

London is the real executioner in Nigeria

by Linda de Hoyos and Lydia Cherry

The British government has taken advantage of Nigeria's Nov. 10 summary execution of playwright Ken Saro-Wiwa to embark on a global crusade to bring down the government of President Sani Abacha. Saro-Wiwa was hanged along with eight other members of the National Youth Council of the Ogoni People (NYCOP), after their conviction Oct. 31 on charges of first-degree murder. The NYCOP, supported financially and politically from London, has functioned as a terrorist organization with the avowed aim of carrying an "Ogoniland" out of Nigeria.

The executions, however, appear to have given the British crusade against the Abacha government a new lease on life. London used the occasion of the three-day heads-of-state summit of the British Commonwealth, in Auckland, New Zealand, to orchestrate a chorus of denunciations of Nigeria from African leaders, most notably including President Nelson Mandela of South Africa, who had previously resisted British demands that he publicly castigate the Nigerian leadership. According to a British government spokesman, Prime Minister John Major had an hour-long "talk" with President Mandela the night of Nov. 10 to force him to change his stance on Nigeria. Mandela, however, has so far refused to call for an oil embargo against Nigeria.

On Nov. 11, the British Commonwealth suspended Nigeria's membership in the association. Major further announced a ban on British exports to Nigeria. The European Union pulled its envoys out of Nigeria on Nov. 12, following an initiative put forward by Germany. The United States and Russia recalled their ambassadors.

London's target is not only Nigeria. Using the international media, its Commonwealth heads of state, and its well-heeled army of environmental and human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to tar Nigeria as an "outlaw state," London is pressing home on its goal of forcing the

Clinton administration to put an oil embargo on Nigeria. Since the United States consumes 70% of Nigeria's oil exports, such an embargo could, at least temporarily, also further dent the U.S. economy.

LaRouche on Nigeria

Speaking at a conference Nov. 15 in Washington, D.C., the American statesman Lyndon LaRouche registered his dismay at the executions, "which I oppose," but also stated emphatically, "Nigeria, the whole people of Nigeria, are being threatened—the lives of all of them, by the *British*. And I will do nothing to help the British, nothing, because that would be the ultimate immorality. They are the mass murderers of Africa; they are responsible for Rwanda; they are responsible for the troubles inside Nigeria. They are orchestrating all of it. Therefore, if you want to find somebody who is responsible for the execution—which I oppose—go find the Brit who is relevant, go find his errand boy."

"I would not uphold Nigeria as a model country," LaRouche added. "It never had a chance to be. The British played that for all it was worth. What Nigeria is, is the largest country in Africa, in population. All but three countries in Africa have been destroyed or virtually destroyed: Sudan, Nigeria, the Republic of South Africa—the only three countries left in black Africa. If Nigeria goes, under IMF-British determination, then Sudan, then all of Africa will go. My primary concern on Nigeria is not Nigeria's internal politics—I've seen some things that make me not exactly too happy. There are three basic groups in Nigeria, and the British played each against the other. There are also 100 different localities in Nigeria, all of which represent a local interest. The British came in, as they always do, with what they call 'ethnicity.' One of the great crimes of humanity, is 'ethnicity,' because it denies the humanity of someone who is a little

bit different than you are. And the British play upon this. In Nigeria, it is like a barroom brawl, which is the nature of the society, not just the government. It is a violence-prone barroom brawl. Now, I am concerned to preserve Nigeria as a State, which does not mean that I always approve of what goes on in that State.

"I am concerned about, as the New Testament says, 'principalities and powers.' The first thing we have to do is to help the Africans establish the sovereignty of their States; not let somebody come up and chop up Nigeria into a hundred different quarrelling bloody entities; we don't want another Biafra war; we don't want another Rwanda. And that's what the British tend to do."

Lady Chalker's crusade

Nigerian sources report that the government's swift move for execution of Saro-Wiwa and his co-defendants, less than two weeks after conviction, was necessitated by internal security. On Nov. 9, the day before Saro-Wiwa was hanged, Nigerian security authorities impounded a large quantity of arms and ammunition that had been shipped to the country illegally from neighboring Benin. However, the source of the continuing operations against the Abacha government, which came to power in December 1993, comes from London.

The government radio reported Nov. 14 that Nigeria's expulsion from the Commonwealth was "the culmination of a period of maneuvering and conspiracy. About five months ago, [British Minister of Overseas Development] Mrs. Lynda Chalker threw all diplomatic niceties to the winds by publicly declaring that Nigeria might be barred from participating in the Auckland Commonwealth conference this month. The untenable reason which she advanced then was what she called the secret trial of coup plotters in Nigeria. She also talked glibly of alleged human rights violations in this country."

Notably, Chalker, a member of the British Privy Council to Queen Elizabeth II, was formerly employed by Royal Dutch Shell and Unilever, Britain's two major firms operating in Nigeria. Chalker's crusade against Nigeria began as early as June 1994, when she announced that the British would maintain sanctions against Nigeria until "democracy" was implemented in the country. Her major point of castigation against the Abacha government, however, was that Nigeria had bucked the conditionalities policies of the International Monetary Fund. Reaching an agreement with the IMF, she stated from the Ivory Coast in 1994, was President Abacha's "first essential task."

In early 1995, it is known, Chalker was a backer of the attempted coup plot against the Abacha government by former President Olesgun Obasanjo, who is now in jail in Nigeria. Obasanjo's arrest, upon his arrival, prevented him from meeting his scheduled speaking engagement on the same podium as Chalker at the Royal Institute of International Affairs' conference "Britain in the World" in March 1995.

With the coup option quashed, Chalker then took on the

role of patroness of the National Democratic Coalition of Nigeria, of Bolaji Akinyemi, who emerged from a July 13 meeting with Chalker to say that he was "encouraged by signs that the former colonial power is willing to 'turn the screws' on the Abacha regime," as the newsletter *Africa Analysis* reported it. A former foreign minister under the IMF-directed President Babangida, Akinyemi has demanded the installation of ITT bagman Mashood Abiola as President of Nigeria.

In September 1995, the intensely frustrated Chalker told a House of Commons subcommittee that Britain would agitate for the expulsion of Nigeria from the Commonwealth at the November summit.

The Saro-Wiwa affair handed her the opportunity.

Who owned Saro-Wiwa?

With Saro-Wiwa's execution, the Nigeria government may have hoped to draw a line against British operations to destroy the country. Ken Saro-Wiwa himself emerged as the British-backed nihilist to take over organizations that had been created by a grouping of chiefs of the Ogoni people, whose homes are in Nigeria's richest oil belt. In protest against their lack of share in the wealth being extricated from their land, in the early 1990s, the Ogoni chiefs founded the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP). The internationally known playwright Saro-Wiwa became MOSOP's public relations director. But in 1993, over the objection of the traditional Ogoni leaders, Saro-Wiwa founded a radical youth organization, the National Youth Council of the Ogoni People.

With violent vigilante action, Saro-Wiwa's new group pitched the Ogoni region into chaos, and terror-recruited a movement for Ogoni secession—as befitted London's geopolitical goals. In May 1994, NYCOP violence culminated in the brutal murders of the traditional Ogoni leaders Albert Badey, Chief E.N. Kobani, Chief Samuel Orage, and Chief T.B. Orage. Only days before NYCOP leaders had publicly threatened the chiefs' deaths, since they stood in the way of Ogoni secession from Nigeria. After the murder of the chiefs, Saro-Wiwa, who lived in London, took over as head of the MOSOP.

In his terror-secessionist campaign, Saro-Wiwa was supported by Britain's Body Shop International PLC, a writers' association. Saro-Wiwa also found support among an array of environmental groups, including the U.S. Sierra Club, Earth First!, Greenpeace, and Friends of the Earth.

According to the families of the murdered Ogoni chiefs, an international campaign was set to go from London demanding clemency for Saro-Wiwa and his co-defendants, centered out of London's Amnesty International, the Ford Foundation's TransAfrica in the United States, the British House of Commons, and the London-based Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO), of which Saro-Wiwa had become vice president. The UNPO had inserted itself as the liaison between the Ogoni and the Nigerian government.