

Make 1985 the year of development for the starving continent of Africa

by Christopher White

As the year ends, over 30 African nations, almost 450 million people, stand on the edge of catastrophe, hideous victims of the starvation policies of the International Monetary Fund. Will Africa be permitted to survive? This burning question must be answered in the affirmative in the early weeks of 1985, or Africa's peoples will be charting a course that we are all dooming ourselves to follow.

Africa needs food, and its needs must be provided. Twenty million tons of grains, 3 million tons of dried beans, and 2 millions tons of powdered milk could provide all the requirements needed to keep Africa alive. Compared to present world production of these items, these amounts are paltry. There is no problem to provide what is required out of present world production of foodstuffs, and if shipping and logistical support are made available, it can be done.

But Africa needs development. It needs modern technology to feed itself.

As we entered 1984, the largest civil-engineering project in the world was slowly moving ahead in southern Sudan. The world's largest excavating machine was slowly chewing through the swamps, heading toward the completion of the 276-mile long Jonglei Canal. As the year ends, the construction project is at a standstill. More than two-thirds completed, the project initially scheduled for completion in 1984, then expected to be finished in early 1985, is idled. There are no prospects in sight to revive the onward march of the giant excavator.

This project has been on the drawing boards for over 100 years. In the modern period, it has been the dream of Egyptian and Sudanese planners since 1947, and especially since those countries achieved independence from the British in 1956. In 1978, work on what is by now estimated to be a \$200 million project was finally begun.

This canal was designed to be one of four, which would channel the waters of the Nile coming into the Sudan from the east African rift, through the marshy swamps of the southern part of the country. The flow of water into the Nile system would be increased. Land reclaimed from the swamps would be directly brought into cultivation. The increased water flow through the Nile system would increase the number of irrigated hectares of land in northern Sudan, and of course in Egypt.

But more significantly, the project would open up the interior of Africa for development. Here is a large-scale project that for the first time was not designed to extract raw materials, or precious metals and diamonds, and ship them out of the continent, but would instead permit the internal improvement of the interior of the continent itself.

The canal construction was to be accompanied by the development of road transportation from the northern part of Sudan down to the south, and through Uganda into the port of Mombasa in Kenya. An international airport was to be built in the southern Sudanese city of Juba. The country's oil resources were to be opened up for exploitation.

A halt was put to this, too.

The canal would also open up the interior of Africa to the West. Now there is no rail connection between the rail-head city of the Egyptian-Sudanese system in Nyali, and Ndjamena in Chad, the rail head for the west African railroad system based on Nigeria. If that approximately 1,200 mile gap were closed, then the expanded food production of the Sudan could, in the not distant future, be shipped west.

Perhaps it could also be said, that if the canal had been completed on time, in 1984, the hideous scenes now broadcast from the inferno that neighboring Ethiopia has become, could have been averted. Airlift relief operations that are not possible from advanced-sector nations could have been undertaken from Sudan.

Whether that were true or not, it is the case that those who shut down the Jonglei Canal operation in early 1984 are guilty of crimes against humanity. They acted to deprive the people of a whole continent of not only their capacity to live, but also their freedom to improve their condition. And that is what makes us human, in distinction from the lower beasts.

Qaddafi and the French connection

But who shut the canal down? Who were the criminals who acted to force Africa back into bestiality? The pretext was provided by a terrorist organization, the Sudanese People's Liberation Army. That organization launched attacks on the construction base, on members of the crew, until the work was stopped. Funded by Libya, the organization is reported to operate out of base areas inside Ethiopia, and is therefore to be considered a Soviet-backed opponent of both

President Gaafar Numayri of Sudan, and President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt.

In an interview in the Saudi daily *Al-Sharq al-Aswat* on Sept. 21, 1984, Numayri accused Libyan dictator Muammar Qaddafi of launching "a water war" against Egypt and Sudan. Qaddafi, the President reported, has a three-fold target list: first, the Jonglei Canal project; second, the Aswan High Dam in Egypt, (Mubarak has exposed Libyan plans to blow up the dam); and third, a project to pump out Nile ground-water into Libya. Numayri charged that the water war is part of an effort to overthrow the governments of both countries, along with unleashing starvation, and the death of the nations themselves.

But there was more. On Dec. 21, 1983, "a diplomat friendly to Sudan" had charged, in a letter to the Sudan News Agency, that the French government (the principal construction company for the canal project, Grand Travaux de Marseilles, is French) had "drawn up a plan" to delay the completion of the canal. The source pointed to the connection

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between the company and the Libyan-backed, Ethiopian-based terrorists operating against the project. He charged that the company executive had provided the terrorists with food and equipment, refused to let the project be guarded, and opposed government efforts to crush the terrorist group. The anonymous writer added: "I reaffirm that Libya is involved in this plot, and that the two countries are coordinating in this regard. This conspiracy is not the first of its kind. The world has witnessed it in Chad, and in some west African countries that enjoyed French protection, and were suddenly swept away as a result of such coordination."

The letter makes clear what is at stake in strife-torn Chad, surrendered in 1984 to the Libyans by French President François Mitterrand. Chad, large, underpopulated, one of the poorest countries in the world, lies smack between the three key nations of Africa—Egypt in the north, populous and oil-rich Nigeria on the western seaboard, and Algeria on the Mediterranean littoral. Whoever controls Chad, controls the fate of those three nations, and thereby controls the fate of the African continent as a whole. The Jonglei Canal is the key that opens up the back door of each of the cited countries for commerce and improvement. This has to pass through Chad. Qaddafi's Russian-backed, French-supported sabotage, and occupation of the northern part of Chad, keeps those

countries apart, and dooms Africa's potentials for internal development and improvement.

Then governments were overthrown in Upper Volta, insurrections launched against Nigeria, and coups organized in Mauritania, while Africa was left to starve.

But if this combination is not enough: The International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and Sudan's creditors (the country owes \$7 billion and now spends its export earnings on debt service) argue that the canal project is "too costly" and should not be completed. Ulrich Kufner, one-time Sudan agricultural officer at the World Bank, says, "The Jonglei proposal was not argued on economic grounds, because on economic grounds there is no good justification for Sudan to do it." James Holtaway, former deputy director of the U.S. Agency for International Development mission to the Jonglei area, concurs: "Too ambitious, too costly."

And of course the international environmentalist movement also opposed the project; it endangered the lifestyle of the Nuer and Dinka tribes, and perhaps also of the anthropology students who study the books of Evans-Pritchard. It endangered the existence of the fauna and flora in one of the most inhospitable areas of the world that is home to over 40 types of malaria-carrying mosquito.

The elements involved in the conspiracy to close down the canal are those who have also determined that Africa should be left to die. They do so for different reasons. In the West, there are the ideologues who follow the program of British racist Julian Huxley, who wanted Africa to be freed of people so that the animals might live undisturbed. His policies are continued by Prince Philip and the World Wildlife Fund and affiliated organizations. In the East, the military planners of the Kremlin have determined that Western culture, based on the idea of the freedom of the individual to contribute to the development of society as a whole, is to be eliminated, and wish to deny the West territory and military-logistical capabilities. The end result of both policies is the same: Africa is dying.

Sudan, the largest country geographically on the African continent, is as large as the continental United States east of the Mississippi. But it is still only a small part of Africa; its population is about 20 million, out of the nearly 500 million souls who inhabit the continent. It could become the motor force for the development and improvement of Africa as a whole. It could become the food producer for the continent, while other development efforts, necessary for the future, are begun elsewhere.

This year the completion of the Jonglei project, and the beginning of the associated developmental programs, such as the construction of the railroad through Chad to combine with the west African system, must be the measures employed to save Africa.

We now look up to the stars to plan the next phase of mankind's conquest of space. Let's employ the same methods and the same approach to end the hideousness we still tolerate here on earth.