

SIERRA LEONE

CALENDAR OF EVENTS 1991

JANUARY

- 2 Ministry of Trade statement on failure of some importers and exporters to comply with SSI regulations on pre-shipment inspection.
- 10-16 Director-General of the British Council, Sir Richard Francis, visits Sierra Leone.
- 18 Minister of Mines, Birch Conteh, announces agreement with Sunshine Mining Company of the USA valued at \$70 million.
- 24 RSLMF contingent departs for The Gulf.
- 30 President Momoh goes to UK for medical treatment.

FEBRUARY

- 21 NPFL and INPFL delegations meet in Freetown.
- 22 British Council Director, Mrs Theresa Harvey, presents drugs from the City of Hull to the Sierra Leone Society for the Welfare of the Aged.

MARCH

- 4 RSLMF contingent leaves for Liberia.
- 8 British Airways announce ceasing operations to Sierra Leone.
- 9-16 British Council Freetown Festival of Arts week.
- 22 Second RSLMF contingent leaves for Liberia.
- 23 50 NPFL rebels attack border towns of Bomaru and Seinga killing 12 people.
- 27 NPFL rebels attack Baidu, east of Koindu.
- 28 NPFL rebels attack Customs post at Beudu.
National Constitutional Review Commission report.

APRIL

- 7 President Momoh pays one-day visit to Nigeria.
- 9 Two NPFL rebels describe Charles Taylor's involvement in the incursions.
- NPFL rebels kill President of Supreme Islamic Council.

MAY

- 1 University students demonstrate outside Diplomatic Missions for support against NPFL rebels.
- 15 Minister of Justice, Dr A O Conteh, opens three-week Drugs Enforcement Law Training Course sponsored by HMG.
- 18 British Airways cease operations to Sierra Leone.
- 23 Government White Paper on the Constitutional Review Commission Report.
- 24 British High Commission donate drug detecting equipment and testing kits to CID.
- 30 Five RSLMF officers cashiered.

JUNE

- 2-5 President Momoh attends OAU Summit in Abuja.
- 7 Parliament extended for 12 months.
- US military aid, including military equipment, communication equipment.
- 11 Musa Kabia, Minister of Rural Development, resigns.
- 12 Dr A D Koroma appointed in his place.
- 21 British military equipment and medical supplies arrive.

JULY

- 2 Bar Association Press Conference on the Constitution of Sierra Leone 1991.
- 3 President Momoh leaves for ECOWAS Summit in Nigeria.
- 8 BCCI suspends operations.
- 15 APC suspends 11 members including 8 MPs.
- 17 RSLMF recapture Pujehun from rebels.
- 26 President Momoh warns that the forming of political parties is premature.
- 30 President Momoh opens new Chinese built military headquarters at Wilkinson Road.

AUGUST

- 1 Chinese learn of yuan 30 million interest-free loan to boost agriculture and health.
- 6 Edward Turay MP poses a motion alleging irregularities in MPSSL account overseas.
- 1st Vice-President, Jusu-Sheriff, Attorney-General, Dr A O Conteh and Foreign Minister, A K Koroma call on Mrs Chalker.
- 11 Recapture of Daru, Segbwema, Gandorhun in the east and Potoru, Sumbuya, Jimmi, Bagbor, Bandajuma and Pujehun in the south.
- 18 Combined Guinean and Sierra Leone forces recapture Zimmi Town.
- 20 HMG donates £225,000 to ICRC and UNDRO for displaced Sierra Leoneans.
- 21 President Momoh says that the rebel incursions may delay the General Election.
- 23-30 Referendum on the new multi-party Constitution.

SEPTEMBER

- 4 GB Airways starts operations to Sierra Leone.
- Guinean and Sierra Leone forces recapture Fairo and Sulima.

SEPTEMBER

- 6 And Mano River Bridge.
US Government donates \$60,000 to displaced Sierra Leoneans.
- 8 NPFL rebels recapture Mano River Bridge.
- 10 Dr Sheku Kanu, Minister of National Development, is dismissed.
- 12 APC withdraws suspension of 10 Party members.
- 23 President Momoh announces his new Government.

OCTOBER

- 4-5 APC Extraordinary National Delegates Conference.
- 11 President Momoh visits Bo and Kenema.
HMG donates £125,000 to ICRC for displaced Sierra Leoneans
- 14 President Momoh attends CHOGM in Harare.
- 18 Public Sector Pay Commission begins work.
- 29-30 2nd Vice-President, Dauda, attends Yamassoukro IV Meeting.

NOVEMBER

- 13 Bank of Sierra Leone authorises the opening of Foreign Exchange Bureaux.
- 12-26 Mike Fox of Hull Daily Mail visits Sierra Leone.
- 26 Lady Hannah Momoh opens Children's Library at British Council.

DECEMBER

- 3 Death of APC National Chairman, Paul Kamara.
- 4 Finance Minister, Dr J S Funna, gives Press Conference on the Sierra Leone economy.
- 6-8 Force Commander, Major General M S Tarawalli, visits the Eastern Province.

DECEMBER

- 9 Delegation from the International Foundation for Electoral Systems calls on President Momoh.
- 17 Mr Willie Pratt appointed Electoral Commissioner.
- 19 1st Vice-President, Dr Abdulai Conteh, defends the appointment of the Electoral Commissioner and the nomination of MPs.
- EC statement calling for an end to hostilities between Liberia and Sierra Leone.
- 21 President Momoh opens the Mini-Hydro Power Station at Makali.
- 23 Bank of Sierra Leone releases leone 500 notes for circulation.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

SUMMARY

1. New Constitution restored multi-party system. A new Sierra Leone Government (SLG) to give the All People's Party (APC) credibility for the 1992 elections. New opposition parties vocal but not yet organised (Paras 1-4).
 2. Economic revival dependant on IMF Structural Adjustment Programme. SLG's economic measures: a policy on diamonds; tax on petroleum products; curb on public sector pay. Revenue measures from offshore fishing and pre-shipment inspection of imports ineffective. Military expenditure exceeded budgetary provision. SLG repayments to IMF short of obligations (Paras 5-9).
 3. Liberian rebels occupied most of south and east. Sierra Leone Military Forces with support from refugee Liberian soldiers, Guinea, Nigeria and equipment from US, China and UK, recover all but Kailahun District. Rebels again active from November. Late participation in Yamoussoukro process. Rebel aims: regional destabilisation, plunder and SL insurrection. Outcome: a heavy drain on limited SLG resources and disaffection in the RSLMF (Paras 10-13).
 4. Limited British interests. British Council effective. Sierra Leone disappointed at scale of military assistance. We have been sympathetic at IMF but programme aid and technical assistance will depend on Sierra Leone's economic performance. Possible scope for help in Customs and Income Tax Departments (Paras 14-16).
 5. A rough ride ahead if the rebel conflict continues. Without additional resources, increasing disaffection in the RSLMF and the public sector. Elections a long way off (Para 17).
- [REDACTED]

Sir,

1. This was a testing year politically, with regard to the economy, and militarily.

Internal Political

2. The coming into force of the new Constitution was the major event. The Review Commission presented its report on 28 March: a multi-party constitution; protection for human rights; an Executive President and an elected House of Representatives, plus a balancing and checking appointed Senate of elders. Giving way to international and domestic pressure, Sierra Leone's All People's Congress (APC) Government accepted most of the Commission's proposals, but in its own draft Constitution excluded the Senate. Parliament compensated by subjecting Presidential appointments, including now those of Ministers, to the approval of the residual single Chamber Parliament. Parliament also removed the President's veto on legislation. The people of Sierra Leone endorsed the new Constitution in a referendum at the end of August and it came into effect on 1 October. Parliamentary elections have to be held within 12 months of that date assuming no war. The Presidential election is due by November 1992.

3. The problem for the APC is to win the elections despite the antipathy which the corruption, incompetence and violence that characterised their one-party rule, has engendered. In an attempt to create a new APC image, President Momoh appointed a new government on 23 September. The APC leadership gave it some intellectual credibility by retaining the former Attorney-General, Dr A O Conteh, as 1st Vice-President. They gave the government professional credibility by bringing in experts such as the former World Bank official, Dr J S A Funna, as Minister of Finance. By appointing Ministers from the south east, where the APC is traditionally weak, they stood to benefit electorally from government successes, and could demonstrate that the APC is a country-wide and not a tribally-based party.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] t.
Momoh's appointment of the new government before the 1991

/Constitution

Constitution came into effect, that is without having to seek Parliamentary approval, showed how the wind of political change had undermined the APC's self-confidence.

4. By early November, seven political parties had been registered. The APC's principal adversary, the revived Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) made little initial impression. There was dissention over the selection of veteran Salia Jusu-Sheriff as leader. Rebel incursions from Liberia prevented the party organising in the south and east where it enjoys traditional support. More effective opposition came from APC defectors and former Ministers, such as Taimu Bangura of the People's Democratic Party (exploiting APC Temne tribal grievances against the APC Limba tribal leadership), Hassan Gbassay Kanu of the Democratic People's Party, and Sheku Kanu of the National Action Party. Such people had intervened effectively against the APC in the debate on the Constitution. In December they agitated against the APC's bid to declare a state of emergency. They were the victims, however worthy, of an APC-inspired Press campaign. But they were the weaker for not combining. The public considered them to be no less opportunistic and corrupt than their former colleagues in the APC. The one truly new party, the National Democratic Party, was spearheaded by academics. It was vocal but lacked direction.

The Economy

5. The Sierra Leone economy was moribund. Public administration a shambles. Central to any remedy would have been an honest and competent government that put a stop to diamond smuggling that is worth over \$150 million per annum. Meanwhile, hopes lay with an IMF Structural Adjustment Programme, important to the SLG as the road to World Bank and other aid, and to the APC as a potential election winner; important to the IMF as a means of recovering \$126 million of Sierra Leone debt, and to potential donors as an assurance of value for future aid. The SLG had embarked on fiscal and other economic measures in December 1989 to meet IMF conditions. The 1991 diamond policy to divert trade into official channels by attracting reputable international companies more than doubled official diamond exports to approximately \$30 million.

6. Some measures proved unpopular. Following the removal of subsidy, the dollar related price of a 50 kg bag of rice doubled to 9,000 leones or twice the monthly salary of a secondary school teacher. A 70 per cent increase in the tax on petroleum products on 10 October led to much higher fares and electricity costs. The curb on public sector pay increases pending a Pay Review Commission brought teachers out on strike in September/October.

7. Other measures proved ineffective. Hostile Sierra Leone fishing interests used a Parliamentary Select Committee to immobilise the SLG's joint venture with a British company, Maritime Protection Services (MPS), the purpose of which had been to raise revenue from offshore fishing licences and royalties. The same interests refused to pay over \$1 million in fees. An SLG creditor, owed \$10 million, put a stop on the SLG account through which the venture was funded. The SLG's sole benefit from the fishery regime was a one-off poaching fine of \$600,000 imposed on a French vessel. Nor did the pre-shipment inspection of import invoices by another British company, Specialist Services International (SSI), on behalf of the SLG, result in any significant increase in revenue. SSI identified attempts at Customs evasion on a large scale. But the perpetrators side-stepped the problem by persuading the Ministry of Finance to issue duty exemptions.

8. The SLG's attempts to contain expenditure were frustrated by the rebel incursions. In June, the SLG expected the conflict to be over by October and budgeted 3 billion leones (£3.5 million) of military expenditure accordingly. The conflict continues and the budget is grossly overspent.

9. The net effect was that the SLG was unable to reduce its arrears to the IMF to the agreed June 1991 level of \$122.2 million. The negotiations continue.

Sierra Leone/Liberia

10. Even more pressing for the SLG than their political and economic problems was the military and diplomatic challenge posed by the occupation and pillage of most of the Eastern and Southern Provinces by armed gangs of Charles Taylor's Liberian NPFL rebels and dissident or pressed Sierra Leoneans. The Republic of Sierra Leone Military Forces (RSLMF) were totally incapable of resistance. More than 200,000 Sierra Leoneans fled from their homes, some into Guinea. But the rebel advance stopped in May. The rainy season was beginning and ammunition may have been running short. The RSLMF was reinforced by refugee Liberian soldiers once loyal to President Doe. Guinea sent fighting troops to the south east, and Nigeria a battalion to defend Freetown. The United States sent a small first consignment of non-lethal military equipment and the Chinese arms and ammunition. The United Kingdom contributed certain non-lethal equipment.

11. During June-September the RSLMF and allied forces recovered most of the occupied areas, the RSLMF gaining a reputation for savagery to its own people in the process. A specially trained RSLMF battalion could not, however, recover the Kailahun salient in the east. In November, rebels in Kailahun intensified attacks on the neighbouring areas, including the garrison town of Daru. In the south, the rebels again occupied a small area across the Mano River near Zimmi.

[REDACTED]

12. Sierra Leone only latterly joined in regional attempts in Yamoussoukro to resolve the Liberian crisis. On 20 September, the SLG called for the withdrawal of Taylor's forces from Sierra Leone and the creation of a buffer zone. They attended Yamoussoukro IV on 29-30 October, and the follow-up meetings in Monrovia. After 2nd Vice-President Dauda's mission to Abidjan on 19-20 December, they thought that the Ivorian President might temper his support for Taylor.

13. Freetown gave a mixture of motives for the incursions. The megalomania theory had it as Taylor's intention to destabilise West Africa. His grudge against Sierra Leone was that but for Momoh allowing the assembly and despatch of ECOMOG forces from Freetown to Monrovia in 1990, he would already have been President of Liberia. Secondly, the plunder motive. South east Sierra Leone is rich in rice, cocoa, coffee and diamonds. It offered a tempting target for unpaid NPFL rebels, particularly after the Sierra Leone Police had underpaid them for loot from Liberia. Thirdly, Sierra Leonean refugees in Liberia exploited the opportunity both to cause trouble for the Momoh government and to settle local scores. Momoh's APC Government had to pay a price. The conflict was a heavy drain on limited resources and diverted attention from pressing political and economic questions. It provoked disaffection in the RSLMF itself. They contrasted their own poor leadership, equipment and supplies with those of the Guinean and Nigerian forces.

Relations with Britain

14. We have a general interest in promoting good government in Sierra Leone against the day when the relationships can be more meaningful and mutually advantageous. Meanwhile the British interest was confined to hangers-on in the banking and consumer goods manufacturing sectors, and to MPS and SSI. We had residual TC projects in agricultural training, the maintenance of bridges and ferries, and Police training, to which we tried to apply the principle that aid is support, and not a substitute, for the SLG's own development policies. On humanitarian grounds, we continued to help the rural poor with support for such as VSO and Water Aid. We contributed £350,000 to international relief organisations for Sierra Leoneans displaced by the incursions. The British Council maintained its high profile and continued its highly-effective work.

15. Sierra Leonean expectations of "help" from Britain as the former Colonial power were innate and eloquent. The SLG was disappointed by our response to their appeal for support against the rebel incursions. In the desired measure, it would have been a fillip to confidence, fulfilled a practical need and served as an encouragement to others. Typically, however, the Sierra Leoneans might have tried to involve us more than was appropriate. As it was, our resources were

/limited

[REDACTED]

limited and we responded in due course with a modest but useful consignment of non-lethal equipment. In August we declined a request for further military assistance from the delegation to London, headed by the then vice-President Jusu-Sheriff. But in December we promoted an EC statement calling on all the combatants to put down their arms.

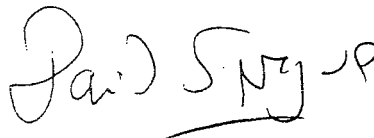
16. Successive Ministers of Finance said that they looked to the United Kingdom for support in Washington for their IMF programme. We spoke sympathetically. IMF and World Bank officials attempted to build HMG into their packaged solutions. We made further programme aid and technical assistance dependent upon Sierra Leone performance under a programme. Meanwhile we are examining whether there is scope for further British help in the key revenue earning departments of Customs and Income Tax.

Prospects

17. Sierra Leone is in for a rough ride if the rebel conflict is not resolved soon. Without additional resources, disaffection in the RSLMF will grow, with the soldiers perhaps turning on the civilian population for sustenance. Without additional pay, the public sector spearheaded by the educationists may turn to political means. Unemployed students may agitate. All while the IMF is deciding whether to agree a Structural Adjustment Programme. The elections seem a long way off.

I am Sir

Yours faithfully



D K Sprague