



Batie Refugee Camp in the Wollo regio

There are now numerous refugee centres in Ethiopia where at dawn they come to take away the dead whose life, already sucked nearly dry by malnutrition, has finally been stolen by the early morning chill. Each morning, in each camp, there are dozens of dead. Estimates of the number of Africans killed by starvation in the months of November and December run as high as three-quarters of a million. Two hundred thousand people are said to have died in Mozambique in the last two years.

The governments of the West and East, many of whose granaries are bursting with food, have finally begun to trickle supplies into the region. They call this "humanitarian aid," and talk of how their more advanced economies are coming to the aid of their weaker brethren who are suffering from a "natural disaster," from drought, lack of water, "too many people," plus the vicissitudes of internal war. Their "humanitarian aid" is as phoney as their explanation of the disaster. In fact, the imperialist system itself has everything to do with the large scale starvation in Africa.



Ethiopia



International "Relief"—a protein tablet

Famine — the Harvest of Imperialism

Cash crops such as coffee and cotton have replaced food crops in many areas. "Aid" programs have often discouraged grain production by the peasants. The depletion of the water table lying right below the surface of much of Northern Africa is due in part to imperialist introduced "modern" methods of farming inappropriate to local conditions. Food production dropped 10% in Africa as a whole from 1970 to 1980.

Now the imperialists are attempting to use the victims that they have created. The latest estimates are that 7.75 million are threatened by famine in Ethiopia alone—as pawns, to be

killed or saved depending once more upon how it serves their own ends. Reagan and the U.S. portray themselves as riding to the rescue of millions. In fact, West bloc aid, amounting to less than one fourth of what relief agencies estimate is needed, is hardly designed to end the starvation anyway.

Instead, the strategists of the West are hoping to use their "relief" to weaken the Mengistu regime in Ethiopia which is under tight Soviet tutelage. The death of hundreds of thousands of the starving is only consequential to them insofar as it affects this, their principal goal.

The Soviets and their clients in Africa have demonstrated an equally callous hypocrisy in face of the famine. Their own actual concerns were graphically illustrated in an incident in early December 1984 when refugees who had been organized by national liberation forces in Tigray to go to refugee centres in Somalia (so as to avoid those controlled by the fascist Ethiopian Dergue) were bombed by Soviet-supplied planes in the Ethiopian military. Shortly afterwards, Chernenko personally commended Dergue chieftan Mengistu for his "determined effort" in the face of the crisis. ■