

ETHNIC SELF – DETERMINATION PROTESTS IN THE NIGER DELTA: FROM ISAAC BORO’S ‘12 DAY REVOLUTION’ TO CONTEMPORARY MILITANCY

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ABSTRACT

In history, self-determination efforts have in most cases been pursued through various forms of protests, characterized by conflicts and crises that in most cases, lead to out-break of hostilities and civil wars, when oppressed people rise up against their perceived oppressors.

Protests are used to express the desire for freedom, justice, equity, emancipation, self-actualization, independence, and self-determination among others. Isaac AdakaBoro’s 12 day revolution executed on behalf of the Ijaws of Niger Delta was to secure freedom for them from the socio-economic and political injustice there were under. This chapter examines AdakaBoro’s 12 day revolution as an instrument for self-determination in the Niger Delta and compares it to the recent militant protests.

The chapter concludes by showing that while Boro’s revolution which was unarguably the precursor of the recent protests in the Niger Delta, can be viewed through the prism of self-determination and economic justice, the recent protests cannot be so viewed. The protests of the last one and half decades are a mixed-bag of self-determination, resource control, and largely, pecuniary motives evidenced by the pay offs of the amnesty program.

KEYWORDS: Ethnicity, Protest, Self-Determination, militancy and Niger Delta.

INTRODUCTION

Protests remain legitimate instruments employed by individuals and groups all over the world to express dissatisfaction over certain events, policies, or situations they find unjust. Protests can take many different forms, ranging from individuals making statements at rallies to mass demonstrations aimed at resolving or influencing the public opinion or government policy. Protestors may undertake direct or indirect action in an attempt to effect desired changes (St John Bamed-smith 2007). In some cases, the actions may go beyond mere protest to civil resistance (Adams Roberts 2009). The 12 day revolution of Isaac Adaka Jasper Boro, the thrust of this chapter, illustrates civil resistance protest.

The chapter proffers a brief background of Isaac Boro and the political and economic anxieties of the Ijaw tribe of the Niger Delta that dictated his cause of action against the Nigerian State.

The revolution that has been described as armed rebellion against the Nigerian State has become a source of inspiration and a playbook for the series of violent protests and militancy the Niger Delta of Nigeria has witnessed in the past fifteen years.

In conclusion, the chapter argues that the contemporary militants and their leaders have pecuniary motives.

Self-Determination Protests: Global Overview

EgbosaOsaghae's (2007) definition of self-determination relates it to the right or freedom of a people that are subordinated, oppressed, dominated, colonized or even marginalized to assert and constitute themselves into a separate state. This re-echoes Alagoa(1964), who sees self-determination as the eternal quest of human spirit for freedom of action, autonomy, freewill, self-expression and independence. Common to both definitions is the notion of freedom.

The notion of freedom was not lost on the drafters of the United Nations (UN) charter in 1941 who in Chapter I, Article I, part 2 state that the purpose of the UN charter is: "To develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of people, and to take the appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace" (U N Charter 2006). Also Article I of both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), both read: "All peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right, they freely determine their political status and freely pursue economic, social and cultural development"(Miller Betty, 2002).

In recognition of this, self-determination has been pursued at different times and ages by people of different nationalities, color, creed, religion and persuasions to fully realize their inalienable right of freedom either through peaceful means or violent method where and when necessary.

Let us sample some cases of quests for self-determination in history. The American campaign for independence in 1776 is a classic case of self-determination struggle against British colonialism. This revolt in the New World of British colonies mark the first example of a successful quest for self-determination and the natural right of a people to be free.

The story is the same in Vietnam, where the quest for self-determination spurred the Vietnamese face off the French in year or period 1954 and later the Americans in a war (between 1955 to 1975) of attrition to gain their independence.

Kashmir has been enmeshed in serious conflict of self-determination since the late 1940s. In recognition of their to freedom, the U N through its Security Council Resolution 47 adopted in 1948 called for a plebiscite to decide the fate of Kashmir. Some groups (name names this is a scholarly work) have suggested that a third option of independence be added to the resolution. In addition, two

options of Union with India or Union with Pakistan have been added to the menu (Kashmir_cc.ca on UN Resolution 47, and United Nations Resolutions on Kashmir)

The Kurdistan self-determination saga remains topical in the Middle East. Kurdistan, the land of the Kurdish people of the Middle East, is currently part of four states: Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Iran. The Kurdish self-determination movements are in each of the four states. The Iraqi Kurdistan has to date achieved the largest degree of self-determination through the formation of the Kurdish Regional Government, recognized by the Iraqi federal constitution. In spite of this, the quest for a single Kurdish State continues while achieving it remains mirage.

Kosovo's self-determination struggle is a highly celebrated independence struggle. This largely Albanian nation was the subject of the quest for independence on territories long held by ethnic Serbs, as well as Yugoslavia. After the war that erupted between Kosovo and Yugoslavia in 1996 that lasted for three years, and with the involvement of the United States/NATO forces against Serbia; there was unilateral declaration of Independence of Kosovo by its Assembly. In spite of Serbia's rejection and disputations of the decisions, in February 2008, European major powers and the United States recognized the independence of Kosovo. This was followed as at November 2009 by the recognition of 65 countries. (Timeline Kosovo)

Another notable case is Taiwan's struggle for self-determination in the East Asian region. The whole territory of Taiwan was claimed by the government of the People's Republic of China as part of its territory. Making a counter claim, the Taiwanese independence advocates argue that there is no legal claim to Taiwan, as no legally binding treaty ever transferred sovereignty of Taiwan to China after World War II. The de-facto government of Taiwan and the government of the Republic of China Remain logger heads over who has sovereignty over Taiwan.

The people of Southern Cameroun have been involved in the struggle for self-determination. They maintain that they were forcefully annexed into the territory of the Republic of Cameroun in 1961. In a legal battle against the Republic of Cameroun, the African Commission for Human and People's Right found out that there were unresolved issues with the constitutional structure of the Republic of Cameroun vis-à-vis southern Camerouns. More importantly, the African Commission found that contrary to the claims of the Republic of Camerouns, the people of southern Camerouns are indeed a "people" under the African charter and bound by international law with inalienable right to determine their destiny (Vijay Sappani 2009)

The people of Eastern Nigeria tried to assert their right of self-determination by declaring a Republic of Biafra in 1967 under Lt. Col Chukuwemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu. The ensued Nigerian/Biafran Civil War lasted 30 months with over 3 million Igbos losing their lives (Madiebo, 1980). Still in pursuit of the Eastern Nigerian self-determination, a new organization known as the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign Republic of Biafra (MASSOB) has emerged since (when?) to rekindle the spirit of actualization of Biafra republic. And because the people of Eastern Nigeria still

feel marginalized and excluded from the Nigerian State, MASSOB has resonance among some of them.

The Niger Delta region of Nigeria has had a history of self-determination struggle dating back to the 19th century period of Atlantic commerce, marked by high points such as, the Akassa raid (1895), Jaja of Opobo/British clash (1887), Nana of Itshekiri/the British clash (1894), Benin/British clash (1897), Boro's declaration of the Niger Delta republic (1966) up to youth restiveness and militancy of the late 1990s.

Self-determination in the Niger Delta region has been violent in nature due to the reason proffered by Eleanya (2002). According to him, one result of self-determination struggles in Africa, is the emergence of ethnic militias and extreme ethnic identity due to the "resurgence of ethnic and cultural demands by minority people who do not control the power of state"(Eleanya 2002, p.11). This view captures the reality of the Niger Delta self-determination led by Isaac AdakaBoro in the middle 1960s.

Isaac Boro: The making of a revolution

Isaac AdakaBoro was born on September 10, 1938, in the oil town of Oloibiri in the Niger Delta; to a father who was a mission school headmaster heading mission schools in places like oloibiri, Port Harcourt and Kaiama.

After his secondary school, Boro joined the police and worked briefly as a teacher before joining the Nigeria police force and worked in Port Harcourt. But because of Boro's restless nature, he left police without official permission and took up another job as an instructor at the Man O'war Bay Character and Leadership Centre in Victoria, Western Cameroon, leading to his been fired from the police job.

On returning to Nigeria, Boro enrolled at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, to study Chemistry. While there, he became president of the student's union. He stayed at the University for two years before leaving once again on a tour to solicit support for the Ijaw cause. He headed to Ghana (in the company of Samuel Owonaro) to solicit for financial aid to be able to realize his vision of liberating the Niger Delta from marginalization. He was an admirer of the Cuban Leader, Fidel Castro and made a stop at Cuban embassy in Ghana to s seek for support. Boro's and Owonaru's appeal for support at the Cuban Embassy was turned down and they were ejected from the embassy.

However, undeterred by that outcome, Boro and Owonaro returned home and with their comrade Nottingham Dick, began to recruit young men to pursue their cause under the umbrella of an organization known as the Niger Delta Volunteer Service (NDVS). They eventually set up a military camp at Taylor creek where they recruited 150 youths and trained them in the use of fire arms and explosives, as well as in gurella warfare in the creeks and forests of the Niger Delta. This force of 150 men was divided into three divisions; under the command of Boro, Dick and Owonaro and with these units, they embarked on their armed campaign after declaring the independence of the Niger

Delta. Dick served as the “Chief of Staff” and “adjutant” while Owonaro was the Division Commander.

The Revolution Foray

Boro kick-started the armed resistance on February 23, 1966, when he and his two other commanders moved out from their Tailor creek camp to start an armed resistance. Before setting out to battle, they made a rallying call to their troops viz:

“Today is a great day’ not only in your lives, but also in the history of the Niger Delta. Perhaps, it will be the greatest day for a long time. This is not because we are going to bring the heavens down, but because we are going to demonstrate to the world what and how we feel about oppression Remember your 70 year old grandmother who still farms to eat, remember too, your petroleum which is being pumped out daily from your veins, and then fight forever your freedom”(Boro, Isaac, 1982).

With this inflammatory battle cry, Boro and his men started their campaign by attacking a police station at Yenagwa, raiding their armory and taking some police officers hostage. Boro’s forces attacked oil installation and new pipelines of the oil Multinational companies operating in the Niger Delta. Boro’s armed militia consisting mainly of his fellow Ijaws , gallantly battled the Federal Forces for twelve days after declaring the Niger Delta Republic, before they were finally overpowered by the superior federal government firepower.

The revolt having been suppressed, Boro and his other two Commanders were put to trial on a 9 count charge of treason at a Port Harcourt high court under Judge Phil Ebosie. Boro was found guilty but remained defiant. He claimed that his people – “had long sought a separate state, not because they loved power but because their conditions were peculiar and the authorities did not understand their problems. There is nothing wrong with Nigeria. What is wrong with us is the total lack of mercy in our activities (Max Siollun, 2008)

, Boro and his colleagues were sentenced to death by hanging. But before they could get executed, a political crisis broke out in 1966 that later led to civil war in Nigeria. Consequently, the then Nigerian Head of State General Yakubu Gowon gave them state pardon. This is probably why, when the Nigeria/Biafra war broke out in 1967, Boro fought on the side of the Federal Nigerian Forces against whom he campaigned.

He died in the war on May 17, 1968, at Ogu (near Okrika in Rivers State) at the age of 32, after liberating the Niger Delta from the Biafran forces. He was buried in Lagos at the Ikoyi Cemetery.

Boro’s quest for justice for the people of Niger Delta is noted in his words “We are clenched in tyrannical chains and led through a dark alley of perpetual political and social deprivations. Strangers

in our own country! Therefore the day would have to come for us to fight for our long-denied right to self-determination. Most of the youths were so frustrated with the general neglect that they were ready for any action led by an outstanding leader to gain liberty” (Isaac Boro 1982).

With similar rhetoric he captures the stark economic and material neglect of the Niger Deltaviz: “Economic development of the area is certainly the most appalling aspect. There is not a single industry. The only fishery industry which ought to be situated in a properly riverine area is sited about so many miles in-land at Aba. The boatyard at Obobo, had its headquarters at Enugu personnel in these industries and also in the oil stations are predominantly non-Ijaw” (Isaac Boro 1982).

The foregoing statements which provide insight to the poor condition of the Niger Delta at Boro’s time informed his 12 day self-determination protest.

Militant protests in the Niger Delta after Isaac Boro.

Isaac Boro’s approach has become a script for the diverse militia groups in the Niger Delta since the mid 1990s, seeking solution for the Niger Delta question.

The Niger Delta question remains the question of justice and fairness to the region due to the exploitation, environmental devastation, political and economic marginalization they have suffered in the hands of the Nigerian State and the multinational oil companies who have been exploring oil in the Niger Delta.

The same appalling situation and issues that spurred Isaac Boro to a 12 day armed rebellion against the Nigerian State have not been addressed. Consequently, two decades after Isaac Boro’s insurgency, a new generation of militants drawing inspiration from him has emerged from the Niger Delta. From Ken SaroWiwa, AsariDokubo and Ateke Tom, to mention just a few, the Niger Delta have adopted and adopted Isaac Boro’s song and modus operandi. AsariDokubo cloned the name of Boro’s group, Niger Delta Volunteer Service (NDVS) to Niger Delta Peoples’ Volunteer Force (NDPVF).

From the 1980s to the early 1990s as the various communities and groups in the Niger Delta with their leaders began to seek means to draw attention to their plight concerning economic injustice, political oppression, ecological problems and others, they borrowed Isaac Boro’s playbook.

What appears to be the first attempt to push the Niger Delta question into the front burner of the national political discourse post Isaac Boro, occurred in 1980 when the people of Egbema Kingdom where the first oil well was drilled in 1965 by Nigerian Agip Oil Company (NAOC), embarked on massive protests that crippled NAOC’s operations for weeks.

The people of Egbema under the aegis of Egbema Youths Association (EYA), guided and led to embark on the protest by an American trained political scientist, O. Jason Osai who hinged the basis of the protest on ecological problems, economic deprivations, poverty, Youth joblessness, lack of infrastructural facilities and political marginalization perpetrated against the people by the oil company (NAOC), the Rivers State Government, and the Nigerian State. Consequently, the then governor of Rivers State, Chief Melford Okilo, brokered a tripartite agreement that involved the Egbema Clan, NAOC and Rivers State Government. The protest was defused after the agreement.

In 1993, the Ogoni people followed suit with agitations against similar plight. The difference however is that they were led by Ken SaroWiwa who fought with a pen rather than gun. The Ogoni Bill of Rights sponsored by Ken Saro-Wiwa's Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), which demanded for the control and use of a fair proportion of Ogoni economic resources for Ogoni development, was phenomenal in intensity, scope and focus. The leadership of the movement KenSaroWiwa, a novelist and human rights and environmental activist, proved that a pen is mightier than a gun. Central to MOSOP's agitation is the demand for the fundamental rights of the Ogoni people which was presented to General Babangida's administration in 1991. MOSOP's quest continued to build steadily and it attracted support from various quarters within and outside Nigeria including the United Nations.

With time, the MOSOP campaign turned violent and inevitably led to a recurrent face-off between the youths and law enforcement agencies. In the end, nine Ogoni citizens, including KenSaro-Wiwa, lost their lives to an extra-judicial killing ordered by the military government of General Sani Abacha in 1995. The purpose was to repress the intense agitations about the Niger Delta by MOSOP.

In December 1998, the Ijaw Youths Conference morphed into the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) and took the Ijaw's struggle to new level. They issued the Kaiama declaration. This provoked the proliferation of Ijaw militia groups in along the line of Isaac Boro's revolution.

Every Niger Delta militant and their leader saw themselves clones of Isaac Boro picking up the gauntlet where he dropped it. They adopted his rhetoric, speech, and above all, his belligerent approach.

GbomoJomo, the leader and spokesman of Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), a much dreaded umbrella militant group in the Niger Delta began vent the vision and objectives similar to Isaac Boro's in a bid to capture the collective psyche and solidarity of the people of Niger Delta. JomoGbomo declared that: "The injustice MEND is fighting is the rape of the Niger Delta for decades using constitutional means to develop other regions of the country; and the criminals are the Nigerian Government, oil majors, corrupt politicians and the officers of the armed forces who are involved in oil bunkering" (Saturday Champion, January 12, 2008)

MujahidDokuboAsari, another Niger Delta militant leader who adopted the name of Boro's group as well as embraced his sentiments and vision, declared in September 2004, an all-out war with the Nigerian State and the oil corporations by threatening to disrupt oil production activities through attacks on oil wells and pipelines. Ateke Tom's group, the Niger Delta Vigilante Group and some others, took the violent path wreaking havoc on the inhabitants of the Niger Delta, kidnapping expatriate oil workers and government officials, vandalizing and destroying oil installations and killing security personnel of the Nigerian State. A press statement signed by Cynthia White, the leader and spokes-person of the Martyrs Brigade published in Newswatch Magazine of October 6, 2006, provides insight to the resolve of the militant groups:

“We have made it clear that despotic force of the occupation of Nigeria and its imperial collaborators should vacate the Niger Delta Area and they would not listen. Let us make it clear to them once, we shall bleed you to your marrows and you shall beg to leave our fatherland. We shall continue to unleash acts of sabotage against Agents and infrastructures of the Nigerian State and its collaborators until they vacate our lands” (Newswatch, October 6 2006 p.22).

True to this threat, the militant groups between January 2006 and February 2007 carried out the following attacks on oil facilities and personnel in the Niger Delta.

- 1) January 10, 2006: Militants kidnap 4 foreign oil workers from Shells offshore E.A. oilfield. Shell shuts 115,000 bpd E.A. platform. They also blow up crude oil pipelines, cutting supplies to Forcados export terminal by 100,000 bpd.
- 2) January 30, 2006: Militants free all hostages kidnapped January 10, but threaten wave of new attacks.
- 3) February 18, 2006: Militants attack a barge operated by US oil services company Willbros in speedboats and abduct 9 oil workers. The militants also blow up a Shell crude oil pipeline and a gas pipeline operated by Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), and bomb Shell's Forcados tanker loading platform, forcing the company to suspend exports from the 380,000 bpd facility. Closure of Forcados affects other companies, cutting further 100,000 bpd output. Shell shuts 115,000 bpd E.A. platform as precaution.
- 4) March 1, 2006: Militants release 6 of the hostages kidnapped February 18; they include 1 American, 2 Egyptians, 2 Thais and a Filipino.
- 5) March 18, 2006: Militants blow up oil pipeline operated by Italian oil company Agip, shutting down 75,000 bpd.
- 6) March 27, 2006: Militants release remaining three hostages kidnapped February 18 - 2 Americans and a Briton.
- 7) May 10, 2006: An oil executive of Baker Hughes (an American Co.) employee is killed by unidentified gunmen in Port Harcourt. MEND denies responsibility.
- 8) May 11, 2006: 3 workers of Italian oil contractor Saipem are kidnapped.

- 9) June 2, 2006: 6 Britons, 1 Canadian and an American are abducted from Bulford Dolphin oil rig owned by Norwegian oilfield services group Fred. Olsen Energy. Hostages are released two days later.
- 10) June 7, 2006: Militants attack a Shell-operated natural gas facility in the Niger Delta, killing 6 soldiers and kidnapping 5 South Korean contractors.
- 11) June 20, 2006: 2 Filipinos with Beaufort International kidnapped in Port Harcourt and freed 5 days later.
- 12) July 6, 2006: Gunmen kidnap Michael Los, a Dutch oil worker in Bayelsa State. He is released 4 days later.
- 13) July 25, 2006: Niger Delta mob seize AgipOgbainbiri flow station, taking 24 workers hostage. Hostages released and flow station abandoned July 31 after paid-off by Nigerian government.
- 14) August 3, 2006: German oil worker, Guido Schiffarth, a 62-year-old employee of Ballinger and Berger snatched from his car in Port Harcourt by armed men dressed as soldiers.
- 15) August 4, 2006: Gunmen abduct 3 Filipino oil workers from a bus near Port Harcourt. They are released 10 days later.
- 16) August 9, 2006: 2 Norwegian and 2 Ukrainian oil workers kidnapped.
- 17) August 10, 2006: A Belgian and Moroccan contractors kidnapped in Port Harcourt. Both released on August 14.
- 18) August 13, 2006: 5 foreign oil workers (2 Britons, a German, an Irish and a Pole.) kidnapped from a nightclub in Port Harcourt. An American also kidnapped earlier the same day.
- 19) August 15, 2006: 2 Norwegian and 2 Ukrainian oil workers kidnapped on August 9 freed.
- 20) August 16, 2006: Lebanese man kidnapped.
- 21) August 19, 2006: German oil worker, Guido Schiffarth is released. Nigerian army launch crackdown on militants. Soldiers fired in the air, sending men and women screaming through the streets of Port Harcourt.
- 22) August 24: An Italian oil worker employed by Saipem is kidnapped by gunmen in Port Harcourt. He is freed after five days.
- 23) October 2, 2006: 25 Nigerian employees of a Royal Dutch Shell contractor seized after an ambush of boats carrying supplies to Shell facilities in the Cawthorne Channel. They are released two days later.
- 24) October 3, 2006: 7 foreign oil workers (four Britons, one Indonesian, one Malaysian and a Romanian) kidnapped in a raid on a compound for expatriate contractors working for Exxon Mobil. The 3 British among the released 7 foreign oil workers arrived back in Scotland October 23, to tell of their hostage ordeal in the hands of Nigerian delta militants. One of the men, Graeme Buchan, revealed how he was beaten and forced to call the chief executive of his employers to falsely say that his colleague Paul Smith was dead. Speaking on behalf of his colleagues, Mr. Buchan described how they were beaten with sticks, slapped with machetes and feared they might never see their families again.
- 25) October 21, 2006: 7 foreign oil workers kidnapped October 3 are released.

- 26) November 2, 2006: A British and American employees of Petroleum Geo-Services (PGS) are kidnapped from a survey ship off the coast of Bayelsa.
- 27) November 7, 2006: British and American employees of Petroleum Geo-Services (PGS) kidnapped on November 2 freed.
- 28) November 22, 2006: A British oil worker is killed during an attempt by Nigerian soldiers to free 7 hostages abducted by militants earlier the same day.
- 29) December 7, 2006: Gunmen kidnap three Italians and one Lebanese from a residential facility. Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) claims responsibility.
- 30) December 14, 2006: Gunmen invade the Nun River logistics base in Bayesa State operated by Royal Dutch Shell and hold 5 people hostage.
- 31) December 18, 2006: 2 car bombs explode in Port Harcourt, one near Agip compound and the other in Shell residential compound. There were no casualties.
- 32) December 21, 2006: Militants storm the Obagi field facility in Rivers State, operated by Total, killing 3 people.
- 33) January 5, 2007: Gunmen kidnapped 5 Chinese telecom workers. Militants plant a car bomb in the Shell residential compound in Port Harcourt. Shell evacuates some staff from compounds in Port Harcourt, Bonny Island and Warn.
- 34) January 10, 2007: Gunmen attacked a base operated by South Korea's Daewoo Engineering and Construction in the Bayelsa state kidnapping South Korean and one Nigerian oil workers.
- 35) January 12, 2007: 9 South Korean workers and one Nigerian are freed after being kidnapped when gunmen attacked a base operated by South Korea's Daewoo Engineering and Construction in the Bayelsa state capital Yenagoa on Jan. 10.
- 36) January 16, 2007: 3 people including a Dutch oil worker are killed when their boat, operated by South Korean firm Hyundai, was attacked by gunmen on its way to the Bonny Island export terminal.
- 37) January 18, 2007: Gunmen free 5 Chinese telecom workers, kidnapped January 5. An Italian is also released in Bayelsa state. 3 foreign hostages remain in captivity.
- 38) January 20, 2007: Militants seize German shipping line Baco-Liner cargo ship on its way to warn port taking all 24 Filipino crew members hostage.
- 39) January 23, 2007: Gunmen kidnap 2 engineers, an American and a Briton, in Port Harcourt, on their way to work.
- 40) January 25, 2007: 9 employees of Chinese National Petroleum Company (CNPC) working in Bayelsa state under contract with Shell are kidnapped.
- 41) February 4, 2007: 9 employees of Chinese National Petroleum Company (CNPC) kidnapped on January 25 released.
- 42) February 6, 2007: Gunmen kidnap a Filipino oil worker on Port Harcourt - Owerri road.
- 43) February 7, 2007: A Filipina woman is kidnapped by gunmen in Port Harcourt. This apparently is the first abduction of a woman in the region. The same day, a French oil worker (an employee of Total Oil Co), identified as Gerard Laporal, married to a Nigerian woman is kidnapped by gunmen as he returned home around 9:00 pm.

(SOURCE: Business Day of July 26, 2007)

Some of the militant groups to be credited with these attacks include Egbesu boys of Africa, Ice Landers, Titanians, KhansmenKonfraternity (KK) Black-Bra (women militia), Bush Boys, Green Landers, Mobutu Boys, Freedom Fighters, Niger Delta Freedom Fighters, The Atangbata Youths, one more Run to Cross Youths, OlabrakinOpre Youths, Oweson – Ogbo, The Ogbokore Youths and The Tongbolo boys among numerous others.

The major militia groups like, MEND, NDPVF, Niger Delta Vigilante and Martyrs Brigade, also have many smaller affiliates groups under their umbrella, all of which are to realize IsaacBoro's vision and dream.

What is notable here is the noble cause of drawing attention to the plight of the Niger Delta people took a violent turn in the 1990s and degenerated into militancy and civil resistance. They became mishmash groups with political socio-economic and environmental/ecological messages. The imperative question that arises is: To what extent, if any, are these group out to realize Boro's vision and dream?

Without a doubt, while the militancy that engulfed the Niger Delta from the 1990s to the present, share the vision of Isaac Boro's 12 day revolution, the leaders of these groups like AsariDokubo, Ateke Tom, Henry Okah, Cynthia White among others, unlike Isaac Boro their forerunner, seem to be driven by pecuniary interest. These leaders are alleged to be implicated, among other things, in oil bunkering, illegal oil refining activities, kidnapping of expatriates for ransom as well as political thuggery.

These leaders are rich, but Niger Delta remains poor. The plight of the Niger Delta people remains unchanged. This is a clear point of departure of the present leaders from Isaac Boro who stood not for sordid personal aggrandizement and gratification but for the development and betterment of Niger Delta as a whole.

Another disappointing perfidious stain of the present leaders of the Niger Delta derives from their management of the amnesty program which has turned to be pacification of the militant leaders. For instance, AsariDokubo gets \$9 million a year to pay his 4,000 former foot soldiers to protect the pipelines they once attacked. Gen. Ebikabowei "Boyloaf" Victor Ben and Gen. Ateke Tom get \$3.8 million a year apiece to have their men guard pipelines. Government "Tompolo" Ekpmupolo maintains a \$22.9 million-a-year contract to do the same.(The Nation, October 23, 2012)

As the sole beneficiaries of the amnesty program, i.e., as guardians of the pipelines and the recipients of funding for skills acquisition training programs abroad, the militants and their leaders appear satisfied while the Niger Delta question remains un-answered.

CONCLUSION

The fear of the Niger Delta people at the twilight of colonization was that of exploitation and marginalization. The inauguration of the Henry Willink's Commission of 1958 was to allay the fear.

The post independent Nigeria proved the Niger Delta people right as they became a micro minority, marginalized, exploited and deprived of the benefits of the oil wealth they are endowed with. It took the revolutionary pioneering effort of Isaac Boro to raise the Niger Delta issues as a national issue and this seemed to have been betrayed by present day militants' pecuniary motive.

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