

Activity 6. Patrice Lumumba's Last Letter (1960)

Background: Patrice Lumumba, deposed Prime Minister of the Congo and a former leader of its independence movement, wrote this letter to his wife weeks before he was murdered while imprisoned. Congolese rebels, the Belgium military, and the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency are suspected of conspiring to overthrow and assassinate Lumumba. In this letter to his wife, Lumumba expresses his thoughts on the Congolese independence movement. Read the passages and answer questions 1 – 3.

A. I write you these words without knowing if they will reach you, when they will reach you, or if I will still be living when you read them. All during the length of my fight for the independence of my country, I have never doubted for a single instant the final triumph of the sacred cause to which my companions and myself have consecrated our lives. But what we wish for our country, its right to an honorable life, to a spotless dignity, to an independence without restrictions, Belgian colonialism and its Western allies—who have found direct and indirect support, deliberate and not deliberate among certain high officials of the United Nations, this organization in which we placed all our confidence when we called for their assistance—have not wished it.

B. They have corrupted certain of our fellow countrymen, they have contributed to distorting the truth and our enemies, that they will rise up like a single person to say no to a degrading and shameful colonialism and to reassume their dignity under a pure sun. We are not alone. Africa, Asia, and free and liberated people from every corner of the world will always be found at the side of the Congolese. They will not abandon the light until the day comes when there are no more colonizers and their mercenaries in our country. To my children whom I leave and whom perhaps I will see no more, I wish that they be told that the future of the Congo is beautiful and that it expects for each Congolese, to accomplish the sacred task of reconstruction of our independence and our sovereignty; for without dignity there is no liberty, without justice there is no dignity, and without independence there are no free men . . . Do not weep for me, my dear companion. I know that my country, which suffers so much, will know how to defend its independence and its liberty. Long live the Congo! Long live Africa!

Questions

1. What did Lumumba and his comrades-in-arms hope to secure for the Congo?
2. Lumumba accuses “They” of corrupting “certain of our fellow countrymen.” Who is the “they”?
3. In your opinion, why does Lumumba still have hope for the future?