

Nigeria Needs All Types of Industry

by Summer Shields,
LaRouche Youth Movement

In the year 2000, NASA released a composite of hundreds of photographs taken by the Defense Meteorological Satellites Program, titled "Earth at Night."¹ As the name suggests, the final image is a view of the Earth from space at night. Mankind's subduing of the Earth through infrastructure development is made clear by the intensity of man-made lights on the Earth's surface, as visible from space. The darker areas are the lesser-developed regions. In viewing this map, one cannot help but notice that the largest expanse of darkness, in terms of land area, exists on the continent of Africa.

This is not what should be meant when one says "black Africa."

Nigeria stands out uniquely on this colossal, underpopulated continent. It is by far the most populated country in Africa, with approximately 150 million inhabitants and a land area of 923,800 square kilometers, about one-tenth the size of the United States of America. Like most of sub-Saharan Africa, it is being devoured by unbelievably unjust poverty. HIV/AIDS, as documented, affects approximately 6 million citizens, and diseases that should no longer exist, such as malaria and yellow fever, still thrive. Small children, some with babies in hand, beg at busy intersections with no traffic lights, while crippled individuals call passersby "master," with a protruded hand asking for money.

These are the effects of a general disrespect for human life and intentional underdevelopment by foreign financial interests, as *EIR* has documented over the years.

The majority of the revenue produced by Nigeria comes from oil exports, and the majority of the oil drilling occurs in the greatly underdeveloped territory known as the Niger Delta. For that reason, this area has been wrought with violence by youth militias, who,

1. <http://apod.nasa.gov/apod/ap001127.html>

desperately seeking some of the revenues from the oil extraction, have kidnapped and even killed Royal Dutch Shell oil workers. While four Shell workers were being abducted, and five killed in the Niger Delta city of Port Harcourt, and the nearby city of Egbema, respectively, a two-man *EIR* team had the distinctive experience of engaging in a fact-finding tour of the region, which led them to the front door of the Ogoni kingdom in Rivers State.

Early Colonial Roots

The mid 19th Century marked the end of the British component of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. In June of 1885, the portion of the Niger Delta located in Rivers State and Ogoniland, became part of a British protectorate jurisdiction called Oil Rivers (named for its large production of palm oil), and by 1894, it was known as the Niger Coast protectorate.²

During the period of consolidation of British colonial power, consuls were appointed to the protectorate, most of whom were racist imperialists. One such reprehensible varmint, Consul Sir Richard Francis Burton, regarded all educated Africans as "The Curse of the West" for their intolerance of the British colonial manipulations of less edu-

2. Paul E. Lovejoy, "Historical Setting," *A Country Study: Nigeria* (Washington, D.C.: The Library of Congress), June 1991, <http://rs6.loc.gov/frd/cs/ngtoc.html>



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Godwin N.K. Giniwa, King of Ogoniland (left), with Lawrence Freeman, Summer Shields, and the Hon. Kenneth Kobani, Rivers State Minister of Finance. "We accept and want any type of industrial investment to make up for lost time," King Giniwa said. "We are prepared to bring lasting development."

cated natives.³

With regard to Africans who were British subjects under the protectorate, there was an intentional policy of disruption of their trade activities, defamation of character, and even rape. All this in the hopes that the British Empire, through its Royal Niger Company, could keep West Africans from consolidating a modern civilization.⁴ This, and continuing colonial policies in much of the 20th Century, have had reverberating effects for Nigeria, sparking artificially created ethnic turmoil to the present day.

A Message From the King of Ogoniland

Rivers State is fittingly named for its nine-month-long rainy season. Ogoniland is a designated “ethnic region” in the eastern portion of Rivers state that has seen its share of ethnic tumult and looting by foreign petroleum companies. The region has a population of 500,000 to 1 million people, who live in extremely impoverished conditions and have been without electricity for nearly a year.

In a truly unique and rare occurrence, *EIR* had a chance to meet with the chairman of the Ogoni Council of Traditional Rulers, King Godwin Giniwa, at his palace in Ogoniland. There *EIR* discovered a stark contrast to the typical liberal anthropologist and kindred environmentalist frame of mind. Over a meal of traditional goat hot pepper soup, King Giniwa imparted these words to *EIR*, when asked what message he would send back to a room full of youth in the United States:

“We will not pass up industry. . . . We accept and want any type of industrial investment . . . to make up for lost time. . . . We are prepared to bring lasting development.”

King Giniwa expressed the importance of individual human development and the need for college scholarships. He described how as a result of their living conditions (e.g., lack of electricity), they had lost their “self-decency” and “economic prosperity.”

Rivers State Minister of Finance Kenneth Kobani, whose father had been killed as a political opponent to Ken Saro Wiwa (which led to the latter’s execution) during the violence in Ogoniland in the 1990s, was also present at the dinner. Kobani listed a number of investments that could be made in the region by various industries, and was thankful that the question had been asked. In further discussions with the King’s son, it became clearer that this was a far-reaching plea for help and development that is shared with the other inhabitants of the region.

What say the anti-development environmentalists who more accurately portray the policy of intentional backwardness imposed on Africans by the British Empire? Contrary to

3. See: Dr. J.U.J. Asiegbu, “Some Notes On Afro-European Relations and British Consular Roles in the Niger Delta in the 19th Century,” *Journal of Niger Delta Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1977).

4. *Ibid.*

popular assumption that somehow traditional dark-skinned people of the world shun development and are prone to living “naturally” off of Gaia’s Earth, an assumption that is often postulated in such a way that the recreational use of marijuana or LSD is a foregone conclusion for the wielder of such a belief, development is requested and required.

In Closing: LaRouche Youth Movement

As a member of the international LaRouche Youth Movement (LYM), I was honored to travel to this largely forgotten continent for the first time, and to expand our influence, especially with the youth. The experience helped consolidate in my mind why we fight for the rights of all human beings, and why most of mankind, no matter how far away, even if corrupted by injustices committed against them, is beautiful and good.

Interview: Gov. Peter Otunuya
Odili, M.D.

Large Infrastructure Key to Nigeria’s Future

Dr. Odili is governor of Rivers state, Nigeria, in the Niger Delta region. The second largest oil-producing state, it is the heart of the nation’s hydrocarbon deposits, and is known as the “treasure base” of the nation. The Niger Delta region is also the world’s second largest wetland area.

Odili was interviewed by EIR’s Lawrence Freeman on Aug. 1, 2006, in Port Harcourt, the state capital. Also taking part in the interview was Prof. Charles C. Okigbo, Ph.D., Department of Communication, North Dakota State University.

EIR: Could you give our readers a brief history of the conditions here that existed prior to your taking office in 1999? There’s been a lot of discussion in Nigeria and around the world about the problems in infrastructure and poverty. And before we go into the programs you propose, could you tell us a little bit about how the situation reached this level here before you took office.

Odili: As you know, the present democratic government of Nigeria came on board on May 29, 1999. Prior to that, we had had a series of non-democratic governments. The state was created in 1967, as one of the first-generation states, twelve in number, six in the north, six in the south. The last democratic exercise before now, was in 1979 to ’83, under President