

‘MY TRAINING IS DEEPLY CHRISTIAN AND I AM AGAINST VIOLENCE’: JASON SENDWE, THE BALUBAKAT, AND THE KATANGESE SECESSION, 1957–64*

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Abstract

This article examines the Baluba Association of Katanga (Balubakat) from its creation in 1957 until its dissolution in 1964, as well as its leader Jason Sendwe. Despite not receiving much scholarly coverage hitherto, Sendwe and the Balubakat played an important part in undermining the Katangese secession, along with the UN and the Congolese National Army (ANC). This article’s focus on the Balubakat and Sendwe challenges the traditional historical focus on top parties, such as the National Congolese Movement (MNC), and their leaders, such as Patrice Lumumba, when examining Congolese decolonisation. Sendwe’s pragmatic, non-aligned stance helped the Balubakat maintain the support of powerful institutions, such as the Great Lakes Railway Company (CFL). His ability to hold the Balubakat together also derived from its members’ common wish to oppose the Katangese secession. Yet the efficacy of Sendwe’s leadership was best demonstrated after the party disbanded following his assassination.

Key Words

Central Africa, Democratic Republic of Congo, decolonisation, political culture, politics, regional, state.

For far too long, scholars have concentrated overwhelmingly on top political leaders in the context of the history of decolonisation in the former Belgian Congo and its successor state, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).¹ As a result, secondary figures such as Christophe Gbenye, Victor Nendaka, and Jason Sendwe have long been overshadowed

* I would like to thank Yolanda Covington-Ward, Guy Vanthemsche, Hein Vanhee, Tom Morren, David Maxwell, Robert Saunders, all who attended my paper at the Congo Research Network (CRN) conference in Cambridge in 2015, and the anonymous reviewers and editors of this journal for their comments, inspiration, and help in preparing this article. I would also like to thank the British Academy for their Small Grant (SG132242) that furthered the research for this article. All mistakes and views expressed in this paper remain mine, though. E-mail: r.loffman@qmul.ac.uk.

1 This list of the books about these three leaders is far from extensive but gives some impression of the volume of literature about them: L. Zelig, *Lumumba: Africa’s Lost Leader* (London, 2015); E. Gerard and B. Kuklick, *Death in the Congo: Murdering Patrice Lumumba* (Cambridge, MA, 2015); L. De Witte, *The Assassination of Lumumba*, trans. A. Wright and R. Fenby (London, 2001); J.-L. P. Ikambana, *Mobutu’s Totalitarian Political System: An Afro-Centric Analysis* (London, 2006); I. Colvin, *The Rise and Fall of Moïse Tshombe* (London, 1968).

by a near-relentless focus on the traditional postcolonial political trinity, namely: Patrice Lumumba, the country's first prime minister, Joseph Mobutu, its corrupt authoritarian ex-president, and, Moïse Tshombe, the erstwhile leader of the Katangese secession (1960–3). Congolese historiography has, in short, effectively been stuck debating the life and times of a small coterie of political leaders as opposed to broadening out its scope of analysis to include what might be termed 'middle-order' individuals and their parties. Yet such leaders and their parties often exerted an important influence over Congolese affairs, and this was particularly evident during the Katangese secession in the early 1960s when the top politicians in Léopoldville could only claim a modicum of control over southeastern Congo.

This article moves discussions of Congolese decolonisation forward by focusing on the life and career of Jason Sendwe as well as the political party he co-founded and led, the Baluba Association of Katanga (Balubakat).² Since few historians have written about the Balubakat per se, some introductory remarks are in order.³ First, the party contested polls in the Belgian Congo as well as the controversial Katangese secession during the lifetime of the independent DRC's ill-fated First Republic (1960–5). Formed in 1957, the Balubakat was briefly a cultural association in that it aimed to preserve what Sendwe, a Methodist-educated former medic, believed were 'authentic' Luba-Katanga traditions.⁴ In early 1958, once Congolese politics was legalized in the Belgian Congo, Sendwe turned the Balubakat into a fully-fledged political party with himself at the helm. The fact that the Balubakat remained a single, unified organisation for nearly the entirety of the early 1960s helped the party successfully challenge the Katangese secession — even if it did not do so alone. This article suggests that Sendwe's ability to hold the Balubakat together was facilitated first by the fact that its members felt they had to unite to fight the secession, and second by his talent for communicating effectively to different audiences.

Jason Sendwe, while not making the political weather in southeastern Congo, largely achieved his aims in his dealings with international actors, such as the United Nations (UN), and national figures like Cyrille Adoula, the Congo's third prime minister. For example, the UN believed that Sendwe could promote peace in northern Katanga as evinced by the fact that, in October 1960, it freed him from his incarceration imposed by the central government. Likewise, Adoula made Sendwe deputy prime minister in August 1961, thereby giving him great authority in Katanga — even if this was nominal on occasion. Unfortunately for him, Sendwe's success with national and international figures eclipsed his relations with many Katangese leaders. Though the odds were against him, he never made peace with Tshombe. Neither did Sendwe manage to maintain the confidence of his more radical colleagues within the Balubakat. Nonetheless, given his

2 The term 'Balubakat' has also come to be used as a shorthand term to describe the Luba-Katanga ethnic group. This article will use the term solely in reference to the political party and will use the term Luba-Katanga in reference to the ethnic identification of the people concerned.

3 There are too many references of books in which the Balubakat feature to list them all, but the following are some of the most important: R. Lemarchand, *Political Awakening in the Belgian Congo* (Berkeley, 1964); E. Kisangani, *Civil Wars in the Democratic Republic of the Congo* (London, 2012); C. Young, *Politics in Congo: Decolonization and Independence* (Princeton, 1965); B. Verhaegen, *Rébellions au Congo*, 2 Volumes (Brussels, 1966–9).

4 E. F. Kisangani and S. F. Bobb, *Historical Dictionary of the Democratic Republic of the Congo* (3rd edn Lanham, MD, 2010), 32.

success with national and international figures, Sendwe's career helped speed the end of the Katangese secession.

To build a coalition of those either against the secession or prepared to inhibit their enthusiasm for it, Sendwe did not fit the mould of either starkly pro-independence politicians, such as Kwame Nkrumah, or leaders who had warmer relations with their former colonial overlords, such as Félix Houphouët-Boigny.⁵ Instead, his emphasis on ethno-regional solidarity as a means of political mobilization put him more in line with other contemporary middle-order figures who adhered more to regional, ethnic concerns rather than large-scale nationalist visions. Examples of comparable leaders include Paul Nkanyemka, the leader of the Moyo wa Uzigua na Nguu (The Heart [or 'Spirit'] of Uzigua and Ungulu) in Tanzania and Isaac arap Koskei of the Kalenjin Political Alliance in Kenya.⁶

As well as his pragmatic, ethnic brand of nationalism, Sendwe's significance to the broader literature on decolonisation — and especially on Congolese decolonisation — also lies in the fact that he trod a fine line between socialist and capitalist politics during the Cold War era. Unlike Mobutu, who conspicuously allied himself with the United States, or Patrice Lumumba, who the US linked with the Soviet Union following his request for military assistance from the communist state, Sendwe was firmly allied to neither.⁷ Instead, he proved able to work both with Lumumba, as evinced in his trying to broker a deal between the Balubakat and Tshombe's Confederation of Katangese Tribes (Conakat) for him, and with companies owned and run by Europeans, notably the Great Lakes Railway Company (La Compagnie du Chemin de Fer du Congo Supérieur aux Grands Lacs Africains, or CFL).

This article therefore adds to the preexisting literature on decolonisation by drawing attention to the career of a significant middle-order African statesperson who did not adhere fully to either of the political credos prevalent during the Cold War. Traditionally, historians have identified leaders who straddled both sides of the Cold War divide with the global non-aligned movement.⁸ Yet, here again, Sendwe is different because he never explicitly endorsed this movement in the correspondence by and about him that remains. In short, Sendwe was an important yet understudied middle-order figure whose pragmatic ethno-regional vision for decolonisation, adhering neither to a staunchly capitalist or communist line, exerted a considerable yet hitherto underappreciated influence on the Katangese secession.

This paper chronicles Sendwe's and the Balubakat's history in light of new sources from the CFL that reveal the ideological divisions within the Balubakat throughout its tenure in southeastern Congo. The men who dealt most with CFL correspondence during the early

5 D. Aboussou, *Kwame Nkrumah and Félix Houphouët-Boigny: Divergent Perspectives on African Independence and Unity* (Cambridge, 2019), 127, 153; R. Rathbone, *Nkrumah and the Chiefs: The Politics of Chieftaincy in Ghana, 1951–1960* (Oxford, 2000), 150.

6 J. Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika* (Cambridge, 1979), 488; J. L. Earle, *Colonial Buganda and the End of Empire: Political Thought and Historical Imagination in Africa* (Cambridge, 2017), 114; G. Lynch, *I Say to You: Ethnic Politics and the Kalenjin in Kenya* (Chicago, 2011), 61, 68.

7 S. R. Weissman, 'What really happened in Congo: the CIA, the murder of Lumumba, and the rise of Mobutu', *Foreign Affairs*, 93:4 (2014), 14; M. G. Schatzberg, 'Mobutu or Chaos?': *The United States and Zaire, 1960–1990* (Washington, DC, 1991).

8 J. Dinkel, *The Non-Aligned Movement: Genesis, Organisation, and Politics (1927–1992)* (Leiden, 2018), 86.

1960s, and on whom much of this article is based, were A. Marissaux and E. Bruart. By the late 1950s, Bruart was serving as the administrator-director-general of the CFL in northern Katanga, having worked as an engineer for much of the 1940s. For his part, Marissaux served as director of the CFL in the region during the period in question.⁹ Taken together, Bruart and Marissaux's telegrams and memos were sent largely from Albertville (now Kalemie) to the CFL's headquarters in Brussels.

There are challenges involved in using European/American sources to elucidate historical aspects of African politics. To write that the 'racially charged depictions and ethnocentricity' of the material is problematic in this context is an understatement.¹⁰ However, the European hierarchy of the CFL was greatly attentive to political developments in northern Katanga during the period in question. Secondly, we do get to hear Sendwe's words through the CFL sources, and these words have not been published previously. Such words come in contexts in which they were unlikely to have been distorted. For the CFL, much depended on getting Sendwe's position *right* given the precarious political situation in which it operated. Likewise, other sources, not least newspaper articles as well as Methodist correspondence, can also be brought to bear on this analysis to put the CFL archive in perspective when such sources can contribute to the discussion. Using the abovementioned sources, the article proceeds chronologically from the formation to the dissolution of the Balubakat. Throughout, Sendwe and the Balubakat's important role in the history of southeastern Congo are highlighted.

JASON SENDWE, THE MISSION ENCOUNTER, AND THE CREATION OF THE BALUBAKAT

The Balubakat was created at a time in which a number of cultural associations emerged in the Belgian Congo. The first such association was the Bakongo Alliance (Abako), which was formed in 1955.¹¹ Joseph Kasavubu had founded it to 'unify, conserve, and perfect the Kongo language' that he believed was increasingly under threat by the mid-1950s.¹² A spate of immigration by Lingalophone workers into Léopoldville (now Kinshasa) led Kongo-speakers such as Kasavubu to conclude that Kongo culture as a whole needed defending. At the same time, more schools appeared in the Congo and more French was taught. Some Kongo speakers, such as Kasavubu, believed that the popularity of other languages among many in the increasingly populous Lower Congo region threatened the continuity of Kongo ethno-cultural traditions. Abako therefore led the way in the creation of what became known as 'cultural associations', with many other iterations of this model emerging in the wake of Abako's inauguration — not least the Balubakat.

9 *Belgisch Staatsblad*, 119, 29 Apr. 1949, 3518, 3535.

10 R. Reid, 'Violence and its sources: European witness to the military revolution in nineteenth-century Eastern Africa', in P. Landau (ed.), *The Power of Doubt: Essays in Honor of David Henige* (Madison, 2011), 43.

11 E. Bute and H. J. P. Harmer, *The Black Handbook: The People, History and Politics of Africa and the African Diaspora* (London, 2016), 32.

12 Y. Covington-Ward, 'Joseph Kasavubu, ABAKO, and performances of Kongo nationalism in the independence of Congo', *Journal of Black Studies*, 43:1 (2012), 74.

The Balubakat's formation followed a somewhat similar pattern to that of Abako in that Sendwe founded it to preserve what he saw as the erosion of Luba-Katanga cultural traditions. Such customs were threatened by much the same factors that had led Kasavubu to form Abako only two years before. However, rather than Lingalophone immigrants supposedly endangering the constitution of Kongo culture in Lower Congo, Sendwe feared the subordination of Luba-Katanga culture to that of their erstwhile ethnic cousins, the Luba-Kasaï. Sendwe bore the group little ill-will, but he was nevertheless concerned that they were migrating to find relatively lucrative work in the mining district of Katanga, known as 'Upper Katanga' (Haut Katanga), at the expense of those Luba who were born in Katanga.¹³ The Balubakat was very much a political vehicle for the Luba-Katanga — as opposed to the Luba-Kasaï — in an increasingly bitter culture war that began in the late 1950s. It not only sought to articulate a series of claims to resources for a native-born Luba-Katangese and often male constituency, for example, but it also sought to oppose claims to resources and political patronage made by their Kasaïan brethren.

Because they were legal under colonial law, cultural associations were places where the Congolese could congregate outside their churches and European-run industries and — crucially — had the opportunity to discuss politics during moments when no colonial official was present.¹⁴ After Congolese politics was legalized in the Belgian Congo, some of these cultural associations unsurprisingly turned themselves into political parties and the Balubakat did likewise.¹⁵ Having transformed the Balubakat into a political party, Sendwe soon took it into the Confederation of Katangese Tribes or 'Conakat'.¹⁶ There were a variety of reasons for Sendwe's wanting to join the Lunda businessman Moïse Tshombe's emergent movement. Sendwe's deputy and secretary-general, Rémy Mwamba, believed that he was related to the Conakat president, and Sendwe, moreover, counted himself among Tshombe's childhood friends.¹⁷ More importantly, though, a political confederation could pool together more voters than any single party. In so doing, it could more effectively block the migration of those outside Katanga to the mining jobs that they were acquiring in the lead-up to independence. As David Maxwell suggests, the Katanga Baluba 'shared the resentments of their Conakat partners at the partisan use of communal office' on the part of the Luba-Kasaï.¹⁸ To sweeten the deal, Tshombe granted Sendwe's Balubakat a considerable degree of autonomy *within* the Conakat structure so as to entice the Balubakat into the Confederation.¹⁹

13 J. Rich, 'Laurent Kabila', in E. K. Kyeampong, H. L. Gates Jr., and S. J. Niven (eds.), *Dictionary of African Biography* (Oxford, 2012), 248; H. Weiss, *Political Protest in the Congo: The Parti Solidaire Africain During the Independence Struggle* (Princeton, 2019), 29.

14 Weiss, *Political Protest*, 7.

15 Young, *Politics in Congo*, 267.

16 S. Vinckel, 'Violence and everyday interactions between Katangese and Kasaïans: memory and elections in two Katanga cities', *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, 85:1 (2015), 82–3.

17 T. R. Kanza, *The Rise and Fall of Patrice Lumumba: Conflict in the Congo* (Rochester, 1994), 107–8.

18 D. Maxwell, 'The creation of Lubaland: missionary science and Christian literacy in the making of the Luba Katanga in the Belgian Congo', *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 10:3 (2016), 385.

19 Lemarchand, *Political Awakening*, 241.

Sendwe's taking of the Balubakat into the Conakat — however brief this alliance was and whatever persuasion was necessary to convince him of the plan's merits — is worth reflecting on. The deal was indicative of an important stream of ethnocentric as opposed to socialist political thought within the Balubakat that illustrates some of the contradictions it would have to manage after independence. Foregrounding ethnicity as a unifying political factor in order to become a 'tribal association', and thereby joining the Conakat, was a long way from the more inclusive path that Patrice Lumumba, who would become the first prime minister of the Democratic Republic of Congo, advocated in his capacity as leader of the MNC. Given that the Balubakat would eventually form an alliance with the MNC around the time of independence, this discrepancy is worth remarking on.²⁰

As Maxwell has observed, the calcification of a series of Luba-Katanga myths into a distinctive and coherent culture owed much to Euro-American Protestant missionaries, even if African evangelists also had a considerable hand in fashioning such narratives.²¹ In deploying a conception of Luba culture that owed so much to missionary knowledge production, Sendwe — consciously or otherwise — acknowledged the veracity and legitimacy of their cultural claims.²² Sendwe's openness to foreign missionary cultural production was unsurprising since he himself was a devout Methodist. Born in 1917 in Mwanya, in the Kabongo territory of the Congo in the Luba heartlands, Sendwe later moved to the important Methodist centre of Kanene.²³ Once there, he came into contact with pioneer missionary Bishop John McKendree Springer who, among others, was greatly impressed by his academic aptitude.²⁴ Springer wrote that Sendwe 'distinguished himself by leading his class ... [H]e was particularly good in French'.²⁵ Sendwe soon suggested to the missionaries that he wanted to be a doctor and went to a local Baptist mission in order to get trained. Shortly afterwards, he returned to the Methodists working as a doctor in the Kanene mission field.

It is clear from the Methodist sources pertaining to Sendwe's education that he was held in particularly high esteem by the American missionaries, in a similar manner to the way Catholic missionaries celebrated Joseph Kasavubu, and such sentiments were often projected back into Sendwe's childhood. For example, in mission correspondence Springer relayed a story about Sendwe's youth in which, at the age of six, his aunt took him into her house to avoid his having to participate in a cannibalistic ritual.²⁶ As Maxwell suggests, stories about cannibals were not necessarily real but instead were often 'a means of asserting moral boundaries between [missionaries'] own respectable Christian communities and "heathen" neighbours', and so Springer's belief that Sendwe was distinct from his peers in this regard was likely a means of emphasizing the latter's

20 J. Gérard-Libois, *Katanga Secession* (Madison, 1966), 84.

21 Maxwell, 'Creation of Lubaland', 368.

22 J. Sendwe, 'Traditions et coutumes ancestrales des Baluba', *Problèmes Sociaux Congolais*, 24 (1954), 87–120.

23 Royal Museum of Central Africa, Tervuren (RMCA) HP.2009.3.971, 'Sendwe, J.'.

24 United Methodist Archives and History Centre, Drew University (GCAH) 1001-4-2:10, articles by John McKendree Springer: N-News, 1948–1957, J. Springer, 'A new mission: how come?', n.d., ca. 1940, 18.

25 *Ibid.*

26 *Ibid.*

pious nature.²⁷ Having earned great respect among the Methodists, as well as a professional career by the time independence came, Sendwe wanted to protect his patronage against those who were migrating into Katanga as independence approached. However, he was not wholly anti-Luba-Kasaï nor was he anti-Euro-American. And much the same could be said about the Balubakat's co-founder, Rémy Mwamba, another Luba-Katanga who had enjoyed an extensive European mission education.²⁸ Having risen to be a clerk in the Elisabethville court once he finished school, he too had no wish to see positions in salaried spheres being given over to those he considered foreign to Katanga. René Lemarchand also suggests that Mwamba 'could stress his direct descent from the first Muluba, Mutombo Mukulu'.²⁹ As such, Mwamba was pivotal to the Balubakat cause as he could boast of a connection both to nationalism and Luba-Katanga traditions.

However much influence Mwamba and Sendwe's ethnocentrism exerted over their political thought by the time independence came, they were not prepared to follow the Conakat's political line at any cost. Both politicians became disillusioned about the kind of independence Tshombe's Conakat began to advocate. First, it soon became clear that the Conakat was getting much of its funding from the Union Katangaise (UK), a political body mostly constituted of European settlers in southeastern Congo known as the *colonat*. Sendwe in particular objected to what he regarded as too much European influence within the Conakat. It was no use blocking inter-Congolese immigration, for example, if most of the political power and patronage available in the Congo would remain in European hands. So, when Tshombe invited Sendwe for a meeting to try to maintain a cordial relationship with him on 1 November 1959, a colonial newspaper at the time, *L'Essor du Congo*, reported that not only did Sendwe absent himself from this meeting but also that he ordered three of his Balubakat delegates to disrupt it.³⁰ The publication reported that Sendwe accused the Conakat of simply being 'indoctrination sold by whites'.³¹ Given *L'Essor's* political leanings, we cannot simply take this story at face value. It is clear, for instance, given the esteem in which he was held by Springer and other Methodists, that Sendwe was not a racist and did not hate whites. Some Belgian liberals and socialists were also key Balubakat allies.³² What is also clear, however, is that Sendwe had alienated himself enough from the Conakat for *L'Essor* to have printed that story. Sendwe was becoming, for *L'Essor's* readership at least, a threatening, radical, and even violent figure despite the fact that he constantly expressed his wish for peace with Tshombe throughout the secession.

Whether or not *L'Essor's* claims about his comportment in November 1959 were true, Sendwe was less militant than Tshombe in terms of his attempting to stem the tide of hatred directed at Luba-Kasaïan immigrants into Katanga. It became clear to Sendwe, for

27 D. Maxwell, 'Photography and the religious encounter: ambiguity and aesthetics in missionary representations of the Luba of South East Belgian Congo', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 53:1 (2011), 55.

28 A. P. Merriam, *Congo: Background of a Conflict* (Evanston, IL, 1961), 138.

29 Lemarchand, *Political Awakening*, 23.

30 'Les élections au Katanga', *L'Essor du Congo*, Dec. 1959, 11.

31 *Ibid.*

32 R. Lemarchand, 'The limits of self-determination: the case of the Katanga secession', *The American Political Science Review*, 56:2 (1962), 412.

example, that Tshombe viewed the Luba-Kasaï peoples as *the* chief threats to 'native' Katangese jobs and political patronage. Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja suggested that Tshombe's second in command Godefroid Munongo even became an 'architect of ethnic cleansing against the Kasaians' shortly after 1960.³³ The Conakat's increasingly open hostility to the Luba-Kasaï en route to independence angered the Balubakat leader, given that he saw the Luba-Kasaï as the Luba-Katanga's ethnic cousins and not rivals to be eliminated. Sendwe might have been frustrated by the power the UK had over the Conakat, therefore, but he nonetheless advocated a moderate, federalist line in terms of how he wanted the Katangese to protect what he saw as 'their' jobs and political power. The federalist position meant that Sendwe would be welcomed by a succession of leaders in Léopoldville, as was his want, but it would alienate him from some of Katanga's most powerful leaders — notably Tshombe.

Sendwe's more pragmatic line was in some ways reflected in his decision to enter the Cartel Katangais (Katangese Cartel) on the day that Tshombe had wanted to meet with him, 1 November 1959.³⁴ The cartel in question was constituted of the Balubakat alongside the Fédération Kasaïene (Fedeka) and the Association des Tshokwe du Congo, de l'Angola et de la Rhodésie (Atcar) led by Ambroise Muhunga. As Lemarchand suggests, Sendwe's taking of the Balubakat into the cartel redrew the lines of Katangese politics that had previously been drawn between 'native' and 'non-native' to divide the 'Baluba and Tshokwe on the one hand, and the remaining ethnicities on the other'.³⁵ In short, Sendwe reframed Katangese politics and gave the Balubakat two very powerful allies, the Fedeka and Atcar, in their struggle against the Conakat's agenda. Yet, as the independence process began, the Conakat still held the balance of Katangese power given that their repertoire of allies was more extensive than that of the cartel. It would be tough, therefore, for Sendwe to stop Tshombe from dictating the direction of Katangese politics in the crucially important days to come.

THE BEGINNING OF THE KATANGESE SECESSION AND THE BALUBAKAT

Congolese independence came quickly, and not just for Tshombe's Conakat or Sendwe's Balubakat, but for most connected with politics in the country.³⁶ Following almost one week's rioting in the capital Léopoldville in 1959, Belgian leaders eventually decided that independence was the only realistic course of action.³⁷ To that end, two hastily assembled 'Round Table' conferences were convened in Brussels in January and February 1960 that Sendwe and Tshombe both attended. Like many other Congolese delegates in Brussels, Sendwe was keen to express solidarity with the independence cause and

33 G. Nzongola-Ntalaja, *The Congo From Leopold to Kabila: A Peoples' History* (London, 2002), 105.

34 Lemarchand, *Political Awakening*, 242.

35 *Ibid.*

36 M. G. Stannard, 'Après nous, la délugé: Belgium, decolonization, and the Congo', in M. Thomas and A. Thompson (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Ends of Empire* (Oxford, 2018), 145.

37 H. Weiss, 'The Congo's independence struggle viewed fifty years later', *African Studies Review*, 55:1 (2012), 111.

not to be divided against other leaders such as Tshombe as the Belgian colonisers had initially wished.³⁸ Tellingly, however, Sendwe acknowledged that there were disagreements at the conference even if he did not specify in public precisely what they were.

A general election followed two agreements produced during the Round Tables and was scheduled for May 1960. This poll ultimately led to a coalition between Lumumba's MNC and Kasavubu's Abako. However, the Conakat won a majority in Katanga and this meant that it had the right to form the provincial government in the mineral-rich Southeastern Province.³⁹ Because Sendwe had taken the Balubakat out of the Conakat and was a member of the cartel, he ordered his deputies not to take up their seats in the assembly, thereby stalling the Conakat's administrative agenda.⁴⁰ Before they relinquished their political control of the Congo, the Belgian government tried to change the quorum necessary to see votes through the assembly as a result of the Balubakat's actions. In response, the Balubakat made overtures to a sympathetic central Congolese government to block the move. While these constitutional debates might seem at first to be esoteric, they helped spur Tshombe on to secession because, by so doing, he would have free rein to govern Katanga as he wished without the Balubakat's or central government's oversight.⁴¹ All Tshombe needed following Sendwe's alliance with the MNC-Lumumba (MNC-L) was an excuse to secede — and he would shortly have one.

On 5 July the old colonial gendarmerie, the Force Publique, mutinied. Having been told by Émile Janssens, the lieutenant general, that there would be no Africanization of the force, the African soldiers revolted. Whether Janssens deliberately meant to stir up trouble for Lumumba's government or his statement was simply a symptom of pig-headedness, the mutiny had a range of important consequences.⁴² One of these was to give Tshombe the excuse he had wanted for some time to, in his words, 'secede from chaos'.⁴³ Tshombe, who was particularly popular among the *colonat*, was dissatisfied with the left-leaning bent of the governing MNC-L party and their support of the right of Luba-Kasaïans to work in the mines in Lubumbashi if they so wished. A unified state — even a strongly federalist one along Sendwe's lines — would mean that Luba-Kasaï immigration would continue unabated. Importantly, Tshombe's anti-MNC-L line dovetailed with the agenda of powerful mining corporations working in Katanga at the time. Given Lumumba's rhetoric during and immediately after his election campaign, the Union Minière du Haut Katanga (UMHK) feared that an MNC-L government would seek to nationalize their holdings. Tshombe's declaration of Katangese independence therefore gave European-led companies such as the UMHK a way out of having to deal with the Lumumbist government and so many embraced it.⁴⁴

38 C. Van Cortenbergh, *The Belgo-Congolese Round Table: The Historical Days of February 1960* (Brussels, 1960), 39–40.

39 J. O. Tshonda et al., *Tanganyika: Espace fécondé par le lac et le rail* (Brussels, 2014), 209.

40 *Ibid.* 210.

41 *Ibid.*

42 G. Nzongola-Ntalaja, *Patrice Lumumba* (Athens, 2014), 92.

43 M. Larmer, 'Of local identities and transnational conflict: the Katangese gendarmes and Central-Southern Africa's forty-years war, 1960–1999', in N. Arielli and B. Collins (eds.), *Transnational Soldiers: Foreign Military Enlistment in the Modern Era* (London, 2013), 163.

44 Young, *Politics in Congo*, 503.

Although the Conakat declared that Katanga was an independent state as of 11 July, the Balubakat was unprepared to follow their lead and rapidly prepared to challenge their former allies' plans. The Balubakat soon allied themselves with the Léopoldville government instead of the one based in Elisabethville. In effect, this meant that 'separation was . . . only effective in the South [of Katanga] where the Lunda and Bayeke resided'.⁴⁵ As they tried to undermine the secession both rhetorically and by force, the Balubakat were 'propelled . . . into violence against their Conakat rivals'.⁴⁶ Much of the Balubakat's violence was undertaken in the name of retaining control of the northern Katangese hinterland for the central government and, at the same time, keeping it out of Conakat hands. While a range of militias were formed, a good proportion of the Balubakat's violence was undertaken by those who identified themselves as Luba youths.

To explain, the Balubakat had formed a youth division, the Jeunesses Balubakat (Jebakat) by January 1960. Although the founder of the Jebakat is not entirely clear from the remaining sources, the group was led by a young Laurent-Désiré Kabila after it occupied Manono in late 1960.⁴⁷ As a sub-set of the Balubakat, the Jebakat and its violence often stood in contrast to the more moderate path that Sendwe publicly advocated. Yet simultaneously, the Jebakat were a vital part of the Balubakat's often successful repulsion of the Katangese army in northern Katanga. Sendwe rarely if ever entirely dissociated himself from the group in public, even if he sometimes condemned the violent excesses they were accused of for the benefit of his national and international allies such as the UN.⁴⁸ Balubakat violence was not simply confined to the 'youth' of the party, though. One of my informants told me that one commander was in his thirties or forties at the time of the violence and was nicknamed 'Kaja Matima' or 'one who eats hearts'.⁴⁹ The actions of Kaja Matima and his peers had important consequences not just for Tshombe's Conakat but also for the people living in the Tanganyika District in that they led to a vacuum of effective control in which looting took place. CFL memos, for example, indicate that there was a lot of pillaging of Belgian shops and business in Kongolo and Kabalo by the end of July.⁵⁰

Yet what we lack from the CFL and other sources left from this period of tumult is a balanced appraisal of the pillaging given that they presented it solely as the acts of riotous mobs intent on material gain rather than motivated by any ideological or political agenda(s). What is clear is that on Sunday 2 August, the political instability in northern Katanga had grown so great that trainloads of refugees were being evacuated from both the territories of Kongolo and Kabalo to Albertville (Kalemie) on the coast of Lake Tanganyika.⁵¹ Unsurprisingly, many members of the *colonat* communicated constantly

45 Maxwell, 'Creation of Lubaland', 385.

46 *Ibid.*

47 E. Kennes and M. N'Ge, *Essai biographique sur Laurent Désiré Kabila* (Paris, 2003), 66.

48 R. Loffman, 'Same memory, different memorials: the Holy Ghost Fathers (Spiritans), martyrdom, and the Kongolo massacre', *Social Sciences and Missions*, 31:3-4 (2018), 217-50.

49 Interview with Mwehu Atundu Thomas, Kongolo, Tanganyika District, 23 July 2015.

50 RMCA HA.02.01.01.0017, 'Dommages matériels subis par les agents au cours des récents évènements', 27 July 1960.

51 RMCA HA.02.01-001, AM/VJ, A. Marissiaux, 'Note to Mr. Lalou', Bruxelles, 3 Aug. 1960.

and rumours of ‘impending doom’ spread quickly across the Tanganyika District alongside the actual violence itself.⁵² The exodus of so many Belgians from the Tanganyika District meant that Balubakat members operated without much constraint in the months immediately following independence. On 1 August 1960, its activists were already beginning their efforts to capture Manono and make it the capital of their breakaway ethno-quasi-state in order to project their political control over northern Katanga.⁵³

Much like in Kongolo, the administrator of the territory of Manono was an African member of the Conakat party. He was terrified because Balubakat activists, who viewed his allegiance to the Conakat as a traitorous act, ‘hunted’ him despite the fact that he had been wise enough not to raise the Katangese flag above his headquarters.⁵⁴ There is little mention made — in the CFL correspondence at least — of the Katangese army being able to protect Conakat sympathisers in the hinterland. The absence of this force in the immediate aftermath of the declaration of secession can be explained to some extent by the fact that it took a while for it to be recruited.⁵⁵ In part, this delay was due to the fact that the Conakat had dictated that at least half of the Katangese army had to consist of ‘native born’ Katangese or those who had resided there ‘for more than ten years’.⁵⁶ Yet the Balubakat’s activities in northern Katanga had forced Tshombe’s hand and so ‘soldiers in mobile groups who were only partly trained, together with some policemen, were mobilized and dispatched to the front line’.⁵⁷ But even these forces did not seriously challenge the Balubakat’s hold over the countryside.

By the end of August 1960, skirmishes between Tshombe’s forces and Jebakat militias had begun but were not significant enough to destabilize the Balubakat’s hold over the Katangese hinterland. Manono was fast becoming the headquarters of an emergent Balubakat-led administration, with the vast majority of former Belgian citizens queuing up to leave the Congo in Albertville and other urban centres in the Tanganyika District. African administrators affiliated with the Conakat were running from their posts, fearing for their lives as the Balubakat and the Jebakat carried the day. In peacetime, the Balubakat violence would likely have besmirched Sendwe’s name but, given it was wartime, Sendwe retained enough goodwill through his carefully moderate rhetoric to maintain the confidence of the central Congolese government. Correspondingly, he was always careful to burnish his Luba-Katanga credentials for his Jebakat and Balubakat followers, most conspicuously by ensuring that he was often seen wearing a leopard-skin torque and sash — attire traditionally signalling Luba royalty.⁵⁸ Sendwe’s choice of dress was a demonstration of his ability to speak to multiple and conflicting audiences given that nearly every other photo of Sendwe depicts him in a suit. That he could present himself sartorially as a

52 United Nations Organization Archives, New York (UNO), ‘The history of the 33rd Infantry Battalion in the Republic of the Congo, August 1960–January 1961’, 14.

53 RMCA HA.02.01-0017, Mr. Detroux, Comitra Bruxelles, Numéro 257.60, ‘Voyage du 30 juillet au 7 aout 1960’, Léopoldville, 12 Aug. 1960.

54 UNO, ‘History of the 33rd Battalion’, 50.

55 M. Larmer and E. Kennes, ‘Rethinking the Katangese secession’, *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 42:4 (2014), 750.

56 *Ibid.*

57 *Ibid.*

58 T. Q. Reeve, *The Rainbow and the Kings: A History of the Luba Empire 1891* (Berkeley, 1982), 113.

politician in the European mould while simultaneously as Luba royalty helped him to navigate the different political forces at work during Congolese decolonisation. He was hardly the only Congolese politician to do this. But Sendwe's understanding of Luba symbolism and European sartorial expectations helped him to articulate the Balubakat's agenda in Brussels while maintaining his support in northern Katanga.

'MR. SENDWE IS AN ADMIRABLE MAN': SENDWE, THE BALUBAKAT, AND THE CALCIFICATION OF THE REBELLION

By the end of 1960, Sendwe's Balubakat retained control of much of northern Katanga even as Tshombe's Conakat increasingly gained military momentum. To maintain their influence in the Tanganyika District, Sendwe and Mwamba had successfully engineered an important relationship with Lumumba's government. As opposed to Tshombe's army being the major actor in the region, it was the Balubakat and the UN who initially made the most significant impact on the Katangese hinterland. Yet Congolese politics once again changed in a way that would have significant consequences for Sendwe and provide a stern test of his nascent leadership.

On 9 August 1960, Albert Kalonji, a Luba-Kasai chief, declared the Mining State of South Kasai (*État Minier du Sud-Kasai*) an 'autonomous state'. In declaring the existence of a semi-autonomous state, Kalonji was not following entirely in Tshombe's footsteps and suggesting a new polity join the community of nations. Instead, he wanted a series of local governments to band together to operate in a very strongly federal relationship with the Congolese government. Although some among the Léopoldville commentariat believed that Kalonji had hit upon a constitutional resolution to the Congo's perennial problem of demands for ethnic sovereignty, Lumumba was entirely opposed to Kalonji's plan.⁵⁹ Not only did it threaten the reach of the central government and by extension Lumumba's own power, but it also compromised the infrastructure that the Congolese army needed to mount a serious offensive against Tshombe's secession. Lumumba tasked Joseph Mobutu, as head of the Congolese army, to crush Kalonji's rebellion. However, the Congolese army — newly baptized as the Congolese National Army (ANC) — committed atrocities against the Luba-Kasai in the process of defeating Kalonji's forces. Lumumba received a good deal of the blame for what the then-UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld later described as 'characteristic of the crime of genocide' given that so many Luba-Kasai were killed by the ANC.⁶⁰ Subsequently, the moral authority of Lumumba's strongly unitary state — as well as that of the prime minister himself — was undermined.

The last straw for Kasavubu was Lumumba's threat to deploy Soviet troops to stop the Katangese secession. Kasavubu announced on 5 September that he was deposing Lumumba and soon the prime minister found himself under house arrest. Lumumba's incarceration had exactly the opposite effect of the one Kasavubu intended, though, and that was to radicalize the Balubakat and by extension the Jebakat. The atmosphere

59 J.-C. Willaime, *Patrimonialism and Political Change in the Congo* (Stanford, 1972), 35.

60 T. J. Stapleton, *A History of Genocide in Africa* (Denver, 2017), 91.

among the Luba-Katanga in and around Manono grew increasingly militant after Lumumba's fall, and anger against the secession grew. Accordingly, ever more women and children began to leave towns such as Kongolo fearing an intensification of the violence. On 12 September, there was a scuffle between Luba-Katanga activists and the police, resulting in the gendarmerie throwing grenades into the crowd to dispel them. This action naturally escalated tensions between the Katangese loyalist administration and local Luba-Katanga peoples.

On 14 September, the UN reported an uprising of Luba-Katanga activists around Manono.⁶¹ Manono was believed to have been a Tshombe stronghold in the heart of what was traditionally believed to have been the Baluba heartlands. While the Baluba militants had taken over a small area of the territory, they had fanned out across the hinterland in a move that surprised the UN. After some deliberation, the UN decided to adopt, in their words, 'a line of action which was not averse to the aspirations of the local population who opposed the control of the Tshombe administration'.⁶² Unsurprisingly, the militancy in Manono soon inspired a countervailing campaign by the Katangese army. And so, on 20 September 1960, Tshombe's invasion of the Balubakat hinterland proper began with the UN keen to curtail it.⁶³

After several UN resolutions had been passed against Tshombe's forces, the Security Council passed another, 4741, which authorized Hammarskjöld to 'negotiate the replacement of Belgian troops and mercenaries . . . with UN troops'.⁶⁴ The Malian UN troops initially had some success in their attempts to demobilize the Katangese army, with a brief ceasefire being agreed just as the invasion of Balubakat lands had commenced. However, the agreement the UN brokered was constantly undermined. The intensity of the war might not have been as high in September and October as later on, but it was still significant. According to Emizet Kisangani: 'Repeated attacks of North Katanga by Tshombe's soldiers only hardened the position of North Katanga's leadership to oppose the Katanga secession'.⁶⁵ Part of this hardening of position related to the fact that, on 19 October, Sendwe had been arrested by the Kasavubu administration. At first, the arrest was a coup for Tshombe, who had offered his services to Mobutu if the latter needed Lumumba removed from the rest of the Congo. Yet Sendwe's arrest enraged the Balubakat/Jebakat and led them to redouble their efforts against the secession. By 20 October, the Balubakat officially inaugurated the quasi-autonomous 'loyal' Lualaba Province with the blessing of Lumumba's Deputy Prime Minister Antoine Gizenga.⁶⁶

Sendwe's imprisonment gave Prosper Mwamba-Ilunga, who took the reins of power in the Balubakat as governor of Tanganyika District during Sendwe's incarceration, the space

61 UNO, 'History of the 33rd Battalion', 16.

62 *Ibid.* 52.

63 MRAC HA.02.01-01.0021, Direction Générale, L'Administration Centrale, Bruxelles, 'Evènements de la semaine', Albertville, 20 Sept. 1960, 2. This was more than just the 'few weeks' that Kisangani mentions in his monograph, see Kisangani, *Civil Wars*, 52.

64 *Ibid.* 123. The UN's belief was that the secession would collapse without foreign support.

65 Kisangani, *Civil Wars*, 52.

66 *Ibid.* The pronouncement of the Lualaba Province followed a decision taken on 19 Sept. 1960 by the Balubakat and the Tchokwe group's Atcar party, see K. L. Sando, *Nord-Katanga, 1960-1964: De la sécession à la guerre civile: Le meurtre des chefs* (Paris, 1992), 53.

in which to build a following among the Balubakat/Jebakat faithful alongside his erstwhile ally André Shabani. Ilunga was more radical than Sendwe, and the latter's toleration and even courting of European capitalist interests such as the CFL created a rift between them that was difficult to bridge. Michael Schatzberg observed that Ilunga, as well as his followers, were known as *les durs* (hard liners).⁶⁷ Rather than toeing a moderate line with regard to European-run companies, Ilunga believed in transforming the Lualaba Province into a Maoist style polity with precious little if any Euro-American capitalist involvement. Ilunga and Sendwe were therefore at odds ideologically over what kind of state should emerge from the ashes of the secession. Such ideological differences between leaders of political parties was common in the Congo at this time.

Tshombe and Munongo famously clashed over the direction that the Conakat should take, for example.⁶⁸ Munongo took a much harder line against the Luba-Kasaï than Tshombe had. Yet Tshombe could not depose Munongo, as to do so 'would have ... driven the Bayekes out of their alliance with [him]'.⁶⁹ What is more, 'both the army and the police were loyal to the Minister of the Interior' and so for Tshombe to dismiss him would have been deeply unwise. Likewise, Sendwe could not depose Ilunga given his ardent regional following among the Luba in the Tanganyika District.⁷⁰

As well as their unwavering conviction, what made *les durs* so powerful was that the Jebakat and their leader Laurent Kabila initially supported their stance.⁷¹ Together with Ilunga, Kabila ensured that the Lualaba Province occupied as much as two-thirds of Katanga, and his every victory made Ilunga's position increasingly unassailable within the Balubakat.⁷² The extent of the Balubakat's conquests partly evinces Tukumbi Lumumba-Kasongo's argument that the Katangese secession failed 'partly because the masses of Katangese did not believe in it'; yet it is also important to acknowledge that many were coerced into opposing the secession.⁷³ The Balubakat fighters held out against Tshombe's army by disabling the infrastructure around the territory they had taken so as to prevent the incursions of Katangese fighters.⁷⁴ They were also notoriously brutal in combatting both the Katangese army and those they suspected of collaborating with them.

In the midst of the ongoing conflicts created as the Balubakat administration established the quasi-autonomous Lualaba Province, the UN desperately tried to broker a peace deal between the Luba-Katanga and Tshombe's troops. They did not see a peace settlement working without Sendwe's involvement, so they helped to free the Balubakat leader from jail shortly after he was imprisoned in October on the basis that he had 'parliamentary immunity'.⁷⁵ Thereafter, Sendwe went on a tour of northern Katanga promoting

67 M. G. Schatzberg, 'Beyond Mobutu: Kabila and Congo', *Journal of Democracy*, 8:4 (1997), 76.

68 I am grateful to one of the anonymous referees for this insight.

69 S. Hempstone, *Katanga Report* (London, 1962), 131.

70 *Ibid.*

71 Schatzberg, 'Beyond Mobutu', 76.

72 Kisangani, *Civil Wars*, 52.

73 T. Lumumba-Kasongo, 'Why Katanga's quest for self-determination and secession failed', in R. Bereketeab (ed.), *Self-Determination and Secession in Africa: The Post-Colonial State* (London, 2014), 178.

74 MRAC HA.02.01-01.0018, Direction Générale, L'Administration Centrale, Bruxelles, 'Evènements de la semaine', Albertville, 4 Nov. 1960, 1.

75 Gerard and Kuklick, *Death in the Congo*, 133.

peace. Emmanuel Gerard and Bruce Kuklick suggested that ‘Sendwe’s people greeted him ecstatically’.⁷⁶ While touring, Sendwe urged his supporters to ‘refrain from bloodletting’ and ‘tensions declined in the area that the UN had safeguarded from warfare’.⁷⁷ Faced with the prospect of northern Katanga being dominated by *les durs* and their likely nationalization of foreign capital in the region, Sendwe was also anxious to placate European-run businesses in Katanga to ensure that any state had financial support once established or re-established.

Sendwe explained in later correspondence with the CFL that my ‘training is *deeply Christian* and I am against violence’.⁷⁸ As such, when the UN delegation touched down in Kabalo along with Sendwe, the Company believed that the Balubakat leader could help them in their quest to find their beleaguered colleague Mr. Rubay who had been kidnapped. Mr. Duray, a senior member of the CFL, stated in a memo that ‘Mr Sendwe is an admirable man. He has performed brilliantly under the current strain. He plays the game honestly, and encourages peace among his followers’.⁷⁹ Unfortunately, Rubay was later found dead at the end of November.⁸⁰ Nonetheless, the CFL were prepared to give Sendwe the benefit of the doubt about his failure to calm his followers following his passage through the Tanganyika District. The CFL reported hearing rumours that Sendwe was passing weapons to his followers that would ‘allow them to attack Albertville’ but the firm said that these had no basis in truth.⁸¹

On Friday 10 February 1961, almost a month after the Lualaba government was officially inaugurated, Sendwe attended a conference in Kabalo with the UN and Bruart, of the CFL, also in attendance. Far from lambasting Tshombe, Bruart reported to the CFL that ‘at no time did Jason Sendwe speak ill of Tshombe, or the Central Government, claiming that he has never ceased to be a strong supporter of federalism’.⁸² Sendwe went on to say that ‘Tshombe and I have always understood one another and were friends . . . I bitterly regret that Tshombe has not responded to my advances . . . [R]ecently I tried to meet him but Tshombe said no’.⁸³ As well as publicly noting his advances to Tshombe, potentially brought about through the weaknesses of the Jebakat and Balubakat armies, Sendwe also talked about his affinity with Belgium. He said that he loved Belgium, ‘much more than Tshombe . . . I have many Belgian friends and I know

76 *Ibid.* 133.

77 *Ibid.*

78 MRAC HA.02.01-01.0021, ‘Note pour M. Tricot et Marissiaux’, Léopoldville, 16 Nov. 1961, 1. My emphasis.

79 MRAC HA.02.01-01.0018, Direction Générale, L’Administration Centrale, Bruxelles, ‘Evènements de la semaine’, Albertville, 4 Nov. 1960, 2. The CFL directorship suggested that Sendwe often spoke in front of several thousand followers. This may be a distortion or misconception but video evidence I have seen has tended to suggest he did have a large following.

80 MRAC HA.02.01-01.0018, Direction Générale, L’Administration Centrale, Bruxelles, ‘Evènements de la semaine’, Albertville, 21 Nov. 1960, 1.

81 MRAC HA.02.01-01.0018, Direction Générale, L’Administration Centrale, Bruxelles, ‘Evènements de la semaine’, Albertville, 8 Nov. 1960, 2.

82 MRAC HA.02.01-01.0019, ‘Relation de l’entrevue Bruart–Sendwe Jason á Kabalo, le vendredi 10 février 1961’, 1.

83 *Ibid.*

Belgium'.⁸⁴ Moreover, as opposed to what one might have considered the socialist message of a Lumumba ally, Sendwe reiterated his opposition to the nationalization of the major concession companies in Katanga. Aside from three anti-Balubakat advisors on the board of the UMHK, Sendwe said it was largely constituted of competent Europeans with whom he had no quarrel. In short, the inability of any side to claim a decisive military victory, as well as Sendwe's courting of major stakeholders during the 'War of the Fifth Parallel', meant that the Lualaba quasi-state survived Tshombe's initial onslaught. Sendwe's courting of the UN and the CFL helped to preserve and even extend the reach of those who opposed the secession.

FACTIONALISM AND THE BALUBAKAT'S NEMESIS, 1962–4

The period 1961–2 saw Sendwe reach his political zenith. In February 1961, the CFL observed: 'The UN recognize the Baluba ... For them, they are not rebels. Jason Sendwe is the head of state'.⁸⁵ Once Adoula was elected prime minister, Sendwe, along with Gizenga, became deputy prime minister.⁸⁶ Gaining power on the national stage was at once a blessing and a curse for Sendwe in that it was the crowning achievement of his political career but simultaneously distanced him from Katanga. The fact that Sendwe did not want to work at such a distance from Katanga was evinced in his choosing to be *deputy* prime minister rather than the prime minister outright. As a result of his desire to maintain his Katangese connections, he tried to keep the CFL as well as the international community in general onside through his correspondence. On one occasion, just after Adoula was elected, he even used the modern history of the Congo in his rhetoric to court CFL and Belgian favour in a way that jarred with Lumumbist versions of Congolese nationalism. In a message to the Balubakat party on 9 August 1961, he suggested that 'we cannot undo the great work of King Leopold II'.⁸⁷

While the Balubakat — together with the UN — held some territory in Katanga in 1961, Sendwe acknowledged that Tshombe 'was stronger than him for the moment' and exercised a considerable degree of caution in his dealings with the Katangese president.⁸⁸ Yet, as strong as Tshombe was, the Adoula government was keen to undermine the secession wherever it could. On 11 July 1962, the province of Nord Katanga (North Katanga) was declared, which would supersede that of the Lualaba yet would still enjoy a large degree of autonomy within the federal administration.⁸⁹ Given that Sendwe was deputy prime minister of the Congo, he could not officially lead Nord Katanga. As such, Ilunga soon became the president of the newly established province on behalf of the

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ MRAC HA.02.01-01.0019, Direction Générale, L'Administration Centrale, Bruxelles, 'Evènements de la semaine,' Albertville, 17 Feb. 1961, 5.

⁸⁶ W. Mountz, 'The Congo crisis: a re-examination (1960–1965)', *The Journal of Middle East and Africa*, 5:2 (2010), 160.

⁸⁷ Sando, *Nord Katanga*, 166.

⁸⁸ MRAC HA.02.01-01.0019, 'Relation de l'entrevue Bruart-Sendwe Jason á Kabalo, le vendredi 10 février 1961', 3.

⁸⁹ B. Verhaegen, *Rébellions au Congo: Tome 1* (Brussels, 1966), 415.

Balubakat.⁹⁰ The rise of the *les durs* to a position of such significant power irked Sendwe in part because he had worked so hard to build with the CFL. The Balubakat's relationship with the UN would also be endangered by the prospect of a hard-line Nord Katanga administration given that it had little intention whatsoever of making any kind of peace with Tshombe. While Ilunga had been tasked by the UN with persuading the 'Baluba to abandon hostilities in late 1961', he had evidently not achieved much.⁹¹ Ilunga became increasingly militant once Gizenga's secessionist state the 'Free Republic of the Congo' collapsed and the UN, under Operation Unokat, were able to concentrate their forces against Tshombe. By the end of summer 1962, the Katangese secession was fast reaching its denouement even if the Conakat retained some modest territory here and there.

Although the Balubakat were on the cusp of achieving their aims, albeit with considerable help from the Congolese national government and the UN, the ending of the secession posed problems in itself. For much of its life, the Balubakat had faced a common foe in Tshombe and the Conakat. To counter Tshombe, Sendwe had taken a position in the central government and Ilunga had led the resistance 'on the ground' in Katanga. Yet, as the secession ended, the question of how the Balubakat would govern Nord Katanga grew more urgent and there was less common ground between *les durs* and the more moderate Sendwe and his followers. The differences between Sendwe and Ilunga became more difficult to manage after an important incident took place in December 1962. An altercation involving Sendwe's son broke out and Sendwe sent troops in order to protect him. However, in the process of stopping the fight, Sendwe's troops assaulted a senator, Pierre Medie, who had come to protect one of his own offspring.⁹² Before he was able to complete his defence, Sendwe was censured by the Provincial Assembly and this resulted in his dismissal from his position as deputy prime minister.⁹³

The end of Sendwe's career in Léopoldville meant that he once again tried to build a power base in Katanga. However, now he faced the prospect of a strong — and victorious — contingent of *les durs*. At first, Ilunga's presence did not halt Sendwe's ambitions. After the end of the secession, he wanted to take advantage of the re-integration of Katanga into the central administration and extend the Balubakat's rule over the entire former province. In so doing, though, he put himself on a collision course with the Nord Katanga Assembly. Ilunga was appalled at Sendwe's plans and accused him of having done nothing to liberate Katanga and, moreover, of harbouring ambitions to be the president of a united Katanga.⁹⁴ The Nord Katanga Assembly rejected Sendwe's plan to lessen its powers and fashion it into a district in a newly created Katanga province. On 7 May 1963, the Nord Katanga Assembly voted decisively against unification with the rest of Katanga and Sendwe's project came to nothing.⁹⁵

The fact that Sendwe saw that to achieve his dream of a unified Katanga he would have to dominate the Nord Katanga Assembly meant he continued to collide with Ilunga, who

90 *Ibid.*

91 M. C. O'Brien, *The Same Age as the State* (Dublin, 2012), 251.

92 Young, *Politics in Congo*, 364.

93 J.-C. Wilame, *Patrimonialism and Political Change in the Congo* (Stanford, 1972), 50.

94 Verhaegen, *Rébellions au Congo*, 415.

95 *Ibid.* 416.

presided over the council. Sendwe managed to oust Ilunga as president of Nord Katanga by September 1963 so that he headed the institution.⁹⁶ While this move displeased many in the Balubakat, some, such as Ildephonse Masengo, Roger Kabulo and — somewhat surprisingly — Laurent Kabila, were in favour of it given that they saw in Sendwe 'an old nationalist ruler, a former ally of Lumumba'.⁹⁷ That Kabila had plumped for Sendwe in this instance was important in undermining Ilunga's hold over the Balubakat and political control of Nord Katanga. Having secured his position in the assembly, Sendwe started to pass measures against the counsellors who remained faithful to Ilunga, which resulted in Ilunga censuring two of Sendwe's ministers. A battle then began in which Sendwe refused to demote his ministers and carried on with them regardless.

After going to the central government in Léopoldville in December 1963, Ilunga successfully lobbied enough provincial politicians to oust Sendwe from the assembly. And so, in January 1964, he was voted out as president. He argued that his dismissal was unlawful since it needed to be ratified by the central administration. Yet, while few in the assembly believed him, the central government forcibly reinstated him. Although Sendwe had gained military superiority over the assembly, his position was nonetheless untenable in the eyes of most of its delegates. Given that Sendwe was still technically the president of the Balubakat, some members pulled away from the party at this point in order to put pressure on him to step down, with their new party being known as the Parti Progressiste Congolais-Balubakat (PPCO-Balubakat).⁹⁸ However much pressure the PPCO-Balubakat put on him, it was clear that Sendwe was not going to leave the Balubakat willingly. It fell to a group of rebels, known as the Simba ('Lion' in Swahili), to challenge him after they started their campaign in Western Congo.

The Simbas were enraged that a Lumumbist government had not been formed after Gizenga stopped his rebellion, which was centred on Stanleyville and ended in August 1961, after hints were given that this would be the case. The Lumumbists had found themselves in exile and began to plot a takeover of the country. This plan crystallized in the formation of the Conseil National de Libération (National Liberation Council, or CNL) in 1963 that was to be led by Gaston Soumialot and Christophe Gbenye.⁹⁹ In January 1964, just as Sendwe was experiencing difficulties with the Nord Katanga Assembly, the Simba rebels were expanding the territory under their control. Notoriously violent in their annexation (or what they might term 're-conquest'), the rebels had captured Albertville (now Kalemie) for the first time on 27 May 1964.¹⁰⁰ While the first attempt by the CNL to capture Albertville had faltered, another proved longer-lasting. Once ensconced in Albertville at the end of May, the rebels set about disbanding Sendwe's government. They briefly succeeded until the government, mainly in the form of Colonel Louis Bobozo, managed to re-take the city. Yet Bobozo and the ANC could not bring stability to

96 *Ibid.*

97 *Ibid.*

98 *Ibid.* 417.

99 See, for example, B. L. Lukunku, 'Prise de position du CNL-Gbenye sur les initiatives de A. Lubaya', 3 July 1964, in B. Verhaegen and J. Gerard-Libois (eds.), *Congo 1964: Political Documents of a Developing Nation* (Princeton, 2015), 52.

100 Verhaegen, *Rébellions au Congo*, 421.

Albertville, as rebels — including Ilunga — persisted in their attempts to force Sendwe's government down.¹⁰¹

In this climate of instability, Sendwe met his demise in circumstances that are still unclear and was found dead on 22 June 1964.¹⁰² His assassination has been the subject of an enormous number of conspiracy theories ranging from a Mobutu-inspired action to make a rapprochement with Tshombe easier to simply that the Simbas killed him.¹⁰³ Despite an investigation launched soon after his death, the exact circumstances of Sendwe's death remain contested. What we do know is that Sendwe's demise dealt a mortal blow to the Balubakat, which fell apart after its leader's death. Moreover, many Luba-Katanga became disillusioned with the Simba cause after Sendwe's assassination and it was not long after those June days that Albertville was recaptured by the central government.

CONCLUSION

This article eschewed an approach to examining modern Congolese history that follows solely a narrow group of top political elites. Instead, it argued that the traditional scope of historical analysis should be broadened to include more middle-level figures and parties. As such, this article concentrated on the Balubakat and Jason Sendwe, its erstwhile leader. Sendwe's career is of interest because he did not straightforwardly favour either a wholesale nationalist approach or a particularly close relationship with Belgium, even if his rhetoric towards the former colonizer was flattering on occasion. Instead, his politics was informed by a careful pragmatism that sought to oppose the Katangese secession while simultaneously maintaining the investment from the CFL that he believed necessary to sustain the region economically. Rather than establishing a Maoist-style state, Sendwe was keen to broker a peace deal with Tshombe — not least since the Katangese army was militarily superior to that of the Balubakat. To some extent, he was successful in that the Katangese secession was defeated and he had played an important role in undermining its political legitimacy in vast swathes of southeastern Congo. He successfully courted both the national government and the UN as well as holding the Balubakat together during most of the secession. As such, he provided a crucial link between the central government, the UN, and local Northern Katangese militants keen to challenge Tshombe. While Sendwe did not make the political weather, he played the cards he was dealt with dexterity as evinced by his being able to speak persuasively to complex and sometimes contradictory audiences. As such, Sendwe's career urges us to pay greater heed to other middle-order figures in different contexts where they may have had a similar influence.

101 'Albertville ties to Congo cut off: radio and telegraph links to city silenced', *New York Times*, 21 June 1964.

102 J. Fabian, *Remembering the Present: Painting and Popular History in Zaire* (Berkeley, 1996), 134.

103 Omasombo et al., *Tanganyika*, 230.