

**THE LEGACY OF LUMUMBA**

**Part One:**

**Lumumba as schoolboy, beer salesman, prime minister**

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## LEGACY OF LUMUMBA

Much that is incredible, extravagant, ambiguous and unjust has been written about Patrice Lumumba. What has been said of him includes pretty well everything that can be said of a truly outstanding man, or a genius. Such men always have exceptional qualities, which make them famous and set them apart, but they also have failings in proportion to these, which may destroy them, and will certainly make them hated, even sometimes by their closest friends. <sup>1</sup>

This statement, by Lumumba's collaborator and biographer Thomas Kanza, justifies this paper. It also suggests the difficulty: how is one to reconstruct the life of the flesh and blood Lumumba, when all the witnesses are all too well-aware of his exceptional qualities? Kanza, for example, goes on to tell us that "Lumumba was a man born to lead others. Very early on in his political life he evinced the characteristics of such a man. He was to be subjected to grave injustices, but he always fought against them, either by charm or by force." <sup>2</sup> This conception of Lumumba guides Lumumbist politician Kanza, like other authors, as he chooses which events to discuss and how to interpret them.

Later, Kanza lists a number of Lumumba's characteristics, which we find in the accounts of other writers as well:

Lumumba, who was tall, slim, always well-dressed and sociable, made an instant impression. He appeared to me as the living symbol of mankind's struggle for emancipation. His powers of observation and oratory impressed all his friends and aroused fear in his critics. He had an astonishing ability to cope with difficult situations and was often able to impress people whom one would have thought better informed and educated than himself. His thirst for knowledge was

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Kanza, Conflict in the Congo: The Rise and Fall of Lumumba, Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1972, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Kanza p. 9.

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insatiable; he was a voracious reader and to a large extent self-taught...<sup>3</sup>

This is recognizably the same person described by the conservative, pro-Katanga American journalist Hempstone:

[BRACONGO brewery] officials remember him as one of their most industrious employees. Meanwhile, Lumumba was making a name for himself with his writings and oratory among Leopoldville's *evolue* group. The tall, thin, mercurial man with the small head, the smooth talk, the bright smile, and the constantly fluttering hands was soon a well-known figure in the bars of the native quarter.<sup>4</sup>

Lumumba's concern with his appearance, his "powers of observation and oratory," his largely self-taught education, his embodiment of the liberation struggle and the fear he aroused in his adversaries, all are themes we shall have to discuss.

My method is to break down the life of Lumumba into a number of segments, some of which correspond to a number of years and others to brief moments. For each of these segments, I shall identify key testimonies, some first-hand, others second-hand, and some obviously fictional. By comparing and contrasting the versions of events given by the different sources, I hope that we can learn something both about Lumumba the man and about the uses to which the symbol "Lumumba" has been put.

Almost all of the sources, other than Lumumba's own writings, date from the period after his meteoric rise and fall. Some, such as the journalistic accounts of Hempstone and the Belgian Pierre De Vos, were written during the "Congo Crisis." Others were written later on and show the benefit of hindsight. In addition to published sources, I shall be referring to

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<sup>3</sup> Kanza p. 29.

<sup>4</sup> Smith Hempstone, Rebels, Mercenaries, and Dividends. The Katanga Story. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1962, p. 83.

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my own interviews, begun in 1969 and continuing until today. My informants include Zairians, Belgians, and Americans. Each writer and each informant has his own ax to grind.

#### Lumumba's Tetela Background

Lumumba was a Tetela, member of an ethnic group which forms part of a much larger community, the Mongo, covering much of the central portion of Zaire. The various authors diverge as to what to make of the fact. Hempstone, eager to discredit Lumumba, discusses Kasavubu, Tshombe, and their ethnic backgrounds, then asserts:

Lumumba was a member of the small but war-like Batetela tribe, which enjoys no imperial tradition but is famed for its savagery in war (and for many years has provided the *Force Publique* with recruits).<sup>5</sup>

To the French scholar Lemarchand, member of the first generation of political scientists to study the Congo Crisis of 1960 and thereafter,

"Lumumba's dedication to the cause of territorial nationalism was no accident... [because] Lumumba belonged to a society whose traditional political structures and value system had been violently shattered by Arab and European influences."<sup>6</sup>

Willame, a Belgian political scientist of the next generation, sees it rather differently. Citing his mentor Verhaegen (first generation political scientist from Belgium), he writes that at first glance, nothing seems to predestine the Tetela ethnic group to play any role in the history of Zaire:

...Coincé au centre du Congo, dans une région relativement isolée des grands axes de communication et modestement peuplée, bloqué dans son expansion par les dynamiques Baluba au sud, le groupe des

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<sup>5</sup> Hempstone, p. 83.

<sup>6</sup> René Lemarchand, Political Awakening in the Belgian Congo, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1964, p. 21

Batetela n'a pas non plus de ressources particulières qui puissent le valoriser. Ceux-ci sont donc, comme l'écrit B. Verhaegen, "condamnés à migrer hors de leur région et à se mettre au service des nouveaux occupants – arabisés d'abord, européens ensuite".

Ils se font connaître d'abord comme les auxiliaires des marchands afro-arabes Ngongo Leteta et ses "lieutenants", auxquels ils fournissent esclaves et pointes d'ivoire, puis comme les premières recrues de la Force publique coloniale, dont ils animeront les deux grandes révoltes en 1897 et 1899, enfin comme les premiers auxiliaires des missions et de l'administration belge dans certains petits centres urbains situés à la périphérie de la zone mongo... 7

None of these descriptions is entirely satisfactory. Each confuses the Tetela as a whole with a small subgroup situated on the Tetela-Songye border in Maniema, which did become auxiliaries of Tippu Tib, Ngongo Leteta, and the Congo Free State. The savanna Tetela of Sankuru, including Lumumba's Ewangu subgroup, showed themselves receptive to innovations such as rice (from the Afro-Arabs) and schooling (from the Europeans). But while some Tetela subgroups of Maniema ("Bakusu") were disrupted by the Afro-Arabs and the Free State to the extent that one can speak of their structures and value systems being shattered, this is not the case for the Tetela of Sankuru. 8

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<sup>7</sup> Jean-Claude Willame, Patrice Lumumba. La crise congolaise revisitée, 1990, Paris: Karthala, 1990, p. 21, citing B. Verhaegen, "Patrice Lumumba, martyr d'une Afrique nouvelle," in C. A. Julien, M. Morsy, C. Coquery-Vidrovitch, Y. Person, Les Africains, vol. II, Paris, Editions Jeune Afrique, 1977, p. 190. (The major revolts were in 1895 and 1897.)

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Turner, "'Batetela', 'Baluba', 'Basonge': Ethnogenesis in Zaire," Cahiers d'Études africaines, 1993, 132(XXXIII-4): pp. 587-612.

Lumumba's Childhood and Education

Published shortly after Lumumba's death and intended to capitalize on current interest in that event, De Vos's Vie et Mort de Lumumba apparently is based on first-hand contact with Lumumba. I say "apparently" because De Vos uses an omniscient narrator and gives no indication of how he knows what he claims to know. He recounts the birth of Patrice and the first contacts with the missionaries as follows:

A Katako-Kombe, sur une litière de paille, Agnès Lumumba a donné le jour, le 2 juillet 1925, à un garçon. Son mari, un paysan qui cultive un peu de chikwangue et qui élève quelques poules en même temps que ses enfants, court à la mission annoncer la nouvelle aux "Monpès", les "Mon Père". Un missionnaire vient voir le bébé.

—Comment vas-tu l'appeler?

—Patrice, comme toi, Tata l dit fièrement Lumumba.

L'enfant a de la chance de ne pas recueillir comme tant d'autres, les prénoms de Sigismond, Symphorien, Ambroise ou Anicet, les missionnaires ayant pris l'habitude de remettre en circulation les patronymes les plus burlesques du calendrier pour que la chrétienté, sur ces terres ingrates, n'oublie pas ses saints...

Patrice dort, mange, joue et grandit tout nu, comme tous les enfants noirs de Katako-Kombe, petit village du nord du Kasai.

Already, alarm bells go off. Lumumba was not born at Katako-Kombe, a territorial headquarters in the forest zone of the territory (administrative subdivision) of the same name, but at Onalua, a village in the savanna zone, more than a hundred kilometers south of Katako-Kombe but in that territory. This same error is found in Hempstone.<sup>9</sup> Lumumba could not have told De Vos that he was born at Katako-Kombe; how many other "facts" supposedly learned from Lumumba are derived from other sources? I know

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<sup>9</sup> The source may be Pierre Artigue, Qui sont les leaders congolais? (Brussels: Editions Europe-Afrique). The first edition, published in 1960, would have been available to De Vos and to Hempstone.

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of no "Father Patrice" who worked in Sankuru, and in fact Lumumba's name, among the Catholics, was Élias Okit'Asombol<sup>10</sup>

Lumumba's future was shaped by Catholic and Protestant missionaries, and by his soldier uncle, according to De Vos:

En 1931 il a six ans. Son père, en bon paysan, l'emmène aux champs. Patrice travaille. S'il n'y avait pas les missionnaires, les pères passionnistes, il n'apprendrait jamais à écrire, mais celui qui l'a baptisé tient à ce qu'il aille à l'école. "S'il travaille bien, on pourrait même en faire un catéchiste", dit-il au père Lumumba, ébloui. Mais il y a un oncle dans la famille et cet oncle aime l'uniforme. "Il faut qu'il entre à la Force publique et qu'il devienne sous-officier comme moi. Qu'il serve le pays!" dit le sergent-major Victor Lundula qui deviendra en 1960, vingt-neuf ans plus tard, le premier commandant en chef de l'armée nationale congolaise.

According to De Vos, young Lumumba was attracted by religious education:

...Ce qui l'étonne, rappellerait-il plus tard, c'est l'histoire sainte où les missionnaires lui expliquent comment le pauvre petit Jésus naît dans une crèche:

—Il y avait là de la paille, un boeuf, et un âne. Joseph et Marie, sur les images de nos manuels scolaires, étaient somptueusement vêtus, alors que mes parents se promenaient également nus. Confusément, j'ai compris que les Noirs et les Blancs ont de la misère des notions peu concordantes...

L'histoire sainte l'attire particulièrement parce qu'elle le fait rêver. L'histoire tout court —il s'agit bien entendu de l'histoire de Belgique— le séduit tout autant. Le massacre de six cents Franchimontois à Liège par les mercenaires de Louis XI le fait frémir et la bataille des Éperons d'Or l'emplit d'exaltation, tout comme les récits des luttes belges contre les esclavagistes arabes au Congo.

The priests noticed that Patrice was studious, according to De Vos, and decided he needed to get out of his home, where it was too dark to study:

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<sup>10</sup> Willame p. 22; Sankuru/Politics/Interview T 15.

Quand l'obscurité est là, étendu sur une natte aux côtés de ses trois frères, il ne peut plus lire. Il rêve, il rumine, il forme des plans pour l'avenir. Son père voudrait qu'il devienne catéchiste! Il y a déjà quelques prêtres congolais... Son oncle Lundula voudrait qu'il soit soldat; mais, pour un Noir, le bâton de maréchal c'est le grade de premier sergent-major: pour éviter toute confusion et pour rester supérieurs en tout état de cause, les Belges débutent au grade d'aspirant. Hélas pour les missionnaires et pour son oncle Patrice Lumumba n'a ni la vocation religieuse ni celle des armes. De ce point de vue, il déçoit.

De Vos points out (validly) the context of religious rivalry:

Dans la région de Katako-Kombe, comme par tout ailleurs au Congo du reste, missionnaires catholiques et protestants se font la guerre des conversions. C'est à qui baptisera le plus. Patrice Lumumba est remarqué par les missionnaires protestants, des Suédois, qui—ravis de souffler aux pères un de leurs meilleurs éléments—lui proposent de devenir infirmier. Or l'infirmier, à cette époque, est vraiment au sommet de l'échelle sociale des Noirs. L'infirmier porte une belle blouse blanche comme le médecin européen, il est à la fois craint et adulé. C'est le caïd du village, et l'égal du sorcier qui, bien souvent, le redoute comme la lèpre. A la consternation de son père, Patrice Lumumba passe chez les protestants. Il a treize ans, c'est pratiquement un homme sous ces tropiques où les êtres sont précoces. Son père ne lui pardonne guère d'être un transfuge et lui en fait le reproche.

—Les "Monpès", dit-il à Patrice, m'ont dit que tu es un homme perdu. Réfléchis, mon enfant. Il ne faut pas être méchant, il faut être bon. Les protestants, c'est le diable.

Entre Patrice et son père, un fossé se creuse lentement.

L'affection qu'ils se portent mutuellement demeure entière: c'est la loi du sang, mais ils ne se comprennent plus. Ils ne parlent plus le même langage. Émile Lumumba est un être arriéré et fruste, sans imagination. Il craint Dieu et les sorciers avec une égale terreur. Patrice est maintenant ce que les Blancs appellent avec mépris un "évolué". Un seul Noir le comprend, Victor Lundula, son oncle soldat.



Patrice a renoncé aux armes, mais il ne l'assiste pas moins en secret, quoiqu'il craigne les représailles des bons pères. Pendant deux ans, l'enfant suivra les cours d'infirmier à l'institut de Tshumbe Sainte-Marie, qu'il quittera sans avoir obtenu son diplôme. Au lieu de lire des traités de médecine ou des manuels d'infirmier, il profite de l'électricité, le soir, pour dévorer pêle-mêle Voltaire, J.-J. Rousseau, Agatha Christie, Victor Hugo, Molière, Churchill et Georges Simenon...

Il ne sera donc pas infirmier. Quand il délaisse l'école protestante, grand, maigre, le dos un peu voûté, il ne sait où aller. Sa timidité, sa gaucherie l'embarrassent. Son bagage est léger sur tous les plans. Il n'a même pas appris à taper à la machine, ce qui est indispensable pour être accepté comme "clerc", c'est-à-dire employé aux écritures. Et son balluchon n'est pas lourd: une chemise au col usé et un pull-over roulés en boule, en plus de ce qu'il porte sur lui, une paire de bottines trouées, cadeau de l'oncle Victor, un pantalon minable avec une corde en guise de ceinture et une chemise à grands carreaux...<sup>11</sup>

This account, which has influenced Sartre, Césaire and others, is extremely unreliable.<sup>12</sup> There is little useful information on Lumumba's parents. De Vos describes the father by a stereotype of a Zairian peasant. The only meaningful detail, the three brothers, is wrong: the father also had a fourth son, Francois Tolenga (Jr.), by his second wife.

Chikwangue is not a crop but a food prepared from manioc. Lumumba's family may have grown manioc but as savanna Tetela were more likely to grow millet or rice. Tshumbe-Sainte-Marie is near Lumumba's childhood home, but was a Catholic mission. The local Protestants were American Methodists, not Swedes. Lumumba's decision to attend a Protestant school did cause a problem with his parents, as De Vos

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<sup>11</sup> Pierre De Vos, Vie et mort de Lumumba. Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1961, pp. 14-17.

<sup>12</sup> For this version of the paper, I have not been able to consult F. Monheim, Reponse à P. Devos au sujet de "Vie et mort de P. Lumumba", Antwerp: Ed. De Vlijgt, 1961.

indicates, but the incomplete nursing course was at Tunda (Maniema), not Tshumbe.

The gravest error is De Vos's assertion that Victor Lundula was Lumumba's uncle.<sup>13</sup> He was an older co-ethnic and in that sense could be referred to as uncle but there was no tie of blood or marriage. Lundula was trained as a teacher and medical assistant; he served in the Force Publique with the rank of first sergeant but the function of army nurse.<sup>14</sup> Since the relationship is fictional, so too are the anecdotes about Patrice's possible army career and Lundula's gift of military boots. Lumumba's choice of Lundula to head the army is trivialized.

De Vos has taken a few facts--Katako-Kombe territory, Passionist Fathers and their Protestant rivals, incomplete schooling, a thirst for knowledge--added some non-facts, and stirred. The result is a fable, with Baby Lumumba like Baby Jesus, lying on straw.

To analyze Lumumba's childhood, I draw upon the mémoire de licence of nationalist Tetela student Jules Mboladinga (who conducted interviews in the area), and my own interview with Mboladinga, as well as my interviews with Father Tharcisse (Passionist), Rev. Alexander Reid (Methodist), Lumumba's brother Émile Omatuku, and the current chief of Lumumba's village. Two themes predominate: Lumumba growing up amidst intense competition between Protestants and Catholics and Lumumba as born leader, fighting against injustice.

Lumumba's parents were Catholics (all sources agree). Omatuku and Chief Onalua agree that because they lived just seven kilometers from Wembo-Nyama, Patrice began his studies at the Methodist primary school

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<sup>13</sup> Lundula is identified as Lumumba's uncle in Artigue, Qui sont les leaders congolais?

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Lundulla (his spelling), Kinshasa, December 1971.

there. This so upset his parents that they excluded young Patrice (then perhaps ten years old) from the house for three months. Father Tharcisse asserts that Lumumba began his studies with the Catholics at Tshumbe-Sainte-Marie, then went to Wembo-Nyama, then returned to Tshumbe. <sup>15</sup> Reid says that Lumumba began studying with the Protestants. He also says that Patrice was baptized as a Methodist in 1937, but the precise wording is interesting. Discussing Congolese independence, Reid reports:

Pastor Paul Unyangunga was in charge of the village church at Ona Lua, the birthplace of Prime Minister Patrice Lomomba, a village only five miles from our Wembo Nyama Mission Station, in the year of 1937. He related the story of taking a group of young men, including Mr. Patrice Lomomba, and Mr. Kudiemuka, my former secretary, from Ona Lua, on March 17, 1937, to a district meeting I was conducting in the village of Shungu N' Koy, and, among a great crowd of youth, I had the privilege of baptizing this first prime minister of Congo (though at the time no one dreamed a person of such caliber was present). <sup>16</sup>

In other words, Reid did not know or did not remember about Lumumba, until Rev. Unyangunga reminded him. The same thing probably occurred on the Catholic side.

For four years, Lumumba was first in his class [of course!] at Wembo-Nyama. Then, suddenly, he was expelled. The Methodist missionaries are reluctant to reveal the reason. Mboladinga writes:

Poursuivi par un pasteur protestant de son village à cause de sa fréquentation irrégulière à l'église, Lumumba fut chassé de son école de Wembo-Nyama.

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<sup>15</sup> Louis Lumumba (quoted by Willame) has Patrice going to Catholic school first, then defecting to the Methodists.

<sup>16</sup> Alexander J. Reid, The Roots of Lomomba. Mongo Land, Hicksville, NY: Exposition Press, 1979, p. 140, p. 140.

Another informant from Onalua insists that Lumumba was expelled because he made a female classmate pregnant.<sup>17</sup>

Whatever the reason for his expulsion from Wembo-Nyama, Lumumba seems to have enrolled at Tshumbe-Sainte-Marie, only to be expelled the following year because he arrived several months too late for the start of school. Next he went to the school for nurse's aides at the Methodist mission of Tunda (Kibombo territory, Maniema), but once again he was excluded. Two informants credit this exclusion to the influence of a particular Tetela pastor; one cites jealousy of the pastor towards Lumumba, the other rivalry between the pastor's groupement Lumbelelu, and Lumumba's groupement, Ewangu, the latter having supplied the chief of the new secteur.

Lumumba returned to Onalua from Tunda, still without any school certificate. One informant claims he filled this gap by picking up a blotted certificate which he cleaned up and filled out in his name, and later used at Stanleyville and at the Ecole Postale, Leopoldville. It is difficult to know how much confidence to have in such reports; Lumumba is a folk-hero in his region and many tales are told of his cleverness in overcoming obstacles placed in his path by colonialism.

Hempstone, eager to discredit Lumumba, passes on this story: His formal education ended with primary school but he kept on reading and learning while working as servant to a Protestant missionary. His few years in a Protestant school, and those more important ones as the servant and protege of the missionary, left Lumumba antagonistic toward Christianity as a whole and Catholicism in particular. His hate of Catholicism apparently grew out of the association of the Catholic Church with the state in the Congo and the

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<sup>17</sup> Mboladinga, op. cit., p. 82; Sankuru/Politics/Interview W.1

feeling of persecution which Lumumba, as a nominal Protestant, experienced in a Catholic-oriented society.

Early in life, Lumumba displayed both his nervous energy and his lack of moral principles in repaying the missionary for his kindness by stealing his watch and a sum of money, which he used to pay his fare to Stanleyville in Orientale Province, the Mecca of young men from impoverished northern Kasai. He then wrote to the pastor for a character reference! As evidence both of Lumumba's mesmeric qualities and of the pastor's Christian forgiveness, he got the reference and used it to obtain a clerical job in the Stanleyville post office. <sup>18</sup>

It's a good story but it cannot be true since Lumumba did not go directly from Sankuru to Stanleyville, and in Stanleyville he joined an association of former students in Catholic schools (ADAPES).

Around 1943, Lumumba and two companions left Onalua for Kalima (Maniema), an important tin-mining center. According to a tale of the sort I warned about, Lumumba had asked the administration for a feuille de route (permission to travel) for Kalema, Lubefu territory, only 30 km from Onalua.

Lumumba intended to work for the mining company, Symétain, in order to gain funds to pay school-fees in yet another school. However, after only four months working in the company canteen, he left for Stanleyville, according to his brother and the village chief. <sup>19</sup>

In Stanleyville, Lumumba lived with a "brother" (city resident of Onalua origin) and attempted to continue his education by enrolling in night school and by borrowing books. However, he ran afoul of the strict control over immigrants and to avoid being sent home he sought and obtained employment at the post office.

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<sup>18</sup> Hempstone, pp. 83-84.

<sup>19</sup> Sankuru/Politics/Interviews T.15, T.16. (De Vos has Lumumba spending four years in Kindu, and becoming a leader of the évolués there )

Lumumba made a favorable impression on the Belgians at the post office and was sent to Yangambi (90 km from Stanleyville) as head of the sous-perception. Then, after another stint at Stanleyville, he was sent to the Ecole postale at Leopoldville from which he was graduated in 1948 with grades of 91.4 percent. At last he had earned a school-leaving certificate.

### Lumumba. "Evolved"

To understand Lumumba's rise, one must grasp the meaning of the term évolué (literally, "evolved one."). The term implies a theory of colonial society according to which the Congolese population was unevolved or backward, in contrast to the Belgians, presumed to be evolved. The theory is not overtly racist, in that individual Congolese could "evolve" i.e., acquire some of the characteristics of the colonizer. In the period after the Second World War, "anyone with some post-primary education could probably be considered a reasonable candidate" for évolué status, which was not defined by law. However, Young adds, "any form of successful entry into the new world created by the arrival of the colonizer, be it commercial or intellectual, would be relevant," while "subjective self-identification would need to be included as well as objective attainment." Representative figures were the clerk, the male nurse, and the teacher, according to Anstey.<sup>20</sup> In contrast to évolué status, based on self-identification and acceptance by other évolués, the authorities granted to select Congolese applicants the status of immatriculation, explained by Young as assimilation to European legal status.<sup>21</sup> Lumumba may have been an évolué when he was hired by the postal service; surely he was one by the time he graduated from the postal school.

<sup>20</sup> C. Young *Politics in the Congo. Decolonization and Independence*, 1965, Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 196-7; R. Anstey, *Belgian Rule in the Congo and the Aspirations of the "Evolué" Class in Colonialism in Africa 1870-1960*, L.H. Gann, and Peter Duignan, Eds., Cambridge University Press, 1970, pp. 194-5.

<sup>21</sup> Young, pp. 27, 75-87.

Soon after his return to Stanleyville from the École postale, Lumumba was hired as research assistant to the French sociologist Pierre Clément, who was studying urbanization in Stanleyville. This was another important step in Lumumba's education.

Clément offers us two portraits of the young Lumumba. A story Lumumba told Clément about his stay in the capital reveals what Clément calls the young man's "first revelation of another possible world":

Il décide un jour d'aller visiter Brazzaville, de l'autre côté du pool frontière. Après s'être promené, avoir regardé, écouté un peu partout, dans cette capitale qui le change plutôt de l'éblouissante 'Léo', il est assoiffé. Il rôde aux alentours d'un débit de boissons et se décide finalement à s'arrêter tout près de la haie qui sépare l'avenue de l'établissement, dans l'espoir qu'un serveur passant à proximité accepterait de lui apporter un verre d'eau ordinaire.

Intriguée par son immobilité, la patronne du café, une Européenne, s'approche et s'enquiert du motif de sa présence. Il lui explique. Elle l'invite à pénétrer dans le jardin et à s'asseoir où cela lui convient.

Autour des tables, des Blancs sont assis. Sa gorge se serre. Dans quel piège est-il tombé? Quand va-t-on l'apostropher, l'expulser? Chose extraordinaire, la patronne lui apporte elle-même un verre d'eau, et pas un verre d'eau quelconque, un verre d'eau minérale. Il tremble de tous ses membres, réussit à payer et s'en va au plus vite sans avoir pu avaler une goutte. <sup>22</sup>

The incident must have made a great impression on Lumumba, since he recounted it to his friend five years later.

De Vos uses a visit (the same visit?) to Brazzaville, to show how completely the young Lumumba identified with his colonizer:

Le jeune Mutetela se sent Belge, plus Belge que jamais quand ses frères de race lui font traverser le fleuve à bord d'une vedette de la

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<sup>22</sup> Pierre Clément, "Patrice Lumumba (Stanleyville, 1952-1953)," *Présence Africaine*, No. 40 (1st quarter, 1962), 67.

Fima pour visiter Brazzaville. La capitale de l'A.E.F. est une belle au bois dormant. Rien n'y bouge, rien n'y trouble une apparente lethargie. A coté de Léopoldville, elle fait figure de sous-prefecture. C'est Angoulême comparée à Paris. Lumumba, le soir, rentre chez lui et le lendemain il fait part de ses impressions au directeur des Postes. M. Wery:

—On est fier d'être Belge quand on rend visite aux voisins !

Car il est sincere. Naïvement, certes, mais il l'est. Il veut collaborer avec les Belges, les aider à bâtir son pays. Il le pense. Il l'écrit dans les articles qu'il donne à *La Voix du Congolais* et à *La Croix du Congo*. Il le dit aux Blancs et aux Noirs qu'il rencontre dans les redactions de ces deux publications. Arrivant de l'intérieur, primitif, il est rempli d'enthousiasme et d'une admiration sincère pour l'oeuvre belge. Assez vite cependant, l'amertume s'emparera de lui et son âme se serrera avec une même sincérité. Un dimanche, un mois après son arrivée à Léopoldville, il déambule en rêvant dans les rues de la ville blanche. Distrait il bouscule une Européenne. Il n'a pas le temps de s'excuser que sa "victime" s'écrie :

— Tu ne peux pas faire attention, sale macaque?

Pour un Congolais, c'est l'injure suprême. Pour Lumumba, c'est une révélation. Jamais on ne l'a traité ainsi à Kindu où tous les Blancs sans exception le connaissaient et l'estimaient. Il est "immatriculé", il est donc l'égal de cette femme blanche. De quel droit...

Et soudain, il constate qu'immatriculé ou non, il ne sera toujours qu'un nègre aux yeux des Blancs... <sup>23</sup>

This cannot be entirely true, since Lumumba was denied immatriculation the first time he sought it. <sup>24</sup> There may be a kernel of truth, if being called a macaque ("monkey") by a European woman revealed the racism behind such terms as évolué and immatriculé and contributed to the emergence of Lumumba's nationalism. De Vos' characterization of the journalist Lumumba, naively wanting to work with the Belgians to build the Congo, contrasts with

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<sup>23</sup> De Vos, pp. 30-31.

<sup>24</sup> Weiss p 126.



Lemarchand's assessment (perhaps referring to a later period) of Lumumba's contributions as unusual:

...while the vast majority of Congolese writers of the period emphasized the cultural heritage of their own tribes, Lumumba's material emphasized -- within the limits tolerated by Belgian officialdom -- problems of racial, social, and economic discrimination. <sup>25</sup>

I tend to agree with Lemarchand. In a 1955 contribution to La Voix du Congolais, Lumumba skilfully conforms to official norms in his own voice but uses a Belgian official's words to criticize prevailing race relations. <sup>26</sup>

Clément's second portrait of Lumumba, at age 27, shows him proud of his status as a state employee (consistent with De Vos), very conscious of his appearance, possessing great intellectual curiosity and personal charm.

Lumumba and Clément visited Sankuru in December 1952:

Pendant près d'un mois je vois vivre mon ami dans son milieu d'enfance. Il est épanoui. Il reconnaît tout le monde, il interroge sur tout et sur tous, il est invité partout. C'est un 'monsieur' maintenant. Son prestige grandit encore quand pour se rendre chez un chef de secteur, il revêt une tenue officielle ("capitula", "safari" et casquette blancs comme neige aux insignes de son administration et de son grade). Le respect qu'on lui témoigne, s'il tempère parfois, au moins un bref instant, l'exubérance de l'effusion, n'en diminue, cependant, ni la spontanéité ni la chaleur. D'ailleurs, Patrice est aussi simple, naturel et modeste avec ces villageois, dont beaucoup sont illettrés, qu'il l'est à Stanleyville avec la masse qu'il brûle d'aider et élever. <sup>27</sup>

Lumumba's reputation must have been greatly enhanced: he left home after having been kicked out of three schools and returned as a functionary, and as collaborator and friend of a white professor!

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 58; René Lemarchand, Political Awakening in the Belgian Congo, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964, p. 199.

<sup>26</sup> Patrice Lumumba, "Le libre accès des Congolais dans les établissements publics," in La voix du Congolais, April 1955, pp. 361-362.

<sup>27</sup> François p. xx.

We first encounter the notion of Lumumba as dangerous in accounts of his activities as an évolué. The Belgians supposedly believed, "pas d'élites, pas de problèmes." To the extent that an African elite emerged, it should be the right sort i.e., Catholic, Protestants, Muslims, Liberals, and Marxists all represented dangers to the colonial order. One way of controlling the évolués was to restrict their access to bad influences. Until the eve of decolonization, it was very difficult for Congolese to leave the Congo. Lumumba's state-sponsored trip to Belgium (where Kanza met him) was very unusual. <sup>28</sup>

All agree that Lumumba was very active in Stanleyville's évolué associations but Kanza adds (perhaps anachronistically), "The colonial authorities regarded him as somewhat dangerous and kept a close watch on him." This was partly due to his penchant for Liberalism, in the Belgian sense of anti-statist and especially anti-clerical: "His European friends tended to be those considered to be liberals, and he himself was an active member of the Cercle libéral de Stanleyville. Indeed most of his Belgian friends were anti-communist: some of them had influential connections in the Belgian Socialist-Liberal coalition government which had come to power after the 1954 elections; and they had commended him to the attention of Auguste Buisseret, the minister for the Congo." <sup>29</sup> In 1955, Baudouin visited his African realm for the first time and was received with great enthusiasm. In Stanleyville, in the gardens of the governor's mansion, the king engaged in a discussion with Lumumba, presented to him as an évolué leader. This further raised Lumumba's prestige. The meeting with the king obviously followed from Lumumba's Liberal contacts. Unanswered in all this is the

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<sup>28</sup> Kanza p. 28.

<sup>29</sup> Kanza p. 28. See also Lemarchand p. xxx, Turner p. yyy.

question of whether Lumumba was anti-clerical through conviction based on life experience (as suggested by Hempstone) or opportunism.

De Vos and Kanza both explore the links between Lumumba's emergence as a "Liberal" and his fall to charges of embezzlement. Following his return from Belgium, Lumumba was to become an assistant to Buisseret (according to Kanza) when he was brought down by his enemies:

After Lumumba's return from Belgium Buisseret had decided to appoint him to his staff at the Ministry, which Lumumba would have been the first Congolese to join. But the appointment never materialized, probably because it displeased the authorities at Stanleyville. Lumumba, then employed at the Post Office, was arrested, charged with embezzling Post Office funds and sentenced to two years' imprisonment by a district court. The Belgian and colonial press seized upon the incident as a way of discrediting him...

of the district  
explicit:

In contrast, De vos suggests embezzlement to support an extravagant life style, including a mistress at Yangambi; the episode became political afterward, when Lumumba claimed he had only taken back money stolen from the Congo by Belgians. <sup>30</sup>

Kanza is my only source on Lumumba's appeal of his conviction:

He appealed, and was transferred to Leopoldville; and it was there in 1957 that I saw him for the second time, in the prisoner's dock at the Tribunal de premiere instance. He was neatly dressed and had a dignified look about him.

*The avocat général*, de Warseghere, addressed the court for the prosecution. In his statement he extolled Belgian colonization for all the benefits of civilization that it had brought to the Congo. He denigrated the black race and pointed to Lumumba as a typical example of those Congolese who nursed the illusion of being equal to the white man and capable of taking his place in certain fields.

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<sup>30</sup> De Vos pp. yy. To Hempstone, the incident simply confirms Lumumba's bad character.

Maitre Jabon, a member of the Cercle libéral in Leopoldville, was Counsel for the Defence, but Lumumba seemed not to want his services. After Maitre Jabon had made a brief statement on the prisoner's behalf, Lumumba spoke in his own defence at length. I was covering the trial for *Congo* and felt sorely tempted to write that I saw in Lumumba a man who would sooner or later become a great Congolese leader; but this would undoubtedly have exasperated the colonial authorities and would not have helped him...

Both Lumumba's detractors and his supporters allegedly were well aware of the political importance of this seemingly unimportant trial:

Meanwhile, in Belgium, supporters of colonial reform and members of the Liberal party in particular had started a campaign for Lumumba's release. Catholics and socialists also brought some pressure to bear... [Some Belgian journalists and politicians found the affair an ideal opportunity for discrediting the colonial administration. The minister for the Congo himself was understandably resolved to secure the release of a Congolese whom he had selected to join his staff. From Brussels came the order that the trial must on no account be allowed to develop into a political or racial scandal. The court reduced Lumumba's two-year sentence to six months, which he had already served...

This is incompatible with the story linking reduction of the sentence to évolués of Stanleyville reimbursing the amount stolen. *α Hen?*

#### Lumumba, promoter of "Polar" Beer

After release from prison, Lumumba went to Léopoldville, where he rapidly became a leader among the évolués of the capital. His only job (until he became a full-time politician) was with Brácongo Brewery. Kanza presents Lumumba's work for the brewery as a microcosm of his hero's political career:

After his release, he thought it unwise to return to Stanleyville, where people who had failed to discredit him might seek revenge in some other form. Belgian friends in Leopoldville found him a job as sales

manager of the Bracongo Brewery, better known by the brand name of its beer, 'Polar'. Its competitor was the Bralima Brewery, also known by the name of its beer, 'Primus'.

Lumumba was a great success in this job, for he was a born leader and had amazing organizational ability. I believe that he would have emerged as a leader whatever his occupation, even if he had started as a house-servant or taxi-driver; but the Polar job provided him with a long-sought chance to practise the various skills required of a politician, although he had to proceed with caution, since the colonized had no political rights at the time.

Lumumba's job was to be Polar's public relations man: to get the beer well publicized among the mass of the Congolese, and win over some of the market from its rival, which had become so popular that for months Polar's sales had been going down. Primus was waging a clever publicity campaign against Polar, and Lumumba had to contend with this, as well as simply working to promote his own product.

The "clever campaign," according to De Vos, was a rumor that Polar made one impotent. Kanza continues:

It was a good testing ground: if Lumumba were to do well in this new job, he would have benefited from an experience of great value to his political future. His own career was not dissimilar to that of Polar beer: only a few days before, he had been denigrated, described as a dangerous element, as dishonest, unscrupulous, and worse still perhaps, as a foreigner - an immigrant to Léopoldville in search of popularity and influence there. The methods he used in winning a market for Polar were the same as those he used in achieving his own political victory... In quite a short time Lumumba, the foreigner from Stanleyville who could barely speak Lingala, became one of the most popular and sought-after figures in the capital.

He wanted continually to re-model, re-think and re-organize; in other words, he wanted to revolutionize, which would often call for new and sometimes quite unpredictable methods. As part of his job, he spent half his time in the cafes, bars and dance halls of the African quarter, and he would fall into conversation with customers having drinks other than the one he was promoting. With the help of his

Congolese friends he had got to know Leopoldville well within only a few days. Of his opponents he was not afraid - which was both a strength and a weakness. His European employers introduced him around in colonial circles and he became a focus of interest for various business circles in Leopoldville.

In order to get at the men, Lumumba started first on the women. This strategy yielded rich results; for once a woman was persuaded, it was not hard for her to get her husband to change to Polar as well. Lumumba made himself well liked among the women in the city by regularly giving them free vouchers for beer. Through them, and especially by dealing with certain women's groups, Lumumba managed to make Polar the town's favourite drink. A demagogue, yes, and not too scrupulous, perhaps; but above all, Lumumba had a nose for business, a flair: he could win new sympathies without forgetting to make careful use of older friendships as well.<sup>31</sup>

It is true that Lumumba worked for Polar and that he displayed the skills enumerated by Kanza in his political career. It is tempting to argue, as Kanza and De Vos both do, that Lumumba acquired or honed those skills as representative of Polar. But there is little independent evidence and both authors may be anachronistically interpreting Lumumba the beer salesman in the light of what they already know about Lumumba the politician.

#### Lumumba and the Ethnic Associations

His brewery job enabled Lumumba to travel around Leopoldville and to offer drinks at company expense, and thus was a help to him in starting a new political career. However, Lumumba's experience in Leopoldville's ethnic associations seems to me far more relevant to his political party activity. The topic of the ethnic associations is relatively neglected, except

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<sup>31</sup> Kanza pp. 31-32.

by Benoit Verhaegen and two of his Tetela students, Jules Mboladinga and Henri Onatshungu.<sup>32</sup>

Lumumba arrived in Leopoldville when the cercles d'évolués had lost their importance, when the administration-sponsored provincial federations were about to break up and when the first true nationalist groups were emerging. He launched himself into this new environment on two levels, that of Tetela ethnic associations and that of inter-ethnic political movements. I will trace his progress on the former level, then come back to consider the latter.

The Tetela of the capital had just regained their unity, having been split 1953-57 into Catholic and Protestant blocs. Most of the Tetela associations had belonged to the Luba-dominated Fédération Kasaienne (FEDEKA), which broke up in early 1957 under the pressure of linguistic nationalism and of imminent communal elections. Negotiations to pull all the associations into a single Tetela federation continued and it was not until December that the Fédération des Batetela (FEDEBATE) was recognized by the colonial administration. Jean Okuka, president of the Protestant anciens élèves, became the first president of the FEDEBATE. By June 1958, the FEDEBATE had managed to unite almost all the Tetela associations in the capital. Its executive committee comprised the presidents of each of the 16 member associations including Lumumba as president of the Cercle d'Etudes et de Recherches Culturelles pour les Atetela

On June 29, a general assembly election pitted Okuka against Lumumba for President. Okuka supporters tended to be older, educated in

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<sup>32</sup> B. Verhaegen, "Les associations congolaises à Léopoldville et dans le Bas-Congo de 1944 à 1958." *Etudes africaines* du CRISP, 1970( Nos 112-113); J. Mboladinga-Katako, "Conflit Ekonda-Eswe au Sankuru," 1960-1964, *mémoire de licence*, Lovanium University, 1970; H. Onatshungu, "Rébellion au Sankuru (1964)," *mémoire de licence*, Lovanium University, 1969.

Sankuru, of moderate opinion, and Protestant, while Lumumba was supported especially by younger men, born or educated in the towns, predominantly Catholic. When Okuka was declared president, Lumumba's supporters walked out and held their own meeting at which he was elected president.

After a battle of press-releases, new elections were called, in which Lumumba scored a decisive victory, with 127 votes against 84 for Okuka, 36 for Albert Kipanga, 3 for Armand Ghenda and 2 for Joseph Lutula.

The defeated candidates contested the committee headed by Lumumba on the grounds that he had violated FEDEBATE rules in signing its name to a petition of the ethnic federations calling for immediate independence. They created a new committee presided by Okuka and including the three other defeated candidates. Okuka sought the arbitration of the colonial administration, which found in favor of Lumumba.

Nonetheless, Okuka announced the creation of the Fédération Indépendante des Batetela de Léopoldville (FIBAT), which joined the Interfédérale, announced its support for the Belgian policy on decolonization, and began supporting the "Ngala" or up-river people in their competition with the Kongo. In turn, the Interfédérale supported the candidature of a "moderate" Tetela, Eugène Lutula, for burgomaster of Kinshasa commune, Leopoldville. The conflict between ethnic associations had become overtly political.

The ethnic association conflict influenced political developments in several ways. First, a number of Lumumba's opponents in the Tetela associations became members of the "moderate" Parti National du Progrès, PNP. Second, Lumumba was led to attach undue importance to the Catholic-Protestant rivalry. Placating the Protestants by making Joseph Lutula a



deputy, Lumumba would overlook regionally defined discontent among the Tetela.

### Lumumba and the MNC

Lumumba built the Mouvement National Congolais (MNC) in a difficult setting. Politics in the capital was dominated by the Kongo-Ngala rivalry. The "archaic" idea of reuniting the Kongo of the French and Belgian Congos and Angola, according to Kanza (himself a Kongo), "acted as a catalyst in precipitating the political consciousness of other groups and tribes" of the Belgian Congo. The administration backed the Ngala, seen as "more tractable since they had not demanded immediate independence."

Both Kanza and De Vos credit Lumumba with founding the MNC but would be more accurate to say that Lumumba took over an existing elite association and transformed it into a political party. The MNC was an outgrowth of the manifesto of Conscience Africaine, since Joseph Ileo had been editor of that Catholic paper at the time it published the manifesto. Anxious to avoid the impression that the MNC was restricted to Catholics, founder-members Ileo and Joseph Ngalula invited the Liberal Lumumba and the Socialist Cyrille Adoula to join.<sup>33</sup>

The provisional committee of the MNC, announced October 1958, included Lumumba as President-General, Adoula and Gaston Diomi as First and Second Vice-Presidents, and Antoine Ngwenza as Secretary-General. In the ethnic terms relevant in the capital, this was two Ngala (Adoula and Ngwenza), one Kongo (Diomi) and a neutral president, Lumumba. This committee was broadly representative of the Leopoldville elite but was

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<sup>33</sup>W. Ganshof van der Meersch, Fin de la souveraineté belge au Congo (Brussels: Institut Royal des Relations Internationales, 1963), p. 99. Ileo is a Mongo of Equateur; at that time the Mongo had not yet split off from the "Bangala" in the Leopoldville context. Ngalula is a Luba from Kasai.

unstable given its ethnic composition and the diverse political orientations of its members.<sup>34</sup> Kasavubu, leading political figure of Leopoldville, had refused to join since he favored immediate independence and opposed a unitary state. The MNC program, presented by Lumumba at the All-African People's Conference in Accra, included the goal "to free the Congolese people from the colonialist regime and earn them their independence," but made no mention of dates. The MNC opposed "with every power at its command, the balkanization of national territory under any pretext whatsoever."<sup>35</sup> and Lumumba considered Kongo ethnic nationalism a prelude to balkanization.

Lumumba's return from Accra was followed by the riots of January 1959 and the arrest of ABAKO leaders. King Baudouin's announcement that the Congo would accede to independence with neither haste nor undue delay led the MNC to assert its leadership over the nationalist movement. In April 1959, the MNC and the Union Congolaise hosted the first congress of Congolese political parties, in Luluabourg. The Congress approved the MNC's unitarist position on state structure.<sup>36</sup> The commission on the date of independence implicitly accepted an MNC report calling for formation of a Congolese government in January 1961. However, following Lumumba's departure for Conakry (to attend a meeting of the AAPC secretariat), a motion of "clarification" was adopted unanimously, except for the MNC representatives, stating that the government to be created in 1961 would have call a constituent assembly to prepare the proclamation of

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<sup>34</sup> The committee members later joined seven different parties: Lumumba, MNC-L; Adoula and Ngalula, MNC-K; Ileo, MNC-K, then UNIMO; Diomi, ABAKO; Ngwenza, PUNA; Nkuli, PSA; Liongo, PNP.

<sup>35</sup> Jean Van Lierde, ed. *Lumumba Speaks* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1972), p. 57.

<sup>36</sup> *Congo 1959*, p. 122. The principal MNC spokesmen gave divergent interpretations of the problem of national unity, Ileo and Kalonji being more federalist than Lumumba, but all three expressed concern as to the danger of balkanization (*Ibid.*, pp. 123-24).

independence. "That does not mean that, in 1961, we will have independence." <sup>37</sup> The sponsors of the motion later joined the Belgian-sponsored PNP.

In July 1959, Ileo and Ngalula called a meeting which purged Lumumba on the basis of a "politique personnelle." The next day, Lumumba announced creation of the MNC-Lumumba, whose committee included fewer Kongo and Ngala, and more Tetela and other Kasaians, than the MNC of 1958. The Ileo-Ngalula body became the MNC-Kalonji, a *de facto* ethnic party of the Luba-Kasai. <sup>38</sup>

The move against Lumumba was "largely conducted by men who enjoyed the protection of the Church," according to Kanza, " and Lumumba reacted "with all the energy of a rejected prophet. In a series of statements to the press and in written articles, he unveiled the machinations behind the plot to unseat him.... I often saw Lumumba in those days, rushing about to deliver articles or conduct interviews. He appeared to me to be fighting a very lonely battle. When all went well, he would be surrounded by friends and fulsome admirers, some of them false and even actively conspiring against him; but at the first sign of trouble he would find himself alone and fighting single-handed. He had long ago learned that 'God helps those who help themselves', and he looked upon every friend as a potential enemy." <sup>39</sup>

Lumumba's ethnic association and political party careers are strikingly similar. He entered both scenes later than his major rivals, rapidly became leader through his extraordinary abilities, then saw his rivals provoke a split. Both the maneuvering in the capital, and his attendance at pan-African meetings, contributed to his continuing political education.

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<sup>37</sup> Congo 1959, p. 123.

<sup>38</sup> Artigue, *op. cit.*, p. 180.

<sup>39</sup> Kanza pp. 35-36.

The MNC in the Provinces

The MNC had begun to spread from Leopoldville in the first half of 1959. Following the split, Lumumba undertook to organize or reorganize MNC-L branches in the provinces. The MNC-L became the leading party in Province Orientale and in Kasai, enjoyed some success in Kivu and Equateur but was largely frozen out in Katanga and Leopoldville provinces.

To organize the MNC in Province Orientale, Lumumba had only to write to friends from his Stanleyville days, including Joseph Kasongo, a Tetela-speaking "Kusu" from Maniema, and ask them to organize a committee. Lumumba spoke at the football stadium of Stanleyville and was received with great enthusiasm. At a second meeting, provincial officers were elected, including Kasongo as president. Kasongo and his committee organized MNC branches in the various communes of Stanleyville and in other towns, both in Province Orientale and in neighboring Kivu. The MNC-L position in Stanleyville was consolidated when a congress of the party, in which Lumumba participated, was followed by rioting, suppression of which led to several deaths. Imprisoned in Katanga, Lumumba acquired the "martyrdom" which had gone to Kasavubu following the Leopoldville riot.<sup>40</sup>

The MNC split in the capital was followed by splits in provincial branches. In most cases, the MNC-L emerged the dominant party. The MNC-Kalonji was able to get significant support only in Kasai and in Katangan towns, where Luba-Kasai were concentrated.

The struggle between the two MNCs in Kasai was particularly bitter, since it reinforced and was reinforced by the ethnic conflict between the Luba and Lulua.<sup>41</sup> Lumumba skillfully profited from the conflict, and from

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<sup>40</sup> Interview with Kasongo, Kisangani, July 1970; the interpretations are my own.

<sup>41</sup> That conflict had been encouraged by the colonial administration, which backed the Lulua against the Luba (then thought to be the leading nationalists). See Mabika-

resentment of the Luba on the part of other ethnic groups, to build an anti-Luba coalition.

Prior to the split in the MNC, when the Lulua-Luba conflict threatened his party, Lumumba attempted unsuccessfully to reconcile the warring parties. In August 1959, shortly after the MNC split, Luba leaders including Albert Kalonji were arrested by the colonial administration for "inciting racial hatred." Lumumba took advantage of the immobility of his rival to undertake an extensive campaign tour of the Kasai. He met with Lulua chiefs, who gave him their support in return for his promise that the chiefs would have an important role after independence.<sup>42</sup>

Lulua attacks on Luba resumed in October 1959 and eventually one million Luba "returned" to the homeland in southeast Kasai, which many of them had never seen. The election campaign of 1960 took place against this background of ethnic polarization. The MNC-L formed alliances with ethnic parties of the Lulua, Songye, and minor ethnic groups of the province. While the MNC-K won more seats than any other single party, 21 of 70, the MNC-L and its allies won 40. The fact that the MNC-K was excluded from the Lumumba government, and was offered only three minor portfolios in the provincial government, led to creation of a separate Luba province of South Kasai.<sup>43</sup>

### The MNC-L in Sankuru

The MNC-Lumumba won an overwhelming victory in Lumumba's home area, in part by portraying the Parti National du Progrès as the puppet of the Belgians. Lumumba's strategic skills were evident as he consolidated

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Kalanda, *Baluba et Lulua, une ethnologie à la recherche d'un nouvel équilibre* (Brussels: Editions de Remarques Congolaises, 1959).

<sup>42</sup> Jules Mboladinga-Katako, *Conflit Ekonda-Eswe au Sankuru, 1960-1964, mémoire de licence*, Lovanium University, 1970, p. 88.

<sup>43</sup> Ganshof van der Meersch, *op. cit.*, p. 634; *Congo 1960*, pp. 216-21.

Tetela support without seeming to contradict the anti-tribalist policy of the MNC-L.

Prior to the MNC split, Albert Kalonji visited Sankuru and set up several territorial committees. Just after the split, Lumumba sent a Tetela, Albert Onya, from Leopoldville to Sankuru for organizing work. And in August, Lumumba himself visited Sankuru as part of his Kasai tour and organized more sections of the party.

Mboladinga argues that the MNC-L seems to have "addressed by preference the groupement chiefs and their capitas, in contact with the peasants and rivals of the sector or chefferie chiefs. In contrast, it mistrusted the most important chiefs, creatures of the colonial administration and pillars of the PNP." <sup>44</sup> However, Lumumba recruited two important sector chiefs, Hemery Pene Sengha and Joseph Okito (later to die with Lumumba in Katanga). <sup>45</sup> Most officers of the MNC-L sections were members of the modern elite, especially from the private sector.

In a sense, the MNC-Lumumba exported its militancy to the countryside. A former MNC-L politician reports that the initial reaction to Onya's visit was one of "mistrust." This appears to cast doubt on Weiss's argument that "the rural masses tended to be radical and the leaders frequently tried to dampen these predilections on the part of their followers." However, the essential question is what happens after the emissaries from the cities arrive with their message concerning independence. <sup>46</sup> And while the first reaction of the Sankuru people may have been one of wariness, the second was one of enthusiasm. Koialodi.

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<sup>44</sup> Mboladinga, *op. cit.*, pp. 93-94.

<sup>45</sup> Sankuru/Politics/Interview T. 55. These chiefs were simultaneously members of the modern elite, undergoing training by the Belgians to enter the territorial administration.

<sup>46</sup> Weiss, *op. cit.*, pp. 183-85; Weiss, personal communication, 1971.

sectional president of the MNC-L, reports that prior to Lumumba's visit to Lomela (August 1959), people had heard about Lumumba and wanted to see him. The chiefs and the vieux (older men) said, "You young people are trying to fool us, it's not true, the whites will never give us independence." But after hearing Lumumba, even the chiefs and the vieux gave him their support. <sup>47</sup>

The main opposition to the MNC-L in Sankuru came from the administration-backed Parti National du Progrès. The PNP made a great effort to get out the vote for the communal and territorial elections of December 1959 (first elections since the royal declaration of January on independence). Both the MNC-L and the Federalist Cartel (ABAKO, PSA, MNC-K, Parti du Peuple) decided to boycott these elections on the grounds that Belgium should agree first to fix a date for independence. In Leopoldville province, the ABAKO, PSA, ABAZI etc., won a total victory over the PNP, as nearly all potential voters respected the boycott.

Temporarily leaderless (Lumumba was in prison following the Stanleyville riots), the MNC-L seems to have adopted an inconsistent stand of participation in Kasai and Orientale provinces and abstention elsewhere. It is difficult to distinguish low totals due to abstention from low totals due to lack of support or poor organization. The MNC-L received most of its votes in Kasai and Orientale, but in each case the PNP had more. <sup>48</sup>

The PNP obtained 302,000 votes in December, less than expected, and revealed itself as a federation of ethnic and rural parties which often ran locally under another label. However, these results led the Belgians to

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<sup>47</sup> Interview with Koialodi, Kinshasa, 1970.

<sup>48</sup> Mboladinga asserts that the MNC-L urged abstention in Sankuru (op. cit., p. 90), former Belgian administrators and MNC-L politicians deny this (my interviews). These elections have been largely forgotten due to the much more dramatic events which followed.

conclude that the 1960 elections would produce a National Assembly in which rural representatives and PNP "moderates" would have a large majority. A moderate nationalist center would comprise the parties of the federalist cartel. A small left wing, very localized, would be formed by the MNC-L at Stanleyville, the CERECA at Bukavu, the Parti du Peuple at Leopoldville<sup>49</sup> In fact, the PNP did very poorly in May 1960, except where its local affiliate was an ethnic party (e.g. LUKA in Kwango district, MEDERCO in Equateur).<sup>50</sup> In Kasai, each of the other parties including the two MNCs crushed the PNP in its respective ethnic homeland.

In Sankuru, the MNC-L used violence against the PNP. However, MNC-L success was not due mainly to intimidation, but to the popularity of its message of a clean break with colonialism.<sup>51</sup> Without strong popular support intimidation would have backfired. Okuka cites a third factor, skillful use of the ethnic factor. He claims that his campaign on behalf of the PNP was making progress until the Anamongo Congress of March 1960, which sealed the PNP's fate by lining up the chiefs with the MNC-L.<sup>52</sup>

#### The Anamongo Congress

Most ethnic groups were uniting behind a single party to defend their interests in the election campaign of 1960. There was some sentiment for such action among the Tetela and southeastern Mongo as well, and Lumumba realized that if he did not respond affirmatively to this sentiment it could be used against him. Thus, he took the initiative in organizing a congress of the "Anamongo" (Sons of Mongo) by contacting the leaders of Tetela ethnic

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., pp. 185-92.

<sup>50</sup> Lemarchand, Political Awakening, p. 212.

<sup>51</sup> Almost all of Sankuru's PNP leaders were or had been state employees, if one includes the five secteur chiefs. Most were older and better-educated than Lumumba. Some had been rivals of Lumumba in the urban ethnic associations.

<sup>52</sup> Interview with Okuka, Kinshasa, 1971.



associations in the other cities. He did not even send a message of support to the meeting but was represented by his trusted men from Leopoldville. <sup>53</sup>

Fourteen delegations, representing all six territories of Sankuru, Kibombo and Kindu territories of Maniema and eight urban ethnic associations, met in Lodja in March 1960. Participants included "on the one hand the delegates of the urban ethnic associations in the cities representing the progressive current and whose immediate objective was the elections of May 1960, and on the other the customary chiefs who were preoccupied with knowing their status after independence." The congress was directed and dominated by the elite, including MNC-L leaders. <sup>54</sup>

The dominance of savanna Tetela of Sankuru was apparent from the first day of the congress, when a five-man bureau was elected, comprising one "Kusu" of Maniema (President Pascal Luanghy, from Elisabethville) and four savanna Tetela of Sankuru. Choosing Luanghy was a skillful move to reassure the Maniema participants that they were not being left out. <sup>55</sup>

Luanghy was a well-known "moderate."

The only effective intervention of the chiefs concerned the name to give to the new movement. "Ana-Mongo" was approved by majority vote of the Political Commission, but the Maniema chiefs declared that if the label "Ankutshu" were not approved they would return home. Supporters of Ana-

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<sup>53</sup> Mboladinga, *op. cit.*, p. 101; also Sankuru/Politics/Interview T.5. Lumumba allegedly provided 20,000 francs to organize the congress (unchallenged assertion of Diumasumbu during meetings of the Commission d'entente provincial, 1963, reproduced in Sankuru/Politics/ Document T.76: "Compte-rendu de la Commission d'entente provincial," unpublished document furnished by Albert Welo)

<sup>54</sup> Mboladinga, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103. Lumumba and his colleagues obviously did not foresee the "Ekonda-Eswe" conflict; at least four of five bureau members were savanna people

Mongo made a similar threat. To avoid a walk-out by either side, the commission adopted the double label "Ankutshu-Anamongo." 56

The Political Commission decided against the creation of an ethnic political party and recommended that the ethnic group call upon the "majority party" in the area to defend its interests. 57 The full congress approved this plan and formed an Association des Ankutshu-Anamongo which would not be a political party but which would supervise the electoral campaign in Sankuru and in "Lomami" (Kusu portion of Maniema). This supervision would consist mainly of selection of candidates, to run under the MNC-L label, through a secretariat headed by Joseph Lutula and including also Catholic and Protestant clergy as well as the members of the Kasai provincial committee of the MNC-L. 58

It was decided to support the maintenance of l'autorité coutumière, i.e. legitimate, traditional chiefs. Imposed chefs de secteur would have to be re-elected. 59

At its closing session, March 12, the congress adopted most of the resolutions proposed by the commissions. On all these points -- with the exception of the double ethnic label -- the congress clearly carried out the will of Lumumba. And as the results of the elections of May 1960 would suggest, the congress was a great success for Lumumba and the MNC-L as it solidified the support of the Sankuru-Maniema region behind them. In another sense, however, the congress was a disaster, in that the secretariat established by the Lodja congress set off the Ekonda-Eswe conflict.

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56 Akutshu-Anamongo, Congrès de Lodja, 9-12 mars 1960, travaux, résolutions finales (Tshumbe, 1960), pp. 20-21. (Hereafter referred to as Congrès de Lodja).

57 Congrès de Lodja, op. cit., pp. 21-23; Mboladinga, op. cit., p. 108.

58 Ibid., pp. 22-23, 38. Abbé Athanase Djadi would be president of the association.

59 Congrès de Lodja, op. cit., pp. 21-22.

The secretariat proposed as candidates for the four Sankuru district seats in the Chamber of Representatives:

- 1) Joseph Lutula -- from Usumba-Wembo-Nyama. Katako-Kombe territory, a savanna Tetela by birth and background;
- 2) Etienne Kihuyu -- from the Basambala Sector, Katako-Kombe, an Eswe by culture but an Ekonda by descent (father a slave from Lomela);
- 3) Joseph Shako -- from the Basambala Sector, Katako-Kombe, an Eswe by culture but an Ekonda by descent (father a slave from Equateur);
- 4) Clément Kalema -- an Eswe from Lubefu, who had lived at Lodja for many years. <sup>60</sup>

Like Kalema, Shako worked in Lodja. Kihuyu worked in Luluabourg and Lutula in Leopoldville.

André Diumasumbu (a forest Tetela of Lodja territory) returned from studies in Brussels and learned that the list of candidates chosen included no authentic son of Lodja. He and other Lodja people gave the Anamongo secretariat an ultimatum: accept Diumasumbu as candidate for the national legislature and some of our candidates for the Kasai provincial assembly, or we will form our own party. Lutula substituted Diumasumbu for Kalema and replaced three of the four candidates for provincial deputy from Lodja territory with forest people. <sup>61</sup> In any case, forest-savanna relations deteriorated during the electoral campaign, during which Diumasumbu and his supporters promoted the slogan "Ekonda against Eswe." <sup>62</sup> However, no violence occurred until the formation of Sankuru province set off a new

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<sup>60</sup> Various interviews, including interviews with Kihuyu and Shako, Kinshasa, 1971

<sup>61</sup> Willame, *op. cit.*, p. 96; interviews with Diumasumbu at Kinshasa, 1969 and 1971; Sankuru/Politics/Interviews T.20 and T.22 (Ekonda politicians of Lodja).

<sup>62</sup> Onatshungu, p. 25. Kihuyu .

struggle for political posts. In 1963, forest people attacked "Eawe" at Lodja and drove many of them from their homes.

#### Results of the May 1960 Elections

For the elections to the Chamber of Representatives, Sankuru District constituted a single electoral circumscription, entitled to four seats. The MNC-L list received 81,895 of 91,815 valid votes (89.2 percent). Kihuyu and Diumasumbu received more preferential votes than Shako and Lutula, which may reflect the successful appeal of these candidates to the Ekonda majority.<sup>63</sup> Lumumba's party won 13 of Sankuru's 14 seats in the Kasai assembly.

The MNC-L won at least one national chamber seat in each province except Katanga. On the level of the provincial assemblies, the MNC-L won at least one seat in each province without exception. The MNC-L was, however, almost frozen out in Leopoldville and Katanga, where ethno-regional polarization had set in prior to the effort of the MNC-L to penetrate the region, and where (unlike Kasai) the MNC-L had little to offer either of the contending parties as an ally. In Leopoldville province the MNC-L won only one national seat out of 32, and two provincial seats out of 60, all from Lac Léopold II district, where part of the population is Mongo.

In Katanga, the MNC-L was largely shut out by the polarization between CONAKAT (dominant party in the southern part of the province) and BALUBAKAT (dominant party in the north). The pre-split MNC had been present in Katanga but most of its provincial leadership was Luba and joined MNC-K. The MNC-L won no seats on the national level, but on the provincial level did carry one in its own right and three in cartel with BALUBAKAT and ATCAR (ethnic party of the Cokwe).

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<sup>63</sup> Etienne Kihuyu, 24,199; André Diumasumbu, 19,009; Joseph Shako, 15,794; Joseph Lutula, 11,917. Sankuru/Politics/Document T.2: "Elections législatives, Province du Kasai, District du Sankuru" (mimeographed document furnished by Benoît Verhaegen)

In Equateur province, the MNC-L was badly beaten on the National level by the "Ngala" party, PUNA. On the provincial level however, the MNC-L was the leading party, doing particularly well in regions which border on its strongholds of Orientale and Sankuru. In post-election maneuvering, PUNA gained enough support to become the majority party on the provincial level as well. <sup>64</sup>

In Province Orientale, the MNC-L won a crushing victory. Its victory was particularly impressive at Stanleyville, where the Tetela-Kusu ethnic group is influential, and in Haut-Congo District, around Stanleyville, which included a number of peoples of the Mongo region or who consider themselves related to the Mongo (Topoke, etc.). However, in Ituri district, of non-Bantu majority, its victory was still more crushing. Only Haut-Uele (peopled by Zande and related "Sudanic" peoples) seemed somewhat reticent towards the MNC-L.

In Kivu, the MNC-L finished second to the CEREA, on the national and provincial levels, but there were major differences from district to district: the MNC-L was almost frozen out of North Kivu, did only moderately well in South Kivu, and won an overwhelming victory in Maniema (where the dominant ethnic group, socially but not numerically, is the Tetela-Kusu). <sup>65</sup>

### Conclusions

After lengthy negotiations and maneuvers, Lumumba was able to form a government and become the Congo's first Prime Minister. His success

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<sup>64</sup> Congo 1960, vol. I, 155-57, 166-67, 240-43; on reasons why the Kwango-Kwifu leaders formed their own party, the PSA, rather than joining the MNC, see Weiss, *op. cit.*, pp. 78-80.

<sup>65</sup> Nord-Kivu: national level, MNC-L, 0 of 9 seats, provincial level, MNC-L, 3 of 38; Sud-Kivu (and city of Bukavu): national level, MNC-L and "cartels," 2 of 9; provincial level, MNC-L and "cartels," 5 of 38; Maniema: national level, MNC-L, 4 of 5, provincial level, MNC-L, 9 of 14

was due to personal charisma and to the fact that the MNC-L was telling the majority of the people what they wanted to hear. They disliked colonial rule and wanted independence, and preferred a party that promised immediate independence to one which equivocated. Thanks to the message of the MNC-L -- that independence would bring about a drastic change in the colonial order, including an end to cotton cultivation, the opening of new jobs to Congolese, etc. -- a millennial atmosphere was created in which the PNP could not possibly compete.

For many people, anti-colonialism meant an end to the abuses of chiefs. For others, (some) chiefs were defenders of the community against outside threats. Lumumba attempted to cope with this division by means of the formula approved at the Lodja Congress, namely to support the maintenance of "traditional" chiefs, whereas "imposed" chiefs would have to be re-elected.

Under the circumstances --in particular, the rapidity of the transition to independence and the lack of experience of the Congolese elite in electoral competition-- Lumumba did remarkably well in the elections of May 1960. More so than most of his competitors, he sensed the strongly anti-colonial sentiments lying just below the surface of the so-called Pax Belgica. Unlike most of them, he was aware of the danger represented by appeals to ethnic and regional sentiment, which opened the door to divide and rule tactics by the Belgians. At the same time, he was forced by the prevalence of ethnic sentiment to forge alliances along ethnic lines. And he was shortsighted in not foreseeing the potential for ethno-regional division of his own ethnic community (the forest-savanna split). These shortcomings do not diminish his accomplishment in winning the elections.

To piece together an account of Lumumba's life and political career to the electoral victory of May 1960, I have had to rely upon a variety of sources. None deals with all the matters which I consider to be important, during this period. Each chooses (more or less consciously) which events or circumstances to discuss, and how to interpret them. De Vos describes the early childhood of Lumumba through Christ imagery, to prepare the way for his climactic section, on martyrdom. Hempstone uses the story of the stolen watch to set up the embezzlement episode, which presumably shows Lumumba to be unworthy of trust.

The stories told in my interviews represent a Tetela view of Lumumba. Some of it can be verified; for example, they remember his return in the company of François, although they could not have told me that François was French or a sociologist. Much of the material is remembered in the form of clichés in which the clever Lumumba outwits the Belgians.

De Vos's Lumumba does not really develop; he undergoes a sudden transformation from the évolué who accepts the colonialist frame of reference to the nationalist who rejects it. The evidence for acceptance is Lumumba's writings. Lemarchand looks at the same writings of Lumumba, whether the articles in La Voix du Congolais or the book Congo. My Country, and sees the beginnings of nationalism. Kanza's account is relatively objective but he tends to portray Lumumba as larger than life, even in early encounters.