

In defense of Nigeria

Those who have expostulated most self-righteously about the expulsion of non-citizens are out to destroy the country, writes Allen Salisbury.

Mr. Salisbury, a member of EIR's board of directors, and a member of the international executive committee of the Club of Life, recently returned from a trip to Nigeria.

The Western press has been having a field day over the unfortunate circumstances that led to the expulsion from Nigeria of between 1 and 2 million immigrants—circumstances which are almost entirely due to the deteriorating economies of the West and to the determination of some very powerful interests there to drastically reduce the population of Africa.

"The population explosion in Africa is a true thing, in Africa as a whole. I think it should be tied down to what it was at the beginning of this century," stated one of these strategists, Robert Gayre of Scotland. This outlook has increasingly shaped the foreign policy of the industrialized nations toward the developing sector, such that today virtually no loan comes from the International Monetary Fund or World Bank without hideous conditionalities aimed at shrinking the population. It is in this context that Nigeria—with one-quarter of the black population of Africa, or an estimated 80 to 120 million people—has become a principal target for destabilization.

The Western press coverage of the Nigerian expulsions displayed a jackal-like hypocrisy. *Newsweek*, for example, lied outright, printing a picture of soldiers beating Ghanaian refugees with a caption, "Justice Nigeria-style." The only problem was that the picture was not taken anywhere in Nigeria; it was taken at the Benin-Togo border, and the troops were from Benin. In typical *Newsweek* fashion, the only correction that appeared was a one-line sentence at the bottom of an official protest from the Nigerian information ministry printed in the Letters to the Editor column.

French press coverage was equally atrocious. In a centerfold in *Le Monde*, Jean-Claude Pomonti gloated that Nigeria is no longer the big brother in Africa, and lied that teachers and skilled workers were placed under the expulsion order. *Le Monde's* Jan. 25 editorial asserted that the expulsions reflected the failure of Nigeria's Green Revolution, a program which has often been attacked in the West as overly ambitious and dependent on modern technologies.

This comes from the same Malthusian policy grouping whose Swiss-influenced oligarchy has not hesitated to initiate

military coups in francophone African states at the drop of a hat—except in the case of Libya's invasion of Chad, when the French clearly had the responsibility to act, but did nothing.

The attack on the Green Revolution was echoed by the *London Times* in a March 3 centerfold feature which recommended that Nigeria give up its development projects and devalue its currency. Nigeria has just signed an irrigation assistance pact with Sudan which will aid in developing 11 river basin irrigation and agricultural projects.

In West Germany, the Social Democrats squealed against Nigeria with the mock outrage of an anthropologist who discovered that her servants occasionally spit in the soup. These are the same Social Democrats who have kept Turkish guest workers from the hope of full-fledged citizenry. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, the country's newspaper of record, had run a statement not long before accusing the guest workers of taking advantage of German residency to increase their population, and calling for measures to limit Turkish-origin demographic growth, while former Social Democratic Chancellor Helmut Schmidt is currently globetrotting with Henry Kissinger, preaching the doctrine of population control.

The British media, especially the BBC, were equally vicious on the subject of their former colony.

The background

Until its recent economic crisis, it was Nigeria's policy to allow an open door with respect to Africans from other countries seeking to escape to a better life in Nigeria. Along with this influx, however, came an organized migration of radical religious sects to both the north and the south of the country. These sects have been responsible for the murder of thousands of Nigerian citizens in riots and other upheavals, and posed an obvious national security threat to Nigeria—particularly with elections approaching.

As for the economic situation, a review of the conjuncture leading up to the expulsion order shows that the crisis was principally caused by the very Westerners who took so much delight in their recent press attacks on Nigeria.

Gulf Oil, for example, suspended lifting oil for two months on Jan. 7, then announced that it would resume operations at a greatly contracted level. Other companies lifting oil in Nigeria have done the same. Moreover, late last year West

German Minister of Economic Cooperation Jürgen Warnke announced that the Kohl government would cut development aid to five African countries—Benin, Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia, and Algeria—as well as India, because those countries are “anti-West,” and would also cut aid to Third World countries deemed to have “disproportionate military budgets.”

The International Monetary Fund has incessantly pressured Nigeria to devalue its currency, and thereby double its indebtedness, a proposal Nigerian officials insist, rightly, that they will not accept. Barclays Bank is now selling the Nigerian currency, the *naira*, at black-market rates, and there is evidence of a massive dumping of counterfeit *naira* on the markets.

And amidst the press furor about the expulsions and the economic crisis, no mention has been made that in the weeks prior to the expulsion order, Nigeria was attempting to negotiate a \$1.1 billion loan from Saudi Arabia to help it weather the oil crisis. The Saudis refused to provide the loan, under pressure from the U.S. State Department. A spokesman for Chase Manhattan Bank had said last summer that the bank no longer had any intention of granting loans to Nigeria for development purposes; at best, financing would be confined to credits for food and consumer products.

The upcoming elections

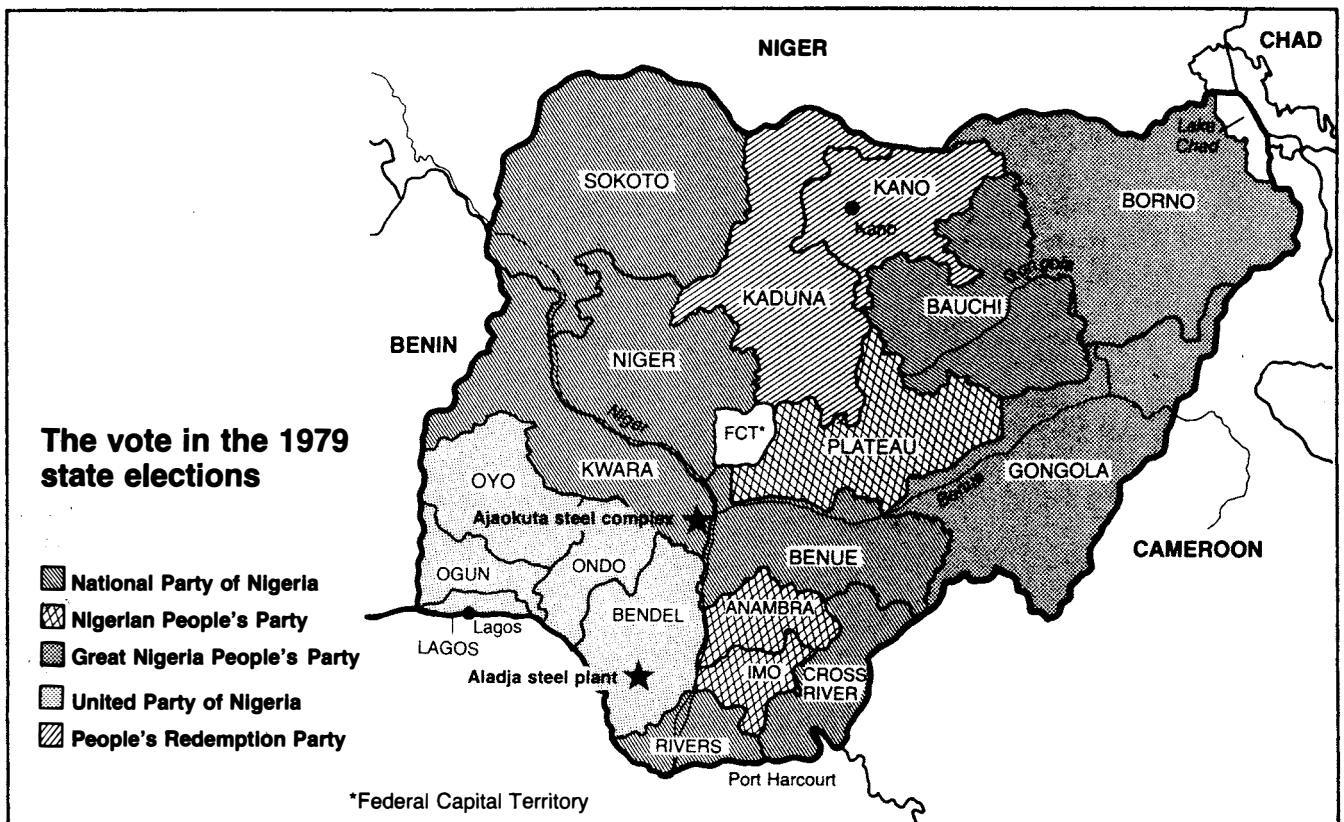
The hypocrisy of the U.S. press since the expulsions is

particularly disgusting because, despite the fact that the Soviet Union aided the federal government in Nigeria’s 1967-70 civil war, when the leaders of that nation decided on a form of government to replace military rule, they chose the American constitutional system with a president, vice-president, Senate, and House of Representatives. During my visit to Nigeria, it was a pleasure for me to see schoolchildren engaged in debates as to whether the American constitutional system or the British parliamentary system was a better form of government (debates that rarely occur any more in the United States). The American position always won out.

Nigeria has had its present form of government since 1979, when the presidential elections were won by Alhaji Shehu Shagari and his party, the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), with only 33.7 percent of the total vote. The five political parties presently existing are closely associated with tribal and religious groupings. The NPN, despite the fact that it is dominated by the Hausa and Fulani ethnic groups in the north—who are predominantly Muslim—is the only party in the country with significant membership from the other tribal and religious sections of Nigeria.

The Nigerian People’s Party (NPP), headed by Chief Nnamdi Azikiwe, has its power base in the southeastern part of the country, which is predominantly Ibo and Roman Catholic.

The People’s Redemption Party (PRP) is based among



the northern Hausa Muslims; the main plank in its electoral platform is rejection over the compromises the NPN has made with the south and the Christians.

The Great Nigerian People's Party (GNPP), also a northern-based party, won the governorships of Borno and Gongola states in the 1979 elections.

The United Party of Nigeria (UPN) is headed by Chief Obafemi Awolowo, with its power base among the Yoruba in the southwest.

Presently, the opposition parties have formed a somewhat shaky confederation called the Progressive People's Alliance (PPA) and are tentatively committed to supporting a candidate chosen by that coalition.

Because of the complex formula involved in a presidential election, there is all sorts of room for forces outside Nigeria to intervene and manipulate the outcome. Under the constitution, a president cannot be elected by a simple majority; in order to prevent a candidate from winning based on the strength of only one tribal group, the constitution holds that a victorious candidate must get at least 25 percent of the vote in at least two-thirds of the states.

Economic prospects

The economics of Nigeria's federal system are as follows: The 19 states and the federal government are funded by dividing oil revenues. The federal government receives 50 percent, the states 40 percent, and local government 10 percent.

The decline in oil revenue has severely affected Nigeria, as it has other OPEC members, forcing a cutback in some development plans and restricting imports, especially consumer goods. Nigeria is dependent on oil sales for 90 percent of its foreign exchange. The import restriction has been geared, not to cutting the living standards of the population, but to weighting the economy toward heavy industry and infrastructural development; Nigerians are aware that no country on earth has developed economically except by protecting its industries from dumping and providing protected markets.

Nigeria is going ahead with plans to dredge its river system to facilitate the transport of iron and steel from its two steel plants at Aladja and Ajuokuta. Three rolling mills are under construction at Jos, Katsina, and Oshogbo; other rolling mills are on the drawing boards. As a result of the international economic crisis, Nigeria has, however, postponed a \$2 billion-plus plan to build a standard-gauge railroad linking the Ajaokuta steel complex to Port Harcourt.

It is impossible to say how many further economic shocks Nigeria can withstand, but it can be emphasized that the country is not without weapons. Together with Saudi Arabia Nigeria could easily participate in bankrupting Britain's North Sea oil corporation, BNOC, which has taken the lead in the operation to destroy the large-population OPEC producers by lowering the price of North Sea oil below OPEC's prices. North Sea oil competes directly with Nigerian oil (both are

of the same high quality). The price-cuts meant that purchasers of Nigerian oil broke their contracts. If the Saudis and Nigeria deliberately drove the price to an extreme temporary low, BNOC, with its relatively high production costs, could be forced under. In tandem with a debtors' cartel to force a flow of credit for industrial development, this could put Nigeria on the track of rapid growth.

And, as the London *Daily Telegraph* has pointed out, Nigeria is Britain's largest trading partner, which represents another potential for leverage.

To refer back to the international press: this writer has never seen such a display of hypocritical racism. Not only are the media's controllers out to destroy Nigeria: don't believe for one second that they give a damn about the deportees.

Documentation

African officials blast Club of Rome, IMF

Africa has suffered the most deeply of any continent at the hands of the colonial oligarchy which organized the Bretton Woods system at the end of World War II. At the time of independence in the early 1960s, Africa was balkanized into mostly small, underpopulated countries: 24 of the 39 Sub-Saharan countries in Africa have a population of less than 5 million, and 12 of these 24 have less than 1 million. Only 6 of the 39 have more than 15 million.

The draconian conditionalities imposed by the World Bank and IMF, in the context of the depression crisis of the international economy, have in most cases wiped out the first steps of progress that African countries made in the period immediately after independence. As a solution, the World Bank is now proposing, as described by its infamous Berg Report, the restoration of colonial economic organization. The Berg Report categorically calls for African nations to forget about the national institutions necessary to guide the development process, and remain content with small-scale agriculture, using primitive technology, and producing cash crops for export, and extracting raw materials to generate foreign exchange. This is exactly how economies looked in Africa under their respective colonial administrations.

Zaire, for example, a country with tremendous potential for industrialization, has been completely destroyed as a result of World Bank and IMF policies. The central government is no longer in control of sections of the country as transport and communications infrastructure fall apart.

During the recent Non-Aligned summit in March in New