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## ***Barotseland: the secessionist challenge to Zambia***

by GERALD L. CAPLAN\*

Few of the new nations of Africa lack, as part of their colonial heritage, their potential Biafras—hence the reluctance of most African states to recognise the secessionist Eastern Region of Nigeria. This article is concerned with one of them, the Barotse Province of Zambia, and attempts to illuminate the historical background of the situation, the motives of the Lozi ruling class in demanding secession, and the methods by which successive colonial and independent governments have met this challenge.

### ORIGINS OF THE DEMAND FOR SECESSION

The Lozi reached the upper Zambesi River, probably from the Congo basin, during the late seventeenth century. From this base they conquered outwards, until their empire encompassed some 25 other peoples, extending from Southern Rhodesia to the Congo and from Angola to the Kafue River. Although there has been considerable assimilation by 'pure Lozi' of members of their vassal tribes, those who lived in the flood-plain of the Zambesi—in *Bulozi* or Barotseland proper—have nevertheless always considered themselves a distinct and superior breed, a chosen people. This concept, a function partly of Lozi hegemony over this vast empire for nearly two centuries, was sanctified during the colonial era by the special status which, as we shall see, the Lozi ruling class was granted.

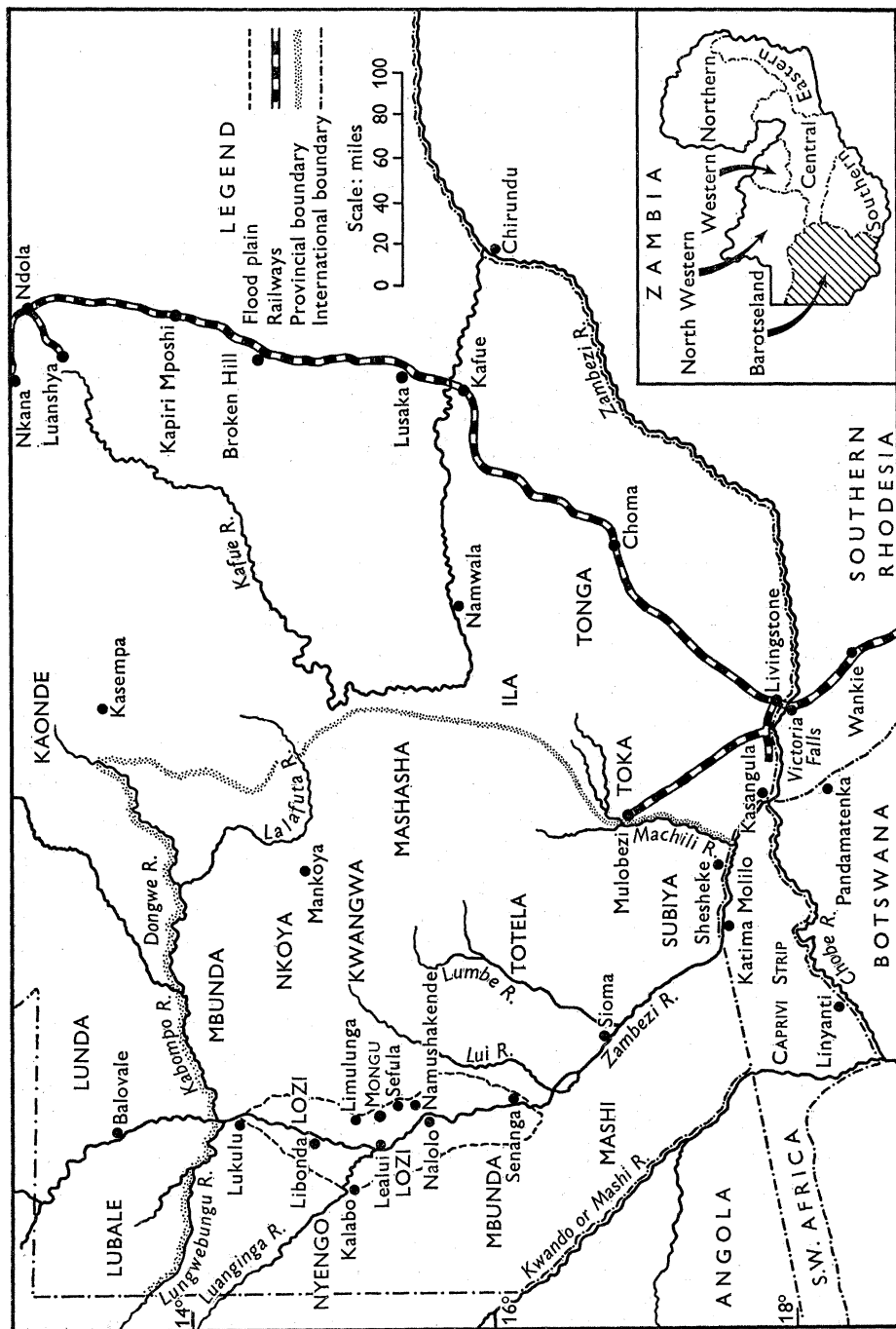
In 1880 the great Lozi King Lewanika (1878-84, 1885-1916), seeking protection against both internal enemies and the Ndebele from the south, signed the Lochner concession, putting his country under the 'protection' of the British South Africa Company.<sup>1</sup> Although the concession was to be 'considered in the light of a treaty between my said Barotse nation' and the British Government,<sup>2</sup> Barotseland was soon regarded by

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<sup>1</sup> See my forthcoming article, 'Barotseland's Scramble for Protection', in *The Journal of African History* (Cambridge).

<sup>2</sup> Reproduced in T. W. Baxter, 'The Concessions of Northern Rhodesia', in *National Archives of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, Occasional Papers* (Salisbury), 1 June 1963, p. 8.

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the administration as merely another unit, albeit a specially privileged one, of the larger territory of Northern Rhodesia.

Moreover, as Eric Stokes has shown, by 1914 Lewanika 'had lost whatever governing powers he had possessed...outside Barotseland proper, and even within his reserved territory he had no more than a limited subordinate jurisdiction'.<sup>1</sup> While the King's formal status was lofty, his real power was only moderately greater than that of other chiefs in Northern Rhodesia. The first half of the reign of Lewanika's son and successor, Yeta III (1916-45), witnessed a bitter struggle by the Lozi ruling class to retrieve some of the rights which Lewanika had been forced to surrender in return for retaining his throne. Neither the Company nor the Colonial Office, which assumed jurisdiction of Northern Rhodesia in 1924, would, however, yield to the Lozi demands. By the end of the 1920s the Lozi aristocracy grasped that its aspirations would remain unfulfilled, and decided instead that it would have to be satisfied with material manifestations of its elevated status; conspicuous consumption would have to compensate for the absence of real power.<sup>2</sup>

In seeking this alternative, the Lozi élite was more successful. The new orthodoxy of indirect rule redounded to its tangible benefit. It was true that, beneath the impressive façade of a state in alliance with the British crown, there lay the stark reality of a wholly undeveloped, almost poverty-stricken labour reserve, the major function of which was to supply the manpower needs of Southern Rhodesian farms and South African mines. Yet, thanks largely to government subsidies, the tiny clique at Lealui, the Lozi capital, thrived in considerable comfort. Moreover, it was the policy of the territorial Government fully to support the traditional Lozi ruling class.

As a result, the latter was persuaded that, if it hardly had the authority of former days, its position was at least demonstrably more satisfactory than that of most other tribal élites in Northern Rhodesia. So long as its special status within Northern Rhodesia was recognised, Barotseland's rulers remained co-operative. But, as they informed the Royal Commission of 1938-9, they were unequivocally opposed to any proposal for amalgamating the two Rhodesias so long as white settlers dominated the south.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Eric Stokes, 'Barotseland: the survival of an African state', in E. Stokes and R. Brown (eds.), *The Zambesian Past: studies in Central African history* (Manchester, 1966), p. 296.

<sup>2</sup> See my unpublished Ph.D. thesis, 'A Political History of Barotseland, 1875-1965' (University of London, 1968), chs. 5 and 6.

<sup>3</sup> *Report of the Rhodesia and Nyasaland Royal Commission* [Bledisloe Report], Cmd. 5949 (London, 1939), pp. 168-9, 175-6, 218 and 235-6.

By the end of World War Two, under Yeta's half-brother and successor, Imwiko (1945-8), this position had not only hardened but had been channelled into a demand for a positive alternative: should amalgamation take place, the Lozi would demand to secede from Northern Rhodesia and to be made a genuinely self-governing protectorate along the lines of the High Commission Territories of southern Africa, 'such as Lewanika always wanted'.<sup>1</sup>

This Lozi stance was in no way moderated by the accession in 1948 of Imwiko's half-brother Mwanawina II, who quickly revealed that his strong loyalty to the Crown and Empire was a very different matter indeed from accepting the whims of the territory's white community. As a result, first the Governor of Northern Rhodesia, A. F. B. Rennie, and then Arthur Creech-Jones, Labour's Secretary of State for the Colonies, appeared in Barotseland to reassure the Lealui élite that its prerogatives would remain inviolate should amalgamation be decided upon.<sup>2</sup>

Clearly the Government feared alienating the most famous tribe in central Africa. The Lozi ruling class saw an opportunity to exploit this fact. It already possessed considerable wealth.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps it could now use its bargaining position to retrieve some of its former powers as well. Within months of his accession, Mwanawina had a petition drawn up setting out the many grievances of the Lealui clique and demanding the restoration of earlier prerogatives and privileges. The petition accordingly sought increased authority for the Kuta (National Council), the right to appoint and dismiss all employees of the Barotseland Native Authorities, full control over the Native Treasury, and the return of large blocs of territory which had been unilaterally excised by both the Company and the Colonial Office administrations.<sup>4</sup>

For its own reasons, the Government in fact had little alternative but to make some concessions: for it was considered critical, in order to influence other chiefs as well as African opinion generally, to win

<sup>1</sup> Fox-Pitt, 'Report on Barotse Province', *Northern Rhodesia Native Affairs Annual Report*—hereafter *N.R.N.A.A.R.* (Lusaka, 1947), p. 71; Frank Worthington to Paramount Chief Imwiko, 27 September 1947, in National Archives of Zambia, KDE 2/43/1; Minutes of the National Council Meeting, 4 and 5 June 1948, in Barotse Province Files, Mongu Boma (hereafter Boma Files), Barotse Native Authorities Conference.

<sup>2</sup> A. F. B. Glennie, 'Reports', in *N.R.N.A.A.R.* (1948), pp. 70-1, and (1949), p. 82; also M. E. Berger, who was a missionary in Barotseland for the Protestant Missionary Society, 1934-49, 1961-6.

<sup>3</sup> See Glennie, 'The Barotse System of Government', in *The Journal of African Administration* (London), iv, 1, January 1952, p. 13; Glennie, 'A Note on the Barotse Province and Some Current Questions', 25 August 1952, Boma Files; see also L. H. Gann, *A History of Northern Rhodesia: early days to 1953* (London, 1964), p. 385.

<sup>4</sup> Cited in Glennie, 'A Note on the Barotse Province'.

Mwanawina's approval for the proposal to federate the two Rhodesias and Nyasaland. Predictably, therefore, Governor Rennie soon announced that the jurisdiction of the paramount chief's court was being extended;<sup>1</sup> while shortly thereafter the Conservative Colonial Secretary, Harry Hopkinson, flew to Lealui to announce his concurrence with the recent proposal that the area's protected status be formalised by making Barotse Province the 'Barotseland protectorate' within the larger protectorate of Northern Rhodesia.<sup>2</sup>

Notwithstanding these concessions, however, the Lozi ruling class remained openly hostile to any scheme associating Barotseland with Southern Rhodesia.<sup>3</sup> In April 1953 Governor Rennie again flew to Barotseland. He first addressed a public meeting of about 500 people, of whom precisely eight raised their voices in favour of Federation.<sup>4</sup> He then conferred privately and at length with Mwanawina and his senior advisers. According to the then Ngambela (chief councillor), Walubita, Rennie used 'words to cheat us'.<sup>5</sup> The Governor stressed repeatedly that, since the Queen approved of the Federation, opposition to it was tantamount to being disloyal to the Crown. Mwanawina later said that he was unable to resist this argument.<sup>6</sup> Having received a pledge that Barotseland's rights were to be enshrined in the federal constitution and that an order in council would formally declare it the 'Barotseland Protectorate',<sup>7</sup> the paramount chief and Kuta announced that they would not oppose Federation,<sup>8</sup> and officers of the central Government promptly began spreading the news of this decision in order to 'give a lead to other more hesitant tribes'.<sup>9</sup>

In like circumstances, the Kabaka of Buganda had refused to accept any prospective federation of the East African territories on the ground that he was protecting African interests against European intruders. For his stand, he was temporarily deposed and deported. He thereby greatly increased his public popularity and, as a direct consequence,

<sup>1</sup> Glennie, 'Report', in *N.R.N.A.A.R.* (1952), p. 86.

<sup>2</sup> Hopkinson's speech of 5 August 1952, reported in Northern Rhodesian Information Department Press Communiqué no. 626.

<sup>3</sup> Record of Meeting between Secretary of State and Chief and Council, 2 August 1952, in Boma Files, Proposals for Closer Association between Central African Territories Dossier.

<sup>4</sup> Rev. J. P. Burger to Director, 29 April 1953, in Paris Missionary Society Sefula Archives.

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Mr Walubita.

<sup>6</sup> The version of this story given by Mwanawina to Harry Franklin, *Unholy Wedlock: the failure of the Central African Federation* (London, 1963), p. 220, is identical almost to the word with that given me by Walubita many years later.

<sup>7</sup> Copy of Rennie's address to the Legislative Council, 16 April 1953, in Boma Files, Closer Association Dossier.

<sup>8</sup> Cited in notice from Glennie to all Barotse Province District Commissioners, 20 April 1933; *ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Glennie's 'Report', in *N.R.N.A.A.R.* (1953), pp. 93-4.

his authority, a factor significantly affecting the position of Buganda in pre-independent Uganda and, briefly, independent Uganda.<sup>1</sup>

Because Mwanawina's decision ran counter to the apparent interests and declared wishes of his people, he effectively isolated himself from all his subjects save the tiny clique which constituted the ruling class. During the nationalist struggle of the early 1960s, he was shown to be highly unpopular with the large majority of his people, thus rendering it virtually impossible for the British Government to uphold his interests against those of the African nationalists. The responsibility for this rested wholly with him and his advisers. For they too remained suspicious of the white leaders of the new Federation, yet at no time did they attempt to reach an accommodation with their natural allies.

This was a tactical area of the greatest consequence. For, even after 1953, Mwanawina might have salvaged something of his personal standing. Had he made concessions to his moderate, élitist, internal opponents during the remainder of the decade, they might not have aligned themselves with the nationalists against him. Had he later agreed to cooperate with the latter, he might have won for himself a position in Zambia comparable to that temporarily achieved by the Kabaka in independent Uganda. But his unyielding intransigence assured the ultimate destruction of the remaining rump of a formerly powerful empire.

The Lealui aristocracy continued throughout the decade to oppose Roy Welensky's demands for a fully self-governing Federation;<sup>2</sup> but the Federal Government perceived that in fact it had in Mwanawina a potential ally against the forces of African nationalism. In May 1958 Welensky paid a formal visit to Barotseland, where he guaranteed the paramount chief and Kuta against any interference in their affairs by his Government.<sup>3</sup> Many Lozi resented any dealings with Welensky,<sup>4</sup> but Mwanawina was prepared to disregard their protests in the knowledge that his position was solidly supported by the white officials of the territorial Government.<sup>5</sup> Conclusive public evidence of the esteem in which the traditional Lozi rulers were held came at the beginning of

<sup>1</sup> D. A. Low and R. C. Pratt, *Buganda and British Overrule* (London, 1960), app. 1; and A. I. Richards, 'Epilogue', in L. A. Fallers, *The King's Men* (London, 1964), pp. 359-64.

<sup>2</sup> *Northern News* (Lusaka), 18 November 1957; and Gervase Clay, 'Report', in *N.R.N.A.A.R.* (1958), p. 80.

<sup>3</sup> *Northern News*, 20 May 1958.

<sup>4</sup> According to Lifunana Imasiku, who later became personal secretary to the paramount chief and whose father was Ngambela from 1956 to 1962.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Clay, 'Report', in *N.R.N.A.A.R.* (1958), pp. 79-80; and M. G. Billing of the Lusaka secretariat, 'Government Policy in the Utilisation of Indigenous Political Systems', in Raymond Apthorpe (ed.), *From Tribal Rule to Modern Government* (Lusaka, 1959), pp. 1-3 and 11.

1959, when the Queen's New Year Honours List included the paramount chief, who now became Sir Mwanawina Lewanika III, K.B.E.—the first and last African in Central Africa so to be honoured.<sup>1</sup>

Mwanawina thus appeared to be at the pinnacle of his career. Indeed, he enjoyed more prestige and privileges than any of his predecessors since the first Company Administrator arrived in Barotseland in 1897. His conservative and isolationist policies had made him indisputably the most important chief in the Federation. Honoured by the Queen, flattered by government officials, wooed by the Prime Minister of the Federation personally, his position seemed as impregnable as that of the Federation itself.

Above all, Mwanawina and Welensky shared the conviction that African nationalism represented the greatest threat to their respective positions. The British Government appeared to the Lozi ruling class more likely to uphold its special status than did Kenneth Kaunda's militant United National Independence Party (U.N.I.P.). Accordingly, all political parties were barred from operating in Lealui, and U.N.I.P. was refused permission to hold meetings therein.<sup>2</sup>

Mwanawina was not yet prepared, however, to join with white racialists against black nationalists. Apparently at the urging of Godwin Mbikusita, the self-proclaimed son of King Lewanika who had in 1959 become a member of the Federal Assembly supporting Welensky, the paramount chief renewed his demands for secession.<sup>3</sup> When news of this move leaked out, a tremendous uproar ensued. U.N.I.P. leaders agreed with the interpretation of the *Northern News*, a newspaper which supported Welensky, that the decision revealed the Lozi rulers to be as hostile to African nationalism as to white domination.<sup>4</sup>

The Ngambela, Akabeswa Imasiku, hotly denied that secession was a reaction to the increasing likelihood of a nationalist victory. Such a contingency, he asserted, was quite irrelevant, since 'We do not consider ourselves a part of Northern Rhodesia or as a protectorate within a protectorate. We are a different country and a different people. We have our own Government.'<sup>5</sup> As a statement of fact, this declaration was entirely accurate. So far as Lealui was concerned, Barotseland's attachment to Northern Rhodesia was merely fortuitous, an administrative device which, as has been noted, had been originally initiated by the British South African Company for its own convenience. Barotseland

<sup>1</sup> Richard Hall, *Zambia* (London, 1965), p. 238.

<sup>2</sup> Under Order no. 8, Public Meetings, in *Barotse Native Government Orders and Rules* (Lusaka, 1957), p. 11, English version.

<sup>3</sup> Hall, *op. cit.* p. 240; and G. Clay, *Annual Report on the Barotseland Protectorate* (1960).

<sup>4</sup> *Northern News*, 3 December 1960.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* 2 December 1960.



had existed as an independent national entity long before the creation of Northern Rhodesia, and was legally and historically entitled to maintain or to dissolve the attachment as its rulers wished.

In terms of political reality, however, historical rights were beside the point. Even the *Northern News*, hostile but almost reconciled to black rule in the future, recognised this truth. It cogently pointed out the fundamental weakness of the Lozi position: the demand for Barotseland's independence if there were an African government could, it foresaw, 'develop into a full scale secession conflict on the lines of Buganda or Katanga. Poor, primitive and isolated, the "protectorate within a protectorate" scarcely occupies the same key position as these two secessionist provinces do in Uganda and the Congo.'<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, as the newspaper went on to acknowledge, Barotseland represented 'a remnant of old-style tribal rule which offends modern pan-African thinking'. Above all, Lealui's stand was intolerable to those U.N.I.P. leaders who were Lozi—not least, perhaps, because a number of them, particularly Arthur and Sikota Wina, were themselves Lozi aristocrats with profound personal grievances against the paramount chief. On the initiative of these men, the Barotse Anti-Secession Movement (B.A.S.M.O.) was formed in Lusaka late in 1960;<sup>2</sup> their leaders spoke for the majority of Lozi in the towns along the line of rail, who appeared to be antagonistic to the Lealui clique.<sup>3</sup> They warned the Government that, if Barotseland were allowed to secede, the 'chaos and discord' which would ensue would be 'much worse' than that which had followed Katanga's secession from the Congo.<sup>4</sup>

Undeterred by such threats, the paramount chief and the Ngambela flew to London for special talks with Iain MacLeod, the Colonial Secretary, who informed them that secession would not serve the best interests of Barotseland. Clearly the British Government was not prepared so to appease the Lozi that it would risk facing the wrath of the nationalists. MacLeod did, however, reconfirm yet again Britain's commitments to uphold the integrity of Barotseland and its traditional rulers, and further announced that, in order to elevate him above his peers, the Lozi paramount chief would henceforth be distinguished with the supreme title of the Lozi themselves—the *Litunga* (earth, owner of the land) of the Barotseland Protectorate.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Northern News*, 6 December 1960. Pratt had earlier made the same distinction between Buganda and Barotseland in Low and Pratt, op. cit. pp. 299–300.

<sup>2</sup> *African Mail* (Lusaka), 22 November 1960.

<sup>3</sup> Prince Ngombala Lubita, a member of the Lozi royal family and one of B.A.S.M.O.'s original officers.

<sup>4</sup> *African Mail*, 27 December 1960.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* 18 July 1961; *Northern News*, 22 April 1961; and Heath, *Annual Report* (1961).

This compromise satisfied no one. The Litunga still demanded secession, while U.N.I.P. saw the new concessions as part of an imperialist plot to divide and rule.<sup>1</sup> With full Boma support, the Lealui Government continued to provoke U.N.I.P. by persecuting its local adherents and deporting its organisers arriving from Lusaka, to which the nationalists reacted by intensifying their campaign to penetrate Barotseland.<sup>2</sup>

The more hostile towards Mwanawina U.N.I.P. became, the more valuable an ally did he appear to Roy Welensky. Lifunana Imasiku, the Litunga's personal secretary and son of the Ngambela, claims to have met Welensky in Salisbury early in 1962. The Prime Minister suggested to him a plan for a new federation, incorporating Southern Rhodesia, the Copperbelt, Katanga, and Barotseland. Welensky is said to have offered to arrange a meeting between the Litunga and Tshombe, but Mwanawina rejected the scheme, fearing it would alienate his white friends in Lusaka and London. Welensky was undeterred, however, and in February 1962 put roughly the same proposition to Duncan Sandys, the Colonial Secretary: he would agree to the secession of Nyasaland and North-Eastern Rhodesia in return for a new federation in which Southern Rhodesia would provide the talent, the Copperbelt the wealth, and Barotseland the labour as well as a co-operative African ruler.<sup>3</sup>

As Harry Franklin later wrote, the entire scheme was 'so manifestly absurd in the context of African politics that none of us in the Northern Rhodesian Government took it seriously'.<sup>4</sup> Sandys, however, apparently adopted the idea of a new federation with Barotseland as its Bantustan. Accompanied by Godwin Mbikusita, who had become one of Welensky's two African parliamentary secretaries, he flew to Barotseland, conferred with the Litunga, and left with a signed document formally requesting Barotseland's secession from Northern Rhodesia 'while remaining within the Federation'.<sup>5</sup>

#### U.N.I.P. AND THE PRESSURE FOR NATIONAL UNITY

To U.N.I.P. these negotiations were merely a transparent manoeuvre to 'play off' the Lozi rulers against the nationalists.<sup>6</sup> Sikota Wina, U.N.I.P.'s publicity chief, declared: 'If Mwanawina breaks away he

<sup>1</sup> *Northern News*, 5 and 14 April 1966.

<sup>2</sup> Heath, *Annual Report* (1961); *African Mail*, 13 June, 25 July, and 12 September 1961; *Northern News*, 16 May 1961; and Hastings Noyoo, one of the earliest U.N.I.P. supporters in Barotseland, who later became Ngambela.

<sup>3</sup> Sir Roy Welensky, *Welensky's Four Thousand Days* (London, 1964), pp. 318 and 322-3.

<sup>4</sup> Harry Franklin, *op. cit.* p. 219.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 216-22; *African Mail*, 20 February 1962; and *Northern News*, 26 February 1962.

<sup>6</sup> *Central African Mail* (formerly *African Mail*), 6 March 1962.

will be doing so illegally and we will be justified in overthrowing him.' Sandys, however, soon reneged on the alleged agreement, announcing that it 'would not be in the interests of the Barotse people to pursue the question of separation at this stage'. Nevertheless, even after Sandys' repudiation of the scheme, secession—within or outside a federation—remained Lealui's demand, as Godwin Mbikusita busily intrigued behind the scenes, encouraging the Litunga not to capitulate.<sup>1</sup>

Immediately thereafter, Welensky and Mbikusita were informed by R. A. Butler that, while Northern Rhodesian and Nyasaland would be permitted to secede from the Federation, Barotseland could not secede from Northern Rhodesia.<sup>2</sup> The Lozi ruling class therefore considered that it had no alternative but to turn for support to its erstwhile worst enemies—the local white settlers—against both the British Government and the threatening alien Africans.

The Boma, believing that U.N.I.P. had little public following in Barotseland, was putting pressure on Mwanawina to allow the party to run candidates in the area for the forthcoming territorial elections.<sup>3</sup> The National Council agreed that, if candidates supporting its policies defeated the nationalists in the election, Britain would be obliged to concede the demand for secession. The Council therefore decided to open Barotseland to party organisers;<sup>4</sup> and several of its members took the initiative in creating 'a party pledged to free Barotseland from U.N.I.P. rule and make it not a part of Northern Rhodesia'.<sup>5</sup> Mwanawina and his *indunas* were only dissuaded from officially endorsing the new Sicaba (National) Party by the Resident Commissioner.<sup>6</sup> No one hindered the party's officials, however, from accepting for the election campaign three Land Rovers, £200 in cash, and the assistance of George Addicott, a public relations man from Salisbury, all provided by 'friends' of Godwin Mbikusita who had 'pledged themselves to secede Barotseland from Northern Rhodesia'.<sup>7</sup>

None of this outside assistance was, however, sufficient to prevent overwhelming victories for Arthur Wina and Mubiana Nalilungwe, the U.N.I.P. candidates. Moreover, the humiliation of this stunning defeat for the Litunga and his clique was swiftly compounded by the determination of the new U.N.I.P.—African National Congress coalition

<sup>1</sup> *Central African Mail*, 27 February, 6 and 27 March 1962.

<sup>2</sup> Welensky, *op. cit.* pp. 360–1.

<sup>3</sup> Informant 'X'—a senior British official at the main government centre (Boma) in Mongu, who asked not to be identified.

<sup>4</sup> *Northern News*, 12 May 1962.

<sup>5</sup> Copy of letter dated 27 November 1962, from F. L. Suu, Y. Mupatu, and L. Mufungulwa to the Litunga, 27 November 1962, shown to me by Mupatu. The three men were among the founders of the new party.

<sup>6</sup> According to informant 'X'.

<sup>7</sup> Letter of 27 November 1962; and *Central African Mail*, 23 October 1962.

Government in Lusaka to initiate reforms in the Barotse Government. Mwanawina was informed that the Katengo, one of the traditional councils of Lozi government, must become an elected body.<sup>1</sup> It was announced in Lealui that the necessary election would be held;<sup>2</sup> but the Litunga manoeuvred to avoid holding it, since he no longer faced the outcome with equanimity. Indeed, U.N.I.P.'s victories in 1962 had made secession seem more vital than ever, and Mwanawina managed to secure an invitation to meet R. A. Butler in London. His hopes, however, were soon dashed. As the *Northern News* understood, after the 1962 election 'Britain can only conclude that the Litunga's monarchy is an anachronism and that, like others in Africa, it must eventually yield'. If this meant reneging on earlier commitments to Lewanika, political realities allowed no other solution.<sup>3</sup>

Butler told the Litunga that Britain could not afford to support Barotseland financially if it were divorced from Northern Rhodesia;<sup>4</sup> and the Lozi delegation dejectedly returned home for the Katengo elections set for 15 August 1963. Since universal suffrage now obtained, the election would establish whether the Litunga could legitimately claim to represent his subjects in a democratic sense. 'The real issue', as the *Northern News* saw, 'is the constitutional future of Barotseland.'<sup>5</sup>

The results gave U.N.I.P. a victory exceeding its own most optimistic predictions. Eight of its candidates had won by acclamation; every one of the remaining 17 candidates was successful, collectively gaining 84 per cent of the 25,000 votes cast.<sup>6</sup> Arthur Wina declared: 'If ever there was a danger of a Tshombe emerging on the Northern Rhodesian political scene, the elections had nipped his growth in the bud.' He then demanded radical reforms of the Barotse Government and immediate discussion of 'the future of the treaties between Lewanika and the British Crown... in an independent and free Zambia'.<sup>7</sup>

#### THE CAMPAIGN FOR SPECIAL STATUS

The Litunga clearly feared these new developments. His own subjects having deserted him, he again turned to Europeans in his struggle against the nationalists. He began a correspondence with Patrick Wall and Roland Bell, members of Parliament, and S. B. Cook, a lawyer in London, all Conservatives and known supporters of Tshombe, asking

<sup>1</sup> *Central African Mail*, 29 January 1963.

<sup>2</sup> Rawlins, *Annual Report* (1963); and *Northern News*, 20 February, 16 May, 1 June, 11 July, and 2 August 1963.

<sup>3</sup> *Northern News*, 11 July and 2 August 1963.

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Sir Mwanawina.

<sup>5</sup> *Northern News*, 15 August 1962.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* 22 August 1962.

<sup>7</sup> *Central African Mail*, 24 August 1963.

them to put pressure on their government to allow Barotseland to secede.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, through Mbikusita, L. K. Wilson, a Salisbury lawyer, was invited to delve in the Lealui archives for evidence to bolster the ruling class's demands.<sup>2</sup> Wilson duly produced three documents, the first recording the many British guarantees of Barotseland's status, the second presenting the Lozi case for a self-governing protectorate, the third offering a detailed written constitution for the new 'Protectorate of Barotseland'.<sup>3</sup>

Although secession thus remained the objective, the tactic in public was to concede its impracticability and to call instead for a kind of semi-independent status for Barotseland, which would continue to share 'common services' with Zambia.<sup>4</sup> When, therefore, a Lozi delegation met representatives of the central Government in Livingstone in September 1963, the traditionalist contingent predictably argued that, if Barotseland were to remain part of Zambia at all, it must be on the condition of virtually complete local autonomy. Less expected was the support this stand received from the delegation's elected Katengo councillors—all of course U.N.I.P. members. Attempting to be both Lozi patriots and Zambian nationalists, they differed from the Litunga's appointees only in degree, not in kind. They wished to remain 'part and parcel' of Zambia, but with Barotseland's special status left intact. In order to preclude a complete breakdown between Lusaka and Lealui and the possibility of a consequent postponement of the imminent elections preceding full independence, the central government representatives reluctantly agreed that the 'final' discussion of Barotseland's relationship with Zambia should be postponed to a later date.<sup>5</sup>

When, however, U.N.I.P. swept the national elections of January 1964, winning all ten of Barotseland's seats,<sup>6</sup> the Litunga again turned actively to the prospects for outright separation. During the 1963 election campaign, U.N.I.P. leaders had accused Lealui of seeking the aid of South Africa, Portugal, and Southern Rhodesia against the nationalists.<sup>7</sup> In January 1964, Prince Ngombala Lubita, Mwanawina's nephew, undertook a journey apparently to determine if assistance from these sources would be forthcoming.<sup>8</sup> The Litunga arranged that W.N.L.A.,

<sup>1</sup> Informant 'X'.

<sup>2</sup> L. Imasiku.

<sup>3</sup> The three documents, all in private hands, are entitled: 'Historical Record of Assurances Given of Barotseland's Rights', undated; 'The Lozi Case for a Protectorate', 1963; and 'Barotseland Constitution', 1963, respectively.

<sup>4</sup> Informant 'X'.

<sup>5</sup> *Northern News*, 13 September 1963; Rawlins, *Annual Report* (1963); and H. Noyoo.

<sup>6</sup> *Central African Mail*, 24 January 1964.

<sup>7</sup> *Northern News*, 11 June 1965.

<sup>8</sup> The fact of this journey is confirmed by informant 'X' of the Boma, and also by a senior member of the Litunga's staff, who must be called informant 'Y'.

the local labour recruiting agency for the Rand mines, should provide the Prince with a free air journey to Johannesburg. W.N.L.A. was at this time recruiting some 5,000–6,000 men annually from Barotseland for South Africa, where they earned about £5 a month.<sup>1</sup> Lubita carried with him a letter from the Litunga to Gemmill, W.N.L.A.'s general manager in South Africa, asking that W.N.L.A.'s attestation fee to the Native Government be raised from 11s. 6d. to 24s. per head, an increase of about £5,000 a year, and concluding, 'It is my wish and my people's wish that we continue with our friendship as it was before.'<sup>2</sup>

Lubita claims to have met Gemmill in Johannesburg. W.N.L.A. must already have been concerned that the U.N.I.P. Government would repudiate its contract to recruit cheap labour in Barotseland;<sup>3</sup> and Lubita underlined for Gemmill the threat implied in Mwanawina's letter. As a result, W.N.L.A. agreed to raise its attestation fee as the letter requested.<sup>4</sup>

Lubita also claims that the Litunga wished him to visit sympathetic government officials in South Africa, Rhodesia, Portugal, and France to seek financial and military aid for the Lozi class. He insists that from South Africa he was flown in a private plane to Paris and 'other places', but has refused to divulge further details; no other source has either corroborated or repudiated this story. But informant 'Y', a confidant of the Litunga, confirmed Lubita's claim to have met a representative of the Verwoerd Government in Katima Molilo, in the Caprivi Strip on the border of Barotseland, on his return journey in March 1964, for the purpose of obtaining South African military and financial assistance for Barotseland. Here Lubita ended his story, but informant 'Y' went on to say that the South African representative agreed to station troops in Katima Molilo, preparatory to a military invasion of Barotseland to 'free' it from Zambia. A South African police depot was in fact established at Katima Molilo immediately thereafter, but the Litunga in the end refused to endorse this bizarre scheme for making Barotseland another of South Africa's Bantustans.

Instead, at a meeting in Lusaka in April 1964, he insisted that recognition of Barotseland's special status be incorporated in the Zambian constitution. In the face of a united front of elected and traditionalist

<sup>1</sup> *Northern Rhodesian Labour Department, Annual Report* (Lusaka, 1960), and Richard Bailey, W.N.L.A. Representative, Barotseland, 1950–66.

<sup>2</sup> Lubita showed me a copy of this letter, undated, bearing the Litunga's official seal.

<sup>3</sup> Which it in fact did in 1967.

<sup>4</sup> R. Bailey of W.N.L.A. in Mongu denied this, but Lubita's claim was confirmed by L. Imasiku, the Litunga's private secretary, and Griffiths Mukande, treasurer of the Native Government until 1963.

councillors, the central Government was forced to accept Barotseland's special status,<sup>1</sup> but the line was drawn at enshrining that status in the constitution. No other people in the territory had received as much attention as had the Lozi in the nationalists' advance towards full independence, and to single them out in the constitution would be flouting the U.N.I.P. motto, 'One Zambia, One Nation', to an extent the party deemed intolerable. As a compromise, the Litunga and Kenneth Kaunda agreed upon a formal treaty to be signed by the British, Barotse, and Northern Rhodesian Governments.<sup>2</sup>

Accordingly, on 15 May 1964, the Litunga and representatives of each of the two factions in the Native Government flew to London to meet Kaunda and Duncan Sandys, now the minister responsible for Central Africa. Kaunda was prepared to abide by the Lusaka agreement, but would on no condition agree to its entrenchment in the constitution. On the advice of Roland Bell, a Conservative M.P., the Lozi delegation agreed to a separate treaty.<sup>3</sup> On 18 May, Kaunda and Mwanawina signed the Barotseland Agreement, Duncan Sandys adding his signature but only as a witness. Its purpose was to formalise Barotseland's position within Zambia, in place of the earlier agreements between Britain and the Lozi, which would be terminated when Northern Rhodesia became fully independent in October. To this end, Barotseland was to become an integral part of Zambia, but with its traditional rights preserved, the Litunga retaining powers over local government matters greater than those conceded to any other chief in Zambia.<sup>4</sup>

The reason Kaunda was prepared to grant such privileges to the Lozi is quite clear. As Clement Zaza, U.N.I.P.'s political assistant in Barotseland, openly acknowledged a year later: 'The Barotseland London Agreement was agreed upon merely as a passport to enable Zambia [to] integrate Barotseland and proceed to Independence as one country. After all, the Zambian Government has no moral obligation whatsoever to respect or honour the said agreement.'<sup>5</sup>

The three African factions represented in London, then, held contradictory views of the future implications of the agreement. To the U.N.I.P. Government, it was a simple expedient which could, if necessary, be repudiated in imposing its authority over the country. To the

<sup>1</sup> *Northern News*, 20 April 1964.

<sup>2</sup> L. K. Wilson to Mwanawina, 20 April 1964, and Kaunda to Mwanawina, 20 April 1964, in Boma Files, Negotiations with Central Government Dossier.

<sup>3</sup> Ngambela H. Noyoo and informant 'X'.

<sup>4</sup> *The Barotseland Agreement, 1964*, Cmd. 2366 (London, 1964).

<sup>5</sup> Cited in a letter dated 23 June 1965 from Ngambela Noyoo to President Kaunda, Boma Files, Negotiations with Central Government Dossier; Mr Zaza made the same comments to me personally.

Litunga, it was an instrument for preserving the traditional prerogatives of the Lozi ruling class. To the elected Lozi councillors, it was a further step towards usurping the positions and privileges of the hereditary élite. There was never any doubt that, in the end, Zambia was going to rule Barotseland. U.N.I.P. was initially prepared to allow this process to develop gradually and gently, but the intransigence and uncooperative attitude of both factions of the National Council ensured that it came swiftly, brutally, and definitively.

The issues at stake were clear-cut. The central Government demanded, first, that the Barotse Native Government be democratised and, secondly, that its members should co-operate in U.N.I.P.'s development programme for Barotseland. In January 1965, with only a handful of U.N.I.P. loyalists dissenting, the Barotse National Council announced that the time was not propitious for reforming the local government; indeed, the Council declared, its real objective was to make Barotseland a 'sister state' of Zambia, part of a loose federation in which the Zambian Government paid the bills—it was already contributing some £270,000 annually to the Barotse Government<sup>1</sup>—but would have no control over Lozi affairs. Moreover, funds allocated by Lusaka to the Lozi authorities in December 1964 were, by the middle of the following year still untouched.<sup>2</sup> In May 1965 the Government announced that £1,500,000 was to be spent in Barotseland under its transitional development plan,<sup>3</sup> and there was a real fear in Lusaka that the implementation of the various projects would be forestalled by the National Council.

On 28 May the Council decided to refuse all further co-operation with Lusaka, and Ngambela Noyoo—a U.N.I.P. member—was given authority to seek widespread publicity for the grievances of the Lealui élite. In June, Zambian newspapers were printing sensational stories of the rift between Barotseland and the central Government. A number of senior ministers, led by Arthur Wina, flew to Barotseland, where Wina informed the Ngambela that the National Council members must either co-operate or go to jail. Noyoo agreed;<sup>4</sup> and Wina publicly announced that the Council had apologised for 'misinterpreting the Government's policy'.<sup>5</sup>

Nineteen days later the Ngambela openly repudiated the apology.<sup>6</sup> This was the nationalists' breaking point. As a direct consequence of Noyoo's statement, Lusaka decided to introduce a local government bill

<sup>1</sup> *Northern News*, 11 June 1965.

<sup>2</sup> John Stewart, Senior Provincial Local Government Officer in Barotseland, October 1964 to December 1965.

<sup>3</sup> *Central African Mail*, 14 May 1965.

<sup>5</sup> *Northern News*, 10 June 1965.

<sup>4</sup> J. Stewart.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* 29 June 1965.



abolishing the National Council and replacing it with five district councils.<sup>1</sup> 'Just Another Chief Now', headlined a newspaper,<sup>2</sup> and this assessment was accurate. The Litunga lost the right to appoint councillors and judges, his control of the Barotse Treasury, and his right to reject legislation of which he disapproved. The central Government was to pay the salaries of the royal family, and the President's office itself was to provide his own annual income of £10,000.<sup>3</sup> In short, as he fully understood, Mwanawina's power base was cut from under him and he was totally dependent on the men he was trying to resist.<sup>4</sup>

The reaction in Lealui was predictably furious. Chiefs and *indunas* immediately began discussing means of resisting the new measures. They considered starting a new party to promote their interests and, failing to grasp either the constitutional or the political realities, they began writing letters to friends in London demanding the intervention of the British Government.<sup>5</sup> Although some councillors understood that they were provoking potentially dire consequences for themselves, a vocal minority attempted to persuade the Litunga that all was not lost. One senior councillor, Induna Luyanga, openly told me that the Lozi had many white friends in London, Washington, Katanga, and Johannesburg to whom they could still appeal, and that, if Barotseland was to be destroyed, their friends would help them destroy Zambia in the process. He and others, I was told, were fact trying to persuade the Litunga to write the necessary letters calling for the aid of these 'friends'.<sup>6</sup>

In truth, it was far too late; all was lost. The Government was quite prepared, had the need arisen, simply to arrest and imprison all the dissidents. In October 1965 the local government bill came into force, and Sikota Wina, the Lozi Minister of Local Government, announced the names of the members he had nominated to the five district councils which replaced the National Council.<sup>7</sup> Shortly before, Parliament had approved the Chiefs Act, empowering the President unilaterally to recognise or depose any chief in Zambia as he deemed fitting. The Litunga of Barotseland was explicitly mentioned as falling under the provisions of the Act;<sup>8</sup> and there was little reason to doubt, first, that it would be applied if Lealui continued as a centre of opposition to

<sup>1</sup> J. Stewart.

<sup>2</sup> *Zambian Mail* (formerly *Central African Mail*), 3 September 1965.

<sup>3</sup> *Times of Zambia* (formerly *Northern News*), 22 September 1965.

<sup>4</sup> Letter of 20 September 1965 from Ngambela Noyoo to John Stewart, in private hands.

<sup>5</sup> Prince Ngombala Lubita; informant 'Y' of the Native Government; also my notes of a meeting between John Stewart and 55 Chiefs and *indunas* at Lealui, 27 August 1965.

<sup>6</sup> Informant 'Y'.

<sup>7</sup> *Times of Zambia*, 30 October 1965.

<sup>8</sup> Government of Zambia, Act no. 67 of 1965.

Lusaka, and, secondly, that Mwanawina's successor would need the full endorsement of the central Government.

It is true that there was a recrudescence of secessionist rhetoric in the latter part of 1967, after senior Lozi in the Cabinet suffered a setback in elections to the U.N.I.P. central committee. Nothing materialised, however, of a rumoured *entente* between the Wina brothers and the Litunga, and President Kaunda appeared at the annual *Kuomboka* ceremony to symbolise the continued authority of the central Government over Barotseland.



Given the Lozi heritage and the self-consciousness of its traditional élite, it is not unlikely that secessionist sentiments will long exist and sporadically manifest themselves in overt challenges to the cohesion of the nation-state. Yet it is almost wholly impossible to conceive of Barotseland as an entity separate from Zambia. In retrospect, one can see that the destruction of the old kingdom and its formal integration as one of Zambia's seven provinces was the logically necessary result of the initiative taken by King Lewanika eight decades earlier. The British South Africa Company had decimated the Lozi empire, and it was the policy neither of the Company nor the British Government to develop modern nations in black Africa. In consequence, Barotseland had long before been transformed into a backward, isolated, wholly undeveloped, and essentially insignificant labour reserve, comprising only one-sixth of the land mass and containing less than one-tenth of the population of Zambia. As Cranford Pratt observed in 1958, Barotseland 'has none of the influence or power *vis-à-vis* the central Government which Buganda enjoys because of her dominant position economically, politically and culturally within Uganda.'<sup>1</sup>

Yet it is unlikely that even a dynamic pattern of development could have reversed Barotseland's fate. Not even larger and economically more viable kingdoms like those of the Baganda and the Ashanti could escape the inexorable fate implicit in the nationalist creed. Nor is ethnic pride an adequate weapon with which to resist the power available to a modern government. Numerous other factors account for the ability of Biafra to survive militarily for as long as it has against the Nigerian Federal Government. But virtually none of these factors obtain in the Lozi case. Given its particular social structure and its insignificant place in Zambia, it is quite inconceivable that Barotseland could muster a fighting force that would be anything but farcical. It is, of course, a

<sup>1</sup> Low and Pratt, *op. cit.* p. 299.

potential 'fifth column', should war ensue between the white-dominated nations south of the Zambesi and the independent nations north of the river, and would have to be treated accordingly. In the meanwhile, 'One Zambia, One Nation' remains theoretically irreconcilable with the continued existence of a privileged tribal élite on the upper Zambesi, and the failure of that élite to attempt to accommodate itself to the new order assured for it in practice a minimal role in the development of the nation.