

How a Mass Famine Helped Spark the American Revolution

And Why American Patriots Must Act To Prevent a New Mass Famine Today

by Matthew Ogden

Dec. 21—While the world reels from the horrific effects of a global pandemic which has killed almost two million people, another catastrophe looms, which threatens the lives of perhaps hundreds of millions, but this one is fully avoidable if action is taken now. What has been characterized as a “hunger pandemic” is now stalking nations across the globe whose economies have already been devastated by the immediate effects of the coronavirus pandemic, along with the long-term effects of eco-

action to address this impending famine crisis, spearheaded by the United States in conjunction with other leading nations. Since early in the summer of 2020, she has argued that the best way to resolve this crisis is by using it as an opportunity to unify mankind around a “coincidence of opposites” to overcome divisions and confront the common threats to mankind.

Her approach would bring together not only the various nations of the world which are teetering on



Schiller Institute



WFP/Michael Tewelde

Helga Zepp-LaRouche, founder and chairwoman of the International Schiller Institute, has called for emergency action to address the impending mass famine in Africa. Last fall, David Beasley, Executive Director of the UN's World Food Program (center of right photo with white vest), warned that if the looming food crisis is not addressed, “We're going have famines of biblical proportions in 2021.”

conomic underdevelopment and perpetual war. David Beasley, Executive Director of the UN World Food Program, has warned that if this looming food crisis is not addressed through the concerted action of nations in the developed sector, “we are going to have famines of biblical proportions in 2021.” He has predicted that an incredible 270 million people are “marching toward starvation” if urgent steps are not immediately taken.

Helga Zepp-LaRouche has called for emergency

the edge of a disastrous geopolitical conflict, but would also unify the politically fragmented and increasingly divided populations of the United States and the nations of Europe, who are currently being factionalized around issues of economics, race, and other forms of identity politics, and instead mobilize the productive workforces of these nations (emphatically including the agricultural sector) around a common mission to save perhaps hundreds of mil-

lions of lives through unprecedented action.

This action would be two-fold, first to use the agricultural potentials of the developed world to provide emergency food aid to those facing starvation in the near term, and second to then provide the support through technology transfer and credit for development to assist these nations in building up the modern infrastructure and agro-industrial capabilities to eliminate the continued threat of famine once and for all.

This initiative echoes the “Food for Peace” campaign, championed by President John F. Kennedy in the 1960s at the height of the Cold War, which was then revisited by the late Lyndon LaRouche in the 1980s at the perilous, pregnant historic moment that the Soviet bloc was facing disintegration and collapse, which posed the urgent need for a new economic and strategic architecture for the planet—a necessity which persists to this day.

Not only is a prompt and decisive response to this potential “crisis of biblical proportions” a moral imperative which, if undertaken, would bring out the better angels of all Americans, no matter their party affiliation or political ideology, but this call to action in fact resonates with the very origins and purpose of the American republic, and evokes the essence of what drove the founders of America to launch the American Revolution in the first place. The creation of the American Republic was intended as a rejection and condemnation of the oligarchical policies and imperial worldview which deems human beings as mere beasts and human life as expendable, as exemplified in the attitude historically of the British Empire towards its colonies around the globe.

As we shall document below, one of the sparks which ignited the revolution in the American colonies, leading to the final sundering of America from that empire, was none other than the horror of a mass famine in another of Britain’s colonies, in India, and which was directly perpetrated at the hands of that empire in the form of the British East India Company.

The Bengal Famine of 1770

The British East India Company was constituted in 1600, as the arm of the British Empire on the Indian



Lyndon LaRouche addresses a Food for Peace meeting in Chicago, Illinois, December 20, 1998.

EIRNS

subcontinent, dealing mainly in the traffic of opium, spices, cotton, and tea. But the British monopoly on commercial and military domination of India was firmly established in the middle of the following century during the Seven Years War, under Robert Clive, whose statue stands to this day prominently at Whitehall, in central London.

In the Battle of Plassey in 1757, soldiers employed by the British East India Company under Clive defeated the forces of the Nawab of Bengal. During the subsequent seven years, fighting continued to rage, until the decisive victory of the British East India Company forces in the Battle of Buxar in 1764, and the signing of the Treaty of Allahabad, which established formal British rule over India. The treaty granted the British East India Company the role of “Dewan” or administrator of the province, which included the rights to collect the *diwani*, a tribute tax, from the population of Bengal.

Under British East India Company rule, the tax rate was more than doubled, and the accumulation of any local reserves of rice and other food was outlawed in the name of maximizing export profits. These reserves had historically served as a buffer against the effects of periodic drought and disease. But with these reserves drained, and with the pillaging of the population through draconian taxation and enforced labor, an otherwise survivable crisis caused by a partial crop failure in 1768 and then a drought due to the failure of the monsoon season to produce adequate rainfall in 1769 led instead to a catastrophic famine, killing more than 10

million people (an estimated one-third of the entire population of Bengal) in 1770.

News of the Bengal Famine reached the shores of North America in 1771, with an account published in newspapers throughout the American colonies under the title, "Letter from a Gentleman in India." This letter described a scene of horror:

On our arrival here, we found a river full of dead human carcasses floating up and down, and the streets crowded with the dead and dying, without anyone attempting to give them relief; so horribly has the famine raged here, that they who were able to walk and procure food for themselves were so accustomed to see their fellow creatures perishing before them, that it did not even create a painful emotion.

The numbers that have perished in Calcutta only, amounted (while they found it possible to keep an account) to 10,000 or 12,000 a week, but afterwards they became so numerous, that they were every morning just gathered together in a heap, and thrown into the river without any possibility of numbering them. I have myself passed by and seen twenty or thirty lain down to die in the length of one street. I have beheld the hapless infant tugging at the empty breast of its mother just expiring, without being capable of affording them the smallest aid.

The dying mothers have frequently been delivered of the fruit of their wombs in the streets, and both have immediately been swept up amongst the dead. It was no uncommon sight to see dogs running about with human limbs in their jaws, and



CC/Ineshraj Goomany

Major-General Robert Clive established the military and political supremacy of the British East India Company in Bengal, India.

I am told that many of the expiring wretches were seen gorging on the bodies of those who perished within their reach.

These horrors were described in graphic terms by John Fiske in his *American Philosopher in the Unseen World*:

All through the stifling summer of 1770 the people went on dying. The husbandmen sold their cattle; they sold their implements of agriculture; they devoured their seed-grain; they sold their sons and daughters, till at length no buyer of children could be found; they ate the leaves of trees and the grass of the field; and in June 1770, the Resident at the Durbar affirmed that the living were feeding on the dead. Day and night a torrent of famished and disease-stricken wretches

poured into the great cities.... The streets were blocked up with promiscuous heaps of the dying and dead. Interment could not do its work quick enough; even the dogs and jackals, the public scavengers of the East, became unable to accomplish their revolting work, and the multitude of



The decisive victory of the British East India Company forces in the Battle of Buxar in 1764 led to formal British rule over India.



Public domain/Illustrated London News

A contemporary print of the Madras famine in India, 1877.

mangled and festering corpses at length threatened the existence of the citizens....

Starving and shelterless crowds crawled despairingly from one deserted village to another in a vain search for food, or a resting-place in which to hide themselves from the rain.... Millions of famished wretches died in the struggle to live through the few intervening weeks that separated them from the harvest.

This nightmare served as a wakeup call to the Americans. Any illusions that the colonists could still work within the British system to defend their supposed rights as “subjects of the king” were shattered. Patriots throughout the American colonies used the example of the horrors of this famine as a rallying cry for action against the British authorities in North America, including the commercial representatives of the British East India Company itself. In a series of pamphlets titled *The Alarm*, the author, writing under the pen name Rusticus, invoked the famine in India, perpetrated by the British East India Company, imploring:

Are we in like Manner to be given up to the Disposal of the East India Company, who have now the Assurance, to step forth in Aid of the Minister, to execute his Plan, of enslaving America? Their Conduct in Asia, for some Years past, has given simple Proof, how little they regard the Laws of Nations, the Rights, Liberties, or Lives of Men. They have levied War, excited Rebellions, dethroned lawful Princes, and sacrificed Millions for the Sake of Gain. The Revenues of Mighty Kingdoms have centered in their Coffers. And these not being sufficient to glut their Ava-

rice, they have, by the most unparalleled Barbarities, Extortions, and Monopolies, stripped the miserable Inhabitants of their Property, and reduced whole Provinces to Indigence and Ruin.

Fifteen hundred Thousands, it is said, perished by Famine in one Year, not because the Earth denied its Fruits; but [because] this Company and their Servants engulfed all the Necessaries of Life, and set them at so high a Rate that the poor could not purchase them.

The pamphleteer then called on his fellow Americans to take direct action against the British East India Company, whose ships were anchored in American harbors full of tea and other commodities extracted from the dying populations of India:

Resolve therefore, nobly resolve, and publish to the World your Resolutions, that no Man will receive the Tea, no Man will let his Stores, or suffer the Vessel that brings it to moor at his Wharf, and that if any Person assists at unloading, landing, or storing it, he shall ever after be deemed an Enemy to his Country, and never be employed by his Fellow Citizens.

This call to action ultimately took the form of the famous Boston Tea Party, when members of the Sons of Liberty dressed as (American) “Indians” boarded British East India Company vessels under the cover of night in Boston Harbor, dumping over one million dollars’ worth (in today’s money) of tea into the sea.

With the horror of the results of British rule in India as their witness, the revolutionary leaders gathered around Benjamin Franklin used this act of resistance to

Extract of a letter from an officer at New-York, to his friend in London, Nov. 1.

“ All America is in a flame on account of the Tea-Exportation. The New-Yorkers as well as the Bostonians and Philadelphians, are, it seems, determined that no Tea shall be landed. They have published a paper in numbers called the Alarm. It begins first with “ Dear Countrymen,” and then goes on exhorting them to open their eyes, and like Sons of Liberty throw off all connection with the tyrant their Mother Country. They have on this occasion raised a company of artillery, and every day almost are practising at a target. Their independant companies are out at exercise every day. The minds of the lower people are inflamed by the examples of some of their principals. They swear that they will burn every ship that comes in; but I believe our six and twelve pounders, with the Royal Welch Fuziliers, will prevent any thing of that kind.”

The Alarm/Rusticus

Extract of a letter from a British officer at New York, to a person in London, November 1773.

the British East India Company as one of the sparks with which to kindle the flames of rebellion against British rule in North America.

The British System

With the successful outcome of the revolution nearly a decade later, a new republic was born, founded on the economic principles of Alexander Hamilton, which became known as The American System, allowing the United States to swiftly establish both political independence and economic sovereignty over its own affairs. While it’s difficult to prove a counterfactual and say exactly what would have happened if the American people had not thrown off the chains that had bound them to the British, one may look to the subsequent history of India as a case study, as well as the fate of British colonial Ireland.

The very year the Treaty of Paris was signed, which brought an end to the revolution and British rule in America, another famine, even larger than the previous, ravaged the Indian people, beginning in the territory of

southern India under British East India Company rule, and then sweeping into the north, killing a combined 11 million people in less than two years, between 1783 and 1784. Much of these regions were severely depopulated, with some areas of the country seeing as many as 60% of the towns and villages completely disappear.

This mass death, known as the Chalisa Famine, was followed up less than five years later with another mass starvation on the same scale. The Skull Famine, as it became known, because of the “bones of the victims which lay unburied, whitening the roads and the fields,” lasted from 1789-1795, killing another 11 million Indians, either through direct starvation or through epidemic disease, and reduced the population of some regions of the country by more than half. People died in such numbers that they could not be cremated or buried by those still living, and the countryside was dotted with human skeletons and remains. According to contemporary accounts, the Indian people were reduced to feeding on leaves and berries, with women and children being sold into prostitution and slavery in exchange for food.

In 1853, the great American System economist Henry Carey authored a book titled, *The Slave Trade Foreign and Domestic: Why it Exists, and How It May Be Extinguished*. In it, he documents how the British Empire had used an international monopoly on finance and trade to run a global plantation system of looting, in which, even nominally free people lived impoverished, subjected lives of cheap labor and debt slavery, all at the mercy of such “commercial enterprises” as the British East India Company.



Engraving by W.D. Cooper

Spurred in part by news of the famine in India, on December 16, 1773, members of the Sons of Liberty boarded British East India Company ships in Boston Harbor, and dumped overboard their cargo of tea and other commodities extracted from the dying people of India.

Carey demonstrates that the inevitable outcome of the British system, everywhere it is applied, is the cannibalization of the local economies, the ruin of the land, the accumulation of an unpayable debt through usury and tax-farming, the export of all the products of the subjected people's labor, both material goods and food, and the ultimate breakdown of the nation's ability to support itself. Carey asserts that the outcome of this system, which forcibly reduces the physical ability of the population to support itself at current levels, invariably ends in famine, disease, and depopulation. This is a system of slavery, Carey says, and the two most horrifying examples he gives are the cases of India and Ireland.

In this book, Henry Carey revisited the process of economic subjugation which the Indian people suffered at the hands of the British Empire, beginning with the establishment of so-called Company rule in 1757, and ending with the Bengal Famine in 1770:

Nearly a century has now elapsed since, by the battle of Plassey, British power was established in India.... From its date to the close of the century there was a rapidly increasing tendency toward having all the affairs of the princes and the people settled by the representatives of the Company, established in Calcutta....

England was thus enriched as India was impoverished....

Step by step the power of the British East India Company was extended....

[This system] resolves a great nation into a mass of wretched cultivators, slaves to a few grasping money lenders. Under such circumstances, the accumulation of any thing like capital is impossible.... The taxes must be paid, and of all that thus goes abroad nothing is returned. The soil gets nothing. It is not manured, nor can it be, under a system of absenteeism like this, and its fertility everywhere declines....

The soil is being exhausted, and every thing necessarily goes backward....

In former times extensive works were con-



Portrait by Charles R. Leslie

Henry C. Carey, American System economist.

structed for irrigating the land, but they are everywhere going to ruin—thus proving that agriculture cannot flourish in the absence of the mechanic arts.

Carey demonstrates that the economic policies imposed under British rule inevitably created the conditions for the great famines which ravaged India, starting in 1770, and occurring with increasing frequency and severity during the entire period of British rule over the subsequent century. And the starvation was by no means due to a shortage of food. During the entire time that the East India

Company governed India, grain exports out of the country continued to increase—grain that was grown on Indian soil, watered by the sweat of the Indian farmers.

The nightmarish effects of the Agra famine that swept the northwest territories of British-ruled India in 1838 are described by eyewitnesses thus:

Go with me to the north-western provinces of the Bengal Presidency, and I will show you the bleaching skeletons of five hundred thousand human beings, who perished of hunger in the space of a few short months. Yes, died of hunger in what has been justly called the granary of the world.

Bear with me, if I speak of the scenes which were exhibited during the prevalence of this famine. The air for miles was poisoned by the effluvia emitted from the putrefying bodies of the dead. The rivers were choked with the corpses thrown into their channels. Mothers cast their little ones beneath the rolling waves, because they would not see them draw their last gasp and feel them stiffen in their arms.... Jackals and vultures approached, and fastened upon the bodies of men, women, and children, before life was extinct.

Madness, disease, despair stalked abroad, and no human power present to arrest their progress. *It was the carnival of death!* And this occurred in British India—in the reign of Victoria



The Pictorial Times, 1846

By some estimates, during the Great Hunger, 1845-52, Ireland's population was reduced by three million, either by direct starvation or attempted emigration. Unable to afford what food was available, the poor in Dungarvan, County Waterford, Ireland rioted in 1846.

the First! Nor was the event extraordinary and unforeseen. Far from it: 1835-36 witnessed a famine in the northern provinces; 1833 beheld one to the eastward; 1822-23 saw one in the Deccan. They have continued to increase in frequency and extent under our sway for more than half a century.

The poorer houses were entirely unroofed, the thatches having been given to feed the cattle, which had nevertheless died; so that cattle had disappeared altogether from the land. A few attenuated beings, more like skeletons than human creatures, were seen hovering over the graves of those who had been snatched away by the famine; desertion was everywhere visible; and the silence of death reigned.... The roads were lined on either side with heaps of dead bodies ... and on one occasion [there] was found the lifeless body of a man who died with his hand in his mouth, from which he had already devoured the fingers.

An Gorta Mòr

The other case study which Carey uses is that of Ireland. (Carey's father, Mathew Carey, had himself fled Ireland to come to America as a political refugee, work-

ing directly under the mentorship of Benjamin Franklin.) Carey was writing in 1853, when a mere half decade had passed since the so-called Irish Potato Famine of 1847, better termed An Gorta Mòr (The Great Hunger). By some estimates, it reduced the population of Ireland by 3 million, one third of its total population at the time, through direct starvation or through attempted emigration. Huge portions of those who attempted to emigrate perished aboard the infamous coffin ships. The population of Ireland has never recovered. In the 1830s the population was approaching 9 million, but today it stands at just 6.5 million.

Henry Carey draws the parallel between the effects of British rule in India, and British rule in Ireland:

As in India, the land had been gradually exhausted by the exportation of its products in their rudest state, and the country had thus been drained of capital, a necessary consequence of which was that the labor even of men found no demand, while women and children starved....

Up to this time there had been repeated cases of partial famine, but now the nation was startled by the news of the almost total failure of the crop of potatoes, the single description of food upon which the people of Ireland had been reduced to depend. Constant cropping of the soil, returning to it none of the manure, because of the necessity for exporting almost the whole of its products, had produced disease in the vegetable world—precisely as the want of proper nourishment produces it in the animal world—and now a cry of famine rang throughout the land. The poor-houses were everywhere filled, while the roads, and the streets, and the graveyards were occupied by the starving and the naked, the dying and the dead....

Throughout the entire duration of the famine, food continued to be exported out of Ireland. Enough wheat to feed the entire country was shipped out of the country each year, destined for the markets to be speculated on in London. The justification delivered by the British administration, was that the markets of the empire must not be disrupted, despite the desperate need. Fifty thousand British soldiers were sent to Ireland, for the purpose of protecting the food reserves to be ex-

ported, while starving women and children literally died at the soldiers' feet. The population became a petri dish for typhus, cholera, dysentery, and scurvy, weakened by the lack of food. Hundreds of thousands desperately boarded ships bound for America, only to complete their voyages with as many as half of the passengers dead. By the time the famine officially came to an end, between one quarter to one third of the entire Irish population had either died or left.

British politicians at the time argued on the floor of Parliament that nothing should be done to resolve the famine, in the name of Adam Smith's laissez-faire, and quoted Thomas Malthus verbatim, who said that mass famines and epidemic disease should be welcomed and encouraged, in order to prevent the human population from becoming too numerous. Charles Edward Trevelyan, the British Treasury official who oversaw the policy of withholding food aid and other economic relief in the face of the famine, had

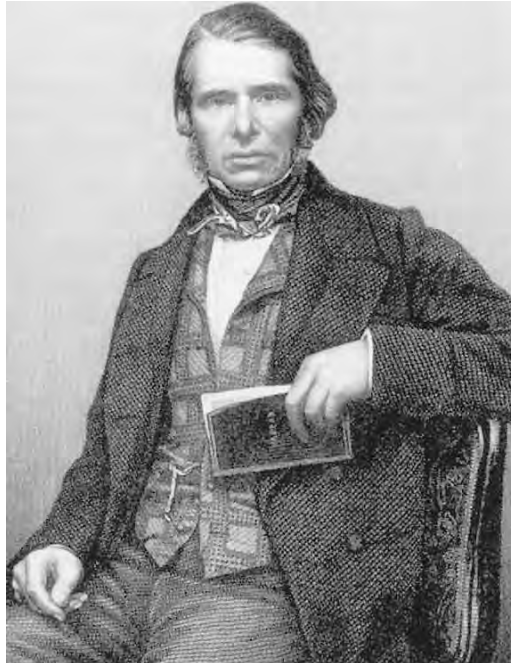


Photo by John Watkins

Charles Edward Trevelyan, a former British East India Company administrator in Calcutta, oversaw the policy of withholding relief in the face of famine in Ireland.

gotten his start working as an administrator for the British East India Company in Calcutta. He insisted that food exports continue to flow freely out of Ireland, even as hundreds of thousands starved, saying, "Do not encourage the idea of prohibiting exports.... perfect Free Trade is the right course." Trevelyan wrote, in a letter to a member of the House of Lords, with typically murderous, Malthusian logic:

The judgement of God sent the calamity to teach the Irish a lesson, that calamity must not be too much mitigated.... The real evil with which we have to contend is not the physical evil of the Famine, but the moral evil of the selfish, perverse, and turbulent character of the people.

In his book *The Famine Plot: England's Role in Ireland's Greatest Tragedy*, published in 2012, the Irish historian Tim Pat Coogan documents these open declarations by the British that the famine must be allowed to run its course, explicitly in order to depopulate the country. He asserts that the British in fact "engineered the food shortage in an early case of ethnic cleansing," citing the United Nations Convention on Genocide to suggest that the famine policy of London towards the Irish people was carried out with the intent of "inflicting ... conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part" and could therefore be classified as such a crime against humanity.

Defeating the Common Enemies of Mankind

One family which emigrated from Ireland to flee the famine was that of Patrick Kennedy, of County Wexford. Just over a century later, his great-grandson, John



Painting by Daniel MacDonal, c. 1847.

An Irish Peasant Family Discovering the Blight of Their Store depicts a family having removed the covering of straw and earth protecting its store of harvested potatoes, only to find the dark of rot.

Fitzgerald Kennedy, was elected President of the United States. As a direct descendent of a victim of the Irish famine, John Kennedy was explicitly an anti-Malthusian, stating in a speech at the National Academy of Sciences exactly one month before his assassination, on October 22, 1963:

Malthus argued a century and a half ago that man, by using up all his available resources, would forever press on the limits of subsistence, thus condemning humanity to an indefinite future of misery and poverty. We can now begin to hope and, I believe, *know* that Malthus was expressing not a law of nature, but merely the limitation then of scientific and social wisdom. The truth or falsity of his prediction *will depend now, with the tools we have, on our own actions*, now and in the years to come. [emphasis added]

This determination, to use “the tools we have” to win the fight against famine and starvation was a central pillar of Kennedy’s economic policy as well as foreign policy, and one he always framed as a moral imperative for Americans and for mankind as a whole. He declared during his 1960 presidential campaign, “This vast world-wide shortage of food is one of the major obstacles to world peace.” And he saw the American farmers as the front-line soldiers in the battle against world hunger, stating during a campaign speech in September 1960 at the Corn Palace in Mitchell, South Dakota:

I think the farmers can bring more credit, more lasting good will, more chance for freedom, more chance for peace, than almost any other group of Americans in the next 10 years, if we recognize that food is strength, and food is peace, and food is freedom, and food is a helping hand to people around the world whose good will and friendship we want.

This “Food for Peace” campaign became a central policy in Kennedy’s presidency. In a speech he made on June 4, 1963 at the opening session of the World Food Congress, sponsored by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, Kennedy declared it an imperative “to banish hunger and outlaw it ... to eliminate hunger from the face of the earth in our lifetime” and laid out the means to do so:



Public domain

George McGovern (right), Director of President Kennedy’s Food for Peace program, in 1961.

Twenty years ago, in May 1943, the first World Food Congress was held. Today we have gathered to rededicate ourselves to the objectives of that Congress, the objective that all nations, all people, all inhabitants of this planet have all the food that they need, all the food that they deserve as human beings. We are here to renew a worldwide commitment to banish hunger and outlaw it.

At the launching of the first World Food Congress, President Franklin Roosevelt declared that freedom from want and freedom from fear go hand in hand, and that is true today...

The same central problem that troubled President Roosevelt when he called together the first World Congress in ’43 is unfortunately still with us today. Half of humanity is still undernourished or hungry. In 70 developing nations, with over 2 billion people, malnutrition is widespread and persistent.

So long as freedom from hunger is only half achieved, so long as two-thirds of the nations have food deficits, no citizen, no nation, can afford to be satisfied. We have the ability, as members of the human race, we have the means, we have the capacity to eliminate hunger from the face of the earth in our lifetime. We need only the will....

For the first time in the history of the world we do know how to produce enough food now to feed every man, woman, and child in the

world, enough to eliminate all hunger completely.... For the first time to know how to conquer the problem and not [to] conquer it would be a disgrace for this generation. We need to help transmit all that we know of farm technology to the ends of the earth, to overcome the barriers of ignorance and suspicion. The key to a permanent solution to world hunger is the transfer of technology which we now have to food deficit nations, and that task, second to none in importance, is the reason for this Congress....

I would hope that we would agree on at least five basic guidelines to be kept constantly in mind:

First: The persistence of hunger during this decade is unacceptable either morally or socially. The late Pope John in his recent encyclical spoke of the conviction that all men are equal by reason of their natural dignity. That same dignity in the 20th century certainly requires the elimination of large-scale hunger and starvation.

Second: We must recognize the fact that food deficit nations, with assistance from other countries, can solve their problem. The Freedom from Hunger campaign is based on this solid premise.

Third: International cooperation, international organization, and international action are indispensable. A contracting world grows more interdependent. This interdependence requires multinational solutions to its problems. This is not a problem for a single nation. It is a problem for the entire human race because we cannot possibly be satisfied with some nations producing too much, while others produce little, even though they are both members of the great human race.

Fourth: No single technique of politics, finance, or education can, by itself, eliminate hunger. It will require the coordinated efforts of us all, all of us, to level the wall that separates the hungry from the well fed.

Fifth, and finally: World opinion must be concentrated upon the international effort to eliminate hunger as a primary task of this generation....

To that task I can assure you the United States of America is committed.

The Coincidence of Opposites

The moral fitness of each generation is tested by how we respond to the urgency of the present. Do we turn a blind eye to the plight of our fellow man, be it caused by poverty, violence, disease, or famine? Or do we act to prevent a human catastrophe “of biblical proportions” as we have been warned, overcoming the seeming divisions and contradictions which would obstruct our path in pursuit of the common aims of mankind by means of the creative endeavor to unite seemingly unreconcilable adversaries in the interest of mankind’s common good?

This is the appeal which Helga LaRouche has characterized as a “coincidence of opposites”—an appeal to those who seemingly have nothing in common with each other, except for the moral determination to act to save the lives of perhaps hundreds of millions of people who are now being threatened with a famine on a scale unprecedented in human history, a famine which would make even the horrors of the Bengal Famine and the Irish Famine pale in comparison.

Perhaps the most eloquent appeal to this principle of the “coincidence of opposites” in which seemingly unresolvable divisions among peoples melt away in the crucible of the struggle against the common enemies of mankind, was that made by President Kennedy himself, during his inauguration speech on January 20, 1961. These words, so powerfully delivered then, can echo across time and inspire us again, as we resolve to act in unity and answer the call of today:

So let us begin anew....

Together let us explore the stars, conquer the deserts, eradicate disease, tap the ocean depths and encourage the arts and commerce.

Let both sides unite to heed in all corners of the earth the command of Isaiah—“to undo the heavy burdens and let the oppressed go free.”

Now the trumpet summons us again ... a call to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle, year in and year out, “rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation”—a struggle against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease and war itself....

With a good conscience our only sure reward, with history the final judge of our deeds, let us go forth ... asking His blessing and His help, but knowing that here on earth, God’s work must truly be our own.