

Austin filmmaker

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APRIL 2005 ★ ISSUE 2



A Fistful of Francs Africaines The Recent Failed Coup in Equatorial Guinea is a Spaghetti Western Served Texas-Style

Pity poor Simon Mann. It appears that being the son of a former England National Cricket Squad Captain and heir to the Watney's Red Barrel Brewing Company empire just doesn't have quite the same swing as being the son of a former resident of 10 Downing Street. While Mr. Mann's former Eton school-chum Mark Thatcher is all snuggly-wuggly in his family's lair back in Merry Olde in no small part due to his mumsy-wumsy Margaret Thatcher, poor Simon is doing seven years hard time in a Zimbabwean prison for his lead role in the failed 2004 *coup d'etat* in Equatorial Guinea. Such is the luck of the insanely privileged.

Stung by Scorpions

Indeed, Mann may have it coming to him, his hand caught firmly in the cookie jar thanks to some brilliantly stealthy work by the South African equivalent of the FBI which is best known by the nickname *Scorpions*. The Scorpions were on top of E-Guinea President-in-Exile Severo Moto's offer of approximately \$2,000,000 plus endless shares in E-Guinea's burgeoning oil enterprises to Mann in exchange for toppling sitting President Teodor Obiang Nguema. Bear in mind that Obiang is a warm cuddly leader who killed his own uncle to get the job then summarily appropriated the country's \$2 Billion a year oil and gas business as his own private cash machine. Of course, if Mann, et. al. succeeded, they would put Moto back in charge of the postage-stamp of a country then share the private cash machine with him. It would have certainly done wonders for the average E-Guinea citizen who lives on less than \$2/day.

Thatcher was allegedly implicated as part of the *coup crew* by the now infamous "Wonga List," (Wonga being Brit Schoolboy slang for money) a lengthy plea letter written by Mann in prison and intercepted by Scorpions giving the nicknames of the coup's top financiers. Thatcher's less-than-clever nickname in the letter was "Scratcher." Mann should be serving seven years for such slack use of creative license alone.

Thatcher never owned-up to his part in financing the coup. He still maintains that he was under the impression that the helicopters he had purchased were to be used as air ambulances when the deal with Mann and company was first made, only to find out later that the helicopters would be put to, to put it loosely, nefarious usage. Still, he has never stated when he found out about the coup or why he never blew the whistle on his old Eton buddy when he did discover the truth.

Mann himself still claims that the 70 or so mercenaries he put on a 747 and all the weapons he bought from a Zimbabwe Defense firm were going to be used to guard Congolese diamond mines. He will have plenty to think about over the next seven years, or four years if he gets his way in an upcoming appeals hearing.

The Texas Connection

There is the great quote from the 1953 Henri-George Clouzot film, *The Wages of Fear*: "Where there's oil. There are Americans." More specifically, the quote should be: "Where there's oil, there are Texans."

Mr. Thatcher himself is a quasi-Texas oilman, well versed in the fast and furious ways of Cowboy Capitalism. He has made millions selling diesel fuel from South Africa to Zimbabwe. According to the *Sunday London Times*, Thatcher averaged an income of \$10.8 million per year from this enterprise. Thatcher was initiated into the culture during the 80's when he lived in Dallas, selling Lotus luxury cars. While there, he married million-heiress Diane Burgdorf to whom he is still married and has two children.

The couple still own a home in the wealthy Highland Park section of Dallas, and several news reports state that Thatcher is attempting to get a Visa into the United States in order to live with his family in their Dallas home. According to the *Dallas Morning News*, the home is on Fairfax Avenue which runs parallel to Mockingbird Lane, approximately four blocks to the south of that major thoroughfare. However, immigration laws will most likely not allow Thatcher a Visa since he is now a convicted criminal, having been slapped on the wrist on January 13th with a \$3 Million Rand (\$500,000) fine by a South African court for his part in the coup. If he does not obtain a U.S. Visa, it is reported that he will be going to Switzerland instead.

Euro Mercenaries vs. Texas Oil Companies (My money's on the latter)

If Mann and Thatcher's coup had gone forward, they would have met some Texas-sized opposition on the side of President Obiang. Seems that Exxon had already been exporting 300,000 barrels a day from E-Guinea for many years while Marathon had been pouring billions for liquid gas production into the country, all under the auspices of Mr. Obiang.

According to a *Washington Post* report in September of 2004, Houston-based Walter International had been getting into the good graces of the Obiang family for more than a decade by shelling-out college tuition for various members of the Obiang family. The expenses for Obiang's son and heir to the throne, Teodoro, a student at Pepperdine University in Malibu, California, alone topped \$50,000 per year. The same report states that other energy concerns such as Amerada Hess, Chevron-Texaco, Devon Energy, CMS Energy,



Margaret Thatcher



Mann's Arrest



Mark Thatcher



Mark Thatcher Speaks



Simon Mann

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Undercurrents

and Vanco Energy had made similar arrangements with the Obiang family in order to do business in E-Guinea.

According to *Afrol News*, E-Guinea had become so "happening" among the Texas energy crowd as of early 2003 that there were daily non-stop flights between Houston and Malabo, the capitol of E-Guinea, with flights to other oil-rich West African nations certain to follow.

Seems as though the *Thatcheristas* were a group of three dorks arriving very late to crash a raging party of a hundred or so steroid-pumped frat boys. They probably would've have been immediately tossed out on their bums after much laughter and merriment at their expense. Wedgies anyone? Gotta admire their *huevos*, though.

West Africa is the New Middle East

Like the Middle East, American military is getting heavily involved in West Africa in order to protect U.S. Oil interests. Nigeria, Niger, Angola, Mali, Mauritania, Senegal, and Chad are increasingly coming under the influence of U.S. Companies and the U.S. Military. The tiny island nation of Sao Tome and Principe is being considered for the home of a new U.S. Military base.

Making things even more fun, terrorists are quickly moving into the region. Due to the corruption, poverty, and instability of the region, Islamic terrorists find it a cozy place. Al-Qaeda, Hezbollah, and Hamas have a substantial presence in West Africa and are generating cash for their destructive activities through diamond smuggling ventures directly aided by the corrupt governments in the region.

It has already been established that Al-Qaeda has been operating diamond smuggling schemes sanctioned by Liberian president Charles Taylor. Other noted terrorist-corrupt government co-ventures in West Africa include weapons smuggling, toxic waste dumping, fraudulent licensing of ships and planes, passport fraud, racketeering, and human trafficking, among other activities. The region's laxness toward terrorist profiteering is so widespread and notorious it makes one wonder if the *Thatcheristas* wanted to get in on this black market gravy train, too.

In response to this activity, the Trans-Sahara Counter Terrorist Initiative, a group made up of U.S. Marines and Sailors under the auspices of EUCOM (United States Europe Command) has already finished training soldiers in Chad to fight the war on terror, and has now moved-on to the same job in Niger.

Now that we geographically-challenged Americans are almost done being force-fed a map of the Middle East, get ready for the next course over the coming years- West Africa. Yum! Cote D'Ivoire. My favorite!