

## Agriculture by Marcia Merry

### Sudan calls for food aid

*The U.S. Committee for Refugees stands exposed as an instrument of those using food as a political weapon.*

On March 18, the Washington embassy of the Republic of the Sudan issued a news release, "Food Situation in the Sudan: An Update." The statement called for international help to make up a gap of up to 1.2 million tons of grain needed by June. The shortfall results from two years of drought, on top of decades of impoverishment imposed by the International Monetary Fund.

According to the February *Food Outlook* report of the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization, the 19 nations of sub-Saharan Africa need 3 million tons of cereals in grain relief in 1991, after harvest shortfalls last year. However, the Anglo-American wing of the world food and refugee organizations is practicing food relief warfare: withholding food and agricultural inputs, and creating refugees.

The Sudanese government statement singled out for criticism the "unfortunate and prejudiced position" of the U.S. Committee for Refugees, as given in a March 7 press release titled, "Famine in Sudan Begins to Kill Thousands," which charged that the Khartoum government is causing hunger and death for its own people.

The Sudanese statement said, "The director of this organization, Mr. Roger Winter, does not hide his open hostility and his sustained negative political attitudes to the Sudan government. He developed the habit of discrediting the Sudan government by circulating unfounded information and calling for punitive measures and the use of food as a political weapon to hurt the Sudanese population at a time when all the international com-

munity need to come together to meet their humanitarian needs.

"According to our knowledge, Mr. Winter has not been to Sudan for the last decade and has never sought information from the embassy. He keeps his agency surviving on stereotyped repeated reports in hearings on Sudan and some other countries. His release of March 7, 1991 provides ample evidence of his lack of knowledge and his zeal to discredit the government of Sudan."

It is an open secret in Washington, that the U.S. Committee for Refugees is a front group for the Department of State. Funding for the committee comes from the State Department and the top Eastern Establishment foundations—the MacArthur and Ford Foundations, John Merck Fund, and others. The U.S. Committee for Refugees has active operations against other nations of Africa, as well as South America (see its January 1991 issue, "Running the Gauntlet") and other Third World regions.

The Bush administration has targeted Sudan for purely political reasons: because the government of President Omar El Bashir opposed the stationing of U.S. troops in the Persian Gulf from the beginning, and also has a policy of attempting to become food self-sufficient in two years. Moreover, Sudan has rich oil deposits, besides agricultural potential. With 25 million people, of whom three-quarters are Muslim, its position along the Red Sea makes it a cultural bridge between Arab West Asia and black Africa.

There has been a campaign of vil-

ification against the Khartoum government by U.S. officialdom and media. A Feb. 23 *Washington Post* piece, headlined, "Sudan's Government Still Won't Ask for Help as Drought Grows Worse," blamed Khartoum for starving its own people. Such stories fail to report that Bush suspended aid to Sudan, and last October even diverted a commercial ship with 45,000 tons of wheat headed for Port Sudan. Meantime, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees cut the outlay of \$46 annually for each Ethiopian refugee in Sudan to \$38 a person.

Winter's refugee front group is circulating a 15-page discussion document in Washington that calls for U.N. non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the U.S. government to conduct "cross-border" food relief, "with or without Sudan government approval." He says, "United States' policy toward Sudan needs to be people-friendly, not government-friendly."

There is an act pending for introduction to Congress called the Horn of Africa Recovery Act, which would authorize U.S. action in the region of Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Djibouti, *bypassing* governments and of providing "relief" through NGOs.

Opposing this violation of national sovereignty, an emissary of Pope John Paul II visited Khartoum on March 13 to discuss peace and to invite President El Bashir to the Vatican. El Bashir expressed appreciation for the Pope's efforts for international peace.

Dr. Abdalla Sulayman al-Awad, the head of the Islamic African Relief Agency, active in nine African nations, also stressed cooperation in a statement March 11. He called for relief aid from the European Community and others, and said that this is no time for arguments. "We need actions now, and not excuses and squabbles."