

Comment

Murder in the midst of famine

A little over a year ago — last Jan. 17 to be precise, I wrote a column called "The awful truth about Ethiopia." It dealt with plans by Ethiopia's Marxist regime to remove 2.5 million people from its rebellious, famine-stricken northern provinces and resettle them in the south. My column was greeted by many liberals with scorn.

Question asked one year ago: "Is this campaign a humanitarian effort, as the Ethiopians say, or a Stalinist-style 'final solution' to separatist movements?" And, the observation: "Unable to crush the rebels ... the government is now trying to depopulate the provinces and rob the separatists of vital civilian support. And, with incredible gall, Addis Ababa is asking the West to pay for this 'humanitarian' program."

Since I wrote these words, the Marxist regime in Addis Ababa has forced 600,000 civilians from Tigre and Wollo provinces into "resettlement" camps and then into the hot, malarial south. Western aid donors have paid for this operation. Such liberal nabobs as Canada's Maurice Strong have lauded the project.

Last fall the French group *Medecins sans Frontieres* about which I have already written — and which I urged be given the Nobel Prize in a 1985 column — was thrown out of Ethiopia. Their crime: This spunky, honest and effective team of French doctors and nurses went public with charges that Ethiopia's resettlement campaign was, in reality, a program of murder.

In brief, MSF asserted that 600,000 northerners had been lured into government camps by offers of free food — conveniently provided by gullible western



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donors. Once in the camps they were surrounded by barbed wire and armed guards. After weeks or months in these pestilential, semi-concentration camps the people were deported to the south.

According to MSF, over 100,000 have died in three months in these camps. UN observers confirm these charges, as do U.S. and West German aid officials. In fact, incredible to say, the resettlement camps have been killing *more* Ethiopians than famine.

The camps and resettlement zones in the south are short of food and water and abound in such diseases as typhus, typhoid, dysentery and shigella. And what keeps these death camps going is ever-flowing western money, provided by a credulous public whipped into an emotional froth by TV images of skeletal black babies.

What gullible westerners do not understand is that Ethiopia's continuing famine is more a creation of government policy than nature's caprice. The Marxist regime in Addis Ababa confiscated farmers' seed stocks, collectivized farms and outlawed private farming. In other words, it destroyed its own agricultural system in order to break resistance to communism

among conservative farmers. Resistance was crushed with famine.

Ethiopia was merely following Stalin's example in the Ukraine, destroying all opposition by starving to death his opponents. Except in Ethiopia the government-created famine got out of hand. The Marxist regime in Addis continues to spend one third of its budget on arms while its people starve. Remember last year's big party when \$80 million was spent on imported scotch and party favors while the West provided money and food to feed starving Ethiopians?

Medecins sans Frontieres had the guts to throw light onto Ethiopia's little genocide of northern tribesmen. Other aid groups there have remained curiously mute — after all, without famine they would have no jobs, no cause. So they remain silent, becoming accomplices to Ethiopia's crime. The West continues to provide the food that keeps Ethiopia's bloodthirsty rulers in power, that rewards their friends, that is denied their foes. In communist nations, where all food is controlled by the government and party, those who deviate can quickly starve.

One thing is painfully clear. Ethiopia's utterly ruthless regime cannot — must not — be trusted with any aid. Whatever we do send into that blighted country must go only on the condition that it is administered and distributed by foreign, non-Marxist officials — not including liberal western sycophants who fawn over the Marxist regime.

Let the Swiss Red Cross deliver aid. Ethiopia can be trusted only to starve, shoot and torture its people.