

## Introduction: It's about Oil

Meredeth Turshen

The price of oil is falling, as we go to press. OPEC has enlisted Mexico as its go-between to talk with non-OPEC members, notably Russia and Norway, about cutting production in order to keep the price above the feared bottom of \$10 a barrel (a price not seen since the Thai economy failed in 1998, setting off a recession and reducing demand). Eleven OPEC members account for 61% of world exports; the world share of three African countries - Algeria, Libya and Nigeria - is 10.5%. As oil producing nations lose revenue, the welfare states they support come under stress. But even in the best of times in this boom-and-bust industry, most citizens of oil-rich states do not benefit from their countries' wealth.

Developing nations that rely heavily on oil or mineral exports suffer higher rates of poverty and child mortality than similar countries with more diverse economies; they also spend more on their militaries, according to the study, "Extractive Sectors and the Poor," written by UCLA Professor Michael Ross for Oxfam America. The report contests the conventional economic wisdom that developing nations prosper by extracting and exporting their oil and mineral wealth. Oil and mineral dependency tend to reduce the rate of economic growth.

Eight of the 25 oil-dependent states are in Africa. Using a UNDP measure that factors per capita income, health and education, Ross finds that the more developing countries rely on exporting minerals, the worse their standard of living is likely to be; mineral-dependent Zambia and Zimbabwe showed marked declines in the 1990s. Oil- and mineral- dependent developing countries have higher infant and child mortality rates than other countries with similar income levels. In these cases, oil dependency is linked to malnutrition. Worldwide, an average of 26.5 children per thousand are malnourished: in oil-rich Nigeria, the rate is 37.7 per thousand. Oil dependency also correlates with low enrollment

in primary schools and low rates of adult literacy.

Developing countries that are dependent on oil and mineral wealth face a much higher danger of civil war than resource-poor nations in any given five-year period. They spend a far higher percentage of their budgets on their militaries, diverting funds from programs that directly address the needs of the poor. Angola tops the list of oil-dependent states and ranks lowest on the human development index of the 25 countries in this category. Petroleum exports generate over 90% of Angola's hard currency income; together with diamond exports, this amounted to \$3.8 billion in 1990. According to the World Bank, 20.5% of Angola's GNP went to military expenditures in 1997. In oil- and mineral- producing countries, the level of repression and poverty is often greatest in precisely those regions where these resources are located. The relationship between oil, minerals and economic, social and political disempowerment is sharp and direct. It is against this background that Chad is about to become oil dependent in the next decade.

The focus of this issue of the Bulletin is on the role of oil. Given the close links between the Bush administration and oil companies, we wanted to look more closely at the issue of oil in Africa - who is producing it, how much wealth it generates, who controls that wealth, who benefits from it, and what are the social, economic and political costs to Africans of the various regional developments? We are interested in the commonalities of what oil companies are doing in these countries and the types of campaign in Africa that can be supported in the US to help affect the role that oil plays here and there. In soliciting the articles, we asked authors to focus on progressive activism, what can people do and what has worked, while also providing readers with

directions to good resources, references for study and for campaigning.(1)

Our authors discuss the role of oil in Chad, Nigeria and Sudan, including the specific international oil companies involved; they describe the campaigns in the countries, identifying social movements or groups involved in the campaigns and noting how representative they are; they elaborate on international campaigns focused on the role of oil in the countries, with the major focus on US campaigns, distinguishing elite, Washington-focused efforts from grassroots popular campaigns (that may or may not attempt to influence US policy, oil companies' behavior or popular perceptions); and they assess common strategies and tactics that have worked to mobilize specific groups (e.g., churches, the African American constituency, environmental groups and students) in the US, as well as suggest strategies and tactics that might be used to make alliances with people focusing on the role of oil in other countries. (The article on Algeria is different because there is no campaign in that country or in the US and very little information on environmental destruction attributable to oil and gas production.)

The campaigns described in this issue of the *Bulletin* focus on human rights and environmental abuses; as Ian Gary notes in his article, most statements by Catholic Churches in Africa do not argue that natural resources should remain unexploited, but that such exploitation should be done in a way that avoids environmental destruction, observes human rights principles and benefits the African people, especially the poor who live amidst such great wealth. Should African nations avoid extractive industries altogether, as Oxfam argues? We note that the communiqué of the two-day workshop on community resistance to oil activity, which was organized as part of the activities for the Oilwatch Africa General Assembly in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, in 1999, which is reproduced in this *Bulletin*, does not call for an end to oil development.

Recent protests against the World Bank have focused on that institution's support for large-

scale oil and mining projects, which critics see as environmentally and socially destructive. In response to the protests, the World Bank began a yearlong review in October 2001 of its investments in oil, gas and mining sectors, consulting with industry representatives, governments and non-governmental organizations. Several of our authors comment on the Bank's role in the Chad/Cameroon pipeline project.

The final article deals with oil, not in Africa, but in Saudi Arabia. Caffentzis gives us the deep background needed to understand the attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup>. In discussing oil and Islamic fundamentalism, he provokes us to think about how to link the environmental and human rights movements engaged in the oil campaigns in Africa and the US with the larger anti-globalization movement.

ACAS has chosen to address the role of Western oil companies in Africa in order to see if activists running campaigns in the US and Africa could together develop a more robust position on Africa, oil, development, human rights and the environment. Our aim is to share analyses, strategies and tactics and to help other groups make oil a focus of their work in these four years of the US oil presidency. This issue of the *Bulletin* will, we hope, open a vigorous debate about oil and energy alternatives, about extractive industries and development, as well as about globalization and the looting of Africa's other resources, including biodiversity.

#### Note

(1) A committee of ACAS members, comprised of Lisa Brock, Jim Cason, Jennifer Davis, Mike Fleshman, Bill Martin, Marc Mealy, Meredith Turshen, and Michael West, contributed to the compilation of this issue of the *Bulletin*.

#### References

For the World Bank's extractive industries review see: <http://www.eireview.org>.

For the Oxfam report see:

<http://www.oxfamamerica.org/eireport/index.html>

**The International Community and  
the Crisis in Nigeria's Oil Producing Communities:  
A Perspective on the US Role**

Michael Fleshman

**The United States Government: Interests and Policies**

The United States has long recognized Nigeria's strategic importance in Africa and its economic role as a major supplier of oil to the US market. US policy toward the region has therefore sought as a first priority to secure reliable supplies of Nigerian oil, protect the billions of dollars invested in Nigeria by US energy companies and assist US companies to expand their share of crude oil production and domestic marketing. Nigerian participation in particularly African peacekeeping and crisis intervention, as in Liberia and Sierra Leone, and efforts to alternately coerce or persuade the government to crack down on Nigerian drug trafficking syndicates, corruption and "419" fraud schemes have also emerged as major themes in US-Nigeria relations.

Although human rights and democracy are on the US policy agenda, they are clearly "second tier" concerns that are invariably superseded by economic and security interests. A mid-level State Department official offered me a rationale for this ordering of US interests in late 1998 in response to a question about why the United States had abandoned the June 12, 1993 electoral process and the imprisoned President-elect Moshood Abiola. National unity and "stability" are preconditions for profitable corporate operations and security cooperation, the official argued, and are under constant threat in a society riven by ethnic and religious tensions. The Nigerian military is the most reliable guarantor -- if with regrettable methods -- of the territorial integrity and internal order sought by US policymakers. The official characterized the pro-democracy movement as a thinly disguised southern secessionist movement that threatened to create a worst-case "failed

state" scenario of ethnic conflict and social upheaval on the order of the Biafran civil war that would take millions of lives and send tens of millions of refugees into neighboring states. In any case, the official asserted, the pro-democracy movement had no prospect for ousting the military, so the best policy was to accommodate Abacha in hopes of curbing his worst excesses and encouraging greater civilian participation in his government.

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In pursuit of its core policy objectives, therefore, the United States responded to the annulment of the June 12 election and Abacha's coup by imposing a handful of symbolic measures intended to demonstrate disapproval but not weaken or destabilize the regime. Of the handful of sanctions imposed on the dictatorship during the 1990s, most, including the ban on direct US-Nigeria air links, were linked to allegations of government involvement in drug trafficking and not the military's illegal seizure of power or human rights violations.

The November 1995 execution of MOSOP leader Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni environmentalists triggered a wave of harsh condemnations from Western and many African leaders, with President Clinton announcing a diplomatic effort to secure multi-lateral support for an oil embargo. It was merely a public relations gesture, however, as Washington knew full well that the British and the Europeans would never agree to sanctions. It was a classic example of the Clinton administration's approach to the Abacha dictatorship, using

rhetorical condemnations and symbolic gestures to mask a policy of oil-business-as-usual and expanded security cooperation with the regime to protect oil production facilities from the growing opposition of local communities and police US interests in West Africa.

The West then attempted what was termed an "African solution" to the Abacha headache by enlisting South African President Nelson Mandela to head an African diplomatic initiative. Mandela promptly called for US and European oil sanctions, however, and the search for an African solution was quietly dropped.

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In the wake of the Saro-Wiwa execution, public opinion in the US and Europe was increasingly aroused by human rights abuses in Ogoni and Western economic links to the dictatorship. Washington and other Western countries temporarily withdrew their ambassadors in protest and the US began a formal review of US Nigeria policy under the direction of the third most senior State Department official, Under Secretary of State and former Ambassador to Nigeria Thomas Pickering. Although the review was never formally completed, a new policy aimed at improving relations with the dictatorship quickly emerged. Termed "constructive engagement" -- the same title of former President Ronald Reagan's political and military alliance with apartheid South Africa -- the Administration toned down criticism of human rights abuses and began to speak more positively about Abacha's wholly fraudulent transition program. The scheme called for the creation of five political parties that would all nominate Abacha as their presidential candidate. In 1998 the State Department ignored its own ban on visas for functionaries of the dictatorship by allowing leaders of Abacha's five puppet parties to tour the US.

At the same time the Clinton Administration, with an eye perhaps towards the growing domestic criticism of its Nigeria policy, stepped up approval of political asylum for Ogoni

refugees and such key pro-democracy activists as Anthony Enahoro after the British rejected his appeal for sanctuary. These humanitarian gestures, while welcome, scarcely compensated for Washington's increasingly visible tilt towards Abacha.

Constructive engagement emerged most clearly in March 1998 with Clinton's remarkable endorsement of Abacha's sole candidacy for the presidency at a press conference with Nelson Mandela in South Africa. The endorsement contradicted assurances to Congress by Assistant Secretary of State for Africa Susan Rice just two weeks earlier that Abacha's candidacy was unacceptable to the United States and forced the Administration into full damage control, arguing without much success that Clinton had mis-spoken.

In fact Clinton had spoken correctly, but prematurely. Washington still hoped to persuade Abacha to drop plans to run as the only candidate for president and allow at least token opposition to his candidacy. The White House needed at least the appearance of a democratic process to justify constructive engagement and Clinton's endorsement was intended as a reward to Abacha for that small concession.

Certain now that there would be no serious response from the West, Abacha was duly nominated by the five registered parties and refused to admit a senior US diplomatic delegation headed by Pickering whose mission was to plead with the dictator to allow a contested vote. Only after Abacha's assassination in June was Washington able to resume high-level contacts with Nigeria's military rulers. The West brushed aside the democracy movement's demands for Moshood Abiola's installation at the head of a transitional civilian government and a sovereign constitutional convention and rushed to embrace the "kinder, gentler" military regime of Abacha's replacement, Abdulsalami Abubakar.

The sole obstacle to constructive engagement now was Moshood Abiola, the still imprisoned symbol of the June 12 electoral process. His refusal to surrender his mandate in exchange for his release threatened to consolidate internal

Nigerian opposition to Abubakar's transition program. Visits by both the UN and the Commonwealth Secretary-Generals to Abiola in prison failed to persuade Abiola to surrender the office. When the Pickering delegation finally did arrive in Nigeria in early July its mission was to pressure Abiola to renounce the presidency, not to demand his release and installation in office. It was during a meeting with the Americans that Abiola suffered an apparent heart attack and died -- removing a major obstacle to both the Nigerian military's transition scheme and US interests.

With Abiola gone the US moved swiftly to reinforce Abubakar's transition program. The US provided very significant funding for the democracy movement's Transition Monitoring Group for election monitoring, funded training workshops with the three competing political parties and provided training and technical assistance to the official Independent National Electoral Commission.

Whatever the merits of the decision of most Nigerian human rights and democracy groups to accept and engage Abubakar's tightly controlled transition, US policy makers appreciated that organizations funded to monitor the process would not be organizing rallies or boycotts against it. Had the democratic movement chosen to oppose Abubakar's scheme there would certainly not have been US support for a boycott.

In the Niger Delta meanwhile, the disruption of crude oil production by activists of the Ijaw and Ilaje communities, including the seizure of both production facilities and oil company personnel, became a major concern of US policymakers. There is evidence that both US corporate and government officials began to urge a crackdown by the Abubakar regime. The provision of Chevron helicopters and boats to the military to attack Ijaw communities in Bayelsa State after the release of the Kiaima Declaration demanding local control of resources or the withdrawal of the oil companies in December 1998 and January 1999 reflected the increasingly hard line view of the crisis emerging in Washington.

At a closed-door meeting of the major oil companies and US government policymaking and security agencies in the spring of 1999, the companies reportedly complained that Washington wasn't doing enough to pressure the Abubakar regime to end the protests. Oronto Douglas, a leading critic of the oil companies and the military, and spokesperson for the militant Ijaw Youth Council, has been branded a "terrorist" and was *persona non grata* at the US Embassy for a period for his highly visible role in the resistance.

With the installation of the Obasanjo government on May 29, the US has sent a steady stream of technical experts, cabinet ministers and military officials to Nigeria to restore the full range of political, economic and security contacts. In testimony before the US Congress on the Nigerian transition in August 1999, the Clinton Administration outlined a broad program of training, technical assistance and equipment sales for the Nigerian military and civil police forces. Although the US Department of Defense insists that it will emphasize civilian control of the military and human rights in its projected Nigeria training programs, it is worth noting that Sani Abacha himself received similar training in the US prior to his brutal seizure of power.

It was at an August 3, 1999 Congressional hearing that corporate spokesperson David Miller revealed that US companies were prepared to provide additional funds to the Obasanjo government to bolster the security force presence in the Niger Delta oil fields.

## **The Oil Companies**

### *Shell on Earth*

It is not my intention to discuss in detail the role of the US and Western oil companies in the repression and pauperization of the oil producing communities in the Niger Delta. Rather what follows is a description of how the companies worked in the US and Europe to deflect public criticism of those practices, mobilize governmental support for their interests and successfully blocked the imposition of US oil sanctions against the Abacha regime.

The internationalization of the Niger Delta crisis began in earnest almost a decade ago with the formation of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) and the launch of the Ogoni people's struggle against Shell. It was not the first time that Shell had been slated for international human rights action because of its presence in Africa. During the 1970s and 80s Shell's role in South Africa, where it was a major supplier of fuel and lubricants to the apartheid security forces, made it a major target of the international anti-apartheid movement.

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The far-sighted leader of MOSOP, Kenule Saro-Wiwa, realized that an alliance between the Ogoni people, who were challenging the company at the point of production, and Western environmental and human rights organizations campaigning against Shell at the profit point, greatly increased MOSOP's chances for success.

Leaked company and Nigerian government documents have subsequently revealed that Shell closely monitored Saro-Wiwa's foreign travel and instigated the Babangida and Abacha regimes to crush MOSOP's structures on the ground. Saro-Wiwa's arrest on murder charges in 1994 inaugurated an international campaign for his release and generated unwanted public scrutiny of Shell's Nigerian operations. Yet even then, Shell's public relations strategy was to deny MOSOP's charges of environmental degradation and to attack Saro-Wiwa's character and motives. It would prove a disastrous mistake for the company.

The firestorm of outrage that swept the world in the wake of the execution of Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni activists was only fanned by Shell's now-notorious full-page advertisement in the British press accusing the international human rights movement of responsibility for the hangings. That ad, and Owens Wiwa's highly credible account of a meeting at which senior

company officials demanded an end to MOSOP's campaign in exchange for Ken's life, gave new impetus to the Shell boycott and did incalculable damage to the company's public image.

With activists in the US and Europe picketing Shell petrol stations and committing civil disobedience at Shell facilities worldwide, the company suddenly shifted public relations gears. Instead of simply denying the accusations of human rights and environmental abuses in Ogoni, the company, while refusing to negotiate with MOSOP, began to "dialogue" with Western religious, human rights and environmental organizations. In recent years Shell has, with great fanfare, announced an agreement with Amnesty International on corporate security practices, invested heavily in green advertising and garnered the UN's seal of approval by joining its corporate club, the Public Private Partnership. The company also announced that it had incorporated the Universal Declaration of Human Rights into its operating principles.

Yet in the Delta it is business as usual. In June 1999 I visited the Otuegwe 1 community in Bayelsa State, the site of a recent Shell pipeline rupture. According to community elders and Niger Delta Human and Environmental Rescue Organization Director Azibaola Robert, the company declared that the leak was caused by sabotage, but failed to conduct the required investigation. The company did hire a local contractor to clean up the spill, and it was that cleanup effort that I had an opportunity to witness.

It was a horrendous sight. Young men from the community without any protective or safety gear stood waist deep in the oil-soaked waters attempting to sop up thousands of barrels of crude oil with cotton rags and plastic buckets. Amid dead and dying raffia palms, other men burned oil soaked brush and refuse in an open fire -- again without protective gear or safety equipment of any kind. This from a company that trumpets its concern for human rights and the environment to its Western customers!

The Ijaw community has also begun to operate internationally, with the establishment of Ijaw

National Congress chapters in the US and Europe.

*Mobil: Partner in Oppression*

With awareness of corporate misconduct in the Delta growing in the US, questions began to be raised about the role of US companies whose operations had largely escaped scrutiny due to the international focus on Shell. In early 1996 a senior public relations official of Mobil, Nigeria's second largest producer, gleefully told me that Mobil planned to keep a low profile on the Delta while its competitor, Shell, remained the target of international outrage and protest.

Unaccountably, however, Mobil instead raised its US profile on the Niger Delta crisis with a series of advertisements in major American newspapers extolling its good works in Nigeria and opposing sanctions. At one point the company ran an advertisement endorsing Abacha's transition scheme. Some of these ads were also run in the Nigerian press during 1997 and 1998.

The company also distributed an expensively produced special supplement to its annual report about Nigeria titled "Mobil in Nigeria: Partner in Progress," that painted a rosy picture of the company's annual \$5 million charity budget and its role in job creation and environmental protection. There was, of course, no mention of human rights abuses by the company's federal government partners or the billions of dollars Mobil's operations generated for the dictatorship each year. If Mobil's charitable giving represents only a fraction of a penny for every dollar it extracts from Nigeria, there was no hint of that in the company's glossy report.

Mobil's very visible presence in Nigeria and its contractual and political ties to the dictatorship made the company an early US focus for Nigeria human right activism. The Africa Fund produced a popularly written response to Mobil's Nigeria supplement titled "Mobil in Nigeria: Partner in Oppression," and assembled a delegation of national religious leaders to meet with company officials to "dialogue" about the company's operations and obligations.

Over the next year a coalition of American human rights and trade union groups and ethical investors met with senior corporate officials to persuade the company to speak out against human rights abuse in Nigeria. In an effort to reach agreement with Mobil, the group narrowed its demands to two cases that touched members of what the corporation referred to as "our Mobil family in Nigeria" -- the detention without charge or trial of oil workers' heads Frank Kokori and Milton Dabibi.

When corporate executives finally refused to take any action whatever -- arguing that US groups should be grateful instead for the "dialogue," a shareholder resolution on Nigeria was introduced at Mobil's April 1998 annual general meeting. The company was confident that the resolution would fail miserably, as human rights resolutions rarely attract more than one or two percent of shareholder votes. They were not aware, however, that The Africa Fund had persuaded several very large US public employee pension funds with hundreds of millions of dollars invested in Mobil stock to support the resolution. Nor was the company aware that Cordelia Kokori, Frank Kokori's daughter, and Hafsat Abiola, the daughter of the imprisoned President-elect, were in attendance to speak on behalf of the motion.

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Cordelia's emotional appeal to Mobil Chief Executive Officer Lucio Noto to save her father's life, followed by Hafsat's bitter charge that Mobil money may have been used to buy the bullets that murdered her mother were moments of high drama at the meeting and created a shocked uproar among the assembled shareholders. The eloquent statements of these two young women, combined with a remarkably high 9% shareholder vote in favor of the resolution forced the company to reverse itself and agree to raise the cases of Kokori and Dabibi with the regime. Corporate executives almost never have to face their victims, and the

confrontation accomplished in twenty minutes what a year of "dialogue" had failed to do.

Abacha's death in June and the release of Kokori and Dabibi shortly thereafter rendered Mobil's commitment moot, but it was a reminder of the political potential of a global alliance between oppressed peoples in the producing South and progressive people in the consuming North.

### *Chevron: Blood and Oil*

In contrast to Mobil, Chevron avoided virtually any mention of its very large presence in the Delta. The company produced no literature about Nigeria, declined even routine requests for information about its Nigerian operations and appeared determined to avoid the international scrutiny that was proving so troublesome to its competitors. All that changed with the revelation that Chevron had flown Nigerian naval personnel and Mobile Police to its Parabe platform in May 1998 to remove unarmed Ilaje youths occupying the facility in a dispute over compensation and employment. Two young men were shot dead and a third was wounded. Others were arrested and tortured.

The incident was originally documented by the Port Harcourt office of Environmental Rights Action and became a major issue in the US after Pacifica Radio reporter Amy Goodman reported it in September. A few months later ERA again documented Chevron's complicity in attacks on oil producing communities when the company provided helicopters and boats to the Nigerian military for use in attacks on Ijaw supporters of the Kiaima Declaration in December 1998 and January 1999. The two incidents dramatically shifted US public attention away from Shell and Mobil and fueled Congressional demands for an investigation into Chevron's role in the killings.

The company's response to the mounting pressure has been confused and defensive. The company has offered at least three different and mutually exclusive accounts of events on the Parabe platform, and, after reporter Goodman won a prestigious journalism award for her exposé, banned the entire Pacifica Radio network from corporate news conferences and interviews. The ban, a wholesale assault on free

speech and freedom of the press, prompted some barbed comments about Chevron importing Abacha's repression along with his oil and the company eventually backed down. The company is also facing legal action in US courts from the families of their victims in what could become a landmark expansion of international human rights law.

If the oil companies have lost some significant battles in the US, however, they have done rather better in the war over US policy. For years the major oil companies have flooded Congress and the White House with campaign contributions and lobbyists and succeeded in blocking efforts to adopt a stronger US policy toward the Abacha dictatorship. The extent to which the Clinton Administration sold the policy review to the oil companies is demonstrated by Thomas Pickering's refusal to meet with US and Nigerian environmental and pro-democracy leaders while maintaining an open door policy for the oil companies and business associations like the Corporate Council on Africa. Chevron in particular has used the occasional kidnappings and armed seizure of production facilities to justify its resort to state violence against even peaceful protests in the Delta, and it has used the tragic intercommunal violence in Warri in June 1999 to portray itself as the innocent victims of senseless tribal warfare. The company has also gone to great lengths to cultivate President Obasanjo -- sending senior executives to accompany him throughout his US tour in March 1999 and hosting an elite reception for him at the Africa America Institute in New York.

### **Abacha: The Disinformation Campaign**

MOSOP and the Nigerian pro-democracy movement were politically active in the US, but so too was the Abacha regime. Beginning in 1994, the dictatorship spent upwards of \$15 million a year on politically well connected lobbying firms in Washington and on disinformation aimed particularly at the African American community. The regime succeeded in recruiting former Senator Carol Moseley-Braun as a principal apologist and interlocutor with the African American leadership. Abacha also relied heavily on a thoroughly discredited African American conservative, Roy Innis, and a former

lobbyist for Angolan reactionary Jonas Savimbi, Maurice Dawkins, to bring African American journalists and religious leaders on propaganda tours to Nigeria and schedule speaking tours in the US for anti-MOSOP Ogonis and other pro-government figures.

Some of the efforts, such as slick 16-page supplements inserted into African American weekly newspapers in major American cities, were quite sophisticated. Others, such as the hiring of Nigerian thugs to disrupt hearings in New York about the naming of the street in front of the Nigerian mission to the UN after Kudirat Abiola, backfired and contributed significantly to the success of that effort.

The regime also operated covertly to buy political access and support. The Chagoury family, major players in the Nigerian oil business with close ties to Abacha, for example, made an illegal \$500,000 contribution to the Clinton election campaign in 1996 and succeeded in buying special access to the President and First Lady. In addition the regime funneled a total of \$350,000 through the military attache's office in New York to Henry Lyons, then head of the National Baptist Convention, the largest African American Christian denomination, in return for his support. How many other Americans were secretly on Abacha's payroll may now be revealed as the Obasanjo government digs into the records of the previous military government.

The Abacha regime made a serious effort to organize both elite and grassroots support in the US and succeeded in slowing, but not preventing, the emergence of a broad public consensus against the regime and in favor of economic sanctions. The regime's money, together with the lobbying muscle of the major oil companies, were a significant obstacle to the effort to make human rights, economic justice and democracy the cornerstones of US policy towards Nigeria.

### **The Solidarity Movement**

The international movement to support the oil producing communities and the national democratic struggle has its origins in MOSOP's

decision to internationalize the Shell campaign in 1991. That effort, directed primarily towards progressive Western environmental, human rights and indigenous peoples' rights organizations was initially almost exclusively focused on Ogoni resistance to Shell and federal government attempts to crush MOSOP through state violence and terrorism. Key organizations during this period included Greenpeace, the Sierra Club, Amnesty International, Article 19 in London, Human Rights Watch, and the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO).

It was only after the formal end of apartheid in April 1994 that some of the major African liberation and anti-apartheid organizations, including The Africa Fund and TransAfrica in the US, turned their attention to the crisis in Nigeria. In contrast to the strong Delta focus of the environmental movement, the Africa groups tended to intervene in the first instance around the national democratic struggle against Abacha. In the US the different points of entry for the environmental and Africa groups and the historic absence of political linkages between the two could have become a source of conflict.

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***What little grassroots organizing there is on Nigerian oil in the US continues and is located almost entirely in the radical environmental and indigenous rights movements, with Africanists now largely dormant on the issue.***

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Instead, through careful management of the political trajectory and organizational relationships of the emerging coalition, and with bridging organizations and individuals like Dr. Deborah Robinson, then director of the World Council of Churches Program to Combat Racism and the author of the seminal study *Ogoni, The Struggle Continues*, the differences in emphasis became a source of cohesion and strength.

What emerged over time were two central campaigns, the consumer boycott of Shell and efforts to enact binding Nigerian sanctions laws in cities and states. This produced an informal and mutually reinforcing division of labor, with

the environmental groups engaged in and supportive of the national democratic struggle, but focusing their limited resources on Shell and Ogoni. The Africa groups, hit hard by the sharp reduction in funding that accompanied the end of apartheid and responding to the needs of a different constituency, were initially able to focus on the struggle against Abacha and the realization of the June 12, 1993 electoral process, but still be very much involved in building solidarity with the particular struggles of the minority communities in the oil fields.

There were organizational strengths to the coalition as well. The existence of local Sierra Club, Greenpeace and Amnesty International chapters, and later the involvement of the regional offices of the American Friends Service Committee, the social justice arm of the Quaker church, gave the coalition a vital capacity to organize and act locally throughout the country. The Africa Fund, with a small staff operating from New York, had national networks of such key constituencies as particularly African American religious and civil rights leaders, state and local elected officials, socially responsible investors and trade unionists that had been active during the anti-apartheid movement and maintained a strong commitment to economic and social justice in Africa. Organizations like Human Rights Watch and Project Underground added important research and analytical capacity. National denominations like the United Church of Christ and the Church of Christ Disciples and the United Methodist Church also emerged as indispensable components of the Nigeria solidarity movement as did strong local committees in Amherst, Massachusetts and St. Louis.

The sizable Nigerian community in the United States was largely disengaged from the effort to build American support for democracy and social justice in Nigeria. In many cases the Nigerian expatriate community simply reproduced divisions back home through the formation of cultural organizations to preserve their language and tradition in the US, making collective action difficult. Many other people expressed a fear of retribution against themselves or family members still in Nigeria should they become politically active.

But the comparatively small cadre of Nigerian pro-democracy activists and organizations who were active played a key role in educating and mobilizing Americans. Individuals like Wole Soyinka, Owens Wiwa and Hafsat Abiola emerged as national spokespeople for the Nigerian struggle in the United States, traveling tirelessly across the US to speak at college campuses and community churches, union halls and before city councils and state legislatures. Chief Anthony Enahoro maintained a low key but effective presence as the exiled Chairman of NADECO. Pro-democracy groups like Jumoke Ogunkeyede's United Committee to Save Nigeria in New York, Tunde Okorodudu and the national Free Nigeria Movement, the MOSOP USA chapter and well organized Nigerian pro-democracy groups in Chicago, Detroit and Boston all played central and dynamic roles in the US solidarity campaign.

### **Prospects for the Future**

The advent of the Abubakar regime in June 1998 fundamentally shifted the political terrain of the international solidarity campaign and ended the international sanctions campaign. It is widely accepted in that the recently concluded Nigerian electoral exercise was fraudulent and that the Obasanjo agenda is reformist instead of transformative. Yet it is equally clear that Obasanjo has proven to be an independent and decisive leader with significant popular support. Unless and until the new government returns to wholesale violations of human rights, international support for such key demands of the democratic movement as a sovereign national conference will not capture the attention of Western public opinion and efforts to mobilize around it are unlikely to be effective.

The eruption of a bitter and very public split within MOSOP in September 1998 -- and the failure of the organization to resolve it -- has dismayed the organization's international allies and largely paralyzed the international Shell campaign.

In other areas of the Delta the advent of armed resistance to corporate and government exploitation and the highly publicized kidnappings of oil workers has raised a host of philosophical

and ideological difficulties for the international solidarity movement. The kidnappings provided the oil companies and Western governments with ammunition to justify their call for a military solution to the resistance. Fratricidal violence between and within communities, however linked to the marginalization of the oil producing communities or manipulated by the state, has taken thousands of innocent lives and proven to be public relations boon for the oil companies back home. The Nigerian movement as a matter of urgency must address the issue.

Yet the emergence of Chevron's human rights abuses as an issue in the US and the steady trickle of US and European solidarity delegations and fact-finding missions to the Delta demonstrate the durability of the alliance between the oil producing communities and the international community. MOSOP has re-emerged as a mass movement and has moved swiftly to rebuild its structures on the ground. There are reasons, in other words, for hope.

The oil producing communities in the Niger Delta, although often remote, isolated and inaccessible, are nevertheless inextricably linked to the international community through the production and sale of oil. That enduring reality, and the bonds of solidarity forged between Nigerians and the international human rights, environmental and Africanist communities in the struggle against Abacha, form a small but firm base for the struggles to come.

To borrow the rallying cry of the liberation movements of southern Africa: A Luta Continua. Victoria e Certa. The struggle continues. Victory is certain.

### **Postscript - October 2001**

Shortly after writing this report in September 1999 I left The Africa Fund to pursue other projects and have not been immersed in developments in Nigeria or US solidarity efforts since that time. With that caveat, it is nevertheless my impression that very little has happened around the continuing human rights

and environmental crisis in Nigeria among US activists. Human Rights Watch continues to report on human rights abuses in the region and Project Underground has maintained some degree of focus on Nigeria and the oil companies as part of their overall oil campaign. What little grassroots organizing there is on Nigerian oil in the US continues and is located almost entirely in the radical environmental and indigenous rights movements, with Africanists now largely dormant on the issue.

More encouraging have been lawsuits against both Shell and Chevron in the US brought by victims of corporate-sponsored human rights abuses in the Delta. The cases, pursued by the Center for Constitutional Rights, represent a landmark expansion of international human rights law and potentially open up the prospect that companies will be held accountable in their home countries for abuses committed abroad.

Yet the advent of the Bush administration and its many links to the repression and pollution in the Delta create new opportunities for education and mobilization. Vice President Dick Cheney was the chief executive of Haliburton during a period when the company was implicated in gross human rights abuses in Nigeria. National Security Council Adviser Condoleezza Rice was on the Board of Directors of Chevron for many years, and even has a Chevron oil tanker named after her. Washington's withdrawal from the Kyoto process, the suspiciously high cost of energy and its industry-friendly domestic energy policy had, until the bloody attacks of September 11, galvanized environmental and consumer groups and opened up further opportunities for coalition building.

Whether and how to capitalize on these opportunities will be the focus of the ACAS oil workshop in Washington, DC in March 2001.

*[This text was originally prepared for the Center for the Defense of Human Rights in September 1999. Michael Fleshman was then Human Rights Coordinator for The Africa Fund in New York]*

**Commentary:**  
**Janus Unbound: Antinomies of *Petrobusiness* and *Petropolitics* in the Niger Delta**

Okechukwu Ibeanu  
Department of Political Science  
University of Nigeria  
Nsukka, NIGERIA  
Email: [ibeanu@hotmail.com](mailto:ibeanu@hotmail.com)

The very interesting report by Michael Fleshman underscores how things have changed and yet remained the same in the Niger Delta. Indeed, the Niger Delta seems to be inherently paradoxical. Like Janus, there are always two faces to everything in the Niger Delta. For instance, the region has the potential to be very wealthy, yet it wallows in pervasive poverty. The leaders of communities in the Niger Delta are very rich, and at the same time their people are extremely poor. The region now has hundreds of elected officials at different levels of the Nigerian government, yet the vast majority of people of the Niger Delta still feel deeply unrepresented. The people of the Niger Delta signed on to a new democratic government through their votes in the 1999 election, yet the government still largely acts with authoritarian high-handedness towards them. The different communities and peoples of the Niger Delta share a common fate of external oppression and privation, yet among themselves ethnic schism, hatred and wars persist. Also, as Fleshman shows, the international community has demonstrated great solidarity with the people of the Niger Delta, yet international forces expressed in the likes of Shell, Chevron, Mobil, the New York Stock Exchange and policy makers in Washington have fueled the rape of the Niger Delta. The consequence of these lasting paradoxes is a peculiar fusion of hope and despair, enthusiasm and cynicism among the peoples of the Niger Delta in their dealings with the Nigerian state and globalized *petrobusiness*.

The rising poverty in the predominantly remote communities of the Niger Delta is well known. Youth unemployment is among the highest in the country notwithstanding that the oil sector

creates thousands of jobs annually. Only about 27% of people in the Niger Delta have access to safe drinking water and about 30% of households have access to electricity, both of which are below the national averages. There is one doctor for every 82,000 people in the Niger Delta, rising to one for over 132,000 in some areas. This is over three times the national average of around 1:40,000. This extreme poverty exists in a region that provides as much as 80% of government revenues in Nigeria and a substantial part of the energy that drives the United States. The situation has spawned a deep sense of relative deprivation in the Niger Delta.

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***Still, the Achilles heel of developmentalism remains that it is prone to conflicts because of its tendency to be exclusivist, regimenting, hierarchical and exploitative.***

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For instance, there is evidence that the 1998 rally of youths organized by Sani Abacha (with the tacit backing of oil companies and Washington) in support of his sit-tight project subsequently galvanized popular resistance against the government and oil companies. The rally brought many unemployed youths from the Niger Delta to Abuja for the first time and graphically showed them the stark contrast between the opulence of Abuja, funded by oil revenues, and the squalor of their communities.

The increasing sense of relative deprivation experienced by the people of the Niger Delta, which is engendered by the contradiction of riches, has been behind the intractable conflicts in the region. The conflict trajectory has been two-pronged, expressing the ambivalence and dialectical response of local people to

incorporation into global capitalism. This ambivalence is expressed, at one level, in resistance against incorporation, and at a second level in a willingness to become incorporated. The first trajectory of conflict is the state/*petro-business* versus oil communities. The state, which normally should mediate conflicts, is itself a major protagonist in the conflicts. In it, the state uses violence to protect the individual and collective interests of officials and, more importantly, the interests of global capital expressed in *petrobusiness*. The violent struggles of local communities against the state and global capital constitute one important dimension of popular response to the debilitating effects of incorporation into the global circuits of capital.

The second trajectory of conflict is that involving intra and inter-ethnic/communal conflicts in the Niger Delta. One recalls the Ijaw-Ilaje conflict, the Ogoni-Andoni conflict, the Ogoni-Okrika conflict, the internecine conflict between the two Ijaw clans of Basambri and Ogbologbomabri in Nembe, and the fatal wars between the Ijaw, Urhobo and Itsekiri over the ownership of Warri, a major center of petrobusiness in Nigeria. The central *causis belli* in these conflicts are conflicting claims made by communities to land and creeks on which there are petroleum deposits or oil installations. In many cases, state officials and oil companies either generate or fuel these conflicts in their antics of divide and rule. For instance, it is known that oil companies have local chiefs and notables on their payrolls in return for cultivating favorable public opinion on behalf of oil companies. However, the oil companies increasingly divulge their names to restive youths, thus fueling anger and conflicts within communities.

This second trajectory of conflict in the Niger Delta manifestly or latently expresses the willingness of local communities to be incorporated into global capitalist relations. It is for instance interesting that while the Ogoni were ruing the environmental devastation of Shell's activities on their land, some other communities were fighting each other over the ownership of oil wells and yet others were inviting oil prospecting companies. Ill-advised

as these may seem, they are not unexpected because of the perceived benefits of such incorporation. More seriously, it is a reflection of the pervasiveness and dominance of developmentalist ideology of ruling groups even among underprivileged groups. In a recent study of "People's vision of development in Nigeria" we realized the very strong affinities across classes in perceptions of development in the Niger Delta: electricity, paved roads, cars, etc. Still, the Achilles heel of developmentalism remains that it is prone to conflicts because of its tendency to be exclusivist, regimenting, hierarchical and exploitative. Thus, even as greater amounts of money are sunk in the Niger Delta as a means of pacifying the region, even greater conflicts have resulted. The best that has been achieved is a matrix of concentric circles of payoffs and rewards built on blackmail and violence. The closer a person is to the center, the greater his/her capacity to blackmail oil companies and therefore the greater his/her payoff. In time, members of the raucous inner circle fade away in a whimper and silence as a new core of vocal "community leaders" emerge: more black-mail, more payoffs. Consequently, conflicts and violence are never eliminated, they are only recycled through new purveyors. Yet in all this, the true representatives of the people are systematically sidelined and silenced, most times violently. Insofar as they represent the true wishes of their people, which is a fundamental restructuring of relations in the globalized oil industry, they will remain an endangered group.

The unending cycle of violence has produced a cogent rationale for state violence against the people of the Niger Delta, even under the present civilian government. In this regard, on one face of Janus appears what ostensibly is a new democratic agenda for the Niger Delta, but on the second face is etched a militaristic solution based on state violence. Early on, the new government seemed conscious of the importance of the problem in the Niger Delta. Soon after his inauguration in May 1999, President Obasanjo toured the region with a promise to right the wrongs of military rule and implored the people to embrace non-violence and dialogue. Obasanjo followed this by proposing to establish a Niger Delta Development Corporation (NDDC). After more than twelve months

of politicking, the Corporation finally came into being in 2000. The issue of fixing the limits of the Niger Delta contended between the maximalists, who equated it with the oil-producing States, and the minimalists, who preferred a political definition limiting the Niger Delta to the ethnic minority States of the Guinea coast, was never fully resolved. To worsen the situation, the Chairman of the Board of the Corporation, Onyema Ugochukwu, is from Abia State, one of the states inhabited by the Igbo, one of three dominant ethnic groups in Nigeria. This has not gone down well with the minority ethnic groups of the Delta and a simmering tension continues between the Board Chairman and the Managing Director of the Corporation, Mr. Omene, who is from a minority ethnic group. Even at that, Omene's appointment has raised eyebrows in the Delta since he was an employee of Shell and it is said that Shell had a hand in his appointment. These misgivings are interpreted as insensitivity on the part of the new government, even if the NDDC is widely accepted as a positive step to redressing the problems of the Delta.

The militarist face of the Janus was bared in mid-November 1999 in the Ijaw town of Odi in Bayelsa State. Some radical youths of the Ijaw ethnic group had taken some policemen hostage and tortured them to death. The policemen had gone to the town of Odi to investigate rumors that some Ijaw youths were mobilizing to storm the city of Lagos in reprisal for attacks a month earlier on Ijaw residents of Lagos by the refractory ethnic Yoruba organization, the Oodua People's Congress (OPC). It was widely believed that the OPC attacks on Ijaw residents of the Lagos suburb of Ajegunle were a carryover from the conflicts in the State of Ondo between the Ijaw and Ilaje, a Yoruba clan. The government interpreted the killing of the policemen as a resurgence of the activities of the Egbesu, a quasi-spiritual Ijaw nationalist movement that had effectively confronted the state security forces in Bayelsa State during the twilight of military rule. In response to the killings, President Obasanjo ordered the Governor of the State, Diepreye Alamiyeseigha to produce the culprits. When this failed, Obasanjo ordered in the army with blood chilling consequences. The engagement rule of

the invading army was to shoot civilians on sight. These draconian measures, which were widely condemned by civil society organizations within Nigeria, attracted only a faint whimper of disapproval from the international community.

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***For another thing, progressive forces in the North seem to be suffering a sympathy fatigue over the Niger Delta. Compassion for the Delta appears to be too expensive now.***

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Fleshman correctly identifies the internationalization of civil society, characterized by a solidarity between progressive forces in the North and oil producing communities of the Niger Delta during the period of military rule. In the post-military era, that solidarity has all but collapsed. The reasons for this are not farfetched. For one thing, President Obasanjo has been adept in courting an international community that in any case is all too willing to go along with him. Surely, Nigeria is too economically and politically important for major international actors, be they oil companies, governments, the Bretton Woods institutions or private donors, not to listen to Obasanjo. For these actors to be left in the wilderness, as under Abacha, is too expensive a prospect to be countenanced. The civilian government has seduced the international community into believing that human rights is no longer an issue and that civil society organizations have done their work and must now leave the elected representatives of the people to govern. This position contrasts markedly from that of civil society organizations in the Niger Delta. They insist that while occupants of structures that dictated the problems in the Delta may have changed, the structures themselves and their internal dynamics have not. In any case, the elections that brought the civilian government to power were essentially Eatanswill (meaning a corrupt election or selection) and the constitution it is running was imposed by the military.<sup>1</sup> Civil society therefore calls for renegotiations of not only the present political regime, but also the entire basis of the Nigerian federation. These have been captured in the persistent demands for resource control and a sovereign national conference.

For another thing, progressive forces in the North seem to be suffering a sympathy fatigue over the Niger Delta. Compassion for the Delta appears to be too expensive now. Moreover, there are new hotspots around the world like Afghanistan that require urgent compassion and sympathy. Indeed, international civil society is not given to prolonged attention spans. Soon, collective amnesia sets in and withdrawal follows. This points to the ephemeral nature of such international solidarity. Many organizations in the Niger Delta have come to realize that the struggle is principally a domestic one. The preoccupation now is how to reorganize in the face of new realities.

Surely, the struggle continues. But is victory certain? One is no longer sure! With Janus unbound, we may not even recognize the victory when it comes with its many faces. That is the Niger Delta for you.

**Endnote**

<sup>1</sup> The idea is that the election that brought the present government to power was widely acknowledged to be corrupt (some say fraudulent), notwithstanding that the international community was eager to endorse it. The departing military regime imposed the constitution. In fact, most of the elected officials did not see a copy of the constitution until after they were sworn in.

## Oil Development in Sudan

Eric Reeves  
Smith College

I. Oil development in Sudan now sustains and exacerbates the longest and most destructive civil conflict in the world. More than two million human beings have perished in the most recent phase of the conflict, which re-ignited in 1983 at least in part because of Chevron's discovery of commercially significant oil reserves in the late 1970s. Because the discoveries occurred in areas near the 1956 division between northern and southern Sudan, then President Nimeiri attempted to re-draw the boundaries in order to place oil reserves in the north. Nimeiri's further renegeing on the 1972 Addis Ababa peace agreement, and his attempt to impose *shari'a* (Islamic law) on the south, also helped trigger the renewal of fighting.

Chevron withdrew from Sudan in 1984 when the southern opposition killed several of its workers, and this essentially ended their role in oil development. It was not until the late 1990s that commercial activities again resumed in serious fashion, with the entry of Canadian, Chinese, and Malaysian oil companies. Over the last five years the consequences of oil development have been devastating, sustaining and exacerbating the conflict in a number of ways.

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***Moreover, oil revenues presently stand as the greatest obstacle to a resolution of the conflict.***

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The most promising oil reserves lie in the south of Sudan. In the eyes of the presently ruling National Islamic Front (which came to power by military coup in 1989, deposing an elected government), this unfortunate fact of geography has dictated that they pursue a relentless policy of scorched-earth warfare to create "security" for the foreign oil companies. Tens of thousands of indigenous people have been killed, more than 200,000 displaced.

These brutally destructive policies have been chronicled by many human rights organizations, by the UN Special Rapporteurs for Sudan, by the staff of humanitarian organizations operating in southern Sudan, and by numerous independent news reporters. Further confirmation was offered by an extensive Canadian assessment mission of late 1999, commissioned by then Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy in response to civil society activism and the reports of the UN

Special Rapporteurs (of particular significance is the report of Leonardo Franco of October 1999).

Moreover, oil revenues presently stand as the greatest obstacle to a resolution of the conflict. All Sudanese revenues, from all oil projects and concession sales, go directly to the National Islamic Front, unencumbered by any credible mechanism for equitable or productive distribution. Indeed, the regime has boasted openly of its willingness to use revenues for military purposes, and has made good on these boasts. Acknowledged military spending, according to IMF documents, reveals that over the last three years military spending has doubled (oil began to be exported in August 1999, though the regime had clearly been using anticipated oil revenues to fund military purchases, especially from China). Moreover, several dual use facilities (military/commercial) have recently been completed near the capital of Khartoum. These have allowed for a very significant increase in domestic military production, and the regime is now militarily self-sufficient in several categories.

Oil from the major producing consortium in southern Sudan (the Greater Nile Petroleum Operating Company [GNPOC]) also goes directly to a 10,000 barrel a day refinery in the town of El Obeid, which lies (not coincidentally) adjacent to the forwardmost military air base of the regime. From the El Obeid air base, Antonov bombers (actually retrofitted Russian cargo planes) have conducted an ongoing campaign of bombing against civilian and humanitarian targets throughout southern Sudan and other marginalized areas, most notably the Nuba Mountains in southern Kordofan province. These attacks, numbering in the many hundreds over the last few years, are nothing less than state-sponsored, state-conducted terrorism, in that they serve no military purpose other than to terrorize civil society and create further internal displacement (Sudan's internally displaced population of 4.5 million is the greatest in the world).

The deliberate targeting of UN-sponsored humanitarian relief has also been a hallmark of Khartoum's conduct of the "oil war." So intense was the bombing of humanitarian relief in the

summer of 2000 that all efforts to reach the extremely vulnerable populations of southern Sudan were suspended. Attacks on humanitarian targets are presently continuing.

The airstrips built by the foreign oil companies in their concessions are also used for military purposes by the Khartoum regime. The Canadian assessment mission established this as "totally incontrovertible" in its report (January 2000), and a Canadian/British human rights team has very recently (October 16, 2001) issued a highly authoritative report confirming that helicopter gunships continue to use the oil company airstrips for attacks against civilians in the south and other areas in and bordering the oil concessions.

**II.** The companies making up GNPOC, the only significant producing consortium in Sudan, include Talisman Energy of Canada (25%), Petronas (the state-owned oil company of Malaysia) (30%), and China National Petroleum Corporation (40%). Sudapet, the Sudanese state oil company, has a nominal 5% stake, but the royalty contracts dictate that at present production levels, Khartoum receives approximately 40% of profits after the scheduled capital recovery.

Other companies operating or controlling concessions in southern Sudan include: Lundin Petroleum (a small, recently restructured Swedish company, that operates with Petronas and OMV of Austria in the most southerly of the concessions); Gulf Oil (Qatar), which operates in the most easterly concession along with China National Petroleum Corporation; and TotalFinaElf (the French oil giant, which controls the largest concession areas in the south). Agip of Italy has signed an agreement with Petronas. The Russian Slavneft has also signed an oil exploration and production agreement with Khartoum.

The response to oil development in Sudan by American civil society has been nothing short of extraordinary. Though advocacy efforts are also underway in Canada and Europe, and growing in strength, it is in the US that a broad and deep coalition of political, human rights, and religious groups has forced Sudan to the top of America's

African foreign policy agenda. Numerous African American political and church organizations have become especially committed in the last year -- in part because of the ways in which oil development has helped sustain a vicious trade in human slaves (this has been abetted by Khartoum through its military proxies as part of its war effort). The Congressional Black Caucus is unanimously behind the Sudan Peace Act, as passed by the House of Representatives (422 to 2, June 13, 2001); this bill contains provision for capital market sanctions, i.e., the shares of all foreign companies operating in Sudan would be de-listed from the NYSE and the NASDAQ (US sanctions already prevent any commercial presence by American firms in Sudan). Though the bill is in legislative limbo following the events of September 11, its passage by the House is a landmark in the American response to destructive oil extraction ventures in developing countries. Organized labor (AFL-CIO) also supports this version of the Sudan Peace Act, as does the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

The American Conference of Catholic Bishops has taken a deep interest in the issue of oil development in Sudan, and they have spoken out vigorously. Conservative and evangelical Christian groups and rights organizations have also made an especially great contribution to forcing the Bush administration to recognize the seriousness of Sudan, and the human suffering and destruction so obviously related to oil development. The Committee on Conscience of the US Holocaust Museum has designated Sudan as "at risk of genocide" and their exhibit in the Museum, as well as their brochure (and a blistering oped in the Washington Post) highlight oil development in Sudan. They've been extremely helpful in the campaign.

Most tangibly, a divestment campaign against Talisman Energy, which is listed on the NYSE and Toronto Exchange, (led, for example, by the American Anti-Slavery Group [Boston], which helped to start the divestment campaign, the Presbyterian Church/USA and just recently the Episcopalians) has brought the largest independent oil and gas producer in Canada to the brink of a forced exit from Sudan. The

Canadian Anglican and Lutheran Churches are committed to divestment. The Ontario Teachers, whose Pension plan is one of the largest shareholders of Talisman, have voted to divest. There is a great deal of advocacy effort now coming on line in Europe. Some observers have described this divestment campaign as the most successful since those of apartheid-era South Africa.

Amnesty International has continued to press hard on oil development issues, though they haven't taken an advocacy position on divestment/oil company withdrawal. Human Rights Watch, which has been outspoken in their criticism of oil development before, is about to issue a major study of oil development in Sudan, and it will become the definitive (300-page) document on the subject. The Casey Institute in Washington, DC has been vigorously committed to the Sudan campaign. Many individual church and Christian organizations have also committed resources and political clout (e.g., Safe Harbor in California).

**Key resources:**

Amnesty International reports: "Sudan -- The Human Price of Oil," May 3, 2000  
[<http://web.amnesty.org/ai.nsf/Index/AFR540042000?OpenDocument&of=COUNTRIES\SUDAN>]

Christian Aid (UK) report: "The Scorched Earth: Oil and War in Sudan," March 2001 (Christian Aid has almost 30 years experience working in both north and south Sudan)  
[<http://www.christian-aid.org.uk/indepth/0103suda/sudanoil.htm>]

Report by Georgette Gagnon (Canada) and John Ryle (UK): "Report of an Investigation into Oil Development, Conflict and Displacement in Western Upper Nile, Sudan," October 16, 2001 (Gagnon was a member of the original Canadian assessment mission; Ryle is a Sudan expert, with specialized knowledge of southern Sudanese ethnography)  
[<http://www.ideationconferences.com/sudanreport2001/resourcepage.htm>]

Reports of the UN Special Rapporteurs for Sudan can be found at:  
[<http://www.unhchr.ch/SearchFormtest1.nsf/0a17df071aa8104ac125662e00356cad?CreateDocument>]

## Chad Oil : Why Develop It?

Delphine Djiraibe

Oil in Chad is a topic that has caused much ink – and saliva – to flow. Opinions on the role that the development of this resource might play in the economy and in the struggle against poverty in a country as little known as Chad are as divergent as they are numerous. What are the risks of developing oil and constructing a pipeline between Chad and Cameroon? What role has civil society played since the conception of this project? Why isn't this a project that will help develop the country? These are some of the questions that this article attempts to answer. First, a brief introduction to Chad.

Chad, a former French colony, obtained nominal independence on 11 August 1960. The World Bank categorizes Chad among the five poorest countries in the world. It is a tropical country with a hot, dry climate and a short rainy season; the rains are unevenly dispersed across the country. Chadians survive on their agricultural, livestock and fishing activities. Important underground resources, which have yet to be developed, include oil and minerals.

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***All oil development runs risks that are linked to questions of the environment, human rights and socio-political management.***

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The population is diverse in terms of both ethnicity and culture. Three religions are represented, Christianity, Islam and animism. Chadians are usually divided into Northerners, who are Muslim and animist, Nilotic and nomadic, and Southerners, who are Christian and animist, Bantu and sedentary. This artificial division is widely used by politicians and warlords in the service of their causes. The socio-political history of Chad has been grafted onto armed conflicts, the true objective of which is to grab or hold onto power. The mark of the Great Powers has always been present in these conflicts, one suspects because of the country's

rich underground resources, notably oil.

A military group with General Idriss Deby as President currently runs the country; this group came to power in an armed takeover in 1990, theoretically ending more than a dozen years of bloody dictatorship. Deby's power was legitimized by elections that were fraudulent and sometimes violent and that were seen as democratic only by their authors and allies. Democracy, human rights, protection of the environment, and sustainable development are mere slogans used by those in power to gain the sympathy of donors and to rake in development aid, which is used to wage war or, in the best case, to satisfy the base material interests of the regime. This sketch may seem a somber exaggeration but sadly it represents reality. It is in this context that the oil project has been launched.

### **What is the Oil Project?**

The oil project comprises the development of three oil fields that were discovered in the Doba Basin at Komé, Bolobo et Miandoum, which form a triangle. The project involves drilling 300 wells in the triangle, the construction of a pipeline 1,070 km long from the Doba Basin, passing through the forested reserves of Cameroon, to the Atlantic Ocean. At the port of Kribi a refinery will be constructed to treat the crude oil and export it to the Great Powers, which need it to support their high technology industries. The consortium in charge of the development is led by ExxonMobil and includes Chevron and Petronas (Malaysia's national petroleum corporation). Chevron and Petronas joined the consortium when Shell and Elf quit on the pretext of internal business problems, leaving Esso the sole partner. After much controversy the World Bank approved the project on 6 June 2000, presenting it as a development project that offered Chad a unique opportunity to launch national development.

### **Why is the Project Controversial?**

All oil development runs risks that are linked to questions of the environment, human rights and socio-political management. Chad is a tropical country already threatened by desert encroachment. Because the oil discoveries are in the Doba Basin, which is the greenest part of the country, the construction of the pipeline, which involves cutting trees and clearing vegetation, will aggravate the problem of deforestation and aid the advance of the desert. (One may also mention the consequences of further oil exploitation for global warming.) In addition, there is no technical guarantee at this time that the current consortium will make an effort to avoid air and water pollution and maintain biodiversity or in general minimize the negative impacts of the project on the environment.

The people directly affected by the project have not been either adequately consulted or sufficiently informed about the negative impacts of the project. In a country in which the population has been traumatized by more than 30 years of war and more recently by massacres perpetrated by the military on civilians in the region near the oil fields, the presence of the military during the consultative sessions was enough to dissuade people from expressing their opinions. As a result, the losses that people will suffer have been poorly evaluated and the compensations they have been allocated are not proportional to the damages they will sustain, nor do they conform to the will of the victims.

We do not know whether the resources that oil will generate will be used for the benefit of the entire population of Chad and for the goals of reducing poverty and achieving sustainable development. Under pressure from civil society, the World Bank and the Government of Chad adopted a law to manage oil revenues. This law established a council that will monitor the management of oil revenues. However, it is difficult to have confidence in a government known for its lack of respect for the law and for violations of established rules and obligations. Here's proof: the government has used the first sum received from the consortium (paid as a sort

of bonus) to buy arms, without giving advance notice to the council as required by the law.

### **The Campaign**

In 1996 when Irène Mandeau, a member of the German section of Amnesty International told me about the oil project, of which no word had filtered into the country, I immediately set to work. Conscious of the advanced stage of corruption in Chad and Cameroon, the problems of human rights violations, the lack of democracy and the repressive character of the military government of Chad, I set about mobilizing civil society, both in my country and abroad, to campaign for a delay in order to assemble a better set of conditions that will cause the least human and environmental damage.

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***From N'Djaména to the capitals of Europe to Washington DC, NGOs have clearly exposed the risks of the oil project and the need to observe a moratorium so as to better prepare adequate conditions for its realization.***

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I contributed to research at the national level through the organization of information seminars, and I participated in public debates in my capacity as president and spokesperson of the Chadian Association for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights and as coordinator of the network of defendants, which includes development NGOs, human rights associations, women's groups, and peasant and workers organizations. In 1999 during a stay at Columbia University in New York, I was able to speak of our concerns and present the human rights and environmental problems to the American public and obtain their support. I traveled around the US with help from the American section of Amnesty International and spoke about Chad, its social, economic and political problems, and the dangers of developing oil in a country so poor as Chad and in an environment so vulnerable.

At the invitation of Korinna Horta of Environmental Defense, who had already worked on this and similar projects, I went for the first time to Washington, DC; there Korinna and I organized an information campaign and

lobbied to postpone the adoption of the project until such time as the conditions necessary to avoid a human and environmental catastrophe could be assembled. We met with administrators and high-level managers of the World Bank, as well as with people at the Department of State, Treasury and Congress, to brief them and alert them to violations of human rights related to the project, as well as to the Chadian government's lack of structural and institutional capacity to manage such a project and the risks of conflict that it can engender. This initial work had the effect of mobilizing American and European NGOs concerned with human rights and the environment. I continued to do this work in active collaboration with Korinna during my stay at the Center for International Environmental Law, where the contribution of lawyers and specialists in international human rights law added an important element to the case.

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***This project is a living example of the power of the oil companies for which profit rises above any consideration of protection of the environment or respect for human rights.***

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From N'Djaména to the capitals of Europe to Washington DC, NGOs have clearly exposed the risks of the oil project and the need to observe a moratorium so as to better prepare adequate conditions for its realization. The civil society campaign has been a success in that it forced decision makers to make some changes in the conception of the project, even though such fundamental problems as the impact on the environment, the benefit that the population will derive from it, and the management of revenues that it will generate have not been satisfactorily resolved. Another source of satisfaction is that the NGO campaigns helped keep the project at the forefront of public attention. The president of the World Bank has on several occasions

cited the project as the one that mobilized more world attention than any other. The World Bank and the other financial institutions consider it as a test case. Many researchers and students have chosen it as the topic of their studies.

The collaboration between northern and southern NGOs has been very effective and continues to bring the highest level of legal advice and technical support to the case against the oil project. Both national and international attention have been mobilized around this project, with the result that it is known as the one most monitored in the history of projects financed by the World Bank. Everyone is waiting to see the result. The short time that has elapsed between the World Bank's approval of the project and the commencement of work is reason for anxiety rather than hope. The powers in N'Djaména have come out and are claiming sovereignty in the face of a World Bank that is caught in its own contradictions and that cannot resolve the deteriorating economic, social and political situation in Chad. All hope of sustainable development, which is the project's objective, is disappearing.

What is certain is that this project is profitable and will bring money to the oil companies and repay the World Bank's loans. The decisions taken and the policies put in place are more for the purpose of reimbursing loans and securing benefits for the oil companies than for anything else. This project is a living example of the power of the oil companies for which profit rises above any consideration of protection of the environment or respect for human rights.

*[Delphine Djiraibe is President of the Chadian Association for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights; she is currently at the Center for International Environmental Law. Translated from the French by Meredith Turshen.]*

## NGO Efforts in Africa's Largest Oil Project

Korinna Horta  
Environmental Defense

The contrast between two worlds in Sub-Saharan Africa's single largest investment project could not be more striking. An hour's drive over dirt roads from the nearest town, Bebedja, which does not have running water or electricity, lies the base camp of Kome, the logistical center for the drilling of 300 oil wells deep in Chad's southern region. The camp is a white man's enclave complete with a small airport, generators, air-conditioned office containers, and even little flower beds in the large suburban-looking parking lot filled with a fleet of ESSO marked jeeps and trucks. The camp is surrounded by the small villages of rondavel mud and straw houses in the shade of tall ancient mango trees where life's daily routines have barely changed over the centuries. But now the prospect of oil being pumped out underneath their soil raises specters of hope and fear. Hope for schools, clinics and jobs. Fear of further government repression, violence by gangs linked to the military which terrorize local people with impunity, polluted water wells and loss of valuable land and trees. More insecurity is added by increasing conflict between local villages and migrant herders and other Chadians from the country's north lured to the region by the promise of El Dorado.

Will the oil in Chad's ground bring ruin to its people as it has done in other African oil-producing countries from Nigeria to Angola? Or can it, as its financial backers claim, lead to a reduction in poverty and protect the environment? Delphine Djiraibe's article provides an overview and analysis of the project, while the focus here is on the role and efforts of NGOs to address the serious risks of this project today, which will leave both Chad and Cameroon transformed for generations to come.

### Development without Politics?

Environmental problems are always simultaneously political problems. Nowhere is this more evident than in countries where the livelihoods of large sections of the population depend on access to land, forests and water in a direct fashion. Environmental Defense and other Northern-based environmental groups with a history of working closely with environmental, development and human rights organizations as well as trade unions and churches in developing countries have learned first hand about the critical role of civil and political rights in promoting development that is environmentally sound and socially equitable. Despite recent

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*In the view of the local organizations, the project could not but lead to more repression, more hardship for the already traumatized population of the country's south and possibly a renewal of the civil war which had been ravaging Chad for thirty years.*

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discussion of the need for good governance and human rights in its development discourse, the world's largest development agency, the World Bank, claims that its mandate does not allow for consideration of human rights. As a result, financing decisions by the World Bank continue to be framed in technical and supposedly apolitical terms which fail to consider how large amounts of money channeled to governments affect relationships of political and economic power within a country and what that may mean for poverty reduction and sustainable development.

Initial information on World Bank plans to support the oilfield development project in southern Chad and a pipeline through Cameroon

to ship the oil to markets in Europe and North America, sounded alarm bells amongst some Washington-based NGO in 1997. Was this oil project going to lead to another Ogoniland or a Sudan-type situation of prolonged civil war? And why did the World Bank want to use public funding intended to lift poor people out of poverty to support a consortium of oil companies in such a high risk venture?

### **Coming Together: Northern and Southern NGOs**

Northern-based NGOs, such as Environmental Defense, the Bank Information Center and Friends of the Earth, knew that the immediate thing to do was to find out about the concerns and aspirations of groups working in Chad and Cameroon. A Germany-based representative of Amnesty International with a long history of working on Chad's dismal human rights record, made a unique contribution in helping to establish close contact between those working in Washington, D.C., Paris and Berlin/Bonn, and local human rights organizations on the ground. In the view of the local organizations, the project could not but lead to more repression, more hardship for the already traumatized population of the country's south and possibly a renewal of the civil war which had been ravaging Chad for thirty years. However, while the drilling of oil wells and the thousands of mini-pipelines linking these wells were spelling a potential social and environmental disaster in Chad's Doba Basin, most of the project's environmental impacts were thought to happen along the over 600 mile pipeline through Cameroon. The pipeline was to traverse major rivers, fragile ecosystems and one of the few remaining largely intact areas of rainforest inhabited by the semi-nomadic indigenous Bakola people. Already the destruction of Cameroon's rainforests had led the country to suffer one of the highest deforestation rates in the world. Environmental Defense had been working with Cameroonian NGOs for several years to call attention to the massive logging of Cameroon's biodiversity-rich forests, which was largely carried out by the unscrupulous practices of mostly European companies and made possible by corruption at the highest level of Cameroonian government. The costs of forest destruction were largely being borne by local communities and indi-

genous peoples whose forest-dependent livelihoods were being destroyed. Pipeline construction and the pressures of logging and wildlife poaching which would certainly accompany it could do nothing but aggravate the existing situation. Yet, when we surveyed the Cameroonian NGO community about the pipeline, we found out that most had no information at all about the project and the few who had heard about the project were unaware of its routing.

The first thing to do was to piece together as much information as possible about the project, to put it in its political context and to create the political space for local groups to get their voices heard in international media and decision-making platforms.

### **The Catalytic Role of the World Bank**

A consortium of oil companies first discovered oil in Chad's Doba Basin in the early 1970s but suspended development of the oil fields in 1979 because of ongoing armed conflict in the country. The consortium was reorganized several times and in early 2000 consisted of Exxon-Mobil as the leader of the consortium with participation of Chevron and the Malaysian state oil company Petronas. With total revenues of about \$185 billion annually, Exxon-Mobil, perhaps the wealthiest corporation on the planet, hardly needed World Bank financial support as a pre-condition for advancing with the project. But

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***According to the NGOs in Chad and Cameroon, the World Bank-supported consultations that took place in the context of the project were little more than a farce.***

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that is exactly what Exxon-Mobil and its partners insisted upon. Documents obtained in Washington, D.C. showed that the financial structure of the project was contingent upon World Bank participation although regular World Bank loans and co-financing from the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the World Bank Group's affiliate for private sector financing, were to amount to less than \$200 million out of total project costs of about \$3.7 billion. There was a two-fold reason for this insistence on public co-financing: First, World

Bank participation would provide political risk insurance because no government in the region could afford to be on bad terms with the World Bank as this would entail a cut-off from all other public and private sources of finance. Second, World Bank participation would provide the project with a quality seal of approval which would help mobilize much larger co-financing from other sources, such as the European Investment Bank, the U.S. Export-Import Bank, Coface, the French export-credit agency, and a range of commercial banks.

From the NGO-perspective, World Bank involvement in the project provided a unique point of leverage. Public pressure over the past decade had forced this publicly funded institution to adopt a range of promising policies meant to protect the environment and the interests of project affected people. An example is the policy on environmental assessments (OP 4.01) which requires that local communities and NGOs not only be consulted but that their views also be taken into account in project design and implementation.

### **African NGOs Self-Organize**

According to the NGOs in Chad and Cameroon, the World Bank-supported consultations that took place in the context of the project were little more than a farce. In southern Chad, for example, representatives for the project would enter villages in the company of armed military guards at a time when local people were still traumatized by the 1998/99 massacres committed by the military which had led to the killing of hundreds of unarmed civilians and the wounding and disappearance of many more. The only serious public debates about the project were organized by courageous local civil society organizations themselves with the support from outside church groups and others. These took place in the towns of Donia (1998) and Bebedja (1999) in oil-producing regions and led local groups to call for a moratorium on financing for this project until adequate legal frameworks and enforcement mechanisms would be in place to ensure transparent and equitable use of the oil revenues and the protection of human rights and the environment.

Taking the lead from local groups, the

international NGO coalition in North America and Europe made the moratorium their central campaign issue. Chadian and Cameroonian NGO representatives and community leaders visited Washington and several European capitals on numerous occasions to make their points directly to the World Bank's Board of Executive Directors, Treasury or Finance ministry officials, members of Congress, parliaments and the media. The arguments they presented were often well received by many officials and led to increasing pressure on the World Bank to build a range of safety measures into the project.

These measures included pressure on the Chadian government to adopt a Revenue Management Law intended to ensure transparent management of the expected oil income, a re-routing of the pipeline away from some of the more ecologically-sensitive areas, capacity-building projects for both governments to address the social and environmental risks of the project, and the establishment of an International Advisory Group (IAG) to provide independent monitoring of the implementation of the safety measures. Work on these measures led to a delay in World Bank approval of the project for about two years.

### **The Counter-Offensive**

The delay of a final decision on the project led Exxon-Mobil to set-up a large-scale operation in both Washington and Brussels to systematically lobby and obtain support for the project from lawmakers, government officials and the media. At the same time, pressure was building up within the World Bank to speed up the approval process and allow no further 'caving in' to NGO concerns. Amongst its initiatives to neutralize NGO-criticism of the project, the World Bank spread information about a split between NGOs with Northern NGOs purportedly opposing the project for their own selfish reasons while Southern NGOs were giving it their full support as a poverty alleviating instrument. To make the point, a group of representatives of so-called Chadian and Cameroonian civil society representatives were flown into Washington in the fall of 1999 to lobby for the project. These individuals had no affiliation with any groups or, in the case of a religious representative, had come to Washington without knowing the

objectives of their visit. Embarrassingly, their written statement was identical to an official statement in support of the project published by the Chadian embassy. For good measure, a Senegalese dance troupe from Paris was brought to the 1999 World Bank/IMF annual meetings in Washington, to be paraded as Africans who had come to show solidarity with the project.

In June 2000, the project document presented to the World Bank's Board claimed that "Chad had successfully put in place democratic political institutions." Despite project risks, the document claimed that this investment represented the only way for lifting Chadians out of poverty. In addition, the project was hailed as a model for public-private sector partnership, in which a relatively small amount of funding triggered a much larger private sector response. The Bank's Board obliged by approving the project and thereby setting in motion the single largest investment project in Africa.

From the point of view of African NGOs and their partners in the North, this confidence in the project was premature. Their concerns were confirmed when Chad's president used part of the first payment by the Oil Consortium for weapons purchases. After being initially embarrassed, the World Bank declared that this "little policy slippage" would have no further consequences and rewarded the government by granting it a \$260 million in debt relief. The generous gift came during the Chadian electoral campaign in the spring of 2001 and the fraudulent re-election of Chadian President Deby, who did not hesitate to imprison and torture the leading opposition candidates in the immediate aftermath of the election.

Can a measure of social justice and the protection of the natural environment be accomplished under the current juggernaut? The International Advisory Group has published its first report which concludes that the project moves ahead at two speeds: Construction work proceeds on schedule while the social, environmental and capacity-building components of the project have hardly gotten off the ground. NGOs continue to carefully monitor the situation and will continue to call international

attention to the problems as they arise. In addition, much hope resides in the work of the IAG and in the World Bank's Inspection Panel, which has recently received the green light from the World Bank's Board to investigate possible World Bank policy violations in the project.

### **A Rights-Based Approach to Development**

A recent statement by the World Bank summarizes the core of the problem: "The Bank is concerned by human rights in Chad as elsewhere, but its mandate does not extend to political human rights." But can the high risk Chad/Cameroon Oil & Pipeline project succeed in reducing poverty and promoting sustainable development when political rights are repressed and freedom of expression and discussion are severely curtailed?

The late Cameroonian writer Alexandre Biyidi, better known as Mongo Beti, one of Africa's foremost literary figures, put it succinctly in a magazine article for *L'Autre Afrique*: "No Freedom – No Pipeline." However, the project's public and private sponsors did not agree. What the project now does is further expose the fundamental incoherence of current development financing by the World Bank and others which pay lip-service to good governance and empowerment of local people while paying little attention to local political realities and human rights.

What is needed in the Chad/Cameroon project and development is the adoption of a rights-based approach where development means support for national and local decision-making to promote sustainable livelihoods. This approach requires that the political and economic forces behind unsustainable practices are publicly analyzed and that the role of the state and who runs it, as well as the relationships between classes and groups are taken into account. Large-scale money flows based on the current, supposedly apolitical, approach carries the risk of undermining prospects for democratic change and further reducing incentives to strengthen domestic accountability.

## Africa's Churches Wake Up to Oil's Problems and Possibilities

Ian Gary

*“What does the Catholic Church care about an oil pipeline?”*

It is a question Fr. Patrick Lafon, Secretary General of the Catholic Church of Cameroon, gets asked often, especially by those in positions of power who wish that the Church, a powerful social and political as well as religious institution in the country, would stick to preaching and ministering to its flock.

But the Catholic Church in Cameroon, like sister Catholic and Christian churches in many countries across Africa, is not “minding its own business” when it comes to sometimes harmful impacts that oil exploitation and development can have on African citizens. Indeed, it is speaking out in bold new ways on the problems and possibilities of oil exploitation and the paradox of pervasive poverty amidst massive mineral wealth.

“What I tell them,” Fr. Lafon says, “is that our advocacy on the Chad-Cameroon Pipeline Project is part and parcel of preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

### **African Churches and Public Advocacy**

Although it is best to avoid blanket generalizations, it may be safe to say that Christian churches in sub-Saharan Africa in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were, for the most part, not notably involved in addressing issues of structural injustice as were their counterparts in Latin America. Apart from the significant role that some churches played in the liberation struggle in South Africa, the role of churches in African liberation and independence movements was relatively minor, and sometimes they were supporters of the colonial status quo. An explicit political or “liberation theology” has been notably absent on the continent.<sup>1</sup> Parochial concerns have tended to dominate and in some

independent African states, church leaders have been seen as supporting the ruling power structure, or, as they often were during the colonial era, part of the structure itself. (Although this article focuses on the role of the Catholic Churches, often the single largest denomination in many African countries, other churches, including mainline Protestant and Evangelical churches and the World Council of Churches, are doing important work.)

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***Because of the nature of global capital and multinational enterprises, advocacy related to oil exploitation must take place at a number of levels at the same time.***

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In the late 1980s and early 1990s, though, with the onset of structural adjustment programs and their devastating economic impact, and the wave of democratization after the end of the Cold War, churches have started to become more involved in public advocacy, addressing the need for democratization and structural change. In the last five years, against the backdrop of international debates about globalization, mainline churches in Africa have become aware of and taken action on the problems related to oil exploitation in Africa. From Catholic Church leaders protesting the hanging of Nigerian Ogoni activist Ken Saro-Wiwa to church leaders in Sudan calling for the immediate halt in oil exploitation in that war-torn country, African church leaders are waking up to the problems and potentials of oil exploitation.

This new awareness draws from the religious, moral and social mandate of Africa's churches. Just stewardship of resources, the integrity of creation, a “preferential option” for the poor and notions of distributive justice all relate to this new focus on the just use of Africa's abundant natural resources. (It is important to note that most statements by Catholic Churches in Africa

do not argue that natural resources, as some international environmental campaigners would argue, should remain unexploited, but that such exploitation should be done in a way that avoids environmental destruction, observes human rights principles, and benefits the African people, especially the poor who live amidst such great wealth.)

### **Speaking out on Oil: The Case of the Chad-Cameroon Pipeline Project**

Recent international advocacy by the Catholic Church on the controversial Chad-Cameroon Pipeline Project illustrates some of the power of church advocacy on African oil issues. The Chad-Cameroon pipeline project is a \$3.7 billion effort involving the ExxonMobil, Chevron, Petronas (the Malaysian state oil company), the World Bank and the governments of Chad and Cameroon. The project is designed to exploit significant oil deposits in southern Chad and transport the oil through a pipeline to the Atlantic coast for shipment to the world market. The World Bank justifies its involvement by promoting the poverty alleviation potential of the project -- the project could yield \$2 billion in revenues for Chad and \$500 million for Cameroon, depending on world oil prices, over the 25-year life-span of the project. Oil companies viewed the participation of the World Bank as "political risk insurance" which enabled them to raise more money on international capital markets for construction costs. The World Bank views its role as helping the governments of Chad and Cameroon to manage the revenue and the environmental and social consequences of the project. International civil society organizations -- environmental, human rights and faith-based groups -- have concerns that the benefits of the project will not reach the poor in a context of endemic corruption and political repression. Additionally, many believe that plans to address environmental effects, compensation for relocated peoples and revenue management are inadequate and will not be realized before the oil starts to flow. Despite these concerns, the World Bank board of directors approved the project on June 6, 2000.

The local Catholic Church and Catholic Relief Services (CRS), the overseas international relief and development agency of the US Catholic

Conference of Bishops (USCCB), have been involved with the pipeline project issue since 1998. The CRS Central Africa program, based in Yaoundé, Cameroon, has worked with the Catholic Church in both Cameroon and Chad to raise their awareness of the importance of the project. CRS has supported the Catholic Peace and Justice Commission in Cameroon with information, strategic advice and financial resources.

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***The message of the churches to oil companies, the government and the international community has been unequivocal, clear and consistent – stop exploiting the oil until a just peace is negotiated.***

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In October 1999, the Catholic and Protestant bishops of Cameroon issued a joint "Point of View" on the pipeline project. In a remarkable show of unity, the bishops said that the project had great potential to address the social needs of the citizens of Cameroon, but that four serious concerns remained. These concerns included the environment, compensation for those affected by construction of the pipeline, the involvement of civil society in project planning and implementation, and revenue management issues associated with the project in an environment of endemic corruption.

The Christian Churches cannot remain indifferent to this project which impacts the . . . life and survival of millions of men and women. The project promises to generate huge revenues that would be able to help our people progressively escape from the rut of poverty. In order that this does not remain an ideal, and that the project does not threaten the quality of life of the people, certain requirements must be fulfilled...We call upon all of the major parties concerned, the governments, the oil companies and all other financial parties involved in this project to be guided by principles of social justice, that they seek to improve the conditions of life for people, that they prevent catastrophes and that they protect the balance of nature. It is necessary to examine the ethical, legal

and environmental implications involved before making a commitment to the project. We recommend that an independent commission be created. We believe that is the price that must be paid in order that the project have the greatest chance of achieving its goal, the fight against poverty.<sup>2</sup>

The statement was sent to the USCCB and transmitted to the World Bank and US Treasury Department with a letter of solidarity and support from Cardinal Bernard Law of Boston, the head of the USCCB Committee on International Policy. In May 2000, Fr. Lafon visited the US and advocated the Cameroonian Church's position in a series of meetings with World Bank, US Government and oil company officials. With support from the USCCB and CRS, Fr. Lafon and members of civil society from Chad and Cameroon were able to meet some of the World Bank's board of directors days before their vote on the project.

At the Treasury Department, the Catholic Church in Cameroon, USCCB and CRS, pressed their position on the project with senior US officials, alongside those of many of the groups CRS has been working with on the project, including Environmental Defense, the Bank Information Center and the Center for International Environmental Law. While in the US, Fr. Lafon had interviews with the *Wall Street Journal* and other media outlets and was able to brief the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR) before a shareholder resolution on the project was presented to the ExxonMobil annual shareholders meeting.

While church leaders in Cameroon and many others in international civil society questioned the advisability of project approval under present conditions, the World Bank approved the project in June 2000. The advocacy by the Church and others had significant influence in project design changes, including increased compensation for individuals and communities, inclusion of some revenue management safeguards, and pipeline re-routing to avoid some of the most sensitive areas in Cameroon.

Since project approval, CRS and the USCCB have continued to work with church and other

civil society partners in Cameroon, Chad and the US to ensure that promises made by the World Bank, oil companies and the governments of Chad and Cameroon are kept. CRS activities have included financial support for an independent pipeline monitoring project. Working with grassroots community groups, three local NGOs – Center for Environment and Development, Service ecuménique pour la paix and Environment-Research-Action – are monitoring the geographic length of the pipeline construction route in Cameroon and bringing attention to problems in the implementation and construction of the project to local, national and international actors. In November 2001, Fr. Lafon made a return visit to the US to express concerns, with CRS and USCCB staff, regarding project implementation.

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***The Angolan Catholic Church has been at the forefront of the civil society peace movement and has urged warring parties not to “send arms in exchange for diamonds and oil – send food, and above all restore peace which is torn away with our diamonds and oil.”***

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Meanwhile, in Chad, where the political environment is even less conducive to public advocacy, the financial stakes are much higher, and where Christianity is a minority religion, the Catholic Church has still spoken out. At the beginning of 2000, the Catholic Bishops of Chad issued an appeal saying that:

Oil profits must be used to meet the people's essential needs present and future, not to increase the riches of a few. . . [Those] invested with power must respect those whom God has entrusted to their care, and stop exploiting the powerless and the poor. [Measures are needed] to ensure a fair distribution of the profits for the good of all the population. [Oil is] a common good which could allow the country to guarantee itself better economic future... do not use it for your own profit... Be transparent in your management of common resources, treat common goods as if they were those of your own family... The time has come

for more social justice, respect sharing and solidarity in the management of the national patrimony... Chad has all the means for nourishing its people and allowing them to live with dignity.<sup>3</sup>

### **Sudan: Oil, Conflict and Pan-African Solidarity**

In Sudan, the Catholic Church and others are trying to address life and death concerns related to oil exploitation – the use of massive new oil wealth by the Government of Sudan in Khartoum to prosecute its 18-year old war against the southern half of the country. Over two million have died and four million were displaced during the fighting. The government has admitted that oil revenues have allowed it to double its military spending in the last two years, with lethal effect.

The message of the churches to oil companies, the government and the international community has been unequivocal, clear and consistent – stop exploiting the oil until a just peace is negotiated. In August 2001, the Sudanese Catholic and Anglican bishops issued a joint statement saying there should be a “suspension of oil extraction until peace is achieved. Its continuation fuels the war, uproots civilian populations, and reinforces the existing imbalance in wealth sharing.”<sup>4</sup> They have given the same message to executives of Talisman Oil of Canada, the major Western oil company involved in Sudan, whom the bishops met in August 2001.

Our country is poor and in need of economic development. However, oil is not contributing to the development. We witness this displacement of our flocks from their homelands, driven away by helicopter gunships, Antonov bombers and government troops and militias in order for oil companies to work in relative security. Private companies, like any other organ in the society are obliged to abide by and promote respect for the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.<sup>5</sup>

The Sudanese Catholic Bishops have also supported the use of capital market sanctions in

the US that would prohibit companies doing business in Sudan from raising money on US capital markets.

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### ***The transnational networks, credibility, institutional strength and structures, political power and constituency of churches lend themselves to oil advocacy.***

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Other churches in Africa have conducted their own advocacy on Sudanese “blood oil” in solidarity with sister churches in Sudan. When Kenyan government officials indicated that they would purchase Sudanese oil in July 2001, Kenyan church leaders and human rights groups mobilized against the plan. Nairobi's powerful Catholic Archbishop Ndingi Mwana a'Nzeki used his pulpit to rally against the plan in Sunday sermons. In South Africa, the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC) expressed “grave concern” in July 2001 that Soekor, South Africa's oil parastatal, was in the advanced planning stages for activities in Sudan. “By negotiating new concessions in areas that have not been 'cleansed' of communities regarded by the Khartoum government as disposable [Soekor would] contribute to the escalation of the conflict in Sudan. Oil is key to the war in Sudan. During our visits to Sudan, we saw for ourselves the results of the forced removal and displacement of tens of thousands of southern Sudanese to make the oilfields and pipeline safe from attack,” said Cardinal Wilfred Napier, President of the SACBC.<sup>6</sup> ANC government officials, in an earlier visit to Sudan, had stated the South African government's commitment to “developing relations with Khartoum in the areas of oil extraction and mining.” As Cardinal Napier commented, “Given our experience under the apartheid regime, we should be the last to support a government that is at war with its own people.”

### **Oil and Church Advocacy in Congo-Brazzaville and Angola**

Although Sudan's oil has garnered much attention, less well known are the problems wrought by oil in Congo-Brazzaville. Oil, conflict, and French and American commercial rivalries are key components of that nation's political history, and the Catholic Bishops have

again spoken out on the issue. After a devastating civil war in the late 1990s, fought mostly over the nation's oil resources, the bishops stated: "How can one understand that during the last three decades, the frequent discovery and start-up of oil wells, always important, has not been accompanied by any kind of visible sign of economic transformation or rectification of the social situation of our population? Our oil must be an instrument for the life and not the death of our people." The Catholic Justice and Peace Commission is now developing research and advocacy programs to address the impacts of oil in Congo-Brazzaville.

In nearby Angola, oil and diamond wealth have supported an even more tragic and long-running civil war. Angola supplies over 8% of US oil needs and American companies have continued to operate profitably despite the war. Although diamonds support the UNITA rebel movement, oil revenues of over \$2 billion annually allow the MPLA government to continue waging war and avoid negotiations. The Angolan Catholic Church has been at the forefront of the civil society peace movement and has urged warring parties not to "send arms in exchange for diamonds and oil – send food, and above all restore peace which is torn away with our diamonds and oil." COIEPA, the church-led peace movement, plans to send a delegation to the US in 2002 to lobby the US government, oil companies and others to play a role in building a just and lasting peace in Angola.

### **Global Solidarity: US and European Churches and Africa's Oil**

There is a real opportunity to implement effective advocacy campaigns on Africa's natural resources through global solidarity between African and US churches. The transnational networks, credibility, institutional strength and structures, political power and constituency of churches lend themselves to oil advocacy. Churches are well placed to address concerns at the grassroots while giving voice to these concerns in Northern corridors of power. The need for oil advocacy is urgent – Africa accounts for 14% of US oil imports, and a report issued last year by the National Intelligence Council predicted that by 2015, Africa would supply 25% of US oil needs.<sup>7</sup> US churches can

get involved in advocacy to help ensure that aggressive oil exploitation does not come at the expense of human rights, the environment, and the human dignity of the poor who live amidst such massive wealth.

The USCCB has been engaged in advocacy around the Chad-Cameroon pipeline and oil in Sudan and will likely continue to support oil-related advocacy of sister Catholic Churches in Africa. A major pastoral letter from the US bishops on US-Africa relations issued in November 2001 speaks forcefully on the issue of Africa's natural resource wealth:

Africa's wealth in natural resources — which should be such a rich source of blessings — has sometimes become a source of tremendous suffering...Foreign corporations — American, European, Asian, and others — reap large profits from diamonds and oil while too often demonstrating little concern for the negative impact their activities may have on peace, stability, human rights, and the environment...Governments, international financial institutions, and private corporations involved in the exploration, development, production, and sales of natural resources (e.g., oil, diamonds, timber, minerals, and precious gems) all have a moral responsibility to ensure that the otherwise legitimate development of these resources does not contribute directly or indirectly to corruption, conflict, and repression. Transnational corporations ought to adopt codes of conduct that reinforce their social responsibilities, direct their activities toward the common good, and adopt transparency in operations and financial accountability.<sup>8</sup>

One concrete example of this new commitment to oil advocacy is found in the work of CRS, which has embarked on an "Extractive Industries in Africa Initiative." Through the initiative, CRS works with African country program staff and partners – as well as the US Catholic Church and other US-based partners – to help ensure that natural resource exploitation fosters poverty reduction and not conflict. CRS

supports training, research, policy and advocacy activities at the local, national, regional and international levels. In May 2001, CRS sponsored a workshop in Douala, Cameroon, which attracted 35 staff and partners from nine countries in Africa – Sierra Leone, Liberia, Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Congo-Brazzaville, Angola and Sudan. Resource people from Global Witness in London, Third World Network-Africa in Accra, Ghana, as well as the Harvard Human Rights program participated. In addition to the Chad-Cameroon pipeline, research and advocacy activities are progressing in a number of African countries.

Other churches in the US have been involved in oil advocacy, most notably around Nigeria and Sudan, using shareholder activism and divestment strategies reminiscent of an earlier struggle against apartheid. (European churches and church development agencies have also been active on Sudan's oil, the Chad-Cameroon pipeline, and other oil-related campaigns.)

### **The Way Forward**

Because of the nature of global capital and multinational enterprises, advocacy related to oil exploitation must take place at a number of levels at the same time. Churches, with their institutional strength, credibility, transnational networks, moral authority, influence on international opinion and access to policy makers in Africa and the North, are well suited to play key roles in the struggle to make governments, international financial institutions and corporations more transparent and accountable in managing and exploiting oil resources. Recent activity by churches in many parts of Africa designed to address the impact of oil production should be supported and encouraged. Too often, analyses of "civil society" in Africa have ignored or obscured the distinct

and important public advocacy role – or potential role – of Africa's churches. Bridges of collaboration should be developed between African NGO oil activists, their Northern partners, and international church networks. Through this work, and the work of others, Africa's oil wealth could become a beacon of hope rather than a flame of despair.

*[Ian Gary is Strategic Issues Advisor for Africa with CRS in Baltimore and is lead staff on the CRS Extractive Industries in Africa Initiative. The views represent those of the author and not necessarily those of CRS.]*

### **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> Gifford, Paul. *African Christianity: Its Public Role*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998.

<sup>2</sup> Translated excerpts from the "Point de Vue des Chretiens du Cameroun sur le Projet Petrolier Tchad-Cameroun (Point of View of Christians Concerning the Chad-Cameroon Pipeline Project)" issued by the Catholic and Protestant Bishops of Cameroon, 25 October 1999.

<sup>3</sup> "The Year 2000, a new era for a new life", Christmas/New Year Appeal, Catholic Bishops of Chad, N'djamena, January 2000.

<sup>4</sup> "Let There Be A Just and Durable Peace in the Sudan: An Appeal by the Bishops of the Catholic and Episcopal Churches of Sudan," Nairobi, Kenya 17 August 2001

<sup>5</sup> Sudan Catholic Bishops on September 1, 2001, at conclusion of Plenary Meeting in Nairobi, Kenya.

<sup>6</sup> "South Africa Helping Prolong Sudanese War, Bishops Say: Soekor Oil Deal Would Fuel the Fighting, Conference Warns", IRIN News, Johannesburg, 20 July 2001.

<sup>7</sup> National Intelligence Council, *Global Trends 2015: A Dialogue About the Future With Nongovernment Experts*, Washington: December 2000.

<sup>8</sup> "A Call to Solidarity with Africa: A Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops." United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, Washington, D.C., November 14, 2001.

## Algerian Oil and Gas

Meredeth Turshen

### The Role of Oil and Gas

The Algerian state oil company, Sonatrach, which was created soon after independence in 1963, is so large that it is called a state within a state. The hydrocarbons sector generates around 95% of Algeria's export earnings (bringing in \$18.7 billion in 2000) and provides some 60% of government revenues. Algeria's oil reserves are estimated at around 9.2 billion barrels. The country produced 802,000 barrels a day of crude in 2000. In December 2000, the government announced plans to increase crude production to 1.5 million barrels a day and to double the number of companies operating in the country over the next five years. Some of this extra output will come from the Hassi Berkine fields, which Sonatrach is developing with Anadarko. Oil production is less than half that of gas. Algeria is in the world's top 10 for gas reserves; it is the second largest supplier of gas to the European Union and the world's third-largest gas exporter. New targets for gas exports are 65 billion cubic meters per year by 2005.

Algeria holds huge external debt: the total at the end of 2000 was \$25.1 billion, and the external debt-service ratio was 22%. The Economist Intelligence Unit anticipates current-account surpluses of 12.3% of GDP in 2001, and forecasts real GDP growth at 3.6% in 2001 and 5.5% in 2002, reflecting the impact of investment in a major gas project. In August 2001, BP (the third largest oil company in the world) and Sonatrach announced a \$2.5 billion 30-year contract to develop seven gas deposits at In Salah. Four companies are supplying equipment, including Kellogg Brown & Root (Halliburton). The announcement followed President Bouteflika's visit with Vice President Cheney in July. No doubt the US Export-Import Bank will issue a credit guarantee to enable Halliburton to sell equipment and services to Sonatrach as it did in 1998 (\$56 million for nine companies) and in 1997 (\$150.4 million authorized).

### Analysis

Much of Algeria's recent behavior – Bouteflika's trip to Washington, liberalization of the economy and increasing ties to MNCs – can be understood in the context of the government's decision to apply for admission to the WTO and to enter into a treaty with the European Union. One purpose of Bouteflika's visit to Bush in July 2001 was to gain Washington's promise to back Algeria's WTO application. But as in the past, Algeria wants to control its interaction with the outside world. In April it hosted a meeting of African energy ministers in Algiers, which resulted in an agreement to form an African Energy Commission, to be based in Algiers. Because Nigeria is the only other African member of OPEC, Algeria hopes regionalization will counterbalance MNC power.<sup>1</sup>

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***Algeria's decision to expand oil and gas production plays into a principal objective of the Bush Administration, which is to reestablish the western monopoly that controlled 95% of the world's oil fields before OPEC and that ended in 1973.***

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Privatization is at the top of Algeria's legislative agenda. The Khelil bill (named for the Energy and Mines Minister) will create two new autonomous national entities and a new management policy that will govern approval of regulations, research and development contracts, and concessions for transport by pipelines, as well as supervise the rules for technical matters, tariffs, occupational safety and health, industrial security, authorizations for prospecting, and the collection of license fees for the public treasury. The bill limits Sonatrach's participation to a maximum of 25% in the development of newly opened fields. Unionized oil workers (FNTPCG [the National Federation of Petroleum, Chemical and Gas Workers] and UGTA [the General Union of Algerian Workers]) in the Saharan oilfields and the coastal refineries at Skikda and

Arzew understand that this bill means privatization and that it threatens their jobs: they oppose it.

### Environmental Impact

The production and use of hydrocarbons have taken a toll on the environment. Pollution is concentrated in the Saharan oilfields and in the petrochemical export centers of Arzew, Skikda and Annaba on the Mediterranean. Hydrocarbon effluents from the Algiers refinery are causing irreversible land damage and serious agricultural losses. Air emissions, especially nitrogen oxides and other volatile organic compounds, produce the smog now hanging over Algiers. Although there have been no large-scale oil spills to date, the Mediterranean, with its heavy oil tanker traffic, is considered the most polluted sea in the world.

### Conclusion

Algeria's decision to expand oil and gas production plays into a principal objective of the Bush Administration, which is to reestablish the western monopoly that controlled 95% of the world's oil fields before OPEC and that ended in 1973. For many third world nations, OPEC represented the decolonization of the extractive system: it reduced the direct access of the "Majors" (now Exxon-Mobil, Chevron-Gulf, BP-Amoco, Arco, Total-Fina-Elf and Anglo-Dutch Shell) to 15% in the 1980s, even if these MNCs continue to control 40% of sales of final products. Since 1973, the US and European governments have used their fiscal powers to counter OPEC. Although OPEC controls the price of crude by setting production quotas, it receives only 20% of the consumer price: taxes account for as much as 80% of the price in Europe. OPEC revenues were \$250 billion in 2000, but the governments of consuming countries received \$1 trillion.

Drilling in Algeria is part of a worldwide surge in drilling. The Bush Administration is helping companies expand into new fields at home (the bill to drill in ANWAR and the Gulf of Mexico) and abroad. Many of the overseas oilfields are in countries like Algeria, mired in internal conflict that both weakens the government's ability to negotiate contracts and feeds its immediate need

for revenues to pacify the revolt. The Algerian government fears that the latest conflict in the Kabylia region will play into the hands of the multinationals (see Turshen 2001 in ACAS "On the Edge"). If the Bush-Cheney strategy creates a global oil glut and forces prices down, the rebellion in Algeria is likely to grow; when oil is less than \$17 a barrel, Algeria cannot pay its debt or provide desperately needed social services.

Closer Algerian ties to the US also promote another Bush strategy, which dates to Bush père in the 1980s: befriend oil-producing countries like Saudi Arabia and Kuwait in order to hobble OPEC from within (and work with non-OPEC producers, notably the UK and Norway [North Sea oil], Russia and Angola to check OPEC from without). Because these strategies fell short of their ultimate goal, the Bush Administration now seems to be trying to gain influence over the remaining national oil companies like Sonatrach, Petronas and Pemex.

### Endnote

<sup>1</sup> The 11 OPEC members are: Algeria (741,000), Indonesia (1.2 million), Iran (3.4 million), Iraq, Kuwait (1.8 million), Libya (1.2 million), Nigeria (1.9 million), Qatar (601,000), Saudi Arabia (7.5 million), UAE (2 million), and Venezuela (2.6 million) (Sept 2001 production quotas in barrels per day are in brackets).

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## Oilwatch Africa General Assembly Communiqué

Port Harcourt, Nigeria  
February 10, 1999.

### Preamble

Noting that transnational companies have supported dictatorships, authoritarian and corrupt governments, in order to favour their profit interest in different regions of the world, with systematic violation of human and environmental rights, the rights of their employees and the rights of the peoples in whose lands they exploit.

Concerned that the activities of the transnational companies in indigenous territories result in their deprivation, the destruction of their natural resources and threaten their survival thereby contradicting the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Convention No. 169 of the International Labour Organization (ILO) concerning indigenous and tribal peoples in independent countries, as well as the first article of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which states the following principle:

Article 1.1. All peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.

Article 1.2. All peoples may, for their own ends, freely dispose of their natural wealth and resources without prejudice to any obligations arising out of international economic co-operation, based upon the principle of mutual benefit, and international law. In no case may a people be deprived of its own means of subsistence.

Informed that the activities of the transnational companies systematically damage the environment, habitats, live-lihood, marine life and wildlife without regard to the protection of the environment and survival strategy of the people.

And noting the definition of resistance as "the right of a people to say no and mean it, in defence of our collective environmental and human rights in order to achieve positive change".

We, the representatives of NGOs, Local Communities/CBOs and other interest groups that are impacted by oil activities and other mining activities in Africa, meeting at the Workshop of the first Oilwatch Africa General Assembly in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, this 10th day of February 1999, do hereby resolve as follows:

1. That we condemn the alliances between the states of Africa and transnational companies in the perpetration of injustice, human and environmental rights violations against local and indigenous communities in whose territories they carry out their activities.

(i) We condemn the use of military force and State acts of terrorism against the host communities of oil extraction and other mining activities.

(ii) Transnational companies should adhere strictly to international environmental standards in the countries of operation.

(iii) Transnational companies and the States should respect the culture and traditions of the local peoples whose lands they exploit

2.(a) We demand that States should make conscious and sincere effort to implement the following international conventions concerning the rights of the local people:

(i) UN article (2) 1 concerning self-determination.

(ii) ILO convention 169 concerning indigenous and tribal people i.e. in independent countries

(iii) Respect to UN 1977 declaration on the rights of indigenous local people

- (iv) UN article 3 on human rights
- (v) African Charter article 24 on Human and Peoples Rights
- (vi) Article of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity.

2(b) Compensation rates should be reviewed upwards taking into account life span of the natural resources, including economic trees damaged and life expectancy of beneficiary.

2(c) There should be a moratorium on oil and other mining activities to determine the level of damage to local and indigenous communities and their natural environment, as well as ways of remediation.

2(d) We demand transparency in all transactions involving the World Bank/IMF and the States concerning all projects in local communities.

3(i) As a matter of urgency all African States should institute the necessary mechanism for the implementation of Agenda 21 of the UN Rio Conference on Environment and Sustainable Development.

(ii) The participation of local communities should be guaranteed by the State in environ-

mental protection and development processes that affects them.

(iii) The State should ensure the restructuring of the judicial system to enable local communities to seek redress at the law courts.

(iv) All African States should guarantee the protection of the rights of women and children against dehumanisation, discrimination and exploitation by transnational companies and state institutions.

### **Strategies**

1. There should be an alliance of oppressed local communities in Africa and elsewhere to address their concerns

2. There should be exchanges of information, materials and experiences of local populations colonised by transnational companies to enrich their struggle for emancipation

3. NGOs, CBOs and other interest groups should support the activities of local communities fighting for their environmental and human rights.

4. African States should organise national or regional conferences of minorities as part of the process for self-determination.

**Oil, Islam and September 11:  
An Essay Addressed to the Antiglobalization Movement**

George Caffentzis  
October 6, 2001

I write this essay to participate in a discussion within the antiglobalization movement on the events of September 11. I am anguished about the lives lost in the bombings of that day. I am also concerned about the scenario that is in front of us:

\*Plans for massive bombings against Afghanistan and protracted warfare against a list of countries (perhaps 60, according to President Bush) presumably supporting terrorism or lodging terrorists.

\*The escalation of xenophobia especially against Arabs, but targeting all immigrants, and this not just in the US.

\*The demonization of the anti-globalization movement, accused of being an enemy of "western civilization."

\*New, widespread restrictions on civil liberties. What can we do in this situation?

Our first task is obviously to stop the escalation of violence, and mobilize against a US-led war on Afghanistan or any other country the Bush administration picks to be a target for its "war" on "terrorism." We also need to build solidarity with the Arab and immigrant communities in the US now under attack physically and ideologically. But these generalized responses, however correct, are not enough. We must gain a better understanding of what has happened and why, since any confusion on this point can have the most serious consequences for the anti-globalization movement. For the Bush administration is determined to use the hijackings and mass murders of September 11 as a political opportunity to transform the definition of dissent here in the US and to project the US military into the oil-rich former republics of Soviet Central Asia. A purely generalized politics is doomed to taking a reactive stance in this historical situation, even when the Bush administration's contradictions begin to unravel in the next few weeks.

This essay is inevitably tentative and hypothetical, given our present lack of precise knowledge concerning the details of the crimes -- even now, three weeks after September 11, there is public confusion as to the identities of some of the immediate perpetrators. Also, my aim is classification and explanation, but not vilification.

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***For the Bush administration is determined to use the hijackings and mass murders of September 11 as a political opportunity to transform the definition of dissent here in the US and to project the US military into the oil-rich former republics of Soviet Central Asia.***

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The legal and moral facts are enough. The killings of September 11 constituted one of the worst one-day massacres in the last decade, probably only those in the first days of the Rwandan genocide of the Tutsis can rival it in terms of numbers. The thousands of murders are a major crime against humanity and, though the immediate perpetrators are dead, their accomplices, if they had any, should be captured and prosecuted in the appropriate courts without the US government committing similar crimes against the humanity of other countries. That this last proposition is a matter of controversy in the US at this moment shows how perilous are the times we are in!

**Oil, Globalization, and Islamic Fundamentalism**

On a broad level, the events of September 11, 2001 can be traced back to the economic, social, and cultural crisis that has developed in North Africa, the Middle East, and West Asia in the aftermath of the Gulf War and, prior to it, the accelerating process of globalization, starting in the late 1970s.<sup>(1)</sup> The first aspect of this crisis has

been the impoverishment of urban workers and agriculturalists in this area, due to Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) and import liberalization, dating back to Egypt's "open door" policy that cost the life of Anwar Sadat and saw the emergence of Islamic fundamentalism as a new political force.(2)

From the Cairo "bread riots" of 1976, to the uprisings in Morocco and Algeria of 1988, both crushed in blood baths, to the more recent anti-IMF riots in Jordan (and the list is much longer) the difficulties of merely staying alive has become more and more dramatic for workers, causing major splits within the capitalist classes from Morocco to Pakistan as to how to deal with this rebellion from below (Midnight Notes 1992). A further element of crisis has been the situation in Palestine. This, too, was made more intense by the Gulf War and Israel's response to Palestinian demands, namely more settlements, the attempted usurpation of Jerusalem, and escalating repression. Regardless of their actual disposition towards the Palestinians, this situation has become a cause of great embarrassment for these ruling classes, revealing, as it does, their duplicity and the shallowness of their commitment to Islamic solidarity.

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***For at the moment, at least, our movement is the only one capable of leading an escape from the hellish dialectic of homicide and suicide that the forces of global capital and the perpetrators of the September 11 massacres have launched into oblivion.***

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But the most important factor of crisis has been the hegemonic role of the US in the region, as exemplified by the devastation of Iraq, the US government's proprietary relationship to the management of oil resources in the Middle East, and the building of US bases right in Saudi Arabia, Islam's most sacred land. On all these counts, deep divisions have developed within these ruling classes pitting pro-American governments -- often consisting of royal dynasties in the Arabian Peninsula -- against a new generation of dissidents within their own ranks who, in the name of the Koran, have accused them of being corrupt, of squandering the region's resources, of selling out to the US, of having betrayed Islam, all the while offering an alternative "social contract"

to the working classes of North Africa, the Middle East and West Asia and using their wealth to create a multinational network of groups stretching through every continent and often taking on a life of their own.

As a social program, Islamic fundamentalism has distinguished itself, in addition to its unmitigated bolstering of patriarchal rule, for its attempt to win over the urban populations through the provision of some basic necessities such as schooling, healthcare, and a minimum of social assistance. These initiatives were undertaken often in response to the ending of government subsidies and programs in these areas, which was dictated by the Structural Adjustment Programs designed by the neoliberals in the World Bank and IMF. Thus, for example, it is the Islamic fundamentalist networks that organize health care and education in the Palestinian "territories," almost functioning as an alternative government to the PLO at the grassroots level.(3)

Over the last decade as the crisis in the Middle East and internationally has intensified, so has the antagonism of the Islamic fundamentalist networks against the US and its domestic supporters in the different Islamic countries. But this conflict has been stalemated in key countries in the 1990s. In Algeria, for example, the Islamic Salvation Front, which grew rapidly after the anti-SAP riots of 1988 and almost took state power by election in 1991, was stopped by a military coup. For the last decade, through a horrendous civil war where between 60,000 and 70,000 were killed, the Algerian Islamic fundamentalists have been decisively weakened by attrition and military repression. In Egypt, the Mubarak regime has used direct repression as in Algeria, as well a system of microscopic social surveillance. For "the [Mubarak] government acted to stem the proliferation of private mosques and associated charitable foundations and to end their extragovernmental autonomy" (Faksh 1997: 54). The result has been a major defeat of fundamentalism in, perhaps, the second most important Islamic state. Fundamentalists seizing state power in Sudan and Afghanistan have not dramatically reversed these setbacks, for in both countries they inherited, and have not been able to end, long-standing civil wars.

But stalemate does not mean defeat, and there is no doubt that Islamic fundamentalism continues to have an attraction within the ruling circles of the wealthiest Islamic nations. This internal contradiction has created a tangled net of consequences, which are now embarrassing and endangering many people in the US government and in the governments of the Middle East. For they have financed and trained the very generation of dissidents that is now so violently turning against them. On the one side, a portion of the Middle Eastern oil revenues has been used to finance assaults on symbols of the New World Order, because of the divided loyalties of the Middle Eastern ruling classes; on the other, the US government has financed and trained many members of this dissident branch of the Middle Eastern ruling classes in its effort to destabilize the Soviet Union in Afghanistan.

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***On the basis of this analysis, then, the September 11 attacks on New York City and Washington DC were the "collateral damage" of a struggle over the fate of oil politics in its heartland: the Arabian Peninsula.***

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The governmental and informal financial and military support of armed Islamic fundamentalists did not end with the Soviet pullout from Afghanistan in 1989. These militants played important economic, military and ideological roles that forwarded US policy against Yugoslavia (in Bosnia and Kosovo) and against Russia (in Chechnya, Dagestan, Uzbekistan) up until September 10, 2001. The deal apparently was: do the dirty work of fighting and destabilizing secular communist, socialist and nationalist regimes in Eastern Europe, Caucasia and Central Asia and you will be rewarded. These "free floating" militants did the US's dirty work for 20 years, but they obviously increasingly were convinced that the US had not delivered. They were not given their proper reward: taking power at the center of the Islamic world, the Arabian Peninsula.

This complicity and deal-making is why, perhaps, the Bush administration is so hesitant to do what would be natural after such a massive intelligence and security failure attested to by the September 11 crimes: get rid of the incompetents. That would be difficult, for many of those who have been

brought back to power in George W. Bush's administration were the ones who were responsible, during his father's presidency, for the training and financing of the very organizations they now hunt under the banner of "terrorism." Therefore, the executive dynasties in both the US and Saudi Arabia must both be worried about "family members" who have been compromised by their past connections to the networks they now claim are responsible for the events of September 11. This goes up to the President's family. For example, the *Wall Street Journal* (9/28/01) reported that the President's father works for the bin Laden family business in Saudi Arabia through the Carlyle Group, an international consulting firm, as do other close associates of the President like former Secretary of State James Baker.

The crude and desperate attempts by ideologists of the Bush administration to somehow connect, in ever more arcane ways, the antiglobalization movement with the Islamic fundamentalists is fueled by a desire to distract public attention and hide a real anxiety on its side which is summed up in the question: when will the long list of real connections between the "terrorist network" the Bush administration is hunting and its own personnel be revealed? That is why, perhaps, President Bush harkened back to his childhood memories of "Wanted Dead or Alive Posters" (with the emphasis on "Dead") when speaking of Osama bin Ladin and his associates. For the administration's legitimacy would be undermined, if they ever spoke the truth.

### **Why now? Why so desperate?**

These generalized facts concerning the hidden civil war within the oil producing countries from Algeria to Iran serve to describe the context of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. For I am assuming that the immediate perpetrators of the attacks were committed to some branch of Islamic fundamentalism. But these facts do not help us understand why the attacks took place in September 2001 and why the resistance to the US took such a desperate form. For these attacks are symptoms of desperation not of power, as they will likely lead to a devastating US military response with predictable results: the destruction of thousands of Islamic fundamentalist militants along with tremendous collateral damage

on the people of Afghanistan and many other countries in North Africa, the Middle East and West Asia. Who on the ground can survive in such a maelstrom? Indeed, the actual perpetrators and their accomplices, whoever they are, must have been very desperate to take such a risk with their own network and the lives of millions of people of the region. It is also probable that many (perhaps most) people even in the most militant Islamic fundamentalist circles object to the bombings in New York and Washington DC, if not for moral, then simply for strategic reasons, knowing full well that their hard-fought for achievements might all go up in smoke as a result these actions.

Clearly something very important was in process of occurring that the perpetrators of September 11 needed desperate and inherently uncertain measures to thwart. What was it? If my hypothesis is right, the source of this desperation are events at the geographical center of Islam, Saudi Arabia, which echoed throughout the Islamic world. My view is that the political factors motivating the mass murder and suicides of September 11 involved the oil industry and globalization in the Arabian Peninsula. Here is the story.

Beginning in 1998 (after the collapse of oil prices due to the Asian Financial Crisis), the Saudi monarchy decided, for "strategic reasons," to globalize its economy and society beginning with the oil sector. The oil industry had been nationalized since 1975, which means that foreign investors were allowed to participate only in "downstream" operations like refining. But in September 1998 Crown Prince Abdullah met in Washington DC with senior executives from several oil companies. According to Gawdat Bahget, "The Crown Prince asked the oil companies' executives to submit directly to him recommendations and suggestions about the role their companies could play in the exploration and development of both existing and new oil and gas fields" (Bahget 2001: 5). These "recommendations and suggestions" were then submitted to the Supreme Council for Petroleum and Mineral Affairs in early 2000 (after being vetted by the Crown Prince), and, by mid 2000, the Saudi government began to respond cautiously by ratifying a new foreign investment law. Under the new law, "tax holidays are abolished in favor of sweeping reductions in tax on profits payable by

foreign entities, bringing them nearer to levels that apply to local companies. Wholly owned foreign businesses *will have the right to own land*, sponsor their own employees and benefit from concessionary loans previously available only to Saudi companies" (Bahget 2001: 6, my emphasis) [NB: it is obvious why "the right to own land" would be a red flag for anyone committed to the sacred character of the Arabian Peninsula.] The Middle Eastern experts were literally falling over themselves in their effort to highlight the new Investment Regulation. One described it in the following words, "Keep your fingers crossed, but it looks as if Saudi Arabia is abandoning almost 70 years of restrictive, even unfriendly policy toward foreign investment" (MacKinnon 2000). This law constituted, in effect, a NAFTA-like agreement between the Saudi monarch and the US and European oil companies.

At the same time as this law was being discussed, a ministerial committee announced that up to \$500 billion of new investments would be deployed over the next decade to change the form of the Saudi national economy. Foreign oil companies had already promised \$100 billion of this investment. In May of 2001 the first concrete step in this stepped up globalization process was concluded when Exxon/Mobil and Royal Dutch/Shell Group led eight other foreign companies (including Conoco and Enron from the US) to take on a \$25 billion natural gas development project in Saudi Arabia. The financial press noted that the deal would not be very lucrative in itself, but that "It's part of a long-term ploy of the oil companies, [which] want ultimately to get access again to Saudi crude" (LA Times 5/19/2001).

Thus, by the summer of 2001, the Saudi monarchy cast the die and then legally, socially and economically entered the Rubicon of globalization (but with its "fingers crossed," undoubtedly). It "globalized" not because the Saudi Arabian debt was unmanageable (as was the case with most other countries that bent to the globalizing dictates of the IMF) but because, faced with intensifying opposition, the King and his circle realized that only with the full backing of the US and European Union could they hope to preserve their rule in the coming years. In other words, confronted with significant social problems and an insurrectional element within its own class that could not be

defeated by open confrontation, since it took on the garb of Islam too, the Saudi Arabian government seems to have decided that a rehaul of its economy would defeat its dangerous opposition through attrition and would further solidify its alliance with US and European capital. The strategy was aimed at reducing the large and growing unemployment rate among its young citizens, its dependence on oil exports, and its huge foreign labor force (in 1993 there were 4.6 million foreign workers out of a total population of 14.6 million; today they are approximately 6-7 million in a population of about 22-23 million) by "getting the economy moving again."<sup>(4)</sup> This required a radical departure from the clientelistic methods of social control the Saudi monarchy had used in the past to keep social peace, which was made possible until recently by its immense oil wealth. But this wealth is not infinite and indeed was declining on a per capita basis -- for example, GNP per capital fell from approximately \$13,000 to \$8,000 from 1983 to 1993 and has since continued to fall (Cordesman 1997: 64). Inevitably, this initiative would impact the economic policies of the other oil producing governments in the region, especially the Gulf Cooperation Council states -- Oman, Qatar, UAE, Bahrain, and Kuwait.

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***It is now a foregone conclusion that anyone interested in understanding Afghan-centered aspects of the Bush administration will have to take into account the "oil factor."***

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If it works, this strategy would deal a decisive blow to the Islamist opposition, undermining its ability to recruit converts who would be employed in the upper echelons of a "globalized economy and society" instead of being driven to despair by political powerlessness and long periods of unemployment. But the introduction of foreign ownership of land and natural resources, backed up by large investments, and the hiring of more expatriates from Europe and the US, would force a major social change.<sup>(5)</sup> The cat-and-mouse game that the Saudi monarchy had played with the fundamentalist dissidents (by which the King and his dynasty claimed to be even more fundamentalist than them) would end. Whatever hopes the Islamic opposition in the ruling classes of the Arabian Peninsula had ever harbored of getting their governments to send the American

troops packing and turning their oil revenues into the economic engine of a resurgent Islam were facing a historic crisis in the summer of 2001. Without a major reversal, the Islamic fundamentalist opposition would have to face the prospect of a total civil war in their own countries or face extinction. Certain elements -- whether they were individuals or groups, I cannot know -- of this opposition decided that only a spectacular action like the September 11 hijackings and destruction of thousands of people in New York and Washington could turn back the tide. Perhaps they hoped that if enough turmoil and uncertainty can be generated by the attacks in the US, they would generate a strategic US retreat from the Arabian Peninsula, just as the bombing in Lebanon in 1983 led to the US pull out there. On the basis of this analysis, then, the September 11 attacks on New York City and Washington DC were the "collateral damage" of a struggle over the fate of oil politics in its heartland: the Arabian Peninsula. Moreover, in order to test this hypothesis in the coming weeks we should investigate the developments in the Peninsula, which will undoubtedly be hidden from sight, more than the sound and fury that will be directed towards Afghanistan for more obvious reasons.

### **The Bush Reaction: A "War" on "Terrorism" and US Military Penetration of Central Asia**

It is important that we understand the political and economic aims of the hijackers and their accomplices, but it will be even more important for us to be clear about the Bush administration's agenda. For one need not indulge in conspiracy theories to recognize that the Bush administration will use the events of September 11 as best as it can to forward its program (while acknowledging that the shock of the destruction of lives and property on that day has profoundly destabilized President Bush's domestic economic and social agenda).

There are two clear territories which the Bush administration has strategically used the death and destruction of September 11 to move on: a conceptual restructuring of the political horizon and a geopolitical thrust into the former Central Asian republics of the USSR that became nation states in 1991. These states, especially Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, have significant oil and gas reserves. "The proven and possible energy reserves in or adjacent to the

Caspian region -- including at least 115 billion barrels of oil -- are in fact many times greater than those of the North Sea and should increase significantly with continuing exploration. Such plentiful resources could generate huge returns for US companies and their shareholders. American firms have already acquired 75 percent of Kazakhstan's mammoth Tengiz oil field, which is now valued at more than \$10 billion." (Kalicki 2001: 121). These countries, along with the former and present Caucasian republics, form the southern border of Russia's "Near Abroad," which the US has been aiming to penetrate militarily for some time both for immediate economic purposes and for the ultimate goal of disintegrating Russia itself into a set of pliable statelets.

The minute President Bush named Osama bin Ladin as "the prime suspect" and "his" camps in Afghanistan as the training ground for the terrorists that destroyed the Twin Towers, every diplomatic move aimed at setting up forward military bases and fly-over rights to attack bin Ladin also doubles as a tool for the US military occupation of Central Asia itself. After all, we are being told equivocally by the administration both that bin Ladin is the center of the evil and that even his capture ("Dead or alive") will not end the threat of terrorism from that quarter. Therefore, the military campaign against both bin Ladin and terrorism (we are assured) will be quite prudential and take months, even years to accomplish. Perhaps the most damaging thing that might happen to this double-edged US government campaign would be for bin Ladin and his circle to depart from the scene while leaving behind a well-documented history of their involvement with the US government over the last 20 years!

The recognition that this US war against Osama bin Ladin and his supporters in the Taliban government is also a way to realize one of the main post-Communist goals of US foreign policy was immediately apparent to analysts of the oil industry and critics of the NATO war in Yugoslavia after September 11. The reading of the Bush administration's moves as the new "Great Game," a.k.a. "the war for oil and destabilization in Central Asia", was easily documented because much of the relevant material required for this interpretation had been researched in 1999 when many were trying to understand the motives of the Clinton administration's involvement in the war

against Yugoslavia above and beyond its ostentatiously decried (and newly found) concern for Kosovars' human rights (cf. for example, Chossudovsky 2001, Federici and Caffentzis 2000, Talbot 2000). It became clear then that one of the reasons the US attacked Yugoslavia (one of the few remaining Russian allies in Europe) was to impress on the Russians that it will use all of its might to discourage them from interfering with its investments in Caucasia and Central Asia. It is now a foregone conclusion that anyone interested in understanding Afghan-centered aspects of the Bush administration will have to take into account the "oil factor" (especially given the direct involvement of many members of the Bush administration in the oil companies that are heavily invested in this area.)

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***The events of September 11 and their consequences have been a tremendous blow against the antiglobalization movement, since it has given the governments all over the planet the opportunity to close public spaces and to repress dissent from whatever source in the interests of "public safety."***

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This is not to say that this geopolitical thrust into Central Asia was high up on the Bush administration's agenda prior to September 11. The expansion of drilling rights within the US was one of its first oil-related initiatives and preoccupied it throughout the summer of 2001. Indeed, Jan Kalicki, a "point man" in the Clinton administration on Central Asian oil, wrote an article for the September/October 2001 *Foreign Affairs* complaining about Bush's back sliding in Central Asia. After detailing the Clinton administration's accomplishments, he fretted that they "are now at risk of unraveling due to inadequate attention from the Bush administration and restrictive US policies. In contrast to the Clinton administration's vigorous support of Caspian energy initiatives, the Bush team seems to have placed those issues on the back burner" (Kalicki 2001: 130). Kalicki ended his article with the following words: "For the US to squander its past success and future potential in the region through complacency and inattention would be a serious mistake." He is undoubtedly now pleased by the swift end of Bush's "complacency and inattention"

to Central Asia after September 11 and welcomes a return to oil business as usual there.

### **Looking Back Carefully**

The events of September 11 and their consequences have been a tremendous blow against the antiglobalization movement, since it has given the governments all over the planet the opportunity to close public spaces and to repress dissent from whatever source in the interests of "public safety." In order to regain the initiative we must understand our situation: the anti-globalization movement is in a struggle against both the supranational agencies of globalization, which are now draping themselves in US flags, and the dissident rulers-in-the-wings of the Middle East, who drape themselves in Islamic flags and want a better world-class deal for themselves and their "followers." To begin to move again we must free ourselves to resee our own past in order to understand our future in this context.

Let us remember our own story. From Seattle in November 1999 to Genoa in July 2001, the antiglobalization movement expressed in the First World the recognition that the supranational agencies (IMF, World Bank, WTO, G8) which claimed to deal with the economic and political problems of humanity are illegitimate on two counts: (a) they have failed to solve these problems (e.g., the Third World debt has increased dramatically since the Debt Crisis of the early 1980s) and (b) they have no democratic responsibility to humanity (e.g., the IMF and World Bank are largely controlled by their largest shareholders: the US, Japan and the EU countries). The antiglobalization movement which had started in the mid-1980s with the resistance against structural adjustment in the countries of the Third World had finally surfaced in the streets of the First.(6)

But that was the problem: though the antiglobalization movement was able to block or disrupt their meetings, the supranational agencies stonewalled the movement's positive demands. Neither massive debt cancellation, nor fairer trade provisions nor a "Marshall Plan for the World" nor the abolition of the World Bank and IMF were launched in response to the movement's efforts

(whatever the debates within the movement about the effectiveness of these demands). On the contrary, the economic and political crises caused by globalization have intensified in the last two years. Moreover, the official response to the movement has become increasingly violent and repressive. This violence reached a climax in Genoa in July with the police's shooting of Carlo Giuliani, their maiming and torture of hundreds of protesters, and their beating of thousands of others.

There were, however, not only two forces in confrontation in 2001 -- the circle of globalizing capitalists and the antiglobalization movement consisting of thousands of peasant, worker, feminist, environmental and human rights groups across the planet -- there was a third: the military Islamic fundamentalist, representing with arms the political demands of the dissident members of the Islamic ruling class. This group was and is committed to mortal violence, patriarchy and reassertion of the Islamic ruling class's control of the energy resources of their region from Algeria to Indonesia against the claims of the transnational oil companies. It stepped into the vacuum of despair the stalemate between the antiglobalization and the supranational agencies of globalization inevitably generated, driven by its own crisis as outline above.

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***The power of the antiglobalization movement is in its potential to build a real, not simply ideological, political struggle of the world's working people against the plans of globalizing capitalism.***

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On the basis of looking back carefully, then, I conclude that we in the antiglobalization movement must not be caught between the huge bombs of Bush and the smaller bombs of Islamic fundamentalism or be the grass trampled by the lopsided struggle between the giant and the small elephants. For at the moment, at least, our movement is the only one capable of leading an escape from the hellish dialectic of homicide and suicide that the forces of global capital and the perpetrators of the September 11 massacres have launched into oblivion.

## Looking Forward

According to my hypothesis, then, not only have thousands of people in NYC and Washington DC been killed as pawns in a power struggle in the ongoing "oil wars" of the Middle East, the attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon has brought us back to the political structure that prevailed during the Cold War; that is, a structure where we in the antiglobalization movement have to confront both sides, since neither side represents the interests of working people in any part of the world. The Islamic Fundamentalists' misogynous treatment of women -- culminating with the politics of open enslavement embraced by the Taliban -- the autocratic way in which Sharia Law has been imposed on many unwilling citizens; the atrocity of the punishments inflicted on those who break it (including capital punishment); and the chauvinistic brand of Islam imposed at all social levels by self-proclaimed Islamic fundamentalist governments like Sudan's and Afghanistan's -- all speak unequivocally on this point.

In this context, the priority of the antiglobalization movement is to offer an anti-war, anti-patriarchal alternative to the deadly politics of the fundamentalists and their globalizing adversaries by showing that we can address the issues that have lead to this situation:

-Control of natural resources. Why should the US and Europe claim possession of the world's resources as if they were their birthright? How can the population of North America and Europe continue to be blind to the social cost of the oil they put in their cars, and the economic and social inequities built upon it?

-The construction of a Palestinian homeland. For how long will generations of Palestinians have to grow up in refugee camps with nothing to hope for and the burning, unquenchable anger of the terrible injustice done to them -- an injustice reaffirmed with every new Israeli settlement in what was once their land?

-The politics of WB/IMF. Can we afford a globalization program that reduces the people of vast regions to refugees, paupers, and immigrants? Can we allow a world where the majority are displaced from their lands, their basic means of survival, and are forced to migrate across the world in a new Diaspora resembling the slave trade?

Further, it is crucial that the anti-globalization movement begin to build a connection with the Middle East -- by addressing its more urgent demands. For it is plausible that had this process been more advanced it would be far more difficult for the perpetrators of the September 11 massacre to portray all the people in the US as enemies of Islam, and by the same token it would be more difficult now for the US government to contemplate indiscriminate bomb attacks on nations in North Africa, the Middle East and West Asia. This making of connections will present many difficulties, logistic and otherwise; but a starting point is to make a connection with the immigrant Middle Eastern and West Asian communities in our own countries. The crucial point is to avoid the situation that prevailed during the Cold War, when for half a century the Russian working class and the workers of North America and Europe had nearly no contact, except sporadically, through the mediation of communist parties with the result that by the 1990s, even the seemingly most militant among the Soviet Union's workers -- the miners -- could be fooled by "experts" from the AFL-CIO into accepting privatization, as happened in the last days of the Soviet Union.

The power of the antiglobalization movement is in its potential to build a real, not simply ideological, political struggle of the world's working people against the plans of globalizing capitalism. Farmers from India, trade unionists from Canada, students from Europe marched, talked and organized together in the great antiglobalization events of the last two years. This increasing unification of people across barriers of all kinds -- geographical, religious, gender, political -- has challenged the agendas of both the Islamic fundamentalists and the capitalist globalizers. The suicidal attack on Washington and New York and the Bush administration's response, therefore, also are attacks on the antiglobalization movement because they both are calculated to bring increasing divisiveness and despair within a planetary working class that was beginning to see, articulated in both words and images, an alternative non-violent, non-chauvinist, non-racist, and non-sexist reality taking shape. It is crucial that we do not let the war drums and increasing restrictions on civil liberties and the freedom to move across borders succeed in erasing the movement's organizing achievements.

## Notes

(1) There have been many problems in describing the unbroken succession of nations states that, according to naive political geography, begins with Morocco in the west and ends with Pakistan in the east. It is not Arab, but is it Islamic? Doesn't such a description succumb to orientalism? After all, we do not describe the arc of nations from Chile to Russia through Ireland and Iceland as "Christendom," even though the dominant religious affiliation of their populations (if they have any) is some brand of Christianity. But if not Arab and not Islamic, then what? I have chosen as nominalist a path as possible in this essay, with the full recognition of its problems.

(2) Again, a definitional problem rears its head: what is Islamic fundamentalism? Given that there are many groups and movements claiming to be Islamic fundamentalists or being described as Islamic fundamentalists, the definitional effort is difficult. For the purposes of ideological categorization, the Islamic fundamentalists seek to establish an Islamic state, which is to be modeled on the way of life of the early Muslim community. Of course, we must remember Marx's old consumer advice: be wary of the words of the tailor who is trying to sell you a coat! For an excellent analysis of Islamic fundamentalism and its political and ideological limitations see (Faksh 1997).

(3) For the role of Hamas, the major Islamic Fundamentalist organization in Palestine, in social reproduction see (Nusse 1998).

(4) For a trenchant description of the crisis the long-term social, demographic and economic trends forebode for the Saudi monarchy, published on the eve of the decision to go forward on the path of globalization, see (Cordesman 1997: 47-76).

(5) A little noticed development in Saudi Arabia might indicate the surprising tangents produced by the new legislation. In November of 2000, two car bombings in Riyadh left one British man dead and five other foreigners injured. Was it the result of Islamic dissident action? Perhaps that was the first reaction, but in February of 2001 Bill Sampson, a Canadian, confessed to the crime along with Alexander Mitchell, a Briton, and Raf Schyvens, a Belgian. The Saudi government claimed that the three murdered and maimed their

victims as part of a turf war over the country's illegal alcohol trade. Whatever the truth of this accusation, the alcohol business in Saudi Arabia is a very lucrative one -- "a litre bottle of locally brewed wine or beer costs \$60, a case of Budweiser \$259, and a bottle of Johnny Walker Black Label Scotch goes for \$225" (Fennell and Snider 2001: 18) -- and will get more lucrative now that the new Investment Regulation has given foreign companies headquartered in non-Islamic countries a green light to bring in their own employees.

(6) For a discussion of the slow growth of the antiglobalization movement from the Third World to the First, see the "Introduction" of (Midnight Notes 2001).

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## “On the Edge” Commentary Series

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### Algeria, Contested and Embattled

Meredeth Turshen  
[turshen@rci.rutgers.edu](mailto:turshen@rci.rutgers.edu)

A decade of violence and news of bloody massacres have replaced the positive images of Algeria – the FLN’s successful fight to liberate the country from French colonialism, which was captured for many of us in Pontecorvo’s film, *The Battle of Algiers*; the pioneering writings of Frantz Fanon based on his Algerian experience; and Algeria’s leadership (with Cuba) of the Group of 77, which launched the New International Economic Order in 1974 and called for self-reliant national development grounded in a strategy of collective Third World action.

Violent attacks began after the FLN-led government cancelled the second round of national elections in December 1991, which the FIS (the Islamic Salvation Front) was likely to win. At first, the targets were single intellectuals, professionals, bureaucrats, journalists, foreigners, army recruits, and nonconforming women; later, whole neighborhoods of men, women, and children were massacred. According to some estimates, as many as 100,000 people were killed. The question some are asking is, killed by whom?

And just when it seemed that the violence was subsiding, new fighting erupted, this time between the military and the Berbers, who account for 15-20% of the population. In April angry high school students rioted in the densely settled mountain towns of Kabylia east of Algiers, where the Berbers are concentrated.

Repressed by government forces, the unrest left around 50 dead. In May peaceful demonstrations organized by *arch* (tribal) and village committees alternated with deadly police confrontations in the streets of Tizi-Ouzou, the regional capital, and many smaller towns. In June the demonstrations moved to Algiers (the largest Berber city in the country) and swelled from tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands. The question here is, who is organizing (and who is participating in) the massive demonstrations in the capital?

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***What is at stake for Algeria – and the prize for western corporations – is the government-controlled oil and gas fields.***

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The two questions – who is responsible for the past killings and who is orchestrating the current protests – are related and important for what they reveal about the ability of groups vying for power to capture and capitalize on popular discontent for their own purposes. Most Algerians hold the Islamists responsible for the decade of murders, but some accuse the government of complicity and others believe the FLN should legalize the FIS again and share power with it. Six political parties (including the FLN and the FIS) signed the Rome Accords for national reconciliation in January 1995. The socialist party (Front des forces socialistes – FFS) was one of the six; in its

anti-government position, the FFS has allied itself with the FIS. The FFS was also quick to join the Berber Cultural Movement (MCB), which planned the first rallies in Kabylia this spring, and has been prominent in arranging subsequent marches in Algiers. To Berber cultural demands for recognition and instruction in Tamazight, their ancient language, the FFS has added anti-government political slogans and pressed for the resignation of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika.

The two questions expose the interplay between internal and external forces. The FIS has received aid from the Islamic world, as well as from its affiliate in France, the Fédération Algérienne en France (FAF). There was a time in the 1990s when several European governments and human rights groups (France, Germany, Britain, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International) backed the FIS and, despite lack of evidence, claimed that the Algerian military had committed the massacres and had falsely blamed them on the Islamists. The FFS has received aid from the French, mostly from leftist groups (e.g., FFS-Europe) and Berber groups in France (most of the very large Algerian population in France is originally from Kabylia), which have organized small solidarity demonstrations in Paris and Marseilles. The French left press (*Le Monde Diplomatique*, for example) consistently attacks the Algerian government; its complaints about corruption are justified, but the alternative — an Islamist state — is not preferable to the vast majority of Algerians.

Who benefits from the current unrest and who would profit from the fall of Bouteflika's coalition government? So many of the orderly marches have ended in rioting and looting that

some commentators believe amnestied Islamists are inciting the chaos. Because the Islamists have targeted women in the past, news that women had to cancel a demonstration in Kabylia because rioters took over the area even before the women could assemble and that armed rioters ran through a women's dormitory at the university in Tizi-Ouzou, forcing the students to flee, support this supposition. There is talk of autonomy for Kabylia, which would amount to the dismantling of the unitary Algerian state (a pattern we have seen elsewhere). This ploy is reminiscent of De Gaulle's last-ditch proposal to give independence to the north of Algeria, while France retained control of the oil-rich Sahara (another area of Berber-speakers). For some Algerians, this talk of autonomy invokes the specter of NATO intervention in Kosovo; they fear that NATO might "come to the defense" of Berbers in Algeria under the guise of humanitarian intervention.

What is at stake for Algeria — and the prize for western corporations — is the government-controlled oil and gas fields. US progressives should not be misled by the French left. Read what progressive Algerians in Algeria have to say (for example, at [www.ifrance.com/algerie-verite](http://www.ifrance.com/algerie-verite)). Given the oil interests that dominate the Bush administration, we should resist calls for humanitarian intervention, a policy ACAS has debated in the past (see Cason, ACAS Bulletin no. 57/58).

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