

# The Newly Independent Nations

Bureau of Public Affairs

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

## REPUBLIC OF CONGO

### Form of government:

Republic

### Date of independence:

August 15, 1960

### Previous status:

Autonomous member of the French Community

### Area:

139,000 square miles

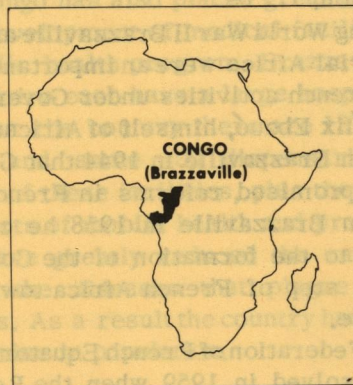
### Population:

800,000

### Principal cities:

Brazzaville, the capital (population 135,000); Pointe-Noire, Atlantic port (population 55,000); Dolisie (population 18,000)

In the 16th century an African Congo Empire reached as far south as what is now Angola. The Kingdom of Loango, which broke away from the Congo Empire, and the Anzico Kingdom of the Batékés were among the early African states mentioned by European explorers. A Portuguese, Diego Cao, reached the mouth of the Congo River in 1484, and in 1879 Henry Morton Stanley, the famous explorer, navigated the river from its source to the sea.



An Italian-born Frenchman, Savorgnan de Brazza, explored and claimed for France the general area north of the Congo River which now comprises the Republic of Congo. In 1875 Brazza, then only 22 years of age, almost reached the Congo River on his first expedition from Libreville in Gabon. On a second trip 5 years later he arrived at the river's lake-like expansion known as Stanley Pool in the area where Brazzaville now stands.

Later that same year (1880) Brazza persuaded the Batéké chief, Makoko, to accept a French protectorate. Leaving his Senegalese sergeant in charge of the post he had established, Brazza went on to explore the Niari Valley in search of the shortest route to the sea. The following year Sergeant Malamine successfully defended the Brazzaville post against Stanley's attempt to take it in the name of King Leopold of Belgium. Returning to Africa in 1883 as Commissioner for the Republic in West Africa and later in the French Congo, Brazza continued his explorations.



Conflicting African claims of various European governments led to the international congress convened at Berlin in 1884. The decisions taken at the congress were incorporated into the Act of Berlin in 1885 and were followed by boundary treaties signed by the various powers.

France gave territorial status and the name "Middle Congo" to its new possession and in 1910 linked it with the territories of Gabon, Chad, and Ubangi-Shari (now the Central African Republic) in the Federation of French Equatorial Africa. Brazzaville became the seat of the governor general of the new federation.

During World War II Brazzaville and French Equatorial Africa were an important center of Free French activities under Governor General Félix Eboué, himself of African descent. It was in Brazzaville in 1944 that General de Gaulle promised reforms in French Africa. Again in Brazzaville in 1958 he committed France to the formation of the Community, the last step of French Africa toward independence.

The Federation of French Equatorial Africa was dissolved in 1959 when the Republic of Congo as well as the three other territories became fully autonomous members of the French Community. Fulbert Youlou, who had been elected by the Legislative Assembly in December 1958 to head the Provisional Government in Brazzaville, became President of the Republic in November 1959.

Climaxing a series of reforms on the part of France tending toward increased autonomy for its overseas territories, the Congo became an independent country on August 15, 1960, retaining, however, close formal bonds with the French Community. In September of 1960, under French sponsorship, it was elected to United Nations membership. This new Republic has displayed marked political stability during its first 2 years of independence.

## GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

The 1959 Constitution of the Republic of Congo was replaced in March 1961 by a new constitution which transformed the type of government from a parliamentary to a presidential one. Its principle is "government of the people, by the people, and for the people." It provides for a 61-member Legislative

Assembly elected for a 5-year term and a President of the Republic, who is both head of state and chief executive.

The President, who is also the Prime Minister, is elected for 5 years through universal suffrage and may be reelected. He appoints ministers and terminates their functions, determines general policy, promulgates laws, issues regulations, and is head of administrative services and of the armed forces.

In addition to a judiciary there is an Economic and Social Council, a 25-member consultative body which gives opinions and suggests reforms in the field of economic and social legislation.

The Republics of Congo, Chad, Gabon, and the Central African Republic share a customs union and have set up procedures and organizations for joint administration and development of regional transportation, communications, fiscal matters, research, and other services and policies.

The present Assembly was elected on June 14, 1959; President Youlou's Democratic Union for the Defense of African Interests (UDDIA) controls 51 of the 61 seats. The UDDIA is affiliated with the African Democratic Party of Ivory Coast President Houphouët-Boigny. The opposition party--the African Socialist Movement--led by Jacques Opangault, now Minister of Public Works, occupies the remaining seats in the Assembly. In August of 1962 President Youlou announced his intention of forming a single political party for the Congo, but this has not as yet been accomplished.

## LAND AND PEOPLE

The Republic of Congo is an irregularly shaped strip of land that stretches obliquely across the Equator in a southwest to northeast direction. Its southwest terminus is a hundred miles of Atlantic coastline. Along its upper border from west to north lie Gabon, Cameroon, and the Central African Republic. Its lower, southeastern boundary is almost entirely delineated by the Ubangi and Congo Rivers, which separate it from the former Belgian Congo.

Among the country's major geographic regions are a low, treeless, coastal plain about 40 miles in depth, the Mayombé Escarpment paralleling the coast, the savanna-covered

valley of the Niari River, and the Brazzaville area. To the north of Brazzaville are the grassy Batéké plateaus and beyond them areas of dense forest, all of this region being cut by the many tributaries of the Congo-Ubangi River system.

The equatorial climate of the Congo is generally hot and humid, with average temperatures between 70 and 80 degrees. Rainfall is heavy, except in the Batéké plateaus, where there is a long dry season and lower annual rainfall.

The peoples of the Republic of Congo fall into four principal ethnic groups, each composed of perhaps 10 to 15 tribes. The largest group includes the Balali and Bakongo, principally farmers and tradesmen, who occupy the southwest part of the country and constitute about 45 percent of the population. The Batékés, chiefly hunters and fishermen, live north of Brazzaville, and the M'Bochi, principally fishermen, inhabit the savanna-forest borderlands. The Sangha live in the forest zone of the north. There also live the pygmies, whose civilization was once undoubtedly widespread but is now limited to the forest regions in the Congo River basin.

About one-sixth of the country's people live in its two principal cities--Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire. The coastal plain and the Niari Valley are relatively well populated, but large areas of the country are almost empty. Average population density is about 6 persons per square mile.

Animism is the religion of half of the Congolese people; 49 percent of the population is Christian, and less than 1 percent Moslem.

Many Bantu dialects are spoken, but French is the official language of the country.

## EDUCATION AND PUBLIC HEALTH

School enrollment in Republic of Congo is one of the highest among the French-speaking countries of Africa, with nearly 75 percent of school-age children in school. Girls comprise 30 percent. In Brazzaville school enrollment is more than 90 percent.

One reason for the comparatively high enrollment figures is the number of private schools operated by missionaries, especially in the coastal areas. In addition, the Government is spending about one-fourth of its annual budget on public education.

There are approximately 500 elementary schools, 10 secondary schools, 2 large vocational and technical schools, and a number of centers offering technical, vocational, and home economics training. The Center of Administration and Advanced Technical Studies at Brazzaville, which is destined to become a university, also enrolls students from the Central African Republic, Chad, and Gabon. Scientific research is carried on by the Institute of Central African Studies in Brazzaville and an affiliated institute at Pointe-Noire. The Poto-Poto School of Art and the School of Technical Arts are making sound contributions in their respective fields.

The Congo has also placed great emphasis on the development of medical facilities and of a public health program. Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire each have a large hospital, and throughout the country there are 13 medical centers and some 100 dispensaries. The services of these facilities, plus the preventive efforts of mobile health and prophylaxis units, have greatly reduced the ravages of most of the diseases that plague tropical countries. As a result the country has experienced a rise in population.

## TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

The Congo has one of the best transportation systems in Africa. Its two major cities, the ocean port of Pointe-Noire and the capital and major Congo River port of Brazzaville, are linked by the 320-mile Congo-Ocean Railroad.

Indicative of the challenging conditions which confront the construction of transportation systems in tropical Africa is the fact that the Congo-Ocean Railroad runs through very rugged terrain and dense tropical rain forest, crosses 92 bridges, and passes through 21 tunnels.

From Brazzaville northward the Congo-Ubangi River system is navigable for more than 700 miles to Bangui, capital of the Central African Republic. Besides serving the Republic of Congo, this rail river route is the principal means of access to the Central African Republic and Chad. Another rail line links the Gabonese border with the Congo-Ocean line and the port of Pointe-Noire. Shipments of manganese ore over this line are expected to double traffic now handled at Pointe-Noire.



Rapids block navigation on the Congo River below the Brazzaville area. The Niari, Kouilou, and Sangha Rivers have navigable stretches, partly due to improvements in the waterways.

Six thousand miles of roads--about 2,300 miles of them all-season and partially heavy-duty truck routes--add to the transportation network. The principal route parallels the Congo-Ocean Railroad from Pointe-Noire to Brazzaville, with several branches leading north into Gabon and the Central African Republic. Heavy rains and dense forests make road construction and maintenance difficult and costly.

As elsewhere in Africa, air transportation in the Congo serves an important and growing need to bridge vast distances and save travel time. Use of air freight is increasing, especially to move perishable goods, spare parts, and pharmaceuticals. Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire have large, well-equipped airports.

Brazzaville is the telephone, telegraph, and radio communications center not only for the Republic of Congo but between the neighboring capitals and Paris as well. Radio Brazzaville is one of the most powerful stations in Africa.

THE ECONOMY

Despite an increase in other economic activities, agriculture remains the occupation of some 60 percent of the population of the Congo and provides approximately half of the nation's income and a fourth of the country's total value of exports.

The traditional subsistence economy includes manioc, bananas, peanuts, rice, yams, palm products, sugar, flour, fruits, and fish. Agricultural exports are mainly palm kernels and peanuts, with some coffee, cocoa, bananas, and tobacco.

Experimental farming, including the introduction of new crops and improved techniques, is going on in the Niari Valley, a region of fertile soil and favorable climate. Other projects include a sugar refinery and an oil mill to process products raised there. Since 1952 both public and private programs have been coordinated by the Committee for the Development of the Niari Valley.

Sheep, goats, and hogs are rather numerous. Cattle resistant to sleeping sickness have been bred and are now being raised mainly in the hilly section of the Niari region by individual farmers and on large ranches. Fish, an important protein element in the local diet, are obtained from the sea and are also bred in thousands of small, local, fish ponds.

Forests cover half the area of the country and the forest industry accounts for nearly 60 percent of the country's total value of exports.

Since 1937, lead deposits near M'Fouati in the Niari Valley have been producing several thousand tons a year. Small amounts of tin and gold are mined by primitive methods. Deposits of phosphates and of natural gas have been discovered, and prospecting for zinc, copper, and radioactive ores is going on. Oil fields near Pointe-Noire have recently begun to produce. Some 90,000 tons of petroleum a year are expected to be exported when development is more advanced.

Industry is growing in the Congo. Output now accounts for 11 percent of the gross national product. Situated mostly in Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire, the principal industries are food processing, lumber and wood-working, shipbuilding, iron and metal, soap, cigarette, and construction industries.

While most of the country's production is sold locally or in neighboring countries, exports abroad have increased in recent years. Imports have grown at an even faster rate and are three times as large as exports. However, this considerable trade deficit has been largely offset by foreign assistance and investments in the country.

U.S.-REPUBLIC OF CONGO RELATIONS

The United States recognized the Republic of Congo and established diplomatic relations with the new nation immediately upon Congolese independence. The United States has an ambassador in Brazzaville, and the Congo maintains similar diplomatic representation in Washington. The United States has also opened a U.S. Information Service center in Brazzaville, and a modest U.S. economic assistance program in the new country is under way.

the newly independent nations

AFRICA

Libya	Somali Republic	Mali
Sudan	Dahomey	Nigeria
Morocco	Niger	Mauritania
Tunisia	Upper Volta	Sierra Leone
Ghana	Ivory Coast	Tanganyika
Guinea	Chad	Rwanda
Cameroon	Central African Republic	Burundi
Togo	Congo (Brazzaville)	Algeria
Malagasy Republic	Gabon	Uganda
Congo (Léopoldville)	Senegal	

NEAR EAST AND SOUTH ASIA

Lebanon	Pakistan	Israel
Syria	India	Cyprus
Jordan	Ceylon	

FAR EAST

Philippines	Viet-Nam	Indonesia
Burma	Laos	Malaya
Korea	Cambodia	Western Samoa

WESTERN HEMISPHERE

Jamaica	Trinidad and Tobago
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