

Captions:**CURSE OF THE BLACK GOLD**By **Ed KASHI**

Niger, 2006



Photo 1 -

An oil spill from an abandoned Shell Petroleum Development Company well in Oloibiri, Niger Delta. Wellhead 14 was closed in 1977 but has been leaking for years.



Photo 2 -

In June of 2004 Wellhead 14 finally released an oil spill of over 20,000 barrels of crude. Workers subcontracted by Shell Oil Company clean it up.



Photo 3 -

King Nemi Tamunoiyala Oputibeya the Xth, of Okrika Town in the Niger Delta, sits on his throne. He was made a new king in 2002, as part of the evolution of the tribal communities in the oil rich Niger Delta.



Photo 4 -

In the oil town of Afiesere, in Warri North district of the Niger Delta, local Urohobo people bake "krokpo-garri", or tapioca in the heat of a gas flare. Since 1961, when Shell Petroleum Development Company first opened this flow station, residents of the local community have worked in this way. Life span is short for these people, as pollutants from the flare cause serious health problems.



Photo 5 -

Trans Amadi Slaughter is the largest abattoir in the delta. They kill thousands of animals a day, roast them, cut them up and prepare the meat for sale throughout Rivers State and the rest of the delta. Nearly all of the workers here, especially the meat handlers, are Hausa and Yoruba, mostly muslim too. In the delta fish was traditionally the main source of protein, but as fish stocks have dwindled due to pollution from oil and over fishing, meat is becoming more common in the delta.



Photo 6 -

Okrika is a troubled area near Port Harcourt that has oil, refineries, pipelines and violence. Factional fighting is common here. Fishing is struggling, like in most of the delta, but was once the main source of employment.



Photo 7 -

The Cherubim And Seraphim Mount Zion Finima church is an African-Christian church that has branches throughout the delta. It was founded by a Nigerian man in the early 20th century.



Photo 8 -

In the Ogoniland village of Kpean, an oil well head that had been leaking for weeks has turned into a raging inferno. The local youths keep watch, waiting for Shell to come and put the fire out. This is an environmental disaster for the local people, as it effects their crops, their water and air. Near the village of Kpean in Ogoniland, a Shell oil wellhead leaks oil into the surrounding farm lands. Even though Shell has not been allowed to pump oil from its 125 wells in Ogoniland since 1993, they still have wells that are leaking and often unattended or maintained. This lack of action, which pollutes the lands and forces farmers and fishermen out of work, makes relations between the local communities and Shell very fractious. This Shell oil well is more than 30 years old and this scenerio is typical of the kinds of ongoing problems with the oil works of the Niger Delta.



Photo 9 -

In this very poor village, with no oil concessions, people barely have enough food to eat. Their former fishing grounds are nearly depleted and they only eat frozen fish. They have been left with no options for work. 50 years of oil has brought them nothing. Ebia Amakady, 18, with her two year old son asleep.



Photo 10 -

Tanker drivers wait for work in the Tanker Park of PTD (Petroleum Tanker Drivers), the only one in Delta state. Due to the crisis in the delta this year, the refinery in Warri has been nearly shut down for production, so many of these drivers have been waiting for 3 months to get oil products to deliver around Nigeria. This is one of the worst slowdowns in Nigerian history.



Photo 11 -

In Uvwie, a local district of Warri, a funeral procession for Roseline Okotie, 63, is as festive as sad. Tradition says that if the deceased has lived a decently long life, then the community, family and friends should treat it as a celebration. If the deceased is young, then the mood is much more somber or doesn't take place at all. Roseline had 33 grandchildren and some of them observe the event from close range. The family dresses up and marches along with the colorful burial band.



Photo 12 -

In the Igaw village of Oporoza three of the nine MEND fighters that were recently killed in a military ambush are laid to rest. MEND (Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta) members had just negotiated the release of a Shell worker taken hostage. While on the way back through the creeks to deliver the worker to freedom, Nigerian military boats ambushed them and killed all nine as well as the Shell worker. Armed militants with MEND make a show of arms in support of their fallen comrades deep in the swamps of the Niger Delta.



Photo 13 -

Militants with MEND brandish their weapons in the creeks of the Niger Delta. Here they check a former Nigerian Army floating barracks that they had destroyed in March of 2006. 14 soldiers died in that attack and due to acts like this by MEND, 20% of Nigeria's oil output has been cut.



Photo 14 -

With the Mobil Exxon Gas Plant across the water, fishermen arrive to drop their catches of bonga fish, gold fish, silver fish and crayfish. Due to pollution caused by the oil companies, the catches have decreased in quality and quantity. This has caused major problems of unemployment for the local young men.

This scene is in the fishing village of Finima, which is a newly relocated community caused by the rapid growth of the Nigerian Liquified Natural Gas plant on Bonnie Island.

None of the locals are given work within any of the gas and oil facilities on Bonnie Island, which has caused widespread resentment and frustration.



Photo 15 -

Scenes in old Bonny Town on Bonnie Island. This is a historical place, where the slave trade and palm oil trade previously was based. Now it's stuck in poverty and under development while the oil and gas companies expand and grow. None of the locals are given work within any of the gas and oil facilities on Bonnie Island, which has caused widespread resentment and frustration. The pollution and environmental degradation of the Niger Delta is striking, particularly in the towns and cities, where the evidence of no sanitation is overwhelming.



Photo 16 -

This scene is in the fishing village of Finima, which is a newly relocated community caused by the rapid growth of the Nigerian Liquefied Natural Gas plant on Bonnie Island. None of the locals are given work within any of the gas and oil facilities on Bonnie Island, which has caused widespread resentment and frustration.



Photo 17 -

General scenes of Nigerian workers and some expat oil workers on the Amenam Kpono oil platform off the Niger Delta in the Atlantic Ocean. This platform produces 125,000 barrels of oil a day for Total of France and employs approximately 90% Nigerians, but few from the Niger Delta.



Photo 18 -

A Nembe fishing village in Bayelsa state with a Shell pipeline running through its little harbor. Mr. Esau Goldsmith, 57, works to fix the shore by his fishing shed, which he doesn't use for fishing anymore. The pollution has all but killed fishing in this tiny community.



Photo 19 -

At a Total gas drilling installation in Rivers State, a Chinese contractor, ZPED, works with Nigerians and the French company to drill for gas. This field is part of the only onshore oil exploitation that Total has in the Niger Delta. Total started here in 1968 and this is the 125th well they have drilled. The Chinese have started to make inroads in the delta and this is an indication of that.



Photo 20 -

Children beg on the streets of the oil city of Port Harcourt in the Niger Delta. Poverty is rampant there and a crumbling infrastructure reflects the neglect of the government even while the riches of oil continue to flow.