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1984 called Africa's worst year in history

by Mary Lalevée

Concern over the fate of millions of Africans facing starvation in 1985 has been shown by a series of meetings and initiatives to increase food aid to the continent. However, there is nowhere visible an attempt to tackle the *causes* of the famine, which caused untold hundreds of thousands of deaths in 1984: The genocidal effect of the "conditionalities" policies of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the dramatic increase in debt, debt service, and costs of vital imports due to the rise in the U.S. dollar and IMF-imposed currency devaluations, and the fall in export revenues due to falls in commodity prices and in demand in the depression-ridden industrial countries.

There is also little attention being paid to the vital question of how to get food aid where it is needed. U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates of how much food aid is needed have actually been scaled down for the first time, due to the "logistical constraints" in such countries as Chad, Ethiopia, and Mali. In other words, more food than officially estimated is needed, but it could not be handled or distributed.

U.S. Vice-President Bush is to chair a special meeting of the United Nations in Geneva on March 11, aimed at "collecting funds for the 20 drought-stricken countries of Africa," according to a United Nations spokesman. Bush's presence at the conference will follow his tour of Sudan, Niger and Mali. Before his departure, he announced at a National Press Club luncheon in Washington, "The President and I want to focus attention on drought and starvation throughout Africa. . . . As bad as the situation in Ethiopia is, it's just part of a much broader emergency that has engulfed most of sub-Saharan Africa. From Mali and Mauritania in the west to Sudan and Somalia in the east, a great curtain of famine has descended over Africa."

British Minister of Overseas Development Timothy Raison called for more food aid for Africa following a five-day visit to Sudan in the middle of February. He said that Europe was lagging behind the United States, which is likely to send one million tons of food aid to Sudan.

A U.N. report on Africa just published gives graphic details of the scale of the famine: In Chad, 1,000 people are dying a month, mostly children; in Mali, 1 million people are facing starvation; in Sudan, 5 million people are threatened with death this year, one-quarter of the population.

In a press conference given on Dec. 28, 1984 in Addis Ababa, the executive secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa, Prof. Adebayo Adedeji, described 1984 as "Africa's worst year in the public domain since the great depression." He said that Africa's deteriorating economic situation had matured into a crisis of unprecedented proportions. The 1984 crisis had been heightened by the widespread and persistent drought, an extremely unfavorable economic environment, and dramatic increases in Africa's foreign debt, interest rates, and debt-servicing costs. He warned that the 1984 crisis might repeat itself in 1985 and in subsequent years with even greater severity unless additional efforts are made to cope with the emergency situation.

There is nowhere visible an attempt to tackle the causes *of the famine which left untold hundreds of thousands of dead in 1984: the genocidal effect of the "conditionalities" policies of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).*

Professor Adedeji outlined a very ominous situation:

First, food shortages of great magnitude were affecting countries all over Africa.

Second, the effects of the drought-related emergency had not been confined to the food crisis alone, but brought in its trail a number of other crises involving:

1) water supplies
2) transport, storage, and distribution of food and medicines
3) population displacement
4) health
5) nutrition
6) livestock
7) income-generating relief projects
8) energy
9) resettling and rehabilitating displaced persons.

He stressed that what happened in 1984 had shown that food aid alone, important as it was, was not enough, and that priority must be given to saving human lives through emergency relief operations, including logistical support.

Third, of the 27 most seriously affected countries, 19 were landlocked and dependent on neighboring coastal countries for imports of emergency assistance. This put an unbearably heavy burden on their ports with "inadequate and antiquated facilities." Inland transport systems had also been put under strain.

Agricultural production had increased by only 1.1% in 1981, 3.4% in 1982, and 0.4% in 1983. In 1984, it seemed

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that there would be at best zero growth, but more likely, it was negative. In manufacturing, a fall of 1.2% was expected. Professor Adedeji asserted that the drop in output was a consequence of lack of local raw materials due to drought and lack of imported materials due to non-availability of foreign exchange resources. This had resulted in very low rates of capacity utilization; in many cases, industrial plants were closed outright.

The decline in per capita income in Africa would continue, he said: By the end of 1985, output per person would be nearly 12% lower than it was in 1980.

IMF ravages

IMF pressure has led to many African governments cutting down expenditures on vital activities, including transport and infrastructure projects needed to get food to the starving. Devaluation of African currencies as demanded by the IMF has led to cuts in imports, including of necessities such as food and oil.

- Ghana devalued its curency, the cedi, by 30% in December, the fourth time in little over a year, on the orders of the IMF. The IMF has also demanded cuts in subsidies, an increase in interest rates, and increased prices for petroleum.
- Ivory Coast has reduced its public investment programs on the orders of the IMF, and encouraged "redeployment of resources to profitable export industries." In November 1984, Ivory Coast's foreign debt was resecheduled since, according to the minister of states M. Maurice Seri Gnoleba, if Ivory Coast had had to service the debt each year, it would have had to freeze all other economic activity.
- Niger had signed an agreement with the IMF in 1983, and the government took "emergency measures," including cutting the number of sales outlets for cereal by the Food Products Company, dismantling state monopolies on marketing certain basic goods, increasing the rates for electricity and coal, and reducing staff. Now the government is being ordered to "privatize" a large part of the state sector, which employs more than 13,000. More than 20 firms could be partially or totally privatized, and one business is simply to be closed down.
- Somalia devalued its currency by almost 30% in January, following a 48% devaluation in September 1984. The devaluation was an attempt to win IMF approval for a new standby arrangement. The IMF is also demanding a significant reduction in the number of employees in the public sector.
- Chad is being forced to cut government spending on the IMF's insistence that the budget deficit should not exceed 5% of the gross domestic product. The Chad authorities are intending to increase some taxes and create new ones.
- Sierra Leone has devalued its currency by 58%, to pave the way for a new IMF standby agreement.

The story goes on. Africans will die, and keep on dying, until the International Monetary Fund itself is destroyed.

Moscow's hand in

by William Engdahl

Is U.S. agriculture policy being dictated by the Kremlin? This news service has come into possession of direct evidence which links one of the top Soviet intelligence think-tanks in the West to the planning and design of the United States Department of Agriculture's radical new 1985 Farm Bill. That Farm Bill, under the auspices of "free market" economics, will destroy the U.S. farm sector.

The facts and background to this dramatic revelation are outlined below.

In June 1983 at the estate in Laxenburg, Austria of the International Institute of Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA), Mr. Ed Rossmiller of the international relations section of the Department of Agriculture met with a top-level group of IIASA's Food and Agriculture Program under the direction of one Dr. K. S. Parikh. At this meeting, they developed a computer simulation which became one of the essential arguments in selling the catastrophic and controversial new farm bill.

IIASA is the headquarters for an eight-year project to develop the most extensive computer-based model of total global food production, demand, and prospects.

This IIASA study, though it has not before now been made public for reasons which will become clear below, provided a nice set of computer simulations and numbers used by Secretary Block and Cargill Grain Corporation's man in Department of Agriculture, Undersecretary Daniel Amstutz, to persuade an unwitting President Reagan to go with the drastic new bill. The studies, according to Parikh, "prove" that elimination of farm price supports in the United States and Western Europe will not greatly reduce production, but will reduce consumer food prices. This, of course, is an outright lie.

The Block-Amstutz bill proposes to crush the world's most productive food production capability with mass bankruptcies by removing billions of dollars in government price and other financial support to farmers. U.S. farm debt is estimated to be more than $212 billion, more than the combined debt of Mexico and Brazil, the two biggest Ibero-American debtor nations. Even without the drastic cuts in Block's proposed "free market" farm bill, conservative estimates are that between 30% and 40% of America's farmers