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*The Belgian Disengagement and the UN's Activity in the Congo in the Eyes of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1960*¹

Paper proposed for the Panel 27 “Re-Visiting ‘The Winds of Change’: The Role of Europe and the United Nations in the Decolonization of Africa Half a Century Ago” (coordinated by Henning Melber, Arrigo Pallotti, Ian Phimister, Mario Zamponi) of the ECAS4 in Uppsala 2011

“*Quod licet Iovi, non licet bovi.*”

This paper² deals with the Hungarian perception of the Belgian and UN role in the first year of the Congo Crisis which coincides with the end of two mandates. First, with the death by accident of the Swedish Secretary-General of the United Nations, Dag Hammarskjöld (17.09.1961), second, the end of the term of the Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Endre Sík (15.02.1958 – 13.09.1961).³ Endre Sík was the only historian of Africa from Hungary who, in the second half of the 20th century, could obtain an international – although very contested – notoriety⁴ by his huge Marxist enterprise, the 4 volume *History of Black Africa* (1961–1973) published first in French (*Histoire de l’Afrique Noire*)⁵ then in Hungarian (*Fekete-Afrika története*), and in English.⁶ Between 1918–1945, he lived in the Soviet Union

¹ Originally, there has been a second part of the title (...the Change of the Belgian Perception of the Events in the Last 50 Years), but I have realized that first, the paper would have been then exceeding the character limits by far, second, I have found three excellent writings (a book and two essays) which cover already this topic: BRAECKMAN, Colette – GÉRARD-LIBOIS, Jules – KESTERGAT, Jean – VANDERLINDEN, Jacques – VERHAEGEN, Benoît – WILLAME, Jean-Claude: *Congo 1960. Échec d’une décolonisation*. GRIP–André Versaille, Brussels, 2010; VANTHEMSCHE, Guy: *The Historiography of Belgian Colonialism in the Congo*. In: LÉVAL, Csaba (ed.): *Europe and the World in European Historiography. Thematic Work Group 6, Europe and the World I*. CLIOHRES.net, Edizioni Plus – Pisa University Press, Pisa, 2006. pp. 89–120; VANHEE, Hein – CASTRYCK, Geert: Inleiding. Belgische historiografie en verbeelding over het koloniale verleden. *Revue belge d’Histoire contemporaine/Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Nieuwste Geschiedenis* XXXII, 2002. 3–4, Fondation Jan Dhondt Stichting, pp. 305–320.

² The author wishes to express his gratitude to the helpful staff in the Hess András square building of the Hungarian National Archives (MOL), especially to Mr. András Kiss, archivist.

³ A recent biography and reappraisal of the oeuvre of the minister in Hungarian by BÚR, Gábor: Sík Endre, Afrika történetírója. (Endre Sík, Historiographer of Africa.) In: SEBESTYÉN, Éva – SZOMBATHY, Zoltán – TARRÓSY, István (eds.): *Harambee. Tanulmányok Füssi Nagy Géza 60. születésnapjára*. Publikon Könyvek – ELTE BTK Afrikánisztikai Oktatási Program, Pécs, 2006. 108–114.

⁴ A less biased evaluation of his works in English by DARCH, Colin – LITTLEJOHN, Gary: Endre Sík and the Development of African Studies in the USSR: A Study Agenda from 1929. *History in Africa*, Vol. 10, 1983. 79–108.

⁵ COLLINS, Robert O.: *Histoire de l’Afrique noire*. Endre Sík. Translated by Frida Léderer. (Volume I.) Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1961. 406 pp., bibliographies, 5 maps, 29 plates, n.p. *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 64, 1967. 1077–1078.

⁶ JONES, D. H.: Sík’s Africa. The History of Black Africa, Vol. II. By Endre Sík. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1966. pp. 332, maps. *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 8, 1967. 549–550.

and he wrote the major part of this book there, in the 1930s. When he returned to Hungary in 1945, he was working in the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and he was heavily influenced by his long stay in the USSR when he tried as a politician to help Hungary to get out of the political isolation after 1956.

Hungary joined the United Nations along with 15 other states only on 14 December 1955. Then the Hungarian revolution in October 1956 offered a good opportunity for Israel to attack Egypt. Great Britain and France joined the Israeli forces. The Soviet Union did not want to enter into direct confrontation and she pulled back her advisors and heavy arms from Egypt. But she expected that in counterpart she would be given free hand in Hungary by the West. The United States of America gave their approval.

Two days later, on 1 November 1956, the Hungarian prime minister, Imre Nagy declared that Hungary would quit the Warsaw Pact and become a neutral State. He also asked the United Nations Security Council to discuss the Hungarian question. There was no reply to his messages. On 4 November, the Soviet army invaded Budapest and took control of it after heavy fights in some opposition cores on 10–11 November. Ten thousands fled towards Austria. The USSR put a quisling, János Kádár to the position of the leader of Hungary serving completely the interests of Moscow.

Also on 4 November, the UN Security Council put to his agenda the Hungarian question. The General Assembly on its second emergency special session also discussed the issue and demanded free elections, the withdrawal of the Soviet forces from Hungary; and requested the Secretary-General to investigate the situation by representatives named by him.⁷ On 8 November, after the suggestion of the United States of America, the UN mandate inspection committee “*proposed that the decision on granting Hungarian credentials should be postponed*” and it was accepted by the General Assembly.⁸ Still, the Hungarian delegation could participate fully in the Assembly (Clause 29 of the Rules of Procedure), so this decision had only a moral impact.⁹ In 1957, the Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjöld created a special committee, but there was a Soviet pressure on the Secretary-General. After the investigation the General Assembly expressed only its regrets on the repression, and the Soviet occupation and named the New Zealander Sir Leslie Munro as Hammarskjöld’s special

⁷ UN Resolutions adopted by the General Assembly during its Second Emergency Special Session from 4 to 10 November 1956. URL: http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/3355&Lang=E, downloaded on 20.05.2011.

⁸ BORHI, László: In the Power Arena. US–Hungarian Relations 1942–1989. *Eurozine*, 07.07.2010, 1–13: 4. URL: <http://www.eurozine.com/pdf/2010-07-07-borhi-en.pdf>, downloaded on 08.06.2011.

⁹ RÁCZ, Barnabás: *Hungary and the United Nations 1956–1962: A Legal and a Political Analysis*. United Nations Association of Hungary (Magyar ENSZ Társaság), 2007. 1–21: 6. URL: http://www.menszt.hu/content/download/288/1419/file/racz_barnabas.pdf, downloaded on 10.06.2011.

representative to watch the eventual improvement of the situation in Hungary but no further action was made.¹⁰

But the Hungarian question (along with the credentials of the Hungarian delegates) remained a very painful issue for the Hungarian government whenever it was raised in the UN and elsewhere during the following years.¹¹ The debate about the Hungarian question was one of the confrontation points between the USSR and the US in the UN. János Kádár's Hungary became isolated, so he tried to establish good relations first with the socialist countries and with the non-aligned countries. That is why the Hungarian press overemphasized the visit of Sukarno in 1960 and Nkrumah in 1961. The first western trip of János Kádár led to New York in 1960, where negotiations began with the United States of America to remove from the UN agenda the Hungarian question and to fully re-establish Hungary's membership in the UN. That was proposed at the end of 1962 by the US and accepted by the Assembly in 1963.

When taking a closer look at the records of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it became clear that the Hungarian diplomats in Brussels and in New York were particularly sensitive to the Hungarian question¹² which had been raised several times by foreign diplomats in comparison with the events of the Congo Crisis.¹³ The Hungarian case was later

¹⁰ UN General Assembly, Thirteenth Session, Resolution 1312 (XIII) The Situation in Hungary (Item 59, p. 69 (12.12.1958.)). More precisely, a very conscientious Danish employee of the UN, Povl Bang-Jensen, against whom Hammarskjöld conducted a disciplinary procedure, was very probably murdered by the Soviet Union in 1959, because he did not want to reveal the list of the witnesses of 1956 knowing that someone in the milieu of Hammarskjöld would communicate it to the KGB. NAGY, Gergely: Az ENSZ, 1956 és egy rejtélyes halál. [The UN, 1956 and a Mysterious Death.] *hvg.hu*, 4 November 2005. URL: http://hvg.hu/kultura/20051028nagyandras_bangjensen, downloaded on 19.05.2011.

¹¹ Sir Leslie Munro made a Report on the Question of Hungary to the UN General Assembly on 1 December 1961. URL: http://www.osaarchivum.org/images/stories/pdfs/hedervary/background/hung_question_munro.pdf, downloaded on 19.05.2011.

¹² Copy of the speech of János Szita (member of the Hungarian UN delegation, permanent representative of Hungary for the International Organizations in Geneva, 1957–1961) on the Fourth Emergency Special Session of the General Assembly (18.09.1960) about the debate over the mandate of China and Hungary: "... the American motion was not proposed on legal ground, but it was only politically motivated. These political motives became obvious in the light of our present debate. Some American circles can not resign themselves to the fact that four years ago they did not succeed to achieve the same goals they hope to realize in the Republic of the Congo, namely to use the UN for the service of their own political services in order to infringe the independence and the sovereignty of a member state." ("...az amerikai javaslatot nem jogi, hanem csakis politikai motívumok alapján terjesztették elő. Ezek a politikai motívumok jelenlegi vitánk fényében nyilvánvalóvá váltak. Bizonyos amerikai körök nem tudnak belenyugodni abba a ténybe, hogy négy évvel ezelőtt nem sikerült elérniük ugyanazokat a célkitűzéseket, melyeket a Kongói Köztársaságban remélnek elérni, azaz felhasználni az ENSZ-et arra, hogy saját politikai céljaik szolgálatában megsértsék egy tagállam függetlenségét és szuverenitását.") Magyar Országos Levéltár (National Archives of Hungary hereafter abbreviated as MOL), KÜM (Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, hereafter abbreviated as KÜM), XIX-J-20-a, Brüsszeli Nagykövetség, TÜK, 8. doboz, 215. alapszám (Embassy in Brussels, Confidential Papers, Box No. 8, base number 215).

¹³ For example page 3 of the copy of the report of the Hungarian UN Mission in New York (28.09.1960) on the Fourth Emergency Special Session of the General Assembly: "During the debate, aside of the attack against the Soviet Union, the Spanish and the Dutch delegate representative mentioned Hungary by name. The first was talking about the Hungarian flow of blood, and the second qualified a 'self defeating tactic' that the 'speaker of the actual Hungarian regime' was talking about the respect of the UN decisions." ("A vita során a Szovjetunió

recalled by the Belgian minister of Foreign Affairs, Paul-Henri Spaak during a parliamentary session on 24 November 1964, when a communist deputy told him that Belgium had intervened into the internal affairs of Congo. Spaak replied the followings: *“Who did ask military aid from us? This aid was asked by Adoula from the UN. When the UN denied that, then he addressed himself to different countries and Belgium, too. Is it an intervention to the internal affairs of a country if someone is responding to the demand of a legal government? Who did intervene one day to the internal affairs of a country? The Soviet Union did it in Hungary in 1956.”*¹⁴ The Belgian ambassador was asked in for explanation by the Hungarian ministry of Foreign Affairs, but the ambassador gave an excuse for absence: he was suffering from heart disease and had to stay in bed.¹⁵

From the Archives, it looks that the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs was following quite closely the evolution of the Congolese events and the relationship of Belgium with Congo. The Hungarian Embassy in Brussels was sending reports and memoranda almost in every month (sometimes even more frequently, of course) about these topics between 1959 and 1961 by ministers Imre Kutas (1958–1960, Tibor Lajti (1960–1964) and *chargés d'affaires* László Kazimir and László Sárkány. The Congolese issue appears first in the reports on 12 April 1959 about the possible dismissal of Hendrik Cornelis, Governor-General of the Belgian Congo.¹⁶ One can also get information about the rumor that the ex king, Leopold III intended to become king of the Congo.¹⁷ Then the list of the political parties in

elleni támadás mellett Magyarországot a spanyol és a holland képviselő említette névszerint [sic]. Az előbbi a magyarországi vérömlésről beszélt, az utóbbi meg azt tartotta 'önmagát legyőző' taktikának, hogy 'a jelenlegi magyarországi rendszer szónoka' az ENSZ határozatok betartásáról beszélt.”) MOL, KÜM, XIX-J-20-a, Brüsszeli Nagykövetség, TÜK, 8. doboz, 215. alapszám (Embassy in Brussels, Confidential Papers, Box No. 8, base number 215).

¹⁴ *“Ki kérte tőlünk a katonai segítséget? Ezt a segítséget Adula [sic] kérte az ENSZ-től. Amikor az ENSZ ezt megtagadta, akkor fordult különböző országokhoz és Belgiumhoz is. Beavatkozás-e egy ország belügyeibe ha válaszolnak egy legális kormány kérésére? Ki avatkozott be egy napon egy ország belügyeibe? A Szovjetunió Magyarországon 1956-ban.”* Quoted by a Memorandum of the Benelux reporting division of the Vth Territorial Department (V. Területi Osztály, Benelux referatúra) of the Hungarian Ministry of the Foreign Affairs (403/1964, 02.12.1964) MOL, KÜM, XIX-J-1-k, 45–64, Kis országok, 2. doboz, Belga Kongó, Kongó 1964 (Small countries, Box No. 2, Belgian Congo, Congo 1964).

¹⁵ Memorandum of the Benelux reporting division of the Vth Territorial Department (V. Területi Osztály, Benelux referatúra) of the Hungarian Ministry of the Foreign Affairs (403/1964, 02.12.1964) MOL, KÜM, XIX-J-1-k, 45–64, Kis országok, 2. doboz, Belga Kongó, Kongó 1964 (Small countries, Box No. 2, Belgian Congo, Congo 1964).

¹⁶ Letter of the minister Imre Kutas to the Ministry (to Endre Sík) (13.04.1959), strictly confidential, MOL, KÜM, XIX-J-1-j, Belgium TÜK (1946–1964), 46. tétel, Belgium bel- és külpolitikája, katonapolitikai kérdések, 6. doboz, 115/59/Sz.t./1959. (Belgium Confidential Papers [1946–1964], Item No. 46, Internal and Foreign Policy of Belgium, Military Policy, Box No. 6, No. 115/59/Sz.t./1959).

¹⁷ Letter of the minister Imre Kutas to the Ministry (non dated, arrived 17.06.1959), strictly confidential, MOL, KÜM, XIX-J-1-j, Belgium TÜK (1946–1964), 46. tétel, Belgium bel- és külpolitikája, katonapolitikai kérdések, 6. doboz, 143/1/Sz.t./59 (Belgium Confidential Papers [1946–1964], Item No. 46, Internal and Foreign Policy of Belgium, Military Policy, Box No. 6, No. 143/1/Sz.t./1959).

the Belgian Congo follows with their leaders in May and in the summer of 1959;¹⁸ after, in the autumn of 1959, the arrest of Lumumba,¹⁹ etc. From that last report we also learn that the Hungarian minister was having additional information from a certain De Coninck, member of the Political Board (*Bureau Politique*) of the Belgian Communist Party. This De Coninck can be nobody else but Albert De Coninck, the Spanish Civil War veteran, who was, according to *Solidaire*, the model for Robert Jordan of Ernest Hemingway in his novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls*.²⁰ One can read also about the Belgian efforts to block or counterbalance the surprising Congolese political union at the Belgo-Congolese Roundtable Conference in Brussels.²¹ There is also a very detailed, long, fully covered with typing, 14 page overview and analysis on the Congolese situation and the Belgian intentions during the last month written by the chargé d'affaires on 5 August 1960.²² We learn from it that in spite of their conflicts, the two most popular leaders, Kasa-Vubu and Lumumba could agree on a common platform mainly in their fight against the separatism.²³

The other important source of the Ministry – mainly in its relationship with Pierre Mulele, the head of the Diplomatic Mission in Cairo (and minister of education and arts) of the Gizenga government of Stanleyville (actual Kisangani) – was the Hungarian Embassy in Cairo. The ambassador, Lajos Szijártó (1957–1963) was delegated on behalf of the Hungarian government to represent it at the celebration of the Congolese independence on 30 June 1960. In his travel report, he writes that he had left Cairo on 27 June and traveled through Ruanda-Urundi where the military governor's secretary showed him around a little and they arrived to Léopoldville on 28 June. He noticed that the representatives of all the socialist countries were there except China and Albania. He had an impression of a lack of organization about the

¹⁸ Letters of the minister Imre Kutas to the Ministry (12.05.1959 and 09.07.1959), MOL, KÜM, XIX-J-1-j, Belgium Confidential Papers [1946–1964], Item No. 46, Internal and Foreign Policy of Belgium, Military Policy, Box No. 6, No. 142/Sz.t./59 and copy without No.

¹⁹ Letter of the minister Imre Kutas to the Ministry (12.11.1959), MOL, KÜM, XIX-J-1-j, Belgium Confidential Papers [1946–1964], Item No. 46, Internal and Foreign Policy of Belgium, Military Policy, Box No. 6, No. 258/Sz.t./59.

²⁰ *Archives du Parti Communiste de Belgique, Le Bureau Politique (BP) 1944–1987*. Le Centre des Archives communistes en Belgique (CArCoB), URL : <http://www.carcob.eu/files/BureauPolitique.pdf>, downloaded on 10.06.2011 and In Memoriam Albert De Coninck. 13.12.2006, *Solidaire* (Parti du Travail de Belgique), URL: <http://www.archivesolidaire.org/scripts/article.phtml?section=A1AAAB&obid=33305>, downloaded on 10.06.2011.

²¹ Letter of the minister Imre Kutas to the Ministry (14.03.1960), MOL, KÜM, XIX-J-1-j, Belgium Confidential Papers [1946–1964], Item No. 46, Internal and Foreign Policy of Belgium, Military Policy, Box No. 6, No. 80/Sz.t./60.

²² Memorandum of the chargé d'affaires ad interim László Sárkány to the ministry (05.08.1960) MOL, KÜM, XIX-J-1-j, Belgium Confidential Papers [1946–1964], Item No. 46, Internal and Foreign Policy of Belgium, Military Policy, Box No. 6, No. 169/Sz.t./1960.

²³ Page 6 of the Memorandum of the chargé d'affaires ad interim László Sárkány to the ministry (05.08.1960) MOL, KÜM, XIX-J-1-j, Belgium Confidential Papers [1946–1964], Item No. 46, Internal and Foreign Policy of Belgium, Military Policy, Box No. 6, No. 169/Sz.t./1960.

reception of the diplomatic staff at the airport and in general. He mentioned that the Soviet delegation came with its own plane and intended to stay further in order to establish the diplomatic relations. The Czechoslovakian Republic was already having a Consulate General which would be transformed into an Embassy. After the celebration, because there had been no further program offered, he traveled back to Egypt – this time via Uganda, Kenya, and Sudan – and he arrived to Cairo on 6 July.²⁴

The ambassador Szijártó was giving his view about the political situation in the new Republic of the Congo in his report of 26 July, in which he expressed that after his discussion with Congolese statesmen during his short stay in Léopoldville, he remarked that there was a strong rivalry inside the government, and that the president Joseph Kasa-Vubu was following rather federalist views (federation of six “states”) while the prime minister Patrice Lumumba was a unitarist. The chiefs of several tribes were looking at the elections as unfair, and they did not want to approve the central government, they would rather follow the local authorities. The government probably would not last long because of these factors, and this divergence was supported by the Belgian, American, and English capitalist groups whose hands the Congo was in. Where Congo will turn, to the West or to the East, time will tell, he added.²⁵

A Hungarian journalist, Tibor Köves (a leading figure of the MTI, the Hungarian News Agency, 1950–1996) was also spending four weeks from the end of August in Congo till 18 September 1960. He came back with the staff of the expelled Soviet and Czechoslovak Embassies after Mobutu had told them to leave within 48 hours and Kasa-Vubu also declared to interrupt the relations with the two countries. The African reporting division of the Ministry made a memorandum of the meeting with the journalist. The opinion of Tibor Köves was that Lumumba became isolated because he had not been following a policy firm enough against the “*external and the internal reaction*”. But the opposition still had to count with him, because he embodied the idea of the national unity. His opposition had been trying to use his isolation to convince him to give up the idea of the national unity and the radical ideas of the Congolese independence. Köves gave a list of anti-Lumumba activities of the UN. According to Köves, Lumumba had to face three forces, the tribal division, the UN, and the intrigues of the missionaries. Tibor Köves also mentioned the antagonism between Kasa-Vubu and Lumumba, and on Mobutu he said that he had no important national forces, his “authority”

²⁴ Letter of the ambassador in Cairo, Lajos Szijártó to the Ministry (20.07.1960), MOL, KÜM, XIX-J-1-j, SZT Kongó (1945–1964), 1. doboz, IV-162, 213/Szig.titkr./1960 (Congo Confidential Papers [1946–1964], Box No. 1, IV-162, No. 213/Szig.titkr./1960).

²⁵ Letter of the ambassador in Cairo, Lajos Szijártó to the Ministry (26.07.1960), MOL, KÜM, XIX-J-1-j, Congo Confidential Papers (1946–1964), Box No. 1, IV-24, No. 218/Szig.titk./1960.

inside the army was due to foreign financial support. The last paragraph contains less ideological consideration, but it expresses the national interests of Hungary: *“Concerning the opportunities of Hungary, if the Congolese events have a favorable turn and the internal situation becomes stable, we shall make immediately the necessary steps to establish direct relations. After the exit of the Belgians the shortage of experts/skilled workforce became substantial which could give us the opportunity to send experts and to receive scholarship students. Congo’s wealth in natural resources can help to develop the trade between the two countries.”*²⁶

This conclusion is reflected strikingly in the end of a much later internal memorandum written by Ferenc Nemes from the VIth Territorial Department about the relationship of Hungary with the Republic of the Congo (Léopoldville) on 22 February 1962. Nemes describes shortly the evolution of the relationship from our recognition²⁷ of the new republic, our presence on the celebration in June 1960, then the contact with and the recognition of the Gizenga government in Stanleyville on 6 May 1961 with a retroactive force from 18 February 1961, finally the cautious rapprochement between Hungary and the Cyrille Adoula government (02.08.1961–30.06.1964) throughout two supporting replies to its notes coming from its Embassy in Belgrade. He then also cautiously proposes the followings: *“Regarding the fact that Gizenga deputy prime minister was violently driven out of the political life and arrested, as well as the more and more realistic opportunity that the territorial unity of Congo would be achieved under the aegis of the central government the stability of which seems unquestionable for now, it is necessary to place our future behavior to new bases towards Congo. When establishing our relations, we should look at the Republic of the Congo as a country which is under the influence of the neocolonialism, follows a pro-Western and with the socialist countries an unfriendly attitude in her foreign policy, and amongst her leaders the circles are already strongly present which would like to block the extension of our*

²⁶ “Magyarország lehetőségeit illetően, ha a kongói események kedvező fordulatot vesznek és a belső helyzet megszilárdul, azonnal meg kell tennünk a megfelelő lépéseket a közvetlen kapcsolatok felvételére. A belgák kivonulása után igen negymértékű [sic] lett a szakemberhiány, ami lehetőséget adhatna számunkra szakemberek küldésére és ösztöndíjasok [sic] fogadására. Kongó természeti kincsekbeni gazdagsága pedig a kereskedelmi kapcsolatok fejlesztését teheti lehetővé a két ország között.” Memorandum of the African reporting division of the VIth Territorial Department (VI. Területi Osztály, Afrikai referatúra) of the Hungarian Ministry of the Foreign Affairs (05.10.1960), MOL, KÜM, XIX-J-1-j, Congo Confidential Papers (1946–1964), Box No. 1, IV-24, No. 39/1960.

²⁷ It is still a bit ironic today that the official recognition of the sovereignty of the Republic of the Congo was signed by the chairman of the Council of Ministers of the People’s Republic of Hungary, the lawyer Dr. Ferenc Münnich (28.01.1958–13.09.1961), and under the signature of the intellectual, one can read his position and the name in use of the government at that time: *“President of the Revolutionary Worker-Peasant Government”* ... Open telegram in French (30.06.1960), MOL, KÜM, XIX-J-1-k, 45–64, Kis országok, 2. doboz, Belga Kongó, 1/X/55-1 (Small countries, Box No. 2, Belgian Congo, 1/X/55-1).

relations. By the way, those elements could become even more influential if the secessionist will be included and play a more important role. On the other hand, we must consider that Congo is Africa's richest territory in natural resources, with which in due course it may become necessary, moreover fruitful for us to establish trading relations for the interest of our national economy. Nevertheless, in my opinion, we should wait with our initiatives towards the establishment of our relations until the political conditions would become clear in Congo and the results of the upcoming visit of Adoula in the Soviet Union would be known as well."²⁸

The Hungarian government was basically following the Soviet Union and the Eastern Block in its attitude towards the United Nations Secretary-General (for example Hungary was not sending an official telegram of condolence to the Secretariat along with the socialist countries and ten more, because she did not recognize Hammarskjöld as an UN officer, thus only expressing the human compassion above his death²⁹), but there are some minor details which may be interesting.³⁰

In September 1960, Patrice Lumumba asked the Hungarian government to protest against the arbitrary actions of the UN forces in the Republic of the Congo and their taking possession of the Congolese national radio station. The Hungarian government sent a telegram to Hammarskjöld which stated that the Congolese government asked Hungary to protest against the infringement of the UN to the internal affairs of Congo then asked the UN

²⁸ *"Tekintettel Gizenga miniszterelnökhelyettesnek [sic] a politikai életből történt erőszakos kiszorítására és letartóztatására, valamint arra az egyre realisabbá váló lehetőségre, hogy Kongó területi egysége mégis megvalósul a központi kormány égisze alatt, amelynek stabilitása egyelőre nem látszik kétségesnek, szükséges Kongó irányában folytatandó magatartásunk új [sic] alapokra helyezése. Kapcsolataink kiépítésénél [sic] a Kongói Köztársaságot úgy [sic] kell megítélnünk [sic], mint a neokolonializmus befolyása alatt álló, külpolitikájában nyugatbarát, a szocialista országokkal szemben barátságtalan magatartást tanúsító [sic] országot, melynek vezetésében máris erősen képviseltetve vannak azok a körök, melyek kapcsolataink kibővítését [sic] akadályozni törekcsenek. Ezek az elemek egyébként a katangai szakadárak bevonásával és szerephez jutásával még inkább erősödhetnek. Ugyanakkor figyelembe kell venni, hogy Kongó Afrikának természeti kincsekben leggazdagabb területe, amellyel kereskedelmi kapcsolataink kiépítése [sic] idővel szükséges, sőt gyümölcsöző is lehet népgazdaságunk érdekei szempontjából. Kapcsolataink kiépítésére [sic] irányuló kezdeményezéseinkkel véleményem szerint mindaddig várnunk kell, amíg [sic] a politikai körülmények nem tisztázódnak Kongóban, s amíg [sic] Adoulának a Szovjetunióban teendő látogatása eredményei ismeretessé nem válnak."* Memorandum by Ferenc Nemes, VIth Territorial Department of the Hungarian Ministry of the Foreign Affairs (22.02.1962), MOL, KÜM, XIX-J-1-k, 45–64, Kis országok, 2. doboz, Belga Kongó, Kongó 1962 (Small countries, Box No. 2, Belgian Congo, Congo 1962).

²⁹ Report of Sándor Hajnal about the commemoration of the death of Hammarskjöld (14.10.1961) MOL, KÜM, XIX-J-59-b-1, New York-i ENSZ-képviselő, Adminisztratív iratok 1. doboz, 1961, 23-24, 1/7-1 (UN Representation in New York, Administrative papers, Box No. 1, 1961, 23-24, No. 1/7-1).

³⁰ The Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Press Department was busy in September 1961 about to distribute the minister's *History of Black Africa Vol. I.* in French. They sent away to New York 234 exemplaries in order to be distributed to the UN delegations and American sympathisers of Hungary. (Letter of the deputy director of the Press Department to the ambassador extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary, Péter Mód [28.09.1961], MOL, KÜM, XIX-J-59-b New York-i ENSZ-képviselő, Adminisztratív iratok, 3. doboz, 1961, 61–74, 3/X/101/2 (UN Representation in New York, Administrative papers Box No. 3, 1961, 61–74, 3/X/101/2).

to refrain to block the activity of the legal Congolese government to restore order and to protest against the occupation of the radio station.³¹

When Lumumba died, the Ministry was about to write two different drafts for telegrams of condolence to be sent in the name of the Hungarian government, one to Antoine Gizenga, deputy prime minister in Stanleyville, and one to the widow of Lumumba. In the telegram's first version to Gizenga, the following very harsh part was written: "*The government of the People's Republic of Hungary and its population claim together: the United Nations should pull back the foreign troops from Congo in order that the people could decide over their own destiny; let the infamous murders be punished; and let Hammarskjöld, the accomplice UN Secretary-General, immediately be relieved.*" This section in the final version in French was not containing any more the claims about the Secretary-General, it ended with the wish of the punishment of the murderers. The draft version of the telegram to the widow stated a charge against the Belgians who were accused in the text with the commitment of the murder, but this was kept in the French version, too: "*The Hungarian people have got the shocking news with deep indignation and rage and claims that the murders, the Belgian colonialists and their vile henchmen, should be punished in front of the world.*" ("*C'est avec une profonde indignation et une colère immense que le peuple hongrois a accueilli la nouvelle bouleversante et il exige que les assassins, les colonialistes belges et leurs valets ignobles, soient châtiés [sic] devant les peuples du monde.*")³²

Later on, on 27 July 1961, the Hungarian chargé d'affaires ad interim in Moscow organized a dinner for some other chargés d'affaires and first counselors. During the dinner, A. M. Adan (probably Abdulqadir Mohamed Aden), the Somali chargé d'affaires told that he had attended the Conference of the Independent African States between 25–31 August 1960 in Léopoldville, "*where Mongi Slim, the Tunisian representative, had been trying for long to*

³¹ Approved telegram to the Hungarian News Agency (MTI) (14.09.1960), MOL, KÜM, XIX-J-1-k, 45–64, Small countries, Box No. 2, Belgian Congo, No. 4 bc.

³² Excerpt from the draft to Gizenga: "*A Magyar Népköztársaság kormánya és népe egységesen követeli: az Egyesült Nemzetek Szervezete vonja ki az idegen csapatokat Kongóból, hogy a nép maga dönthesen sorsáról, büntessék meg az elvetemült gyilkosokat, és azonnali hatállyal váltsák le Hammarskjöldöt, a bűnrészes [sic] ENSZ-főtitkárt.*" Excerpt from the draft to the widow of Lumumba: "*A magyar nép mélyeséges felháborodással és haraggal értesült a megrázó hírről [sic], és követeli, hogy a világ színe [sic] előtt bünhődjenek [sic] a gyilkosok: a belga gyarmatosítók [sic] és aljas bérenceik.*" Draft of telegrams of condolence in the name of Dr. Ferenc Münnich, President of the Revolutionary Worker-Peasant Government of the People's Republic of Hungary (17.023.1961 or before) MOL, KÜM, XIX-J-1-k, 45–64, Small countries, Box No. 2, Belgian Congo, No. 1/X/8-1. By the way, later on, Hungary, like the other socialist countries, was giving several scholarships to Congolese students, and among them to the son of the murdered prime minister, François Emery Lumumba who was a student of the Karl Marx Economic University of Budapest between 1971–1975 and got a degree in foreign trade analysis and management. (The author expresses his gratitude to the source of this information, Mr. Vilmos Zsidi, archivist of the actual Corvinus University of Budapest – successor of the above mentioned university.)

*convince the Congolese prime minister Lumumba not to act against Hammarskjöld, because he would have been overthrown”.*³³

The Belgian internal political situation and the position of Belgium towards her allies and the UN was also reported and analyzed by the Hungarian embassy in Brussels and the Ministry as well.

Earlier, in 1958 the chargé d'affaires, László Kazimir wrote that the intention of Belgium was to get her profit from the Atlantic solidarity and she wanted to make Brussels the capital of the small united Europe because of the obvious economic advantages. The Belgian were opportunists, they played the policy of wait and see in the relationship of the two superpowers.³⁴ In January 1960, the minister Kutas wrote about the Belgian minister of foreign affairs, Pierre Wigny's (1958–1961) position. According to that, Belgium did not want to raise her military expenditures higher in the NATO, because she had to invest a lot of money in Congo during 1960 for protecting it and Africa from the communist penetration. Belgium wanted to get a bigger share from the production of war equipment; and in the opposition of the United States of America and France, she was rather closer to the US. Wigny was thinking that in the future the competition between the two blocks would be mainly economic.³⁵

When the crisis became acute in Congo, the chargé d'affaires ad interim, László Sárkány was writing extensively about the situation of the *Force Publique*, the secession of Katanga and the position of the Belgian political circles about that, the description of the “hardliner” and the “cautious” group (both wanted to stay in Congo), and the three possible versions of the transformation of the Belgian government (three party government with socialists included, “hardliner” government, military government), the options of the policy to

³³ “...ahol Mongi Slim, a tuniszi küldött hosszasan próbálta meggyőzni Lumumba kongói miniszterelnököt arról, hogy ne lépjen fel Hammarskjöld ellen, mert elsöprik.” Report of the chargé d'affaires (Péter ???, [unreadable name]) of the Hungarian Embassy in Moscow to the Ministry (03.08.1961) MOL, KÜM, XIX-J-1-j, SZT Kongó (1945–1964), 1. doboz, IV-146, 554/Szt./1961 (Congo Confidential Papers [1946–1964], Box No. 1, IV-146, No. 554/Szt./1961).

³⁴ Report of the chargé d'affaires László Kazimir to the Ministry (10.01.1958), MOL, KÜM, XIX-J-1-j, Belgium TÜK (1946–1964), 46. tétel, Belgium bel- és külpolitikája, katonapolitikai kérdések (1958–1962), 6. doboz, 34/szt/1958 (Belgium Confidential Papers [1946–1964], Item No. 46, Internal and Foreign Policy of Belgium, Military Policy [1958–1962], Box No. 6, No. 34/szt/1958).

³⁵ Report of the minister Imre Kutas to the Ministry (07.01.1960), MOL, KÜM, XIX-J-1-j, Belgium Confidential Papers (1946–1964), Item No. 46, Internal and Foreign Policy of Belgium, Military Policy (1958–1962), Box No. 6, No.2/szt/1960.

follow in Congo (the division of the government, the support of the separatism, to bring Congo bankrupt, to keep the Belgian troops in Congo).³⁶

In September, the Belgians became disillusioned in their allies (handing over of the African NATO military bases Kitona and Kamina), the prestige of the USA was diminishing, Belgium was searching closer contacts with France, because Europe might have become the intermediate power between the USA and the USSR.³⁷ In October, De Coninck who had come back from Congo, told that there was no force able to restore the order in Congo, the *Force Publique* ceased to exist (the UN forces bought their weapons), Mobutu made a putsch only with 30 men, he was the agent of the Belgian secret services, it was known for long, but Lumumba trusted him, and that is why he was surprised. Lumumba was unlikely to get the power back, and the crisis could be prolonged for several months. From the press, it looked that Belgium was looking at the UN and Hammarskjöld as the tools of the USA in the fight between the USA and Belgium for Congo.³⁸

The countrywide strike and the linguistic issue at the end of 1960 in Belgium was giving some hopes to the Hungarian Ministry, where the IVth Territorial Department held a meeting and there they established some very misleading conclusions: “...today it is the general decomposition process of the capitalist system which is going on along with the complete liquidation of the colonial regime and there is a close, organic connection between them. The Belgian workers’ relatively high living standards were possible because of the colonial exploitation. [...] It is a wrong idea that the participation in the Common Market had launched the crisis. It is the loss of Congo which means the major strike to the economic life of Belgium. Those are right who say that they try to replace the profit lost by the monopolies in a way that they transfer the charges to the working classes and this is in part directly, in part indirectly affecting the reduction of the living standards. [...] The fact that the colonial system is falling apart is boosting the decomposition of the capitalist system and also the working class to become class-conscious, because the living standards decreases and in the mother country the antagonism between the bourgeoisie and the working classes raises and so does the class struggle. [...] The Hungarian press in some cases deals with the Belgian

³⁶ Reports of the chargé d’affaires László Sárkány to the Ministry (25.07.1960 and 05.08.1960), MOL, KÜM, XIX-J-1-j, Belgium Confidential Papers (1946–1964), Item No. 46, Internal and Foreign Policy of Belgium, Military Policy (1958–1962), Box No. 6, No.174/SZT/1960 and 169/SZT/1960.

³⁷ Report of the chargé d’affaires László Sárkány to the Ministry (07.09.1960), MOL, KÜM, XIX-J-1-j, Belgium Confidential Papers (1946–1964), Item No. 46, Internal and Foreign Policy of Belgium, Military Policy (1958–1962), Box No. 6, No.169/3/SZT/1960.

³⁸ Report of the chargé d’affaires László Sárkány to the Ministry (03.11.1960), MOL, KÜM, XIX-J-1-j, Belgium Confidential Papers (1946–1964), Item No. 46, Internal and Foreign Policy of Belgium, Military Policy (1958–1962), Box No. 6, No.169/4/Sztitk./1960.

situation in a far too optimist way. Many are evaluating that we can count on a revolution in Belgium and the workers will take over the power. We must call the attention of the competent authorities to that.”³⁹

The new Belgian government of 1961 (Théo Lefèvre, 25.04.1961–28.07.1965) was showing some hope to the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the socialist minister of foreign affairs, Paul-Henri Spaak would have a different attitude. This had been demonstrated by his recent negotiations yet as a NATO Secretary General (1957–1961) with president Kennedy in the USA; and also with the minister of foreign affairs of the Joseph Iléo government (09.02.1961–27.07.1961), Justin Bomboko in Paris. Thus Belgium would get closer to the UN-US line, so the US and Belgium would rather share the prey and not fight over it, although the Belgian press would keep a fierce profile for a while.⁴⁰

In June 1961, the debate over the budget of the Foreign Affairs, and Spaak was delivering a very sharp speech in which he mentioned that a high level of the Atlantic solidarity was necessary against the “*great danger of the communist fatalism*”. Among others, the Congo question was also raised, and he concluded that way: it is not possible to turn against the whole world, it is not possible to not to take the international law into consideration. The things had changed, so the Belgian official attitude. Spaak was now co-operating with the UN, he had been negotiating with Taieb Sabhani, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Hammarskjöld in Brussels during several months. Other diplomatic steps were made to be ready to wait for the potential rapprochement of the Iléo government of Congo.⁴¹

³⁹ “...napjainkban a kapitalista rendszer általános bomlási folyamata megy végbe a gyarmati rendszer teljes felszámolásával párhuzamosan s e két folyamat között szoros, szerves összefüggés van. A belgiumi munkásság viszonylag magas életszínvonalát a gyarmati kizsákmányolás tette lehetővé. [...] Téves az a nézet, hogy a Közös Piacban való részvétel indította [sic] el a krízist [sic]. Kongó elvesztése jelentette a főcsapást Belgium gazdasági életére. Igazuk van azoknak, akik azt mondták, hogy a monopóliumok által elvesztett nyereséget úgy [sic] próbálják pótolni, hogy a terheket a dolgozó osztályokra próbálják áthárítani és ez részben közvetlenül, részben közvetve kihatással van az életszínvonal [sic] csökkentésére. [...] A gyarmati rendszer szétesése gyorsítja [sic] a kapitalista rendszere bomlási folyamatát, másrészt erősíti a munkásosztály politikai öntudatra ébredését azzal, hogy az életszínvonal [sic] csökken, és növeli az anyaországban a burzsoázia és a dolgozóosztályok közötti ellentétet, növeli az osztályharcot. [...] A magyar sajtó egyes esetekben tulzottan [sic] optimistán foglalkozik a belga helyzettel. Sokan már úgy [sic] értékelik, hogy Belgiumban forradalomra lehet számítani [sic], hogy a munkásság át fogja venni a hatalmat. Erre fel kell hívni [sic] az illetékesek figyelmét.” Memorandum of the Department meeting by Anna Tóth (18.01.1960), MOL, KÜM, XIX-J-1-j, Belgium Confidential Papers (1946–1964), Item No. 46, Internal and Foreign Policy of Belgium, Military Policy (1958–1962), Box No. 6.

⁴⁰ Report of the minister Tibor Lajti to the Ministry (10.05.1961), MOL, KÜM, XIX-J-1-j, Belgium Confidential Papers (1946–1964), Item No. 46, Internal and Foreign Policy of Belgium, Military Policy (1958–1962), Box No. 6. No. 168/SZT/1961.

⁴¹ Report of the minister Tibor Lajti to the Ministry (30.06.1961), MOL, KÜM, XIX-J-1-j, Belgium Confidential Papers (1946–1964), Item No. 46, Internal and Foreign Policy of Belgium, Military Policy (1958–1962), Box No. 6. No. 239/SZT/1961.

That means that the Belgian moderate political establishment understood at that time, that although a superpower could intervene however not without consequences in his satellite states, the tiny Belgium could not do that in her former colony when so many great players' interest were at stake.