

Emergency in Africa: famine hits ten million

by Alice Roth

Ten million persons are threatened with starvation in northeastern Africa, in a region beset with drought and severe refugee problems caused by a series of wars. The impending holocaust could rival that of Cambodia if adequate relief does not arrive soon, according to the London *Economist*.

Relief efforts directed by the United Nations' High Commission for Refugees, the World Food Program, the U.S. government's Agency for International Development, and other international agencies have thus far been skimpy, and the crisis has gone virtually unnoticed by the U.S. media.

But what passes as mere neglect may actually represent something more sinister: a deliberate policy of "population control" through mass starvation. Last week, the State Department and Council on Environmental Quality released with great fanfare a three-year study on global resources prepared for President Carter. The "Global 2000 Report," as it is called, represents a frankly Malthusian view of the world in the year 2000: "Environmental, resource, and population stresses are intensifying and will increasingly determine the quality of human life on our planet. . . . If present trends continue, the world in 2000 will be more crowded, more polluted, less stable ecologically, and more vulnerable to disruption than the world we live in now."

The study's findings were enthusiastically endorsed by Secretary of State Edmund Muskie, who called for a doubling in U.S. spending on "family planning" in the developing sector, so that "there might be 3 billion fewer people on earth when population finally stabilizes."

The immediate causes of the current African famine are twofold. Large sections of Africa have been afflicted by drought this summer, in an area extending from Senegal on the west coast to Ethiopia and Somalia on the east and extending southward along the east coast through Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, and Zambia. AID officials report that this summer's harvest could range 30 to 50 percent lower than normal throughout much of eastern Africa.

Preliminary estimates indicate that in Mozambique, where the growing season is almost completed, food crops are 50 percent below normal, and in Tanzania, 60

percent below recent averages. In Zambia, the corn crop is placed at 350,000 to 400,000 tons, compared to 750,000 tons in 1976.

Millions of refugees

Aggravating the famine is the fact that several million persons in northeastern Africa have been forced to become refugees. This is due to a series of disastrous wars, cynically manipulated by Anglo-American intelligence agencies. They include the Somalian-Ethiopian conflict, the secessionist movement in the Eritrean region of Ethiopia, and the political disintegration of Uganda following a Tanzanian invasion and the overthrow of Idi Amin.

The Ethiopian government estimates that 5 million Ethiopians are desperately in need of food. Of these, 700,000 are refugees who fled from the drought-ridden Ogaden region—also the site of the war with Somalia—into Ethiopia's interior. Meanwhile, it is estimated that 2.5 million other refugees from Ogaden are in Somalia, a country whose indigenous population totals only 4 million. About 750,000 of these Somalian refugees are barely surviving in camps organized by the United Nations' High Commission for Refugees, and the *Economist* has predicted that even these people will die if 80,000 tons of food does not arrive before September. Sudan's economy is straining under the weight of 1 million refugees, who came from Eritrea, other Ethiopian provinces, and Uganda.

The area of greatest immediate concern is the Karamoja district of northern Uganda. It has been impossible to get accurate estimates of the numbers of displaced persons in this area, according to AID, because of "physical security" considerations. Trucks carrying food into Karamoja are hijacked, their loads stolen, and the drivers and aid workers killed. About 400,000 persons are believed to be close to starvation.

U.S. farms can supply grain

Yet Africa's immediate food needs could be met by drawing upon a relatively small portion of U.S. grain reserves. According to an official estimate prepared by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1.6 million metric

tons in grain imports over the next 12 months will be required to meet normal diet requirements in eight countries in eastern Africa. This figure compares with 25 million metric tons in U.S. grain reserves left over from last year's bumper harvest, currently wasting away in storage because of the Soviet grain embargo and a general slump in exports.

The eight countries targeted by the USDA include Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Mozambique, Somalia, Tanzania, and Zambia. The total population of these countries is roughly 94.8 million, with nearly 10 percent, or 9.2 million, classified as "refugees and drought-affected nomads" who are most vulnerable to famine. The "normal" diet requirements used by the USDA in arriving at the 1.6 million ton import figure is based on historical data showing an average caloric intake of about 2,000 calories in these countries, compared with the 3,000 consumed by most American males.

The USDA estimates that half of the required 1.6 million tons can be purchased by the countries themselves despite the fact that most have little or no foreign exchange reserves. The other half is to be provided through various food aid programs, with 70 percent or more coming from the U.S.

Meanwhile, Lyndon LaRouche, a contender for the Democratic presidential nomination, has made the African famine a major theme in recent campaign addresses. LaRouche's agricultural advisers have termed the USDA plan "paltry." They propose, first, that the import requirement be upgraded to at least 3 million tons, to bring caloric intake closer to American standards and to help cover the needs of other African countries also experiencing food shortages this year (see map). Second, they suggest that the entire amount be purchased by USDA directly from U.S. farmers at *parity prices*, thereby helping to alleviate somewhat American farmers' own financial plight.

Third, grain should be immediately shipped to the targeted countries along with personnel and vehicles necessary to transport and distribute it to the intended recipients. The USDA should run the food distribution programs independently of the U.N. and other agencies who have proved incompetent in the past. This food aid, supplied through low-interest credits or outright grants, should be followed by a major U.S. commitment to develop capital-intensive agricultural production in these countries and to reverse the desertification process in northern Africa.

"Small is beautiful"

Quite a different sort of aid program is envisioned by the London *Economist*. In its June 21 "Science and Technology" section, the *Economist* reports that one Derek Winstanley has completed a study purporting to



prove that the chronic dryness of the Sahel region is not caused by deforestation but by a long-term "climatic shift" which has nothing to do with "changes in vegetation." This climatic shift has simply sprung up as if by magic, with no apparent cause. The *Economist* draws the conclusion that it is useless to attempt to apply intensive agricultural methods to the Sahel. Similar arguments are currently being advanced to write off the American Southwest as an "inevitable Dust Bowl."

Some British agencies, such as the London-based International Disaster Institute, are currently profiling tribal herdsmen in eastern Africa to determine how they can be induced to reduce their cattle herds. The *Economist* reports that Kenya planners are "trying to teach tribes that small is beautiful by ensuring water and supplementary food stocks only for livestock herds kept constantly moved and down to reasonable numbers." Such programs are likely to reduce food supplies still further. Is this the sort of "family planning" Ed Muskie has in mind?