

**'U.S. REAPING
ZAIRIANS' ANGER TO-
WARD MOBUTU'**

**(3/30 NYTimes article by Ken-
neth B. Noble)**

1993? or 1992?

*March 30 NYTimes carried the follow-
ing article by Kenneth B. Noble on page
A5, with the above headline.*

(BEGIN TEXT)

KINSHASA, Zaire -- Ever since Mobutu Sese Seko came to power nearly 30 years ago, Zaire has been regarded as one of Washington's best friends in Africa. But now, with the country facing economic ruin and increasing violence, there has been a marked surge in hostility toward Washington for its longtime support of Mobutu's autocratic rule.

Students and intellectuals have long denounced the United States as a repressive force in Zairian politics, accusing Washington of pressing a cold-war ideology that has helped prop up the Mobutu dictatorship. But amid the growing political turmoil, even Zairians who reject such views are taking a more critical view of the United States.

"There's no doubt that many people here blame the United States for keep-

ing Mobutu in power for so long," said Etienne Tshisekedi, leader of Zaire's biggest opposition party, who served briefly as prime minister in October. "The anti-American sentiment has recently become a lot worse because many people can't understand why the U.S. is still supporting his regime."

Zairians say they believe that the United States has the power to remove the president, but is unwilling to.

Mobutu has received hundreds of millions of dollars from the United States since he came to power in 1965. Over time, public and private American voices were raised against that aid.

Last November, allegations of a massacre of university students in a major southern city, Lubumbashi, and persistent reports that he amassed a fortune prompted Congress to end all military and economic help.

Nonetheless, the United States is perceived as Mobutu's Western backer, which has made life uncomfortable for Americans living in this central African country. This hostility is directed not just at Americans but at Zairians who are friendly with Americans.

A Zairian who studied at Stanford University said, "Even people who have been educated in the U.S. like me have been told things like we're brainwashed, or probably CIA agents, or on the CIA's payroll."

A poll taken by the Zaire Institute of Public Opinion in February found that 73.3 percent of those asked had a poor opinion of American policy toward this country. In contrast, 78.9 percent said they had a good opinion of Belgium, the former colonial ruler.

American officials said they were hard pressed to explain this, since in recent months, at least publicly, the United States and Belgium have taken virtually the same positions toward the Zairian leader, criticizing him for being unwilling to grant political pluralism he promised in 1990.

"The difference," said a European diplomat, "is that Belgians have been wrestling with Mobutu for a much longer time, and most people here believe that they truly want to get rid of him. The Americans, on other hand, aren't seen as credible; they're afraid to say publicly what they privately believe, that Mobutu must go."

This view has come at a time when the American presence has nearly vanished. Since the State Depart-

ment warned of danger in Zaire in September, thousands of Americans have left. The few who remain -- fewer than 100 by some estimates -- say they are targets of strident criticism. Many fear that the tension could easily turn violent.

"It is not the virulence of the stories appearing in the local press that concern me," said Melissa Wells, the U.S. ambassador, "but it is the comments of longtime American residents, including many missionaries, who say they have never known this extent of anti-American sentiment. And I hear such comments day after day after day."

The anger increased a few weeks ago when Herman J. Cohen, assistant secretary of state for African affairs, met briefly with Mobutu. Cohen declined to discuss the meeting, and his silence seems to have released a torrent of pent-up anger and fed conspiracy theories involving the United States.

Cohen, though critical of Mobutu, has said he should stay in office during a transitional period leading to multiparty elections.

(END TEXT)
*(PRECEDING FS MATERIAL NOT
FOR PUBLICATION)*