

London's mafia war against Sierra Leone

by Linda de Hoyos

Direct talks between the Sierra Leone government of President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) are scheduled to begin on May 18 in Lomé, Togo, under the mediation of Togo's President Gnassingbe Eyadema, chairman of the Economic Community of West African States. As suspected by Ambassador John Ernest Leight, Sierra Leone's ambassador to the United States (see interview), the RUF is using the talks to force the Sierra Leone government to permanently release RUF leader Foday San-koh from detention. "The man must be free, and our own position is that this is a prerequisite for the talks to succeed and the talks to continue," said Omrie Golley, a Sierra Leone exile living in England who works with International Alert.

As Ambassador Leight discusses in detail, the RUF is a gang of demoralized soldiers culled from a succession of corrupt military regimes extending from that of President Joseph Momoh, overthrown in 1992, to Valentine Strasser, overthrown in January 1996. In war against Sierra Leone since 1991, the RUF has waged a campaign of violent terror against the people. Ambassador Leight also documents that, at the center of the continuing war which has devastated a country whose citizens already had one of the lowest life expectancies in Africa, are the country's resources, its vast wealth in gold and diamonds.

The reaction of the Western powers to the RUF war against Sierra Leone has been ambiguous at best. Sierra Leone is a former British colony and a member of the British Commonwealth. In 1991, President Momoh asked the British Defense Ministry for help to defend his country against the RUF onslaught. *The British government turned down the request.* From there, over successive regimes and governments, the people of Sierra Leone have been crushed between a rock and a hard place. On the one side is the deranged RUF, ravaging the country, killing and maiming civilians, kidnapping children and turning them into drugged-up child-soldiers. On the other side, are all the British "private security forces," which seek to come to the aid of whatever non-RUF government is ruling in Freetown, to crush the RUF—at a price. And what is that price? The government should hand over to that private foreign interest the franchise for mining Sierra Leone's gold and diamonds.

In short, the RUF could be likened to the gang of street hoodlums hired by the mafioso fat cats at the top to terrorize people into seeking "protection" from the hoodlums the fat

cats had sent to steal, burn, and kill in the first place. This accounts for the fact that the British Broadcasting Corp. is considered a major booster of the RUF (and of its ally, Charles Taylor of Liberia), and accounts for the fact that the RUF was able to receive highly sophisticated equipment for its January assault on Freetown, in part delivered by such British companies as Occidental Airways and Sky Air Cargo. On the other side, in March 1995, the Strasser regime brought in Executive Outcomes to deal with the RUF, which the South African mercenary company managed to do, while its affiliate, Branch Energy, mined the gold and diamonds of Sierra Leone for itself.

EO, as *EIR* has documented, is close to the center of the British Commonwealth financial nexus around the British Crown. The Kabbah government terminated the agreement with EO in January 1997, but then Indian-born Thai banker Rakesh Saxena attempted to bring in Col. Tim Spicer's Sandline International, to aid Kabbah's restoration to power after an RUF-backed coup against him in May 1997. The terms were the same: Sandline will deal with the RUF, in exchange for Sierra Leone's mineral wealth. To keep the game going, the British government and its underlings at the U.S. State Department maintained that a UN Security Council embargo had been placed on both the RUF-backed government of Johnny Paul Koroma, and the Kabbah forces.

While praising the Nigeria-dominated Ecomog which intervened on behalf of the Kabbah government in Sierra Leone in 1998, the Western powers have failed to deliver substantial aid to Ecomog. Thus, the war continues—while thousands of Sierra Leone citizens die of starvation, disease, and murder caused by that war. Ambassador Leight avers that the current peace talks in Lomé will be used by the RUF as just another tactic in the war. Given the game imposed on the people of Sierra Leone by their former colonial masters and their helpmates in Washington, he is likely correct in that assessment.

Interview: John Ernest Leight

The grab for Sierra Leone's resources

Mr. Leight is Sierra Leone's Ambassador to the United States. He was interviewed by Lawrence Freeman in Washington, D.C., on April 21.

EIR: There is a bloody conflict going on in your country. Can you tell us what is at the center of this controversy?

Leight: At the center of the trouble in Sierra Leone is our