











A SEASON IN  
THE CONGO

THE FRENCH LIST



Aimé  
Césaire

A SEASON IN  
THE CONGO

TRANSLATED BY  
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WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY  
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## FROM THE TRANSLATOR

There are two theories of translation: you add yourself to the original, or you efface yourself and let the text shine. I subscribe to the second. But I have said again and again that translation is also the most intimate act of reading. And to read is to pray to be haunted. Césaire haunted me, as he was in turn haunted by Lumumba. Effacing my generation's disappointments, translating him with care I understood in my nerve-endings that that generation of post-colonials wanted to undo the flimsy European gift of nation-identification and create a real force in the world, where a new kind of regionalism would undo cultural essentialisms. It did not succeed. But, speaking again and again, Lumumba's dying speech in Act III, Scene 6—not veridical but true—where death appears as a promise to be in the land, and death's bloody foam as the sense of some coming dawn, I sensed in my nerves that that failure was not final. As I expressed this in public, my friend Souleymane

Bachir Diagne, speaking from the first row, counter-signed that sense—speaking of a persistent effort, the result always around the corner. I asked him, therefore, to introduce the text that it was my honour to translate. Let my translation lead you to the French.

## INTRODUCTION

Aimé Césaire's theatrical oeuvre is composed of four plays: the first, *Et les chiens se taisaient* (*And the Dogs Kept Quiet*), was written as a dramatic poem and published in his collection of poetry, *Les armes miraculeuses*, in 1946. Ten years later, it was recreated as a 'tragedy' and published by Présence Africaine. The second play, *La tragédie du roi Christophe* (*The Tragedy of King Christophe*), announced by Césaire as early as in 1961 was published in 1963. It was immediately played on different stages in Europe and, in 1966, in Dakar, Senegal, during the First World Festival of Negro Arts (Premier Festival Mondial des Arts Nègres), a major cultural event in newly independent Africa organized in Senegal by his friend and co-founder of the Negritude movement, Léopold Sédar Senghor. Césaire's third play, *Une Saison au Congo* (*A Season in the Congo*), was published that same year and was followed, in 1968, by *Une Tempête* (*A Tempest*), bearing the subtitle: 'Adaptation of Shakespeare's *Tempest* for a Negro Theater'.



Scholars of Césaire's theatre rightly insist on the profound similarities that exist between the four plays. Indeed, it is quite obvious that the poet has created the same play in four incarnations. The publication of *And the Dogs Kept Quiet*, first as a dramatic poem and then as a tragedy, marks the transition from poetry to drama. Césaire writes the text as if he is less interested in staging an actual play than in expressing the *essence* of tragedy in general. First, there is the strong emphasis on the chorus, the function of which is multiplied and distributed among many voices: those of the 'echo', the 'reciting man', the 'reciting woman', the 'mad women', the 'chorus' proper and the 'semi-chorus'.

Then, there are the characters presented more as archetypes than individuals—they have no real names and are just called "The Rebel", 'The Administrator', 'The Lover', 'The Bishop', 'The Great Developer', 'The Mother', etc.

Last, there is the inevitable presence of Fate. Right at the beginning, as the curtain rises, the 'echo' makes it clear that, as in any tragedy, the hero is already condemned to fall, the victim of an inexorable and foretold fate which he will face with a stubborn refusal of any compromise with the established order

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that he dies combating. As Romuald Fonkoua<sup>1</sup> writes in his superb biography of Césaire, the poet's first play is an 'apology for theater' which scrupulously respects all the slightest details of the laws of ancient tragedy. It is important to mention here that Césaire himself has indicated in many interviews that, at the time of writing *And the Dogs Kept Quiet*, Friedrich Nietzsche's *The Origin of Tragedy* was his 'breviary'. It should be added that the situation of the Rebel facing the Administrator and marching to his death (while) refusing to listen to the voice of compromise—the Mother's, the Lover's or the Politician's—is a theme also visited by Senghor, Césaire's accomplice in Negritude. It constitutes the mainspring of the Senegalese writer's dramatic poem, *Chaka*, which recounts the last moments of the legendary Zulu king. *Chaka* was written by Senghor in 1956, the same year that *And the Dogs Kept Quiet* was recreated as a play.

Writing drama in the early 1960s, and producing the last three works of his theatrical corpus, will mean for Césaire adding the weight of actual history to the otherwise *quintessential* or *ideal* tragedy that was its first play. *King Christophe* adds to that essence the turbulences of the 160-year-old history of independent Haiti. *A Season in the Congo* irrigates it with the recently

spilled and still-warm blood of Lumumba, the martyr of Congolese independence, killed in January 1961. And finally, there is the last component of what Césaire himself has called a trilogy—*A Tempest*, a play in which the poet adds to the original Shakespearean characters Eshu, the ‘Negro god-devil’ and, more importantly, transforms Caliban into a rebellious ‘Negro slave’ while Ariel is a ‘mulatto slave’ willing to compromise if that will gain him freedom. Such a recreation of that classical oeuvre (Césaire acknowledges that, after his ‘adaptation’, there was little left of Shakespeare) was meant to evoke the march of African Americans towards freedom.

It is a wonderful coincidence that Césaire’s play on the tragedy of Congo’s independence and its martyr, Patrice Lumumba, is being published in English now, at the very moment when many African countries are celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of their independence (proclaimed in 1960 for a majority of them) by questioning the very meaning of that notion. The play offers an answer to that question. It means either fake *dipenda* (the word ‘independence’ mispronounced by ignorant uneducated Africans) or *uburu*, the Swahili word for freedom, the very last word shouted by the crowd at the end of the play

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making it the legacy of their hero: *Uhuru Lumumba*. *Uhuru*! Compromise and pragmatism lead to *dipenda* while *uhuru* is a task that demands the courage of intransigence and a passion for the absolute.

Why wouldn't everybody be happy to settle for *dipenda*? Since His Majesty Basilio, King of the Belgians, is ready to grant it to the Congolese people that his country has fostered into civilization, allowing them to have their flag, their anthem and their government, what else is to be desired? The Belgian bankers are happy when they understand that *dipenda* means that what truly matters, namely economic domination, will remain the same so they join in the choir chanting: 'Hurrah! Hurrah! Long live Independence!' The new President, Kala-Lubu, is happy to proclaim his fidelity to 'Civilization' and the friendship offered by Belgium and its King. Mokutu, the pragmatic soldier, is of the opinion that everybody should manifest satisfaction with the new situation. The Congolese populations see that they are expected to feel happy and to celebrate *dipenda*. But it is precisely when everybody understands what is possible and is satisfied with things as they are that tragedy unfolds. Everything is under control and then comes a '*discomforter*', as Lumumba calls himself, who asks for the

impossible. So here is Oedipus/the Rebel/Christophe/Caliban/Lumumba who pursues the question that no one wants to hear. Who declares stubbornly that what everybody—Jocasta/Kala-Lubu/Mokutu/the Lover/the Mother/Ariel—is satisfied with will not do for him. Thus Lumumba is convinced that 'Africa needs [his] intransigence' and he sets his own death in motion when he ruins the consensus around *dépense* by proclaiming as the true goal for the people of Kongo and Africa the same concept of freedom but in their own tongue: 'Uhuru!' And *cri de guerre*, one of the last words of *A Season in the Congo*, is also the very first word pronounced by Caliban when he makes his appearance in *A Tempest*: 'Uhuru!' he responds to Prospero calling him when he enters the stage for the first time.

With *A Season in the Congo*, Aimé Césaire has created his most Shakespearean, his most Nietzschean/Dionysian play and hero. He has made the best of the historical fact that Patrice Lumumba who was largely a self-educated man and political leader worked for many years as a travelling salesman for a beer company. Having represented him both as the tragic figure of a leader for independence and the Smoothtalker who uses beer as a metaphor for politics, Césaire's



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writing admirably mixes voices and registers, alternating tragedy and burlesque, poetry and its caricature (in the language of the bankers, for example). In this play the poet eminently manifests the art of being political in literature, of transforming anger into laughter, of undermining the established colonial order just by being mischievous to the highest degree which is what Nietzsche characterized as 'to be harmful with what is best'. That art has found in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak its translator.

*Souleymane Bachir Diagne*

July 2010

### *Note*

- 1 Romuald Fonkoua, *Aimé Césaire (1913–2008)* (Paris: Perrin, 2010), p. 297.



A SEASON  
IN THE CONGO

*Dramatis Personae*

In order of appearance

Smoothtalker	3 Senators
Onlooker	Hammarskjöld
2 Belgian Police	Great Western Ambassador
Voice	Croulard
A Man	Isaac
Two women	Voice of Civil War
Mokutu	3 Ministers
Mama Makosi	Helen
The director	Pauline Lumumba
4 Bankers	Bishop
MNC citizen	Ghana
Tribalist Mukongo	Okito
Basilio	Tzumbi
General Massens	Zimbabwe
Kala-Lubu	Travele
Lumumba	M'siri
M'polo	Mercenary
Soldiers	Matthew Cordelier
4 Transmitters	Sanza Player
Pilot	Crowd

## Act I





[11] Scene 1

*African quarter of Leopoldville.*

*A trooping of natives around a smoothtalker, under the  
more or less troubled eye of 2 Belgian cops*

[SMOOTH TALKER] → Reve'

My children, the Whites have invented many things and they have brought them here for you, some good, some bad. I will not speak of the bad things today. But it's for sure that among the good things we must count beer! Drink! Drink up! What's more, isn't it the only freedom they allow us? We can't gather without being jailed. Meeting, jail! Writing, jail! Leave the country? Jail! And everything to the first comer! But see for yourselves. For a quarter of an hour now I'm talking at you and

their cops let me do it . . . And I roam the countryside from Stanleyville to Katanga, and their cops let me do it! The theme: I sell beer and I invest in beer so well that one can say that the keg of beer is now the symbol of Congolese law and our Congolese freedoms!

But watch out! Oh yeah! Just as in the same country there are different races, as in Belgium itself there are their Flemish and their Walloons, and everyone knows [12] the Flemish are bad news, there is beer and then there is beer! Races of beer! Families of beer! And I have come here to speak of the best beer in the world: Polar! Polar, the chill of the Poles in the tropics! Polar, the beer of Congolese freedom! Polar, the beer of Congolese friendship and brotherhood!

ONLOOKER

Awright! But I've heard that Polar makes you impotent. That Polar takes away the *n'golo*—our combative strength! Answer that, sir!

SMOOTH TALKER

Notice, citizen, that I do not answer your provocation with a provocation! And I'm not asking you to send me your wife or your sister.

*Laughter among those present.*

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ONE OF THE CROWD

Ho! Ho! That one has balls!

SMOOTH TALKER

But I turn to the girls and hey, I ask this lovely bunch  
of girls a question. So my girls, my sweeties with your  
light-up smiles, my girls with the snake's supple belly,  
won't you answer me?

GIRLS

*Sing*

Women mirror-smooth } *smooth*

Bodies without lies

Honey muffins

Hair with the wavy shine of a burnous.

[13] two ripe papayas

on the faultless chest

*Crowd applauds*

FIRST BELGIAN COP

Not bad, his patter. He can talk!

SECOND COP

Yeah! But he bothers me! His keg of beer's a real  
bag of tricks! What's in it? I'd like to say  
a word to him.

AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

FIRST COP

Watch out! Polar must be sold! You know who's  
Polar's boss?

SECOND COP

How would I know? I only know that this nigger is  
dangerous! *> wic people*

FIRST COP

You're young! Lemme tell ya: behind Polar is the  
Minister . . . Ah yes . . . the Minister of the Congo!  
It bothers you! But it's like that! Now you understand!  
Come on, let's have a pint!

SECOND COP

Love to. Give me the pilgrim's name though . . .  
Something tells me that we'll need it.

FIRST COP

Oh! He's on file! Rest assured. On file. His name?  
Patrice Lumumba.

[14] SECOND COP

And that other one? He's also on file?

FIRST COP

Oh! He's nothing but a sanza player. Not dangerous.  
But yes, a pain in the butt! Always everywhere!  
A real fly, and always buzzing!



A SEASON IN THE CONGO

SANZA PLAYER → *hidden  
dancer*  
Sings

*Ata Ndele, modele akobaluka*

*(‘Sooner or later, the whites will be overthrown’)*

Scene 2

*A voice is raised behind the theatre and grows increasingly loud, while through the coming and going of waiters and patrons an African bar sets itself up.*

SANZA PLAYER

Hear ye! Hear ye! The buffalo is wounded. He can’t do anything at all because he’s been shot. That’s why the buffalo has grown furious. Who is the buffalo? The buffalo, it’s the government of the Belgians and the Flemish. As the buffalo is now wounded, it is now dangerous. As for you, will you draw back because it’s dangerous? The buffalo is a brutal animal. Will you be afraid of its brutality? Of its heavy gallop?

The buffalo has a heavy step,

A heavy step, a heavy step,

[15] If you see it, don’t be afraid of that heavy step

Of that heavy step, of that heavy step

*The bar is set up. Violent lights. Small tables. Back and forth of clients and free women.*

AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

FIRST WOMAN

*Singing*

Come, why fear?

I'm not married

I was married too soon.

I thought there were no other men

Ah! If only I had known!

*Approaching a table*

Truly! No one's gallant in the Congo! Men who drink  
their beer and let a lady stand, gullet parched!

A MAN

*Sniffs*

And what a lady! Nothing to say! A six-cylinder  
girl. Let's push in a bit, have a seat little lady,  
have a seat.

SECOND WOMAN

*Approaching*

Oh! Oh! Girlfriends! Help me! Help me! I've had a  
little accident. My *jikita*-amulet has given way. These  
belt things don't hold up. It's rotten cork. These bloody  
Flemish, they cheat us in every way.

A MAN

They cheat us and they exploit us, little mother, yes,  
they exploit us. You see, the nigger isn't careful enough!

A SEASON IN THE CONGO

FIRST WOMAN

Me, I've solved the problem, I've given up the *jikita*.  
I dress in the *jibula* straw skirt without it.

A MAN

*Laughing*

Softly! Softly! Say rather you undress in the *jibula*!  
With that fashion, when women walk, you see the  
thigh, and even more! Heh-heh! I say much more.

SECOND WOMAN

Ungrateful wretch! What are you complaining about if  
it's free? Ah men have become misers, stingy, jerks!  
And I have had enough of this life!

*Singing*

Listen, my friends  
God gave us mothers,  
Mothers who, for money  
Kill us, always for more money!

*Enter a man dressed in European clothes, with the air of a  
pimp—it's Mokutu.*

MOKUTU

Boys and girls, hello! I have something new to sell you.  
The Flemish have arrested Patrice, there's no way to  
soften them up! They have transferred him handcuffed

AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

to Eville, [17] and at this time, the politicians are at the round table in Brussels, about to decide the fate of the Congo. If African politicians had anything in their pants, surely they would have decided not to take their seats as long as Patrice was not released.

A MAN

Yeah, it's a point of view. Although we don't work for the fate of a man but for the fate of a country!

think  
'og no  
small

MOKUTU

Oh! Oh! Are there Flemish folks here? Black Flemish?

There are plenty of pink ones, why not black, eh?

sunburned  
white

Comrade, have you ever asked yourself what would happen if the fate of a man and the fate of a country came to mingle?

THE MAN

Right! Right! But what to do? We're not going to attack the prison at Elizabethville with our bare fists!

MOKUTU

Do I know the answer, me? God Almighty! Do what you can, but do! All paths are good. Moreover, at this point in the Congo, all roads lead to revolution, now take whichever, but take!

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*A voice rises again from the back of the theatre and sings the  
hymn of the Kimbangists.*

SANZA PLAYER

We are orphan children.  
Black night, the way is bleak,  
[18] Mighty God, where is help?  
Father Congo, who gives a hand?

FIRST WOMAN

I propose that we mourn for six months! When we lose  
one of ours we mourn, and Patrice was, in a certain  
sense, one of ours!

MOKUTU

What a joke! You think the Flemish will give  
a damn!

SECOND WOMAN

For me, let us go on strike, and let us march with our  
standards. All our associations, Lolita, Dollar, the Free  
Woman, Hope, marching, filing with their banners—  
yellow, green, red, that'll have an effect!

MAMA MAKOSI (or 'woman of power')

Enough foolishness: no mourning, no strike. Work is  
work. We will work. More than ever. We will put up  
bail to the Belgians: the buffalo loves money, that's well

AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

known, it's his food, and Patrice will sit with the others  
in Brussels. I have finished speaking.

MOKUTU

Children, I must leave you. Do what your heart tells you.  
Whatever you do for Patrice is good! Thank you!

SANZA PLAYER

*He rises and sings, and the song is taken up by the crowd.*

Let the rains come,  
The war will come as well,  
[19] the time of red blood  
is the time I announce,  
the buffalo is powerful, and powerful the elephant,  
but where to fly?  
They did not plan their knowledge  
Neither the door, nor the way  
The buffalo will fall soon, and soon the elephant  
Of God they will feel the powerful hand  
The time I announce is the time of red blood,  
Freedom is for tomorrow.

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Scene 3

*Elizabethville prison*

FIRST JAILER

*On the phone*

Hello? Yes! Yes, Director . . . Perfect, sir . . . at your service, Mr Director!

SECOND JAILER

Boss, what is it? Serious?

FIRST JAILER

It's the Director who informs us that he's paying us a visit, concerning Sire Patrice Lumumba.

SECOND JAILER

Oh! That one, he's been nothing but trouble. I've seen many prisoners, but, word of a jailer, nothing more trouble than these niggers with monocles. → Lumumba

FIRST JAILER

And the airs and graces! Even now, he's writing poetry! → nice  
Monkey poet! Fancy that! But bring him here, so we  
can put him in condition to speak to Mr Director and  
to refresh his memory regarding the regulations! → regime?

*While Second Jailer goes looking for the prisoner,*

*First Jailer reads.*

AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

FIRST JAILER

Oh! Oh!

Congo, and then came the Whites

Raping your women

Making your warriors drunk

But the happy future brings liberation

From then on the shores of these great rivers are yours

Yours this earth and all these riches

Yours the sun above.

Where is he going to go fishing for it, the sun? He is not content to covet our houses and our women, he would also take the sun! . . . Ah! Look at you, bastard, shitface, ungrateful wretch! Ah! The gentleman writes poetry! But who taught you to read, Monkey, if not the Belgians whom you hate so much! Here, catch, I'll write poetry on your back.

*Hits him*

SECOND JAILER

My colleague, that's not all. Look what I just happened to find in his cell: the manuscript of an article where the prisoner protests against his imprisonment, of course illegal! (You know they all say so!) and demands his release so that he can participate [21] in the work of the Round Table in Brussels. Signed: Patrice Lumumba, President of the National Movement of the Congo.



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FIRST JAILER

Not bad, eh?

*Hits him*

You see yourself in Brussels, savage? And what will you say to the king if you see him? What will you say to the Bwana Kitoko—that noble man?

SECOND JAILER

*Hitting him*

Of course he wants to be minister!

*Laughs*

You see yourself Excellency, monkey! . . . Excellency.

FIRST JAILER

Possible! But first he would have to eat King Kala. Sonny, don't damage him too much, he reports to the Director who may be here any moment. Yes! There he is!

*Enter Director.*

DIRECTOR

Mr Lumumba, I bring you good, indeed excellent, news! Yes, it sometimes happens to prison directors, to bring to their prisoners good, indeed, excellent, news: I have just received an order from Brussels concerning you. The Minister of the Congo has decided to set you at large and wishes that as the president of the MNC,

the Congolese National Movement, as you say, you participate in the work of the Round Table. I am charged to take all measures to facilitate your trip. I advise you that tomorrow there is [22] a Sabena flight for Brussels. You are free, Mr Lumumba.  
Have a good trip, Excellency.

THE JAILERS

Oh! Oh!

*They bow.*

Have a good trip, Excellency!

SANZA PLAYER

*Passes, singing*

*Kongo Mpaka Dima*

(‘My brothers, watch out, the Congo is stirring.’)

#### Scene 4

*A sign falls from the arch:*

*‘Brussels, Hall of the Round Table’.*

*The antechamber of a room in the palace where the Round Table of the African parties is taking place.*

*Four or five men dressed as the caricatures of bankers come and go: suits, top hats, big cigars.*

*Anger and panic are at their height—it has just been leaked that the Belgian government, by Lumumba’s demand,*

A SEASON IN THE CONGO

*has agreed to fix 30 June 1960 for the Independence of  
the Congo.*

FIRST BANKER

We're fucked. A government of traitors sells off our  
Empire.

[23] SECOND BANKER

And so, they have fixed the date of Independence.

THIRD BANKER

It's terrible! They've accepted the diktat of that monkey.

FOURTH BANKER

Guts, sirs, guts, always guts, like the very devil.  
One must marry one's times! I don't say love, marrying  
is enough! This independence has nothing that  
disconcerts me.

FIRST BANKER

Of that which constitutes a true calamity  
ruins the State, dries up our finances  
reduces this country to the level of a minuscule power  
it is to take sides with it in a forbearing way

SECOND BANKER

Worrying paradox or dangerous maxim  
both no doubt! Colleague, I say it straight up  
I don't know what there is at the bottom of your bag!

AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

But when in a vast empire evil spreads,  
it is a bad time to choose a liberal pose.

FOURTH BANKER

When in a vast empire evil spreads  
the daring solutions are also the only wise ones!

FIRST BANKER

Nothing is more irritating, sir than these obscurities!

In fact, to get out of our difficulties,  
If you have a plan, speak, say, propose  
Rather than speak riddles.

[24] SECOND BANKER

Yessir. Do you have what one calls a politics?

FOURTH BANKER

Politics? That's a big word,  
but a bit of common sense.  
Here and there some ideas that  
through my brain trot.  
Nothing meritorious. Twenty years in the tropics.  
Think for yourselves, I know them. Axiom:  
To make the savage treatable, only two politics:  
Trick him, my dear, or bribe them—*matabich*.

FIRST BANKER

True?

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FOURTH BANKER

Hey! Well too bad, I'd thought you more lively.  
Follow the idea. What do they want? Jobs, titles,  
presidents, deputies, senators, ministers!  
So, bribe them! Good! Car, bank account  
villas, big-time treatment, I skimp nothing.  
Axiom: and that's what's important: one must force-  
feed them!

Result: their hearts soften,  
their mood becomes smooth.

You see little by little where the system takes us  
Between their people and us, their cohort rises up.  
If at least with them, in place of friendship,  
in this ungrateful century, limited sentiment  
we know how to tie the knot of complicity.

FIRST BANKER

Enough: Bravo my friend! No reservations!

BANKERS' CHORUS

Hurrah! Hurrah! Long live Independence!

[25] Scene 5

*Leopoldville, jubilant and childlike crowd.*

*The cha-cha of Independence is heard.*

*First Group*

A CITIZEN

It's what exactly, your *dipenda*?

SECOND CITIZEN

Idiot, it's the celebration, our celebration.

As you see: it is when the Blacks

Command and the Whites obey!

FIRST CITIZEN

Ah! I see! It's very very nice! A carnival, right?

Ah well, long live *dipenda*!

*Second Group*

A WOMAN

How does it come, *dipenda*? By car, by boat, by air?

A MAN

It arrives with the little white king, the Bwana Kitoko,  
it is he who brings it to us.

SANZA PLAYER

*Dipenda*! No one brings it to us, it is we who take it,  
citizens!

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[26] THE TRIBALIST MUKONGO

Doesn't matter! Given or wrested, what I know is that now that we have *dipenda*, all the Bengalas must return to their villages. The country is ruined with all those Bengalas!

A MUNGALA

Attention, Sir, do not provoke us. It is we who have to be good enough to tolerate that a Mukongo should be the President of the Republic, that a Mukongo should govern us. This place returns to a man of the river! Long live John Bolikango! Power to John Bolikango!

SANZA PLAYER

Come on! People, calm down! No more ethnic fights. Don't let colonialism divide and rule! Let us rise above these tribal quarrels! Let there no longer be Bengalas, Bakongos, Batetelas, among us, but only Congolese! Free, united, organized! Come along, let us celebrate our unity with a good beer, I will pay you to drink, Sirs!

A PARTISAN

Right! At least we must know what beer, I only drink Polar.

AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

SECOND PARTISAN

Me, only Primus.

THE DRINKER ABAKO

Primus, the queen of beer! The beer of King Kala!

SECOND DRINKER

Polar, the chill of the Pole in the tropics! [27] I drink to peace! To all the peaces: the peace of hearts, to ethnic peace, to peace among parties, the peace among beers, let us drink, friends, and clink glasses, whether on Polar, whether on Primus, but to the health of the Congo!

ALL

Long live the Congo!

*They sing the Independence cha-cha.*

Scene 6

BASILIO (King of the Belgians)

This barbaric people, already struck down by the hard fist of Boula Matari, we have taken charge of them. Ah yes, Providence has committed us to this care, and we have fed them, raised them, educated them. If our efforts have succeeded in conquering their nature, if our pains encounter payment, by this independence that we



bring them today, we will test it. Now they must launch this liberty. Either they will show Africa an example which, we ourselves, give to Europe: of a people united, decent, hardworking, and the emancipation of our pupils will bring us some honour in the world. Either the barbaric root, nourished by the powerful primitive base, will recapture its malignant vigour, strangling the good seed tirelessly sown, for fifty years, by the devotion of our missionaries, and then!

GENERAL MASSENS (Belgian General)

And then?

[28] BASILIO

We will advise at a useful moment, Massens. Let us rather have confidence in human nature—do you mind?

GENERAL MASSENS

You know your Majesty, that I am hardly an enthusiast of these experiments, which carry, in continuing, the mark of the boldness and generosity which characterize the genius of Your Majesty!

But since you wish it! At least, this freedom, whose seductive drug they have smoked, and whose emanation intoxicates them with such deplorable visions, they must feel that they receive it, and not that they win it. Majesty, I don't believe them so obtuse that they do not

sense the difference that separates a right that would  
be recognized as theirs and a gift of your royal  
munificence!

BASILIO

Be assured, Massens, I will make it completely and  
urgently clear to them, but look!

KALA-LUBU (President, Republic of the Congo)

*Addressing Lumumba*

First Burgomaster, Sir, excuse me, I wanted to say 'Mr  
Prime Minister', my concern is that things go well, con-  
veniently, I mean. The rules of courtesy have made that  
a duty for us, the rules of politics as well. This would be  
a badly chosen time for complaints, for recriminations,  
for too-loud and ill-sounding words. Giving birth is  
painful, it is the law; but when the child is born one  
smiles at it. I would like today a Congo full of smiles.

But here comes the King.

*Addressing the crowd*

40-2  
↖ Come on, all together now, Long live the King!  
Long live the King! Long live the Bwana Kitoko!  
Long live King Kala!

*The crowd waves small flags, carrying the sign of kodi,  
emblem of the Abako, a shell pierced by a sword.*

*Explosion of firecrackers.*

*A group of black children, led by a missionary with a full beard, sing a song, a bit like the Little Singers of the Wooden Cross.*

BASILIO

*Haranguing the officers*

My words will be brief. It is simply to address a pious thought to my predecessors, tutors before me, of this country, and first to Leopold, the founder, who has come here not for taking or dominating, but to give and to civilize. It is also to express our gratitude to all who, day after day—and at the cost of what pain!—have constructed and built this country. Glory to the founders! Glory to the continuers! In the end, gentlemen, for you to put in place again this state, our creation. We are a people of engineers and manufacturers. I say it to you without boasting: today we remit to you a machine, good. Take care of it, that's all we ask of you. Of course since it's a question of technology, and it would be dangerous never to anticipate mechanical failure, at least know that you can always come to us for help, and that our support remains accepted by you, our support: our disinterested support, gentlemen! And now, Congolese, take command, the whole world is looking at you!

KALA-LUBU

My lord! The presence of your August Majesty, at the ceremony of this memorable day, constitutes a shining and [30] new testimony of your solicitude for all these populations that you have loved and protected. They have received your message of friendship with all the respect and all the fervour with which they surround you, and will keep for a long time in their heart the words that you have just addressed to them at this solemn hour. They will know how to appreciate the entire price of the friendship that Belgium offers them, and will enthusiastically engage the path of a sincere collaboration. As for you Congolese, my brothers, I want you to know, to understand, that Independence, friend of the tribes, is not here to abolish either the law, or custom; it is here to complete them, to accomplish them, to harmonize them. Independence, friend of the Nation, is not here to make Civilization regress. Independence has come, held by the hand, on one side by Custom, on the other by Civilization. Independence has come to reconcile the old and the new, the nation and the tribes. Let us remain faithful to Civilization, let us remain faithful to Custom and God will protect the Congo.

*Uncertain applause.*

A SEASON IN THE CONGO

Does

LUMUMBA

I, my lord, I think of the forgotten.

We are those who were dispossessed, struck, mutilated—those who were addressed as inferiors, whose faces were spat upon. Cookboys, chamberboys, laundryboys, we were a people of boys, a people of 'Yes, Bwana', and whoever doubted that man could be not man had only to look at us. Lord, all suffering that can be suffered, we have suffered it. All humiliation that can be drunk, we've drunk!

But, comrades, the taste for living, they could not turn it sour in the mouth, and we have struggled, with our poor means we have struggled for fifty years

[31] And look: we have won.

Our country is now in the hands of her children

Ours, this sky, this river, these lands.

Ours, the lake and the forest.

Ours, Karissimbi, Nyiragongo, Niamuragira, Mikéno, Ehu, mountains mounted by the very word of fire.

Men of Congo, today is a day, big.

It is the day when the world welcomes among the nations Congo, our mother

And above all Congo, our child.

Child of our waking, of our sufferings, of our combats.  
Comrades and brothers in combat, may all our wounds  
be transformed into udders!

May each of our thoughts, each of our hopes be oars to  
brace once again, the air!

For Kongo! Hold it. I lift her above my head, I bring  
her around to my shoulder.

Three times I spit on her face.

I place it in the earth and I ask you this: Truth, do you  
know this child? And you answer all together: It is  
Kongo, our king!

I want to be a toucan, the beautiful bird, to be all over  
the sky, to announce, to races and languages that Kongo  
is born to us, our king! Kongo, may he live!

Kongo, born late, may he follow the sparrowhawk!

Kongo, born late, may he bring palaver to an end!

Comrades, all is to be done, and all is to be redone,  
but we will do it, and we'll redo it. For Kongo!

We will take them up, one after the other, all the laws,  
for Kongo!

We will revise them, one after the other, all the customs,  
for Kongo!

A SEASON IN THE CONGO

Tracking injustice, we will take up, one after the other  
all the parts of the old building, from top to bottom,  
for Kongo!

[32] All that is bent will be straightened, all that is  
straight will be pulled up  
For Kongo!

I demand the union of all!

I demand the devotion of all! For Kongo! Uhuru!

*Moment of ecstasy.*

Congo! Great times!

And we, having burnt the years of rags and castoffs,  
proceed in my singleminded jubilant steps  
into the new times! On the solstice!

*Stupor. Here, four bankers enter.*

FIRST BANKER

This is horrible, this is horrible, it'll end badly.

SECOND BANKER

That speech! This time it's goodbye, time to pack his bag!

THIRD BANKER

*Very dignified*

It's clear! Where order fails, the banker steps in!

AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

FOURTH BANKER

Yes, on the Congo, this time adrift without a buoy.

*Mokutu passes busily.*

MOKUTU

I had banked on him! Who edited that speech for him?  
And to say that I'd make a statesman out of him! If he  
wants to break his neck, it's too bad! Pity! It's a pity!  
Too much sharpened, the knife cuts to his nape.

[33] *He spits.*

*Enter Lumumba.*

SANZA PLAYER

*Perplexed*

Hum! Let's not judge the boss too quickly! If he's done  
it, he must not have done it for nothing. Even if, his  
reason, we don't see it!

LUMUMBA

So, do you agree? Or are you one of those who believe  
that the sky will crash because a nigger has dared, in the  
world's face, to curse out a king? No, you don't agree!

I see it in your eyes.

MOKUTU

Since you ask me, I'll answer with a story.



A SEASON IN THE CONGO

LUMUMBA

I hate stories.

MOKUTU

It's to save time. At eleven, I hunted with my grandfather. Suddenly, I found myself nose to nose with a leopard. Terrified, I throw my spear at him and wound him. My grandfather is furious. I have to go recuperate my weapon. That day, I understood once and for all that one does not attack an animal, if one is not sure to kill him.

LUMUMBA

*Very cold*

You are wrong not to agree. There was a taboo to take out. I've taken it out! As for your story, if it means that you hate colonialism, the Beast, and that you have decided [34] to track it with me, and to get it done with me . . . that's fine . . .

MOKUTU

Do you doubt it Patrice?

LUMUMBA

*Brisk*

Good! Let's make peace! I'm happy.

*They leave.*

*Now the Sanza Player passes, singing the complaint of  
Lupeto.*

SANZA PLAYER

To take the wind

No one does it more than the easy ones  
They don't have the guts of assassins  
But beaks to sniff out all smells on the wind  
These are the people of Lupeto.

These are the men of appetite.  
For their feed everything is dentures  
These are the men of Lupeto.

Lupeto is about money  
Neither good nor bad,  
These are the men of Lupeto.

*The Fifth Banker appears.*

FIRST BANKER

Congratulations, Sir, and truly, well done!

FIFTH BANKER

My colleague, I do not believe I deserve your severity.  
It is not politics that the risks involve.

[35] SECOND BANKER

Look how he gets out of it: sentences, generalities, it's a  
bit of a nerve when your plans abort, Sir.

A SEASON IN THE CONGO

Bankers don't  
Congo to fair - or don't  
really care as long as  
new gold

FIFTH BANKER

Sentences? Not at all!—guts, colleagues!

At the smallest little thing, one doesn't lie down as if  
getting into bed. Come on, follow this idea.

*He whispers in their ears.*

You will agree, my friends, that this is good sense if Leo  
insists that we autodetermine

Ok! We cannot avoid it, but then

Let it be for all and first for our mines!

FIRST BANKER

Psst! Psst! Let me hear! What our colleague says is  
often most sensible.

FOURTH BANKER

Colleagues, when I consider the ocean of anarchy  
where this country is drowning

I tell myself that only the final solution remains for us.

Yes, before this upstart Congo, immense and  
embarrassing,

the thought comes that it would be improper  
that from this enormous and formless aggregate

Our Katanga could not leave at will.

FIRST BANKER

Ah! I've understood you! Now I embrace you.

\$ Long live free uranium! That's good, no?

FIFTH BANKER

Not only uranium! Diamonds! Copper! [36] Cobalt! \$4  
So Katanga it is! Katanga loud and staggering!

Scene 7

*Night club—Elite Club. Between two records of Franco de Mi Amor, one hears the whispering voice of an announcer.*

[ANNOUNCER] → *voix*

This is African Moral Rearmament. To work, citizens! To work! I say to work as I would say 'to arms!' A war has begun, people of Congo, a war for the future of the country. Equally the mobilization of the labouring classes must be total, unconditional, conscious, voluntary! The days that the Congo has lived are like prehistoric times. But with Independence we have accessed the historic age, and the age of history, citizens, it's the age of work. To work! To work, citizens.

*Then another voice is raised, that of Revenge.*

[REVENGE] → *voix*

Awake, awake, the people of Congo. Close your ears to the noise of cranes! Leave your holes, your studios, your factories! But for revenge, and to make

A SEASON IN THE CONGO

demands! Independence should not be an empty word.  
Believe me, the word is not empty for the whole world.

[37] Ask your parliamentarians and your ministers. DON'T

Cars, they are for ministers and deputies. Father  
Christmas, he's for the monocled niggers. Father  
Christmas should be for all! That's how we understand  
the Independence of the Congo! Long live the  
Congolese Independence!

USE WHAT  
MAKES THE  
CONGO

*Scene invaded by Congolese soldiers, semi-drunk, belts in  
hand and chanting: 'Down with politicians! Lumumba good-  
for-nothing, Lumumba pamba, Lumumba pamba! . . . ?'*

Intelligence even

viewed as evil - we just

take place as

white (Ford)

Scene 8

*The light changes. We are at Kalina,  
in the Prime Minister's office.*

LUMUMBA

Call me Makessa. Kangolo absent: fine leader of the  
Cabinet! Useless to look for Sissoko—he's sleeping! He  
doesn't get up before night. And you think that it'll go  
on this way. Shit! Shit! Gentlemen, who are we? I will  
take the trouble to tell you. Galley-slaves, we are galley-  
slaves. I am a galley-slave, a voluntary one. You are, you  
should be, galley-slaves, men condemned to ceaseless

work. You have no right to rest. You are at Congo's disposal, 24/7! Private life, zero! No private life. In exchange, you will have no material care! . . . Because you won't have the time to have them. I know, I know.

I seem to want a lot, I seem adventurous, what do I know, me, the backbreaker? Yes, that's it, it looks like I want to go too fast. Ah well! A band of sluggards, yes, we must move fast, we must [38] move too fast. Do you know how much time I have to reassemble fifty years of history? Three months, gentlemen! And you think I have the time not to move too fast!

M'POLO

President, soldiers! Soldiers! They are coming!

LUMUMBA

Soldiers? What the fuck are they up to? Soldiers? They are screaming? What are they screaming?

M'POLO

They are coming to attack you, President! They are screaming: 'Death to Lumumba! Lumumba pamba!'

LUMUMBA

*Enraged*

Nothing else? Jerks, traitors, Flemish, all Flemish! Flemish, bastard Flemish! When I think that for fifty

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years they have crawled in front of Belgians, yet as soon as we have put our ass on a sofa, they start to bite our shins.

A MINISTER

What fun! It's starting off well, Independence!

LUMUMBA

Idiot! How did you believe it would start? And how do you think it will go on? How do you think it would take place? When I named you ministers, did you have the impression that I was inviting you to a party? Anyway, I don't take you for traitors. All. We will have everything, and at once? And right away: revolt, sabotage, [39], threat, calumny, blackmail, treason. You look startled! That's it, power—treason, perhaps death.

No doubt death. And that's the Congo! Do you follow—the Congo is a country where everything goes fast. Today a grain in soil, and tomorrow a bush—what am I saying!—a forest, rather! And things that go fast will have a follow-up. Don't count on me to relent! M'polo let those braying fools in, I'll speak to them . . . and make their hearts turn to the base of their chests.

*Enter the soldiers' delegation.*

Enter, gentlemen. Ah! How I regret that you have not brought civilians with you, the gentlemen of Apic and

Otraco who, so valiantly put the knife at our throat today! I would have asked them if there is decency when, for fifty years, they kept their mouths shut and trembled before the Belgians, in not granting to a Congolese government, a government of the Congolese, to a government of brothers who have only just put themselves in place, a delay of a few months so they access the files for study and revisit all the problems! As for you, soldiers, I won't beat around the bush. Your demands are legitimate. I understand them, and I want to do the right thing! As a public army you were commanded by the Belgians—as a national army you require that you be commanded by nationals. What is more natural? And we hesitated, no more than an instant, before that measure of radical Africanization, only because our goodwill was stopped by the malevolence and the prejudices of General Massens. Take a leaf out of that book, gentlemen: see how colonialism tricks you, how pig-headed it is, how fatal. But we have rejected Massens.

[40] SOLDIERS

Down with Massens! Down with Massens!

LUMUMBA

Massens is dismissed and the government justifies your claims. So the government will promote each of you to



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a higher grade: private first class becomes sergeant, the  
sergeant becomes adjutant . . .

SOLDIERS

No! no! Colonels, Generals!

MOKUTU

Mr Prime Minister, what the troops demand is a total  
immediate Africanization of the cadres. Given where  
things are at the moment, there's not a minute to lose!

LUMUMBA

The problem has not escaped the government. I am in  
a position already to announce to you that the govern-  
ment envisages, no decides . . . no, has decided, to  
name, from this day onwards, a Congolese General, and  
a Colonel, also Congolese. The General is Lundula, and  
the Colonel our Secretary of the young State, M'polo,  
here present.

SOLDIERS

No! no, not M'polo, he's not a soldier, he's a politician.

SOLDIERS

It's Mokutu that we want. Down with M'polo! Long  
live Mokutu! Mokutu has seven years' public force  
experience! That one's a soldier!

[41] LUMUMBA

You choose Mokutu. So be it! I ratify your choice. It's true, Mokutu is a soldier, and Mokutu is my friend, Mokutu is my brother. M'polo was named by the government! Well, as for me, I name Mokutu. But no more of this. The question is settled! The problem is no more if you will be officers because, from now on, you are: officers on parade? Officers for profit? Officers of a new caste system? What the government wishes is that you should be the officers of the Congolese people, animated by the spirit of the Congolese people and resolved to do fierce battle for the preservation of the Independence of the Congo. Are you willing?

SOLDIERS

Yes! Yes! Long live Lumumba!

LUMUMBA

Soldiers and officers of the Congo, if the enemy comes, and it is not impossible that it will be sooner than we think, they must be made sorry, as are falcons, when they try to grab the meat that villagers are busy roasting, and singe their talons!

Long live the Congolese National Army,  
long live the Congo!

*Soldiers cheer.*

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SANZA PLAYER

*Sings*

Fire pollen

Drunken sowing times

Little bird flying back and forth

[42] Little bird forgetful

Of glue and of the slingshot

What a bird brain, says the trap,

The bird has forgotten the trap,

The trap remembers the bird.

people are bird  
= trap  
bird - intelligent  
LUMINOUS  
now the trap  
two birds  
one bird  
if it is

Scene 9

*In darkness, White refugees cross the stage carrying what they can . . . These are the colonizers with their biloko.*

*Suddenly, red lights light up an immense map of the Congo.*

*Above, on a balcony and in half-darkness, two shadows:*

*Basilio and Massens.*

FIRST TRANSMITTER

Myosotis calls Gardenia, Myosotis calls Gardenia!

Hallo, hallo, answer Gardenia.

SECOND TRANSMITTER

Angel, Betty calls Angel. It is announced that a dozen cars with women and children are moving towards the base of Kitona! We ask you to come to meet them.

AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

THIRD TRANSMITTER

Myosotis calls Gardenia, hallo Gardenia. We are transmitting new receptions received just this minute from Luluabourg in Kasai province. Twelve hundred Europeans removed from the apartment building called Immoekasai have been besieged by Congolese troops with machine guns and mortars. Please [43] send rescue troops. Extremely urgent. Over and out.

FOURTH TRANSMITTER

Phoenix—hello, Phoenix. Transmitting from Juba. Watsa troops—general revolt. Forty Belgian officers—prisoners with their families, suffering abuse, mutiny. Over.

*Enter Basilio and Massens dressed as Belgian Generals.*

MASENS

Ah well Your Majesty! The experience is conclusive!  
They've made our Congo a pigsty!

BASILIO

What a pity!

MASENS

Your Majesty, these are brutes that we must bring to reason and I see only one way.

A SEASON IN THE CONGO

BASILIO

I know Massens, I know. A means to which international law unfortunately does not allow us access.

MASSENS

Your Majesty, there's no more time to encumber ourselves with legal scruples. The saving of European lives, of human lives, is an imperative which exceeds all others!

BASILIO

All others, it's true Massens. All right. I give you carte blanche.

[44] MASSENS

*In a thundering voice*

Soldiers! Onward!

*Vision of Belgian para-commandos in action.*

*Black.*

SANZA PLAYER

*Giving the Congolese battle cry*

Men of Congo! Luma! Luma!

*Battle tom-toms resonate for a long time in the night, transmitting the news of Belgian aggression.*

Scene 10

*When the light returns, we are on a plane above  
Elizabethville. Wind, rain, lightning.*

LUMUMBA

What weather! Look! Look! The wind is uprooting the trees. What a rain! The weather is as bad as the Congo situation, and that's a lot to be said. It's as if a herd of ghostly elephants are charging through a forest of bamboo. It's the rainy season starting! A bit early, no?

KALA-LUBU

It's surely not good weather . . . but when God worries, our ignorance says that it's foggy.

LUMUMBA

Pilot, why are you waiting to make a landing? This is an unending voyage. Where are we?

PILOT

We are above Elizabethville, but, Excellency, it's that we are caught in a genuine tropical thunderstorm and here's the radio explaining something.

*He is given a paper. Reads.*

Okay! M'siri and Tzumbi in person at the control tower. Katangan authorities refuse permission to land.

A SEASON IN THE CONGO

LUMUMBA

M'siri? Tzumbi? The Katangan authorities? Are we, yes  
or no, the Congolese authorities? And Katanga is, yes  
or no, part of the Congo? Pilot! Land! Land, I tell you,  
whatever happens!

PILOT

Impossible, Sir. The weather's terrible and, as you see,  
they've just turned off the runway lights. I'm obliged to  
regain height!

tailor  
saw

LUMUMBA

Miserable traitor! Black Belgian! You join up with those  
who would dismember the Congo! You turn your  
back!

*Meanwhile, the plane regains altitude.*

PILOT

Mr President, which direction?

KALA-LUBU

Leopoldville.

LUMUMBA

No! Armaments! Armaments! To Moscow!  
To Moscow!

Scene 11<sup>1</sup>

*When stage lights come on, we are at the Congolese parliament in Leopoldville. As the senators seat themselves, Sanza Player passes. He sings.*

SANZA PLAYER

Palm wine brewer who climbs  
to the top of the palm tree,  
Come down, little ant  
Come down little sparrow  
The good souls sing at the foot of the palm tree  
Palm wine brewer you climb, you climb  
Sparrow drunk on freedom!

FIRST SENATOR

Dear and honourable colleagues, the Congo has become a vast graveyard; the Belgians have behaved like the Roman legions.

SECOND SENATOR

I draw the attention of the government to the question of finance, yes! Finance! Congo's treasure has been dissipated, volatilized in the North wind. Where to go to in search of money, now? The Bank of the Congo has been transferred to Katanga. Are we going to sleep while Rome burns? This is the question I ask the government. As for me I do not hesitate to say that I'd like to die in my senator's robes.



## A SEASON IN THE CONGO

### THIRD SENATOR

We are not here to dishearten each other comrades, that is certain. However, there are things that we cannot pass over in silence. Our Prime Minister and our President are never here. We must have the courage to point this out to their face. When one believes they are in Leo, they are in Matadi. When one says Matadi, they are in Banane. In Banane they tell us they are in Moanda and Boma. They fly from left to right, here and there, and always together. Think of it, gentlemen! In a civilized country, when the husband goes out, the wife should stay home. I demand that the Senate take my wishes into consideration.

### LUMUMBA

And I, let me assure you, gentlemen, that we do not travel enough. Ah! As for me, I'd have liked to multiply myself, divide myself, become countless myself to be present everywhere at once. Matadi, Boma, Elizabethville, Luluabourg, to thwart everywhere the countless plots of the enemy! For the plots of the enemy break out everywhere! The plot, the Belgian plot, I see it hatching since the first day of our Independence, hatched by men tormented by resentment and denatured by hatred. I see it in the features of General Massens, raising the public forces against the

government, to whom we were designated, all of us, as a collection of politicians and profiteers without scruples! The Belgian plot? I see it in the person of the Ambassador of Belgium in Leo, Sir Van den Putt, sabotaging, derailing and, to disorganize our republic better, massively organizing the exodus of his functionaries. The Belgian plot? I see it in the General's uniform, preparing methodically, and from the first day, without dropping parachutes and his raids of soudards. The Belgian plot? It's the friendship treaty the Belgians have signed with us, torn up like a bit of scrap paper. It's the bases that we have conceded to them, transformed into bases for aggression against us. The Belgian plot? It's Kabolo, Boloma, Matadi! Matadi and its heaps of cadavers! But the most serious has just been produced. Today, 11 July 1960, Tzumbi, our brother Abraham Tzumbi, helped by M'siri, Tzumbi, counselled, pushed, patronized, financed, and armed by the Belgians, without preliminary consultation with the population, has just proclaimed the independence of our richest province, Katanga! And the first act of that independent Katanga is, as if by chance, to make a treaty with the Belgians for military and economic cooperation. Is it sufficiently clear, the Belgian plot? People of the Congo, it is this plot that we must break,

as one breaks the paws of the frog in the water. People of the Congo, are you going to let our dearly conquered Independence be assassinated? And to you as well, Africans, my brothers, Mali, Guinea, Ghana, to you beyond the borders of the Congo, we cry. Africa! I am screaming to you! Do they think there is a deafness in the African ear? Or a weakness around the heart? Or do they believe the hand of Africa is too short to deliver us? I know well that colonialism is powerful. But I swear by Africa: all united, all together, we will pierce the monster by the nostrils! My brothers, the Congo has already carried off a [49] great victory. We have launched an appeal to the UN, and the UN has looked at our appeal favourably. Tomorrow, the Secretary General of the United Nations Organization, Mr Hammarskjöld, whose impartiality and probity are appreciated in the Third World, will be among us, in Leopoldville. We have confidence in him! The UN will speak the law and justice will be done to us! I do not doubt it! In the face of the world! Justice full and whole! Gentlemen, I am done with it. To say everything in a word, it is our independence, it is our existence as a nation, it is our freedom and all that *dipenda* represents for the people—such are the stakes. Now I look at you, and through you, I look at all the

Congolese people, eyes in your eyes, and I repeat to  
them the words of our song Kikongo:  
My brother, things that belong to you  
You hold in your hand  
If another wants to grab it  
Will you accept?  
Do you know the response?  
*Kizola ko!* I do not accept!

*Deputies rise and shout*

THE DEPUTIES

*Kizola ko!* I do not accept! We do not accept!

## Scene 12

*Dark, then light.*

*As a number of European experts group themselves in the  
back, around Hammarskjöld, Sanza Player walks past on  
the first floor and sings.*

[50] SANZA PLAYER

Father Congo

You carry with you flowers, and islands.  
What pumps your grey heart  
And breaks you up with hiccups?

A SEASON IN THE CONGO

HAMMARKSJÖLD

*To his experts*

Gentlemen, I am sure that all of you sense, like me, the extreme importance of this moment when we walk for the first time on Congolese soil. The Congo is not only a country, a state, an unhappy state, which solicits our aid and needs our protection. It is a testing ground for the international public service which is our organization—testing ground par excellence! Also the work that awaits you is not the marginal work of the expert. We are working here at the future of the world. Let us act then with our best intelligence for the creative evolution in which we have the privilege of collaborating.

Gentlemen, if in this solemn moment I could synthesize the spirit in which you undertake your task here in the Congo rather than simply summarize my instructions, I would have recourse to the words of the poet:

‘I don’t know you, lawsuits, and my view is that we  
should live!

With the torch in the wind,

With the flame in the wind,

And that all men, among us, mingle so well in that  
flame and are so consumed in it

That by that growing torch more clarity is  
illuminated in us . . . the flesh is an irritation where  
the soul’s zeal still makes us rebellious.

And it is a time of great good fortune, when the great  
adventurers of the soul

[51] urge their step on men's pathways, interrogating  
the whole world

in its expanse, to know the direction of this great  
disorder, interrogating.

Their bed, the waters of the sky, and the relays  
of the river of shadows on earth

Perhaps even troubled by  
not hearing a response . . . ?

But here are our guests. Meditate on these words,  
gentlemen, meditate upon them for a moment and  
gain strength from them, at this moment when in a  
new chivalry, I throw you into the burning road of  
humanity.

*Addressing the Congolese—*

Gentlemen, members of the Congolese government,  
I'm happy to have come to the Congo at the moment  
when the United Nations, at the request of the Con-  
golese government, place their resources at their dispo-  
sition, to help the leaders to establish the groundwork  
for a prosperous and happy future. It is normal that,  
looking at me the first time, you will see who I am. I  
have come to tell you: I am a neutral man. It has some-  
times been asked if there can be such a thing, a neutral

man. Ah yes, I exist! Thank God! I exist! And I am a neutral man. The problems in the Congo must be solved by a normal political and diplomatic process. I want to say that they must be solved not by force and intimidation, but in the spirit of justice and peace. That is why neutral men can work here and help the Congo effectively to find a satisfying solution for her problems.

For what after all is it to be a neutral man if it is not to be a just man? Need I specify that I mean that word in

its most exacting sense and if I daresay, its most pregnant sense: 'Those,' says Master Eckhart, 'who have left their own selves completely; who seek nothing here below or up above, nor beside themselves. Those [52] who pursue neither goods nor glory, neither approval nor pleasure, neither interest, nor sanctity, nor yet recompense, but are detached from all that.'

In short, those who give God his due, and from whom God receives his honour.

That, gentlemen, is the spirit in which we come to you.

To help you calm the passions, to soothe spirits!

To pacify hearts! Justice therefore and peace! With these words I greet the Congo! Long live the Congo, peaceful and happy!

Scene 13

*While the Congolese crowd celebrates Congolese Independence by dancing and singing the cha-cha, the Great Western Ambassador moves front-stage.*

GREAT WESTERN AMBASSADOR — *firemen*

I know well that as a nation we have a bad reputation. We are accused of shooting fast, but can one do the politics of the rocking chair when the world acts, for nothing, and peoples get to the boiling point! When peoples do not behave like decent people, it is necessary that someone makes them decent. It is to us that Providence has given that task. Thank you Lord! . . . and so, you've heard how they shouted on the plane: 'To Moscow! To Moscow!' Ah well, people should know that we are not just policemen, we are also the firemen of the world! Firemen designated to circumscribe the fire lit everywhere by Communist pyromania! I say 'everywhere!' in the Congo, as elsewhere! Greetings to the good listener!

*America during cold war, war  
keep in mind it's Russia out of  
newly independent African countries →  
will try to step in to help*



[53] **Act II**



[55] Scene 1

*African bar, same as Act I. Back and forth of women and  
Mama Makosi. Lumumba, Mokutu and some friends sit.*

LUMUMBA

As for me, I love these places . . . I know that it ticks  
off Pharisees of all sorts, but . . .

MOKUTU

It is a fact that people will not stop presenting interna-  
tional public opinion to us, like monkeys in heat!

Ministers and officers, can we go on visiting these  
places of our youth? It's a question that can be asked.

You are now a Mbota Mutu! Think upon it!

AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

CROWD

. . . Birds!

MOKUTU

What do these rumblings signify?

[56] CROWD

*Grunting*

Eh? I'm talking about birds . . . strange birds, white shirt but black in the ass.

LUMUMBA

Bizarre, this filth. As for your question, Mokutu—for me it is resolved. . . . It's great to see our delicate friends pinch their noses before the low dives of Leopoldville. I think the Americans do likewise in Harlem! And if the oppressors allow only the freedom of vice to the oppressed?

MOKUTU

Surely you're not thinking of discussing matters of state here! Say what you like, the Congo is a great brothel!

LUMUMBA

I'll reflect on the proposition Mokutu . . . but let's be serious: Europe came, and the Congo has not collapsed, no! Worse!—the Congo has started to decompose. It

A SEASON IN THE CONGO

has started to decompose limb by limb, and to stink! It's all over—state, family, man. So much so that this hovel with its interloping and mixed crowd may be the very image of our Congo today. Garbage in the sun!—at least it's encouraging to see the sprouts of renewal point their heads from time to time through the compost.

*To the approaching Mama Makosi*

So, Mama Makosi?

MAMA MAKOSI

Patrice, can I count on you for our levee ball of [57] mourning? It'll be great—we've rented the Elite Bar!

MOKUTU

Mama Makosi, be careful! One cannot ask the Prime

Minister what one could ask of friend Patrice . . .

MAMA MAKOSI

Oh! You know, Patrice will always be Patrice for us. Where he goes, we'll go. And I'm sure he'll come where we are. There's someone not ashamed of his friends.

A GIRL

Oh! Yes! It would be so great! As a union singer, I've discovered a great song, y'know.

*Sings*

'When I tie on my green bandanna . . .'

AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

*Madman passes between the tables and hums.*

MOKUTU

Who's that?

MAMA MAKOSI

A madman! Nothing doing for two days to show him the door. If you ask his profession, he answers:

[ 'Insulter of the nation!' ]

MOKUTU

Insulter of the nation?

LUMUMBA

That exists in certain tribes. Their role—abusing [58] the chiefs. Not that they take themselves too seriously.

It may be of use.

MOKUTU

What the fuck are the police doing?

LUMUMBA

Let's leave this bloody crowd alone. They don't bother anyone.

MADMAN

Thank you! Thank you! . . . So it's you, the new Whites . . . I wish you all fun with the Congo . . . I am only a poor savage . . . A kick in the butt has never frightened

A SEASON IN THE CONGO

me . . . But a glass of beer would surely make it  
a bit better.

*He drinks Mokutu's glass.*

*Mokutu makes a threatening gesture.*

Ah! God of the Christians, why did you allow the  
Whites to depart . . .

MOKUTU

Bah! Here's someone who can't go on living, because  
he doesn't have his ration of kicks everyday. It's an  
addiction like any other!

LUMUMBA

No, Mokutu, it's more serious . . . it seems plausible  
that one must have a head more solid than one of our  
villager's to support this truth that God is dead!

MADMAN

God, why did you make the Blacks so bad! *hope*

[59] MOKUTU

Better and better!

MADMAN

I went down river to find the White men who left my  
village, and I did not find them at all; the Whites have  
left the village and the Black men are bad! Black men  
are cursed by God . . .

AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

LUMUMBA

You see, Mokutu, the usefulness of frequenting these places! Mama Makosi, thanks to your bar for permitting me to measure at one go the bitter extent of our truth and what evil we must still conquer, these people! Mama Makosi, you can count on me, I will be at your mourning levee ball, and I'll bring my ministers!

SANZA PLAYER

Let's lift this mask. I've said enough from it. I've done enough of it! Certain things are shown to those who have good eyes. The rest, they see it by themselves. Also, what there is to see is more than clear. No need of a great wind to lay bare the chicken's ass!

## Scene 2

*In Kalina, meeting of Congolese ministers*

LUMUMBA

Gentlemen, the situation is such that there isn't a minute to lose! The battle that we are engaged in [60] right now, a battle on all fronts, is neither more nor less than a battle for the survival of the Congo.

CROULARD

Excuse me, excuse me, Excellency, before you start, I



A SEASON IN THE CONGO

must advise you that the Joint Secretary of the United Nations, Mr Bunche, greatly insists that he wishes to see you . . .

LUMUMBA

Who asked him to come? Who summoned him? Hold it, Croulard, since you saw fit to interrupt me, pass over the dossier on the chieftainships. . . . Also, gentlemen, we must revisit the question of visas. One enters the Congo just like that, without visa! Or, worse, with a Belgian visa!

CROULARD

Excellency, Mr Bunche is really insisting . . . he says that . . .

LUMUMBA

Croulard! Will you let us work?

*Rushes to the phone.*

Hallo? Hallo Stanleyville? Is it you Jean? . . . Ok . . . prepare the meeting. I will speak . . . I tell you right away, it will make a noise! Wait for the suppression of chieftainships and the mobilization of the unemployed: Hallo? Ah! I forgot! Don't forget to order beer! . . . tons of beer! . . . Yes, beer for the entire population!

. . . Bye!

*Hangs up.*

200 10

*Enter Isaac Kalonji.*

[61] ISAAC

Greetings! Greetings everyone . . . all this is well and good, my dear Prime Minister. But tell me, when do we enter Katanga? I don't understand that we hesitate so long. All we have to do is to dash off to Bakwanga! There our partisans are rising . . . Albert Kalonji has fled . . . Tzumbi is saying his prayers . . .

M'POLO

I agree with Isaac.

We must seize Bakwanga. Who has the diamond has the crown!

LUMUMBA

The only thing we have to do, as you say! Well, the only thing we have to do is to give me airplanes! I am thinking about it, Isaac, I'm thinking about it!

MOKUTU

Not only airplanes, Mr President . . . troops also, troops! . . . No money, no troops! The military is like that! And for the last two months it hasn't been paid!

LUMUMBA

Good! Good! We'll give you money!

A SEASON IN THE CONGO

MOKUTU

Thank you! But you haven't come to the end of my grumbling. I do not like the work of amateurs. You've named me Colonel, I'd like to be a serious Colonel.

LUMUMBA

And then?

[62] MOKUTU

Well, it is that I've learned that M'polo moves around everywhere, as the fancy takes him, with a colonel's kepi on his head and a switch . . . Any rate, the government must choose between the two of us. Either him or me!

LUMUMBA

Look, Mokutu, there's nothing to be angry about . . . it was while you were on tour. We thought it was prudent to name M'polo as Colonel, him too. The two of you is not too many to confront the situation. Be advised that if you don't agree, one can name you General and leave the post of Chief of Staff to M'polo.

*Brouhaha.*

SANZA PLAYER

Yes, that's it . . . it's a good compromise . . . that way everyone has satisfaction.

AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

MOKUTU

I'm sorry. I say it bluntly: the Army is not a circus.  
Rather than take part in your folly, I'd like to resign.

LUMUMBA

Good! Mokutu is Chief of Staff. Let him remain so.  
M'polo will be advised later. While waiting, leave your  
uniform just there!

M'POLO

Ah! I see, papa's darling! Mr President, I am brutal, but  
treason lurks all around you and you don't see it! When  
will you open your eyes, then?

[63]MOKUTU

Watch what you say, M'polo. I am not in the mood to  
tolerate your pranks!

M'POLO

I hate false tokens.

MOKUTU

And I crude persons.

LUMUMBA

Peace! we are a team. There is no 'papa's darling'. You  
are both dear to me and both, each in his own style,  
useful for the Congo.

A SEASON IN THE CONGO

M'POLO

Chief, I hope some day you don't regret having put your confidence in those who don't deserve it. Spies, saboteurs, at every step here, one sees such vermin raise parano!  
their heads. Ah! It disgusts me!

LUMUMBA

*Violently*

Enough! . . . Anyway, Croulard, are those dossiers on chieftainships arriving? All those little potentates who helped the colonizers to crush our people! Those watchdogs of the Belgians, they must disappear and give place to the true elites . . . And where would we find them, the true elite, if not among the people! So Croulard, the files?

CROULARD

It's just that I can't find them, Excellency . . . There is such a bazaar here! At least look at this big packet that I wasn't looking for! . . . I opened it—and what do I discover? Take a guess?—a pile of messages! These are the mes[64]sages through which scores of nations recognize the Republic of the Congo! And no one has read them! Since a fortnight! It's a bazaar! I tell you, it's a bazaar!

*disorganised*

AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

LUMUMBA

It's good, Croulard, that you are there to put a little order there!

MOKUTU

*Grumbling*

And also for putting his nose into a lot of stuff that does not concern him!

M'POLO

Comrade Prime Minister, we were just now speaking of Katanga. Rather than Katanga, we could perhaps take Leopoldville. The youth of Abako hold the heights of the streets, and now they make so bold as to come boo us under our very windows.

MOKUTU

Attention, gentlemen! To touch Abako is to touch the President, whether one wishes to or not!

LUMUMBA

M'polo, you are the Minister of Youth, dammit! What prevents you from organizing the young people yourself? Congolese National Movement, Youth wing! To all Abako demonstrations, you respond by a CNM counter-demonstration! And there you are! It really isn't a question of state!

A SEASON IN THE CONGO

M'POLO

Okay, Chief . . . that didn't fall on deaf ears!

[65] LUMUMBA

Bravo M'polo!

*Enter Chief of Police.*

Hey my policeman? What's new?

DIRECTOR OF POLICE

Excellency, yet another article by Gabriel Makoso on  
Christian conscience! A diatribe from Msgr Malula . . .  
and then the tracts, a shower of tracts! . . .

LUMUMBA

I know tracts, I can recite them by heart: Lumumba has  
sold the Congo to the Russians, Lumumba has sold his  
soul to the devil! Lumumba has received many millions  
from the Czech ambassador!

*Taking the newspaper*

Now this is more serious.

*He scans it quickly.*

Oh! Oh! Monsignor is not pulling his punches! Take a  
look M'polo, read this aloud.

M'POLO

*Reading*

'It is appropriate to denounce secularism forcefully, that  
rubbish from the West imported to the Congo by the

suspect  
of corrup

local government! Death to the enemies of religion,  
wherever they are, to Freemasons such as Makessa,  
and to those who flatter themselves as atheists, like  
the vile Lumumba!

LUMUMBA

Eh! Not bad for a bishop! 'Vile Lumumba!' Ah well,  
the vile Lumumba will make news! [66] These gentle-  
men want a fight! We will fight. We will fight, and we'll  
give blow for blow! Policeman, make arrangements,  
you arrest Makoso and close his journal. One down!

MOKUTU

Mr President, forgive me! Isn't this unwise? I'm afraid  
of a backlash.

LUMUMBA

Careful Mokutu, work with what concerns you; I say  
to you once and for all . . . you occupy yourself with  
the Army, I agree, but politics, that's my affair.

As for a backlash, don't worry, I'll face it . . .

Gentlemen, either we strike, or we allow ourselves to be  
beaten! Ah well! We will strike. I ask that all power be  
given to Lundula for a decisive action in the country:  
the Army will arrest whomever, White or Black, who  
wishes to make trouble. No remission! No hesitation!  
Go for it, there is a terrific rumble in Abako! They wish  
to hold a congress in Thysville. You see the movements



# A SEASON IN THE CONGO

from here! They are preparing to secede! Yet another secession! Ah well, there will be no congress. I prohibit the congress! Moreover these gentlemen would be wrong to complain: they have not respected the regulatory delay of two weeks' notice, as provided by law . . . all right, Sirs?

M'POLO

Comrade Prime Minister, we agree, the law should be the law! There is no privilege for anyone!

LUMUMBA

As for Katanga, Isaac is right to insist. It is the essential question. Resolving it, we will resolve all [67] the rest . . . I'll see Hammarskjöld . . . the UN's mission is to help us . . . You'll have your planes, Mokutu, you will have your planes! As Isaac says, Tzumbi has only to say his prayers!

*Sanza Player passes, and sings.*

SANZA PLAYER

Sun and rain

Beating rain

Rising sun

[An elephant

Makes a babe.]

strong & sing

word time

hopeful + 10

new 900

represent & make

Scene 3

LUMUMBA

Mr Secretary General, who could have told me that I, having summoned the United Nations here, I, being the first to have every confidence in this organization, should make words to you words not of gratitude but of reproach and incrimination! Believe me, I regret it greatly. But it is only too true that you have given to the resolution voted in by the Security Council an altogether personal interpretation: the Belgians are still in the Congo! And the UN enters into conversation with the traitor Tzumbi!

HAMMARSKJÖLD

I am the Secretary-General of the United Nations. I am accountable only to its General Assembly. Permit me however to [68] indicate to you that I did not receive a mandate to put Katanga through blood and fire.

LUMUMBA

You cancelled the military operations which would have allowed us to enter Elizabethville without opposition.

HAMMARSKÖLD

If I've cancelled or differed them, it is because Bunche's reports were formal: Elizabethville should have been conquered house by house.

A SEASON IN THE CONGO

LUMUMBA

You can't be serious! The population of Katanga bear Tzumbi's yoke impatiently. They would have greeted you as a liberator! But you thought you should make contact with the rebel . . .

HAMMARSKJÖLD

Mr Prime Minister, I've done what my conscience dictated. It is a point of doctrine, a point of my doctrine that the UN cannot take part in an internal conflict, constitutional or otherwise, and that its military forces cannot be used to force the issue! Not that there aren't problems, but I do not despair of solving these problems. I believe I sensed in President Tzumbi a man not without, if I may say so, a certain wisdom. I will spend my time in reasoning with him and convincing him. At any rate, this country has suffered enough. I do not want, by undertaking a military campaign, to add yet further to its unhappiness.

LUMUMBA

I know you by the taste of your concern! But tell me? For this country, what unhappiness is greater than resignation to [69] the secession of its richest part? Katangese resistance? Tzumbi and M'siri may well laugh—they have already retained retirement villas in

AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

Rhodesia. Your Bunche has allowed himself to be abused like a child. Bunche made a mistake! Unless . . . After all, Bunche is American . . .

HAMMARSKJÖLD

That Bunche is American is of no importance. I do not allow anyone to doubt the honesty and impartiality of my collaborators. A neutral man, I am myself surrounded by neutral men who hold international interests as coming before all consideration arising out of their own national origin.

LUMUMBA

I leave to history the task of judging this. Whatever that may be, and because the UN has stopped short of its obligations, its duty, its mission, the government of the Republic of the Congo will assume the responsibilities that are its own. By force we will reduce Katangese secession. Our troops are ready to enter a campaign. It must be finished before the rainy season. I think the UN will not refuse to lend us a few planes to transport soldiers!

HAMMARSKJÖLD

Planes? I thought I had made you understand that, by definition, the forces of the UN are the forces of peace, not the forces of aggression!

A SEASON IN THE CONGO

LUMUMBA

Look at this now, the impartiality of the UN. See them, the neutral men! Belgian arms and the affluent mercenaries of the Congo! They unload them every day, and you allow it!

[70] HAMMARSKJÖLD

You are unjust, I have sent a very firm note about this to the government in Brussels.

LUMUMBA

A note, yes, a note! The secession fortifies itself every day as it waits, seen and known by the whole world, and you, not only do you not act but you don't allow us to act! That's rich! The Congo will do without your help: in spite of everything, we have some friends left in the world! We will do without neutral men!

HAMMARSKJÖLD

I allow myself to remind you that all external aid to the Republic of the Congo can come only through and by channels of the United Nations.

LUMUMBA

A powerful claim! Ah well, allow me in my turn to remind you that it is a point of doctrine, a point of my doctrine, that the Congo is an independent state, and

AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

that we have not shaken off the tutelage of the Belgians  
to fall, forthwith, under the tutelage of the United  
Nations! Goodbye, Mr Secretary-General. The Russians  
will lend me the planes that you are refusing me! In a  
few days we will be in Elizabethville! As for you,  
whatever happens, I hope you don't one day have to  
pay too dearly the price of your illusions.

HAMMARSKJÖLD

Mr Lumumba, I learned one thing very early: to say  
yes to Fate, whatever might befall. But since we are  
exchanging wishes, I [71] hope, whatever happens, that  
you don't have to pay too dearly one day, the price of  
your lack of wisdom and your impulsive nature . . .

Good-bye!

*Sanza Player passes, and sings.*

SANZA PLAYER

The magpie on a spike  
Ruffles its feathers and makes like a peacock  
'This spike belongs to me,' the magpie says  
Riches I do not want at all I  
Whoever is the spike of the magpie.

A SEASON IN THE CONGO

Scene 4

*Darkness, and then a half-light full of troublesome noise.  
Little by little we find ourselves in an atmosphere of clustered  
nightmares: women, magicians, warriors armed with  
assagai and blowguns.  
A voice is raised gradually—the voice of the Civil War.*

WAR

[ Boy! Pour the palm wine!

Hot and spiced

And all lemony in its lees,

Pour the palm wine! Drunk, it's my sword that I reclaim  
The sharpened sword that hangs on the peg,  
There where hang also the buffalo horn  
and the assagai!

[ Boy! Pour the palm wine!

When I am drunk, I take my bow down  
There where also hang the trumpet of war  
and assagai.

[ Boy! By day I'll fight

And in the evening I'll praise my bow,  
[72] Honouring it with the branch of a wild grapevine  
With the oil that I will cover it with in the evening  
In the evening it deserves to shine like a mirror  
[ Boy! My machete!

The brave man is not made to die in his bed,  
The brave man is an elephant ]

He's a spitting serpent!  
Brewer, pour the wine the colour of the enemy's blood  
We will look at it straight in the eye!  
Boy! Pour the palm wine!  
Wine, enemy blood? I don't know . . . I am drunk!  
The assagai is in our hands! Eiii!  
The assagai strikes and lies down in the wound!  
Enemy head, I'll take you round  
From village to village!

### Scene 5

*Kalina, Council of Congolese ministers.*

LUMUMBA

Gentlemen, I have big news to tell you. Bakwanga is  
taken: the traitor Kalonji is in flight.

KALA

Oh my! A victory that risks costing us as much  
as a defeat!

A MINISTER

I understand you, and I share your feelings. We must  
admit that the Congolese National Army handed out a  
stiff sentence! Six thousand Balubas killed! In the  
church of St John of Bakwanga, forty Baluba families



A SEASON IN THE CONGO

have been exterminated in [73] unbelievable conditions  
of cruelty! One could even say sadism!

SECOND MINISTER

The Army must be recalled!

THIRD MINISTER

The Congolese National Army has dishonoured us in  
front of the world!

LUMUMBA

Poor Balubas! Massacred by our own in Kasai! Exter-  
minated by Tzumbi's policemen in Katanga! They are  
called the Jews of Africa. All these pogroms make me  
come to believe it! But a military campaign is never a  
battle of confetti! *See end*

KALA-LUBU *necessary*

Nevertheless, look at us with the lovely flags! The world  
press, particularly the Belgian, is unleashed against us.  
As for Hammarskjöld, he vituperates at the UN and  
accuses us of genocide.

LUMUMBA

Now that is too much! And where was  
Mr Hammarskjöld, when the Belgians massacred our  
men and violated our women?  
And now, it's we the savages!

*See note  
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Belgians! Ah! They are truly good! And who raised the Luluas against the Balubas? Who made the Balubas believe that the Luluas only thought of making them lose? Who supported Chief Kalamba Mangole, and encouraged him to claim the recognition of a Lulua kingdom, from where the Balubas would be expelled rather than submit to the customary authority of the Lulua? Who made one group and the other believe that the existence of the one was incompatible with that of the other? 1959! Hey, you remember? [74] Balubas and Luluas eviscerated each other under the complacent eyes of the Belgian police! And where was Lumumba? In prison! Tell me about the civilized Christian world press! And then of the universal conscience! Old carbuncle on a horse's ass! With the swarms of flies over the putrid pus! No! but do they believe that I will let the Congo be skinned, for fear of their hysterical cries, like a mango, slice after slice, by the pecking bird?

Gentlemen, I challenge you!

*He laughs.*

I adjourn the entire tribunal! As a block! I adjourn everything en bloc. Your laws! Your rights! Your morals! Your code! Yes, Mr Ministers, let us rejoice! I would like each and every Congolese to drink a glass of beer to celebrate the capture of Bakwanga! This evening, I'll speak on the radio to celebrate the

capture of Bakwanga! And I want to dance this evening  
to celebrate the capture of Bakwanga! M'polo, we'll go  
tonight to the Elite Bar. No, to Cassian's! I know a  
Lulua girl! The prettiest! She's called Helen Jewel! And  
it's true! She's a true jewel of a woman! Inform her!  
This evening, I will dance with her! With a Lulua girl!  
In the face of the whole world!  
As for you, gentlemen of universal conscience, the way  
will be nicer, lit up by your grimaces!

Scene 6

*Cassian's bar.*

*Lumumba and Helen Jewel dance in a pink and green  
half-light.*

[75] HELEN

I dance the things of cavernous darkness  
In the thorns of the exile of fire and blood  
full, abundant, alive with snakes.

LUMUMBA

I dance the flowering of the man and his spit, the salt!  
And man alone, in the depth of self-alone experiences in  
disgust his flesh of tasteless cassava.

AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

HELEN

I dance the pavonia flower which makes the wheel  
around the sun when each beating of the eyelid of the  
star awakens the violet smoothness of easy blood.

LUMUMBA

I dance the governing vessel most high  
From its armoured border of desire's panic;  
It's the pavonia bird and its pavan.

HELEN

I dance happy speed, in the sowing of the sun,  
Of the incongruous little rain planting  
Its defeated brassy laughter in the tart flesh of  
The sea.

LUMUMBA

I dance the insect more beautiful than all names  
Which in the sliver of the ripe fruit instals  
A filigree of jet and obsidian, its lassitude fulfilled.

HELEN

See our dance danced  
And the refrain that closes its corolla  
As, proud of having supported the insupportable  
[76] Burnt to ashes and fulfilled, closes,  
The pavonia flower.

A SEASON IN THE CONGO

LUMUMBA

That's good, Jewel! Now we've danced the dance  
of my life!

Jewel, when I'm no longer around;

When I am defeated, as on

The night sky, the blinding meteor blinds,

When the Congo won't be more than a season which  
the blood seasons

Continue to be beautiful

Not keeping anything of the dreadful times

But some drops of rose-pink which make more moving  
the hummingbird's feathers for having

Passed through the storm.

Come, friend, no more sadness; let's dance till dawn  
and give me the heart to march

to the night's end!

Scene 7

*Presidential palace, Kala-Lubu's apartment*

KALA-LUBU

What blood! What horrors! The Luluas kill the  
Balubas! The Balubas exterminate the Luluas! And  
our Army, the Congolese National Army, massacres  
Everyone!

Oh! War! War!

Sure, I've given my consent. But do you think it's easy to say no to this [devil with a goatee! Anyway, it was he who decided. And it's normal that he has to suffer the consequences!

[77] And then, there is his casualness!

For proof—this incident with the UN soldiers! Bunche wanted to speak to him about it, and he sent him a flunkey. Naturally, Bunche finally dropped it in my lap! 'No one tells me anything!' I answered. And it's true! Not a thing! . . . Does he think I'm a guy to play the figurehead!

To be honest, he is bizarre. He will always surprise me. Often full of delicacy, even. I remember his words, when he left me to go to New York.

'President, I leave you my heart.'

I'm not inventing this! 'I leave you my heart,' they were the words of a true friendship . . . Ah!

That devil of a man!

What I will reproach him for most, would be perhaps that mobility! Agitated! Excited! A running flame, running! A fighting bird whose head looks for the prey!

Our ancestors were right, the true chief does not act. He is. He remains. He concentrates. It's a

concentration of being. A concentration of the land.

And concentrating, he casts his rays softly . . . *Sidra*

This one is hot-headed. He does not cast rays. *Unle!*

He lights up, he sets on fire. *Kintu-Kintu!*

Ah! If I let him, he'd set everything on its head! And the fire in the Congo, fire in the world! But I am here and I won't let him do it. I am here to save the Congo and himself from himself. Softly, Mr Patrice! Softly! Old Kala is there! He is there, devil take him! Yes, I'm here, and for a long time! He calls me the old one! I am not old! I am slow! They call me the tortoise, full of malice! One should rather say full of good sense! I come slowly, slowly. . . *Koukoutou Bouem! Koukoutou Bouem!* He is impetuous, a hot-head!

I do not like the impetuous, even when they are right! [78] They give you vertigo! And then, sooner or later, they run out of breath. But enough dreaming! I must write this discourse! To be honest, I don't see why they all pick on him so! But who don't they pick on! Ah! The world is bad now! Don't they spread the noise that Patrice leads me by the nose! That I have betrayed the Bakongo by accepting the presidency. They dare to write 'Kala is a woman in front of Lumumba!' . . .

'Kala is Lumumba's wife!'

... That's stupid! A president is the chief! He is the king! Moreover I can revoke it when I want, as I want!

The fundamental law gives me power! It is the president who decides, and the ministers execute. Of course, I do not intend to use that power. Patrice is intelligent, active, popular. Yes to that! He is popular! It's no use criticizing him, he is popular! And that is indeed a force, popularity! And I must take note of that ... But why the devil do they pick on him! Take this, their last find: Patrice is a communist, and I, protecting him, I play the game of international communism!

Me, it makes me laugh! Patrice communist! I remember his head, when, at my wit's end with the Belgians and in a moment of madness, I proposed to him sending a telegram to Khrushchev! Do you know what he answered? 'It is not possible, Mr President.

People say I'm already sold to the communists. If I do this, they will see this as additional proof that I am on sale at the Kremlin. You who are a Christian, you do it if you like. And still they will say that I have been manoeuvred!

So! Do you think he has manoeuvred me? He'd have to be crazily strong! Crazily strong! It is true that he is strong. Last week, the American Ambassador said to me: 'If Lumumba entered a meeting of Congolese [79]



A SEASON IN THE CONGO

politicians, a plate in hand, like a waiter in a cafe, he  
would leave President of the Council!’

But does he think it's that easy to take in old Kala!  
. . . Ah well! . . . I'll talk to Malula! The Monseigneur  
gives good advice . . . and I'll ask Mokutu to come  
with me . . .

*Smiles.*

Me too, I could have been bishop . . . think . . . we  
were fellow students at the seminary . . . bishop, for  
sure, I would have had less trouble . . . But one does  
not choose one's lot . . . My God! My God! Oh! This  
presidency! . . . Well, I go to write this speech! Let's go  
Kala! A little effort! A little effort.

*He starts to work again.*

*Sanza Player sings.*

SANZA PLAYER

Thoughts, lightning strokes

I see the toad croaking → *Shava shava*

Chameleon on his branch → *Shimushu*

He waits and holds his tongue.

Scene 8

*Lumumba's apartment. Lumumba and his wife.*

PAULINE

Patrice, I'm afraid . . . My God! My God! I feel in the shadows the pressure of hate, and I see everywhere termites, toads, spiders, all these vile animals in the service of envy. I think I see [80] around you a gathering of the net of all their dirty plots, Patrice! . . .

LUMUMBA

Why be afraid? It's true I have enemies . . . but the people are for me, it's the people! My safety, all I have to do is talk to them, they understand me, yes, and they follow me! We are in a revolution, Pauline, and in a revolution, it is the people that count!

PAULINE

The people, yes! But they are weak, the people, disarmed, the people! Gullible! And the enemies are strong! They persevere! Deceivers! Supported by the whole world!

LUMUMBA

Let's not exaggerate . . . I have friends too! Faithful friends! We are a team . . . as the proverb says: We are like the dog's hide, all sleeping on the same bunk!

A SEASON IN THE CONGO

PAULINE

Oh! Tell me about the team . . . I see tens of them who owe you everything, and who turn around you, and who still lie in wait for you! Some would sell you for a dish of lentils! I feel it!

LUMUMBA

Oh! Women! Can they be bad! Always imagining the worst!

PAULINE

And the men! And you? Gullible, confident! You are a child, Patrice! . . . look, as for me, I have no confidence in your Mokutu . . . you know very well that he has been the timekeeper for the Belgians . . .

} can you

[81] LUMUMBA

That's what they say, Pauline . . . but you know the situation we live in these days. Many have no choice but to die of hunger, themselves and their children, or else sell information! It's not nice, no doubt, it's not nice . . . although among those who slipped, there are recuperable persons . . . and Mokutu is one of them! He is smart, delicate, and more, he is grateful for the confidence that I show him. My confidence helps him to redeem himself in his own eyes . . . I answer for his loyalty.

✱ Mokutu might  
✱ betray him ✱

AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

PAULINE

God help you, Patrice! God help you!

LUMUMBA

Also he can't do anything against me, don't worry,  
Pauline . . . he can do nothing against me as long as  
Kala and I are united, and we are united!

PAULINE

Are you quite sure of that, Patrice? I think he is jealous  
of you . . .

LUMUMBA

I say it again: never has the unity of mind been more  
complete between Kala and me . . . he has his faults, no  
doubt, but he is a patriot . . . he is the chief of a power-  
ful ethnic group. An estimable ethnic group, the Bakon-  
gos! It is to them that the maxim applies: If one sees  
the cock's beak, one sees the whole cock!

PAULINE

Do I know this myself? There are so many people who  
are working hard to tarnish your reputation . . . He is  
secret . . . sly . . . In any case, be careful! . . . Sitting on  
his throne, bolt upright and serene like a god [82]  
made of copper, this redoubtable edifice, seems, for the  
moment, to have no other concern but to hold his scep-  
tre quite straight. But I believe that he is quite capable,

A SEASON IN THE CONGO

when the moment comes, and without declaring war  
(Oh! The most innocent air in the whole world!) to fall  
on your head like a bludgeon.

LUMUMBA

And you imagine that I'll let myself be crushed like  
that! And you imagine that I have neither means nor  
friends! But let's leave all this, Pauline . . . pass me my  
guitar, I feel tired . . .

*She gives him the instrument.*

. . . I don't know why . . . what comes to mind is a tune  
of sorrow . . . Pauline, do you know that Swahili song?

*The light is lowered slowly, while he sings on his guitar.*

Will you hang on  
Even with your fingers  
To a rotting tree?  
Life is a rotting tree!  
Even with your fingers  
Don't hang on to it!

Ouf! It's tiring, *dipenda!*

*He dozes off, then springs awake.*

Eh!

*In a nightmare, a group advances to front-stage: a bishop,  
Kala-Lubu and Mokutu. Kala-Lubu and Mokutu kneel  
on the ground.*

[83] BISHOP

My children, the moment has arrived to prove your love for the Church, and to bring the enemies of our holy religion to their senses. We have confidence in you! In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, so be it.

PAULINE

Poor Patrice! Come on, wake up! It's already time for your news!

*She turns on the radio and we hear the broadcast of a speech by Kala-Lubu.*

KALA-LUBU

My dear compatriots, I have a most important piece of news to announce: the Prime Burgomaster, sorry I meant to say the Prime Minister, who was named by the King of Belgium, according to the dispositions of the fundamental provisional law, has betrayed the task that was entrusted to him. He has had recourse to arbitrary measures that have provoked discord in the bosom of the government and the people. He has governed arbitrarily. He has deprived many citizens of their fundamental freedoms. And now, in addition, he is about to throw the country into an atrocious civil war. He has introduced into our community the most fearful evil: disorder, preventing our people from

## A SEASON IN THE CONGO

finding their equilibrium and their base. Disorder! Such a ferocious beast, let loose in our cities and villages!

That is why I have found it necessary to revoke the government immediately! I do it by virtue of the constitutional powers that have been conferred on me. I have named Joseph Iléo as the Prime Minister. Mr Iléo is charged with forming the new government. I can already say that I have total and unfailing [84] support of our admirable Congolese National Army and its Commander-in-Chief, Colonel Mokutu. I would like to be able to count equally on the discipline and patriotism of all the people of the Congo. God protect the Congo.

TAKING

MOVIES

chaos

### Scene 9

LUMUMBA

The bastard! But he has not yet heard the last of Lumumba Patrice! Done! It is I who has done it! But do you see that what's happening, M'polo, is perhaps, surely, a good thing? The Congo of the fundamental law, the two-headed Congo, the monstrous albino born of the hybrid fornication of the Round Table, I did not accept except during a time of compromise. Very good! Now comes the time to defeat King Kala. Also, I have informed the radio—I'll speak to the nation.

AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

M'POLO

*Entering.*

Great, you're right. We must strike, but try first to obtain the neutrality of the UN.

LUMUMBA

The UN? I frankly don't care. Moreover, the UN is a fiction. The situation is that, whatever the colour of their helmets, men and soldiers are coming from all the corners of Africa. And precisely our good fortune, M'polo, the radio, is in the hands of the Ghanaians. A soldier of N'Krumah cannot refuse help and assistance to Patrice Lumumba. Believe me, the game has not yet been played.

*He leaves.*

Scene 10

*Radio Palace.*

LUMUMBA

Wonderful to see you, Colonel. Ghana is a great country, dear to all truly African hearts. And I for my part will never forget that it is in Ghana—in Ghana and by N'Krumah—that the bird of Africa with its wings clipped by colonialism first shook off bastardization and



then, launching itself without fear or vertigo before the sun, felt itself to be something other than the heart of a silly falcon. → Gvora was ... independence

GHANA

Independence is one thing, and chaos is another. We are in a complete chaos, Mr Lumumba.

LUMUMBA

We will come out of it, Colonel, and you will help us do so. M'polo should have given you my message. The people need explanations and slogans. I will speak on the radio this evening. ← people are stupid I need a ...

[86] GHANA

I am informed, Mr Lumumba. Sorry, the instruction given by the UN representative, Mr Cordelier, is formal—all political activity in the Congo is suspended until the new government is established—no politician has access to the radio.

LUMUMBA

So it goes until the new government, Cordelier gives the orders here . . . let it go . . . At any rate, the UN's instructions are no longer valid for me—unless the President of the Congolese National Army has his partisans, it is the Prime Minister of the Congo who intends to address the Congolese nation.

AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

GHANA

Mr Lumumba, we have a proverb which says: The State is an egg. Clutched hard, it breaks. Not hard enough, it falls and breaks. I don't know if you have clutched too tight or not enough, but it's a fact—there is no longer a Congolese State.

LUMUMBA

Should I understand that you are taking the responsibility to forbid me from the radio of my own country?

GHANA

I am no more than a soldier, Sir. I execute orders.

LUMUMBA

Oh oh! Do you know, Sir, that your president is my friend? That Ghana, more than an ally, is a brother?

That the government at Accra has promised me, totally and unconditionally, its support? I tremble at the cowardice of your evasion as at the insolence of your pretensions, especially since, as I inform you loyally, [87] I cannot avoid referring to it by telegram to your president, to my friend, my brother,  
Kwame N'Krumah!

GHANA

Sir! In the Congo, I am not in the service of Ghana, but of the UN! Soldier, Sir! Not politician! As for my

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relationship with Kwame N’Krumah, him and me, we will explain this matter between ourselves, in a specific time and space, without your intervention. The Congo already has too many affairs in its hands.

### LUMUMBA

I’ve understood! Soldier? No! You are, and I will say it loud and clear—a traitor, a traitor twice over! What a day! N’Krumah writes to me: ‘Brother, one must remain colder than a cucumber.’ It’s true. One must carry in one’s veins, not Congolese blood but water, like a Ghanaian cucumber, to consider calmly, worse than poison and toad, worse than the scaly lizard rolled into a ball on its branch, worse than the long trembling cunning tongue of the menacing striped hyena, the indecent swarming of treacherous Africa.

### GHANA

#### *Pulling out his revolver*

Everyone knows that once you’re in this fucking country, one must be ready to expect anything, but man, there is a dirt that I’ve never tolerated, that I will never tolerate, and in this Congo full of shit even less than elsewhere, these are the insolences of a communist at bay.

AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

LUMUMBA

Shoot! Come on, shoot! See, I'm cool as a  
cucumber.

[88] GHANA

*Holstering*

All things considered, no! . . . The Congolese them-  
selves will take care of it, one of these days.

*Exit.*

SANZA PLAYER

Africans, this is the drama! The hunter discovers the  
crested crane at the top of the tree. By a stroke of luck  
the tortoise gets wind of the hunter. You will say that  
the crane is saved! And in fact, the tortoise informs the  
large leaf, which must inform the creeper, which must  
inform the bird! But I give a fuck for you. Everyone for  
himself! Result: the hunter kills the bird; takes the large  
leaf to wrap up the bird; cuts the creeper to wrap up  
the large leaf

. . . Ah! I forgot! He carries off the tortoise as well,  
over and above! Africans, my brothers, when will you  
understand?

crane = Congo

to a ...  
LUMUMBA

Kala has succeeded  
in taking Congo from  
him - but ...  
... danger during  
the period that  
100 pervades the  
Congolese  
elite.

A SEASON IN THE CONGO

Scene 11

*Lumumba's villa, surrounded by Mokutu's paramilitaries.*

LUMUMBA

Thank you for coming, thank you for having thought, as did I, that I had the right to an explanation.

MOKUTU

I am astonished that I have to explain the evidence! Civil war, foreign war, anarchy, I felt that you cost the Congo too dear, Patrice!

[89] LUMUMBA

Are you sincere? Do you really think you'll save the Congo? And it doesn't come to your mind that by sapping its institutions, ruining its legality, at the very moment when the country constitutes itself as a state, you make it run into the most mortal danger!

MOKUTU

It's for sure that you could have, by going it alone, facilitated the task for us. But there are things that one cannot expect of a politician. Now, I leave you! I have decided to neutralize power!

LUMUMBA

Excuse me! In politics, when I hear one of these big technical words, I dig my heels in, and I look every-

AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

where for the infamy that it hides. Concretely, where do  
you want to go with this?

MOKUTU

Nothing is simpler. The President of the Republic dismisses the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister ripostes by dismissing the President of the Republic. I dismiss

both! I leave the politicians! → *power entirely*

LUMUMBA

In short, you take power! After all, you won't have been the first colonel to make a *coup d'état*. But take care, Mokutu! The day when any one dragging a sword, anyone wearing stripes, anyone managing a stick thinks he has the right to buy up all the power, on that day, he will set the style of the land. A state? No! a free-for-all! Are you ready to assume that responsibility?

[90] MOKUTU

I do not permit anyone to put my honesty in doubt. I am a military man, and I will remain a military man. I entrust power to a College of Commissars, until law and order return. Otherwise I will order the Army to stop all forward march towards Kasai, and to enter its cantonments. We will have enough to do in Leopoldville.

A SEASON IN THE CONGO

LUMUMBA

Mokutu, I will not invoke our friendship, our common struggle, but . . .

MOKUTU

Oh! Don't speak to me of the past! It's true! I helped you get out of prison. I was by your side at the Round Table in Brussels. Night and day, I alerted public opinion in your favor. Five years of friendship, of comradeship, but now, our paths diverge. What I call your 'neuralization' means that, without sacrificing our friendship, I understand that it does not prevent me from accomplishing my duty as a citizen and as a Congolese patriot.

LUMUMBA

You're right, this is not the moment for sentimental effusions. As for the word neutralization, I know its meaning and its burden better than you, at least I measure them better than you. Do you sometimes think of Africa? Ok, look at it! No need to have a pinned up map on the wall. It is engraved upon the palms of my hands.

Here, Northern Rhodesia, its heart the copper belt, a silent land, except from time to time, a curse from the foreman, the baying of a police dog, the rumble of a

colt, it's a nigger that one shoots down, and he falls  
without a word. See, on the other side, [91] Southern  
Rhodesia, that is to say millions of niggers despoiled,  
dispossessed, parked in townships.

There, Angola! Principal export: neither sugar nor coffee,  
but slaves! Yes, my Colonel, slaves! Two  
hundred thousand men delivered each year to the mines  
of South Africa over against the good  
silver that falls fresh into the empty cash boxes  
of Father Salazar!

There hanging like a rag, this isle, this rock, San Tome,  
its small size feeds on niggers to an unbelievable  
degree! By the thousands! By the millions! It's the  
penal colony of Africa!

*Sings*

Our youngest son  
They've sent him to San Tome  
'cos he had no papers  
ay ay  
our son didn't return, our son  
death has taken him  
ay ay  
they sent him to San Tome.

It's funny, you don't know it, this song? I'll teach it to  
you Mokutu, if you give me the time! And then, lower



down, South Africa, the racist slave-galleon, armed with its tanks, with its machine guns, with its cannons, with its planes, with its Bible, with its laws, with its tribunals, with its press, with its hatred, with its lies. Nothing remains of its hard and fierce heart! Mokutu, look at it, our Africa! Brought down, tied up, trampled, fixed as a target! But you'll say to me, she hopes! She suffers, but she hopes! It's true! For from the bottom of the abyss, she sees the surface blaze and blush, and it grows, it grows, the stain of light. She hopes, why not? There's been Ghana, Guinea, Senegal, Mali and that's not all . . . Dahomey! Cameroon! . . . Day before yesterday, Togo! Yesterday, the Congo! Now Africa the prisoner says to herself: 'Tomorrow, it's my [92] turn! And tomorrow is not far away!' and she clenches her fists, and she breathes a bit better, Africa! Already the air of tomorrow! The air of the open sea, hale and salty!

Mokutu, do you know what you are ready to do? You draw the curtain of shadow across the small square of light above the prisoner's cell! The great bird of the rainbow, that visits the roof over a hundred and fifty million men, the double serpent, which raises itself from one corner or another of the horizon and insists on joining together a promise of life, an attestation of life and the heavens, you bring it down with one blow

AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

of the baton and see, over the entire continent, the  
heavy scaly folds of a maleficent darkness fall!

MOKUTU

I will not follow you in your apocalypse!  
I am not answerable for Africa, only for the Congo!  
And I intend to make order reign there, do you  
understand? Order!

*Soldiers have entered silently and occupy the whole stage.*

Lumumba wants to liberate the entire  
continent of Africa & is looking at the  
big picture — he has seen the pain  
Africans have faced but he believes  
there is hope.

Mokutu sees just the Congo — thinks  
dreaming big is do or die & hopeless.

[93] **Act III**



How did  
we get here

[95] Scene 1

*Thysville, Camp Hardy, prison cell.*

*Mpolo, Okito, Lumumba, on narrow bunks. It's morning.*

*Lumumba, sleeping, groans and turns over.*

SANZA PLAYER

*Singing*

O little sparrowhawk, oh! Oh!

O little sparrowhawk spread your wings!

The sun drinks blood, oh! Oh!

Little sparrowhawk, little sparrowhawk,

What blood the sun drinks!

LUMUMBA

Oh! Oh!

AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

OKITO

Always his nightmares!

M'POLO

Poor Patrice! One would say an insect caught in  
birdlime and it struggles.

[96] LUMUMBA

*Waking and rubbing his eyes*

And who will escape, M'polo! And who will escape!  
Oh! That dream! I was a man assaulted from all sides,  
by rapacious birds, and I defended myself with large  
mad gestures! It was awful!

OKITO

The proverb says: We eat with the sun, we do not eat  
with the moon! I don't like dreams!

LUMUMBA

I, yes! Even terrible ones! A wisdom is expressed  
there which our waking hours forget too  
quickly!

M'POLO

I know! I know! The ancestors! Oh! Speak to me of  
them! For the moment, they show themselves to be  
rather miserly of their favours!

A SEASON IN THE CONGO

OKITO

Ah yes! They have forgotten us  
in the bitter savannah!

LUMUMBA

Courage! Friends! Courage! The country at first  
surprised now rallies! You know the story. We  
sacrificed Lumumba. Immediately, the appeased gods  
cast a more clement glance upon the Congo. Oh!  
Everything came together . . . Belgium disarmed,  
Tzumbi returned to the fold, the UN brought to the  
Congo aid without default, and more! . . . but hey, no!  
I teach you this, everything will go from bad to worse!  
Chaos! Mess! Anarchy! Corruption! Humiliation!  
You'll see, before too long, they will come to us beg-  
ging, here, to take up power again!

[97] M'POLO

Unless to suppress such a possibility, it occurs to them  
to suppress us, us! Something tells me that they will not  
stop in mid-crime! Besides in the Congo, one never  
stops midway!

OKITO

The Congo! The Congo! Say above all the international  
capitals! They are quick to take offence! At the least  
tickle, they become fierce! The buffalo!  
Yes, the buffalo!

AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

M'POLO

When the buffalo defecates, the shit flies far!

LUMUMBA

All that is true: our life is at the mercy of the first goon to arrive . . . White or Black is of no importance. If he's Black, it is that a White will have armed his arms! That is indeed a thing. The other thing is that they can destroy us but not conquer us! Too late! We have brought them to court, friends! Since then they are nothing but out of joint with history!

M'POLO

It is sure that you are a prophet, Patrice. He who walks ahead and speaks out. That is your strength and your weakness!

LUMUMBA

Half-praise, half-criticism, I accept M'polo's verdict! Above all if he will communicate to you my faith, my unwavering faith in the future!

M'POLO

You've said it! Half-praise, half-criticism. I wonder sometimes if we haven't wished to go too fast.

[98] LUMUMBA

M'polo, I regret nothing. Doesn't the architect go straightaway to the end, affirming the building? My



function was to mark out, with one chanting and formulaic stroke, upon a black sky and an overcast horizon, the curve and the direction. After that all was saved. And then, we do not underestimate our force, it is immense, our force! It is for us to know how to use it! Here, look at two letters I have just received, and which have escaped the vigilance of Mokutu's rogues. One is from Van Laert, and the other from Luis. Don't you find that marvellous? Luis! A Spaniard! Tell me! What a rapport with the Congo! After all, those people also have their problems! And Van Laert! A Belgian! My friend, my brother from Brussels! Listen I feel sure that at this moment, he is thinking of me, as I think of him. And you say that, in the rampage of a destructive destiny, we have been, him and me, capable of saving this high fraternal bearing! A friendship beyond blood! Ah yes! They are ours! For they know that what is at play here is not our lot, it is not Africa's lot, it is the lot of man! Of man himself. As for Africa, I know that in spite of its weakness and its divisions, it will not fail us! After all, lemon, sun and water, from that solemn encounter, here, man was born! What is it? If not, dissipating the mists of living, a certain manner of holding oneself upright and of lifting one's face. M'polo, it's good, I will talk to the soldiers, they are Congolese, I will break their hearts!

*To the jailers and to the soldiers*

Come on, comrade jailers, a glass of beer?

But excuse me, I have only Polar!

[99] JAILER

You know, Boss, Primus or Polar, who cares! We're not  
going to make a fuss about the brand!

We are so thirsty!

LUMUMBA

Drink! Friends! Drink! And the country, how's it  
doing? How's business?

JAILER

The country! The country! It's a case for saying, more  
it changes, more it's the same! People are beginning to  
ask if *dipenda* didn't come here, like a swarm of  
locusts, to ruin the country!

LUMUMBA

It's not like that that the problems arise! But let it go!  
And the Army? And the pay?

JAILER

To tell you the worst of that business, there's been no  
pay for two months!

LUMUMBA

Yeah! Maybe there's no more money in the bank. Eh?

A SEASON IN THE CONGO

And Mokutu? And Kala and the UN? what the fuck are  
they up to?

A SOLDIER

I ask you that myself. If the money isn't in the bank,  
where is it? Tell me where it is? You should know, you,  
'cos you've been minister! After all, you are like the  
others, a pigger with a monocle!

[100] LUMUMBA

Softly, comrade! Softly! The money, where is it? I'm  
certainly going to tell you! It is in Katanga! Yes sir, in  
Katanga! In Tzumbi's cashbox! And it is because I  
wanted to take it away from him that I am here!  
Delivered to the cruelty of the one by the ingratitude  
of the others!

SOLDIER

That's true, yeah! I've always said that to my buddies.  
Many believed it, many didn't, and now! We're ok! You  
say money, it's for the Katangese police?

LUMUMBA

The police, sure! And also for Tzumbi! And for M'siri,  
and for the Belgians! Come on soldiers! Get rid of these  
gloomy ideas! I buy you another round!  
*The soldiers pour and the glasses go around*

Soldiers, I see that many of you are Batetelas! I am happy for that! I am myself a Mutetela! It's the tribe that will give the Belgians the last fight, that's been going on for sixty years, saving the honour of the Congo as a whole! So much so that I myself, venting an angry outburst, and showing a fight, perhaps the last, to avoid the possibility of the country falling under the thumb of a new colonialism, I fulfil, if I may say so, my Mutetela office!

Soldiers of other groups, I don't make of you the lesser part of my confidence. I know that the Army as a whole is faithful to me, as to their legitimate commander, and Mokutu succeeded in his bad plot only by bribing, not the Army but a battalion of paras stuffed full and treated like Roman senators at the Hotel Memling, [101] partly thanks to tips from the Americans, partly and mostly through the funds that supposedly pay your wages! But you soldiers, you are not at the Memling. I know well from where you hail, you are from the hazing groups and the labouring gangs, you are from the blocked futures, you are those with famine for wages, of the unpaid wages! And it is from your thinness that those gentlemen are fat! Too bad, but yes! When I named the first black officers, the first Black General, the first Black Colonel, I did not think that faster than

A SEASON IN THE CONGO

the lava pushes out of the volcano, a caste will be born, of voracious and insatiable dogs, a caste of Colonels and of new gentlemen, and it is that caste that has confiscated for their profit, for their own profit alone, the advantages that you had the right to expect from our Congolese revolution!

A SOLDIER

We have had it with Mokutu! Get the fuck out of here!  
We want to see if with you we fill our bellies!

SECOND SOLDIER

Long live Lumumba! That one, when he speaks, it's the crested heron that passes.

SOLDIERS

Down with Mokutu! Down with Mokutu!

A SOLDIER

If I catch that one, I'll cut off his balls!

LUMUMBA

I respect your opinions, and I don't want to influence you in any way! But it is important that every one of you be aware of the gravity of the situation. If I were a watchman, and someone wanted the time, I would answer that two months after Independence, we [102] are at the hour when the Congo is a goat between the teeth

AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

of a big cat! Soldiers! I, Lumumba, if I get a good grasp and if I brace myself, it is to pull out the Congo with tooth and fang! Won't you help me?

SOLDIERS

*Shouting*

You can count on us! You are our chief!

Cut off Mokutu's balls!

*They open the doors of the prison  
and carry Lumumba out triumphantly.*

Scene 2

*African bar, men and women, same atmosphere as Act I*

*Scene 1. A woman sings a monotonous song*

WOMAN

Who has seen my husband?

No one's seen my husband,

He has entered my heart

Like a bamboo splinter.

*The door opens suddenly. Enter Lumumba, M'polo and  
Okito.*

MAMA MAKOSI

Patrice! You here!

A SEASON IN THE CONGO

LUMUMBA

As you see!

[103] MAMA MAKOSI

I was sure that you'd get outta there!

LUMUMBA

That's good, Mama, that you never doubted it!  
There were so many who would not have paid a lot for  
Lumumba's skin! Oh yes! Free! Freed by our brave  
Congolese soldiers! Inform my wife, my children, so  
they come here! I will make this my headquarters.

MAMA MAKOSI

You're right, they've betrayed you, all! Kala! Mokutu!  
Your buddy Mokutu, I still see him, with his manner of a  
vicious little girl! Here, you are comfortable, the house  
belongs to you, and the people will protect you.

LUMUMBA

Excuse me in advance, but I risk disturbing your  
habits a bit!

MAMA MAKOSI

Rather than excusing yourself, talk about it, Patrice.  
Tell us what they did to you, those damn fools!

THE WOMEN

Oh! Yes, tell!

AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

SANZA PLAYER

Children, I will surely sing you something that will give  
you courage: how Gabouloukou, the dwarf antelope,  
played with the animals in pursuit.

*Sings*

Gabouloukou, dwarf antelope  
To the animals in pursuit  
[104] Put out his paw from the earth.  
‘The beautiful root that you’re holding right there!’  
Gabouloukou giggled!  
Blessed Gabouloukou!  
The animals letting go of the paw  
Among the roots  
Nosed around it from afar.  
Long live Gabouloukou!

LUMUMBA

Thank you, fine singer! With ten cuts, you did, if I had  
need of it, raise my courage and expand my force to  
defy the whole world! In truth, what should I talk  
about? The details? Why the details! I can tell you  
better stuff! I can tell you Africa! Aieeee! Africa! Eyes,  
back, flank! Europe, your talons! America, your beak!  
Asia! Asia! Ah! That pursuit of bird droppings and  
rostrums! Africa is like a man who gets himself up at  
midday, and finds himself assaulted from the four  
corners of the horizon!



A SEASON IN THE CONGO

I see Africa assaulted in every part by rapacious birds,  
and as soon as she moves away from one, another is on  
her with its beak dripping. Another thing, the Congo!  
It's a bit like our Mukongo dance with twelve masks.  
We had wealth, beauty, assurance, powerful medicines,  
and then came jealousy, and then the spirit of evil  
which destroyed all with its powerful claws, withering  
the cheeks of our virgins, casting down all our warriors,  
bringing corruption and dissension! Oh! It was horri-  
ble! Finally, thank God, the spirit of evil is in its turn  
defeated, and we make links with prosperity among us!  
Are you listening, all of you? We bring to the country,  
and we are going to guard it, Prosperity! Mama  
Makosi, I want everyone to drink to the return among  
us, of Prosperity! To the installation among us of Pros-  
perity! But let's not be [105] selfish! I also want to  
carry the good news to our foreign friends, in the whole  
world! Call a meeting of journalists! →

SANZA PLAYER

You've invited the journalists, let 'em come, we want  
them, but they must know that you are our king! Our  
lawful king! Put on the leopardskin again!

THE CROWD

Yes! Yes! The leopardskin!

AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

LUMUMBA

Friends, let it go! One day in the bush I met my wild  
soul: she had the shape of a bird!. And better than a  
leopard skin, it is, flight and span, of a bird that you  
will make my sign! The eye, the beak! To enter the new  
times, of the ibis each feather lustrous and bronzed!

SANZA PLAYER

You're right! Chiefs and kings, they have all betrayed  
us! You are our inspired guide, our messiah! Let us ren-  
der glory to God, my children, Simon Kimbangu is  
once again among us!

THE CROWD

*Sings*

We are the orphan children  
Dark night, bitter is the way,  
Powerful God, where to find help?  
Father Congo, who will give us a hand?

SANZA PLAYER

*Gives to Lumumba a sort of stole  
which Lumumba pushes away.*

[106] LUMUMBA

And what else am I doing but giving you a hand? With  
all my strength! Beyond my strength! But as much as I  
have not put on the leopardskin so I will not wear the

stole! Even if I were to deceive you, I am not Simon Kimbangu. He wanted to give you force, our Congolese *n'golo*—combat power, and for that he deserves that you commemorate him. He wanted to go to God all by himself. To make claims upon God all alone, as your ambassador, and he deserves that out of that you glorify him! But it is not only God, that the Whites have confiscated for their profit, and it is not only God, that the Whites have thesaurized! And it is not only with God that Africa is frustrated, it is herself that Africa has cheated! It is by herself that Africa is hungry!

It is for this that I want to be neither messiah nor mahdi. My only arms are my words, I speak and I awaken, I am not a redresser of wrongs, nor a miracle worker, I am a redresser of life, I speak and I give back Africa to herself! I speak and I give back Africa to the world! I speak and, attacking the very base of oppression and servitude, I make fraternity possible for the first time!

*Hesitation in the ranks.*

*Enter Pauline Lumumba. She and Patrice embrace.*

PAULINE

My God! How happy I am! I was so afraid! You know, they are brutes? One can fear anything from them! All right, you're there, saved! Freed! But we must leave,

AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

you are not safe here in Leo. I've made everything ready. At Stanleyville, your partisans are waiting for you.

LUMUMBA

Stanleyville? I, combating secession, can I, to put myself in safety from the blows of my enemies, orga[107]-nize, in my turn, a secession! I want neither to fly, nor desert. Also, we have nothing to fear here! My enemies have learned their lesson, that without me, the Congo is a broken machine.

PAULINE

You have always been pigheaded, inflexible, a head of iron, a true iron head! But does he have any care for me at all! I am talking to you, Patrice! And your eyes look above me!

LUMUMBA

Above, below, I don't know. Both, no doubt! Above, I see Africa, and inside, mingled with a muffled timbre of the gong of my blood, the Congo.

PAULINE

Render unto me this justice, I have never deflected you from your duty, but you are responsible for nothing but Africa! You have no responsibility but the good or ill of

## A SEASON IN THE CONGO

Africa! Do you remember just that day, Patrice? Father poured the palm wine, you took the glass, took a swallow, gave it to me, I took a swallow, and we drank jointly, swallow after swallow. I don't have the name of a country or a river! But a woman's name! Pauline! That's all! I will add no more than this: would you like to see me one day, my head shaved, following a funeral cortege? And will you orphan the children?

### LUMUMBA

Too bad, on my own I have always called you Pauline Congo! So much that I have never breathed a thought of stone heated on the hemp of your double name, that you haven't helped me doubly to dominate a weakness, and on the thinnest edge, one will see me ready to defy the whole world, if, Pauline, I know that I can count [108] on you. If I disappeared, I leave to the children a great struggle as their heritage, you will help them, guide them, arm them! But no! I will still continue the struggle! Myself, and for a long time! And I will lead it to good results! And the colonialist gentlemen are not ready to have me! Excuse me, Pauline, go to Brazza, try to see Luis, tell him all about what's going on, I have to speak to the journalists.

*Pauline Lumumba draws back slowly, and sings.*

AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

PAULINE

Alas! Alas! Who has seen my husband?

No one has seen my husband,  
he has entered my heart  
like a bamboo splinter.

*Enter journalists.*

LUMUMBA

Have a seat, gentlemen, as you can. Excuse the place, it doesn't matter, or it does, greatly! A popular spot, a humble place, here beats, in its own way, the Congo's heart, much more strongly and frankly, that is, than in any ministerial or presidential palace. I have summoned you here, to announce to you, so that you can announce to the world, that the Congo goes on. I take up again and effectively the direction of the country's affairs, from which only a puerile and arbitrary act, a *coup d'état*, could remove me. My politics, the politics of my government, the only legal government of this country will direct itself to restore everywhere in the country and in all areas the authority of the state, to maintain and reinforce everywhere and in the entire country, the unity of the Congo. But it will not be, for all that, a vindictive politics! I incline much rather to closing the era of our civil wars and to construct our republic in dig-

## A SEASON IN THE CONGO

nity and decency. In the international context, I count on you, gentlemen, to give reassurance to world opinion. My govern [109] -ment, faithful to the principle of positive neutrality, will have as its major concern the establishment or the maintenance of friendly relations with all foreign countries. But also, it must be well understood that the Congo is an independent country, which wishes to remain independent, fully independent and sovereign, and we must not be everywhere perceived that untimely fig of which the prophet speaks, who sees it, plucks it, and as soon as taken, gulped! }

### A JOURNALIST

Mr Lumumba, we have the impression of listening to the inauguration speech of a prime minister! But the events that take place all around us oblige us to ask you if these proposals correspond well to a just and realistic appreciation on your part of your personal situation, of your current situation, in the politics of the Congo.

### LUMUMBA

I thank you for caring so much about my personal situation. Let me reassure you immediately that I am the Prime Minister of the Republic of the Congo, invested by popular confidence, by the confidence of the Parliament, which has recently renewed it by an unequivocal

vote, and if I am free today, removed from the enterprises of my enemies, it is because of the effective action of the Congolese people. It is therefore with complete legitimacy and with full rights that I speak in the name of the Congo! You have, as journalists, a noble profession, that of educating and informing. I ask you to do just that, in an honest and judicious manner!

*Commotion, panic. Women push through  
and throw themselves forward.*

MAMA MAKOSI

Patrice! The paras! The paras!  
They have surrounded the house!

M'POLO

Patrice, don't be afraid! Our boys are ready! The area is with us! Mokutu's goons will find their contenders!

LUMUMBA

M'polo, that's enough, I don't want Congolese  
blood to flow.

M'POLO

But we mustn't be like rats!

LUMUMBA

I'm not a religious man, but I have made my own the words: 'the eunuch who wishes to deflower a young



A SEASON IN THE CONGO

girl is the one who pretends to give justice  
with violence!

M'POLO

[You say non-violence, which amounts to suicide!

LUMUMBA

Precisely, M'polo! If I must die, let it be like Gandhi. Come  
on! Let the crowd enter! I will give them an audience! →

*Enter Kala-Lubu, Mokutu and a group of paramilitary  
forces.*

MOKUTU

*To the police*

Make everyone leave.

[111] *To the journalists*

Excuse me, gentlemen, the representation is at an end,  
now the working session begins! We will meet at the  
proper time and place! Good-bye!

*The room empties.*

KALA-LUBU

*To Lumumba*

My approach towards you would appear unusual if it  
came from a man less decided than myself to place the  
safety of the country before all other consideration. I'd  
like to find you in the same frame of mind!

AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

LUMUMBA

I have never served interests other than those of the  
Congo! I hear you.

KALA-LUBU

The affairs of the state cannot support a power  
vacancy any longer!

LUMUMBA

I'm happy to hear you say so! I am Prime Minister, I  
am *the* Prime Minister, I have not been reversed by Par-  
liament, so there is no crisis in the Congolese govern-  
ment! There is no crisis except in Congolese legality!

KALA-LUBU

Patrice! You don't understand yet! No one has the  
power to make what has happened unhappen! Be realis-  
tic for once! Iléo is the man of the moment. He is calm,  
reassuring. Once the fires have been somewhat put out  
everywhere, throughout [112] the length and breadth  
of the territory, we'll see . . . I ask no more than a little  
patience from you, a little patience, no more! The  
banana ripens only gently. And gently and softly the  
earthworm goes to the backwater.

LUMUMBA

I hate the time! I hate your 'softly and gently'! and  
then, reassure! Why reassure! I should have preferred a

A SEASON IN THE CONGO

man who made uncomfortable, a discomforter! A man  
who made the people uncomfortable, as I am myself,  
about a future which prepares bad shepherds for us!

to guide  
disrupt  
determ  
ions

KALA-LUBU

Whether you accept it or not, to enter the government?  
I leave to your diligence the choice of a portfolio. Vice-  
President, Minister of State, Minister of Technology—  
choose! I have the right to require a precise response  
from you I believe!

LUMUMBA

*Casually*

Oh yes, by the way, how is Reverend Yulu? Yes,  
Fulbert? I heard that in Paris he ordered a new  
cassock! A nylon cassock!

KALA-LUBU

*Offended*

The moment seems to me ill-chosen for your light-  
heartedness. Seriously Patrice?

LUMUMBA

Please note that what I say about this is not a rebuke!  
On the contrary! His wives might need less detergent  
this way! But don't be cross! Seriously, President, [113]  
and to say everything to you in a word, I don't want to  
be your Oppengault!

AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

KALA-LUBU

What? Your intransigence will destroy you!

LUMUMBA

Africa needs my intransigence! Above all when so many others are transigent on her back! To respond to your most precise question, I do not wish, by my presence, to endorse a politics that I disavow, and even less patronize a team formed by gathering corrupt folks and traitors.

KALA-LUBU

Do you know what I have brought for you here? Do you know? Oh unhappy you! I bring you life! Life saves! Don't tempt fate!

LUMUMBA

Do you know what you have come here to ask from me?

MOKUTU

President, don't insist, you see clearly that you are dealing with a maniac. Count on me to bring down his crest!

[114] KALA-LUBU

Patrice, it is you who will have wished it! Good-bye!  
Done, Mokutu, done!

A SEASON IN THE CONGO

MOKUTU

*To Lumumba*

Too bad for you, Mr Lumumba, it is your rain, you ordered it, it will wet you completely! Soldiers! Seize the prisoner! → *unprotes*

Scene 3

*We are in Elizabethville, at the seat of the Katangan government, the Special Committee of Katanga (CSK). What dominates with the Katangan leaders is hypocrisy and a certain ecclesiastical unctuousness, except with M'siri who is a predator. In addition, we are allowed to think that Zimbwe and Travele, specially the latter, are a bit tipsy, all the more so since, during this entire scene, whisky and champagne circulate generously.* → *unprotes*

MOKUTU

There are missions more pleasant than mine. I have come here to make a complaint in the name of Leopoldville about what we cannot not consider as a violation of our accord. You have posed your conditions, they were reasonable, we underwrote them, and we have executed all the clauses of our little treaty. Now, not only has Katanga not given up the ideal of

AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

secession, but it has given the whole world the impression that [115] it intends henceforth definitely to claim independence!

TZUMBI

Permit me . . . permit me . . . an accord! That is a big word, there was no accord! Strictly speaking! Unless you want to give that name to free conversations between good comrades.

ZIMBWE

Te, te, te! Words! I don't for my part want to discuss words! Accord, treaty, conversation, no matter. In all that, what is important to me is to know how to distinguish the spirit from the letter, because it is the letter that kills . . .

TRAVELE

I was about to say it, and it is the spirit that saves!  
*He laughs in an idiotic way.*

TZUMBI

Zimbwe and Travele are right, the spirit of our conversations was that the elimination of Lumumba was an indispensable preliminary to the reunification of the Congo! . . .

MOKUTU

My word! That's what was done! And properly done!

A SEASON IN THE CONGO

M'SIRI

Are you a child? And must one say it brutally?  
A snake like that doesn't die with one blow of the  
stick. The obstacle Lumumba still weighs upon  
the Congo!

[116] TZUMBI

Excuse our good friend M'siri, he is frank and brutal,  
but he is the best of men! And a man of good counsel!  
It's true, we don't love Leopoldville greatly! There is  
the UN, the people, the soldiers . . . it is an agitated  
city, noisy, changeful. Without reproaching you, let me  
say that you live there one of those lives of climbing the  
ladder! . . . And by the way, how is Sissoko? By Saint  
Martin! That guy, I admire him greatly! I call him  
'water rail'.

MOKUTU

Rail? I don't see the connection.

TZUMBI

. . . That bird that can run on the water without wetting  
its paws. Passes from one water lily to the next without  
sinking. With a peck of its beak, it lifts up for you the  
leaf, to swallow the worm or the fish which is under  
it, isn't that Sissoko, no?

*They laugh.*

But let's speak seriously . . . we think Lumumba will be better off in Katanga! Much better off in Katanga!

MOKUTU

My God! And who would refuse to get rid of a troublesome prisoner on the other hand! But we must not hide the fact that the transfer of the prisoner to Katanga would pose delicate problems, on the internal as well as the international plane! The people are most attached to Lumumba, and the opinion of the world is also on his side, in a half fetishistic way, with respect to certain democratic forms, which, under the circumstances, and we must not deny this, would ineluctably be violated.

[117] ZIMBWE

Te, te, te! Democracy! There's a big word of those gentlemen in Leopoldsville. Ah well my dear colleague, we also, we are democrats in Katanga, but, for us, the democracy is everything that fits the interests of the people! It is everything to know if the transfer enters this category of acts of which one can say that it serves the people of this country!

TRAVELE

*Laughing*

I said it at the very moment, it is the spirit that saves, it is the spirit!



A SEASON IN THE CONGO

M'SIRI

You have evoked an internal problem very quickly, it need not create difficulties if you wish not! The people!

The people! Sir, the people always incline towards force! If you know how to command, the rabble lies down! Do you know how to command? And will you finally know how to be leaders? That is the entire problem!

MOKUTU

But no! no! you know well that that is not the problem.

The problem is that I have *neutralized* him and you, you want to *liquidate* him. Why fixate on someone who is outside the capacity for harm?

M'SIRI

As long as he breathes, he harms! → *unbearable*  
*his presence*

MOKUTU

Careful! Death will be even more redoubtable. In your mind, this is a demon. [Dead, he'll be a god! → *he is*  
*no longer*

[118] M'SIRI

I see that it is no use discussing this. Weaklings and hypocrites, that's what you are in Leopoldville. One certainly wants the thing! But one does not wish to dirty one's hands! Okay, too bad! Katanga will make

AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

the sacrifice. We will do it for the Congo, and for  
the good of humanity. Katanga usually accepts its  
responsibilities.

MOKUTU

Good-bye! I wash my hands of this!

ZIMBWE

. . . Pity! A real pity! We had wished that the path of  
our encounter would be pretty and without dispute.  
But God did not wish it. But it doesn't matter. We are  
not put off by this . . . hang on, I'll sing you something!  
Come on children! I am the author.

*A group sings the hymn of Katanga*

Come, come, let the valorous Katangans march,  
the sun has risen on the soil of our forefathers  
ancient ancestral earth  
from the firmament to the depths  
you live again, opulent, to the call of joy.

*Refrain*

Children of Katanga (*again*)

Defend yourselves to the death

Do it proudly. Do it with strength

With your arms and blood

With your teeth.

A SEASON IN THE CONGO

Scene 4<sup>2</sup>

*New York, UN building*

HAMMARSKJÖLD

Do you have the news? I have just received the telegram. They have transferred Lumumba to Katanga and we have every reason for fearing for his life . . .  
this is dreadful!

MATTHEW CORDELIER

In fact . . . given the customs of that charming country, the Lumumba question seems to me to have been dealt with forever.

HAMMARSKJÖLD

It doesn't seem to have moved you greatly!

CORDELIER

The UN is an organization, no, an organism that ill supports the foreign body called sentimentality.

[120] HAMMARSKÖLD

The facts are there and they weaken you: it is you who forbade him access to the radio, preventing him from defending himself, when his adversaries had all the licence to place on the waves their hateful propaganda. It is you who, under the guise of reserving the airport of Leopoldville only to UN planes, cut him off from the

AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

outside world while every hour Belgian planes landed in  
Katanga . . . in sum we stretched out our arm to him, as  
others knocked him down! Good job!

CORDELIER

Pity distracts you! You sound like the Soviet delegation!

HAMMARSKJÖLD

I tell you, the terrible thing is to think that you justify  
them, you justify Zorine! You deceived me! And to say  
that I covered your odious acts!

CORDELIER

Mr Secretary General, let me defend myself!

HAMMARSKJÖLD

No! Even you cannot believe that I would say, as Jim to  
Doramin: 'Everything's on my head' and I'd shut up?  
Oh! I have been too silent! Tell me, Cordelier, what do  
you think of Jesus Christ?

CORDELIER

You surprise me! I am a Christian . . . Methodist . . .  
and you know it!

[121] HAMMARSKJÖLD

Should be Methodist and Christian? It is admissible for  
anyone, and I say anyone, to strike their chest and say 'I

am a Christian? . . . What I'm asking you is not what the Matthew Cordelier whom I have in front of me (big deal!) thinks of Christ, but on which side you would have been, you Cordelier Matthew, one thousand nine hundred and sixty one years ago, when in Judaea, under Roman occupation, one of your contemporaries would arrest and kill a certain Jesus? Let it go! Get out of here!

Christ-killer!

WOMAN . . .  
Christ of the Congo!

### Scene 5

*Light. In a training camp in Katanga. A mercenary. In front of him, a target representing a negro on which he will soon have a go. Waiting, he cleans his weapon as he hums.*

#### MERCENARY

North and south  
Desert and tropics,  
Brush or jungle  
marsh or deltas  
rain, fever or mosquitoes  
sunburnt skin  
the new knight errant  
feel your heart swell  
for law and liberty!

[122] *He positions himself to draw on the target.*

Bastard! Monkey! Savage! Magician! Ingrate! Violator  
of nuns! Pan pan pan!

*He draws.*

Oh! Oh! That race of devils have an indestructible life!  
Look at him with his big white eyes and his big red  
mouth! Pow pow pow. Catch this!

*He draws.*

I've seen them! Even dead they advance on you! You  
must kill them ten times! They say their witch doctors  
promise to change our bullets into water! Pow pow pow.

*He draws, the target tumbles down.*

I doubt that that one was changed into water!

*Laughs.*

Yes, but me, I am melting into water! Ouf! It's hot!

Hot and thirsty! Fucking place!

*He dries his forehead, pours himself a glassful, and sings to  
himself.*

There are those who make it awkward  
for their parents

Who take out debts, play the fool

Uselessly

Who, on a nice evening, of their mistress

Have had enough,

They fuck off, full of distress

For the Congo!  
Night has fallen.

*When the light comes back, the white mercenary still holds his smoking revolver, but on the ground, [123] the target has been replaced by two cadavers, Okito and M'polo. M'siri and a mercenary enter, pushing Lumumba. Rudely, M'siri throws himself on Lumumba, whom he hits on the face.*

## Scene 6

M'SIRI

Did you see how they swallowed bullets, your  
buddies? Between the two of us now!

*The mercenary attempts to intervene.*

*M'siri, pulling away his bayonet*

No! I have a personal account to settle with this  
gentleman!

*Addressing Lumumba*

Between the two of us! Now, it's true that they say that  
you think you are invulnerable!

*He places the weapon against his chest*

You answer when you're spoken to!

AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

LUMUMBA

It's good M'siri! I waited for this confrontation! It was necessary! We are two forces! Two forces! You are the invention of the past, and I am the inventor of the future!

M'SIRI

It seems that in Kasai you had powerful magic spells.  
Zunzi skin or other stuff. This is the moment to put  
them to the test!

[124] LUMUMBA

M'siri, it is an invulnerable idea that I incarnate, in fact!  
Invincible, like the hope of a people, like a travelling  
brushfire, like the pollen moving from wind to wind,  
like the root in a blind compost.

M'SIRI

And that, and that! You don't feel it? Inexorable! You  
don't feel it across the compost of your hide, plunging  
towards your heart?!

LUMUMBA

Careful, there's a hard seed in my chest, the silex  
against which your blade will break! It is the honour  
of Africa!

M'SIRI

*Sniggering*

Africa! Africa gives a fuck for you! It can do nothing



A SEASON IN THE CONGO

for you, Africa! Feel me as a man to drink your blood  
and eat your heart! → see

LUMUMBA

All night I've heard weeping, laughing, moaning, and  
growling . . . it was the hyena!

M'SIRI

He swaggers! But you do not speak so well! You do  
not see the death that plants its eyes in your eyes! You  
see death, but you don't feel it!

LUMUMBA

I die my life, and that's enough for me.

[125] M'SIRI

Take this!

*He thrusts the blade*

Now, prophet, what do you see?

LUMUMBA

I will be the field; I will be pasture

I will be with the fisher Wagenia

I will be with the shepherd of the Kivu

I will be on the mount, I will be in the ravine.

M'SIRI

Let's get it done.

*He presses in.*

LUMUMBA

Oh! This roseglow over Africa! I look at it, I see,  
comrades, the flamboyant tree, pygmies, the axe,  
busying itself around the precarious trunk, but the head  
that grows, summons the sky which keels over, the  
rudiments of foam in a dawn.

M'SIRI

Bastard!

*Lumumba falls.*

*To the mercenary.*

*You dog, complete it.*

*A shot. The mercenary gives the killing thrust to Lumumba.*

*Black.*

*As the light returns, we discover backstage [126] a group  
literally turned into statues: the bankers, Kala-Lubu,  
Tzumbi, Mokutu. At a little distance Hammarskjöld.*

*Enter Pauline Lumumba.*

LOUDSPEAKER

One cage, four clouds, Lycaon

Lycaon with carbuncle eyes!

It is the alphabet of fear

Declined under the scavengers' theft

Filling the soil treason feeds on its shadow,

Higher up the sharp drop bats

A SEASON IN THE CONGO

Of the flight of premonitions.  
Lower down, on the white black sand  
that is manufactured  
Tirelessly, a laziness, the shipwreck renews  
Its small gestures of loving invitation  
To the most beautiful coupling of star and disaster.  
Come back, my soul, come back!  
Why does he delay in the woods,  
On the hill, in the ravine?

*With little sniggers, the sanza player comes forward, dressed  
as a Congolese witch doctor. Short straw skirt, little bells on  
wrists and ankles. He crosses the stage humming.*

SANZA PLAYER

And you, Nzambi, fool that you are!  
You eat our backs, our butts  
Eh Nzambi, fool that you are!  
You eat our heart, the liver!  
Eh! Nzambi, measure your feeding!  
*At the moment of disappearing, he turns around and faces  
the public, turns around his mpiya of cock feathers—the  
feather banner of divination:*  
[127] Women! Songs! Men give me songs!  
I scratch in the sands of error!  
Hackles up I scratch! I scratch until the truth!

AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

Scratching claws  
I the *nganga*—the wise man  
The divining cock!

HAMMARSKJÖLD

Congo!

The coherence of things melt away.  
Achieved, across the matrix of original sin,  
The dark approach to ourselves.  
The horrible fire includes the place  
of Evil's streaming!  
Oh! That the just becomes the unjust;  
That honesty could not serve the system except by  
weighing honesty down,  
My God! Why was I chosen  
To preside over a monstrous alchemy?  
But thy will be done! Yours, not mine  
I await orders! I hear the order

only  
matters  
it ends

Only the first step counts

*He takes a step.*

Only the last step counts.

*He leaves.*

THE BANKER

For my part, I hardly see the matter as political speculation. Let's say it's a folkloric episode, something like a

↑  
benning.

A SEASON IN THE CONGO

manifestation of that Bantu sentimentality, that periodically makes the too frail veneer of civilization crack with the best among them.

[128] At any rate, and that's the main thing, you've been able to state with your own eyes, that we are not there for nothing! I say for nothing!

*He leaves in a most dignified way.*

TZUMBI

*Advancing*

Ah! No! Ah no! you'll see! They'll put everything on my back. I say to you what I think! This crime is a conspiracy against my person. → selfish

*He leaves.*

KALA -LUBU

You see: no one in the Congo obeys me! I had said to trim the tree—not to uproot it!

*He leaves.*

MOKUTU

It is given that I did not nourish any personal animosity towards him. And it is a thing much publicized that the politicians of this country fully avoided letting me know of what was weaving itself against him. Oh! I know well that the objection will be brought forward that I had to put a provisional end to his career, having

Wummba's  
murder

decided upon what I have called his neutralization.  
But the pen of God Himself is not without an eraser.  
And what political opportunity commanded me to do,  
I was waiting for it to ask me to undo. But the betrayal  
prevented me!

[129] Scene 7

*Kinshasa (Mokutu's office)*

MOKUTU

*Soliloquizing*

A great ceremony! A prodigious uprising of mourning!  
A *matanga* of Congolese dimensions! Something like a  
national exercise of exorcism! The people love spectacles. We will give them those and afterwards, the ghosts  
will leave us in peace! But that does not relieve us of  
having to think of the living . . . Gentlemen, enter and  
have a seat.

*Four ministers enter.*

MOKUTU

Gentlemen, we must finish with our 'friend' from the  
other side of the river . . . make him promises . . . the  
man is weary. He will accept. Tell him that I give my

A SEASON IN THE CONGO

word to let him have a safe life and that I invite him into the work of national reconstruction. I am even ready to seat him in the government with the title of Minister of State . . . Not bad, eh! For a bandit who, in a few months, has put one of our most beautiful provinces in his bag.

A MINISTER

I see no need to pay such a high price for a rallying that we would have in any case.

A MINISTER

. . . And that we will have a discount if as you say the man is weary.

[130] A MINISTER

At any rate I should say, in my capacity as the minister of foreign affairs, that I fear the reaction of world opinion. The world is now sensitized to the affairs of the Congo!

→ world sees Congo  
as a chaotic place

MOKUTU

World opinion, my dear, is an old biddy, a maniac of anonymous letters. It is time to make it understand, this world opinion, that now there is here a government that governs, that is to say gives a fuck about whinings and anonymous letters. This resolution, if one signifies it by spilling blood, all right, we will spill blood! And

world opinion will understand that language very well,  
you may be sure . . . No, look here, gentlemen, world  
opinion is not what worries me. The real problem is  
elsewhere. It is to know if the man will walk. But I am  
sure that he will walk: all revolutionaries are naive:

man ← they have confidence in man!

*Laughs*

What a mistake! Confidence in man!

*Roars with laughter. The ministers laugh.*

### Scene 8

*Dark, then light.*

*A notice indicates the date: July 1966.*

*Public plaza in Kinshasa, Independence Day festival.*

THE WOMAN

Long live Mokutu! Mokutu *uhuru*! → Mokutu  
rema

[131] MAMA MAKOSI

*Uhuru* Lumumba! → ves  
sop

THE WOMAN

Careful, citizen, one must say 'Long Live Mokutu'. → nba  
srau

MAMA MAKOSI

I say what I think. *Uhuru* Lumumba!



A SEASON IN THE CONGO

SANZA PLAYER

The sorghum pushes up  
The bird leaves the ground  
Why refuse a man  
The right to change?  
But the parties not just by half  
But all in all play tricks  
If then you push  
You should push straight  
White bottle and bottle white  
Never dark bottles.

white not  
dark

THE WOMAN

At any rate, down with colonialism!  
Oo, oo! Coffins! Look, look!

MAMA MAKOSI

Coffins? What coffins?

SANZA PLAYER

Death mixes with everything in the Congo! → Congo is  
violent

THE WOMAN

Why not? That's life! The first coffin is that of Belgian  
Congo; the second, that of the Congo of papa; [132]  
the third, that of tribal division. That's great. Long Live  
Mokutu.

circum

AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

A VOICE

Hush! Hush! The General will speak!

A VOICE

Shut up! We want to hear!

MOKUTU

*In leopardskin and haranguing the crowd*

The force to pursue my task, Patrice, it is to you that I  
ask for it, martyr, athlete, hero.

*Sensation. Mokutu collects himself for a moment.*

People of the Congo,

I wish that from now on the most beautiful  
of our boulevards

Proudly bear his name;

that the place where he was slaughtered become,  
for the nation, a sanctuary;

and that a statue erected at the entry of what was  
formerly Leopoldville  
signify to the universe

that the piety of a people will never finish with  
the reparation of that which was our crime  
to all of us!

People of the Congo, may today's date be for the  
Congo

The point of departure for a new season!

A SEASON IN THE CONGO

THE CROWD

Glory to Lumumba! Immortal glory to Lumumba!

Down with neo-colonialism! Long live dipenda!

*Uhuru Lumumba. Uhuru!*

[133] MOKUTU

*To one of his ministers*

Enough! I've had enough of these yells! These people should know that there are certain limits, going beyond which will not be tolerated. Tackle them!

*To the leader of his guards who rushes in*

Let's go! Clean it up for me! Speed it up! It's a story of signifying to these idiots that our powder is dry and that the show is over. Fire!

*A burst of machine gun fire . . . here and there, corpses, among them the sanza player. As the smoke clears, Mokutu exits slowly with his officers.*

Sanza player was  
source of lot of  
honour & glory  
he died

In 1960, the Congo was a  
country of many different  
tribes and languages.  
The Congolese people were  
being oppressed by the  
Belgians.

*Notes*

- 1 On the stage, Scene 10 and the beginning of Scene 11 interpenetrate and play themselves in a concomitant manner.
- 2 This scene can be omitted from stage versions.

*Une saison au Congo*

First published by Editions du Seuil in 1966. The present edition contains modifications and additions which makes it the definitive text for the theatre.

Staged on 4 October 1967 at the Theatre de l'Est-Parisien, by the group Serreau-Perinetti, under the direction of Jean-Marie Serreau. Directed by Guy Rétoré, with the following cast and crew.

Prison director, a Banker	Armand Abplanalp
Tzumbi, the Protester, a Senator	Moro Bitty
Basilio, Cordelier, a Banker	Daniel Dubois
M'siri, a Senator, a Soldier	Georges Hilarion
M'polo	Daniel Kamwa
Ghana, Travele	Balou Kassé
Mokutu	Yvan Labejof
a Mercenary, a Banker, a Pilot	Jean-Marie Lancelot
Kala-Lubu, Zimbwe	Théo Legitimus
Okito	Jackson Nshindi
Sanza Player	Douta Seck
Croulard, a Jailer, a Banker	Dominique Serreau
Hammar skjöld	Jean-Marie Serreau
Lumumba	Bachir Touré
Massens, the Ambassador, a Jailer	Rudi Van Vlaenderen
Jewel, a Woman	Marie-Claude Benoit

AIMÉ CÉSAIRE

A Woman, a Prostitute	Cayotte Bissainthe
Pauline Lumumba, a Woman	Lydia Ewandé
Mama Makosi	Darling Legitimus
A Woman, War	Danielle Van Bercheycke
WITH	
Eddy Louis	electric organ
Jean-Pierre Drouet	percussion
Pierre Cheriza	tambourine
Music	Eddy Louis
	Jean-Pierre Drouet
Costumes	Claude Lemaire
Scenes	Paul-Emile Simon
Images	Jean-Michel Folon















Season in the Congo

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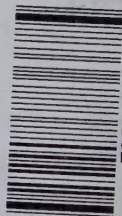
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