

served to strengthen the most radical factions, further closing the door to a negotiated settlement.

IDF's Grave Miscalculation

During the night of Aug. 24, a two-man team from the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine infiltrated a fortified Israeli military outpost in the Gaza Strip. Armed with assault rifles and grenades, the team caught the Israelis by surprise and killed three soldiers, including the major commanding the relief force deployed to rescue the outpost. Seven others were wounded. The two Palestinians were killed only after a massive manhunt involving helicopters and search parties.

The DFLP's highly professional attack demonstrated the biggest vulnerability of the IDF: the arrogance of an occupation army; the same disease that led to the defeat of the French in Algeria and the Americans in Vietnam. The attack represents the first guerrilla war-type operation to be launched by the Palestinians. Although the Palestinians might calculate its success as a great victory, it could at the same time push Sharon to escalate the conflict, with the deployment of even greater force, for fear of getting bogged down in a war of attrition.

Israeli military commentator Reuven Pedatzur, writing in the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz* on Aug. 26, underscored the grave danger of miscalculation by the IDF. Pedatzur warns that the ever-escalating operations of the IDF "could bring about an uncontrolled deterioration to an all-out war with the Palestinians, and even a regional war.

"Neither the Presidents of Egypt and Syria, nor the leaders of the other Arab states, will be able to persist in their policy of standing on the sidelines if an Israeli bomb causes the death of 250 Palestinians. Even [Egyptian President] Hosni Mubarak, who has stated frequently that a regional war is not an option for him, will be forced to react, even if by means of symbolic measures.

"The entry of Egyptian troops into Sinai, as such a symbolic move, could bring about a clash with the IDF. The transfer of a Syrian division close to the Golan Heights, as a gesture of support for the Palestinians by [Syrian President] Bashar Assad, is liable to trigger an Israeli military reaction and an unplanned escalation."

Pedatzur warns that what the top echelons of the IDF "fail to understand, or prefer to ignore, is that what they are engaged in is not a 'rolling operation,' as they call it, but the prelude to a 'rolling war.'"

Polls show 70% of Israelis would accept a freeze on settlement building in the Occupied Territories, and a negotiated peace. But will be no challenge to Sharon within Israel as long as the United States does not intervene, pressuring both sides and backing a peace based on real regional economic development. Otherwise a new religious war, featured in repeated warnings by U.S. Presidential pre-candidate Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr. to the nations involved, threatens all of Eurasia.

No 'Peace Dividend' For Suffering Nigeria

by Lawrence K. Freeman

On May 29, 1999, the first democratically elected government of Nigeria in two decades took over the reins of government. There was optimism from many Nigerians, that newly elected President Olusegun Obasanjo — who as military head of state in 1979, had relinquished his power — would lead the country to the "promised land" by the good graces of the West. From the day Obasanjo took office, he has campaigned around the world for cancellation of Nigeria's unpayable, almost \$32 billion debt to the International Monetary Fund's banking consortium, all the time begging for the "democracy dividend" that has not, and will not ever be granted through such channels.

Against this background, the importance of bringing Lyndon LaRouche's ideas to Nigeria's new capital, Abuja, on Aug. 13, should be understood. LaRouche's analysis of the imploding global financial system was highlighted at the fourth anniversary of *Conscience International* magazine, organized by its publisher, Chief Abiola Ogundokun. The prestigious day-long gathering, also attended by the Nigerian press and media, met at the Nicon Hilton, divided between presentations of scholarly papers, and awards to governors, members of the National Assembly, and other outstanding individuals. The proceedings were chaired by Alhaji Lateef Kayode Jakande, a political personality from western Nigeria, who has been active since the founding of the First Republic in 1960; and by special guest, Nigerian Ambassador to the United States, Dr. Jibril Aminu.

The proceedings were opened by Chief Abiola, who discussed the accomplishments of *Conscience International* over the last four years, giving special attention to its coverage of the economic forecast of LaRouche. "In our November 1997 edition," Abiola said, "we reached out to Germany and brought you what turned out to be one of the greatest predictions of recent times. I sat down with a towering authority on global economics and world politics, Lyndon LaRouche, who predicted the crash of the International Monetary Market in the year 2000. This prediction . . . turned out to pass like every other LaRouche prediction before it. This was a special lead story that read like a comprehensive text on world economics, and remarkably underscored our stance for truth and development of Nigeria and Africa."

Ambassador Aminu, following Chief Abiola, expanded on LaRouche's unique stature in the world as an economist, and recounted a Washington meeting with LaRouche. "The world should listen to Mr. LaRouche," the ambassador in-



A street scene in Abuja, dominated by the “informal economic activity” which proliferates in Nigeria’s wrecked economic circumstances.

sisted. He urged the 175 in attendance to heed the presentation of *Conscience International’s* featured speaker—this writer—as “Mr. LaRouche’s number one disciple.” That presentation was “The Time Is Now, For a New Bretton Woods.”

Attending were Nigerian Senators and Congressmen, including the Deputy President of the Senate, State Governors, Deputy Governors, former Ministers, and regional and national leaders. Prof. Sam Aluko, the well-known national anti-IMF economist, summarized his paper on the Nigerian naira’s exchange rate and the nation’s economy, and excerpts were read from LaRouche collaborator Uwe Friesecke’s paper, “Peace Through Development: A Long Overdue Approach to Africa’s Problems.” Alhaji Wada Nas, a columnist and former minister, also spoke on “The Thorny Road to 2003.”

IMF Policies Are Not Democratic

In the first 27 months of the Obasanjo Administration, hopes of progress have quickly turned to a growing feeling of desperation. While the overt signs of military control are gone, and the Murtala Muhammed International Airport in Lagos has been transformed into a functioning airport for travellers in and out of the country, there is no question that the economy is in worse shape, and the struggle for daily existence for most Nigerians has become difficult. During the regime of Gen. Sani Abacha (1993-98) there was at least a resistance to the complete takeover of the country by the IMF-World Bank. Patriotic Nigerians, allied with people like Professor Aluko—then Chairman of the National Economic Intelligence Committee—and followers of Lyndon LaRouche, had an impact in reversing some of the more egregious pro-IMF policies of the pre-Abacha regime, that of Gen. Ibrahim Babangida.

Abacha refused to accept even one new loan from the IMF, reversed the rampant deregulation of the banking sys-

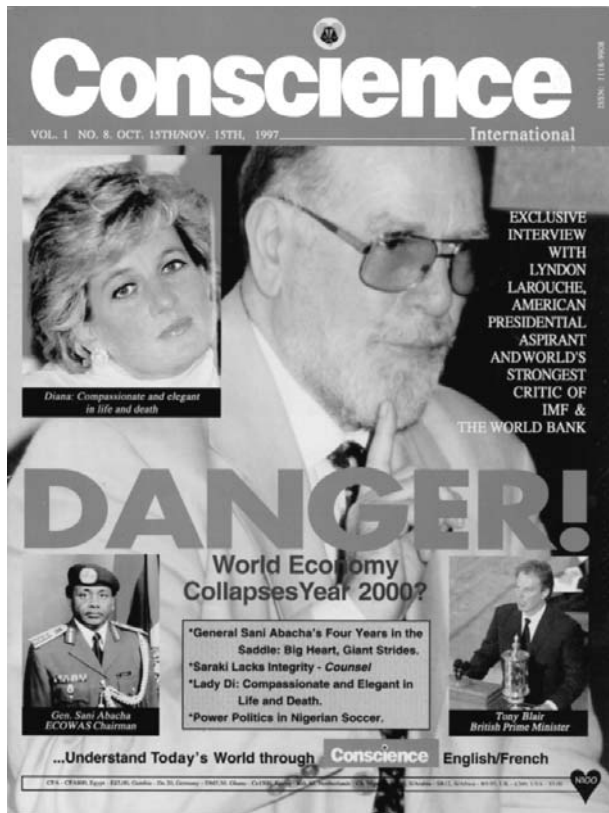
tem, and lowered interest rates. While he failed to energize the Nigerian economy in the way necessary, the financier elite and the oil cartels could not count on his strict obedience to their destructive policies.

Now the IMF and World Bank are entrenched in supervisory positions, which allow these institutions to direct the finances of Nigeria, with two official IMF Representatives officially residing in Abuja. They are there to oversee an acceleration of privatization of numerous state-run companies; the deregulation of the gigantic oil industry—which generates 77% of Nigeria’s revenue at \$16 billion a year; the restriction of direct government spending; and the reduction of the already pitiful minimum wage.

This has not gone down well with the population, and there is public debate, and news coverage discussing the IMF’s role in the country. The trade unions and some politicians oppose some of their policies, but under the new government, the IMF has virtual free run of the country. This was not enough for London’s *Financial Times*, which on July 30 criticized the IMF and Nigeria for “perpetuating a facade of reform.”

The Obasanjo Administration proclaimed to raise the minimum wage to 7,500 naira, up from 3,500 naira, which has not even universally taken effect. The naira is now officially 114 to the dollar (up to 145 on the black market), which is a 23% devaluation from 87 naira to the dollar in 1999. An airport worker still makes only \$30 a month, and if the raise goes through, it will rise to \$60 a month. Thus, workers make between \$1-2 a day. But Obasanjo, following the example of the Roman Empire, will give them “bread and circuses”: the single largest expenditure of the government is the construction of a new soccer stadium in Abuja at the cost of \$345 million.

With only 7-8 million of 120 million people in the labor



The November 1997 issue in which Nigeria's Conscience International detailed Lyndon LaRouche's warning of a "world economy collapse 2000." With that collapse now under way, Conscience invited LaRouche representative Larry Freeman to address its annual seminar for 2001, on what to do now.

force, and unemployment officially at 65%, most Nigerians survive by scraping out an existence in the "informal economy" or small-scale peasant farming. This "informal economy" represents a horrible waste of human potential. As one drives through the intersections of Lagos, cars are surrounded by children and teenagers selling every conceivable consumer product from bags or bushels they carry in their arms or on their heads. Some 45% of the Nigerian population are 15 years old or younger. At some intersections, beggars mob the cars asking, "Master, master, can you give me some money?"

Unemployment has led to the formation of large gangs of up to 40 people, strong enough to overpower the guarded homes of the wealthy, whom they rob and kill. There has been a huge increase in crime since the end of the Abacha regime, as well as an increase in tens of thousands being killed due to "ethnic-tribal" conflicts. While this is the result of outside manipulation, the large number of unemployed, especially youth, and the extreme poverty, provide an ever-expanding pool of desperate, frustrated youth, with no future, and little basis for optimism.

The declining quality of life, and the lack of confidence in any leadership, have led people to nostalgically look back upon the Abacha years. Far worse, citizens are considering

electing General Babangida—the former military leader responsible for destroying Nigeria from 1983-88 by implementing the IMF structural adjustment programs—as President in 2003.

What Future for Nigeria and Africa?

Politics in Nigeria is already dominated by the jockeying of candidates and parties for 2003. Obasanjo's ruling party, the People's Democratic Party-PDP, controls the majority of elected offices, but new coalition parties are being formed, hoping to capitalize on the population's disappointment. The lack of viable leading candidates has given Obasanjo or Babangida a leg up to win the Presidency.

Unfortunately for the people who are suffering, few, if any, constructive policies are being put forward by these parties. The horrible life for most Nigerians—the majority are very, very poor, and only a tiny minority are very, very rich—is a microcosm for sub-Saharan Africa, except that many countries are actually worse off. The sub-Saharan continent is dying. Hundreds of millions of African already live in a New Dark Age. Adequate infrastructure in hospitals, schools, railroads, clean water, medicine, and electrical power doesn't exist.

Excluding South Africa, all of Africa has just 171,000 kilometers of paved roads—less than Poland. Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for just 2% of world exports, and even a smaller percentage of manufactured goods. AIDS is ravaging the populations, the economies, and the labor force. Five million children under the age of five die each year as a direct result of intentional policies to reduce Africa's population.

Sub-Saharan Africa in particular, has been so destroyed by the immoral colonialist looting policies of the last two centuries, that it can not generate the economic means *internally* to pull itself out of its deadly decline. The stated intention of imperialist Cecil Rhodes at the end of the 19th Century to clear the "natives" off the land in order to get the "wealth" under the land—reiterated by Henry Kissinger in the 1970s as official Anglo-American policy—is the root cause for Africa's deplorable condition today.

LaRouche's New Bretton Woods system and his global infrastructure program—the Eurasian Land-Bridge—are the only means to transform the African continent, and to develop its rich natural resources. Such a program, initiated from outside Africa, is what African statesmen and intellectuals must fight for inside Africa.

Some may object, saying that we must solve our local or regional problems first, before we can consider such global efforts. That kind of thinking would not only be short sighted, but fatal. The only realistic hope for survival, and for the total transformation of the dying sub-Saharan continent, is to intervene now, at the point of the disintegration of the world's financial-monetary system, with LaRouche's alternative. Thus, the discussion of LaRouche's ideas in Abuja, is of strategic significance for the future of Africa, and the world as a whole.