

EIR Special Report

The crimes of the IMF: Ignorance is no excuse

by the Editors

In the war-crimes tribunal held at Nuremberg in the aftermath of World War II, individuals were held responsible for the consequences of their actions. Many pleaded their ignorance as a mitigating circumstance for the different categories of crimes that were there brought to account. Before this tribunal, as indeed has been well-established in Western law over the millennia, ignorance was no excuse. It was found, rightly, that the Nazi war criminals “knew or should have known,” what the consequences of their criminal actions were.

Individuals who tried to evade responsibility by claiming “I was only following orders,” were permitted no safe retreat into the collective anonymity of bureaucratic institutional life. They were held responsible as individuals for what they as individuals did, or did not do.

Are such precedents justly cited, as warnings to those who claim, again today, either that they do not know what crimes are being committed in their names, or that they are merely following orders? In the case of the International Monetary Fund and related institutions, such as the Bank for International Settlements and the World Bank, the evidence accumulated says overwhelmingly “yes.”

The categories of crimes brought before the judges at the Nuremberg tribunal were primarily three:

Crimes against peace. Under this heading, the leaders of the Nazi regime were held accountable for violating international agreements, to provoke war. The invasion of Poland was exemplary.

War crimes. On this count, Nazi leaders were prosecuted for crimes committed against military and civilian populations in the prosecution of the war itself.

Crimes against humanity. Here were assessed crimes committed in defiance of Western civilization’s fundamental conceptions of the dignity and worth of the individual and human life. For example, euthanasia policies directed against the aged, the sick, the handicapped, in pursuit of Nazi racial doctrines. Or the genocidal slave labor-policies pursued at Auschwitz.

What if the actions of the IMF were assessed in the same way? Let us take the reverse order.



UN Photo/John Isaac



Under the International Monetary Fund's austerity conditionalities, genocide has been perpetrated against the populations of the Third World. Now the international bankers want to impose the same financial dictatorship on the United States. Shown are victims of the famine in Ethiopia, and a street in New York City's Harlem.

Mass starvation in Africa, a portent of what will happen elsewhere in the globe, is the direct consequence of what are called the "IMF conditionalities policies," applied with increasing viciousness since the early 1970s. Africans, for racial and insane ideological reasons, have been denied access to the technical and other means, that would permit their continent's development. They have been denied terms of trade that would permit the mutually reciprocal development of their own and the metropolitan economies. They have been forced to loot their economies to service unfinanceable debt. These are crimes against humanity, measurable in starvation, in death through disease, in infant mortality, in life expectancies that do not exceed 40 years. What is being done to the continent of Africa, and elsewhere, is exactly what was done in microcosm at Auschwitz. Self-cannibalization, the Nazis found, is the cheapest way to kill in mass.

The think-tanks and cult movements demanding austerity and cuts in health and social services in the advanced-sector nations themselves are the spawning ground for the revival of euthanasia and related practices, for which the Nazis were judged at Nuremberg.

Ibero-America's heads of state have found, and informed the world, that the international drug trade is a "crime against humanity." That trade is promoted by the conditionalities policies of the IMF and related financial institutions, including David Rockefeller's Chase Manhattan bank, which has come to depend on drug revenue flows for its own survival. The cases of Jamaica and Colombia, and the commercial growth of marijuana production inside the United States, are exemplary.

In this section

The IMF in Mexico: 'Adjustment program' means starvation

by David Ramonet

The history of the IMF: Keynes's conspiracy against Western civilization

by David Goldman

IMF demands economic shutdown, financial dictatorship in the U.S.A.

by Richard Freeman

What were called “war crimes,” and “crimes against peace,” at Nuremberg, are also committed by the drug lobby every day. There is a proven interrelationship between the international drug trade and weapons trafficking. The weapons are used to equip separatist and terrorist movements deployed in covert war against nations. Armed establishments of significant size are maintained by drug interests in such nations as Bolivia.

The policies of the IMF toward the advanced-sector nations also constitute “crimes against peace,” since they have fostered the conditions in which disorders up to the level of insurrection occur. The separatist, fundamentalist, and terrorist elements deployed for such purposes also work with, and for, the policies of world domination of the Russian imperial political intelligence services.

The IMF and its allies are smoothing the way for Russian takeover, and not just in Yugoslavia. They are insisting that advanced-sector nations like the United States cut defense expenditures, to continue to service the debt which the IMF itself helped to create, in order to destroy the sovereign nation-state as an institution.

Is it only with the hindsight acquired in the aftermath of war that one may correctly say, the following policies constituted crimes against peace, at the pre-war point they occurred? Do not the Nuremberg guidelines—“knew or should have known”—establish responsibility before the case, and not simply afterward on the basis of *post hoc ergo propter hoc*?

Here the ignorant, or the sniffer of the winds of oppressive dominant opinion in the bureaucratic pecking order, will take refuge in the nonsense argument, for example, that economics is not classed among the exact sciences. That the behavior of economies is therefore not predictable, and that consequently the individual cannot be held responsible for what he cannot do.

Fortunately, that was all taken care of in the founding document of economic science, the Book of Genesis: “Be fruitful and multiply. Dominate the earth and subdue it.” In some ways we have come a long way since then, in others not so far at all. To the extent we order the affairs of our culture and society to increase the capacity to support an expanded population, at higher levels of potential relative population density, by developing the science and technology which enable us to “dominate and subdue the earth,” we can be assured that we are violating the laws of neither God nor man in the conduct of our affairs. We can know that we are acting as instruments of the good in the governance of man’s affairs.

But on the other hand, we have a force of international institutions, based on the debt they created and the drug weapon they employ, working with the Eastern enemies of our Western culture, which recognizes no such good.

Where does that leave those who claim ignorance, or that they were just following orders today?

The IMF in Mexico

‘Adjustment plan’

by David Ramonet

The precipitous decline of the Mexican economy since the signing of a “program of economic adjustment” with the International Monetary Fund on Dec. 23, 1982 is a particularly savage case study of the effects of the IMF’s austerity policies in the Third World. The program included cuts in government spending to reduce the budget deficit by half, an end to subsidies for goods produced by state-run enterprises, maintenance of domestic interest rates above the rate of inflation, and “market control” of prices and exchange rates.

At the beginning, the government’s spokesmen—particularly Secretary of Planning and Budget Carlos Salinas de Gortari—insisted that the “adjustments” were merely aimed at resolving deep-seated problems which grew worse with the “maladjustment” of 1982—when then-President José López Portillo nationalized the banks, stopped paying the foreign debt, and imposed foreign-exchange controls. More than two years after the adjustment program started, it is now difficult to sustain this myth in public, so seriously have the measures adopted eroded the productive capacity of the economy—in particular the productive capacity of the workforce. Mexico’s economy is now on the verge of an irreversible collapse, with food production and consumption levels approaching those of the “Fourth World” countries of Africa.

The Immediate Program of Economic Reordering (known by its Spanish acronym of PIRE, which in Mexican slang means “flight from reality”) was supposedly designed to resolve Mexico’s balance of payments problem. The foreign debt could not be paid since Mexico’s income was not sufficient to buy the imports needed to maintain the economy at a functioning level and at the same time comply with debt-service payments. But in essence, the PIRE was only the programmatic expression of the famous “IMF conditionalities.”

The only promise which Budget Secretary Salinas de Gortari made two years ago that has been kept, is his pledge that the economy would undergo a “structural change.” This means allowing that sector of the economy oriented to satisfying the needs of the domestic population to die, while the entire sector which is oriented to markets abroad is strengthened. Of course, this is not what was explicitly proposed by the Budget and Planning Department, nor by the Finance and