

ZAIRE

ISSUE:

The recent confrontations between the "rebels" and the Government are another glaring illustration of the erosion of the latter's power. The country's future lies in establishing a national union government to pave the way for the ultimate transition.

BACKGROUND:

With the exception of the expulsion of Zairians of Banyarwandan origin in Masisi last spring, the political transition and respect for human rights in Zaire continued to develop acceptably until mid-September.

The Kivu crisis proved once again that the authority of the Kinshasa government does not extend beyond the capital. The collaboration of the provincial authorities (although appointed by the central government) with the leaders of the Rwandan Hutu refugees demonstrates the breakdown in the country's political fabric. The loss of Eastern Zaire, and the eventual restoration of Kinshasa's authority over this territory, could be used by some political elements in the capital to rekindle the flame of popular nationalism .

The uncertainty over President Mobutu's future, the open struggle between the Kengo government and the Tshisekedi-led opposition, and the regime's inability to produce a widely-accepted successor to President Mobutu, could lead to the total collapse of the Zairian state and the resumption of various post-independence secessionist struggles. If reckless actions on all sides are not controlled, these secessionist struggles could lead to further confrontations and to civil war in various parts of the country. Zaire has, however, not yet reached the point of collapse.

Zaire is progressively losing the powers of a sovereign state. Because its collapse would have very severe repercussions for the stability not only of Central Africa (the Congo, the Central African Republic, Rwanda and Burundi) but of Southern Africa as well (Zambia and Angola), the territorial integrity of Zaire must be protected.

CANADIAN POSITION

Canada wholly supports the principle of the territorial integrity and inviolability of the borders of Zaire. Canada considers that a negotiated peace accord between Zaire and Rwanda and democratically-held legislative and presidential elections are essential for the stability of Zaire and of the Great Lakes region.

Canada fully supports the principle of granting Zairian citizenship to the Banyarwandan populations that have inhabited the country for generations. In September 1996, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) approved a civic education project of \$1.3 million to support the electoral process.

An international conference on the causes and possible solutions to the problems of the Great Lakes region could make possible the establishment of an area of peace, stability