

= Paul Gondjout =

Paul Marie Indjendjet Gondjout ( 4 June 1912 ? 1 July 1990 ) was a Gabonese politician and civil servant , and the father of Laure Gondjout , another prominent Gabonese politician . Gondjout was a member of the Mpongwe ethnic group , and served in the French colonial administration from 1928 , and founded the Cercle amical et mutualiste des évolués de Port @-@ Gentil in 1943 . He was a delegate to the French Senate from 1949 to 1958 , and founded the Gabonese Democratic Bloc ( BDG ) . In 1954 , Léon M 'ba joined the party and eventually overthrew Gondjout as leader .

In 1960 , then President M 'ba reshuffled the government without consulting Parliament . When Gondjout filed a motion of censure he was charged with attempting a coup d 'état and sentenced to two years in prison . Following his release , M 'ba appointed him to the largely symbolic post of President of the Economic Council , in part to silence the threat he represented .

Gondjout served as Minister of State during the abortive 1964 Gabon coup d 'état but was acquitted of all charges during his subsequent trial . He lived outside public view from his 1966 acquittal to his death on 1 July 1990 and there is little record of his life during this period .

= = Early life and political career = =

Gondjout was born on 4 June 1912 , to a Mpongwe family . He had a younger brother named Edouard . The elder Gondjout began his service in the French colonial administration in 1928 . In 1943 he founded the Cercle amical et mutualiste des évolués de Port @-@ Gentil ( roughly translated as Mutual Friends for the Evolution of Port @-@ Gentil ) , an organization that encouraged and utilised the talents of educated Gabonese . With the assistance of Mpongwe businesspeople , In 1945 he established the Gabonese Democratic Party alongside Emile Issembe .

Gondjout was elected to the Senate of France on 24 July 1949 and re @-@ elected on 18 May 1952 ? both times as an independent candidate ? serving until the end of his term on 7 June 1958 . On 18 December 1953 , he became the father of Laure Gondjout . She would later become a prominent politician as would his son , Vincent de Paul Gondjout , and nephew , Georges Rawiri .

In August 1953 Gondjout 's PDG merged with the Gabonese Mixed Committee to form the Gabonese Democratic Bloc ( BDG ) . Over the course of the following seven years , the party published a newspaper which caught the eye of the aspiring politician Léon M 'ba , whom Gondjout had earlier helped to elect to the Gabonese council of government . The two formed an alliance supported by the Mpongwe business community , the wealthy coastal Fangs ( like M 'ba ) , and the French , which managed to overpower Jean @-@ Hilaire Aubame and fellow members of the Gabonese Democratic and Social Union . Gondjout , the self @-@ appointed secretary of the BDG , decreed M 'ba to be the secretary @-@ general . He and M 'ba both believed that Gabon should not have full political independence , stating shortly before it was obtained :

I affirm my belief that it would be premature now for Gabon to achieve total independence , for this would precipitate it irreparably into anarchy or , what would be even worse , into a sort of neocolonialism .

M 'ba overthrew Gondjout as head of the BDG and Gondjout aligned with Aubame on several issues , such as opposing M 'ba 's amount of power . Nonetheless , when Gabon gained its independence on 17 August 1960 Gondjout was named President of the National Assembly by the new President of Gabon , Leon M 'ba . In November 1960 or 1961 , Gondjout called for a constitutional amendment to allow him more executive power . When M 'ba reshuffled his cabinet without consulting Parliament , Gondjout filed a motion of censure . He supposedly hoped to benefit from a balance of power modified to his own advantage , and to model Gabon after the Western democracies . M 'ba , who did not share these ideas , reacted repressively .

On 16 November , under the pretext of a conspiracy , M 'ba declared a state of emergency , ordering the internment of eight BDG opponents and the dissolution of the National Assembly the day after . Electors were asked to vote again on 12 February 1961 . Gondjout himself was sentenced to two years in prison . He was imprisoned in a remote village under house arrest , where

he was supplied , according to U.S. ambassador to Gabon , Charles Darlington , " with all the whisky and beer he [ could ] drink and all the girls he want [ ed ] " . Unable to fulfill his position , it was given to Louis Bigmann . Upon Gondjout 's release , M 'ba appointed him to the mostly symbolic post of President of the Economic Council , in part to silence any threat to M 'ba 's power .

= = 1964 Gabon coup d 'état = =

During the night of 17 February and the early morning of 18 February 1964 , 150 members of the Gabonese military , gendarmerie , and police , headed by Lieutenant Jacques Mombo and Valère Essone , seized the presidential palace . They arrested President of the National Assembly Louis Bigmann , French commanders Claude Haulin and Major Royer , several ministers , and President M 'ba , who was dragged from his bed at gunpoint . On Radio Libreville , the military announced to the Gabonese people that a coup d 'état had taken place , asked for technical assistance , and told the French not to interfere in this matter . M 'ba was forced to broadcast a speech acknowledging his defeat , in which he said , " The D @-@ Day is here , the injustices are beyond measure , these people are patient , but their patience has limits . It came to a boil . "

No blood was shed during the event , and when the Gabonese people did not respond violently the military interpreted this as a sign of approval . Aubame was offered the presidency of the newly formed provisional government . The government was composed of civilian politicians from both the UDSG and BDG , such as Gondjout . During the coup , he served as Minister of State . The coup 's leaders were content at restoring security for the civilians . The small Gabonese army did not intervene ; composed mostly of French officers , they remained in their barracks .

Second Lieutenant Ndo Edou gave instructions to transfer M 'ba to Ndjolé , Aubame 's electoral stronghold . However , due to heavy rain , the deposed president and his captors took shelter in an unknown village . The next morning they decided to take him over the easier road to Lambaréné . Several hours later , they returned to Libreville . The new head of government contacted French ambassador Paul Cousseran , to assure him that the property of foreign nationals would be protected and to request against French military intervention . In Paris , President Charles de Gaulle decided against the plea .

M 'ba was one of France 's most loyal African allies , and during a visit to France in 1961 , declared , " all Gabonese have two fatherlands : France and Gabon . " Moreover , under his regime , Europeans were particularly well treated . The French authorities therefore decided , in accordance with signed Franco @-@ Gabon agreements , to restore the legitimate government . Intervention could not commence without a formal request to the Head of State of Gabon . Since M 'ba was imprisoned , the French contacted the Vice President of Gabon , Paul @-@ Marie Yembit , who had not been arrested . However , he remained unaccounted for ; therefore , they decided to compose a predated letter confirming their intervention , that Yembit would later sign . Less than 24 hours later , French troops stationed in Dakar and Brazzaville landed in Libreville and restored M 'ba to power . During the operation , a French soldier and 15 to 25 Gabonese died .

= = Post coup d 'état = =

Aubame and Gondjout fled Libreville , but were captured sometime before 20 February . In August a trial of the rebels and provisional government was opened in Lambaréné . A " state of precatons " was imposed , which decreed that local government keep surveillance on suspected troublemakers and , if necessary , order curfew , and special permits were required to travel through the town . The trial was held in a school building overlooking the Ogooue River , which was near Albert Schweitzer 's hospital . Space at the hearing was limited , so members of the public were disallowed from attending . Permits were required to attend the trial , and family members were restricted to one permit each . Press coverage was limited , and journalists were allowed only if they represented a high @-@ profile news agency . In addition , there were restrictions on the defence of the accused .

During a trial which carried the death sentence as a maximum , the prosecution called 64 separate witnesses . Aubame claimed he had formed his provisional government in a constitutional manner ;

at the request of members of the " putschists " . He argued that the French intervention was effectively an illegal act of interference ; a belief shared by both Gondjout and the former education minister , Jean Mare Ekoh . On 9 September , without consulting M 'ba , Leon Auge handed down a verdict acquitting both Ekoh and Gondjout of all charges .

Little is known of Goundjout 's life between his 1966 acquittal and death on 1 July 1990 , in Libreville . He is buried in Libreville near his wife Odette ( d . 2006 ) , a former fashion model . A secondary school has been established in his name .