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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Meeting with President Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire (U)

PARTICIPANTS: The President
Secretary of State George Shultz
Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick
Counsellor to the President, Edwin Meese III
Assistant to the President, James A. Baker
Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, Robert McFarlane
Assistant Secretary of State, Chester Crocker
Ambassador to Zaire, Brandon Grove
Frederick Wettering, NSC Staff (Notetaker)
Alec Toumayan, State Department (Interpreter)

President Mobutu Sese Seko
Foreign Minister Umba di Lutete
Finance Minister Kiakwama Kiakiziki
Director, Office of the President, Nimy Mayidika Ngimbi
Ambassador to the U.S., Kasongo Mutuale

DATE, TIME AND PLACE: September 23, 1984, 4:00 PM - 4:30 PM
Presidential Suite, Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, New York, N.Y.

The President expressed his pleasure at seeing President Mobutu again. He characterized bilateral relations as based on solid friendship and described them as excellent. He commended President Mobutu's courage in dealing with his economic problems and maintaining the reforms. He also thanked President Mobutu for his very positive contribution to the Chad problem. He stated that he personally held President Mobutu in the highest esteem for his courageous actions. (S)

President Mobutu thanked the President for seeing him in the midst of his electoral campaign. But he felt it important to tell the President what his government is doing in economic and political spheres and what seems to be needed. (S)

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President Mobutu noted that in 1982 one senior American official asked him to help himself so that we (Americans) can help you. In 1983 we began a program of economic and financial austerity by ourselves, even without waiting for the IMF. Then in 1984 Zaire turned to the IMF and things have worked out well with the IMF. After bearing these heavy burdens in 1983 and 1984, Zaire must and will continue reform in 1985 but must call on the help of our friends and partners in the manner I will describe, he added. (S)

President Mobutu stated he was leaving a memorandum outlining in detail steps which Zaire has done and will do and what Zaire is asking its friends to do. The principal issue is that he will continue the austerity program in 1985. But the \$900 million debt due next year is beyond Zaire's capability. Hospitals must have medicines, soldiers must have clothing and ammunition, communications must work. Zaire still has aircraft engines in Italy and owes \$29 million for these. He has no stipends for Zairians abroad. We need help in these matters; we want to pay what we owe, but we need to meet around a table and talk about what Zaire can pay, he added. (S)

President Mobutu noted that two months ago he had been massively reelected. But he was unhappy; in going around the country campaigning he found mothers and children looking to him for help, for improvement in life. What can I do, he asked. Must I tell them austerity means no medicine, no clothes? That is why I am here, he declared. (S)

President Mobutu then turned to political aspects. He noted that the US had asked Zaire for help and Zaire had responded without hesitation or bargaining. Ambassador Kirkpatrick knows, he added, that during Zaire's term on the UN Security Council we acted closely and in concert with the US. We ask you to extend all the support and understanding you can. (S)

President Mobutu noted that he had said the same thing to President Mitterrand a few days ago. Mitterrand had said something which embarrassed him, though. Mitterrand said that along with Presidents Houphouet-Boigny, Bourgiba, Sekou Toure, he, Mobutu, was the only African leader worthy of the name. Two very old, infirm men and one dead man, Mobutu grumbled. Mitterrand responded to Mobutu's pleas by saying that he understood and asked Mobutu to tell the American friends that they too should understand. (S)

President Mobutu apologized for speaking candidly, but noted that was his style when in the presence of good friends. (S)

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The President responded by stating that Ambassador Kirkpatrick had kept him well informed on Zaire's strong support in the Security Council and General Assembly. He noted that he has raised our bilateral assistance this year over last and had asked Congress for an increase for next year. Regarding debt rescheduling, he went on to say, we will try to be of help and we want to be of help, and will work with his people on this.

~~(S)~~

Secretary Shultz noted that we would carefully study the aide memoire and sit down with President Mobutu's advisors. He thought we could parse it into separate areas - Paris Club, bilateral aid, etc. - and that we would sit down with his people and go through it with them. No doubt we can develop a program, he added. ~~(S)~~

President Mobutu added that he was not asking us to bear the burden alone. He had met with President Mitterrand and on Wednesday he would meet with the Belgians and Chancellor Kohl of the FRG, on Friday he would be in Rome, and possibly on Thursday he would meet with Prime Minister Thatcher. ~~(S)~~

The President wished President Mobutu well and asked him to pass the President's regards to the leaders he would soon see. He concluded that we would study President Mobutu's memorandum carefully. ~~(S)~~

President Mobutu wished the President well in his campaign and the meeting ended on pleasantries. ~~(U)~~

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