

# WHO KILLED MAGGIE ?



THIS MONUMENT IS IN MEMORY OF  
MARGARET KUWORINE  
WHO WAS SHOT DEAD IN A POLICE  
RAID ON SALT WINNERS AT  
BONIKOPEY, ADA  
ON FRIDAY 17th MAY 1986

Secretaries' Committee Ada Songor Co-operation

THE STORY  
of  
THE SONGOR LAGOON

# WHO KILLED MAGGIE?

PATIENCE LADEY ARLOH

## QUOTATION

Until we have rooted out the cheats, the parasites; until participatory democracy becomes a reality rather than a goal; until creativity, initiative, dignity, efficiency and compassion are the norm rather than the exception, until there is truth and social justice, the struggle continues.

*Flt Lt J.J. RAWLINGS*  
*SIXTH ANNIVERSARY, 4 JUNE*

**The story of the Songor Lagoon**

# **WHO KILLED MAGGIE?**

**Secretaries' Committee of  
Ada Songor Cooperation**

**Colophon**

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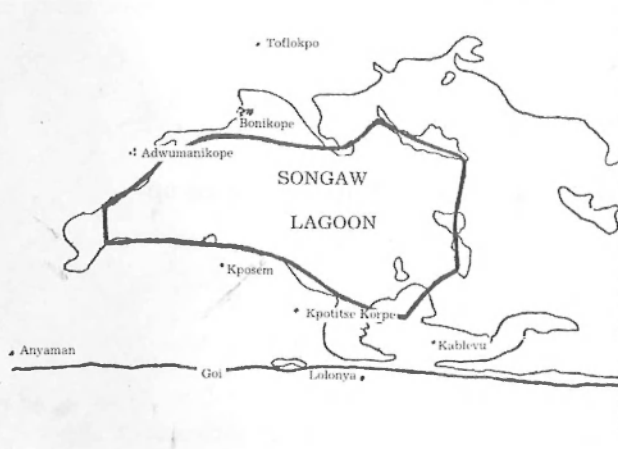
# NOTICE TO ALL PERSONS FISHING OR IN ANY OTHER WAY USING

## The Songaw Lagoon

We wish to bring to the knowledge of all inhabitants concerned around the Songaw Lagoon, that, as we have started operations inside the Lagoon, using its brine for the final Salt crystallisation, it is from now on FORBIDDEN TO FISHING or engage in any other occupation inside that portion of the Lagoon which has been enclosed by earthen embankment with laterite surface

This land has been leased to our company by the Ghana Government as per document No. LR 2010 /1974, Dated 24th July, 1974. All trespassers will be dealt with according to law. Here below we append a site Plan for your verification.

By Order  
The Managing Director  
Vacuum Salt Products Ltd.



# PREFACE

We have been brought up in a society in which oral tradition is the major source of information. Documentation is rare, we have heard misleading stories about events that occurred within our own society. As such it is quite difficult to perceive clearly how and why certain events that are rooted in the past occur at present. This book has been written to break this cycle.

The principal aim of the book is thus to enlighten the general public about the Songor Lagoon issue and to serve as a reference book for generations to come, especially for our own people, the Ada.

The book briefly discusses several issues and it deals primarily with the activities of the co-operative of salt miners\*. It is, however, hoped that it contains sufficient material to serve its purpose and to ginger other Ada writers to come out with more detailed information on the Songor Lagoon.

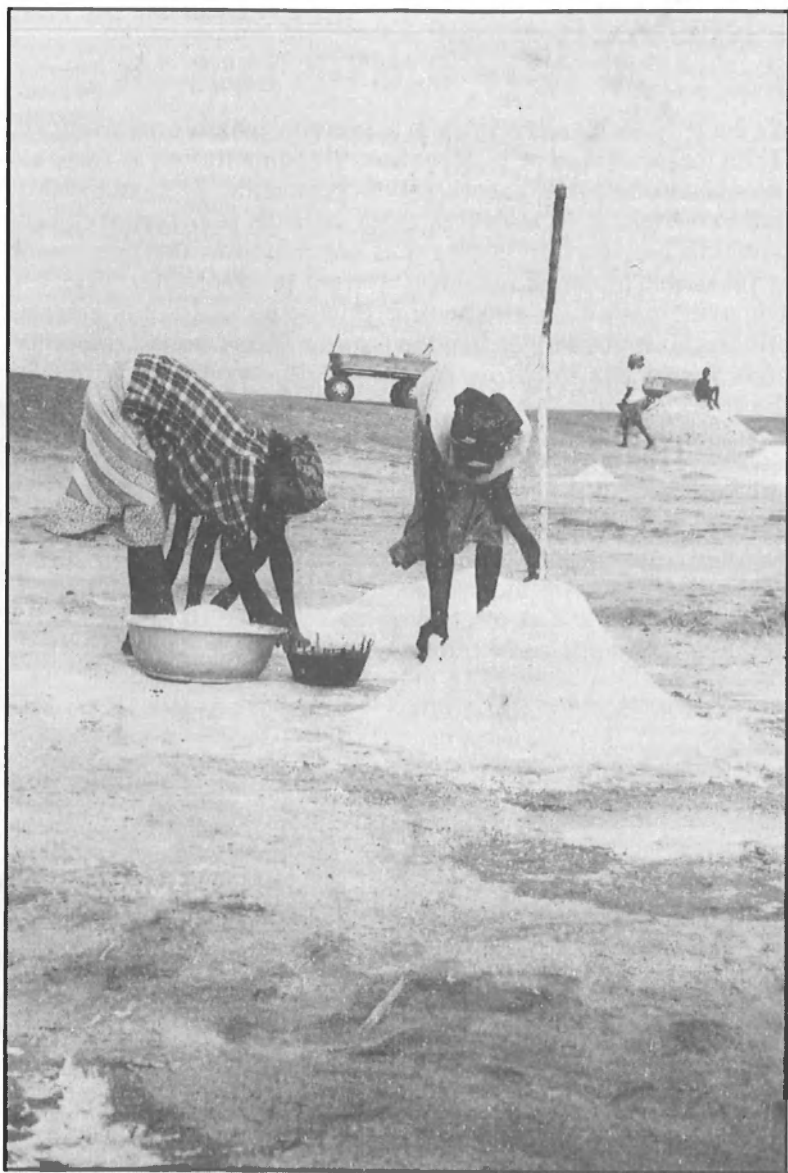
We shall welcome opinions and suggestions from all quarters.

We are most grateful to all who co-operated in diverse ways to make this work come out so well.

*SECRETARIES' COMMITTEE  
ADA SONGOR CO-OPERATIVE*

*\* The Songor-story is an ongoing story that shows its ups and downs. This will be clear from the 'Educational Assessment' at the end of the book, which is obviously from another source.*





## CHAPTER ONE

# THE UNPROVOKED ASSAULT, MISSION TO MURDER

Live ammunition. Rifles and truncheons. Policemen. All this was needed to carry out an unprovoked raid on a defenceless community. The result? An incredible number of brutally assaulted people and the cold-blooded murder of a young pregnant woman.

In our villages where reliance on the clock for work is rare, the dawn crowing of the cock signals the birth of a new day and the setting sun signifies the end of the same.

It was Friday morning, 17 May 1985. The communities around the Songor Lagoon were awake. Fervent preparations to win salt, our major means of living, were far advanced. The place of work is the lagoon where we, the Ada, have won salt for centuries. Rainfall in this area is irregular, hence farming, another economic activity, is unreliable.

That morning the sun was unusually hot, probably confirming the saying that 'coming events cast their shadows before them'. Our people trooped with their working implements - hoes, baskets, sacks, shovels, carts, pieces of wood and pans - into the lagoon. Some arrived there after having walked several kilometres barefooted in the hot sun. The actual work began. But the salt miners in the lagoon and also those staying behind in the villages were unaware of the danger that loomed ahead.

At Sege, a town five kilometres away from the lagoon, the police were preparing for an attack on them. A scouting party was sent in order to locate the actual places within the lagoon where our people were working. Having sighted them the party returned to base. After having received their final instructions, the policemen collected their ammunition, jumped into their vehicles and zoomed off in the direction of Bonikorpey sending

clouds of red laterite dust into the air. Everyone was startled. Goats, sheep, pigs and dogs took to their heels for dear life. This aggressive manner in which they approached the lagoon alarmed Maggie, a young pregnant woman residing at Kpotsum. She decided to rush to Bonikorpey to alert her mother and other relatives of the imminent danger. Not seeing her mother and frightened by the arrival of more policemen, she took shelter in a nearby house. The police quickly jumped out of their vehicles wielding their guns and truncheons.

Ezekiel Amanor, a member of our newly formed co-operative, on duty at the office, was quickly seized by the police, slapped several times in the face and hit on the head with a truncheon that left a deep gash from which blood flowed freely. When he attempted to defend himself, he was hit in the stomach with a rifle butt. He fell flat, looking helpless, groaning and with blood oozing from his mouth. He was then dragged on the ground and finally heaved into a waiting police van.

While this was going on, a section of the raiders went into action in the lagoon. A rather cunning approach was adopted in their attack. Behaving as if they came on a friendly mission, having hidden their guns and other ammunition in their vans, the policemen beckoned the large crowd working in the lagoon to come out. A small group of courageous persons, however, came out of the village and started to sing war songs, our usual practice to inform one another of impending danger.

The salt miners began to move further into the lagoon and challenged the policemen to follow, which some of them did. They soon discovered that it was not easy wading into the lagoon because the further they advanced the deeper they sank into the mud. They therefore had to retreat.

Just then, a reinforcement of policemen arrived in police vans and tipper trucks belonging to Vacuum Salt Products Limited, a salt-winning company operative in the area since 1971. The people back in the village, realising the precarious situation of the miners in the lagoon, mobilised to their rescue. This made the police focus all their attention on the village providing those in the lagoon with an opportunity to escape. The sun at this time was at its zenith leaving the temperature of the brine

extremely high. Running on the crystallised salt in the lagoon was hell. Some miners who drifted towards Okorngmleku, an island on the eastern part of the lagoon, discovered to their consternation that some of the raiders had also laid an ambush for them there.

Therefore they returned the way they had come, back into the hot brine. Some stumbled and fell and were trampled upon. Some with their feet seriously bruised by the sharp edges of the crystallised salt, hopped painfully. Hunger and thirst weakened those trapped in the hot lagoon. Our people were thus forced to give up for loss of energy. They were like the innocent lamb ready for the slaughterhouse. The police beat them up, shoved them into the waiting vans and carted them off to the offices of Vacuum Salt Products Limited. More people were arrested in the Bonikorpey village. There was heavy traffic: from Bonikorpey to Vacuum Salt site. The journey to the slaughterhouse was not comfortable either, as victims on board were mercilessly beaten. Other policemen busily engaged themselves in seizing our stockpiles of salt and the tools we use for work. People were shot in the legs. Others were vomiting blood as a result of the severe beatings they had received from the police.

Back in Bonikorpey, there was a fierce clash between the raiders and members of the community. Our people defended themselves by hurling stones and sticks at the policemen. In the process, some of the policemen took shelter behind a baobab tree while others fired warning shots. The worn-out troops were now reinforced by a fresh consignment of policemen who arrived in two patrol jeeps from Star Chemical Industry area - another salt-winning firm east of Bonikorpey. The group of courageous youth retired to a nearby pigsty where they waited patiently. One member, Jude Buer, went over to the police to arrange a truce. Then, suddenly, there was a loud explosion. A trigger had been pulled and a live bullet had been shot. The original target was missed but the bullet found other victims. It tore through the arm of a lady, Amakwor Anim, then grazed the stomach of Christiana Abbio, a pregnant woman. There was a loud scream. 'Ao!, A fiami tu!' (Ouch! I have been shot). The bullet finally penetrated the chest of another young pregnant

woman. She fell dead with blood gashing from her body. Her name was Margaret Kuwornu, known to her people as Maggie. The entire village was thrown into confusion and panic. There was wailing as our people swore to their ancestors. There was running in all directions for safety, but nowhere was safe. In the process of escaping from the village, some fell into pools of water whilst others got stuck in the mud. Some also fell and got trapped in cactus which tore their skins. Those who courageously went to report the day's incident to the police at Sege were rounded up and mercilessly manhandled. Having fully satisfied themselves with the day's raid, the raiders finally retired to the Vacuum Salt site leaving behind Maggie's dead body. When the dust finally settled, the village of Bonikorpey was virtually deserted.

The elders of Bonikorpey summoned an emergency meeting to discuss the day's raid and the action they should take. Klamor Nagadzi, the chairman of the village CDR, dispatched Jude Buer and Djangbletey Narh Tsatse to Accra to report the incident to the authorities. They first went to the Michel Camp at Tema where they reported to one W.O. Tetteh, who advised them to go back to Dawa Police Station and report the incident. Having second thoughts, the delegation found it unwise to report this fatal incident to the same police who were also involved in the raid. Instead they went to Gondar Barracks where they met officers who listened to their report sympathetically. After careful consideration the officers contacted the IGP (Inspector General of Police - Head of the Ghana Police Force) but had to advise the delegation to give up hope of seeing the IGP personally for fear of being locked up. The delegation therefore returned home weary and dejected.

On that very day Doris Ocansey, a lawyer, who later became the National Executive Secretary of the CDR, was at Ada-Foah. On hearing the news, she rushed to the village to ascertain the truth. After having met the elders of the community and members of the bereaved family, she left with the promise that Chairman Rawlings would come down.

At about 10 p.m. on that fateful day, the Chairman and his

entourage arrived at Dawa Police Station, where he ordered the immediate release of those arrested and locked up in the cells. He then continued to Ada-Foah where he met the District Secretary, Mr James Ayiku Nartey. From there the Chairman moved towards Bonikorpey. Frightened by the sound of the approaching engines and the sight of lights some of the villagers sneaked into the nearby bushes and watched the trucks of the Head of State approach the village. Those watching over the corpse pretended that they were asleep. When the Chairman arrived, it was midnight. After formal customary greetings, Chairman Rawlings requested to see the body. A libation was poured by Dotcher Asamani after which the corpse was uncovered.

After having observed some minutes of silence, the Chairman promised that he would do all in his power to resolve the Songor issue once and for all. The Chairman finally left for Accra with the corpse. Some members of the bereaved family accompanied them.

On Thursday, 23rd May, policemen came to Koluedor to clear the cemetery and after having erected a canopy in the house of the deceased's family, they returned to their stations.

On Friday, 24th May, a week after the fatal incident, both Maggie and her unborn child were brought to Koluedor in an ambulance. Some policemen accompanied the corpses. Two coffins provided by the government were brought for both mother and child. The wake was attended by many. The District Secretary was also there. During the wake, the unborn child was buried quietly.

On Saturday morning, more policemen arrived. But it was around 10 a.m., when the family was becoming impatient and was ready to take the corpse to the cemetery, that the IGP, Mr S.S. Omane, arrived. He was accompanied by Mr Asiedu and Mr Adi, the Regional and District Police Commissioners respectively.

Maggie's body, already in the coffin, was then brought out and put on a stand in the compound. Around her were the chief mourners and sympathisers. Her life history was read by a member of the family. When Mr S.S. Omane was invited to give

a speech, he said that it was rather painful that Maggie died through the hands of the police. He prayed that the family would forgive the police. A special prayer was said by Pastor Kofi Afloe of the Pentecostal Church. After that the corpse was carried by the policemen to the cemetery while people were wailing. Dirges were sang and wreaths were laid on the grave. Back at the family house, the amount of ten thousand cedis, a carton of beer and two bottles of schnapps provided by the government through the police were given to the deceased's family.

Later in the day, the lawyer Doris Aklerh Ocansey, then de facto counsel for the co-operative led by Miss Kate Akrofi, one of the organisers of the co-operative, arrived to sympathise with the family. After exchanging formal greetings, she briefly met the IGP and his entourage.

We cannot recall any burial at Ada at which the IGP was present. And his presence at this particular funeral would have been welcomed except that it heightened the repressed anger and frustration of our people because of the deprivations being supported by the police force. This is especially so when it is realised that the fatal bullet that tore away life from Maggie came from the police. In future the Ada people would rather be spared the presence of high dignitaries such as the IGP at their functions if it should be for a reason like this.

## CHAPTER TWO

# THE HISTORY OF THE SONGOR AND MAGGIE'S PEOPLE

The Songor (sometimes spelt Songaw or Songhor), covering an area of about 37 square miles (94.7 square kilometres), is the second largest lagoon in Ghana. It lies 77 km east of Accra and about 7 km west of the Volta estuary in the Ada District. It is less than one km from the sea at Lolonya where one of the many inlets allows the inflow of seawater at high tide.

Scattered on the lands around the lagoon are 35 to 40 villages and hamlets. These have a total population of about 17,000. Our major occupation is the winning of salt. However, fishing and farming are also practised.

Preceding every season's salt winning an ancient custom was practised in the lagoon until 1970. This customary practice is vividly described by D. Weaver in his book 'Kete-Krachi in the Nineteenth Century'. We quote: 'The processing of salt at Ada was -and still is- a guarded matter: presided over by the fetish priest there and bound up in traditional religion and ritual'. The following is a description given by a British District Commissioner, Le Lievre, in Ada in 1922: 'When the lagoon is observed to be showing signs that salt will be available in the coming season ... the fact is reported to the fetish priest of the Tekper-biaweh tribe who is concerned with the lagoon fetish called Libi. At the priest's orders sticks are then placed in semi-circle across all the paths that lead to the lagoon and it then becomes a serious offence to go to the lagoon at all. At this time as well as at the later stages watchmen are stationed at various points to see that the fetish regulations are not broken. The lagoon is a taboo throughout the dry season, about three months, or until the rains come, by which time a layer of salt has formed by evaporation. Gong-gong is then beaten and after the fetish ceremonies have been concluded and the sticks removed anyone





*Saltminers at work*

may go and collect as much salt as he wishes: after collection each man places his heap of salt at the edge of the lagoon where he is taxed by the representatives of the fetish priest before being allowed to take it away: ... when collected, it is stored, after years before being exported up the river'.

A definitive consumer preference developed in the interior for Ada salt as opposed to other salts. The *Tarikh Gonja*, an Arabic manuscript dating from 1884, makes references to the Ada salt. 'All the people bought (Dabayo) salt except the people of Asante who do not like it, and prefer the salt of Idasababude (Ada and Labadi) which is expensive.' Paul Hulter, a Swiss trader involved in the Ada salt trade in the early 1880's and later retiring at Kete-Krachi, observed that: 'The salt the French sell is very clean and the Ada salt rather dirty but, funny to say, the natives in the hinterland prefer Ada salt to all other kinds, saying it is the sweetest'. And Le Lievre was in accord: '... I hear on the best authority that the natives of the Northern Territories and elsewhere have so decided a preference for Ada salt that they will always buy it whenever it can be obtained at anything like a competitive price with the import article'.

As the salt collection progressed, representatives of the traditional custodians went round to collect levies from the salt winners. Some of the revenues obtained from such levies went to the local authorities for building schools and for the provision of social amenities.

The origin of this method of management of the Songor according to history could be traced to the discovery of the Libi goddess courteously called Yomo, a Dangme word meaning 'old lady'. It was alleged that Libi disclosed herself to Korley, a renowned hunter of the Tekperbiaweh clan as the owner of the lagoon and then outlined in clear and precise terms the taboos associated with the lagoon. She identified an eastern portion of the lagoon, now called Yomo (named after her), as her abode.

Tradition has it that Korley, on one of his hunting expeditions, went as far as Wokumagbe, a Dangme word meaning 'plain of male buffaloes'. Here he shot and wounded one of these animals. Korley followed the blood-stained marks of the wounded animal until he found himself in the heart of Sege forest, now

destroyed. He found an old lady dressed in royal regalia attended by a host of priestesses. She was flanked by her principal priestesses Darley and Animo. Scared by what he saw Korley wanted to return. But the old lady called him back and interviewed him extensively on his background. She also revealed to him that she was the animal he had shot and wounded and that she was the Libi goddess who has exclusive possession of the lagoon.

It is believed that the word 'Okor', the traditional name of the Ada, was coined from what Korley said in Dangme: 'I ma ye o kor no', meaning 'I shall observe your taboos'. This was Korley's reply when he was enjoined by Libi that he and his descendants should have nothing to do with gold, called 'ayawa' in Dangme. The treasures hidden in the Songor Lagoon -salt and gold- were then revealed to Korley. He was warned not to touch the gold under the lagoon but was given salt-winning and fishing rights. She told Korley of the special customary ceremony which must always be performed before salt was allowed to be won.

Charles M.K. Mamattah has this to say in his research publication, 'The Ewe of West Africa' (Volume 1, 1976): 'The old lady told Korley that she owned the Songor salt lagoon. She asked Korley if he could faithfully observe the taboos and preclusions of the use of that lagoon. If he could be faithful to his oath of fidelity and loyalty to her she shall turn over ownership of the whole Songor Lagoon to him'.

'You must now know that having beheld me with your naked eyes, you have met with a creature from the spirit world. You and your children must leave your present settlement and come to settle here with me, here in this sacred forest'.

The present-day Ada, according to Mamattah, Rev. Carl Christian Reindorf and oral tradition, are one of the seven Dangme tribes in Ghana namely: Ada, Ningo, Prampram, Kpone, Shai, Osudoku and Krobo (Manya and Yilo). It is worth noting that there is one Dangme tribe known as the Adangme, settling at Agortime Afegame near Kpetoe in Ghana, and Agortsum and Ewe land in Togo near Tsieve.

Today, the Ada settling at the western side of the Volta estuary

with Big Ada as their traditional home, consist of ten clans, namely:

The four Ada-Dangme divisions (also known exclusively as the 'Okor' clans and who are the first citizens of the Ada state), namely:

Adibiaweh

Tekperbiaweh (the custodians of the Songor Lagoon and its salt fetish Nana Libi)

Lomobiaweh and

Dangmebiaweh.

The three Ada-Akan divisions, viz.:

Kabubiawetsu (from Kumasi-Bantama)

Kabubiaweyumu (war refugees from Ashanti-Akim and Akwapim) and

Kpono (war refugees from Denkyira near Ashanti).

The three Ada-Ewe divisions, viz.:

Kudzragbe (from Agave in Torgu)

Ohuwem (from Kenyi, Tefle and Sokpe) and

Korgbor (from Kpele in Togo through Battor in Torgu).

It should be noted that the Ada-Akan and Ada-Ewe divisions merged with the Ada-Dangme divisions after the latter had discovered the Songor Lagoon and had settled at Okorhuem (a word invented from the Dangme word 'korhue', meaning 'forest of taboos'), in the southern part of the lagoon between Anyamam and Goi.

Older traditions trace the Dangme to the Nile Valley area in Egypt. This can be supported by the existence of some traits common to the Dangme and the Egyptians, for example regalia such as the staff, the rod and the sword; and utensils such as drinking vessels and chalices. Oppression from hostile rulers, internal frictions, harassment and molestation by invaders forced the Dangme to migrate from place to place, running from Egypt, through Sudan and Chad until they mixed with the Yoruba of Nigeria at Ile-Ife, Oyo and Abeokuta.

In Dahomey, now Benin, the Dangme merged with the Ewe from Ketu. The Dangme later travelled with the Ewe to Ngortsi in Togo where they came under the rule of King Agorkorli - a dictator. Due to the very warlike, furious and brave nature of

the Dangme, the king nicknamed them 'Adaworlawo'. Through oral tradition the present name of the Dangme group, 'Ada' has been coined from this nickname. Because of the dictatorial rule imposed by the king on the Dangme and the Ewe, there was widespread rebellion. As a result, another wave of migration took place. Some of the Dangme settled at Agortime-Afagame near Ho and Agortsum near Tsieve in Togo where they stayed till today, while the others entered Ghana in small groups either by land or by sea.

Whilst some Dangme groups went by sea, the four Ada-Dangme divisions led by their priest-king Adi, the Krobo led by their priest-king Many, the Osudoku and the Shai travelled together by land into present-day Ghana. They crossed the Volta at various points around Akrade and Fodzoku landing at Akuse, Dofor, Asuchware and Vume, to mention a few.

At the Latreku crossing, one Tsiatey Avagbe, thought to possess mysterious powers, changed into an enormous crocodile and spread across the Volta enabling the Dangmebiaweh led by Okumo and some other Ada-Dangme divisions to cross the Volta. On his death, Tsiatey Avagbe was deified and is worshipped as the great crocodile called Ablao, a goddess worshipped specifically by the Dangmebiaweh division up to this day.

The land travellers converged at a place called Tagologo near Akuse after crossing the Volta. A misunderstanding arose which led to the breaking-up of the group. The Osudoku left for the Osudoku hills: the Krobo and the Shai for the Shai hills leaving the Ada alone on the plains at Lorlorvor (an Ewe word meaning literally 'love is finished') near the Shai hills.

While at Lorlorvor these four Ada-Dangme divisions shared responsibilities, each holding a title or role invested in the respective divisional leaders as follows:

1. the Adibiaweh were given the 'Matse' (chief) title held by Adi-kono;
2. the Tekperbiaweh were given the 'Maklalo' (regent) title held by Korley;
3. the Lomobiaweh, the 'Asafoatse' (war leader) title held by Lomowier;
4. the Dangmebiaweh, the 'Otsiameh' (linguist) title held by

Okumo.

The Ada at Lorlorvor saw no peace as a result of constant and unbearable raids launched on them by the contentious and belligerent Akan. They had no alternative but to migrate. A survey team of famed hunters was sent out to look for a place to settle. With the exception of the Adibiaweh who gave out two hunters -Adi and Buertey Kpakpaku- the other three clans gave out one each: Korley, Lomovier and Okumo from the Tekperbiaweh, Lomobiaweh and Dangmebiaweh respectively.

The team moved en bloc southwards and arrived along the fringes of Sege forest. It is alleged that on reaching Sege forest Korley, who was believed to be endowed with supernatural powers, changed into an eagle and 'climbed' a tall tree. Surveying the land beyond he saw a white sheet of land, now known as the Songor Lagoon, which the five hunters traced. They discovered, after having tasted the substance, that it contained alluvial salt.

The team surveyed the lagoon, with Adi, Buertey and Lomo taking the northern side which took them as far as Togbloku, while Korley and Okumo took the south and came across Okor forest, locally called Okorhue, along the coast.

Back at Lorlorvor, Korley broke the good news of the discovery of the lagoon to the Ada. The Ada moved en masse to Sege forest where they established their permanent settlement at Okorhuem. The Tekperbiaweh division of the Ada (of which Korley was a member) has ever since been considered the custodians of the Songor Lagoon.

Upon finally settling in the forest, Nene Adi, the priest-king, proceeded to apportion the lands around the Songor Lagoon to the four Okor clans in accordance with the movements of the hunters. The Adibiaweh and Lomobiaweh were given the lands on the northern side of the lagoon with the Adibiaweh taking the portion from Agbanaka valley near Matsekope to the Yomo Creek between Togbloku and Lufenya. The Lomobiaweh were allotted the lands from the Ada- Ningo boundary on the west of the lagoon up to the Agbanaka valley. Tekperbiaweh and Dangmebiaweh were given the southern side of the lagoon with the Tekperbiaweh accepting the area from the Sakanya

Creek, west of Anyamam to a place identified by seven (now six) date palms called Songutsokpa.

The Dangmebiaweh were given the land from Songutsokpa to Azizanya at the Volta estuary. The Songor Lagoon became the common boundary.

As was mentioned above, the goddess of the lagoon revealed certain secrets to Korley, the hunter of the Tekperbiaweh clan. On the promise of Korley to the goddess to obey her instructions, he and his people became the custodians of the lagoon.



*The salt is being bagged*



## CHAPTER THREE

### THE THIEVES ARRIVE

In the 18th century the Songor salt developed into a lucrative trade commodity across the Sahara Desert to markets in North Africa. It was used in exchange for slaves and consumer goods. This aroused the interest of the natives of the middle belt (Ashanti) and the northern territories of Ghana.

As a result of this external interest in the Songor Lagoon, the people of Ada, for a long time, had to heroically defend the lagoon in numerous tribal wars. Two of such wars fought over the Songor Lagoon in the last century were the Kantamanso war of 1826 and the Battle of Dodowa of 1866. These were battles fought between our people - the Adangme supported by the Ga and Ewe (coastal tribes) on one side against Ashanti invaders on the other. The Ashanti were ignominiously routed and driven away. Up to this day we, the Ada, celebrate these victories in our traditional annual festival, the Asafotufiami festival.

As the times changed, the interest in the Songor Lagoon attained political dimensions. The First Republic of Ghana under the Convention People's Party expressed interest in the Songor Lagoon in 1963. The then government wanted to establish a salt industry near the lagoon and sought to acquire the whole of the lagoon by a request to the Ada Traditional Council through the District Commissioner. The Council turned down the government request giving as reason the dependence of the people on the lagoon and the untold hardship that would befall them if the lagoon should be taken away from them. The Convention People's Party government was soon overthrown in a military coup d'état, hence their request came to nothing.

During the Second Republic of Ghana (1969-1972), promoters of a private company, Vacuum Salt Products Limited, led by its Managing Director, Mr Samuel Christian Appenteng, approached Nene Korley II, head of the Tekperbiaweh clan in the

Ada Traditional Area in 1970, and put forward proposals for a lease of a parcel of land adjoining the lagoon to make salt. After careful consideration of the request and the terms of the promoters' proposals, Nene Korley II stoutly refused to sanction the lease, believing that such a grant could not be in the interest of his people.

Mr Samuel Christian Appenteng is a wealthy Akan merchant who had become particularly interested in the salt trade in Ghana. He wanted to do everything possible to make his company the largest salt company in Ghana, if not to monopolise the salt trade completely.

Dr Kofi Abrefa Busia, Prime Minister of the Second Republic of Ghana, and General A.A. Afrifa, who handed over power to Busia, were his close friends. He is the Grand Master of the Freemason Lodge of Ghana of which his functionaries in the acquisition of the lagoon, Mr Emmanuel K. Narter-Olaga and Mr C.O.C. Amattey, are also members.

Incidentally, Mr Appenteng's lodge brother Mr Narter-Olaga happened to be the Member of Parliament for the Ada constituency during the Second Republic of Ghana.

When the Busia regime passed the Aliens Compliance Order in 1970 compelling foreigners engaged in certain categories of business to sell them out and leave the country, Mr Appenteng bought a number of them. His wealth thus increased enormously. His fortune included the Panbros Salt Industries Limited and Vacuum Salt Products Limited which were formerly owned by a Greek called Alexis Panagiotopoulos.

Clearly, Mr S.C. Appenteng is a man with enormous economic power wielding tremendous political influence. Panbros Salt Industries firmly in his grip, coupled with his desire to monopolise the salt trade in Ghana, the potentials of the Songor Lagoon whetted his appetite and he was prepared to go to any length to acquire it, even at the cost of human life.

Vacuum Salt Products Limited employed Emmanuel Kabutey Narter-Olaga for legal advice, and later he became a shareholder in the company. According to Mr Narter-Olaga, Mr C.O.C. Amattey, Secretary to the Tekperbiaweh clan, was also added to the company's payroll.

As Nene Korley II refused to sanction the request of the company, no other person could grant the lease. Behind the scenes, an unlawful deposition of Nene Korley II was organised and C.O.C. Amattey quickly got himself in place as the chief and head of the Tekperbiaweh clan. Mr Narter-Olaga surfaced as the solicitor for the Ada Traditional Council in the negotiations for the lease of the lagoon to Vacuum Salt Products Limited in 1971.

All was then set for the lease to be hurriedly pushed through. Mr Narter-Olaga, the lawyer, prepared the lease and Mr C.O.C. Amattey had it executed. The chiefs and elders of the Ada Traditional Council, whose consent and concurrence were necessary for the lease, were lured with false promises and representation into putting their thumb prints on the lease documents.

In December 1970, when the company applied for the lease of the Songor Lagoon, its Managing Director proposed to create and introduce into the area many amenities such as pipe-borne water and electricity, and to develop and open up the closed port of Ada. The good old days, when Ada boomed and gained much popularity, would be revived. These were described as only 'a few of the benefits' which the people of Ada would enjoy from the operations of the company.

The 1971 lease between C.O.C. Amattey and his supporters and Vacuum Salt Products Limited sought to provide the latter with the entire span of the Songor Lagoon and the adjoining lands, measuring 26 square miles, for a period of seventy-five (75) years. In return for these grants our people, the Ada, had a customary drink of a case of schnapps and a piece of 'calico'.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **THE PEOPLE RESIST - LEGAL RESISTANCE**

Soon after the lease between Vacuum Salt Products Limited and the Ada Traditional Council had been signed, Mr C.O.C. Amathey started championing the cause of the company to evacuate the people in the villages located within the lease area, including Lolonya at the lagoon inlet, and to resettle them elsewhere to enable the company to have exclusive rights to the area. Consequently the people resisted. Mr Amathey reacted by suing about 13 elders of the Lolonya community in court. Mr S.N. Abayataye, then a young lawyer and a native, came to the defence of the people and won their case against the evacuation exercise.

On 13 January 1972 there was a military coup d'état toppling the Progress Party government of Dr K.A. Busia and bringing to power Colonel I.K. Acheampong and the National Redemption Council. This change in the government brought about a change in the direction of the Songor Lagoon affairs. Nene Korley II filed an appeal in court against his deposition and won. He immediately started moves to have the lease granted to Vacuum Salt Products Limited annulled, insisting that the terms of the lease were inimical to the interest of the people. At about the same time, Mr Abayataye, the lawyer, started his own organisation to forcibly drive away Vacuum Salt Products Limited from the Songor area. Mr Abayataye's contention was that the site adjoining the Songor Lagoon where Vacuum Salt Products Limited proposed to construct its salt pans, was land belonging to the Lomobiaweh divisional seat of the Ada Traditional Area. Being a member of that clan, he organised his clansmen for the action he intended to take. He went on to organise and include concerned citizens from Goi, Lolonya, Anyamam, Nakomkorpey and Koluedor, but excluding people

from Adjumanikorpey, whose clan is of Akan origin (Kabubia-weh) whom he classified as traditional allies of Mr S.C. Appenteng.

In his organisational exercise, Mr Abayateye realised that some of his people had mixed feelings about his mission; they thought the presence of the company would bring them electricity, pipe-borne water, schools and other social amenities that they were promised when the lease was being negotiated with the company. He therefore thought it expedient to find other companies with Ada origin that would replace Vacuum Salt Products Limited. He had Tsohi Chemicals and Star Chemicals Limited to consider. He chose Star Chemicals Limited. Tsohi Chemicals Limited was a company incorporated to make salt. Its major shareholder was one Mr Andrew Pupilampu, a former Member of Parliament for the Ada constituency in the First Republic of Ghana, and at the same time the Minister for Lands and Mineral Resources. Star Chemicals, owned by one Mr W.G. Nartey, a wealthy Dangme businessman, was also incorporated to make salt. Mr Narh Abayateye solicited Mr Nartey's support to drive away Vacuum Salt Products Limited from the site. At a meeting with Mr Nartey and some elders and chiefs of the Ada community, it was proposed that the Ada should be shareholders in Star Chemicals Limited and that the Ada Traditional Area should hold one-third of the capital investment of the company. Mr Abayateye had this to say about his operation: 'After my meeting with Mr Nartey and some of the Ada elders, I took everybody's word in good faith and swore to certain oaths of secrecy and loyalty. The stage was met. Mr Nartey released two water tankers and two tipper trucks to fetch water to feed the people on the 'battlefield', and to lift them. I was the mastermind of the operation to provide food for the people. Our mission was to stop the work being done by the company and to make all entries to the premises inaccessible. I arranged and lifted all the people from Lolonya, Goi, Anyamam, Nakomkorpey and Ada-Foah, starting about 11.20 p.m. and ending at 1.30 a.m. After feeding the people for the operation that night, all entry points to the working site of the company were blocked and trenches were dug to prevent any entry or exit. I proceeded

together with four other members of our party to the company site to instruct the workers on night duty to leave the site. They refused. However, with our people surrounding them, they would have starved to submission if the police had not intervened to disorganise the whole operation. Information about our action later got to the Regional Commissioner, Colonel Nyanteh, and he set up a Committee of Inquiry to look into the matter. No report ever came out. Nevertheless, soldiers were brought in to guard the premises of Vacuum Salt Products Limited and the work was resumed'.

Eventually, things came to such a pass that the principal champion (on the Tekperbiaweh side) of Vacuum Salt Products Limited, Mr C.O.C. Amattey, who, if anybody could be presumed to know what was contained in the lease, felt it necessary to sue Vacuum Salt Products Limited for exercising powers in the area that had never been intended to be conferred on the company by their lease.

It will be recalled that Mr C.O.C. Amattey initially led the granting of the lease of the entire span of the lagoon, supposed to cover an area of about 26 square miles, to Vacuum Salt Products Limited. Mr Amattey later realised that the entire span of the lagoon covered an area of 37 square miles and not 26 square miles, the figure submitted by the surveyors of Vacuum Salt Products Limited. It then became clear to him that he had been duped by the company so far as payments of rent on the lagoon area leased was concerned as there was an undervaluation of about 11 square miles. Mr Amattey immediately took court action against Vacuum Salt Products Limited. Whilst the case was pending in court, Mr Amattey was taken into preventive custody under Executive Instrument 11 of 31st January 1974.

Meanwhile, Nene Korley II had been reinstated as head of the Tekperbiaweh clan. In order to show that he did not recognise the lease granted to Vacuum Salt Products Limited, he started negotiations to grant a portion of the Songor Lagoon to Star Chemicals Limited. This other lease, covering an area of 11 square miles of the lagoon, was signed between Star Chemicals and the Ada Traditional Council in 1972.

In the aftermath the two companies started demarcating what they considered their leased areas - resulting in hostility between them. The conflict ended up in the killing of a watchman of Vacuum Salt Products Limited during a battle between the companies. The government of Colonel I.K. Acheampong stepped in to solve the issue by the compulsory acquisition of the entire Songor Lagoon through Executive Instrument 30, passed on 18th March 1974, in the name of the National Redemption Council.

Then in July 1974, with Mr C.O.C. Amattey still in custody, the government of the National Redemption Council granted a lease of a portion of the lagoon and its adjacent lands covering an area of about 12,000 acres to Vacuum Salt Products Limited. Of course, it may have been pure coincidence that Mr Amattey's was detained as soon as he challenged Vacuum Salt's claim and that, while he was in custody, steps were taken to make sure that Vacuum Salt would be able to exercise the rights it claimed. All this while the interests of the people in the villages bordering the lagoon, whose subsistence depends on the lagoon, were not considered. In government circles, our people apparently did not exist and, even if they existed, they could easily be stamped down into submission with all the cohesive force at the disposal of those in power at the time.

The principal representatives of the Ada Traditional Council, the lessors in the lease between the companies and the council, particularly the illiterates who constituted the majority, declared themselves amazed at the rights being claimed by the two companies. While Mr Amattey was in custody, the lessors -now led by Asafoatsengwa Otu Anim and the Libi priest- presented to the National Redemption Council government, a petition through counsel for the revocation of the government acquisition. The apparent response to the petition under reference was an amendment to the acquisition by Executive Instrument 57 passed in 1975. This amendment excluded about 9,000 acres from the acquisition. The excluded portion of the lagoon is called the Yomo at the eastern part of the main lagoon. It is believed to be the abode of the Libi goddess and as such a

sacred place and a spiritual centre in respect of the Songor Lagoon. The winning of salt in this area is governed by certain taboos and strict compliance with the performance of certain rituals. Among these taboos are the following:

1. a salt miner is not allowed to wear gold ornaments in the Yomo;
2. female salt miners in their menstrual period are not allowed entry into the Yomo;
3. the use of red calico is not allowed;
4. in any salt-winning season that salt crystallises in the Yomo, the salt winning is limited to three days only. For that year, the salt winning is limited to only those persons who have not won salt from any other part of the lagoon.

It is the popular belief in the area that anybody who contravened these taboos would have his house demolished by the goddess. Perhaps it was for the sake of these religious rites for which there is strict cultural adherence among the people of the area, that the government excluded the Yomo from the acquisition.

Shortly after this amendment Star Chemicals Limited also managed to get the National Redemption Council government to lease a portion of the lagoon covering an area of about 8,000 acres to it. By this time, all the 'agitators' on the Ada side against the lease were silenced. They bided their time till January 1979, when they sent another petition to the Supreme Military Council government praying for the revocation of Executive Instrument 30 of 1974. This was after a change had occurred in the leadership structure of the government. Unfortunately, there was no response from the Supreme Military Council and that government was overthrown in June 1979, bringing into power the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC). Upon this petition, the AFRC is reported to have recorded a decision taken three days before it left office. This decision granted the prayer of the petition and directed the steps to be taken to execute the decision. However, this decision was not executed by the AFRC before it left office.

Whilst the AFRC government was in office there was a vigorous election campaign all over the country towards the Third Repu-



blic of Ghana. In the Ada constituency, the Songor Lagoon featured prominently in the political campaign of the People's National Party (PNP). The PNP candidate for the Ada constituency, Mrs Eunice Ametor-Williams, declared at a mass rally in Ada that, if she was voted into office, she would do everything within her power to restore the Songor Lagoon to the people of Ada. When the ballot papers were finally counted, she won massively. Her party, the PNP, also won the national elections and assumed office in September 1979. Shortly hereafter the people of Ada renewed their petition.

In 1981, about half way through the term of office of the PNP government, all political parties started making preparations to run for office. The Member of Parliament for the Ada constituency, Mrs Ametor-Williams, realising that her party would stand no chance in Ada for a second term of office if nothing was done about her promises concerning the Songor Lagoon during her previous election campaign, took the matter up to her government. The Songor issue was raised in parliament. After the parliamentary deliberations, it was decided that the Songor Lagoon be restored to the people of Ada. To effectuate this it was necessary that the government acquisition through Executive Instrument 30 of 1974 be revoked and the leases granted to the companies abrogated.

At a meeting at the Greater Accra Regional Administration in 1981, attended by representatives of Vacuum Salt Products Limited, Star Chemical Industries Limited, the Ada Traditional Council and the Ada Development Association, the decision of the government was made known to all parties interested in the Songor Lagoon issue.

In the execution of the decision of the government, Executive Instrument 10 of 1981 was passed abrogating the leases granted to the companies in 1975 through Executive Instrument 57. The government acquisition through Executive Instrument 30 of 1974 was, however, not revoked. Why this was not done by the PNP government remains a question for speculation. It is the opinion of close political observers that there was an underlying conflict of interest - the interest of the people of Ada against the interest of some PNP politicians who were believed to be

interested in the salt industry themselves. Immediately after Executive Instrument 10 of 1981 was passed, Vacuum Salt Products Limited took the PNP government to court. While the case was pending in court, there was another military coup d'etat in the country on 31st December 1981 bringing the PNDC (Provisional National Defence Council) government of Flight Lieutenant J.J. Rawlings into power. After the coup Vacuum Salt Products Limited took the Executive Instrument 10 of 1981, which was not enforced, for granted and therefore continued to exercise its rights over the lagoon.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### **THE PEOPLE RESIST - CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE**

The PNDC government of people's power was based on the formation of the People's Defence and Workers Defence Committees (PDCs and WDCs) later changed to Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (CDRs). These committees were formed in all communities and work places throughout the country. Among other things, the operations of the CDRs were to be guided within the framework of the following principles of the State policy of the Provisional National Defence Council government:

1. eradication of all forms of exploitation and abuse of power;
2. organisation of the various communities to set their own developmental goals to be financed principally from local resources.

For over a decade the Ada had seen no peace as a result of the leases granted to the two companies. Salt winning by the Ada was prevented by the companies. Between March and September 1982, the molestation and harassment of traditional salt miners by the management of Vacuum Salt Products Limited accompanied by military personnel was renewed with extra determination. So far as the companies were concerned, they owned a large portion of the Lagoon and its adjoining lands on which some of the villages stood. And, for that matter, anybody found with salt within that area was regarded as a trespasser and a thief. The fate of the unfortunate ones who were arrested was pathetic. Some of those arrested were given salt to chew and brine to drink. Some were subjected to dehumanising drilling and were detained in military guard rooms in Burma Camp for weeks without charges being brought against them. As a result some of the victims suffered from various ailments - hypertension, stomach ulcers, miscarriages, as later

medical reports revealed. Several mounds of salt belonging to the villagers were seized and brought to the premises of Vacuum Salt Products Limited by the workers of the company, under close supervision of soldiers. What they could not take immediately, was destroyed with mud and sand. The salt that was preserved in the traditional way, by means of thatch, was set on fire. The atrocities were reported to the police and a team of criminal investigators from Tema came to verify the reports made.

Regardless of the police investigations Vacuum Salt Products Limited, accompanied by military personnel, launched unprovoked aggressive raids intermittently at Kasseh Market, the largest market in the Dangme District, about 5 kilometres from the nearest point to the lagoon. The contention of the raiders was that the people of Ada did not have salt and that salt found in the market was stolen from their concessions.

An eyewitness to some of these raids, Mr Albert Apetorgbor, the then PDC chairman of the Kasseh unit, gives his account as follows: 'These raids on the Kasseh market took place on three different occasions: May 21st, May 28th and June 4th, 1982. The first raid was led by one Lieutenant Ewuah and the subsequent ones were led by one W.O.II Sackey, and on all occasions, Mr Stephen Appenteng (son of Christian Samuel Appenteng) from the Vacuum Salt Products Limited was in their company. They collected both bagged and unbagged mounds of salt at the outskirts of the market and later broke into the salt warehouse of the Dangme District Council in the market where individual salt traders stored their salt. Altogether, they collected and carried away about 6,000 bags of salt'.

Some of the salt owners too were arrested, beaten up and sent to Accra on the military vehicles that were brought. Later interviews with some of the victims, for example Wortey Appiah, the leader of the salt sellers, revealed that in a military guard room in Accra his palm was stamped with a hot electric pressing iron. Another victim, an old lady of about 80 years, Amaku Sewu, was dragged out naked from her room at Kasseh at about 10.00 p.m. Later she was clothed by her children and was taken by the raiders to Burma Camp in Accra.

During the first raid on 21st May 1982, Mr Apetorgbor confronted Mr Stephen Appenteng and challenged him on the legitimacy of their exercise only to be snobbed and Mr Appenteng, moving away, stretched his right arm and, beating his chest with the other arm, declared that he held the destiny of the Ada in his palm like an egg and could crush it at will. He went further to boast that even university graduates of Ada would have to work for him for their living.

These developments threw the whole of the Ada community into a state of confusion, consternation and resentment. With this state of affairs, the Interim District Co-ordinating Committee for PDCs and WDCs (IDCC) started its own investigations realising that the police investigations were not getting anywhere. The IDCC enquired about the police investigations from the Tema Regional Crime Officer, Mr Adam, who replied that he had compiled his report and submitted it to the Inspector General of Police but that he found everything to be politics and would not want to get involved.

With this information, all the Unit PDCs in the Ada District met and discussed the issue exhaustively and resolved that something positive must be done, and done swiftly and effectively. The IDCC submitted its report on their investigations together with their resolution through the Interim Regional Co-ordinating Committee to the National Committee. Upon this report, the Interim National Co-ordinating Committee caused the arrest of Stephen Appenteng and placed him in custody at the Darkuman Police Station in Accra. Whilst the INCC was taking steps to have Appenteng prosecuted at the Public Tribunal, the people's court, strings were being pulled at the National Investigation Committee (NIC) to prevent the prosecution. The prosecution never came on and Mr Appenteng was later released.

Back at Ada, the IDCC and their Unit PDCs were making final preparations to put their resolutions into action. A general meeting was held, and 14th October 1982 was set for the take-over of Vacuum Salt Products Limited. The INCC, the IRCC, the Tema Regional Police Officer-in-Charge and the whole of the Ada community were informed about the action to be taken. The plan of action was that the whole Ada community in their

various PDC units were to converge at Koluedor, a village along the Ada-Accra trunk road and central to all the villages along the Songor Lagoon. From there the crowd was to march, singing war songs to the Vacuum Salt Products Limited premises, drive the management of the company away and assume control of affairs.

On D-Day the inhabitants of the villages around the Songor Lagoon converged at Koluedor at dawn drumming and singing patriotic songs. And those from far-off places came in vehicles placed at their disposal free of charge by transport owners in the community. There was also a donation of one keg of 'akpeteshie' (local gin) from the Paramount Chief of the Ada State, Nene Kabu Abram Akuaku III, to raise the spirits of the crowd. At about 9 o'clock in the morning, the crowd moved from Koluedor towards the Vacuum Salt Products Limited site singing war songs. They stopped on the way at a village called Toflokpo-Kpalamkorpey where the Asafoatsengwa Otu Anim IV, the war leader of the Tekperbiaweh clan, poured a libation calling on the ancestors and the gods to lead the crowd to victory. After the libation the march continued through Bonikorpey to the Agbedrafor Presby Primary School compound for the final rallying up of the crowd in preparation for the onslaught on the company's premises where several policemen were positioned to maintain peace and order.

The leaders of the crowd seized the Site Manager of Vacuum Salt Products Limited, Mr Allotey, and demanded the keys to the offices of the company. He initially resisted and would have been mercilessly beaten into submission but for the timely intervention of the police. He then handed over the keys of the premises to the leaders of the crowd. Having gained control of the premises, the leaders went ahead to take inventory of moveable and immoveable property of the premises under the close supervision of the police. Later the crowd was addressed by Mr Kofi Portuphy, the then head of the Investigation Department of the INCC, Mr S.K. Sewornu and Mr A.A. Apetorgbor, both of the INCC. After the address the sun was already down and the crowd dispersed.

Immediately PDC volunteers mounted security guard at the premises until the IDCC appointed and monitored an Interim Management Committee (IMC) to run the affairs of the company. The IMC confined its work to the salt pans of the company on the lands adjoining the Songor Lagoon and in February 1983, allowed the traditional salt miners free access to the main lagoon to mine salt for their livelihood. The new opportunity brought a lot of relief and joy to the communities of the area and dealt a devastating blow to the monopoly profit enjoyed by Vacuum Salt Products Limited and their mother company - Panbros Salt Industries Limited in Accra. It is no wonder, therefore, that Vacuum Salt Products Limited immediately started doing everything possible to regain control over their company and the portions of the Songor Lagoon they claimed as their concession. They solicited the backing of the news media, particularly the Ghanaian Times, a daily newspaper, and the Weekly Spectator.

The Ghanaian Times and the Spectator carried news items and editorial comments condemning the PDC take-over and denigrating the new management of the company's affairs. From Gondar Barracks of Burma Camp came series of announcements on the radio summoning persons known to be involved in the Songor Lagoon issue at the time to report for interrogation.

During the period of work of the IMC there was an average income of one million cedis a month. This income attracted selfish interests from some of the cadres. This led to the intensification of campaigns against them. In October 1983, the then Secretary for Labour and Social Welfare, Mr Ato Austin, called a conference between the IDCC personnel and VSPL management. The Labour Secretary played the role of mediator to resolve whatever problem existing between the Ada Traditional Area and the management of Vacuum Salt Products Limited. He further explained that the government's interest in Vacuum Salt Products Limited was represented by three banks, namely: the National Investment Bank, Ghana Commercial Bank and the National Savings and Credit Bank (cf. Appendix for shares by banks, etc.) and that the PDC take-over was adversely affected.

ting the government's interest. At this juncture, the Ada representatives, not happy about the interference by the Secretary for Labour and Social Welfare in the Songor Lagoon issue, enquired from him whether he was solving a labour problem or a welfare one. He replied that he was using his Ministerial, or Secretarial initiative to hear the cases of the parties concerned as a basis for a pending inter-secretarial meeting on the issue. He invited the representatives of the Vacuum Salt Products Limited and the banks to outline their grievances. But, the spokesperson for the Ada side, Miss Doris Ocansey, objected on the grounds that, firstly, they found the forum inappropriate for discussing land and labour matters since, if anything at all, it should have been the task of the Ministry of Lands and Mineral Resources to deal with the matter. Secondly, the Ada side indicated that they had no prior information about the purpose of the meeting and so were not ready to say anything. Furthermore, they stated that this meeting should have been called long ago when Vacuum Salt Products Limited was terrorising the people of the area and not after the Ada had taken over the company. And for that reason, they were not ready to have any negotiation with the company. The meeting was adjourned for a fortnight to enable all parties to submit their grievances. The Ada side was entreated to reconsider their position and co-operate. The meeting so adjourned never came on.

At 6 o'clock in the morning of 23rd December 1983, Radio Ghana in its home news bulletin announced that the government had taken over the operations of Vacuum Salt Products Limited from the IMC of the PDC. A five-man Care-taker Management Committee was set up to replace the PDC Management and the PDCs requested to account for their stewardship.

On the eve of the announcement, a police task force heavily armed in armoured cars had laid ambush at the outskirts of the Vacuum Salt Products Limited premises and soon after the announcement, they zoomed to the Vacuum Salt Products Limited site and seized the keys of all the rooms and drove away the PDCs. Apart from the take-over from the PDC, the government announcement imposed a ban on salt winning by all individuals from the Songor Lagoon but the salt miners refused to



comply with this directive and continued their work in the lagoon. However, the requisite customs duty and sales tax were paid by the salt traders to the customs officer stationed at Kasseh. This continued until about March 1984 when the Care-taker Management Committee appointed by the government reported at the Vacuum Salt Products Limited premises and stopped the Kasseh customs officer from issuing and collecting the duty and tax.

The Care-taker Management Committee immediately raised the total taxes on a 50 kg bag of salt to about 35 cedis. The salt traders and miners complied with these changes without any resistance until 15th June 1984. On 1st June 1984, another press release directed that the government would acquire majority shares in all the companies operating in the Songor Lagoon and that the Ada Traditional Salt Miners should be encouraged to form co-operatives. The statement further directed that the Care-taker Management Committee should hand over the operations in the Songor Lagoon to the original management of the companies - Vacuum Salt Products Limited and Star Chemical Industries Limited.

## CHAPTER SIX

# ORGANISED DEFENCE - THE CO-OPERATIVE

On 25th April 1984 a co-operative for the traditional salt miners in the Songor Lagoon was formed. One of the chief architects behind the formation of this co-operative is Lawer Hushie. We record for our readers the following interview with him on the organisation of the co-operative.

*Q: Lawer, you are one of the brains behind the co-operative in the Songor Lagoon. Can you tell us what led to your involvement in the Songor affairs?*

A: Well, I am aware this is no opportunity for me to give my autobiography and I hope I do not sound egocentric to our readers, but in brief my involvement in the Songor affairs started as follows:

I am the son of a shoemaker who owned a small beer bar called Sea-View bar at the beach at Ada-Foah. I first heard about the Songor Lagoon in 1971 when I was a teenage waiter in my father's bar. I overheard a conversation of some customers about negotiations and sale of the Songor Lagoon to a certain white man and the prospects and benefits that would accrue to the Ada people. Some of the benefits mentioned were a new harbour at Ada, similar to the one at Tema, the supply of pipe-borne water, electricity and other amenities. I also overheard that some of our chiefs and elders were reluctant to give their support to the deal. The situation was likened to the case of the original proposal to site the Tema Harbour at Ada and the alleged refusal of the chiefs to give their consent and concurrence.

I was carried away by the promises of future hopes and aspira-

tions with particular reference to job opportunities to young men and women and wondering why some of the chiefs remained conservative.

Since then the Songor Lagoon never came to my attention until after the People's Defence Committee (PDC) action in 1982. This time I was working with the Confiscated Assets Committee, a committee set up by the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) government to work on properties confiscated by the state.

One of the subjects of confiscation was Star Chemical Industries Limited operating in the Songor Lagoon as a salt manufacturing company. Matters concerning this company were on my schedule. I visited the premises of the company and, shockingly seeing for the first time the length and breadth of the Songor Lagoon, I felt ashamed about my ignorance about this natural resource in my land of birth for all this while.

One other thing that also shocked me was the relative poverty of the area; the quality of water the people drink in the area is disheartening. This unsettled me when I compared in my imagination the amount of wealth that is siphoned out of the area and the existing conditions of livelihood. I was moved with compassion and was ready to devote the rest of my life to the cause of the Songor Lagoon and to suffer together with the people of the area.

As already noted, the other company operating in the lagoon, Vacuum Salt Products Limited, was being run by an Interim Management Committee (IMC) set up by the Ada PDC. Some of the officers of the IMC called at my office at the State House in Accra and invited me to assist them from time to time in discussing problems relating to the administration of the company.

Not considering my education a passport to privileges in the city, but a duty to return to my roots to help, I deliberated on the invitation and decided to get involved setting aside most of my weekend leisure time to visit the IMC.

*Q: What about the co-operative, how did it evolve?*

A: During my visits to the lagoon site, I observed that the salt miners who work directly in the lagoon had no organisation to work for their interest. But customs revenue was regularly collected from them by a customs officer stationed at Kasseh about 20 km away from the lagoon at Bonikorpey. I thought there should be some organised groupings. I therefore organised a public meeting at Toflokpo, a village near the lagoon, for discussions on the subject in October 1983. The idea of a co-operative never occurred to me then, but the proposal at the meeting was that the salt mining should be done in groups instead of on an individual basis. This idea was rejected outright on the grounds that group salt mining was unknown to our forefathers. The chief opponent of any organisation for the salt miners, Abdulai Sottie of Toflokpo, has now become one of the staunch members of the co-operative. It was explained to the opponents of the group idea that the groups to be formed would better serve the interest of the salt miners but no one took heed.

When the government terminated the work of the PDCs and appointed the Care-taker Management Committee (CMC), I immediately contacted the chairman of the CMC and indicated my preparedness to give any information needed on the performance of the PDCs or any assistance that they might require in respect of the work of the salt miners in the lagoon.

In March 1984 I was invited by the chairman of the CMC to a meeting at the lagoon site. At the meeting it was decided that the CMC was to be the sole body to collect duties and taxes from the salt miners and traders; the customs officer based at Kasseh was to cease operation. The Under-Secretary for Labour and Social Welfare (now Mobilisation and Productivity) was present at this meeting and it was clear from his talk that the government would eventually replace the CMC with the original management of the two companies. I was alarmed about the fate of the salt miners if the companies should come back, wondering whether the state of repression would not return.

Soon afterwards, the customs officer at Kasseh received orders to stop his revenue collection exercise for the CMC alone to do the job. The thought of the possible calamity that might befall the salt miners in the future as a result of this action took away

my peace of mind. I decided to do something about the situation. The idea of a co-operative for the salt miners came into my mind in a flash one morning in March 1984, whilst I was sitting on the edge of my bed, my head resting in my palms and reflecting on what the fate of the salt miners would be. It was as if someone was talking to me: 'Go and form a co-operative for your people'.

I immediately moved out of my room to tell my colleagues with whom I had been living in Accra (Dornu Hushie, Anku Gollo, Ofoe Mankwa and Korlety Agbetiameh) about my sudden awareness of the solution to the problem of the salt miners that we had been thinking about for some time now.

I found that my body, soul and spirit were on fire with inspiration and would not rest until the co-operative was formed.

With the assistance of my colleagues, I obtained a copy of the Co-operative Societies Decree (NLCD 252) from the Department of Co-operatives in Accra and started working on a draft for our co-operative byelaws. We moved to the lagoon area and contacted Narteh Nardugbey, Nene Klokpah II and Francis Azinah, all from Koluedor, and discussed the idea with them. Their response was favourable and we decided to begin our organisational work toward the formation of co-operatives at Bonikorpey; this time by- passing Toflokpo.

*Q: What about some of the problems and difficulties encountered in this exercise?*

A: Needless to say that every endeavour in this life of struggles has its obstacles. The significant difficulties that I would like to mention about the organisation of the co-operative was the scepticism with which the idea of a co-operative was received by the salt miners themselves. At the time we began our organisation, they were mining salt in the lagoon without hindrance and could not foresee any danger or difficulties that might arise in the future. Besides, it was some of the same people involved in the PDC administration of the salt works of the companies who were coming up again. (During the operation of the PDC in the lagoon, certain measures were instituted and these did

not find favour with the miners. As such the miners were suspicious of our new moves.) And in my particular case a lot of friends and relatives could not understand why I should leave my comfort in Accra and waste my time in villages.

*Q: Now, can you tell us something about the performance and achievements of the co-operatives?*

A: Thank you but I think we should leave this section for the Secretaries' Committee to carry on with its work.

It was a very hectic task organising the people to form a co-operative. The salt miners argued that their forefathers never had formed a co-operative before they won salt in their own lagoon. In March 1984, at Bonikorpey, where the co-operative first took root, Klamor Nagadzi, the chairman of the People's Defence Committee, a very dynamic and influential elder of the village, did a good job in convincing his people to accept the idea of the formation of a co-operative. Election was conducted at Bonikorpey and Lawer Agbloe was ushered in as the first chairman with young Dzabaku Awidi as secretary. Dzabaku Awidi and Francis Azinah had to take on the difficult job of educating the people. They moved from village to village in the scorching sun to prepare the ground and mind of the people. Not long after that Toflokpo and Matsekorpey appeared in the picture. Toflokpo has a good labour force to reckon with, spear-headed by their executives, while at Matsekorpey the active Kate K. Akrofi, later known by the members of the co-operative as 'Akpertiyo' - the centre girl, took on the task almost single-handedly to organise the miners.

Meanwhile, Lawer Hushie contacted the Department of Co-operatives to acquaint himself with the procedure for registration. At this time only a few people at Bonikorpey and Toflokpo officially registered with the co-operative. Ten of them, namely Lawer Hushie, Ofoe Mankwa, Dzagbletey Akunyumu, Agbloe Thomas, Awidi Dzabaku, Michael O. Anim, Amanor Ezekiel, Anim Clement, Sottie Haruna and Adabang Joseph, were selected to complete the documents for registration of the co-opera-

tive at the Department of Co-operatives as requested by the Co-operative Societies Decree No. 252 of 1968.

An application dated 7th April 1984 by a co-operative of traditional salt winners was then registered at Accra as the Ada Songor Co-operative Salt Miners' Society Limited on Certificate No. 11601 on 25th April 1984 by the Acting Registrar of Co-operative Societies.

The primary objective of the co-operative was to promote the economic interests of its members. It also aimed at uniting all parties with common interests in the Songor Lagoon with a view to identifying their interests and formulating policies for their fulfilment. It was also the intention of the co-operative as a legal entity to enable the salt winners to honour their financial obligations to the state in the form of payment of excise duty and sales tax on bags of salt should Vacuum Salt Products Limited (VSPL) come back and refuse to issue customs papers to cover salt won by the people. It should be recalled that the VSPL prevented customs officers from issuing customs papers to cover salt won by our people in the main lagoon: a deliberate act rendering the disposal of salt by our people impossible.

At the time of registration of the co-operative the salt winning in the Songor Lagoon was being supervised by a government appointed Care-taker Management Committee through which the salt winners were paying their duty and tax.

Meanwhile, the Songor Lagoon issue was being discussed at PNDC Secretaries meetings. And on 1st June 1984, the PNDC government issued a Press Statement directing that the E.I. 10 of 1981 be revoked and the leases granted to the companies in 1974 reconfirmed. This statement further stated that 'the traditional salt winners in the Ada Traditional Area must be encouraged to form co-operatives to win salt in THE AREA ALLOTTED TO THEM'. Legally and for all intents and purposes, the Songor Lagoon issue was reverted to what it was during the Acheampong Regime. Without wasting time, the control of salt winning in the lagoon was handed over from the Care-taker Management Committee to the companies.

The sanctioning of salt co-operatives by the government in the

Songor area was keenly awaited and prayed for by our people. We therefore quickly seized the opportunity. But there was a snag: the part on the formation of co-operatives did not appear in the daily newspapers as had been announced on the radio. So the co-operatives quickly wrote to the Secretary of the PNDC for the Press Statement which was received later. Meanwhile, the Customs Department had agreed to license the co-operative to issue customs invoice and waybills after many deliberations with the Ghana Customs and Excise Department at Tema. The co-operative was thereby given the mandate to collect for the government taxes on salt. A licence was therefore issued to the co-operative in the name of Lawer Hushie who was then making most of these contacts. The customs books were bought from the Customs Department and brought to Bonikorpey on Friday night, the 15th of June 1984. Dzabaku Awidi and Doler Abiasi, the secretary and his assistant respectively, were taught immediately how to process them. The co-operative commenced its independent work in the lagoon on the next day, the 16th of June 1984, only to be met with intensified repression.

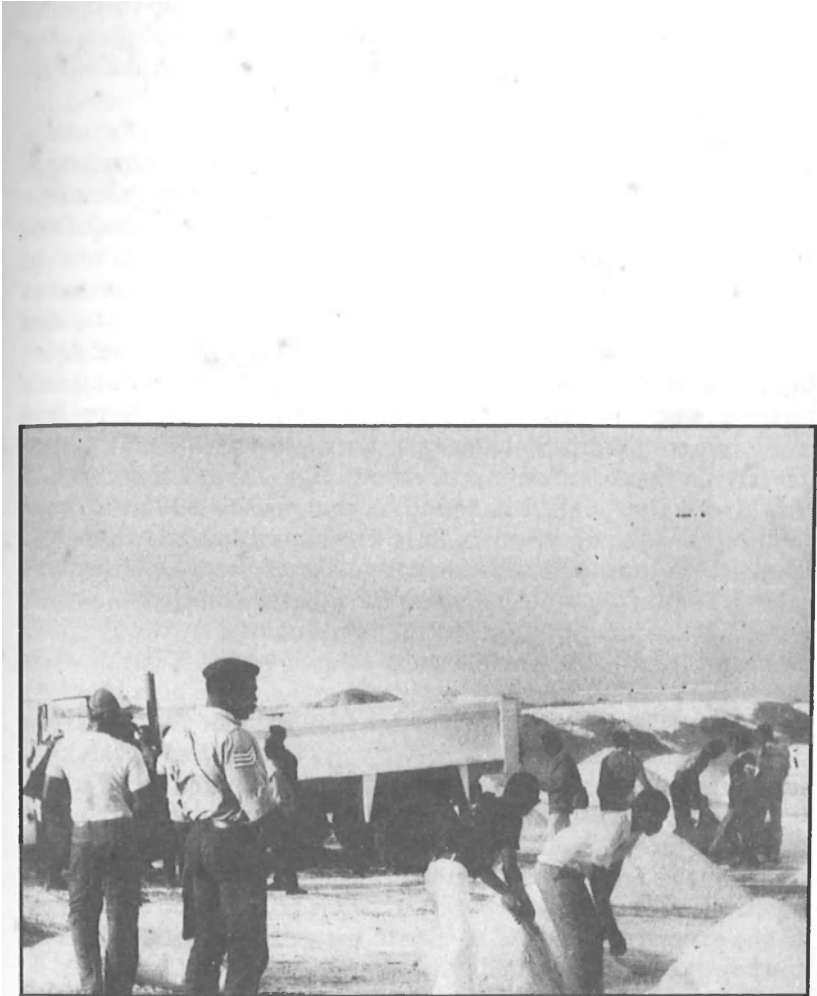
We were sad when we learned later that Kerma, the customs officer who issued the licence to collect customs duty to the co-operative was transferred to the north of Ghana.

Incidents that followed showed that our people in the villages around the lagoon were not safe. Within just a week after commencing work, the office of the co-operative at Bonikorpey was raided by some customs officers allegedly organised by Vacuum Salt Products Limited. On 25th June 1984, to be precise, a new yellow Mitsubishi bus with about eight customs officers, all in uniform, on board suddenly appeared at the co-operative office. The officers were led by a red-faced, slim, smartly dressed young man in black boots, a pair of blue-black trousers and a light blue shirt. Well styled on his head was a black beret with the Ghana coat of arms. This man was later identified as C.K. Kalewe. They arrested the co-operative chairman, Thomas Lawer Agbloe and his wife, Madam Oye Dameh, and detained them at Kasseh Police Station for two days. The fact of the case was that the customs officers had earlier during the day



contacted Lawer Agbloe asking him to produce the customs invoices and waybills which the co-operative was issuing to customers. Lawer denied possessing these customs books lying that the books were sent back to Accra by the leaders of the co-operative. The customs officers without further questions left and hid themselves at Toflokpo, an adjacent village not too far from Bonikorpey. While waiting there they liaised with a woman customer who informed them that the co-operative office was ready to issue her with customs papers to cover her salt. The customs officers on this tip-off rushed to the office to discover a set of customs invoices and waybills on the table. Mr Lawer Agbloe on seeing the vehicle approaching the office and aware of the consequence of being caught, moved away hurriedly and stealthily. To traverse the shortest distance to safety, he had to step quietly and secretly through the stretch of mud which outlines the northern boundary of the office premises. The others were taken unawares at the office. There was a free-for-all run, dispersing from the office premises like the mature dried seeds of the flamboyant plant shooting out of the pods during the dry season. Mr Doler Abiasi, the co-operative man on duty at the office, mistakenly took the customs officers to be naval officers and quickly took to his heels for dear life, through the window. 'Yea - aa, you are lucky', the words echoed after him from among the customs officers. Meanwhile he hid himself in the clear spaces among nearby cactus plants from where he later appeared. He received serious bruises from the cactus thorns.

The officers, on entering Lawer Agbloe's building, met Madam Oye Dameh, Lawer Agbloe's wife, whom they questioned extensively about her husband's whereabouts. Kalewe confidently moved into the office, collected the customs books and with the help of the other officers forced Oye Dameh into their bus. Mr Lawer Agbloe, realising that his wife was arrested, reappeared from his hideout to confront the customs officers, seeking the release of his wife. After questioning him, Kalewe gave him a hard slap in the face. Some of his colleagues who succeeded in bolting away stopped at a distance and gazed back speechless with embarrassment at the scene. Lawer Agbloe was then added



*Policer confiscating salt during one of the raids*

to his wife already in the bus and driven away to Kasseh Police Station where both were detained for two days. (It should be mentioned that one of the rooms of Lawer Agbloe's residence was at the time being used as the co-operative office.)

On the Monday following the day of the incident, the co-operative consulted the Deputy Controller of Customs at Tema on the raid and succeeded in having the seized customs books released to us.

Then in July 1984, Lawer Hushie was summoned to the office of the State Secretary for the Interior, Kofi Djin, for interrogation on the authenticity of the co-operative and its operations.

For seven weeks after the 25th of June 1984, Vacuum Salt Products Limited had been making conscious preparations to launch a heavy raid on the salt miners. And on 16th August 1984 a detachment of the Ghana Police Force led by Assistant Commissioner of Police in charge of Tema Region, Michael Asiedu, raided the offices of the co-operative and chased hundreds of the traditional salt winners out of the lagoon. The raiders came in about eight police jeeps, two motor bikes and a police car driven by Asiedu himself. About 300 winners were forced into six cargo trucks intended to be loaded with salt and driven to the premises of Vacuum Salt Products Limited where the very young ones and the weak, aged ones were set free. The others, about 66 in number, were forced into a cargo benz truck with registration number TRA 3259 purchased by the People's Defence Committee during their take-over of Vacuum Salt Products Limited and later seized by the same company. As the captives were being conveyed to Dawa Police Station, three people, Atteh Agbedam (Black Kanyo), Tetteh Ocansey (Makpe-lo) and Tettehtsu Akortia (Soccer 1-1 draw) jumped out of the truck and escaped. At Dawa Police Station the rest were packed into a tiny cell and detained for three to five days. One can imagine the horrible conditions in the cell at this time. Some of the captives, like Mekporgbey Lawerteh, fainted as a result of the excessive heat and stench in the cell. After the third day the captives were charged with stealing salt and were asked to pay 600 cedis each, totalling several thousands of cedis. One Dotser Apenklo Meji from Afiadenyngmah, after he had settled

his fine of 600 cedis and was set free, went around desperately to borrow money here and there to enable him to settle the fine and seek the release of his colleagues still in the cell. Thus the police had now become judges and prosecutors extorting money from the poor folk. Three staunch members of the co-operative, Lawer Agbloe, Doler Abiase and Kabutey Daker (Pisitor), were sent straight to Tema Harbour Police Station and were detained for some time.

Around 21st August 1984 Lawer Hushie was arrested in Accra by the police and detained at Afienua Police Station for 30 days and released on bail. He was charged with involvement in acts intended to sabotage the economy of Ghana by inciting the people against the government. As a young man of 29 with very clear foresight, imbued with community spirit, Lawer Hushie was always considered the originator and engineer of every move of the co-operative, be it an individual or a group initiative.

In September 1984, the Deputy Commissioner of Police, Michael Asiedu, organised a public education rally at Bonikorpey where he invited the two companies, Vacuum Salt and Star Chemical, the District Secretary, Ayiku Nartey and the co-operative. This rally was heavily patronised by our people from all the villages around the lagoon amidst drumming and dancing. The local village dance bands featured prominently and thrilled the gathering with traditional solos and inspiring music. However, the hope of our people to be allowed to work in the lagoon was dashed against the rocks when Asiedu sternly warned us never to win salt or fish again in the lagoon. This was a great disappointment. Lawer Agbloe, irritated by Asiedu's speech, replied sharply in Dangme: 'We shall always continue to enter our lagoon'. The face of the Assistant Commissioner of Police in uniform broke into an exasperated and threatening grin. The commissioner rose instantly and roared: 'You shouldn't take my words for granted: this is my last warning'. Grumbling rumbled through the crowd. The District Secretary, recognising the politically explosive nature of the situation, reserved his comments and just accepted the decision of the Assistant Commissioner though he was very much aware of the precarious

and miserable situation of his people in the lagoon area. The disappointed crowd dispersed in a sad mood back into the roof-leaking, dilapidated thatch buildings in the various villages cursing themselves for being born to such a cruel destiny. This is the case of our people living in abject poverty while the wealth of the area was being siphoned out by exploiters.

On Wednesday 17th October 1984, Nii Abeo Kyerekuandah IV, the Greater Accra Regional Secretary, paid a visit to the Songor Salt Lagoon site to familiarise himself with the area and to confer with the indigenous people, the Ada, in finding a lasting solution to the dispute over the salt lagoon. He asked our people to remain calm whilst the government resolved the conflict amicably. He drew our attention to the fact that the lagoon would soon be properly demarcated and that the government now owned 51 per cent of the shares in the industries as contained in the 1st June 1984 Government Press Release. Our people appealed to the Regional Secretary to consider seriously releasing part of the lagoon closest to our villages of Bonikorpey, Alorgnorkpor, Kposem and Luhuor to enable us to carry on with our legitimate business. We assured him that our operations in these areas would not in any way interfere with the production process of both companies whose salt production pans are each over 2 km away from the nearest village. The Regional Secretary promised to consider our appeal. This was even reported in the Friday 19 October 1984 issue of the People's Daily Graphic under the heading 'PNDC Stands for Peace', which also stated that the Secretary gave an assurance when speaking to the elders of Ada that 'the PNDC government ... will, therefore, not sit down unconcerned for any misunderstanding to generate into conflict, enmity and rivalry between any parties'.

Meanwhile, on 14th November 1984, our people petitioned the Regional Secretary to allow us to start immediately winning the salt that had crystallised in the lagoon, as this period is our main salt season. Since there was no reply, our people desperately decided to fall on the last resort, the Paramount Chief, before advising themselves. Without wasting time, the co-operative organised another rally on Thursday 29th November 1984

and invited the Paramount Chief of the Ada Traditional Area, Nene Abram Akuaku III. Our people appealed to the Chief to allow them to win salt in the lagoon, otherwise they would starve to death. The Paramount Chief, conscious of the problems of his people, told us to commence work in the lagoon and promised to send a petition to the government through the Regional Secretary, Nii Abeo Kyerekuandah IV. This was welcome news.

Happily normal work in the lagoon resumed after a three-month period of unemployment. The co-operative at this time had not got deep roots and hence was not well known. Since the co-operative had now become the unofficial mouthpiece of our people, all energy was geared towards popularising it. Furthermore it was the aim of the co-operative to advertise itself to win more sympathisers and customers.

Meanwhile, police troops were permanently stationed at the offices of Vacuum Salt Products Limited and they intermittently raided the villages along the lagoon. During one of such raids on Friday 5th December 1984, they brutally assaulted many of the salt winners leaving several of them wounded after a serious scuffle. Among those injured were Lawer Agbloe who had his left arm broken and four policemen with bodily bruises. Agbloe was rushed to the Battor Catholic Mission Hospital where he was admitted for about a week. Lawer Agbloe is a well-built, dark man; his height and muscular body is enough to imagine his strength. Though he is not so eloquent, his powerful strength and size earn him that much needed respect as a leader.

Meanwhile, the police were making frantic efforts to arrest the leaders of the co-operative. They combed one village after the other until they laid hands on a few, among whom was Dzabaku Awidi. The following is a short interview with him.

*Q: Dzabaku, why did you join the co-operative?*

A: In fact, I did not join the co-operative as such. I was elected by my people of Bonikorpey to be their secretary and this automatically made me a member. I was chosen not only for the reason that I had some formal education but also because they

were afraid: none of them was prepared at that material moment to hold such a post as they described the Songor Lagoon issue as 'dreadful'. There was enough evidence to prove their bitter experiences while I was away at school for almost fourteen years. Nevertheless I welcomed the idea of the formation of a co-operative wholeheartedly because I trusted the co-operative would present a reliable front to fight and liberate my people from economic bondage.

*Q: What were some of the experiences you had after the formation of the co-operative?*

A: Organisation of my people posed a big problem. I also cannot overlook the numerous confrontations with the police who prevented us from winning salt in our own lagoon. To avoid arrest after such clashes with the police, I often had to stay away from home and sleep in the bush. I was given all sorts of provocative names. Worst of all, my parents threatened to disown me as their son after I refused to accept constant advice from them to relinquish my post of secretary and to abandon all related activities. The sound of the engine of an automobile always startled me as the police were regularly after me. Sometimes I absented myself from school for fear I might be attacked on the way as I have to go for about four miles (6.4 km) on foot each day to get to the school at Matsekorpey where I teach.

*Q: You tried to avoid police arrest as much as possible, isn't it?*

A: Yes, but I was once arrested. What happened was that we learnt that the Greater Accra Regional Secretary, Nii Abeo Kyerekuandah IV, in giving an account of his stewardship during his period of office, said that the misunderstanding between the people of Ada and the companies had been resolved and that there was peace in the Songor Lagoon area. To prove to the government that this was not the case, Thomas Lawer Agbloe, Osorfo Omari Yusuf Mensah and myself organised our people to mine salt from the lagoon in areas close to our villages from morning to evening. We were successful the first two days.

Hardly had we started the third day's work when the police intercepted. The guns and truncheons carried by the police intimidated our people so much that most of them ran away. The few of us left took the police on. An old man by the name of Tetteh-Kwala Ayim of blessed memory was being whipped by the police. In an attempt to rescue him Lawer Agbloe's left hand got broken as it was hit by the butt-end of a gun. Thus the 'Hercules' among us was disabled and we quickly dispersed. Few arrests were made. Yusuf Mensah took Lawer Agbloe to Battor Catholic Hospital. After 12 hours the police started looking for the leaders of the co-operative. Four days later, that is on Tuesday 9 December 1984, I was informed in my hideout that the police would come in search of me at dawn and had promised to see me at the close of the day. I could not absent myself from school as I was conducting examinations. Many close relatives, among whom was my father, came to me that morning asking me to leave the school premises. I was discussing with my father the next step to take when we heard the drone of engines approaching the school compound. In the twinkling of an eye two police jeeps raced from the eastern end of the school block; one parked at the north-eastern side and the other at the south-eastern side. I was confused and in a state of dilemma. My father's shout alerted me and I took to my heels in the opposite direction of the parked jeeps. Jumping over hedges and stumps of trees I carefully but speedily sneaked through the graveyard into the neem bush. I squatted quietly among the leaves of the low canopy tree with my eyes and ears wide open. My heart throbbed and my head ached. My clothes became wet with sweat.

Behind me, my father was held responsible for aiding me to escape. The staff and pupils had to go out searching for me. I heard their conversations. Sensing the danger in which my father was, I came out to meet them and we walked together back to the police who were then seated under the shady mango tree on the school compound with their guns in hand. My father was released and I was ordered to go on board one of the police jeeps which I complied with without question. Soon, we drove off towards the premises of Vacuum Salt Products Limited.



The pupils gathered in confusion looking sorrowfully and doubtfully as the jeeps gathered momentum one after the other.

*Q: What happened thereafter?*

A: The jeeps arrived at Vacuum Salt's premises and came to a halt. I was pushed out and sent into a room with several policemen with guns. In the room I was with two other people including Nene Djagbletey Yakah, Chief of Bonikorpey. The three of us were later driven to Tema and then brought back to Dawa Police Station where we were placed in police cells for two weeks. I was forced to write my statement in a room with two rifles directed at my head. I felt sick after we were released, around Christmas time, and had to undergo medical treatment.

*Q: Okay, Dzabaku, thank you very much.*

A: It is a pleasure.

During this period the police also traced Agbloe to Battor Hospital. Soon after he was discharged from hospital, he was arrested and sent to the offices of the Co-ordinator, Investigations, Revenue Commissioners and Tribunals and was requested to sign a bond not to do anything that could jeopardise the demarcation of the Songor Lagoon. He, however, refused to sign the bond insisting that he had done nothing wrong. Next, the police charged him before Tema Circuit Court for assaulting a peace officer and damaging a police rifle.

All this while Lawer Hushie was on police bail and was reporting himself to the Police Commissioner at Tema every Friday. His passport had been confiscated from him. Much to his surprise, in February 1985, when he reported himself to the Commissioner, he was escorted to the same Afienny Police Station where he had been detained in cell for seven days on the same charges for which he had been given bail. While he was in cell, an indenture was signed by the government in February 1985 and a law passed in accordance with the Press Statement of

June 1984, thus leasing the lagoon back to the companies for 50 years starting from 1st January 1984. But this second detention rather led Hushie and some others to full-time commitment to the struggle.

The 5th December attack and constant police surveillance afterwards have instilled such great fear into our people that nobody dared enter the lagoon. Not happy with the plight of unemployment of members after 5th December, the co-operative agreed to hold a meeting and advise itself. Unlike previous meetings which were held on weekends at the head office at Bonikorpey -for the decisions taken at such meetings easily got to the bosses of Vacuum Salt through their informants/spies, most of whom were believed to be resident in Bonikorpey and its adjacent villages- this meeting was held at Matsekorpey on Sunday 3rd March 1985. Going into the lagoon by force was the general consensus.

Still Vacuum Salt had a hint of the meeting but not the detailed outcome and decided to set the police to arrest the leaders for interrogation. At about 1 a.m. on Thursday 7th March 1985, less than four days after the meeting, the police using a tipper truck belonging to Vacuum Salt Products Limited broke into the rooms of some leaders of the co-operative and arrested them. They first went to Bonikorpey and arrested Lawer Agbloe and some others, and then moved to Toflokpo to arrest Asamani and others. At Toflokpo the police could not trace Abdulai Sottie, a spokesman for the co-operative and for that reason decided to take away, in his place, Haruna Sottie, his son. The boy resisted fiercely. For his punishment the police threw him straight into a nearby cactus bush. Haruna screamed and screamed, and called on his Allah to deliver him from this awkward predicament if he had not done anything wrong. His screams travelled far through the quiet night and echoed in the ears of even those snoring in their sleep. 'Nyetesi nyetesi, nokoba nyetesi', people shouted and rushed to the scene. Before they could get there, the raiders had driven away leaving Haruna to struggle in the cactus out of which he was finally rescued. He was severely bruised by the cactus. He sobbed his heart out as blood dripped from his wounds.

After thorough interrogation of those arrested, Vacuum Salt happened to perceive a little more of the decision taken at the Matsekorpey summit. They then engaged the Ghanaian Times, a daily newspaper, to shout and conceal the truth on their behaviour and rally forces against the co-operative and the Ada as a whole. Barely a week after this summit, that is on Tuesday 12 March 1985, this newspaper published a report boldly headed 'They Are Stealing the Salt and the State is Losing Revenue at Sege, Ada'. It reported, among other things, that 'The State loses huge sums in revenue, both in local and foreign currency as a result of rampant stealing of salt from the Ada Songor Lagoon by villagers in the area'.

'... the people have concentrated their illegal salt mining in the area where Vacuum Salt Products Limited operates.'

'In the process they have abandoned their fishing business.'

'And the school kids have joined the bandwagon, playing truancy in the process.'

'... the illegal diggers were being encouraged by some Accra lawyers and chiefs who maintained that they had 'the right as Ada citizens to harvest' natural salt whether the land belonged to the state or not.'

The same newspaper presented editorial comments headed 'Clear Case of Indiscipline' on the two following days. The Wednesday 13 March 1985 issue mentioned, among other things, that 'one of the major natural advantages of the salt industry is the development of caustic soda production and we understand that the bank partners in the company are already carrying out the necessary feasibility studies for this purpose'.

'Now we know the people who are behind the vandalism, and the government should deal with them firmly.'

'Meanwhile, it is our view that the government is right to take measures to foil tomorrow's proposed action by the executive of the Co-operative Society'.

'These instigators must be dealt with.' The Thursday 14 March 1985 comments stated, inter alia, that 'The behaviour of those involved in the Songor salt field vandalism cannot be tolerated. It is sheer criminal indiscipline, corruption and it is counter-productive'.

These publications prompted the co-operative to speak out since, to the objective mind of any person residing in the lagoon area, the formation of salt in the Songor Lagoon is natural and primordial. Thanks to Father Joop Visser, a Catholic Missionary, it was made possible for the voice of the Ada to be heard through the 21st, 22nd and 25th March 1985 publication of the Daily Graphic headed 'All about Songor Salt'. The report concluded, among other things, that 'The people are part of the government and Vacuum Salt Products Limited is also of the government and for the Government. The people of the Songor Lagoon area must therefore be allowed to work and be encouraged to contribute effectively to raising national productivity. In view of this, the people must produce more salt to feed the government's (proposed) caustic soda plant. There is no reason why the people of the area shouldn't be given the chance to increase the production of salt from the vast lagoon without having to interfere with the operations of the two companies: those have their saltpans outside the lagoon area and are in no way affected by the people's own activities'.

The People's Daily Graphic finally expressed its view in its editorial comment of the Monday 1 April 1985 issue under the heading 'Salt Politics'. It stated, inter alia, that 'Having examined all the issues involved and the present situation in the lagoon, we feel that serious problems exist which need urgent solutions. It should be understood that this type of problems can never be solved by police raids on the traditional salt winners.

The most serious problem is the human aspect which embraces the welfare of the people and their right to work and make a living out of their traditional way of mining salt combined with farming activities.

The second problem is to protect the interests of all the companies operating in the area and that of the people in such a way that the industry prospers and gives benefit to those in need of salt, but no one is especially favoured or unduly disadvantaged.

To arrive at this it would be important to accommodate modern means of production without unduly destroying the traditional

ways, a philosophy powerfully proclaimed by Dr E.F. Schumacher in his book 'Small is Beautiful', which we consider a useful guide to planners in developing countries.

Solutions to these problems have been broadly outlined in a government press release of 1st June 1984 and we would plead for their full implementation.

We would suggest that as a first provisional but urgent step the Greater Accra Regional Secretary should demarcate areas along the lagoon near the villages -which are mostly far from Vacuum Salt and Star Chemical Industries Limited operating pans- for the people to start work immediately so as to avoid all the precious salt to be washed away.

This would seem to be the only practical solution, because, if only one area at a given end of the lagoon is allocated to the people, those living at the other end would have to walk the 32 square-mile lagoon to get to work.

This step would still leave sufficient room for the two companies, the present co-operatives and even many more, to operate without any hindrance to their operations. The demarcation committee to be set up should bear this very important point in mind.

In the long term, the demarcation committee should see to it that nobody monopolises the inflow of seawater into the lagoon. Furthermore, they should address themselves to the wider implications of the acquisition of these Ada lands, which deal with ownership questions and compensations, to mention but a few.

It should come as no surprise, therefore, that we learn from reliable sources that the Lands Commission is holding compensation money since the government acquisition of 1974 and does not see any way to disburse it.

The committee should also work out proper modalities for the collection of government revenue from all the operators in the area and the protection of the income of the rural people.

We feel sure that the implementation of these policies would not only increase the production of salt to feed the proposed caustic soda plant but would definitely go a long way in averting an imminent human tragedy which we can least afford in these

trying times.'

On Wednesday 3rd April 1985, a seven-man delegation from the Greater Accra Regional Consultative Council headed by Rear-Admiral H.A. Hansen (retired) paid a fact-finding visit to the Songor Lagoon area probably as a result of these newspaper publications. They met the co-operative and the two companies at different sessions in the lagoon area. We prayed that the government should abrogate all the leases made to the companies so as to enable the yet-to-be-set technical team to have a general view of the area in demarcating areas for commercial and traditional winners to operate. We also appealed for a portion of the area which is nearest to our villages for operation, as salt winning is our major source of income. Abdulai Sottie, a spokesman for the co-operative, also told the delegation that we were living in complete fear and that not a single day passes without our being harassed, terrorised and raided by the police with instructions from the management of Vacuum Salt Products Limited. One Tepey Afloe, speaking in Dangme, warned that 'We are prepared to defend our land and our source of income until the last person in our village is wiped out'. The delegation in turn promised to find a way to settle this salt-mining dispute amicably. Reporting this in the Daily Graphic on Saturday 6 April 1985, the newspaper, under the heading 'Abrogate Pacts on Songor Lagoon', also stated that 'The unfortunate incident that made members of the delegation really wonder was the rate at which inhabitants run helter-skelter at the mere sight of the vehicles of Vacuum Salt Products Limited'.

Days passed without hearing anything from the Greater Accra Regional Consultative Council. So, on Saturday 13th April 1985 the salt winners were organised to march to the lagoon where a white flag was hoisted to commemorate the ancient administration over the Songor. Nene Okorkorteila, Chief of Matsekorpey, played a commendable leadership role. The Police Headquarters were alerted about this uprising and the leaders immediately went underground.

In an article with the title 'Justice Must Be Done' by Nene Tetteh Chayi II, which appeared in the Tuesday 23 April 1985 issue of the People's Daily Graphic, details of the then sharehol-

dings of the promoters of Vacuum Salt Products Limited were listed (Appendix A). This article stated, among other things, that 'The people of Ada were not considered for any shares even though they were being deprived of their most valuable natural source of income. All that the Ada, including the people of Ghana, would probably have benefited from would have been the paltry royalty sum of 1.10 cedis per tonne of salt won, and annual rents varying between 2,300 to 6,200 cedis which were stipulated in the then lease granted to both Vacuum Salt Products Limited and Star Chemicals Limited by the then authorities.

As far as I am concerned, both the people of Ada and Ghana in general are being robbed and real justice must be done immediately.

Since the acquisition of the lagoon in 1974, the people living in the surrounding villages and the entire Ada State have been denied fishing rights and even some of the villages have been swallowed by the acquisition, thus making life unbearable for the villagers'. 'I wish to reiterate that the Chiefs and people of Ada, with the exception of a few so-called elites, who have been serving as frontmen in disguise for the companies operating in the lagoon, have been fighting like mad, employing all constitutional means to regain ownership and possession of the entire length and breadth of the Songor Lagoon since 1974. The companies now agree to allow government to take majority shares because, by so doing, they think they would have the necessary security to enable them to carry on their cheap business of gathering natural salt which forms in the Songor Lagoon after a good sunshine.

I would like to mention at this juncture that no one can convince any right-thinking Ada person that salt is being manufactured in the Ada Songor Lagoon.

If salt can be so manufactured, then it would have been possible for the companies in question to have started their operations in the 'Korle Lagoon', which is in the heart of Accra, instead of travelling all the way to the Songor Lagoon at Sege in the Ada Traditional Area.

No one can deny the fact that there is something unique and

natural about the Ada Songor Lagoon. Once again, I would say that the main import licence for the production of salt in the Ada Songor Lagoon is the 'sun'.

'I would like to end here by appealing to all those who have been trespassing in the Songor Lagoon, to stay away from the site, to avoid any further clashes with the law enforcement agencies and the accredited workers of the two companies operating in the area.

Personally, I do not think demarcation of the Songor Lagoon, which is impracticable, is the answer to the multiple problems in the lagoon.'

Later Vacuum Salt Products Limited also presented their case concerning the Songor Lagoon affairs, which appeared both in the Daily Graphic and the Ghanaian Times on Wednesday 24 April 1985. It was stated, among other things, that 'All that piece of land popularly known as Songor Lagoon is a dust bowl during the major part of the year. After the wet season, the lagoon is encrusted with a thin layer of salt in patches less than 1/16th of an inch thick and brooms are used to sweep this layer by the local residents who also supplement their income by fishing and farming'. This is not true. Salt crystallises up to and even more than a foot in many parts of the lagoon in any one season.

The midnight raids, though putting so much fear in our people that some of them did not sleep, not only in their rooms but also in their villages, for fear of being caught and molested in the night, coupled with the newspapers' report of 24th April 1985 on Vacuum Salt's view on the Songor Lagoon affairs, have actually annoyed our people to the degree that we resolved to implement the decision taken at the Matsekorpey summit. One fine Saturday morning in early May our people sounded the trumpet, reorganised themselves and rose with the beating of drums and singing of local war songs to the lagoon to commence work. The police vigilantes over the lagoon could not react. Our people once more started their normal work. This incident served as a landmark in the history of the struggle of our people to regain the lagoon.

Agblo, however, had to appear in court at Tema on his previous



case with the police and there he was arrested, handcuffed and sent into police detention. He was charged with acts conducive to the breach of public peace, trespassing and meeting without permit.

Lawer Hushie was also picked up on 29th April 1985 and detained at Osu Castle for 49 days, later to be transferred to the Regional Criminal Investigations Department (CID) at Tema for a further 19 days to answer charges similar to those of Agbloe. He became depressed in spirit when he was finally released.

In fairness, it should be stated that it was later learnt that some of the arrests of Lawer Hushie for economic crimes were related to his work as an official of the Confiscated Assets (and Disposal) Committee (CAC) in connection with which he had to answer certain questions. Still we consider the timing of his arrests on this issue not coincidental. (The CAC has been set up by the PNDC government to monitor and dispose of all assets confiscated by the state.)

Meanwhile the police, sensing the strength of the co-operative, mobilised their numbers with the intention to assault and disorganise the co-operative once and for all. And on that fateful Friday 17th May 1985 the police launched an attack and painfully shot and killed the young pregnant woman, Margaret Kuwornu, in cold blood.

Gloom fell on our people. The police retreated with shame and left for their various police stations leaving the murdered pregnant woman in a pool of blood at the spot where she fell. There she lay like a slaughtered sacrificial animal. But for Doris Aklerh Ocansey, the lawyer, the police would have denied having any knowledge of her death. In the opinion of many, there is no doubt that the bullet that tore away the life of Maggie was the result of Vacuum Salt Products Limited's deadly pledge to eliminate all opposition to the company's bid to expropriate the Ada of the Songor Lagoon.

The PNDC Chairman, Flt Lt Jerry John Rawlings, who came for the corpse in the night, directed that nobody should go into the lagoon for the next two weeks. At the end of the second week he sent six unarmed policemen to assist the salt winners

selling their already won heaps of salt.

The interrogation of Agbloe and Hushie was terminated after the shooting incident and the two were released in July 1985. In September 1985, the government set up a probe into Maggie's murder and on 2nd October the government directed that the traditional salt winners were free to work in the lagoon and that nobody should carry any weapon to the site. The co-operative has ever since come to stay.

After October 1985, the co-operative settled down to reorganise itself. Its membership increased tremendously as many people now submitted themselves for registration. As at 1st August 1986, the co-operative could boast 3,300 registered members. There were inaugurations of branches in virtually all the other villages scattered around the lagoon. People became more active. Even the old who would not like to be one of the most sought-after 'incitors' in the lagoon area and therefore leaned back indifferently, became regular and more vocal participants in co-operative meetings.

A Management Committee and a Committee of Secretaries were set up and they are functioning effectively. Other committees like that of the traders, carpenters and female salt winners are now gathering momentum.

All the villages scattered around the lagoon have been organised into six mining and loading groups as follows:

Group 1: Luhuor, Korpehem, Kasseh, Tamatoku, Songorkper, Gbatana Amlakpo, Big Ada, Ada-Foah, Togbloku and Lufenya;

Group 2: Matsekorpey, Koluedor and Foluedor-Mahem;

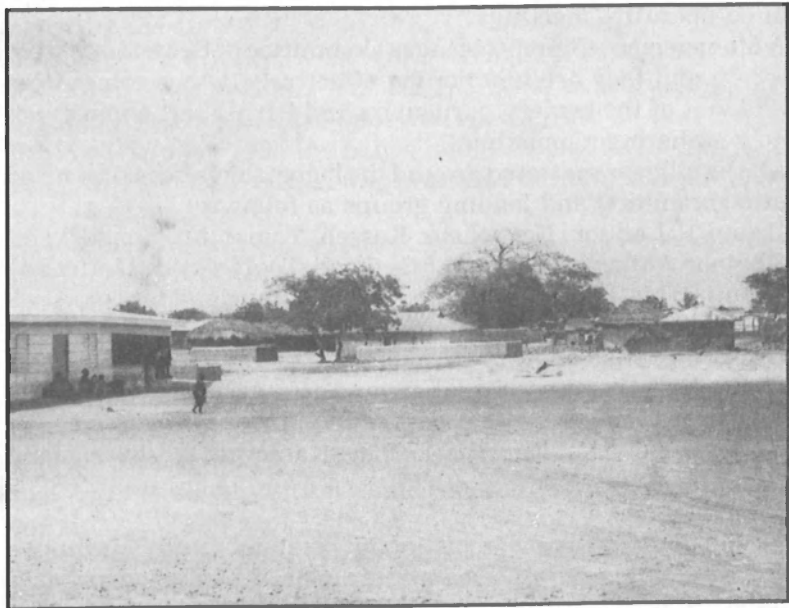
Group 3: Toflokpo and Salom;

Group 4: Bonikorpey;

Group 5: Anyamam, Akplabanya, Adjomanikorpey, Kpotsum Agbedrafor and Sege;

Group 6: Lolonya, Kportitsekorpey, Kablevu, Okorhuesisi and Goi.

As the co-operative was just about to stand firmly on its two feet after two miserable years of struggle, it happened unfortunately that either because of divisive tactics by our enemies or because of unresolved disputes within our own co-operative,



*Bonikorpey village; left front: co-op office*

smaller co-operatives started forming in the area. Among others, there are the Goi Co-operative Salt Winners and Marketing Society, the Okor Co-operative Salt Winners and Marketing Society, the Noryami Co-operative Salt Winners and Marketing Society, the Oboade Salt Winners and Marketing Society and the Sege-Nakomkorpey United Salt Winning and Marketing Co-operative Society operating in Goi, Salom, Adjomankorpey, Matsekorpey and Sege-Nakomkorpey respectively. In terms of strength and size these new co-operatives together formed only a tenth of that of the Ada Songor Co-operative Salt Miners' Society Limited.

It even so happened that on the 16th of September 1986 fourteen members of the co-operative wrote to the Registrar of Co-operatives with copies to other sensitive areas including the Committee of Secretaries of the ruling PNDC government maligning the entire leadership of the co-operative. In this petition it was demanded that the 'top brass' of the Ada Songor Co-operative be arrested immediately naming specifically Lawer Hushie, Dornu Hushie, Lawer Agblo, Ofoe Mankwa, Dotser Asamani, Abdulai Sottie, Tsatsu Mankwa, Korletey Agbetiamah and Anku Gollo.

It is unfortunate that the Department of Co-operatives, instead of playing a conciliatory and advisory role, rather contributed to the division. The Department, in clear contravention of its own rules and conventions that prohibit the establishment of other co-operatives with similar objectives within a radius of 5 miles (8 km) of an existing one, authorised the formation of these new co-operatives all of which are situated within this radius. The seeds of disunity have thus been sown.

The Ada Songor Co-operative, however, will always advocate unity of action among the salt winners around the Songor Lagoon and is making all efforts to work in unison with these new co-operatives.

At a meeting with the Interim Management Committee (IMC) of the Dangme District Administration on 27th April 1986, the co-operative appealed to the Dangme District Council to reduce its tax demands of 60 cedis (later 40 cedis) on a 50 kg bag of salt fearing that this would render the price of our Songor salt

uncompetitive. Nevertheless the co-operative paid an amount of one million cedis on account in respect of taxes demanded by the council. Despite this, at a workers' meeting at Ada-Foah in the Dangme District, under the chairmanship of Mr James Ayiku Nartey, the District Secretary, the IMC said that, since its establishment in October 1985, the co-operative had failed to pay its taxes on salt despite repeated warnings. This was reported in the Monday 14th July 1986 issue of the Ghanaian Times. The co-operative therefore asked the council 'to publish the list of all societies working in the district and the amount of taxes that each has paid. This the society said is the only way to demonstrate the sincerity behind the call by the Interim Management Committee of the council to salt miners in the area to pay their taxes' (Daily Graphic, Monday 14 July 1986).

Far back in September 1984, after a public education rally at Bonikorpey, the salt miners suspected the Dangme District Secretary to be an ally of Appenteng. This resulted in much tension between the co-operative and the Dangme District Council. This strained relation became aggravated when it was alleged, after a thorough investigation, that the District Secretary was behind the writing of the letter of 16th September 1986 by the fourteen members of the co-operative, and also when the Secretary demanded a high tax of 60 cedis on each 75 kg bag of salt that the members of the co-operative would mine. Also, the relationship then existing between Mr James Ayiku Nartey, the District Secretary, and Mr Lawer Hushie, the Vice-President of the co-operative, was not cordial either, probably because of Hushie's poor performance in public relations.

In addition to the above problems the co-operative has internal ones too, which to a great extent thwart the progress of work. These problems include mismanagement and rampant theft cases of co-operative property. There is also a feeling that being a founding member of the co-operative guarantees superiority over other members. This state of affairs needs continued attention through regular education.

But above all the most important problem facing the co-operative is the lack of vision and sense of mission among most of the top leadership of the co-operative. These qualities are nee-

ded for bringing about fundamental social change and material progress amongst our people. The poverty of the leadership of the co-operative in persons with these qualities is hampering progress. In a sense this situation was inevitable. This is because most of the people who emerged as leaders were chosen on the basis of their bravery in the thick of the struggle rather than for any revolutionary qualities they might have. This has remained a problem that the co-operative is grappling with.

In spite of these teething problems the co-operative has been able to make some strides forward. The co-operative made it possible for so many of our people to be gainfully employed. It enables the salt winners to meet their financial obligations to the state in the form of payment of customs duties. The co-operative has rehabilitated the roads from Koluedor to Bonikorpey, dug a well at Anyamam, roofed the Matsekorpey and Koluedor school buildings, constructed a Kumasi Ventilated Improvement Pit (KVIP) latrine at Big Ada, to mention a few. The co-operative intends to embark on further development projects like constructing school blocks and providing furniture for the schools, digging wells or constructing watertanks, the construction of KVIP latrines in the villages and around the lagoon area, etc. But the future and further progress of the co-operative can only be guaranteed in a peaceful atmosphere and under an inspiring leadership. Long live Songor, long live the Ada Songor Co-operative!

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### **THE SYSTEM ADMITS THE PROBLEM - THE PROBE**

For all the years since 1971 until Maggie's death, the wailings, the cries, the clamour, the sufferings and the written petitions of our people apparently never penetrated the ears of our governments. Even worse, the police, an arm of the government, who are to keep the peace impartially, kept raiding the villages relentlessly and remorselessly, which culminated in damage to property, unjustified interference with property rights, physical assault, battering and torture. Our people therefore had nobody to complain to. They bore these sufferings with repressed anger and frustration and waited for the day of salvation. As a result of these unprovoked attacks, the tension between our people and the police reached its boiling point and a young pregnant woman had to be killed before the government of the Provisional National Defence Council stepped in.

Upon this callous murder, the government passed an Executive Instrument, E.I. 12, on 24th September 1985 setting up a Committee of Inquiry on Songor Lagoon under the chairmanship of Mr S.H. Amissah of the Methodist Church (retired Principal, Wesley College) with Togbe Adja Tekpor VI, Osie of Avatime, and Mr J.K. Harlley, State Attorney, as members and Mr E.C. Kotey, acting Chief Director of the Ministry of Defence as secretary. The committee, among other things, was:

- '- to investigate the grievances and complaints of the people of the Ada Traditional Area in relation to the operations of Vacuum Salt and Star Chemical Company Limited in the Songor Lagoon;
- to investigate whether the operations of these companies have resulted in undue hardship to the people in the area and to make recommendations to redress such hardship, if any;
- to investigate to what extent the operations of Vacuum Salt

and Star Chemical Company Limited are preventing the people of the area from developing their own portion of the lagoon;

- to inquire into any other matter which, in the opinion of the committee, is reasonably related to the foregoing and which the committee is satisfied should be inquired into; and
- to submit its findings to the Provisional National Defence Council giving reasons and making such recommendations to the council in respect of its findings as the committee may find appropriate'.

The cases of all the parties involved, the Ada Traditional Council, the Ada Songor Co-operative Salt Miners' Society Limited, Star Chemical Company Limited and Vacuum Salt Products Limited were fully presented before the committee.

In view of the grievances submitted and the exhibits presented several witnesses were called by all the parties concerned and by the committee itself. To ascertain certain facts and complaints from either individuals or the companies, the committee paid visits to the lagoon site. The most important visit came off on Thursday 24th October 1985. This visit was reported in the Saturday 26 October 1985 issue of the Daily Graphic under the heading 'Songor Lagoon Committee Moves to Site'. The report stated, among other things, that 'Management and other representatives of the companies, Vacuum Salt and Star Chemicals, and the local people, security personnel and officials of the Dangme District Council were also among those who went on the fact-finding tour.

From the arguments adduced it became clear that the usurpation of the heart of the lagoon by Vacuum Salt and the prevention of the people from winning salt from it are the basis of the dispute'.

"Throughout the over 48 kilometre journey, the people in the villages along the route cheered the arrival of the convoy ... the chairman of the committee, Mr S.H. Amissah, noted that the tour has revealed a lot of facts which would help the committee in its findings. He hoped that the spirit that prevailed would remain throughout the assignment so that the dispute would be resolved amicably.

Togbe Adja Tekpor VI, Osie of Avatime, also said that the tour



had 'opened the eyes of the committee members' and it would help them greatly in resolving the issue.

Meanwhile, the Dangme District Secretary, Mr James Ayiku Nartey, who was in the team, seized a gun from Mr Andrew Sackey, a watchman of Vacuum Salt on the approach of the team to the Vacuum Salt premises. The seizure was due to violation of a government directive of 2nd October, that 'no one should be seen using weapons for security or any other purposes around the Songor Lagoon area'.

The gun has been placed in the custody of the Ada police.

The case of the Ada was that, without just cause, they have been deprived of their rights to the Songor Lagoon, and indeed of their rights even to the land on which some of their villages bordering the lagoon stand. Furthermore, the two companies and their allies, in assertion of their rights, purportedly granted them, have engaged in persistent and systematic acts of terror and harassment using their employees as well as State Officials, often in uniform.'

At the probe the two companies argued vehemently that they legally acquired the lagoon, and that they never resorted to any terrorist activities in the area. They also asserted that if policemen harassed the people around the lagoon, it could not be attributed to them. The two companies also claimed that their operations in and around the Songor Lagoon were beneficial to the people of Ada and of vital importance to the national economy. Therefore, their existing concessions must be preserved.

The two companies have been operating on two legal documents - the lease granted them in 1971 by the Ada Traditional Council and, later, the Executive Instrument No. 30/74, which purportedly cancelled the 1971 lease and which subsequently gave them the leases on which their present rights to operate are based.

The counsel for the people of Ada submitted at the probe that the circumstances surrounding the execution of the 1971 lease and the compulsory acquisition of the Songor Lagoon by the government in 1974 and the subsequent apportionment of the lagoon to the two companies were such that whether under

common law, by the Conveyancing Decree, NRCD 175 of 1973 or under customary law, the leases must be set aside as unreasonable. Fui Tsikata, counsel for the Ada Songor Co-operative Salt Miners' Society Limited, said: 'Even if the companies obtained their concessions through the formal procedures, there are good reasons of law and justice, and grounds of policy which require that those concessions and the purported government acquisition on which they are based be revoked'.

It emerged at the probe that, when Mr Appenteng initially approached Nene Korley II, the head of the Tekperbiaweh clan, for the transfer of the Songor Lagoon, he refused to grant the request deciding it was not in the interest of his people. As the only authority whose consent and concurrence was necessary for such a transfer, underground manoeuvres were initiated to have him deposed and to have the lease granted and executed. This sinister move succeeded on grounds of insincere promises, false representations and selfish interest.

There was also evidence at the probe that at the time the lease was executed there was no peace in the Tekperbiaweh clan. There was a major rift between the leaders of the clan. Nene Korley II, who appealed against his deposition and won, and even Mr C.O.C. Amattey himself, the acting head of the Tekperbiaweh clan, under whose authority the lease was executed, brought separate actions against Vacuum Salt seeking to cancel the lease. The litigation that immediately followed the granting of the lease is a clear indication of the fact that even those representatives of Ada, who, for their private interest and in breach of trust sanctioned the lease, very quickly regretted their act when they saw the result of their selfish deed.

The illiterate witnesses to the execution of the lease who, rather unfortunately, formed the majority, never understood the real content of the document then thumbprinted. At the probe, they stated their understanding that what was being granted in the lease, was a particular piece of land outside the lagoon at a spot known to the Ada as 'A li tso a li te' (literally meaning they neither know a tree nor a stone) and rights to draw water from the lagoon. This fact first came to light when the two companies fought over the lagoon in 1971. They were therefore

naturally surprised at the rights claimed by the two companies. Furthermore, the lawyer who made preliminary enquiries about the lease and, in fact, who eventually prepared the lease instrument, Mr Emmanuel Kabutey Narter-Olaga, himself a citizen of Ada, testified at the probe that he acted as solicitor for the Ada Traditional Council and the Tekperbiaweh clan, while at the same time he negotiated the lease on behalf of the company - Vacuum Salt Products Limited. He later came to hold a 1.5% share in Vacuum Salt. When cross-examined he was asked to produce documents to show that the Ada Traditional Council had full knowledge of his relationship with Vacuum Salt and that yet the council asked him to represent it as required by law. Narter- Olaga could not. It also emerged that Mr C.O.C. Amattey, the head-lessor, was on the payroll of Vacuum Salt at the time the lease was executed. This startling fact was also revealed by Mr Olaga at the probe. That is why Mr Tsikata rightly asked 'How can a lease executed in such circumstances adequately protect the interests of the people of Ada?'

But one very interesting aspect of the lease document itself were the conflicting figures representing the area of the Songor purportedly granted to Vacuum Salt in 1971. While in clause 1 of the deed the concession is described as 'containing an approximate area of 26 square miles more or less', the schedule and the plan attached to the lease described it as 'covering an approximate area of 37.98 square miles'. Why these conflicting figures, one may rightly ask?

The counsel for Star Chemical, Mr George Thompson, argued that so far as all interested parties signed the deed, its validity is not in dispute. Even though Mr C.O.C. Amattey, one of the signatories to the transaction, testified as to the signing of the deed: he claimed that some of the documents which were closely related to the deed and purported to have been signed by him were forged.

The counsel for the people of Ada raised all these questions because of the elaboration with which the companies addressed the matter of the 1971 lease, even though they no longer claimed it as the basis of their title.

The evidence given at the probe on the 1971 lease established

conclusively once more that the mass of the people have been the victims of some very fraudulent, rapacious and greedy professionals -lawyers and businessmen- in league with shortsighted selfish and gullible chiefs.

#### **EXECUTIVE INSTRUMENT NO. 30/1974 - E.I. 30/74**

This Executive Instrument, as already noted earlier, was promulgated by the government of the NRC on 18th March 1974, ostensibly to resolve the impasse between the two companies operative in the lagoon. However, the real effect of this instrument was the compulsory acquisition of the Songor Lagoon and its adjacent lands in the name of the NRC.

At the probe, the counsel for Vacuum Salt and Star Chemical, Mr Zwennes and Mr George Thompson respectively, argued that the basis of their title is E.I. 30/74. According to them, the government of the NRC validly acquired the Songor Lagoon and that the same government subsequently granted them effective leases of the portions over which they now assert their rights. According to Vacuum Salt they must be given exclusive rights over their concessions, so that, if any person should be found collecting or winning salt from their so-called concessions, that person would be prosecuted as a thief and a trespasser. The exclusive monopoly sought by Vacuum Salt on the Songor Lagoon was summed up by Joe Reindorf, counsel for the Ada Traditional Council, when he said: 'It is quite obvious from the materials before the committee that the single source of conflict in the Songor Lagoon area between the companies on the one hand and the chiefs and people of Ada on the other, out of which arises the claim of hardship complained of by the Ada, is the claim by the companies to sovereign rights over the lagoon by virtue of which rights they claim that the chiefs and people have no rights whatsoever over the same subject matter.... The very fact that the two companies describe the villagers as 'trespassers' is proof that this is what the two companies claim'.

The counsel for the people of Ada further argued that the com-

pulsory acquisition of the Songor Lagoon by the government was not justified on the grounds that the people directly affected were not even consulted. Giving evidence at the probe through cross-examination, Mr E.A. Adjei, Principal State Attorney at the Lands Department, invoked Legislative Instrument 230 by stating that consultation with the people never formed a legal requirement for such acquisition. The issue now is the construction and interpretation of the said Legislative Instrument. Therefore, his interpretation and understanding of the said Legislative Instrument 230 was that the government was right in not consulting the people of Ada before acquiring the Songor Lagoon. However, one may ask whether it is reasonable and in fact justifiable for the government to compulsorily and permanently divest a community of its lands without consulting that community. The people would obviously protest against such irresponsible use of power. That is why Fui Tsikata rightly said: 'The consequence of such a limited method of statutory interpretation is the continuing unrest and the persistent sense of grievance on the part of the people who have been dispossessed'. It is crystal clear that the real motive behind the acquisition of the lagoon was the interest of the two companies. This is because immediately after the acquisition certain portions of the lagoon were leased out to the same companies which previously fought over the lagoon. This singular act of the government, which is against natural justice, equity and good conscience, is rather ridiculous and would remain a riddle. This ridiculous act of the government was summed up by Joe Reindorf at the probe when he said 'For the settlement of disputes between private persons about property there are courts of law, and where private disputants resort to physical violence as the two companies did against each other to enforce their respective claims, the law rewarded them by having the property they were fighting about seized from the innocent bystander, who is the rightful owner, and shared between them'.

This issue of E.I. 30 had been further highlighted by the counsel for the people of Ada. By extensively quoting the law Joe Reindorf pointed out that the government can compulsorily acquire stool land only in the 'public interest' and when 'special circum-

stances' require it. A government is vested with wide powers to pass laws. But when government passes laws under doubtful circumstances to satisfy a certain class of people (rich) to the detriment of another class (poor), the inevitable - social unrest - would occur. In law, if an executive exercises its discretionary powers arbitrarily, the courts are there to apply the necessary brakes by setting such decisions aside. To quote Joe Reindorf: 'The statutes empowering the Head of State to acquire property compulsorily for the state where he is satisfied that such acquisition is in the public interest and that special circumstances exist for such an acquisition confer on the Head of State a discretion. That discretion is not unfettered. The law requires that it must not be exercised only for that purpose for which it was conferred, that it must not be exercised arbitrarily, capriciously or out of improper motives'.

The two conditions on which the government acquired the Songor Lagoon, a stool land, crumbled when pitched against the evidence adduced at the probe. No reasonable evidence was given to justify the promulgation of Executive Instrument 30 by the NRC government.

At the inquiry, the counsel for the people of Ada called the attention of the committee to the fact that the law requires the government to declare to the open public the acquisition of the Songor Lagoon. Mr E.N. Adjei, when cross-examined again to give evidence on that requirement, gave evidence in support of it. The evidence he gave was a document, more specifically a letter, - Exhibit VS20- purportedly written by the Secretary to the NRC and addressed to the Commissioner for Lands and Mineral Resources. The letter stated that the Chairman of the NRC was satisfied that the Songor Lagoon should be compulsorily acquired. The basis on which the government got satisfied that the Songor Lagoon should be compulsorily acquired remains a mystery. The letter was never seen by anybody except the official to whom it was addressed. The contents of this letter were never known until it was produced and read out at the inquiry on 8th May 1986. Such a hidden letter -Exhibit VS20- cannot represent the sort of open, public announcement that would constitute a declaration for the purpose of the law. Joe

Reindorf laid much stress on this letter and stated that the letter directed the Minister of Lands to take 'all appropriate steps to acquire the entire expanse of the Songor Lagoon and the adjacent lands'. When the letter directed that appropriate steps should be taken, then all it means is that all appropriate steps must be taken. One of such steps was the publication of the acquisition instrument, which was done. The other step preceding the passing of Executive Instrument 30 was the declaration of the acquisition to the open public. This was not done. The omission of such an important step by the Minister, according to Joe Reindorf, is fatal to the validity of the acquisition and therefore E.I. 30 should be declared null and void. Vacuum Salt insisted at the probe that its operations in the Songor Lagoon were in the public interest and that the people of Ada stood to gain. Vacuum Salt is a monopoly organisation, an organisation which controls either price or output but with a bias towards the former. The same monopoly organisation deals in goods which have no substitutes. Salt is an essential commodity which is indispensable to a menu chart in every home, everywhere. It also has wide industrial use and it has no substitutes. Vacuum Salt as a monopoly has been able to dominate the salt trade in Ghana. Already, the exclusive operations in the area for a very short time only has resulted in very high prices for salt enabling it to reap monopoly profits, all in the 'interest of the public'. How can the operations of a private firm, which is monopoly oriented, be in the interest of the public? A very simple fact reveals the exploitative nature of Vacuum Salt. In December 1985, while Vacuum Salt was demanding a price equivalent to 3.70 cedis per kilo of salt, the Ada private salt winners' price worked out to be 0.40 cedis per kilo. It is very interesting to note that both Vacuum Salt and the Ada private salt winners use the same technology - solar evaporation. On the basis of these relative prices, it is very clear that the public interest is better served by the private salt winners than by Vacuum Salt. The attitude of Vacuum Salt is a straight case of sheer greed and avarice. They prevented thousands of villagers from entering the lagoon resulting in massive unemployment. They thus protect the so-called public interest

at the expense of humanity.

### **THE CAUSTIC SODA PLANT**

When Vacuum Salt Products Limited was to be incorporated, it falsely represented in its objects to its prospective promoters, including the government, that it was to produce salt using the vacuum method, and to produce caustic soda which would serve as a vital raw material in the industrial sector of the economy. For fifteen years, all Vacuum Salt could do was adopt the same method of salt production -solar evaporation- as the Ada inherited from their forefathers and maintained to this very day. For all these years, the promoters and the government never questioned this false representation. By this false representation the company again managed to rob the state coffers. This is because the company was given some tax exemptions.

### **THE QUESTION OF LABOUR**

For fifteen unprecedented years, Vacuum Salt monopolised operations in the lagoon and forcibly drove off thousands of our people. The mass of the people who have been dispossessed were therefore forced by circumstances beyond their control to offer their labour to Vacuum Salt for ridiculously low wages. Mr Allotey, an employee of Vacuum Salt, shamelessly confessed at the inquiry that 'one reason why the people should be prevented from working independently in the lagoon was that if they should be allowed to do that, the company would not get labour'. This assertion is true because, since the lagoon was opened up to the people, Vacuum Salt has been suffering from a persistent shortage of labour for its own operations. This practice by Vacuum Salt smells like the tactics employed by the capitalist apartheid regime in South Africa as stated in the Policy of the Glenn Grey Act, South Africa, and quoted in 'The West and the Rest of Us' by Chinweizu:  
'... break up the tribal system which gives ... economic strength



to native life; set the Kaffir on an individual footing as an economic bargainer, ... put him down under circumstances where he has no option but to labour at the mines', and J.A. Hobson in his book 'Imperialism' identified the practice of this policy: '... the adopting by a white ruling race of legal measures designed expressly to compel the individual natives to whom they apply to quit land which they occupy and by which they can live, in order to work in white service for the private gains of the white man. When lands formerly occupied by natives are confiscated, or otherwise annexed for white owners, the creation of a labour supply out of the dispossessed is usually a secondary object'.

### **THE CASE OF EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO 'ITS' CONCESSIONS**

The two companies, especially the notorious Vacuum Salt Products Limited claimed that its operations in the Songor Lagoon were in the national interest, and that its concessions must be preserved. According to the company, it needs the exclusive rights to the part of the lagoon purportedly granted to it by the lease for its operations. Vacuum Salt Products Limited claims that it needs that area of 12,000 acres which represents its concessions and evaporating ponds. When Appenteng was subjected to cross-examination by Joe Reindorf on the potential of salt to be won inside the 12,000 acres, he resorted to evasive answers. The following extract of cross-examination at the probe reveals everything:

*Counsel:*

*'You say that for every 100 tonnes of seawater, you can get 2.5 tonnes of salt. Your previous evidence is to produce 400,000 tonnes of salt a year.'*

*Witness:*

*'That is the potential.'*

*Counsel:*

*'If you are aiming at 400,000 tonnes of salt a year, then you would agree with me that you would require 400,000 x 100 which would be 40 million tonnes of seawater.'*

Witness:

*'Yes, by your calculation.'*

*Counsel: 'Can you tell me what would be the volume of 40 million tonnes of seawater and what space it would occupy?'*

Witness:

*'... It would be spread over a year.'*

*Counsel:*

*'Supposing you had 40 million tonnes of seawater gathered together, what space would it occupy?'*

Witness:

*'You need volume, height and so many things.'*

*Counsel:*

*'I need only three things: height, breadth and length.'*

Witness: Witness did not reply.

*Counsel:*

*'You have about 12,000 acres of lagoon there. What I am putting to you is that you don't require 12,000 acres of the lagoon.'*

Witness:

*'Originally, when we went there, we went for the whole lagoon.'*

*Counsel:*

*'And with the whole lagoon, you could have produced 400,000 tonnes of salt, based on what calculations? How many tonnes of seawater?'*

Witness:

*'There are certain factors you should take into consideration.'*



*Maggie's Monument*

*Counsel:*

*'Right now, what I am asking about is the volume.'*

Witness: 'You can calculate.'

All that Joe Reindorf wanted to prove to Appenteng and the Committee of Inquiry was that Vacuum Salt did not need so much area for its operations. Claiming so much of the lagoon leaving the mass of our people unemployed is nothing short of expropriation, greed and rapacity.

During the height of Vacuum Salt's operations in the area, our people could not even visit relatives in the villages across the area demarcated by Vacuum Salt. Their right of way was so much restricted that the people found in close proximity to the lagoon were arrested, beaten up and sometimes thrown into cells without any charges brought against them.

Further, Mr Appenteng gave evidence that the company needs clayey soil to hold the seawater for evaporation. When Joe Reindorf asked him if the company would be prepared to accept some nearby clay still outside the lagoon, he said: 'What if I say it and the company hangs me'. That clearly shows that the company could still do its job effectively outside the lagoon, but as its avowed aim was to prevent our people from working in the lagoon, it was bent on doing just that. (Most of the lands immediately surrounding the lagoon is of clayey soil.)

## **MAGGIE'S DEATH**

At its 61st Public Sitting, 28th May 1986, the company put a suggestion to one Mr Walankaki, a senior police officer at the Police Headquarters in Accra, that Maggie may have been shot somewhere else and brought to the spot from which she was collected. In fact the least said about this funny and absurd statement the better, because it runs contrary to all the evidence before the committee. 'There is nothing to justify such speculation, particularly as they did not put that case to the eyewitness-

ses to the incident', said Fui. Miss Christiana Abbio and Miss Amakwor Anim testified at the probe. According to them, they were standing in the courtyard of Miss Abbio's uncle with Miss Kuwornu, having nothing to do with salt mining when shots were fired which injured both of them and killed Miss Kuwornu who died on the spot. Mr Jude Buer also testified that a policeman deliberately took aim and fired the fatal shot.

'I knew one of the policemen so I went to him.... He is Corporal Boakye.... He was the driver for the long truck.... We were still chatting when a police jeep came from Star Chemical area.... It came and parked on the road, about 60 metres from where the other jeeps were parked.... Later on, another jeep came with two policemen. When they came, they asked the policemen: 'Why are you playing with the villagers?' Stop playing the fool.... There was one elderly policeman who replied that the officer had come to disarm them. Then one among them -a very young, slim man- told the rest that he was having about three live bullets and could do harm to the people. Then he moved from where the others were, about ten metres, then took a step and stood in a squatting position behind some cactus. It was here that I told Boakye I was going to find something to eat.... I was running towards the village and at the same time I was shouting to the people that they should get indoors because the police had meant business.... Then, as I was running and at the same time shouting, less than 20 metres, there was a pond and I heard someone shout that they have shot me! Immediately I turned to look at them. I saw one with blood and she wanted to enter a room but she fell. Then the one who shouted stood back and fell dead.'

One very sad aspect of the 17th May incident is that, even after the probe, no effort has been made to pursue and bring to book those policemen who went on rampage on that day and to locate the policeman who committed that crime.

Obviously looking very desperate and losing ground, the two counsels for the two companies, especially Vacuum Salt's counsel, argued that the mandate of the Committee of Inquiry was

not to determine the illegality or otherwise of the leases and the government's compulsory acquisition. Their claim was that the Committee of Inquiry must operate within the terms of reference, namely to examine the grievances of the people of Ada against the two companies. It was a last minute move intended to mislead the committee and direct their attention away from the real issue at stake. Why do our people constantly become targets of terrorist actions mounted by the companies? Why do our people complain? Is it not due to the presence of these two hostile, greedy companies? How have they arrived at the Songor Lagoon? Is it not through the leases and the government's compulsory acquisition? If there were no problems about the leases and the government's acquisition, would our people complain? To sum it all up, Joe Reindorf had this to say in his final address to the committee:

'The present situation in the Songor Lagoon area is one structured for conflict, and that conflict, it is submitted, is not likely to cease until the situation is restructured for one conducive to peaceful co-existence. It was the government which brought that situation about in 1974, by conferring on the two outside companies leasehold rights by virtue of which they consider themselves entitled to exclusive possession, control and exploitation of the areas leased to them while in possession of the very same areas the original inhabitants and traditional owners who see no reason to give up exercising the rights of property they and their ancestors had exercised for centuries. In that situation of conflict, the original inhabitants have obviously suffered undue hardship, particularly because the invading companies have so far had more influence with and easier access to the coercive forces of the state. It is now for the government to restructure the situation and the choice is between two alternatives: either remove and deport all Ada people from the Songor Lagoon and resettle them somewhere else at public expense, or get the two companies out of the lagoon and make them confine their operations to land now unoccupied outside the lagoon, with licence to draw water out of the lagoon. Between these two alternatives, it is submitted there can be no doubt or

hesitation as to which should be preferred, on grounds of public expense, the public interest, lawful title, technological requirements, social policy, economic benefit to the people and, lastly, of morality. The only acceptable course is to move the two companies out of the lagoon on to land where they do not disturb the original inhabitants'.

The committee had seventy public sittings. At the close of the final sitting, the chairman, Mr S.H. Amissah, said the committee would do its work expeditiously to present a report to the government soon. He said that the fact that the committee was not given a deadline to present its report enabled it 'to understand the complexities of the issue which one can only endeavour to unravel at a leisurely pace'.

On Thursday 27th November 1986, the committee presented its report to the government through Alhaji Mahama Iddrisu, a member of the PNDC. This ceremony was reported in the Friday 28th November 1986 issue of the People's Daily Graphic under the heading 'Songor Lagoon Probe Submits Report'. The report contains the following, among other things: 'On receiving the report, Alhaji Iddrisu noted that the problems of the salt industry has engaged the attention of the government and the Ghanaian public for a long time.

He assured the committee that the government will study and implement its recommendations in the interest of the nation. Earlier, the chairman of the three-member committee, Mr S.H. Amissah, noted that bright prospects for both large and small-scale development of the salt industry exist in the Ada area and that serious efforts must be made to exploit the potentials of the industry for the benefit of the nation.

He said that the Songor Lagoon issue has deeper human problems which can only be resolved when all parties concerned are prepared to ensure peaceful co-existence'.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### **A LUTA CONTINUA!**

The story of the Songor has shown once more in history that the right to ancestral land, freedom from exploitation and the enjoyment of the fruits of our labour do not come as a gift from heaven, but as a result of hard work and sacrifice.

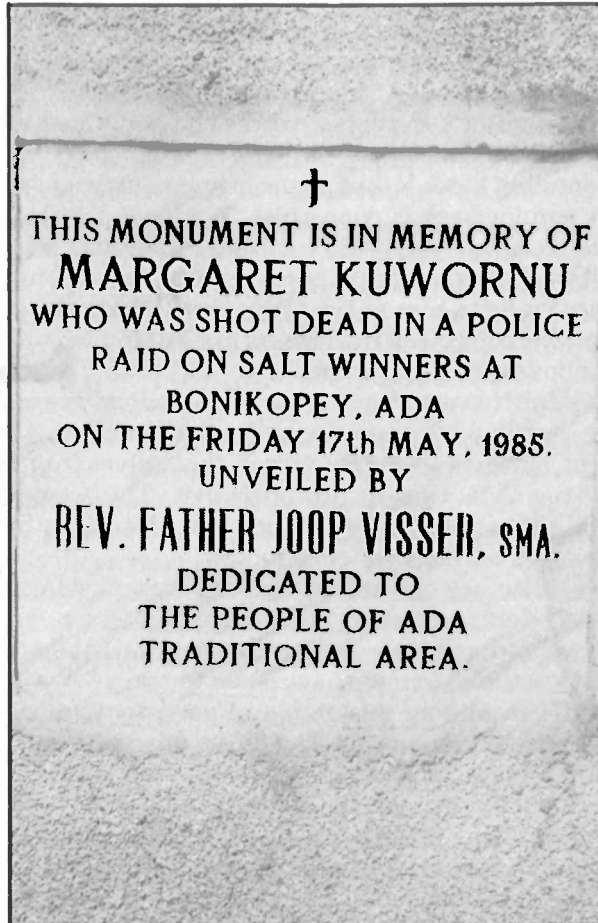
In the situation of our people, where the major occupation is salt winning, the misappropriation of the Songor Lagoon and the surrounding lands left us at the mercy of private companies as far as employment is concerned. The local people who, for centuries, were self-employed as proud salt miners were forced to sell their labour for a pittance to exploiting and monopolising companies who can hire or fire them at will. Indeed we became slaves and were declared trespassers on the land where we have had our abodes for generations.

But man's spirit everywhere is born to freedom. From spontaneous resistance by courageous individuals and small committed groups our people slowly forged themselves into a united force of the Ada Songor Co-operative. The long-standing proverbial saying that a single twig can be broken but not a broom became a life experience for us.

Ignorance, illiteracy and partisan interests are sins in our society we must relentlessly struggle to overcome. Our enemies play on them to hold us at ransom. In the spontaneity and heat of the struggle for freedom we have come to realise this. It is now up to us to consolidate this gain and persistently declare war on these deficiencies in our society as our constant internal enemies. As such our struggle to real, that is inner, freedom has only started.

As in our national history the death of Sgt Adjetey on 28th February 1948 was a sacrifice that became a turning point in our struggle for independence, so the death of Maggie became a turning point in the struggle of the Ada people for their Songor Lagoon. We have erected a monument of Maggie around which





*Memorial slab*

we will always celebrate the anniversary of her death. This monument stands for the values we hope to work towards in the transformation of our society. It will be a constant reminder to us, as members of the Ada Songor Co-operative, to foster equality, participatory democracy, solidarity and unity among ourselves and in the society in which we live.  
A luta continua!!!

## **POSTSCRIPT**

Though the probe by a government Committee of Inquiry started in September 1985 and finished its work in October 1986, as at now, January 1988, the government has not officially produced a judgement on our case. All we have to go by are the articles in two of the government owned dailies that purportedly report on a government White Paper, access to which or copies whereof are not available.

We reproduce the article as it appeared in the Daily Graphic of Saturday 19th September 1987 for the reader's own interpretation. We would not wish to comment ourselves until an official document is acquired.

## **'Government Accepts Songor Lagoon Report**

The PNDC has accepted the report of the Committee of Inquiry into the affairs of the Songor Lagoon and emphasised that, while agreeing with the committee's findings and recommendations, the government is of the view that certain important issues should be further investigated in the interest of justice and fair play.

Accordingly, the PNDC has given directives for certain measures to be taken, in relation to the report to make the operations in the lagoon area to functionally benefit the people in the area. These are contained in a statement signed by Mr Ato Dadzie of the PNDC Secretariat yesterday.

The statement said that the government takes a serious view

of the allegations of harassment and acts of brutalities meted out to the people of Ada and has therefore directed the National Investigations Committee (NIC) to make thorough case by case investigations in the area and submit recommendations for appropriate compensation to be paid where cases of brutality have been fully established.

The government equally endorses the committee's concern about the long delay in police investigation into the death of Madam Kuwornu and directs the Attorney-General and Secretary for Justice to ensure that police investigation into the unfortunate case is speeded up.

Whilst waiting for the completion of the investigation, the Attorney-General is to work out appropriate compensation to be paid to the family and dependants of the deceased.

The statement reaffirmed the state ownership of the Songor Lagoon under the State Lands Act (Act 125) but stressed that leases granted to the two companies will be revalidated in conformity with the Minerals Code to ensure that all payments of compensation, rents and royalties to the original owners are made after due determination of the ownership issue by the Lands Tribunal.

Meanwhile, the government has directed the Ministries of Lands and Natural Resources and Industries to work out a redistribution of shareholdings of the two companies whilst new boards of directors are to be appointed and the management of the companies restructured after consultations with the supervisory ministries.

The statement stated that the present arrangements for the winning of salt in the Songor Lagoon area does not cater for the legitimate interests and welfare of the people in the area and accordingly directs the appointment of a technical team by the supervisory ministries to study the technical and operational problems and submit proposals for maximising the economic potential of the lagoon area for the benefit of all parties.

The technical committee, according to the statement, is to look into the feasibility of the lagoon sharing arrangement between companies and the Ada Traditional Council and ascertain the factors which adversely affect the inflow of seawater into the

lagoon and the economic activities of the area.

The statement emphasises that the government has noted that the people in the Songor Lagoon area do not benefit much from the operation of the salt-winning co-operatives and has therefore directed that a joint team from the Department of Co-operatives and the Office of Revenue Commissioners should examine the operations of the salt-winning co-operatives.

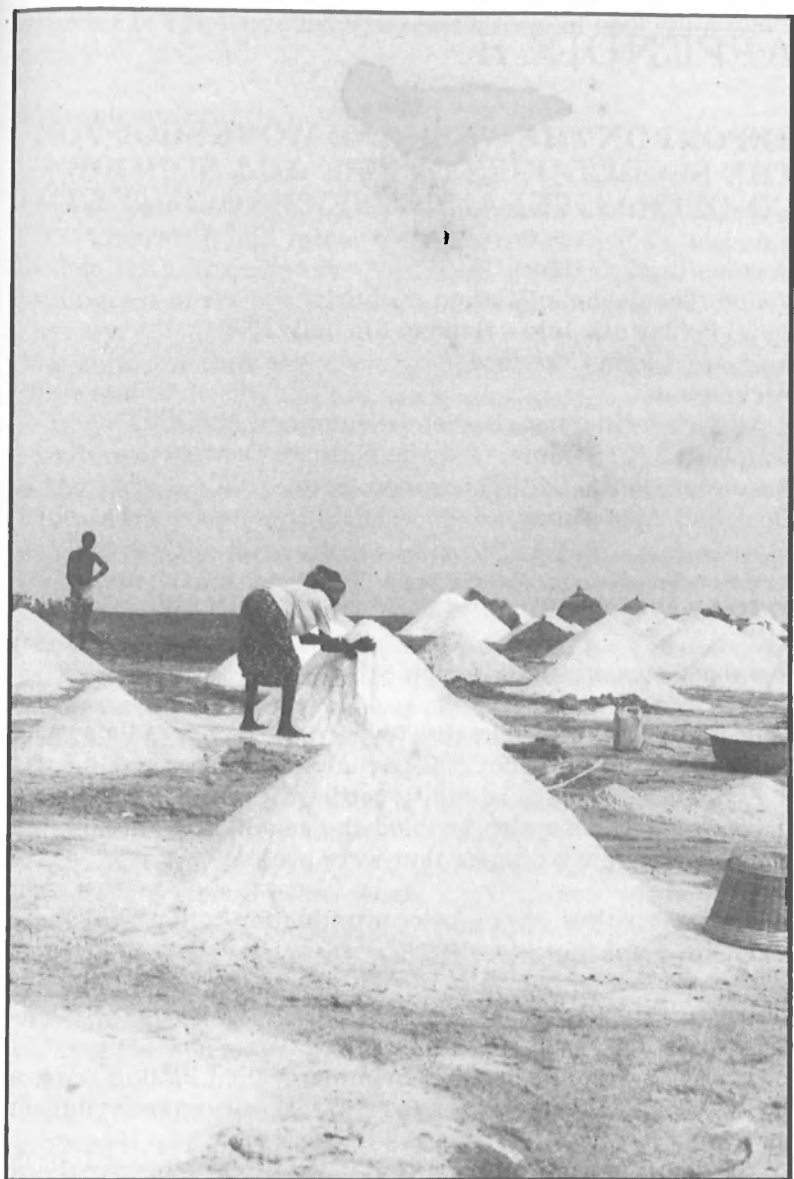
They are also to make recommendations for improving their performance and extending their activities to cover the majority of the people in the Songor Lagoon area'.

# APPENDIX A

## **SHAREHOLDINGS OF THE PROMOTERS OF VACUUM SALT PRODUCTS LIMITED**

Daily Graphic, 23rd April 1985

1. National Investment Bank 10%
2. National Savings & Credit Bank 10%
3. Ghana Commercial Bank (Development Finance Unit) 10%
4. Kwesi Efuna 10%
5. Kwesi Efuna 2.5%
6. Appenteng Mensah & Co. 31%
7. Gerassinos Alexi Panagiotopoulos 20%
8. Albert Adomako 10%
9. Ernest Orgle 5%
10. Kabutey Olaga 1.5%



# APPENDIX B

## **REPORT ON THE WEEKEND WORKSHOP FOR THE SECRETARIES OF THE ADA SONGOR CO-OPERATIVE SALT MINERS' SOCIETY LTD**

Theme: 'Critical Education'

Venue: The Catholic Mission, Koluedor

Date: Friday 4th July - Sunday 6th July 1986

Animator: John Crawford

Participants:

Kate, Lawer, Stephen, Korlety, Humphry, Mr Obu,  
Timothy, P.K., Sammy, Godwin, Nathan, Daniel,  
Eric, Alex, Peter, Sax, Theo, Joop, Seth, Kofi,  
Dock and Apetorgbor

### **FRIDAY 4TH JULY**

*Morning 9.00 a.m. - 12.00 noon*

In order to allow the animator to learn the names of those who took part in the workshop, the participants were asked to write their names on strips of white card which they pinned onto their clothing. This also enabled the secretaries to learn the names of the few strangers that were present.

The animator then gave a brief introduction to the workshop. He pointed out that:

- The workshop would be concerned with the word 'conscientisation'.
- This word was first written by a man called Paulo Freire, a Brazilian who had spent many years working and reflecting on the types of education that exist in the world.
- From his experience of working with illiterate marginalised

workers in Sao Paulo he developed a form of education that is above all 'critical'.

The animator continued that:

- The workshop would not be like other workshops, it would be very 'practical' with plenty of dialogue and plenty of action. The emphasis would rather be on 'learning' than on 'teaching' and so the outcome of the workshop would depend upon the willingness of the participants to fully participate.

The animator then asked the group to split up into groups of three and to discuss the following questions:

- a. Do you think that the people of this area have a good understanding of the Songor issue?
- b. As secretaries of the co-op, have you made any efforts to educate the people about the Songor issue?
- c. What are the difficulties you have faced or still face while trying to educate the people about the Songor issue?

The participants split up into six groups of three and discussed each question for a period of thirty minutes. Once the group had reassembled, newsprint was put on the wall and the various points from each group were collected and put under three headings:

- a. Do the people have a good understanding of the issue?
- Three groups said 'no' and three groups said 'yes'.

The reasons given for 'no' were:

- Because of the poverty forced upon them when they were no longer allowed to enter the lagoon to win salt, the people have been totally occupied with looking for food and money to survive and therefore have had no time to reflect upon issues concerning the Songor.

- Many people believe that the lagoon still belongs to them because it was given to their ancestors by God and so they do not see a problem to be overcome.



- The frequent police brutalities, e.g. the eating of salt, the beatings, the arrests, the shootings, the raids, have all served to terrorise the people and so many have become pessimistic. They believe that Appenteng is so strong that they will never be able to fight him and get their lagoon back.

The reasons given for 'yes' were:

- People have a deep belief that the lagoon is theirs.
- Because of this deep belief people have organised themselves and they have begun to fight: this shows that they understand the issue.
  
- Our fathers taught us that the lagoon is ours, we have worked on it and we have paid our taxes. Many of the people know that Appenteng has robbed us of the Songor and so the people have prayed to God to lay a curse on him.

The animator then invited the group to give any further comments or additions to the newsprint.

**b. Have we tried to educate the people about the Songor issue?**  
All six groups said 'yes'.

- We have organised the people to come together to reflect on the issue.
- We talk to the individuals that we meet so that they too will come to understand the issue.
- When the people were being raided by the police, we taught them how to resist arrest.
- We have also made efforts to help people understand that we have to be united if we want to win the Songor back.
- We have tried to educate the people about improving our material conditions.
- We have printed our Maggie and co-op T-shirts which serve as a means to educate people.
- By forming our co-op we have shown people in a practical

way what unity is.

- We have given employment to people:

8,000 people win salt;

1,000 people load salt;

40 people take charge of security.

- Over the last eight months we have paid:

5,000,000 cedis in taxes to the government;

1,000,000 cedis to the District Council for development work;

400,000 cedis to the Traditional Council.

- Appenteng could employ only 200 people at the most and tried very hard not to pay his taxes.

c. What difficulties did you face?

- Many people believed that if we would form a co-op then money would be misused by members of the co-operative and so some people began to lose trust.

- There was no regular attendance at meetings when we called the people together.

- Customers were prevented by the police from buying our salt.

- Our vehicles were impounded.

- Because of the police raids there was no peace in the land and so farming activities began to fall and we faced a very bad food shortage.

- People began to blame God for closing his/her eyes.

- Social evils such as stealing and prostitution increased.

- People often gave up hope on a victory.

- Poverty increased.

- People held the belief that if the government made a decision about the Songor there was nothing that could be done to change it.

After a brief review of all the themes that had been placed on the newsprint the group retired in order to take lunch.

*Afternoon 1.00 p.m. to 4.00 p.m.*

The animator began by outlining the philosophy and methodo-

logy of the work of Paulo Freire. The difference between 'banking' and 'critical' education was explained to the group and in order to make the whole concept of critical education a little easier to digest, an example of how it was used in Kenya among rural women was outlined to the group. Using this example the topic of 'generative themes' was introduced to the group. The list of generative themes that came out of the survey in Kenya were written on newsprint and explained to the group. The group was then asked to go back into smaller groups in order to discuss what they considered to be the generative themes of their villages. In order to make the task a little easier the animator gave six topics to be discussed:

In your village what are people most:

- worried about?
- happy about?
- sad about?
- angry about?
- fearful about?
- hopeful about?

After discussion in the smaller groups the participants were called back into the bigger group and the information was collected and placed on newsprint. This was done by two individuals from each of the groups, one would explain their findings to the bigger group and the other would summarise the contents and with the help of the bigger group put it down on the newsprint.

People are worried that:

- the Songor will be taken away from them. In the long run this would mean that people would not be able to win salt or be able to fish or use the Songor as a means of transportation;
- they will not be able to find a market for their salt;
- they have nowhere to store their salt;
- they have no protective clothing to wear when they are winning salt;
- they have no drinking water;

- there are very few first aid posts;
- the access roads to the Songor are not good;
- there are no nursery centres;
- the salt air can destroy buildings;
- the outcome of the probe will not be in their favour.

People are happy because:

- they can win salt;
- they have employment;
- they are free from police brutalities;
- there is peace and stability in the area;
- they have free movement;
- they are able to market their salt;
- they have the right to fish;
- they have won back the Songor;
- social evils such as prostitution and theft have begun to fall;
- they have money to support their families;
- they have made Mr Appenteng less powerful;
- religion has once again found meaning;
- people are able to farm;
- the roads and ponds are being repaired;
- the chiefs are united over these issues;
- information about the Songor problem is being spread over the country;
- social life has improved.

People are sad because:

- the lagoon was given to Appenteng and that they were no longer allowed to win salt;
- Maggie was shot and killed;
- the chairman's hand was broken by the police when he was beaten up;
- people's hoes, sacks, bowls and baskets were collected during the police raids;
- the police took away salt from the villages during the raids;
- people were forced by the police to chew salt and drink salt water
- the harassment of the co-op waybill officer took place;

- co-op officers were arrested;
- the salt is shared among individuals.

People are fearful:

- that the police and army brutalities will return;
- that Appenteng will bribe people in order to get the lagoon back;
- that it may come about that only a few individuals will benefit from the co-operative;
- that there will be no proper accountability of money;
- about equal development of the villages;
- that there will be a change of government;
- that the health of those people who were forced to chew salt will deteriorate;
- that Appenteng will organise another co-op in order to destroy our co-operative;
- that Appenteng will bribe officials of the Ada Songor Co-operative;
- that unnecessary conflicts will arise among the people and so give Appenteng an opportunity to destroy the co-op.

People are hopeful that:

- the Songor will remain in the people's hands so that they can continue to do their work;
- the co-op will undertake development projects;
- the people will drive Appenteng away from the Songor;
- the people will be able to find foreign markets for their salt;
- employment will continue for the people;
- the people will be free from police brutalities;
- the Ada will be brought under one umbrella;
- the policeman who shot Maggie will be brought to trial;
- tyranny will not replace tyranny;
- good roads will be built;
- on-going education of the co-op members will continue.

After all the themes were collected from the various groups and placed on newsprint and members were content that each section was complete, the animator asked each member to re-

flect on each of the above sections and choose one theme that they felt was the strongest for their particular community. Below is a list of the results:

- People are worried that the Songor will be taken away from them.
- People are angry that one man was allowed to brutalise the original owners of the Songor.
- People are sad about the shooting of Maggie.
- People are happy that they have the Songor back.
- People are fearful that Appenteng will bribe officials to get the lagoon back.
- People are hopeful that the Songor will remain in the hands of the people.

*Evening 6.00 p.m. to 8.00 p.m.*

During the evening session, three of the above themes were chosen:

- People are worried that the Songor will be taken away from them.
- People are angry that one man was allowed to brutalise the original owners of the lagoon.
- People are happy that they have the Songor back.

These three themes were written on newsprint and placed before the group. The animator then went on to point out the need to analyse in depth the root causes of these themes. Three separate headings were then written on newsprint and presented to the group. These were:

- the economic aspects of the theme;
- who controls the decision making in this theme?
- what are the cultural beliefs associated with the theme?

The animator gave a brief introduction and explanation of these three headings and after certain points had been clarified for the participants, they were asked by the animator to split up into three groups. Each group was then given one of the above themes to discuss and then to place the relevant information under the three headings. After the discussions in small groups

the participants were called together and asked to write their information on the newsprint.

This is the information as it appeared on the newsprint:

**A.** The people are worried that the Songor will be taken away from them.

The economic aspects:

- Our economic interests conflict with the interests of the companies interested in the Songor Lagoon.
- If the Songor is taken away from us, then our source of income will either fall or be lost completely.
- If the lagoon is taken away from us, we will have no work and so money will once again be scarce.
- If we lose the lagoon, we will become an exploited people and we will be forced to work for someone else.
- If the lagoon is taken away from us, the production of salt in Ghana will fall.
- Loss of income will mean that development projects in the area will not be able to take place.

Who controls the decision making?

- The government controls the decision making.
- The Committee of Inquiry.
- The people, especially the traditional rulers.
- Corrupt government officials can also affect the decision.
- Appenteng's class allies, especially his lodge brothers.

Cultural beliefs:

- The lagoon is the property and life blood of the people. If it is taken away from them, untold hardships and epidemics will come on the people since the customs will no longer be performed.

**B.** The people are angry because one man was allowed to brutalise the original owners of the lagoon.

The economic aspects:

- Only a few people were employed while Appenteng controlled the lagoon.
- Because the natives were poor they had no power to speak out.
- The people were economically exploited.
- Bribery: police and other officials.
- The people had not formed a co-operative and were therefore not economically organised.
- The economic policy of the government.
- Lack of proper accountability of revenue by tax personnel.

Who controls the decision making:

- Appenteng.
- The rich.
- The people, the poor self-claimed owners of the lagoon.

Cultural beliefs:

- The gods of the land were offended.
- The people called upon the gods to punish Appenteng.
- Traditional systems were broken down.
- The gods were happy when the lagoon came back to the original, traditional people.
- The customs were performed to purify the lagoon and pacify the gods.

**C. The people are happy that they have the Songor back.**

The economic aspects:

- The lagoon is a source of revenue for the people.
- The lagoon provided employment.
- The people did not benefit from the lagoon when it was in the hands of Appenteng.
- In Appenteng's time there was:
  - a. no employment;
  - b. meagre pay;
  - c. bad roads;
  - d. no fishing;
  - e. no collection of salt for domestic use;



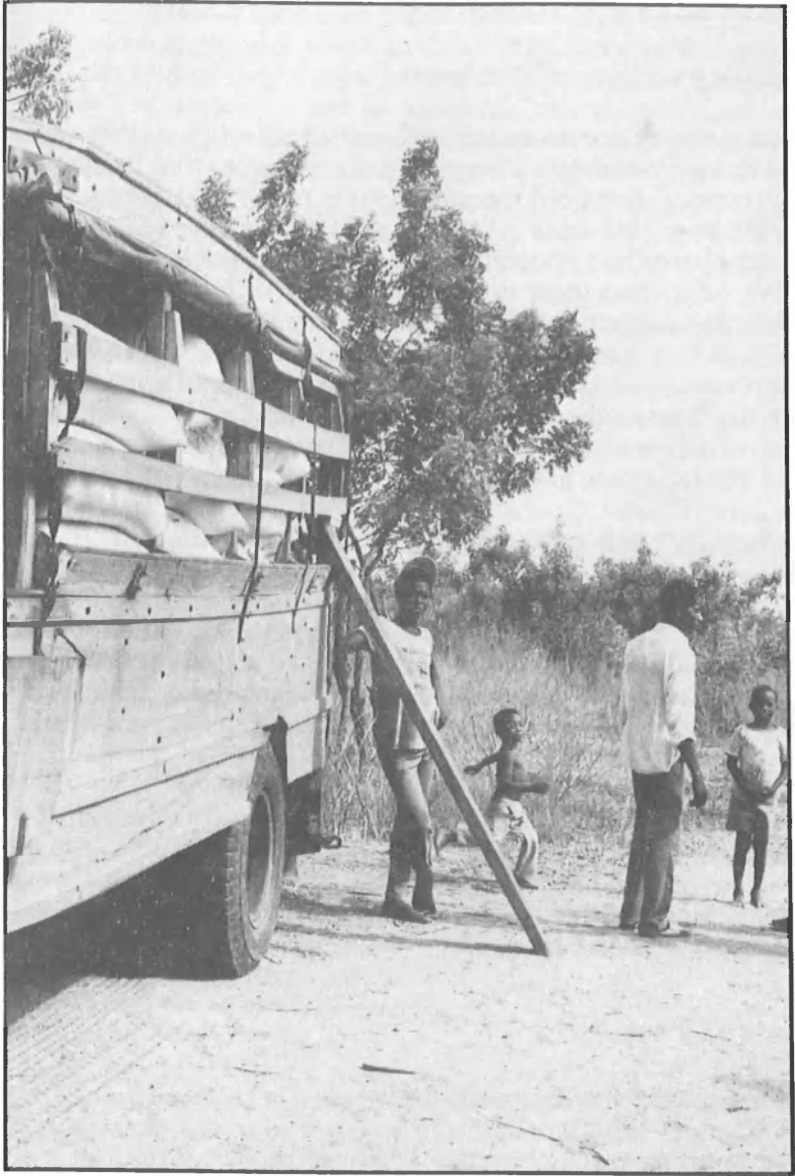
- f. no rehabilitation of school buildings;
- g. no royalty payments;
- h. a limited number of salt traders.

Who controls the decision making?

- The government.
- The people of Ada.
- Appenteng.

Cultural beliefs:

- There is a belief that the goddess 'Yomo' is behind us and supporting us in the struggle. The people still worship 'Yomo/Libi' through 'Libi Wornor/Woryo', traditional priest and priestess respectively.



## **SATURDAY 5TH JULY**

*Morning 9.00 a.m. to 12.00 noon*

The morning session began with a brief reflection on the events of the previous day. Then using an example from Kenya the animator introduced the participants to the next phase of the workshop: 'the code'. As soon as the animator felt that the participants had understood the basic concepts of code formation, he invited them to return to their groups of the previous day. The participants of each group were then asked to prepare a 'code' on the particular theme that they had discussed the previous evening. Group A was asked to prepare a small play. Group B was asked to prepare a poster and Group C was asked to prepare a song. The various groups worked on their codes for the next four hours.

*Afternoon 1.00 p.m. to 4.00 p.m.*

The first two hours of the afternoon session were given to code formation. When each group had completed their codes and questions, the participants were asked to return to the bigger group. Each code was performed and a member of each group led the bigger group in a discussion by asking the participants various questions.

*Evening 6.00 to 8.00 p.m.*

Due to the fact that the church was occupied during the evening the session could not come off and so all codes were presented in the afternoon session.

## **SUNDAY 6TH JULY**

*Morning session 9.00 a.m. to 12.00 noon*

The morning session began with a brief resumé of the previous

day. The animator then introduced the next topic 'How adults learn'. The group was asked to think of something that they had learnt while they were adults, something outside the context of a classroom. A set of questions was then written on newsprint and the participants were asked to sit quietly on their own and answer the questions. The questions were the following:

- What did you learn?
- Why did you learn it?
- Who helped you to learn it?
- What was the relationship between you and the persons who helped you?
- What was the situation in which you learnt it?
- In what way did you learn it?
- Can you remember anything that made your learning easier or more difficult?

The participants were asked to reflect on the above questions for thirty minutes. Then each member was invited to report back to the group on his or her experience. The animator then wrote three headings on newsprint and placed them on the blackboard. These were:

- What?
- How?
- Who?

The animator then continued by asking the group 'What kind of things did we learn?' The group was united in saying they were all 'practical' things, e.g.:

- learning how to steal salt;
- learning how to fish;
- learning how to ride a bicycle;
- learning how to catch a thief;
- learning how to trade.

The animator then asked the group to summarise 'How have we learnt those things?'. The group was united in saying that they learnt those things through continual practice.

The animator then asked the group to describe the people who had helped them to learn. They were united in saying that those who helped them were either friends or relatives.

Using the results of the above exercise and various basic points that were displayed on newsprint, the animator went on to point out the fundamental principles of how adults learn, giving special emphasis to the fact that most adults learn best by 'doing'. The session was finalised by placing on newsprint the following information:

Tests have shown that adults remember:

20% of what they hear;

40% of what they hear and see;

80% of what they discover for themselves.

The animator then went on to introduce the group to the last section of the morning session: 'Teaching people to read and write using the problem posing method'. The animator pointed out that it would be impossible within such a short period of time to cover all aspects of the method. Referring the group back to the 'Kenya Code' he pointed out that certain words within the code were 'generative', 'co-operative' being an example of such a word. This word was then written on newsprint and used as the main example in explaining the method. As soon as the animator was happy that the group had grasped the basic techniques involved, he asked them to go back into the smaller groups in order to experiment with 'new word formation'. Thirty minutes later the new words were collected and the groups were very surprised by the number of new words formed.

Two new words were then placed on newsprint. These were 'Nonam' and 'Songor'. Using the same technique the group was invited to try and make as many new words as possible. They created eighteen in all.

*Afternoon session 1.00 p.m. to 4.00 p.m.*

The afternoon session was given to a general evaluation of the

workshop. The following questions were written on the blackboard and the participants were asked to split up into three groups in order to reflect and discuss the questions. After two hours, the groups were called together and the following information was collected:

*Q: What have you learnt from this workshop?*

A: - How to feel free in public so that we can speak about our struggle.

- How to behave as a member of a group.
- How to pose questions to the community.
- We have learnt that when people come together and share their experiences we get better results.
- To focus people's minds on one problem and how to solve it.
- About conscientisation and the theory of Paulo Freire.
- How to organise people in order to fight for their rights.
- Self-awareness.

*Q: What part of the workshop did you find most enjoyable?*

A: - The preparation and presentation of the code.

- The code.
- The code and also the section on 'How adults learn'.

*Q: What part of the workshop did you find most helpful?*

A: - The section on 'How adults learn'.

- The section on 'How adults learn' and the section on literacy.
- The code section.
- How to teach people about things which affect them directly.
- The collection of generative themes.
- How to organise people to take action.

*Q: Were there any parts of the workshop that you found difficult to understand?*

A: - No.

- No.

- No.

*Q: Did you prefer to discuss things in a small group or in a large group?*

A: - Large groups on condition that all participants allowed the more shy ones to speak.

- Small groups, because each and everyone can bring out his or her contribution fully.

- Discussion in small groups prepares you for the bigger group.

- Small groups because you receive first-hand information.

*Q: How did you find the method and presentation of the workshop?*

A: - Very fantastic because we were able to learn a lot effortlessly within a short period of time.

- Real to life, effective and absorbing, the language of the animator was simple and straightforward.

- Splendid and practical.

*Q: How did you find the sitting arrangement?*

- A: - Good because we could see each other's faces while talking.
- Good and helpful because we could see each other.
  - Good/traditional.

*Q: How did you find the participation in the discussions?*

- A: - Good but some people dominated the discussions.
- Good, people felt free to express themselves and to make suggestions.
  - Good, with the exception of a few who talked too little.

*Q: Did everyone contribute in the smaller workshops?*

- A: - Everybody contributed but to varying degrees.
- Everyone contributed immensely.
  - Everyone contributed according to his or her capacity.

*Q: Do you have any suggestions about what to do with our drama and song?*

- A: - Improve upon them and present them to the people.
- They should be polished and presented to all villages, towns and put on the air so that all the Ada will know what the co-op is doing.
  - Mr J.M.T. Dosoo should be invited to polish the song and the drama and poster should be polished up and staged for the people up to the level of the mass media.

*Q: Did you find the venue satisfactory?*

- A: - Yes, it was good.
- Good, because amenities were available and the place was central for everyone.



- Quite good.

*Q: Did you find the food satisfactory?*

A: - O.K.

- Good but 'kokonte' should be added to the menu.
- The cocoa drink was too light and too sweet.
- Provision for special diets should be made.
- Too much pepper in the food.

*Q: Do you feel that we need another workshop?*

A: - Sure.

- Yes, as soon as possible.
- A big yes, we must dive deeper into the method.

*Q: Any useful tips for the future workshops or meetings?*

A: - Secretaries must put into practice what they have learnt and John should make himself available to help with the evaluations.

- We should get press coverage for future workshops.
- CDRs and Town Council members should be involved in future workshops.
- There should be a formal opening and closing of the workshop.
- There should be a round-off party after each workshop.
- Participants should be resident.
- The textbooks 'Training for Transformation' should be available to the secretaries.
- The next workshop should be longer.

N.B.: It was decided by the group that the next workshop should take place during the second week of August and its main aim should be to put together a book about the whole Songor issue.

The workshop was formally closed with the evening meal and a farewell party for those who were leaving the area.

**JUSTICE MUST BE DONE**

**PND** stands for peace

**Vacuum Salt: Factory** now 'traditional property'

**ALL ABOUT SONGOR SALT** A REJECT

**State now has majority shares** in 2 salt firms

**SALT POLITICS**

**Justice Must Preval**

**WDCs: A Vacuum Salt Probe**

**ALL ABOUT SALT (I)**

**Songor Lagoon c'ttee moves to site**

**Abrogate pacts on Songor Lagoon'**

# THE SONGOR LAGOON AFFAIR

— Vacuum Salt Talks

# SALT INDUSTRY PACT IS BOGUS, EXPLOITATIVE

... Say Ada PDCs, WDCs

Clear case of **indiscipline (I)**

# THEY'RE STEALING THE SALT

... And the State is losing revenue at Sege-Ada

**All About Salt (II)**

**Songor**

**CLEAR CASE OF INDISCIPLINE (2)**

**Government accepts Songor report**

**ALL ABOUT SALT (I)**

**SONGOR**

**C'ttee on Songor Lagoon set up**

**Review Vacuum Salt pact**

**All About Songor Salt (III)**

**Vacuum Salt affair**

**Okor Salt rejects claims list on tax payments**

**SONGOR LAGOON PROBE**

**Fangme Council blames salt miners co-op**

**Songor Lagoon Probe: Submits Report**

**C'ttee takes over Vacuum Salts**

# APPENDIX C

## CHRONOLOGY OF THE SONGOR LAGOON ISSUE

**1826:** Kantamaso war (fought over the Songor Lagoon between the Ada and the invading Ashanti)

**1866:** Dodowa war (fought over the Songor Lagoon between the Ada and the invading Ashanti)

**1963:** The Convention People's Party (CPP), the ruling government of the First Republic of Ghana, expresses interest in the Songor Lagoon.

**1969-1972:** Second Republic of Ghana - the Progress Party (PP) government of Dr K.A. Busia

**1970:** Busia regime passes the Aliens Compliance Order compelling foreigners engaged in certain categories of business to sell out. Appenteng acquires Panbros, a Greek-owned salt company

**December 1970:** Vacuum Salt Products Limited owned by Appenteng applies for the lease of the Songor Lagoon.

**1971:** Unlawful deposition of Nene Korley II. C.O.C. Amathey gets himself in place as the head of the Tekperbiaweh clan.

**1971:** C.O.C. Amathey and his supporters (on behalf of the Ada Traditional Council) lease out the Songor Lagoon (26 square miles) to Vacuum Salt Products Limited for 75 years.

**31 January 1974:** Executive Instrument 11 is passed and C.O.C. Amathey is sent to prison.

**18 March 1974:** The NRC passes Executive Instrument 30 (to

solve the conflict between Vacuum Salt and Star Chemical when they started demarcating what they consider their leased areas) and the entire Songor Lagoon is acquired by the NRC government.

**July 1974:** The NRC government leases 12,000 acres of the Songor Lagoon and its adjacent lands to Vacuum Salt Products Limited and the remaining part of the lagoon to Star Chemical Industries Limited.

**1975:** The NRC passes Executive Instrument 57 which sets a small portion of the Songor Lagoon called Yomo (which is a kind of sacred area) apart for the Ada people.

**4 June 1979:** The Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) headed by Flt Lt J.J. Rawlings seizes power.

**September 1979:** Power is democratically handed over to the People's National Party (PNP).

**1981:** The PNP government passes Executive Instrument 10 abrogating the leases granted to the companies in 1974.

**31 December 1981:** A military coup ushers the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) government of Flt Lt J.J. Rawlings into power.

**21 May/28 May/4 June 1982:** Raids by Vacuum Salt Products Limited and some military personnel on Kasseh Market in Ada.

**14 October 1982:** The Ada People's Defence Committee (PDC) takes over Vacuum Salt Products Limited.

**16 October 1982:** 'Vacuum Salt Factory Now Traditional Property', Daily Graphic report.

**23 October 1982:** 'Review Vacuum Salt Pact', Ghanaian Times publication.

'Salt Industry Pact is Bogus and Exploitative', Daily Graphic publication.

**October 1982:** Secretary for Labour and Social Welfare, Mr Ato Austin, calls a conference between the Interim District Coordinating Committee (IDCC) for PDCs and WDCs and Vacuum Salt Products Limited management.

**9 December 1983:** 'WDCs - A Vacuum Salt Probe Overdue', Ghanaian Times publication.

**16 December 1983:** 'Justice Must Prevail' by S.I.T. Ayekpa, Daily Graphic publication.

**23 December 1983:** 'Committee Takes over Vacuum Salt', Daily Graphic publication.

The PNDC government takes over the operations of Vacuum Salt Products Limited from the Ada PDCs and hands over to a five-man Care-taker Management Committee.

**March 1984:** The customs officer at Kasseh is stopped from issuing invoices and waybills and collecting duty and tax on salt.

**7 April 1984:** Formation of Ada Songor Co-operative Salt Miners' Society Limited.

**25 April 1984:** Ada Songor Co-operative Salt Miners' Society Limited is registered on certificate no. 11601 by the Acting Registrar of Co-operative Societies in conformity with the law on Co-operatives No. 252 of 1968.

**1 June 1984:** The PNDC government issues a Press Statement which states, inter alia, that E.I. 10 of 1981 be revoked; leases granted to the companies in 1974 reconfirmed; and the traditional salt winners in the Ada Traditional Area must be encouraged to form co-operatives to win salt in the area allotted to them.

**2 June 1984:** 'State Now Has Majority Shares in Salt Firms', Ghanaian Times publication on the Songor Lagoon issue.

**16 June 1984:** Ada Songor Co-operative starts its independent work in the Songor Lagoon.

**25 June 1984:** Customs officers raid Ada Songor Co-operative office at Bonikorpey.

**July 1984:** The State Secretary for the Interior, Kofi Djin, summons Lawer Hushie to his office for interrogation.

**16 August 1984:** A police raid on the Ada Songor Co-operative, led by Assistant Commissioner of Police in charge of Tema Region, Michael Asiedu.

**September 1984:** Michael Asiedu organises a public education rally at Bonikorpey and invites the companies, the co-operative and the Dangme District Secretary.

**17 October 1984:** Nii Abeo Kyerekuandah IV, Greater Accra Regional Secretary, pays a visit to the Songor Lagoon area.

**19 October 1984:** 'PNDC Stands for Peace', Daily Graphic report on the Songor issue.

**14 November 1984:** The Ada Songor Co-operative petitions the Regional Secretary to allow us start work in the lagoon.

**29 November 1984:** The co-operative organises a rally at Bonikorpey which is addressed by the Paramount Chief of the Ada Traditional Area, Nene Abram Akuaku III.

**5 December 1984:** Police raid on the people working in the lagoon. There are several casualties including Lawer Agbloe who has his left arm broken.

**20 February 1985:** The Songor Lagoon is leased out to the two

companies in accordance with the Press Statement of June 1984 for 50 years starting from 1st December 1984.

**3 March 1985:** The co-operative holds a summit at Matsekorpey where we decide to resume our work in the lagoon by force.

**7 March 1985:** Using Vacuum Salt's tipper truck the police raid Bonikorpey and Toflokpo at midnight.

**12 March 1985:** 'They (local inhabitants) Are Stealing the Salt', Ghanaian Times publication.

**13 and 14 March 1985:** 'Clear Case of Indiscipline', Ghanaian Times editorial comments.

**21, 22 and 25 March 1985:** 'All about Songor Salt', Daily Graphic publications.

**1 April 1985:** 'Salt Politics', Daily Graphic editorial comment.

**6 April 1985:** 'Abrogate Pacts on Songor Lagoon', Daily Graphic report.

**13 April 1985:** White flag hoisted in the lagoon to commemorate the ancient administration over the Songor

**23 April 1985:** 'Justice Must Be Done', by Nene Tetteh Chayi II, Daily Graphic publication.

**24 April 1985:** 'The Songor Lagoon Affair - Vacuum Salt Talks', Daily Graphic publication.  
'All about Songor Salt - a Rejoinder', Ghanaian Times publication.

**17 May 1985:** Massive police attack on salt miners and a young pregnant woman, Margaret Kuwornu, is shot dead.

**24 September 1985:** Executive Instrument 12 is passed by the

PNDC government setting up a Committee of Inquiry into the operation of companies and individuals in the Songor Lagoon.

**25 September 1985:** 'Songor Lagoon Probe', Daily Graphic publication.

**2 October 1985:** PNDC government directs that traditional salt winners are free to work in the lagoon and that nobody should carry any weapon to the site.

**3 October 1985:** 'The Songor Lagoon (Probe) Affair', Ghanaian Times and Daily Graphic publications.

**26 October 1985:** 'Songor Lagoon Committee Moves to Site', Daily Graphic publication.

**1986:** Other salt-mining co-operatives are formed in the Songor Lagoon area.

**14 July 1986:** 'Dangme Council Blames Salt Miners Co-op', Ghanaian Times report.  
'Salt Miners Call for List on Tax Payments', Daily Graphic publication.

**16 September 1986:** A petition by 14 members of the Ada Songor Co-operative to the Registrar.

**28 November 1986:** 'Songor Lagoon Probe Submits Report', Daily Graphic publication.

**19 September 1987:** 'Government Accepts Songor Lagoon Report', Daily Graphic publication.



# EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF THE SONGOR CO-OP\*

The original objectives of the co-op were, firstly, to help our people regain the right on their land, and, secondly, to act as an instrument for community development.

As to the first objective we find ourselves in a cold war situation. Though we are now free to mine, fish or farm on our land, this arrangement is still a temporary one until the government gives its final verdict on the report of the probe conducted into the case.

The probe itself lasted a full year. About a year after the presentation of the report, the government owned dailies made centre-page mention of a purported White Paper on it. This is the only public statement so far, and another full year has passed. It has been informally learnt, however, that what was reported as a White Paper was only a draft proposal towards it. And actually a document containing recommendations by the PNDC secretaries' meeting on the draft is in circulation among ministries concerned with the Songor issue. A final White Paper has thus not been produced: neither have the Songor people -either through their traditional heads or through the co-op, both represented at the probe by separate counsels- received any official word from the government nor have they been served with any insight into the probe's report, the purported White Paper or any other developments taking place. It is learnt, however, -again unofficially- that, probably on the basis of recommendations on the draft White Paper, a technical committee has been set up by the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources to conduct further investigations into and make recommendations on the exploitation of the Songor Lagoon. The orientation of the findings and proposals to be made might be

*\* The Songor-story is an ongoing story that shows its ups and downs. This will be clear from this final part of the book, which is obviously from another source.*

deduced from the secretive and selective way in which the committee has gone about its work. Though members of the co-operative have heard that a three-man technical team, consisting of Dr P.C. Acquah, Mr A.K. Agboado and Mr S.A. Kessie were twice around in the area, no contact has been taken up with them nor with the chiefs in the lagoon.

Further unofficial but reliable sources inform us that in the meantime new leases are being assigned to companies that have applied for the right of salt winning. The end of it all is that anything can happen any time, and that the fate of the local salt miners and inhabitants of the lagoon is still in the balance. Given the trend in Ghana, the fear that the people may again be the great losers is not unfounded.

The leadership of the co-operative has not been able to do more than just gather as much information as possible, like the above about underground movements going on. But given the nature of the information it is hard to take concerted action upon it apart from alerting one or two sympathetic and potentially influential people about what appear to be negative developments. Impotency of the leadership is also partly caused by strife and divisiveness among the local people that reared its ugly head again after the binding factor of the physical struggle had fallen away. This paralysing fact could easily be used against us if we tried to press the government for an early solution in the impasse.

The inefficiency, unaccountability and outright corruption with officials and departments -to mention specifically the Department of Co-operatives- we have to deal with contribute greatly to the confusion about our plight, and make strategic and progressive planning and action to protect the people's right and interest almost impossible.

As for the second objective, from the beginning of its existence the co-op had contributed funds for amenities to improve the

living conditions in the area. Further, when the Songor area had returned to its present cold war peace, periodic training-for- transformation sessions were started for the secretaries of the village branches of the co-op, united in the Secretaries' Committee, in order to develop an integrated orientation towards development. It began with a long weekend -a report of which is included in this book- during which the secretaries had the opportunity to reflect in an analytical way on their recent experience of struggling for their land, and to become aware of their task ahead. The Secretaries' Committee at that time functioned as a critical structure for and next to the Management Committee, in which they were also represented. Evaluating our educational efforts now, it should be acknowledged that the animators -who came from outside and were thus not fully aware of the local situation- took too much for granted. It was, for example, not realised that people at village level were not really organised as a co-operative and were in fact merely nominal members. Instead of giving this reality the attention it deserved, a decision was made at the close of the first workshop to devote subsequent ones to the writing of the story of the struggle for the lagoon. Though this was laudable as a conscientisation exercise, it was at the cost of organising a broader base to cope with the multitude of problems that were soon to be faced internally and externally. This diversion of attention, we can now say, was clearly exploited by Lawer Hushie for his own ends; as the originator of the co-op, he held an influential and by many even respected position in both the Management Committee and the Secretaries' Committee. He was the only educated full-timer on the spot -the main office at Bonikorpey- together with the illiterate section of the Management Committee and they soon started to regard those young brats of village secretaries and those professional members of the Management Committee resident in Accra as envying their position of power and unnecessarily challenging their unilateral decisions and actions. The newly evident economic potential of the salt business was clearly too much of a temptation for some. Individual people who knew a thing or two about Hushie's past and who were critical of his constant unilateral decisions

did for some reason or other not want to act on it in a decisive way. These reasons included the feeling of having started the struggle together, and for the outside enemy one could not afford to show to be innerly divided. Local instances of group protest and even break-away co-ops were not judged on their merits but merely seen as damaging the image of the co-operative and its cause. Before one realised it, Hushie with his allies in the Management Committee managed to paralyse the influence of the Secretaries' Committee by constant new ideas affecting the operations of the co-operative on fake pretentions and by withholding remunerations to secretaries for work done on the excuse that funds were tight. At a certain point later, indeed the coffers at the Bonikorpey office were quite depleted, but very much because of mismanagement.

The affairs would have run out of hand but for the foresight and tactical move by some of the Management Committee members under the leadership of Mr Blaise Amankwa, the co-op's accountant. As a professional accountant and for the position he held in the Management Committee, he was naturally the last and biggest hurdle to be taken by Hushie and his associates to get control, if not over the accounts, then at least over the cash. For one thing Mr Amankwa has consistently made efforts to convince Hushie to regularise his indebtedness to the co-op by at least writing an I.O.U. or a formal loan application to cover the huge amount he had unilaterally appropriated in the very initial stage of the co-op. Confronted with Hushie's stubborn response, his increasingly hostile attitude and the unilateral decisions Hushie continued to take, Mr Amankwa, with the approval of the Management Committee, registered a marketing company as a subsidiary to the co-op under the name of African Salts Limited. Though Hushie was not chosen as a board member, still he and others were welcomed at its weekly board meetings to create as congenial an atmosphere for operations as possible. Soon, however, when cash at the Bonikorpey office was in short supply, Hushie started initiating tactics to effectuate that the assets of African Salts Limited should be appropriately kept at the co-op's office and not in Accra.

In the end even the auditor from the Department of Co-operatives, who came to audit the accounts, was used to try to achieve that aim, as he was equally used to cover up certain moneys not answered for as mentioned above. While all this was going on Mr Amankwa, again in an effort to bring more sanity into the organisation, proposed a meeting of representatives that would represent a cross-section of the people who could be thought to have the development of the Songor area at heart, together with the Management Committee and the Secretaries' Committee, to evaluate the functioning of the co-op vis-a-vis the needs and situation in the area as a whole. This was welcomed generally and such meetings were held twice with Hushie present only once for a short while. One of the outcomes of the meetings was that a more representative structure of the Management Committee was proposed and accepted. For months the truant section of the Management Committee did everything to prevent and sabotage the execution of the proposals as they saw them, rightly so, as a threat to their unilateral running of the co-op. Respecting again their original contribution and suffering in the struggle as well as considering their age and also because of the co-op's sensitive public image, a compromise was suggested to keep the old members of the Management Committee next to the new representatives to be elected from the six zones into which the village branches were grouped. Even while the elections were in progress, the 'truants' unilaterally sold stockpiled salt bought by African Salts Limited, with bank loans while not accounting for it.

They also changed the lock of the accounts office in a bid to force the accounts clerks into a new system of rendering account. In the meantime after the representative meeting, still in good faith, the Secretaries' Committee -after a break of confusion- started meeting again to take up their educational programme to equip themselves to let the new representative system work for the benefit of developing and strengthening the co-op at village branch level. The atmosphere in the weekly Management Committee meeting, however, started to deteriorate.

rate more and more as there was continued challenge and counterchallenge.

At one such meeting the illiterate chairman, a supporter of Hushie, in a bold statement said that they started the co-op and, after all, it was registered at Bonikorpey, and the others could go to their own villages; it would always be theirs until Rawlings himself would come to take it from them with a gun! Repeated appeals and presentations to the Registrar of the Department of Co-operatives, the chief of Bonikorpey, and mediation through the co-op's counsel at the probe did not have any effect. The truants did not allow a general meeting to take place at our registered office at Bonikorpey for a final verdict and advice on the rumpus that now seemed unavoidable. The meeting was finally convened at the neighbouring town of Koluedor. The Department of Co-operatives was invited, but did not attend. It was generally agreed that no other way was left open to us than to report the case to the NIC and to have the case put before the Tema Public Tribunal.

In the meantime, over the years, eight other co-ops had been allowed to operate by the Department of Co-operatives, though none of them, even up to now, has been officially registered. This act by the Department of Co-operatives is a flagrant violation of its own laws. They were meeting their own problems and did not add to co-operative credibility. Even though the truants of the Management Committee were, after investigation, charged with criminal offence, the Department of Co-operatives allowed them together with the people of Bonikorpey to continue to operate under our name and even attended a so-called general meeting convened by them (the truant section of the Management Committee) during which the audit report was presented by the Department's auditor! With the help of the same department our accounts were blocked, which makes operations difficult to say the least, let alone that we could embark on the much needed community development projects, if we wanted to regain credibility with the people at all. At the one-but-last Secretaries' Committee meeting it was sadly but

rightly concluded that they had no standing of confidence with the salt miners and others in the villages any longer and that any new attempt to organise them would be interpreted as just another move for some people to further their ends. A last idealistic effort to resolve the problem by trying to informally influence the communities through indirect contacts via opinion leaders was apparently felt not to work, as was reflected in the very bad attendance of the next and last meeting so far.

We think it must be realistically acknowledged that the co-op as an instrument for community development has lost its potential, notwithstanding the fact that it still contributes to the economic wellbeing of the area. To summarise some of the root causes of this situation we can state the following.

1.

Because the co-op was created under pressure from outside forces that demanded speedy and repeated ad hoc decisions, a strong link between management and floormembers never developed, to say the least.

2.

In retrospect it can be stated that the originator and de facto co-ordinator of the co-op from the very start schemed to use the co-op -at that time the only way to enter the salt business- to further his own selfish interests in the lucrative salt business. As a full-timer on the spot he could confuse and corrupt the illiterate elders in the Management Committee and the locals of Bonikorpey, where our office was established.

3.

The Secretaries' Committee, though aware of the unilateral decisions and actions, could not speak or organise itself effectively against them because of a number of reasons among which the fact that one could not afford a rumpus, the inexperience and traditional sensitivities that made one too accommodating, and a kind of euphoria after the initial successes, reflected in the time spent to write 'their story' of the struggle against the outside enemy, forgetting to spend time and get seriously down to the task at hand to organise themselves against inner weaknesses.

4.

People in the leadership with vision and commitment were mainly full-time professionals in Accra, and we could hardly expect more from them than to be the monitors of political and economic developments and, in the end, to present our case at the tribunal.

5.

Definitely the corruption and inefficiency of institutions and departments we had to deal with in our problems contributed to the fact that a confusing situation could linger on for so long to the detriment of all and sundry.

6.

Divisiveness among the local people and 'illiteracy' did not help much to address the situation.

We are now in November 1988. A new mining season has started. There is slight hope that the tribunal case will be speeded up now. We have sobered down about our ability and ... quality of commitment. Information is seeping through that our outer enemy is far from asleep, but instead highly active and playing on our exhibited weaknesses. It may alert us to make a new beginning. A lot of thought has to be put in a genuine effort to do just that. Two things seem absolutely necessary for any chance of success to save the situation:

1.

one or two co-operative trained full-timers in the leadership;

2.

direct or indirect (during the confidence-restoration period) links between the co-op leadership and the salt miners in the villages.



# THE STORY of THE SONGOR LAGOON

In July 1986, the Secretaries' Committee of the barely one year old Ada Songor Co-operative Salt Miners' Society came together for a long weekend on 'Critical Education' of which a report is in Appendix E of this book.

As decided at the end of that workshop subsequent workshops were used to write down the story of the Songor.

As a corporate exercise the undertaking and final completion of the book took a long time. It was, however, worth the effort and trouble given the bonds of friendship, co-operation and solidarity it fostered. It has helped us to get a better understanding of the issues involved in the pursuit of the human ideal of self-determination.

We hope that the record of our story will be of help to people who find themselves in a similar struggle for self-determination.

*The Secretaries' Committee  
January 1988*

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