

= Jean @-@ Hilaire Aubame =

Jean @-@ Hilaire Aubame ( 10 November 1912 ? 16 August 1989 ) was a Gabonese politician active during both the colonial and independence periods . The French journalist Pierre Péan said that Aubame 's training " as a practicing Catholic and a customs official helped to make him an integrated man , one of whom political power was not an end in itself . "

Born into a Fang family , Aubame was orphaned at a young age . He was raised by the stepbrother of Léon M 'ba , who became Aubame 's chief political rival . Encouraged by his colleagues , Aubame entered politics , serving as Gabon 's first representative in the National Assembly of France from 1946 to 1958 . Aubame was also a leader in solving African problems , particularly developing the Gabonese standard of living and planning urban sites . Aubame 's quick rise in Gabonese politics was spurred by the support of the missions and administration , whereas much of M 'ba 's strength came from the colonists .

Despite a rivalry , Aubame and M 'ba , now the President of Gabon , formed several political unions which were sufficiently politically balanced to appeal to the electorate . In appreciation for his help , M 'ba appointed Aubame as foreign minister and later President of the Supreme Court . Tensions soon rose between the two due to Aubame 's refusal to merge his party with M 'ba 's and create a one @-@ party state . Aubame was installed as President of Gabon during a 1964 coup d'état against M 'ba . However , the coup was toppled three days later , and although he did not participate in the coup 's planning , Aubame was sentenced to 10 years of hard labor and 10 years of exile . He was beaten almost daily by his prison guards while serving out his sentence . M 'ba 's successor as President , Omar Bongo , allowed the return of Aubame to Gabon in 1972 . The elder politician died in 1989 in Gabon 's capital of Libreville .

= = Youth and early political career = =

Born into a Fang family near Libreville , Aubame lost his father at eight years of age and his mother at eleven . Abbé Jean Obame , stepbrother of Léon M 'ba , looked after the orphaned Aubame and arranged for schooling at several Roman Catholic missions . After he graduated , Aubame became a schoolteacher .

M 'ba helped get him a job in customs on 24 March 1931 . First appointed to Libreville from 1931 to 1935 , he was transferred to Bangui in 1935 and then to Brazzaville in 1936 , where he co @-@ founded a branch of the Mutuelle Gabonaise with a brother of politician Louis Bigmann . He was also a member of the Association des fonctionnaires , an organization which was dominated by two other soon @-@ to @-@ be politicians : René @-@ Paul Sousatte and Jean Rémy Ayouné .

Following the speech given by Charles de Gaulle on the Appeal of 18 June 1940 , Aubame sided with the Free French , and in November was sent by Libreville authorities to rally Fangs for the cause . In February 1942 , Aubame met colonial administrator Félix Éboué and quickly became his protégé . He served as an informant for Éboué on African affairs . Aubame 's reward was to be one of several Africans promoted on 23 February 1943 into the European section of the civil service , and on 1 January 1944 Éboué appointed him president of the municipal commission for the Poto @-@ Poto section of Brazzaville .

Aubame participated in the 1944 Brazzaville Conference and served in this post until 10 November 1946 . After Éboué 's sudden death in March 1944 , Aubame worked as an adviser to Governor @-@ General André Bayardelle and his secretary André Soucadoux . They encouraged Aubame to run for office , and he returned to Gabon to campaign with the support of both the administration and the missionaries .

= = Deputy = =

= = = Deputy to the French National Assembly = = =

Aubame lost in the 1945 elections , though on 10 November 1946 became Gabon 's first representative to the French National Assembly by winning 7 @, @ 069 votes out of 12 @, @ 528 possible . From 1946 to 1951 he was Commissioner of shipping , the press , communication , labor and social security . He voted for Algerian independence on 27 August 1947 and for the establishment of a Council of Europe on 9 July 1949 .

On 17 June 1951 , Aubame was reelected a deputy with 17 @, @ 329 votes out of a total of 29 @, @ 203 and on 2 January 1956 with 26 @, @ 712 votes out of a total of 57 @, @ 031 , with this term lasting until the end of the Fourth French Republic . Around this time , M 'ba was establishing his political career after being exiled to Oubangui @-@ Chari . Affiliating with the French Section of the Workers ' International ( SFIO ) , Aubame later worked most closely with the Indépendants d 'Outre @-@ Mer , an African parliamentary group whose leaders were Senegalese Léopold Sédar Senghor and Cameroonian Louis @-@ Paul Aujoulat . While a deputy he lived in Paris and toured Gabon regularly .

He continued to develop local Gabonese politics , in particular revitalizing the Fang clans . In fact , M 'ba asserted that Aubame was too involved with the Fang to pay attention to the interests of the southern tribes , a charge Aubame ridiculed . Aubame was also a leader in solving African problems , particularly developing the Gabonese standard of living and planning urban sites . On 29 September 1951 , he voted to increase the minimum wage in the overseas territories of France , and served as vice president of its Commission from 1953 to 1955 . He organized the Gabonese Democratic and Social Union ( UDSG ) in 1947 , whose leadership came mostly from the interior , particularly Woleu @-@ Ntem Province . The party in turn backed Aubame 's reelection in 1951 and 1956 . It had few philosophical differences with the M 'ba @-@ led Bloc Démocratique Gabonais ( BDG ) , including advocating less economic dependence on France and faster " Africanization " of French political jobs . Fairly quickly , Gabonese politics became dominated by Aubame , supported by the missions and the administration , and M 'ba , supported by the settlers .

= = = Deputy to the Gabonese Territorial Assembly = = =

In 1952 he was elected as Woleu @-@ N 'Tem 's representative for Gabon 's Territorial Assembly . He was re @-@ elected in the March 1957 elections , in which the UDSG also placed first , winning 18 of the 40 contested seats , against 16 for BDG . M 'ba 's party won 21 seats against 19 for Aubame 's party after a recount . However , in the absence of an absolute majority , on 21 May 1957 , both parties were obligated to submit a list of individuals that both agreed were suitable for inclusion in the government . That same day , M 'ba was appointed vice president of the government . Soon , divisions within the government grew , and Aubame resigned from his position and filed a motion of censure against the government . The motion was rejected by a 21 ? 19 vote . With M 'ba 's victory , many elected UDSG members joined the parliamentary majority , giving the ruling government 29 of the 40 legislative seats . Well installed in the government , he slowly began to reinforce his power .

= = Independence and opposition = =

= = = Opposition leader = = =

After voting in favor of the Franco @-@ African Community constitutional referendum of 28 September 1958 , Gabon became pseudo @-@ politically independent . Legislative elections were scheduled for 19 June 1960 through the Scrutin de Liste voting system , a form of bloc voting in which each party offers a list of candidates who the population vote for ; the list that obtains a majority of votes is declared the winner and wins all the contested seats . Through the redistricting of district and constituency boundaries , the BDG arbitrarily received 244 seats , while the UDSG received 77 . In the months that followed , the legislative majority was plagued by internal strife . M 'ba , now President of Gabon , decided to dissolve the Assembly and looked to the opposition to

strengthen his position .

With Aubame , he formed a number of sufficiently balanced political unions to appeal to the electorate . On 12 February , they won 99 @. @ 75 % of the vote , and later that day , M 'ba , running unopposed , was elected president of Gabon . For his cooperation , M 'ba appointed Aubame foreign minister , replacing André Gustave Anguilé . In contrast to M 'ba who wanted a strong executive regime , Aubame preferred a parliamentary republic . Tensions rose when a new constitution was unanimously adopted , on 21 February 1961 , providing for a " hyperprésidentiel " regime . Under this system , M 'ba was able to appoint ministers whose functions and limitations were decided by him .

On 19 February , he broke his ties with Aubame ; all UDSG representatives were dismissed , with the exception of M 'ba supporter Francis Meye . This was due to Aubame 's refusal to merge the UDSG with M 'ba 's and create a one @-@ party state . In an attempt to oust Aubame from his legislative seat , M 'ba appointed him President of the Supreme Court on 25 February . Thereafter , M 'ba claimed that Aubame had resigned from the National Assembly , citing incompatibility with parliamentary functions . Aubame resolved the accusation by resigning from his post as President of the Supreme Court , complicating matters for M 'ba . Faced with reports of tension between the government and the National Assembly , even though 70 % of its composition were BDG members , the Gabonese president dissolved the legislature on 21 January 1964 as an " economy measure " .

The electoral conditions were announced as such : The election 67 districts were reduced to 47 . M 'ba disqualified Aubame by announcing no one who held a post recently was banned . Any party would have to submit 47 candidates who had to pay US \$ 160 or none at all . Thus , over US \$ 7 @, @ 500 would be deposited without considering campaign expenses . M 'ba 's idea was that no party other than his would have the money to enter candidates . In response to this , the opposition announced its refusal to participate in elections that they did not consider fair .

It is unlikely that Aubame participated in the planning of the 1964 Gabon coup d'état . It appears that he joined the effort after being recruited by the new government . His nephew , Pierre Eyeguet , a former ambassador to the United Kingdom , may have known of the plot beforehand and notified his uncle , although it is unknown whether or not Aubame established contact with the plotters .

= = = 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 , and that they required technical assistance and told the French not interfere in this matter . M 'ba was instructed to broadcast a speech acknowledging his defeat . " The D @-@ Day is here , the injustices are beyond measure , these people are patient , but their patience has limits " , he said . " It came to a boil . "

During these events , no gunshots were fired . The people did not react strongly , which according to the military , was a sign of approval . A provisional government was formed , and the presidency was offered to Aubame . The government was composed of civilian politicians from both the UDSG and BDG , such as Paul Gondjout . As for the coup plotters , they were content to ensure security for civilians . The small Gabonese army did not intervene in the coup ; composed mostly of French officers , they remained in their barracks .

Aubame was unaware of the coup until the French ambassador to Gabon , Paul Cousseran , called him on the telephone roughly a half hour after sunrise . Cousseran , meanwhile , was awoken by the noisy streets and checked to see what was happening . Aubame replied that he was to find out why there was " no government " , as Cousseran never directly mentioned a coup . However , about midway through the morning an automobile carrying the revolutionary committee arrived at Aubame 's residence and drove him to the governmental offices , where he had been named president .

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 quickly contacted French ambassador Paul Cousseran , to assure him that the property of foreign nationals would be protected and to ask him to prevent any French military intervention .

In Paris , French president Charles de Gaulle decided otherwise . M 'ba was one of the most loyal allies to France in Africa . While visiting France in 1961 , M 'ba said : " [ a ] Il Gabonese have two fatherlands : France and Gabon . " Moreover , under his regime , Europeans enjoyed particularly friendly treatment . Therefore , President de Gaulle , upon advice from his chief adviser on African policy , Jacques Foccart , decided that he would restore the legitimate government . This was in accordance with a 1960 treaty between Gabon and the French , which was ironically signed by Aubame in his stint as Foreign Minister . Intervention could not commence without a formal request to the Head of State of Gabon . Since M 'ba was otherwise occupied , 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 that Yembit would later sign , confirming their intervention . Less than 24 hours later , French troops stationed in Dakar and Brazzaville landed in Libreville and restored M 'ba to power . Over the course of the operation , one French soldier was killed , while 15 to 25 died on the Gabonese side .

= = Trial at Lambaréné = =

Aubame and Gondjout fled Libreville as fugitives , though were eventually discovered . In August , the trial of the military rebels and provisional government was opened in Lambaréné . A " state of precatons " was enacted , which decreed that the local government maintained surveillance over suspected troublemakers and , if necessary , order a curfew . Special permits were required to travel through the town . The trial was held in a school building overlooking the Ogooue River , near Albert Schweitzer 's hospital . Space was limited , so there was no representative section of the public . One needed a permit to witness the trial , and family members were restricted to one each . Press coverage was limited , and journalists were only allowed if they were representing a high @-@ profile news agency . In addition , there were restrictions on the defence of the accused .

The prosecution called 64 witnesses to the trial . Essone , Mbene , and Aubame claimed that their involvement in the coup was due to a lack of development in the Gabonese army . Judge Leon Auge , the judge in the case , said that if " that is the only reason for your coup d'état , you deserve a severe penalty . " Aubame affirmed his position that he did not participate in its planning . According to him , he formed the provisional government in a constitutional manner , at the request of some " putschists " . He stated that the French intervention was an illegal act of interference , an assertion that Gondjout and Jean Mare Ekoh , a former education minister , shared .

On 9 September , the judge came to a verdict without consulting M 'ba . Aubame was sentenced to 10 years of hard labor and 10 years of exile on a remote island off Settecama , 100 miles ( 161 km ) down the coast of Gabon , as were most criminals of the case . He was not particularly popular during his political career , though according to Time , his arrest " ballooned him to heroic proportions in the eyes of the aroused public " . While serving his 10 years of labor , he was beaten regularly by prison guards . Besides Aubame , M 'ba imprisoned more than 150 of his opponents , most of whom were sentenced to 20 years of hard labor . The actor and the doctor were given 10 years of imprisonment each . While appealing for peace on 18 February , he pledged " no pardon or pity " to his enemies , but rather " total punishment " .

= = Later life = =

M 'ba 's successor as President , Omar Bongo , allowed the return of Aubame to Gabon in 1972 . Afterward , Aubame lived in Paris and removed himself from the world of politics . He did visit Libreville in 1981 , on which occasion Bongo appointed him " special adviser " ? a mostly honorary post . Although not a supporter of the Movement for National Renewal ( MORENA ) , his home was

bombed on 12 December 1984 by anti @-@ MORENA extremists . Aubame and his family barely escaped harm .

Aubame , whom journalist Ronald Matthews described as having " a curiously harsh voice , a severe appearance , and ... a stern character " , died in 1989 in Libreville . The French journalist Pierre Péan said that Aubame 's training " as a practicing Catholic and a customs official helped to make him an integrated man , one of whom political power was not an end in itself . " Michael C. Reed speculates that , had Aubame become president instead of M 'ba , he might have made the country more democratic . After his death , a Libreville high school was established in his name .

= = Awards and decorations = =

Médaille de la Résistance

Commandeur de la Légion d'honneur

I 'Étoile équatoriale ( Gabon )

I 'Étoile africaine ( Libéria )

I 'Ordre libérien de la Rédemption africaine

I 'Ordre national du Mérite du Niger

I 'Ordre national du Mérite centrafricain

I 'Ordre national du Mérite de Côte @-@ d'Ivoire

I 'Ordre national du Tchad

I 'Étoile noire du Bénin