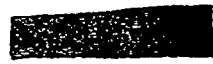


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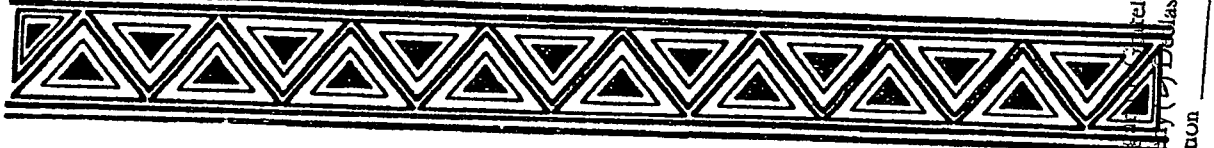
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No. 20
October 25, 1990

African Trends



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No. 20
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ESSAY

Zaire: Mobutu's Chickens Coming Home To Roost

Since assuming power in Zaire in 1965, President Mobutu Sese Seko has kept the lid on the political opposition through a combination of patronage politics, divide-and-rule tactics, and occasional promises of reform to domestic and foreign audiences. These old tricks no longer serve him as well as in the past, however, and pressures on the regime are reaching unprecedented levels.

Reforms announced in April have whetted appetites for change and have led to a surge of political protest that has caused Mobutu to make further concessions to the opposition. Although he has been weakened, the opposition is fragmented and does not pose an immediate threat to the regime. Mobutu's survival in the medium term probably will depend on renewed foreign economic assistance to sustain his patronage-based system of rule.

Reforms, but no credibility. The fall of Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu profoundly shocked Mobutu, who had held Romania up as a model. When Zairian oppositionists stepped up

their protests early this year, Mobutu began taking measures to avoid a similar fate. In an April 24 speech, he announced plans to modify his one-man, one-party rule and create a three-party system and a government elected by parliament.

Mobutu probably expected that the appearance of reform would silence domestic and foreign critics, as various "reforms" and "renewals" had in the past. This time, however, reforms have fanned rather than dampened pressures for change: More than 70 political parties have sprung up (including

Contents

ESSAY

Zaire: Mobutu's Chickens Coming Home To Roost 1

NOTES

South Africa: Who Will Negotiate? 5

Sudan: The Sky Is Falling 6

Zimbabwe: ZUM Six Months After the Elections 6

Rwanda: Regime Challenged by Rebels and Refugees 7

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some led by former Mobutu "loyalists") to contest for the three spots; newspapers have become increasingly critical; and the once-docile parliament on occasion has criticized the regime. The leading opposition parties have rejected Mobutu's efforts to get them to join a transition government to replace the unpopular and ineffective one headed by Prime Minister Lunda Bululu. Miners, teachers, doctors, and civil servants have gone on strike.

The ruling MPR party, now known as the Popular Movement for Renewal (instead of Revolution), is becoming factionalized and confused by the reforms. In comments to Embassy Kinshasa, representatives of the two major factions within the party were equally and openly critical of Mobutu (who still closely controls the MPR despite his announced resignation from it as part of the April reforms) and cynical about his motives.

Mobutu has bent somewhat under the sustained pressure. At first, he intended to handpick the three legal parties, then in June he announced that they would be chosen in a nationwide primary. Faced with the difficult choice of which parties to certify for the primary (almost all of them refused to pay the required registration fee), Mobutu announced on October 6 that all parties and political groupings would be certified and allowed free access to the state media. The opposition, however, continues to insist on a national conference involving all parties to discuss Zaire's future form of government.

The limits of patronage politics. Mobutu continues to try to manipulate political life by distributing largess plundered from the economy and by personally directing government expenditures; off-budget expenditures by the presidency typically exceed \$30 million a month. The effectiveness of this policy has decreased because Mobutu has overused it. His diversion of government resources to nonproductive uses over the past 20 years has gutted a once-prosperous economy.

The effect of corruption is most obvious at the state-owned mining company Gecamines, the source of two-thirds of Zaire's export revenues and

the primary source of its tax revenue. Financially strapped by extra taxes, surcharges, "contributions" to the treasury, and diversion of hard currency and production by Mobutu and his associates, Gecamines has had to limit investment in new equipment, spare parts, and equipment repair. Combined with increasingly frequent strikes, the corruption-induced breakdown of infrastructure is likely to limit Gecamines copper production to less than 350,000 tons this year, the lowest level in 20 years. As a result, the value of copper and cobalt exports in 1990 probably will fall by \$200 million to below \$1 billion despite high world prices.

Since the increase in political pressure earlier this year, Mobutu has raised presidential patronage payoffs and increasingly directed government spending. In 1989, when Zaire was at least trying to demonstrate compliance with International Monetary Fund conditions, the government ran a budget deficit of \$115 million. This year, the World Bank expects that the budget deficit will be on the order of \$850-900 million (14-15 percent of GDP) owing in large part to increased civil service salaries, the costs of strikes, higher fuel import bills, falling export revenues, and increased presidential spending.

Mobutu's patronage politics are alienating donors and the IMF, whose structural adjustment loans for 15 years have helped keep what has remained of the modern sector going. Earlier this year, Zaire went off its seventh IMF structural adjustment program since 1976 and it is no longer attempting to meet its debt-service obligations. Donors appear to be taking a harder line than they did during past financial crises. Total IMF and foreign aid commitments are down from \$1 billion in 1989 to an estimated \$420 million in 1990. The World Bank, which had planned to loan Zaire almost \$500 million this year, will provide less than \$25 million.

Neither the IMF nor the World Bank shows an inclination to go back into Zaire in the foreseeable future—a year, at least. Zaire now is financing Mobutu's political payoffs by printing money. The annual inflation rate has risen from 50 percent to more than 60 percent since July and is expected

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- 3 -

to exceed 100 percent by the end of the year. The inflationary surge will put an added strain on the economy—and limit the effectiveness of Mobutu's patronage.

The failure of "Belgium bashing." In the past, Mobutu always was able to gain a degree of domestic support by manufacturing a "crisis" with Belgium, Zaire's former colonial power. He tried this trick again in June after the Belgian media reported that Zairian security forces had massacred students at the University of Lubumbashi, and the center-left government in Brussels suspended aid and called for an international investigation. Mobutu retaliated by condemning Belgian interference in Zaire's internal affairs, canceling an important debt repayment agreement, and expelling Belgian aid workers.

This time, however, Zairians seemed to support the Belgian position. Moreover, in contrast with past disputes when the Belgians tried to placate Mobutu and work out new arrangements, Brussels has begun to cut back economic and military aid valued at \$130-150 million annually. The precedent set by the sudden cutback in Belgian aid—which Mobutu had always been able to take for granted—further causes him to worry about the US commitment to his anti-Communist regime now that East-West tensions have relaxed. US economic aid to Zaire has decreased from \$60 million in 1989 to \$36 million this year.

Threats and alternatives I: The opposition parties. Nonetheless, Mobutu's divide-and-rule tactics—and Zaire's ethnolinguistic and regional diversity—have kept opponents from seriously challenging his leadership. The opposition's strength is diluted by the large number of parties, and by divisions among them over whether and how much to cooperate with one another and with Mobutu. Among the most important opposition parties are the following:

- The Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS)—the oldest, most established opposition party—is divided on whether to

play the reform game by Mobutu's rules. Its most important leader, Etienne Tshisekedi, totally distrusts Mobutu and believes that reform is impossible as long as he is President. Seeing the UDPS as the only true opposition party, Tshisekedi is reluctant to dignify the other opposition parties by cooperating with them.

- The Social Christian Democratic Party (PDSC), formed after the April reforms, includes disaffected former MPR members, many with church ties. It reportedly is strong in urbanized Bas-Zaïre, and its members are confident that they could beat the MPR in an election. Because it is still technically illegal for political parties to identify themselves with religion, it is not clear whether Mobutu will legalize the PDSC.
- The Union of Federalists and Independent Republicans (UFERI) has had a good reception for its federalist platform and strong criticism of Mobutu in mineral-rich Shaba province. One of UFERI's most prominent leaders is former Foreign Minister Nguz Karl-I-Bond, who throughout his career has alternated serving in Mobutu's cabinet with calling for his overthrow. Worried about UFERI's and Nguz's appeal, the regime has reinforced troop strength in Lubumbashi.
- The Nationalists' Common Front (FCN) is led by two longtime Mobutu loyalists, and its oppositionist credentials are dubious. It has a leftist platform of nationalization and socialization of the economy and appears to be the sort of party that Mobutu would establish if he could pick "straw men" opposition parties. Its popularity is unknown.

A so-called cartel of 30 smaller opposition parties cooperates on strategy with the major opposition parties (except the FCN and the too-proud UDPS), and has issued joint calls for further liberalization and for a national roundtable of all the parties.

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- 4 -

All the opposition parties are short on funds and have no way to get their message across to the people without access to the state-controlled radio and television. They are narrowly based among elites in Kinshasa and Lubumbashi and weak in rural areas, where the MPR with its well-established patronage networks continues to dominate.

Moreover, the opposition's effectiveness is hampered because all the major opposition politicians are products of Mobutu's system. Many are simple opportunists willing to abandon opposition in return for political (or economic) favors from Mobutu; their price is just a little higher than it used to be. In combination, the opposition parties can keep the political pressure on Mobutu and disrupt his political schemes, but none is in a position to replace him.

Threats and alternatives II: The security forces. Mobutu has limited somewhat the threat of a coup from the security forces by decentralizing the force structure and by pitting one unit against another and deputies against commanders in a competition for presidential favor. The result of Mobutu's divide-and-rule tactics has been a lack of military corporate identity, institutional loyalty, and sense of Zairian nationalism. In this situation the security forces' loyalty to Mobutu comes into question as soon as the value of Mobutu's favors declines. Their loyalty to a post-Mobutu democratic government would also be questionable. Despite the political ferment, however, there are no indications yet that the security forces are getting restive.

If an element or elements of the security forces were to overthrow Mobutu, their commanders probably would attempt to rule by using the same patronage methods Mobutu has relied on; it is all they know. But because the Zairian military—and practically all of its component units—is such a weak institution, it is unlikely that it would be capable of running Zaire.

The recent military performance in Rwanda demonstrates the scope of the institutional breakdown. The soldiers from the elite 31st Brigade and the even more elite Special Presidential Divi-

sion (DSP) acted like a mob—looting, terrorizing civilians, and performing ineffectively against the Rwandan rebels they were sent to fight. The Zairian military in general has long been considered to be incompetent, but before the Rwanda expedition most observers usually had assessed at least some units to be relatively well organized and effective.

Outlook. The limits of what Mobutu will accept before cracking down on his opponents are constantly shifting. Mobutu's decisions will be based not only on his calculation of his security forces' effectiveness but also on human rights pressure from foreign donors (or potential donors). He realizes that a crackdown on opponents would jeopardize his chances of getting back into the good graces of Western donors—and reopening the IMF/World Bank spigot. The publicity surrounding the killing of students at the University of Lubumbashi in May was especially unhelpful in this regard.

Despite recent reports that Mobutu is in an unusually "reflective" mood, he is not about to give up power to the opposition. Although he may be willing to countenance a weak democratically elected government to handle day-to-day matters of state, he will fight to keep control of resources for patronage (and thus real political power). He will also seek to control at least some security units.

The key question, as it was in 1960-65, increasingly is: Is Zaire governable? Mobutu's methods have maintained a relatively stable central government for 25 years. In the process, however, they have destroyed Zairian institutions or severely warped their development, ruined the economy, and made Mobutu dependent on foreign economic support that, for now, does not seem to be forthcoming. Zaire has entered a dangerous period. Recent riots in the depressed Mayombe region of Bas-Zaire—where alienated students and local residents rampaged and destroyed much of their own property in this formerly prosperous area—could be symptomatic of a deeper disease.

Mobutu believes himself indispensable to Zaire's future and is shrewdly aware of the limitations of the opposition. But he may have miscalcu-

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- 5 -

lated that the economy and foreign donors will sustain indefinitely his corrupt, patronage-based governing style. (S/NF) (Ehrenreich)

that negotiations with the government were possible only to discuss transferring power to the black majority.

NOTES

● South Africa: Who Will Negotiate?

Talks leading to formal constitutional negotiations continue to be the preserve of the National Party (NP) and the African National Congress (ANC). Both sides know, however, that a political settlement will require the inclusion of others, on the right and the left, who will play roles in post-apartheid politics. Some of those who have been adamantly opposed to the talks, particularly the Conservative Party (CP), the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), and the Azanian People's Organization (AZAPO), are reconsidering their strategies and prospects in anticipation of formal negotiations.

The government and the ANC are eager to gain allies. The ANC believes it would be strengthened if other black groups could be convinced to sit on its side of the table. The government thinks inclusion of other black groups, even as part of an ANC coalition, would weaken the ANC's claim to represent all blacks and would make black-white alliances possible. The government would prefer that all whites talk from the same agenda; CP participation, in particular, would eliminate parliamentary rightwing opposition to negotiations and increase white confidence in the reform process.

Wooing the PAC. In August the PAC's long-standing advocacy of armed struggle and criticism of government-ANC negotiations became suddenly conciliatory after President de Klerk and Nelson Mandela each invited PAC President Mothopeng to meetings. The meetings never took place, but the PAC announced it was considering a mutual cessation of hostilities—PAC leaders had always said

The government invited Mothopeng to join in "exploratory constitutional talks," but Mothopeng deferred a decision until the PAC's national congress in November. Differences have surfaced between the PAC's internal and external wings, but the postponement may also reflect a deliberate strategy to spur government and ANC competition for PAC favor which could give it negotiating leverage.

AZAPO shifts position. AZAPO President Mosala announced earlier this month that he would not accept an offer to join the exploratory talks, which were "unlikely" to lead to genuine nonracial democracy. AZAPO now, however, is distinguishing between constitutional negotiations among elected representatives and talks aimed at luring liberation movements into debate and compromise. AZAPO leaders say the first move toward negotiations should be a conference of liberation movements and labor organizations.

CP stirrings. CP leaders find their options narrowing. Unable to force new elections, the party cannot capitalize on the increased white support it has gained since de Klerk's election in September 1989. Leaders now seem to accept that de Klerk's reform program is irreversible and they are beginning to think practically. Andries Treurnicht has set conditions for engaging in preliminary talks (for example, that de Klerk clarify Pretoria's position on acceptance of a black majority government) but is unlikely to reject what may be the CP's only opportunity to ensure its political survival.

Broad representation? AZAPO's refusal to participate in preliminary talks is a setback to government and ANC efforts, but the changing attitudes of the PAC and the CP represent a tentative widening of the political process. When formal negotiations begin—early next year, the government hopes—the PAC and the CP probably will be there, and AZAPO ultimately is likely to join. What alliances will be formed remain to be seen. (C) (Warner)

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- 6 -

● Sudan: The Sky Is Falling

Sudanese Government indifference and obstructionism, donor alienation, and logistical constraints could undercut international efforts to cope with a looming famine of enormous proportions—November's harvest should reveal the true dimensions of the emergency. Khartoum's fundamentalist-oriented leaders either have denied the reality of the menace or have perceived UN and Western relief agencies as a greater danger to their interest. They may belatedly promise cooperation but care only about insulating their northern Arab Sudanese core constituency from hunger.

In what may be Sudan's worst crisis since 1984's killer famine, this year's crop failure threatens an immense loss of life. The war has dispossessed 4-5 million, and about 1 million refugees are already at risk. The current severe drought in the north and east could leave an added 4-5 million people in need of assistance. The outline of the looming crisis became clear ~~only~~ in August; its worst effects will not be felt until perhaps next April, when the November harvest is exhausted.

Late and poor rains over a wide area, depleted food stocks, and government subversion of deliveries of relief food to the war-ravaged south have left many Sudanese vulnerable. One million metric tons of grain might be required, 300,000 metric tons to be distributed by relief and the rest commercially.

Fundamentalist blinders. Perhaps because Sudan's response to the Gulf crisis so clearly exposed their influence, fundamentalist National Islamic Front (NIF) leaders have begun to flaunt their ability to manipulate Sudan's rulers. The same mind-set that has tilted Khartoum toward Baghdad, because it sees the Western presence in Saudi Arabia as more threatening than Iraq's annexation of Kuwait, now views ongoing international relief aid to the south as a covert Christian plot to aid anti-Muslim insurgents. NIF string pullers, and their apparent regime puppets, believe food relief only breeds dependency on the West.

Unconcerned about the fate of endangered southern non-Muslims, NIF Secretary General Hassan al-Turabi would rather not accept a grain of aid than leave Sudan vulnerable to Western leverage. Ignoring the evidence, he denies that the rains have failed and insists Sudan can feed itself.

Dismal record. Western and moderate-Arab donor disenchantment with head of state Bashir stems, respectively, from his regime's subversion of relief aid to the south and his unhelpful Gulf stance. Prior undertakings notwithstanding, Bashir interrupted relief flights from Kenya to rebel-held areas from November 1989 until April 1990; he has refused a military escort to a relief train held up by progovernment militiamen since September 1989; he has done little to expedite the passage of relief barges also unable to move since September 1989; and last month he disrupted flights by bombing rebel-held relief centers operated by UNICEF and the ICRC. Bashir's periodic hollow promises of cooperation regularly have been subverted by strategically placed NIF functionaries.

Off the dime. Sudan's leaders will not be too upset if a famine compels millions of dispossessed southerners in Khartoum to flock home or forces other distressed southerners to pour into Kenya, Uganda, or Zaire—some relief aid is getting into the south over land. Bashir will do everything possible to assure that his northern Arab supporters get the lion's share of short rations.

Because the impending crisis extends beyond the south, Bashir might adopt a more conciliatory tone to keep bread available in Khartoum. Scattered food riots in the north have raised warning flags that could translate ultimately into the most serious challenge yet to Sudan's narrowly based regime. (C) (Shaloff)

● Zimbabwe: ZUM Six Months After the Elections

The Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM) continues its precarious existence as the country's ma-

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major opposition party following President Mugabe's landslide victory in the combined presidential/parliamentary elections held last March. ZUM was weakened and left divided by the balloting and now holds just two seats in Zimbabwe's 150-member unicameral parliament. The party is heavily in debt and has no office or paid party operatives; it is stumbling along with no national organization apart from its chairman, Edgar Tekere. ZUM's only hope of survival is for its adherents on the local level to take the party's fate into their own hands.

ZUM's continued existence was made possible by the lifting of the state of emergency in July and by ZANU's September 22 compromise on the one-party issue. ZANU's central committee determined that the establishment of a one-party state should remain the party's central objective but that the much-discussed referendum on the issue was unnecessary. In its view, the March elections had left Zimbabwe a de facto one-party state and there was no need to legislate a de jure one.

The central committee decided instead that ZANU would "organize and mobilize the people" to support the idea of a one-party state. This agreement to keep the goal but not embody it in legislation provided a face-saving formula for President Mugabe and appears to have satisfied those within the party who fear that a legislated one-party state would be an invitation to tyranny.

So far, however, ZUM has not done much to ensure its own survival. It is being badly mismanaged at the national level. Tekere's refusal to conduct a village-to-village campaign in the March elections antagonized many of his young followers. Through his ineptitude, Tekere has failed to raise external funds for the party. He so angered the ZUM leadership that it refused to support his bid for a parliamentary seat in a post-March byelection.

Although ZUM suffers from a lack of infrastructure and funds on the national level, there is some hope for growth at the local level. In Matabeleland the legal chapter of ZUM is better organized and better financed than in most other parts

of the country. ZUM is trying to raise funds to finance the campaign for the Bulawayo city council, one of the nationwide city council elections to be held in 1992. Although ZUM still faces some police harassment, the lifting of the state of emergency has allowed ZUM to organize meetings without permission from the police.

City council elections present ZUM with its best opportunity to build a grassroots political movement. However, unless ZUM can again get funds from the reincarnated white Rhodesian party of Ian Smith—the Conservative Alliance of Zimbabwe (CAZ)—as it did during the March elections, or from external sources, it will not be able to mount a serious challenge to ZANU.

ZUM will have to work around Tekere's liabilities as party leader and do better at articulating how it would change Zimbabwe for the better, not just attack ZANU. Looking toward the 1995 parliamentary elections, ZUM will need to campaign in the rural areas outside Manicaland, Tekere's home province, and to cultivate rural chieftains who could influence their people.

Beyond what it can do for itself, however, ZUM at all levels will need the tolerance of President Mugabe's government with its overwhelming control of the media and the political process in Zimbabwe. ZUM will not easily survive more of the manipulation and intimidation it experienced at the hands of the ruling party during the last elections. (C) (Siegel)

● Rwanda: Regime Challenged by Rebels and Refugees

Current conflict in Rwanda pits President Habyarimana's Hutu government against a force of mostly Rwandan Tutsi exiles who invaded from Uganda. The outcome depends greatly on the roles of France, Belgium, and Rwanda's neighbors. Habyarimana has responded to diplomatic initiatives by agreeing to negotiate with the rebels, but he appears to be setting conditions on his accep-

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- 8 -

tance. Long-term stability pivots on the settlement of Rwandan Tutsi claims of a right to return.

Hutu-governed since independence in 1962, overcrowded and impoverished, Rwanda is more than 80 percent Hutu. Rwandan Tutsi resent relegation to lesser positions and employment quotas, but Habyarimana has protected them from Hutu extremists. He relied unsuccessfully on regional summits to alleviate growing pressure from neighbors to repatriate the "Banyarwanda diaspora" of more than 250,000 Rwandan Tutsi from Uganda and other neighboring countries; they first left to escape slaughter in the 1959 Hutu overthrow of the Tutsi monarchy. Habyarimana repeatedly has refused to let them come home, predicting economic collapse of Rwanda but really fearing heightened ethnic tension and political confrontation.

From invasion to diplomacy. The estimated 3,000-man invasion force has been contained in northeastern Rwanda. Denied quick victory, the rebels, if repatriated from Uganda, could have staying power to weaken the Rwandan Government. Habyarimana's arrest of some Hutu officials shows division in the regime that could worsen if conflict continues.

Faced with rebel military pressure and following foreign diplomatic initiatives, Habyarimana at a meeting in Tanzania with President Mwinyi and Ugandan President Museveni agreed to hold talks with the rebels once a cease-fire went into effect. Subsequent Rwandan Government statements, however, appear to qualify this agreement, saying that the government would not talk "directly" to the rebels and insisting on a prior rebel pull-out from Rwanda. Kigali also maintains that the rebels may not represent the Banyarwanda in talks concerning the return of refugees. The issue of the composition of a cease-fire monitoring force is also unsettled.

The Europeans. Belgium, Rwanda's former colonial power, has sent troops and military supplies to protect its nationals and bolster Habyarimana. Under increasing domestic pressure to withdraw its troops because of human rights abuses by Rwanda's

Government and particularly by Zairian troops who rallied to Habyarimana's call, Belgium continues to pursue diplomatic initiatives. France's agenda is to protect its nationals and assist Belgian troops in securing Kigali airport, but it also continues to provide military resupply to Kigali. France is under no significant domestic pressure to withdraw. European troop withdrawal could encourage further rebel activity, remove restraints on Kigali's human rights behavior, and erode the security situation. While diplomatic initiatives appear promising, France and Belgian troops probably will stay on.

Regional actors: Uganda... Despite Museveni's assertions of innocence, most observers believe that he had foreknowledge of the invasion and that he sympathizes with the rebels' cause. His proposal that Habyarimana share power with the rebels, integrate them into the Rwandan Army, and allow Tutsi refugees right of return clearly discomforts Habyarimana. The question is whether Museveni, whose clan is of Tutsi lineage, could allow the rebels to be defeated.

...Zaire. Mobutu—concerned that conflict might spread to Zaire's Tutsi refugee population, almost paranoid in his perception of Museveni as a pro-Libyan revolutionary, and desiring regional acclaim—rushed troops to the Rwandan front. But the Zairians proved an embarrassment to Kigali; their rampages further alienated Belgium, whose relations with Zaire already were at low ebb. Now bloodied by the rebels, the Zairians are withdrawing and lessening the war's risk of regionalization.

The future. As Habyarimana's early fear of a rebel march on Kigali eased, arrests of suspected rebel sympathizers diminished. Because Rwandan neighbors (Burundi, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Zaire) have sizable Rwandan Tutsi refugee populations, any proposal for solution of the refugee problem has to recognize their concerns if it is to be lasting. Prospects for a cease-fire have brightened, but quick resolution of the conflict and of the root Tutsi refugee problem is unlikely. Although limited in scope, all-too-familiar Tutsi-Hutu violence has begun to recur in western Rwanda and has claimed at least 200 lives. (S/NF) (Lehman)

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