

## Maggie Thatcher's Son And the Failed Coup

by Dean Andromidas

At 7:00 a.m., on Aug. 25, agents of South Africa's Scorpions, the elite special police unit deployed for the most serious of crimes, arrived on Mark Thatcher's doorstep in Cape Town to announce to the pajama-clad Thatcher that he was under arrest. South African authorities announced that "credible evidence" indicated that Mark Thatcher, the son of Great Britain's infamous prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, had helped finance a coup attempt in Equatorial Guinea. His good friend Simon Mann, the British, Eton-educated mercenary, had already been languishing in Chikurubi Maximum Security Prison in Zimbabwe since March 7, after he and 69 other mercenaries were arrested, and charged with illegally buying weapons in Zimbabwe, as they were on their way to carry out a planned coup d'état in Equatorial Guinea.

The widespread international press coverage after Thatcher's arrest, put the spotlight on an Anglo-American network of financial and political interests, and the mercenaries they hire, that are responsible for setting up the brutal exploitation of Africa's raw materials by launching genocidal wars throughout sub-Saharan Africa. This network was exposed in the *EIR* Special Report, "Britain's 'Invisible' Empire Unleashes the Dogs of War" (Aug. 22, 1997).

Lyndon H. LaRouche, in his recent security memo, "Facts Behind the Franklin Case: We Are Gripped by a Global Strategy of Tension" (*EIR*, Sept. 10, 2004), identified the arrest of Mark Thatcher as part of a counter-operation to this global destabilization. The network behind Thatcher has not confined itself to Africa, but has been deployed into Central Asia, especially in support of the anti-Russian irregular war in Chechnya, and now in Southwest Asia, where British "private military companies"—the euphemism for mercenaries—are making hundreds of millions of dollars dominating the "private security market" in Iraq.

Mark Thatcher's connections to the neo-cons is through the Margaret Thatcher Foundation, which for a number of years was based in Mark's business office when he lived in Texas. Among the directors of the Foundation are Timothy Forbes, chief operating officer of the right-wing *Forbes* magazine; Dwayne Andreas of Archer Daniels Midland; and Thomas J. Watson, Chairman of IBM and former ambassador to Russia. In 1995 Thatcher moved from Texas to South Africa, following a bitter lawsuit brought by his former business

partner, which accused him of fraud and racketeering. The case was settled out of court.

## The African Bloodbath That Failed

*EIR* investigations reveal that Thatcher and Simon Mann were supplying the financing and muscle for this coup attempt that also involved the Spanish government of then-Prime Minister José María Aznar, an enthusiastic supporter of Bush and Cheney's march to war against Iraq. The war's ultimate authors were Vice President Dick Cheney and the cabal of neo-con advisors that dominate the Bush Administration.

Equatorial Guinea has large oil reserves, and it has become sub-Saharan Africa's third-largest oil supplier to the United States, after Nigeria and Angola; sub-Saharan Africa now supplies the United States with more than 15% of its oil imports. With Southwest Asia now a battleground in the financier oligarchy's global "clash of civilizations," Cheney and his neo-con friends see the securing of the oil resources of West Africa, and particularly the Gulf of Guinea, as a strategic priority. In fact, the plan for a West Africa oil grab was outlined in a policy document published by the Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies (IASPS), with offices in Jerusalem and Washington, D.C. In 1996 this same institute published the neo-cons' blueprint for war in Southwest Asia, the infamous "A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm," written by, among others, the "prince of darkness" Richard Perle and the current Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Doug Feith.

Shortly after Cheney's office released its National Energy Policy Report on May 16, 2001, which called for the United States to exploit the oil of West Africa, this same institute formed the African Oil Policy Initiative Group, whose purpose was to get the United States to declare the Gulf of Guinea an area of "Vital Interest."

Paul M. Wihbey drafted the IASPS policy paper in consultation with senior advisors to Cheney and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. As recently as July 9, Wihbey described West African oil as an alternative to Saudi Arabian oil, at a conference sponsored by the Hudson Institute, one of the temples of neo-con policymaking. Another participant was none other than Laurent Murawiec, a former associate of LaRouche who turned traitor and became the protégé of Richard Perle, who brought him into the Pentagon on July 10, 2002 to deliver a rant against Saudi Arabia. Murawiec, at Hudson, once again foamed at the mouth about how Saudi Arabia should be treated as an enemy of the United States.

Furthermore, the main oil companies in Equatorial Guinea include the giant ExxonMobil, ChevronTexaco, Amerada Hess, and Marathon Oil. Dick Cheney's own Halliburton has extensive contracts in the country, as well as the entire region, providing technical support to the petrochemical companies.

At the end of February, two weeks before the coup was to take place, according to South African intelligence sources,

the United States froze the bank accounts Equatorial Guinea held in Riggs Bank in Washington, D.C. Thus if the coup had been successful, Equatorial Guinea President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo would have been blocked from withdrawing the funds.

Spain, the former colonial master of Equatorial Guinea, was to play a crucial role in the coup. First it provided the front-man for the coup attempt, Severo Moto Nsa—whose role was similar to the role neo-con stooge Ahmed Chalabi played in the invasion of Iraq. Nsa has been a protégé of Aznar for over 20 years.

"I knew Mr. Aznar even before I began my own political career," Moto told *The Guardian*. It was Aznar who told Moto to establish a government in exile.

The coup scenario was to follow the recent African pattern. Simon Mann's mercenaries would engineer "popular unrest" in the country, most likely by conducting provocations between rival clans. The inter-clan violence would spread throughout the capital and other cities. Spain's role was to supply a contingent of marines which would land in the country under the pretext of protecting foreign nationals. Last February, departing from NATO's Rota naval base in Spain, a Spanish Navy frigate and a troop carrier with 500 marines headed for the Gulf of Guinea. But because the plot was blown, the ships went no farther than the Canary Islands.

A few days before the coup was to take place, Moto himself was flown down to the Canary Islands, and on to Bamako, Mali, according to some reports, in a plane whose charter was reportedly financed by Thatcher. Once the coup was blown, Moto returned to Spain. The coup attempt was slated to take place the same week as the March 11 Madrid train bombings, where nearly 200 people were killed.

## Simon Mann's Dogs of War

Great Britain's role was to supply the muscle, not with regular troops, but with Her Majesty's "dogs of war." The regime change was to be carried out by the rent-a-coup operation of Simon Mann, the aristocratic ex-Special Air Services (SAS) officer who founded Executive Outcomes and Sandline. His former partner and Sandline director, Col. Tim Spicer, just received an over-\$300-million private security contract from Donald Rumsfeld's Department of Defense for private security operations in Iraq.

The financial resources were to be lined up by Mark Thatcher, who served as his mother's bag man, collecting millions of dollars in "commissions" from Middle East arms deals, back in the 1980s and 1990s.

Shortly after his arrest, Mann smuggled a letter to his wife out of his Zimbabwe prison cell, calling on Thatcher, who had the code name "Scratcher," to contact the other financiers of the coup to collect "plenty of wonga" to get him out of prison. In addition to the names in the letter, this "wonga list" has grown in the course of the investigation, and includes some of the same pirates who have been involved in financing

the mining operations in war zones throughout Africa, which are only possible when secured by groups of mercenaries:

**Eli Calil:** Referred to as “Smelly” in Mann’s letter, he is a Nigerian-born Lebanese oil trader based in London. Calil changed his name from Elie Khalil after he was arrested in June 2002 in Paris for his alleged involvement as a middleman in payoffs worth \$70 million to former Nigerian President Sani Abacha from the French oil company, Elf Aquitaine, between 1989 and 1993. Some press reports indicate he might be involved in the Technip case, involving Halliburton bribes in Nigeria. Calil once rented his apartment to Tony Blair’s “handler,” Peter Mandelson (who is now the European Commissioner for Trade).

**David Hart:** A former advisor of Maggie Thatcher, he served as her key go-between with American political-intelligence circles. Hart, who made millions on Southwest Asian arms deals, was Maggie Thatcher’s key liaison with the Reagan Administration’s Pentagon, where he reportedly cooperated with Richard Perle, among others. Hart is now a consultant for Boeing.

**Lord (Jeffrey Howard) Archer:** A top Conservative Party insider, he was recently released from prison after serving a sentence for perjury. He is said to have deposited \$134,000 into a bank account of Simon Mann under the name of J.H. Archer, four days before the coup attempt. Elie Calil is his good friend and financial advisor.

**Greg Wales:** A British businessman named by coup conspirator Nick du Toit; du Toit is now on trial in Equatorial Guinea. That government has issued a writ for Wales’ arrest. Wales was a frequent visitor to Washington where, along with Mann, he met people in the Administration, and relevant think-tanks. Although he denies involvement in the coup, he nonetheless claims to have informed a U.S. Department of Defense official, a week before the coup was to take place, that the situation in Equatorial Guinea would become “dangerous” and to expect trouble.

**Gianfranco Cicogna:** The grandson of Countess Cicogna and Giuseppe Volpi di Misurata, Mussolini’s finance minister, he was named by Mann as having promised to contribute \$200,000 for the “project.”

Mercenary operations in Africa, or anywhere else, invariably involve Israeli networks, and so, there is an intriguing Israeli connection here, as well. One of the conspirators arrested in Equatorial Guinea was a German national, Gerhard Eugen Merz, who died in prison. He was the transportation officer of the network. Merz had been a resident of Israel until 1963. In 1994 Merz, along with two others, was put on the U.S. State Department’s sanctions list for selling forbidden chemicals to Iran. An Israeli operative, Moshe Regev, who was part of this same network, and who used the name Regenstreich, was an arms dealer-fraudster and sometime Mossad stringer. He fled South Africa in 1999 following the collapse of a fraudulent loan scheme. He is now in a Swiss prison following a conviction for fraud.

## Failure and Exposure

The coup plot began to unravel before it could get off the ground. In their arrogance, the coup plotters failed to see that other interests would move against them. It has been rumored that France blew the whistle on the attempt. Saner circles in Washington could also have moved to prevent yet another disaster for American foreign and security policy.

But on March 7, no sooner had the aging Boeing 727, which Mann chartered, landed at Zimbabwe’s Harare airport, than a team of Zimbabwe police, having been tipped off by South African intelligence, stormed the plane, arresting Mann and 69 other mercenaries, including South Africans, Namibians, Angolans, and Armenians.

Then on March 8, Nick du Toit, a former South African army officer, and also a founder of Executive Outcomes, was arrested in Equatorial Guinea along with the advance team of 19 mercenaries. Facing a death sentence if convicted, du Toit, an Afrikaner, began spilling some of the beans during his trial.

Thatcher came into the picture in July 20, when the above-cited letter Mann smuggled out of his cell was mysteriously leaked to the London *Observer*. At that time Thatcher hired top spin-doctor Lord Bell, who also worked for Thatcher’s mother and for billionaire dirty-trickster Jimmy Goldsmith. When the police closed in on him in August, he already had flight tickets to leave on Aug. 30 for Texas, the home of his wife, the former Diane Burgdorf, the daughter of a wealthy Texan Bush supporter.

Where do things stand now? In Zimbabwe, Mann was convicted of attempting to purchase arms illegally, and could face a ten-year prison sentence. Most of the South African mercenaries were acquitted in Zimbabwe, but were arrested on their return to South Africa to face charges of violating South Africa’s anti-mercenary laws. Nick du Toit’s trial continues.

As for Thatcher, his mother has come up with nearly \$200,000 to pay for his bail, but his troubles have only begun. Some of the conspirators are now cooperating with the police and have given evidence on exactly how Thatcher financed the coup attempt.

The story is far from over. As one South African intelligence source told *EIR*, “They have a lot of dirt and it’s all going to come out.”

*David Cherry and Roger Moore contributed to this article.*

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