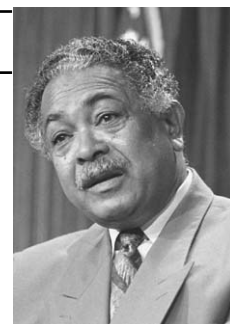

Interview: Mervyn Dymally



IMF adjustment policies are 'an absolute, total disaster'

The Honorable Mervyn M. Dymally served as a U.S. Representative for 12 years (1980-92), representing a district in South Los Angeles County. While in the Congress, he served as chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus, and founded the Caribbean Action Lobby. Born in the British colony of Trinidad in the West Indies, he first became active in politics in California as a field coordinator for the 1960 Presidential campaign of John F. Kennedy. In 1962, he was elected to the California Assembly. He was elected to the State Senate in 1966, and, in 1974, was elected lieutenant governor of California.

Since retiring from Congress, he has travelled extensively in Africa and the Caribbean. He is the president of Dymally International Group, Inc., a consulting and financial advisory firm, and is a Distinguished Professor at Central State University in Ohio.

Congressman Dymally is a signer of the call for convening a New Bretton Woods Conference.

The interview was conducted by Harley Schlanger on Aug. 29.

EIR: You have been concerned with, and involved in shaping U.S. policy toward the nations of Africa for many years. Why don't you give our readers some background on your involvement?

Dymally: My involvement really started in secondary school. Under the British system, one had to study for the senior Cambridge exam to go overseas, and part of that curriculum involved geography, and certainly the British Empire. That was my first foray into Africa, learning about the presence of the British there.

Then, after leaving secondary school, I began working for a trade union newspaper, the oil workers union, which was closely affiliated with the World Congress of Trade Unions, and much involved with the emerging unions in colonial Africa. When I went to the [California State] Assembly in 1963, I was asked by the State Department to go overseas and talk about democracy in the United States, and that was just around the time that the eastern and southeastern states, such as Zambia, Rhodesia, Malawi, Tanzania, Kenya, etc., were coming to the forefront.

So, I've had a long interest in Africa that predates my service in the Congress.

EIR: As a congressman, and as a leader of the Congressional Black Caucus, what role did you play in shaping U.S. policy toward Africa?

Dymally: Well, we never really had an African policy. Our interest in Africa had to do with fighting Communism. After the death of the Soviet Union, we had no policy, and still do not have a policy. So, our interests were really focussed on fighting Communism, and we never had a coherent African policy.

EIR: Were you, as a congressman, involved in trying to change that?

Dymally: We did the best we could, by increasing the authorizations and appropriations for Africa, to its highest point, and that was \$1 billion. In addition, I travelled all over Africa, trying to get a feel of what the needs were on the ground, so to speak. I visited some 41 states in Africa.

EIR: One of the major problems in the United States is the level of apathy, and ignorance, of the American people—including African-Americans—when it comes to Africa. How much of a factor do you think this has been in shaping U.S. policy toward Africa?

Dymally: Well, the story is told, and I understand correctly so, because it came from the sources, that, in the absence of aid for Africa, the emerging Congressional Black Caucus, headed by Rep. Charles Diggs, chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa, from Michigan, went to see Dr. Kissinger. And his lordship, Dr. Kissinger, told them the reason why Africa was not getting any aid is because Africa did not have a constituency in black America. And that, of course, angered them. And that was . . . the beginning of the Congressional Black Caucus's deep interest in Africa.

Now, Charlie Diggs had the distinction of visiting some 51 out of the 52 states, some of which were still colonies at that time. He, more than anyone else, was instrumental in creating awareness about Africa.

Interest in Africa with African-Americans goes all the way back, many, many years, with the churches moving into Africa to provide education—the black churches, that is. Then, it was highlighted by Marcus Garvey and, subsequently, Dr. W.E.B. DuBois, Paul Robeson, George Padmore, a West Indian of Trinidad birth, who was guru to Presi-

dent [Kwame] Nkrumah [the first President (1960-66) of Ghana]. So, there were a number of prominent blacks in the 1930s and '40s who were very pro-Africa. Then, during the civil rights movement, that interest was heightened by Stokely Carmichael, and Malcolm X, more prominently.

So, there has always been black interest, contrary to what Kissinger would have you believe, in Africa.

EIR: One of the things which contributes to the confusion and ignorance that exists toward Africa in the United States is the media. For example, not long ago, the *Baltimore Sun* published a so-called eyewitness account of the alleged slave trade in Sudan. Shortly after it appeared, it was challenged by a delegation of U.S. elected officials, who toured the alleged slave-trading region on a fact-finding tour with the Schiller Institute. They spoke to many people in the region, including government leaders, religious leaders, and found no evidence to support the claims of the *Sun* reporters. And yet, the lying story by the *Baltimore Sun* reporters is still generally accepted. Would you comment on this?

Dymally: I shall be most happy to, because I happen to know a little bit about that story. Here's what happened: The reporters went to the Sudanese embassy to seek a visa. The ambassador agreed to give them a visa. Then, they returned and said the only condition on which they would accept a visa, is if they were guaranteed a meeting with the President. That would be like a Mexican reporter going to the U.S. embassy in Mexico City and saying, "I want to come to the U.S. to study the farm workers' issue, but I will only come if you will give me a visa to see President Clinton."

The ambassador thought it was somewhat presumptuous, and said, I shall give you a visa, but I cannot guarantee you a meeting with the President. When you get there, you may want to go through the Department of Foreign Affairs. The reporters then refused to accept the visa, entered into southern Sudan illegally, then were hooked up with some fundamentalist Christians, who took them to a man who allegedly sold a slave.

When I questioned these two reporters at a Carnegie conference, and asked them for the name of the slaveowner, they said he could not give them his name, because to do so would lead him into a great deal of trouble, including sentencing and possibly death, because it is illegal to sell slaves in Sudan! That whole scenario was staged. It is quite possible in any war zone that one can produce some young boys, because [British-backed Sudanese opposition leader John] Garang of the SPLA [Sudanese People's Liberation Army] has specialized in recruiting young boys into the army.

So, it was a fraudulent story which got a great deal of credibility in the United States. . . .

EIR: The British and U.S. media are pushing the line, which comes from the British-based Christian Solidarity International, and now has been picked up by the Christian Coalition,

that there is brutal repression of Christians in Sudan. What about these charges?

Dymally: I suspect there are some problems for both Christians and Muslims, and animists, in southern Sudan, because they are in a war zone. But, I met with the one African Christian female governor of the south, who challenged anyone to come to her region and prove to her that Christians are being abused.

The fact is that, when these people make claims that there is persecution against Christians, they fail to mention the fact that this is in war-torn southern Sudan, where their socialist hero, John Garang, raises havoc, and controls the area. They also fail to mention that, of the six rebel leaders who signed the peace accord, I believe five are Christians. They do not mention the fact that those who signed the peace accord had guarantees of not only a referendum to separate [the south from Sudan], but religious freedom.

EIR: Following one of his visits to Sudan, Lyndon LaRouche said the British targetted Sudan for fear that its successful defense of national sovereignty represents a threat to British Commonwealth plans to redraw the map of Africa, destroying sovereign nation-states, in part in order to loot raw materials. What do you think of his assessment?

Dymally: There is no question in my mind, when you look at the hidden hands of the British, by using the far-right, fundamentalist Christians, both in London and in the United States, one has to be very concerned about what is going on. What we are witnessing in the United States is that the far-right Christian fundamentalists, having failed to get Congress into domestic religious affairs, are now talking about persecution of Christians overseas. I suspect there is some discrimination against Christians, but discrimination also exists against Muslims, and other religions.

But the larger question is this: Are we now going to ask the State Department officials overseas, our diplomatic representatives, to become religious cops? Is that what we want? The whole situation is getting ridiculous, it is getting out of hand.

EIR: I suspect there are ulterior motives, beside the religious ones which are stated.

Dymally: Oh, absolutely. I mean, they think people are foolish. But what is troubling is that their program has been met with silence in the United States, and people who are concerned about religious freedom here and overseas are being manipulated. I'm not saying there isn't some form of religious persecution, but there is also discrimination right here in the United States . . . and what is ironic about it is that the most segregated, the most racist institutions in the United States, the churches of the far-right Christian fundamentalists, are now going overseas to clean up the world!

EIR: In his comments after his trip to Sudan, Mr. LaRouche

also pointed to the role of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which is working in parallel with the raw materials cartels, to destroy nations through harsh economic conditionalities, which eventually bring down governments, opening the way for looting and plundering. What is your view of the role of the IMF in Africa?

Dymally: I must confess to you that I am not a financial technician, a financial wizard, I don't know much about the inner workings of finance, but I do know this—I do know the political ramifications of the IMF. Let me cite for you an example of which I am very familiar: Gambia, which I visited several times, whose President I knew—and was a favorite of the author of "Roots," Alex Haley—he and his country were cited as having implemented the best adjustment program of the IMF in the world. The civil service had been reduced, the budget cut. And guess what happened: He was overthrown!

Then we go to Benin. The first democratic President in the history of Benin, also lost his election because he couldn't produce, as a result of "structural adjustment." I go to the Caribbean, to a country with which I am most familiar, where structural adjustment has created a permanent class of poverty among the population, and especially among children. And then I can cite unrest, in Egypt, in Liberia, in Jamaica, and on, and on, where poor people under IMF structural adjustment rules are asked to make the biggest sacrifice. So, it is an absolute, total disaster. Why countries succumb to that, those arbitrary rules, and the destruction of an emerging middle class, I do not know.

EIR: You mention the IMF models. The IMF has just rewarded Uganda, whose dictator Yoweri Museveni has been the leader in pursuing the present genocidal wars in east Africa, against both Zaire and Sudan. They have rewarded him with debt relief. The IMF and the British Commonwealth have declared war on Nigeria and Kenya, in addition to Sudan. Yet, there are leaders of the Congressional Black Caucus who are supporting the efforts of these international agencies, and issuing calls for sanctions against these governments. Why do you think there is no outcry against the IMF, and why do you think leaders of the Congressional Black Caucus have taken this stance?

Dymally: I can guess that the IMF, because it operates overseas, has never become a domestic issue as such. As a result of that, there isn't a large constituency here among African-Americans about the evils of the IMF. I must confess to you that, during my forays in Africa, I really never focussed on the IMF, because, when a structural adjustment is put in country X, we here in Watts, or Harlem, don't know about it, and don't feel it directly. Of course, we feel it indirectly. But it is a matter of priorities; that has never really been a major priority of the Congressional Black Caucus.

As I left Congress, and travelled as I have for the last six years, and looking at the effects of the IMF from the outside

now, I began to realize that we need to focus more attention on this problem now.

EIR: The World Bank and the IMF are now claiming the right to withhold credit from nations based on the criteria of "good governance." Under these unspecified criteria, a nation may be declared "corrupt" by IMF bureaucrats. They are making Kenya, a former British colony, the test case. The President of Kenya, Daniel arap Moi, has protested this policy. What do you think about the World Bank and the IMF asserting the right to judge which governments pass their test for determining corruption?

Dymally: Their criteria are very arbitrary, and in my judgment, are not fair. . . . But the fact of the matter is that the poor are never the beneficiaries of these policies, or the structural adjustments.

EIR: There are organizations—such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and the Constituency for Africa—which have joined the assault against Nigeria and Sudan, with the NAACP just passing a resolution against Nigeria. What do you think is the reason for this?

Dymally: I think the killings which took place in Nigeria sparked some great concern here, but one has to understand Nigeria, before one proceeds to oppose them. What we must do is begin to negotiate a compromise with them, rather than try to isolate them.

EIR: What changes do you think are necessary in U.S. policy toward Africa?

Dymally: First, we need to develop a whole new approach to Africa, look at economic needs, rather than focussing all of our energies on democracy and elections, even though those are necessary prerequisites. The great need in Africa has to do with human resources, the question of poverty, transportation, housing, education, and health, in my judgment.

EIR: General infrastructure.

Dymally: Yes, absolutely; that's what we should focus on.

EIR: There are hundreds of parliamentarians, and three former Presidents of nations—including Godfrey Binaisa of Uganda—who have endorsed a call for the convening of a New Bretton Woods Conference, to sweep away the presently bankrupt global financial system and its huge debt bubble, which the IMF is trying to save through its looting policies. What do you think of this effort, and would you support it?

Dymally: Yes, indeed. I remember when I visited Fidel Castro in the late 1980s. He recommended elimination of all debts, and everybody laughed at him. I think we need to have forgiveness of all these debts, and begin anew, looking at new economic approaches to Africa. I confess again that I am not an expert in this, but these are my observations.