THE
OGONI NATION
TODAY
AND
TOMORROW

Ken Saro-Wiwa

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K.B. SARO-WIWA

On the ruins of the old
A greater story be told...

A Publication of the Ogoni Divisional Union
PREFACE

This booklet owes its publication and its form to the Nigerian crisis.
It has been motivated by a strong desire to bring to the Nigerian nation and the world at large the feelings and reactions of one of the small, often forgotten yet important groups in Nigeria, to the national present predicament and hopes. But for a publication of this sort, the terrible experiences in the Nigerian nation of such groups as the Ogoni might well be lost for all time, and the real reasons why the present war is being fought beclouded by terms such as “Hausa-Fulani etc. oligarchy” and “genocide”.
While the booklet introduces the Ogoni nation to the country and the world, it also speaks very directly to the Khana, Gokana and Eleme who constitute the Ogoni Division. Should it succeed in arousing these demoralized and downtrodden people from the stupor in which they have been forced to live these many years, it shall have achieved a part of its aims.
We make no pretence to depth (sources accumulated over the years in preparation for a possible publication is far away – they were, in fact, burnt by an Ibo mob in November 1967) but every attempt at objectivity has been made. The points made here are not inspired by hate for any group of people in the country, but by our great love for the Ogoni people and our share in their aspirations as well as our deepest feelings for their every emotion.
Our apologies go to the large number of Khana, Gokana and Eleme people who will object to the name “Ogoni” on the grounds that it is alien. While we share this view, we regret that we could not find a substitute which would be readily understood by all readers. What is important, after all, is not so much the name as that the people should have that place of dignity and honour which is their birthright in the Nigerian nation.

K.B. Saro-Wiwa
Lagos, 20th April 1968.
PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

I have allowed the re-issue of this pamphlet because I am persuaded that young Ogoni men and women who could not have had access to it when it was first published, should now read it. They will probably find how much my own dreams as an Ogoni youth have been shattered within Nigeria and Rivers State.

It should also prove to them the necessity for the autonomy of Ogoni as advocated since 1990 by the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP).

I also hope that it will draw their attention to the authenticity and immutability of my views on Ogoni and its place in the Nigerian nation-state.

Some amendments have, invariably, been made. However, these are minor and do not interfere with the general tenor of the first edition.

I wish to thank my nephew, Mr. Barika Idamkue, for encouraging me to re-issue the publication. I hope that his gut feelings are justified by the reception the pamphlet receives.

Ken Saro-Wiwa
Port Harcourt,
16th January, 1993
TODAY

The Ogoni nation, one of the many nations of Rivers State of Nigeria, lives almost entirely in Ogoni Division, one of the 5 administrative Divisions constituting Rivers State.

GEOGRAPHICAL

The Ogoni nation lies in an area between approximately, latitude 4° 05' and 4° 20' North and longitudes 7° 10' 7° 30' East. Its approximate boundaries are the Aba-Port Harcourt highway to the west, the big bend and mouth of the Imo River in the north and east respectively, and coastal flats occupied by the Andonis to the south. Covering a total of 404 square miles, it forms part of the coastal plain terrace which here appears as a gently sloping plateau intersected by a few deep valleys which carry water intermittently. The central part of this plateau is about 100 feet above sea-level.

POPULATION

The nation numbers 231,513 (1963 census). Population density at 572 per square mile is considerably higher than the Nigerian national average (146) and still higher than the average for former Eastern Nigeria (406).

PEOPLE

The Ogoni nation consists of three groups:

(i) **KHANA** (120,000) who live in the eastern and northern parts of the Division and are divided into 4 kingdoms- Babbe and Ken Khana, Nyo Khana, and Tai. Each kingdom speaks mutually intelligible dialects of the language, Khana.

(ii) **GOKANA** (94,000) live in the south-central part of the nationality and speak Gokana which is closely related with Khana and is considerably intelligible with it.

(iii) **ELEME** (29,000) live in the west of Division and speak
Eleme which is more divergent from both Khana and Gokana though it is closely related with them.

Density of population per square mile for the various kingdoms is as follows: Babbe 485, Ken Khana 485, Eleme 707, Gokana 1,251, Nyo Khana 400 and Tai 598.

**OCCUPATION**
The main source of income for the people is the sale of agricultural products. The production of gari from cassava, and palm oil provides some supplementary income. Coconuts and fishery products are important in the seaside villages. Pottery as well as palm wine tapping are also practiced. Some palm wine tappers migrate as far afield as Lagos and Ijebu-Ode in the Western State. The cash income has been estimated at £30 to £40 per year per family excluding the population's own food production. The average family consists of 8 persons – father, mother and 6 children.

**TOWNS**
There are a total of 124 villages and towns in the division. Main towns include Bori the Divisional Headquarters; Bodo, Dere and Bomu in Gokana; Nonwa in Tai; Nchia in Eleme; Bane, Baen, Kono and Kpean in Southern Khana; Tabangh, Okwale and Beeri in Northern Khana.

**RELIGION**
Most people are traditionalists, worshipping a common deity, Bari, (Obari - Eleme) the creator of Heaven and Earth. Other more immediate gods and ancestral spirits are worshipped in the various villages and kingdoms. Various denominations of the Christian Church are commonly found throughout the nation.

**HISTORICAL**
There is yet much work to be done anthropologically, ethnographically, sociologically and linguistically to determine the true origins of the Ogoni people, one theory is that they migrated into the Division from across the Imo River fairly late—
probably in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. (Two Ogoni villages, Warife and Utetuk still exist on the other side of the River. Warife still speak Khana while Utetuk have adopted Annang customs and language.) They met no one in the land, and were able to keep their identity from their neighbors', the Ibibios to the south-east, the Igbos to the north, the Ikwerres to the west and the Andoni and Ijaws to the south. By this theory, the first settlement was in Khana spreading north-westwards into tai, thence to Gokana and from Lewe in Gokana into Eleme.

A second theory is that the Ogoni came in the trading ships which often visited Bonny. That they began to settle in Bonny until their great number necessitated movement into the mainland. The fact of their new arrival in Bonny made the Ibani refer to them as 'Igoni' meaning 'stranger' (the name Ogoni is a corruption of this word and remains odious to the Khana, Gokana and Eleme). There is a saying in Bonny that the Ogoni and Ibani are brothers. The origins of this saying may be tied up with the theory of first settlement in Bonny.

It is, however, true that as a farming people, the Ogoni provided the great city-state of Bonny with agricultural produce, in exchange for cloth and other materials. This fact enabled them to escape the ravages of the slave raids which were rampant in the hinterland.

CULTURE
The Ogoni nation has a culture all its own. This culture is very rich, although she has shown great skill in adapting aspects of Ijaw and Ibibio customs.

CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT
The Ogoni were possibly the last people in Nigeria to come into contact with Europeans in consequence of the ban on European penetration for trade imposed by Jaja of Opobo. This has had considerably deleterious effects on the nation. Before 1946, the Ogoni nation was a part of Opobo Division in the then Calabar Province. But in that year, following the requests of the people, a separate Ogoni Division was created for the nation and included in the then Rivers Province. This
was but a first step towards the fulfilment of the people's desire for regroupment with other peoples in the enlarged Niger Delta for the purposes of development and political administration. Besides, cross-cultural influences, trade, a similarity of outlook on life had bound the people to the peoples of the Rivers Area.

**THE HON. T.N. PAUL BIRABI**

Further constitutional development of the Ogoni nation has been bound up with development within the Nigerian Federation. Here mention must be made of the late T.N. Paul Birabi who enhanced this development considerably, Birabi, member of the House of Representatives and one of the pioneer members of the banned NCNC, helped to pave the way to Nigerian national independence. A one-time President of the Rivers Association and of the Ogoni State Representative Assembly, he attended Constitutional Conferences in London in 1953 and contributed brilliantly at meetings of the House of Representatives.

But Birabi was not only a politician who had the interest of his country at heart. He is fondly remembered as a master at the famous Dennis Memorial Grammar School at Onitsha and Vice-Principal of the Okrika Grammar School. Birabi was an asset to Nigeria and a blessing to the Ogoni people. He gave imaginative and selfless leadership to his people whom he strove to lift from the throes of ignorance, want and disease. Single-mindedly and without counting the cost, he pedaled his bicycle through every town and every village in the nation, bringing to thousands of people the message of the twentieth century. He had Ogoni Division surveyed and its boundaries registered. He knew that what the Ogoni-nation needed was education, and stumped the hundred-odd villages of the Division calling for contributions towards the Community school that later became the Birabi Memorial Grammar School.

To impress upon the youth of the land the dignity that lies in labour, Birabi made slates and plates from the clays of the nation. A mason, he built houses and trained a number of young men in the art. No better practical man could be found than this simple man who shared in every emotion of the simple people he led.
For the gigantic work Birabi had undertaken, time was an essential factor. This he had not; on a cold morning in 1953, Birabi died and left his people leaderless and in deep mourning. Dr. Azikiwe, paying him tribute said, by his death, Nigeria had lost a worthy son and the Ogoni nation a sun. He added that his death would throw the Ogoni nation back another fifteen years. The words have proved terribly prophetic. Today, Birabi remains a national hero.

On the establishment of an Eastern House of Assembly in 1953, the Ogoni nation in gratitude to Birabi voted two NCNC party members into the Assembly. But after the Forster-Sutton Tribunal, and consequent upon the failure of the NCNC representation in Parliament from 1954 through 1957, the nation decided to vote Action Group.

**WILLINK COMMISSION OF INQUIRY 1957/58**

Following the Constitutional Conference in London (1953) and the representation there of the wishes of the Rivers People by the Rivers Chiefs and Peoples Conference of which the Ogoni people were very active participants, the Willink Commission into Minority Fears in Nigeria sat in Port Harcourt as in other places in the Nigerian Federation. At this Commission of Inquiry, the Ogoni nation once again made it clear that she considered that her lot lay with Rivers State. Members of the NCNC Party flouted party directives and fearlessly expressed the desire of their people. Mr. S. F. Nwika, a man of outstanding honesty and truthfulness rejected all Ibo State Union Pressures and remained true to his people. For his very courageous stand at the Commission, the Ogoni nation will ever thank Mr. Nwika. When, as a result of the Inquiry, the Niger Delta Development Board was constituted, Ogoni Division became an area of its authority.

**AFTER WILLINK**

The actions of the Ogoni nation at the 1957 Regional elections and the Willink Commission of Inquiry were not lost on the Ibo rulers of the Eastern Nigeria. The cruelest reprisals were taken on the Ogoni people. They were taunted and molested in the market places at Aba and Port Harcourt. The arm of the law
screwed them down. They were denied scholarships. The Premierships of Machiavelli called Michael Okpara (“Politics is not church” – 1963) worsened matters. This petty tyrant often said at political campaigns: “I will give you all the amenities you require, but first you must vote for me. Booty of war is always shared after war.” He was not the man to forgive(!) the Action Group vote of 1957. It did not matter that the Ogoni people having been bullied into submission, consistently voted NCNC thereafter and passed countless votes of confidence on the Ibo misleadership of the NCNC in then Eastern Nigeria, hailing them as God-sent Daniels. Dr. Okpara, his cronies and followership remained implacable. In January 1966, in a highly symbolic act, a white ram that was being presented to the bulldog Premier broke loose as it was being handed over. The ram has not been found till today.

OIL

The flames of shell are flames of hell
We bask below their light
Naught for us save the blight
Of cursed neglect and cursed shell.
(A popular song).

The Ogoni nation sits in poverty on oil.
In the late fifties, oil was struck in commercial quantity in so-called Afam (Lekuma) which is actually on Ogoni soil: then in the Bomu oilfields. The Company? Shell-BP. Gloats the Company in one of its 1964 publications: since the first shipment of oil left Port Harcourt in 1958, some 125 million barrels of Nigerian crude oil have been exported. The bulk of this production came from the Bomu field which has remained the major source of supply.
In 1962 and 1963, the Korokoro and Ebubu fields where respectively discovered. And in 1964, the oil refinery at Alesa went into production. There are other wells dotted all over the nation such as Nyokuru, Bodo and Yorla. Further development is expected in the next few years. Statistics of crude oil production from the oilfields is as follows for 1967:
Bomu  25 wells 76,637 barrels per day.
Ebubu  7 wells 3,440 barrels per day.
Korokoro  6 wells 20,519 barrels per day.

The total of approximately 100,000 barrels a day represents about one-quarter of Nigeria's total oil production today. There is every reason to believe that the real figures are higher than what has been released.

It is ironical that the discovery of oil on our land has brought us nothing but misery, hunger and pain. By contrast, oil brought prosperity, wealth and plenty to those who controlled the government and so the economic life of then Eastern Nigeria. The Federal Government paid 50 percent of oil royalties to the 'Region of origin', and nothing to those on whose soil the oil was actually found. Shell-BP in what we often warned was a very short-sighted policy, failed to take proper stock of the sentiments of the people on whose land it was operating. Boasts the company about its impact on what the Company calls its “areas of operation”: ...Numerous job opportunities have been created; subsidiary industries and service companies have been established... new amenities... have been developed. And one is forced to ask whether these areas of operation lie in Orlu, Owerri or Umuahia where Shell-BP has set up a number of projects or in Ogoni where it has used up all the people's land? Surely, the Company's brag does not extend to Ogoni. Of the Company's avowed total expenditure of £16.3 million pounds in 1964 alone for example, nothing came to the Ogoni nation except a land rent of 5 shillings to the acre per annum. And this in an area (Gokana Kingdom) where population density is 1,251 persons per square mile and the total acreage per year per person is only 0.08 acres! All protests by the people were hastily suppressed, Shell-BP being quite adept at that sort of thing. The Land and Legal Department of Shell-BP was the main instrument for the cheating of our nation. Even contracts for clearing the land around the oilfields were awarded to all but the Ogoni people. Although the company operated a scholarship scheme, (awards up to the end of 1964 totaled almost 450), the Ogoni nation got only 8 of these scholarships.
The company adopted a discriminatory policy in employment. No more than 6 of our people were employed in either the junior or senior cadre of the company's services. All delegation of protest to the company were treated with levity. In August 1965, our youths were driven to riot against shell-BP. Needless to say, shell-BP's unfailing weapon of gold was used against the youthful protestants. These crimes against our people and nation will return home to roost. The warning was given in three articles written in the Port Harcourt press in August 1965 by Messrs. Frank Taol, Lawrence Domkpe and myself. It is but a matter of time.

**OGONI DIVISIONAL UNION**

The Ogoni State Representative Assembly died with its founder, Birabi, in 1953. Between that year and 1962, the nation never met to discuss her problems in a large group. This unsatisfactory state of affairs was rectified in 1962 when Messrs. Dennis Atu-Komi and myself inaugurated the Ogoni Divisional Union at Bori in December that year. Mr Edward Kobani, a worthy patriot of our land, was voted its President. I became its secretary. This union remains the only guardian of our nation. Its current president is Mr M.M. Awi.

**EDUCATION**

By 1962, discriminatory practices in the award of scholarships, the fact that over 95% of Ogoni people were non-earners (they had not had enough education to get good jobs and so could not send their children to school) left the Ogoni nation in a sad state of illiteracy. 85% of the population (of school age) were out of school. Argued many a parent, and not without reason, what was the point in sending the kids to school when most school-leavers were jobless? As the years went by, illiteracy went on the increase. Schools were in disrepair; ignorance held the people in a death-like grip. Although there were 5 secondary schools in the nation, namely, Birabi Memorial Grammar School, Bori (Community), St. Pius XII Secondary School, Bodo (Catholic), Bodo City College, Bodo (Private), Regina Caeli Secondary Commercial, Bori (Catholic), Ascension High School, Ebubu, Eleme (Catholic), each school contained a minimum number of
students of Ogoni divisional origin – in some cases less than 5% of the total student population. Primary schools emptied at an alarming rate.

This educational void in the life of nation rendered more than dismal the vicious circle in which our people lived. The reply of the then Eastern Nigerian government was characteristic. In September 1966 for example, a total of 600 secondary school scholarships were awarded by the government. Only 2 of these went to the Ogoni. Of university scholarships only one, and that after due to protests. At the same time many of our students were being sent down from the Universities for lack of fees.

These facts made it increasingly obvious that the entire economy of then eastern Nigeria was being geared towards the prosperity of the Ibo majority of then Eastern Nigeria, and that small nation such as ours could only hope to end as hewers of wood and drawers of water. This situation was becoming increasingly irksome to those who could think for themselves, and who saw that the economic boom in Eastern Nigeria was a result of the oil find at home. It was ridiculous that we could not share in this boom.

PLANNED CONSTITUTIONAL REVIEW, 1965

When, in late 1965, the Federal Government announced its intention to review the Federal Constitution, the leaders of the Ogoni nation immediately asked each kingdom to contribute a sizeable sum of money towards the fight for the creation of a Rivers State that would include the Ogoni nation. This was in despite of the obstructionist tactics of the banned NCNC which had sponsored a so-called Oil Rivers State that would consist of Ogoni and Ahoada Divisions. The proposed Constitutional review was, however, overtaken by the events of January 1966.

1996

The distressing chain of events which engulfed the Nigerian Federation in 1966 brought a rude shock to the Ogoni nation and led the people to think once again about their future. Shortly after his assumption of duty as Military Governor of Eastern Nigeria, Ojukwu openly declared at Ogoja that the
concept of 'minorities' in then Eastern Nigeria had been abolished. Abolished, not because fairer treatment would be meted to them, but because they were, thenceforth to be judge on the same level with their more advanced neighbours. Dismay rang through the Ogoni nation. The idea then promulgated of a meritocracy did not appeal; for once, a meritocracy can only operate where there is equality of opportunity; there was nothing to suggest that anything near to the latter then existed or that it would ever exist.
Secondly, the Ogoni people were not convinced that the people who would operate this meritocracy were in any way different from those who had operated the previous regime of ungodliness and corruption. Here was the first sign of trouble.
In the May, July and September disturbances, several Ogoni people died. The nation was touched. We contributed money towards the rehabilitation fund. Ojukwu rehabilitated none of our people; instead he used our money in purchasing guns which he later turned against us as we had forecast.
In September, 1966, the Ogoni nation was fully represented at the Rivers Leaders of Thought Conference which was held early that month at Port Harcourt. The upshot of the Conference was the preparation of a memorandum calling for the creation of a Rivers State by decree. This memorandum was submitted to the Ad-hoc Committee that met in Lagos during September; it had far-reaching effects on the life of the Nigerian Federation.

**EASTERN NIGERIA CONSULTATIVE ASSEMBLY**

Ostensibly to consult public opinion in then Eastern Nigeria, but evidently to consolidate his hold over the Region, Ojukwu appointed a Consultative Assembly. **ALL 10 MEMBERS FROM OGNONI DIVISION, AS ELSEWHERE, WERE HANDPICKED.** In spite of this, when the members were in a position to speak their minds freely, they made it clear to Ojukwu (at private interviews) that what the Ogoni people desired in the event of the simultaneous creation of States in Nigeria was a Rivers State, although they would go with a Port Harcourt Province within the framework of Eastern Nigeria. At no time did these members bargain for secession. The Rivers State, they said, was the panacea to their ills. Later,
some members of the so-called Consultative Assembly were induced out of the Rivers State cause. The bribe takers were openly reviled at a meeting of the Ogoni Divisional Union held at Bori on the 26th of December, 1966.

CIVIL DEFENSE FUND 1967
In early 1967, Ojukwu, hell bent on secession, sent emissaries to all villages of our nation to raise money towards his so-called Civil Defence Fund. The attitude of the nation was expressed by one chief who addressed Ojukwu's emissaries in these words: “Who is the Hausa Chief you have asked me to contribute money to fight? How have I and my people offended him? Here, we do not fight before we talk. If my children have offended the Hausa Chief, take me to him and I will apologize. If he won't accept that, I will consent to fight him.”

All monies and gifts later paid into this fund by our people were extorted. The people paid with curses. It is the price we have had to pay for being in the teeth of the lion.

MAY 1967 AND NATIONAL RE-BIRTH
In May 1967, out of the debris that was Nigeria came hope and salvation. Major-General Yakubu Gowon in a courageous act of statesmanship created 12 States out of the awkward and tottering Nigerian Federation thus curing the cankerworm that had plagued the nation since independence. All at once, a balanced Federation in which no ethnic group, however small, would be dispossessed or dominated was born. The course of Nigerian history was altered for good and the 200-odd peoples of this giant placed on the path of progress, unity and equality. This progressive move was countered by Ojukwu and the Ibo misleadership in their characteristic negative manner by secession and the attempted inclusion of our people in the so-called Republic of Biafra.
Republic of 'Biakpara'

They called it 'biafra', We called it 'Biakpara' (remain poor forever). This untenable republic was rejected from the first by the entire Ogoni nation. At the Consultative Assembly where the pre-prepared motion of secession was approved, the hand-picked representatives of the Ogoni people did not even speak. In view of the guns that were behind them, they stand excused for whatever they signed, if they did sign anything. To the ordinary man from the Ogoni Division, the bogus Republic was not Biafra. It was either 'Biakpara' or 'Biafaa' (remain a nonentity). Later events were to prove their premonitions correct. Ojukwu's war has caused us untold hardship and suffering. It has left us penniless, childless, fatherless, etc.

In Ojukwu's Biafra, revenue would be allocated “according to need”, where of course the manifestly selfish Ibo misleadership was in a position to dictate what this need would be, being as they were, Head of State, Commander in Chief of the Army, Navy, Airforce, Inspector-General of Police, and constituting as they did, more than 90% of the top cadre of the Civil Service. And yet one of Ojukwu's pet ideas at the Federal Nigerian level had been that each area should be left to develop itself with its own resources. Herein the unexampled greed of the rebels.

Reign of Terror

No sooner did hostilities begin in July 1967, and no sooner was Bonny liberated by Federal troops than the rebels, with the active aid of Ibo thugs recruited from Aba and Port Harcourt and dubbed 'civil defenders', along with Ibo civilians resident at Bori, turned our nation into a land of terror and death. Our people abhor violence and were amazed by the heights which rebel arrogance and brutality could and did attain. It became more than obvious that these people could never be partners in a country. What they wanted was to be master and conqueror, and their demands were absolute surrounded. The only alternative to such surrender was death. Chief Akeeyor of Kani was murdered in cold blood on the 12th August, Messrs. Kpeden, Ebeh, Piam, Banbel and a host of others were arrested, tortured and detained.

In November, a dastardly outreach was committed against my
parents and my property on my appointment as Administrator for Bonny. Not even my kid brother of seven was spared the torture of armed soldiers. At the time of writing, the number of deaths caused by the rebels in the nation is unknown. In any case, what need repeating the need the loot of villages, the needless death of the flower of our land, hastily conscripted into the rebel army and sent to inglorious deaths at the various war fronts? What need? We shall sing a requiem for 'Biakpara'. It shall be a song against greed and mad ambition; for the end of an epoch of domination, oppression and terrorization.

FOR THE WORLD TO NOTE
Today, Ojukwu and his rebel clique have misled their people in order to satisfy their personal ambition. These educated men are busy exploiting the illiterate society in which they live, and are around the world behaving as though they were a minority in Nigeria and have suffered as such. The truth, of course, is that the Ibos are the third largest tribe in Nigeria; that they have had control of the Government of Eastern Nigeria since 1953, that they have been strong partners in the Federal Government since 1959, and have used all their influence to give their people a good education, excellent health services, employment opportunities and the benefits of the modern age. **IT IS SMALL NATIONALITIES SUCH AS OURS WHO HAVE THE WORST OF OURS WHO HAVE HAD THE WORST OF EVERYTHING SINCE NIGERIA BECAME INDEPENDENT. IT IS SUCH NATIONALITIES AS OURS THAT YAKUBU GOWON HAS SAVED FROM EXTINCTION.**

Ojukwu and the Ibo misleadership as well as the Nyereres of the world who are busy trumpeting the cause for a national home for the Ibos, must accept that we too have a right, an absolute right, to live and assert ourselves side by side with others, in a union of our own choice. We have said so scores of times. We shall say it again and again. If, by any fluke, Ojukwu wins the present war, we shall immediately take up arms against him. If the present hostilities are determined in any way other than giving us freedom from the Ibo control, we shall ensure that we reverse the issue. Ojukwu shall only have our oil over the dead body of every Ogoni man, woman and child. Our desire is to live in the Nigerian Federation.
TOMORROW

What does the future hold for the Ogoni nation? First and foremost, the Federal Republic of Nigeria; the new Nigeria of 12 States designed to ensure justice and fairplay for all sections and to accommodate all genuine aspirations of the diverse peoples of the Federation. We have bound ourselves irrevocably to this cause. It is only within the context of a Federal Nigeria that our aspirations will be legitimized and our interests fully protected. We accept the responsibility of building a nation where no man shall be oppressed. In this spirit, we hold forth hands of fellowship to our brother Edos, Efiks, Hausas, Fulanis, Tivs, Angas, Yorubas, Kanuris, and, in spite of everything, Ibos of the Nigerian Federation. The present crisis has taught us all the evils inherent in greed and an overweening ambition to dominate and rule. This country will also have profited if it has recognized that it is dangerous to so control the national economy that only a few nations benefit from it.

Our second loyalty goes to Rivers State for which we have struggled these twenty-odd years. Our fight for the creation of our State represents the only cause that has been consistently and constitutionally espoused in the last two decades. We now welcome our State; we shall do everything to protect it. We embrace our brother Ijaws, Ikwerres, Abuas, Ekpeyes, Engennis, Egbemas, Ogbas and Etches. Together, we shall work not only to control our government but also our economy and so give our peoples that honour and dignity they have been denied in the past.
Finally, we owe ourselves a duty – the duty to lift ourselves from the dust and never more allow ourselves to be taken on a ride by any group of people. To achieve this, we must achieve successes in several spheres:

EDUCATION
We can no longer be excluded from the blessings which modern education showers on most of our countrymen. The present position where 95 per cent of our children are out of School must
end forthwith. Only by more and more education can we break the vicious circle in which we live. In this respect, it is gratifying that the Federal Government has adopted a policy that aims at bringing all educationally backward areas to par with the more advanced parts of the country. The shame of illiteracy which beclouds us today must be wiped out in the next decade and all our efforts will have to be bent towards the attainment of this goal. No sacrifice should be deemed to astringent for this. Our first attention will be turned on primary schooling as a basis for the development of proper secondary education geared towards the achievements of this age of technology. To this end, the secondary schools at present in the division must be converted to comprehensive schools. Particular attention must also be paid to female education as well as adult education.

**ECONOMIC**

In the past, our businessmen remained unaided by the government of then Eastern Nigeria, whose loans policy was discriminatory in the extreme. In Rivers State, these businessmen will have the opportunity of working hand in hand with a co-operating and sympathetic government. Henceforth, we shall have to be our own tailors, transporters, confectioners, masons and traders. This is the only way to give meaning to our newly-won independence. In this regard, we must not fail the expectation of our well-wishers. Our pottery and fishing industries will modernized. Moreover, Rivers State offers our people a means of increasing their earning power. Whereas, in the past, even night-watchmen in Government establishments as Bori were Ibo, we shall now be able to get more employment in our State government. The new era must begin with the wiping off of that economic strangulation which has been our lot these many years. We have never lacked men who were willing to work hard; indeed we had a surfeit of them. These men will now receive every encouragement. They shall succeed.

**AGRICULTURE**

Although in the years to come, the Ogoni Division will turn more
industrial than agricultural, we will still have to remain self-sufficient. The Rivers State government will be able to draw on the research already completed by the Niger Delta Development Board. This will be to our benefit. No doubt, our farmers will find that they have to turn their hands to poultry farming as well as the growth of citrus and vegetable rather than depend entirely on food crops.

GENERAL DEVELOPMENT
Our land is easy to develop. Lying as it does on a plateau, roads are easily constructed. There are no forests to clear, no hills to by-pass. There is enough gas in Afam to electrify the entire Division, and pipe-borne water should be no problem. That our nation has not seen prosperity thus far is due entirely to the selfishness of the Enugu government of the former Eastern Nigeria. We now have a magnificent opportunity for development both by government and by community effort. No consideration of development within the Ogoni nation can be complete without reference to OIL. The Nigerian crisis has brought home to us more than ever before the full implications of the presence of oil on our soil.

OIL, SHELL-BP AND THE OGONI NATION
We find it most intolerable that we who sit on oil should be one of the poorest, if not the poorest, people in the country. The common man in the Western States benefits directly cocoa; so does the man from Kano benefit from groundnuts. We, on the contrary, are chased out of our land by oil-prospecting companies and left to languish in poverty. We find it untenable that the oil industry should bring prosperity to everyone but us. We refuse to accept that the only responsibility which Shell-BP owes our nation is the spoliation of our lands to satisfy the company’s needs for the silly sum of five shillings per acre in an area where 1,200 people live on each square mile of land, and the only source of income as well as subsistence is agriculture. Shell –BP can earn the goodwill of our people. She can do for us what she knows is right. She can help us attain that dignity and honour which we shall strive for henceforth. She can aid educational and health services; she can give employment to
large numbers of our people; she can participate directly in development schemes in our nation. Shell-BP known our requirements and has the cure for them. We shall henceforth look on the activities of this Company with great interest. We shall not be taken for a ride a second time. The signs of the times are clear and unmistakable.

A CONCLUDING MESSAGE
People of Khana, Gokana and Eleme, a challenge has been thrown us. In the past decade, we have bemoaned our neglect by both the Federal Government and the more immediate government of then Eastern Nigeria. We fought and are still fighting to make this sad neglect known to the authorities and to public opinion. This has now been recognized in part, and already a panacea to these ills has been found. As a first step, we have Rivers State.

A while ago, we were demoralized, made to feel that as a people, we are worthless. During the course of this civil war, we have been humiliated as a people. We have watched our best men being flogged, our daughters violated and our sensibilities hurt in the extreme. This, coupled with the economic exploitation of the past, the miscarriage of justice in our courts, the arrogance of a people who thought and behaved like a master race, has taught us all a lesson. The lesson, no doubt, has been well learnt.

We do not here preach hate. We do not ask that our people nurse the injustices of the past; or that we recall the loot of our villages and the utter humiliation we have suffered. Hate is a negative quality which we must not nurse. But we do ask that the disgrace of the past should be our armour against the future. We must each of us immediately resolve not to repeat the mistakes of the past. We have now been given an opportunity to reassert ourselves side by side with all other nations in the Nigerian Federation. We cannot let this great opportunity slip past us. If we do, posterity shall not forgive us, and we shall disappear as a people from the face of the earth. This must not happen.

This spirit of self-sacrifice which moved Birabi is still alive in our nation today. The men who think as he did are not lacking. The present crisis will have served to bring such men to the fore.
They will provide enlightened and dynamic leadership; they will, with active support, ensure that our nation regains its lost dignity and honour, and transform our land for the betterment of our peoples. It is incumbent on us to entrust the future of our land to responsible persons who know what is going on in the world around them, and who will not succumb to petty inducements. This is important.

Rivers State has been created, and a new Nigeria born. But we must remember that no matter the system of government, unless a people take their destiny their own hands, no improvement will come to them. We cannot afford, then, to be complacent. We must begin immediately to organize ourselves enthusiastically for the difficult and turbulent days ahead. To start all over again is not going to be easy; the task will be made even more difficult by the uncertainty of the times and the hostility of some of our neighbours who have vowed to keep us as slaves for all time. But we must now bend to the labour. There is a lot deal to be done and we must do it quickly and efficiently. We reiterate that the task will not be easy. We shall be starting from a manifestly weak position. At the moment, the number of our people in the junior and senior cadre of the Federal Public Service and the Corporations can be counted on the fingers of one hand. So also the number in the Police and armed forces. Our children are largely out of schools and universities, many families have lost their bread winners and our economy has collapsed completely. Our position is certainly not enviable, not even by comparison with other nations in Rivers State. But the measure of our success will be the way, manner and time in which we turn this position of weakness into strength. It is not an impossible task, and we urge that the sufferings of the past year should not dishearten our young men and women. We stand convinced that we shall rise.

We shall appeal to the Federal Military Government or whatever Government succeeds it to continue to show concern for small nations such as ours—especially in Constitution-making; and that it takes STRONG COGNIZANCE OF OUR DISIRES WITH REGARD TO THE COMPANIES PROSPECTING OR OPERATING ON OUR SOIL.

Our wish is that the Rivers State Government so orders affairs in
the State that all its component nations share in the prosperity and dignity which the State in expected to bring to Rivers people as a whole. We must show that we have learnt from the mistakes of the past; and if there is a lesson to be learnt, it is that no group, however weak or small can be taken for granted. The duty before all Nigerians is clear. People of Khana, Gokana, and Eleme, we appeal to you to show more readiness to face the times ahead. The world is looking on at you. The men who have died in the current crisis are watching you. We must make sure that they have not died in vain.

OURS IS THE FUTURE. WE SHALL SUCCEED.

BEE OGNI NAA LEE PE!
ken Saro-Wiwa was born at Bori-Ogoni in October, 1941. He took scholarship to Government College, Umuahia and the University of Ibadan.

He wrote this pamphlet shortly after he was appointed Administrator for Bonny and member of the Interim Advisory Council of Rivers State at the early age of 26.