

Radio Katanga

by

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No year in history saw more African nations gain their independence than 1960. Most of the new countries were the constituent parts of the old French West Africa and French Equatorial Africa, but there were a few others as well (including Nigeria). Of the total of 17, none was born in less hopeful circumstances than the Republic of the Congo, the then-new name of the former Belgian Congo (renamed the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 1964, Zaire in 1971, back to DRC in 1997). Whatever the evils of British and French colonialism, both of the “mother countries” had taken some steps toward the development of local infrastructure and the advancement of politics and education in their respective territories. The Belgian Congo enjoyed no such favor. It had been ruled personally by King Leopold II as the Congo Free State. Belgium formalized a more traditional colonial relationship with the Congo in 1908, but it did so reluctantly, and only when the economic exploitation of the country and its peoples could no longer be ignored.



HIS EXCELLENCY MOÏSE TSHOMBE
President of the State of Katanga

Moïse Kapenda TSHOMBE was born on the 10th November, 1919, in Musamba, the capital of the Lunda, a large peaceful tribe ruled by the 'Mwata Yamvo' whose 3,000,000 subjects are widely spread throughout Katanga, Rhodesia and Angola.

Moïse TSHOMBE's ancestors are of noble descent, and it is from this elite that the Mwata Yamvo is elected. His father, Joseph Kapenda Tshombe, was a wealthy tradesman, who owned a number of estates and stores, and ran a transport business.

Moïse TSHOMBE studied to become a schoolteacher in American Methodist schools. He also qualified in book-keeping. He married a daughter of the Mwata Yamvo, and their union has been blessed with eight children.

In 1947, he was drawn to politics and devoted himself to the promotion of African development.

Before long he was in the public eye because of his sane approach and his knowledge of economic affairs.

The reputation he established, gained him numerous invitations to attend conferences both in Europe and the United States of America.

During preliminary talks for the Congo's constitution, Mr TSHOMBE presented his ideas in favour of a federation on the grounds of geographical and genetic differences existing in the Congo, but unfortunately, his sound advice was not heeded at the time.

In June 1960, Mr TSHOMBE was elected President of the provincial Katanga government.

On July 11, 1960, when terror and anarchy were spreading throughout the Congo, President TSHOMBE proclaimed Katanga's independence, thus saving his country from chaos and ruin. Thanks to his efforts, Katanga has been able to retain law and order, the protection of human rights, and the security of private property.

All who approach President TSHOMBE appreciate his kindness, his goodness and his care for human dignity and justice.

But it is primarily as a great statesman that President TSHOMBE is known and respected. He has surmounted numerous obstacles in the cause of freedom.

Twice the people of Katanga have taken up arms against the forces of evil, and stood firmly behind their President in his struggle for independence.

Through his unswerving devotion to a just cause, President TSHOMBE has gained the highest award of all ... the unanimous support and loyalty of a whole people.

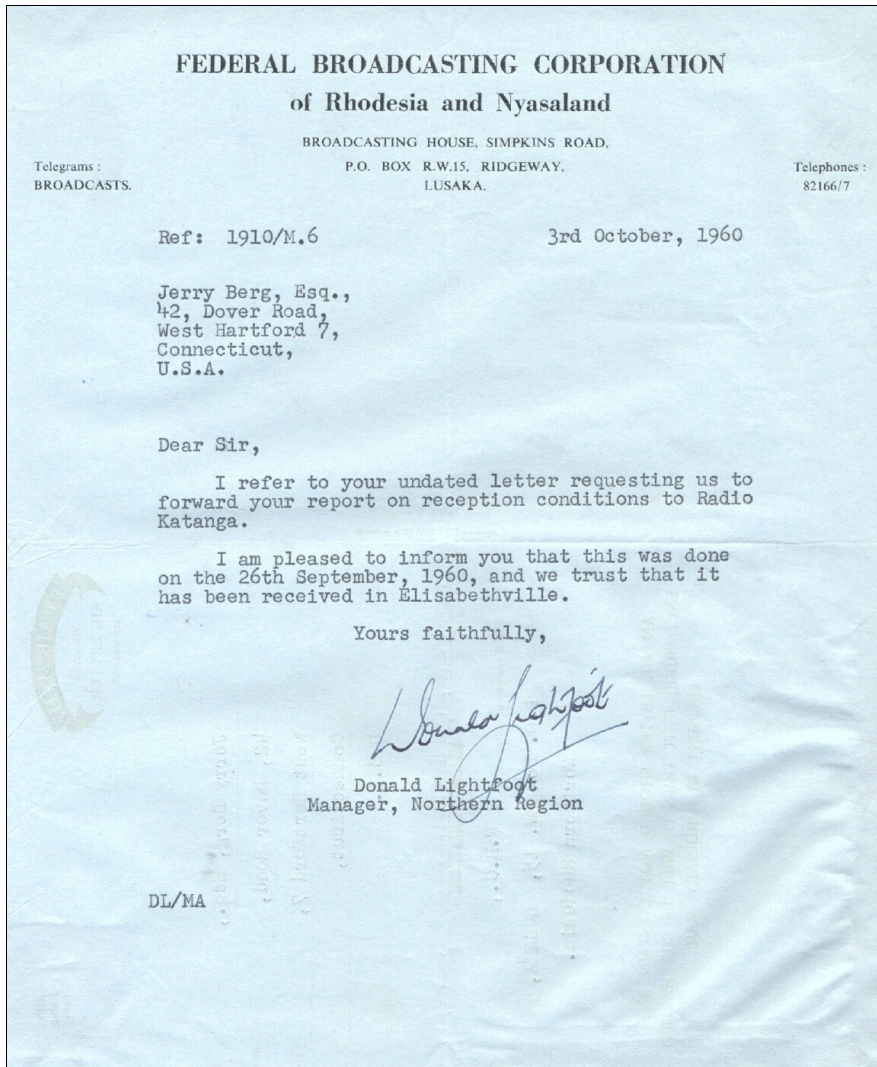
President TSHOMBE is Doctor Honoris Causa of the Elisabethville University.

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The Congo became independent on June 30, 1960, and the world soon learned the names of its two leading politicians, Joseph Kasavubu and Patrice Lumumba, who became president and prime minister respectively. Soon the country descended into chaos. Within ten days, Belgium sent in troops to maintain order. U.N. peacekeepers soon followed, and would be active in Katanga as well as the rest of the country. Lumumba was killed in January 1961. An army colonel, Joseph Mobutu, would seize power in 1965. He would be the country's President for more than 30 years.

Soon after independence, a revolt against the central government began in Katanga, the Congo's southernmost province and home to its considerable mineral wealth. The action was led by Moïse Tshombe, another political figure, who was supported by the mining interests, the Belgians and the west. Tshombe declared Katanga independent on July 11, 1960.

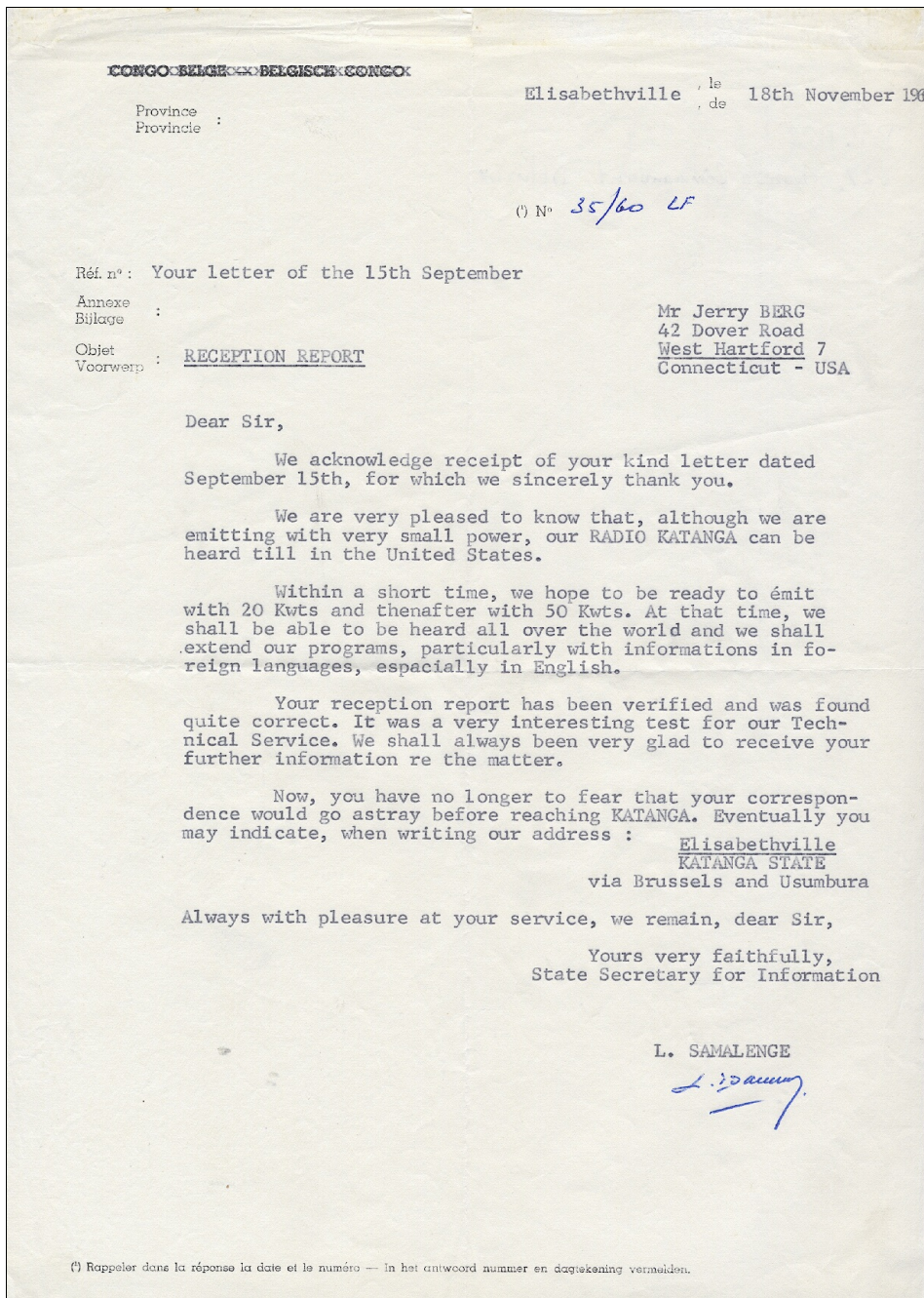
Katanga was not an entirely unknown place to SWBC DXers. There was a seldom-heard shortwave outlet of Radio Congo Belge in the provincial capital, Elisabethville (so named after the Belgian queen; when colonial names were dropped in 1966, Elisabethville became Lubumbashi and Leopoldville, the capital, became Kinshasa). Elisabethville boasted three other small shortwave stations as well – Radio College, Radio Elisabeth, and Radio UFAC. But now, for the first time, Elisabethville would have a major presence on shortwave.



The station was called Radio Katanga. In October 1960 there were reports of the dedication of a new 20 kw. transmitter, which would certainly make long-distance reception feasible. But it was unclear if the station was already at that power, or if a dedication was something still in the works. In any event, the new station's signal was soon traced on 11865 kHz. The first U.S. reports were in the November issue of the NNRC Bulletin. In those days it was uncommon to report the dates of loggings, so it can't be said with precision when the first loggings were made. Most of those in the November bulletin would have been from September. What I am sure of, however, is that I was lucky enough to hear the station, on Saturday, September 11, 1960, from 0501 to 0611 GMT, just past midnight on the east coast.

My log from back then shows reception quality as SINPO 54444, a more respectable signal than would have been expected from that part of

the world at that hour. But early reports from Connecticut, Delaware, New Jersey, Indiana and California confirmed that the signal was getting out well.



There were two windows for hearing 11865 on the east coast. One was for about an hour at the time I heard them, 0500 GMT. The other was in the east coast afternoon from around 1900 (and sometimes earlier) until closedown around 2100 GMT. Both were classic times for east coast African reception. From logs reported to the NNRC (see pgs. 6 & 7 below), most of the programming was in French, but there were also IDs in English and German, and some English news, plus some programming in local languages.

As can be seen from the logs, the frequency varied somewhat, but was always in the general area of 11865. The station was also on other channels as well, with what appeared to be a domestic service. They were reported on 60 meters (5926, 5933, 5953, 5978), 41 meters (7155, 7166), and 31 meters (9525, 9540).

So how to QSL the new Radio Katanga? Given the fighting in the Congo (which extended into Katanga), addressing a

letter directly to Elisabethville seemed a long shot. In the NNRC Bulletin, someone (it may have been me) suggested sending letters via Lusaka, Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia), which was about 275 miles from Elisabethville. That is what I did, and in early October I was pleasantly surprised to receive a letter from the Federal Broadcasting Corp. in Lusaka, advising that they had forwarded my letter on September 26 (see pg. 2 above).

The waiting on a Katanga response ended in late November-early December when I received the letter shown above. My report had been received, and was found correct, and the station advised

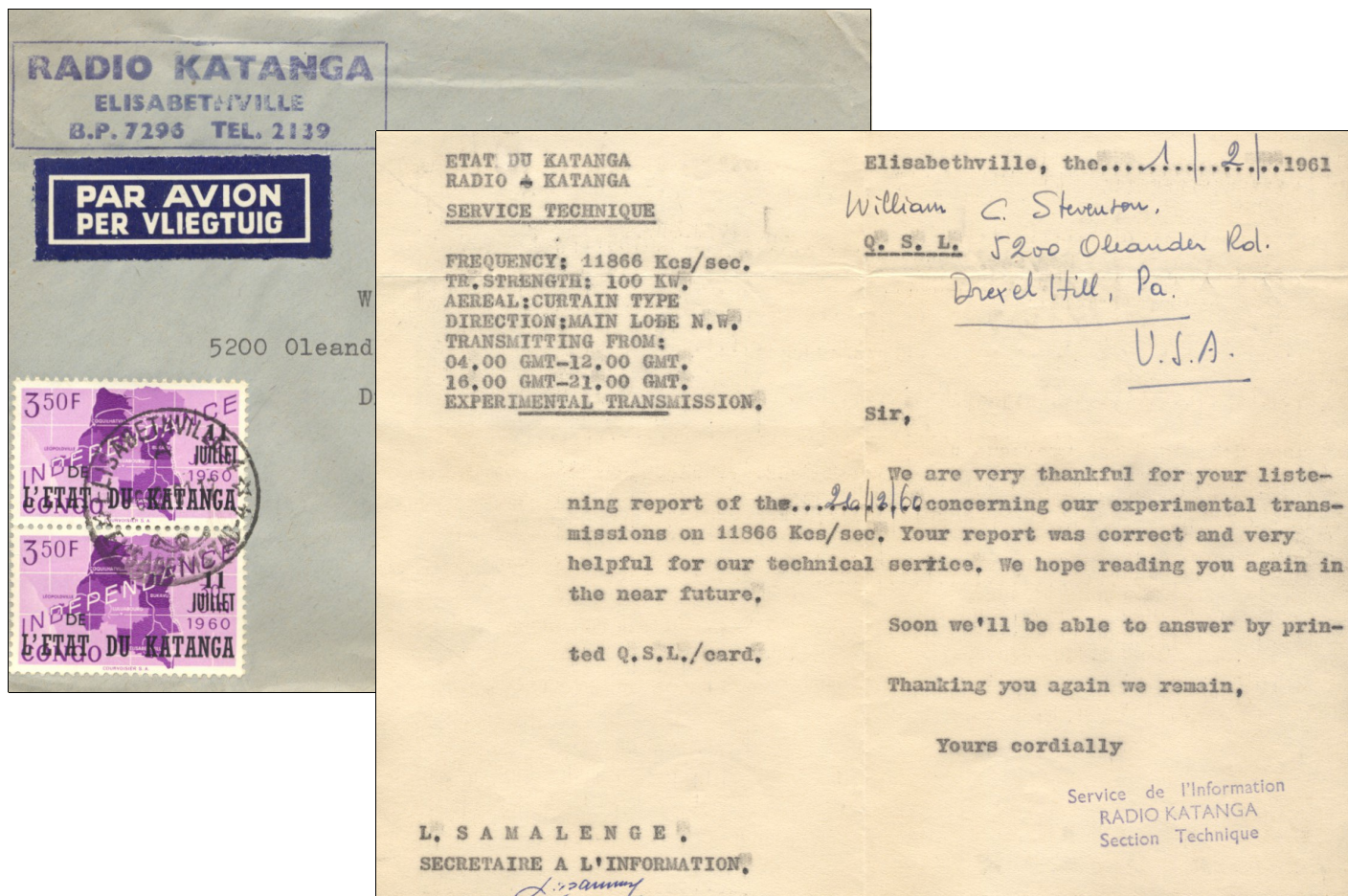
that further correspondence should be addressed to "Elisabethville, KATANGA STATE, via Brussels and Usumbura" (Usumbura was the capital of another Belgian territory, Ruanda-Urundi, which bordered the Congo). Eventually, the Elisabethville station opened a post office box, and it appears that letters addressed to it were received at their destination in the ordinary course.

An interesting point in the letter from the station, which was dated November 18, was the statement that they "hoped" to go to 20 kw. "within a short time," and then to 50 kw. That suggests

RADIO KATANGA (Station Nationale de Radiodiffusion — Go.) — **ADDR.:** B.P. 7296, Elisabethville. **L. P.:** Dir. M. Cotterau.
STATIONS: 5933 kc/s 50.57 m 10 kw — 7156 kc/s 41.93 m 20 kW — 11875 kc/s 25.26 m 100 kW.
HOME SCE. in French and Congolese: D. 04.00 (Sun. 04.30)—06.30, 10.00—12.30, 15.00—22.00 (Sat. 23.00). **N. in French:** D. 05.00—05.15, 11.00—11.20, 18.00—18.30, 20.00—20.15. — **ANN.:** »Ici R. Katanga, station nationale de radiodiffusion de Etat Indépendant du Katanga«. — **V. by letter.**

they were transmitting with less than 20 kw. when I and other DXers heard them during their first few months on the air. What was their power at the time? Perhaps 10 kw., which is the power shown for Elisabethville on 5933,

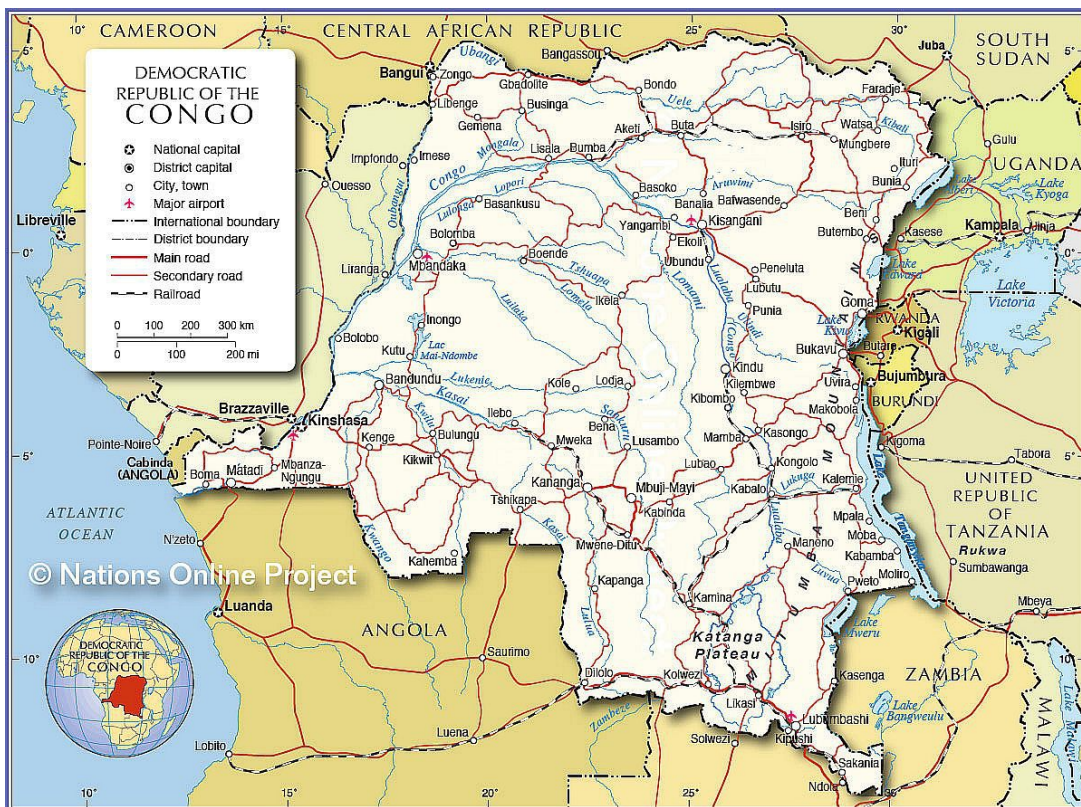
as well as other Congo Belge regional stations, in the 1960 and 1961 WRTH. But we will likely never know for sure. In the first Radio Katanga entry in the WRTH, which was in the 1961 Summer Supplement (shown above), the power was given as 10 kw. on 60 meters, 20 kw. on 41 meters, and 100 kw. on 25 meters (11875). There are no WRTH entries suggesting that the station ever operated at 50 kw. As shown in the form-letter QSL below, power was given as 100 kw. in early 1961. Might the station's right hand not know what the left hand was doing when they suggested that they weren't yet at 20 kw.? Were they in fact at 100 all the time?



The rebellion in Katanga ended in January 1963. Tshombe fled to Northern Rhodesia, then Spain. Soon thereafter there were reports of United Nations forces programming on the 25 meter Katanga channel (see p. 7). U.N. programming from Katanga was listed in the WRTHs for 1963 and 1964; the 1964 entry is at right. Elisabethville resumed its status as a regional outlet of the central government station, Radiodiffusion Congolaise. The U.N. broadcasts from Katanga were marked “discontinued” in the 1965 WRTH. Moise Tshombe returned to serve as Congo’s prime minister in 1964, but his presidential ambitions resulted in his dismissal by Kasavubu after four months. Later he was sentenced to death in absentia, but he died in 1969, seemingly from natural causes, and was buried in Belgium.

UNITED NATIONS ORGANISATION (ONUC)
 L.P: R. Officer: A. Familiant – STATIONS: 5933kc 10kW – 9540kc 31.45m 20kW – 11870kc 25.27m – D.PRGR. in French, Swahili, English: 06.00–06.30, 11.00–11.30, 17.30–18.30. N: French: 06.00, 11.00, 17.30. Swahili: 06.10, 11.10, 18.10. English: 06.20, 11.20, 18.20 – ANN: “This is the Voice of the United Nations in Elisabethville broadc. through the courtesy of R. diff. Nationale Congolaise, Provincial Station of So. Katanga”. S/off: “You have just heard UN news in English. This is the Voice of the United Nations in Elisabethville” – V. by letter.

From www.intervalsignals.net, here is a [recording of Radio Katanga](#) on 11865 kHz. made by Henrik Klemetz in December 1961. Lubumbashi continued to be heard intermittently, on 11865 into the mid-70s, and in the 41 and the 60 meter bands for years after, finally leaving shortwave altogether around 2004. In 1988, reconsidering the application of its country-counting rules to Katanga, NASWA granted it separate country status, reversing a contrary decision made years earlier. Lucas Samalenge, the Radio Katanga verie signer (and Katangan Secretary of State of Information), was officially said to have died in a hunting accident in November 1961, but some believe the true cause of death was assassination.



Selected loggings of Radio Katanga in the 25 meter band
as reported in the NNRC Bulletin

Times in EST

October 1960

CONGO REPUBLIC - CBS News & R. Brazzaville newscast of August 20 both mention the dedication of a new 20 kw. xmtr to be called R. Katanga in Elisabethville. No further information was given. (8FV)

November 1960

11865 Elisabethville, Katanga Province; French news 1500; hrd in French 0000 after Berns s/off; French news 0007-0022; talking 0025, then music. Talk at 0111; suggest reports be sent via Lusaka. Power 20 kw. (LAAC, 1EM, 3NF, 6EZ)

December 1960

11865 Ici R. Katanga is better at times just prior to 1600 than at 2300. Features much native music. (9KM)

January 1961

11865 R. Katanga, Elisabethville; strong with African musical pgm at 1400; ID & gong at 1445; native talk; French ID as "Ici Katanga" at 1500, then news. Also at 0000 with French news; later into a musical program. (LAGM, 1EM)

February 1961

11866 R. Katanga, Elisabethville; as early as 1200 in French; also 1330 with pop music & Fr., some IDs are also in Eng. & German; 1430-1530 classical music; 1635-1830 music & Eng. & Fr. IDs. Also noted 2330 with short Eng. anmt. (LAGM, 1EM, 2AXS, 2AJ, 4AIX, 6EZ, 9KM)

March 1961

11866 Elisabethville, Katanga; schedule reads 2300-0700 and 1100-1600; hrd 1200-1605 with Fr. & Eng. pgms; news in French 1300 & 1500; Eng. news 1515; Eng. ID every 30 minutes; much excellent music is featured. Closes 1605 weekdays; runs past 1630 Sat. They are asking for reports. (1BYR, 4BC, 6AE)

May 1961

11866 R. Katanga, Elisabethville; 1445-1500 French music; French news 1500-1515; ENG news 1515-1530; jazz and old pop tunes to 1600; also hrd 2330-0000 with old pop records to 2345, then news in a Congo language. From 0000 in French (5AG, 6AA, 6AE)

December 1961

11875 R. Katanga, Elisabethville, Katanga, is back on this spot after former facilities were destroyed recently. Noted 1458 with French ID by a gal. QRM here. (3NF)

September 1962

11871½ R. Katanga at 1300 with French news; then native vocals. Retuning found a gal giving Eng. news at 1520; then letter acknowledgements. QTH given as B.P, 7296, Elisabethville. Reports wanted. Resumed French program at 1528. (3NF)

October 1962

11870 R. Katanga, Elisabethville, again on the air; Eng. news 1520 (exc. Sun) and at 0130. 1315-1330 Fr. news, music; 1420 native music; 1445 Fr. talk; 1450 pop mx; 1500 Fr. news; 1515-1530 Eng. news; 2330 lang. news. (1DYL, 2FGX, 4BC, 5AG, 5EMP, 8MS)

January 1963

11879 Elisabethville, Katanga, at 1445 with records; 1452 ID; 1503 ID and more music; 1505 Fr. news; 1602 ID. (1BD, 4BC)

February 1963

11870 R. Katanga, Elisabethville; 1502 ID in French with French news; 1518 IS/ID; 1519 Eng. news. Hrd till 1531. (1W)

March 1963

11870 (1BD) 11872 (4BC) 11875 (4BQ) Elisabethville, Katanga; at 1333 with Eng. news after IS & ID; IDs at 1405 as "Radiodifusion Congolaise" and "This is the Voice of the U.N. in Katanga"; 1435 in lang., 1440 Congolese music; 1448 ID and noted to close at 1527. (1BD, 4BC, 4BQ)

April 1963

11868 Elisabethville, Katanga, down from 11871.8 kc., at 1318 with ID "Voice of the United Nations in Elisabethville"; then Eng. news. Music 1530 with comments in French; IS is on a piano. (1BD, 3NF, JP)

March 1965

11870A Elisabethville, Katanga, in Fr. with ID at 1300; fair lvl but QRM. (9FM)

January 1966

11866 Formerly " R. Katanga, Elisabethville; fine at 1900 chex after stay of several days on 11955 where was sacared by a Russian; not noted with Eng. news at this time as mentioned by overseas sources: at least not on Sun. (9NM)

July 1966

11877 former R. Katanga, Elisabethville, hrd recently around 2045, up from usual 11866; pop mx & African numbers. Off at 2101. (9NM)

March 7, 2021