
AFRICA

'Permanent warfare' threat in Zaire

by Douglas DeGroot, Africa Editor

Washington was host the week of Sept. 15 to Zaire's former prime minister, Nguza Karl-I-Bond, arriving from Belgium to drum up support for a campaign to bring down the government of Zairean President Mobutu.

Nguza pointedly compared Zaire to Iran in his testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and then again at a breakfast press conference sponsored by the Carnegie Institute's Foreign Policy Association, at a private meeting of the Georgetown Center for Strategic International Studies, as well as in private meetings with congressmen and others during his seven-day visit. He particularly advised the United States to stop supporting Mobutu or risk earning the enmity of the Zaire population. "The people of Zaire will make this equation: we are suffering because of Mobutu; Mobutu is there because of the West; So the West is against us," he said.

Judging from the array of people willing to listen to his arguments, Nguza already has gathered significant support for his campaign in the United States. But, admitted an associate of William F. Buckley, in a candid moment: "The invasions or rebellions, and their repulsion, are bankrolled by the same Belgian forces." The point is not to clean up the Zaire government but to perpetrate upon Zaire, and the surrounding nations of Central Africa, a permanent warfare that would drastically reduce population levels of the entire area—the ultimate goal of oligarchical financial forces in Belgium and Britain that dominate Africa.

Squeezing Zaire

Nguza advised Washington to forego giving aid to Mobutu, who faces an extreme crisis of foreign debt. Zaire reportedly has the largest per capita debt of any country of the Third World. A deal that was previously worked out with the Carter administration's Andrew Young between Nguza and Mobutu in 1978 brought the International Monetary Fund in to run Zaire's central bank and impose strict austerity conditionalities on the country—conditions that have undermined Mobutu's authority.

There is no question that Mobutu and his "kleptocracy," as his ruling clique is known, are corrupt and

incompetent. But Nguza himself is not totally sincere in his pleas on behalf of the Zairean people. Nguza represents other interests: the Belgian mining and banking oligarchy that ruled Zaire (the Congo) as its colony until 1960 and, along with the Anglo-American South African mining interests, retains significant power in the country. Trained at the Jesuit University of Louvain in Belgium, Nguza is an associate of the Katangan secessionist leader Moïse Tshombe, also backed by Belgian interest.

Nguza has been foreign minister of Zaire three times, and was prime minister until he suddenly resigned while in Belgium last April, and declared his war on Mobutu.

A tinderbox

"The region is a tinderbox," said one Washington source, referring to Zaire and the nine countries that border it. "People in the State Department know Zaire is a potential powderkeg," concurred Georgetown Prof. Stephen Cohen, former deputy assistant secretary for human rights. "Iran having happened, people are more sensitive to this," he added.

Now that Nguza has swept through Washington, congressional staffers predict that a military coup or regional uprising like the Shaba invasions of 1977 and 1978 will be repeated. These staffers are hoping that if the United States does not place all its support behind Mobutu, then a moderate alternative will emerge around Nguza and Mungul Diaka, who also operates out of Belgium. "Do you want to lose control of the situation completely or have people who don't like Mobutu but are more moderate?" was the way one staffer defined the State Department options.

But another Washington source familiar with African politics dismissed hopes of an orderly transition of power in Zaire as an "Alice in Wonderland fantasy." Zaire, he pointed out, is collapsing. Its road network and its agricultural production are broken down, and entire areas of the country are reduced to subsistence levels of life. "If there is an uprising, Mobutu will concentrate, as in the past on controlling Kinshasa [the capital] and Shaba, the mining district. This he will be able to hold on to, while he dramatizes his plight and tries to mobilize international support."

The Zaire army, he also noted, aside from the well-paid officer corps, is composed of roving bands of unpaid soldiers who scrounge the country for their sustenance.

If a revolt is touched off under these conditions, the resulting struggle between Mobutu and the anti-Mobutu forces, neither of which has the capacity to win, will destroy what is left of the already crumbled country and spread beyond its borders. The fate of nations like Uganda would tend to bear out that evaluation.