

Tshombe Could Still Lead Katanga to Independence

By TIM KNIGHT
United Press International
Elisabethville, The Congo — At 3:30 p.m. on June 14, Moise Tshombe fled Katanga on his way to Paris and political exile.

Katanga's secession attempt was over and its president finished. Or so it seemed to the small knot of supporters who stood on the dusty airstrip at Kipushi, watching the light-blue Cessna disappear over Rhodesia.

Yet nothing is ever certain in the Congo, and Moise Tshombe could still return to try to lead Katanga to independence. The United Nations may have to leave the Congo soon, or go bankrupt. There would then be nothing to prevent Tshombe flying back to continue the fight where he left off.

Look For Miracle
Tshombe mounted the "Tiger of Ambition" eagerly let it carry him ever nearer to his goal, speeding faster and faster to success. When, at last, he saw the dangers of the road he had chosen, it was far too late to dismount. He could only ride on fearfully, hoping desperately for a miracle.

The miracle never came. Tshombe failed, and had to pay the cost. He paid the first installment on the morning of Jan. 14, 1963, in the rich Katangese mining town of Kolwezi, when he announced to the world that Katanga's secession attempt was over.

For the burly president, a dream was over too. He had fought the United Nations and the central Congolese government for three years and now he reluctantly admitted defeat.

The world sighed with relief. Katanga Broken Up
Within weeks, the central government started to break up Katanga into three provinces, taking more than half of its enormous copper reserves away from Tshombe's control.

Tshombe was paying the second instalment on the cost of failure, and could only shrug angrily, helplessly, while Leopoldville carved up his beloved Katanga.

Young Moise (Moses) wanted to be something more than just another African under Belgium's harsh colonial rule. As he grew older, his ambition spread to include first his own Lunda tribe, then Katanga.

Starting as a council member for Elisabethville's African township at 28, Tshombe moved confidently into the complex — and often dangerous — world of African politics under the Belgians.

Became Aware of Views
As the years went by, the Belgians became increasingly aware of his moderate views and willingness to take advice. They regarded him as a "good" African, and Tshombe was careful to foster this view.

But inevitably, as he mixed with them, his own personality changed, and he became more Belgian than African in many ways. He also never lost the habit of listening to Belgian advice.

He spoke French fluently, good Portuguese and a little English, as well as nine African languages. He learned how to use a language, how to sway a listener.

Less than a year before the Belgians gave the Congo independence, Tshombe became a leader of the Conakat party. Early in June, 1960, he was elected to the First African Katangese Provincial Assembly and on June 16, during an all-night sitting, Moise Tshombe was elected president of Katanga. He was 42.

To Highest Position
He had risen to the highest position in Katanga, but to be president of a province was not enough.

On the last day of June, the Belgians handed over the reins of government to the Congolese, and the Republic of the Congo, was born. Eleven days later, Tshombe declared Katanga an independent sovereign state outside the Congo.

An official Katangese information ministry release dated October, 1960, declared grandly: "One may say that this solemn act saved the Katanga from anarchy and disorder."

It also split the West, cost the U.N. \$300 million and, eventually, drove Tshombe into exile.

Had Seen Mutiny
He had seen the Central Congolese army mutiny and 25,000 heavily armed troops start an orgy of killing which threatened to end law and order in the Congo, perhaps forever.

In his own province of Katanga, he moved swiftly, calling in Belgian paratroopers based inside the province to disarm the army and return all non-Katangese to their homes. The troubles lasted only a few days.

Thousands died in the Congo before the U.N., responding to a government appeal, came in and restored order.

Tshombe feared more violence in his own province unless he effectively cut it off from its neighbors.

He had already made one minor attempt to secede, and when he saw the Congo in flames he did what he thought to be best for Katanga, and for himself. He could not know that the decision would cost thousands of lives—most of them Katangese.

(The U.N. put its own death toll since mid-July, 1960, at 127 officers and men killed in action, nearly all of them fighting to end Katanga's secession.)

When Katanga seceded from the Congo, the long, bitter fight to end its breakaway began.

Conferences were called promises made, angry words exchanged, but there was no progress. Tshombe was hanging on to independence and much of the western world unofficially backed his stand.

Attend Conference
Then, in April, 1961, Tshombe attended a Congolese leaders' conference in Coquilhatville, called to discuss re-unification of the Congo, and was arrested on treason charges by the central government.

Six weeks later he was released, proclaiming he would form a common front against Communism with the Leopoldville government. But the arrest deepened his distrust of the central government and strengthened his determination to continue secession.

Tshombe's mercenaries — once known as "Les Affreux" or "The Frightful Ones" — provided an essential backbone for the newly formed Katangese army and, frequently, an effective mobile striking force on their own.

Mercenaries Well Trained
When the first Katanga war started on Sept. 13, 1961 the mercenaries were strong and reasonably well-trained. The army had been whipped into some sort of shape in the 14 months since secession and was as ready as it would ever be.

The U.N. believed it would meet only token resistance, and badly underestimated Katangan determination.

U.N. Chief Dr. Conor Cruise O'Brien believed that once the mercenaries were out of the way, Tshombe's white advisers would be arrested and the secession ended. But the attack was badly planned and Tshombe and his interior minister, "strong man" Godefroid Munongo, evaded arrest.

Suddenly, in an effort to end the firing, U.N. Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold agreed to meet Tshombe in Ndola, Northern Rhodesia. On Sept. 17, 1961, Hammarskjold's aircraft crashed into the bush a few miles from Ndola and he was killed.

Four days later, Tshombe ordered a cease-fire after the U.N. had agreed to do the same. He had forced an honorable draw, the Katangese army had been bloodied, and the mercenaries and advisers were still there.

After the shame of his detention at Leopoldville, Tshombe had proved himself a worthy leader of the Katangese. Cheering crowds followed him wherever he went.

The president returned to Elisabethville and shortly afterwards flew to Leopoldville for the second time since independence, after U.N. guarantees for his personal safety. He was taking no chances of being arrested again.

Unexpected firing broke out on the morning of Dec. 24 as Elisabethville was preparing for a quiet Christmas. It's believed that U.N. Ethiopian troops fired on Katangese soldiers at the Lubumbashi slag heap, just outside the town because of a misunderstanding.

U.N. Determined
This time it was for real. The U.N. was determined to crush Tshombe and forcibly lead Katanga back into the Congo. The only question was: would the U.N. delay its attack until Jan. 15 as planned, or begin the take-over immediately?

The Katangese army solved the problem by starting heavy firing on the night of the 27th, after two days of relative quiet.

Tshombe previously had promised to call a cease-fire, after U.N. senior officers escorted him around the battle areas and forced him to stand near the front line while his own troops fired on the position.

Dawn on the 28th brought more fighting and more conferences between Tshombe and the U.N. The British and American consuls in Elisabethville tried to talk him into signing a cease-fire and he apparently agreed. But the result was only more shooting.

U.N. Goes To War
That afternoon, after Tshombe had refused to sign a surrender, the U.N. went to war. Within 15 hours, they had surrounded Elisabethville and held all roads leading to the city.

The Katangese army fled, followed by thousands of refugees. The road from Elisabethville to the Rhodesian border was crammed with frightened Africans. The U.N. took Elisabethville with ease.

Tshombe escaped during the fighting and took refuge first in Rhodesia, then in Kolwezi, Katanga's second largest town.

He returned on Jan. 8 and his reception by the Katangese, who still apparently believed in him, was rapturous as ever. Without much hope he set about salvaging something from the wreckage.

Then Tshombe "proclaimed to the world" that Katanga's secession attempt was over. He lingered on in Elisabethville and watched while Leopoldville sent in a former Congolese premier, Joseph Ileo, as its representative in the Katanga capital. As he had known would happen, Ileo gradually took most of the government's power into his own hands, and Tshombe was president in little more than name.

On May 24, U.N. and Central Government troops surrounded the presidential palace and ordered Tshombe to surrender his last remaining bodyguard, believed to be about 30 men.

Tshombe made a last brave gesture of defiance, but a few hours later, the 30 guards slipped out of the grounds dressed as civilians.

Tshombe was finished. On May 29, when he learned that the central government had seized documents implicating him in another secession attempt, Tshombe fled from Elisabethville in secret, making for Kapanga, deep in Lunda territory. Sixteen days later, he boarded a light aircraft at Kipushi on the Katanga-Rhodesia border and went into exile.



LARGE FAMILY—These three kittens are the 126th, 127th and 128th offspring of Fluffy, a cat who resides at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Earl Richardson, 2133 Crater Lake ave. Fluffy, a persian cat with long white hair, will be 12 years old in December. She averages between five and seven kittens, twice a year. Nine is the most she has had at one time.

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