

SIERRA LEONE  
CALENDAR OF EVENTS 1992

JANUARY

- 3 Momoh receives delegation of the Youth League of the Communist Party of China.
- 10 Momoh's Annual Reception for Heads of Missions.
- 14 Bank of Sierra Leone's concern about artificial shortage of currency notes.
- 16 Liberian Ambassador, Osman Dukuly, presents credentials.
- 17 State House say that government will not allow processions anywhere in the country.
- 18 The Amara-Bangali Commission on conditions of service of members of the public service and teachers submits report.
- 22 Parliament approves bill entitled "The Public Budgeting and Accounting Act 1992".
- 27 Momoh warns against demonstrations aimed at embarrassing him and his government.

FEBRUARY

- 3 Teachers resume strike over salary and better conditions of service.
- 5 Mines Minister, Aiah Koroma, discloses that \$200 million worth of minerals are smuggled every year.
- 10 Momoh appoints retired civil servant, Val Nylander, as Chairman of newly-formed National Asset and Government Property Commission.
- 12 Momoh officially opens Summit of Heads of Government of the Mano River Union.
- 13 Five accused of the murder of Dr Claude Nelson-Williams receive death sentence.
- Government issues statement on salary increases

FEBRUARY

- 13 Police question Editor-in-Chief of New Oracle newspaper, Ibrahim S Shaw, at CID.
- 14 Momoh officially opens new FM 99.9 radio station at Leicester Peak.
- Mrs Theresa Harvey, Director of British Council, becomes first woman to receive the Freedom of the City of Freetown.
- 15 Clash between APC and SLPP supporters at SLPP political meeting in Kenema.
- 18 APC Secretariat refutes SLPP allegations of APC attack in Kenema.
- 19 Finance Minister, Dr Jim Funna, reports satisfactory progress in negotiations with IMF.
- 25 Parliament approves Bill entitled "The Sierra Leone Roads Authority Act 1992".
- 27 Information Minister, Sam Kpakra, advises newspaper editors to work within the law.
- Executive of Sierra Leone Teachers Union agree to accept 200 per cent salary increase effective 1 February.
- 27-29 Electoral Commissioner, Mr Willie Pratt, visits Makeni.
- 29 English Shakespeare Company begins visit to Sierra Leone.

MARCH

- 1-16 Momoh appeals to Temnes in Kono District to be law abiding.
- Arrangements for the re-registration of voters in the Western Area and the Northern Region.
- 17 President Amos Sawyer of Liberia holds talks with President Momoh.
- 18 American based company, CHEVRON, tender to manage the oil refinery.

MARCH

- 19 Police Council appointed. Members include the Vice-President as Chairman, the Inspector-General and three other members. Powers to appoint, promote etc members of the Police Force.
- 24 New UNDP Representative to Sierra Leone, Mr Joseph Kotta.

APRIL

- 13 Momoh visits Southern Province.
- 14 National Registration Secretariat resumes its registration programme.
- 28 Black Dyke Mills Band from Britain ends tour of Sierra Leone.
- 29 Military coup d'etat. Momoh flees.

MAY

- 1-3 NPRC announces names of members of Cabinet on SLBS.
- 14 Head of State announces that the NPRC will continue to honour and implement the recent IMF programme for the improved economic situation of Sierra Leone.
- 17 13,226 metric tons of rice and 5,801 metric tons of bulk wheat lands in Freetown under the US Government's PL 480 programme.
- 23 Minister of Trade, Industry and State Enterprises announces that NPRC will not introduce a price control system.

JUNE

- 1 Deputy Chairman of NPRC, Capt S A J Musa, holds closed door discussions with the Interim President of Liberia, Dr Amos Sawyer.

JUNE

- 3 World Food Programme approves £118 million expansion of its current feeding operations for the needs of more than two million refugees and internally displaced people for 1993 in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Ivory Coast.
- 10 Commissions of Inquiry set up to investigate certain past holders of public office.
- 17 Strasser visits Nigeria.

JULY

- 1 28th Summit of the OAU opens in Dakar, Senegal. Addressed by Capt Strasser.
- 2 SLMPB closes down because of gross mismanagement.
- 5 Nurses in Freetown hold solidarity march to State House.
- 9 Newly appointed Ministers of Transport and Communications, Mr F Kargbo, and of Labour and Energy, Mr A R E Browne, sworn in by Capt Strasser.
- 29 Freetown Post established.

AUGUST

- 6 NPRC celebrate 100 days in office.
- 13 Press Conference on the Public Emergency Regulations and the fate of the detainees in Pademba Road Prison by Attorney-General, Mr Arnold Gooding.
- 15 Strasser departs for medical treatment in the United States.
- 17 Mr Tim Lankester, Permanent Secretary at the ODA, arrives for two day visit.
- 18 Mr Lankester holds talks with Acting Head of State, Capt S A J Musa, and other government officials.
- 20 Heavily armed troops patrol streets of Freetown, "to keep soldiers in a state of readiness".

SEPTEMBER

- 4 National Rehabilitation Committee (NARECOM) appointed with Capt S A J Musa as Chairman.
- 7 Interim Report of Beccles Davies Commission of Inquiry presented to Acting Head of State, Capt S A J Musa.
- 22 Decree No. 7 establishes 15 member Advisory Council.

OCTOBER

- 3 Acting Head of State, Capt Musa, administers oath of office to two new Secretaries of State and one Under-Secretary of State.
- 20 Sierra Leone does not attend ECOWAS meeting in Cotonon.
- Strasser formally launches the Sierra Leone wildlife week and the Jane Goodall exhibition at the British Council in Freetown.
- 23 Koidu town attacked by rebels.
- 24 Red Cross worker, Michael O'Neil, captured by rebels in Koidu.
- 27 Strasser visits Nigeria.
- 30 Foreign Secretary, Dr Dumbuya, is relieved of his post.

NOVEMBER

- 2 Department of Trade, Industry and State Enterprises in collaboration with the Department of Finance, Development and Economic Planning, and the RSLMF, embark upon an anti-smuggling campaign.
- 3 Lt Cdr Mohammed Diaby, member of the NPRC, appointed as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Sierra Leone to Guinea.
- 12 Six people among those detained since the military take-over are released.

NOVEMBER

- 19 Pte Issa Kamara sentenced to death by firing squad at the Military Tribunal. Found guilty of robbery with aggravation.
- 21 19 people arrested on conspiracy charges.
- 25 Secretary of State for Finance, Dr Jim Funna, resigns for personal reasons.
- 30 Sirrre Leone Red Cross holds Press Conference following the release of Michael O'Neil, Relief Coordinator, kidnapped by rebels in October.

DECEMBER

- 7 Strasser calls on Foday Sankoh to lay down his arms.  
Decree No. 12 setting up a treason and serious offences special military tribunal issued.
- 8 18 out of the 19 members of the National Advisory Council sworn in.
- 10 Sierra Leone celebrates Human Rights Day.  
Messrs Tejan Kabba and Banda Thomas elected Chairman and Deputy-Chairman respectively of the National Advisory Council.  
Deputy-Chairman of the NPRC, Capt Musa, becomes Chief Secretary of State, while John Benjamin is re-appointed Secretary of State in the Chairman's office.
- 12 The British Northern Black Lights Theatre in Sierra Leone to mark the Golden Anniversary of the British Council in Sierra Leone.
- 18 Strasser appeals to international community to exercise patience and understanding with the pace of political reform in Sierra Leone.
- 28 Arrest of group of alleged coup plotters.
- 29 Execution of 26 alleged coup plotters.
- 30 Head of State informs the public about foiled coup plot.

DECEMBER

31

Press Release from State House gives details of the attempted coup by the Anti-Corruption Revolutionary Movement (ACRM), naming all those alleged to be involved.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE  
AFRICAN DEPARTMENT (EQUATORIAL)

SIERRA LEONE

SIERRA LEONE: ANNUAL REVIEW  
FROM THE BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER AT FREETOWN TO THE  
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

SUMMARY

1. Coup on 29 April by young military officers brought an end to 23 years of All People's Congress misrule, and the establishment of a military National Provisional Ruling Council (Paras 1-3).
2. NPRC enjoys popular support for removing the APC and for certain improvements in the standard of living (Paras 4-5).
3. But the underlying reality is sombre. The NPRC has failed to end the rebel war in Kailahun. Indeed it has now spread to Kono (Paras 6-7).
4. Although the NPRC has commendably kept Sierra Leone on course with its IMF and World Bank economic recovery programmes, the economy as a whole is in poor shape. Business confidence and activity much reduced in the uncertain political and security situations. The loss of diamond-rich Kono was a serious additional blow (Paras 8-11).
5. The NPRC has done nothing to give effect to its commitment to return Sierra Leone to civilian and democratic rule. Civilian participation in government is even weaker than it was. The Advisory Council on the modalities of democratic rule was long coming and is slow in its deliberations (Paras 12-13).
6. The NPRC's commitment to human rights is contradicted by its actions. Most political prisoners remain behind bars without being charged. The Press is under constraint. 26 alleged coup plotters were summarily executed at the end of the year without the opportunity for a fair and open trial (Paras 14-16).



7. In the context of British good government policy, a military government in Sierra Leone was bad news. We promised £4 million to encourage economic recovery but subjected it to political conditions. The NPRC did not charge or release the political prisoners. It made no tangible process towards civilian and democratic rule. The execution of the 26 was the last straw. The offer was withdrawn (Paras 17-18).

8. Sierra Leone has an enormous capacity to absorb failure. Nevertheless, any serious attempt to overthrow the NPRC, or further decline in the economic and security situations, could easily precipitate collapse (Para 19).

Sir,

1. Twenty three years of incompetent and venal rule by the All People's Congress (APC) came to a sudden end in the last days of April.

#### Coup

2. On the morning of 29 April, a group of young army officers occupied State House and demanded better conditions of service for the officers and men of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLMF) fighting Sierra Leonean rebels and their Liberian supporters in the Southern and Eastern Provinces of Sierra Leone. In mid-morning, other disaffected young officers from the front joined them in a bid to overthrow President J S Momoh's APC government. The Nigerian High Commissioner refused to deploy Nigerian troops stationed in Sierra Leone in support of Momoh. Capt V E M Strasser broadcast a message that afternoon that he and his colleagues had taken over. Within 24 hours, senior RSLMF officers had joined the coup. Momoh and other members of the APC had fled the country or were in hiding. The coup leaders announced that they had set up a National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) to govern Sierra Leone. There had been no resistance and very little bloodshed. The people of Freetown rejoiced that the APC was gone.

3. The NPRC comprised the coup leaders, notably Capt Strasser as Chairman and Lt S A J Musa as Deputy-Chairman, together with other officers who had participated in the coup or whom the coup leaders trusted from past experience. Also included was Mr John Benjamin, the civilian accomplice who had plotted with the coup leaders.

#### Popular Support

4. The NPRC enjoys widespread popular support. Nothing that the military junta has done or may do will detract from the esteem it enjoys for ridding Sierra Leone of the APC. People fear the violence that will ensue if APC diehards or anyone else attempts to topple the NPRC. There is satisfaction that members of the former regime are in prison and that Commissions of

/Inquiry

Inquiry have been investigating alleged financial malpractices on their part. There is an inclination to accept high living by the NPRC as their due.

5. Moreover, the NPRC are credited with improving the quality of life in Sierra Leone. Rice and fuel are now readily available at constant prices. Freetown now has some mains electricity some of the time. It is being cleared of much of its accumulated rubbish and spruced up. Its roads are being repaired. Medical facilities have marginally improved.

#### Rebel War

6. Nevertheless, the underlying reality is sombre. The NPRC gave it as its primary objective to end the rebel war and resettle and rehabilitate the affected areas. In practice, the NPRC proved even less capable of winning the war than did its APC predecessor. It inherited a situation in which the rebels were mainly confined to the Kailahun Salient on Sierra Leone's eastern border with Liberia. It offered the rebels an amnesty but the offer was ignored. It bought arms and ammunition to enable the RSLMF to retake Kailahun by force. But the RSLMF's advance at the end of August ended ignominiously. They occupied the three strategic villages of Baiima, Mobai and Joijuma, but then returned to their base at Daru. The three officers in charge were later Court Martialled for deserting their posts. For their part, the rebels broke out of Kailahun into the adjacent Kono District in September. At the end of October, they occupied the strategic diamond mining town of Koidu, having put the local population and the defending RSLMF Battalion to flight. The RSLMF are themselves part of the security problem. Thousands of troops were recruited after the rebel incursions began in 1991. These troops are undisciplined and unmotivated. They loot the villages that the rebels have abandoned.

7. Fortunately Nigerian, Guinean and ULIMO troops provide the RSLMF with some backbone. The NPRC appears to be at a loss what to do.

#### The Economy

8. The IMF had finally approved a Rights Accumulation Programme for Sierra Leone on 3 April. The World Bank had followed with a Reconstruction Import Credit of \$43 million on 14 April. Donor governments impressed on the NPRC how important it was for them to honour these commitments and the NPRC undertook to do so. That the programmes were kept on course owes much to the expertise of the civilian Minister of Finance, Dr Funna. Repayments to the IMF were made as they fell due. Fiscal discipline was maintained. Inflation, interest and exchange rates remained reasonably steady. The IMF and the World Bank agreed the second tranches of their respective programmes in November. Shortly afterwards, the Paris Club agreed to reschedule \$1.6 million of Sierra Leonean debt.

9. Nevertheless, the economy as a whole remained in poor shape. Disproportionate expenditure was incurred for the purchase of the arms and ammunition for the war front: for June-September, it was estimated at twice the budgetary provision for the whole year. Business confidence and activity plummeted in the uncertain political and security situation following the coup. Soldiers entered and looted business premises. Stocks were therefore kept at a low level. Soldiers demanded money at military roadblocks. The movement of goods was therefore inhibited. The NPRC took some remedial measures, but confidence remains low. Imports have declined and, with them, Customs revenue. The small manufacturing sector is affected by both reduced demand and excessive taxes.

10. The loss of Kono District to the rebels dealt a further blow to the economy. The district typically produces 70 per cent of Sierra Leone's diamonds. More than \$50 million in cash is no longer available to the economy. Over 150,000 people engaged in the diamond business have fled, are unemployed, and have to be looked after elsewhere. Ancillary businesses are no more. There is a massive displacement of population.

11. With the rich Kailahun District having been lost to the rebels in 1991, and Kono District in 1992, the prospects for the economy are dire. It is of paramount importance that the IMF and World Bank programmes remain intact.

#### Civilian Rule

12. At the behest of western governments, Strasser repeatedly committed himself and his government to a return to civilian and democratic rule. While lack of progress can to some extent be attributed to the continuing war, two events point to Musa's increasing influence in the NPRC and his determination to ensure that the military remain in power. The first was an attempt by Strasser and Benjamin in July to make government more efficient and to give civilians a more effective say. They would have replaced the unwieldy and inexperienced NPRC with a smaller military Cabinet or Supreme Council of State (SCS) and a Council of civilian Secretaries of State (CSS), each heading a Department. However, Musa insisted that the NPRC itself, minus its small civilian membership except Benjamin, should become the SCS and that the CSS should comprise military as well as civilian members. Additionally, he had three of his closest colleagues, Capt Bio and Lts Kambo and M'Bayo made Liaison Officers to keep an eye on the civilian Secretaries of State and their Departments. Secondly, Musa further increased the military weighting in the CSS in December when he replaced Benjamin at its head and brought Bio and M'bayo into the Council as Secretaries of State.

13. Nor did the NPRC make tangible progress towards democratic rule. In a message to Baroness Chalker on 4 June, Strasser said that an Advisory Council would be set up to advise on the

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modalities. But it was not until 7 September that the NPRC promulgated the necessary Decree. Moreover, it was not until 8 December that the membership of the Council was announced and the Council sworn-in. Its initial meetings do not inspire confidence that the Council is addressing its primary task with any degree of urgency.

#### Human Rights and the Rule of Law

14. Again at western behest, Strasser committed himself and his government to respect human rights and the rule of law. But, as with civilian rule, he has pleaded that the security situation is overriding. Immediately on taking over, the NPRC assumed powers to derogate from the 1991 Constitution, which includes provisions for protecting human rights. The NPRC imprisoned more than 50 members of the former regime in the interests of public order. Some of them were subsequently released, but most remain in prison without charges being levelled against them.

15. Under the Emergency Regulations of 10 July, the NPRC took sweeping powers, including powers to restrict the Press. Journalists protested, were cautious for a while, but later became critical. In November-December three editors were imprisoned for several days for publishing stories to which the NPRC objected. Some editors are now compiling dossiers cataloguing misdeeds, including the remittance of assets and the purchase of properties abroad by leading members of the NPRC, including Musa. It remains to be seen what they will do with them. Nevertheless, not all is gloom with the Press. Experience seems to be maturing them. Both sycophancy and irresponsibility remain. But there is increasing evidence of reasoned criticism. Some editors are learning to insert what they think into what they have to say.

16. It was the summary execution of 26 military and civilian alleged coup plotters on 29/30 December however that really demonstrated how ruthless and brutal the NPRC, or more particularly Musa and his close military friends, can be. They rounded up 7 people on 28/29 December whom they believed to be conspiring to overthrow them. They took two of the prisoners they had held in prison since the coup. They took 17 other alleged conspirators whom they had held in custody for over a month and were still investigating. They shot them all on the beaches outside Freetown and buried them en masse in the city's main cemetery at Kingtom. The NPRC claimed that the 26 had been tried by special tribunals set up under a Decree of 7 December to try cases of treason and other serious offences. Even if the accused were so tried, the Decree is deficient in not permitting convicted civilians to appeal. It is also doubtful whether the accused were allowed defending counsel of their own choice as the Decree provided. There is no doubt that the accused had neither the time nor opportunity for a fair and open trial.

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Anglo-Sierra Leone Relations

17. British objectives had been to encourage the APC regime towards an IMF-backed economic recovery programme and towards multi-party elections under the new 1991 Constitution. To this end, we had pledged £4 million balance of payments support to Sierra Leone with the IMF programme. Payment was to be conditional upon six months satisfactory programme performance by Sierra Leone and the holding of the elections by the end of the year.

18. The British response to the military takeover was hostile. In the context of good government policy in Africa, a new military regime in Sierra Leone was bad news. Accordingly, we made payment of the first tranche of \$2 million of the support conditional upon the charging or release of the political detainees. We made the remainder subject to satisfactory progress towards multi-party democracy, including a timetable for the return to civilian rule. Although the NPRC fulfilled its obligations under the IMF programme, it had not fulfilled the political conditions by the end of the year. Following the summary execution of the 26 alleged coup plotters, the Secretary of State announced on 5 January that the offer had been withdrawn.

Prospects

19. Sierra Leone seems to have enormous capacity to absorb failure. However, gross neglect of the soldiers at the front led to the April 92 coup. Further decline in the political, economic or security situations could precipitate collapse. Meanwhile, the international community has to balance its censure of the junta's abuse of human rights with avoidance of punitive measures that would tip the balance.

I am Sir

Yours faithfully

*Dan Sprague*

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