

ZAIRE

Predicament and Prospects

A Report to the Minority Rights Group (USA)
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SUMMARY

For more than five years, the people of Zaire have struggled to survive in a state on the brink of utter collapse. Amid growing economic disarray and infrastructural breakdown, standards of living have plummeted, moral and ethical standards have withered, and violence has risen. Political authority is almost hopelessly fragmented and discredited. The massive inflow and outflow of Hutu refugees from Rwanda has exacerbated Zaire's multifaceted predicament—a predicament that, for political and economic as well as humanitarian reasons, the international community cannot ignore.

But what practical steps can and should be taken by the international community, and which actors (individual governments, multilateral organizations, or NGOs) should take them? In the search for answers to these questions, and for an accurate portrait of the extent and nature of Zaire's malaise, Minority Rights Group (USA)—supported by the United States Institute of Peace and the Carnegie Corporation—initiated a project in 1995 that brought together academics, government officials, and NGO experts to consider the case of Zaire and the prospects for effective preventive diplomacy there. This two-part report presents the results of this project: part I offers a broad-ranging examination of Zaire's predicament; part II presents three suggestions for preventive action to ameliorate Zaire's problems.

UNDERSTANDING THE UNENDING CRISIS IN ZAIRE

Jean-Claude Willame

To the astonishment of many observers, Zaire continues to exist. Despite the implosion of key social, political, and economic structures since the beginning of the 1990s, Zairians have developed a set of informal arrangements that enables them to survive and prevents the societal explosion one would have expected.

Belgian colonial rule created a society, but not a strong centralized state, out of a network of mobile and autonomous households. In the postcolonial period, attempts to establish the total unification of Zairian society through the cult of the Supreme Chief and acceptance of a party-state ran up against ethnic and mostly regional loyalties. In regions such as Shaba, Kasai, Kivu, and Kongo, these loyalties are still strong. Even so, ethnicity in Zaire has little to do with old-fashioned tribal realities; rather, it is essentially a modern political phenomenon that revolves around the allocation of scarce resources of power. Moreover, urbanization has attenuated the divisive impact of ethnicity (and has done so without creating as pronounced a polarization between the cities and the countryside as is sometimes claimed).

One social cleavage that is both significant and growing is the distinction between the spheres of the elite and the non-elite. The problem of inequality is not simply one of rich versus poor but of Zaire's increasing inability to redistribute wealth through the channels of patrimonial relationships. Popular resentment at this could explode into violence.

The reactions of ordinary Zairians to such societal stress have, however, been relatively peaceful to date, though they have changed over time. In a first phase, popular discontent with the Mobutu regime expressed itself through participation in "money games"; the second phase consisted of a series of revolts and looting in the early 1990s; next came a tide of messianic hope in the ability of charismatic leaders to solve Zaire's problems, followed shortly by great confusion as political parties proliferated amid a supposed "transition" to democracy. There is today widespread popular disillusion with political transition.

The most conspicuous feature of the economy of Zaire is the dichotomy between the modern or formal economy, which has completely collapsed, and the informal economy, which has created its own momen-

tum. After more than a decade of economic growth, the economy was badly shocked in the mid-1970s by a confluence of national and international events. Stabilization programs foundered, and in the early 1990s the economy crashed: public servants went unpaid, the currency was reduced to nothing. As early as 1980 large regions had escaped government control and were organizing illegal exports on a large scale. Today the informal economy is a prominent feature of Zairian life—and one that, by helping Zairians survive, has inhibited widespread violence. Meanwhile, any hopes of restarting the modern economy and achieving macroeconomic rehabilitation depend not least on unorthodox approaches to tackling the huge national debt.

The political situation in Zaire is more complex than is indicated in Western press reports, which present Mobutu as a powerful dictator fully responsible for Zaire's political chaos. The beginning of the political transition in 1990 unleashed a general drive for power among a new generation who had previously been contained by the old guard of the MPR or had found no place in the political system. For many, political liberalization meant democracy, but above all a form of democracy that could entail a greater share of the national wealth. Hundreds of opposition parties arose, but their opposition was limited to a single objective: toppling Mobutu. The past five years have seen many alignments and realignments among members of the old and the new political classes, but no real change has occurred. So far the president's power has not been weakened by the transition in terms of his ability to play off one faction against another.

Among the elite, the first nexus of power is made up of President Mobutu and his immediate entourage. To date, Mobutu has succeeded in compelling his opponents to recognize his prominence in foreign and defense affairs. A second nexus of power is the current, and clearly unconstitutional, government of Prime Minister Kengo wa Dongo. The Kengo government, conscious of its lack of domestic support, has been trying to gain external credibility by appearing to play a managerial role in the governing of Zaire. Between these two centers of power are various quarrelsome factions and a number of charismatic figures with ethnic or regional constituencies.

Three conclusions emerge from a survey of Zairian politics. First, large-scale violence will probably not erupt because factionalism prevents the consolidation of power. Second, nationalist feelings are strong

and pervasive among the political class. Third, those institutions promoted by foreign governments—democracy, the holding of free elections, and so forth—do not seem very relevant to the circumstances of Zairian political life.

Since the beginning of the transition, the Troika—the United States, Belgium, and France—have attempted to press for democracy and good governance. Their activities have not, however, achieved significant or positive diplomatic results, partly due to differences in their appraisal of Zaire's political evolution. The only common denominator among the three has been the affirmation of the necessity of democracy through a fully legitimate National Conference.

Large-scale civil strife in Zaire seems unlikely in part because Zairians have learned over the years to live beyond the reach of the state's authority and structures. Interventions by both the Kengo government and President Mobutu have also helped to quell some volatile situations.

Even so, the problem of generalized public insecurity remains critical throughout the country. Timely payment of soldiers and civil servants might well reduce the extent of bribery and physical harassment. Some local garrisons, it may be noted, have been paid by local businessmen, and a temporary reprieve in tensions has been the result. But such local expedients cannot overcome national macroeconomic and financial woes. Zaire has the resources to support only a fraction of its existing armed forces and civil service. Another urgent issue concerns the creation of a more favorable environment for the maintenance of education and health, demand for which is very strong among both urban and rural populations.

Given their strong sense of national dignity, Zairians regard outside intervention with suspicion. Thus, foreign mediators, analysts, and practitioners must appreciate and respect Zairian political culture. Mediating local and regional conflicts, which have often degenerated into "national" ones, is one of the most urgent issues in Zaire, especially in light of the continued postponement of parliamentary elections. Assisting intergroup mediation must precede any attempt at "educating" people about democracy and codes of conduct. Additionally, typical state-to-state relations between Zaire and outside governments will yield few results if they focus on the management of resources at the expense of addressing human and social concerns.

FRAMEWORKS FOR PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY

A Framework for Action to Arrest Further Violence in Zaire

Jean-Claude Willame

A framework for immediate action would focus on regional conflict prevention. Following an on-site expert assessment mission, an independent and informal forum should be developed—preferably under UN auspices—to identify areas where local political mediation is most urgently needed. Pilot centers should be set up to implement the recommendations of the forum and strengthen local resources.

How Best to Provide International Economic Aid in Zaire

Hugues Leclercq

The severe malfunctioning and corruption of the monetary system not only inhibit the recovery of the economy but also would negate the benefits of large-scale aid programs, especially those working through the government. The system of parallel currencies must be regularized and a climate of public security guaranteed for any real reform to occur. Aid agencies and governments can still effectively contribute to Zaire by extending credit and aid in proportion to the economy's capacity to absorb it, targeting small infusions especially to those small, vibrant micro-industries thriving away from the center of Zaire.

Violence in Zaire

Peter Rosenblum

The pervasive state-sponsored—and now increasingly “privatized”—violence in Zaire is a primary impediment to real political transition, social and

ethnic stability, and economic development. The reform of the army and other security forces will depend on establishing a regular and sufficient pay schedule, as well as successfully delinking militarized groups and gangs from political manipulations by various elites. Much of the privatized violence is unarmed, but given the arms flowing through the country, conditions could dramatically worsen. Indeed, the takeover of Kivu by a “rebel” army in the fall of 1996 has challenged the fragile order maintained by the armed forces of the state.

APPENDIX

Rwandan Refugees in Kivu, Zaire

Catharine Newbury

In an appendix written in early 1996, Catharine Newbury examines the Rwandan refugee crisis in the Kivu region of Zaire. Although most of the refugees have since returned home, Newbury's analysis remains valuable for the issues it identifies and the solutions it proposes to problems typical of many African refugee crises. Priority should be placed on a multipronged approach: halting the delivery of weapons to rebel forces; concrete efforts by the home government to encourage refugees to return and ensure their security; programs to enhance communication between the refugee camps and the villages and communes from which the refugees fled; mechanisms to resolve land conflicts as refugees return home; and donor assistance to fund the costs of repatriation.

CHRONOLOGY, 1960–96

Key events in Zaire's postcolonial history are chronicled, especially the political turmoil of recent years.

PREFACE

This report on Zaire is the first published result of the program on preventive diplomacy undertaken by Minority Rights Group (USA), with the support of the United States Institute of Peace and the Carnegie Corporation.

The notion of preventive diplomacy has been in the air for many years and has collected both defenders and detractors, but all would agree that it received a fresh impetus from the Secretary-General of the United Nations in his *An Agenda for Peace*. Mr. Boutros-Ghali, an experienced diplomat, is well aware that much good diplomacy has always been preventive, on the principle that prevention is better than a cure. *An Agenda for Peace*, however, calls for preventive diplomacy specifically through the United Nations. That implies action by and for the international community, a careful and constructive interpretation of the UN Charter, and the evolution of new methodologies. The charter provides a variety of ways in which diplomacy in general can be brought to bear on a problem. UN preventive diplomacy may be thought to call in particular for soundings, investigations, UN-brokered negotiations, proposals by the Secretary-General, and other discrete actions by the Secretariat and agencies. This is a delicate matter for which there are few well-established procedures. How are dangerous issues to be defused while respecting national sovereignty?

MRG (USA) does not presume to supply a blueprint; however, supported by a distinguished Advisory Board, it does believe that as an experienced non-governmental organization (NGO) it can make a worthwhile contribution to the techniques and practice of preventive diplomacy. It seeks to help in the realm of information, analysis, and preparation for those who may be called upon to respond to matters of concern to the international community.

The first case MRG (USA) considered in this light is the predicament in which Zaire finds itself. This can be investigated at several levels. There is the fallout from the enormous and unexpected influx of refugees, mainly from Rwanda, to the province of Kivu; the crisis has produced severe strains within Zaire and in relations with Rwanda, to say nothing of a horrendous humanitarian problem. There is the collapse of central government. There is the “transition process” toward more democratic political arrangements in which the United Nations and others are by agreement playing a role. There is a serious breakdown of infrastructure and there are signs of a rising level of violence. Underlying all is a profound deterioration in the standard of living for most people. In such circumstances, Zaire is open to a sudden shock calling for the deployment of massive and expensive resources by the international community.

The more one investigates the roots of the predicament, the clearer it becomes that a still larger crisis than at present exists could be very ugly—yet the more evident it is that such a crisis could be prevented. If preventive diplomacy through the United Nations is to become a reality, Zaire presents a singular challenge that cannot be ignored. And if the existing crisis in Zaire should escalate, the international community may yet be grateful for action to forestall and control its development.

It is the particular merit of Professor Jean-Claude Willame’s paper “Understanding the Unending Crisis in Zaire” to illuminate the nature of Zairian life. He shows us that if Zaire has “failed” in some senses, the Zairian people are nevertheless surviving and grassroots community action is growing. This insight reveals possibilities for healing the Zairian ills that are not necessarily apparent through normal diplomatic exchanges, and it is precisely this sort of understanding that MRG (USA) seeks to elicit. Professor Willame and his colleagues on the team assembled by MRG (USA) explain the local, social, political, and economic forces that transcend the daily dysfunction of

the Zairian state and in so doing indicate possible remedial actions of an unusual kind. The possibility is growing of salvation burgeoning from the grassroots rather than being handed down from the top of the political pyramid. That could prove to be a vital insight.

The experimental methodology employed in this project—research leading to a series of workshops—worked well. Professor Willame's report provided the original working paper for the workshops held during autumn 1995. These workshops involved a small number of important scholars and analysts of Zaire (and the Great Lakes region) together with policy practitioners. This bringing together of academic, NGO, and governmental experts proved mutually beneficial and led to a more effective and coordinated approach to certain Zairian problems.

The ensuing discussions produced a high degree of consensus on how to answer the question, "What precisely are the elements in the Zairian predicament that should concern the international community and could be ameliorated in a practical way by international action?" At the final session of the workshop a range of options was debated in response to the question, "Given our consensus on the situations that should concern the international community, what practical steps can and should be taken, by whom, and at what cost?"

The broad answers—plural, because it was recognized that no single key can unlock all the problems considered—are set forth in three short papers in part II of this report (and in a fourth in the appendix), each the work of a single author, written while debate was under way and revised after the final workshop. These recommendations were intended as a "framework" that could be amplified and adjusted in the light of ongoing developments.

The upsurge of fighting in Kivu, the dramatic large-scale movement of refugees, the strained relations with Rwanda, the prolonged illness of President Mobutu, the failure to launch the electoral process, and half a dozen other unwelcome developments of the autumn of 1996 confirm that the so-called "crisis waiting to happen" in Zaire has stopped waiting. What will happen and exactly when cannot be safely predicted, but it is evident that the old processes are tired and have not worked. Something new is required if a still greater crisis is to be prevented.

Action through the Troika alone (the governments of Belgium, France, and the United States) may not be

effective, and the involvement of the wider international community may be required. If this is the case, one possible course of promising action might be to create a working group in New York to be chaired by the UN Secretariat and to appoint in the Great Lakes region a special representative of the Secretary-General. The working group, whose core members could be joined by others according to the agenda of individual meetings, would coordinate the activities of agencies and, to the extent appropriate, of NGOs, and would have an overview of the relations between the international community and the governments of the region. The special representative would be the main source of recommendations and the principal implementer of practical policies. The special representative, in this scheme, would have three principal objectives: (1) to preserve the integrity and sovereignty of Zaire and the other states in the region; (2) to negotiate the best achievable settlement of the refugee problem, including bringing to justice the perpetrators of genocide; and (3) to encourage the growth of civil society and democratic institutions in Zaire. The achievement of objective (1) depends crucially but not wholly on success with (2) and (3).

However, it would be a mistake to regard those latter two objectives as inseparable problems that can only be tackled jointly and simultaneously. As Professor Willame notes in his paper in part I, the disasters in Rwanda and the crisis in Zaire are not necessarily part and parcel of each other. We believe that the Rwandan (and Burundi) refugee situation demands instant action that does not depend upon the resolution of the crisis in Zaire. And vice versa. This is just as well, because the scale of the crisis in Zaire means that it has to be tackled piecemeal by a patient, sustained effort over several years.

Elections will not themselves resolve the crisis. On the contrary, there is a danger that the international community will consider that assistance with elections—an obviously worthy and expensive project—absolves it from other, longer-running and more constructive efforts. The political elites in Zaire have so conspicuously failed to make the necessary provisions for elections (for instance, the establishment of electoral rolls) that the international community should desist from giving priority to national parliamentary elections and should, as a first step, aim to assist with local elections as and where appropriate conditions exist. It would, for example, be impractical to hold any elections in Kivu province at present.

This illustrates the point that if we insist on dealing with Zairian problems only when all parts of that vast and varied country are equally ready, we may wait forever. This is certainly not how to conduct preventive diplomacy.

The top priority for the special representative of the Secretary-General should be the encouragement of civil society at the grassroots as and where it is possible to build on the spontaneous action taking place in several regions of the country. It will be up to the special representative to take appropriate soundings and to form his own views. He will, however, be wise to take seriously the proposals and the timetable suggested by Professor Willame (see part II). A program along these lines would swiftly get to grips with the basic problems and would be relatively cheap: a small, high-quality staff would suffice, and most of the early disbursements would be measured in thousands, rather than hundreds of thousands, of dollars.

The special representative would not be alone in assisting Zaire. We envisage activity by several UN agencies and also by NGOs. We place particular importance on the role of the World Bank and we stress the need for action along the lines of the suggestions by Professor Hugues Leclercq (see part II).

Apart from the development of the crises already described, the greatest threat to the national unity of Zaire is the growth in violence. Action to avoid and curb this is a sine qua non of success, and in this context we commend the observations put forward by Peter Rosenblum (in part II).

In tackling the refugee problem, the special representative would have at least two key objectives: to arrange for human rights observers, including NGOs, to monitor the situation of returned refugees in Rwanda and Burundi and report through him or her to the Secretary-General and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights; and to encourage the Zairian authorities to hand over the suspected perpetrators of genocide in Rwanda to international authorities and to resettle far from the border with Rwanda those refugees genuinely unwilling to return home. Pursuing these goals will call for great perseverance on the part of the special representative. It will also call for remarkable flexibility and inventiveness, given the very fluid and unpredictable nature of the refugee crisis. Even so, certain issues will be of enduring

concern and certain approaches of continuing worth. In an appendix to this report penned in early 1996, Catharine Newbury pinpoints several of these issues and approaches. Although the character of the refugee crisis in Kivu has dramatically changed since her paper was written, Dr. Newbury's analysis remains valuable for its identification of problems—and of potential solutions to those problems—typical of many African refugee crises.

Of course, MRG (USA) hopes that the international community, the communities within Zaire, and the Zairian authorities will adopt these and other recommendations set out in this report. But irrespective of this, MRG (USA) believes that all the actors and potential actors in the Zairian predicament, together with many others, notably in academia and the media, will benefit from the analysis and wisdom contained in the contributions from Professor Willame and his colleagues.

MRG (USA) thanks Professor M. Crawford Young, Professor Michael Schatzberg, and Professor Tom Callaghy for their important comments—both supportive and critical—on the report. Professor Herbert Weiss in particular gave invaluable time and advice on the report and the overall project, for which we are very much obliged. Pascal Kambale Kalume of AZADHO and currently a fellow with the International Human Rights Law Group kindly updated the chronology. The generous support of the Carnegie Corporation and the United States Institute of Peace was indispensable, and we are grateful for the practical and sympathetic encouragement of their officers. Most importantly, the kind support and encouragement of Mr. Kouyaté and his able staff at the United Nations Department of Political Affairs made this project possible in the first place. The last word in thanks and acknowledgment must go to the “team”: Professor Willame, Professor Hugues Leclercq, Dr. Catharine Newbury, and Mr. Peter Rosenblum. Their excellent analysis and judgment were more than matched by their unflagging commitment to the future prospects of Zaire.

ELIZABETH CABOT AND JOHN THOMSON
MINORITY RIGHTS GROUP (USA)

MAPS

ZAIRE AND ITS AFRICAN NEIGHBORS



ZAIRE: MAJOR CITIES AND PROVINCES



ABBREVIATIONS

AZADHO	Association zairoise des droits de l'homme
CEDAF	Centre d'études et de documentation africaine
CNDDH	Comité national pour la défense des droits de l'homme
CNONGD	Conseil national des organisations non gouvernementales de développement
COMINGEM	Combinat industriel de Gemena
DSP	Division spéciale présidentielle
FAZ	Forces armées zairoises
FLNC	Front de libération national congolais
FPC	Force politique du conclave
GDN	Gendarmerie nationale
HCR	Haut conseil de la république
JUFERI	Jeunesse de l'union des fédéralistes républicains
LIZADHO	Ligue zairoise des droits de l'homme
MPR	Mouvement populaire de la révolution
OAU	Organization of African Unity
PALU	Parti Lumumbiste unifié
PDSC	Parti démocratique social chrétien
PRP	Parti révolutionnaire du peuple
SARM	Service d'action et de renseignement militaire
SNIP	Service national d'intelligence et de protection
SOSIDER	Société d'exploration siderurgique
SOZIR	Société Zaire-italienne de raffinage
UDPS	Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social
UFERI	Union des fédéralistes indépendants
UNAMIR	United Nations Advance Mission in Rwanda
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission on Refugees
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USORAL	Union sacrée de l'opposition radicale et alliés
VSV	Voix des sans voix

PART I

UNDERSTANDING THE UNENDING CRISIS IN ZAIRE

Jean-Claude Willame

“Zaire: is there a state?” . . . “the unending crisis” . . . “the rise and fall of the Zairian state” . . . “the nonexistent state.” For more than five years such phrases have been used to describe Zaire, as though the country were unable to avoid congenital chaos during its first decades of independence.

Some twenty years after independence, Zairian sociologist Ilunga Kabongo wrote that were one to put all the relevant data on Zaire in a computer, one could conclude such a country did not exist.¹ But clearly Zaire does exist, to the astonishment of many observers, even though certain meaningful social, economic, and political structures have imploded over the past five years; and even though—probably a more worrisome point—few ethical and moral values have prevailed in political and civil society.

This report does not attempt to recount the long and painful historical processes that led to that implosion. Instead, it tries to explain the way society at large, as well as some of its economic, social, and political arrangements, hold together in a somewhat bizarre and mostly paradoxical “order” preventing the explosion that one would have expected.

7

THE STRUCTURE OF SOCIETY

Consolidating the Postcolonial Authority

A first point to consider is whether a single Zairian society exists within a specific Zairian territory. During colonial times the existence of such a society was firmly denied. Belgium viewed its African possession as a mosaic of several hundred autonomous tribal groupings and clanic aggregates, which often maintained “traditionally” hostile relations with their neighbors. In order to govern a territory eighty times larger than Belgium—and one which had to be “dominated in order to serve,” as former Governor Ryckmans used to put it—the colonial administration searched frantically for local chiefs and intermediaries responsible for well-circumscribed territorial entities, usually identified by rigid ethnic and tribal divisions.

To be sure, there was a paradox in the colonial Promethean ideology. While Belgium aimed to *civilisé, christianisé, et modernisé* the Congo, it could not help assuming that the colonized and (sometimes) affectionate “children” of the Belgian king were doomed to live in a state of tribal nature from which they would only slowly emerge. This perception outlasted the colonial period and explains the current and protracted frustration that exists between large segments of the Congolese, and now Zairian elites, and the Belgians.

From the early postcolonial period onward, historians and anthropologists have questioned the congruence between tribe and territory. Among others,

Jan Vansina has suggested that Congolese societies were the result of a network of ethnic and tribal clusters characterized by territorial mobility. This condition was determined by the pressures of the prevailing mode of production, such as extensive agriculture or hunting and gathering.² In contrast to other societies in Africa, in Zaire household migrations continuously fluctuated according to the basic requirements of subsistence—for example, food security, natural frontiers, relationships with neighbors, and density. Vansina also suggested that political centralization was never completely realized in the so-called kingdoms of central Africa: the prevailing sentiments for local autonomy among households prevented consolidation into strong chiefdoms.³

Colonial rule succeeded however, consciously or not, in creating a society, if not a strong centralized state, out of these multiple households. The central figures of the Belgian colonial triad—colonial administrator, missionary, and company—served to unify this society despite occasional resistance by local populations to performing their roles of “good taxpayer,” “good Christian,” and “good company worker.”

The colonial authoritarian experiment was consolidated under a Zairian “monarch,” President Mobutu Sese Seko, who imposed himself as the founding father of a Zairian nation after a “time of troubles” (1960–65). The unification of society by the elite was conducted and pursued in different ways, however: frequent political turnover at the top and middle levels of provincial, regional, and local administrations replaced the rigid pattern of colonial governance. The good MPR militant was loyal and obedient to the “Chief,” just as he or she used to be to the colonial administrator.

Further consolidation of the Zairian nation arose through newly fashioned cultural artifacts in such realms as dance, music, and song. The slogan of authenticity helped create feelings of national pride and unity, even in distant parts of the country. Education, urbanization, and the development of small trade and business dramatically increased after independence and also contributed to the acceleration of social exchanges.

THE QUESTION OF TRIBAL LOYALTIES

However, total unification of Zairian society in the postcolonial period, through the cult of the Supreme Chief and obedience to a new political religion embodied in a party-state (the MPR), remained

incomplete. Ethnic and mostly regional loyalties flourished at elite, sub-elite, and popular levels despite the president's ability to constantly remove political entrepreneurs from their territorial or ethnic power bases.

Shaba Region

Popular and elite allegiances to the former Katanga (now Shaba) persisted even after the first secession attempt ended in January 1963. Over the following decade Shabans viewed Zaire as comprising only those from Kinshasa, not themselves. Shaba once provided 60 percent to 80 percent of Zaire's hard currency through Gécamines, the main producer of copper and cobalt, and the Shabans' consciousness of being a main source of economic prosperity was widespread and strengthened latent feelings of regional autonomy.

It was very well known that President Mobutu, even at the peak of his strength in the late 1960s and early 1970s, continued to worry about a new secession in Shaba. The enormous Inga-Shaba power-line project was built partly to address that threat: in the event of a Katangese insurgency, Kinshasa could "press the button" and cut the supply of electricity for the mining industry.⁴ In 1977 and 1978, the two Shaba wars, as they came to be known, posed a direct threat of separatism and seriously endangered the viability of the political regime. The ensuing French and Belgian military intervention went beyond mere protection and evacuation of foreign expatriates.

No wonder then that the collapse of the Zairian state after 1991 revived the myths and symbols of the old Katangese secession. In 1992 most of the inhabitants who were not regarded as true Katangese citizens (largely those of Luba origin) were expelled from the mining towns where they had formed the major part of the administrative, industrial, and technical personnel since their arrival in the colonial period. The revival of Katangese secession was nevertheless unrealistic. Gécamines had virtually collapsed by 1991, and no foreign company had any real interest in its copper or cobalt ventures.

Kasai Region

Kasai, mostly Luba, ethnic "particularism" was perceived as one of the major threats to the political cohesion of Zairian society. Like Katanga, Kasai seceded from the central government in 1960–62. Since then, Luba administrative, social, and commercial elites

have spread all over the Congo country to form an ethnic diaspora that has been viewed with suspicion by the rest of the political class. Meanwhile, in their stronghold of South Kasai, the Luba have taken over the second source of economic prosperity in Zaire: the diamond trade, a business whose profits they have been compelled to share with other regional barons.

As early as the 1960s, the Baluba regarded themselves as the "Jews of the Congo," and some of their most notorious leaders (for example, J. Ngalula) were called "Moise." They felt persecuted by most of the other ethnic constituencies, who disliked the privileges the Baluba allegedly garnered under the white administration. During the Second Republic they remained highly visible in politics: President Mobutu's strategy was to consistently absorb the Luba elite into the highest levels of the political hierarchy in order to better control it. Since 1978 one of the harshest opponents of the regime among the Luba elite has been Etienne Tshisekedi, later named the "Zairian Moise," who, together with ten fellow Kasaians, led a protracted struggle against Mobutu.

With the implosion of the copper and cobalt sectors and an economy that relies nowadays mostly on the legal and illegal export of diamonds, Kasaians—and thus the Baluba—are regarded with suspicion as their region has become the center of the "real" economy of the country. The fact that they are a leading force behind the main radical opposition party, the UDPS, as well as having members involved in many other smaller political groups, has antagonized most of the other ethnic and regional elites.

In almost all the regions and provinces, the Luba diaspora is implicitly accused of wanting power only for its own people. Like the Shabans, the Luba are threatened with expulsion by the "native sons." The grievances of the "Jews of Zaire" once again resonate.

Kivu Region

Somewhat milder regional loyalties in North and South Kivu have been another noteworthy political force in Zaire. Unlike the Baluba of Kasai or the Katangese, the natives of Kivu have never been especially vocal in national politics—their elite preferring to withdraw quietly from the political theater. Equally, Kivu's representatives in Kinshasa were never very active or well known, and some were even distrusted.

As the economic recession deepened, the Kivu economy, especially that of North Kivu, became increasingly oriented eastward. Local business and

trade based on the illegal export of gold and coffee have always been relatively independent of the Zairian kleptocracy. The most important part of it was taken over by an entrepreneurial ethnic group, the Banande, whose sphere of expansion once reached the Kisangani area⁵ and who used to trade with distant regions in East Africa and the Middle East (Dubai).

Another entrepreneurial group is the Banyarwanda, many of whom came from Rwanda in the 1930s or after the political turmoil of 1959, 1963, and 1973. They acquired vast areas of grazing land in Masisi and Rutshuru and even expanded farther west into the territory of Walikale. Not considered “true” Zairians by the native population, they came into collision in the 1980s with the native agriculturists of North Kivu (the Bahunde, Batembo, and Nyanga), who now tend to associate “democracy” with the recapture of what they deem to be their own land and property and the expulsion of those they regard as foreigners.

Kongo Region

“Kongo nationalism,” once an important political reference in the 1960s, has not been a substantial driving ethnic force in the Second Republic. Shortly after independence, Kongo elites loudly proclaimed their rights as the first occupants of the capital city, but have since quietly renounced the struggle for political autonomy. Entering into good relations with the Mobutu regime, they were allowed to concentrate freely in big business and trade, a position enhanced by the region’s strategic location near the sea, and benefiting until recently from a relatively good road and railway system. In short, this region, which was a granary for the capital, softened its demand for purely political rewards and benefits.

More recently, however, grievances against “non-natives” who are heading certain public and state enterprises have been heard. As in Kasai, Kivu, and “Katanga,” calls for autonomy are gaining strength and momentum, although the Congolese realize perfectly well that their future cannot be disassociated from Kinshasa, which remains the immediate hinterland.

In sum, ethnicity in Zaire should not be regarded as—nor associated with—“backward” struggles related to old-fashioned ethnographic tribal concepts and

Table 1. Population Growth in Zaire’s Largest Cities (1958–93).

	1958	1970	1984	1993
Kinshasa	398,472	1,142,761	2,664,309	4,402,633
Lubumbashi	182,872	318,000	564,830	817,153
Mbuji mayi	42,864	204,923	486,235	766,684
Kisangani	121,726	216,526	317,581	406,249
Kananga	116,940	203,398	298,693	392,389
Kolwezi	56,434	76,182	220,706	391,979
Likasi	74,833	133,696	213,862	289,249
Bukavu	52,896	130,094	167,950	197,924
Kikwit	15,198	113,017	149,296	178,549
Mbandaka	61,675	101,925	137,291	166,266
Goma	33,426	56,495	94,984	130,582

Source: Jean Flouriot, “Introduction à la géographie physique et humaine du Zaïre” (Lyon, February 5, 1994, mimeographed).

realities. Ethnicity is essentially a modern political phenomenon that revolves around the allocation of the scarce resources of power. It expresses itself through local and regional allegiances that are more geopolitically than historically circumscribed.

Moreover, urbanization has been instrumental in attenuating the divisive impact of ethnicity. The Zairian essayist Lye Mboka has pointed out the ambivalence of ethnic urban identities in his humorous “Letter to a Village Uncle”:

Believe me, here [in Kinshasa] tribal origins sometimes lose their importance. Look at me, for example, with my unidentifiable name, I continuously change my regional affiliation according to the demands of cooperation.⁶ I am a native of Tshikapa, of Isiro, or of Kahemba whenever I have to talk about precious stones and business. I am a native of Equateur whenever I have to impress women. I am from Bas-Zaïre, to be acknowledged and welcomed by the religious sects. But I am from Kinshasa, that is to say, sexless and with no biases whenever I have to talk about politics, giving myself the false alibi of being neutral.⁷

THE RELIGIOUS CLEAVAGES

Institutionalized religion is not at the root of social and political distinctions and affiliations in Zaire. President Mobutu has always taken great care to maintain a subtle equilibrium between the three main official churches: Catholic, Protestant, and Kimbanguist. Major quarrels with the Catholic Church in the 1970s led Mobutu to counter its profound influence in society and its powerful array of social services in the education and health sectors by granting

protection to both the Protestant and especially to the “native” Kimbanguist Church, so deeply rooted among the Bakongo people.

However, allegiance to only one cult has always been tenuous in Zaire, and in the present crisis is likely to become more so. People are turning both to traditional institutional religions (mostly to the Catholic Church) and to the numerous sects that have always been active in the country and are believed to provide spiritual rewards and security.⁸

Since the onset of political transition, numerous prayer groups, exorcists, messianic and prophetic “churches,” and evangelists—some of whom are foreign-born—have proliferated, especially in Kinshasa. Active in the official media (radio and television), they have received a lot of publicity in the press. These movements and individuals are popular not just among the poor: they recruit intensively among members of the presidential entourage, former clientele of MPR dignitaries, army officers, and even security agents.⁹

One fact remains, however: the Catholic Church is too influential an institution to be really threatened. The magnitude of its economic and social role throughout the country is demonstrated by the fact that, even after the collapse of state structures and institutions, the church remains one of the main pillars of the informal economy, as well as the primary provider of health care and education.

URBANIZATION

The spectacular growth of urbanization, especially in Kinshasa, seems to indicate a growing polarization between urban centers and the countryside. According to Joseph Boute and Léon de Saint-Moulin, the rate of urbanization rose from 8 percent in 1959 to 19 percent in 1970 and to about 28–32 percent in 1984.¹⁰ Today, 8.9 million Zairians live in cities of 100,000 or more inhabitants. Estimates are that in 2000 half of the population will live in cities, with over five million people in Kinshasa.¹¹

As table 1 indicates, urban growth is not limited to the capital city. The population of other urban clusters such as Lubumbashi, or the main center of diamond production and export, Mbujimayi, has risen more than sevenfold from the late 1950s to the early 1990s. Thus the emphasis sometimes placed on the existence of a radical dichotomy between urban Kinshasa and the rest of the country does not seem entirely accurate.

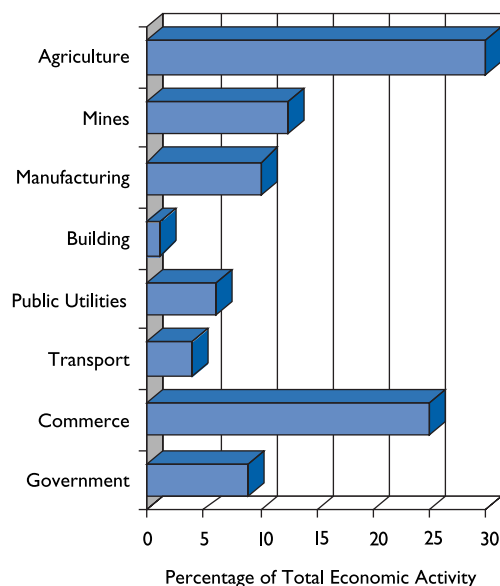


Figure 1. Value Added to the Main Economic Sectors in 1987.

Moreover, the French demographer Jean-Claude Bruneau argues that Zaire has actually experienced a decrease in urban growth over the last twenty years due to the severity of the economic and social crisis.¹² This trend has mostly affected the big cities, while medium-sized or small towns (especially in Shaba and Kasai) continue to grow.

A second point is that the development of urbanization must be seen in the context of a large hinterland within which cities interact commercially and otherwise. Kinshasa could not survive without neighboring Bandundu and Bas-Zaire feeding the capital city during the rainy season, and without territories farther north (Equateur) supplying staple foods during the dry season. The vitality of trade in Zaire—despite the severe constraints—has constantly put cities and countryside in close contact and enhanced the circulation of goods and people.

Third, it would be a mistake to regard Zairian cities as the beneficiaries of specific revenues at the expense of the rural countryside. A familiar image, partly supplied by World Bank analyses, of an urban milieu sucking its surplus from an impoverished rural sector is not quite accurate. Before the collapse of the modern economy in 1991, the value added to agriculture, most notably cassava, which is the main staple food in Zaire, had reached 30 percent of the total economic activity, whereas that of typically urban activities (manufacturing, transport, and services) lagged well behind (see figure 1).

Finally, Kinshasa and other large cities are home primarily to a population that has largely retained its rural mentality. The top elites maintain local loyalties that are the dominant frame of reference, but the big cities otherwise are conglomerates of rural-minded inhabitants lacking fully integrated urban habits. This is still the case today, despite a high incidence of intermarriage and proximity with “alien” ethnic constituencies that have given rise to the feeling of being “Kinois” (that is, an inhabitant of Kinshasa).

Since the episodes of massive looting in September 1991 and January 1993, many people are seeking help and refuge in their neighborhoods. René Devisch, for example, speaks of the “villagization” of towns where urban citizens seek to renew values of solidarity through land cultivation or other activities related to agriculture.¹³

ELITE AND NON-ELITE AFFILIATION

Beyond tribal allegiances often tempered by regional ties, beyond religious affiliations (which are not necessarily conducive to political divisions), and beyond the question of rural-versus-urban identities (which, in fact, are often blurred), there is one dominant cleavage that has continued to grow with the consolidation of the Mobutu regime and that even precedes tribe, religion, and urbanity. That is the distinction between the spheres of the elite and the non-elite.

One of the main features—and a consequence—of the deterioration of the political regime in Zaire is the enlargement of the gap between the classes. This breach was initially created by a decolonization process that moved too quickly. The growing inequalities were summarized in pat images, such as a country ruled by a powerful dictator (“one of the richest men in Africa”), promulgated by part of the Belgian and international press and relayed by the “free” opposition press. Such images have contributed to an oversimplified understanding of political and social conditions in Zaire.

Although the classical measure of revenue inequalities (the Gini coefficient) is more moderate in Zaire than in Western European countries, the relatively egalitarian distribution of revenue in the agricultural and urban sectors conceals the reality of a tiny, extremely rich ruling class that absorbs more than 45 percent of the national wealth (see table 2). Thanks to Mobutu’s political acumen, members of this class have basically overcome ethnic and tribal divisions, having lost touch in many instances with their constituencies.

However, it might be argued that the problem of inequality in Zaire (as well as in other sub-Saharan countries) cannot simply be defined as rich versus poor. Rather, as François-Régis Mahieu points out, a proper understanding of elite versus non-elite is related not to the acquisition of wealth but to its redistribution. In other words, what is at stake is not the immense and arrogant wealth of a tiny fraction of the population but its growing inability to redistribute wealth through the vertical and horizontal channels of patrimonial relationships.

The problem many African countries, both rich and poor, face nowadays—and particularly since the beginning of the attrition of external assistance—is the “growing pressure upon a diminishing constituency of political donors (be they external or internal),” as Mahieu puts it.

Hence, a growing confrontation between the “haves,” who no longer redistribute, and the “have-nots”; hence also a growing number of people, especially urban youngsters, who no longer respect their traditional obligations toward the community from which they have progressively come to feel excluded. At this stage, not only the poor but also the relatively protected middle class have developed a real sickness. . . . According to a classical syndrome, they have too many problems and have lost the prestige and consideration they once enjoyed from their constituency and from which they now fear reprisal.¹⁴

It is precisely at this juncture that a popular explosion might take place, and one that could be exacerbated not only by the loss of income but also by the loss of status and sense of citizenry. Complicating the situation is the tremendous diminution of purchasing power, the disappearance of social services, and the threats to personal security posed by crime and police “extraction.”

SOCIAL RESPONSES TO CRISIS

This leads us to the reactions of ordinary people facing a situation of societal stress in Zaire, especially in the urban environment. These reactions, which have been relatively peaceful, have changed over time.

In a first phase, popular discontent and disaffection with the Mobutu regime expressed themselves by the huge participation in money games—the so-called Bindo Promotion, the *Pannier de la Ménagère*, and so on—developed in Kinshasa and elsewhere from the beginning of the “transition” process.¹⁵

Table 2. Revenue Distribution by Quintiles.

Quintiles	Percentage of Agricultural Revenue	Percentage of Nonagricultural Revenue	Percentage of Revenue in Zaire	Percentage of Revenue in Kinshasa
1	7.78	6.50	7.19	7.5
2	11.54	11.13	10.89	11.5
3	15.68	15.29	15.02	16.0
4	21.93	21.19	21.37	23.0
5	43.07	45.90	45.53	42.0
Gini coefficient	0.338	0.378	0.364	0.385

Source: J. Maton, "Structure et développement de l'économie zairoise: Une analyse macroéconomique" (working paper, Ghent, November 1993).

Launched by mid-level urban businessmen and traders, these games consisted of making deposits of money in exchange for "gifts" (first in kind, next in interest), the value of which was two to three times higher than the original deposit. In a couple of months, these games became immensely popular.

Among ordinary people who did not immediately realize that the "gifts" just equaled the rate of inflation, this unexpected wealth was said to originate from Mobutu himself, who was finally redistributing to the people from his own treasury chest. Eventually, the pouring of money into schemes came to exceed the capacity of those who had promoted the games to reimburse players: thousands received neither their gifts nor their initial deposits.

The second phase consisted of a series of revolts and looting, in Kinshasa in December 1990, in Mbuji-mayi in May 1991, in Kinshasa again in June 1991, then in almost all the Zairian cities between September and October 1991. At this stage, the impoverished sections of the army became directly involved; in most instances soldiers opened the way to the great pillages and acts of destruction of September and October 1991. In many cases, however, systematic looting developed in a festive atmosphere and in a sort of "organized chaos."¹⁶

Next, in the aftermath of the military and popular uprising, urban populations turned to a messianic hope induced by a charismatic type of political hero. They looked to a few personalities who had long been out of politics and were perceived as potential successors to Mobutu, who was thought to be losing his magical grip on the political system. This was the period of the much acclaimed return of leaders such as Tshisekedi and Gizenga and of the beginning of the National Conference in early 1992.

A period of extraordinary confusion followed, as more than three hundred parties registered and more than two thousand delegates participated in

the National Conference. Subsequently, the quick succession of prime ministers designated by Mobutu or by the National Conference, the suspension and reopening of the National Conference, and the protracted debates on responsibility for the bankruptcy of Zaire added to the rampant political insecurity and social banditry in Kinshasa and led to the collapse of the monetary and economic system—resulting in widespread popular disillusion with political transition.

The transition did not result in a large and organized movement of civil disturbance, except for the 1991 looting. Clearly, however, political violence and abuses by ruling elites—ranging from large-scale corruption to arbitrary arrests of opponents or rivals—have spread throughout large segments of the civil society.

From life stories collected from among ordinary people in Kisangani and elsewhere, Benoit Verhaegen and Bugumil Jewsiewicki have both observed the spiral of violence, despotism, and autocracy in Zairian civil society.¹⁷ As Jewsiewicki writes:

[Social] cohesion is mostly ensured by the fear of others. Stories present a world where violence, often so insidious that the discourse of "tradition" translates into matters of witchcraft, constitutes the principal if not the only relationship between individuals. Life is the art of avoiding the worst in order to survive, in the hope of being able one day to abuse another man, or better yet, another woman. The violence that results is an end unto itself and the ambiguities that emerge confer upon state violence more than the appearance of legitimacy.¹⁸

To the extent that Zaire can still be regarded as a nation and as a single society, it is a society that is experiencing a deep "social sickness," a sickness aggravated and exacerbated by the political evolution of the country. It will take time for Zaire to heal.

2 ECONOMIC STRUCTURES AND PROSPECTS

The confused economy of Zaire today presents two conditions.¹⁹ On the one hand, the *modern economy*—the formal, registered activities acknowledged in the national accounts—has completely collapsed, in part because of its dependency on large predatory state structures and in part because of the dramatic decrease in the purchasing power of the urban population. On the other hand, the *informal, secondary, or popular economy*—the middle-scale or petty activities that are not registered in any official statistics—now has its own momentum. Nevertheless, the dichotomy between formal and informal sectors does not fully capture the current situation.

In order to understand the economic conditions in Zaire, one must have a sense of the trends over the past twenty-five years. One might divide this era into three periods, the first of which may be labeled the “Zairian miracle,” extending from 1962 to 1974 (see figure 2).

ECONOMIC GROWTH, 1962–74

Despite the traumatic accession to independence and the 1963–64 rebellions, Zaire’s economic potential was not really damaged. After a radical devaluation of the currency in 1967, economic performance soon approached that of developing countries such as the Ivory Coast and Mexico. Although agriculture lagged,

with only a 2–3 percent annual growth, overall economic growth rose to 6 percent annually, mostly due to strong copper and diamond prices and the performance of the manufacturing and mining industries. This period was also characterized by a tremendous expansion of the public sector, as well as by some grandiose industrial and infrastructure projects—for example, Ingadam, the Inga-Shaba power-line, SOSIDER, SOZIR, AND COMINGEM.

ECONOMIC SHOCKS, 1975–91

The first postindependence economic shock occurred in 1975, when a confluence of national and international events began to undermine Zaire’s position. First, the totally unplanned nationalization in the agro-industrial and trading sectors severely disrupted the economy. Second, copper prices suddenly—but expectedly—collapsed after the 1974 oil crisis. Third, the Benguella railway in Angola, traditionally one of the major export routes for Zaire’s mining industries, was closed. The recession was abrupt in character (see figure 2), and Zaire never really recovered. Between 1975 and 1993, gross domestic product per capita (in 1993 dollars) plummeted, from \$330 to less than \$140.

Initially, the shock did not appear catastrophic. Economic growth remained high, at 6.4 percent a year. Except for the disastrous large industrial and infrastructure projects, the manufacturing sector, still supported by bilateral donors, maintained relatively good performances, though falling to only 30–40 percent of productive capacity.

The textile industry was badly hurt by the explosion of illegal exports, but other industries overcame the crisis by exporting their output, which was largely enhanced by external public aid. The transport sector suffered but succeeded in stabilizing itself from 1978 to 1984. State receipts remained high until 1980, although public expenditures tended increasingly to exceed public revenues.

The first three years (1983–86) of the stabilization program imposed by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank appeared promising. A new and quite severe devaluation allowed Zaire to again be competitive—at least in theory. The country also appeared to regain some credibility by starting to repay part of the interest on the huge national debt.

But hopes placed in the stabilization program were quickly dashed. Between 1984 and 1989—“the Kengo years,” as the period was once known—Zaire entered

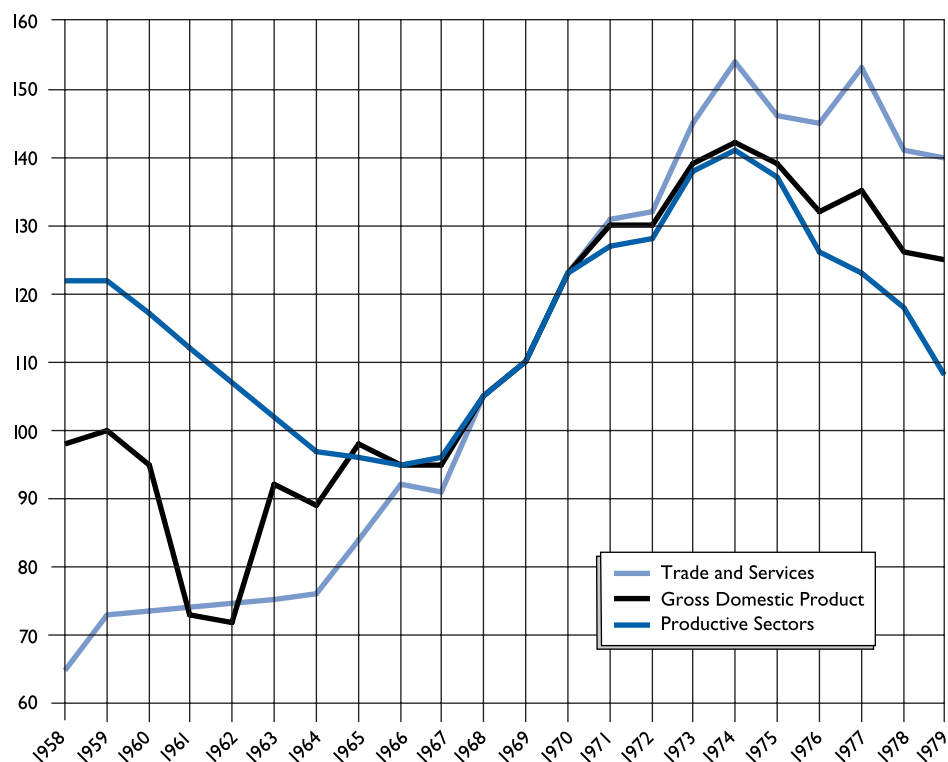


Figure 2. Gross Domestic Product of Zaire (at 1968 prices).

into a phase of generalized “predation” and extortion perpetrated by those close to the presidency and above all by a large circle of barons and plutocrats. It is estimated that roughly \$1 billion was drained from the state treasury during that period.

At the same time, even as state expenditures were maintained at the highest levels, the state budget was collapsing under the high interest rates on the external debt, which Zaire could no longer service—and part of which could not be rescheduled. What is surprising is the amount of external aid conceded to Zaire: \$555 million in 1983–89 (compared to \$508 million in 1975–82). In 1990 official development aid to Zaire reached a peak of more than \$800 million.

ECONOMIC CRASH, 1991

In September 1991 the collapse of one of the richest copper mines of Gécamines (Kamoto) triggered a major economic and financial crash. When the revenue stream from the core mining industry dried up, Zaire virtually ceased to exist as a state.

The currency, a symbol of national sovereignty, was reduced to nothing, while 500,000 to 600,000

public servants went unpaid. A World Bank document from 1994 reveals the withering of the state and the social impact of a crumbled economy:

The overall size of the economy has shrunk to the level of 1958 albeit with a population of 2.9 times larger. . . . Public finances are in disarray. . . . The State is insolvent; most state-owned enterprises and financial institutions are de facto bankrupt. . . . The economy has been demonetized and exchange markets have contracted and serve mostly speculative purposes. . . . Power and water utilities and the Road Authority are still operational, but Gécamines, Petro-Zaire, and ONPTZ [the postal and telecommunications company] are barely functioning; SNCZ [the railway holding] and most other public enterprises have de facto ceased operating and have in some cases lost or sold their fixed assets.

Enrollment in primary education declined from 95 percent in 1972–73 to 77 percent in 1986–87 and was projected at 50 percent by year 2000, barring massive remedial actions. When open at all, the schools operate in deplorable conditions, without textbooks and teaching materials and with the students often forced to sit on the floor as desks

Table 3. Agricultural Production and Marketing.

Year	Food Production (billions of zaires)	Cash Crops (billions of zaires)	Food Crops as Percentage of Sold Production	Urban Population (millions)	Food as Percentage of Urban Consumption
1968	76.3	26.4	41.5	2.43	12.0
1969	79.1	23.7	43.0	2.61	13.1
1970	81.4	24.6	43.0	2.81	14.6
1971	86.3	25.7	43.0	2.98	13.8
1972	95.3	23.5	44.1	3.15	14.9
1973	96.7	21.3	45.3	3.33	13.0
1974	108.9	20.5	45.2	3.53	15.7
1975	104.0	16.1	43.7	3.74	17.3
1976	108.9	19.1	44.6	3.94	18.8
1977	110.6	14.3	42.5	4.16	19.5
1978	111.6	14.4	40.9	4.39	20.6
1979	114.8	11.3	41.9	4.63	23.2
1980	118.3	13.4	41.4	4.89	19.8
1981	120.9	12.7	41.7	5.06	19.9
1982	124.9	11.8	41.4	5.24	19.7
1983	128.5	12.2	40.8	5.42	18.8
1984	133.5	13.4	40.6	5.60	18.6
1985	137.6	12.6	40.8	5.80	18.7
1986	141.3	18.0	41.5	6.00	19.1
1987	145.0	13.8	41.0	6.20	18.9
1988	149.2	10.0	42.6	6.42	30.3
1989	153.0	15.3	40.9	6.64	29.2
1990	157.6	13.8	41.3	6.86	29.6

Source: J. Maton, "Structure et développement de l'économie zairoise: Une analyse macro-économique" (working paper, Ghent, November 1993).

have been looted. . . . Higher education institutions . . . [have seen] their infrastructure crumble: facilities and teaching materials vanish, teachers [are] increasingly underpaid (or not paid at all) and demotivated, and students [are] unable to survive on meager scholarships.

Health standards deteriorated due to inadequate and declining financing. In 1986, the government was financing only 5 percent of the recurrent costs in the health sector, compared to 50 percent or more in most sub-Saharan African countries. . . . The economic and financial crisis has since severely constrained the ability of the population and enterprises to provide basic care, while externally financed health programs have de facto ceased.²⁰

Nonetheless, although fully representative data is lacking, it appears that at the microeconomic level of the economy some sectors did not follow the catastrophic trends just outlined.

For one thing, production of staple foods (mostly cassava and other tubers) continued to rise faster than the rate of population growth. However, as shown in table 3, the growth in the production of staple foods has not matched the growth of the urban

population. This means that urban households, whose revenues have been drastically reduced by the recession, must devote a larger part of their income to buy food.

Three factors have played a large part in the performance of the agricultural sector: the collapse of the road infrastructure, the increase in oil prices, and the monetary manipulations of the government. If these problems can be remedied, the agricultural situation in Zaire can probably rapidly recover.

THE PRIMACY OF POPULAR ECONOMIES

To be sure, urban "popular" economic activities have a long history in Zaire, stretching back long before the 1984–90 recession. Some economic indicators suggest that between 1974 and 1978 what were labeled "underground activities" climbed from 9 percent to 19 percent of total productive activities.²¹

By 1980 large regions had escaped government control and were successfully organizing illegal coffee exports on a large scale through new commercial centers that were not even on the map. Some of these,

called “Base,” became the gathering point for Zairian, Chadian, Ugandan, and Malian traders who peacefully exchanged luxury goods (cars, radios, spare parts) for coffee, tea, or gold.²²

Today, the urban popular economy—whether formal or informal (that is, registered or not)—is a prominent feature of Zairian life. Its economic strength is sometimes reinforced by the support of the powerful network of Catholic missionary posts, historically representing the prime social and economic mediator between civil society and the local authorities. In both the city and the countryside, local churches are often the only place in which trade and bank activities can take place at a popular level. It can also be argued that the proliferation of the popular economy is a major factor inhibiting large-scale violence.

According to Hugues Leclercq, the informal sector occupies three major territorial spaces in Zaire.²³

- The urban petty or middle-range economy of Kinshasa and its hinterland, formed by two main regions (Bas-Zaire and Bandundu), has easy communication links with the capital through a relatively fair road infrastructure and river system. To these two trade axes one might add the intense traditional trading activities between Kinshasa and Bas-Zaire, on the one hand, and neighboring Congo-Brazzaville, on the other. According to Eric Tollens, a typically Zairian retail economy has replaced the larger Greek and Portuguese enterprises, which have almost completely withdrawn from that sector.²⁴
- The mining area of the Kasai region, particularly around Tshikapa and Mbuji-Mayi, has an economy that relies essentially on nonindustrial exploitation and marketing of diamonds up to Angola on the Kasai River. In Haut-Zaire and Equateur new diamond deposits have been exploited over the past several years by the local population. Nowadays, diamonds—half of which are illegally exported—are the only available resource for the state (as well as for many Zairian barons); hence the rather ambiguous nature of that popular economy, which is by no means limited to the ordinary diamond craftsmen of the Kasai region.
- The economy of the area encompassing North and South Kivu provinces and part of the former Ituri district relies on the nonindustrial and infor-

mal exploitation of gold, the unofficial export of coffee, and the trade of staple foods. For the last three years, this area, involving several regional and local barons, has been linked to the far distant lands of the Middle East, including Dubai, through imports of oil products and manufactured goods.

To these unstructured forms of the Zairian economy, which have become part of the “real” economy, one could add a nonmarket economy organized along the necessities of sheer survival. This equivalent of a social security system provides the poorest segment of the population access to minimal health services and education.

Activities in the nonmarket economy are often seasonal and occasional, yet provide many households various opportunities arising from the erosion of the modern economy. Usually such benefits are not reinvested in productive activities but spent instead on social or “status” exchanges.²⁵ Thus, the popular economy should not be seen as a panacea for the lack of a modern economy.

René Devisch has reported on the predatory—though nonviolent—aspect of the informal sector, particularly among young city dwellers. He identifies the popular illusion sustained by the celebrated ability to scrape by (*débrouillardise*) within the informal sector:

The imaginary universe of numerous slum-dwellers continues to be haunted, through television and “downtown” scenes, by the lives of ease and extravagance centered around fine clothing, expensive cars, and luxury goods. This mirroring process simply reinforces social disparities and stigmatizes any individual or social space deprived of these goods.²⁶

Despite the visible dynamism of the popular economy in most instances, a large segment of the modern technocratic elite claims that this type of economy cannot produce the needed development. They argue that it represents an individual way to adapt to recession, not a significant means to fight the economic crisis.²⁷

In some cases, the validity of that argument might be contested on empirical grounds. Illegal or not, small-scale or large-scale, the informal economy evidently means (at least in some notorious cases) a “real” economy not only for groups of individuals but also for large collectivities.

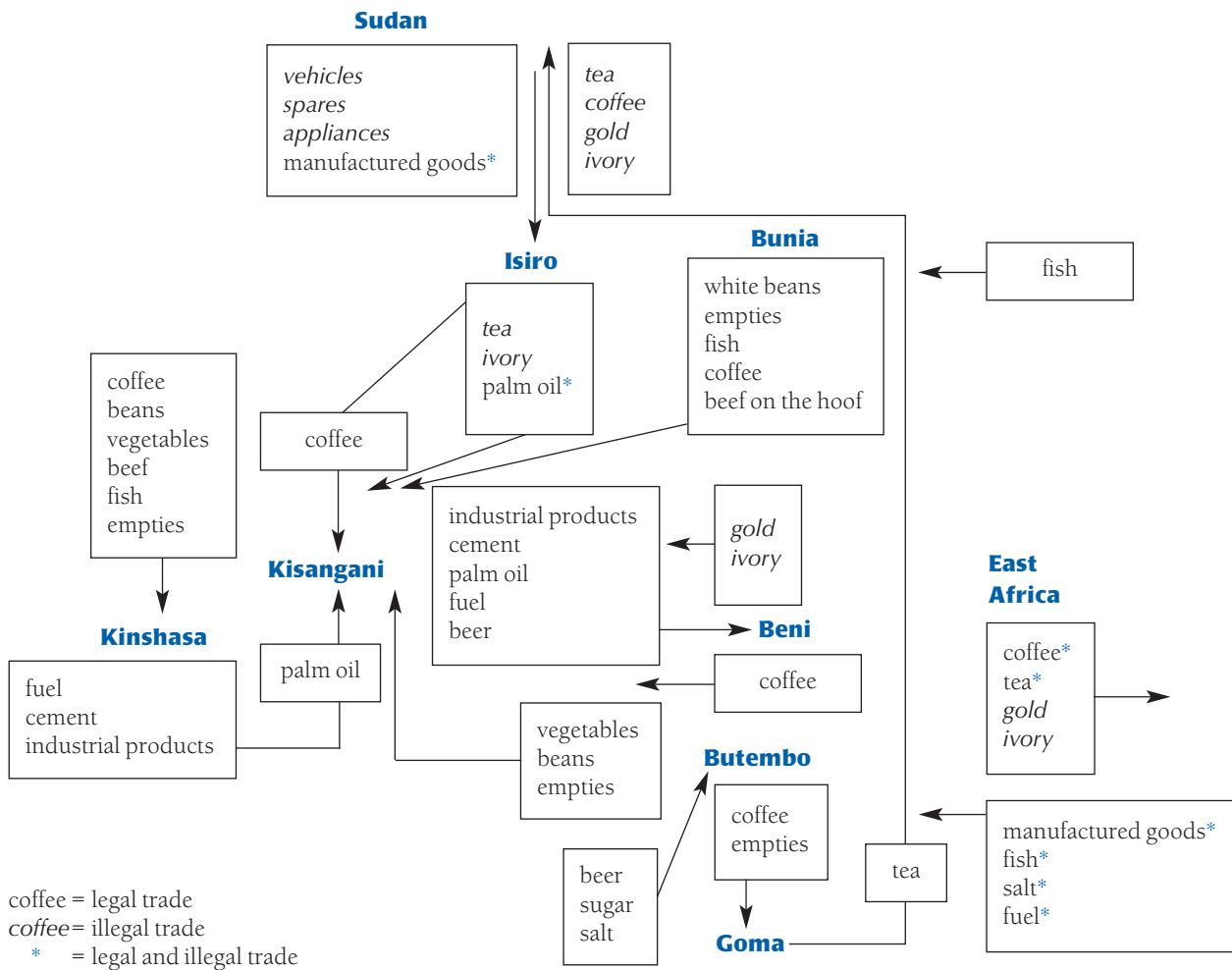


Figure 3. Flowchart of Commodities Trades in Northeast Zaire.

Such is, for instance, the case of the Banande of North Kivu, whose impressive entrepreneurial achievements have been studied by Janet MacGaffey (see figure 3). According to MacGaffey, the Banande trading ventures, both legal and illegal, illustrate how the crisis of the last decade has undoubtedly created problems for aspiring entrepreneurs but has also stimulated “potential opportunities for those with initiative, enterprise, and a measure of good fortune.”²⁸

CRISIS AND THE GROWTH OF LOCAL INITIATIVES

Since the early 1990s the crisis in Zaire has stimulated embryonic forms of local “good governance” in some areas. In Kivu and Bas-Zaire, certain regional spontaneous agreements have been reached between local army officials, administrative chiefs, NGOs, and traders to ensure a minimum of order, especially in times of extreme tension and uncertainty. In particu-

lar, local entrepreneurs, who control most of the economic activities, have paid the salaries of the garrisons in order to avoid being looted by them.

From Kasai come reports of local authorities and businessmen indirectly helping the integration and resettlement of a substantial number of refugees from Shaba, absorbing them either into the informal economy or into the agricultural and transport sectors. This process was obviously facilitated by the relative prosperity of a region controlling the production of diamonds—the main financial resource of the country. Because the “native” population has invested heavily in that sector and thus pulled out of investments in rural development, there are employment opportunities for newcomers. Thus, it was observed by a UN mission in December 1994 that out of 16,000 displaced persons living in a camp eight kilometers from Mbuji mayi, 3,400 were able to reintegrate and settle spontaneously on plots of land at the outskirts of the camp.²⁹

It remains obvious, however, that if some parts of the country can function reasonably well when others are in a state of unrest and even anarchy, economic and social development is not the first priority of Zaire. To be sure, the popular or informal economy is still suffering from the general economic deterioration. In this respect it would be tempting, but wrong, to rely exclusively on the capacity of resistance and the imaginative solutions of ordinary citizens to accommodate themselves as best they can.

While the players in the popular economy may have skillfully adapted to the monetary landslide, one thing is clear: economic chaos in the modern sector has paralyzed the national economy, most notably in

terms of the circulation of goods, as well as the provision of sanitary and educational services.

Equally clear is that the economic rehabilitation of Zaire will not progress from the top down, that is, through master plans originating from state or international macroeconomic structures—some of which are pretexts for promoting specific foreign or national interests and as such have no relevance for economic development.

The fundamental obstacle to any macroeconomic rehabilitation remains the huge national debt, which is a greater problem for the international financial markets than it is for the country. Without any new, unorthodox proposals, very little can be achieved in

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tackling the macroeconomic matters conducive to real “development.”

POLITICAL STRUCTURES AND PROSPECTS

A familiar image emerges from international, especially Belgian, press accounts of the political theater in Zaire. It is that of a country led by a powerful “dictator,” Mobutu, who skillfully manipulates the puppets orbiting his presidency and who, of course, is fully responsible for the political chaos in the country. The rather simplistic premises of such press analyses ignore the complexity of political evolution in Zaire and thereby misinform and mislead foreign policy establishments in their appraisal of realities in that country.

KEY INTERNAL ACTORS

At the beginning of the political transition in April 1990, Zaire’s political class consisted of roughly three groups. One group was composed of those linking their political careers to the former party-state, the MPR, thereby professing faith in the continuation of Mobutuism with new clothes. The second group was formed by moderate political leaders who had maintained a distance from the Mobutu regime for several years but had kept their dissatisfaction a private matter. The third was made up of radical opponents, many of whom had been in exile for years or had been punished for their refusal to formally rejoin the party-state.

When Mobutu proclaimed the end of the one-party system, he thought he could maintain dominance by advocating three Zairian parties, one for each of the groups. However, within eight months of the proclamation, there were upwards of three hundred political parties and caucuses, each of which aimed to occupy a seat at the National Conference and, more generally, to participate in the new political redistribution game.

Even the parties that received financial support from Mobutu (*partis alimentaire*—literally, parties “fed” by the regime) were not mere puppets of the president. In fact, the transition unleashed a general drive for power among a new generation that previously had either been contained by the old guard of the MPR or that could not find a place in the political system during a period of economic recession. For many, political liberalization meant democracy, but above all a form of democracy that could entail a greater share of the national wealth. As a Zairian press analyst aptly commented: “Power [in Zaire] is just like alcohol: it gives thirst to whoever drinks of it. When one has tasted it, one always wants to drink more of it.

Moreover, unlike the lands of old democracies, where primarily the rich seek power, in the third world, power is sought to become rich. It is therefore not convictions that often dictate political behavior, but appetites.”³⁰

To be sure, opposition parties arose, but their opposition was limited to a single objective: toppling Mobutu, whose political life appeared terminal. Beyond his demonization and eventual replacement there were no social or political projects.

One outcome of the many alignments and realignments among members of the old and new political classes during the unending transition is a dividing line between those who succeeded—that is, who were co-opted into the various transitional governments and thus had access to the diminishing benefits of the state structures—and those who were excluded from power and its immediate dividends and returns.

The strength of the president’s power, while clearly in decline, is geared more toward factional arbitration than maintaining some form of dictatorship. But it is precisely this capacity to skillfully play off the many discontents in a large group of incumbents that prevents the permanent polarization of members of the political class, many of whom have lost contact with their local constituencies.

Beyond the division of haves from have-nots, there are several cleavages between political factions and clans. Paradoxically, the way these groups have inter-related during the most recent government does not significantly differ from their dealings in the period before political transition.

Nexus around President Mobutu

Among the haves, the first nexus of power is made up of the president and his immediate entourage, represented not so much by regional barons as by the functional instruments of power, for example, the security services, the Civil Guard, and the Special Presidential Division (DSP).

Clustered around this prime circle are some young technocrats and older opponents, including formerly radical ones. Also included are certain people with no particular regional constituency, especially those previously considered “citizens of dubious nationality” (for example, the mulatto Seti Eyale, head of the security services, and businessman Bemba Saolona). This second cluster is more dispensable: it can be disbanded at will and at any moment by the chief of state as required by political exigencies.

Table 4. Sociopolitical Profile of the Kengo Government (June 1994–August 1995).

Profile	Number of Ministers	
	Old Generation	New Generation
Political*	9	9
Management	10	–
Diplomacy	2	–
Business	5	–
Professional	–	3
Military	2	–
University	2	1
Others	2	–

Note: Ministers can belong to several profiles.

* Includes former member of the Legislative Council and regional assemblies, former ministers, and members of the HCR.

So far, the president’s power has not been weakened by the transition. On the contrary, President Mobutu and his entourage (a group who engage in fluctuating allegiances) have consistently pursued a twofold strategy similar to that employed during the First Republic. The first and foremost strategy is to prevent the collapse of the security and armed forces by maintaining control over certain trusted and disciplined units. The second is to keep—and even reinforce—international credibility in the closed circle of African heads of state, while attempting to restore credibility in the eyes of foreign governments, by performing the usual mediating role in regional African conflicts (for example, in Rwanda).

So far, Mobutu has succeeded in compelling his opponents to recognize his prominence in foreign and defense affairs and in attracting a loose coalition of former supporters of the MPR and former opponents of the government.

Nexus around Kengo wa Dongo

A second meaningful nexus of power is the current government, led by Prime Minister Kengo wa Dongo, which is dominated by the technocratic and political elite of the Kengo years of the mid-1980s (see table 4).

The Kengo government, however, is clearly unconstitutional. Contrary to the agreement of the entire political class in the Constitutional Act of the Transition—namely, that any government had to result from a political consensus—Kengo was elected by fewer than half (332 out of 738) of the members of the Transitional Parliament.

A further weakness is the absence of meaningful political and, importantly, regional constituencies among members of the Kengo government. Their

only support comes from a tiny faction of generally younger intellectuals, high-level technocrats, and some individual members of civil society who, through informal or occasional political platforms, hope to gain rewards in return for their support. However, these political groups do not yet form a meaningful clientele.

Aware of its weaknesses, the Kengo government has been pursuing a strategy aimed at gaining external credibility—most notably in international financial and business circles—by appearing to play a managerial role in the governing of Zaire. Good governance imperatives such as those defined by the World Bank and USAID have conditioned the political behavior of the Kengo team, although there is no significant proof that the government has the means to implement them. Noteworthy measures taken by the Kengo government include the following:

- the spectacular expulsion of several dozen Lebanese businessmen, some of whom were associated with the printing of allegedly counterfeit bills under the preceding government;
- the seizure of thirty tons of banknotes that had not been registered at the Central Bank;
- the designation of new managers at the Central Bank and the removal of some high officials from such strategic posts as Customs and Hôtel des Monnaies;
- the decision to clean up the civil service by getting rid of 200,000 fictitious and real public servants out of a total of between 500,000 and 600,000;
- the willingness to launch a large privatization program in the mining sector, a program inspired by some officials at the World Bank, the African Bank of Development, and various foreign financial advisers;
- the numerous declarations of war against those contributing to the “criminalization” of the Zairian economy, including members of the radical opposition; and
- the decision to start expelling Rwandan refugees from the camps near Bukavu and Goma, a decision taken with President Mobutu’s support.

The impact of these measures is not yet clear. Kengo’s government still has no leverage in either the diamond sector—the only sector where resources can still be mobilized—or the popular economy, which is beyond the reach of any kind of public authority.

Opposition Factions

Besides these two centers of power, Zairian politics is also determined by the very complex play of factions that are now allowed to act in the open but prevent any real political stability from emerging. Whereas the landscape used to be divided between the *mouvance présidentielle* (FPC) and the radical opposition (USORAL), factional politics have invaded practically all political parties, movements, caucuses, and loose coalitions.

Thus, within the *mouvance présidentielle*, a war of succession followed the death of its moderate leader, former Ambassador Lengema Dulia. A member of the old guard, Mandungu Bula Nyati, is vying with a representative of the new political generation, Kitenge Yesu, while both pretend to be close to the Mobutu entourage.

The main issue behind that struggle, positing Mobutu once again as arbitrator, is that the new generation is ready to support Kengo, while the old guard refuses to entrust the executive power of the country to a prime minister who is considered the paramount example of an “inauthentic citizen” and is judged beholden to “foreign actors.”

Similar factional quarrels have appeared within the radical opposition. The UDPS leadership imploded into two camps. The first embodies truly radical opposition to Mobutu, while the second, allegedly backed by followers of Etienne Tshisekedi, agreed to open negotiations with the president in order to unseat the prime minister. The PDSC is also split into two factions: one led by supporters of a former PDSC leader who has accepted Kengo; and the second, the party’s old guard, ready to compromise with Mobutu.

In the UFERI, which is supposed to represent Katangese aspirations to autonomy or independence, major splits have occurred between the national president and the regional branch of young radicals led by the local governor, who was held responsible for the “ethnic purification” in Shaba.

In short, party politics are being strongly eroded by one and only one issue: who is going to grab power, and where and when. Matters such as the rehabilitation of political legitimacy, of a viable state sys-

tem, or of an acceptable modern economy do not seem to greatly preoccupy political actors.

Regional and Ethnic Constituencies

A fourth category of political actors includes those who appear to have retained the support of regional or ethnic constituencies. Many are formerly prestigious leaders and employ political symbols that are still invested with charisma. Tshisekedi belongs to this category: his messianic type of leadership gives vent to feelings widespread among the Luba diaspora. Another politician of this sort is Antoine Gizenga, who emerged as a leading “nationalist” figure of the 1963–64 rebellion in Kwilu and eastern Zaire. A third example is the current governor of Shaba, Kyungu wa Mwanza, who entertains the futile dream of Katangese independence.

But charismatic figures are not the only relevant actors in regional politics. Other local leaders (governors, district commissioners, and so forth) might emerge in the context of democratization and the collapse of central state structures. One might thus anticipate that political regionalism will be the lasting reality, consolidated in the future through elections and the backing of Mobutu, who by remaining in his native constituency (Gbadolite), appears to support regional patrons.

Mediators

A final category of political actors could be labeled “mediators.” This category includes a number of independent individuals who once belonged to the moderate old guard of Mobutuism (for example, Nendaka, Bomboko) and who, at one point or another, have tried to moderate factional politics by discretely performing the role of go-between. Most have no political future and prefer to remain on the sidelines.

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Three major conclusions emerge from this survey of the complex and constantly shifting political landscape. The first is rather comforting: Even though factionalism is the prime mover of politics in Zaire, large-scale political violence has not—and probably will not—erupt, precisely because every attempt at consolidating power is usually dashed by the eruption of a new counterforce.

Mobutu may claim the central mediating role in factional politics, but since figures such as Monsen-

gwo have emerged at the National Conference, he is not the sole arbitrator. Moreover, Mobutu was forced to reopen the political monopoly; as president of the Republic he can no longer exercise despotic rule and is compelled to concede to new arrangements that suggest a more democratic face.

A second conclusion concerns the prevailing and pervading strength of nationalist feelings within the political class. Nationalism is expressed not only through the revival of ethnic identity and ethnic politics, possibly reinforced by regional and local political bosses, but also through the widespread use of the symbols of “Zairian authenticity,” which have reemerged since a “non-Zairian,” Kengo wa Dongo, took over the government. These nationalist themes are also supported by the major “godfathers” of Zaire.

Third, one must question the relevance of the political institutions and practices promoted by foreign governments. Democracy, the holding of free elections—yet again postponed—and even good governance do not seem to be the order of the day. Factional politics are omnipresent in Zaire, and one may conclude that the ruling class, among them the natural incumbents of the Third Republic, are not quite ready to tackle the problem of state effectiveness and legitimacy.

KEY EXTERNAL ACTORS: THE TROIKA

Since the beginning of the transition, the governments of Belgium, France, and the United States—the “Troika”—have attempted to press for democracy and good governance in Zaire. The most important pressure has come from the U.S. State Department, which, together with World Bank officials, has insisted on consistent and fundamental political reform so that Zaire can implement the measures (chief among them, tackling the huge national debt) recommended by international financial institutions.

Initially, Belgium did not play an active part with the United States and France in exerting diplomatic pressure on the Mobutu regime: Belgian cooperation with Zaire had virtually ceased following a diplomatic crisis between the two in early 1989. Eventually, however, a process of international consultation developed between Belgium, the United States, and France, which have long-established political and economic ties to Zaire. An informal group of ambassadors from these countries has displayed some degree of unity in delivering its message to the Zairian

authorities—first and foremost to President Mobutu—about the necessity of democracy.

Belgium

Within the Belgian government, whose foreign affairs policy passed into socialist hands in 1992, a strong anti-Mobutu feeling—traditional in the Flemish socialist party—has prevailed. As was bluntly stated in an official document issued by Minister of Foreign Affairs W. Claes, for discussion in the Belgian House of Representatives, Mobutu has no future at all and must be “isolated” from the international scene.

In spring 1992 this position was endorsed by a majority of the Belgian political parties, which made it clear that political dialogue was unlikely as long as Mobutu remained head of state. However, this anti-Mobutu position conflicted with decisions adopted at the National Conference, which repeatedly asked Mobutu not to leave the presidency, but to learn to share his absolute power.

Later, the Belgian foreign policy establishment was caught by its open support for the Tshisekedi government when it became obvious that (1) no political compromise was possible at the National Conference, (2) Mobutu was clearly regaining his political influence, and (3) the United States and France had rather mixed feelings, to say the least, with respect to the Tshisekedi cabinet.

The United States

The position of the United States has rested on two ideas: Zaire is no longer a strategic spot in Africa and Mobutu has been a friendly ally of the West. Moreover, during the first phase of the political transition, President Bush and part of the U.S. Congress felt that Mobutu had an inevitable role to play in the democratizing process that they thought was unfolding.

The Clinton administration came to develop a rather different attitude toward Mobutu, with some U.S. diplomats seeing him as a possible obstacle to democratization. Nevertheless, the Clinton administration took no initiatives that would have indicated a willingness to break with Mobutu. Personal relationships between Mobutu and the U.S. presidency, high-ranking officials in the State Department, and leaders in Congress remained intact.

In fact, both the Bush and Clinton administrations were partly paralyzed in their search for new credible

political actors in Zaire, being highly suspicious of the radical opposition. Eventually, the Clinton administration came to accept the traditional argument that “Zaire without Mobutu could entail a Zaire engulfed in chaos.”³¹ In the end, the designation of Kengo wa Dongo as prime minister was considered the only politically valid initiative to stabilize Zaire.

France

Despite the verbal support of the French diplomatic establishment for democratization in Africa, embodied primarily in the celebrated speech of President Mitterand at the Franco-African summit at La Baule, France’s attitude toward Zaire has remained consistently ambivalent and even contradictory.

Before transition, the French establishment had at times considered Mobutu a not quite reliable African “chief.”³² Since 1990, the French position has become less coherent, largely due to the dilution of the decision-making process in the realm of foreign affairs among several centers of influence. Thus, for example, Minister of Humanitarian Affairs Bernard Kouchner publicly showed his contempt for Mobutu even as close advisors to Mitterand and Minister of the Interior Charles Pasqua, a conservative politician, discreetly maintained cordial relations with Mobutu’s family and entourage. France, like Belgium and the United States, did not regard the Zairian radical opposition as a credible political solution—although limited circles within the socialist party disagreed.

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So far, the Troika’s activities have not achieved significant or positive diplomatic results, partly due to differences in their appraisal of Zaire’s political evolution. The only common denominator has been the affirmation of the necessity of democracy through a fully legitimate National Conference.

OTHER ACTORS

Other state and nonstate actors and international financial pressures have also been at work during various phases of Zaire’s transition. First in chronological order was the little-known visit in early November 1991 by the Nigerian representative of the president of the OAU, an attempt to start a conciliatory process between several major opponents and the FPC.

That short-lived effort was followed immediately by another bilateral African mediation, that of President Abou Diouf of Senegal. Led by his emissary, Abdoulaye Wade, it was a little more successful in that a “Common Declaration” signed by the major political leaders was issued. The statement asserted inter alia that (1) the principle of nonviolence would be “scrupulously respected” (this declaration was issued almost immediately after the looting of September and October 1991); (2) the National Conference, abruptly canceled by the looting, would be reopened; and (3) the head of the new “transitional” government would belong to the opposition.

The first two parts of the agreement were respected, but political feuds reemerged when Nguz Karl-i-Bond, who claimed to be a long-time opponent of the Mobutu regime, was designated the head of the transitional government by the president.

Another OAU attempt to mediate the political conflict, in May 1993, was cut short by the radical opposition’s request for a joint UN-OAU mediation. In July the matter was settled by the designation of Algerian Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi as special emissary of the United Nations. After negotiating an agreement for a new round of talks between the contending parties in August and September 1993, Brahimi left Zaire bitterly noting “the versatility, the inconsistency, and the lack of maturity of the Zairian political class.”³³ He briefly returned in October to discover that his efforts had been to no avail.

Although these mediation attempts failed, they were not perhaps entirely useless. It can be argued that these efforts helped diminish the level of tension and prevented further political violence.

URGENT ISSUES

The quiet implosion of the Zairian state (in contrast to the explosions in Somalia, Liberia, Angola, and Rwanda) suggests that large-scale civil strife—with all that implies for mass migration and large-scale humanitarian intervention—is not likely to occur, at least in the near future. One reason Zaire has not exploded is that Zairians have learned over the years to live beyond the reach of the state's authority and structures, as evidenced by the development of the popular economy. A further example: the expulsion of the Luba and other non-Katangese from Shaba did not result in the establishment of huge permanent refugee camps in Kasai and elsewhere. Some of those taking refuge near Mbuji-Mayi have tried, successfully on occasion, to leave the camps and insert themselves in local agricultural activities or the diamond business.

Certain state interventions have also contributed to a decrease in tensions. Both the Kongo government and President Mobutu have gone to Shaba to try to persuade the governor—who had been accused of ethnic cleansing, and who was then suspended and later

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called back to Kinshasa for three months—to stop his appeals to civil strife and his threats to secede.

The one highly dangerous spot where chaotic conditions have required large-scale humanitarian intervention is the area around Bukavu and Goma, where more than 1.7 million Rwandan refugees have been situated. Their presence threatened to provoke a major ecological disaster while exacerbating general insecurity.

But the crisis in Zaire is not at the root of the Rwandan hecatomb. Local populations are the victim of the chaotic situation prevailing in that part of Zaire where resentment has been growing against the refugees, whose lot has been considered better than that of ordinary Kivu citizens on account of the huge external assistance organized on the refugees' behalf. Although Zairian authorities cannot solve the problem alone, the expulsion of several thousand Rwandan refugees, initiated by the Kengo government and tacitly backed by Mobutu, came as a major rebuke to the United Nations, which was accused of inflexibility and ignoring the Zairian side of the problem.

For the time being, local elites, newspapers, and NGOs do not place much trust in the effectiveness of any large international humanitarian intervention, and they worry that such an effort could further destabilize the region. In places such as North Kivu, populations have armed in order to resist the threat of a permanent settlement of Rwandan refugees, while several military incidents have taken place between Zairian soldiers and unidentified militias (Interahamwe or other) from Rwanda.

Beyond this geopolitical tension concentrated in one part of Zaire, the problem of generalized public insecurity remains critical throughout the country. Apart from the DSP and some paramilitary units, irregular or no pay is the common lot of most of the Zairian army, as it is for the civil service. The bribes and physical harassment that result have directly undermined the observance of human rights by both military personnel and the civil service throughout Zaire. This remains true despite the fact that the population avoids contact with the state as far as possible,

and has learned how to retaliate against local extortion (for example, in Kinshasa or Kivu) during the transition.

Timely payment of soldiers and civil servants might well improve the situation. As mentioned earlier, the payment of some local garrisons by local businessmen bought a temporary reprieve in tensions. But such local expedients cannot overcome national macroeconomic and financial woes. Zaire simply does not have sufficient resources to support more than 50,000 to 60,000 civil servants and 10,000 to 12,000 army troops.

Not paying much of the civil service for close to a year and no longer paying the largest part of the garrisons in the interior has brought home to Zairian authorities the harsh realities of austerity. In response to this pressing issue, the government will have to match, in a coherent rather than random manner, the remaining national resources with the reasonable needs of governance.

Another urgent issue concerns the creation of a more favorable environment for the maintenance and development of two basic services: education (including higher education) and health. Demand for these services is very strong among both urban and rural populations.

According to a number of observers, Zairians are willing to invest their savings and assets in certain sectors provided that they can control the quality of the services offered. In the case of institutions of higher learning, for instance, some former state and new private educational structures function thanks to the tuition paid by the students' families.

Obviously, the pressing national issues in Zaire will need to be approached very carefully. Within the elite (both the radical opposition and the *mouvance présidentielle*), the NGOs, and the population at large, national dignity is not an empty concept. Whether benevolent or not, outside intervention has always been and is still regarded with strong suspicion. It is thus essential that foreign observers, analysts, and practitioners appreciate and respect the concrete contingencies and constraints of Zairian political culture.

Mediating local and regional conflicts, which have so often degenerated into "national" ones, is one of the most urgent issues in Zaire—all the more so given that presidential and parliamentary elections have been postponed until the summer of 1997. The National Electoral Commission is in disarray, however,

and there are questions as to whether this schedule can be met.

In my view, assisting the learning process of intergroup mediation and conflict management must precede any attempt at “educating” people about democracy, electoral procedures, and codes of conduct. Additionally, state-to-state relations between Zaire and other countries will have trivial results if they focus on the management of resources (foreign debt, rehabilitation of infrastructure, control over public expenses, and so forth) at the expense of addressing human and social concerns.

PART II
FRAMEWORKS
FOR PREVENTIVE
DIPLOMACY

A FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION TO ARREST FURTHER VIOLENCE IN ZAIRE

Jean-Claude Willame

At the initial sessions of the MRG (USA) workshop, four principal points emerged.

1. State and political structures as such have no relevance in Zaire for the time being. The government lacks any meaningful control over basic state functions (defense, finance) and over the country at large. According to Hugues Leclercq's estimates, the government's claim that it has achieved "better mastery" over public finances is not well founded. In short, the content of state power and influence is nonexistent. The political institutions born out of the transition, specifically the new political parties and the Transition Parliament (the HCR-PT), have not succeeded in offering a viable alternative. They have all split in endless feuds and factions, unable to maintain a minimum of institutional coherence and political responsibility.
2. Normal state-to-state relations have little meaning at this point. As such, members of the Troika (the United States, Belgium, and France)—which remain to some extent limited by their previous approaches (for example, the demonization and isolation of Mobutu) and by their domestic public opinion—seem unwilling to take any initiative other than provide indirect public aid to Zaire. A clear signal of the departure from state-to-state relations was given by the European Union in 1995, when it decided to channel an aid package of

\$100 million for local infrastructure, health, and education through the civil society in particular regions (Kasai, Kivu, and around Kinshasa).

3. For the time being, holding elections, be they at the regional, local, or national level, might present a dangerous illusion. In 1994 the World Bank estimated that elections would cost at least \$100 million. Recently, the minister of the interior of Zaire said that his department was prepared for elections but estimated the cost at \$300 million. A European consulting firm has assessed the cost at between \$250 million and \$270 million.

Obviously Zaire does not have sufficient resources to engage in that process. There are serious doubts that the international community—in this case, the Troika—would be ready to mobilize even a quarter of that amount. Besides, elections might exacerbate, rather than reduce, ethnic and regional tensions, and the violence could be far more dangerous than the sort now encountered. In certain parts of the country, elections would be impossible to conduct.

4. Large-scale political violence is unlikely. The more probable scenario is the continuous spread of day-to-day social violence, especially among the younger age groups, which constitute about half the population and have nothing to lose. In Shaba and North Kivu, especially, they form gangs that have been mobilized by unscrupulous and unorganized members of the political class, as well as by citizens who wish to defend themselves.

A PROPOSAL FOR REGIONAL CONFLICT PREVENTION

The current state of affairs does not mean that nothing significant can be achieved prior to the conduct of legitimate democratic elections. There is justification for believing that opportunities exist, given the appearance of a workable agreement between President Mobutu and Prime Minister Kengo, although neither man has decisive leverage in political and economic developments.

I suggest undertaking an initiative that focuses on regional conflict prevention and that seeks to ameliorate tensions before the beginning of the election process. The institutions of the political transition were asked to tackle this latter task, but they have been unable to implement a serious plan. The national

authorities would be more likely to find a preventive approach acceptable if the external parties involved in the initiative refuse to take sides in the political feuds between caucuses and factions.

Such an initiative could be inaugurated with an informal, independent forum attended by

- national and regional church leaders, who have recently created their own system of coordination;
- regional entrepreneurs, particularly those maintaining their independence vis-à-vis the political class;
- some military provisional commanders acceptable to all sides;
- political bosses and elders who retain regional backing and are still able to perform the role of go-between;
- representatives of NGO coalitions (CNONGD) and established NGOs (for example, Oxfam and Médecins Sans Frontières);
- representatives of major human rights associations (VSV, Toges Noires, AZADHO, LIZADHO, CNDDH); and
- members of the intellectual and educational communities, especially those working in the new private universities.

This forum, which should be independent of both the executive power and the political class as such, could be placed in the context of the mission to be fulfilled by the UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights, whose mandate has been accepted by Zaire.

The identification of the relevant actors to be associated with the forum could be partly undertaken by independent outside experts with a good knowledge of Zaire and its human resources. This phase would be critical, requiring considerable attention; the assistance of the UN agencies still operating in Zaire and of the embassies of the Troika would be extremely valuable.

Once the forum is convened and it recognizes the need to abandon the stalemate at the macroinstitutional level, it should define as precisely as possible the critical sectoral and geographical areas where

local political mediation is most urgently needed. Additionally, the forum should determine the specific means and ways to be used to decrease the level of local and regional conflicts.

It is critical that the participants understand that Zaire is at a crossroads. Language used during the forum should be straightforward; there should be no misunderstandings about the role of external mediation and the responsibilities that the elite must collectively assume. Participants should be invited to adopt a positive, concrete, and realistic attitude and to eschew explicit or implicit recriminations about past events.

For symbolic reasons and subject to logistical feasibility, it would be more appropriate to hold the forum in a place other than Kinshasa.

After the forum adjourns, its members would oversee the establishment of pilot centers for the prevention of conflict at those locations chosen at the forum's first session. The forum participants would also continue to meet informally to assemble the local and regional grievances (in the form of letters, tracts, and other documents) that circulate widely in Zaire, to report on them, and to start implementing a procedure of conciliation.

Needless to say, the operation of the pilot centers would be entrusted to independent local structures responsible to the forum, while maintaining regular and even day-to-day contact with the regional authorities. At this stage, the active participation of local security agents and army officers would be required.

As the following timetable indicates, implementation of this process of regional conciliation could be achieved in less than a year:

- three to four months for preliminary investigation by independent experts
- two to three months to organize the forum
- one to two weeks for the forum, if everything goes as planned
- three to four months to operationalize two to three pilot centers.

UN-EUROPEAN PEACE CORPS

A complementary, longer-term action that could be undertaken concerns the proposal made by some members of the European Parliament for a

“UN-European Peace Corps” that would promote conditions conducive to dialogue between contending parties at a grassroots level. This proposal is an attempt to implement the “Bourlanges-Martin” report adopted by the European Parliament on May 17, 1995, recommending the establishment of “a European Civil Peace Corps with the training of monitors, mediators, and specialists in conflict resolution.”

The premise of the civil peace corps initiative is that military peacekeeping and large humanitarian mobilizations have yielded few substantial results so far. Although they might have succeeded in diminishing the gravity of conflicts and the level of violence, most military peacekeeping and peacemaking operations have been overrun by macropolitical and geopolitical factors over which they had no control.

Moreover, large-scale humanitarian missions have sometimes upset the precarious socioeconomic equilibrium within local communities. At times, too, local resentment against refugees has grown as international aid has poured in to address the needs of those in the refugee camps, but not those among the established population. This was the case in Kivu, where the use of dollars, rather than the Zairian currency, greatly increased after the arrival of the humanitarian organizations.

According to its proponents, a purely civilian peace corps would have the advantage, at least in theory, of being independent of any institutional machinery, and its culture would be more informal, more egalitarian, and individually oriented. It would not therefore seriously threaten national sovereignty, pride in which remains supremely important to government agencies, local military commanders, militia chiefs, and ambitious political leaders in Zaire.

In sum, mediation would be a relevant initiative in Zaire to the extent that it is conducted from beginning to end by native political brokers. Thus the prime role of a civilian peace corps or any other presence is to search for and encourage the emergence of such brokers. In 1994 the political and land conflicts that erupted in North Kivu were entirely managed by the contending ethnic groups under the aegis of local military commanders, regional authorities, and local NGOs. Although the quarrel is not yet extinguished—indeed, it has been reactivated by social and economic “bandits” attracted by the presence of Rwandan refugees in the area—such a purely endogenous mediation has undoubtedly contributed to easing local tensions.

HOW BEST TO PROVIDE INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC AID IN ZAIRE

Hugues Leclercq

The severe malfunctioning of Zaire's monetary system has negative consequences for recovery in both the modern economy and the informal popular economy. It also affects the operations conducted by central governments, monetary authorities, and, more broadly, the central political institutions. Among other things, it is for now impossible to establish a budget that is really operational, still less to administer and audit it properly, and no monetary policy can be effectively implemented. Moreover, the current situation allows officials to manipulate funds and waste resources, especially foreign exchange, despite the acute shortages.

There are profound implications for aid policy. Indeed, until radical changes in the monetary system are taken (that is, with the establishment of a currency board), it will remain extremely difficult, even counterproductive, to channel funds directly or indirectly. Tensions among the central political institutions will rise and reinforce the clientelist behavior of officials. To prevent the misallocation of funds, aid agencies should make arrangements with the central government to channel aid for predetermined purposes to existing NGOs or para-NGOs (associations composed of not only representatives of civil society but also local officials and military authorities).

An essential precondition for economic survival is the maintenance of civil peace and national solidarity. Civil peace, intertribal "good neighborliness," and

good regional relationships must be preserved at all costs. Absent a climate of public security, no economic recovery is possible. The security function in Zaire can be enforced not only by the usual instruments of the formal police and army but also by other kinds of supplementary security provided by local communities. A major problem is to sustain, on a pragmatic basis, the links between security functions performed by the formal central government and those performed by local communities.

ZAIRE'S MONETARY SYSTEM

The current monetary system makes it very difficult to channel aid funds to the neediest sectors of society. The current system has five components.

"Useful" banknotes denominated in NZ (nouveaux zaires). The "useful" banknotes are the only Zairian money accepted in the country. The ultimate holders of these notes are the poor: women, men, and children who animate the informal economy and need the notes for undertaking their micro-activities. For most workers in the informal popular economy, holding cash balances in banknotes is the essential counterpart to their modest working capital, and it allows them to generate income and employment.

About 85 percent of the cash balances in Zaire is the hands of the informal popular economy. The remainder is held by the upper-income set (big traders in diamonds and gold), by those in the private modern sectors who need the banknotes for transactions (with workers or local suppliers) in the informal economy, and by the elite who have family links with the informal economy. Most of the cash holdings in banknotes are located in Kinshasa and its suburban hinterlands (home to over twelve million people).

The real value of the cash holdings in banknotes denominated in NZ is \$80 million. The real purchase values of the different banknotes range from six cents to around \$1.25, which is the largest banknote that can be used in the informal economy.

The responsibility for issuing currency notes rests with the Central Bank. Because issuing banknotes is the only means of financing public expenditures, the printing of banknotes exceeds the needs of the informal economy, and the value of the currency circulation of banknotes degenerates rapidly.

Due to the hyperinflation provoked by excessive public financing, the circulation of notes has had to be totally renewed every year. Monetary authorities are constrained to annually print between 650 and

900 million banknotes. Thus the cost of maintaining an average of \$80 million in real cash holdings amounts to \$50 million a year.

Old one-million-zaire banknotes that were to have been retired on December 10, 1993. At the time of the monetary reform in September 1993, only 65 percent of the banknotes in circulation were exchanged against the NZ. Most of the currency that was not exchanged consisted of one-million-zaire notes. These notes were progressively sucked into the two regions of Kasai, where they are now used for transactions in the informal popular economy. There are probably between 400 and 410 million banknotes with a real purchase value of around \$25 million. In fact, the one-million-zaire notes issued in September 1991 are now appreciating versus the NZ. (At the end of September 1995, a one-million-zaire banknote could buy 385 NZ.) This currency will probably continue to circulate until it is worn out.

Notes denominated in U.S. dollars. The dollar currency circulation, already important before 1994, was boosted by an injection of dollars through the relief aid from humanitarian agencies and NGOs coping with the Rwandan refugees in Kivu. Dollar notes of almost all denominations are in use. A very rough estimate of the dollar notes in circulation in Zaire is around \$40 million.

This currency is mainly used in the informal popular economy of the two Kasai and the two Kivu regions. Dollar notes are used for transactions in the upper-income bracket of the informal economy outside of Kinshasa. A substantial amount are also held by the elite and the private sector for payments in local transactions.

The foreign-exchange accounts deposited in local banks in Zaire are used mainly by exporters. This foreign-exchange deposit is estimated at \$50 million, the majority of which belongs to a dozen big diamond traders. Fed mainly by the repatriation of export proceeds, these foreign-exchange deposits are formally under the control of central monetary authorities, but in fact they are freely used by their holders. (Indeed, when central authorities periodically try to take hold of these funds, they have little success.) Foreign-exchange deposits are used for both foreign commercial transactions and local payments, either by acquiring NZ banknotes to settle payments with local businesses holding these types of deposits or by cashing dollar notes.

“Zairian Belgian francs,” which appeared in Kinshasa in 1994. The difficulties of running a business with banknotes denominated in zaires has encouraged some in the middle class to engage in certain financial arrangements with large local religious associations. These middle-class traders, mainly operating in Kinshasa and in Bas-Zaïre, bring the proceeds of their sales in zaires to the association, which then opens in its books a deposit account denominated in Belgian francs.

The transfer to this deposit account is executed at the current rate of exchange between the NZ and the Belgian franc. These Belgian deposits are used mainly to protect the real value of cash holdings. Sometimes they serve to settle local transactions with colleagues who also have accounts in the association. Finally, part of these deposits are used to pay for goods and services bought in Belgium. The entire process is computerized and seems to work fairly well on a small-scale basis.

Degenerated money deposit accounts denominated in NZ. The deposit accounts in NZ cannot be used either for current normal transactions or to retire banknotes. They only retain their value because they permit the settling of fiscal obligations. Such accounts are sometimes the only way to receive a payment by the Treasury, and there is always a hope that banknotes will be retired by some arrangement.

These accounts are a virus in the monetary system. Their proportion varies between 8 percent and 30 percent of the total monetary circulation. Recently, the authorities officially legalized the rate of conversion between zaires held in deposit accounts with banknotes denominated in zaires. In late February 1994 the legal rate applied for deposit accounts that could serve to settle transactions was 14,000 NZ per \$1 (compared to 3,500 NZ per \$1 for banknotes).

From February onward, the rate of conversion was fixed by “the market”—that is, by arrangements between customs, revenue administration, and local businesses. This floating rate of exchange only adds to the confusion in the monetary system and in public finance. It has also put the Central Bank in an embarrassing situation: according to the books of the Central Bank, deposits of zaires do not perfectly equal zaires in banknotes. It will be extremely difficult now to have an accurate idea of the real accounting situation of the Central Bank, the government, or the local banks.

The current monetary system, with its multiple currencies and annual renewal of banknotes, invites malpractice and mismanagement. Opportunities include manipulating the exchange rate by issuing more or fewer banknotes; acquiring foreign exchange by issuing banknotes; speculating on the variable rates between the currency rates and the deposit rates; and arbitrarily selecting the beneficiaries of public funds and settling their payments either in banknotes, in deposit accounts, or in foreign exchange.

Given these conditions, it will remain extremely difficult, and may be counterproductive, to inject aid through those channels ruled by the central government and monetary authorities. The best remedy is to establish some sort of currency board (as was done, for example, in Estonia in 1992) adapted to the conditions of the Zairian economy. Establishing such a board would require not only that financial, technical, and economic decisions are made but also that the current political institutions reach a consensus that the issuing of money should be strictly linked to a corresponding foreign-exchange deposit at a fixed intangible rate and that public expenditures cannot be financed simply by issuing banknotes.

THE WAY AHEAD

The fundamentals of the Zairian economy are still promising and could rapidly generate a high growth rate if proper political and monetary conditions were restored.

Potential resources and environment. As is well known, Zaire has a significant natural resources potential, notably in the mining and the hydraulic sectors: this could be exploited in the medium term. Zaire has maintained a relatively well-protected natural environment compared with other countries in sub-Saharan Africa, although the influx of Rwandan refugees has threatened the environmental situation. It should also be noted that the social environment is still relatively sheltered from chronic and general violence, as yet uncontaminated by ferocious tribal war, urban guerrillas, or modern and international forms of crime.

The dynamism of the informal popular economy. The informal economy is very dynamic, working on a highly free and competitive market-oriented basis.

Participants have a sense of opportunities and flexibility, and are making the best of the available local resources. The informal popular economy generates a deep sense of solidarity, founded not so much in sentiment as in the necessity for survival: people need one another to undertake profitable activities. Finally, the participants are conscious of the public goods that need to be provided, because the success of their humble activities depends on their understanding of their local market. The highest priorities expressed by those in the informal sector are (1) security, that is, freedom from personal violence and aggression toward property; (2) access to health care and education; (3) freedom and facilities to move easily, one priority being the maintenance of roads; and (4) free access to information and communications.

The endurance of the modern sector of the economy. Despite the collapse of the public sector and its infrastructure, and despite the outbreaks of looting in 1991 and 1993, the private modern sector, notably the manufacturing industry, has survived. Indeed, under the pressure of circumstances, the modern economy has made several far-reaching and sound economic adjustments:

- Local experts have replaced redundant expatriates. Between 1989 and 1994, around 60 percent of the total expatriate labor force left industry and services in the private sector.
- The unqualified labor force has been reduced (at a tolerable social cost) by almost 45 percent since 1989.
- The manufacturing sector is able to sell products in a very competitive environment while employing cheap labor. Goods and services are provided by the informal economy most efficiently and at lowest cost.
- Intensive labor and equipment have been favored over sophisticated machinery in capital expenditures.
- There has been a growing awareness that a social environment must be created, in collaboration with the local NGOs and authorities, that addresses the economic and social problems of the local people. In some regions, health, education,

road maintenance, and electricity distribution have been partly financed by coalitions, with manufacturing industries and private mining enterprises being particularly responsive.

The informal economy, the private modern sector, and the large local NGOs thus represent quite a large segment of Zairian society that is trying to work together. Operating mainly without foreign aid, and relying instead on their own resources (both local and external), these economic actors have developed a kind of consensus to supply and finance certain priority public goods. They are sensitive to financial constraints and careful to spend scarce resources on the highest local priorities.

CONCLUSIONS

Until the monetary system is changed it will be difficult to channel a substantial amount of aid to the central government. There is, however, a strong case for targeting aid on the local level.

Providing support to regional and local communities does not require a complex infrastructure either in Zaire or outside. The first step is to encourage those

local initiatives already under way to make themselves known to international agencies. Designing arrangements to allow international organizations to dispense foreign aid without channeling it directly or indirectly through the central government calls for creativity and an understanding of local and national realities. Working from the local groups' proposals, a high-powered representative of international organizations could help conclude practical arrangements with central government authorities.

To begin with, the amount of financial aid that can be efficiently absorbed by local communities under this approach will be small. However, as the program achieves greater success, so the capacity to absorb much more substantial aid will enlarge. In this manner, the program will directly address Zaire's most pressing problem, which lies not so much with the absence of large-scale aid as with the country's limited capacity to absorb aid, particularly for the economic development of the poor. The most important role that international organizations can play in the transition is to help enlarge Zaire's capacity to absorb aid through formulas developed by local communities and to foster appropriate arrangements with the central official authorities.

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VIOLENCE IN ZAIRE

Peter Rosenblum

The primary impediment to political transition in Zaire throughout most of the 1990s, and the continuing threat to local and regional development comes from violence perpetrated, tolerated, or provoked by the state. While still circumscribed, “privatized” violence in the form of ethnic or regional strife, has also become a fact of life, principally in the regions of Shaba and Kivu, and represents an increasing threat, because of the trend toward acquiring weapons and the perception that economic and political benefits can be had with little risk.

Without reform of the army, containment of the security forces, and reining in of the military and civilian investigative security apparatus, political change will be ephemeral and development unsustainable. The recent past demonstrates that while a fragile equilibrium is possible between civil society and armed forces, it cannot last in the face of political intrigue, ethnic and regional division, or simply the appearance of new profit-making opportunities.

STRUCTURE OF THE ARMED FORCES

The armed forces of Zaire—army and security apparatus—are composed of overlapping and competitive units dominated by individuals close to Mobutu; they come primarily from his own ethnic group, the Ngbandi, and neighboring groups in the region of Equateur, primarily the Ngbaka. Mobutu has been the

undisputed head, a position he maintains in part by ensuring that few lines of authority converge below him.

The number of men under arms is notoriously difficult to assert. However, UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights Roberto Garréton gave these estimates:

- a regular army (FAZ) of about 60,000, half of whom belong to the Gendarmerie nationale (GDN);
- an air force and navy totaling about 5,000;
- a Civil Guard (Garde civile) of about 12,000; and
- the Special Presidential Division (DSP) of between 6,000 and 10,000.

Most army officers with significant professional training were purged in the 1970s or early 1980s. Officers lacking ethnic and regional links to the president were, with very few exceptions, executed, dismissed, or moved to inconsequential positions. Even within a single “corps” like the FAZ, loyalties vary according to relationships with the president: A regional commander may not—probably will not—have control over troops belonging to a particular elite regiment whose commander has a direct relationship to the president or one of his “barons.”

The elite units and security forces are linked to barons of the regime, who are known to have used them to build economic empires. Three key figures are Kpama Baramoto of the Civil Guard, General Bolozi of the Gendarmerie, and Nzimbi Nbale Kongo of the DSP. In addition, a number of Mobutu’s closest advisors, the most prominent of whom currently is Ngbanda Nzambo-ko-Atumba, are associated with the intelligence forces, which had their own strike force in the past.

THE TRANSITION PERIOD

Although official banditry was endemic before 1990, it has reached new peaks in recent years. Two rounds of army-led pillaging, in 1991 and 1993, hit almost every urban center (Bukavu being one of the few exceptions). Although it is true that the first round of pillaging was joined by a gleeful population pleased to assault big businesses, the second targeted the population itself with a vengeance not previously experienced.

While the army pillaging was overtly motivated by economic needs (few if any soldiers actually receive a regular, living wage), there has been a significant element of political manipulation behind the timing and targets. The 1993 assaults in Kinshasa, for example, were particularly aggressive against institutions of the Catholic Church at a time when the Catholic bishops and many individual priests were playing a leading role in the democracy movement. The strategic deployment or restraint of the reliable elite forces demonstrated the extent of the president's will to control the army rampage, as did his immediate announcement of an amnesty after the first round of pillaging.

The military and security forces have been used frequently in the 1990s to block specific transition initiatives, most significantly in connection with the National Conference. In addition, with the independent press that has thrived in Zaire since 1990, journalists, newspapers, and opposition politicians have been periodically targeted for attacks. Although most of the identified crime of this type is carried out by soldiers in uniform, the regime sometimes relies on secret strike forces or zealous party youth.

MILITARY AND SECURITY FORCES

There have been signs during the transition of breaches of Mobutuist orthodoxy, and these have favored a democratic transition within the military and the security forces. Under Mobutuist "moderates," the civilian and military intelligence forces (SNIP and SARM, respectively) were essentially removed from the work of active political repression early in the transition. During the National Conference, a number of important military figures—including General Singa Boyenge, head of territorial security until 1990, and General Dona Mahele, army chief of staff and former head of SARM—indicated a willingness to support the transition process.

Signs of splintering have been seen within the rank and file as well. A bungled government effort, in early 1992, to implicate soldiers in a coup d'état monté redounded to the overwhelming benefit of the opposition, turning human rights lawyers into heroes in the eyes of the soldiers. Later, under the Tshisekedi government, the defense minister—himself from the Ngbaka ethnic group—reassured many soldiers. Although perhaps overconfident, the opposition government and the minister, in particular, were

extremely optimistic about the possibilities of working with the army.

This process came to end, however, in early 1993, when Mobutu intervened to stop the transition process initiated by the National Conference; he removed the "moderates" from positions of authority and replaced them with hard-liners. One immediate result was the resumption of repressive political activities by the SNIP.

Despite these developments, soldiers up to the very highest levels are free agents, and seek out the best economic opportunities for themselves. For years before the transition, the perpetrators of repressive activity were rewarded with the possessions of the victim. The practice continues. When the Rwandan army fled to Kivu in August 1994, any political support for the fleeing Hutus was clearly secondary to the search for spoils. According to officials in South Kivu, in response to calls for help, generals from Kinshasa arrived, only to collect their share of vehicles and weaponry and then depart. Zairian soldiers have sold weapons to Hutus and non-Hutus alike, and have joined on each side of the battle in North Kivu. During periods of insecurity in Kinshasa, even members of the DSP rent their services to European and Zairian businessmen.

Where communities have succeeded in paying the soldiers, as in Bukavu, the worst economic disasters have been avoided. But the equilibrium is very delicate and can be upset by a new group of soldiers, a new set of demands, or a political incentive to disturb the balance.

ETHNIC AND REGIONAL VIOLENCE

Since 1990 traditional enmities have erupted into violence in two regions of the country—the copper- and cobalt-rich region of Shaba and the fertile, densely populated region of North Kivu. Neither eruption of violence was without precedent. However, the particular circumstances and timing of the violence were more a function of recent politics than of age-old feuds. The case for the direct government manipulation and control of the conflict is strongest in Shaba. There, a popular opposition politician, Kyungu wa Kumwanza, allied himself with one of the most notorious politicians of the Second Republic, Nguz Karl-i-Bond. When Nguz broke ranks with the opposition to become prime minister in 1991, Kyungu became governor of Shaba. Taking a direct, populist approach, Kyungu went to the people with the message that

Shabans must take back what is theirs—in other words, drive out the people of the neighboring region of Kasai, who, admittedly, occupied most of the prestigious positions in the major regional enterprises.

Kyungu justified his alliance with Mobutu as one of pure convenience. One of the expressions of the party was “Better a dying dictator than a permanent dictatorship of Kasaians”—a reference to Tshisekedi, who is a Luba from Kasai. The administration adopted an explicit policy of regional cleansing. Following the model used by Mobutu during the Second Republic, Kyungu’s party—the UFERI—established a militant and partly militarized youth wing, the JUFERI. The JUFERI increasingly took up policing functions at state institutions. Although not paid for their services, members of the JUFERI expected to receive the jobs of departing Kasaians.

The first outbreaks of violence occurred in late 1991, soon after Kyungu became governor. But immediately after Etienne Tshisekedi became prime minister in August 1992, the violence took on an entirely different scale and direction. Massive gangs of youth attacked Kasaians and forced them out of their homes. These gangs, whose attacks were systematic and well organized, appeared as if out of nowhere, accompanied by drugs and fetishes. In Likasi, where the worst violence occurred, soldiers made what appears to have been a sincere effort to suppress the gangs, but they lacked the means and the logistical support. Those troops that did have the capabilities to act effectively—the DSP and the Civil Guard—never arrived.

By March 1993 most of the Kasaians living in Shaba had left their homes for displaced persons’ camps or moved to the capital of Lubumbashi. In Lubumbashi, tensions flared, but the Kasaiian community was probably too large and powerful to displace.

Throughout this period Governor Kyungu continued to expand his administrative control over local television, newspapers, and radio. Like other Zairian politicians, Kyungu also used his control of local resources to enrich himself. The youth gangs apparently disappeared with the departure of the Kasaians. But the populist base, including the JUFERI, continued to grow and play an increasingly public role.

In the process, Kyungu created a power base unlike any other in modern Zaire. Although allied to President Mobutu, it was clearly separate. As a result, few were surprised when Mobutu allowed Prime Minister Kengo to remove Kyungu in 1995. Unexpectedly, the initial response of the population was calm,

perhaps because of Kyungu’s willingness to play by the rules of the Second Republic. Subsequently, however, political tension has increased in Shaba. The SNIP, with the support of the Civil Guard, has used an iron fist to keep order while purging Kyungu’s supporters from positions of power. Many members of the UFERI have been arrested, detained, and abused.

The violence in Shaba has been almost entirely unarmed, despite the large number of weapons passing through Shaba destined for Angola and for other parts of the country, including Kivu. Apparently, however, administrative control or popular sentiment is sufficient to prevent weapons from flowing into the community. While impressive, this situation must be viewed as fragile and analyzed in light of what would happen if armed violence increases in neighboring South Kivu or if the struggle for power in the region intensifies.

The circumstances in North Kivu are somewhat different. No charismatic political leader motivated the population to rise up. Rather, a long-term controversy over citizenship took on new importance as populations jockeyed for control in eventual elections. The ethnic Rwandan population of North Kivu, known as Banyarwanda, composed of waves of immigrants over a period of more than a hundred years, had grown in some areas to outnumber other inhabitants, primarily the Hunde and Nyanga, known, inappropriately, as the “autochthonous” people. In the area of Masisi, for example, the Banyarwanda account for as much as 80 percent of the population.

Successive laws in 1971 and 1981 first acknowledged the Zairian citizenship of the Banyarwanda and then withdrew that citizenship (requiring proof of presence since 1885), but no administrative action was taken to enforce the latter measure. Although the Banyarwanda had become the most powerful economic force in the regions of Masisi and Walikali, and occupied important positions there in, for example, the Catholic Church, they did not own the land they cultivated and on which they herded. Rather, according to traditional land rights, the land belonged to the “autochthonous” leaders.

What sparked the outbreak of violence in March 1993 is unclear. There were reports of visits to Kinshasa by local politicians, on the one hand, and of secret meetings of Banyarwanda elders, on the other. Whatever the cause, in March 1993 a group of Hunde and Nyanga attacked the Banyarwanda at Ntoto market, east of Masisi. The violence that erupted in Masisi, Walikali, and Rutshuru quickly took on a

character far more deadly than the gang attacks in Shaba. Within a period of weeks several thousand people were killed, villages were destroyed, and hundreds of thousands of people were displaced.

During the ensuing calm, President Mobutu dispatched a contingent of the DSP, headed by a rare non-Ngbandi officer. The DSP took up a peacekeeping role (one of the rare instances in which it has played such a part), to the general satisfaction of many in the region. In the meantime, local groups in Goma, with little external support, tried to mediate and organized community meetings. There, many people acknowledged that, while the grievances were real, they had been manipulated into violence that was unwelcome. By the time Rwandan refugees began flowing into Kivu in 1994, a delicate balance had been struck. Although the underlying political issues had not been addressed, many villagers—not, however, the traditional leaders of the “autochthonous” peoples—had returned to their villages, and NGOs and local collectivities were functioning.

This delicate balance was destroyed by the arrival of the refugees, but not, as many believe, because of the infiltration by Interhamwe and ex-FAR (Rwandan and Hutu soldiers). Rather, new acts of provocation were bolstered by the flow of arms to both sides in the conflict. Youth militias formed on all sides, primarily Hutu and Hunde. The Zairian soldiers now stationed in the region are no longer paid, and even the remaining DSP troops have joined in preying on all sides.

In South Kivu a similar ethnic balance exists. There, as well, people of Rwandan origin—primarily Tutsi and known as Banyamulenge—have lived among other ethnic groups for generations, predating even the arrival of the Banyarwanda in North Kivu. A resolution of the transition parliament in Kinshasa, however, claims that large numbers of refugees have joined them and links their fate to that of the Rwandan refugees, who were to be expelled by the end of December 1995. One of the leaders of the Mobutu faction in the HCR-PT, Anzaluni Bambe, is from the region and has reportedly been active in inciting aggression toward the Banyamulenge.

According to Banyamulenge residents of the area, the local administration has begun to inventory the belongings of the Banyamulenge for repossession after the residents’ expulsion. The Banyamulenge report a heavy flow of arms, primarily from Shaba, and add that every family is encouraged to buy a Kalashnikov, which can be had for the equivalent of about \$60.

CONCLUSIONS

On the surface, there exists an eerie stability to the relations between society and the armed forces in Zaire. Violence is constant—used to pursue either political or economic ends—but held within limits. There is no popular armed movement against the government and no “private” violence beyond the control of the government.

Viewed from another angle, however, what has occurred is a dangerous dissipation of authority over armed power in the state. While armed forces remain loyal to Mobutu, the motivation is little more than opportunism. Their actual source of income is banditry and pillaging, encouraged by their near-complete impunity for crimes.

Even if there were the necessary will, it is questionable whether, for example, elite forces could maintain order over the 60,000 remaining troops of the armed forces for any prolonged period. On the other hand, the armed forces as now constituted pose an insurmountable threat to Zaire’s economic and political development.

Both the incitement and the relative containment of ethnically or regionally based violence are significant. Although hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced, the violence has been far less deadly and widespread than many predicted. This is in part due to the absence of armed violence and armed opposition to Mobutu, and in part due to restraint within society. But these conditions may not hold: weapons are flowing into areas such as South and North Kivu, and youth gangs are becoming accustomed to power brought by weaponry.

This analysis leads to these recommendations:

- Intensive research should be conducted to detect points of ethnic, regional, and political division susceptible to violent provocation and also to identify the means by which tensions can be reduced or avoided.
- An effort should be made to develop a strategy for military containment and restructuring in preparation for elections and long-term development.
- Specific confidence-building measures should be developed that take into account ethnic and regional sensibilities. For example, some Mobutu insiders might be replaced with officers who, while close to Mobutu, are more acceptable to the population.

ADDENDUM

The takeover of the Kivu provinces by a “rebel” army in the fall of 1996 set the conflict in Zaire on a new course, challenging the fragile order maintained by the armed forces of the state and raising the specter of Zaire’s hastened disintegration. For the first time since 1978, a well-armed, foreign-backed military movement challenged the state. As in previous military confrontations, the Zairian troops were easily routed. The main resistance to the rebels appeared, in fact, to come from the former Rwandan troops (ex-FAR) based on Zairian territory. As they beat a retreat, Zairian troops ransacked towns and wreaked havoc. The city of Bukavu, the only major city to escape the pillaging of 1991 and 1993, was plundered by Zairian soldiers before they fled in late October.

The mainstay of the forces that took over Kivu is Rwandaphone, reportedly Banyamulenge from the southernmost region of South Kivu, near Uvira. They are almost exclusively Tutsis, and have roots in Zaire that extend nearly two hundred years, further than most ethnic Rwandans living in Zaire. In September 1996 a provincial official announced that the Banyamulenge would be expelled from Zaire. This threat of expulsion followed upon the actions of Hutu extremists in the refugee camps in Zaire, who began spreading anti-Tutsi propaganda, and of Hutu guerrillas, who drove most Zairian Tutsis out of the Masisi and Rutshuru regions. After Zairian soldiers started attacking Banyamulenga Tutsi in South Kivu in September and October, the well-armed rebels attacked Zairian army posts and Rwandan refugee camps, first around Uvira and Bukavu, and then in and around the northern camps surrounding Goma. The attacks on the camps routed the Hutu militias, who fled further west into Zaire. With the tight control of the militias over their fellow refugees broken, vast numbers of Hutu refugees started returning to their homes in Rwanda.

Although the Banyamulenge are a major component of the rebel forces, the real composition of the

troops is not clear, particularly the level of involvement of Rwandan soldiers. The Rwandan authorities have denied the involvement of regular Rwandan troops, though they admit providing substantial assistance to the rebels. In North Kivu, which is entirely foreign to the Banyamulenge, the rebels have reportedly been joined by Hunde militias and others that were fighting against the Banyarwanda (now “cleansed” of Tutsis) and ex-FAR in Masisi, north of Goma. The rebel leaders, who have played bit parts in earlier rebellions and lack any known base of support in the country, are calling for an overthrow of Mobutu and pointedly avoid calling for the secession of Kivu.

In the short term, the takeover in the east is causing a dramatic realignment of political forces in the country. The Zairian public unified against what is perceived as a foreign invader employing local proxies. The opposition, civil society, and followers of President Mobutu have come together for the first time, rallying to the side of President Mobutu, applauding France for its willingness to intervene, and decrying the United States both for its hesitation at sending troops and for its uncritical support for Rwanda. In Kivu itself it is hard to gauge the reaction of the population. Local leaders of civil society have either fled or sought to remain out of the public eye. None is yet collaborating openly with the institutions established by the rebels.

The unity created by the rebel takeover will likely be short-lived. Even now, opposition leader Etienne Tshisekedi is calling for negotiation rather than military confrontation. If the spell of nonviolence has been broken in the country, as some believe, other disaffected populations in the country may be more willing to use the arms that are so easily available in the region. Although suspicion of the rebels and their leaders makes the current assault an unlikely vehicle for a direct takeover of the state, it could be the catalyst for the spreading of violence that Zaire has thus far succeeded in avoiding.

APPENDIX

RWANDAN REFUGEES IN KIVU, ZAIRE

Catharine Newbury

In the aftermath of the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 and the accession to power in Kigali of a government dominated by the Rwandan Patriotic Front, hundreds of thousands of Rwandans fled to Tanzania, Zaire, and other neighboring countries. As of this writing (early 1996), some two million “new caseload” Rwandan refugees are living outside the country. Most of these recent refugees are Hutu, and most are in refugee camps in Tanzania and Zaire.

Despite sometimes aggressive efforts by the UNHCR to persuade the refugees to return home, only a small proportion of them have done so. By contrast, since 1994 an estimated 750,000 “old caseload” refugees have come to Rwanda from Uganda, Burundi, Zaire, Tanzania, and other countries. Most of these are Tutsi who themselves, or whose parents, had fled the country two to three decades earlier.¹

The largest proportion of new caseload refugees from Rwanda, some 1.5 million people, are living in Zaire’s Kivu province. The presence of such a huge conglomeration of refugees in this area is problematic in a number of respects. First and foremost, it is a significant human tragedy for so many people to be living in what are, for most of them, miserable conditions.

Second, the presence of these refugees in the densely populated lacustrine areas of Kivu constitutes a grave burden for local communities, heightening social tensions. Although some Kivu residents have

benefited from the refugee influx, for most ordinary citizens such benefits are far outweighed by the negative political, economic, and social effects, including serious destruction of the environment and, in North Kivu, an exacerbation of ethnic tensions.

Third, for the current government in Rwanda, the refugees in Kivu represent both an embarrassment and, because there are among them soldiers from the former Rwandan army (FAR) and members of the militias, a significant security threat.

Finally, providing material support as well as medical and social services to such a large refugee population is expensive; the costs are stretching the resources and generosity of international organizations and humanitarian agencies.

In August 1995 the decision by the government of Zaire to expel Rwandan refugees by force attracted world attention, underscoring the importance and volatility of this simmering crisis. Zaire’s subsequent ultimatum, naming December 31, 1995, as the deadline for repatriation of the refugees, dramatized the urgency of these concerns.

Because the refugee crisis in Kivu is constantly evolving, any analysis runs the risk of being overtaken by events. One thing is clear, however: Resolving the refugee crisis will require that a number of measures are taken on several different fronts at the same time. The problem is a regional one and the refugee crisis cannot be isolated from the problems of Zaire. Careful assessment is needed of Zaire’s position on the refugee crisis and of how the Zairian leadership could be persuaded to facilitate efforts to promote orderly repatriation.

IMPERATIVES AND DILEMMAS OF REPATRIATION

Under what conditions are the refugees in Kivu (and in Tanzania and Burundi) likely to go home, and what can be done to establish those conditions? How can international organizations such as the United Nations work with governments in the Great Lakes region, humanitarian agencies, and donor countries to address the crisis and establish the basis for voluntary, peaceful repatriation?

In general, it may seem reasonable to assume that encouraging repatriation can help to defuse the crisis. Yet the situation is more complicated. How one goes about encouraging repatriation will determine whether it helps to ameliorate or serves to aggravate the situation. And any efforts in this regard must take

account of the dynamics of fear among the refugees, among leaders of the current government in Kigali, and among ordinary citizens in Rwanda, both Tutsi and Hutu.

A number of studies have pointed out that many of the refugees want very much to return to Rwanda but are afraid to do so.² Hutu refugees fear that if they return, they may be arrested, accused of participation in the genocide, and thrown into prison. They also fear that they may be mistreated or harassed by the army, by civil authorities, or by people seeking vengeance for the genocide. Linked to such fears are concerns over property rights. If refugees return home to find their homes occupied by others, how can they attempt to reclaim property without running the risk of imprisonment? There have been enough cases of arbitrary arrest to make such fears credible.

In particular, the conduct of the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) is hardly reassuring to refugees contemplating return. After taking power in 1994 the RPA engaged in massacres of Hutu in some regions.³ In 1995 dramatic cases of army brutality sent shock waves of fear through the camps. During the Kibeho massacre in April, at least 2,000 and perhaps as many as 8,000 persons were killed when the RPA moved to close a displaced persons' camp in southwestern Rwanda; in September more than 100 villagers and their mayor were massacred at Kanama in northwestern Rwanda.⁴ Attacks by the RPA on a refugee camp at Birava in Kivu in April 1995 and against suspected guerrillas on the island of Iwawa in Lake Kivu in November 1995 have added to refugees' fears.

The death or disappearance of what Human Rights Watch calls "a substantial number of Rwandans" has served as a further deterrent to the return of refugees from Kivu. Among the more prominent people killed were the prefect of Butare Prefecture, in March; a deputy prefect of Gitarama Prefecture (killed with his wife, two children, and a cook), in July; a deputy prefect of Gikongoro Prefecture, in early August; a judge in Butare, in late August; and a local government official in Gisenyi, in late September.⁵

Reports on conditions in the refugee camps have noted that extremists in the camps, partisans of the former government, exaggerate the frequency and nature of abuses in Rwanda, so as to frighten refugees and convince them not to return. Moreover, some leaders in the camps and former militia have used pressure and coercion to prevent refugees from returning to Rwanda. Nonetheless, some 27,000 refugees in a camp near Bukavu said they wish to

return to their homes in southwestern Rwanda. As of October 1995, however, local authorities in Rwanda (Cyangugu Prefecture) were hindering rather than facilitating their return.⁶

It is important to recognize that there are groups of refugees (women's organizations prominent among them) who have attempted to marginalize or circumvent the extremists in the camps. But the comportment of the RPA and some local government officials in Rwanda has tended to confirm refugees' fears; abuses by soldiers, arbitrary arrests, and the ever-increasing prison population (58,000 in November 1995) are grim reminders that there are risks to returning. Compounding the problem are calls for vengeance on the part of some government leaders in Kigali, and a stalled justice system.⁷ Because of such uncertainties, refugees have asked for more information about conditions in Rwanda, and for escorts from UNHCR or other international agencies back to their home communes.

At the end of August 1995 a cabinet reshuffle in the Kigali government heightened fears among the refugees, because those who left the government were moderates who had opposed indiscipline in the army, criticized human rights abuses, and called for measures to combat insecurity. The prime minister and interior minister resigned, and three other ministers, including the justice minister, were dismissed.⁸

Misinformation and lack of communication between the camps and Rwanda are not necessarily the most important constraints. Just as important has been the pervasive climate of insecurity in Rwanda and an apparent lack of political will on the part of the government to promote confidence-building measures. The political conditions inside Rwanda have convinced numbers of refugees that their fears are well founded.

Meanwhile, the RPA and elements in the government in Kigali fear the threat of military attack by remnants of the FAR (the army of the former Rwandan government, loyalists to Habyarimana). They have heard reports of arms being sent to the refugees and of military training among them. Some observers believe that the extent of the military threat posed by the refugees has been exaggerated. At most, such critics say, the former FAR and militias could carry out small attacks but would be unable to mount an all-out war.

Whatever the realities on the ground, the fear of attack from outside has been used to justify a military buildup within Rwanda. Some estimates suggest the RPA grew to some 50,000 soldiers during 1995. Yet

these soldiers often go unpaid, which creates a further security threat, as soldiers turn to assaults and thefts while foraging among the population. Moreover, since the arms embargo on Rwanda was lifted by the United Nations in August 1995, the RPA has been seeking to increase its arsenals.

Thus, for many reasons, every effort should be made to halt the flow of arms into Kivu and to prevent the efforts of the former FAR and militias to re-arm. At the same time, strong pressure should be brought to bear on the government in Kigali to secure a halt to armed forays into Kivu.

Just as threats from the FAR spread fear within Rwanda, certain policies and actions of the current government in Kigali seem to foster the very situation that the incumbent leaders fear. That is, the more that refugees in the camps in Zaire (or in Tanzania) become convinced that they cannot safely return to Rwanda, the more receptive they will be to appeals from hard-liners in the camps who wish to recommence the war and attempt a return to Rwanda by force. The RPF leaders, having themselves chosen to use force in 1990 to win the right to return to Rwanda, are surely aware of the potentially explosive consequences of having large refugee populations on their borders. Conversely, they cannot fail to understand that concrete gestures of reconciliation and confidence-building are needed if indeed they are serious about promoting repatriation of new caseload refugees.

In such a polarized situation, the willingness of the Zairian government to extend the deadline for repatriation beyond December 31, 1995, was a positive step. The International Tribunal in Arusha has handed down the first indictments of those to be tried for genocide. Although only eight indictments have been issued so far, this judicial activity has tremendous symbolic significance.

In November 1995, during a meeting of regional leaders in Cairo (organized by the Carter Center), the Kigali government reiterated its commitment to repatriation of refugees—a positive message. Within Rwanda, there appeared to be progress at the end of 1995 toward beginning trials for some of the prisoners accused of genocide. And there were signs that the Kigali government might be softening its previous refusal to engage in dialogue with representatives of the refugees in the camps.

It appears that the 12,000 refugees forcibly expelled by Zaire at the end of August 1995 have been successfully reintegrated to their home communes.

The efforts by the Rwandan government to accommodate the returnees were encouraging. Less encouraging was the fact that the prison population continued to grow during the last quarter of 1995 at the rate of about 1,000 per week.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *UN agencies, donor governments, and organizations providing development aid should encourage the government in Kigali to take concrete measures to allay the fears of refugees.*

Refugees need to believe that they are welcome in Rwanda and that they can return safely. In this regard, local administrations in Rwanda require close attention. Each of Rwanda's eleven prefectures has several deputy prefects, who assist the prefect and carry out specified functions in finance, legal affairs, and so on. At the end of 1995 about 85 percent of these subprefects were Tutsi. The prefectures are divided into communes; there are 143 communes, each headed by a bourgmestre. Estimates indicate that more than 60 percent of the bourgmestres are Tutsi. One measure that could help to reassure refugees would be to replace those bourgmestres who are relatively new to the country, having returned to Rwanda only recently (after the genocide), with individuals who are known locally and respected by the inhabitants of the commune they are to administer.

The Kigali government should be encouraged to move ahead as rapidly as possible in reestablishing a functional justice system. Funding has been provided, and expatriate jurists are prepared to provide assistance. Manifestation of political will on this issue would be an important confidence-building measure.

2. *Obtain agreement from the Rwandan government to prolong the presence of a UN peace-keeping force.*

As of December 1995 the United Nations had negotiated an agreement with the government of Rwanda to maintain a UNAMIR presence in the country until March 1996. Still under discussion was the question of whether UN political observers would remain. Though neither the United Nations nor the Rwandan government seem inclined to maintain UNAMIR in Rwanda beyond March 1996, the withdrawal of UNAMIR

is likely to retard rather than encourage refugee repatriation. The continued presence of UNAMIR would seem to be an important confidence-building measure, to provide reassurance to returning refugees and to UN and NGO personnel involved in repatriation and relief operations.

3. *Promote mechanisms to facilitate communication and dialogue between refugee camps, their home communes in Rwanda, and the Rwandan government.*

The Rwandan government claims that conditions have improved and refugees should not be afraid to return. If this is true, better communication with the camps is needed so that refugees can obtain a realistic picture of the conditions back home.

4. *Conduct follow-up monitoring in communes to which refugees have been repatriated.*

There are a variety of ways in which follow-up monitoring could be done: it would probably be best to use several different approaches, for example, more human rights monitors (at least two per commune), as well as monitoring by NGOs involved in humanitarian relief and by UNHCR personnel. Coordination of efforts between NGOs operating in particular communes within the camps and NGOs in counterpart communes in Rwanda should be encouraged. Churches could also be called upon to assist in facilitating follow-up and communication.

5. *Promote a massive effort to provide resources to defray the costs of repatriation.*

Coordination among the United Nations Development Programme, UNICEF, other UN agencies, and humanitarian organizations will be needed to assure adequate material support for returning refugees when they arrive in their home communes. This effort will require substantial funding.

Such support should take the form of hoes, seed, and food supplies to carry people through until the next harvest. December/January and August/September are propitious periods for repatriation, since rural cultivators are more likely to want to return home at a time when they can begin to cultivate and envisage a harvest. One

problem that became evident in Rwanda during the January/February 1995 planting season is that relief organizations tended to serve mainly those areas near the principal roads; more remote communes were neglected. Mechanisms must be developed to ensure transport of supplies to remote areas.

Some agencies have raised the possibility of providing cash payments (rather than food and seed) to returning refugees. This is inadvisable, for once the money is spent, the refugees are left with nothing. Moreover, distributing hoes, seed, and food increases the likelihood that the supplies will be used for family needs. To avoid tensions, some resources should also be made available to local residents, many of whom are desperately poor. The expense of this additional aid seems less costly than risking resentment and violence against the returnees.

6. *Devote specific attention to the land issue and to ensuring women's rights to land and other property.*

Plots of land in resettlement areas must be made available to old caseload refugees, so they will cease occupying the land of newly returning caseload refugees. Tracts of land, mostly in the east, have already been identified in government plans for resettlement, but additional land will be needed in communes in many different parts of the country. As a report from Refugees International has emphasized, it is important that the Rwandan government "issue a clear land and property decree to clear up confusion and designate a local dispute resolution mechanism." Moreover, material assistance is needed for both new caseload refugees and the old caseload returnees.⁹

7. *Programs to provide employment and training should be developed.*

The Rwandan government has been told by the World Bank that it must sharply limit government employment. How, then, can returning new caseload refugees with training and skills hope to find employment? Many existing jobs have already been filled with old caseload refugees. This situation requires study and attention. Rural em-

NOTES TO APPENDIX

ployment is also needed to accommodate those who have too little land to ensure family survival.

1. Sources on the genocide in Rwanda are numerous. For background on political conflicts in Rwanda and the roots to the genocide, see André Guichaoua, ed., *Les crises politiques au Burundi et au Rwanda (1993-1994)*, 2d ed. (Paris: Karthala, 1995); David Newbury, ed., "Rwanda: Genocide and After," special issue of *Issue: A Journal of Opinion* 23, no. 2 (1995); Filip Reyntjens, *L'Afrique des Grands Lacs en crise: Rwanda, Burundi, 1988-1994* (Paris: Karthala, 1994); and Claudine Vidal and Marc Le Pape, "Les politiques de la haine: Rwanda, Burundi, 1994-1995," special issue of *Les Temps Modernes*, no. 538 (July-August 1995).
2. See, for example, Jeff Drumtra, "Rwandan Refugees: Updated Findings and Recommendations" (site visit notes, U.S. Committee for Refugees, October 25, 1995); Jean-Pierre Godding, "Rwanda: Désastre, mensonge, et espérance," *Dialogue*, no. 178 (October 1994): 49-54; and Refugees International, "Repatriation of Rwandans: Findings and Recommendations" (report issued October 30, 1995).
3. See Human Rights Watch/Africa, *Rwanda: A New Catastrophe?* (New York: Human Rights Watch, December 1994).
4. Human Rights Watch has reported that survivors of the massacre were often treated harshly when they returned to their home communes after the Kibeho camp was closed. Many were "attacked by gangs of civilians who beat them and pillaged their belongings. Hundreds of the displaced were arrested as they arrived in their home communes and were crammed into lockups that were already full to bursting." See Human Rights Watch, "Human Rights in Rwanda: 1995," in *Human Rights Watch World Report 1996* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1995), 43.
5. See *ibid.*, 5.
6. See United Nations, Department of Humanitarian Affairs, *Observations while Traveling through Rwanda, Zaire, Burundi, and Tanzania*, mission report (New York: United Nations, 1995).
7. Human Rights Watch reported that "although real shortages of human and material resources slowed the operation of the judicial system, this did not account for the failure to try even one of the more

than two hundred cases that were ready as early as April 1995. The authorities who ended the genocide appeared unwilling to prosecute its perpetrators, either because they lacked confidence in judges named by the previous government or because they saw some political interest in detaining large numbers of persons indefinitely." Human Rights Watch, "Human Rights in Rwanda: 1995," 41.

8. See *ibid.*, 44.
9. Refugees International, "Repatriation of Rwandans," 3.

CHRONOLOGY

1960–96

1960

Zaire (Congo) achieves independence from Belgium. After an unexpected military coup against the first elected government in July, the United Nations sends a Chapter VII operation. Katanga, supported by Belgian forces, secedes. After a political clash between President Joseph Kasa-Vubu and Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba, Colonel Joseph Mobutu, who commands the Congo army, temporarily seizes power and Lumumba is jailed near Kinshasa.

1961

Lumumba is transferred to Elizabethville (now Lubumbashi) and is almost assassinated. While Katanga is still in the process of seceding, Mobutu relinquishes power. Parliament reconvenes in Kinshasa and a new prime minister, Cyrille Adoula, is nominated by the congress.

1962

Parliament votes for the creation of twenty-two new provinces. The Congo becomes a quasi-federal state.

1963–64

End of the secession in Katanga; its president, Moïse Tshombe, is forced to leave the Congo. Beginning of popular rebellions in the Congo against an ineffective administration in Leopoldville, which ostracizes the “nationalist opposition” claiming Lumumba’s heritage. A foreign-led military operation is launched against the “rebel army.” Tshombe returns to the Congo and is immediately designated as the new prime minister.

1965

Amid renewed political turmoil, induced by the approaching presidential election, Mobutu takes power in a coup d’état. A new era of nationalism (“Zairianization”) begins, but accompanied by pacification in the country.

1973–75

Economic disarray results from government policies to seize foreign-owned commercial and industrial assets and distribute them to patrimonial clients. The precipitous fall of world copper prices in 1974 exacerbates the economic crisis.

1976

First in series of stabilization programs under the IMF and the World Bank, which last until 1987. After initially disappointing results, the World Bank and the IMF send their own people to key posts in the Bank of Zaire, the Customs Office, and the Ministries of Finance and Planning.

1977–78

After the FLNC invasion of Shaba (Shaba I), Mobutu allows multiple candidates for legislative seats, although all belong to the MPR. The National Legislative Council demonstrates some political independence by rejecting a presidential budget, due to excessive presidential spending, and after the elections it becomes more assertive in questioning ministers. Mobutu's "democratic reforms" terminate with the second invasion of Shaba in 1978 (Shaba II).

1979

"The Thirteen" arise as an opposition voice within the legislature, defying the government and holding the army responsible for massacres of diamond miners in Kasai-Oriental. Erwin Blumenthal, the World Bank's appointed manager of the Central Bank in Zaire, resigns in frustration.

1980

The Thirteen write an open letter to Mobutu critiquing the government. They are arrested and stripped of their seats.

1982

The Thirteen create the UDPS, which claims to be an opposition party—an explicit violation of Zaire's constitution and laws permitting only one party. Although most founding members are from Kasai, the party succeeds in obtaining a diverse ethnic and regional base.

1987

The UDPS agrees to dissolve and become a "tendency" within the MPR. A number of prominent members accept positions with government or state enterprises. Etienne Tshisekedi and Faustin Birindwa, among others, are soon detained and subject to inter-

nal exile and house arrest. Elections for the National Assembly are held (the last ones to date).

1988

Consolidation of the UDPS as an underground opposition movement. Periodic demonstrations and student protests are repressed violently by special forces. Tshisekedi remains under house arrest.

1990

The beginning of the political transition.

January. Mobutu attempts to fend off pressure for democratization by proposing "Popular Consultations." Instead, Zairians seize the opportunity to debate the affairs of the state for the first time in more than twenty years.

April 24. Mobutu announces a limited return to democracy. Tshisekedi and other political detainees are released. Zairians greet the announcement with jubilation.

May. Students in Lubumbashi are attacked in what Africa Watch determines is a routine disciplinary measure "slightly gone awry." Special Rapporteur Wako reports that there was organized official involvement.

November. The Troika's support for Mobutu, which has already been diminishing, dwindles further when the United States follows France and Belgium and cancels remaining economic aid.

According to Africa Watch: "Most long-term political detention has disappeared, an active free press has come into existence, and a number of significant human rights monitoring organizations have arisen. Nevertheless, the state keeps a stranglehold on the official media and periodically intervenes to intimidate journalists, opposition political leaders, and human rights activists."

1991

April. Mobutu agrees to a National Conference as demanded by the opposing parties, but no immediate action is taken.

July. The main opposition parties (UDPS, UFERI, PDSC) form the Union sacrée and immediately attract other opposition voices. Mobutu is unable to split this bloc, despite his strategy of appointing several "transitional governments" in rapid succession.

The opposition continues to call for a National Conference. Public pressure pushes Mobutu to agree

to the conference, but he begins to invest heavily in the creation of new parties and groups loyal to him. Over two hundred political parties, some with no apparent base of support, appear. At the same time, hyperinflation increases at an almost unprecedented rate.

August. The National Conference opens but is unable to complete any substantive work due to constant shutdowns, interruptions, and delays caused by the military and squabbles among the participants.

September. The 31st Brigade, followed by the population of Kinshasa, goes on a looting spree in the capital. Looting spreads to other cities (except Bukavu) and destroys much of what remained of the modern sector of the economy. The brigade's actions are in response to the devaluation of the currency and meager wages in comparison with per diem allotments for delegates to the National Conference. Further clashes between security forces and the Union sacrée lead to the suspension of conference activities between September and November 1991. The violence and political turmoil prompt the withdrawal of almost all aid from foreign governments.

October. After intense negotiations, Mobutu accepts the Union sacrée opposition leader, Tshisekedi, as prime minister while retaining four ministries, including defense. Tshisekedi is soon removed because, according to Mobutu, he did not properly execute the oath of office; the opposition attributes the dismissal to Tshisekedi's effort to block Mobutu's control of the currency.

November. After the intervention of Senegal's president, Mobutu agrees to name a prime minister from the opposition, assumed by all to be Tshisekedi. Nguz Karl-i-Bond, a long-time Mobutu stalwart now leading the UFERI, breaks ranks with the Union sacrée and accepts the appointment. His ally, Kyungu wa Kumwanza, becomes governor of Shaba.

December. Mobutu's term of office expires on December 4. The National Conference reopens with some 2,000 participants representing political parties, public institutions, and civil society. Laurent Monsengwo Pesinya, the archbishop of Kisangani, and a moderate, is elected president—demonstrating the strength of opposition to Mobutu. When the conference launches itself on a path of genuine transition, Karl-i-Bond suspends it, fueling great public support for the opposition.

1992

Renewed conflicts result in 750,000 displaced persons in Zaire, according to the UN Human Rights Commission. The main areas of turbulence are Shaba and North Kivu. The government abandons the IMF's economic recovery plan; inflation averages 33 percent per month.

January. Soldiers take over the radio station, raising the specter of a coup. The defense minister mounts a televised trial, promising to prove that the soldiers were linked to the opposition. Instead, defense lawyers provided by human rights groups turn the trial against the government, winning those groups widespread popularity among rank-and-file soldiers.

February. One million people march in Kinshasa in support of the National Conference. The March of Hope, as it is called and which is organized by the lay Christian community, is suppressed by soldiers.

March. With pressure from the Troika after the March of Hope, the National Conference reconvenes.

May. Foreign oil companies are regulated by the regime, ostensibly to prevent a rise in oil prices. (Tshisekedi rescinds these regulations in October when he becomes prime minister.) The copper and cobalt industries operate at less than 50 percent capacity.

August–November. The Sovereign National Conference names Tshisekedi prime minister and adopts a program for the transition that attempts to end the political impasse by redefining the duties and powers of the president, the prime minister, and the courts. Mobutu eventually accepts Tshisekedi but not the redefinition of powers. The first full-scale "ethnic cleansing" officially backed by the local authorities occurs in Likasi (Shaba). The Katangese are further aggrieved by the protection given by international organizations to fleeing Kasaians.

December. Tshisekedi struggles for control over the Central Bank and the currency, precipitating a new crisis. The National Conference adjourns with a declaration that its work will be continued by a transitional legislature, the 453 members of the HCR. The conference also proposes a timetable for elections in August 1994. The HCR continues to support Tshisekedi, but in the coming months the armed forces intervene and seek to stop the work of the HCR.

1993

The Troika engage in intensive negotiations, and three measures are discussed: the denial of visas to Mobutu supporters, a boycott of weapons shipments, and a freeze of Mobutu's assets. Only the first two are adopted. Vital jobs formerly held by foreigners remained unfilled: unemployment is estimated at 80 percent and monthly inflation averages almost 38 percent.

January. Looting by army units recurs in Kinshasa. Part of their motive is that salaries are paid with new five-million-zaire notes, imposed by Mobutu over the objections of Tshisekedi. The notes are refused throughout the country except in Shaba and parts of Equateur, leading to trafficking in banknotes and different exchange rates for various domestic currencies.

The population does not participate in the pillaging, and instead is targeted by the soldiers. In an attack on the French embassy, the French ambassador is killed.

February–April. The transition process appears to come to an end. Ethnic violence in Kivu and Shaba increases. The U.S. State Department estimates that at least 1.8 million Zairians (5.2 percent of the population) are suffering from acute malnutrition. Reportedly, children are being abandoned by their families—rare in an extended family system.

Belgium seizes 14.5 million tons of five-million-zaire notes after Tshisekedi informs the Belgian authorities of aircraft landing at Ostend.

The Troika tries to establish a coherent response that will compel Mobutu to respect the transitional process. Mobutu plays for time and fires Tshisekedi. A month later, one of the UDPS copresidents resigns and the opposition is shaken, with many criticizing Tshisekedi for intransigence and an inability to compromise.

Mobutu convenes a conclave and issues a new transitional institutional framework. In a legally questionable move, Birindwa is appointed prime minister.

Soldiers obstruct the HCR from performing its work. Two separate and parallel governments develop: Birindwa occupies the ministerial offices, while Tshisekedi has no office but remains the legitimate executor of the decisions of the National Conference. The existence of two prime ministers, two constitutions, and two cabinets leads to the complete paralysis of the state machinery.

July. Lakhdar Brahimi is sent as the UN Secretary-General's special envoy to Zaire after Tshisekedi asks for, but is refused, a UN peacekeeping force. This mission fails, as had an earlier one by the OAU and another by the president of Namibia. The opposition is divided between moderates and hard-liners; Frederic Kibassa Maliba heads the Union sacrée.

October. Mobutu, Karl-i-Bond, and the opposition finally come to an agreement under the "Protocol of Agreement," which is designed to merge the two governments. Negotiations resume on a single constitution, a single parliament (the HCR is to be replaced by a Transition Parliament, the HCR-PT), and elections. All agreements eventually break down.

Hoping to stop hyperinflation, Birindwa launches a reform of the currency by introducing a new banknote. But the note loses 75 percent of its value within three weeks; the effect is cataclysmic on the rural poor and does nothing to quell inflation.

November. The World Bank suspends all projects in Zaire; the United States closes the USAID mission.

December. After another currency devaluation and scattered rioting, Shaba Governor Kyungu wa Kumwanza declares "total autonomy."

1994

The average monthly inflation rate rises to almost 47 percent.

January. Mobutu dissolves the HCR and dismisses both governments, announcing that a new joint parliament will choose a new prime minister. Tshisekedi refuses to go along. France indicates that it would support a third route, in effect bypassing Tshisekedi.

February. A U.S. State Department report concludes that violations of human rights in Zaire are at the worst level since the early 1960s.

Mobutu's willingness to negotiate gains him increasing legitimacy with the West, which perceives the opposition as intransigent and divided. The HCR reconvenes but succumbs to procedural wrangling.

March. The USAID mission reports on increasing decentralization in Zaire. Médecins Sans Frontières finds one in ten children malnourished and one in forty starving. The government provides virtually no public services and has less than \$250,000 in the Treasury.

April. The HCR accepts the Transitional Constitution, which provides for the election of a new prime minister. Mobutu signs the accord.

June. After a deadlock over the naming of a prime minister (who must come from the opposition), Kengo wa Dondo is elected, although without the required consensus. Kengo is considered to have the backing of Western diplomats.

July. Prime Minister Kengo opens the media to the opposition, freezes all Bank of Zaire withdrawals, releases political prisoners (although new arrests continue), curtails embassies abroad, and suspends the governor of the Bank of Zaire. His proposals include granting autonomy to the Bank of Zaire, revisions of the tax system, stronger customs controls, and measures to curtail tax evasion.

Other decisions are to restore relations with the World Bank and the IMF and to pay arrears. His ambitious program meets with enthusiasm but some skepticism; the regime's abuses appear to continue.

August. Kengo visits Shaba on a goodwill mission. Mobutu remains in office, cooperating with Kengo over the Rwandan refugee crisis. In gratitude, France expresses a readiness to resume aid to Zaire. Belgium, too, is tentatively willing to resume cooperative relationships.

September. A World Bank team begins an audit of Zairian projects.

November. The UN Secretary-General recommends dispatching 5,000 UN peacekeepers to help cope

with the influx of refugees into Zaire from Rwanda. The Security Council rejects the proposal.

December. A National Electoral Commission is accepted.

1995

March. Lebanese businessmen are expelled by Kengo. The UN Center for Human Rights announces that it will open an office in Zaire.

July. Elections are scheduled but never held. In mid-July Kengo announces that he will consult the "political class" to bolster his government against the radical opposition. However, Kengo merely reshuffles his cabinet, and his "new government" includes no new members from the opposition.

At the end of July, the army kills between ten and forty demonstrators at a march organized by the PALU, a party associated with the radical opposition and that is pressing for Kengo's resignation.

August. A rally organized by the Union sacrée attracts fewer people than expected. At the end of the month, Zaire expels 10,000 to 20,000 Burundian and Rwandan refugees from camps in Kivu. This decision follows the decision of the Security Council to lift the arms embargo on the new Rwandan government.

September. Zaire's minister of foreign affairs insists that all Rwandan and Burundian refugees must leave Zaire by December 31. Mobutu meets with Jimmy Carter in Faro, Portugal. According to the Carter Center, Mobutu agrees that force will no longer be used to

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