

SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
PRESS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

PRESS CLIPPINGS

Enclosed are clippings of the latest local and international press on the Special Court and related issues obtained by the Press and Public Affairs Office as of:

Wednesday, March 23, 2005

The press clips are produced Monday to Friday.
If you are aware of omissions or have any comments or suggestions please contact
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'50 Civilians Detained In State House Kitchen'

*By Mohamed
Mansaray*

The first Prosecution witness in the trial of AFRC indictees of the Special Court, TF1-024 has disclosed that he and fifty other civilians were detained in a kitchen at State house following the invasion of Freetown by rebels of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) in January 1999.



FLASHBACK: Fighters in action during January

Salone Times,
Wednesday March
23rd, 2005.

The witness was giving evidence during cross-examination by defence counsel for Santigie Borbor Kanu, Geert-Jan Alexander Knoop at the Second Trial Chamber presided by Teresa Doherty at New England in Freetown recently.

Describing himself as a mechanic, the witness testified that the other detainees were also picked up at various locations in the city and added that they were subjected to various forms of inhuman treatment during their detention.

"The rebels even forced me to carry a bomb weighing about 15 pounds," the witness further testified. Giving his testimony from the witness protection box in Krio through an interpreter, he told the court that several people were gunned down at State House by the rebels during that period but would not say how many.

The witness further disclosed under cross-examination that scores of women were raped at State House by those he described as "gun-toting" rebels. "I heard them crying as I listened and watched through the kitchen window where I was detained," he said.


During the course of the cross-examination, defence counsel for Alex Tamba Brima, Glenna Thompson accused the interpreter of not interpreting the words of the witness properly. "The interpreter should interpret the exact words of the witness," Ms. Thompson protested.


Presiding Judge, Teresa Doherty reminded the interpreter about the oath he had taken and warned him to do his work properly. "You don't add or subtract, interpreter, what you are told by the witness," Judge Doherty further warned the interpreter. The witness was led in evidence earlier by a prosecution counsel, Christopher Santora.


The three indictees, namely Alex Bazy Kamara and Santigie Borbor Kanu alias 55 are charged with individual criminal responsibility for crimes

Sierra Leone Welcomes Arrest Of Charles Taylor Associate On Gun Running Charges

By Cindy Shiner
Washington
22 March 2005

Listen to Shiner interview Mp3 

Listen to Shiner interview 

Listen to Shiner interview 

The Special Court for Sierra Leone has welcomed the arrest of an associate of former Liberian President Charles Taylor in the Netherlands.

The Special Court Leone says Dutch authorities have charged Gus van Kouwenhoven with war crimes and gun smuggling in violation of a United Nations arms embargo on Liberia.

The UN-backed Special Court said it had provided extensive assistance to Dutch investigators in the case. The court said it did not have evidence to find that Mr. Kouwenhoven was among those bearing "greatest responsibility" for international crimes in Sierra Leone so the court could not indict him. However, the court said enough evidence was found to charge Mr. Kouwenhoven with war crimes and arms trafficking. Mr. Kouwenhoven ran a hotel in Liberia as well as a timber company.

"Charles Taylor called the company that Gus was general manager of his 'pepper bush.' In West Africa this basically means something that is very, very important to you and it provided a lot of money for Taylor and for his exploits in Sierra Leone and really kept him alive and in power in the region," said Alex Yearsley of Global Witness, the London-based private organization that investigates links between resource exploitation and human rights abuses. "

It was a huge amount of money, up to nearly about 100 million dollars a year that Taylor was able to take from the timber trade," said Mr. Yearsley. He told Africa Division reporter Cindy Shiner that Mr. Kouwenhoven sold timber mainly to markets in France and China. Timber sanctions were eventually imposed on Liberia.

Mr. Yearsley said the international community must pay closer attention to issues such as illegal logging. "If law enforcement and intelligence agencies were to begin to really look at some of the economic incentives and drivers behind some of these devastating conflicts then we would really see far less of these operators being able to exist with impunity and to be able to still come into London and Paris and Antwerp and sell their wares," he said.

"It really must end. We must have the end of impunity for these people that seem to walk around with total freedom."

Former President Taylor fled Liberia in August 2003 and is living in exile in Nigeria.

Print



For up to the minute sports.



Jewel Vomits

The Analyst (Monrovia)

NEWS

March 22, 2005

Posted to the web March 22, 2005

-Says Her Husband Has Girlfriends; Recruited Child Soldiers

Jewel Howard-Taylor, the woman who prefers to call her husband "Chief" poured her heart out in an effort to present former president Charles as the angel is not for obvious reason. She did good job of making a good reading for many Liberians who would learn nothing from her. But then she vacillated and before she caught her bearing, she portrayed Charles Taylor as a born-again Christian with a horde of concubine in tow and a benefactor who sent children to their early graves while his own children stay in the comfort of their "White Flower" home in the Congo Town suburb.

The Analyst's Staff has been looking at another part of Jewel's interview with Nigeria's Ovation magazine.

The former first lady of Liberia, Jewel Howard-Taylor, has revealed that former president Taylor retained a horde of concubines while president of Liberia, besides other discrepancies.

Mrs. Taylor, who granted an interview to the Ovation Magazine of Nigeria in a hope of exonerating her husband from a 17-count charge of murder, rape, and mayhem being held against him by the UN-backed Special Court in Freetown, implied at one point of the interview that Taylor did not keep their marital home chaste.

Answering a reporter's question about the fidelity of Mr. Taylor, she said he has one wife - her - but noted, "He got plenty concubines don't bother me about that one."

Perhaps embarrassed and taking off guard by the question, the former first lady neither named the concubines nor said how many they were.

But observers, who recalled media reports that Taylor fled into exile with more than one hundred girls and women believe the concubines may well be the size of a soccer squad even though this could not be independently verified.

It may however be recalled that on a number of occasions, one Hadja Taylor, claiming to be another legally-wedded wife of the president and therefore another "Former First Lady" attended official functions with Mr. Taylor to the embarrassment of official of the Taylor government.

Hadja, a Muslim, openly bragged about being one of the wives of the president, something neither he nor Jewel

denied or clarified.

Few months prior to the escalation of the war, it was rumored that Mrs. Taylor abandoned her official duties at the Executive Mansion in protest of Hadja's claim to their wedlock.

With the return of Jewel to Liberia shortly after landing in Calabar and with the whereabouts of Hadja not certain, observers say the best bet is that she may be with Taylor in Calabar where the daughter of the Governor of Calabar, Donald Duke, is rumored to Taylor's another wedded wife..

It may be recalled that on account of Hadja, Jewel reportedly abandoned her official at the Executive Mansion for weeks before she reconsidered upon the intervention of traditional women of Liberia.

In another development, without intending to, the former Liberian first lady who appeared au courant with most of the military inner workings of the Taylor regime disclosed that the Taylor administration hired child soldiers, an act considered criminal under Liberian and international law, to fight on the side of his militias forces.

She let the cat out of the bag in this way in an apparent effort to prove Taylor's magnanimity: "Children used to get hit at the front and he would fly them to Abidjan. He wanted to give them the best care because he felt that those guys were giving their lives for him. And this is person who people can now demonize and say he is a wicked pleader? It is not possible."

In her view it is kind heartedness when little children who were recruited to fight a war they knew nothing about get wounded and are taken to the hospital abroad.

But this is a woman who will give Taylor credit for launching a "popular uprising" and discredit others for "using him" to do so.

Conceding that he was not military personnel prior to the launch of the guerrilla incursion, she said: "No, he wasn't before, but the politicians in Liberia pumped him up saying this is somebody we can use.

Let's support Charles Taylor to do an incursion on Liberia and at the end of it when he was to have killed Doe, they would have said well, you cannot be president of Liberia. And he said he had given so much blood and tears to give the presidency away to somebody else. So that was the beginning of the end." Beginning of the end of collaboration with the politicians, the king maker, and perhaps with the U.S. government. Taylor became a lone figure, outsmarting everyone else, said one recent commentary.

So everyone agrees that he should take sole responsibility for the war in Liberia and in Sierra Leone, but Jewel believes that is farfetched and unfair.

For her, prosecution for Taylor's war connections is either Liberia or Geneva in Switzerland; she gave no reasons.

"As I said, if Liberia gets a war crime court they will say there were some atrocities done in Liberia, should we say we will go and get President X because they gave Charles Taylor guns to come into Liberia and bring a popular uprising. No we won't. Charles Taylor would be held accountable if he goes to Liberia the Liberian people feel they have something against him, he could be responsible for whatever happens in Liberia, so I think it's just a story that was written to provide more pressure on the Charles Taylor government, because frankly it was economic, economic sabotage, shutting all of the economic links," she said.

According to her, it became political, a travel ban and ban on diamonds, indicating that the series of impositions against the NPP-led government was a systematic plan to strangle the government.

Describing the move on the part of the UN as "sad," and intended to eliminate Taylor, she noted: "It was all just a game which is so sad, because like I said, you look the story on Iraq and it brings to my mind what has happened in Liberia but the decks are already stacked against Charles Taylor [in Sierra Leone]. Why don't they take him to The Hague?" Would there be fair trial in The Hague where the Sierra Leone Special Court takes its orders?

Perhaps that is not a question for Jewel who believes that the way out of the quagmire created by her husband is an African peace formula.

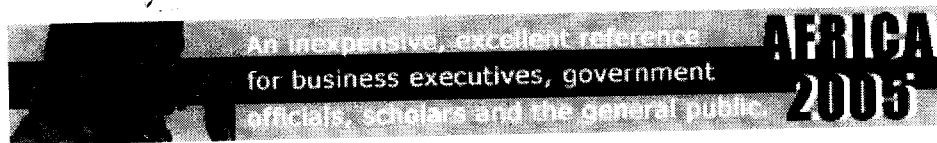
She wondered: "So why did they decide that the formula for truth and reconciliation was best for South Africa. Was it only because they were dealing with the whites against the blacks? So we as African now must design a formula where sometimes we look at the outside world and we try to jettison those western values that have no place in own customs."

Reminiscing the past, she noted, "I remember the tribal thing in Liberia for instance we had that hut that was called the palaver hut. Whatever happened the superintendent or whoever the leader of the clan would convene a session where the elders would come and sit and people would talk and you would resolve the issue."

Irrespective of whatever anyone thought, according to observers, all of Africa, including Nigeria that is currently shielding Charles Taylor from prosecution agreed that impunity must be eradicated and they are prepared to prosecute individuals accused of war crimes.

Charles Taylor may one day have to answer for his crimes, whether in Sierra Leone or in The Hague if one follows Jewel's wit.

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Something to Think About

Standard Times (Freetown)

OPINION

March 21, 2005

Posted to the web March 22, 2005

By Philip Neville

If wishes were horses

Sometimes when I sit at the back of my writing table I reflect on vice president Solomon Berewa's struggle for the leadership of the SLPP, not only the leadership parse but the struggle to become the next president of the republic of Sierra Leone.

Like any citizen of this country, the vice president has every right to eye this high office, but what perhaps is very certain is the fact that the forces against him due to his past and present activities are too many to contain within the next-eighteen months to pave a smooth way for him. Apologists of the vice president may advance arguments, whether the argument may be devoid of substantial premises or not, may not be of significance to them. The simple reason being that he is there "Man" and all they wanted is for their man to succeed, because president Kabbah had already recommended him as a suitable successor.

If that is the yardstick, his apologists are using, one has to caution them, since that is not a tangible evidence for a success story. It would be recalled that president Kabbah did make such pronouncement somewhere in the provinces during one of his usual tours, that "he saw Solomon Berewa as a fitted successor". This should not send people crazy to arrive at a unanimous conclusion because the president after making such pronouncement did issue out a rejoinder to it, that "firstly it would be dependent on the SLPP as a political party to accept him, and finally the people of Sierra Leone". Though one may conclude that the president pronouncement was subjective, bearing the fact that it was his personal opinion about Solomon Berewa that he shared with his congregating at the material time which could imply that he was supporting him to succeed and become the next president. His wishes may be a probability or possibility. This had thrown the vice president into a state of dilemma, but one should recognized the fact that it is not "certainty" because president Kabbah did not request neither the SLPP nor the people of this nation to vote him as their leader and next president. One should bear in mind that president Kabbah has every right to his opinion though subjective it may be, his opinion as an individual should be respected because he is entitle to it which is neither universal nor generally acceptable.

President Kabbah can transform his wishes on behalf of Solomon Berewa to reality by allowing him to take after him either this year or 2006, preceding the 2007 election which could be a "certainty" for Solomon Berewa to be the next president, but come 2007 he would be challenged during the election by then he would have been the incumbent and would have built himself a solid foundation and well protective walls around him.

But president Kabbah would not make that sacrifice bearing in mind that political power is something that can never be borrowed or entrusted to somebody for safekeeping. He had said it time and again that the people of this nation gave him the mandate to rule, and he would rule until the end of his term. If he is aware of that crucial fact and has kept it as a promise he therefore sees no reason why he should betray the trust of the people. That is why he is leaving Solomon Berewa to battle it out and thrive, first for the SLPP leadership and the next journey is for the presidency.

But there is more to the leadership than the internal squabbles going on within the party. The SLPP may nominate Solomon Berewa as its leader but that is not the end. What is of tremendous significance is whether that leadership may bring victory to the party or not.

There is every indication that such leadership may not bring laurels for the party due to perceived factors, which if any analytical approach is taken one can visibly see the pros and cons. Firstly, Solomon Berewa carries the Hinga Norman stigma which most of the south-easterners had perceived him as the master planner or architect of the arrest and detention of the Kamajors chief whom they relish as their redeemer or messiah. But truly this is not the case, at the time Solomon Berewa signed the documents for the establishment of the Special Court in Sierra Leone while he was Attorney General and minister of justice he had nothing in mind against Hinga Norman or plotted his arrest? He did it as a servant of the nation, though he could have advised as the government's legal adviser against the establishment of such outfit, he thought the Special Court could serve as a precedent and signal for future upheaval or war in Sierra Leone.

Because of his failure to comprehend that fact he has to pay the price for it. These are some of the issues the vice president campaigners should begin to address, rather than engage in marketing him when the minds of the people are already set in that direction.

Similarly, the killings of twenty-four military officers whose relatives are still mourning their deaths should be part of the agenda. The question is, was it Solomon Berewa who killed or ordered the killings of these officers?

He was not as Attorney General who gave orders to kill but as the government legal adviser and prosecutor he interpreted the laws against the coupists in his own fashion and they were found guilty, which is to say they suffered the consequence of their actions. There again he should have advised the government, but did he do that? Will the relations of these people vote Solomon Berewa as the SLPP candidate to become the next president?

Though the answer may be unpredictable but the fact remains clear that they would fear him becoming president, as Attorney General that was what he did, as president he may go beyond human expectation, as there would be nobody to checkmate his excesses.

Apart from all these, there remains a political grudge that has not been solved and would never be solved, and that is the issue of Dr. Joe Demby losing his job to Solomon Berewa. Nobody knew why and how Dr. Joe Demby lost his job until now that the issue of leadership of the party and the next president of Sierra Leone are taking the platform. It is not a secret that Dr. Joe Demby was very loyal to president Kabbah, his loyalty cannot be doubted or measured. Naturally it should have been him going up and down, moving helter-skelter to woo support to become the next presidential candidate of the SLPP and not Solomon Berewa. While he was vice president the latter was gainfully employed as Attorney General and Minister of Justice, a key division maker in the country.

But how Dr. Demby lost his job to Solomon Berewa is a story yet to be adequately told, others may say it was a "palace coup" against the medical doctor, yet others may argue that president Kabbah has the constitutional right to appoint his running mate and that was what he did exactly. This argument may suffice but not

convincing to the medical doctor, his supporters and a section of the SLPP. Political analyst may examine it from different perspectives. Whatever the argument may be either for or against the fact is Joe Demby is no more vice president and he is currently residing in one small corner in his home town trying to make ends meet. The situation can be likened to the Siaka Stevens- Sorie Ibrahim Koroma scenario. It could have been the latter who should have succeeded the former, but never happened, instead Joseph Saidu Momoh was handpicked and squeezed down the throats of the people, Siaka Stevens cleverly did it by stating that S.I.

Koroma was sick and therefore could not serve as a better president, but in the case of Joe Demby he was neither sick nor suffering from any form of internal or external ailment that could have prevented him from performing state functions.

So, we begin to see the political strangulation the former vice president suffered in order for a way to be paved for Solomon Berewa. The aftermath is whatever way one may glance at it, is that Joe Demby still has support from his people who thought that he was treated unjustly. The question is will Berewa's ask Dr. Demby to support him? If he does will the medical doctor give him his support?

Both Dr. Demby and Hinga Norman are from the east and Solomon Berewa needs the support of the easterners, so how can he compromise these issues.

There is also the question of Harry Will who went to jail on corruption charges while Solomon Berewa was Attorney General. Harry Will is also a strong SLPP supporter with followers from the south. The case of Momoh Pujeh also from the east was also jailed on similar charges like Harry Will. So while the south-easterners are gnashing their teeth and weeping, the northerners are equally taking a deep reflection. The westerners (Freetonians) are also recapitulating, recounting events that led to the incarceration of journalist Conrad Roy whose untimely death is ripping apart his old mother and other family members. Other journalists too are also recalling events that led to their detention and that of their numerous colleagues while Solomon Berewa was Attorney General.

Surprisingly, the sharp turn of Solomon Berewa in the recent past of being an SLPP is weighting the minds of the SLPP diehards, questioning themselves as to when did he become full blooded SLPP. Did he become SLLP for the purpose of convenience and to grab the leadership of the party? It would be recalled that Solomon Berewa prior to the 2002 election was not SLPP and would not want to identify himself as one. His loyalty and constituency was president Kabbah whom he believe catapulted him to such magnitude, therefore he owes no obligation to the SLPP but to president Ahmed Tejan Kabbah. It is for that reason he is serving him diligently and delicately, that was his conviction. So why does he want to be party flag bearer at this material time? As a founder member of the National Unity Party he could have done a great service to the defunct party if he has helped to resurrect it, but perhaps seeing the impossibility himself and most of his followers have joined the SLPP bandwagon to the party's political successes. The suspicion is that the intention of most of these NUP members joined the SLPP to overshadow most of its membership, that is why they are eyeing key positions within the party and that of he leadership .It is like "NUP inside SLPP".

The situation is however fragile for them seeing the determination of most SLPP stalwarts. An additional theory is that Solomon Berewa lacks a definitive political base; some say he is from Bo, others say from Kono, while the majority says he is from Bumpe, so the question is where is his base? If the wishes of president Kabbah are anything to go by it should first come from his base, like the saying if wishes were horses beggars could ride.