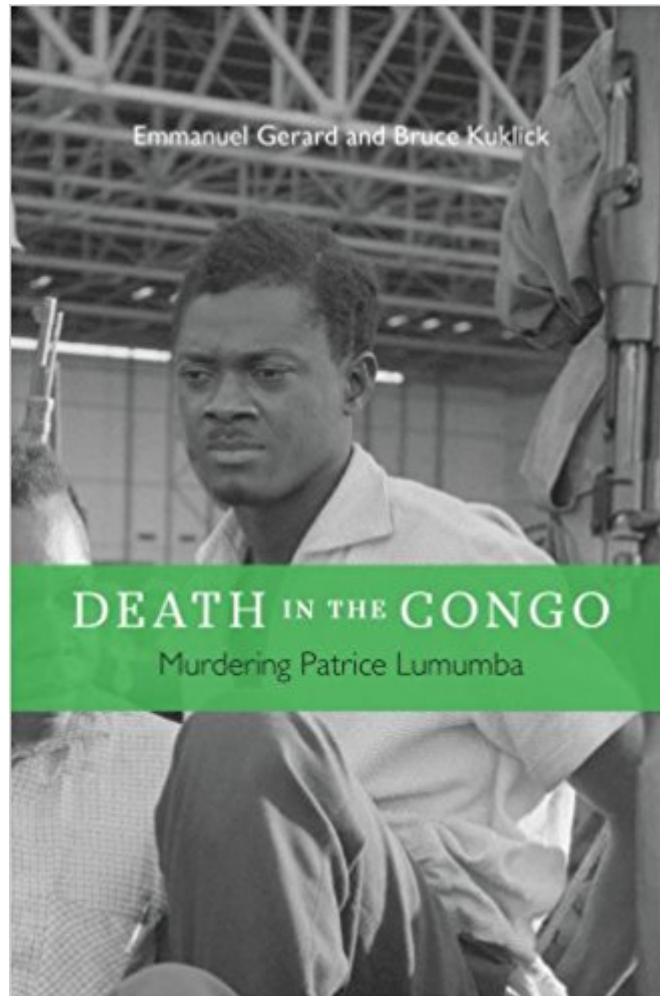




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Death In The Congo: Murdering Patrice Lumumba



Synopsis

Death in the Congo is a gripping account of a murder that became one of the defining events in postcolonial African history. It is no less the story of the untimely death of a national dream, a hope-filled vision very different from what the war-ravaged Democratic Republic of the Congo became in the second half of the twentieth century. When Belgium relinquished colonial control in June 1960, a charismatic thirty-five-year-old African nationalist, Patrice Lumumba, became prime minister of the new republic. Yet stability immediately broke down. A mutinous Congolese Army spread havoc, while Katanga Province in southeast Congo seceded altogether. Belgium dispatched its military to protect its citizens, and the United Nations soon intervened with its own peacekeeping troops. Meanwhile, behind the scenes, both the Soviet Union and the United States maneuvered to turn the crisis to their Cold War advantage. A coup in September, secretly aided by the UN, toppled Lumumba's government. In January 1961, armed men drove Lumumba to a secluded corner of the Katanga bush, stood him up beside a hastily dug grave, and shot him. His rule as Africa's first democratically elected leader had lasted ten weeks. More than fifty years later, the murky circumstances and tragic symbolism of Lumumba's assassination still trouble many people around the world. Emmanuel Gerard and Bruce Kuklick pursue events through a web of international politics, revealing a tangled history in which many people—black and white, well-meaning and ruthless, African, European, and American—bear responsibility for this crime.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In *Death in the Congo: Murdering Patrice Lumumba*, Emmanuel Gerard and Bruce Kuklick open a wide aperture onto one of the most charged historical whodunits of the 20th century. It lays bare the entangled international actors that conspired to seal Lumumba's fate and that of the independent Congolese nation. *Death in the Congo* is a riveting account. (Caroline Elkins *Wall Street Journal* 2015-04-03) *Death in the Congo* is history for grown-ups, lucid and unsparing, alert to our infinite capacity for deceit and self-deception. (John Wilson *Chicago Tribune* 2015-02-19) The story of Patrice Lumumba's death is fascinating because it seems emblematic of the Cold War era decolonization of Africa. What is distinctive and new in this very readable account is the authors' unrelentingly negative portraits of all the actors involved. No one emerges unscathed: not the bumbling Congolese, not the Cold War-crazed Americans, not the petulant Europeans and, worst of all, not even Lumumba himself, whom Gerard and Kuklick portray as a gifted speaker but also a self-promoter who was generally clueless about the exercise of power. (Nicolas van de Walle *Foreign Affairs* 2015-09-01) While political violence is no stranger to the Congo, what happened to Lumumba in the early 1960s still matters. To this day no one has been prosecuted for Lumumba's death. And this is where a book as calm, clear and authoritative as Emmanuel Gerard's and Bruce Kuklick's *Death in the Congo* adds true value. Novelists and filmmakers have all had a go at the Lumumba story, but here at last is history-writing at its most powerful: a work that reads in part like a charge sheet for a war-crimes prosecution and in part like a Shakespearian tragedy with farce thrown in. The drama of Lumumba's death makes a grand finale. But the book's true importance lies in spelling out the roles of the various powers involved, notably America and Belgium. Individual prosecutions are now unrealistic, but *Death in the Congo* demonstrates (something Tony Blair and George W. Bush might ponder) that it is never too late to investigate political decisions that lead to manipulation and murder. (Tim Butcher *The Spectator* 2015-03-07) [Gerard and Kuklick] have bravely taken on the most important and disturbing assassination of a democratically elected leader in modern times, and an event on a par with that of Archduke Franz Ferdinand for the mayhem and madness left in its wake. Rather than interpreting [Lumumba's] downfall as the result of crude Cold War anti-communism, Gerard and Kuklick rightly argue that Cold War tensions were more contextual, feeding into a U.S. commitment to support Western interests and influence in post-colonial Africa; its sympathy for Nato and its Belgian secretary general; and the Eisenhower administration's hatred of Lumumba. (Joanna Lewis *Times Higher Education* 2015-02-26) [Gerard and Kuklick] have brilliantly

and usefully provided fresh details about how Lumumba, Okito, and Mpolo died. The book offers revealing photographs of Lumumba with others, including President Joseph Mobutu of Zaire.

— A book about an old story that has new nuances and details for its readers, who should definitely include general readers, students still in search of the truth about the assassination, and, indeed, seasoned as well as amateur Africanists. (Dawn M. Whitehead *Africa Today* 2016-01-01)

Death in the Congo: Murdering Patrice Lumumba is an eminently readable and absorbing book by Emmanuel Gerard and Bruce Kuklick which examines the evidence in a balanced and coherent manner while examining the complex tapestry of the alliances, pacts, and promises that comprised relations over the Congo between Leopoldville (now Kinshasa), Brussels, the Katangan capital Elisabethville (now Lubumbashi), London, New York, and Washington.

— A thought-provoking work of history. (Alanna O'Malley *H-Net Reviews* 2016-04-01)

Death in the Congo captures a striking portrait of an international crisis in the early Cold War caused by one post-colonial nationalist's rise to power. It meticulously details the way Patrice Lumumba was subsequently ousted and how his murder was encouraged by western powers. In many ways, it is a character study of the political leaders who instigated and backed Lumumba's murder and the men in the lower ranks who carried it out. (Neil Thompson *International Affairs* 2015-12-01)

Outstanding — This major work of scholarship succeeds in showing how the convergence of a complex mix of interests and motivations resulted in Lumumba's murder. (Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja *Journal of American History* 2015-12-01)

The authors provide wealth of detail in this worthy primer to the events that plunged the nation into decades of dictatorship under Joseph Mobutu (Mobutu Sese Seko). (Publishers Weekly 2015-02-16)

Emmanuel Gerard and Bruce Kuklick shed light on an important episode in the annals of decolonization, the Cold War, and African nationalism, as well as on significant aspects of the domestic politics of Belgium and the United States. Death in the Congo is a welcome contribution to our understanding of the darker side of decision-making in ostensibly open and democratic political systems. (Edouard Bustin, Boston University, Emeritus 2014-10-08)

Emmanuel Gerard is Professor of History at KU Leuven — University of Leuven. Bruce Kuklick is Professor of History at the University of Pennsylvania.

Authors Girard and Kuklick digest the sad story of Patrice Lumumba who within two years of being the first democratically elected prime minister of the Congo was removed from office and murdered. It appears that Belgium never expected to truly liberate the Congo or, maybe they

didn't know what liberty entailed. There were many and financial interests in the southern province of Katanga, where with installation of Lumumba, a secession movement began. The story takes a lot of twists and turns. At a few points there is marginal hope for Lumumba and his democracy. It is hard to tell why so much western hostility was poured onto Lumumba. On pages 140-1 Richard Helms is quoted as saying "I'm relatively certain that he represented something that the US government didn't like, but I can't remember anymore what it was." This is exactly what I felt as I was reading the book. It seemed to be an idea that fit the needs of Belgium, the anti-communists in the US (although there is no evidence that Lumumba was a communist) and competing politicians and politicians on the take in the Congo. The UN's objections to him are the hardest to glean. While the locals did the deed, they responded to other masters. The CIA had developed a culture of doing dirty work and a coded vocabulary for it: "a good high level", "plausible deniability", "eliminate", and "subvention" meant bribery. Later US Senate hearings divulge (later confirmed in declassified CIA documents) that the order came from President Eisenhower. The capture, torture and the disposal of Lumumba's body were sordid affairs and paved the way for Joseph Mobutu. While this is a dramatic story the prose is bland and reportorial. Hypocrisies are noted as are the strange episodes (i.e. brutal events and the delicacies of protocol) but in general, events are left to speak for themselves. If you want the facts, this book is for you.

None.

Patrice Lumumba was a nationalist and needs more recognition in terms of great African men.

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