

## **MATTHEW KUKAH AND THE NEXT Ogoni HOLOCAUST**

**By Leburah Ganago**

I used to be a fan of Rev. Father Matthew Hassan Kukah, Secretary-General of the Catholic Secretariat in Nigeria and a ( supposedly) progressive voice. He was one of my favorite columnists in the Guardian stable, ( The Guardian On Sunday) as I made sure not to miss his column alongside those of Dr. Olatunji Dare on Tuesdays and Dr. Edwin Madunagu on Thursdays, in the 1980s and 1990s. From his writings and public comments then, Rev. Fr. Kukah came off to me as an activists behind the pulpit. And I applauded every move of his.

However, the passage of time seems to have changed this "Man of God". He soon became a recurring decimal in many of Obasanjo's deceptive schemes and gimmickries. First, it was the Oputa Panel, ( the Human Rights Violation Commission), where Rev. Fr. Kukah became the Secretary of the Commission. Even if we knew Obasanjo for what he is , a phony con man , who is incapable of dispensing justice, we had great confidence in Rev. Fr. Kukah whom we believed was a man of conscience. The Ogoni people under the coordination of MOSOP filed and defended about eighty per cent (80%) of the total petitions presented to the Oputa panel. When Obasanjo trashed the Oputa Panel report Rev. Fr. Kukah expressed frustration and showed it, even as his boss, Justice Chukwudifu Oputa ,had no problem accepting Obasanjo's alibi for dishing the panel report and chided Rev. Fr. Kukah for his protest ,blaming his reaction on his lack of legal background.

However, one was somewhat surprised when Rev. Fr. Kukah jumped at another offer .from Obasanjo to serve as Secretary of another grand charade, the so-called Political Reform Conference. Rev Fr. Kukah got his fingers burnt for the second time, as Obasanjo after failing to manipulate the Political Reform Conference to launch his third term bid also rubbished the Forum's recommendations.

By the time Rev. Fr. Matthew Kukah accepted another "National Assignment" to serve as Facilitator for the doomed Ogoni/Shell Reconciliation bogey from Obasanjo, a third one in quick succession , it became obvious to me that this Catholic Clergy has no value for public reputation.

Today, Rev. Fr. Matthew Kukah comes off to me as someone who has got his fingers soiled in the filthy bowls of the Port Harcourt "Brick House" and the Abuja Aso Rock, two of the darkest spots on earth. This is a peace Ambassador of a strange kind. I am told that he has literarily relocated to the Port Harcourt Government House. Port Harcourt no doubt, is a very attractive city, but [Rev.Fr.](#) Kukah's overstay in the Garden City must not be at the expense of the Ogoni people.

However, it would appear that the Facilitators of the Ogoni /Shell/ Nigeria government reconciliation did recognize MOSOP as the official representatives of the Ogoni people ,and the central role the organization has to play in the process and deferred to it. For instance, according to the Draft Process Concept Paper, : " As a first start ( sic) ,MOSOP (on behalf of the Ogoni people) and SPDC ( Shell) were therefore asked by Father Matthew Kukah to convey to the facilitators their goals and aspirations with regard to

this process". What is not clear now is at what point MOSOP and the facilitators started to part ways . But we do know that at a point MOSOP started to raise alarm alleging violations of terms of discussion first against Shell, ( whom they accused of taking provocative steps of unilaterally entering onto Ogoni territory to resume operations while the dialogue process was just getting underway. Then, the facilitator himself, Father Matthew Kukah was accused of sidelining MOSOP in the supposed process of dialogue and going to press to make equally provocative statements claiming that the process was going on and that progress was being made ( as an outcome of the talks) towards the return of Shell to Ogoni.

The Rev. Fr. Matthew Kukah led "reconciliation" project was doomed to fail . First, it took off from a wrong premise . From the Process paper I have seen and the various comments of the facilitator and the government, their position is that the Ogoni people and Shell are in dispute and the Nigerian government has come in to mediate . This position is a distortion of the case at issue. The true position is that the Ogoni people are in dispute with Shell and the Nigeria government . And the government being an active party to the case cannot preside over its own judgment. And looking at the draft document , which laid out the framework for the dialogue process, it is easy to detect that the framers of the document were up to some funny games with the Ogoni people. For instance, item 9 of the draft document states: " We agree to pursue reconciliation along three tracks simultaneously, all led by the PCIOR. First, by programs of sustainable community development, clean up of oil spills, and servicing of facilities, all only as agreed by the PCIOR".

An Ogoni leader who happened to chance upon one of the Port Harcourt Government House stage-managed so-called reconciliation meetings noted that through out the proceedings what he observed was a one-sided conversation where government officials ( the Kukah team) would just be talking , like telling the Ogoni representatives, or precisely those who had gone there to pose as the people's representatives , what they want to tell them . He alleged that no room was given for the people to ask questions. And that the only contribution of the Ogoni representatives was to simply thank their hosts, the government officials and leave the room. MOSOP President ,Ledum Mitee confirmed this allegation in one of his recent interviews when he said inter alia " We think that most times that you hear about dialogue , it is actually not dialogue. It is that someone wants to talk to you. And so, he calls you and says what he wants. He does not think that you have a say about what to do".( Vanguard, March 6, 2007 ). This is a monumental insult to the Ogoni in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. An insult we will NEVER tolerate.

MOSOP became palpably outraged by Rev. Fr. Kukah's misrepresentations and came out smoking, denouncing and disowning him. Things came to a head, and towards the end of last year MOSOP officially announced that it has pulled out of the talks. MOSOP withdrawal from the Ogoni/Shell/ Nigeria government reconciliation talks was reaffirmed by its President Ledum Mitee in his January 4, 2007 Ogoni Day Speech.

Meantime, Rev. Fr. Matthew Kukah seems unperturbed by MOSOP withdrawal and has chosen instead his own team of Ogoni representatives , made up of pro-Shell, pro-government Ogoni mercenary politicians and hat -in-hand chiefs who conspired with

Shell and the Nigeria government to murder Ken Saro Wiwa, the only credible Ogoni leader since the late Rt. Hon. Timothy Paul Birabi. Something is obviously wrong with Matthew Kukah and his ways here. He is behaving in a very suspicious manner. He cuts the image of an agent , an agent provocateur . Matthew Kukah (whom we have assumed to be an impartial arbiter) has gone out of his way to play the PR role for government as he repeatedly reminds the Ogoni people how much the Odili administration has done for them. Translation –they should reciprocate by playing ball in order not to be seen as ungrateful.

Matthew Kukah and his collaborators have engaged in a host of sinister plots against the Ogoni people in this renewed efforts to return Shell to Ogoni. They have induced the Ogoni Nine families in desperate attempts to compromise them. Towards the end of last year members of the Ogoni Nine families were invited to the Government House Port Harcourt where they were offered some cash amounts on top of promises of government contracts and employments in the Rivers State civil service. The plotters understand that the Ogoni Nine families are the symbol of the struggle and winning them over could do an incalculable blow to the movement .

Amorphous organizations are being revived and funded to counter the influence of MOSOP in Ogoni.

Then came the issue of environmental clean up. Rev. Fr. Kukah has pursued this issue with such ferocity that makes one wonders if he does not have an ulterior motive behind his dogged devotion. Naturally, MOSOP smelt rat and protested but Father Kukah would not look back. Kukah appears to be now crying more than the bereaved in the clean up issue. He is behaving as if he values a cleaned Ogoni environment more than MOSOP. Yet, it is an open secret that the fight for the clean up of the Ogoni environment has always been on the front burner of the MOSOP campaign.

MOSOP now suspects that Rev. Fr. Kukah is using the clean up issue as a ploy to return Shell to Ogoni.. And with good reason. In fact , investigations have revealed that Kukah was peeved by the decision of the out-going Obasanjo administration to revoke Shell operational license in Ogoni and he has been lobbying and has almost succeeded in convincing the government to rescind its decision. The question now is: What deal does Matthew Kukah has with Shell on the Ogoni issue ? And can this agent turned mediator be trusted anymore ?

Who told Matthew Kukah and his collaborating team that they can intimidate MOSOP with an inferior UN organ? How could they pretend not to know that the UN is MOSOP fortress? MOSOP should show Matthew Kukah and his team the way to the UN but not the other way around . Rev. Fr. Kukah , the agent turned peacemaker has shoved aside MOSOP and “moved” on. But where does his strange confidence lie?. Who is paying Matthew Kukah’s piper here?

On Ogoni Day, January 4, 2006 , Governor Peter Odili of Rivers State reminded the Ogoni people that the business of peace and reconciliation in Ogoni is so important that the government-appointed Facilitator , Rev. Fr., Matthew Kukah has abandoned his parish to concentrate on the assignment.

We have now seen the reason Matthew Kukah has abandoned his parish . He is now facilitating the return of Shell to Ogoni. He is on a very dangerous mission, the very unholy mission of returning the hangman to Ogoni. But truth is Shell's fate in Ogoni has been sealed with the blood of our martyrs . No mercenary within or outside of Ogoni, no traitorous hat-in-hand traditional ruler , no bread and butter politician or con man in activist garb, can return Shell to Ogoni. . Matthew Kukah will meet his doom in Ogoni. The Ogoni people are still bearing the visible strains of Shell's atrocities in our land, strains that will never go away . So also will our resolve to banish forever, the murderous oil giant from our ancestral land not waiver .

Of course, Matthew Kukah is well-informed that the Ogoni has since resolved not to let in Shell. The quit notice served the company in December 1992 and reaffirmed on January 4, 1993 is irrevocable. We are determined to resist the return of Shell with the last drop of our blood. The troops would be sent in and the Killing Field would resume. However, the remnants of the surviving Ogoni population will continue with the struggle. It is a lifetime commitment.

Obasanjo says he has no more time left to implement even the most model request of the Ogoni people but he feels that he has enough time to return Shell to Ogoni as one of his achievements as president. This is hypocritical –vintage Obasanjo.

Shame on you, Matthew Kukah, for daring to say that you are not afraid of dying for the Ogoni people. If Matthew Kukah want to die , he should go to Kaduna to die for his people there ; not for the Ogoni. Why on earth will this guy want to die for the Ogoni people. Ogoni people are not in short of heroes. We do not need a Matthew Kukah , to add. However, in life or in death Matthew Kukah will fail in his satanic mission of returning Shell to Ogoni. But if he insists on dying executing this mission he will have died in vain; even as his death may bring more money from Shell to his family. Shell may have insured his life, who knows?

Matthew Kukah has fatally misread the Ogoni situation in thinking that he could use the usual Shell/ Government collaborators to return Shell to Ogoni. However, I do know that MOSOP still commands an overwhelming support among the masses of the Ogoni people . And when the chips are down MOSOP's will shall be our command.

Coming to the Bori , the traditional head quarters of the Ogoni people to threaten the MOSOP President , Ledum Mitee, is one of the most foolish acts of a despicable character who is evidently dying morally and physically, the shame of a nation. He said this of the MOSOP President : "Everybody who has spoken has complained that you are now becoming a cog in the wheel of peace and progress in Ogoniland". (ThisDay, May 15, 2007 )Unknown to Obasanjo, his action in Bori that day has inadvertently boosted the leadership profile of the MOSOP President, Ledum Mitee. True Ogonis like me and Nine hundred thousand plus others know that he could not have been regarded as " becoming a cog in the wheel of peace and progress in Ogoni by standing on the side of the people to resist the return of Shell to our land. Real Ogoni people know too well that those Shell agents who labeled the MOSOP President a cog in the wheel of peace and progress are the enemies of our people , the agents of death. So is the return of Shell to Ogoni Obasanjo's idea of " peace and progress" in the area ? The spirit of Ogoni will continue to say no to Shell.

It is instructive to note that even the government-appointed speaker for the Ogoni people , a State Commissioner, Mr. Kenneth Kobani also demanded that Shell be stopped from returning to Ogoni? What lessons does Obasanjo learn from this? Why did Obasanjo think that he can intimidate the Ogoni people in his dying days? Does he think he can do in two weeks what he could not do in eight years.?.

The Ogoni people are on red alert. All we are asking is for the MOSOP leadership to be consistent, resilient and resolute in leading us into the incoming battle. And for Matthew Kukah , our blood on his head.

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