

Rat Hordes, Plagues, Hunger — Wall St. Policy for Third World

Feb. 10 (IPS) — George Ball of the New York Lehman Bros. banking house, stated before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee June 3 the Atlanticist policy towards the Third World: "Today we cannot totally ignore a body of respectable opinion which suggests that, in providing aid to countries already crowded in relation not only to space but to resources, we may be multiplying the misery for future generations... (this) poses.. distasteful questions... the idea expressed in the military term 'triage.'

"These are problems of shattering complexity.. by keeping these populations alive and failing to make rigorous population control a condition to our assistance we may be doing millions of unborn human beings a tragic disservice."

The Atlanticist final solution for the collection of \$140 billion in outstanding Third World debt is now in operation: The people of three West African nations are being overrun by plagues of millions of rats devouring harvests and spreading disease...the victims of an earthquake are dying at a rate of 2000 a day from starvation and thirst while the world watches...1.2 million citizens of the central African nation of Niger will starve to death without 200,000 tons of emergency grain supplies.

This is the reality that now confronts the leaders of the Third World. It is what lies behind the intense political battle for the formation of New World Economic Order particularly around the debt issue at the recent Manila conference of the Group of 77.

The alternative to the Atlanticist genocidal austerity plans for the Third World is development — a fact which has many of these leaders urgently studying the International Caucus of Labor Committees' proposal for the creation of the International Development Bank to facilitate triangular trade between the developing sector, the advanced sector and the Comecon nations. Such a move will immediately end Atlanticist hegemony over the world economy.

As can be seen from the following report, delays in taking these steps to implement such proposals will result in the unnecessary loss of millions of lives.

Triage In Bangladesh

Under the dictatorship of the Atlanticist-controlled International Monetary Fund-World Bank, Ball's demand for triage is being rammed down the devastated nation of Bangladesh in South Asia. The government of Bangladesh, following a visit from a top World Bank official and following the directives of a World Bank Appraisal Report, has declared that its "number one" priority is the achievement of zero population growth within two years. The World Bank calculated that the additional 3,600,000 babies every year mean an additional foodgrain requirement of 2.4 million tons per year. Their solution — under the rubric of achieving "self-sufficiency" — is to eliminate the current import of grain, currently running at approximately 2.8 million tons a year. This is the only way that a goal of ZPG within two years could be achieved — through mass starvation.

The IMF began this policy, along with the U.S. government Agency for International Development (AID), three months ago when they told the Bangladesh government that they would have to cut off food subsidies based on wheat imports and raise the price of rationed imported grain. The official

reason for this is that Bangladesh, only through a rare season of good weather, had a relatively abundant rice crop this year.

This is no isolated policy — an associate of George Ball's banking house told IPS that their policy for Egypt to meet its debt requirements is to eliminate the \$1.5 billion spent to similarly subsidize vital commodities, mainly wheat.

In Brazil, a nation ravaged by disease, the government issued a decree banning all imports of fruit, meat, and automobiles.

Conditions of enforced starvation are part of a deliberate policy of guaranteeing debt repayment through massive cuts in imports and expansion of commodity exports to provide foreign exchange for payment. This policy has led to the threat of starvation of almost one-fourth of the population of Niger. Niger farmers have switched from growing grain to growing peanuts — 60 per cent of Niger's exports — for export income. Foreign Minister Adamou of Niger, appealed today for 200,000 tons of emergency food supplies to avert the impending "tragic situation."

The inhabitants of Guatemala, where a large earthquake struck last week, are on the Atlanticist triage list with the virtual refusal of the U.S. to aid that country after the disaster. Mounting deaths, now at 16,000, are occurring from an almost total lack of portable water, food, and medical aid. The only functioning part of the country is the army, well-aided by the U.S., which has shot over 200 hungry victims scrounging for food.

The Rats And Disease Take Over

The most horrid evidence of the genocidal collapse in the Third World — the lack of even elementary conditions of sanitation, shelter, and disease control — is the submission of human existence to the ravages of rats and disease. In the West African countries of Senegal, Mali and Mauritania, per square meter, are crossing the countryside devouring crops and spreading plague in their path. In the urban capital crops and spreading plague in their path. In the urban capital of Argentina, Buenos Aires, the rat population has doubled since September 1974 to 16 per inhabitant and the government has been forced to take measures against the spread of bubonic plague.

In the symbol of capitalist 'miracles' of looting, Brazil, epidemics of encephalitis, and meningitis have broken out again. The favela slums of south Brazilian cities have been inundated with feces and disease from large-scale flooding, directly the result of the government's refusal to dredge the rivers.

The bankers' solution to these conditions of urban holocaust is a call to depopulate the cities, shipping people to the countryside to fend for themselves. This was proposed by a leading figure in the Mexican Federal Electricity Commission, Manuel Torres, who called for depopulation by "forcing city dwellers to suffer so that they have to move out to the provinces" and for reducing Mexico City's population from 12 million to 4 million. "The rest are excess," Torres declared and called for the government to "raise taxes, raise the cost of living... ration water and electricity and force them to suffer."

The fate of those forced to leave the city is demonstrated in

Brazil where Brazilian military dictator Geisel has "put a stop" to the exodus of starving peasants to the cities of Northeast Brazil. Rural laborers are kept on the land through fascist "labor fronts" which force "able-bodied men" to work on public works slave labor projects in return for small amounts of subsistence food. Those no longer "able-bodied" are put on triage lines; only the fittest receive food.

This is George Ball's "distasteful" solution for those already living and those he would rather see "unborn."

Case Study: Egypt

Egypt is faced with an unprecedented economic crisis and a staggering foreign debt, of which several billion dollars is in highly expensive short-term debt with interest rates running as high as 19 per cent. Vital imports — such as bread and oil — are hostage to creditors' demands, and New York and London financiers and their financial police, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), have set a plan to force a major devaluation of the Egyptian currency and its convertibility in tandem with a sweeping reorganization of the Cairo bureaucracy in a nationwide austerity drive. Key items of basic working-class consumption — meat, tea, sugar, soap, matches — already rationed, will be reduced in their availability.

In an interview with New Solidarity, a partner in George Ball's Lehman Brothers investment house was asked to describe what he saw as the cause of Egypt's present plight. "Well," said the gentleman, "I look at Egypt and I see the fact that Cairo shells out \$1.5 billion each fiscal year to support low commodity prices for Egypt's middle class and poor." Left unspoken was the hideous notion that even that minimal concession to maintain life in Egypt must go, freeing another \$1.5 billion for endless recycling in the world's bloated credit system.

An aide to Sen. Morgan of North Carolina, recently returned from Egypt was more blunt. He told a reporter, "The Senator feels that economic relief, in whatever form, whether loan guarantees or a leadership role for the IMF, are the aces in the hole to keep Sadat friendly. As long as we can help that aid effort, we can keep Sadat in line."

But the signs of resistance to austerity in Egypt have called into question the continued existence of the regime of President Anwar Sadat. The ferment in the working class is linked directly to strongly nationalist, pro-development layers that permeate the Egyptian military and civil service, whose social identity is emotionally identified with the regime of Sadat's predecessor, President Gamal Abdul Nasser. Nasserist layers in Egypt, while by no means politically united in all respects, are united in their unshakeable commitment to social progress. The decline and collapse of Sadat's Egypt, typified by the current policy of economic "openness" to Western capitalist investment, has sparked bitter criticism of the Sadat regime — and forced Sadat to begin looking over his shoulder at his opposition inside the army. Reflecting this fear, War Minister Mohammed Gamassi reminded an assembled group of officers last week to avoid being entangled in politics. "Our only work," he said bravely, "is to be professionals in the military and to defend the country."

The battle for Egypt has implications that go far beyond the banks of the Nile, however. Regionally, Egypt has been designated by the Atlanticists as the cornerstone of NATO policy in the Middle East by virtue of its large population and predominance in Arab affairs. While various Atlanticist factions squabble over policy toward Israel and the Fertile Crescent countries — Iraq, Syria, Lebanon — they are

agreed that the top priority must be to maintain Egypt firmly on the course set by Sadat's overt pro-Western tack after the death of Nasser in 1970. If Sadat and the Atlanticists cannot break the back of the Nasserists and the Egyptian working class in the coming weeks, then Egypt — with or without Sadat — will be forced to change course, and NATO's Middle East policy will be in a shambles.

In a larger sense, Egypt has become a test case. For George Ball of Lehman Brothers, for Averell Harriman, for the Rockefeller brothers, the Egyptian political crisis is one that must be resolved. Egypt is not just another debt-ridden Third World country; Egypt is the hub of the Arab sector and the Arab sector, in turn, is the leading edge of the political motion in the developing countries for a "new world economic order." Should Ball and Co. succeed in "stabilizing" Egypt through forcing acceptance of brutal austerity measures, then the developing sector as a whole — the Group of 77 — will have suffered a major psychological defeat.

The reason for this is not located in anything peculiar to the nature of Egypt's particular economic and political crisis, which in its internal features resembles that of any number of Third World countries. But Egypt, thanks to the heritage of Nasser, represents for the Third World generally the Idea of Progress. Whatever its faults, the Nasser era symbolized the intense drive in the developing sector for a better life. In a society like Egypt's, where the bestial stupor of countless centuries of dull peasant existence seemed about to be shaken off for the heady transition into a modernized economy, the feeling is not easily forgotten.

When asked about the possibility of Egypt's declaring a moratorium on its debt, a spokesman for the IMF said plainly, "In Ghana, in 1966, when (Ghanian President) Nkrumah didn't pay his debt, there was a coup."

A number of other sources in Washington and New York echoed Lehman Brothers and Morgan. Most NATO policymakers are counting on the Saudis to continue to bail out Egypt on a weekly or monthly basis, to "keep Sadat in line." But none predicted any serious development effort for Egypt, instead concentrating on simply maintaining the continuous roll-over of Cairo's multi-billion dollar debt. Imperialists without the ability to finance an imperialist policy, Ball's Atlanticists are crossing their fingers and hoping that Sadat's military police can contain the rising anger at the conspicuous lack of national development.

The Egyptian weekly *Rose al-Yousef*, often a forum for Sadat's pro-development opposition, last week printed a scathing attack on Sadat's policy of openness. The author, Ahmen Mujahid, a member of the People's Assembly, correctly noted the deliberate Western policy aimed at preventing development in Egypt, and cites the existence of \$350 million in credits from Eastern Europe that were ignored by Cairo — for political reasons. Then, Mujahid gets to the heart of the matter: the Aswan Dam, a monument to Soviet-Egyptian cooperation built in the days of Nasser and the symbol of Egypt's national development along with the Suez Canal. Mujahid notes that the dam's capacity is purposely being under-utilized while Sadat negotiates for nuclear reactors and other useless energy boondoggles. Mujahid asks the key question: "Who is interested in maintaining the Aswan Dam idle?"

The feeling behind that question, full of rage at Sadat's abandonment of the Nasser ideal, challenges both Sadat and his Western backers. Unless U.S. Policymakers opt for a development policy in the Middle East, Egypt will remain inherently unstable — and the volatile Middle East will remain a possible scene of thermonuclear confrontation between the U.S. and the USSR, whatever the passionate desire of Ball and Co. for "stability."

Case Study:

Guatemala and Brazil

Feb. 15 (IPS) — The President of the League of Societies of the Red Cross declared two days ago that the earthquake that hit Guatemala last week, killing 25,000 people and leaving over one million without homes or food, "far from putting a halt to the (economic) development (of the country), will provide the take-off point toward a better social and political situation."

With this statement, Red Cross President Juan Borroso announced his full cold-blooded endorsement of the policy of genocide now being carried out by the psychotic guardians of the Dollar Empire.

Borroso made his remarks from the disaster area in Guatemala where survivors are eating rats to stay alive. He objected to the view that the quake would mean increased misery for the already very backward and impoverished Central American country, according to Prensa Latina, the Cuban press agency.

When challenged by reporters on his remarks, Borroso made it clear that he was a fully conscious advocate of the policy of wholesale murder known as triage that was outlined to the U.S. Congress last year by Atlanticist policymaker George Ball. The quake, Borroso explained, did not affect commercial or industrial sectors, but rather "those sectors that were already distanced from social progress previous to the earthquake."

Let Them Die

The right-wing government of President Kjell Laugerud is cooperating with the Red Cross and U.S. agencies to ensure that large sections of Guatemala's peasant and Indian population are left to die of injuries and starvation. The Secretary of the Federation of Autonomous Unions of Guatemala has told reporters that food was not being distributed outside the cities. Laugerud has personally echoed Borroso's statements, characterizing the disaster as creating conditions for a "push for development."

British aid to the area has been rejected altogether by the government, allegedly because of disputes over territorial rights to the small region bordering Guatemala known as Belice. The government has also refused to allow Cuban medical teams into the country to set up field hospitals. The \$1 million in U.S. aid is paltry when compared to the previous relief efforts.

In Brazil, the so-called northeast drought polygon area has been without any appreciable rainfall for over five weeks, and thousands of persons are now starving to death for lack of water and food since the basic bean crop of the area was wiped out by the drought. The government has set up "triage lines" to distribute small amounts of food but has released no statistics on the numbers of dead.

Those survivors of the drought who are strong enough are now leaving the area in hordes and flooding toward the cities on the country's Northeast coast. Many are carrying diseases, and there is a danger of an outbreak of plague since large sections of the drought area are plague endemic. The government has set up emergency work fronts to try to keep

the men in the population from fleeing the area with promises that they will be paid in food for their slave labor. Surveillance points have been set up on all the transportation routes out of the drought area that lead toward the larger cities on the coast. The so-called migrants are stopped at these roadblocks and sent back to their home towns or impressed into the labor fronts.

The Political Problem

In an apparent about-face on their triage policy, Atlanticist financial institutions have pumped an enormous \$1 billion in credit into Brazil over the last two weeks while bourgeois newspapers, led by the New York Times, loudly proclaimed that the so-called Brazilian Economic Miracle has come to an end and a less dictatorial government is required. This major credit and propaganda effort, however, represents no change whatsoever in Atlanticist policy toward Brazil or the rest of the Third World. It is an immediately expedient political maneuver to head off the real and growing possibility that significant sections of Brazil's industrialists will break ranks and move toward moratoria on Brazil's \$23 billion foreign debt and an alliance with pro-development industrialists in Italy centered around Eugenio Cefis.

The loans, extended at outrageously high interest rates, are very specifically targeted. The industrialists in the Sao Paulo area, who are increasingly unwilling to continue the destruction of the economy, represent the greatest political danger to the Atlanticists. They will get \$300 million for the work on the Sao Paulo subway system and will be the direct beneficiaries, through subcontracts, of \$324 million in credits extended for a hydroelectric dam project in the North.

But even within the standards of their own expedient amorality, the Sao Paulo industrialists are being taken in if they fall for the Atlanticist ploy. Temporary debt refinancing for selected political targets is the Atlanticists' complement to the general policy of mass murder throughout the Third World. To be convinced of that, the Sao Paulo industrialists need only look at the building holocaust that surrounds them in the industrialized state of Sao Paulo.

A mutant strain of encephalitis with a 20 per cent mortality rate has broken out in the state. The disease, carried by mosquitoes, attacks the nervous system and has no known treatment or vaccine. Doctors are warning of a "broad scale" epidemic as the disease, which was localized in one smaller city last year, is now spreading rapidly outward.

about by malnutrition, is killing increasing numbers of children. In one town of Osasco, outside the industrial center of Sao Paulo city, hospitals treated 1,637 cases in January alone; 54 children died. Sao Paulo, like the rest of the country, is suffering from an acute shortage of albumin which is a critical medicine in treating severe cases of dehydration.

There are continuing unofficial reports that much of what is classified in the state as dehydration, diarrhea, or gastroenteritis is in fact cholera although the government has flatly denied all such reports. The Director of the State Commission on Cholera has told the press that his agency is vigilant in checking for an outbreak of cholera, but had decided against launching a preventive education campaign in the general population. Such a campaign, he said, would distract the public's attention from the problems of meningitis, diarrhea, and dehydration.