

in shining armor or, in modern-day parlance, another military coup. Because things will get out of hand, and a savior will come in.

We say the military should go, and the way we choose is through the Constitutional Conference. With my colleagues, we presented the government a document that accepted for Nigeria the rotation of the Presidency. It goes from the North to the South. We agree that is not perfect, but it will hold us together to enable us to do something with our sovereignty. We have also insisted that no group or man shall succeed himself in power. We have insisted, that even when you have a President, you should have multiple vice presidencies, so that other areas will be represented in the Executive. We also say, as in South Africa, that if you get up to 10% of the vote, you have the right to a seat in the government. So everyone participates, instead of the old "winner takes all" system that we had. We have Constitutional Courts to deal with nothing but constitutional issues. Our citizens' rights in Nigeria have been made justiciable. There are courts you go to to get your rights accepted. There is the conception of derivation. We suggested that instead of the 3% that is given only to oil derivation, that the people who produced anything in a multi-ethnic state should be allowed to take 13% to be able to develop themselves. Therefore, the anger of being milked of their resources will die down. We have a commission permanently sitting to make sure that wherever possible, the idea of federal character is adhered to by heads of departments.

Finally, we submitted our report. General Abacha accepted our report. He said it will be considered in 90 days. I know some people won't agree with me—but even if it is 190 days, the mere fact that it is being considered for this nation, and done in peace, means I would accept it. After that, he will let us have his program, his timetable for withdrawing from power. One thing that a lot of you do not realize, is that Abacha has got behind him, cooperating with him, every single ex-head of state except Obasanjo. Every other one is working closely with General Abacha. So he can't be that bad.

Let us move on to the crimes that are put on him. A lot of them were committed long before he came into power. I have said—and this is why I so much welcome the Schiller Institute initiative—that the problem of Nigeria is not just one of North-South, or Abacha, but it is a global attitude of mind. Some people think that Africa is not fit for independence. They are thinking seriously about recolonizing Africa. These people think Africa could be governed from the board-rooms, in terms of profit and loss. The human element of government is not considered. We cannot solve this problem in Nigeria without joining hands with the Schiller Institute and other such organizations, to try and fight it globally. Because the propaganda machinery is against us.

I thank the chairman, and I look forward to much, much longer times of cooperation with you.

The top priority is to save your country

by Sen. Sharif Ali

The following are excerpts from remarks made to the conference by Sen. Sharif Ali, a former delegate to Nigeria's Constitutional Conference:

I was an elected senator in the last, aborted republic. We saw our country clearly disintegrating. Between the first week of November and Nov. 17, we—and I mean every meaningful Nigerian—appealed to this administration to come and take over the government and bring the country back into the line of democracy, including [Mashood] Abiola himself, who went and congratulated General Abacha on the day he took over. General Abacha was not looking for a mandate at that time. He was looking out for the country.

I joined the Constitutional Conference immediately, when they announced that an election was going to be held for it. I loved my job. Within that one year, I cannot quantify what my private organization lost, in terms of money and in terms of my time. But whatever I am going to gain in my own private capacity as a businessman, I will not enjoy with my children, if we don't have Nigeria. The most important thing is, to have the country—first, before any other consideration.

What makes the present Constitutional Conference different from all the others we have ever had in Nigeria, is that here people—intellectuals, businessmen, politicians—sat down and analyzed the problems of the country, why we could not have a proper democracy. The military government did not give us any agenda, no direction, no guidance. We drew up our own memoranda, and received memoranda from all over Nigeria.

Today, thank God, we have finished the Constitutional Conference. I believe, what we were able to accomplish at the conference, if we put it into practice, will be the end of our crisis in Nigeria. . . . Maybe future generations, in 300 years if they want, can change this Constitution, but for today, we designed it so that we can live in peace.

When the western world talks about democracy, what is it? Democracy is the collective will of the people to govern themselves. But the West went to war to liberate Kuwait, which is governed by brothers and sisters. And Saudi Arabia: There is no resemblance of democracy there. What are we talking about? We are really not talking about democracy; what the western world wanted, is that we become their colony again. . . .