

[start, 00:00]

SPEAKER 3: Is it good for you? Clap. It's filming. We can resume.

SPEAKER 1: I was saying that the Universal Exhibition, East and West, it was finding yourself there. That is why, jealous of Belgium, which alone profited from the riches of the Congo, the Congolese people were practically trained, they were told here and there to let the independent masters do it, they were colonized by Holland, they liberated themselves. That's why political parties began to germinate. When the Congolese people arrived here, already in Brussels, the courses of... the African conscience spoke of a Congolese National Movement, MNC (*Mouvement National Congolais*). When they came here, they officially legalized it. This is the first officially recognized political party, the Congolese National Movement, in 1958. While at first (inaudible), in 1950, it was a cultural, ethnic movement, but taking political positions, as I told you before. That is an achievement of these (inaudible) Congolese people at the Exhibition. Another important fact of the Exhibition, the priest, Abbé Malula(ph) had held a conference called "The African Soul". As at the Exhibition, we all arrive opposite, everyone listened, Malula was discussing the subject roughly like this. He said here, on the ecclesiastical side, we have abbots, we have priests who administer the Congolese brothers. I am a parish priest in the capital Libreville, but on the civil side, on the secular side, there is no movement. The Congolese people have to be prepared to use the country later. That too, the Congolese had profited. That's why, when we got back here, the parties were created.

[00:02:30]

SPEAKER 2: So you were also in Belgium when the Political and Economic Round Tables took place in 1960? Did you attend the Round Tables?

SPEAKER 1: I'm coming back to something I forgot. You asked me the difference between White and Black, as in Belgium. I've given you an aspect and I've told you that here a Black man cannot be with a lady, a White woman, go somewhere, except at the Bilo(ph). But when I arrived in Belgium, I was amazed. One Saturday, a student who lives in Belgium before, he takes the train, there was no metro at that time. We go to the Gare du Nord rail station, we get off. He takes us to a neighborhood, we see girls showing us their breasts, their legs, inviting us, all that. There were five of us, plus he who knew (inaudible), I didn't even know what it was. But [*makes the sign of the cross, twice*], people were fleeing, people in trouble. If the wine does that, when you say it's like that in these neighborhoods, they'll send him back to Congo. What are we going to tell our parents, I got all this? We panicked and got back on the train. We arrived on the train. No one moved, really, we were surprised, surprised, because it was always said that Black people have no culture, Black people, you know nothing, you are savages, polygamous land, all that. In Kinshasa, I was (inaudible) at the time in the capital, I never saw women who were somewhere, waiting for men, showing breasts, and so on. We were lost on Saturday (inaudible). We went into a cafe.

[00:05:00]

We are (inaudible) until the waiter (inaudible), says, More than ten minutes ago, you come to see me? Are you chatting to me? Don't you talk? They moved (inaudible), yes, yes, yes. We want this, we want that. But when we got back into the apartment, we said, Really, the civilized White people do things like that, like beasts.

The next day, each of us wrote to their family, I had my coffee... (inaudible) today. He replied to me, But you, you're an extremist, you're lying, that's not true. The following week, one of our friends said, White people are afraid of Congo. Here you should not be afraid. If you really want to face it, let's go and see those girls there. I apologize for telling you that, this was a stupid thing, but since we are talking about what happened in that time. Ten or fifteen days later, we got ourselves ready and we went. We call, the three women, it was at your house, the four, it's you, and there you go, my legs, that's here all that. How much did it cost? 300 francs. When you want, three hundred francs, you go up (inaudible) with a girl. You go back down, if you want to start over 300 first, so on.

So, it was an event, I'm talking about it, these are things that were not done in Congo. And then the Belgians, they said something else. And before that, the restaurants, it was the White people who were serving us. We saw White people cleaning the streets and all that, White people who were drivers. Since at the time in Congo, all the White people were bosses, never a White driver who would drive a White man. (inaudible). You go to a restaurant, it was the Black people who'd be serving, the bosses who'd be ordering, the Black people are the ones who wash the plates, who lay the plates on the table, who take them away, all that. At the university where we were, (inaudible) they were not Congolese, uh... intelligent, it was not possible to hunt, all that. I just started my application in Leuven with the young people who were leaving college.

Which meant we were still brilliant. Then the events happened. One day, they brought me to Kelbec(ph), I speak French. There were some Flemish people who asked me, how long have you been here? I said, but eight months ago, or even a year ago. How do you speak French? When you say, No, we speak French in Congo, they didn't believe it was true. So the colonial Belgians, they were not telling the truth with (inaudible). And then, very importantly, every Belgian worker there knows his bosses, leave... his house, like servants and photos. When these people returned to Congo, the house on leave, he is not Belgian. That's why the Belgians, they used to say, no, the colonials there, it was chic. But in Louvain, we had homes for students, for students, colonial children, who did not accept that we go there. And then when we returned, we Black people, to Leuven, we made noises, noises. Finally, they were put together during the Exhibition. It was me and the others who came for a conference in Leuven. Each person spoke. I talked about the relationship between White people and Black people. When I said what I said, the professor of Génieco(ph), he gave me the course of historical facts, the history of Belgium. We followed the alphabet, we went over "B". He goes out, he asked me, Is that you Mukamba? I said, Yeah, And then, he passes me, Mp, Mu, me, I come after... (inaudible), he asks the other, is that you Mukamba? No. He asks me, Is that you Mukamba? I said, Yes. Are you the politician speaker?

[00:10:00]

I said, No, no, I am a student. Well, question, when you are independent, what are you going to do with the Belgians? That's not (inaudible) he said (inaudible) historical, but apart from that. I asked a question, he answered, the professor of Génieco(ph) (inaudible).

I went to the programming, there were nine points out of twenty. So when you have less than half, you have to do a second session, you start it all over again. I did my exam in the second session in his course, the (inaudible) series. He asked me again, What did you do on vacation? Did you do (inaudible)? I said, No, I did not go to Leuven, because I prepared my classes. Ah, did you prepare the classes? Yes. What did you study? I said, well, I studied that, and I did that, that, that. Ok, sir, you can leave. In the programming, he gave me twelve points, that's it. There it was really, it's something I don't have (inaudible).

[00:11:30]

SPEAKER 2: But now, can you tell us about the political and economic Round Tables that took place in Brussels in 1960?

SPEAKER 1: After the events of January 4, there was unrest in Kisangani, Stanleyville at the time, the King made a speech, Baudouin the First, to say, "Here, let us try to find an agreement between the Belgians and the colony and the metropolis. We have to find a system so as to emancipate the Congolese people". This is where the idea was born. It was decided in December or November 1959 to call a delegation of Congolese to Belgium, the tribal chiefs and the leaders of the political parties. They were to be in Belgium before the Belgian parliament, made up of parliamentarians and ministers. So, 44 Congolese delegations arrive in Belgium.

They arrived at the station of (inaudible), they arrived, politicians, tribal chiefs, civil society. Among the Belgians, as I said, there was the minister. We said, that's the Political Round Table that started on January 20th and ended on February 20th. But since the Belgians were clever, there was the party called the National Progress Party (NPP) created by the Belgians. And also the tribal chiefs, and they were called the "Béni-oui-oui [Blessed-yes-yes]". As the politicians discussed, they demanded independence. They were put in different groups, they didn't see each other. A week before the opening of the Round Table, Justin Bomboko was the vice-president of the Association of Black Students in Belgium. Lihau [*Marcel*] was the president in charge of public relations. We gathered, we thought, But the Belgians, they are remaining in Congo, until that time there were only three political parties in Belgium, the Christian Social Party, the Liberal Party, the Socialist Party. We said (inaudible) at that time, it was the liberals and Christians who were in power, the socialists in the opposition. In front of Congo, they will speak the same language. While we are (inaudible), the students made the effort to visit all the hotels where there were congresses so as to convey this idea.

We succeeded. We all came together to say, "We need to know the nature of the conference". From that moment, the date of independence. These are the two things that students will instill and the politicians in their entirety will support.

[00:15:00]

That's why at the conference, Kalonji Albert, (inaudible) was part of the MNC-K party since the Congolese-Kalonji National Movement had split in two, and on the left, there was the Abako, but fortunately thanks to (inaudible), the Abako of Kasavubu, the Kasai PCA(ph), the capital, the Kalonji MNC, the ABAZI Party, the People's Party.

These people went to the Kisanu Botanical Garden in December, they did two weeks, they said, We're going there, we have an appointment at (inaudible). It is Kasavubu who is the spokesman, uh, who is the president; Kamitatu was the spokesman in the other ICC(ph). They came united while all the others were not united. But thanks to the students, after the work we had done, what is called the Congolese Common Front was created.

So Oleka(ph) was appointed spokesman, Kamitatu, the second, and they said the students who helped us, they must also be the third spokesman. We have Pluodia(ph) Naxene(ph), who was the president of our association. The conference began. At that time, Lumumba was in prison in Likasi, Jadotville at the time. About two weeks later, the work was postponed. The Common Front said, "No, no, our brother Lumumba is in prison, he must attend. If they don't let him come, we'll skip the meetings. Indeed, two days, there were no meetings. Fortunately, some five days later, Lumumba was released and (inaudible) others in Belgium. So every year in Congo, on July 1st, we celebrated a national holiday, Belgium, I don't know why. We had a party in primary and secondary school on June 30.

The (inaudible) socialist in the opposition told the Congolese, Don't be foolish. Now, you're here, you won't have a chance to come back. Are you still going to celebrate July 1st? You have to have independence before that. People thought, "Well, you're going to come to say that." So, we did not (inaudible). Lumumba came out, he contacted (inaudible), he said, "No, no, we're asking to come on June 30th, a day before July 1st. The others reproached him, as I had left, there you have the overbidding. That way, who says (inaudible), and the other who says (inaudible).

So, given the risk of overbidding, that's how we agreed for June 30th. I will never forget that Kasavubu opposed (inaudible). We don't have trained people in the police, the army. In the army, the first sergeant-major was the most advanced rank, there were no adjutants in the army. In the police, you look, no commissioner. And for the most advanced Black people, (inaudible) category. So there are (inaudible) categories of (inaudible). No, let's have a provisional government until 1962. In 1962, we will create independence, but the inhabitants (inaudible) like that. This is how the final decision of the Independence Date was on June 30th. But, we have no officials, what are we going to do? It was decided that, because there was the minister of colonies, in the (inaudible) government, who was in Brussels with his cabinet.

[00:20:05]

And here the colonel general, the council of generals, then the district council and provincial governors, the council of districts and territories. We said, well, before we leave the Round Table, as there are six provinces, each province appoints one person, six people who will stay next to the Minister of Colonies in Brussels, it was called, Political Commission. In each ..., the (inaudible) party departments were made aware of the opinions. Each province had to meet, appoint a man who comes to the Political Commission, on the 25th in Brussels. Then, also six people known as the General Executive College, which was due to be before the Governor General. And in the provinces, three people who had to work with the governors of the provinces. So, since these decisions there, as soon as we become independent, but when we returned, before independence, the Minister of Settlements cannot sign the documents without the agreement of these six. The governor, even in Libreville(ph) Kinshasa, works in collaboration with the six personalities. Same for the province.

What was done, we decided the elections in May. We ended on February 20th, people left happy, we will have the elections. Until then, as elections in this country, there was only the municipality, the Touavi(ph), and to say (ph) in Kinshasa, Lubumbashi and Kasai(ph). Elsewhere, they did not know what elections were. Now we have to hold parliamentary and presidential elections. People came. It was after they all came en masse that the Economic Round Table was held. Not all politicians came, they didn't attend, they appointed collaborators here, in addition to students. However, the students, I refused to go to that conference there.

I said, I can't go, I'm preparing for the July exams. So, there are a few students, like (Albert Kigoli)(ph), he had studied finance, Lesembe(ph), he had just finished, (inaudible), Kanza(ph), who had finished two years prior at (inaudible), plus some brothers of ours (inaudible) who stopped, supposedly, that pronoun(ph). Thus, having given no credit here to this Economic Round Table, the Belgians have attributed the lion's share (inaudible) for themselves. When they came, the Prime Minister went to Belgium in 1964, he came to negotiate the (inaudible) so-called Congolese (inaudible). He came with his briefcase (inaudible). He said, "In this briefcase, I have everything". There you go. There was seriousness at the political Round Table, the economic Round Table was neglected. *[coughing, stops talking]*

[00:24:10]

SPEAKER 2: You want to drink something, maybe?

SPEAKER 1: Is there any juice? *[man brings a phone]*

SPEAKER 2: So independence, you celebrated it in Belgium?

SPEAKER 1: Obviously, I remember how we were, the cartel, Abako, MNC and all that. We were at the Plaza Hotel, the Plaza no longer exists. You know the Métropole Hotel, right? When you arrive, there is the Sheraton Hotel, the avenue with the name I forget, it had the Plaza, at the bottom, at the roundabout you have the Métropole.

[00:25:05]

In the Plaza, this was where the (inaudible) Round Table group was. It's an Aba-Coda(ph) cartel, they were the strongest, talking, all that. And it was there that (inaudible), that we brought the Kabasele orchestra. I remember (inaudible), brings in the orchestra (inaudible), the hotel with the name I don't know, Joseph Pania Kabasele. So, the big square, I often went down there, it is there in front of this hotel, I forget the name, that we celebrated "The Independence Cha". It was in this hotel that we celebrated independence, I attended, we danced. Kabasele, he was the one singing "The Independence Cha", we were all there.

[00:26:20]

SPEAKER 2: And on Independence Day itself, Independence Day itself, June 30th in Belgium, what happened?

SPEAKER 1: No, it was before independence, when we decided on independence on June 30th, we brought Kabasele while the politicians were still there. As it was already final and decided for June 30th, he came, we danced and the media left with, we had the (inaudible) June after.

SPEAKER 2: But on June 30th, was there an Independence Day party?

SPEAKER 1: Yes, yes, on June 30th, in (inaudible), there was a very big party, we had a party.

SPEAKER 2: Ok. Did you return to the country in 1961?

[00:27:10]

SPEAKER 1: When independence came, with the events that first took place in Kasai, there was a conflict between Lumumba(ph) and the Bulua(ph). The Bulua(ph) were more numerous in all (inaudible), Kasai remains and (inaudible) in there. They all took up the posts. My parents, Bentikama(ph), being barbarian, they also left. And Kalonji got fucked by (inaudible), he called on me.

Kalonji phoned me, he said, "Come". So in August 1960, I returned to Congo for the first time since National Day. I went to Bakwa, which is in Kasai, I helped him welcome refugees. We had to welcome all those thousands and thousands of Balubas who came barefoot, exhausted and many are still on the roads. We had to build huts and tents for them. I completed this business, then I left for Brussels.

But when Kasavubu dismissed Lumumba, he appointed [*Joseph*] Ileo as prime minister, but they did not see eye to eye. Mubutu, who was Colonel Mobutu, said, "I suspend (inaudible) in the republic," no, "I suspend both governments, I suspend Lumumba and President Kasavubu". Then, the students took advantage of it, we formed what is known as the College of General Commissioners composed of mostly students and some Congolese politicians(ph) who were not

academics. (inaudible) The president of the College of General Commissioners acting as Prime Minister was Justin Marie Bomboko, and Albert Ndele was the vice-president, and I was part of that team.

[00:30:00]

So three months later, we ended this college. Tshisekedi, who was at [University] Lovanium, and the others returned to their university, those who came from Liège, Leuven and Brussels, they returned to Belgium. So, it was 1961, I'd just finally finished, I came back. When I returned, I was in South Kasai, which today has become Kasai Oriental. From the beginning, I worked in the (inaudible) municipality of Skarondi(ph) which was (inaudible) MNC-Kalonji. What we did at the beginning, we drove him out, It was (inaudible) who became head of the province, he formed a government where I was elected Minister of the Interior (inaudible). 1962, 63, 64 ... in 1965, there were firstly legislative elections, then the provincial ones in May. In December, presidential elections were held.

That is, Adoula was no longer prime minister, Tshombé was brought from Socrates(ph) where he studied, after Tshombé had fled, but Tshombé returned as prime minister. (inaudible) everywhere, there was the crowd in Kinshasa. When Tshombé came, he resigned Kasavubu at the end in Leopoldville, Kinshasa. Sombo Amba Ileo went all over the country to hold elections. But Tshombé had done his job very well. He had abundance (inaudible) here in Kinshasa. Some said he had (inaudible) and all that. But Tshombé, when he went out, he was carried from arm to arm, since people were walking, he had everything. Then, finally, Tshombé brought Senère(ph), they went to (inaudible), to Boukabou(ph), everywhere. They ended the rebellion, and Tshombé held elections in May. There were two groups.

Tshombé had what is called CONACO, and Kasavubu had what was called MNC, but Tshombé had a provincial majority in all provinces. For national MPs and senators, (inaudible) had a majority. However, the elections had to be held before December 5th for the public treasury(ph), and at that time, of the meeting for the Basic Law, it was the two chambers of the (inaudible), it was not at the universal suffrage. It was the Senate and the National Assembly that had to appoint the president.

So, Kasavubu, seeing that Tshombé would surely win, dismissed Tshombé from office. But Tshombé, a Democrat, did not do what Lumumba did since Lumumba was going (inaudible) President Kasavubu, that is to say as soon as he delisted (ph), more fights. But Tshombé, democratically, they put Guimba(ph) who was his Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Secession, which is at his place, because you have to divide to rule. This will be his collaborator who will collaborate(ph) Prime Minister.

Then he had to run for Parliament, both houses (inaudible). He did not have a majority (inaudible). Two weeks later, Kasavubu (inaudible) still appoints him, he took the majority. We are in a dead end according to my conception and my understanding. The "Binza Group", as it was called, which was against Tshombé, who was hungry(ph) from Kasavubu, it was who, it was Nendaka who was at Security, Bomboko, who was a specialist on the whole of Africa, Mobutu, who was at the Army,

and Adoula who was minister since at that time he was the only one who lived on this side, in Binza, the others lived in cities (inaudible).

[00:35:15]

I think these people have made it clear in Kasavubu, if we go to the elections on the 5th, they are ready to beat you because they were candidates of the political parties. But what is it? (inaudible) If we were able (inaudible), it is that on November 24, 1965, a statement comes from the military high command concerning the chaos in Congo. The politicians are not getting along. The military government took power that night of November 24, 1965, and Mobutu, their commander-in-chief, was put in charge, he became President of the Republic. That's why Mobutu went on to do the coup, he became President of the Republic in 1965.

What I just said, that is what is happening. In January ... rather in September 1960, Kasavubu had blocked Lumumba. Mobutu unblocked the government of Lumumba and Ileo that had been formed. The students were called. Three months later, Kasavubu, who was supposedly set aside, became president. I will come back to it... He became president. I think that at this boubacric(ph), as it was done in September last year, now we'll take power for five years. He will leave me the power. But since I no longer have power, as power always attracts, Kasavubu was in his village until his death. Mobutu did 35 years instead of 5 years, which he had promised. So he threw it at me (inaudible). When Kasavubu and Lumumba had argued, who has the right to dismiss one or the other. Kasavubu had dismissed him according to Article 23 or 22 of the Basic Law which says that the head of state can provoke ... uh, dismiss any minister. But when he is a prime minister, his decree must be countersigned by two ministers who are members of the government.

And Kasavubu did that, while Lumumba dismissed Kasavubu on the radio. But if it was Parliament that had, as agreed with Kasavubu, there would have been (inaudible) distrust after the case. So there was a seat at the United Nations given to the newly independent DRC. There was Thomas Kanza who represented Lumumba, and Losembe Cardoso who represented Kasavubu. The general meeting had to meet to find out who has the right to appoint someone there.

That's why the UN General Assembly went to visit the archives, and went on the basis of the article I told you about before. There was a vote, I remind you, Khrushchev, Nkrumah of Ghana, Sékou Touré of Guinea, Mohamed V of Morocco, and Nehru of India, and some groups from the East, since it was the Cold War at that time, East-West, they defended Lumumba. I remember, I saw on TV, Khrushchev took off his shoe, he tapped on the table. But when they voted on who has the right to enforce the law, Kasavubu had more votes. That's why the United Nations brought Kasavubu from Léopoldville to New York, to say now you are the President of Congo. That is an important detail that I'm giving you, that we never talk about. There you go.

[00:40:00]

SPEAKER 2: Can you briefly tell us about your professional and political career after independence?

SPEAKER 1: After independence... there was this... when Mobutu Sese became president, it was Kasavubu as he had to... when Kasavubu became president, he visited the political parties. There

was Prime Minister Ileo, he drove him out, [Cyrilla] Adoula came, Tshombé came, I just talked about Tshombé... Then Mobutu took power, Mobutu worked very well. Mobutu created the Congolese National Movement, uh rather, the Popular Movement of the Revolution, not to say the former political party, the MPR, the name of the coalition. We had a company project...

[end, 41:25]