

# Make 1990s a decade to end starvation

by Rosa Tennenbaum

*Mrs. Tennenbaum is a leader of the Food for Peace movement in West Germany. The following are excerpts from her speech to the conference in Chicago on Nov. 4, 1989.*

Around the world, as most of you know, the conditions of food crisis exist, and will worsen over the coming 12 months. It is almost as if we can hear a section of the Lord's Prayer coming from the developing nations, from the poor of Eastern Europe, from the poor, the tens of millions of poor in our own country: "Give us this day our daily bread." With these words, Lyndon LaRouche, who is now a political prisoner in the Rochester federal prison, opened the speech he gave at our last Food for Peace conference on Dec. 10, 1988 in Chicago.



We can hear this prayer much louder today, if we still have ears to listen. We see 160 million people, or 30% of the population in sub-Saharan Africa, being subjected to starvation. We see 500 million people, or 40% of the population in South and East Asia, suffering hunger. We see 90 million people, or 25% of

the population in North Africa and the Middle East, threatened with starvation, while 163 million in Ibero-America are malnourished. And we see hundreds of thousands of people standing up in the captive nations of the Russian Empire against hunger and tyranny. We react to this incredible amount of genocide being committed in front of our eyes as if it were only numbers. We seem to have no ears to hear and no eyes to see.

Whole peoples, whole generations are being swept from the map right now, for instance in Africa. In Eritrea, the northern part of Ethiopia, only 21% of a normal crop could be harvested this year. The FAO, the Food and Agriculture

Organization of the United Nations, is predicting an unprecedented hunger catastrophe. In Mozambique, the cereal harvest that was gathered in April-May is now largely exhausted, and the food supply is deteriorating rapidly. Food aid requirements as calculated by the FAO were 755,000 tons of grain for 1988-89; only 218,000 tons had been delivered, with no prospect for food aid deliveries for the current year at all. In Sudan, at least 100,000 tons of emergency food relief are needed, while 5.7 million hectares of cropland in western Africa are currently infested with locusts, endangering not just the harvests there, but in all neighboring countries as well.

At the World Food Conference in 1974, a "decade to defeat starvation" was announced. "Within the next decade, no child will ever again go to bed hungry, no family will ever fear whether it will have enough bread for the following day, nobody's mind will be crippled, and nobody will have to live without a future because of constant hunger." That was the promise of the world's leaders in 1974. Today, 15 years later, the world food situation is worse than it was then, and nobody anywhere seems to care. . . .

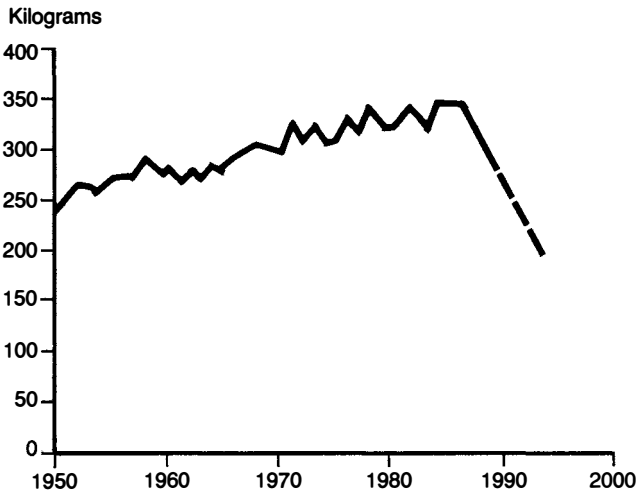
This year's grain harvest will only be some 6% higher than last year's drought-stricken harvest. For the first time, grain harvest will be lower than demand for the third consecutive year. The FAO reports in the October issue of its monthly magazine *Food Outlook*: "Global output will be below aggregate utilization for the third consecutive year. As a result, during 1989-90, global cereal stocks will fall further from already low levels. . . . For at least one more year—i.e., until 1990 harvests are gathered—global cereal stocks will remain at or below the minimum level FAO considers necessary to safeguard world food security. . . .

"The world food security situation will be very delicately balanced throughout 1989-90," the FAO summarizes the situation. "Over the last three years the safety net provided by large cereal stocks has been eroded and the situation could become potentially very volatile. Any unexpected reduction in output could well lead to reduced consumption and/or higher international prices. Even assuming that there are no unfavorable developments for the remainder of the 1989-90 season, stock replenishment and a return to normal consumption levels would have to be postponed at least until 1990-91 and would be contingent on a substantial increase in production in 1990" . . . (see **Figure 1**).

## The strategic dimension

In summer last year, LaRouche predicted that the food crisis will become the most important strategic issue. He warned that the Russian generals will find means to get their hands on our food, if they can no longer negotiate the huge amounts of food shipments they need to stay in power. Three weeks ago, Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze said exactly that, when he warned the West of "hunger wars" in a speech he gave in New York.

**FIGURE 1**  
**World per capita grain production falls sharply in late 1980s**



Source: USDA

If we want to prevent hunger wars, if we want to improve the food situation, we have to reverse the farm crisis. Agriculture today is in an overall state of collapse. Farm income is collapsing, indebtedness is growing in every single country. As a result of that, farms are going bankrupt at a rate that is hard to keep up with. In Germany, for instance, they expect 400,000 farms out of 623,000 farms to go out of business before the year 2000. Of the 9 million farms we have today in the European Community, no more than 4 million are expected to be in operation by the year 2000 . . . (see Figure 2).

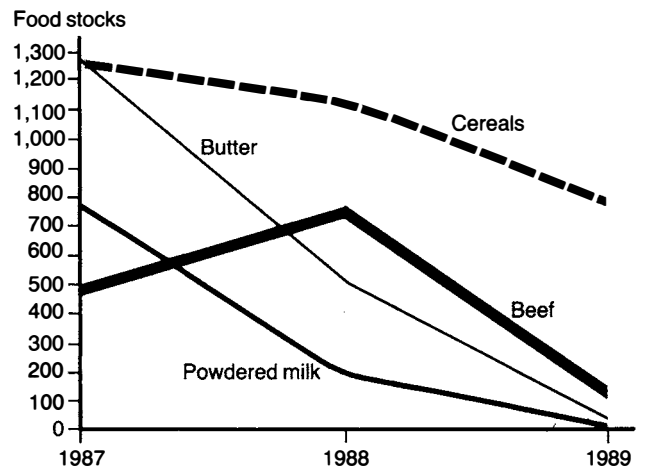
Ever scarcer food supply is an imminent danger for peace, and this danger is growing exactly the way that LaRouche said it would, years back. The real danger that lies in today's policy unfolds, when we look to the future. Today, the world population counts 5 billion people. We need to triple agricultural output within 10 years, by the year 2000. This is a tremendous task, and this perspective exposes the amount of insanity that is guiding economic policy today.

### The solutions are at hand

We have to reverse that policy and we have to reverse it quickly. To do that, we have to mobilize all reserves available. We need an emergency program to be established immediately. Mr. LaRouche identified the following points as the most important ones in his electoral program:

- 1) An immediate stop to all farm foreclosures.
- 2) Raise farm prices to at least 90% of parity.
- 3) Restructure the debt at prime rates between 2% and 4%. Supply additional loan capital on a long-term basis and at a rate below 4%.

**FIGURE 2**  
**Decline in food stocks of European Community**  
 (in 1,000s of tons; grain stocks in 10,000s of tons)



Source: European Community

- 4) Disaster relief for farms in the relevant regions.
- 5) Immediate action to develop fresh-water management systems in areas threatened by water shortages.

These measures have to be applied in all countries. In addition to this, all programs that limit production now, namely set-aside and conservation programs, have to be canceled. Farmland areas have to be expanded wherever possible. This is of particular importance for Ibero-America and Asia. Yields have to be exceeded by mechanization, building irrigation systems, by developing better seeds, and similar measures. We need all these measures together, otherwise we will lose the war.

We are entering a decisive decade, because world agriculture is on the verge of losing its capability to feed a growing world population on a long-term basis. So we announce today: The 1990s to be the decade to defeat hunger and misery. We swear:

“That in the next decade, no child will ever again go to bed hungry, no family will ever again fear whether it will have enough bread for the following day, nobody's mind will be crippled and nobody will have to live without a future because of constant hunger.”

And we will exceed that aim. Just to be free of hunger is not enough. But it is the indispensable precondition for the well-being of the mind. And as Friedrich Schiller said in his poem, we say today:

### *Dignity of Man*

No more thereof, I beg you. Feed him, give him shelter,  
 Have ye his nakedness clothed, and dignity comes on its own.