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## Interview: Manuel Alegre

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# IMF blocks all hope for democracy

*Mr. Alegre, a leader of the Portuguese Socialist Party, is the head of the Portuguese National Assembly's Foreign Affairs Commission. EIR interviewed him on March 12. The text is excerpted and translated from the French.*

**EIR:** Mr. Alegre, Can you tell us about the role played by the IMF, notably in Africa?

**Alegre:** In my mind, the role of the IMF is very negative for Africa—and elsewhere. It is not appropriate to the crisis in which the world finds itself now. The conditions imposed on my country by the IMF are difficult to reconcile with progress, with development in a democratic framework. They are difficult in a European nation such as Portugal; they are incompatible with Africa's, with Latin America's, democracy. Any future-oriented project there demands a change in the policy of the monetary authorities. The IMF is the principal enemy of any solutions: It blocks the potential for development and even for democracy. You cannot base democratic regimes on misery, starvation, and the lack of a productive apparatus—on debt and so on.

**EIR:** What about the Soviet efforts to gain and keep Africa within its own sphere of influence?

**Alegre:** The Western countries, notably the United States, have not understood the process of liberation of Africa, and have not had a policy to cope with it. The United States as a nation was in the best position to be able to understand this problem and solve it, since the United States itself came from the first war of liberation against colonial rule; also a large part of its own population is black, and they have immense cultural, historical means of understanding what was going on in Africa.

Europe did not understand either. It impelled those movements in those countries that had to go to war for their liberation, to turn to the Soviets—and pay the price in the future of the help they received then, and even enslave their independence to the aid received during the liberation fight. But the fault lies with the West which, instead of grasping what was going on with Africa's process of liberation, instead of helping those African nations to liberate themselves in a free, democratic framework, supported colonial wars against them, like the wars of Salazar.

Economically, the type of aid the U.S.S.R. can give is not what the countries need. The type of technological aid the Soviets can give cannot solve their problems. The linguistic, cultural handicaps are too great. The question is whether the other side—the West, and especially the U.S.—will have a new understanding, a new attitude, a new policy. Military aid is obvious; if it does not come from the West, it will come from elsewhere. But fundamentally it is the economic and technological aid they need. Portugal has a privileged situation, due to its history, its culture, its language, and its own situation. We can bring the Africans the type of technology they need. But we do not have the financial means to develop this cooperation. Hence the projects of triangular cooperation with Africa and the United States. We need a real mobilization.

**EIR:** What should Western and American policy be, in your view, concerning Africa's development?

**Alegre:** First, stop the demagoguery! There has been too much talk of "North-South dialogue," and so on, and it is pure rhetoric. There should be closer collaboration between America and Europe to have a closer link with Africa. We must first understand that things have changed: European countries are not colonial powers any longer, nor the masters of raw materials. They must change something at home. There still are industries based on cheap African raw materials and artificially maintained markets in Africa. This must change! Western nations, Europe, must, in cooperation with the U.S.A., promote a development not based on the misery and the debt of such countries or our own interest. Those countries need a kind of technological aid which fits the requirements of their development, and is of benefit to Western nations. Minds must change. Europe cannot have old-style relations with Africa.

You cannot have "development" without infrastructure—transportation and all the rest. In many African countries, the crisis is in particular a crisis of transportation. We must develop Africa starting with the beginning: ports, transportation, railways, domestic markets, road, small towns, and so on, energy.

**EIR:** Let us return to the financial aspect. The West has the required financial instruments to extend low-rate, long-term credit to large projects in Africa.

**Alegre:** Yes, but we have not been able to continue doing this given our own financial situation.

**EIR:** If you had three minutes to talk to President Reagan and tell him what Portugal thinks is necessary for Africa's development, what would you say?

**Alegre:** To have the Americans understand that the United States has no future unless it turns to the outside world, to the development of Africa and the rest of the world. It is America's pioneer spirit which must turn toward the outside world.