trade'. Léopold annexes the Congo as his own private property.

1883 Congo becomes the International Association of the Congo (AIC), presided over by King Léopold II (who never visited the country during his reign).

1884 At an international congress in Berlin, the AIC becomes the Independent State of the Congo, run by Léopold II with his government situated in Boma. Léopoldville (now Kinshasa) later became the capital city.

1885 Léopold II gains control of Katanga (now Shaba) by ceding other territories to France. Sir Francis de Winton is named as administrator general to replace Stanley.

1904 International commission begins inquiry into brutal policies used to boost rubber production in the Congo, including amputations and hostage taking.

1906 Following uproar in parliament in Brussels, the Independent State of Congo is annexed by Belgium.

1908 The Congo becomes a Belgian colony and, until independence in 1960, will be run jointly by the colonial ministry in Brussels and a governor-general in Léopoldville.

1920 The Belgian minister for the colonies, Louis Franck, outlines a new policy for Africans in the Congo, including the establishment of chieftainships and indigenous tribunals. The Belgian Congo's first daily newspaper *Avenir* is published.

1933 Two new provinces created (Kasai and Kivu) in addition to the existing four: Congo Kasai (later renamed Congo Léopoldville), Equateur, Orientale and Katanga.

1948 Belgian authorities recognise Congolese workers' right to strike, establish minimum wage and inaugurate public transport in Léopoldville.

1950 Establishment of Abako (Alliance of Bakongo), which develops into a major pro-independence party, led by Joseph Kasavubu.

1955 Royal visit by King Baudouin who launches the idea of a Belgo-Congolese community. Baudouin meets Patrice Lumumba (1925–61) then active in trade unionism. In December, Belgian priest Fr Antoine Van Bilsen (a professor at the institute of overseas territories, Antwerp University) publishes '30-year plan' for granting Congo increased self-government. Van

Bilsen's plan envisages the creation of a federal structure in the Congo and the training of a Congolese elite to progressively take over the 'levers of power'. The Belgian ministry of the colonies opens three colleges of administration in the Congo.

1957 Balubakat formed by Jason Sendwe, as a Baluba umbrella group in Katanga. In December, local elections see sweeping gains for pro-independence parties, including Joseph Kasavubu's Abako faction, which wins 130 of the 170 seats reserved for Africans. Census puts native population at 13 million, with 108,000 whites, of which 20,000 are settlers.

1958 Patrice Lumumba forms his MNC party (Congolese national movement) in Léopoldville.

In October, Moise Tshombe forms the Conakat group (confederation of tribal associations of Katanga).

1959 4–5 January: 49 Africans die (290 injured, including 50 Europeans) in violent suppression of an Abako pro-independence rally in Léopoldville. Formation of PSA (African Solidarity Party) by Antoine Gizenga.

11 January: Abako is banned by Belgian authorities.

13 January: In radio address, King Baudouin undertakes 'to lead the Congolese populations towards independence' with gradual introduction of self-government. He announces that local elections will take place on 20 December on a one-man, one-vote basis.

23 June: Abako leader Joseph Kasavubu seeks the establishment of a Republic of Kongo in west of the country.

16 December: King Baudouin visits Léopoldville.

20 December: Pro-independence parties win election. Political leaders demand round-table conference on Congolese independence, to be held in Brussels.

1960 29 January: Belgian delegates to the Brussels conference (which runs until 20 February) set 30 June 1960 as the date for Congolese independence.

Period from end of round-table conference to independence marked by unrest in Kasai, Katanga and elsewhere.

10–18 May: Belgian parliament votes in favour of independence for Congo.

May: Following free elections, Patrice Lumumba's MNC emerges as largest single party, winning 35 of the 137 seats. Joseph Kasavubu becomes president-elect.

23 June: Lumumba is named as prime minister-elect.

5 July: Force Publique troops mutiny demanding pay rises and the sacking of Belgian officers.

7 July: Belgian troops intervene to protect Belgian civilians and put down the mutiny. New Congo government sacks General Jannsens, a Belgian, and appoints Victor Lundala (a sargeant-major) as army commander-in-chief.

11 July: With the support of Belgian business and 6,000 Belgian troops, Katanga declares its independence under the leadership of Moise Tshombe, leader of the local Conakat party (Secession formally ends on 15 January 1963).

12 July: Lumumba and Kasavubu seek armed UN intervention to prevent civil war, and call on Belgium to withdraw her troops.

13-14 July: UN Security Council requests Belgium to withdraw its troops in favour of a 19,000-strong UN contingent.

27 July: Irish 32nd Infantry Battalion departs from Dublin for the Congo to join UN troops of 25 other nations there, under the banner of ONUC.

Lumumba appeals to USSR and Ghana for help in restoring order.

5 August: President Kasavubu sacks Lumumba (after only 67 days in power) and installs Joseph Ileo as prime minister.

12 August: UN troops enter Katanga, as Belgian troops withdraw. Albert Kalondji, emperor of the Balubas, declares the diamond-rich South Kasai as an independent state (Secession lasts until September 1962).

14 September: Colonel Joseph Mobutu seizes power in a military coup, suspending parliament and the constitution. Lumumba placed under house arrest, guarded by UN forces.

20 September: The Republic of the Congo is admitted to the United Nations as a sovereign state.

1961 1 January: Lieutenant-General Seán MacEoin appointed as commander of the UN's ONUC force in the Congo (until 29 March 1962).

17 January: Mobutu sends Lumumba by air from Léopoldville to Elisabethville airport, where he is assassinated soon after his arrival.

9 February: A provisional government, led by Joseph Ileo, replaces the college of commissioners-general.

21 February: UN Security Council authorises UN troops to use 'all appropriate measures', 'if necessary, in the last resort', 'to prevent the occurrence of civil war in the Congo'.

7–12 March: Conference of Congolese leaders held at Tananarive (now Antananarivo), Madagascar (boycotted by pro-Lumumbist, Antoine Gizenga), agrees to form a confederation of Congolese states. Dr Conor Cruise O'Brien appointed as UN secretary-general's special representative to Katanga, with mandate to end secession of Katanga.

26 April: Following all-party conference at Coquilhatville, Katanga's president, Moise Tshombe, is arrested for condemning President Kasavubu's pact with UN to expel foreign militas from the Congo.

2 August: Parliament votes to elect MNC co-founder Cyrille Adoula as prime minister, with Antoine Gizenga as deputy prime minister. UN troops begin disarming Katangese soldiers.

28 August: Operation Rumpunch (plan to neutralise the white leadership of the Katangan military) launched under direction of UN special representative, Dr Conor Cruise O'Brien. Irish, Swedish and Indian troops capture military posts throughout Katanga.

9 September: Tshombe's mercenaries seize control of Katangan gendarmerie to resist UN troops.

13 September: Tshombe flees across border to Ndola, Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia).

17 September: Dag Hammarskjöld dies in air crash on his way to Ndola to meet secretly with Tshombe in effort to negotiate a ceasefire.

18 September: 155 Irish troops from the 35th infantry battalion taken prisoner at Jadotville, Katanga (after running out of food and ammunition).

20 September: Ceasefire pact with UN allows Tshombe to return to Elisabethville. Operation Morthor fails as secession of Katanga continues.

25 October: All 155 Irish troops released from custody in Jadotville and Kolwezi after six weeks' detention, following a prisoner-swap deal.

3 November: U Thant named as new UN secretary-general. USA seeks new UN resolution authorising 'use of any and all force necessary' to overcome the mercenaries in Katanga.

1962 UN launches Operation Grand Slam, a full-scale assault on Katanga's political and military infrastructure. Secession of Southern Kasai ends.

1963 15 January: UN forces take full control of Elisabethville, ending the secession of Katanga.

September: President Kasavubu suspends parliament, as opposition parties go underground.

December: Pierre Mulele unleashes a revolutionary war in Kwilu.

1964 Forces loyal to Gaston Soumialot seize the east of the country and establish a breakaway government in Stanleyville. Meanwhile, Christopher Gbenye's Lumumbists seize control of Kivu and Orientale provinces.

June: End of four-year UN mission to the Congo.

10 July: Moise Tshombe is named prime minister of new national government with task of ending regional revolts.

November: Belgian, British and US troops are parachuted into Stanleyville to end the secession there.

1965 23 October: President Kasavubu appoints Evariste Kimba to replace Tshombe as prime minister.

25 November: Coup d'état by General Mobutu topples Kasavubu and Kimba. Political parties banned. The Mobutu dictatorship will last 32 years.

1971 Congo renamed Zaire.

1990 Mobutu ends ban on multi-party politics but retains substantial powers.

1997 Mobutu flees the capital in May, ahead of Rwandan-backed rebel troops loyal to Laurent-Désiré Kabila, who takes over as the new president. Zaire renamed Democratic Republic of the Congo.

7 September: Mobutu dies (of prostate cancer) in exile in Morocco.

1999 Anti-government rebels hold half the territory of Congo. In August, all rebel groups sign up to peace accord in Lusaka, Zambia.

2000 In February, UN Security Council authorises a 5,500-strong force to monitor ceasefire. Ethnic fighting erupts in the rebel-held eastern Congo.

2 May: Brussels parliament opens inquiry into possible Belgian government involvement in death of independence leader Patrice Lumumba in 1961.

2001 16 January: President Laurent Kabila shot dead by one of his bodyguards in the presidential palace in Kinshasa. His 31-year-old son, Joseph Kabila, takes over as president.

23 November: a Belgian parliamentary inquiry finds that Belgian government ministers bore 'moral responsibility' for the events leading to the murder of Patrice Lumumba in 1961.

Unrest continues in the Congo.