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THE BELGIAN CONGO: The Visitor

Of all the African politicians now jostling for position in the soon-to-be-independent Belgian Congo, none makes the Belgians feel more uneasy about the future than cocky Patrice Lumumba, 33. A onetime postal clerk and convicted embezzler, Lumumba was hustled briefly off to jail only four months ago after bloody riots erupted in his home town of Stanleyville, leaving 20 of his fellow Africans dead. Last week the Congo was recovering from a visit that he paid to the Congo's second largest city, Elisabethville.

Lumumba has powerful enemies in Elisabethville, who hope that after independence they will be able to keep the copper wealth of their Katanga province pretty much to themselves. He also has there a fiercely loyal tribal following, which he has carefully kept inflamed. The result was that no sooner had Lumumba appeared on the scene, a leopard skin draped dramatically over his well-tailored lounge suit, than the fighting began.

It lasted for three days, and spread through the suburbs and into the countryside until it reached the copper center of Jadotville, 65 miles away. Plumed warriors charged at each other with pangas and poisoned spears, and the environs of the bustling city of Elisabethville (pop. 177,000) were soon filled with death and mutilation. Since bereaved Africans like to keep the number of their dead secret from the authorities, there was no telling how many casualties there had been. The official figures—seven dead, 148 injured—were admittedly low.

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