

Europe: in western Europe the population is 700 million; Zaire's population is 35 million. They have everything. They have different kinds of climates. They can grow everything from palm nuts to strawberries. They have the second-largest river in the world, so they could have cheap energy. It has been called a geological scandal, because they have every kind of mining. The problem they have in developing wealth is first, to have a population to work in their country, and also to have people with skills. Manpower is a major issue, because the development issue is not to have all this wealth, it is to have people to work properly."

Harking back to his days at the World Bank, he added, "When there was the Third Report on Sub-Saharan Africa, they wanted to put as a conditionality, this issue of population, and I was very blunt on that. . . . I remember in the 1960s, you had the Club of Rome, the idea of zero growth. And they also don't like life. . . . We are not going to accept any kind of conditionality on this matter. They can make noise."

It is a matter of development

President Soglo spoke about a trip to the Netherlands some years ago, where "they started talking about that to me. I went to the house of a member of Parliament, and they started talking. I said: You take a small country like this, it is less than one department in my country; you have 14 million people living well. It is not a matter of population, it is a matter of development. That is the real issue."

The President of Benin spoke with great passion about his conviction that Africa can develop and that Africans, if given the same opportunities, are as capable of development as anyone. "The brain is like a muscle," he said, meaning you must use it for it to develop and grow. Taking a swipe at the theories of the eugenics crowd, who are among the leaders of the pack who believe in treating the world's population like cattle, like a herd that needs to be culled, he insisted that "there is no genetic defect which prevents a person from moving forward," only the lack of education, training, and opportunity.

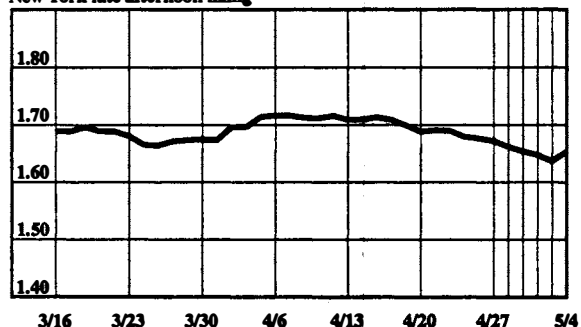
President Soglo is currently taking his turn as the West African head of state chairing the Economic Community of West African States (Ecowas), and at his May 4 press conference he made some startling revelations concerning the role of certain NGOs in the civil war-torn West African nation of Liberia where Ecowas had been trying to mediate between the warring parties. In Liberia, "you have some organizations, humanitarian ones, doing a good job. You have some that are only there to raise money. If you don't have war, they have to retire. So, I have called them, and said: No, if this is your purpose, stop it!"

President Soglo convincingly made the case that just as Asian countries from Vietnam to Korea were ravaged by war decades ago, but now are developing economically, so can Africa overcome the tragedies of Somalia, Rwanda, and Liberia, if given serious investment and assistance.

Currency Rates

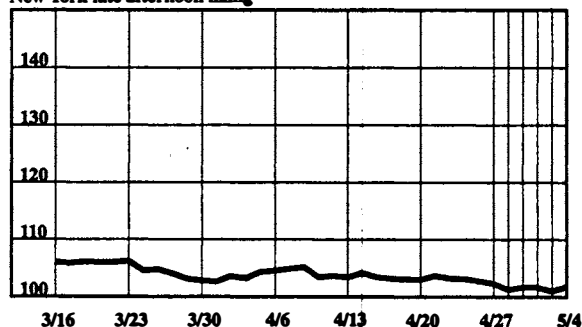
The dollar in deutschemarks

New York late afternoon fixing



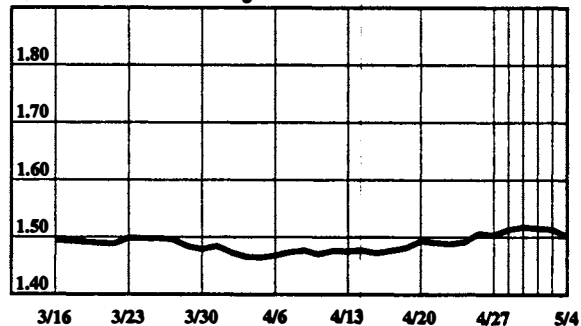
The dollar in yen

New York late afternoon fixing



The British pound in dollars

New York late afternoon fixing



The dollar in Swiss francs

New York late afternoon fixing

