

 [Back to Article](#)

 [Click to Print](#)

# TIME

Monday, May. 30, 1955

## THE CONGO: Changed Young Man

The trees swarmed with black urchins and the crowds along the road shouted "Vive le Roi!" as Leopoldville welcomed young (25) King Baudouin to the Belgian Congo's steamy, metal-rich and thriving jungleland. Resplendent in white-and-gold uniform, Baudouin was the first Belgian monarch the Congo had seen since 1928, when grandfather Albert I visited a far less prosperous and bustling Congo.

Many of Leopoldville's 20,000 Belgians were not prepared in advance to be much impressed by their young king. "That infant," snapped one sun-helmeted businessman as he watched Baudouin's arrival in a Sabena DC-6 airliner. The colonists had seen too many prim, unsmiling photographs of the bespectacled King, watchfully flanked by his father, ex-King Leopold, and his purposeful stepmother. But a change seemed to have come over shy King Baudouin the moment he left Brussels. He became relaxed, friendly and informal—a man on his own. On the plane, he insisted on getting himself sprayed with "baptismal" water with the rest when the plane crossed the equator. At banquets and state occasions, Baudouin scorned the special salons reserved for the royal party, shook hands with everybody, exchanged courtly pleasantries with the colony's ladies, disrupted schedules by lingering long past protocol deadlines—at one party until 1 a.m. Scheduled to deliver a formal address at Leopoldville's huge, open-air stadium, Baudouin looked out over a crowd of 80,000 people, noticed many fainting under the broiling sun. He unceremoniously took a pencil and cut his prepared speech in half.

The speech, too, was welcome to those Belgians in the Congo who have been smarting under the advice from U.N.

committees. Particularly, the U.N. had deplored Belgium's refusal to allow the natives any political voice whatever. "We must be inspired by our own consciences, and our duties," said Baudouin pointedly.

"These can be dictated to us only by ourselves, who thoroughly know Belgian Africa. We know what imperatives are imposed upon us by our sovereignty, and this sovereignty must be exercised by us —without sharing." In other words, Belgium's particular paternalism (TIME, May 16) would continue to prevail.

 [Click to Print](#)

**Find this article at:**

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,866418,00.html>

Copyright © 2012 Time Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without permission is prohibited.

[Privacy Policy](#) | [Add TIME Headlines to your Site](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Customer Service](#)