

SIERRA LEONE
CALENDAR OF EVENTS 1993

JANUARY

- 5 Britain suspends further aid to Sierra Leone following the execution of 27 people.
- Week of national repentance, fasting and prayer (9-15 January) proclaimed by Capt Strasser.
- 12 Guidelines for the registration of newspapers announced.
- Three detainees released from Pademba Road Prison.
- 21 Government troops recapture Koidu Town and other parts of Kono District.
- 28 Statement by the Head of State, Capt Strasser, on the demarche by the envoys of the EEC and the Delegate of the EEC resident in Freetown.

FEBRUARY

- 8 Deadline for re-registration of newspapers. Eleven weekly newspapers registered.
- The British High Commission presents gifts to the Community Education Centre at Waterloo.
- 26 Sierra Leone Government denies mandating Dr Abass Bundu, ECOWAS Executive Secretary, to act on its behalf over a call for a ceasefire in the rebel war.

MARCH

- 5 15% increase in the price of petrol, gasoline and kerosene announced.
- The British Council presents textbooks to the Newton Resource Centre.
- 11 The Sierra Leone Government expresses alarm at deaths of paupers and stragglers at Mafanta Prison.
- The Secretary General and PRO of the NPRC, Lt Karefa Kargbo, informs local and international press about attempts by dissidents in Guinea, Conakry, to destabilise the Government of Sierra Leone.

MARCH

- 12 Government troops recapture Bandajuma - Yawei in Kailahun District and Gandorhun in Kono District.
- 16 British High Commission presents essential drugs to the ECOWAS Executive Secretary, Dr Abass Bundu, for use by ECOMOG forces in Liberia.
- 23 The United Kingdom is to provide £110,000 to UNICEF for its programme among displaced people in Sierra Leone.
- 26 Liberia's Interim President, Amos Sawyer, pays a one-day visit to Freetown.
- Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Dr Lamin Kamara, and Secretary-General and PRO of the NPRC, Lt Karefa Kargbo, calls on the British Government to review its decision to suspend aid to Sierra Leone and to play a major role in bringing the rebel war to an end.
- 28 Secretary-General and PRO of the NPRC states that the NPRC Government is determined to return the country to genuine multi-party democracy within the shortest possible time, and that a timetable for the return to pluralism could be released during the first week in May this year.
- 29 Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs describes recent talks in London with British Government officials as friendly, frank and encouraging.
- 30 Total number of paupers and stragglers who died at Mafanta Prison given as 75. Committee set up to investigate the circumstances leading up to this tragedy.

APRIL

- 1 Sierra Leone Government signs contract worth £1,396,000 with the British Council for the procurement and supply of text books and supplementary readers to primary schools in Sierra Leone.
- Sierra Leone Government levies 10% sales tax on the importation of rice.
- 2 6 out of 7 people arrested and detained for their alleged involvement in the illegal arms deal with the Ukraine are released. 7th suspect, Ernest Allen, still in detention.

APRIL

- 23 Sierra Leone Government sets up special tribunals to take resolute action against Service personnel or civilians caught commandeering vehicles or harrassing civilians.
- 27 Sierra Leone's 32nd Independence Anniversary.
- 28 Government troops reportedly recapture the strategic towns of Tikonko, Kwiva, Mobai and Baiama in the Kailahun District.
- 29 1st Anniversary of the assumption of office by the NPRC. The Chairman of the NPRC announces the release of 24 political detainees and democracy within three years.

MAY

- 3 British Council organises Gala Musical performance as part of the activities to celebrate their 50th Anniversary in Sierra Leone.
- 6 31 out of 62 suspects in a ritual murder case die in Police custody in Kenema.
- 14 Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Dr Lamin Kamara, calls for British Government's assistance in acquiring international support for the implementation of Sierra Leone's rehabilitation programme.
- 15 Under-Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Mr Anthony Goodenough, briefs Capt Strasser about his visit to Sierra Leone.
- 17 Consignment of drugs and medical supplies estimated at millions of leones presented to ECOMOG by Mr Anthony Goodenough.
- 31 VSO Ambassador to Sierra Leone, Ms Fatima Whitbread, calls on Capt Strasser.

JUNE

- 3 Rebels launch attack on Pujehun - 25 rebels killed.
- 9 Acting Chairman, S A J Musa, issued notice permitting indigenous Konos to return home.
- 14 Course conducted by two British detectives ends at the Police Training School, Hastings.
- 29 Secretary of State for Finance, John Karimu, presents Budget Estimates for 1993/94 fiscal year.

SEPTEMBER

- 27 British High Commission advise State House that Capt Musa has been planning a coup from UK.
- 29 Teachers strike ends. Classes resume in primary and secondary schools throughout the country.

OCTOBER

- 8 The British High Commissioner to Sierra Leone presents letters of credence to the Chairman of the National Provisional Ruling Council and Head of State.
- 13 Staff of the New Breed Newspaper arrested and detained. Ambassador Prinz visits them at CID Headquarters.
- 14 Four British Nationals arrested for an alleged coup attempt.
- 18 Acting Inspector General of Police briefs the Press on the reasons for the arrest of four British Nationals.
- 21 Acting Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs addresses members of the Diplomatic Corps on the situation. Advises diplomats not to interfere in internal affairs.
- 25 The United Kingdom Government allocates Le 42,750,000 to UNICEF in support of the rehabilitation of war affected children.

NOVEMBER

- 3 The Head of State and Chairman of the NPRC addresses the nation in a radio and television broadcast on the coup attempt. German Government asked to withdraw Ambassador Prinz by 15 November.
- 9 The Public Relations Officer of the NPRC, Capt Karefa Kargbo, denies that the Sierra Leone Government had declared the German Ambassador persona non grata.
- 10 The Managing Director, Editor of the New Breed Newspaper, Dr Julius Spencer and four others charged with ten count indictment of seditious libel, false report and defamation.
- Dr Abass Bundu appointed Foreign Secretary. Ambassador Prinz's stay extended to 15 December.

NOVEMBER

- 24 Bank of Sierra Leone announces the availability of Foreign Exchange, from the World Bank, under the Structural Adjustment credit, for the importation of eligible goods.
- 26 The Head of State and Chairman of the NPRC announces detailed transition programme for the return to democratic civilian rule by 1996.

DECEMBER

- 1 The Sierra Leone Government declares ceasefire in the war with Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels.
- 3 The Working Document for the proposed constitution for Sierra Leone is launched at the State Hall, Parliament Building.
- 5 RUF rebels attack several towns in Kailahun District.
- 6 Fourah Bay College closed down by College authorities and government as a result of student unrest.
- 24 Four British Nationals charged with treason. Curfew lifted. List of detainees received.
- 25 25 prisoners released including student Sesay.
- 31 Interim Election Commission appointed with Dr James Jonah as Commissioner.

[REDACTED]

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

African Department (Equatorial)

[REDACTED]

Sierra Leone

31 December 1993

SIERRA LEONE: ANNUAL REVIEW FOR 1993

*From The British High Commissioner at Freetown to the
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs*

SUMMARY

1. This engaging country with its young military Government began the year with executions but in April promised a return to civilian rule (Paras 1-2).

2. They have embraced an IMF economic programme and driven rebels from Liberia out of the diamond mining areas of Kono province. But the Army looted the recovered areas and people are slow to return (Paras 3-4).

3. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Chairman Strasser is accused by a newspaper of stealing diamonds. Press freedom is limited (Paras 5-7).

4. The Government have created an environment in which people can live and work. Power supplies and fuel are available. The business and education systems have political support from Government (Para 8).

5. A programme for return to civilian rule by 1996 was announced in November. Prominent Sierra Leoneans abroad accept key posts in support (Para 9).

6. There are strong bilateral relations within West Africa. The West and international organisations run a close second. Britain has an influential role. Sierra Leone has economic potential and the Government has good ideas to implement, if it can avoid corrupt business pressures (Paras 10-11).

[REDACTED]

Sir,

1. This small tropical country on the Atlantic coast of Africa is scenically engaging, sensitively black and brimming with unfulfilled promise. A group of young officers took charge in April 1992 and completed that year by executing twenty seven opposition plotters on a local beach. But they were popular. They replaced a series of increasingly corrupt governments since Sierra Leone became independent in 1961. Their motto 'One Love', accompanied by the thumbs up sign and reflective shades, encapsulated the pop culture style of their early leadership. 1993 brought a more serious tone to the proceedings.

2. The immediate British reaction to the beach executions was a suspension of proferred balance of payments aid and a ban on new bilateral aid projects. In slower time a European demarche condemned the executions. The Government arranged a half-hearted demonstration against the High Commission but thinking Sierra Leoneans privately applauded the Western stance. On the first anniversary of the coup in April 1993, National Provisional Ruling Council Chairman, Capt Valentine Strasser, 28, promised elections within three years and released some 86 political detainees. This, taken together with the Government's economic programme, was seen as sensible progress and Britain's aid offer was renewed, conditional on the publication of an election timetable, the listing of other prisoners detained without charge and their release by the end of the year if not charged.

3. The NPRC have consistently faced up to the country's economic problems. They inherited a situation in which the IMF had offered a Rights Accumulation Programme if some interest and capital repayments could be made on time. They have firmly implemented this to the point where, by February 1994, Sierra Leone will be reinstated as a regular borrower from the Fund. They have to a large extent met targets on inflation, down from 40% pa to below 20% pa, government budgets and the reduction of civil service roles, and eliminated the parallel foreign exchange market by floating the Leone. In an anti-corruption drive, a Commission of Enquiry under Justice Beccles Davies has investigated the assets of former members of Government back as far as 1986, imposing fines and confiscating property. Attempts to licence

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and regulate diamond mining and offshore fishing have not so far come to fruition, but the mining of bauxite, rutile and to some extent gold has been renegotiated with the mining companies to provide a satisfactory level of revenue.

4. Sierra Leone's exports are traditionally diamonds, coffee and cocoa, commodities produced in the Eastern region of the country in Kono, Kenema and Kailahun provinces. In October 1992 much of this area was occupied by rebel forces linked to Charles Taylor in Liberia. Their organisation is neither strong, nor coherent; it is known as the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and led by Foday Sankoh. The Republic of Sierra Leone Military Forces (RSLMF), now an army of 12,000, dislodged the RUF from Kono province in the late spring of 1993 but trade and refugees only began to return towards the end of the year. Meanwhile what buildings and facilities the RUF had left intact were stripped by the Army as booty. Further east in Kailahun, the good agricultural land has not been recovered, though the army largely hold the towns and roads. The economic effect of the rebel war is profound. Normal production of diamonds and produce has been cut back and the population displaced to refugee camps. The money which circulated from this trade, largely outside the official economy, has not been available to support services and importers. And this coincided with an outbreak of comparative honesty in Government, which no longer provided political slush money to support the consumer goods market. The destruction of Kono is thought to have removed 25% of the country's economy at a stroke.

5. Nevertheless, success in the rebel war, moral support from the IMF and material support from the World Bank, EC and ADB as well as the UN agencies has brought confidence to the military leadership over the year. They surmounted a crisis in July when Chairman Strasser expelled his Deputy Chairman SAJ Musa. The dispute between them was both personal and over policy matters.

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

When Strasser dropped Musa as Deputy Chairman and Chief Secretary of State, the latter took refuge in the Nigerian High Commission in fear for his life. After negotiations Musa and his wife were allowed to travel to Britain where Musa is now a student at Birmingham University.

6. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] In the same month, a newspaper in Freetown published a report and editorial condemning Strasser for selling diamonds privately. The paper's editor, Julius Spencer, and his staff were arrested. Spencer is a prominent intellectual and dramatist. The German Ambassador, Karl Prinz, protested against this attack on press freedom by visiting CID headquarters to protect Spencer from, he believes, summary execution. All this precipitated a second crisis point for Government. That same week (on 14 October) four visiting British Nationals of oriental origin were arrested in Freetown for attempting to mount a coup at Musa's instigation. They were eventually charged with treason in December. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]. The journalists were released on bail in November and their trial for seditious libel is underway.

7. The positive side to this complex intrigue, worthy of publication as a paperback, is the acceptance by Government that these matters should be dealt with in open court in accordance with the law. At the Commonwealth Conference in October, Strasser and his team were questioned by the British press and confirmed publicly that they would let justice be done and be seen to be done. The local press is understandably nervous of government, though not formally censored. Television and radio are government controlled. Private radio is allowed but not so far economic. The media system is evolving, and is a dramatic improvement on the situation 2 years ago when the lack of electrical power prevented both the production and reception of television, radio or newspapers.

8. The extent to which the NPRC have created an environment in which people can live and work peaceably is perhaps their most striking achievement. With World Bank, ADB and EC aid, electricity in Freetown has been restored and petrol is freely available. The contract to manage further power rehabilitation, hitherto held by the Germans, has just been won by the Irish Electricity Board with Kennedy and Donkin as consultants. The Sierra Leone Roads Authority again with aid and British consultants is making progress both within Freetown and in the country at large. The medical services have undergone a major review and British VSO consultants attached to the Minister's office are

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optimistic that considerable improvements are manageable. The British Council assist the Ministry of Education through a World Bank contract for school books and our Representative is a member of the University Court. Schools in the country run peacefully, especially those managed by the Catholic Church. The University has its strains but the Government have lent support to the academic authorities rather than overruling them. A similar situation applies in business. The Government stepped in in support of management during a strike at Barclays Bank. The appearance of an Army Captain in uniform to address employees at their place of work had a dramatic effect on union willingness to negotiate.

9. In November Chairman Strasser announced a timetable for the return to democracy. He declared a unilateral ceasefire in the rebel war, a new amnesty for the rebels, and gave details of a political education programme to explain the rights and responsibilities of people under the new constitution to be adopted in 1995. The draft constitution has been published as a working document and includes a provision for non blacks to become citizens, the prohibition of a one party state, and the separation of the judiciary from the executive. District Council elections are to take place in November 1994 when candidates will campaign as individuals, rather than for political parties. The people should choose "dedicated, honest, hardworking, knowledgeable and patriotic candidates to represent them". The plan is for political parties to be formed in mid 1995 and elections to take place in November and December that year. Prominent Sierra Leoneans from elsewhere are rallying to this democratic timetable. James Jonah, former Assistant Secretary General at the United Nations has accepted the post of Election Commissioner. Abass Bundu, ex-Secretary General of ECOWAS, has become Foreign Secretary and Victor Brandon, an Aid Director from CUSO, is Minister of Development.

10. Sierra Leone's foreign relations are dominated by their involvement with their West African neighbours. Nigeria and Guinea provide ECOMOG troops to assist against Liberian rebel incursions. Nigerian troops guard key installations in Freetown and could secure the Government against a counter coup. Ghana is a model which the NPRC could well follow, both economically and politically. The NPRC, some suspect, may itself become a political party. Beyond regional politics, Britain has a major influence in culture, business and outlook. While the leaders have been cool following our suspension of aid, and the populace were puzzled at UK failure to give direct support in the rebel war, Sierra Leoneans react to advice emanating from UK sources and accept easily the presence of British advisers and consultants in Government posts and the international agencies. Germany is a major aid partner, but Ambassador

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[REDACTED]

Prinz' disillusionment with the young officers and his defence of the arrested journalists led to a Sierra Leone request for his recall. The German Government refused, common sense prevailed and the request was dropped [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]. France and the United States play a role internationally in Sierra Leone affairs but the bilateral effort seems muted. Sierra Leone makes a major effort to woo and cosset the international financial institutions, the UN family and the European Commission. In this they are successful.

11. Looking to the future, the Government's political and economic plans are sound, an atmosphere of peace and security has emerged and their attempts to control the rabble army are showing signs of success. A renewed rebel incursion from Liberia may sap resources and resolve, but the greatest threat comes from within. The NPRC have planned their own demise with a return to democracy. They will fear for their personal welfare. Some may succumb to the attractions of corruption so endemic in West Africa. Others may connive at a further coup if they feel marginalised in power or personal gain. Business interests, especially those connected with diamonds and the Lebanese community, exert powerful and traditional forces against open government. The temptations and the hurdles are formidable. Nevertheless, with consistent political and financial backing for the best of their ideas, the sound economy which existed in the sixties based on good land, water, fish and valuable minerals can re-emerge to found a self-sufficient, equable and peaceloving nation.

I am Sir

Yours faithfully

Ian McCluney

Ian McCluney

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