

A 'Marshall Plan' For the Niger Delta

The following article was excerpted and edited from reports sent to *EIR* by Lawrence Fejokwu, a researcher and journalist living in Nigeria, who has collaborated with *EIR* in disseminating the ideas of Lyndon LaRouche there. The Marshall-Plan-type proposal he discusses is intended to alleviate the extreme poverty that exists in the Niger Delta oil-producing region of southern Nigeria.

Despite its great natural wealth as the world's tenth-largest oil producer, Nigeria is still suffering from its refusal to break from the failed economic policies of the International Monetary Fund. The vast majority of Nigerians live on \$1-2 per day, in horrible conditions which unfortunately exist throughout Sub-Saharan Africa. There is no hope for Nigeria, or any other country in Africa, unless we overturn a century of genocidal-predatory policies executed by the financier-oligarchy based in the City of London. The international financial system is bankrupt, and has to be replaced with Lyndon LaRouche's New Bretton Woods system.

In the Niger Delta, armed gangs freely roam through the swamps, taking hostages and sabotaging pipelines—which



has resulted in a 25% reduction of Nigeria's daily output—and threatening to destabilize the whole country. Without real physical economic development and improvement in living standards, alienated youth facing a hopeless future will be an ever-growing potential recruitment base for these types of activities.

While the following proposal for a Marshall Plan for the Niger Delta does not provide all the answers, it is a useful contribution toward a solution. However, we must warn against any tendency to rely on the oil and gas companies that dominate production and commerce in this area, for the financing of infrastructure for a Marshall Plan. The private sector will not make the long-term investment for vital large-scale infrastructure projects in water, energy, roads, schools, and hospitals. Only the government, in accordance with its responsibility to provide for the general welfare, will make these necessary investments.

—Lawrence Freeman

Report From Nigeria

by Lawrence Fejokwu

Amidst frantic calls by patriotic nationalists and international agencies for a Nigerian-versed “Marshall Plan” to stem the violence in the Niger Delta, it has become imperative for the federal government to initiate strategies that will urgently stimulate accelerated socio-economic development in the Delta region.

Unless and until the government of Nigeria takes concrete and urgent steps to promote genuine development in the Niger Delta region, there will be a catastrophe in the years ahead, judging by the hostage-taking saga.

The nine states of the Delta region (Abia, Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross-River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo, Rivers) have made efforts toward accelerated development, using a 13% extra grant from the federation account. But one state, Rivers State, has initiated a revolutionary initiative for poverty eradication—the Rivers State Sustainable Development Plan (RSSDP).

Dr. Peter Odili, Governor of Rivers State, put this idea forward as a “Marshall Plan” to deal with the crisis. He underlined in his 1999 inaugural address: “Our youth are the future of our state. We will make the solution of their problems a major priority in our development efforts, and create new and positive avenues for the attainment of their innate potentials.”

Coming at a critical period in Nigeria's history, this plan will reduce political tension in the oil and gas region of Nigeria, and also create employment for millions of unemployed youths.

Odili's Strategic International Initiative has already taken

root in Rivers State, and the RSSDP has been operational over the past few years.

The highlights of the plan include:

1. Provision of uninterrupted power supply to every nook and corner of the state, specifically all the oil-producing communities, on completion of the 40 billion naira [\$314 million] Omuku Independent Power Plant (IPP) with an initial capacity of 300 megawatts. The IPP is complemented with a N15 billion state grid, which will transmit power to all corners of Rivers State, and possibly beyond.

2. Security has been strategically enhanced with the provision of high technology, such as vehicles for security operatives, including power-boats for patrolling the riverine communities, and sophisticated telecommunications equipment.

3. Training, equipping, and motivation of police and other security personnel.

4. Provision of housing and welfare facilities to motivate security personnel.

5. Provision of highly equipped helicopters both for security surveillance and inter- and intra-state transportation. Helicopters equipped with medical facilities are being procured for riverine communities.

6. A modern, fully equipped hospital is under construction in the state capital. The \$13.2 million Brathwait Memorial Hospital, under construction in Port Harcourt by an international consortium on a turnkey basis, will serve as one of the best reference hospitals in the country.

7. A massive road construction and maintenance program by internationally reputed construction companies is in progress throughout the state.

8. Rivers State is not only the land of oil and gas; it also has the largest palm oil estate in Nigeria, producing more than 120,000 tons of palm oil for export.

9. Fish farming and cassava cultivation are being seriously developed to empower entrepreneurs, create employment, and radically increase prosperity.

After providing a satisfactory environment—power supply, security of lives and property, a highly motivated workforce, and food security programs—the Rivers State Marshall Plan has now moved to the international scene. Governor Odili is inviting multinational stakeholders to come and invest in the state, which is the oil and gas capital of Nigeria, indeed, of Africa.

What does it profit Nigeria to amass billions of dollars in foreign reserves, while the Delta region, which has consistently supplied billions of dollars for Nigeria's sustenance over the past 45 years, remains a war zone?

The big international projects being executed in the Rivers State can be considered part of this overall plan. They include the International Aircraft Hangar near Port Harcourt International Airport, for servicing and maintenance of aircraft; construction of a second runway and perimeter fencing at the Port Harcourt Airport; construction of an industrial park, and several other construction projects.