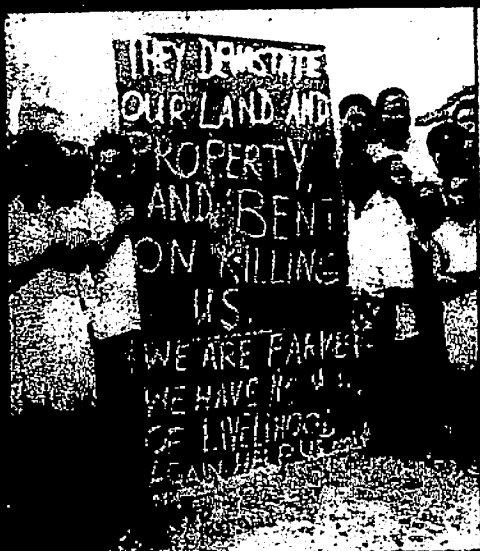


# GENOCIDE IN NIGERIA

*THE OGO NI TRAGEDY*



KEN SARO-WIWA

**By the same Author:**

**Novels**

Sozaboy: A Novel in Rotten English  
Basi and Company: A Modern African Folktale  
Prisoners of Jobs  
Pita Dumbrok's Prison

**Short Stories**

A Forest of Flowers  
Adaku and Other Stories

**Poetry**

Songs in a Time of War

**Drama**

Basi and Company: Four Television Plays  
Four Farcical Plays

**General**

On A Darkling Plain: An Account of the Nigerian Civil War  
Nigeria: The Brink of Disaster  
Similia: Essays on Anomic Nigeria

**Children's Books**

Tambari  
Tambari in Dukana  
Mr B  
Mr B Again  
Mr B is Dead  
Mr B Goes to Lagos  
The Transistor Radio  
Segi Finds the Radio  
A Shipload of Rice

**Folklore**

The Singing Anthill: Ogoni Folk Tales

# GENOCIDE IN NIGERIA

## *The Ogoni Tragedy*

**Ken Saro-Wiwa**



Saros International Publishers  
London. Lagos. Port Harcourt

To the Memory of T. N. Paul Birabi, Ogoni patriot.

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

Writing this book has been one of the most painful experiences of my life. Ordinarily, writing a book is torture, a chore. But when, on every page, following upon every word, every letter, a tragedy leaps up before the eyes of a writer, he or she cannot derive that pleasure, that fulfillment in which the creative process often terminates.

What has probably worsened the matter is that I have lived through most of the period covered by this sordid story. I knew, as a child, that period from 1947 when the Ogoni saw, for a few brief years, the possibility of extricating themselves from the cruel fate which seems to have been ordained for them. I watched as they went into decline. I was privileged to play a role in the civil war which decimated them further and to assist in their rehabilitation at the end of that war.

Since then I have watched helplessly as they have been gradually ground to dust by the combined effort of the multi-national oil company, Shell Petroleum Development Company, the murderous ethnic majority in Nigeria and the country's military dictatorships. Not the pleas, not the writing over the years have convinced the Nigerian elite that something special ought to be done to relieve the distress of the Ogoni.

I have known and argued earnestly since I was a lad of seventeen that the only way the Ogoni can survive is for them to exercise their political and economic rights. But because the Nigerian elite appear, on this particular matter, to have hearts of stone and the brains of millipedes; because Shell is a multi-national company with the ability to crush whomever it wishes; because the petroleum resources of the Ogoni serve everyone's greed, all the doors seemed closed.

Three recent events have encouraged me to now place the issue before the world: the end of the Cold War, the increasing attention being paid to the global environment, and the insistence of the European Community that minority rights be respected, albeit in the successor states to the Soviet Union and in Yugoslavia. What remains to be seen is whether Europe and America will apply in Nigeria the same standards which they have applied in Eastern Europe.

For what has happened and is happening to the Ogoni is strictly not

the fault of the Nigerian elite and Shell Company alone; the international community has played a very significant role in it. If the Americans did not purchase Nigerian oil, the Nigerian nation would not be, nor would the oppressive ethnic majority in the country have the wherewithal to pursue its genocidal intentions. Indeed, there is a sense in which the "Nigerian" oil which the Americans, Europeans and Japanese buy is stolen property: it has been seized from its owners by force of arms and has not been paid for. Therefore, these buyers are receiving stolen property. Also, it is Western investment and technology which keep the Nigerian oil industry and therefore the Nigerian nation alive, oil being 94 per cent of Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product.

Also, European and American shareholders in multi-national oil companies and manufacturers of oil mining equipment have benefited from the purloining of Ogoni resources, the devastation of the Ogoni environment and the genocide of the Ogoni people.

Thus, shareholders in the multi-national oil companies - both Shell and Chevron - which prospect for oil in Ogoni, the American, Japanese and European Governments, and the multi-national oil companies have a moral if not legal responsibility for ending the genocide of the Ogoni people and the complete devastation of their environment, if, indeed, that is still possible.

The requirement is enormous and urgent. The Ogoni people themselves including their children are determined to save whatever is left of their rich heritage. The international community can support this determination by championing the drive of the Ogoni for autonomy within Nigeria. The restoration of their rights, political, economic and environmental does not, cannot, hurt anyone. It will only place the responsibility for ending this dreadful situation where it should lie: on the Ogoni people themselves. The area being rich in resources and the people resourceful, the Ogoni will be able to sort out their problem in time.

Secondly, the international community must prevail on Shell and Chevron which prospect for oil in Ogoni, and the Nigerian Government which abets them, to stop flaring gas in the area immediately.

Thirdly, the international community can help by sending experts - medical, environmental and agricultural - to assist the Ogoni people

restore a semblance of normality to Ogoni territory.

In the early years of this century, a French writer, André Gide, toured the Congo and observed the gross abuse of human rights being perpetrated in that country by King Leopold II of Belgium and his agents. He wrote about it and Europeans were sufficiently shocked to end the abuses.

I write now in the hope that the international community will, in similar fashion, do something to mitigate the Ogoni tragedy. It is bad enough that it is happening a few years into the twenty-first century. It will be a disgrace to humanity should it persist one day longer.

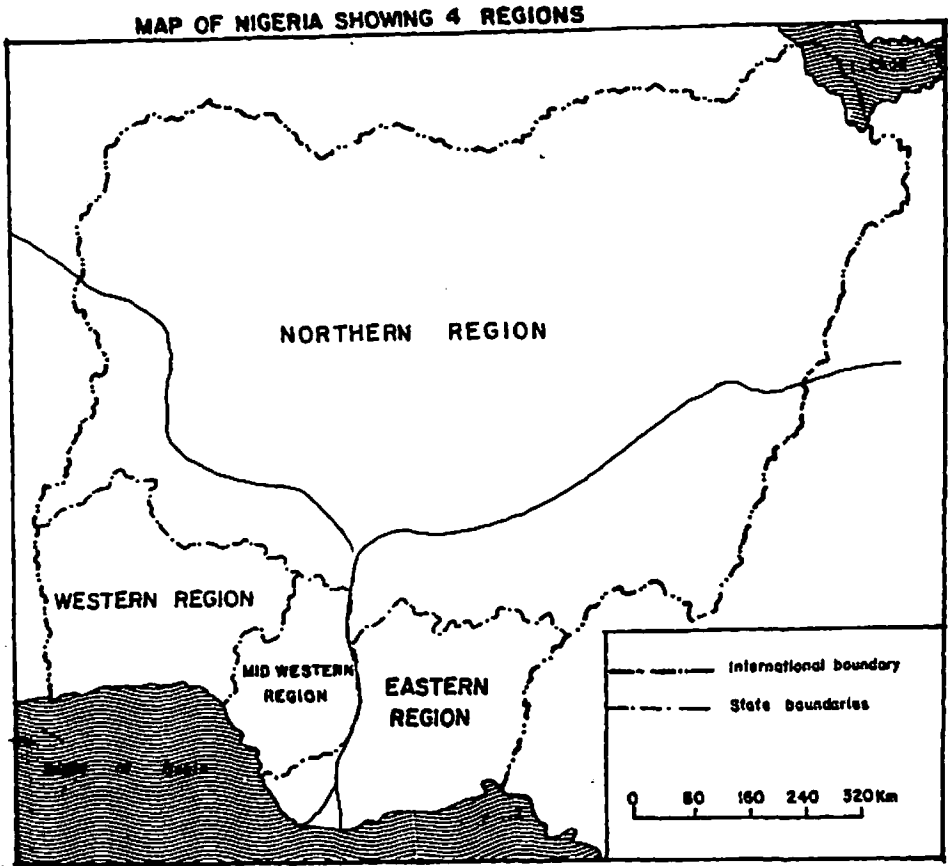
I expect the ethnic majority in Nigeria to turn the heat of their well-known vindictiveness on me for writing this book. I defy them to do so.

Some may wonder at my use of the word 'genocide' to describe what has happened to the Ogoni people. The United Nations defines genocide as "the commission of acts with intent to destroy a national, ethnic, racial or religious group". If anyone, after reading this book, has any further doubt of, or has a better description for, the crime against the Ogoni people, I will be happy to know it.

I wish to thank Barika Idamkue and Dr Sonpie Kpone-Tonwe for kindly reading the manuscript and making valuable suggestions for improving the work; and my assistant, Hyacinth Wayi, for speedy word-processing.

All errors in the book are mine and I accept full responsibility for them.

Ken Saro-Wiwa  
Port Harcourt, 1992.



## CHAPTER 1

### BACKGROUND

The Ogoni are a distinct ethnic group within the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Their territory forms the easternmost extension of the mainland fringe bordering the eastern Niger delta, lying in an area between approximately latitude 4.05° and 4.20° north and longitudes 7.10° and 7.30° east.

Covering a total of approximately 404 square miles, it forms part of the coastal plains terrace which here appears as a gently sloping plateau. The central part of this plateau is about 100 feet above sea level. It has an estimated population of 500,000.

There is yet much anthropological, ethnographic, sociological and linguistic work to be done to determine the true origins of the Ogoni people. One theory is that they migrated into the area from across the Imo River (Two Ogoni villages, Warife and Uietuk still exist on the eastern side of the Imo). A second theory is that the Ogoni came in boats from Ghana and settled in the southern part of the area. Believers of this theory point to the name by which most of the Ogoni call themselves (Khana) as a pointer to the Ghana origins of the Ogoni people. Colonial administrators have pointed to the paucity of legends on the origin of the Ogoni and linguistic experts classify the Ogoni languages of Khana, Gokana and Eleme as a distinct group within the Benue-Congo branch of African languages or, more particularly, as a branch in the New Benue-Congo family.

Generally, the Ogoni are said to have settled in the area well before the fifteenth century and established themselves in the six kingdoms of Babbe, Eleme, Gokana, Nyo-Khana, Ken-Khana and Tai. The history which lies behind this is very interesting, but is of little value here.

What is of interest is that the Ogoni had inherited a precious part of God's earth and did everything to preserve it. The rich plateau soil provided agricultural plenty and the rivers which wash the borders of

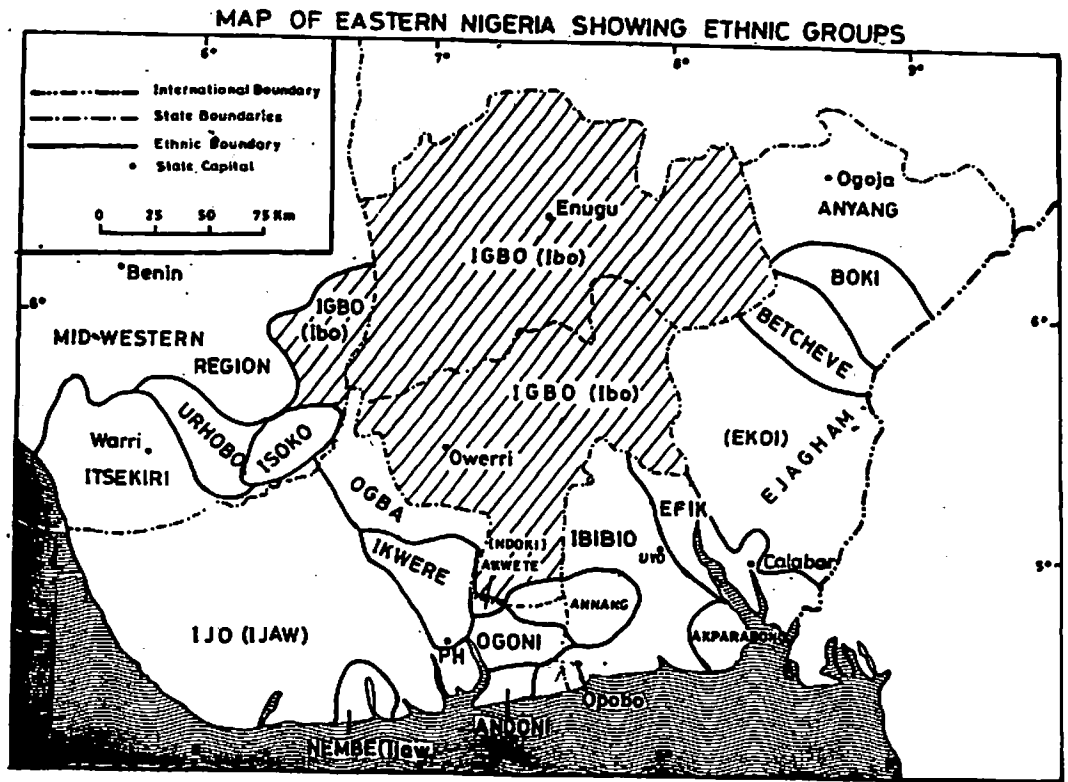
the entire area brimmed with fishes and sea food. The Ogoni seized the opportunity to become competent farmers and fishermen and to transform their territory into the food basket of the eastern Niger delta. But what the Ogoni realized, from earliest times, was the necessity to preserve the territory for themselves, a task at which they were very ferocious, earning for themselves in the process, a reputation for "cannibalism". Throughout their recorded history, there is no instance of any of their neighbours being able to impose upon them in any manner whatsoever. They were never defeated in war and were not colonized by anyone except the British.

To the Ogoni, the land on which they lived and the rivers which surrounded them were very important. They not only provided sustenance in abundance, they were also a spiritual inheritance. The land is a god and is worshipped as such. The fruit of the land, particularly yams, are honoured in festivals and, indeed, the Annual Festival of the Ogoni is held at the yam harvest. The planting season is not a mere period of agricultural activity: it is a spiritual, religious and social occasion. "Tradition" in Ogoni means in the local tongue (*doonu kuneke*) the honouring of the land (earth, soil, water). This respect for the land means that forests are not merely a collection of trees and the abode of animals but also, and more intrinsically, a sacred possession. Trees in the forest cannot therefore be cut indiscriminately without regard for their sacrosanctity and their influence on the well-being of the entire community, of the land.

Moreover, the Ogoni believe that the soul of a man or woman has the power to leave its human form and enter into that of a beast, taking on the shape of an animal. G. N. Loolo, the Ogoni historian asserts in his study "A History of the Ogoni" (Port Harcourt, 1986) that, *nearly all "strong" animals in the bush, such as tiger, elephants, antelope, tortoise, and such aquatic animals as crocodiles, turtles and catfish are credited with being "were" beasts. It is a common belief that should any harm come to a "were" beast, it would also affect its human counterpart.*

To the Ogoni, rivers and streams do not only provide water for life - for bathing and drinking etc; they do not only provide fish for food, they are also sacred and are bound up intricately with the life of the

community, of the entire Ogoni nation. As indicated above, they also contain animals into which the human soul can be transmuted. In some cases, they are deified, and erring human action can desecrate them and therefore bring disaster upon the people who are regarded as their custodians.



In modern times, this translates to a deep awareness of the importance of the environment and the necessity to protect and preserve it. The Ogoni ancients knew that the land which was their inheritance was rich farmland; that the fresh and salt water rivers which surrounded them were blessed with plenteousness. They did everything to preserve this rich inheritance.

Before the advent of the Atlantic Slave Trade, the Ogoni had established an organized social system which worked under a monarchy and under which men and women of courage and ability enjoyed a special status.

During the Slave Trade, the Ogoni lay on the slave route from the hinterland to the coastal slave markets. However, no Ogoni man or woman was taken as a slave. No record of the Ogoni languages exists in the *Polyglotta Africana*, the record of languages spoken by Africans taken into slavery in the New World. Indeed, there is evidence in the oral traditions of the Ogoni to suggest that the Ogoni considered slavery a disgrace to manhood. "I'd rather drown in the sea than be killed by an Iban!" is a well-known Ogoni proverb, indicating that the Ogoni would have nothing to do with the slave markets of Bonny. The slaves the Ogoni knew about were Igbos or "gbon" as the Ogoni called them. If an Ogoni man is given an unsavoury task, he will ask, "*m lu o gbon?*" (Am I your slave?)

The Ogoni also forbade intermarriage with all their neighbours except the Ibibio.

Thus, to the end of the Atlantic Slave Trade, the Ogoni were able to preserve their land and culture and maintain peace and order in their territory in virtual isolation.

However, contact with the inhuman trade introduced firearms to the area and in the later half of the nineteenth century, intestine wars became the order of the day. By 1900 these wars had virtually destroyed the fabric of Ogoni society and the Ogoni were forced to survive in independent villages. This was the condition in which the British colonialist found them in the early years of the twentieth century when the former began the free-lance colonization of eastern Nigeria.

## CHAPTER 2

### UNDER BRITISH RULE

Although Europeans had been in the Niger delta from as early as 1485, a combination of forces stopped them from coming into early contact with the Ogoni. The ferocity of the Ogoni and their reputation among their neighbours as "cannibals" may have contributed to this. The geographical location, far from the nearest anchorages of the European trading ships, was also a contributory factor. It was not until 1901 that colonial forces landed in Ogoni at Kono and Ogoni country was proclaimed a British protectorate.

But no effective presence was established in the area. The Ogoni resented this intrusion upon their lives and refused to accept British overlordship. In 1903 and again in 1905, the records speak of patrols being sent "to enforce administrative control" and of "a number of villages" being "destroyed".

Such wanton destruction of life and property was not acceptable to the Ogoni and they resisted it. In 1913, yet another attack was launched against the Ogoni. This finally broke the resistance and when, in 1914, the religious centre of the Ogoni at Ka-Gwara was razed to the ground by Major Webber and a large police escort under a Major G. H. Walker DSO, the Ogoni were finally subjugated.

It was in that same year that Nigeria came into being. In effect, at that time when the Ogoni were technically absorbed into a Nigeria created by the British, the Ogoni had not ceded their sovereignty.

For twenty years thereafter, the area was left to stagnate. The British did not establish an administration; the Ogoni nation was administered as a part of Opobo Division within the Calabar Province. The divisional headquarters was separated from Ogoni by the Imo River and Calabar was about 200 miles away. British rule of the area was "haphazard".

To the Ogoni, British administration meant the collection of taxes and the establishment of courts for the maintenance of law and order.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE SHELL-B.P. ROLE

Ever before the defeat of Biafra on the battlefield, the Shell-B.P. Company had recommenced its mining operations in Ogoni. The Federal Government needed the proceeds from oil to prosecute the war in its incompetent, wasteful, devious manner. Consequently, every encouragement was given to Shell-B.P. to continue its genocidal plans against the Ogoni people.

It has to be said that at that time, the Nigerian government knew pretty little of the oil industry. There were not enough trained men in the relevant supervising Ministries of the Government to draft the laws and regulations which would bind Shell-B.P. to minimum standards of civilized behaviour.

Shell-B.P. consequently seized upon this fact and displayed the ugliest possible face of international capitalism. Operating among a peasant population which, as this study has shown, knew little of the ways of the modern world, Shell-B.P. has behaved cruelly, stupidly and in a racist manner.

Over the years, right from 1958, the Ogoni people have been engaged in a no-win war with Shell-B.P. Matters came to a head in April 1970 when Ogoni leaders, unable to bear the chicanery and heartlessness of the Company, were forced to petition the Military Governor of Rivers State in a carefully considered memorandum. At that time, I was a Commissioner (Minister) with responsibility for education in the State and was sent a copy of the petition for my information. The petition, reproduced hereunder, speaks for itself as does the reaction of Shell-B.P. to it.

*Ogoni Divisional Committee,  
c/o Chief T. N. Adda-Kobani,  
12 Victoria Street,  
Port Harcourt.  
25th April, 1970.*

*His Excellency the Military Governor,  
Rivers State of Nigeria,*

*Port Harcourt.*

*Your Excellency,*

#### *HUMBLE PETITION OF COMPLAINT ON SHELL-BP OPERATIONS IN Ogoni DIVISION*

*May it please Your Excellency to give your fatherly attention and sympathetic consideration to the complaints of your people of Ogoni Division who have suffered in silence as a direct result of the discovery and exploitation of mineral oil and gas in this Division over the past decades.*

*2. While it is a fact of history that the petroleum oil industry has given the national economy of Nigeria a great leap forward, it is equally and sadly true that neither the nation nor the Shell-BP Company has ever given serious and deserved consideration to the effects which this industry has had, and will continue to have, on the economy and life of the people of this Division, which has become the main home of the oil industry in Nigeria.*

*3. In addition to the Refinery which is located at Alesa, the Bomu, Bodo-West, Korokoro and Ebubu oil fields which are among the nation's most extensive and most productive oil-fields are also sited in Ogoni Division. Besides these production wells, several other wells will soon go into production in all other parts of the Division.*

*4. Land is a very rare commodity in the Rivers State, and even more so in Ogoni Division. Ogoni Division contains one of the highest population concentrations in Nigeria, rising from a density of over 500 per square mile in Eleme to 1,200 per square mile in the Gokana area, the home of the vast Bomu oil-fields. It is in view of this that we are alerting the State Government to the fact that the Shell-BP operations in this Division are seriously threatening the well-being, and even the very lives of the people of Ogoni Division.*

*5. About two decades ago, agriculture was the mainstay of the economy of Ogoni Division. But to-day, the entire economy of our people has been completely disrupted through the connivance of a nation which seems to have allowed the Shell-BP, a purely commercial organization, to enter upon and seize the people's land at will. So long as the nation gets her royalties, nobody bothers what happens to the poor rural farmer whose land has been*



expropriated. Here our delta-type alluvial soil possesses a high degree of fertility, and each acre yields an average of £1,000 (one thousand pounds) to £2,000 (two thousand pounds) per farming season to its cultivator. But without negotiation, the nation allows a land-grabbing commercial company to seize large stretches of rich agricultural lands, paying a scandalously meagre once-and-for-all £1:10/-per acre. Deprived thus of his only source of income, the dispossessed farmer is ruined, and his children can no longer obtain an education nor his family a decent life.

6. In the same way, the Shell-BP destroys cash crops and economic trees without giving adequate compensation to their owners. A few weeks ago, caterpillars of the Shell-BP entered into cultivated farms in the Bonu area and mercilessly ploughed down acres and acres of cultivated crops; yams, maize, pepper, melons, fluted pumpkins, cassava, okro, garden eggs, and other valuable crops in flagrant violation of Section 17, Sub-sections (b) v and (c) of the Petroleum (Drilling and Production) Regulations, 1969. Your Excellency, the attached photographs of this atrocity speak for themselves. Because the Shell-BP knows too well that none of the poor villagers being dispossessed has ever had the benefit of reading these Petroleum Regulations, or of even knowing of their existence, the company does not bother to consult them. What Your Excellency sees in these photographs is a picture of what is happening to our people everywhere in our Division where-ever the Shell-BP operates: Korokoro, Egbu, Kpean etc. It is all the more distressing to note that the victims of these caterpillar raids are poor returnees (from the war) whom we have encouraged to till the soil in order to raise a pabny subsistence. Your Excellency will agree that for such poor people, the war will never end since the hard realities of the war are still with them today.

7. When Your Excellency recently honoured this Division with an extensive tour, you were shown large acres of mangrove swamps that have been destroyed by the periodic out-flow of crude oil into our rivers and streams, which have killed off not only mangrove trees, but fishes and crabs, mudskippers, oysters, shell-fishes etc. on which the livelihood of the poorer people depends. In this way, our rights under Section 23 of the Petroleum (Drilling and Production) Regulations, 1969, have been violated with impunity by the Shell-BP.

8. A few years ago, our streams were blessed with pure and sparkling

water. But in the Gokara area of the Division, most inland waters, rivers and water courses have today been polluted by crude oil, mud and other fluids which have contaminated our water supply in contravention of Section 25 of the Petroleum (Drilling and Production) Regulations, 1969. And yet, all entreaties made to the Shell-BP to provide the people with alternative water-supply have been rebuffed. Our people have been compelled to sacrifice all life-supporting necessities so that the nation may enjoy economic boom from the oil industry.

9. Before the Shell-BP began to prospect for oil in Ogoni Division our untarred roads were in very motorable condition, thanks to our firm and well-drained soil. But twenty years of hard use by the company's heavy vehicles, some of them ranging between twenty to thirty-two tons in weight, has broken the resistance of these roads, thereby making them unmotorable for most of the rainy season. When our people have requested for a few coats of tar on these roads, the Shell-BP have often told us that road maintenance and repairs are the responsibility of the State Government.

10. Your Excellency, neither from the Shell-BP nor from the successive Governments have we received the slightest consideration in the widespread destitution that has been our sad lot as a direct result of the oil industry in Ogoni Division. The uprooted and displaced farmers are left without alternative means of subsistence. No special consideration was ever given to the employment of our people in the services of the company. There is only one single son of Ogoni Division on the Senior Staff of the Shell-BP and there are less than a dozen in the junior staff segment. Today there is similarly only one Ogoni son in the Administrative Class of the State Government Service. In the award of Government and Shell-BP Scholarships, no special notice has been taken of the fact that the education of our youth has suffered tremendous disabilities from the reduction in the earning capacity of our people.

11. The current Petroleum (Drilling and Production) Regulations of 1969 still suffers from the immature political thinking of the First Republic. It is a sad irony of our history that none of the areas providing this greatest source of our national wealth has ever had the privilege of having a strong voice in the processes of law-making in this country. The result has always been that no attention has ever been paid to the fate of the poor people who bear the full weight of the national economic burden on their backs.

12. Your Excellency, we are crying to you for sympathy because we have these recent years been victims of a callous neglect by successive Governments whose only interests are the royalties which accrue to them every year from the oil companies. The people of Ogoni Division are informing all men of reason who have a conscience that the millions of pounds which the Shell-BP constantly pays to our Government is blood-money, extracted from the very veins of our dying people. We are respectfully requesting Your Excellency and the Government which you so honourably head to disburden your conscience of this conspiracy against our people.

13. In view of the foregoing, the people of Ogoni Division are seeking the fraternal assistance of Your Excellency's Government in alleviating the suffering of your people of this Division. We lent our support and energy to the struggle for the creation of the Rivers State in a united Nigeria because we have always believed that we can obtain justice only at the hands of our own brothers who were our companions in suffering in the First Republic.

14. We are respectfully requesting the Rivers State Government to help in the revision of the Petroleum laws in a way that will give some consideration to the fact that the nation has been collecting her fabulous oil royalties on the ruin and destitution of a section of her population.

15. We request that in any event, negotiation for the acquisition of land not owned by Government should be a bilateral transaction between the land-owner and the prospecting company, with the State Government sitting in as arbitrator. This happens in other oil-producing countries and can happen here.

16. We request that no less than £1,000 (one thousand pounds) be paid to land owners as rents per acre per annum for land acquired for oil exploitation and production.

17. We submit that where a people's water supply has been polluted and contaminated, or any of their life-supporting necessities destroyed as a direct result of oil exploration or production, it should be recognized that the company has an obligation to make alternative arrangements to supply these needs.

18. We are calling on the conscience of our dear countrymen to recognize that a people who have lost their sources of livelihood in the process of enriching the nation, deserve greater consideration by the country and the

commercial company which is tapping this wealth, in the award of scholarships, in greater employment opportunities and in the award of contracts.

19. We refer again to paragraph 6 and to the photographs of wilful destruction attached hereto, and request that a special and immediate rehabilitation programme be arranged to resettle these poor returnee farmers who were recently deprived of their farms, their crops, their labour and virtually their lives, by the Shell-BP. Substantial sums of money should be laid out to enable them establish meaningful business. Having now been uprooted from their only sources of obtaining a decent living, alternative opportunities should be created for them now in the award of Government and Shell-BP contracts, in Government and Company employment, and in the award of special scholarships to their children in school, in college and University.

20. The people of Ogoni Division confidently believe that their State Government exists to protect their lives, property and material well-being against political or economic oppression and exploitation.

21. We shall feel highly honoured if Your Excellency can grant a delegation of the people of Ogoni Division the favour of an interview at your earliest convenience.

We humbly remain,  
Your Excellency's most loyal people

Sgd. 1. Chief W.Z.P. Nkidee 2. F.O.L. Yowika 3. N.A. Ndegwé  
4. E.N. Kobani 5. O.B. Nalelo & Chief A.O. Ngei 7. Obo Ngofa  
ON BEHALF OF OURSELVES AND THE ENTIRE PEOPLE OF OGOINI  
DIVISION IN THE RIVERS STATE OF NIGERIA.

Copy:-

The Federal Commissioner for Mines and Power,  
Federal Ministry of Mines and Power, Lagos.

The Chief Petroleum Engineer,  
Federal Ministry of Mines and Power, Lagos.

The Managing Director,

*Shell-BP Petroleum Development Co. Ltd., Lagos.*

*The Commissioner,  
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Natural Resources,  
Rivers State of Nigeria, Port Harcourt.*

*Mr K. B. Tsaro-Wiwa,  
Commissioner for Education, Rivers State, Port Harcourt.*

*Mr O. O. Ngei,  
Commissioner for Works, Land and Transport,  
Rivers State. Port Harcourt.*

*The Head of Operation,  
Shell-BP, Port Harcourt.*

A little over two months later, Shell-B. P. replied as follows:

*H.E. The Military Governor,  
Rivers State,  
PORT HARCOURT.*

*Your Excellency,*

#### **OIL OPERATIONS IN OGONI DIVISION.**

*We refer to the "HUMBLE PETITION OF COMPLAINT FROM SHELL-BP OPERATIONS IN OGONI DIVISION", dated 25th April, 1970, addressed to Your Excellency by the "Ogoni Divisional Commission" and copied the Federal Commissioner for Mines and Power, and the Rivers State Civil Commissioners. This petition is one of a series which have originated in Ogoni Division over the past few years attempting to place development and other responsibilities on this Company which can only properly be undertaken by Government or by a Government agency. In support of such contentions, statements are usually made which, on examination, bear little*

*relation to what is actually taking place. Regrettably, this petition is no exception to the rule and we deal with the various matters raised in it in detail in the appendix to this letter.*

*As you know, the main aim and purpose of an oil Company must be to find and produce hydrocarbons as efficiently as possible. This is the area in which it makes a very significant contribution to the overall economic development of any country in which it operates. As is the case with the other oil Companies operating in Nigeria our obligations and responsibilities are clearly delineated in the agreements made with the Federal Government and by the Laws and Regulations relating to the oil industry in Nigeria. These have always been meticulously observed by this Company. We have, however been extremely careful to ensure that our operations cause minimal disturbance to the people in the areas in which we operate and we think that this clearly emerges from the content of the attached appendix.*

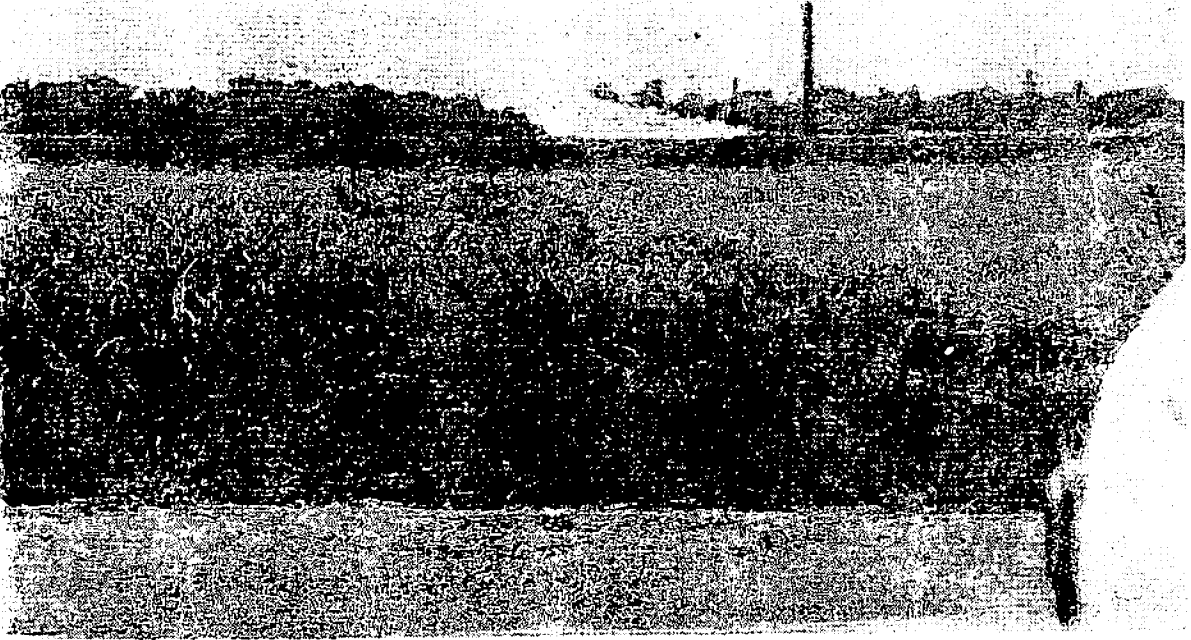
*As with any special pleading, the petition exaggerates or misrepresents in one direction (e.g. the amount of land occupied for oil operations in Ogoni Division) and minimizes in the other (e.g. the amount of compensation paid by Shell-BP in Ogoni Division over the past years). There can be no doubt, however, that the incidental benefits accruing to Ogoni Division from Shell-BP's presence there greatly outweighs any disadvantages.*

*We have given very careful consideration to the advisability of writing to you on this matter and have finally concluded that the inaccuracies in the petition should not remain unanswered. We are sending copies of the letter to the Governor and Commissioners of the Rivers State who received copies of the petition.*

*Yours faithfully,  
for: SHELL-BP PETROLEUM DEVELOPMENT  
COMPANY OF NIGERIA LIMITED.*

*(Sgd.) J. SPINKS  
MANAGER, EASTERN OPERATIONS.*

**APPENDIX TO LETTER NO.PUB/2110 DATED 9/6/70**



*Gas flares twenty-four hours a day.*

62

## THE SHELL-B.P. ROLE

63

Shell BP is the Leviathan to whom we have been forced to surrender all our Rights including our very LIFE. What is the company's answer to all our ills - to keep the emergency situation as dark as possible from the public. As a free born of Dere, and hearing of the situation, I came home to see things for myself, but I am not allowed entry into the area of disaster. Some great and well meaning sons of Ogoni have had the same bitter experience.

The situation in Dere today calls for sympathy from Shell BP, from the governments of the Federation, from the press and radio and from charitable organizations. We were among the worst sufferers in the then rebel held areas. For several days bombing was concentrated on us. The town was evacuated almost to a man by the rebels. Fortunately many returned between last December and January and started immediately to plant various crops on any available lands - crops that had now been completely destroyed by a stream of crude oil.

We have expected that by now helicopters of Government officials would be hovering over the area; that radios and the press would make the Dere emergency situation news items and commentaries. Yes, these have not been possible for after all, only a minute minority of the people of Nigeria live in Ogoni and much less in Dere. Our forefathers committed no crimes to have founded a home on top of the country's greatest source of wealth - wealth from which we derive no atom of benefit.

As I write the thought of it makes me sob for as I look around I remember the old ballad.

*The towns go down; the land decays ...*

*Poor folk for bread, cry and weep.*

*The mournful peasant leads his humble band,*

*And while he sinks, without one arm to save,*

*The country blooms - a garden and a grave*

Five years ago a great son of Ogoni made this appeal to Shell BP, an appeal which is even more appropriate today than our good old days of 1965 by 1970 standard.

"Today, we need education, we need employment, we want to eat, we want to live. We do not want our children to remain out of school ... we do not want to lack money because Shell has removed land which used to be

our main source of revenue. In short, we do not want to live in a vicious circle in which we shall see the Shell BP as the authors of our misfortune and our oppressors ... Is it not an irony that those who live on top of wealth should be the poorest people in the nation? Shell BP can rectify this irony NOW if it wants to, AND IT SHOULD."

And I add, well meaning Nigerians! Come over to Ogoni and help us!

**SAM BADILO BAKO**  
SECONDARY/COMMERCIAL SCHOOL, TAABAA, Ogoni, VIA  
PORT-HARCOURT.

Copy to:

1. The News Editor, Radio Nigeria, Lagos.
2. The News Editor, Radio Television, Kaduna.
3. The Editor, Daily Times of Nigeria, Lagos.
4. The News Editor, Radio Nigeria, Port Harcourt.

**A PROTEST PRESENTED TO REPRESENTATIVES OF THE SHELL-BP DEV. CO. OF NIG. LTD. BY THE DERE YOUTHS ASSOCIATION. AGAINST THE COMPANY'S LACK OF INTEREST IN THE SUFFERINGS OF DERE PEOPLE WHICH SUFFERINGS ARE CAUSED AS A RESULT OF THE COMPANY'S OPERATIONS.**

Sir,

We the Youths of Dere (misnomered Bomu) are proud to be associated with the gigantic progress made by your Company since it started explorations in Nigeria. We are also impressed by the remarkable contribution she is making for the economic stability of Nigeria. You would candidly agree with us that DERE is a partner on this stage of progress, though in a varying and yet a conspicuous degree.

But it is a great source of disappointment to us, to note that the Shell-BP is deliberately pursuing a Godless economic policy in our locality, an inhuman profiteering at the expense of our lives, whereby it sucks the liquid gold from our land but takes no interest in our welfare. The Company only contented on pleasing the political authorities so that it may be in the

position to discountenance with impunity the pathetic cries of those who are most, inconveniently affected by her operations. Yet she blows such a loud trumpet about the assistance she renders to peoples in her areas of operations that we cannot but see our neglect as a specially deliberate one.

This act is pellucidly demonstrated in her refusal to control the present catastrophe. About a fortnight ago, there occurred an eruption of crude oil from one oil well. This has developed from one stage to the other until at present the earth is quaking to the discomfort of people both day and night. We see as a calculated attempt to stand by and watch with joy the area sink in the earthquake so that she can more conveniently siphon out the Oil. This is heinously immoral.

The havoc done by the eruption is unprecedented. An area of about four square miles has been perpetually rendered inarable. The farmlands are flooded with crude oil, an old woman was saved the other day from drowning in the crude oil in her farm by some expatriate employees of the Company (it should be noted with all amount of seriousness that the areas so affected are areas newly cultivated by people whose ribs can still be counted as a result of the war). Our rivers, rivulets and creeks are all covered with crude oil. This is unfavourable for breeding of fish; fishing is one of our occupations. We no longer breathe the natural oxygen, rather we inhale lethal and ghastly gases. Our water can no longer be drunk unless one wants to test the effect of crude oil on the body. We no longer use vegetables, they are all polluted. The effect of this explosion casts serious doubts on the minds of people as to whether DERE can survive the imminent famine that will afflict her subsequently. No one can predict with certainty or precision the future of Dere. We are all alarmed. We are all worried. The cup is full. Full to the brim. No, it can no longer take more.

The present unforgettable and unpardonable episode aside, it would be expedient if we look in retrospect into the Shell-BP - Dere (Bomu) relations since 1958. In February of that year when we joined the Company in celebrating the discovery of oil in DERE, we thought we were celebrating prosperity, good health, good education, employment opportunities. But we know now that we were celebrating our entry into a darkened and oblique horizon of despondency, abject poverty, extinction of our lives and destruction of our crops. We thought our town was to be placed on the map of oil producing towns in Nigeria. But to our utmost dismay, our town is

Committee was set up by the Rivers State Government to assess the damage done by the blow-out and establish what compensation should be paid by Shell-B.P. However, no representative of Shell-B.P. sat on the Committee.

The Committee, of which I was a member, worked extremely hard and produced a report. The Official Secrets Act forbids my releasing that report at this time, but I can confirm that it was established that Shell-B.P.'s negligence in installing outdated equipment led to considerable harm being done and that compensation running into tens of millions of pounds was due to be paid by Shell-B.P. to the people of Dere and the surrounding area.

The Committee also made far-reaching and long-term proposals for rehabilitation and resettlement of the area which would have cost tens of millions of pounds.

What the Committee had not counted on was the deviousness of Shell-B.P. and the lack of interest of the Federal Government of Nigeria in the affair. Just as the Committee was about to submit its report to the Rivers State Executive Council, news came that a section of the Dere Community had sued Shell-B.P. to court claiming a compensation of £250,000 (two hundred and fifty thousand pounds).

And in totally uncharacteristic fashion, the High Court of Rivers State delivered judgement in the shortest possible time, entering judgement in the sum of £168,468.5.9d (one hundred and sixty-eight thousand four hundred and sixty-eight pounds, five shillings and nine pence) which Shell had admitted. Once again, Shell had cheated the poor peasants. The British-born judge who joined in this rape of the Ogoni people was soon to be knighted by the Queen of England. While I cannot state categorically that the honour was won as a result of the judgement in respect of the Bomu Oil Disaster, I must say that I harbour that suspicion. Efforts by the Rivers State Government to interest the Federal Military Government in the matter yielded no fruit whatsoever. General Yakubu Gowon, who was Head of State at the time, visited the wasteland created by the blow-out during a visit to Rivers State in 1971. He stood before it incomprehensibly, staring long-tongued, unable to say even a word of comfort to the affected villagers or to order that even the minutest relief be sent to the area. His famed Christian conscience was not even touched.

Today, twenty-two years after, the wasteland remains - barren and useless, another reminder of the road to the extinction of the Ogoni people

charted by the greed and racism of Shell and the complicity of the Federal Government of Nigeria.

Since then, the offending oil well has been capped, new wells dug, and gas from them has been burning methane and other hydrocarbons into the lungs of Ogoni villagers every day of the year for twenty-one years. The noise of burning gas has made the people of Dere half-deaf - they have to shout when they speak to each other; burning gas continues to turn their nights into day. They have no electricity, no pipe-borne water and no hospital. Respiratory diseases are common in the area. Only last year, the entire village was flooded because the access roads built by Shell to its numerous locations have made a valley of the village. Studies have indicated that the level of lead in the blood of the inhabitants is at a dangerously high level.

Shell must bear full responsibility for the genocide of the Ogoni which is going on even now. The record of the Company in environmental issues in Nigeria has been most appalling. When Chevron began to prospect for oil in Ogoni twelve years ago in 1980, it had the example of Shell to go by.

The most notorious action of both companies has been the flaring of gas, sometimes in the middle of villages, as in Dere, (Bomu Oilfield) or very close to human habitation as in the Yorla and Korokoro oilfields in Ogoni. This action has destroyed ALL wildlife, and plant life, poisoned the atmosphere and therefore the inhabitants in the surrounding areas and made the residents half-deaf and prone to respiratory diseases. Whenever it rains in Ogoni, all we have is acid rain which further poisons water courses, streams, creeks and agricultural land.

Next to the flaring of gas comes the frequency of oil spills. Shell and Chevron use the most outdated equipment and technology in Ogoni, leading to innumerable oil spills which destroy farmlands, streams and water courses and the creeks. One of the greatest casualties of oil spills has been the mangrove trees in the swamps which near-surround Ogoni. These trees which were a source of firewood, of seafood such as oysters, mussels, crabs and cockles, have been unable to survive the toxicity of oil. They have now been replaced by strange, valueless palms.

Additionally, oil has poisoned the mudbanks which were formerly the home of mudskippers, clams, crabs and periwinkles. These rich sources of protein for the Ogoni people no longer exist. The result is that the fishermen

of Ogoni have lost their occupation and Ogoni people no longer have protein in their food. Children are the main sufferers at the hands of Shell and Chevron.

Similarly, the pollution of water courses, streams and creeks by oil spillage has led to the death of another source of protein - fish. As indicated in Chapter 1, these streams and creeks formerly brimmed with fish. Today, the Ogoni who normally fished in these waters have no alternatives. If they must fish, they need to go into deeper and offshore waters for which they have not been equipped or trained.

Pipelines criss-cross Ogoni territory, using up valuable land and ringing the people round with the danger of oil being pumped under very high pressure. These pipes metaphorically drain the very life-blood of the Ogoni people. As the oil mining activities of Shell and Chevron proceed apace, huge company trucks and other vehicle thunder past villages and towns day and night, an additional hazard to the peace and quiet of rural life.

As a final mark of their genocidal intent and insensitivity to human suffering, Shell and Chevron refuse to obey a Nigerian law which requires all oil companies to re-inject gas into the earth rather than flare it. Shell and Chevron think it cheaper to poison the atmosphere and the Ogoni and pay the paltry penalty imposed by the government of Nigeria than re-inject the gas as stipulated by the regulations.

To this charge of genocidal intent and insensitivity to human suffering must be added another of racism. Shell has won prizes for environmental protection in Europe where it also prospects for oil. So it cannot be that it does not know what to do. Now, why has it visited the Ogoni people with such horror as I have merely outlined here? The answer must lie in racism. In Shell's racist mind, what is good for the whites must not be good for blacks.

Shell has used its financial might to promote European culture in Nigeria. It regularly sponsors the tours of British artists to Nigeria, but spends nothing on the promotion of Ogoni culture. It is, at this moment, sponsoring the construction of a theatre for chamber music in Lagos at a cost of twenty million naira (one million pounds). But it has not spent a tenth of that amount in Ogoni in thirty-four years of exploitation of Ogoni resources estimated at a total value of 100 billion US dollars.

Added to this charge is that of ethnocentrism which Shell has promoted

in Nigeria. Shell's best residential and office blocks in Nigeria are situated in Lagos among the Yoruba ethnic majority where there is not a drop of crude oil. It does not have a single modern building in Ogoni. Chevron pays more in rent in one year for ONE two-bedroom flat for one of its middle-level employees in Lagos among the Yorubas than it has paid in a total of ten years to the Ogoni landlords whose land it is expropriating. Both Shell and Chevron ensure that their best jobs and contracts go first to foreigners and then to the ethnic majority in Nigeria.

Shell has stated that its sole responsibility is to produce hydrocarbons efficiently. This is manifestly false. Shell and other companies routinely contribute to the social and economic well-being of the people among whom they operate. Indeed, it is a datum of management wisdom to create a conducive atmosphere for business operations. Why Shell and Chevron have decided pig-headedly to oppress, suppress and eventually destroy the Ogoni people cannot be understood. How they can take away millions of dollars from a people who have no electricity, no pipe-borne water, no hospitals, no schools and no future and feel no pangs of conscience whatsoever defies the imagination.

The result of the foregoing has been the total destruction of Ogoni life, human, social, cultural and economic. I have already outlined in Chapter 1 the intrinsic psychic relationship which exists between the Ogoni and their environment. What Shell and Chevron have done to Ogoni people, land, streams, creeks and the atmosphere amount to genocide. The soul of the Ogoni people is dying and I am witness to the fact.

I hear the plaintive cry of the Ogoni plains mourning the birds that no longer sing at dawn; I hear the dirge for trees whose branches wither in the blaze of gas flares, whose roots lie in infertile graves. The brimming streams gurgle no more, their harvest floats on waters poisoned by oil spillages.

Where are the antelopes, the squirrels, the sacred tortoises, the snails, the lions and tigers which roamed this land? Where are the crabs, periwinkles, mudskippers, cockles, shrimps and all which found sanctuary in mudbanks, under the protective roots of mangrove trees?

I hear in my heart the howls of death in the polluted air of my beloved home-land; I sing a dirge for my children, my compatriots and their progeny.

## CHAPTER 7

### THE AUTONOMY OPTION

In 1990, the Ogoni people took stock of their situation in Nigeria and found that for all the wealth of their land, and in spite of the fact that an estimated 100 billion US dollars had been taken from the land in thirty two years of oil mining, they had no schools, no hospitals and no roads. They found that there was intense pressure on their land and that they lived in a poisoned environment in which wildlife, etc. could not survive. They found that the few Ogoni men and women who had some education, had no access whatsoever to jobs and that when they had jobs at all, they did not obtain promotion, no matter their competence. They found that from time, their leaders had laid faith in co-operation with the rest of Nigeria but that this faith had been grievously misplaced as each ethnic group had its own agenda quite unrelated to the notion of co-operation in a multi-ethnic nation.

They found that, in plain terms, they were being terribly exploited in the name of a Nigeria to which no one paid fealty or only nominal fealty and only in so far as it enabled them to advance their personal or ethnic interests. They found that the tribulations which they had suffered in the civil war and ever since would not end unless they took their fate into their own hands. They also found that they had lost a sense of community; that their best men were in exile in different parts of the country and that this was contrary to the order among other ethnic groups where men and women could achieve success in ten or twenty different centres WITHIN their ethnic home areas. They found that their languages were dying and they still lived in mudhuts and dilapidated villages unfit for beasts.

They also found that the Nigeria of which they were a part was deeply in debt in spite of the enormous resources which they had contributed to it; that it was getting deeper into debt and that the only way those debts could ever be repaid was by the exploitation of Ogoni resources, which exploitation would do even more harm to Ogoni existence.

And they knew that the only thing that could make the eighth oil-producing country in the world also the thirteenth poorest was gross mismanagement by the ethnic majority who wielded power in the country.

And it became obvious to them that the country was headed in a wrong direction and that something would have to be done urgently to alter their situation and the situation of the country, if all was not to be lost.

That thing was none other than the operation of either a true federation in which each ethnic group would have autonomy and be directly responsible for its own salvation, a confederation of equal States based on its ethnic groups or the complete disintegration of the country with each ethnic group left to fend for itself. They voted for the first option. And they decided to put the nation to the test.

Accordingly, their Chiefs and leaders decided to test the waters. They addressed an Ogoni Bill of Rights to the Nigerian President, General Babangida and his Armed Forces Ruling Council who had seized power in 1985 and had been running the nation according to their whims and caprices ever since:

#### OGONI BILL OF RIGHTS

#### PRESENTED TO THE GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE OF NIGERIA

We, the people of Ogoni (Babbe, Gokana, Ken Khana, Nyo Khana and Tai) numbering about 500,000 being a separate and distinct ethnic nationality within the Federal Republic of Nigeria, wish to draw the attention of the Governments and people of Nigeria to the undermentioned facts:

1. That the Ogoni people, before the advent of British colonialism, were not conquered or colonized by any other ethnic group in present-day Nigeria.
2. That British colonization forced us into the administrative division of Opobo from 1908 to 1947.
3. That we protested against this forced union until the Ogoni Native Authority was created in 1947 and placed under the then Rivers Province.
4. That in 1951 we were forcibly included in the Eastern Region of Nigeria where we suffered utter neglect.
5. That we protested against this neglect by voting against the party in power in the Region in 1957, and against the forced union by testimony



- before the Willink Commission of Inquiry into Minority Fears in 1958.
6. That this protest led to the inclusion of our nationality in Rivers State in 1967, which State consists of several ethnic nationalities with differing cultures, languages and aspirations.
  7. That oil was struck and produced in commercial quantities on our land in 1958 at K. Dere (Bomu oilfield).
  8. That oil has been mined on our land since 1958 to this day from the following oilfields: (i) Bomu (ii) Bodo West (iii) Tai (iv) Korokoro (v) Yorla (vi) Lubara Creek and (vii) Afam by Shell Petroleum Development Company (Nigeria) Limited.
  9. That in over 30 years of oil mining, the Ogoni nationality have provided the Nigerian nation with a total revenue estimated at over 40 billion Naira (N40 billion) or 30 billion dollars.
  10. That in return for the above contribution, the Ogoni people have received NOTHING.
  11. That today, the Ogoni people have:
    - (i) No representation whatsoever in ALL institutions of the Federal Government of Nigeria.
    - (ii) No pipe-borne water.
    - (iii) No electricity.
    - (iv) No job opportunities for the citizens in Federal, State, public sector or private sector companies.
    - (v) No social or economic project of the Federal Government.
  12. That the Ogoni languages of Gokana and Khana are undeveloped and are about to disappear, whereas other Nigerian languages are being forced on us.
  13. That the ethnic policies of successive Federal and State Governments are gradually pushing the Ogoni people to slavery and possible extinction.
  14. That the Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria Limited does not employ Ogoni people at a meaningful or any level at all, in defiance of the Federal government's regulations.
  15. That the search for oil has caused severe land and food shortages in Ogoni one of the most densely populated areas of Africa (average: 1,500 per square mile; Nigerian national average: 300 per square mile).
  16. That neglectful environmental pollution laws and sub-standard inspection techniques of the Federal authorities have led to the complete

- degradation of the Ogoni environment, turning our homeland into an ecological disaster.
17. That the Ogoni people lack education, health and other social facilities.
  18. That it is intolerable that one of the richest areas of Nigeria should wallow in abject poverty and destitution.
  19. That successive Federal administrations have trampled on every minority right enshrined in the Nigerian Constitution to the detriment of the Ogoni and have by administrative structuring and other noxious acts transferred Ogoni wealth exclusively to other parts of the Republic.
  20. That the Ogoni people wish to manage their own affairs.

Now, therefore, while reaffirming our wish to remain a part of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, we make demand upon the Republic as follows:

That the Ogoni people be granted POLITICAL AUTONOMY to participate in the affairs of the Republic as a distinct and separate unit by whatever name called, provided that this Autonomy guarantees the following:

- (a) Political control of Ogoni affairs by Ogoni people.
- (b) The right to the control and use of a fair proportion of Ogoni economic resources for Ogoni development.
- (c) Adequate and direct representation as of right in All Nigerian national institutions.
- (d) The use and development of Ogoni languages in Ogoni territory.
- (e) The full development of Ogoni culture.
- (f) The right to religious freedom.
- (g) The right to protect the Ogoni environment and ecology from further degradation.

We make the above demand in the knowledge that it does not deny any other ethnic group in the Nigerian Federation of their rights and that it can only conduce to peace, justice and fairplay and hence stability and progress in the Nigerian nation.

We make the above demand in the belief that, as Obafemi Awolowo has written:

*In a true Federation, each ethnic group no matter how small, is entitled to the same treatment as any other ethnic group, no matter how large.*

We demand these rights as equal members of the Nigerian Federation who contribute and have contributed to the growth of the Federation and

have a right to expect full returns from that Federation.

Adopted by general acclaim of the Ogoni people on the 26th day of August, 1990 at Bori, Rivers State.

Signed on behalf of the Ogoni people by:

**BABBE:** Sgd. HRH Mark Tsaro-Igbara, Gbenemene Babbe; HRH F. M. K. Noryaa, Menebua Ka-Babbe; Chief M. A. M. Tornwe III, JP; Prince J.S. Sangha; Dr Israel Kue; Chief A. M. N. Gua.

**GOKANA:** Sgd. HRH James P. Bagia, Gberesako XI, Gberemene Gokana; HRH C.A. Mitee, JP., Menebua Numuu; Chief E. N. Kobani, JP, Tonsimene Gokana; Dr B.N. Birabi; Chief Kemte Giadom, JP; Chief S. N. Orage.

**NYO-KHANA:** Sgd. HRH W. Z. P. Nzidee, Gbenemene Baa I of Nyo-Khana; Dr G. B. Leton, OON,JP; Mr Lekue Lah Loolo; Mr L. E. Mwara; Chief E. A. Apenu; Pastor M. P. Maeba.

**KEN-KHANA:** Sgd. HRH M. H. S. Eguru, Gbenemene Ken-Khana; HRH C. B. S. Nwikina-Emah III, Menebua Bom; Mr M. C. Daanwii; Chief T. N. Nwieke; Mr Ken Saro-Wiwa; Mr Simeon Idemvor.

**TAI:** Sgd. HRH B.A. Mballey, Gbenemene Tai; HRH G. N. K. Gininwa, Menebua Tua Tua; Chief J.S. Agbara; Chief D. J. K. Kumbe; Chief Fred Gwezia; HRH A. Demor-Kanni, Menebua Nonwa Tai.

General Babangida and his Council did not only ignore the Bill, but proceeded to split the country into 30 States and 589 local government areas which further marginalized the Ogoni people and brought them closer to extinction.

This act made it clear that appealing to the ethnic majority in Nigeria was an exercise in futility as they were hell-bent on genocide and were merely using the Nigerian nation as a cover for their misdeeds.

They received a further jolt when President Babangida, addressing the United Nations as President of the Organization of African Unity, studiously ignored oil pollution as one of the menaces to the African environment, choosing to mention only desertification, erosion and all such.

The Ogoni were not unmindful of the trends in world history, particularly the break-up of such multi-ethnic States as the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. They also took into account the fact that the only reason the Nigerian nation can survive today is the oil resource of the Ogoni and other peoples in the delta; that this oil is being mined by European and American investment and technology and being bought by the Americans, Japanese and the Europeans. Therefore, these nations, the most powerful on earth, have a role to play in the drive of the Ogoni for justice and survival.

Therefore, in 1991, Ogoni Chiefs and elders met once again to appeal to the international community:

#### ADDENDUM TO THE Ogoni BILL OF RIGHTS

We, the people of Ogoni, being a separate and distinct ethnic nationality within the Federal Republic of Nigeria, hereby state as follows:

A. That on October 2, 1990 we addressed an "Ogoni Bill of Rights" to the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, General Ibrahim Babangida and members of the Armed Forces Ruling Council;

B. That after a one-year wait, the President has been unable to grant us the audience which we sought to have with him in order to discuss the legitimate demands contained in the Ogoni Bill of Rights;

C. That our demands as outlined in the Ogoni Bill of Rights are legitimate, just and our inalienable right and in accord with civilized values worldwide;

D. That the Government of the Federal Republic has continued, since October 2, 1990, to decree measures and implement policies which further marginalize the Ogoni people, denying us political autonomy, our rights to our resources, to the development of our languages and culture, to adequate representation as of right in all Nigerian national institutions and to the protection of our environment and ecology from further degradation;

E. That we cannot sit idly by while we are, as a people, dehumanized and slowly exterminated and driven to extinction even as our rich resources are siphoned off to the exclusive comfort and improvement of other Nigerian communities, and the shareholders of multinational oil companies.

Now, therefore, while re-affirming our wish to remain a part of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, we hereby authorize the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) to make representation, for as long as these injustices continue, to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, the European Community and all international bodies which have a role to play in the preservation of our nationality, as follows:

1. That the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria has, in utter disregard and contempt for human rights, since independence in 1960 till date, denied us our political rights to self-determination, economic rights to our resources, cultural rights to the development of our languages and culture, and social rights to education, health and adequate housing and to representation as of right in national institutions;

2. That, in particular, the Federal Republic of Nigeria has refused to pay us oil royalties and mining rents amounting to an estimated 20 billion US dollars for petroleum mined from our soil for over thirty-three years;

3. That the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria does not protect any of our rights whatsoever as an ethnic minority of 500,000 in a nation of about 100 million people and that the voting power and military might of the majority ethnic groups have been used remorselessly against us at every point in time;

4. That multinational oil companies, namely Shell (Dutch/ British) and Chevron (American) have severally and jointly devastated our environment and ecology, having flared gas in our villages for 33 years and caused oil spillages, blow-outs etc., and have dehumanized our people, denying them employment and those benefits which industrial organizations in Europe and America routinely contribute to their areas of operation;

5. That the Nigerian elite (bureaucratic, military, industrial and academic) have turned a blind eye and a deaf ear to these acts of dehumanization by the ethnic majority and have colluded with all the agents of destruction aimed at us;

6. That we cannot seek restitution in the courts of law in Nigeria as the act of expropriation of our rights and resources has been institutionalized in the 1979 and 1989 Constitutions of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which Constitutions were acts of a Constituent Assembly imposed by a military regime and do not, in any way, protect minority rights or bear resemblance

to the tacit agreement made at Nigerian independence;

7. That the Ogoni people abjure violence in their just struggle for their rights within the Federal Republic of Nigeria but will, through every lawful means, and for as long as is necessary, fight for social justice and equity for themselves and their progeny, and in particular demand political autonomy as a distinct and separate unit within the Nigerian nation with full right to (i) control Ogoni political affairs, (ii) use at least fifty per cent of Ogoni economic resources for Ogoni development; (iii) protect the Ogoni environment and ecology from further degradation; (iv) ensure the full restitution of the harm done to the health of our people by the flaring of gas, oil spillages, oil blow-outs, etc. by the following oil companies: Shell, Chevron and their Nigerian accomplices.

8. That without the intervention of the international community, the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the ethnic majority will continue these noxious policies until the Ogoni people are obliterated from the face of the earth. Adopted by general acclaim of the Ogoni people on the 26th day of August 1991 at Bori, Rivers State of Nigeria. Signed on behalf of the Ogoni people by:

**BABBE:** Sgd. HRH Mark Tsaro-Igbara, Gbenemene Babbe; HRH F. M. K. Noryaa, Menebua Ka-Babbe; Chief M. A. M. Tornwe III, JP; Prince J.S. Sangha; Dr Israel Kue; Chief A. M. N. Gua.

**GOKANA:** Sgd. HRH James P. Bagia, Gberesako XI, Gberemene Gokana; Chief E. N. Kobani, JP, Tonsimene Gokana; Dr B.N. Birabi; Chief Kemte Giadom, JP; Chief S. N. Orage.

**NYO-KHANA:** Sgd. HRH W. Z. P. Nzidee, Gbenemene Baa I of Nyo-Khana; Dr G. B. Leton, OON, JP; Mr Lekue Lah Loolo; Mr L. E. Mwara; Chief E. A. Apenu; Pastor M. P. Maeba.

**KEN-KHANA:** Sgd. HRH M. H. S. Eguru, Gbenemene Ken-Khana; HRH C. B. S. Nwikina-Emah III, Menebua Bom; Mr M. C. Daanwii; Chief T. N. Nwieke; Mr Ken Saro-Wiwa; Mr Simeon Idemyor.

**TAI:** Sgd. HRH B.A. Mballey, Gbenemene Tai; HRH G. N. K. Gininwa,

Menebua Tua Tua; Chief I.S. Agbara; Chief D. J. K. Kumbé; Chief Fred Gwezia; HRH A. Demor-Kanni, Menebua Nonwa Tai.

I wish, as a writer, to add my voice to this appeal of the Ogoni people to the international community. This study has shown, convincingly I hope, the collusion of multi-national oil companies and the ethnic majority in Nigeria in the total destruction of the Ogoni nation.

The travails of the Ogoni people are probably repeated many times over in different parts of the world. Taken together, such violence, for that is what it is, practised on weak and defenceless peoples, demeans the human race. It is a joint responsibility to put an end to it.

Over the past thirty years, I have made representation, in writing and in person, to the power elite in Nigeria to put an end to the misery, or at least to mitigate the harm which they do to the Ogoni. I have not only failed to convince them; each appeal has been followed by further acts of genocide.

These genocidal actions have been condoned by all Nigerians. Even well-known Nigerian writers, who would ordinarily be expected to decry these actions have lent support, by their silence, to them. In one case, following the publication of my book, *On A Darling Plain: An Account of the Nigerian Civil War*, where I raised the matter of the denial of the rights of the Ogoni to their resources, Kole Omotoso, a writer well-known for his liberal views, asked, in a review of the book:

*how true is it to say that the riverine areas 'produce' oil? Are we to assume that the people of the riverine areas produce oil in the same way that the Ondo people produce cocoa or Kano produce cotton?*

*If this were the way of thinking of what comes out of the soil of the riverine areas, the distribution of the resultant revenue would have been different.*

Dr Omotoso did not ask if the Ondo farmers had been deprived of their land. Nor did he ask if the planting of cocoa had poisoned the air of the Yoruba people in the Ondo area. Or whether Yoruba farmers had been denied the ownership of the fruit of their farms.

Thus, even the purest minds in Nigeria are marked by their greed for oil money and their insensitivity to the suffering of the minorities.

This insensitivity owes itself to the ethnic nature of Nigerian society.

Ethnocentrism blinds even the best men to injustice, discrimination, even genocide perpetrated against those who are not of their own ethnic groups.

The ethnic majority in Nigeria count it as nothing to order the murder of peasants protesting the high-handedness of a multi-national oil company as happened in the Etche ethnic group of Rivers State when a detachment of Nigerian Mobile Police Force mowed down 14 men and women, and burnt down the village of Umuuechem. No one has been punished for this dastardly crime. The Nigerian Police Force or the Nigerian Army can mow down ethnic minority protesters easily because in most cases members of the Forces sent on such duty would be perfect strangers in the area and would consider themselves as protecting their own ethnic interest in killing as many people as possible. In some cases, soldiers and policemen might find their religion no barrier whatsoever to harming people among whom oil is found.

The ethnic majority in Nigeria are anxious to benefit as much as possible from oil, knowing full well that oil is a wasting asset. This is why Nigeria's huge earnings from oil are being frittered away or committed to expensive projects in the non-oil producing areas of the country. The idea is that when oil runs out, as it will surely do, such areas will have all the benefits of the oil industry, leaving the oil-producing areas with a blighted environment.

It is left for the reader to decide whether a group of people who have no conscience, are opportunistic, who vary rules to suit their immediate design, whether such people will, in the absence of oil, be willing to cater in any measure for the oil-bearing areas and those who reside there. There is no doubt in my mind at all that they will not care a hoot for such people especially as they find that they are powerless.

Today, the ethnic majorities in Nigeria enjoy a multiplicity of bureaucracies which they do not need, agricultural outfits, a myriad Universities, abundant schools, television and radio stations, etc. But they will fight to the death anyone who suggests that any of these be extended to the minorities who own the oil which have made these blessings possible.

The ethnic majority in Nigeria are behaving true to type: persisting in evil (as they did during the slave trade) and waiting for other nations to COMPEL them to mend their ways.

In the circumstance, only the international community and well-meaning individuals acting in their personal capacity, or collectively where possible, can stop this wholesale and mindless destruction of the environment, this

genocide.

The profile of the Ogoni today is of a proud, independent, distinct ethnic group numbering an estimated 500,000, christian, richly blessed by nature, inhabiting the south-east of Nigeria. Their land gushes with petroleum and natural gas, an estimated US100 billion dollars of which has been extracted over the last 33 years by two racist, brutal and callous multi-national oil companies - Shell (Dutch/British) and Chevron (American) whose activities have completely devastated the local environment and ecology. All wildlife is dead, plant life is endangered, the rivers and streams and air are polluted by the oil spillages, blow-outs and gas flares of 33 years; the land has been rendered infertile by acid rain. All primary schools are closed, educated youths find no jobs, children die of malnutrition and kwashiokor; there is no pipe-borne water, electricity, hospital or industry.

Over them sits, vampire-like, a bogus, debt-ridden Nigeria with a fraudulent, undemocratic Constitution operated by an ethnic majority which has expropriated and wasted Ogoni resources for over 30 years. This ethnic majority, bound by none of the rules of modern, civilized, international society has bullied and tortured them since independence and now waits to deal them the final death-blow.

The situation is tragic. The question is, will the international community fold its arms and allow this twenty-first century genocide?

I urge upon the international community a ten-point course of action:

1. Prevail on the American Government to stop buying Nigerian oil. It is stolen property.
2. Prevail on Shell and Chevron to stop flaring gas in Ogoni and other oil-producing areas.
3. Prevail on the Federal Government of Nigeria to honour the rights of the Ogoni people to self-determination and AUTONOMY.
4. Prevail on the Federal Government of Nigeria to pay to the Ogoni people all royalties and mining rents collected on oil mined from Ogoni since 1958, according to the revenue allocation formula agreed before independence.
5. Prevail on the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to stop giving all loans whose repayment depends on the exploitation of Ogoni oil resources to the Federal Government of Nigeria.

6. Send urgent medical and other aid to the Ogoni people.

7. Prevail on the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity and the Commonwealth of Nations to either get the Federal Government of Nigeria to implement the human rights declarations of these organizations, face sanctions or be expelled from them.

8. Prevail on European and American Governments to stop giving aid and credit to the Federal Government of Nigeria as aid and credit only go to encourage the further dehumanization of the Ogoni people and other minorities.

9. Prevail on European and American Governments to grant political refugee status to all Ogoni people seeking protection from political persecution and genocide at the hands of the Federal Government of Nigeria.

10. Prevail on Shell and Chevron to pay compensation to the Ogoni people for ruining the Ogoni environment and the health of Ogoni men, women and children.

The matter is urgent. I live in the hope that somewhere in this world, good still exists and that it will prevail over evil. If nothing is done now, the Ogoni people will be extinct within ten years.

People of the world, I appeal to you in the name of God to help stop this genocide of the Ogoni people NOW!

THE END