

Oligarchy's assault is destroying Africa

by Linda de Hoyos

In general, African countries experienced in the mid-1980s the onslaught of fiscal austerity and economic destruction that has been wreaking havoc in Asia and eastern Europe and Russia in the mid-1990s.

In the mid-1980s, African countries were hit with a double blow. On the one side, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) imposed the Structural Adjustment Program, which forced most countries to enforce levels of austerity that in all cases brought down per-capita income, destroyed agricultural production through the elimination of subsidies, and rendered hundreds of thousands unemployed. The AIDS epidemic which swept through East Africa in the mid-1980s and is now devastating southern Africa, is a marker for the destruction of the continent's health systems, and the general physical depletion of the population. Throughout the decade of the 1990s, life expectancies fell—for the first time since the end of colonialism.

The other blow was a campaign for "democracy," coming from the Western countries. In the context of the collapse of the nations' economies, the drive for democracy more often than not resulted in destabilization of the country, civil and community strife, and the general weakening of all national institutions.

Thus, the African countries emerged from the decade of the 1990s in the weakest positions they had been in since the 1960s era of independence. The IMF rule brought no prosperity or financial stability, but only desperate poverty and an upsurge in death rates. The democracy campaign produced destabilization, which tended to result in the continent's militaries emerging as the most powerful institution—the only institution left standing.

Rwanda shows the results of these policies in the most extreme case. A relatively stable government was overthrown by a combination of IMF austerity and invasion backed by a neighboring dictator, in the context of growing ethnic tensions that exploded into a winner-takes-all, loser-loses-all endgame that resulted in the deaths of more than 1 million people.

War has been the end-result of the policies imposed on Africa since the 1980s. Within the last decade, war has destroyed the nation-states of **Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Liberia, Angola, Republic of the Congo (Brazzaville), Burundi, Somalia, Guinea-**

Bissau, and Sierra Leone. Niger, which underwent a military coup in 1999, has effectively been emptied by extreme poverty and its government put in the hands of the military. Somalia has been without a government for the last ten years, with no representation at the United Nations, without embassies anywhere in the world. The country of 8 million people has been carved up, with a new enclave called Somaliland, but not recognized, in power in the north, and the rest of the country divided among murderous warlords, whose chief source of income appears to be stealing the relief food that is sent to feed the population which is in a state of semi-permanent famine. That is where the IMF and the democracy campaign against former President Siad Barre got Somalia.

In West Africa, Sierra Leone and Liberia are in total ruins. The government of Sierra Leone has lost all sovereignty over its rich diamond and gold fields, first to the British mercenary force Executive Outcomes, and now to the Revolutionary United Front, an insurgent group backed by Liberia's Charles Taylor, which recruits through the kidnapping of children, and deploys them on heavy doses of drugs—the dosage "dependent on the mission," as one RUF soldier explained. The country has been held hostage by this criminal gang, which still hold preponderant military power.

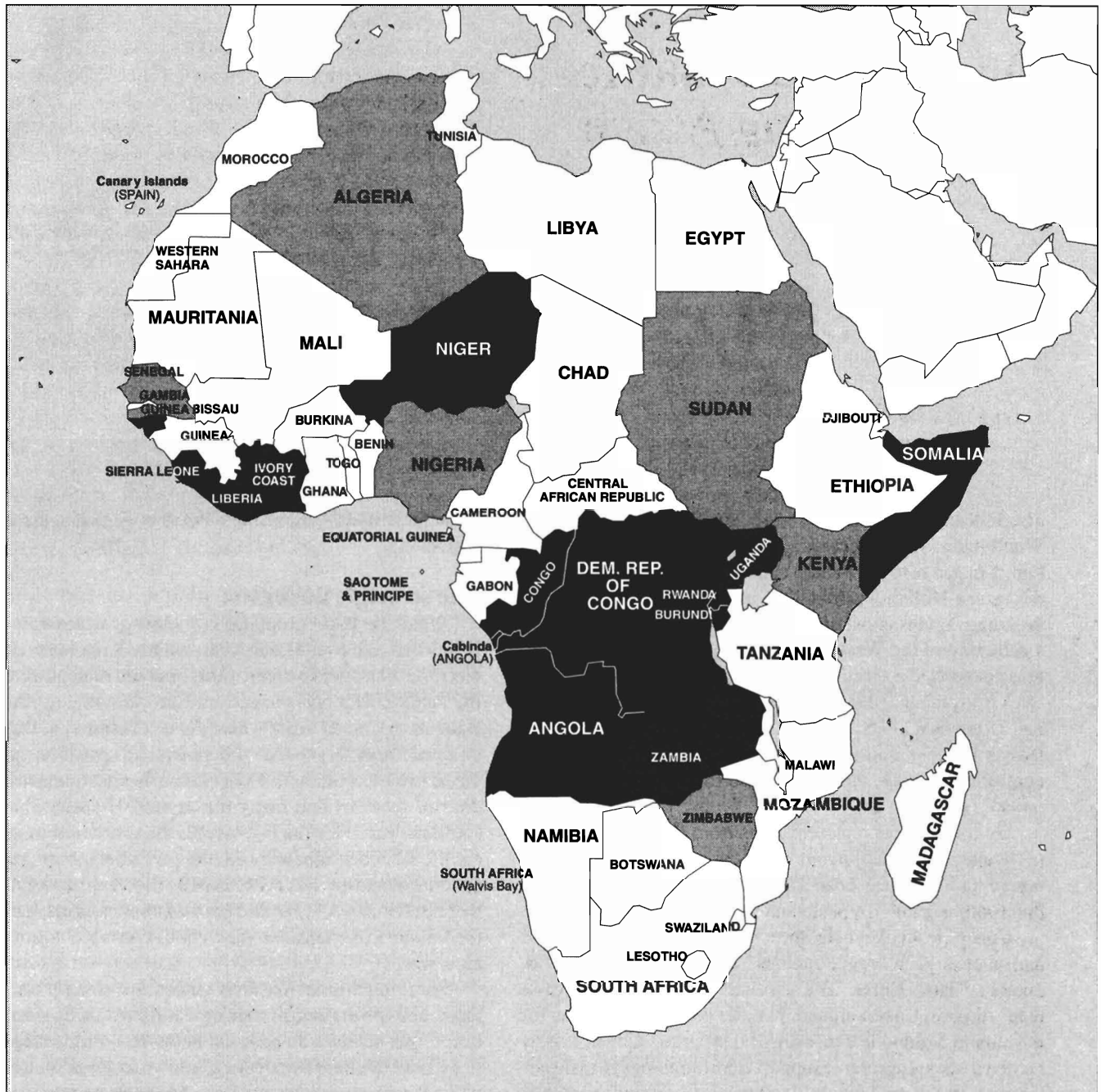
Bankrupt and shattered




The countries of **Zambia, the Ivory Coast, Algeria, and Uganda** do not today stand in the same status as their disintegrated neighbors. However, their economies are so weakened that they are now in a state of permanent strife. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Algeria paid debt at the rate of 75% of its export earnings, resulting in protracted civil war.

Zambia has lost sovereignty over its copper fields, and the country has been devastated by a 15-year-long siege from the IMF and the "donor community" to force the 1999 sell-off of the Zambia state mining company to London's Anglo American. Assaulted by wars on its Angola and Democratic Republic of the Congo border, and its 9 million-person population devastated by AIDS, Zambia is being brought to a state of internal collapse. Sell-off of the mines has not resulted in a decrease in pressure, but its escalation from the donor community, led by Britain. The new military regime in Ivory Coast, which came to power in late 1999, initially pledged to pay the debt, but now has discovered that there is no money—the country is bankrupt. One-third of Uganda is under siege by insurgents. Under the Presidency of Yoweri Museveni since 1986, Uganda represents a positioning point for mercenary operations against its neighbors on behalf of foreign mining companies—it is no longer a nation.

Sudan, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Kenya, and Senegal are countries now being heavily targeted by the Western powers, particularly by the IMF or by civil strife and war. Their survival as nations is crucial—their destruction would gravely reduce the ability to reverse the trend toward utter devastation on the continent.

Africa is disintegrating



 1. Collapsing/ prime targets	 2. Bankrupt/ shattering	 3. Dollarized/ shattered
Algeria	Ivory Coast	Angola
Kenya	Uganda	Burundi
Nigeria	Zambia	Democratic Republic of Congo
Senegal		Guinea Bissau
Sudan		Liberia
Zimbabwe		Niger
		Republic of Congo/Brazzaville
		Rwanda
		Sierra Leone
		Somalia