

DEVELOPMENT AID: A multi-billion dollar business for the donor-countries, a drama for Africa!

(Translated from Unabhängige Nachrichten of June 2007, by E. Thomson)

Before the start of the media-genic G-8 Summit, Nigerian Nobel Prize-winner for literature, Wole Soyinka, had nothing good to say about rock-singer Bono, nor about German Chancellor Angela Merkel. "They think we are stupid," as he was quoted in a FAZ report of 5 June 07, of which we provide the following: "These Bonos, Geldofs, however they are called, say that we must be helped, and insinuate that we cannot do so ourselves, insult the Nigerians. That is racism." This is how Soyinka and many others think in Africa, but nobody in the industrialized countries wants to hear about it. The best example occurred at Heiligendamm and the latest discussion about a drastic increase in development assistance (for Africa).

AFRICA'S STANDARD OF LIVING IS BELOW THAT OF LATE COLONIAL TIMES

Since 1960, roughly \$500 billion in development assistance has been pumped in the direction of Black Africa. But, today, in many places, the standard of living has fallen below that of late colonial times. For this reason, Kenyan economist James Shikwati pleads for an immediate end to further development-funding. Such funding has only spread corruption and dependence. The inflow of aid money actually frees the African regimes from any responsibility: Why should they rearrange their tax system to include more than the usual 6% of households if they can receive budget assistance from other countries? Why should they build granaries to prevent famines if international aid organizations are standing by? Why should foreigners finance roads, if Africans can do it themselves?

"IF I DON'T PROVIDE THE MONEY, I WILL HAVE A PROBLEM."

The unheard of money inflow has put most African regimes on a level of 'high class' beggary. One complaint is that the Africans are wise to the mechanism of developmental assistance and exploit it. Developmental assistance is the only 'industry' in the world in which proper accounts need not be kept. The only criterion for 'success' is often that the funding goals have been met. What is thereby obtained is unimportant. Or how would one consider the memorable meeting with a European Union representative in Nigeria who complained in a slightly drunken state that he has millions in Brussels earmarked for Nigeria, and that he must ponder the financing of local elections (in Nigeria!). As to the question of how Europe became the 6th largest oil-producer in the world, whose 'elite' in the course of a decade have embezzled the incredible sum of \$600 billion, to fund elections, the diplomat answered: "If I don't provide the money, I will have a problem." It is development assistance on behalf of one's career, so to speak.

DESERT-CREATION VIA DEVELOPMENT AID

Classical development assistance cannot be better described. Few projects have survived the departure of White technicians. Example: Chad. Somehow, the development-aiders got the idea of ending cattle deaths in the semi-desert by digging water wells. Hence, water wells were dug all over. But no one had considered that, in Chad, cattle were not goods, but status symbols. The more animals, the more esteemed their owner. Thanks to the development-aiders, who provided sufficient water, the herds grew in unheard of numbers. Since then, the great herds have stripped the soil of grass, thus turning the Sahel region into a genuine desert.

Hence, more projects were launched such as the construction of stone wall wind-breaks, for the protection of young trees, and to save more topsoil. But the inhabitants quickly cut the trees down for firewood, as soon as they could be used for such, since there was a market for firewood.

Such experiences on the part of development assistants are told with a tinge of cynicism, after the 3rd or 4th beer, combined with the request: "But please don't quote me." The list is endless.

"Who would help Africa should give no money!" (James Shikwati)

AN 'INDUSTRY' WITH PROFITS IN BILLIONS

Topmost on the "aid" list is the Congo road-building project financed by The World Bank, without fulfilling its purpose. The Chinese building contractor simply 'forgot' to build an essential bridge over a river, but that did not discourage The World Bank from granting its next order to the contractor. All was quite in order, on paper; that should be sufficient.

Development aid and emergency assistance are becoming an industry with billion dollar profits. The U.S. aid organization, USAID, is a good example. The U.S.A. provides development aid in products, which USAID distributes. But the grain shipments to Africa have one purpose: the sale of U.S. farm surpluses to the U.S. tax-payers on behalf of maintaining "price stability," that is, higher grain prices in the U.S.A. But such distribution ruins the local Af-

2) rican markets, because U.S. grain is unbeatably cheap.

CONTINENTAL DRAMA (Translator's note: U.S. 'aid' policy was previously known as "dumping". International racketeering was previously used to describe present practices, now called "Globalism.")

Development aid has actually developed into the drama of the continent, because the money costs the recipients nothing and works counter-productively. On the Ivory Coast, for example, villages were equipped with wells, at considerable effort and expense. The water was pumped manually, and the pumps were operated by pumphandles. When the handles were broken, the villagers would wait for Whites to come and repair them. The villagers' efforts to repair the pumps were not to be expected, since the wells had cost nothing, and their disuse caused no economic loss. Besides, the wells were not particularly popular: the people preferred to get their water from the river, as they had for generations, on the one hand. On the other hand, the river water allegedly tasted better.

KAFKAESQUE ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS

It is right that the donor countries have long wanted to know just what happened with their money. But the outcome is a sheer Kafkaesque administrative nightmare, with still more 'specialists' and an unsupervised army of additional "consultants," it would appear. Example, Mali: There are busily occupied 33 national and 22 multi-lateral aid organizations, in addition to which have come at least 100 NGOs or non-governmental organizations, all of which require supervision.

After a promotion by the OECD, 600 development projects have been undertaken at the same time in each Sahel Land (Mali, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Niger and Chad). That always requires an interim report every trimester, which makes 2,400 reports each year, which are transmitted to the appropriate ministries. In addition, there comes a cross-section of observation and evaluation missions: administrators who must, in the first place, administrate themselves.

MAJESTIC TREATMENT

While the Mali authorities are inundated with examples of divers standards of donor stipulations, development assistance develops more and more in the direction of "technical collaboration" in the form of foreign experts. The Malians evaluate these "expats" with mixed feelings. "If I receive a pledge of 12 million euros, of which 3 million must be given for the European experts, the aid melts away rather quickly," said former Mali minister Ag Erlaf.

Germany's somewhat assured Mali that this technical collaboration was a gift, requiring no repayment, but this does not change the fact that a 'modest' portion of the development aid funding would go to pay their own experts. Because of the credit-financed projects which are so many in Mali, the number of experts has multiplied enormously, and Mali has no influence in their recruiting. These experts live royally off such borrowed funds. Since they are far from home, they require plenty: A residence befitting their rank, servants, a large cross-country vehicle with chauffeur and regular flights back to their homelands. In addition come the tax exemptions: Regional office heads rarely have exemptions under 10,000 euros.

NO INTEREST IN ENDING CORNUCOPIA POLITICS

Critics like Nigerian Soyinka and Kenyan James Shikwati remain in the wilderness with their demands that this patronage system be ended. Too many obtain too good therefrom. The development aid ministries, in ending this cornucopia politics, have not the slightest interest. Which minister would make himself redundant?

The African regimes have no interest in becoming independent from development assistance so as to make an economic recovery with their own strength. Those foremost in lacking any such interest are the development assistants: They live on the supposition that they are going to be urgently needed.

AID TO AFRICA = INFINITE WASTE

What has the much-ballyhooed G8 Summit really achieved with its touted aid increase to Africa? Professor George Ayittey of Ghana is among Africa's leading economists, and he teaches economics at Washington's American University. These excerpts from his article in WamS of 20 May 2007 are revealing:

"UNCONSCIOUSLY, LIKE A BLIND DRIVER": "Despite its immense natural wealth, Africa remains deep in poverty, misery and debt. Africa is worth helping and must be helped, but 'more help for Africa' is stamped with sentimentality, hypocrisy and post-colonial guilt feelings, while pragmatism, reason and efficiency remain in the distance. Governments, development aid organizations and private persons have gone to Africa to help people whom they do not understand.

3) More than \$450 billion (six Marshall Plans!) were pumped into Africa since 1960, without perceptible results. The entire exercise resembles one who drives unconsciously and blindly. Africa's begging hat is full of holes, like a sieve. In 2004, the African Union calculated the cost of African corruption as \$148 billion annually. Flight of African capital amounts to \$22 billion annually. Civil wars cost at least \$15 billion annually.

In the 1960s, Africa could not only feed itself, but could also export food. Today, it requires nearly \$20 billion to import food, somewhat more than the \$19.6 billion it receives in donations.

Debt-relief and massive aid are absurd without stipulations, security, oversight mechanisms and reforms. The African government budgets are running out of control. Bribery and favoritism are the order of the day. Corruption prevails. Without reforms, forgiven debts will simply be replaced by new debts. Of course, Africa's leaders are not, with few exceptions, interested in reforms. One can demand the reduction of bureaucracy, & the creation of a 'Ministry to Reduce Expenditures'. One can demand more democracy, appoint a committee of creeps to write an election law, throw the opposition leader in jail, and halt the election, so as to remain in power. Of 53 African countries, only 16 are 'democracies'; only 8 have a free and independent press. Fewer than 8 are 'economic success stories.' Without genuine political reforms, still more African countries will implode. What is to be done?

'Smart Aid' can help. Such development aid empowers civil society and community groups to supervise the expenditure of aid funds, to kickstart reforms. To make this empowerment succeed, the people must receive accurate information, the freedom and the institutional means to free themselves from the stranglehold of repression, corruption and poverty. The agents of change and reform are to be sought outside the government leadership, and not in 'reform partnerships' with treacherous regimes.

The people of Africa need the following institutional tools: Free and independent news-media (to guarantee the free flow of information); an independent justice system (as guarantee of a government of law); independent elections commissions; independent central banks (to guarantee monetary stability and to stop the flight of capital); efficient and professional public officials; as well as neutral and professionally-equipped security forces.

Elections alone do not bring about democracy, nor does democracy occur in a vacuum. People need a 'political space' in which people express their opinions and request that their governments put their affairs in order, without being shot by security forces. People need a political space in which people may decide who shall govern them. In the greater part of Africa, no such space exists.

The entire European Union Development Program should be examined, not by EU officials alone or representatives of African governments, but by independent parties. Otherwise, more money will be wasted."

Please help distribute this flier so that people will be informed, so as to demand that such wasteful 'development aid' be stopped, immediately!

Translator's note: As a long-time political analyst and journalist, with almost a decade of residence in Central Africa, I can agree with the waste and inefficiency of so-called aid to Africa, which I agree should be stopped. I saw similar waste and corruption under the U.S. Alliance for Progress in Colombia in 1963 and 1964. The abuses of the "aid programs" are clear, but the proposed solution is not. It appears that the author(s) of this flier advocate some miraculous change in Africans' character. Assuredly, a different people, such as Danes or Chinese, would likely enhance African development without assistance. But I believe the ones who would 'help' Africa best would be those who left Africa alone, since they do not understand the Africans, as aforementioned. Sincerely, Eric Thomson.

THE West is being told to prepare for an influx of people escaping environmental catastrophes. These 'climate' refugees should be treated the same as those who flee political danger, a *Toronto Star* article by Peter Gorrie quotes some international experts as saying.

The number of people fleeing the spread of deserts or climate-change impacts such as drought and flooding is likely to hit 50 million within a decade and soar to between 135 million and 200 million by 2050, says a director of the U.N. University.

This figure will swamp the current global total of refugees from war, genocide and all other threats (19 million). While the problem grows, support for solutions is falling.

The main current problem is the spread of deserts, both because Earth's climate is warming and because impoverished people in drought-stricken areas are denuding the land for cooking fuel.

The Canadians missed two vital points: 1) Few countries in Africa have an effective programme in place to prevent the desert from encroaching. 2) The effect of goats (favoured by the primitive and the poor) grazing on dry lands can be catastrophic, because they nibble and destroy the roots of grasses, making it impossible for the grasslands to recover.

Poverty and climate change feed on each other: Once land is cleared of trees and vegetation, it reflects more of the sun's heat into the atmosphere, warming the climate. That, in turn, increases the spread of areas too dry to support vegetation. About 2 billion people live in dry areas threatened with becoming desert.

Plenty of solutions are suggested: Replanting vegetation, providing renewable energy sources such as solar power, developing eco-tourism, and combating climate change by reducing greenhouse-gas emissions. But, we are told, "some areas

won't be habitable any more. People will have to leave, and they will need the same help as political refugees." There can be no doubt about who will be expected to implement these solutions. In times of crisis, the poor and desperate do not respect property, so replanted vegetation would quickly be swallowed up by the human swarm; solar power plates would be stolen; eco-tourism would be as impossible as it is in Zimbabwe today, because of poaching. "Developed countries must prepare for a new class of refugee," say the 'experts'.

Canada, the USA, Europe, Australia and New Zealand are named as likely targets for these 'climate refugees', say the 'international experts'. Does anyone notice that these targeted countries are among the last remaining First World areas in the world?

During all of the thousands of millennia of our planet's history, it has undergone dozens of cataclysms – continental drift and violent impact resulting in

mountain ranges being thrust up, droughts, floods, lethal gas clouds, erupting volcanos, earthquakes, reversal of poles, expansion and shrinking of polar ice caps, rise and fall of sea levels, meteors crashing through our atmosphere down onto Earth. In the whole period since life began, the survivors of these cataclysms accepted responsibility for their own further survival, either by instinct or by conscious choices – or both.

Individual dash and dare, group solidarity, and the quiet processes of evolution played their part in the great escape from environmental disaster. Whole species perished. What extreme environmental pressure must there have been to force whales and dolphins, for instance, to return to the sea! Big brains developed, cultures and weapons were fashioned, perilous treks were undertaken by the heroic across land bridges over the sea, precipitous mountain passes crossed, savage wars fought over resources and territory. The lion never lay down with the lamb. The continuum of development went on. And *Homo sapiens*, that 'bad-weather animal', as Robert Ardrey calls us, developed from his humble ancestors in all parts of the world.

However, nowhere and at no time did false altruism demand that losers – who could contribute nothing and who had destroyed their own environment like locusts, or even those with 'bad luck' – be welcomed in the sanctuaries so painfully fashioned by the resourceful. If that had happened, no development would have been possible, and we would all have become 'climate refugees' – but with nowhere to go.

As Dr Phil says, "*We all have choices. We all need boundaries.*" And as Peter Scholl-Latour reminds us: "*We need a concept of sacred self-interest.*" Each individual and clan has to look after itself and the territory it fought for. If it doesn't – as every lizard, elephant, lion, mossie or eagle knows in some deep, wise recess of its being – it can expect ... nothing.

IN THIS ISSUE

- 1 The 'United States of Africa'
- 3 SA Current Affairs
- 4 Africa
- 5 "U.S. of Africa" (cont'd)
- 6 News in Brief
- 7 Report on Revisionists
- 9 British captives released from Iran
- 10 Middle East Today
- 12 France: New President
- 14 Russia: Yeltsin's Legacy
- 16 Far and Wide
- 19 Readers Forum
- 20 Four-footed friends, quotes



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