

Africa Report by Mary Lalevée

A test-case for U.S. Africa policy

Bush is restoring some of the aid to Sudan frozen by the State Department, but serious emergency measures are needed.

American Vice-President George Bush ended his visit to Sudan at the beginning of March by restoring part of the \$150 million in U.S. economic aid that had been frozen by the State Department as "punishment" of Sudanese President Gaafar Numayri for not implementing the austerity demands of the International Monetary Fund. Now Sudan will be enabled to buy fertilizers and pesticides—for the princely sum of \$15 million.

Bush also announced that the United States would send an additional 150,000 tons of emergency food aid for the victims of famine in the region. Most significant, however, was the report that Bush proposed American help in building a great project to enable Sudan to increase its agricultural production. The Paris daily *Le Monde* reported that this involved the construction of new dams for irrigation—a significant step in the direction of the necessary policy of using American technology to end famine and develop Africa.

Whether this policy is consolidated, however, depends on the outcome of the factional debates in Washington. Unless the influence of the State Department is overturned, the genocide in Africa will continue.

Bush is scheduled to go on to Niger and Mali, with the official aim of "examining American action to help Africa," and then to a special United Nations meeting in Geneva on March 11, where donor governments are to be asked to increase aid to drought-stricken areas of Africa.

Sudan is one of the 20 worst-affected countries on the continent, and millions could die this year. Four years of drought have drastically cut local food production, and lack of foreign exchange means there are no funds to purchase food. There are shortages of diesel fuel and gasoline. Hundreds of thousands of refugees are flooding into the country from even worse-hit areas such as Chad and Ethiopia. There are reportedly 1.5 million refugees in the country, with reports that another 600,000 could arrive from the Ethiopian province of Tigre in the next months.

A representative of the British charity Oxfam said that 250,000 refugees are in immediate danger of death from malnutrition and disease.

A disagreement over distribution has meant that the European Community has only provided 3,500 tons of food aid to Sudan so far this year. The Sudanese authorities wish to sell the food provided on the open market, while the EC wants to have it delivered to the refugee camps. As a result, 150,000 tons of food are simply waiting to be sent.

The U.N. Office of Emergency Operations for Africa in New York has issued a report on the situation of the 20 worst-affected countries, prepared for the March 11 conference. It calls for some \$1.5 billion of additional funds to meet the needs of Angola, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cape Verde, Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, So-

malia, Sudan, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

The report describes "an unprecedented crisis which shows little sign of abating in the near future." Over 30 million people are affected; at least 10 million have abandoned their homes and land in search of food and water.

The report calls for \$1 billion of food aid—\$185 million for agricultural inputs, \$70 million for health care, \$52 million for relief survival items, \$32 million for water projects, and \$40 million for additional logistics.

However, even if all this aid is sent, it is nowhere near the \$20 billion that *EIR* has estimated as the minimum to end the famine on the continent and start development projects that could begin to get the continent producing food. African spokesmen have also called for major development efforts as well as food aid, and have stressed the fact that it is the economic crisis which has hit Africa which is to blame for the famine, not the drought as such.

At a meeting of the economic ministers of the Organization of African Unity which opened in Addis Ababa on Feb. 26, OAU Secretary General Peter Onu warned that Africa was facing "a catastrophe without precedent in the history of mankind" unless immediate and drastic measures were taken. He called for urgent action, not only to save the lives of the millions faced with starvation, but to build up agriculture and industry on the continent.

The Ethiopian head of state, Mengistu Haile Mariam, told the meeting that "no region of the world has been so hard hit by the world recession as Africa," as it faces falling prices for its exports of commodities and raw materials, rising prices for its industrial imports, and an increase in its foreign debt. He called on African nations to undertake a common initiative to obtain debt relief.