

London's warlords on the march in Africa

by Linda de Hoyos

"They have no program; they want to make the country un-governable. They want to destroy everything," was the way a Sierra Leone government official accurately characterized the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), which occupied and ravaged the capital city of Freetown in the first week of January. The RUF had only been forced out of the city by the joint forces of the Economic Community of West African States Cease-Fire Monitoring Group (Ecomog), dominated by Nigeria. Upon entering the city, the RUF had been true to the word of its deputy commander Samuel Bockari, who proclaimed on Nov. 18: "When I take Freetown, I shall clear every living thing and building. To my God, I'll fight. I'll kill and kill, and the more they tell me to stop, the more I'll kill."

In its days surrounding and entering Freetown, the RUF destroyed the police headquarters, cut the electricity supply to the city, cut the water supply to the city, and cut the phone lines into the city. People were driven out of their homes and then lined up to act as human shields for the RUF forces. Nigeria, which commands the Ecomog forces of Nigerian, Ghanaian, and Guinean troops, were forced to rush reinforcements to the city to drive back the RUF. Nigeria now has 17,000 troops in Sierra Leone fighting the RUF, which in the past nine months has acquired heavy and sophisticated military equipment.

The RUF offensive highlights the ravaging forces of murder that have been unleashed on the continent of Africa by British intelligence in its drive, launched at the end of the Cold War in 1989, to destroy the Africa nation-state, and crush any actual or potential institutional barrier to the wholesale looting of the continent.

The RUF: a hideous record

The RUF, whose leader Foday Sankoh was trained by the British during the days when Sierra Leone was still a British colony, is a force for nihilism. Born out of Sankoh's alliance with Charles Taylor, now President of Liberia, the RUF has a consistent record of hideous human rights abuses, including the mass murder of civilians in villages and towns it temporarily takes control of, and the mass abduction of children, who are then forcibly addicted to drugs and trained to become child-killers of their own kinsmen, a method of recruitment that was also employed by Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). The RUF response to military attacks is reprisals against civilians—the chief method also used by

London's Tutsi militaries in Rwanda and Burundi. In November, at the start of its latest offensive, the RUF killed 100 civilians in the diamond area of Tongo Fields in the east, and killed another 96 civilians in Gbendembu the next day. Throughout the war, RUF punishment for civilians believed to be sympathetic to the government is death or mutilation and amputation of limbs.

The RUF is not a sociological phenomenon. It is true that Sierra Leone was, in the 1980s and early 1990s, the poorest country in Africa. Before the annihilation of Rwanda, it had the lowest life expectancy on the continent. Beset by civil war since 1991, it held national elections in March 1996 in which Ahmed Kabbah, a bureaucrat of the World Bank, was elected President. But in the respite afforded by the elections, there was no effort by the "donor countries" of the Paris Club to effect any reconstruction in Sierra Leone; predictably, the war re-commenced. In May 1997, a military coup instigated and backed by the RUF overthrew the Kabbah government. After almost a year of total war, Ecomog managed to defeat the coup masters, and imprisoned Sankoh. Kabbah was re-installed in Freetown. Meanwhile, the RUF continued to occupy the country's diamond mines, fueling its insurgency with the profits. But again, no reconstructive effort for the war-shredded Sierra Leone was forthcoming from the donor countries.

The money was going to the RUF. In the latter half of 1998, the RUF was given heavy military equipment, including artillery and such sophisticated weaponry as night goggles and cell phones for its commanders for instant communications. In October-November, as members of the former RUF junta were put on trial and executed, the RUF burst out of the northeastern area of the country and began its march on Freetown.

The RUF is backed by Charles Taylor's Liberia, is armed through Liberia, and is believed to be tangentially supported through Burkina Faso and Libya. In late December, Taylor directly amassed troops on the Sierra Leone border. Taylor was himself helped to power by Sankoh in 1989-91, with the understanding that Taylor would in turn aid him. In a meeting of the Ecomog countries to discuss the Sierra Leone crisis, Taylor came into direct confrontation with Ecomog chief commander Timothy Shelpidi, who warned Taylor that if he widened the war with his own forces, "It won't end in Sierra Leone. It is going to spill over and affect every country in the sub-region." Nigeria, with its population of more than 100 million is itself a major target of London's Taylor-Sankoh operation.

British backing

Despite official British government support for the Kabbah government, sections of British intelligence directly support the RUF. This includes the British Broadcasting Corp., which also directly aided Taylor's communications and propaganda during the Liberia war. It also includes International

Alert, a spin-off of Amnesty International. Lord Avebury, a board member of International Alert, was the leading opponent of the British arming of the Kabbah government during the 1997-98 war. The Alert's Omrie Golley, a Briton of Sierra Leone background, is a direct adviser of the RUF, and International Alert functions as the RUF's international propaganda arm. Sankoh himself has a British lawyer, Charles Buckley, to defend him in his treason trial. Buckley's firm includes former Conservative Foreign Office Minister of State Douglas Hogg.

Aid from British intelligence is not limited to "non-lethal support." According to the London *Sunday Times* Insight column, the RUF is being supplied through two British companies, Sky Air Cargo and Occidental Airways. The arms come in to secret airstrips in Sierra Leone, via Gambia and Liberia. The weapons reportedly originate in the Slovak Republic.

If the RUF were to succeed in taking Freetown and establishing its "rule" over Sierra Leone, that would just be the beginning of war in West Africa, said one knowledgeable source from the region. "It will erupt in Guinea, Mali, throughout the region."

Many wars

The war in Sierra Leone is but one front in the British Privy Council war to destroy the nation-states of Africa. Charles Taylor, along with Sankoh, launched his invasion of Liberia in 1989, the same year that saw the Anglo-American-backed overthrow of Siad Barre in Somalia, hurling that country into anarchy and famine from which it has not even begun to emerge.

In East and Central Africa, the British drive to destroy the African nations is centered around the Ugandan military dictator Yoweri Museveni. In August, Museveni directed the invasion of the Democratic Republic of Congo with Rwanda. This war soon turned into a regionwide maelstrom. While the Western powers blithely tolerated the Ugandan and Rwandan seizure of the mineral-drenched east Congo, President Laurent Kabila was able to win immediate military support from Namibia, Angola, Zimbabwe, and Chad, whose leaders saw in the violent disruption of borders carried out by Uganda and Rwanda a threat to the stability of the entire continent.

The *New York Times* on Jan. 11 predicted that Congo would indeed set the precedent for the violent redrawing of Africa's borders. "A fundamental reworking of the old rules of Africa may be unfolding in the five-month-old Congo war. . . . The borders of African nations, set up arbitrarily by the Europeans who colonized the continent a century ago, are supposed to be inviolable. Yet Congo is now split in two, perhaps for good. . . . Diplomats around the world worry that a full-blown regional war may not be far off. . . . In the longer run, many experts say that the Congo war may become a point of departure from which African nations begin to re-imagine themselves in ways not possible under

the old rules. Wars between nations, largely absent since Africans became independent starting in the 1960s, may become more common. As troubling, some experts say, the national boundary lines that have defined African countries for a century, and lent some stability, may slowly come apart."

The projection is accurate, but the truth is missing. The driving force for this bloody reorganization comes not from African nations, but from the private interests grouped around the British Commonwealth and which dominate "donor country" policy.

Thus, the marauding invading marcher-lord Museveni was granted \$2.2 billion in donor aid by the Paris Club in December, to fuel his wars in Congo and now Angola, where he has sent his most highly trained forces in support of Jonas Savimbi's UNITA.

Thus, as the Tanzanian *Daily Mail* reported on Jan. 14, following in the trail of the Ugandan and Rwandan militaries now occupying the Kivu provinces of eastern Congo, are ten mining companies, "reported to be the main financiers upon which rebels fighting to topple D.R.C. President Laurent Kabila [rely]."

According to the article, the Kivus are being mined by ten companies, including Busico, partly owned by the wife of Museveni and the latter's half-brother Salim Saleh; Little Rock Limited; Tenfield Holdings Limited; Collier Ventures Limited; Sapora Limited; and an import company, Intermarket Limited. The majority shareholder of these companies is a British citizen named Sanjivan Ruprah, a partner in other projects with Executive Outcomes founder Tony Buckingham. Also on the scene are Barrick Gold Corp. (among "whose shareholders are the former U.S. President George Bush") and "the Australian Russel Resources Group, owned by an Israeli, former Army Gen. David Agmon," now an adviser to Museveni.

The same British nexus is behind the arms flow to the so-called Congolese rebels. Former British Royal Air Force pilot Capt. Christopher Barrat-Jolly, is accused of flying weapons whose official destinations were Uganda and Rwanda, but were flown directly to Goma and Kissangani for the Uganda-backed rebels. *EIR* has also confirmed that Sky Air was involved in airlifting rebel and Ugandan troops in August for the invasion of Congo, and also shipped armored personnel carriers for the Ugandan troops from Botswana to Goma, Congo.

The same gang, and the same backers, coming through the British Commonwealth mercenary and clandestine arms networks in South Africa are behind the December offensive of Savimbi's UNITA against Angola.

Needless to say, the citizens of the targetted countries are not consulted. Resistance from them is dealt with ruthlessly, as the slaughter by Rwandan troops of 500 men, women, and children on Dec. 31 in the Mai-Mai village of Makobola outside Uvira, Congo, attests.