Zaire: A Nation Held Hostage

A Policy Paper by
The Washington Office on Africa
distributed in collaboration with the
Africa Office of the National Council of Churches
June 1992
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Preface

The fall 1991 mutiny of unpaid Zairian soldiers and the subsequent wave of political unrest propelled Zaire to the front pages of the Western press. After opposition leader Etienne Tshisekedi was appointed prime minister, however briefly, many Africa advocates came to realize that the regime of Mobutu Sese Seko was at last under serious challenge. In Zaire, as elsewhere in Africa, a grassroots movement was pressing for a democratic, representative and participatory government.

Since then, hopes have been muted as Mobutu has removed and installed prime ministers, opened then closed the conference, loaded the conference with his political supporters and on February 16 unleashed his forces on peaceful protestors marching for democracy.

As this document went to print the national conference had resumed. However, even in the most conservative corners of the State Department the view is widely held that each day Mobutu remains in power threatens the process. Despite this widespread acknowledgement the U.S. maintains a position of objective support for the regime—a situation that confounds most observers. Reportedly bound by a personal friendship for Mobutu, the Bush administration has refused to publicly distance itself from the regime and stand behind the democratic process.

Opposition to this policy has been the bond which has drawn a broad range of organizations together to issue the enclosed recommended policy framework. The endorsers of the paper do not necessarily agree on interpretations of the historic role of the U.S. in Zaire and even the role of Mobutu. However, on the current assessment and immediate recommendations for the future we are clear: Current U.S. policy is an anachronism of the “old world order” which must be swept aside. The U.S. must adopt an impartial posture of support for the democratic process in Zaire.

A number of individuals and organizations have assisted in the development of this paper. Particular acknowledgement must be given to William Minter, who took on the difficult task of incorporating editorial comments that reflected a wide range of views. It was a task that required sensitivity and skill, qualities Bill possesses in abundance. The Washington Office on Africa also wishes to thank Dr. Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja for his thoughtful preparation of the historical background and John Metzel for producing the list of mass killings under the Mobutu regime. Additionally, we thank: Steve Askin; Carol Collins; Kristen Wells and Anne Griffin, TransAfrica; Jesse Lutabingwa, Africa Office of the National Council of Churches; Nancy Warlick, Presbyterian Church (USA); Andrea Young, United Church of Christ Office of Church in Society; Kristen Lee; Laura Carnell, Robert Higgs and Sheila Clemons for their editorial input. And special thanks to Willis Logan and the staff of the Africa Office of the National Council of Churches, without whom this paper would not have been possible.

Imani Countess, Acting Director
Washington Office on Africa, June 1992
Executive Summary

The United States government, which has served as the patron of Zaire's dictator Mobutu Sese Seko for more than 25 years, is still hesitating to support pro-democracy forces in that country. Despite over six months of political turmoil, violence and a history of broken promises by Mobutu, the U.S. has yet to demand unequivocally that he give up power. This prolonged stalemate has put Zaire on a track to even deeper poverty and chaos.

As U.S. churches with deep historical and personal ties to the Zairian people and as other organizations of Americans concerned with democracy in Zaire, we strongly agree with the demand of the Zairian democracy movement that Mobutu must step down from power and allow the transition to democracy to proceed.

In particular, we recommend that:

1. The U.S. government should use all the diplomatic leverage at its disposal to pressure Mobutu to retire from office and leave Zaire.

2. The U.S. government should respect the right of the sovereign National Conference to decide all the pertinent questions placed before it, independent of any foreign pressure or manipulation.

3. The U.S. government should offer to assist the process of transition with bilateral financial support and diplomatic support for active multilateral involvement as requested by the National Conference.
Background to the Crisis

Mobutu Sese Seko, a military officer supported by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in the first Congo crisis of the early 1960s, assumed power as President in a 1965 coup. He has ruled Zaire (then Congo) ever since. Mobutu is reputed to be one of the richest men in the world, but has bankrupted his country through corruption and mismanagement. He has succeeded in retaining power by using repression and clever divide-and-rule tactics against opponents, and by maintaining support from a variety of Western powers, including Belgium, France and the United States.

His close ties with the United States resulted in the use of Zaire as a base for intervention in Angola. This happened both in the conflict around Angolan independence in 1975 and in the 1980s, when Zaire served to support guerilla operations by Jonas Savimbi’s National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA).

In recent years, however, domestic opposition has grown stronger, and even Zaire’s Western allies have become disillusioned with Mobutu’s regime. Criticism from Belgium has been particularly strong since the May 1990 massacre of as many as 150 students in Lubumbashi by Mobutu’s troops. France and the United States have been slower to respond, but even the International Monetary Fund and the United States cut off aid to Zaire in 1991.

Opposition forces, particularly the Sacred Union, a grouping of most opposition parties, forced Mobutu to accept a national conference on democratization in August 1991. However, Mobutu has systematically blocked the work of the conference. Initially he packed it with his supporters and surrounded it with troops. In late September unpaid troops mutinied in Kinshasa, the capital of Zaire. Western countries began to evacuate their citizens, and Mobutu was eventually forced to accept a government with opposition leader Etienne Tshisekedi as prime minister. But, with U.S. support, Mobutu retained control of the presidency and the defense ministry.

In October, only two days after he took office, Tshisekedi was dismissed by Mobutu. Prime Minister Tshisekedi and the Zairian opposition in general called upon the United States to put pressure on Mobutu to leave. But the State Department argued instead for a new compromise prime minister to be chosen. At the end of November Mobutu appointed his former foreign minister and occasional opponent Nguza Karl-I-Bond as prime minister. Karl-I-Bond was denounced by the opposition as totally unacceptable.
The National Conference finally convened in December and chose as its chair Monsignor Laurent Monsengwo Pasinya, Archbishop of Kisangani. Its meetings were repeatedly delayed by the government, and were suspended by Prime Minister Nguza at the end of January. During a protest march organized by the religious community on February 16, government troops fired on the marchers, killing at least 19 people and injuring at least 100 more, according to Amnesty International. [Presbyterian Church (USA) missionaries report that at least 42 people were killed and an eyewitness of the American Baptist Missions International reports that 250 bodies were loaded on trucks and buried in mass graves.] At the end of March after an international outcry led by the Church, followed by a letter from President Bush, President Mobutu did agree to reconvene the National Conference in April.

In May the National Conference formally adopted resolutions declaring its sovereign authority. But with the Mobutu-appointed government still in place, and Mobutu in charge of the armed forces, the practical scope of the Conference's authority is still uncertain. Strong suspicion remains that Mobutu will find yet another way to block the transition to democracy.

**United States Policy**

In the 1960s and early 1970s Western support for Mobutu was justified by contrasting the stability of his regime with the chaos of the earlier Congo crisis, and by pointing to signs of economic advance. By the 1980s, the corruption and economic bankruptcy of the regime was widely recognized even by Western officials sympathetic to Mobutu. But they argued that he was still necessary to protect national unity in Zaire, and as a pro-Western asset to facilitate intervention in Angola and other neighboring countries. Twice, in 1977 and 1978, Western countries joined in sending troops to protect Mobutu against rebellions in Shaba province (formerly Katanga), where Zaire's mineral wealth is concentrated.

Since 1989, however, the economic crisis in Zaire has escalated dramatically. A cease-fire in Angola has reduced the importance of Zaire as a conduit for weaponry to the forces of UNITA. The Cold War has ended. Even U.S. officials have come to accept the idea that it is time for Mobutu to go.

Western action during the September 1991 army mutiny demonstrated that Western countries are no longer inclined to undertake active intervention in favor of Mobutu. Indeed, there is virtually an international consensus that the time has come for Mobutu to step down. Belgian and most French officials have urged Mobutu to go. In the U.S. House and in the Senate, there is strong
bipartisan sentiment that it is finally time to abandon this dictator. Both houses have passed non-binding resolutions that call for the U.S. to sever its ties to Mobutu. In fact, except for the White House, there is virtually no support for Mobutu in this country.

The Bush administration has systematically dragged its feet, however, soft-pedaling public criticism of Mobutu. The official line insists that Mobutu must play a role in the transition to democracy since he controls important segments of the military.

The administration maintains it supports democratization in Zaire without favoring any one political personality, but until the administration calls for Mobutu to abandon power, U.S. commitment to democracy in Zaire remains questionable. Both the Zairian opposition and independent observers predict Mobutu's continued presence can only perpetuate chaos and violence in Zaire. As long as Mobutu is there, it is unlikely that anyone can bring the armed forces under control and begin to rebuild the country.

Zaire may no longer have the strategic significance it had in the Cold War period. But it is home for almost 35 million people, more than in any other African country south of the equator except South Africa. Zaire's people have suffered bitterly from Western support of Mobutu. They deserve a new chance, not just abandonment to the mercies of a dictator fighting to survive.
Recommended Policy Framework

Premises:
1. Mobutu's continued hold on power, not the prospect of his departure, is the greatest threat to stability in Zaire and in the region today. The regime has lost effective control over the country, and Mobutu survives primarily because of the loyalty of two elite military units. The continued deterioration of the administrative machinery and of law and order threatens disintegration as in Liberia and Somalia. To prevent further chaos and civil war, Mobutu should step down from power and leave the country.

2. However useful Mobutu may have been as a loyal friend and ally of the U.S. in the past, his continuation in power serves neither U.S. interests nor the interests of stability and democracy in Zaire. A credible transition depends above all on restoring a legitimate framework for government. U.S. policy should support the democratic process as embodied in the sovereign National Conference. There is no justification for efforts to make the U.S. the political arbiter of the post-Mobutu order.

3. Recovery from economic disaster depends on resolving the political crisis. The identification of U.S. interests with Mobutu's survival is not credible, even in pragmatic economic terms. The longer the impasse continues, the more difficult it will become to rebuild the production and transportation infrastructures necessary for extracting and marketing Zaire's raw materials. With proper organization and management, Zaire is a country that not only can feed itself but one that can also become the breadbasket of Africa as a whole. Policy planning for recovery is necessary, but no policy can have significant impact without a credible government and an administration to implement it.

4. As of April 1992, Zairian opposition groups have identified the following steps as necessary for the preparation of the democratic institutions of the Third Republic:
   a) Mobutu's resignation;
   b) the successful completion of the sovereign National Conference, to determine the main guidelines for institution-building and for public policy;
   c) the choice of a transitional government to administer the country and manage the transition to multi-party democracy;
   d) the setting up of a constitutional commission to draw up a new constitution;
   e) the approval, by referendum, of the new constitution;
   f) local, regional, and national elections to the new representative institutions of the Third Republic
Recommendations for U.S. Policy

1. The U.S. government should use all the diplomatic leverage at its disposal to pressure Mobutu to retire from office and leave Zaire.

Measures to be taken include, but are not limited, to the following:
- warning that failure to leave now might complicate or even diminish his chances of obtaining asylum in a friendly country later;
- the freezing of his bank accounts abroad, given that they contain assets stolen from U.S. assistance;
- embargo of economic contacts with Zaire, with the exception of support for the National Conference and humanitarian aid protected from confiscation by Mobutu's forces.

2. The U.S. government should respect the right of the sovereign National Conference to decide all the pertinent questions placed before it independently of any foreign pressure or manipulation.

Given the past history of U.S. intervention in the political life of Zaire, and escalating popular resentment of the U.S. role in prolonging Mobutu's rule, this implies exceptional efforts to avoid both the reality and the appearance of U.S. manipulation or favoritism in the transition to a new democratic order.

3. The U.S. government should offer to assist the process of transition with bilateral financial support and diplomatic support for active multilateral involvement as requested by the National Conference.

The U.S. role is critical not only in terms of bilateral aid, but in terms of leadership among Western powers, in the United Nations and in other international organizations, where U.S. attention or indifference significantly affects priorities. Areas for which support is likely to be needed urgently include the following:
- humanitarian aid channeled through non-governmental organizations or through transitional government institutions once established;
- international support for demobilization of troops and building up of professional non-partisan security forces;
- reconstruction of essential infrastructure as a prerequisite both for economic recovery and for communications during the electoral process;
- international support for the organization of elections and election monitoring;
- immediate debt relief once a transitional government is established.
Policy Recommendations Endorsement List

Africa Christian Mission
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AFRICARE
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American Committee on Africa
Association of Concerned Africa Scholars
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Global Exchange
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Interfaith/Impact
International Association for Zaire
International Labor Rights
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Appendix One:
Historical Background

By Dr. Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja

From Leopold to Mobutu

Zaire is the third largest country in Africa and one of the potentially richest countries on the continent. Its enormous wealth in natural resources and strategic location in the center of Africa have made it the envy of major world powers since the present territory was defined in the Western scramble for Africa in 1885. In the ensuing one-hundred and seven years—regardless of the name it was called (Congo Free State, 1885-1908; Belgian Congo, 1908-1960; Democratic Republic of the Congo, 1960-1971; and Zaire, since 1971)—it has managed to achieve world-wide notoriety.

The first instance of humanitarian emphasis on the country, nearly a century ago, focused on protest against the brutal regime of King Leopold II of Belgium in the Congo Free State. The Leopoldian Era was characterized by atrocities. The quest of red rubber and other resources by the King’s men led to death for millions of Congolese men, women, and children and was immortalized in two outstanding literary works, Joseph Conrad’s Heart of Darkness and Mark Twain’s King Leopold’s Soliloquy. In the real world, Mark Twain was among the leading figures of an international campaign against King Leopold in the United States and in Britain (under Edmund Morel). A major actor in this campaign was William Henry Sheppard, an African-American from Virginia who had arrived in 1890 as one of the first two American Presbyterian missionaries in the Congo. Having witnessed at first hand the atrocities committed by the agents of King Leopold and his rubber barons in the Kasai region, Sheppard and his colleague William McCutcheon Morrison played a critical role along with other Christian groups in the fight to free the country from the Leopoldian system.

When Belgium took over from King Leopold in 1908, bringing reforms of the worst abuses, the administration still built on the legacy of the Congo Free State. In the Belgian Congo, more clearly than elsewhere in Africa, a “colonial trinity” of the state, large corporations, and the Roman Catholic Church worked harmoniously to promote Belgium’s mission civilisatrice. The system was based on economic exploitation, political repression, and cultural oppression. In the Belgian Congo, as in the Free State before it, the country was a major source of capital accumulation for the colonial power. The Congo provided revenue for the construction in Belgium of public buildings, highways and other public works. Its resources bailed Belgium out of financial difficulties during both world wars, and it consistently proved a major source of investment capital and job opportunities for the Belgian economy.
An economic boom in the 1950s and the absence of nationalist upheavals during much of the decade earned the Belgian Congo the label of "model colony" from its colonial rivals. African elites known as évolués benefited. There were also some improvements for the masses, including the opportunity to buy consumer goods such as bicycles, gramophones, and radios. But the fundamental roots of the system: economic injustice, political repression, and the daily humiliation of colonial racism did not change. A spirit of protest, however, grew. Évolués demanded equality of opportunity with whites. Peasants resented the forced cultivation of crops such as cotton, forced labor on private and government projects and heavy tax burdens. The working class demanded better living conditions and higher wages, while the urban unemployed and underemployed sought protection from deportation to the countryside and the right to a decent living.

This stage of the struggle for freedom culminated with a rebellion on January 4, 1959 in Leopoldville (Kinshasa), shocking the Belgian authorities into accepting the demand for independence advanced by the anti-colonial alliance of ordinary people and the évolués. However, the decolonization of the Belgian Congo did not follow the classic pattern of a relatively long period of initiation by the colonial rulers of their successors, preferably a group of moderate nationalists. The Belgians, who shifted almost overnight from opposition to independence to agreement to the militant demand for "immediate independence," gambled that they would be able to retain control even after independence. They assumed that the Congolese, without technical training, would be content to hold the formal trappings of office, while Belgian technical assistance personnel continued to run the country in practice.

In the May 1960 general election, the Mouvement National Congolais/Lumumba (MNC/L) and its coalition of radical nationalist parties won 71 of 137 seats in the lower house of Parliament. Patrice Lumumba, the MNC/L leader, was seen by the Belgians as a major stumbling-block to their strategy of neo-colonialism. His election victory was a threat. In the ensuing crises Belgium and its Western allies aimed to eliminate Lumumba and to prop up leaders without popular political support, hence vulnerable to external manipulation. One such leader was Joseph Desiré Mobutu, now Mobutu Sese Seko. He began his career as a sergeant in the Force Publique (the Belgian colonial army), became an informer for the Belgian intelligence services, and later served as a junior minister in Prime Minister Lumumba's office when the latter named him as chief of staff of the national army in July 1960. The appointment followed an army mutiny less than one week after independence on June 30, 1960. The mutiny, generally acknowledged to have been provoked by General Emile Janssens, the Belgian Commander-in-Chief of the Force Publique, resulted in
the panic and flight of Europeans. This left both the economy and the state deprived of most of their professional and technical personnel. It also marked the beginning of what became known as the "Congo crisis."

Having lost control of the situation, Belgium intervened militarily on July 10, presumably to protect European lives and property. On the following day, the Katanga (Shaba) province declared its secession. In the subsequent crisis, the Congo's fate was shaped largely by external intervention, with Belgium joined by the United States and by a United Nations mission dominated by the Western powers. Although the United States justified intervention by the Soviet threat, as Lumumba eventually appealed for Soviet help, Soviet involvement was never more than token. While Lumumba sought United Nations assistance in restoring order, ending the secession of Katanga and securing the withdrawal of Belgian troops, Washington identified Lumumba himself as a threat.

Perceived as a "dangerous man" from the standpoint of Western interests, Lumumba became a target of a CIA assassination plot ordered by U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower on August 18, 1960. He was eventually killed on January 17, 1961, as a result of decisions made by his Congolese rivals, including his former aide Mobutu, but with the help and encouragement of the CIA. With Lumumba first, and his followers afterwards, eliminated from the political scene, the stage was now set for a speedy resolution of the Katanga secession. The result was a unified Congo state, formed on terms favorable to Belgian and Western interests, featuring a leadership dependent primarily on external backing rather than political support within the country.

The newly established order rapidly disintegrated into a new and more severe crisis. The aspirations of ordinary people for more freedom and a better standard of living, ignored by the political elite, led to the eruption of popular resistance beginning in early 1964. The call for a "second independence," however, was blocked by Western military intervention and the search for a new "strongman" to maintain order. Ironically, Moïse Tshombe, the former Katangan secessionist, presided over the regime's suppression of the insurrections for a time. But in 1965, with Western support, army chief Mobutu took power in his own name. In the words of Eric Rouleau, writing in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, Mobutu fit the ideal profile of a dictator: intelligent, cunning, and independent of any group or popular consensus that might prevent him from serving his external patrons or his own personal interests.

Since 1965, Mobutu has ruled Zaire with supreme skill at political survival, but with virtually total disregard for the interests of the Zairian people.
Mobutu in Power

In spite of its enormous wealth, Zaire is one of the poorest countries in the world today. Both the country's economy and social fabric lie in ruins, a consequence of the economic and social debacle it has suffered under the 27-year reign of President Mobutu. The growing misery of ordinary people has been intensified as a result of both the worldwide economic crisis which began in 1975 and the crisis of a decaying one-party dictatorship. Millions of people are now destitute having fallen into a deplorable state of physical want, while many others are struggling to preserve themselves and their dependents from such a cruel fate. The standard of living for the overwhelming majority of citizens has declined far below what it was at independence, while at the same time, former and current senior government officials live in expensive villas, leading a life of luxury.

Zaire's economic and social decay, together with the moral crisis associated with it, is ultimately related to the nature of the Mobutu regime as an externally backed autocracy. Beholden to external patrons and sources of support rather than to domestic bases of legitimacy, this regime is basically an authoritarian structure of control. Its citizens experience it mainly as an instrument of repression. Mobutu and his retainers have blocked economic growth and development by depriving the state of basic resources needed to meet the vital needs of the people and to improve their living conditions. The embezzlement of public funds has been elevated into an administrative principle, as the President himself advises people to steal, but to do so "cleverly, and little by little." This institutionalized corruption begins at the top and pervades the entire structure of national, regional, and local administration.

In the earlier stage of the Congo crisis, the disintegration of the country's social fabric was disparagingly known all over the world as "Congolization." Mobutu sought to create a new image by changing names, promoting "authenticity" of African culture and customs. On October 27, 1971, Mobutu changed the country's name from "Congo" to "Zaire." Ironically, this "authentic" name comes from a Portuguese corruption of a local word for the big river (Zadi), while the word Congo derives from the illustrious Kongo Kingdom which flourished for centuries in the area.

The facade of authenticity contributed to the recuperation of national dignity in the 1970s. But the self-serving economic policies associated with it jeopardized any genuine recovery of national well-being. Mobutu himself acknowledged the intransigent character of what is now called "le mal Zairois" (the Zairian sickness). Among the symptoms are an economic collapse rarely encountered in peacetime, and a radical inversion of moral values. Any attempt
therefore to solve Zaire’s problems must involve fundamental changes in the entire political system.

The social character of a political system reflects the nature of its leadership group. In Zaire, as the *New Nigerian* (June 15, 1978) editorialized, the leadership group constitutes a *kleptocracy* which rules the country “at the pleasure of foreign powers to the disadvantage of their own people.” President Mobutu is for all practical purposes Zaire’s second emperor, the successor to King Leopold II as the owner and autocratic ruler of the country. But behind the President and helping him ruin the country was, until recently, an entire leadership group that benefited greatly from Mobutu’s autocracy and the patronage system built around him. As a patrimonial ruler, Mobutu rewarded and punished individual members of the elite at his own pleasure. Once appointed to a high post, an individual was likely to remain a permanent member of the *kleptocracy*, accumulating resources to maintain a high standard of living whether in or temporarily out of a lucrative cabinet or parastatal post. Many of Mobutu’s associates have thus joined the ranks of the rich and super-rich of the world.

In Zaire, as in the rest of the continent, there is a widespread recognition today that there is a close relationship between the inability of the state to ensure a decent livelihood for its citizens and the lack of democracy. Political structures and processes must be democratized, so that national leaders are accountable to their own people rather than to external patrons and allies. Unfortunately, the economic interests of Western powers seem to require the maintenance of undemocratic leaders in resource-rich and strategically located countries like Zaire. As the major patrons of his dictatorship, the United States, France and Belgium have provided critical support to Mobutu since 1965 despite his regime’s record of gross violations of human rights. Such abuses over the years include the public hanging on trumped-up charges of four leading politicians in May 1966; the assassination of Pierre Mulele, leader of the “second independence” movement, in 1968; the massacre of students in Kinshasa in June 1969; the execution of military officers feared for their competence as potential coup makers; brutal repression against rebellious villages in Bandundu and elsewhere; the massacre of diamond diggers in Eastern Kasai in 1979; the Lubumbashi Massacre of May 1990; and recent killings of demonstrators in Kinshasa and elsewhere in Zaire. [For an extended chronology of mass killings under the Mobutu regime see Appendix 4.]

The current struggle for a multiparty democracy is part of a global phenomenon related to the end of the Cold War and the demise of the one-party system. But it is also, and above all, a continuation of the fight that Zairians in all walks of life have waged against the political and economic crimes of the Mobutu regime. Zairians look back today to the first two major periods of the
popular movement for democracy in Zaire, both the anti-colonial alliance of ordinary people and the évolutés in the struggle for independence (1956 to 1960) and the "second independence" movement embodied in the popular insurrections of 1964 in nearly all regions of the country. Like the first two periods, the current or third period is marked by a great national awakening, with people ready to shed fear to manifest their permanent aspiration for democracy and their desire for a better life materially and a more secure future for their children. Two other parallels are noteworthy. The first one is the radicalism of the mass of the people, although the majority even of the opposition leaders come from the same leadership stratum that has worked with Mobutu. The second is popular faith in an individual leader: as Patrice Lumumba symbolized the freedom struggle in one phase, and Pierre Mulele in the second, so today ordinary Zairians tend to look to Etienne Tshisekedi. The people see in him the "Moses" who is to deliver his people from "Pharaoh" Mobutu.

This period of the democracy movement began in 1980 with a protest by 13 members of Parliament, including Tshisekedi, who wrote a 52-page letter to Mobutu demanding political reforms. They were immediately met by brutal repression. In spite of repeated jailings and the defection of some of its original members, the group persisted in its opposition to the Mobutu regime. In 1982 they defied Mobutu's laws against opposition parties by creating the Union pour la Démocratie et le Progrès Social (UDPS). Long before Mobutu was compelled by internal and external pressure to accept multipartyism in April 1990, the UDPS had become associated in people's minds with the democracy movement in Zaire. Many other opposition groups have emerged within Zaire or returned from exile, most joining together with the UDPS in an alliance called the Union Sacrée (Sacred Union). But the UDPS remains the single most important party with respect to name recognition and emotional attachment by millions of Zairians who are appreciative of Tshisekedi's record of consistent opposition to Mobutu throughout the 1980s.

Given the vastness of the country, the breakdown of the road infrastructure and the backward nature of communications, much of the political life of Zaire revolves around Kinshasa, the capital city, and a few major regional urban centers. In this context, party organizing remains precarious; one of the few gauges of support for a party is the number of people it manages to attract to its rallies and demonstrations. Other than the UDPS, the only other party that seems to do well in this regard in Kinshasa is the Parti Lumumbiste Unifié (PALU) of Antoine Gizenga, who served in the first post-independence government as Lumumba's Deputy Prime Minister. In Gizenga's absence from the country until early 1992, the party was actually led by Mrs. Therese Parkasa, who is affectionately known because of her militancy as the "Iron Lady" of Zaire. As a party, PALU has its antecedents in the progressive wing of the Parti Solidaire Africain (PSA), which included Gizenga and Mulele.
The Union Sacrée was created in June 1991, under the leadership of the UDPS and Joseph Iléo’s Parti Démocrate Social Chrétien (PDSC), and quickly incorporated the majority of opposition parties. Following the precedent of other French-speaking African countries, such as Benin, the Zairian opposition focused on the demand for a sovereign national conference to direct the transition to democracy. Such a conference, grouping not only political parties but also representatives of all social groups, including churches, trade unions, professional associations, community groups and others, has been seen as a way of mobilizing a consensus and rebuilding the political order on the basis of popular support. It is a democratic forum of all the relevant social forces of a nation designed to take stock of what has gone wrong in the past and to chart a new course for the future. In the African tradition of consultation, the national conference must both provide a place for dialogue and design the mechanisms for a transition to democracy. This is all the more critical in countries like Zaire which lack the minimum infrastructure for free and fair elections. The conference, whose decisions are meant to be binding on all parties or groups, is seen as the appropriate forum from which a transitional government can emerge to prepare the way to multiparty elections and democracy.

In Zaire, where such a conference began on August 7, 1991, Mobutu has done everything possible to frustrate the popular will and to prevent the Conference from proceeding normally. On Sunday, February 16, 1992, Mobutu’s Civil Guard opened fire on peaceful demonstrators who had been called upon by the Catholic Church and other religious groups to protest the suspension of the conference by Mobutu’s prime minister Nguza Karl-I-Bond. Over forty people were killed. In response to international pressure, the National Conference was allowed to resume in April. In May it formally adopted resolutions declaring its sovereign authority. But with the Mobutu-appointed government still in place, and Mobutu in charge of the armed forces, the practical scope of its authority is still uncertain. There is strong suspicion that Mobutu will find new ways to avoid handing over power.

Mobutu as a United States Ally

U.S. policy since 1965 has consisted of virtually unswerving support for Mobutu, despite widespread acknowledgment of the corrupt and brutal character of his regime. This has been justified by several premises. Each was questionable at the time, despite arguments made to support them. In the current context, they have become virtually incomprehensible. As one Zairian exile recently put it, “at least before we could understand why the U.S. was supporting Mobutu, even if we didn’t agree. Now we just don’t understand it at all.”
These premises include the following: 1) that a vast and multi-ethnic country like Zaire needs a "strongman" to keep it together and maintain stability, since instability would lead to chaos and opportunities for communist subversion; 2) that the U.S. ought to support its loyal friends, regardless of their behavior toward their own people; and 3) that Zaire under Mobutu can be counted on to promote U.S. business and strategic interests in central and southern Africa.

The first premise, envisioning Zaire torn asunder by ethnic rivalries and thereby exposed to all sorts of external intervention in the absence of a strong central rule, emerges with a surprising consistency from statements made by Africa policy specialists in the U.S. government during the last thirty years. Although fear of "extremist infiltration" by communists is no longer a factor today, there are people in the U.S. government who rationalize their support for Mobutu on the ground that his departure might lead to the kind of disintegration that we have seen in Liberia and Somalia.

Yet the "stability" under Mobutu has been an illusion from the point of view of the majority of Zairians. His rule has not established a framework for resolving conflict or established an effective government administration. Instead real chaos and institutional paralysis are more evident today than during the days of the Congo crisis. Then, despite civil war and bickering among politicians, the state machinery continued to run in those areas not seriously affected by armed conflict. Records were kept, social services were provided without too much trouble to ordinary citizens, and corruption was minimal. The quality of administrative services was remarkably high in a number of provinces with a dynamic government and an adequate level of resources, notably in Central Kongo and South Kasai.

Under Mobutu, on the other hand, tribalism and corruption were institutionalized, with the predominance of people from his region in high government and military positions on the one hand, and the establishment of a veritable kleptocracy, on the other. Even before the current breakdown of administration and law and order, Mobutu's constantly reshuffled government was responsible for an administration that could not administer in an effective way. Lacking the most elementary demographic and other statistical data due to the poor quality of record-keeping, the Zairian public administration is notorious for working with fictitious data. Economic regulation was at best limited to the selling of various business licenses, while the privileged groups whose activities and businesses often endangered public health and safety were able to frustrate basic law enforcement. The rich and the powerful used their might and connections to evade taxes while the poor and the powerless suffered a state of permanent insecurity due to the arbitrariness of state officials and to all kinds of extortion by ill paid soldiers and other state agents.
ZAIRE: A NATION HELD HOSTAGE

Mobutu has indeed laid the seeds of possible disintegration once he goes. But protection against a Liberia or Somalia scenario lies in building a consensus on a post-Mobutu framework within the National Conference, and finding the resources to begin reconstruction of both the government and the economy. The longer this is delayed, by tolerating Mobutu’s final efforts to retain power, the more difficult the reconstruction will be.

The second premise focuses on the need for the U.S. to prove reliable to its allies. If the U.S. abandons its allies, as Professor Crawford Young noted in a classic 1978 *Foreign Affairs* article on the Zairian crisis, African leaders elsewhere will perceive identification with the West as a liability. Despite the end of the Cold War, which was the primary justification for such a premise, U.S. policymakers seem to cling to such a posture. For the U.S. as a superpower with global interests and obligations must rely on dependable allies to advance its interests, and these allies must have a reasonable expectation that they can count on the support of their powerful patron in Washington. In the political calculations of U.S. policymakers, then, the fact that Mobutu is guilty of blatant corruption and gross violations of human rights to the detriment of the people of Zaire is of no real importance. What matters the most is that he has been a friend and ally of long standing. Even if it is now time for him to go, he is seen to deserve the consideration of an “honorable exit.”

Yet as an analogy made by Senator Paul Simon in a letter to President Bush on February 20, 1992 makes clear, the White House would not tolerate such behavior nor extend such consideration if it were a question of an ally closer to home:

“I understand that you may feel some loyalty to President Mobutu, since he has long been a U.S. ally. But I think it is as though a hypothetical person, a long-time campaign supporter and White House aide, had been caught embezzling funds. That person should be dismissed. Mobutu has, in fact, embezzled funds. And he has also stolen from his own people the democratic government they deserve.”

Finally, U.S. support for Mobutu is based on Zaire’s usefulness as a regional gendarme, a business partner, and a friendly voice in international forums. Given its size, enormous wealth in natural resources, and its strategic location at the heart of the African continent where it shares common borders with nine countries, Zaire is well suited to play the role of regional gendarme in east, central and southern Africa. Most significantly, Zaire served, both in 1975-1976 and in 1986-1991, as the rear base of covert U.S. military intervention in Angola. The Mobutu regime also intervened with Western support in Burundi in 1972, in the then-Central African Empire in 1979, in Chad in 1981 and 1983,
and in Rwanda in 1990. There are strong suspicions that some U.S. policymakers are reluctant to abandon the Mobutu card until they see whether Jonas Savimbi's UNITA comes to power in Angola after elections scheduled for September.

However, an examination of occasions in which Mobutu has sent Zairian forces into action at the bidding of the United States yields no indication that the interests of Americans, Zairians or those ostensibly intervened on behalf of, were served. The Zairian army under the command of Mobutu has been notorious for its corruption, indiscipline, flagrant human rights abuses, and ineptitude in combat. Since the Kinshasa mutiny of September 1991 Mobutu has been unable to stem the looting and rioting led by his own unpaid soldiers across the country. Zaire's once ebullient economy has been crippled. The notion that Mobutu is capable of maintaining regional order, always questionable, is clearly no longer tenable.

Mobutu's Zaire has also defended U.S. positions in international forums. With few exceptions, notably ritualistic votes against racist South Africa at the United Nations and the 1973 decision to break diplomatic relations with Israel, the Mobutu government was very helpful to Washington by aligning its positions with those of the U.S. In the most recent example, during the Gulf crisis, Zaire as a member of the UN Security Council and its president for January 1991 played an important role in the adoption of U.S.-sponsored resolutions against Iraq.

Yet with the Soviet geo-political threat no longer even remotely credible, it is hard to see what real advantages the U.S. might have in promoting particular leaders and regimes in Zaire or in its neighbors. The quest for extra votes in the United Nations seems hardly a sufficient motive. Even in strictly economic terms, such dictatorial figures as Mobutu and Savimbi are unlikely guardians of economic stability.

Zaire's mineral wealth, and opportunity for profitable investment in selected projects, has certainly been a focus for U.S. interest. It was from Zaire, then Belgian Congo, that the U.S. obtained the uranium for the atomic bombs which were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In normal times, Zaire has been the world's biggest producer of cobalt, a strategic mineral used in alloys and one that is highly in demand in the aerospace and aircraft industries. It is the second largest producer of industrial diamonds; and the fifth largest producer of copper. As long as these exports continued without major interruptions, outside interests could make their profits, and corruption could be regarded as a kind of tax. The deterioration of welfare for the majority could be ignored.
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Part of the blame for this situation resides with the U.S. government and transnational corporations, which were responsible for the single biggest white elephant to result from what Belgian professor Benoît Verhaegen calls "technological safaris": the Inga-Shaba project. This is a high-tension power transmission line built over 1,200 miles to transmit electrical current from the Inga dam on the Congo river in the southwest to the Shaba province copper mines in the southeast. This venture was built by Morrison-Knudsen, an Idaho-based transnational corporation, thanks to the lobbying efforts of U.S. Ambassador Sheldon Vance, a friend of the company president, who sold Mobutu on the idea. It was financed by, among others, the U.S. Export-Import Bank and Manufacturers Hanover, a New York-based transnational bank.

This venture is typical of the sophisticated technologies and turnkey investments of dubious economic value that are totally unrelated to the absorptive capacity and the development needs of the economy and yet involve the waste of billions of dollars. Operating at only 10-15 percent of its capacity, the Inga-Shaba line cost too much money for its real value, and it is today estimated to account for approximately one-third of Zaire’s external debt of $9-$10 billion. Although useless for the country, which must now assume the responsibility for the debt incurred in its construction, such a venture benefited the contractors who built it, the international banks and corporations which financed it, and the government officials who authorized it. The latter succeeded in strengthening their friendship and alliances with their U.S. partners, in addition to pocketing the kickbacks which usually accompany this type of economic activity.

By the late 1980s, however, the economic crisis had reached a level which endangered normal economic functions of any kind. The withdrawal of World Bank and International Monetary Fund support indicated that Mobutu was no longer a going concern even from the limited standpoint of Western business interests.

Most policymakers now recognize that the arguments for support of Mobutu sound increasingly thin. But the legacy of more than a quarter century of cooperation provides a deeply rooted inertia, embodied in personal ties of Mobutu and his establishment with both business and political figures in the West. The United States, unaccustomed to trusting in democracy in places like Zaire, is still reluctant to try. The result is the constant equivocation which time and again leaves Mobutu yet another respite, and postpones new democratic efforts by Zairians to deal with the immense problems their country faces.
Appendix Two:  
Zaire’s Economy: Snapshot of a Catastrophe

Precipitous Macroeconomic Decline

Zaire’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) declined by 1.3% in 1989, 2.6% in 1990, and probably more than 10% in 1991. This unprecedented economic and financial crisis followed about twenty years of generally poor economic performance; the last period of substantial growth was 1965-1973, before world copper prices went into decline. The decline was accentuated by an estimated $700 million of destruction during mutinies by troops in September and October, leading to losses of some 75,000 jobs in the wage sector.

Zaire’s outstanding international debt rose from $4.2 billion in 1980 to $8.8 billion in 1990 (including $6.2 billion to Western countries and $1.8 billion to multilateral agencies such as the World Bank). The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have suspended new loans due to non-cooperation in dealing with unpaid debt.

The value of the national currency, the zaire, dropped from 117 per U.S. dollar to 719 per U.S. dollar in 1990, and descended to more than 200,000 per U.S. dollar by June 1992.

The Export Economy

The present crisis has affected not only the economy as a whole, but also the copper and cobalt mining sector which in previous years continued to produce revenues despite economic deterioration in other sectors. Copper production, with an annual capacity of 450,000 tons, fell to less than 350,000 tons in 1990, and to 240,000 tons in 1991.

Total exports dropped to an estimated $1.5 billion in 1991, compared with an average of over $2.1 billion a year for 1988-1990.

The government budget, dependent in large part on tax revenues from Gecamines, the state-owned mining company, ran a deficit estimated at 10% of Gross Domestic Product in 1990 and over 25% of Gross Domestic Product in 1991. Financed largely by printing of new bank notes, the deficit fueled the runaway inflation.
Social Conditions and the Crisis of Survival

Already known for decades of neglect, social conditions in Zaire reached new lows, particularly in the urban areas. With virtually no modern transportation infrastructure functioning, the more than 60% of Zairians living in rural areas have long depended primarily on subsistence production of crops such as cassava. Urban residents unable to cultivate their own food were at the mercy of rising prices, illustrated in the following table.

Inflation, October 1991 - April 1992

Prices in thousands of zaires

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sack of cassava</td>
<td>525</td>
<td>1300</td>
<td>1425</td>
<td>2625</td>
<td>2850</td>
<td>2950</td>
<td>2850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canned fish</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beans</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>42.5</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>72.5</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>67.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soap</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charcoal</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>850</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: USAID

Priorities for Structural Change

Observers of Zaire agree that economic improvement depends above all on establishing a viable government and administration which can invest in priority needs rather than siphon off any surplus into bank accounts abroad. If stability is restored through a political transition, foreign investors and multilateral institutions will probably reinvest in rehabilitating the modern export sector. But economic growth that benefits Zaire’s people will not come from restoring the patterns of the past.

Among the priorities for a new government will be redressing the neglect of social services such as health and education, essential investments in long-term human capital. Strategic sectors where investment could produce more immediate returns as well include the internal transport sector and peasant production of food crops.
Appendix Three:  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>USAID</th>
<th>Peace Corps</th>
<th>Military Assistance</th>
<th>Total Assistance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total 1962-1985</td>
<td>707.4</td>
<td>50.2</td>
<td>200.7</td>
<td>958.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>63.8</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>75.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>60.9</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>69.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>54.9</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>62.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>59.7</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>68.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>47.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>49.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 1986-1991</td>
<td>325.7</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>372.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Military assistance was cut off in FY1991 at congressional insistence. Development assistance was terminated in June 1991, after Zairian inability to repay debt brought Brooke Amendment sanctions into effect.
Appendix Four:
A Partial List of Mass Killings Undertaken by the
Government and Military of Mobutu Sese Seko
in the years 1965-1992 * +

(Distributed by the Washington Office on Africa)

1. On Sunday February 16, 1992, soldiers under the command of Mobutu Sese Seko
shot and killed at least forty-two (42) people and wounded more than 100 others
in Kinshasa, Zaire. The victims were Christians of all denominations who had
joined in a peaceful pro-democracy march after church services.

Letter to President Bush of February 18, 1992 from Clifton Kirkpatrick, Director of the
Global Mission Ministry Unit, Presbyterian Church, U.S.A.
Reuters News Service, February 19, 1992;
Amnesty International Newsletter, May 1992, Volume XXII, Number 5, 1.

2. Eighteen (18) members of the Zairian armed forces are suspected by Amnesty In-
ternational to have been killed in custody by security agents of Mobutu’s govern-
ment on January 22, 1992.


3. At least two-hundred and fifty (250) people were killed during the months of Sep-
tember and October 1991 when poorly-paid contingents of the army under the
command of Mobutu initiated violent looting in Kinshasa and other major cities.

Amnesty International Newsletter, May 1992 Volume XXII Number 5, p.1

4. From April 13 to 15, 1991 fifty-six (56) people were shot and killed by soldiers
under the command of Mobutu after they attended a peaceful pro-democracy rally
in East Kasai Region

Muissa Camus, “Le Sang de Mbujimayi et le Viol des Consciences”, La Conscience,
No.35, 49.

* This document supplements the October 1989 Petition from Members of the Faculty
of Harvard University with Supporting Documentation to Derek Bok, President
of Harvard University, and Jennifer Jordan drafted by John W. Metzel and John
Ralston Haynes. The Petition was signed by fifteen members of the Harvard Faculty.

+ This listing is partial in the sense that the true extent of extrajudicial execution and
torture carried out by the Mobutu regime may never be known. For every documented
mass killing others must realistically be allowed for, which have been carried out in
remote areas and have escaped notice by the outside world. In addition, the Mobutu
regime makes use of as many as ten secret security forces to maintain its grip on power.
These forces “arrest without warrant, hold incommunicado, interrogate, and torture sus-
pects” as they wish [Young 1985, p.27] and execution without trial is commonplace. It
is unlikely that the number of people who have “disappeared” at the hands of agents of
the Mobutu Regime will ever be accurately determined. This listing is partial also in that
it is by no means exhaustive of the incidents of mass killing which have been docu-
menced.


10. At least three (3) people were killed by soldiers of the Mobutu Regime and dozens were injured at a rally for returned leader Etienne Tshisekedi wa Mulumba on January 17, 1988. Amnesty International, Concerns Between January 1987 and January 1988, 4. Steve Askin, "Tales of Torture", *Africa News*, Vol. 29 Number 2, 1.

12. In July of 1985 at least five (5) persons are believed by Amnesty International to have been executed without trial outside the headquarters of armed forces under the command of Mobutu at Moba in Shaba Region.


13. On February 10, 1985, thirty (30) civilians were killed by soldiers under the command of Mobutu Sese Seko in Katandala village forty kilometers northwest of Moba in Shaba Region.

*Zaire Reports of Torture and Killings Committed by the Armed Forces in Shaba Region*, 1.


14. Between February and May of 1985 at least thirty (30) people are believed by Amnesty International to have been executed by gunshot or drowning on the orders of an official of the Mobutu government without trial, on Idjwi island in Kivu Region.


15. Troops under the command of Mobutu killed forty (40) civilians in the Kabare district of Kivu Region in incidents relating to a succession dispute during 1985.


16. At least twenty-four (24) people were killed by firing squad at Kalemie Naval Base on Lake Tanganyika in December 1984 without receiving a trial of any kind.


17. From November 15 to 22, 1984, at least one-hundred and thirty (130) unarmed civilians were killed in the town Moba in Shaba Region by soldiers under the command of Mobutu.

*Zaire Reports of Torture and Killings Committed by the Armed Forces in Shaba Region*, 6.

18. Eight (8) people were executed without trial on January 2, 1984 at the headquarters of the National Gendarmerie in Kinshasa by agents under Mobutu's command belonging to the Special Research and Surveillance Brigade (BSRS). Killings continued later in the month but the exact number is not known.


20. At least fifty (50) people were deliberately killed or starved to death by agents under Mobutu's command belonging to the BSRS during 1983 in the Lingwala district of Kinshasa.


21. Extra-judicial executions are frequently carried out at a detention center operated by Mobutu's Special Presidential Brigade in the elaborate Mont Ngaliema complex where Mobutu once hosted the Organization of African Unity. More than fifty (50) people were executed without trial between the months of June and August 1982.

22. In early 1982 twenty-one (21) civilians were executed without trial south of Lubumbashi by military security agents under the command of Mobutu. 


23. Seventeen (17) people were hanged in March 1981 in Kinshasa at Luzumu Prison operated by Mobutu's government. "When some of the victims did not die immediately on the gallows, they were shot dead by the guards." They had been condemned to die in a civil trial in January 1980, the fairness of which has been challenged by Amnesty International. All were mistreated in custody and two (2) were tortured to death before October 1980 by Mobutu's personal security service. Mobutu had direct knowledge of the cases of these persons and rejected all of their pleas for clemency.


24. Between June 1980 and March 1981 nine (9) civilians were executed without trial in Kivu Region by members of the Fifth Infantry Battalion, under the command of Mobutu Sese Seko.

*Political Imprisonment in Zaire*, 10.

25. In March 1980 at least (9) persons were executed by the military under command of Mobutu without due process of law. Seven people including two civilians were condemned to death with no right of appeal by a military tribunal in Kinshasa. At least two civilians were summarily executed at the port of Matadi.


26. Troops under the command of Mobutu opened fire on a demonstration of students at the university in Kinshasa in February 1980. At least seven (7) university students were shot dead.


27. Eight (8) people were killed in custody by agents security agents of the Mobutu government at the National Documentation Center (CND) in Kinshasa during late 1979 and early 1980. Five students of the Institut Superieur de Techniques Appliquees were shot by a guard in January 1980 and three workers of PETROZAIRE who were tortured to death.


‘Zaire replies to charges on torture and detention camps’, *A.I. Newsletter*, June 1980.


28. On July 19, 1979, approximately three hundred (300) civilians were massacred at Katekelayi and Luamelu villages of East Kasai Region by Zairian army units under the command of Mobutu Sese Seko. A partial list of ninety-six of the victims is available.

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“Les Massacres de Katekelayi et de Luamela (Kasai Oriental),” Politique Africaine 2.6 (May 1982), 72-106.

“Lettre Ouvrée au Citoyen President Fondateur du Mouvement Populaire de la Revolution, President de la Republique par un groupe de Parlementaires,” Politique Africaine 1.3 (September 1981), 94-140.

Dikonda wa Lumanyisha, Massacrer pour Gouverner (LIEGE: Club Travail et Developpement, 1985).


29. In December 1978 ten (10) people died of gangrene and tetanus after soldiers under the command of Mobutu welded chains around their wrists and ankles in Upper Zaire Region.


30. On March 17, 1978 at Badiadingi Shooting Range thirteen (13) civilians and military officers were executed by firing squad with the authorization of Mobutu Sese Seko after he denied them the opportunity to appeal their case. Some were accused only of belonging to a particular religious sect.

Human Rights Violations in Zaire, 11.

Crawford Young. Rise and Decline of the Zairian State, 74.


31. In February 1978 Mobutu’s elite personal guard massacred at least eight hundred (800) members of the Kasongo religious community in the Kwilu sub-region of Bandundu Region of Zaire. It is reported that the soldiers were armed with American M-16 rifles and were transported by C-130 airplanes supplied by the United States of America. Recent reports suggest the number of people killed was as high as two thousand (2000).


Human Rights Violations in Zaire, 2.

Crawford Young. Rise and Decline of the Zairian State, 74.

32. On January 25, 1978 fourteen (14) people were hanged in public at Idiofa in Kwilu sub-region without trial by soldiers under the command of Mobutu.


33. Forty (40) inmates starved to death in Makala Prison, Zaire’s largest, in 1978.

“Hilundreds of prisoners are known to have died” at Ekafera prison in Equateur Region between 1977 and 1980 of disease and starvation.


34. More than a thousand unarmed civilians were detained by Mobutu’s army without charge at Lubumbashi for several months and then transferred to Lokandu military camp in Kivu Region for six months in 1978. Disease and malnutrition in these camps caused the death of at least twenty (20) of these detainees.

35. Mobutu's appointed security chief for Kinshasa, Manzikala Madrikani, organized an assassination squad which murdered some five-hundred (500) people in 1971 by his own admission.


36. A demonstration by students of Lovanium University was fired upon in June 1969 by army soldiers under the command of Mobutu. An estimated fifty (50) students were killed and many more were wounded. Two years later on June 4, 1971, and again in 1974 commemorative demonstrations by students were violently dispersed by soldiers under the command of Mobutu.

Crawford Young, Rise and Decline of the Zairian State, 198.
Human Rights Violations in Zaire, 2.

37. On June 3, 1966 four (4) cabinet members were publicly hanged without the opportunity to appeal their case. The announcement was made before the trial that the four cabinet members would be sentenced to death. Mobutu Sese Seko is directly responsible for the grisly manner in which these executions were carried out. He himself has remarked, "One had to strike through a spectacular example...[It] was necessary to make an example of them."

Crawford Young, Rise and Decline of the Zairian State, 57.
Human Rights Violations in Zaire, 10.

38. The period from 1964 until 1967 during which Mobutu Sese Seko was in command of the Congolese National Army, is considered "one of the most bloody in postcolonial Africa". Mobutu's army is notorious for depending on foreign troops and mercenaries to accomplish the combat tasks necessary to secure military objectives and then, once the area is secure, moving in to kill indiscriminately large numbers of civilians as a form of collective punishment. "In one town alone, Kindu, the mercenaries killed some three thousand people, according to one of their number. Mobutu's army, which followed in the wake of the mercenaries, was considered to be even more brutal." The Shaba 'wars' of 1977 and 1978 saw this pattern often repeated. Mobutu's army was unable to defend itself from the invading forces of General Mbumba and yet after French and Moroccan troops had been flown in by U.S. aircraft and had repulsed Mbumba's army, an untold number of civilian lives were exacted as punishment by the army under Mobutu's command. As these massacres accomplished no valid security or even military purpose they are included in this listing.
