

Congo marks golden jubilee of independence

■ **1885:** *King Leopold II* of Belgium establishes **Congo Free State** as his personal colony and ruthlessly exploits vast natural resources through slave labour

■ **1908:** Congo annexed by Belgium

■ **1960:** Congo gains independence with **Patrice Lumumba** as prime minister ▶

■ **1961:** Lumumba killed, reportedly with U.S. and Belgian complicity

■ **1965:** **Mobutu Sese Seko** takes power in coup ◀

■ **1971:** Country renamed Zaire

■ **1999:** Ceasefire signed in Zambia, but fighting continues. UN deploys peacekeeping force

■ **2001:** President Kabila assassinated – succeeded by son, **Joseph Kabila** ▶

■ **2002:** Peace agreement signed in South Africa leads to withdrawal of most foreign troops, but several militias continue to fight in eastern Congo

■ **2006:** Joseph Kabila declared president after first free elections in four decades

■ **2008:** After botched offensive, Kabila signs ceasefire with rebels in east but fighting persists

■ **2009:** Kabila approves law giving amnesty to armed groups as part of deal meant to end fighting

■ **Jun 30, 2010:** Ceremonies to mark 50 years of independence attended by **King Albert II** – first Belgian royal to visit in 25 years

■ **1991:** Under strong pressure to democratize, as West withdraws support from former Cold War ally

■ **1996:** Tutsi rebels capture eastern Congo

■ **1997:** Tutsi and other anti-Mobutu rebels, aided by Rwanda, capture Kinshasa and oust Mobutu. **Laurent Kabila** installed as president. Congo name restored ▶

■ **1998:** Rebels backed by Rwanda and Uganda rise up against Kabila. Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia intervene to support Kabila. "Africa's World War" claims some three million lives between 1998 and 2003

