

Complete Statement by Ken Saro-Wiwa To Ogoni Civil Disturbances Tribunal

21 September 1995

I repeat that we all stand before history. I and my colleagues are not the only ones on trial. Shell is on trial here, and it is as well that it is represented by counsel said to be holding a watching brief. The company has, indeed, ducked this particular trial, but its day will surely come and the lessons learned here may prove useful to it, for there is no doubt in my mind that the ecological war the company has waged in the delta will be called to question sooner than later and the crimes of that war be duly punished. The crime of the company's dirty wars against the Ogoni people will also be punished.

My name is Kenule Beeson Saro-Wiwa. I live at Simaseng Place, 9 Rumuibekwe Road, Port Harcourt. I am a writer, publisher, environmentalist and human rights activist.

I am the President of the Ethnic Minority Rights Organization of Africa (EMIROAF). I am also the current President of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) which was founded in 1990 to struggle non-violently for the political, economic and environmental rights of the Ogoni people. The motto of the movement is "Freedom, Peace and Justice".

The Ogoni are a distinct ethnic group, numbering 500,000 and inhabit the coastal plains terraces to the north of the Niger delta in south-east Nigeria. Living in an area of 404 square miles, Ogoni is one of the most densely populated rural areas in the world.

Oil was discovered in Ogoni by Shell in 1958 and about 900 million barrels of oil of estimated value 30 billion US dollars have been mined from the area since then. There are in Ogoni 96, oil wells connected to five oilfields where gas has been flared twenty-four hours a day for thirty-five years. Shell's oil pipelines criss-cross the surface of Ogoni lands dangerously. There are, as well, a fertilizer plant, two oil refineries, a petrochemical plant and a seaport. Most of the oil wells in Ogoni are operated by Shell. Chevron operates the balance.

In 1990, the Ogoni took stock of their condition and found that in spite of the stupendous oil and gas wealth of their land, they were extremely poor, had no social amenities, that unemployment was running at over seventy per cent, and that they were powerless, as an ethnic minority in a country of 100 million people, to do anything to alleviate their condition. Worse, their environment was completely devastated by three decades of reckless oil exploitation or ecological warfare by Shell. In brief, the Ogoni were faced with environmental degradation, political marginalization, economic strangulation, slavery and possible extinction.

The Chiefs and leaders of Ogoni therefore adopted an Ogoni Bill of Rights (OBR) in which they demanded (a) the right to self-determination as a distinct people in the Nigerian Federation; (b) adequate representation as of right in all Nigerian national institutions; (c) the right to use a fair proportion of the economic resources of their land for their development and (d) the right to control their environment. These demands were presented to the Government and people of Nigeria in October 1990.

Petitioning governments for rights is common and is an undeniable prerogative of individuals and communities in the country. Ordinarily, therefore, the OBR would not have raised an eyebrow. The Babangida military dictatorship ignored the demands. So, the Ogoni embarked on intense publicity at the national and international levels. And MOSOP embarked on the mass mobilization of the Ogoni grassroots, in preparation for non-violent struggle.

On 3rd November, 1992, the Ogoni people, under MOSOP, and after extensive popular consultation, issued the oil companies operating in Ogoni with a thirty-day Demand Notice: pay back rents and royalties, pay compensation for devastated land or quit. The oil companies, Shell, Chevron and the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, ignored the demand.

On 4th January, 1993, the Ogoni situated their struggle in an international milieu when, in celebration of the United Nations Year of the World's indigenous Populations, 300,000 Ogoni men, women and children staged a massive peaceful protest march against Shell's ecological war and the Nigerian government's denial to the Ogoni of all rights.

A protest march of 300,000 people anywhere in the world is an event; for such a march to happen without a stone being thrown is a rare phenomenon. This single event underlined the non-violent nature of the struggle which the Ogoni had embarked upon; it showed the high discipline of the Ogoni people under the leadership of MOSOP. It was peaceful because the security agencies who were crawling all over Ogoni on the day, did not themselves resort to violence. The march alarmed both Shell and the ruling Nigerian military dictatorship.

THE ALLIANCE OF SHELL AND THE NIGERIAN MILITARY DICTATORSHIP

Shell and the Nigerian military dictatorship are violent institutions and both depend heavily on violence to control those areas of Nigeria in which oil is found.

Shell has waged an ecological war in Ogoni since 1958. An ecological war is highly lethal, the more so as it is unconventional. It is omniscidal in its effect. Human life, flora, fauna, the air, fall at its feet, and finally, the land itself dies. This is violence at its height although society (particularly in the Third World) is not aware of its methods and effects. Generally, it is supported by all the traditional instruments ancillary to warfare -- propaganda, money and deceit. Victory is assessed by profits, and in this sense, Shell's victory in Ogoni has been total.

The Nigerian military dictatorship survives on the practice of violence and the control of the means of violence. Since it also depends for survival on the availability of oil money, its violence is directed at oil producing areas such as Ogoni. Apart from physical attacks, it takes other forms: the denial of employment, of political power, of oil royalties and rents to landlords. Looking the other way while multi-national oil giants such as Shell and Chevron devastate the environment is also violence.

Between oil companies such as Shell and the Nigerian military dictatorship, there is an alliance. The military dictatorship holds down oil-producing areas such as Ogoni by military decrees and the threat or actual use of physical violence so that Shell can wage its ecological war without hindrance and so produce the oil and petrodollars as well as the international and diplomatic support upon which the military dictatorship depends.

This cosy, if criminal, relationship was perceived to be rudely disrupted by the non-violent struggle of the Ogoni people under MOSOP. The allies decided to bloody the Ogoni in order to stop their example from spreading through the oil-rich Niger delta.

The methods of the allies have been well-rehearsed over the years. Shell alleges that under Nigerian law, when a threat to any of its installation or oilfield is perceived or suspected, it is required to immediately call in the military dictatorship to visit the threatening community with physical violence. No such law exists to my knowledge. However, in October of 1990, the Etche community in Rivers State (neighbours of the Ogoni), had a taste of the power of the allies when, following a peaceful demonstration by a few youth at one of Shell's locations, the Mobile Police Force (popularly known in Ogoni as 'kill and go') were drafted, at the specific request of Shell, into the village of Umuechem. Eighty people were massacred and four hundred and ninety-five houses burnt down. A Judicial Commission of Inquiry which was later set up recommended that the members of the marauding Force be prosecuted for this offence. To date, no one has been prosecuted. The Rivers State Attorney-General who should have prosecuted the criminals has returned to his legal practice and now holds Shell's briefs.

What is evident from the foregoing is the close collaboration between Shell and the military dictatorship in the violation of human rights in Nigeria. Also, Shell has the capacity of calling on physical violence to assist its even more lethal ecological war which makes the Company extremely dangerous to human existence in the Niger delta where most of its

activities are situated.

MOSOP: NON-VIOLENCE AS INNOVATION

MOSOP's decision to confront the slick alliance of Shell and Nigeria's military dictatorship through non-violent struggle was well-considered and accepted notwithstanding that the MOSOP leadership was fully aware that in non-violent struggle more people die than in armed struggle. MOSOP was also aware that it could easily have targeted the economic installations in Ogoni to the detriment of the Nigerian economy, had it wanted to adopt violent means.

However, MOSOP was intent on breaking new ground in the struggle for democracy and political, economic, social and environmental rights in Africa. We believe that mass-based, disciplined organizations can successfully re-vitalize moribund societies and that relying upon their ancient values, mores and cultures, such societies can successfully re-establish themselves as self-reliant communities and at the same time successfully and peacefully challenge tyrannical governments.

MOSOP also believes that debt-ridden, morally-bankrupt Nigeria must be a federation of equal ethnic groups, irrespective of size, with each group being free to control its resources and environment and exercise its political right to rule itself according to its genius.

MOSOP, therefore, had a firm philosophical base and proceeded to translate its vision into reality by the formation of the organizations through which it could get to different strata of Ogoni society. The decision to form different organizations was not arrived at without debate. Those who wanted MOSOP to be an organization with direct individual membership, without the discipline of membership of other organizations were worsted in the debate and the majority decision prevailed.

The National Youth Council of Ogoni People (NYCOP), the Federation of Ogoni Women's Associations (FOWA), the Conference of Ogoni Traditional Rulers (COTRA), the Council of Ogoni Churches (COC), the Ogoni Teachers Union (OTU), the National Union of Ogoni Students (NUOS), Ogoni Students Union (OSU), Ogoni Central Union (OCU) and the Council of Ogoni Professionals (COP) were formed at the instance of their members and affiliated to MOSOP. It was mandatory for each affiliate organization to operate branches in all Ogoni villages and in each of the six Ogoni kingdoms. All decisions of the bodies were to be arrived at democratically. All affiliate organizations are represented at the decision-making level of MOSOP.

Thus, MOSOP as an umbrella organization was and is a very democratic outfit. Its decisions are taken after full discussions which emanate from the grassroots. Decisions are also quickly to the grassroots. This explains the effectiveness of MOSOP. MOSOP empowered the Ogoni people and destroyed the culture of subservience to a few men who derive their power and influence from the Nigerian government, whether military or civilian, and often use that power to denigrate the people. It is thus an innovation in Africa. There is no question of any one individual or a few individuals being able to impose themselves or their desires on MOSOP.

To underline its non-violent nature, MOSOP's first task was to register the Ogoni people with the Hague-based Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) whose charter enjoins non-violence on all members.

Apart from the mammoth protest march of January 4, 1993, MOSOP successfully organized a "Survival Fund" to which every Ogoni man, woman and child contributed pennies, as a mark of commitment. MOSOP also successfully held a national vigil on 13th March, 1993. And it also organized a successful boycott of elections. Thus, the organization relies strictly on the traditional tools of non-violent struggle in promoting its cause.

CONFLICT

Conflict was built into the opposites of the violent alliance of Shell and the Nigerian military dictatorship on the one hand and the non-violent MOSOP on the other hand.

AFTER THE PROTEST MARCH

Shortly after the protest march of January 4, 1993, executives of Shell Nigeria and Shell International held an important meeting in Rotterdam and London. The minutes of that meeting held in February 1993 confirm that Shell accepted that "the main thrust of the (Ogoni) activists now seems to be directed at achieving recognition of the problems of the oil-producing areas BY USING THE MEDIA AND PRESSURE GROUPS (capitals mine)." And it decided that Shell Nigeria and Shell International should "Keep each other more closely informed to ensure that movements of key players (read, Ken Saro-Wiwa), what they say and to whom is more effectively monitored to avoid unpleasant surprises and adversely affect the reputation of the group (Shell) as a whole."

Shell followed this declaration of war against the Ogoni and their leaders by stating publicly that it had withdrawn from Ogoni because of hostility to its activities. But this was a lie. What Shell called hostility were mere words that expressed facts. And Shell did not feel threatened enough to stop working in the area.

Shell's contractor, Wilbros, were laying pipelines through the heart of Ogoni at the time and continued to do so until 30th April when farmers in the village of Biara came out to protest the bulldozing of newly-planted crops, the non-payment of compensation, and the failure to do an environmental impact assessment study on the project as stipulated by Nigerian law. Shell did not hesitate to ask soldiers of the Nigerian Army whom it had hired to guard the Wilbros workers to shoot at the unarmed protesters who only held palm branches. One man was killed and eleven others received gunshot wounds. A mother of five, Mrs. Karalolo Korgbara, was shot and had her left arm amputated at MOSOP's cost.

Shell's oilfields in Ogoni continued to produce after this date, although Shell alleges that it had pulled out of the area. In any case, Shell workers, as a rule, only pay occasional visits to their Ogoni oilfields since the wells are generally on automatic. These fields were later reported by Shell to have "closed in" of themselves since they were not being serviced.

The shootings of 30th April 1993 angered the Ogoni masses in the extreme and there was a spontaneous demonstration against Shell, Wilbros and the Nigerian Army by the people. The MOSOP Steering Committee despatched me, Ledum Mitee and the late Chief Edward Kobani to appease the demonstrators. Denied access to Rivers State radio, we sent circulars to all Ogoni villages and followed it up with visits to three Ogoni centres where we spoke to calm frayed nerves. Calm was immediately restored.

Shell, thereafter in a letter to Governor Ada-George of Rivers State, appealed for "the usual assistance to enable it resume construction of the pipeline." Thus, Shell cannot deny responsibility for the violence which the government later visited on the Ogoni people.

THE MILITARY DICTATORSHIP

For its part, the Babangida dictatorship made half-hearted attempts to speak with the Ogoni leadership. The Inspector-General of Police invited Ogoni leaders for discussions early in January, 1993 but nothing came of the parley. In February, the leaders were guests of the State Security Service headquarters at Abuja where the riot act was read out to them. And after the shootings and death of April 30, they were once again invited to Abuja, this time to meet with the highest level of authority, short of General Babangida himself. Present at the meeting were Major-General Aliyu Mohammed, National Security Adviser, Brigadier-General Ali Akilu, Director of the National Intelligence Agency, and Alhaji Aliyu Mohammed, secretary to the Federal Military Government.

Before this meeting, which took place in the 7th of May, the Federal Government had promulgated a new draconian decree -- the Treason and Treasonable Felony Decree, 1993 -- which left no one in doubt as to whom it was aimed at -- the Ogoni people in general and Ken Saro-Wiwa in particular.

At the meeting, the Ogoni delegation which consisted of late A.T. Badey, late Chief E.N. Kobani, Dr. G.B. Leton and Ken Saro-Wiwa, was instructed to detail the Ogoni demands and produce a list of unemployed Ogoni youths as well as a summary of the treatment of oil-bearing areas in different parts of the world. Another meeting would be fixed once these details were submitted. In the meantime, it was stressed by the authorities, there should be no confrontational activity on the part of MOSOP and the Ogoni people. A special appeal was made by the Director-General of the SSS for the construction of the Shell pipeline to resume.

PEACEFUL PROTESTS

In the month of April, 1993, in line with Shell's decision that my movements be closely monitored, I had received the full attention of the security agencies. I was arrested and interrogated several times, the questioning being aimed at proving that MOSOP was advocating Ogoni secession from Nigeria (which was patently untrue).

This spate of arrests disturbed the Ogoni people and on 29th of April, 1993 in tune with the non-violent tenets of MOSOP, a peaceful protest march was staged in Port Harcourt. The

march ended with a visit to the Speaker of the Rivers State House of Assembly to whom a petition was presented.

I travelled to Europe in the middle of May, 1993. In my absence, an attempt was made by Dr. Leton, late Chief Kobani and the late Albert Badey to sell the idea of the resumed construction of the Shell oil pipeline by Wilbros at public meetings. The idea was rejected by the Gokana villagers across whose land the pipeline was due to pass.

BOYCOTT OF PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

I returned to Part Harcourt on the 1st of June, in time for a crucial meeting of the Steering Committee of MOSOP scheduled for 2nd June, 1993 at the usual venue, the residence of the then president, Garrick Leton. I was not a regular at meetings of the Steering Committee since I was fulfilling my responsibility of organizing for publicity and diplomacy, in particular, in Lagos and overseas.

At that meeting, two issues were tabled. First, the Committee received a delegation of the people of Gokana kingdom which came to formally inform the Committee that a resumption of construction works on the Shell oil pipeline was not acceptable to the people. The message was noted by the Committee. Next was the issue of the Presidential elections due to be held on the 12th of June, 1993.

A motion to boycott the elections was tabled and was exhaustively debated by the Committee. Support for a boycott was overwhelming. The reasoning was simple. MOSOP had to remain neutral among the two existing Nigerian parties. It was for this reason that the top officials of the organization had been advised to shun party politics, advice which both Dr. Leton and the late Chief Kobani (then president and vice-president respectively) had ignored. But more importantly, a boycott would make the point that the Ogoni were disenchanted with the Constitution under which the elections were being held since its provisions deprived them of their oil resources, and this was regarded as discriminatory.

At the specific instance of late Chief Edward Kobani, the boycott proposal was put to the vote and was approved by eleven votes to six.

The matter has arisen as to the composition of the Committee on the day. Available records indicate that the eighteen members who were present at the meeting were the same who regularly attended the weekly meetings of the Committee. One member, Sir Simeon Idemyor, did not vote because he was the electoral officer.

The proposal to boycott the elections was placed before the Ogoni people at various venues in Ogoni immediately thereafter and was unanimously endorsed. The people were properly briefed on how to conduct themselves on election day. Those who wished to were not to be prevented from voting.

Subsequent to this, the party politicians on the Steering Committee, including Dr. G.B. Leton, late Chief Edward Kobani, Late Albert Badey and Chief T.N. Nwieke called on me and pressured me into rescinding the decision of the Committee. I refused to be party to such

unethical behaviour. Both Dr. G.B. Leton and late Chief Edward Kobani informed me that they would be resigning their positions as President and Vice-President of MOSOP respectively. I noted their decision.

I have to stress here that it was this decision to boycott the elections which led singularly to the resignation of Dr. Leton and late Chief Edward Kobani and not any disagreement over the methods of MOSOP. The boycott was a non-violent action, and the two men resigned their positions only because boycotting the election dented their putative positions in the Social Democratic Party to which they had trumpeted their ability to "deliver Ogoni". The boycott decision had once again shown that no one could use MOSOP and the Ogoni people for their personal ends, as had been the case in the past; and that the Ogoni masses refused to be exploited by anyone whatsoever.

I left for Lagos on the 7th of June, 1993 on my way to the United Nations World Conference on Human Rights due to be held in Vienna from the 11th of June.

In my absence, the prominent politicians on the Steering Committee, including Dr. G.B. Leton, Dr. B.N. Birabi, Late Chief Edward Kobani, Chief T.N. Nwieke, late Mr. Albert Badey and Chief E.A. Apenu met and decided, I am informed, to issue a radio announcement IN MY NAME, calling upon the Ogoni people to go to the polls because MOSOP had rescinded its boycott order. Dr. B.N. Birabi actually issued the notice and signed what was purported to be my signature. This was an act of forgery.

The announcement on Rivers State radio of this forged document alerted Ogoni people who decided to frustrate the fraudulent politicians. Elections could not be held. No arrests were made, however, and there was no violence reported.

I had been stopped on the 11th of June, 1993 at the Lagos airport and prevented from travelling to Vienna by the security agencies. My passport was confiscated. Instructed to report to the Lagos offices of the State Security Service on the 18th of June, I remained in Lagos to keep the appointment and was told that I could not have back my passport. I returned to Port Harcourt later that day. On the 21st of June, 1993 I was abducted on the streets of Port Harcourt by armed security agents and taken to Lagos.

As reported, my arrest was followed by a massive peaceful protest march in Port Harcourt on the 21st, and in Bori-Ogoni on the 22nd of June, 1993. The Port Harcourt march was without incident. However, at Bori, the police used tear-gas on the protesters and this incensed the latter as the march had been peaceful. The protesters went to the police station and ransacked it.

Some government-appointed Chiefs who felt threatened by their anti-people actions in the past were frightened by this development which was totally uncharacteristic of the hitherto-cowed Ogoni people, and ran for cover to the Governor of Rivers State in Port Harcourt, alleging that their property had been vandalized. There is indication that four houses were slightly damaged by the angered mob.

At this point, I was not yet President of MOSOP, I was not physically present in Ogoni or in Port Harcourt, so no one can put the protests to me. If anyone is to be blamed, it would

surely be Dr. Leton and his group who had abandoned the people in pursuit of their personal ambitions in the two existing parties, and who had, by forging my signature on a radio announcement, incited the Ogoni masses to protest.

DETENTION

Even from my detention cell I immediately called for calm, assuring the Ogoni people that I was safe and that there was no cause for alarm. I was to remain in detention for thirty-one days during which I was charged for sedition and remanded in prison custody. When my health failed, I was transferred to hospital and following considerable international protest, was granted bail on the orders of the so-called military Vice-President of Nigeria, Admiral Augustus Aikhomu.

NEW ELECTIONS TO MOSOP STEERING COMMITTEE

I was still in detention at Owerri when the Steering Committee of MOSOP met to fill the positions vacated by Dr. G.B. Leton and late Chief Edward Kobani. I was elected President in absentia and Ledum Mitee, a brilliant young Ogoni lawyer, Deputy President. The Committee decided that I should remain the Spokesman of the Ogoni People. Other young men were elected to positions on the Steering Committee, thus effecting a youthful reaction to the shenanigans of the older Ogoni who had abandoned the people in preference for anticipated political party gains.

I did not influence any of these decisions. They were decisions of the people, democratically taken, which I accepted.

SHELL LAUNCHES A PERSONAL CAMPAIGN

My detention raised a furore in international circles as writers, human rights, environmental and indigenous people groups campaigned for my release. As Shell's role in Ogoni naturally came into focus, the Company issued a press note in which it accused me of organizing a secessionist movement. As far as the Company was concerned, my cause was not environmental, as Shell had done nothing wrong in Ogoni; I was merely using Shell to bolster my secessionist campaign. Quite plainly, Shell was now inciting the military against me. And it was in character. Their new public tack was entirely at variance with the views expressed in their internal memorandum of February 1993 at their meetings in Rotterdam and London.

THE NATIONAL SITUATION

At the material time, Babangida the military dictator, was playing games with the nation. The Presidential elections of 12th June were supposed to end a costly transition to civil rule programme which had taken all of eight years and cost billions of dollars. Babangida annulled the elections, which were reported to be free and fair.

In the various States of the federation, civilian governors with legislative houses were in place, voted into office in 1991. There was also a National Assembly in place.

In Rivers State, the civilian governor was Chief Rufus Ada-George. He was also the Chief Security Officer of the State and was, as such, the Chairman of the State Security Committee on which sat the Commanders of the units of the Army, Air Force and Navy in the State, as well as the Commissioner of Police and the State Director of the State Security Service. Security funds available to the Governor are not subject to normal accounting procedures of the government.

Although Chief Rufus Ada-George had been voted governor by the people, he still owed his position to the military dictator, Babangida, who could easily proclaim a State of Emergency in any part of the country, and dismiss the democratic paraphernalia that existed. Chief Rufus Ada-George did not want any such thing to happen to him.

He had shown sufficient disenchantment with MOSOP in the past, and left me in no doubt that he considered me a security risk and a threat to his personal situation as Governor.

Faced with the situation in Ogoni after the boycott of the presidential elections in June 1993 and my subsequent arrest, Ada-George did not re-establish police presence in the area. Instead, he and his Security Council decided upon a way to access the security funds of the State. A local decision was taken to draft a contingent of army, navy and airforce personnel to Ogoni. The contingent numbered no more than thirty-six but according to Chief Ada-George himself, it cost Rivers State no less than half a million naira (25,000 US dollars) a week. The troops did not have orders to shoot, since they were not there by authority of Army headquarters. They were there, therefore, not to protect the Ogoni but to provoke them; not to prevent violence, but to engineer it.

STATE VIOLENCE UNLEASHED

I was in my hospital bed on 15th July, 1993 when there came news that about one hundred and thirty-two Ogoni men, women and children returning from their sojourn in the Cameroons had been waylaid on the Andoni River by uniformed men wielding automatic weapons, massacred and sent to their watery graves. Only two women were left alive to tell the story. A complaint was laid with the Commissioner of Police, Rivers State. He bluntly refused to investigate the massacre, giving room to belief of complicity of the security agencies in the tragedy.

On the 5th and 6th of August 1993, the Ogoni market village of Kaa on the Andoni border was attacked with grenade, mortar shells and automatic weapons. Two hundred and forty-seven people were killed and all the villagers forced to flee. The primary and secondary schools in the village were laid waste. Foreign journalists who visited the scene the very next day confirmed the carnage. On both days, the villages of Tenama and Tera'ua on the Andoni border with Ogoni were also attacked and property destroyed. Several lives were lost.

Claude Ake, a highly-respected social scientist and Director of the Centre for Advanced Social Sciences, a political think-tank based in Port Harcourt, was so appalled by these

events that he came to my hospital bed to alert me and suggest that we call on Governor Ada-George who had refused to react to the events.

We met the Governor and his entire Security Council the night of the 8th of August, 1993. All the members of the Council feigned ignorance of the grisly events of the 5th and 6th of August. Whereupon, we suggested that we all pay a visit to the area to see for ourselves what had happened.

I travelled with representatives of the Army, Navy and Air Force, Police and State Security Service on the 9th of August to Kaa. Dr. Bennet Birabi, who was at the time the Senate Minority Leader (of the same party as Governor Ada-George) was also in the team.

The unanimous view of the team was that the attack on the villages was undertaken by well-trained and armed troops. Each member of the team sent a report to his Commanding Officer. When I later asked Major Buraimoh, the Brigade Major of the 2nd Amphibious Brigade, Port Harcourt if the reports had been discussed at a subsequent meeting of the Security Council, he confirmed that they had been discussed but that "there appeared to be a mind-set on the issue" and there the matter rested. I also asked Wing-Commander Alli of the Air Force who was also a member of the team the same question and got the same answer.

I had received information earlier that similar attacks were being planned using the border territories of the Okrika and Ndoki sub-groups. I now realized that there was an official conspiracy against the Ogoni people and that I had to do something to protect the latter. I immediately issued press releases appealing to these neighbours not to allow themselves or their areas to be used against the Ogoni.

Then I moved to reconcile the Ogoni government-appointed Chiefs with the Ogoni masses. On the 14th of August, in the presence of members of the Rivers State Council of Chiefs, in a public meeting at Bori, I appealed to all present to maintain law and order and respect the sanctity of life and property. Given my standing in the community, this was promptly obeyed and the Chiefs returned to their villages in peace.

Next, I tried to get the party politicians, including Dr. Leton and late Chief Edward Kobani back in to the MOSOP fold. A number of meetings were held at the residence of Mr. B.A. Konya, an Ogoni banker. At these meetings, both Leton and late Kobani insisted on returning to the positions they had voluntarily resigned.

The discussions were still going on when Chief Rufus Ada-George introduced a diversion. He set up an Andoni-Ogoni Peace Committee headed by Claude Ake. I was wary of participating in any such Committee because the attack on the Ogoni villages was not undertaken by the Andoni. Andoni territory had only been used for the purpose.

Out of courtesy to Claude Ake, and to ascertain that the Andoni knew that they were being used, I and other Ogoni including late Albert Badey, late Edward Kobani and Dr. G.B. Leton attended the meetings of the Peace Committee.

Even at the very exploratory stages of the work of the Committee, both sides agreed that there was no reason for confrontation between the Ogoni and the Andoni. There was no

territorial dispute, no argument on fishing rights or access to each other's area; and that there was not, in history, any instance of an Ogoni-Andoni dispute. All there had ever been were disputes between one Andoni village and one Ogoni village, and the last of these disputes had been settled according to local traditions in 1973.

Had the Peace Committee continued its work, we might have been able to show to the Andoni that they were mere pawns in an oil game. Shell were active in the area, and Chevron had also just struck oil there. Indeed, the latter Company had been making overtures to be allowed to undertake geophysical surveys to determine the extent of the oil deposit in their new concession.

The Peace Committee was not allowed to continue its work. There was a change of government, I was suddenly summoned on September 1 to Abuja to meet with General Abacha, who was evidently planning a coup against the contraption, the Interim National Government, which his colleague, General Babangida had set up before he was disgraced out of power on August 26, 1993.

My meeting with General Abacha was important in one respect: over lunch, he confessed to me that government had been misled by false security reports on the Ogoni issue and he apologized to me for the undeserved punishment I had suffered. He ordered that my passport, seized on June 11, should be returned to me.

I returned to Port Harcourt to find that the conspirators were flustered by this new development and had determined to do something about it.

Accordingly, further attacks against Ogoni villages on the Andoni border were staged by armed troops. The troops used boats belonging to Shell and Chevron, and on the days of the attacks, a helicopter which Shell often charters was always seen in Ogoni skies. The villages of Eeken, Gwara and Kenwigbara were devastated in these attacks which took place between the 1st and 15th of September, 1993. Over 1000 Ogoni men, women and children were massacred and about 20,000 rendered homeless.

Disturbed in the extreme by these developments, I, as President of MOSOP, called on Claude Ake and we together went to the Brigade Commander, 2nd Amphibious Brigade, Port Harcourt, Brigadier-General Thaddeus Ashei. We asked him why the troops stationed at Bori had not protected the Ogoni people during the attacks. He replied that the deployment of the troops was a mere local arrangement and that if they were to do anything more than what they were doing at the time, he would need proper orders from Army Headquarters. Present at the meeting was Wing Commander Dilli, Commander of the Air Force unit in Port Harcourt who rudely assured me that I and the Ogoni were getting what we had asked for.

I knew there and then that I needed to get proper protection for the Ogoni. I headed straight for the airport and flew into Lagos that 15th of September for a meeting with General Abacha, then Minister of Defence. He made arrangements for a small contingent of troops to be sent to Ogoni.

On my return to Port Harcourt, I got rumours that further attacks were planned on other Ogoni villages. Even before the rumours could be checked out, the attacks did take place, the

most dastardly of them being that on the village of Kpean in which every single concrete building, including the secondary school, was destroyed.

Even as Kpean lay in ruins, I received a summons to meet with Chief Ernest Shonekan, the head of the Interim National Government. I met with him on the 21st of September, 1993 holding a videotape of the carnage at Kpean, which he refused to see. He did not tell me much beyond the fact that he would have preferred to have the police rather than the army, in Ogoni.

In subsequent discussions with the Director of Operations of the dreaded State Security Service, I gathered that I had been called to Abuja at their instance. I had travelled with Ledum Mitee, Deputy President of MOSOP, and together we outlined to him, since he had only just assumed the duty desk, the issues at stake in Ogoni. We returned to Port Harcourt with the impression that he would visit Ogoni to see things for himself.

It was upon our return that I knew the precise reason I had been summoned to Abuja. A fictitious security report had intimated Abuja that 10,000 armed Ogoni youths had dug trenches all the way from Bori to the Onne junction, a few miles from Port Harcourt and were attacking the security forces. And that was the very day Kpean was flattened to the ground!

Here was an example of the false security reporting which General Abacha had told me about on the 1st of September. And that was the alibi for using Nigerian troops against Ogoni villages!

Time was running out for the official conspirators in Port Harcourt as troops were officially deployed on 24th September, 1993 with instruction to protect the Ogoni people.

However, we knew that since the security operatives were making a lot of money out of the Ogoni situation, and since Shell were interested in restoring their operations in Ogoni, we could not rest on our oars if the Ogoni people were to be properly protected.

Accordingly, we made representation to the Inspector-General of Police and the Minister of Police Affairs, as well as the Commissioner of Police, Rivers State, asking for adequate policing of Ogoni. I believe that consequent upon this request, the Minister of Police Affairs, Mr. Solomon Lar, did visit Ogoni, but I was abroad at the time and did not meet with him.

VIGILANTES

At the time of the attacks on various Ogoni villages, all Ogoni people were nervous and there was considerable fear. Each village called out its youth and ordered them to organize the defence of the village. The youths called themselves "Vigilantes". It was a desperate measure, since the youths were not armed. But it was important psychologically. However, when the armed attacks on the villages stopped, the vigilantes became a social problem.

Instances of "witch hunting" in which Ogoni youth were encouraged to go into villages to search for and either extort money from or actually kill suspected "wizards" were reported.

We were terribly appalled by this barbarism and fought the development with our usual vigour, issuing letters of warning to all village heads and holding rallies to educate the people as to the legal consequences of lawlessness and murder. Dr. Leton and his groups did not condemn this "witch hunt" at any time, which made us believe that they either initiated it or gave it their tacit support as a means of discrediting a MOSOP which they had abandoned. We succeeded in the end in stopping this barbaric practice.

A PEACE(?) ACCORD

The conspirators now turned tack. On October 4, 1993, they sprang a "Peace Conference" between the Andoni and the Ogoni, this time headed by Professor Elaigwu, of the National Council on intern-governmental Relations, who arrived mysteriously from Abuja and, in less than two days, fashioned an "accord".

There were reasons to distrust the Elaigwu initiative. What had happened to the Claude Ake Committee? And what was the business of Shell which was conspicuously represented at the "Peace Conference"? Nor were the Andoni and Ogoni at war, except in the fevered brains of the Rivers State Security Council which was doing everything to mask the attack on the Ogoni through the Andoni border as a "communal clash".

The new initiative was put to the test when I refused to sign the document which resulted from the meetings because I needed to have it approved by MOSOP's Steering Committee and the Ogoni people. Presented to the Ogoni people, they declared two paragraphs which asked for a resumption of all economic activity in Ogoni as unacceptable.

In spite of the refusal of the Ogoni people to accept the proposal, Shell decided that there was an accord and returned to its oilfields in Ogoni, under the protection of Nigerian troops. The company ran into problems at its Korokoro oilfield on October 18, 1993 when it ordered troops to shoot and kill villagers who were alarmed at the renewed sight of Shell workers in the village. One man was shot dead and two others were wounded.

This fact, above all else, indicates Shell's complicity in the state violence which has been visited on the Ogoni since April 1993. Shell is always there in the background even as it denies all participation. I believe, and not without reason, that the Company's ready cash is always at play, goading officials to illegal, covert and overt actions.

A CHANGE OF GUARDS

With General Abacha's seizure of power in November of 1993, Lt-Colonel Dauda Musa Komo, was appointed the Military Administrator of Rivers State. He did not arrive in Port Harcourt to assume duty until the 14th of December, 1993. The security mafia in Port Harcourt had a message waiting for him.

PORT HARCOURT WATERFRONT MAYHEM

On the 12th and 13th of December, right under the nose of the police, navy and army, the residences of Ogoni people at several waterfronts in Port Harcourt were targeted. Fifty-three Ogoni men, women and children were massacred and all buildings belonging to Ogoni people dynamited out of existence.

Confronted with the rubble upon his arrival, Lt-Colonel Komo did what was to be expected in the circumstances: he set up a Commission of Inquiry headed by a serving military officer, Major Paul Taiwo, to investigate the disturbances and make recommendations.

According to a leaked copy of the Inquiry Panel, the Commission came to a predictable conclusion:

In all the waterfronts where there was a mixture of ethnic groups, say Ogonis, Okrikas, Ibos, Yorubas etc., destruction of houses was really selective. Only the Ogoni houses were handpicked and destroyed... The evidence before the Commission suggests a situation in which one well-prepared party caught the other unsuspecting party sleeping in a series of attacks co-ordinated with military expertise and precision... The disturbances should not be described as a communal clash as it was nothing of the sort.

As to "strong allegations against MOSOP to the effect that MOSOP not only planned the disturbances but also directed Ogoni military operations during the disturbances", the Commission said: *The Commission wishes to point out that it has painstakingly investigated these allegations to try to establish a link between the disturbances and MOSOP but was unable to establish MOSOP's involvement with the disturbances in the remotest possible way. The Commission therefore concludes that the allegations made against MOSOP are completely without foundation and are a clumsy attempt at shielding the real culprit by pointing fingers at innocent parties...The only involvement of MOSOP with the disturbances has been of a positive nature. This is because most of the Ogonis affected by the disturbances had communication difficulties and could not articulate their losses or experiences. Here MOSOP stepped in. It not only served as a rallying point for the aggrieved Ogonis but it also became a mouthpiece of these harassed and suffering people. MOSOP was able to compile a list of those affected -- a list which the Commission found most invaluable in accomplishing its task.*

The Commission refused to comment on "the attitude of the Nigeria Police before, during and after the crisis." But it did disclose that when it asked the Police for a "comprehensive report of the disturbances", it was given *a report which appears to have been deliberately framed to give away as little information as possible.*

I have dwelt at length on this report because it is the only official government investigation of the putative "communal clashes" organized by the State and Shell against the Ogoni people, and it clearly identifies the role of the security agencies, of MOSOP under my presidency, and of the State itself in the mayhem.

The report of the Commission was never published because even before the Commission finished its detailed and thorough inquiries, Lt-Col. Komo had been sucked into the

Conspiracy and become its valued leader.

NEW MOVES AGAINST MOSOP AND THE OSONI

Although MOSOP made every effort to brief Lt.-Col. Komo, he took steps to humiliate MOSOP leaders and to provoke the Osoni people. He arrested MOSOP Deputy President, Ledum Mitee and Steering Committee member, Dr. Owens Wiwa on 24th December, 1993 and sent soldiers to invade the venues of all activities -- debates, lectures, symposia, exhibitions and church services -- planned for the end of the United Nations Year of the World's Indigenous Populations and which were to culminate in the celebration of Osoni Day on 4th January, 1994. He placed me and my entire family under house arrest from the 2nd to the 5th of January, 1994.

MOSOP was able to read these provocative actions right and to convince the Osoni people to keep calm and maintain the peace.

RIVERS STATE INTERNAL SECURITY TASK FORCE

Following representation which we had regularly made to the new administration of General Abacha (Ledum Mitee and I met with General Diya, the Chief of General Staff and General Chris Alli, the Chief of Army Staff soon after they assumed office), a Ministerial Committee was sent by the federal government to tour the oil-bearing areas of the country. The Committee started their tour in Osoni on the 19th of January, 1994.

No sooner had the team left Port Harcourt than Lt.-Col. Komo, no doubt acting on the advice of the Security Council which he had inherited and which had commenced the aggression against the Osoni people, constituted the Rivers State Internal Security Task Force which he placed under Major (now Lt.-Col.) Paul Okuntimo, a former course-mate of his at the Nigerian Defence Academy and who had, as Camp Commandant of the 2nd Amphibious Brigade in Port Harcourt, supervised all the earlier acts of aggression against the Osoni people. He had personally carried out the cold-blooded murder committed under the eyes of Shell employees at Korokoro on 18th October, 1993.

The orders to the illegal and unprecedented Task Force were simple: "box in the Osoni and subject them to the authority of the Rivers State Internal Security Task Force." Osoni, in a small area, surrounded to the south by the Okrika and Andoni Ijaws, to the north by the Ndoki Igbos, and to the east by the Ibibios, was easy to so "box in". Besides, the Osoni were unarmed and it would be a goon force indeed that could not box them in easily. Besides, federal troops were already in Osoni, at MOSOP's invitation. It is pertinent that not a single Osoni soldier or mobile policeman was ever allowed to serve in the Internal Security Task Force.

THE NDOKI BORDER

On Easter Day, in April of 1994, Nigerian troops struck Osoni on its northern borders.

Information gathered from the troops who carried out the attack are that a security report was sent to Abuja to the effect that 10,000 armed Ogoni youths (always the magical number) were on their way to attack the Afam Power Station which is on Ogoni soil. Abuja had no difficulty in confirming Lt.-Col. Komo's orders to the Internal Security Task Force to destroy all the Ogoni villages in the area. Between the 3rd and 15th of April, over 800 Ogoni men, women and children were massacred and six villages completely flattened. Women and children were raped and the villages were looted before they were burnt down. Wrote a Catholic nun who was resident in the area, "The military are busy flattening anything left standing on the 9th (of April, 1994) in the six villages and are taking up residence there to eat the goats and crops."

WASTING OPERATIONS

The eastern border of Ogoni was not easy to tackle in this same deceptive fashion. No ready excuse (e.g. land disputes between individual Ogoni and the neighbouring Ibibio) could be found in order to engineer another "Communal Clash". So the Internal Security Task Force Commander recommended creating internal dissension among the Ogoni as a ruse for invading all of Ogoni and carrying out "wasting operations". In a 12th May, 1994 memorandum to Lt.-Col. Komo, Major Paul Okuntimo, after noting that division between the elitist Ogoni leadership exist, recommended: *intra-communal/kingdom formulae alternative as discussed to apply. Wasting operations during MOSOP and OTHER (emphasis mine) gatherings making constant military presence justifiable. Wasting targets cutting across communities and leadership cadres especially vocal individuals of various groups.*

This amazing memorandum is a confirmation of the genocidal intentions and plans laid by the Nigerian military dictatorship against the Ogoni people. The fact that it was actually carried out is even more blood-chilling.

Shell's interest in the plan is clearly indicated in the memorandum although the Company will, as usual, deny it publicly.

A proposal by the Police dated April 21 to inundate Ogoni with policeman along with other arms of the Armed Forces in order to "restore and maintain law and order" and "to ensure that ordinary law abiding citizens of the area, non-indigenous residents or carrying out business ventures or schooling within Ogoniland (sic) are not molested" and "to re-establish government presence in the area so as to bring to the knowledge of the citizenry that they are still part and parcel of Nigeria" was leaked to MOSOP indicating that there was competition between the various arms of the security forces for the huge sums of money, to be supplied by Shell, that were being spent on destroying the Ogoni. Made public by MOSOP and protested by foreign and local opinion, the Police were excluded from the lethal "wasting operations" hatched by Major (as he then was) Okuntimo and Lt.-Col. Komo in early May.

MOSOP'S WAYS OF PEACE AND DIALOGUE

While these cruel plans were actually being hatched and implemented, MOSOP was working

for peace. Hoodlums in Ogoni were being handed over to the security agencies. MOSOP was co-operating with the federal-government owned Nigerian Gas Company to ensure that plans to lay a gas pipeline through Ogoni territory were carried out under the law, and that the Ogoni voice was heard at the National Constitutional Conference which was expected to commence in June 1994.

MURDER, MAYHEM

As the Ogoni planned peace and dialogue, Shell and the Nigerian military plotted death and destruction.

The elections to the National Constitutional Conference proved to be the occasion the conspirators were waiting for. Again, the plan was to provoke the Ogoni people and find occasion to visit mayhem on them. Consequently, I was stopped by armed troops from explaining to the Ogoni people why they had to be represented at the Conference. This was totally unprecedented, high-handed and illegal. At the same time, the Gokana Council of Chiefs was allowed to hold a campaign meeting. Ogoni had been inundated with security agents on the day, the 21st of May, 1994 yet none of them was asked to secure the campaign meeting attended by, among others, those who had, a week earlier, on the 14th of May 1994 called upon a section of the Ogoni people (the Gokana) to abandon MOSOP and to allow the resumption of oil activities in the area. They also asked for troops to be drafted into the area. They had been left in no doubt that the masses were opposed to all such betrayal of the people by a spontaneous peaceful protest march staged in the area on the 15th of May, 1994.

GIONKOO MURDERS

On 21st May, 1994, a mob was said to have set upon four prominent Ogoni men at Gionkoo in Gokana on the day and brutally murdered them. Two of the murdered men were my in-laws. The other two were my very close friends. The police were not allowed to investigate these murders, the Internal Security Task Force being ordered by Lt.-Col. Komo that very day, to round up leading members of MOSOP whom he accused, very strangely, of having committed the barbaric murders. Lt-Col Komo's intent was not in doubt. It was the total destruction of the Ogoni people: genocide.

This case of homicide was the pretext for the Internal Security Task Force to invade every single Ogoni village and to loot, rape, burn and kill unarmed men, women and children. The Commander of the Task Force, Lt.-Col. Okuntimo has himself publicly confessed to these crimes.

At a press conference broadcast by the Nigerian Television Authority, he described his involvement in Ogoni after the May 1994 murders as "psychological warfare" intended to facilitate constructive dialogue. He gave the following account of the actions of his forces during the first three days of the operation:

The first three days, the first three days of the operation. I operated in the night. Nobody knew where I was coming from. What I will just do is that I will just take some detachments

of soldiers, they will just stay at four corners of the town. They...have automatic rifle(s) that sound death. If you hear the sound you will freeze. And then I will equally now choose about twenty (soldiers) and give them ... grenades -- explosives -- very hard one(s). So we shall surround the town at night... The machine gun with five hundred rounds will open up. When four or five like that open up and then we are throwing grenades and they are making "eekpuwaa!" what do you think the people are going to do? And we have already put roadblock(s) on the main road, we don't want anybody to start running ... so the option we made was that we should drive all these boys, all these people into the bush with nothing except the pant(s) and the wrapper they are using that night.

Hundreds of Ogoni men, women and children were shot by the Nigerian troops in cold blood; many were maimed, and hundreds of thousands were driven into the bush. Money was extorted from the over six hundred men who were detained and tortured in special detention centres established for the purpose at Kpor and Bori, and as yet unspecified number of Ogoni people were driven out of government and private sector employment. Many houses were destroyed and a lot of private property looted. Villages were forced to pay protection money in order to escape Major (as he then was) Okuntimo. Human Rights Watch/Africa have given a full report of the brutalities committed against the Ogoni people in this war of genocide.

For organizing these "wasting operations", this genocide, neither Major Okuntimo nor Lt.-Col. Komo was chastised. The Nigerian Army subsequently promoted Major Okuntimo to the rank of Lt.-Colonel and Lt.-Col. Komo continues to act as Military Administrator of Rivers State and executioner of the Ogoni.

GOVERNMENT & SHELL PROPAGANDA

The crime of the Ogoni people is that they had the temerity to ask for their rights from both the government of Nigeria and Shell. The punishment for this crime has been genocidal attacks on the Ogoni. To justify genocide, it has suited the Nigerian government to put it to the world that the Ogoni and MOSOP have organized violence. Enormous sums of money have been spent on this propaganda. But the method is well known. It is the case of the lion and the sheep of Aesop's fable. And it will not wash.

Lt.-Colonel Komo's cohorts have not captured a single rifle in Ogoni in the two years of their sojourn there. Bribing a few Ogoni politicians who have sold their conscience for a mess of pottage to join the government in putting it out that the Ogoni struggle is violent and that MOSOP is a violent organization, is cheap blackmail.

From the very beginning, I have made it a point of duty to brief the diplomatic community in Nigeria on the aims and methods of MOSOP. Accordingly, several diplomats visited Ogoni on their own, observed MOSOP rallies, spoke to MOSOP activists and other Ogoni people and were able to form independent conclusions. It is not therefore surprising that MOSOP has earned the rare distinction (for Nigeria) of being honoured with the 1994 Right Livelihood Award, often described as the "alternative Nobel". And Professor Claude Ake, distinguished social scientist and winner of the Nigerian National Merit Award, has said of MOSOP and Ogoni:

For better or for worse, MOSOP and Ogoniland (sic) are the conscience of this country. They have risen above our slave culture of silence; they have found the courage to be free and they have evolved a political consciousness which denies power to rogues, hypocrites, fools and bullies. For better or for worse, Ogoniland (sic) carries our hopes. Battered and bleeding, it struggles on to realize our promise and to restore our dignity. If it falters, we die.

AMEN!

OGONI ON TRIAL

Not satisfied with its "wasting operations" in Ogoni, the slick alliance of Shell and the Nigerian military dictatorship have mounted a campaign of calumny against my person in major centres of the world. Nigerian embassies in the United Kingdom, Sweden, Belgium, the United States and elsewhere have asserted that there is or has been a "Saro-Wiwa Militant Movement" and all such beasts engaged in acts of violence in Ogoni. Fictitious hijacks of planes and kidnapping of influential Nigerians have been hung on the neck of MOSOP. The alliance have gone even further, detaining and torturing me for seven months during which I was held incommunicado, chained, denied medical attention and starved before arraigning me and Ledum Mitee and other Ogonis on charges of murder of which we are completely innocent before this Special Military Tribunal whose rulings and methods have been condemned worldwide.

What the criminal partners of the alliance are trying to tell the world by this arraignment is that the black man, even the best of them, is no better than a criminal. For, if a man of my upbringing, education, cultivation and demonstrated achievement in various areas of life cannot conduct an argument for rights peacefully and in a civilized manner, then no one else can do so. Nor am I so daft as to confront two brutal enemies with the weapon which they wield best but which I lack the resources, inclination or temperament to procure: arms.

PART TWO

I wish now to go to the events of May 21, 1994. But before I do so, I will wind back the hands of the clock some fifty years. Born in October 1941, I began to appreciate the world around me in 1947, the year in which the Ogoni people, after almost forty years of British colonial control, finally won the right to have their own Native Authority, a right which many other Nigerian ethnic groups were accorded way back in 1924. The Ogoni had had to fight a long battle to be extricated from balkanization into Opobo Division, Degema Division and Ahoada Division severally. In that same period, different parts of Ogoni were taken from Calabar Province and Owerri Province to be included in the newly-created Rivers Province. An Ogoni man, T. N. Paul Birabi was a spearhead of the struggle for the creation of Rivers Province.

Growing up in Bori in 1947, I was privileged to see the Ogoni people administering themselves and doing for themselves all those things which would not be done for them while they were administered as a part of other Native Authorities. I came to know the

leading Ogoni men of that period. The Birabis, Wikinas, Monsis, Wifas, Kobanis, Loolos, Orages, Wikpos, Ngegwes, Ngeis, Ndonakes, Wiyors, Badeys, Wikos, Yowikas, Gbarazias, Igaras, Danwis and Tornwes. I also grew up with the children of some of them.

Ogoni was a blessed land at that time. The fertile alluvial soils of the plain provided a rich harvest of yam, cassava and vegetable. The pure streams and seas brimmed with fish and other sea food. We lacked for nothing. And the Ogoni, industrious as ever, worked hard for a living, extracting bounty from land, streams and seas. This tradition of labour in return for reward I inherited, imbibed and have always valued.

I saw, as a child, the Ogoni people building their own schools, their dispensaries, their churches, their roads. I saw them paying their taxes and rates. I saw them at work and play. And I felt proud to be Ogoni.

In 1954, I went into the wider world when I won a competitive scholarship to Eastern Nigeria's premier school, Government College, Umuahia. It did not matter to me that I was the only Ogoni boy in a school of three hundred pupils. In the best traditions of the British public school, I was taught to be hard-working, broad-minded and honest. "Own up" i.e. accept your deed, was a favourite Umuahia phrase. I was encouraged to be curious, to search for answers, for the truth, to debate ideas in a spirit of give and take. Academic excellence was taken for granted. But a boy had to be competitive, in or outside of the classroom. And he had to defer to his seniors as well as acknowledge the ability of his betters. Envy of jealousy was not the make-up of a typical Umuahia boy. Boys had to be public spirited; to worship God and country. I learnt the lessons well. By the time I left Umuahia in 1961, I was still the only Ogoni boy in the school, but although I say so, I was certainly one of its shining lights. I set an academic record which may be equalled, never beaten.

The only intrusions into this life of bliss at that time, were three facts: Firstly, by 1956, the Native Authority system in Eastern Nigeria was scrapped and the Ogoni were split into three County Councils: Khana, Gokana, and Eleme and the Ogoni lost the co-operative spirit which had guided them from 1947 onwards and which should have made up for the backwardness induced by colonial neglect. Secondly, in 1957 at the election to the Eastern Nigeria House of Assembly, the Ogoni people, in a remarkably peaceful election, voted in two members of the opposition Action Group, dumping two members of the party of power in Eastern Nigeria, the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC). One of the winners of that election, Chief O.B. Naaleelo was the father-in-law of late Albert Badey. This electoral rebellion on the part of the Ogoni was to earn them every hatred, every taunt from the majority Igbos in Eastern Nigeria. It even reached me in the hallowed halls of Umuahia Government College where Igbo cooks and stewards thought me to be a very foolish boy indeed to have been born an Ogoni and told me so to my face several times. I have not forgotten the taunts, although I have forgiven them. Thirdly, the drilling rigs of Shell began to dig deep into the heart of Ogoni, tearing up farmlands and belching forth gas flames which pumped carbon monoxide and other dangerous gases into the lungs of my people.

This last intrusion, Shell, I protested from almost the very first in 1958 when I wrote pseudonymous letters to the editor of the government-owned newspaper of the period. Even at that time, I had premonitions that Shell spelt wicked forebodings and that there was

inevitable evil in the Company for the Ogoni people.

By 1962 when I went to the University of Ibadan where I was a University scholar, Nigeria had become an independent nation. I was but one of two Ogoni men at the University in my sojourn there and although I established my presence in and outside of the lecture halls, the fact that I was an Ogoni, I was on the periphery of the nation began to imprint itself on my mind. Elections to the Students Union at the University had become a tribal affair -- When I contested elections to the Union, in spite of a spirited and admired campaign, I won a majority of votes only in the women's halls whose residents could not resist the fact that I was tall, handsome and rich. The rest of the students voted their ethnic compatriots. There was no doubt as to which ethnic group had the majority of students on the University campus. That ethnic group won ALL the elective posts. But let me not be facile about it. I did win elections to become Chairman of Mellanby Hall, my hall of residence, and I was also elected President of the University of Ibadan Dramatic Society. However, I harboured a niggling suspicion that these were left-overs from the master's table; left-overs which fell to me because, let's admit it, I was a damned persistent and hardworking student, determined to press my advantages home.

As in the University, so also in the larger Nigerian society. Nigeria had become a political battlefield of the Hausa-Fulani, the Igbo and the Yoruba. All the other ethnic groups were on the periphery of society. They were expected to ally with one of the three in order to pick the crumbs from the master's table. And they were readily available if, from among them, fawning fools ready to sell their birthright for a mess of pottage could be found. Those who decide not to sell that birthright, could not hope to benefit from the commonwealth.

The birthright of freedom and equality imprinted itself on my mind as I studied history in my first year at the University. Nigeria was a federation of ethnic groups. All ethnic groups are equal irrespective of size. I had followed, even as a schoolboy at Umuahia, the proceedings of the Willink Commission of Inquiry which investigated the fears of Nigeria's ethnic minorities and was expected to put forward proposals as to how to allay them as Nigeria marched to independence. I had noted the cries of the Ogoni people before that Commission. One of the men who spoke for the Ogoni before the Commission, Kemte Giadom, has been before this Tribunal in a slightly diminished role. There was no doubt in the minds of the Ogoni leaders that the Ogoni required living room, breathing space, in Nigeria and that their rights had to be specially protected. The colonial government was not very forthcoming and was probably less than honest. Oil had already been found in Ogoni and Oloibiri at the time, yet the British used the fact of poverty to deny the ethnic groups in the Niger delta the right to self-determination which they keenly demanded and were entitled to. It was thought that this birthright would have to be secured after independence.

Now here we were, independent or said to be independent and the struggle for the national cake had become a matter of life and death for the three major ethnic groups. But did they care who baked the cake? For the cake was a minority cake, baked in the belly of the Niger delta, in its plains and creeks where the heat from the ovens was roasting the inhabitants. Greed for the cake was to lead to internecine war, a war in which an estimated one million people died.

In that war which raged between July 1967 and January 1970, at least 30,000 Ogoni people

or ten per cent of the Ogoni population died. It was a very heavy price to pay for having oil on their land, for baking the cake for the greedy consumers.

Fortuitously, I was to play a role in that war. Even though I recognized the inequities, the inequalities in the Nigerian nation; even though I knew that the Ogoni and other minority groups were only on the periphery of the country, I still voted for Nigeria in hope. The hope of youth, for a brighter future which could be negotiated.

I had abandoned my post-graduate studies at the University of Ibadan at the sight of violence visited on innocent Igbos who had nothing to do directly with the competition of their elite for power. I had hoped to find in Eastern Nigeria, a spirit of negotiation which would re-order the society based on the unhappy experiences of the recent past. In that hope, that spirit, I joined the Rivers Leaders of Thought which sat in Port Harcourt in 1966 and made proposals to the Federal Government for the creation of a Rivers State by decree. It was a novel idea and seemed unattainable, except to the few who were blessed with foresight and who shared the hope that peace could be achieved by negotiation and with it, justice.

But that was not to be. Instead of negotiation, the nation plunged headlong into the drama of war. When I perceived that violence was being urged as a weapon for the settlement of disputes, I left the University of Nigeria, Nsukka where I was a Graduate Assistant and subsequently escaped in a dug-out canoe through the creeks and rivers of the Niger delta to Bonny and thence to Lagos to identify with the federal government.

A month or so later, I opted to return to the front, not as a fighter, but as a man of peace, to administer civilians who were the victims of war. My record as Administrator for Bonny speaks for itself. There are Nigerian Army officers who are still alive who will vouch for the intermediary role I played between combatants and civilians, and the work I did to ensure the return of peace to Nigeria. I was subsequently appointed a Commissioner and a member of the Executive Council of Rivers State.

Throughout the war, I found that I was almost the only one, of the entire Ogoni elite, who stood by Nigeria. The men of my age group and beyond who have given evidence at this Tribunal or who were listed as prosecution witnesses in the proof of evidence -- Dr. G. B. Leton, Mr. I. S. Kogbara, Kemte Giadom as well as the men who were sadly murdered on May 21, 1994 were all on the opposite side of the argument.

In spite of that, as soon as the war ended, I made absolutely sure that they were all rehabilitated, that their positions in Rivers State were promptly secured and that they could begin to make an Ogoni contribution to the development of the newly-created Rivers State. Their individual and collective achievement whatever its quality was a pride to me. I did not expect to be thanked for this service by any individuals. I was not. My reward was knowing that I had done my duty by my country and by my kith and kin.

Even in Rivers State, I remained conscious of the need for peace and justice among all the nine or so ethnic groups which comprise the State. I argued for fair treatment of all within the State and for Rivers State at the Federal level.

Every argument for rights in Nigeria lands in the deaf ear of rulers. Before long, my regular

and consistent argument for equality and equity in Rivers State began to sound like a challenge to the authority of those who wielded power in the State. I was sacked from the Rivers State Government on March 21, 1973. In the four odd years I served as Commissioner, I became very conversant with the problems of the Ogoni people. I did what I could in that time to alleviate some of these problems. Education, I realized, is basic for progress in the modern world; I did whatever was possible to encourage the Ogoni to acquire it. I cannot say that I was satisfied with my achievement. However, a beginning that could be built on had been made.

One important event occurred in my time as Commissioner in Rivers State. In 1970, immediately following the end of the war, there was an oil blow-out in Well 11, at the Bomu oilfield. I was witness to the great damage which the blow-out occasioned to the town of Kegbara Dere. Water sources were poisoned, the air was polluted, farmland devastated. I watched with absolute dismay as indigent citizens found neither succour nor help from Shell for the ruin of the town. The Rivers State Government did not hesitate to set up a Committee to inquire into the blow-out and make recommendations as to the payment of compensation and any other action which would ameliorate the condition of the inhabitants of K.Dere. I was a member of the Committee which worked tirelessly to produce a report.

The Committee's work was quickly pre-empted by Shell which, intent on the destruction of the unwitting and powerless Ogoni people, tricked them into going to the law courts which awarded them a paltry compensation amounting to less than one per cent of what the Committee set up by the River State Government considered as adequate compensation in the circumstances.

I did not fail, in the time I was in Government and thereafter to bring to the notice of all those who were in power or close to it, the angst of the Ogoni people. As a result of my role in the civil war, I developed close relationships with top army officers, including Generals Obasanjo and Danjuma who were to rise to power in 1975, two years after my service with the Rivers State Government ended. Both of them and the Nigerian public in general were fully briefed of the need to treat the Ogoni people fairly.

In something close to desperation, I initiated with other associates, the demand for a split of Rivers State in 1974. We were among the first to see that the twelve-state structure decided by the military in 1967 was not satisfactory, and that it could not satisfy the yearnings of various ethnic groups for development and dignity. I was encouraged in this view by the writings of Obafemi Awolowo and my brief meetings with the eminent philosopher.

I was to be greatly disappointed by those who used the argument which we proffered to take Nigeria down the road to disaster. Instead of state creation being used as an instrument for enhancing the status of the oppressed minority ethnic groups, it was used to bolster the power and authority of the majority ethnic groups who were split into a multiplicity of states in order to give them greater access to the oil wealth of the Ogoni and other minority groups in the Niger delta. By this action, the Ogoni and other such groups were being driven not just beyond the periphery of the Nigerian nation but to extinction. I decried this with all the energy at my disposal.

However, the more I cried, the worse the situation became. Were I given to violence, I would

have considered using it to bring the argument home. Slavery, denigration, dehumanization are achieved by violence. Those who resort to the same methods to end these evils are only responding to the agenda set by the slave master. However, as a man of peace, I did not for once consider this alternative. I have always believed in the power of the intellect, the superior graces of dialogue as a means of conflict resolution.

Throughout the second half of the seventies and most of the eighties, I spent time and energy studying how best the situation in which I found the Ogoni could be tackled. I tried in 1977 to get into the Constituent Assembly that was to fashion the 1979 Constitution. I was cheated of this opportunity.

In the Second Republic, I avoided all the political parties because I had come to realize that the Nigerian politician with any ideals invariably has to yield to compromise and corruption if he is to survive the shoals and sandbanks of Nigerian politics. I recognized that it was important not to lose authenticity if one was to successfully intervene in the lives of the suffering masses. The more so if one was intervening on behalf of a people on their way to extinction. The almost superhuman effort required would demand the highest, the purest ideals, unblemished character and utmost devotion -- characteristics lamentable lacking in the Nigerian politicians of our time.

In 1987, I found direction in the Directorate for Mass Mobilization, Social Justice and Economic Recovery otherwise known as Mamsar set up by the military dictator, Babangida and to which I was appointed as Executive Director in October 1987. My hesitation about assuming any posts under a military dictatorship after my experience from 1967 to 1973 was cleared by the brief given to the Directorate viz:

1. Awaken the consciousness of all categories of Nigerians to their rights and obligations as citizens;
2. Sensitize, induct and equip all Nigerians to fight against internal and external domination of our resources by a few individuals and groups;
3. Re-orientate Nigerians to shun waste and vanity and to shed all pretences of affluence in their life-style;
4. Create consciousness about power and its use, and about the proper role of the government in serving the collective interest of Nigerians;
5. Propagate the virtues of hard work, honesty, self-reliance, commitment to, and promotion of national integration; and
6. Inculcate in Nigerians the virtues of patriotism and positive participation in national affairs.

Here was a call to revolutionary change in Nigeria. Bearing in mind that these may merely be good intentions and realizing that the way to hell is paved with good intentions, I decided to give the Directorate one year of my time, in the first instance. It turned out to be an important year in my life, in the life of the Ogoni people and, I dare say, in the life of ethnic minorities in Nigeria and the African continent. I found out, as Director in charge of Research, that the oppressed ethnic minorities of our land required just such mobilization, such ideas of social justice, just such economic recovery. This was the route to their salvation.

By the time I resigned from the Directorate in early October of 1988, I had perfected my views of non-violent struggle as the handmaiden of a dispossessed people, a minority in search of dignity and survival in a country such as Nigeria. This is what led to the formation of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP).

One night in late 1989, as I sat in my study working on a new book, I received a call to put myself, my abilities, my resources, so carefully nurtured over the years, at the foot of the Ogoni people and similar dispossessed, dispirited and disappearing peoples in Nigeria and elsewhere.

The voice spoke to me, directing me what to do and assuring me of success in my lifetime or thereafter. I was adequately warned of the difficulties which this call to service would entail and the grave risks I would be running.

Without hesitation, I put myself at the service of the Voice. I spoke to my family and intimated them fully of the cause to which I was about to dedicate my life and received their full understanding and blessing.

In forming the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People, I made sure that I was able to carry along the great bulk of the Ogoni people for it was not going to be a one-man struggle. It was going to be a mass movement. And I found that I had touched the right chord in the breasts of all Ogonis. I was not telling them anything they did not know about; I was not calling them to make sacrifices that they were not aware of. In short, the Ogoni were ready for revolution, ready to confront their history and their tormentors in a non-violent manner.

The non-violent struggle which is MOSOP was and is predicated on three ideas, all of them current in the modern world, relevant in international discourse: the environment, human rights and the rights of indigenous people. Because of my career as a writer and my founding role in the Movement another idea became important in MOSOP: the poet as prophet, as keeper of the conscience of society.

I realized, from the beginning, the intellectual underpinnings of the Movement, the depth of its endeavor. I did not expect many to appreciate this fact, but I trusted that the few who did would be able to simplify the message for those who did not and did not have to. It is a tribute to the leadership of the Ogoni at every level that the message carried in a very short time to the Ogoni masses.

The bible of the Movement, the Ogoni Bill of Rights (OBR) demanded the right of the Ogoni people to administer themselves within Nigeria, the right to adequate and fair representation as of right in all Nigerian national institutions, the right to use a fair proportion of Ogoni economic resources for Ogoni development, and the right to control the Ogoni environment.

There is nothing threatening in these demands. These are rights enjoyed by several ethnic groups in Nigeria although many other ethnic groups are denied them -- thus making our beloved country a very unequal one or, for the Ogoni and their like, a slave society in which the master groups have all, and the slave groups nothing.

Self-determination or ethnic autonomy is enjoyed in abundance in Nigeria by the Igbo, the Hausa-Fulani and the Yoruba. The fact that these groups are administered in a multiplicity of states means that they have a surfeit of self-determination. Their gain is the loss of all other groups who are forced to be administered in multi-ethnic states where they suffer a clash of cultures and their progress is stymied. The fact that the Nigerian Constitution states (and quite wrongly too) that Nigeria as a federation of states means that those ethnic groups which do not have states to themselves suffer a disability under the Constitution. Therefore, the law is not equal for all Nigerians and the country cannot therefore enjoy equal loyalty from all its citizens.

Nigeria is, of course, a federation of ethnic groups. That is fact. All the ethnic groups irrespective of size are equal and should be so treated. The Ogoni may be only 500,000 but they have far more resources of oil and gas at this time than the Yoruba who are 20 million or so. If the size of the Ogoni is insignificant vis-a-vis the Yoruba, what do we make of the outsize resources of the former? To use population as a reason to deny them the right to self-determination while usurping their resources for the use of more populous peoples is illogical and cruel in the extreme. Nor are population and economic resources the only determinants of the right to self-determination. The Ikulu or Bura who are few and have no mineral resources also have a right to self-determination. It is a God-given right which should be exercised by the people should they want it. They also have a right to refuse it.

Thus, what the Ogoni Bill of Rights underlined by its demand for autonomy was a declaration that the Ogoni had come of age politically; that they were not going to be snuffed out by the illogicality of the state-creation exercise in Nigeria, nor would they allow themselves to be administered in only the third-tier of government: the local government which has little power and even less resources while other ethnic groups enjoyed a multiplicity of states -- the second tier of government.

The Ogoni call was therefore a call for the re-structuring of the federation, a devolution of power to all peoples so that everyone would have access to the Nigerian commonwealth. The call is patriotic and will be seen to have been timely when the dust settles. Nor was it new. Obafemi Awolowo had called for it way back in 1947 and had revisited it in 1956.

I should note that the recent National Constitutional Conference was very much confronted by it, but ducked it by voting for a Rotational Presidency and multiple Vice-Presidency which merely scratches the problem on the surface, and situates Nigeria in a scramble for office by the squabbling elite rather than devolving power, dignity and authority to the masses in their various and intrinsic habitats.

And lest I forget, I should add that the Ogoni were never conquered by any of their neighbours. Only the British colonialist forced them under the rule of other peoples. The call for self-determination was therefore a call for the return to the roots, to the status quo ante colonialism. It was also a rejection of indigenous colonialism which I have characterized elsewhere as cruel in the extreme, insensitive and primitive. It must stand rejected in the interest of social progress, for it is this colonialism that is responsible for the backwardness of Black Africa. All over the continent are despairing, distressed peoples, held in thrall by their kind who usurp their rights and subject them to indignities, reducing them to the status of third-class citizens or outright slaves, thus destroying their culture. They are held back,

held down and cannot call upon their political genius, their latent abilities, to develop themselves politically and economically. Their energies have, perforce, to be canalized into the struggle for freedom which is a waste in a modern world which is making progress by leaps and bounds. And they are held down, it must be said, by military dictatorships, bandit governments which rely on the use of force to achieve their ignoble aims. Military dictatorships stand in the way of progress, of democracy which is what the Ogoni and other peoples yearn for at this time. The Ogoni demand that there must now be political freedom for all ethnic groups.

The demand for the control of economic resources is naturally concomitant with political control. It is wrong that the resources of the Ogoni people should be used to develop other Nigerian ethnic groups and to the exclusion of the Ogoni themselves. Since Nigeria is a federation, each ethnic group should control its resources, contributing only what it can to the federal purse for the use of agreed federal services. The practice in Nigeria today where the military dictator or a civilian ruler backed by a pliant army arrogates to himself all the resources of the country and proceeds to share it out to cronies and favored groups is tantamount to armed robbery. It is irrelevant to argue that such sharing is backed by decree or by law. Who makes the decree or law? Are the owners of the resources adequately represented at the making of such decrees and laws? Do their views matter? The answer is, no. And to that extent, it is neither fair nor proper.

Some may argue that the Ogoni argument derives from the fact that Ogoni has oil and gas. This is not necessarily so. Indeed, the argument of the Ogoni, fleshed out in part in the Ogoni Bill of Rights is that oil and gas have only brought misery to the Ogoni people, oil exploration has deprived them of farmlands and polluted their streams, gas flared into the air has poisoned the air and has, by flaring day and night, stopped fishes from spawning and driven all wildlife away. Gas flaring also leads to acid rain which renders the soil infertile. Moreover, the presence of oil and gas does not mean automatic wealth. If it were so, Nigeria should be rich, and not a debt-ridden country with educational, health and other services in a parlous state, its people hungry and malnourished. The only beneficiaries of oil wealth are the multi-national oil companies and their shareholders.

In demanding the control of their economic resources in a situation where they are in control of their environment, the Ogoni expect to be able to determine whether they will return to the situation before 1958 when there was no oil, yet the people were well fed and the children were in school, the present was tolerable, and the future hopeful.

The above may be academic; the reality is that before and immediately after independence, the Region where a particular product was found benefitted first by the presence of that product in its vicinity. The Region of origin of oil had fifty per cent of the proceeds of oil. It was only after the civil war that this share was whittled down to a negligible percentage, thus increasing the feelings of exploitation and economic slavery. Royalty is, by definition what is paid to a landlord for a mineral that is found under his soil. By seizing oil royalties as the Nigerian nation state now does, owners of oil-bearing land are being cheated. This is not acceptable. The Ogoni demand that it be given a fair share of its economic resource is equitable, fair and morally justified.

The environment is man's first right. Without a safe environment, man cannot exist to claim

other rights be they social, political or economic. The fact for the Ogoni is that not being in control of their environment, their very existence is seriously threatened. Oil exploration and exploitation carried out by Shell and Chevron in Ogoni with reckless abandon for the environment has been omniscidal. Even worse is the fact that the Ogoni do not know exactly what their resources of oil and gas are and since they do not determine how much of the oil is mined, they cannot ensure the sustainable development of the community.

It is futile to argue that the Federal Government of Nigeria knows. The question the Ogoni people ask is, if after an estimated 30 billion dollars worth of oil has been taken from their land, they have nothing to show for it, what assurance do they have that when the oil runs out, as it surely must, they will be cared for? So important is this matter that I do not expect the Ogoni people to permit any further oil activity on their land until it has been properly negotiated.

It is clear to the Ogoni people that the wanton devastation of the Ogoni environment in which Shell engages arises from their racist contempt for the black man. Otherwise, how else can the Company justify its environmental practice in Ogoni which is so much at variance with the Company's practices in the developed world? The double standards practised by this company is not acceptable and the Ogoni must protest it determinedly with all the energy at their disposal.

In expressing their discontent over the destruction of their environment, the Ogoni perform an important civic duty which other communities in other oil-bearing areas of the country will be well-advised to copy.

The last fundamental demand of the Ogoni Bill of Rights is for adequate and fair representation as of right in all Nigerian national institutions. Again, this is no exceptional demand. The principle of quotas for jobs in Nigeria has been accepted. However, by basing these quotas on states, the principle is unfairly operated in favour of those ethnic groups which have states to themselves or exist in a multiplicity of states. They thus not only enjoy the numerous jobs created in their states, but also dip their hands into the federal jobs pie. This is a cheat, more annoying because it is so brazen and conduces to the deprivation of the already disadvantaged. In a situation where jobs are not advertised but offered below the table and where qualification is not so important as the ethnic origin of applicants, the deprived must loudly protest their deprivation.

In Nigeria, plum jobs and opportunities go to the groups which control power. The various loans provided by the World Bank, the IMF and other lending institutions mostly go to those who can swing such loans, for which read the bureaucrats in the Federal Government. But what then happens to those who have no bureaucrats? They will never secure any such loan. When you are an Ogoni and find nothing being done in your community and are assailed daily by the implications of loans which multiply daily and remain unpaid, you feel a great sense of injustice and rightly so. You are further impaired when you realize that these same loans are expected to be repaid with the proceeds of oil from your land.

The Ogoni demand was therefore meant to awaken the government of Nigeria to its responsibilities to the oppressed ethnic groups throughout the length and breadth of the country. The Ogoni chiefs and leaders were fully aware that there are many minority ethnic

groups in all parts of the country who were suffering disabilities similar to theirs and hoped that whatever was done for them would also apply to their fellow-sufferers. In that sense, the Ogoni Bill of Rights was a broad-minded document, touching the fundamental rights of all Nigerian communities and meant to initiate fundamental change. This classified the Ogoni Movement as revolutionary.

Revolution in this wise connotes change. It does not mean violent change. The change envisaged by MOSOP would come through altering the way people think. That is why one of the slogans which I coined for MOSOP is "We must use our brain!" In all meetings and rallies, I did not ever fail to remind the Ogoni people that our struggle is not to be waged with machetes and axes, but with the brain. "Naa le be gen le sii, men be puin". I would re-iterate ad infinitum. The Ogoni Liberation Song is similarly positive. It goes:

Arise, arise, Ogoni people arise,
We will not be oppressed!

Work, work, Ogoni people work,
We will not be oppressed!

Study, study, Ogoni people study,
We will not be oppressed!

Struggle, struggle, Ogoni people struggle,
We will not be oppressed!

Be proud, be proud, Ogoni people be proud,
We will not be oppressed!

I have to stress that I was privileged to be the ideologue of the Ogoni Movement. I did the basic homework, organized the seminar which examined Ogoni life in late 1989 and drew up the conclusions arising therefrom. I wrote the Ogoni Bill of Rights singlehandedly and presented it to the meeting of Ogoni Chiefs and leaders which I summoned under the auspices of the Ogoni Central Union of which I was President in 1990.

The OBR stressed from the very beginning that our struggle would be non-violent. I am a man of peace and I was also aware of a historical responsibility to initiate change in Africa by non-violence. I had been sufficiently shocked as a young man by the carnage of the Nigerian civil war and appalled by the great number of ethnic wars on the African continent -- wars which solved no problems but rather sent the people backwards.

My research in Mamser also showed that the mobilization efforts of Ahmadu Bello, Obafemi Awolowo and Azikiwe among the Hausa-Fulani, the Yoruba and the Igbo respectively, were non-violent and successful whereas Ojukwu's mobilization of the Igbos, magnificent as it was, floundered because it was violent.

The first two years of the Ogoni struggle were spent creating the intellectual foundations of the Movement. During this period, I wrote essays, pamphlets and books aimed at both the Ogoni people and the general Nigerian public and I presented the Ogoni case to the international community all at my personal cost. I lectured younger Ogoni people organized under the name Committee for Ogoni Autonomy (COA) and not until I was convinced that the tenets of the Movement had been properly inculcated in them did we make the first move

to show our strength to the Nigerian public and the international community.

When we eventually decided to go on a massive protest march on 4th January, 1993 it was that the Babangida government had studiously ignored our demands, the private overtures which I made to the men in the Presidency whom I knew well having yielded no fruit whatsoever.

The protest march of 4th January, 1993 was a phenomenal success. Involving an estimated 300,00 people in all villages and at the centres of the six Ogoni Kingdoms, it went off without a hitch. No one was hurt and not a stone was thrown. A protest march involving 300,000 people anywhere in the world is an event. When that march goes off peacefully, it is a remarkable achievement. It speaks volumes not only for the leaders of the march but also for the followership.

My lord, I organized that march personally to the smallest details with the full support and assistance of Ogoni professionals. I also financed it singlehandedly. In organizing it, I relied on the genius of the Ogoni people, their culture, their attributes. The march will go down in history as a tribute to Nigeria, to black Africa. Ogoni men, women and children took part in it and danced their anger, their denigration, their despossession and dehumanization to the world and the winds, to sun, moon and stars, to posterity.

I was not, at the time, President of MOSOP. I was Spokesman of the Ogoni People. The SOP of MOSOP, if you see what I mean. The lesson being that when you serve the people, you do not have to be in office. Every revolution develops a symbol. Life is about symbolism. I became the symbol of the Ogoni Movement, not because I desired it, but by the inexplicable ways of history. Struggle is a pain, to be the symbol of a struggle is to suffer. It is a sacrifice which must be made. I know it, I accept it.

It is to be regretted that the Federal Military Government of 1993 and Shell decided to misinterpret the message which the protest march tellingly delivered. Instead of going for the message, they went after the messenger. In fairness, I must say that the then Inspector-General of Police, Aliyu Attah did invite the Ogoni leadership to Lagos a week after the march to dialogue with them. Dr. G.B. Leton, late Chief Edward Kobani, myself and at his own invitation, Dr. B.N. Birabi attended that meeting. Unfortunately, it bore no fruit as Alhaji Attah seemed not to have been able to convince the dictator Babangida to pay attention to the cries of the Ogoni people. Alhaji Attah had promised to get back to us within a fortnight of our meeting. We did not get to hear from him again until he retired from the Nigerian Police Force.

Meanwhile, Shell, alarmed at the new development, took the decisions to which I earlier made reference. Those decisions were not aimed at peace, at conciliation, but at me. The messenger, not the message. Alas! The company thus lost a glorious opportunity to redeem itself before the eyes of the world.

We then took the Ogoni people on a journey of non-violent struggle. The One Naira Ogoni Survival Fund (ONOSUF) by which all Ogonis including children made a commitment to and investment in peaceful struggle, the all-night vigil in which all Ogoni people cried to God for deliverance and assistance, culminating in a boycott of the Presidential elections of

June 12. In between, we started a series of seminars on Community leadership, for the struggle was not just about change for the sake of change, but about self-reliance and re-creating Ogoni society to fit it for life in the twenty-first century.

On 4th January 1993, the Ogoni people crossed the threshold of fear, and took their destiny into their own hands. It was a remarkable achievement. But there were still other lessons to be learnt. I had hoped that those lessons would be learnt in peace. On 30th April, 1993, Shell gave notice that its silent, ecological war which had ruined Ogoni life would be supplemented with physical violence as Nigerian troops shot the people of Biara as earlier indicated.

The military government also went out of its way to frighten the Ogoni people, by enacting draconian laws, by threat and intimidation, by its constant arrest of my person. But the Ogoni people were not to be deterred. And so the enemy hit on the time-honoured device of divide and rule.

The strategy came to the fore over the Presidential election of June 12. The argument was whether the Ogoni people should vote or not. The demands of non-violent struggle were that they should not vote. But the party politicians in the leadership of MOSOP were intent on using the considerable clout of MOSOP in the Ogoni community to party advantage. Now, this was a thing which the majority of the Steering Committee did not want. The struggle was not meant to be used for the benefit of a few people, but for the betterment of the masses. Besides, it was necessary to show the Ogoni people that their vote was not important to the rulers of Nigeria. What was important to them was Ogoni land, Ogoni oil. That whenever they voted, they were merely selling their birthright. In that the vote could not, would not, had not ever, ameliorated their objective condition because they had no protection under the Constitution. The point was proved when, in spite of the fact that the Ogoni boycotted the election, a result would still have been announced had Babangida the dictator not annulled the elections.

The main thing any Nigerian election has ever done for the Ogoni and similar ethnic minority peoples is to provide opportunity for a few politicians to pick the crumbs from the master's table by showing to the winner of the election that they "delivered Ogoni" to him. This is one of the things MOSOP stood against. Individuals should not benefit from the misery of the masses.

Dr. G.B. Leton has put it out that he resigned his Presidency of MOSOP because of a difference with the majority of the Steering Committee of MOSOP over methods. This is completely false, an after thought. He resigned because the Steering Committee decided by a majority that MOSOP would not allow itself to be used to achieve his private purpose of delivering Ogoni votes to the Social Democratic Party of which he was the leading light in Ogoni. He had accompanied the SDP Candidate, Chief Moshood Abiola on a campaign tour of Ogoni and had promised the candidate the totality of Ogoni votes which would have been the case had MOSOP adopted his (Abiola's) candidature.

The aftermath of the successful boycott of the Presidential elections was that I landed in detention. That detention was resented by the Ogoni masses and wounded the community. I was elected President of MOSOP *in absentia* while still in detention and upon my release,

undertook to heal all wounds and bring peace to Ogoni. Although I was in poor health, I held meetings with the Rivers State Council of Chiefs, and with their assistance ensured that some Government-appointed Chiefs could return to Ogoni from which they had exiled themselves to escape the wrath of the Ogoni people. On 14th August, 1993 at a public meeting in Bori attended by members of the Rivers State Council of Chiefs, I spoke of peace and reconciliation and warned again against violence.

Meetings were also held to re-unite MOSOP. At those meetings, Dr. Leton and late Chief Kobani offered to withdraw their resignation as President and Vice-President respectively. This proved a thorny issue but would certainly have been resolved had not the state-violence organized against Ogoni escalated, necessitating my frequent travels to Abuja to meet with General Abacha and Chief Shonekan. Mediation to resolve the issue through Ogoni Church leaders was on up until the crisis of 21st May 1994. The MOSOP Steering Committee under my Presidency was ready for dialogue and the resolution of the issue and had submitted a memorandum to the mediation committee.

In August and September 1993, I was fully occupied with this issue of peace and reconciliation in Ogoni and, contrary to the false witness that has been borne at this Tribunal, did not have occasion to address any meetings of the National Youth Council of Ogoni People (NYCOP) whose President was away in Europe at the time. In early October 1993 I was busy with the so-called Ogoni-Andoni Peace Accord and overseas travel to touch base with my family in London.

I have to state that I was not a regular at meetings even of the Steering Committee of MOSOP since I was mostly engaged in publicity and diplomatic work and kept an extremely peripatetic schedule between Port Harcourt, Lagos and Europe where I had outstanding engagements quite apart from my writing to which I devoted every spare minute at all times. The devil finds occupation for idle minds. My mind was so busy that I could not possibly have found time to engage in any plans to hurt anyone.

The change in government in November 1993 was to introduce a new element into the Ogoni struggle. The appointment of Lt.-Col. Dauda Komo as Military Administrator of Rivers State was welcomed with a measure of relief by MOSOP and when he set up an inquiry into the Port Harcourt Waterfront massacres, MOSOP Steering Committee hoped that government would proceed therefrom to identify the causes and perpetrators of violence against the Ogoni and end such violence.

This hope was not borne out as I have earlier indicated. Lt.-Col. Komo fell into the hands of the local conspirators who were making money from the Rivers State exchequer and Shell by organizing state violence against the Ogoni people and filing fictitious reports to Abuja to justify their nefarious actions. Soon, Lt.-Col. Komo became a key player. In December/January leaders of MOSOP were detained and I was put under house arrest in early January of 1994. All arrangement made by MOSOP to celebrate the end of 1993 and Ogoni Day in 1994 such as exhibitions, debates and symposia were ruthlessly broken up by armed troops. I used my influence with the Ogoni people to prevail on them to ignore these provocative actions, while I made protests to the authorities in Abuja.

A Ministerial delegation visit to Ogoni on January 19, 1994 gave me hope that a solution of

the crisis was in sight but Lt.-Col. Komo had other plans which he carefully financed and implemented. The failure to publish the Major Taiwo Inquiry Panel report and to act on it, the formal institution of the Rivers State Internal Security Task Force, the destruction of Ogoni villages on the Ndoki border by the Task Force in April 1994, the further detention of Ogoni leaders, all these were elements of the Komo plan.

In spite of the foregoing, I still laid great store by dialogue as a means of resolving the crisis. And I was content when in spite of my personal reservations about the impending National Constitutional Conference, the Ogoni people voted to participate in it. The MOSOP Steering Committee put me forward to contest the elections. I hurried from visits to London and Lagos arriving in Port Harcourt on the 19th of May to find that the MOSOP Steering Committee had made arrangements to address rallies in parts of Ogoni to whip up support for the Conference which many Nigerians were boycotting. I applied and paid the fees for forms and got properly nominated as required by the regulations. I submitted the forms at Bori, the headquarters of Khana Local Government as instructed, and, being fully qualified, expected to contest the delegates elections on the 23rd of May. Up to the 21st of May, the list of qualified candidates in the Khana Local Government Area was not available although the regulations demanded that they should have been made public by 20th May. But the entire election was marked by irregularities -- there was no enabling law and deadlines were altered at short notice. The statement by a prosecution witness that I was not a candidate is news to me. However, the rallies were to explain the need for the Conference and not for just my candidacy.

On the 20th of May, I addressed rallies at Kono-Boue, Kpitem and Nonwa. As is usual with MOSOP rallies, the occasions were very orderly and the format of my speeches ready-made. Speaking in Khana, I greeted the people, explained briefly how the National Constitutional Conference was going to help resolve the Ogoni crisis, and then I presented the ward delegates chosen by the local MOSOP Committee, urging the latter to electoral probity. End of rally. This format was strictly followed at all three rallies. The statement by a prosecution witness, Mr. Limpa Gbaa that I urged the crowd to murder at an open rally in Kpitem is an outright lie. None of the four murdered men was a candidate for the elections; I was aware that both Dr. Leton and the late Edward Kobani belonged to the Southern Minorities Movement which had announced publicly that they would be boycotting the elections. Late Edward Kobani had published the fact of his not standing the elections in "Sunray" newspaper before the 19th of May. So there was no question whatsoever of my asking the public to oppose his candidacy or to hurt him in whatever way. A man of my standing, education and knowledge of the laws of the land could never make the statement which Mr. Gbaa alleges that I made. Only an idiot would make such a statement in public. I am no idiot. Limpa Gbaa also claims that MOSOP, through the Master of Ceremony, told the people at the rally that apart from the five candidates presented to the people as delegates to be voted for by the public, all others who came out on election day were to be "dealt with". If only the contestants were to come out on election day, who would have voted for them? It is also incredible that a person soliciting for votes would use threats of the kind alleged by Limpa Gbaa at a campaign rally. This would surely have pitched the votes against him. Moreover, I spoke in Khana and only Limpa Gbaa's mendacious mind could have fabricated his lies. He confesses to a lack of formal education and cannot certainly, successfully and faithfully translate whatever he hears in Khana into English.

On the 21st of May I went to Luusue-Sogho in continuation of my tour. When confronted by the troops of the Internal Security Task Force, I did not make any arguments whatsoever beyond grumbling that it would have been far better if I had been told in Port Harcourt not to attend the rallies. I decided to return to Port Harcourt but was then reminded by Mr. Diigbo who was travelling with me in the same car that a Seminar was holding in Bori for delegates and polling officers. I decided to go there. Before getting to Bori, I asked the Security officers, Mr. Stephen Hasso and Navy Lieutenant P.C. Nwatu if it was alright to go there. They gave their consent.

On arrival at Bori, I found that the Seminar had not started and when Lieutenant P.C. Nwatu gruffly told me that if the Seminar turned into a rally (how could it?) he would disperse it, I knew that my presence at Bori was not welcome and decided to return to Port Harcourt. It was at this point that Ledum Mitee, Deputy President of MOSOP, whom I met at Bori, invited me to drinks at his home in K.Dere. I again solicited the permission of the Security agents to go there and when they gave me their consent, set off in that direction.

I have to draw attention here to the fact that throughout my encounter with the security agents, I behaved impeccably, taking orders from them and asking their permission before I would do anything.

We drove in a convoy of three cars and had gone past Gionkoo when the security agents overtook my car and stopped. An Army truck went past our three cars and blocked the road. Troops jumped out of the car and cocked their rifles. The security agents told me that they had decided against my going to K.Dere. When I asked why, they explained that it was in my own interest. I only had time to wave goodbye to Ledum Mitee who had alighted from his car and stood beside my car window. I immediately ordered my chauffeur to turn back and drive off.

The statement by Ledor Vizer that I addressed words in the Gokana tongue to a crowd is a complete fabrication. In the first place, there was no such crowd. Secondly, I do not waste words on just anyone I see on the road. Thirdly, I, like Dr. Leton, was not aware that there was any meeting of Gokana Chiefs and people going on in Gionkoo and had I not been stopped by the security agents at that particular spot, would have driven straight on to K.Dere. I stress this ignorance of the Gionkoo meeting. Since it was a meeting of Gokana people, I as a Khana was not invited and did not know of it. Similarly, Dr. Leton, another Khana man who testified as follows to the Tribunal: "surprisingly, I was not aware (of it)". Fourthly, I do not speak the flawless Gokana of Ledor Vizer's sentence. Fifthly, I have never used the word "Bedere" (vulture) on anyone, least of all on men who are my seniors; I have cultivation and culture and am old enough to know the difference between right and wrong. On 14th August, 1993, I had publicly upbraided those who used the term "vulture" to describe some Ogoni elders.

The statement of prosecution witness, Stephen Hasso, Assistant Superintendent of Police, that I complied with all the instructions I was given by him on 21st May, 1994 is correct and I pay tribute to his unusual (for a Nigerian police officer) honesty in the circumstance.

I drove non-stop to Port Harcourt to the offices of "Sunray" where I reported all that had happened and did an interview. Thereafter, I tried to contact the Military Administrator,

Lt.-Col. Dauda Komo, but he was not available. I left the telephone numbers to my residence and office and requested that he please contact me whenever he became available. I did not hear from him even though I waited in my office until 6 p.m. that day. By that time, I had been joined by Mr. Ledum Mitee and others who came to discuss with me what we were going to do in view of the attitude of the Security agencies. I asked that a Press Release be issued, which was done.

At about 5.30 p.m. I received a telephone call from "Sunray" newspaper informing me that there had been trouble at Gionkoo and that some prominent Ogoni men may have been murdered. I was shocked, traumatized. I did not even remember to ask for the name of the caller. After a brief discussion with Mr. Mitee and others, we decided to go to "Sunray" to get more details of what had happened. The "Sunray" editor said the news had been brought by Mr. Justice Peter Akere, himself an Ogoni. We went to Justice Akere's, but he was not in. Thence we proceeded to the Commissioner of Police's residence. He told us that he did not have detailed information, but was expecting it. We then went to Government House in an effort to see the Military Administrator. He was said to be attending a Command Performance of a play and was not available. We met a distressed Mrs. Badey there. We returned to my office and at about 10 p.m., I repaired home.

Shortly after midnight, armed men broke into my residence and I was taken away at gunpoint. I was driven to the Bori Camp headquarters of the 2nd Amphibious Brigade, beaten, kicked and brutalized and locked in the military guardroom. The next morning, I was put in legcuffs and driven to Afam. On Monday evening, Lt.-Col. Okuntimo, Commander of the Rivers State Internal Security Task Force before whom I had been led the night of the 21st of May, arrived, took video and still photographs of me in leg and handcuffs and returned me to Bori Camp where I was asked to make a statement to the Police about the murder of Chief Edward Kobani, Albert Badey, Chief S.N. Orage and Chief T.B. Orage.

At this point, I would like to say something about the murdered men:

The late Chief Edward Kobani was my particular friend and political mentor. I knew him from childhood when our parents lived together at the "Courtyard" in Bori, headquarters of the Ogoni nation. Although he attended N.A. School, Bori, I did not meet him there because of the difference in our ages. I came to know him well in 1962 while I was at the University of Ibadan and spent my holidays with him in Port Harcourt where he was teaching at the then Niger Grammar School, Port Harcourt. Late Edward had a great sense of humour, had a knack for putting the right word in the right place and knew Nigerian and Ogoni politics well. He introduced me to a lot of Nigerians whom I would otherwise not have known. He had a good knowledge of English and Latin literature. He was something of a quintessential Ogoni man and could sing and dance to Ogoni songs. He spoke his native Gokana and my native Khana. These qualities endeared him to me. He taught me to disagree politically with people but never to personalize such disagreements. I noted, in all our years together, that he had interminable disagreements with members of the Bodo (his hometown) elite such as Chief Kemte Giadom, Chief I.S. Kogbara and late Albert Badey. He might even take them to court on certain issues and yet he would be holding meetings with them on other issues. We collaborated on a lot of Ogoni issues. I formed the Ogoni Divisional Union in 1961. Late Edward became its first President. I was Secretary. We worked together, representing Ogoni at the Rivers Leaders of Thought meetings in Port Harcourt in 1966 and when I decided to

skip Biafra during the civil war, he was the only non-member of my family whom I took into confidence. We also worked together in the Port Harcourt State Movement from 1974 onwards.

At the end of the civil war, I made sure that he rose to prominence in the River State Government because I thought he eminently deserved it. We had one major disagreement in all those years. We both tried to get into the Constituent Assembly in 1977 and were initially both disqualified on a technicality. My disqualification was later quashed while his held. Late Edward decided that I would not go to the Assembly and got his way at the elections. No sweat. Our friendship got over that hitch and when I decided to form what later became MOSOP in 1990, he was the first man to whom I broached the idea. As usual, he gave his full support and worked tirelessly for the Movement of which he became Vice-President in February 1993. He was a good, if controversial politician. In April 1993 when I was conferred with the chieftaincy title, Mene Kpaamagbara of Bodo (his hometown), he was on hand to offer me a post-conferment dinner. He was a great friend of whom I was very proud and in whom I was well pleased.

Late Albert Badey was also my friend. I knew his late parents. His father called me "Nagbo" or "my dear friend" and I knew Albert from his days at the Methodist College Uzuakoli where he was a great sportsman and showed great academic brilliance. Like late Chief Kobani and myself he also studied at the University of Ibadan where, like me, he read English. I valued him immensely as the most successful bureaucrat Ogoni has ever produced. It will take Ogoni a generation to produce another like him. He did not take part in Ogoni politics and was always available to proffer his valuable advice on all matters. He was a great Ogoni patriot. And it was for this reason that he was co-opted into the Steering Committee of MOSOP when he became available upon his retirement from the Civil Service where he was Secretary to the Government.

In MOSOP, his level-headed advice was extremely useful and when we were summoned to Abuja in 1993, the Secretary to the Federal Military Government, Alhaji Aliyu Mohammed was so impressed with him that he appointed Albert to the National Electoral Commission. It was like him to quietly reject the appointment because he foresaw that the Commission did not have a future.

So brilliant was late Albert Badey that had he been anything else but an Ogoni, he would have risen to very high situations in Nigeria.

Late Chief S. N. Orage was very closely related to me. I knew his father. His wife, Elizabeth, is from the same village, Bane, with me. My father, Chief J. B. Wiwa was an instrument of their marriage. Sam Orage trained my first wife, Maria, the younger sister of his wife, through primary school before I met and married her. I considered him my father-in-law. I had such great love and respect for him that I would never contradict him openly or privately at any meeting. I was, of course, a frequent visitor to his house, my children were his, and his children are mine. He was probably the most promising Ogoni businessman and I respected him for that as well.

Late Chief T.B. Orage, was the elder brother of my father-in-law. I knew him well but at a distance. I had not seen or met him for fifteen or so years prior to his unfortunate murder.

But I considered him family.

My lord, you will see why the murder of these four eminent Ogoni men left me in a state of shock and trauma. I wept like a child when their death was confirmed to me. Their death has not only impoverished Ogoni, it has diminished me greatly. I felt terrible when I thought of their wives, and of their children to all of whom I was "Uncle Ken". I knew what effect their death would have on my children as well. My children are cousins to the Orages and were playmates of the Kobanis. It is really quite impossible for me to transmit fully the depth of my anger and despair at not only their death but the manner of their murder and the full implication thereof for Ogoni.

To find myself charged for their murder is not only embarrassing, it adds to my distress, the distress of my family and the unending pain of the Ogoni people. I categorically deny responsibility for the murder of Albert Badey, Edward Kobani, Samuel Orage and T.B. Orage. I am innocent.

Throughout my life, I have dedicated myself to the progress of the Ogoni people. In war and in peace, I have defended their interest, their life. I prayed to be given the opportunity to bring them a better life, the sort of life which, by the grace of God, I have been privileged to lead. We know that death is ordained for man but we always hope that those we love should live for ever. The murder of late Edward Kobani, Albert Badey, Samuel Orage and Theophilus Orage is a blight on Ogoni. I pray today as always that their souls may rest in perfect peace and I once again extend my condolences to their families and friends. I appeal to the latter not to yield to the effort of politicians to play politics with the unfortunate death of their and our beloved ones.

I have pleaded not guilty to the false charges of their murder laid against me before this Tribunal. I state without equivocation that I know nothing of their murder. The prosecution states that I, Ledum Mitee and Barinem Kiobel procured and counselled John Kpuinen and Baribor Bera to commit these murders.

Let me state that by the nature of Ogoni politics, there is no possibility of this happening. I am a Khana. All the others are Gokana. The Khana are the majority group in Ogoni. If I, as a Khana leader went to any two Gokana people and asked them to murder four eminent Gokana men, that would be the end of me. No Gokana man would ever tolerate that. In any case, Ledum Mitee I knew very well as Deputy President of MOSOP; I also knew his late father, a signatory to the OBR. Ledum is a most honourable gentleman, a brilliant lawyer, a patriot and a very humane man who cannot hurt a fly. Barinem Kiobel I only met once in my life, when he came as a Commissioner to solicit my assistance to have Bori Polytechnic re-opened, sometime in early 1994. Beyond that, I have had no relationship with him, and am duly impressed that he thought, as is before the Tribunal, that I did not like him because he had usurped my brother's position as Commissioner in Rivers State. I know John Kpuinen because of his role in MOSOP. He is deeply religious, a young idealist of impeccable character. I only met Baribor Bera in detention in late January or early February this year.

I cannot possibly understand what the prosecution adduces to have been the motive for this terrible crime. I have not sought political power and have no ambitions whatsoever for any political office in Nigeria. The Ogoni struggle is not about power, but about justice.

Therefore, the murdered men were not my political opponents. They were, like me and all other Ogoni people, victims of the oppressive system that is Nigeria. Their murder could not bring the Ogoni any closer to the justice we have been questing for. The debate between us as to whether Shell should return to the Ogoni oilfields was a healthy one. I love the cut and thrust of debate and being a "disagreer" so to say. I concede the right to disagree to others. There was never any doubt in my mind that the truth would prevail. That truth could only be got at by argument. The debate was also showing the world that the Ogoni are a vibrant people who cannot be led by the nose by anyone.

As far as I can see it, the prosecution has not established any motive for this crime, has not established any nexus between the accused persons, between the "procurers" and the "procured", and I can only assume that this is a political persecution meant to silence my determined opposition to the political, economic and environmental deprivation of the Ogoni people and other ethnic minorities in Nigeria.

I have listened carefully to the prosecution witnesses who have testified before this Tribunal. Limpa Gbaa, Celestine Meabe, David Keenom and Ledor Vizor belong to a special class. They are thugs, the dregs of Ogoni society. Celestine Meabe and David Keenom belong to the lunatic fringe of the Ogoni Movement and they always sought to use the Movement for their selfish purposes. I am pleased to know that the National Youth Council of Ogoni People (NYCOP) to which they belonged, found them out early and flushed them out. It is a shame that the prosecution has lionized these vermin, giving them an opportunity to display their depravity before the world. Limpa Gbaa and Ledor Vizor are equal knaves who must have been bribed to testify here in the same manner as were Naanyone Nkpa and Charles Danwi who have sworn to affidavits that they were bribed to testify against me. The prosecution has enabled David Keenom, for instance, to continue his life of infamy, extorting money from Ogoni villagers whom he threatens to report to the police for the murder of the four prominent men if they do not pay him off.

Chief F. S. Kpai and Chief Kemte Giadom were always respected Ogoni elders. In the case of Chief F.S. Kpai who was fondly called "Father of MOSOP in Bodo", I must seize this opportunity to sympathize with him over his suffering on the 21st of May, 1994. I thank God that he survived the assault on his person. I thank Chief Kemte Giadom for revealing to this Tribunal that the security agencies failed to promptly attend to the fracas in Gionkoo and even mocked his sense of civic responsibility for reasons which I shall explain later. I pray him to understand my younger brother, Owens' emotional concern for my safety.

Miss Priscilla Vikue does not deserve my attention. A lickspittle political operator, she has always wanted to profit by politics and MOSOP. Opening the eyes of the ordinary Ogoni people to exploiters of her ilk, represented a threat to her livelihood. That is why she came to this Tribunal to lie and to put up a poor show as a middling actress. I did not meet her in September or October 1993 nor did I know about the alleged destruction of her house by her nephew. I was in detention at Owerri when the alleged event happened. I have never discussed revolution with her. She is, I am sorry to say, a dreadful, frightening, misrepresentation of Ogoni womanhood.

Alhaji Patrick Mohammed Kobani similarly lies but as a half-brother of one of the deceased, one can understand his blood thirst. I grew up with him and know that were his late

half-brother Edward alive, he would not have placed value on his words.

Which leaves me with the first prosecution witness, Dr. G.B. Leton whose political naiveté shines through his evidence. By his allegation, I lured him into becoming President of MOSOP. He fell in to the "trap". If that is true, it is not to be the only trap he has been lured into. Although he resigned his Presidency of MOSOP by his own confession, he still states under cross-examination, "I remain the only President." He says that I "assumed the Presidency of MOSOP" whereas it is common knowledge that I was elected in absentia to the position while I was in detention in Owerri. Whereas he, as MOSOP President, personally swore in the officers of the National Youth Council of Ogoni People (NYCOP) at Bori in February of 1993, and attended several functions organized by NYCOP, he still states on oath that I formed the organization and other "parallel" organizations all of which he describes as "militant organizations". He is confused as to the meanings of "parallel" and "militant". For how could anyone describe the Federation of Ogoni Women's Association (FOWA) or the Council of Ogoni Professionals (COP) or the Council of Ogoni Churches (COC) or NYCOP as "militant organizations"? What is militancy? Organizing protest marches at which no stone is thrown? MOSOP is by its Constitution and umbrella organization. What is parallelism? It is on record before the Tribunal that Dr. Leton was the first person to publicly broach the idea of "vulturism" in Ogoni politics, in his famous press release "Before We Are All Killed." And he does confess that he did not like the idea that some of his friends were "anti-Ogoni" yet he will not concede to others that they might also have friends whose anti-Ogoni posture they would dislike, even though they still remain friends.

What also shines through Dr. Leton's testimony is his malice towards me, his envy of my person and my achievement. I consider this sad for a man whose academic brilliance I have always admired.

For any Nigerian politician to state that any public appointment does not derive from his being from a certain part of the country is naive in the extreme. Most Federal appointments in this country are made on a State basis and appointees are expected to represent the interest of their home areas even while serving the country in totality. His failure to realize this is why Dr. Leton did not do justice to any of his numerous appointments and left a legacy of discontent with the Federal and Rivers State Governments among Ogoni people.

His ultimate act of naiveté is clearly shown by his reaction to the "strong rumour" about "people wanting to kill us". By his own testimony, he says, "We were told that weekend that there would be bloodshed in Ogoni but they did not tell us any specific area." What is curious for a man who has served in various governments is that his discomfort sent him to see the Military Administrator of the State, Lt.-Col. Dauda Komo. If he and his colleagues had had any suspicions about individuals, they should have gone to the Police. "On the 20th of May, 1994 in the morning at 9 o'clock, I and three of my colleagues were in the Government House to report this strong rumour about people wanting to kill us. We left there about mid-day." They laid their complaint before the Military Administrator. "He assured us that he will (sic) take care of the situation. But on the 21st of May, 1994, the following day, four of our elders were killed," testifies he. And he is still unable to make the valid deductions months afterwards.

My lord, the "strong rumours" Dr. Leton refers to were, I believe, the contents of the notorious memorandum published in national and overseas newspapers in February 1995 to which I made reference earlier in which Lt.-Col Okuntimo made proposals on the 12th of May, 1994 to Lt.-Col. Komo to undertake "wasting operations" cutting across the different groups in Ogoni -- MOSOP and non-MOSOP alike. The memorandum stated explicitly that Ogoni was to be destabilized, that intra-communal and inter-kingdom warfare was to be encouraged in order to make necessary the continued presence of the military in Ogoni. Money was to be secured from both Shell and the Rivers State Government for what was compared to Ecomog operations in Liberia. The memorandum was also explicit about the "wasting operations" being undertaken at MOSOP and other meetings. When Lt.-Col. Komo assured Dr. Leton and others that he would take care of the situation, he knew precisely what he was saying. He knew that he had approved Lt.-Col. Okuntimo's proposals, he also knew that the Gokana people would be holding a meeting at Gionkoo the following day and he knew that an election period was as good a time as any to conduct "wasting operations." All these were painfully lost on Dr. Leton and his colleagues. I invite the Tribunal to note that my statement to the police on 29th June, 1994 correctly divined the contents of the notorious memorandum which only became public in February, 1995.

Dr. Leton admits that he has never seen me use or advocate violence in all the years that he has known me. Truly so. If he were to cast his mind back to the "strong rumours" he heard on the 18th of May and to the memorandum recommending "wasting operations" in Ogoni; if he took account of the fact that armed troops were used to stop me from addressing peaceful rallies; were he aware that Chief Kemte Giadom drew the attention of the security agents to the danger facing our murdered compatriots and that it took the agents five hours to respond even though Ogoni was brimming with security agents on the day; were he to recall that the Military Administrator had promised to ensure the safety of the murdered elders and that the said Military Administrator was fully aware of the Gokana Council of Chiefs meeting to which he dispatched his Commissioner, Dr. Kiobel, the third accused person, Dr. Leton would know for certain that his suspicions should be elsewhere. And when we remember that on late arrival, having given the culprits the chance to escape, the armed troops went on a rampage throughout Ogoni, attacking unarmed men, women and children in their sleep with automatic weapons with intent to either kill them or drive them into the bush; and that the very next day, the Military Administrator gave a press Conference at which he named MOSOP the murderers of our friends and compatriots without having carried out any investigations whatsoever, openly bragging that he had arrested "those we wanted to arrest", he would know that only the absolutely naive would look at the dock here for the culprits. He has failed to see that as in the "communal clashes" perpetrated by Nigerian troops and blamed in the Ogoni, so the murders now being placed on innocent Ogoni men.

The man who has declared on oath, "I remain the only President (of MOSOP)", has not found it strange that brutal murders should have been ascribed to his organization, a declaration of collective guilt passed on the entire Ogoni people on the basis of which extra-judicial killings have been perpetrated in Ogoni in addition to looting, rape and beatings. To his everlasting shame, Dr. Leton, instead of protesting, has rationalized these events perpetrated by the Nigerian Army to the shock of the civilized world and has even travelled to Europe to justify them, exulting in his safety and the safety of his immediate family. He has even denied being an Ogoni on record. This witness is terribly confused and

lacks credibility.

The police witnesses have also failed woefully to help this Tribunal. Their investigations were no investigations at all, and they lie in their assertions. I was present at the Bori Camp Military Guardroom on the 26th of May, 1994 when over fifty Ogoni men were brought by the Internal Security Task Force which had merely mounted road blocks on the Port Harcourt -- Bori road, ten miles or more from the murder scene and arrested anyone who had marks on their chests. These men were supposed to be NYCOP activists. In my presence, they were brutalized and those who were frightened by such brutality were then handed over to the police. This was the investigative method by which murder suspects have been held, some of them without charge, for the past fifteen months.

I gave the investigating police a lead to the Rivers State Internal Security Task Force and Shell. They refused or failed to follow the lead and investigate both organizations. The totality of their investigation was to justify the false claim by Lt.-Col. Komo, Military Administrator of Rivers State that MOSOP committed the murders, a claim which has been contradicted by a key prosecution witness, Alhaji Mohammed Kobani who should know. This is a most incompetent investigation.

My first statement to the police was made voluntarily; the second statement was a matter of my responding to questions and guidance offered by the investigating police officers. There was no question therefore of my having refused to supply the name of my chauffeur who remains in my service to this day and lives in my residence.

It is said that a prophet is not without honour save in his country and in his own house. In the last sixteen months or so I have won the following foreign awards: The Fonlon-Nichols Award for excellence in creative writing and the struggle for human rights; the 1994 Right Livelihood Award or Alternative Nobel Prize for Peace; the 1995 Goldman Environmental Prize, the most prestigious environmental award in the world; the eighth Bruno-Kreisky Foundation Award for human rights and the 1995 British Environmental and Media Special Awareness Award and the Hammett Award of Human Rights Watch. Here in Nigeria, the Students Union of Ahmadu Bello University have named me the Grand Commander of the Oppressed Masses. I am honoured and encouraged by this world-wide recognition of my work and my ideas.

But I have also found honour among my beloved Ogoni people who have suffered immensely in the last hundred years and more particularly since 1990 when I urged them to confront their history and their tormentors in a non-violent struggle. Their determination, their resilience, their refusal to be provoked into a course of action contrary to the peaceful ways prescribed by me and other Ogoni leaders does them proud and confirms the fact that they have truly come of age in the modern world. They conferred on me the first Ogoni National Merit Award in December 1992.

This trial tests the foregoing awards but it is also a further denigration of the Ogoni people as their best men are put on display, some to lie under pressure and by psychological suggestion, others to be lied against and publicly humiliated, for the impish delight of a Rivers State Government anxious to cover its track of incompetence, multiple murders, lies and misuse of public funds. Many Ogoni people who would gladly have given evidence here

have been driven underground or were only recently arrested. Documentary evidence has been seized by the 29th July 1995 raid on my office. However, I predict that the attempt to ridicule and denigrate the Ogoni people will fail. In future, we shall dig deep, the truth about all the murders and other acts of state terrorism in Ogoni will surface, and the Ogoni people and their leaders will be vindicated. For, ultimately, the truth is its own protector.

My lord, since my arrest on the 21st of May, 1994 I have been subjected to physical and mental torture, held incommunicado and denied food for weeks and medical attention for months. My seventy-four year old mother has been whipped and arrested, my wife beaten and threatened with detention, the three telephone lines to my office and residence cut and the they remain cut to this day, my office and home have been ransacked on three different occasions and personal and family property, official files and documents taken away without documentation. I have been calumniated in the press and on satellite television before the whole world by a Rivers State government anxious to prejudice the mind of the public and to convince that public of my guilt even before trial. Only recently, before the United Nations Committee for the Eradication of Racism and Discrimination in Geneva, an official delegation of the Federal Government which included the Special Adviser on Legal Affairs to the Head of State, Professor Yazudu, declared me responsible for the murders which are the subject of this Tribunal, even before Tribunal has found against me or anyone else.

The fact that a case of homicide is being charged before a Tribunal set up under Decree No. 2 of 1987 speaks for itself. I am aware of the many strictures laid against the decree and this Tribunal by local and international observers. All the same, I have followed the proceedings here with keen and detailed interest, not only because I am charged before this Tribunal, but also because, as a writer, I am a custodian of the conscience of society. I regret that the legal counsel I freely chose, Gani Fawehinmi, the human rights hero and pride of this country, was forced to withdraw. His withdrawal has denied credibility to this trial.

With the permission of the Tribunal, I would now like to make a filmic representation which will graphically demonstrate all that I have said here and amplify the details thereof.

* * *

My lord, we all stand before history. I am a man of peace, of ideas. Appalled by the denigrating poverty of my people who live on a richly-endowed land, distressed by their political marginalization and economic strangulation, angered by the devastation of their land, their ultimate heritage, anxious to preserve their right to life and to a decent living, and determined to usher to this country as a whole a fair and just democratic system which protects everyone and every ethnic group and gives us all a valid claim to human civilization, I have devoted all my intellectual and material resources, my very life, to a cause in which I have total belief and from which I cannot be blackmailed or intimidated. I have no doubt at all about the ultimate success of my cause, no matter the trials and tribulations which I and those who believe with me may encounter on our journey. Nor imprisonment nor death can stop our ultimate victory.

I repeat that we all stand before history. I and my colleagues are not the only ones on trial. Shell is here on trial and it is as well that it is represented by counsel said to be holding a watching brief. The company has, indeed, ducked this particular trial, but its day will surely come and the lessons learnt here may prove useful to it for there is no doubt in my mind that the ecological war the company has waged in the delta will be called to question sooner than later and the crimes of that war duly punished. The crime of the company's dirty wars against the Ogoni people will also be punished.

On trial also is the Nigerian nation, its present rulers and all those who assist them. Any nation which can do to the weak and disadvantaged what the Nigerian nation has done to the Ogoni, loses a claim to independence and to freedom from outside influence. I am not one of those who shy away from protesting injustice and oppression, arguing that they are expected from a military regime. The military do not act alone. They are supported by a gaggle of politicians, lawyers, judges, academics and businessmen, all of them hiding under the claim that they are only doing their duty, men and women too afraid to wash their pants of their urine. We all stand on trial, my lord, for by our actions we have denigrated our country and jeopardized the future of our children. As we subscribe to the sub-normal and accept double standards, as we lie and cheat openly, as we protect injustice and oppression, we empty our classrooms, degrade our hospitals, fill our stomachs with hunger and elect to make ourselves the slaves of those who subscribe to higher standards, pursue the truth, and honour justice, freedom and hard work.

I predict that the scene here will be played and replayed by generations yet unborn. Some have already cast themselves in the role of villains, some are tragic victims, some still have a chance to redeem themselves. The choice is for each individual.

I predict that a denouement of the riddle of the Niger delta will soon come. The agenda is being set at this trial. Whether the peaceful ways I have favoured will prevail depends on what the oppressor decides, what signals it sends out to the waiting public.

In my innocence of the false charges I face here, in my utter conviction, I call upon the Ogoni people, the peoples of the Niger delta, and the oppressed ethnic minorities of Nigeria to stand up now and fight fearlessly and peacefully for their rights. History is on their side, God is on their side. For the Holy Quran says in Sura 42, verse 41: "All those who fight, when oppressed incur no guilt, but Allah shall punish the oppressor." Come the day.

Ken Saro-Wiwa
Port Harcourt
21st September, 1995.