

Democratic Republic of Congo: History from 1960s -in Parts: Part 4

September 30, 2023

Please read about the ANCIENT HISTORY of the AREA of DRC on pages 1-2.

Please read about a SUMMARY of the History of DRC from June 30, 1960 to 13th Oct 1965 on pages 2-3. Please refer to Notes 1 and 2 below for details.

Please read about Mobutu's Presidency from 25th Nov 65 to 16th May 1997 on pages 4-6.

Please read about the History of DRC from 16th May 1997 to present on pages 7-8.

Note 1: Please see “Democratic Republic of Congo: History from 1960s -in Parts: Parts 1 and 2” at <https://diginews360.com/democratic-republic-of-congo-history-in-parts-parts-1-2/>. It includes the following:

- *A Brief Backgrounder on the Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo) on pages 1-3.*
- *Part 1 of History of DR Congo – Prime Ministership of Patrice Lumumba. It includes the story of the beginning of the Katanga Rebellion and the South Kasai Rebellion. Pages 4-8.*
- *The History of many Prime Ministers during Political situation of 1960-61 on page 8.*
- *Part 2 of History of DR Congo – Prime Ministership of Cyrille Adoulis. It includes the story of the Leftist rebellions including the. Pages 9-15.*

Note 2: Please see “Democratic Republic of Congo: History from 1960s -in Parts: Part 3” at <https://diginews360.com/democratic-republic-of-congo-history-from-1960s-part-3/>. It includes the following:

- *About Moise Tshombe's Prime Ministership (10th July 1964 to 13th Oct 1965) on pages 1-8.*
- *About Évariste Kimba's Prime Ministership (10th July 1964 to 13th Oct 1965) on pages 8-9.*

The History of Democratic Republic of Congo

A BRIEF HISTORY of the AREA of DRC BEFORE 1960: The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), **also known as Congo-Kinshasa**, is located in Central Africa. The country has a rich history, with early human settlements dating back over **80,000 years**, as shown by the discovery of the **Semliki harpoon at Katanda**. The **Semliki harpoon** refers to a group of complex barbed harpoon heads, carved from bone and used for catching giant river fish. The **Kingdom of Kongo** was established in 1390 and continued to exist till 1914 in some form. (At the Conference in Berlin, the Kingdom of Kongo was divided among Portugal, Belgium and France.)



In the late 19th century, the region was colonized by **Belgium's King Leopold II**, who established the **Congo Free State**. During this time, millions of Congolese people were subjected to forced labor and other forms of exploitation, resulting in the deaths of an estimated 10 million people.

In 1908, the Belgian government took control of the Congo Free State and renamed it the **Belgian Congo**. The Belgian Government introduced modern education and Christianization by missionaries.

From Part 1 and 2:

The country gained **independence on 30th June 1960**, with **Patrice Lumumba** becoming its **first** democratically elected as **prime minister**. However, high expectations from independence led to a rebellion by the soldiers on 8th July 1960. Though Lumumba's government was able to sort out the problem within a week, the violence against the Europeans led to an exodus of thousands of Belgians, who formed the civil service and were the backbone of many modern services and companies.

This led to a period of political instability and violence, with various factions vying for power.

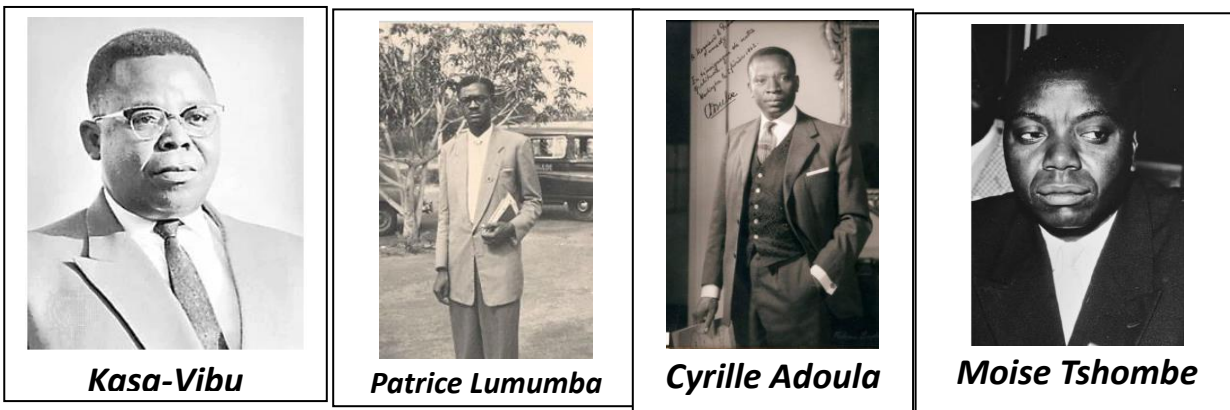
President Kasa-Vebu tried to dismiss **Patrice Lumumba** on 5th September 1960. Lumumba retaliated by trying to dismiss the President. The deadlock was broken by the **Chief-of-Staff of Army Col Mobutu**.

In this imbroglio, Lumumba tried to escape **towards Stanleyville**. During the flight, he was captured by the rebels and **executed on January 17, 1960**.

During the period from 5th September 1960 to 2nd August 1961, **President Kasa-Vebu** appointed and dismissed at least 5 Prime Ministers.

On 2nd August 1961, **Cyrille Adoula**. He worked to meet the internal and external challenges to DRC with a weak bureaucratic structure and an army with poor leadership. By 1964, Prime Minister **Cyrille Adoula** (2nd August 1961 to 30th June 1964) seemed to have lost popularity, as his political coalition **Rassemblement des Démocrates Congolaise** (RADECO), failed to attract support from the country. By late July 1964, the leftist insurgents controlled about half of DR Congo.

At this stage, **President Kasa-Vubu** decided to dismiss Prime Minister Cyrille Adoula, and install a new government led by **Moïse Tshombe**, who was considered to be a more effective leader. So, the President invited Tshombe to come back from exile



From Part 3:

As the war with the leftist rebels in the East started going in favour of the Congolese Government, **President Kasa-Vubu** and **Prime Minister Moïse Tshombe** fell out. On **October 13, 1965**, President Kasa-Vubu dismissed Tshombe and appointed **Evariste Kimba as the Prime Minister**. However, when Kimba asked for a vote of confidence from the Parliament on **November 14, 1965**, Tshombe joined with other parties to **defeat the motion of confidence**. President Kasa-Vubu re-appointed Evariste Kimba again on the next day. The deadlock continued for some days. On **25 November 1965**, Army Commander-in-Chief **Joseph-Désiré Mobutu** launched a coup removing both Evariste Kimba and Kasa-Vubu from power and assumed control of the presidency. **Colonel Léonard Mulamba** was appointed to replace Kimba.

The dictatorship of Joseph Mobutu lasted until 1997.

----History BACKGROUNDER on the DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC of CONGO----

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS after INDEPENDENCE

Mobutu as the President of DRC (25th November 1965 to 27th Oct 1971)

Mobutu as the President of Zaire (27th Oct 1971 to 16th May 1997)

The rise of President Mobutu Sese Seko

Using a **state of exception** (regime d'exception), Mobutu assumed sweeping powers for five years. In his first speech upon taking power, Mobutu told a large crowd at Léopoldville's main stadium that, since politicians had brought the Congo to ruin in five years, it would take him at least that long to set things right again, and therefore there would be no more political party activity for five years.

On **30 November 1965** Parliament approved a measure which turned over most legislative powers to Mobutu and his cabinet, though it retained the right to review his decrees. In early **March 1966**, he opened a new session of Parliament by declaring that he was revoking their right of review. Two weeks later, his government permanently suspended the Parliament and assumed all of its remaining functions.

On 20th May 1967, Joseph Mobutu founded the **Popular Movement of the Revolution** (French: Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution, abbr. MPR). Its philosophy was: **nationalism, revolution and authenticity**. It repudiated both capitalism and communism. President Mobutu outlawed all the other political parties and established a single-party state. (*MPR was dissolved on 16th May 1997, when Mobutu was removed as the President.*)

In **October 1971**, General Mobutu changed the name of the country from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (or Congo [Kinshasa]) to the **Republic of Zaire** (*The country reverted to its earlier name on 16th May 1997.*)

In 1972, Joseph Mobutu renamed himself Mobutu Sese Seko Nkuku Ngbendu Wa Za Banga (meaning "The all-powerful warrior who, because of his endurance and inflexible will to win, goes from conquest to conquest, leaving fire in his wake.").

Under Mobutu's leadership, Zaire experienced a period of relative stability in the 1970s. However, this stability was built on a foundation of human rights abuses and

economic mismanagement. Mobutu's regime was characterized by autocratic rule, political repression, and widespread corruption. He enriched himself and his inner circle through embezzlement and the exploitation of the country's vast natural resources.



Field Marshal **Mobutu Sese Seko**

Party: **Popular Movement of the Revolution (MPR)**

Service: ***Force Publique*** (or "Public Force") till July 8, 1960

FP: renamed as ***Armée Nationale Congolaise (ANC)*** after July 8, 1960.

Mobutu's regime relied heavily on patronage networks and the suppression of political opposition. He used his control over the military and security forces to suppress dissent and maintain his grip on power.

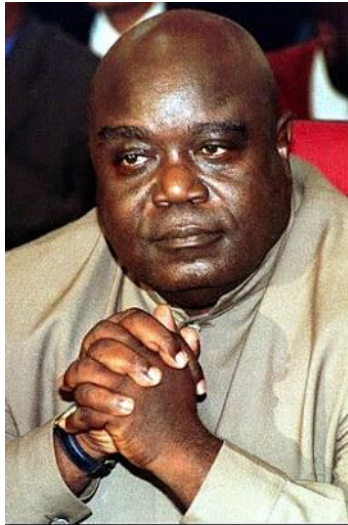
EXTERNAL SUPPORT: Despite his autocratic rule, Mobutu managed to maintain support from Western powers, including the United States, during the Cold War. They saw him as a bulwark against communism in Africa and provided him with financial aid and military support. However, this support waned in the 1990s as Mobutu's regime became increasingly unpopular and his misrule became more evident.

In the early 1990s, following the end of the Cold War, popular discontent with Mobutu's rule grew. Pro-democracy movements emerged, demanding political reforms and an end to corruption. Mobutu attempted to appease these demands by introducing limited political reforms but ultimately failed to address the underlying issues.

In 1997, Mobutu was overthrown by rebel forces led by Laurent-Désiré Kabila, who established the Democratic Republic of Congo. Mobutu fled into exile and died shortly after in Morocco.

Life after the fall of Mobutu

After the overthrow of Mobutu Sese Seko in 1997, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) entered a new phase in its history. **Laurent-Désiré Kabila**, who led the rebellion that ousted Mobutu, became the new president of the country. However, his presidency was marked by conflict and instability.



*President of DRC from 17 May 1997 to 16 January 2001: **Laurent-Désiré Kabila***
Kabila's government faced numerous challenges, including internal dissent, external interference, and a deteriorating economy. In 1998, a rebellion broke out in the east of the country, led by Congolese ethnic Tutsi fighters who had helped Kabila come to power. **The rebellion was backed by neighboring Rwanda and Uganda**, who were seeking to protect their interests in the region.

The rebellion quickly escalated into a wider conflict involving multiple armed groups and foreign powers. The conflict became known as the **Second Congo War** and lasted until 2003. It is estimated that millions of people died as a result of the conflict, either directly or indirectly through disease and hunger.

During the war, the DRC was effectively divided into multiple zones of control, with various armed groups vying for power. The government in Kinshasa struggled to assert its authority over the entire country. Meanwhile, neighboring countries continued to interfere in the conflict, either directly or by supporting proxy forces.

In 2001, **Kabila was assassinated by one of his bodyguards**. He was succeeded by his son Joseph Kabila, who became the country's youngest ever president at the age

of 29. Joseph Kabila inherited a difficult situation, with the country still mired in conflict and instability.



*President of DRC from 17 Jan 2001 to 24 January 2019: **Joseph Kabila Kabange***
Senator for Life: from 15th March 2019

Under Joseph Kabila's leadership, the DRC continued to face numerous challenges. The conflict in the east of the country persisted, with various armed groups continuing to operate in the region. The government also faced criticism for human rights abuses and restrictions on political freedoms.

In 2018, following years of protests and international pressure for him to relinquish power, Kabila stepped down after 18 years in power. In the elections, held in 2018, **Félix Tshisekedi**, leader of the opposition party **Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS)**, was declared the winner of the presidential election.



President of DRC: **Félix Tshisekedi**

Tshisekedi's presidency has been marked by some positive developments, including efforts to promote democracy and human rights. However, the country still faces numerous challenges, including ongoing conflict in some parts of the country, poverty, and corruption.

The government has taken steps to promote economic development and attract foreign investment. There have also been efforts to improve governance and combat corruption.

Overall, the DRC's post-Mobutu history has been marked by conflict and instability. However, there are also signs of hope for a brighter future, with efforts underway to promote peace, democracy, and economic development in the country.



Lumumba Memorial in Kinshasa, DRC

On June 30, 2022, **President Félix Tshisekedi** paid a tribute to **Patrice Lumumba**, the first Prime Minister of DRC, when the memorial was opened for the public.

By—**Abel from Burundi**