

## Africa Report by Mary Brannan

### Carter rejects famine aid petition

*Nevertheless, it is in America's self-interest to rescue the continent's jeopardized millions.*

In October 1980, the Committee for a New Africa Policy presented President Carter with a nationally circulated petition demanding that the President use his emergency powers to take action to alleviate the conditions of famine and drought now threatening the continent of Africa.

Carter's effective answer was to declare a death sentence against 100 million Africans who face starvation in the next months, and the more than 20 million Africans who are likely to starve to death in the next weeks. Despite his stated concerns for black Africans and black Americans, the President replied only with a State Department form letter to the Committee request for emergency shipments of U.S. grains to famine-hit areas to lay the basis for reversing the continent's famine conditions.

There is no doubt that Carter is aware of the mass death confronting millions in Africa. Former Manhattan borough president Hulan E. Jack, a member of the Committee, went before national television to mobilize American aid to Africa.

At the end of October, Carter instructed the State Department to reply to the petitioners organized by the Committee in the name of William J. Dyess, Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs.

Dyess replied as follows:

"Thank you for your letter to President Carter regarding your concern for the refugees of Africa. We share your deep concern about these unfortunate people. I have enclosed some material that briefly describes U.S. relief efforts throughout Africa, and especially in Somalia. I hope that this information will be useful to you and your association."

With these words the Carter administration formally washed its hands of the responsibility to act in the present emergency. Never before in recent history have holocaust conditions threatening human life on such an extended scale been tolerated so passively for so long.

It is notable in this regard that Carter's reply ignored the fact that a petition had been submitted, and that the petition was concerned not only with refugees, but with providing the 18 million tons of grain from U.S. surpluses that could buy the time to enable medium-range and long-range programs to be put into effect to end the causes of the holocaust once and for all.

Africa is not starving to death for any natural or inevitable reason. Africa is starving because industrialized nations such as the United States—which could provide the investment credit, capital goods, and

manpower training, for extended scale development of food and energy production—are themselves being strangled under the tight credit policies of the Federal Reserve Board.

Unnecessary depression, plant closings, and austerity in the United States, for example, translate directly into genocide in black Africa. Africa has been systematically deprived of necessary outside inputs under the barbaric conditionalities policies of the International Monetary Fund and the other London, Canada, and New York-centered institutions.

The refugees to which the Carter spokesman referred are the outcome of the imposition of such conditionalities policies. The basis for subsistence agriculture has been eroded across the continent, in a belt extending from the Atlantic coast to the Horn and down the east coast into Mozambique. As a result, populations have been displaced and forced into a life of nomadic brigandage or a concentration-camp existence.

The same petition signed by leaders of business, labor, minority, religious, and farm organizations from around the country presented to Carter was also sent to the relevant committees in the Senate and the House of Representatives. Specifically addressed were the Committees for Foreign and International Relations, and the Agricultural Committees.

Thus far only Congresswoman Millicent Fenwick of the Foreign and International Relations Committee has seen fit to reply. Fenwick, a liberal Republican, reported that she "shares the concern," but "does not want to join any more organizations."