

U.S. 'food weapon' spreads African starvation

by Alice Roth

EIR has consistently argued that the major cause of the decline in America's influence abroad is the Carter administration's policy commitment to Malthusianism. Last week, *EIR* noted that Secretary of State Muskie had called for a reduction in world population growth by three billion persons.

Overriding any doubt that this is a serious consideration, we continue our coverage of conditions in Africa, where famine has become endemic not only through drought, but through the administration of mass starvation.

One of the continent's most compelling cases of depopulation is Zaire, once a major country with some industry, much mining, and a large population. The starvation in this part of the Congo is the direct and immediate result of International Monetary Fund stringency imposed on that country, not any natural causes.

Reviewing the evidence, there should be no difficulty in understanding why the world views America as a second-rate, declining power. It is not merely that America is permitting the depopulation of areas of the world it once viewed as export markets. The majority of the rest of the world's nations have agreed that world security and economic development are interdependent (see Special Report), and consider economic development issues to be of paramount strategic importance. This has not sunk into the heads of American leaders.

State Department's food weapon

At least ten million persons are currently starving in northeastern Africa, where millions have been displaced

due to drought and war. *EIR* has confirmed that the State Department is nevertheless channeling the bulk of U.S. food relief to Somalia, which provides the United States with a strategically located military base.

According to a State Department source, the administration has decided to provide no additional food aid this year to Somalia's neighbor, Ethiopia, because it is "skeptical" about Ethiopian estimates of the number of persons affected by the drought. The Ethiopian government estimates—and the United Nations Disaster Relief Organization (UNDRO) confirms—that five million Ethiopians are in serious danger of starvation, nearly one-sixth of the country's population. Many of them presently receive only 300 grams of food a day, 100 grams short of the international standard for "famine rations"—the amount of food considered necessary to keep a starving person alive until more substantial supplies arrive. Ethiopia's nationalist government, at war with Somalia since 1978, has "tilted" toward the U.S.S.R.

The U.S. "Food for Peace" (PL-480) program, administered by the State Department's Agency for International Development, has shipped only 52,700 tons of grain to Ethiopia during the fiscal year ending this September and will not allocate more. 200,000 tons have been shipped or are in the process of being booked for Somalia, which has a smaller population of four million but currently must sustain as many as 2.5 million refugees from Ethiopia's Ogaden region. According to UNDRO estimates, Ethiopia requires 151,000 tons of foodgrains and 27,000 tons of supple-

mentary food between now and the end of the year to avert catastrophe. Even this amount is based on the assumption that, due to transportation problems, only 70 percent of the five million Ethiopians can be reached.

By focusing U.S. and U.N. efforts on Somalia, the State Department has aggravated the refugee problem in the area, encouraging thousands of nomads in drought-stricken Ogaden to cross the border into Somalia during the last few months.

Even the food aid provided to Somalia has proven inadequate, however. According to the U.N. High Commission for Refugees, only the 800,000 refugees housed in Somalian camps are receiving rations, and it is not even known how or whether the other 1 to 1.7 million refugees have managed to survive.

In northern Uganda, the U.N. agencies have announced that they have been forced to suspend feeding operations for 560,000 Ugandans due to attacks on relief workers by armed bandits. The bandits are mostly marauding soldiers left over from the forces of deposed Ugandan dictator Idi Amin. Amin's army was and perhaps still is funded by Libya, the fanatical "fundamentalist Islamic" regime with whom the Carter administration has pursued an alliance. At last report, the Karamojan population of northern Uganda was reported to be dying at the rate of 400 to 500 persons a day. Although 4,000 tons of food a month are required to keep these people alive, only 100 tons were getting through, and even this supply may now stop due to the cessation of U.N. operations.

Although Zaire has been little affected by the drought presently scorching most of eastern Africa, its population is being exterminated. In December 1979, under IMF direction, the government of Zaire announced that all citizens must turn in their holdings of the old Zairean currency in exchange for a new one. Especially in rural areas, many Zaireans were unable to exchange their money within the allotted time, and were left with piles of worthless paper. This was followed by a series of devaluations which raised the cost of imported wheat and increased the price of bread by 60 percent. As a result the population can no longer afford to purchase food, and in the relatively prosperous city of Kinshasha, it is reported that bread consumption has dropped by 25 percent.

Urban food shortages are developing because there is no way to transport food from the countryside. Zaire's road system is in utter disrepair. Food cannot be flown into the cities because of fuel shortages. (Fuel sells for \$10 to \$12 a gallon.) Waterways cannot be used because there are no spare parts for boats. These shortages are the consequence of IMF orders to reduce imports so that all available foreign exchange can be used to finance debt service.

According to a dispatch from the U.S. embassy in Zaire, the sharp decline in purchasing power "may well have wiped out the middle class" in Zaire, whose diet is now hard to distinguish from that of the rest of the population. The typical intake for an employed urban worker's family in Zaire is said to consist of a breakfast of bread in the morning (sometimes with butter and tea or coffee) and nothing more till the evening, when *fufu*, a paste made from manioc flour, and manioc leaves, is prepared. The unemployed consume far less.

Under the PL-480 program, the State Department has allocated 36,000 tons of wheat and 10,000 tons of wheat flour for Zaire in fiscal year 1980. This is worse than a token gesture.

The *New York Times*, meanwhile, in an Aug. 4 editorial called for the establishment of an "emergency grain reserve" that would further enhance the State Department's food weapon clout. In response to farm pressures, the Agriculture Department bought some four million tons of wheat earlier this year to help relieve the overhang created by the administration's embargo of the Soviet Union. The Senate last week, with Carter administration support, passed a bill transferring the four million tons to a reserve that can be tapped "only in times of general shortage, and then only to meet extraordinary needs in poor countries." The *Times* called on the House to quickly approve the measure, never mentioning the fact that ten million Africans are starving right now. Much of this grain may end up being used in labor-intensive "food for work" projects, where the recipients are paid in food as if they were feudal serfs. A large portion of PL-480 food aid is already being channeled into such projects run by the U.N.'s World Food Program, the World Bank, and private "charitable" agencies like CARE.

Lester Brown on 'carrying capacity'

The State Department has developed a convenient rationale for its role in the depopulation of Africa, in the form of the just-released "Global 2000" Report. "Global 2000," the product of a three-year study carried out under a directive from President Jimmy Carter, was jointly supervised by the State Department and the Council on Environmental Quality. The study has been hailed by Club of Rome President Aurelio Peccei as a

“comprehensive” and “far-sighted” response to the Club of Rome-sponsored “Limits to Growth” report, published by MIT’s Jay Forrester and Dennis Meadows in 1972.

Like “Limits to Growth,” the “Global 2000 Report” starts out from Malthusian premises to project a grim future in which human growth can no longer be sustained by the world’s diminishing “finite resources.” The study predicts “regional water shortages,” widespread deforestation, a 20 percent increase in land area covered by deserts, and sharp increases in real prices of food, energy, and non-fuel minerals occurring within the next 20 years.

One of the key buzzwords promoted by “Global 2000” is that of “carrying capacity,” the notion that the earth has only a fixed amount of available water, arable land and other resources, beyond which any population growth is excessive. The study states that “the populations in sub-Saharan Africa and in the Himalayan hills of Asia” have already “exceeded the carrying capacity of the immediate area, triggering an erosion of the land’s capacity to support life.” The conclusion to be drawn: populations in these areas must necessarily die.

According to Worldwatch Institute’s Lester Brown, an adviser to “Global 2000,” the “carrying capacity” notion must also be applied to eastern Africa, where ten million persons are presently threatened with starvation. “The desertification problem is growing,” Brown stated in a recent interview. “The entire East African plateau appears to be slowly deteriorating under pressures of population and deforestation. The same thing is happening in northeastern Brazil for the same reasons.”

“There’s a need for much more education on carrying capacity issues,” Brown continued. “I’ve been at so many international conferences where Africans said, ‘We’ve got lots of space.’ But it’s not just space, it’s the availability of water and arable land. What I’ve proposed informally within the U.S. government is to sponsor Global 2000 studies country by country. AID [the Agency for International Development] would work with the governments and help them to understand the relationship between population policy and carrying capacity. This is not a natural thing for many of these governments to understand.”

Brown’s colleague at Worldwatch, Erik Eckholm, has just joined the State Department’s Policy Planning staff. In an interview, Eckholm pooh-poohed estimates by the London *Economist* and other sources that ten million lives are at risk in northeastern Africa: “They always say that. During the Sahelian famine, there was talk of six million at risk. But afterwards studies were done which showed that the death rates increased by only tens of thousands over normal. . . . There’s enough aid going into these areas. People are adaptable, they go into the cities and manage to survive.”

Transportation

Trucking dereg crashes ahead

by Richard Freeman

A month and a half after the deregulation of U.S. trucking, the industry is in the steepest decline since the 1930s. If certain plans now sponsored by the Interstate Commerce Commission are implemented, American trucking companies will undergo a shakeout that will conclusively wreck the domestic transportation system.

Trucking is highly dependent on the consumer goods-producing sector. The Federal Reserve’s interest-rate crunch last October and imposition of credit controls this March have devastated the U.S. consumer sector. Hardest hit is auto production, the leading item transported by truck. Consumer electronics, building materials, home furnishing and so forth have also suffered. American Trucking Association figures show that from May 1979 to May 1980 (the latest month available), trucking traffic has plummeted 25.2 percent nationwide. The decline was 10 percent for New England, 13 percent for the Pacific region, 29.1 percent in the Northwest and a whopping 36.7 percent in the Midwest.

The ICC moves in for the kill

Companies that have already folded include the nation’s 17th largest motor carrier, Wilson Company, which went into bankruptcy court with \$22.4 million in defaulted loans when its Dallas-based Strickland Transportation Co. failed. Others are the Thomas Inman Company of Tulsa, Oklahoma, and the giant Johnson Motor of North Carolina, which employed 2400. Another major carrier, McLean Trucking, will probably report a heavy loss for 1980, its first red figures in 34 years.

Even the industry giants, such as Consolidated Freightways, the number two company, are merely making money on reduced freight traffic by charging higher rates.