
IMF Genocide

Austerity brought on the locust plague

by Thierry Lalevée

Locusts and grasshoppers have ravaged Africa and Asia from the time of the Bible. Yet, infestation is a phenomenon that can be predicted and contained, using modern technology. This has been proven in southern Europe, which up to the 1950s faced such a threat, and in California, which was regularly ravaged. Today's infestation is the first in 60 years, however, in which all four kinds of locusts and grasshoppers are striking at once.

The most conservative estimates show that the following countries will be overwhelmed by the locust swarms in the next few months: Mauritania, Senegal, Burkina Faso (Upper Volta), Mali, Niger, Chad, Central Africa, Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya, Uganda, Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Zambia, South Africa, Botswana, and numerous others. In North Africa, no black African country will be unaffected.

When the African drought was finally broken in mid-1985 by a heavy rainy season, it was predictable that locusts and grasshoppers would find fertile ground for breeding. Indeed, after years of drought, the rains which allowed for the sowing of new harvests, also allowed for the massive breeding of species that had been checked.

The locusts have reproduced best in the areas of conflict. Thus, Michel Launois, director of the French agency Prifas, which conducts a locust watch in the Sahel, reports that among the best breeding grounds is the Libyan-occupied part of Chad, which no one was allowed to survey. The same holds for southern Sudan or the Eritrea region of Ethiopia, where visibility in some places is no more than a yard because of the swarms.

Chad and Sudan are also being attacked by rats. While the locusts fall on the harvest from the air, the rats eat the roots. The rat invasion has forced Chad's peasants to sow more than twice the seeds usually required, for their next harvest, only to find it attacked by grasshoppers.

The IMF-FAO conspiracy

Underlying this infestation is the policy of looting by the international agencies that spend millions of dollars monitoring the implementation of economic austerity imposed by the IMF and the World Bank (which did not give a penny to the

developing sector in 1985).

The conspiracy worked as follows:

First, although Africa was decimated by a locust infestation in 1968-74, when 30% of the crops were lost to locusts, there are no records of how it happened. According to Michel Launois, although the U.N.'s Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) set up a Locust Control Group in the 1950s in coordination with 60 countries, there are no data available to help now in this campaign.

Second, because of the austerity imposed by the IMF, most if not all the African-based agencies specializing in the fight against the locusts have gone bankrupt and disappeared. This is being covered up by the claim that these organizations lost their purpose during the years of drought and "disappeared." In fact, they were active to the end of 1985, when they went bankrupt. This was the case for the International African Organization for the Control of the Migratory Locust (OICMA) and the Joint Anti-Locust and Anti-Bird Control Organization (OCLALAV) in the Sahel belt, as well as the East Africa Anti-Locust Organization (DLCO-EA), which went bankrupt in May.

Third, although the FAO received warnings of the infestation as early as August 1985, when 300,000 hectares in Mali were hit, no international appeal was launched before May 1986. In fact, as the FAO only now documents, the Sahel belt and Sudan were hit in August-October 1985, leading local specialists to predict that by May 1986, there would be 125 locust eggs per square meter. FAO General-Secretary Saouma launched his first appeal in April, but there was no mention of the locust plague in the FAO monthly update until June! The conference in May of the World Food Security Council in Rome did not discuss the case at all.

There has been strange behavior at FAO headquarters. At the end of April, the FAO warned that nine Sahelian countries would be affected, and called for a \$4 million emergency fund. In May, it revealed for the first time that it had gotten warnings as early as August 1985, and FAO then requested an \$8 million budget. Two weeks later, on May 15, it called for a \$12 million budget and warned suddenly that all Africa was also being attacked by six kinds of locusts. The FAO also revealed (again, too late) that brown locusts had been spotted in the Cape Province as early as November 1985. Hence, in a two-week period and without any previous public warning, the FAO finally revealed the scope of a disaster that it could have known about by early winter 1985. With no elaboration, FAO concluded that the fight against the locusts would last several years! Between early May and mid-August, nothing was done. The June, July, and August FAO bulletins reported the threat, but concluded by noting that operations were "delayed."

In fact, as the FAO itself admitted, decisions to act were only taken at the Aug. 19-20 conference of donor countries. FAO now claims to have received all of the \$12 million requested, and has announced that operations will start by

the end of August. This is much too late! Between May and August, the grasshoppers and locusts were able to breed twice.

What international mobilization?

An international mobilization is supposedly under way. But the governments of France, West Germany, and the United States spent months gathering data before deciding to act in August. Each country sent its own missions to survey the situation. In May and July, France gave 5 million francs to the most affected countries for insecticide. In mid-August, France announced it would send pilots and planes to Niger, Mali, Chad, Senegal, and Mauritania, and created an Agricultural Specialized Agency with a 10-million-franc budget to operate locally. In July, West Germany gave 3.5 million deutschemarks to the Sahel countries. On Aug. 21, the European Commission in Brussels announced that 4.2 million deutschemarks had been allocated, plus 185,000 liters of insecticides. The United States gave about \$1.25 million.

The aerial operations face vast difficulties. In countries like Mali or Burkina Faso, there are no airfields in the affected area, the north. By July 3, Niger had planes but no pilots; Burkina Faso had no planes. As of mid-August, not one gram of pesticide had reached Chad. This means that, though financial aid is needed, technical training and creation of infrastructure are vital if the operations are to be effective.

The Red Cross is adding to the confusion by announcing

its own mobilization, not to get rid of locusts, but to deal with the "expected poisoning" of the human population during the aerial spraying—a move based on silly environmentalist propaganda.

For these reasons, the amount of pesticide now required in Africa, as well as the exact amount requested from Bauer in West Germany, a main producer of the most commonly used pesticide against locusts, fenitrothion, are considered "secret." A Bauer spokesman indicated that the firm cannot produce as much as it was asked to, but would not reveal the amount sought, nor the amount it was able to make. Effective aerial spraying requires at least 1 liter of pesticide per hectare.

Moving into southern Africa

Nothing in the way of assistance has yet been considered for southern Africa, which is now in its spring season. More than 100,000 hectares there are covered by eggs that will hatch in September, according to the FAO, although South African specialists say 14 million hectares are affected in that country alone.

The brown locust is expected to move from South Africa and Botswana to neighboring Angola, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, reaching Burundi, Rwanda, and eastern Zaire by late November. Then, the brown locust will converge upon swarms of red locusts which will hit northern Mozambique, Tanzania, and Uganda, perhaps linking up with the migratory and desert locusts in eastern Africa and Saudi Arabia.

Development of the grasshopper-locust crisis

August 1985: Grasshopper infestation in Mali is reported on 300,000 hectares.

August-October 1985: Sahel belt is hit with infestation.

December 1985: Director of the French organization PRI-FAS documents where the locust eggs are laid in the Sahel and warns that spraying and extended plowing are necessary to stem the locust spread.

Late April 1986: FAO launches emergency appeal.

Early May 1986: World Food Security Council meets in Rome, but does not discuss locusts.

May 15, 1986: FAO calls for \$12 million budget to fight

locusts, notes that brown locusts had been reported in November 1985.

June 1986: FAO monthly update doesn't mention locusts.

August 1986: UNICEF "Update on Emergency Assistance to Affected Countries in Africa" leads with a section on "Pests Infestations" as follows: "Reports received during the month of July 1986 concerning the pests infestations are most distressing. Locusts, grasshoppers, armyworms, rats threaten hundreds of thousands of acres throughout Africa . . . and the survival of millions of people just recovering from drought and famine. . . ."

August 1986: FAO bulletin discusses locust threat.

Aug. 16, 1986: Emergency Center for Locust Operations is set up in Rome under the direction of Lukas Brader.

Aug. 19-20, 1986: Donor countries meet in Rome to discuss aid.

Sept. 1(?): Spraying to begin.