

**SPECIAL COURT FOR SIERRA LEONE
OUTREACH AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE**



PRESS CLIPPINGS

Enclosed are clippings of local and international press on the Special Court and related issues obtained by the Outreach and Public Affairs Office

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Press clips are produced Monday through Friday.
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Special Court for Sierra Leone (Freetown)

Friday, 15 June 2012

Libya: Statement by Special Court President Justice Shirleen Avis Fisher On the Detention of ICC Staff in Libya

Freetown — I am deeply concerned about the detention by the Libyan government of four ICC staff while on mission in Libya. Intimidation of staff members of the institutions of the international criminal justice system while on official duty strikes at the heart of that system.

The success of the Special Court for Sierra Leone owes much to the co-operation of the international community in respecting the Court's mandate, and accommodating the necessary privileges of the Court's personnel and the lawyers who practice before it.

The privileges and immunities of the detained ICC staff are essential to the performance of their mandated functions, as ordered by the ICC Pre-Trial Chamber on 27 April 2012, consistent with UN Security Council Resolution 1970. They must be permitted to exercise these functions without fear, harassment or intimidation.

I therefore join the Presidents of the ICC and the ICTY in calling for the immediate release of the ICC staff members.

The Daily Beast

Thursday, 25 April 2012

Hague Finds Charles Taylor Guilty

The Hague has found former Liberian ruler Charles Taylor guilty of aiding rebels in neighboring Sierra Leone in a bloody civil war that left 50,000 dead. The judge said that the warlord provided arms and communications equipment to the rebels in return for blood diamonds. Taylor, the court ruled, is guilty of aiding and abetting terrorism, murder, rape, sexual slavery, cruelty, and conscripting child soldiers. However prosecutors failed to prove he had command of the rebels, and he was acquitted of commanding the militias. He's the first former head of state to be convicted of war crimes by an international court since the Nuremberg trials.

The Beast

Monday, 28 May 2012

Life After Charles Taylor: Senator Jewel Howard Taylor Moves On



Clair MacDougall

Sen. Jewel Howard Taylor pulled open her desk drawer and carefully turned the thin pages of her Bible to Psalm 25, of David, who battled and defeated the giant Goliath. The Bible was edged in gold, and the name of her former husband, Dr. Charles Ghankay Taylor, was printed in elegant cursive in the bottom corner of the cover. The desk itself—dark wood and decorated with gilded women’s faces—was Taylor’s personal desk, purchased on a trip to Paris while he was still Liberia’s president.

Dressed in a violet African lapa suit and a loosely tied headdress, the senator traced the contours of the prayer, pausing after each line. “Do not let me be put to shame, nor let my enemies triumph over me.” A picture of a fair-skinned Christ with his heart crowned in flames sat behind her. She lingered on the final two lines: “Look upon my affliction and my distress and take away my sins.”

Jewel, a devout Christian, begins every morning with a prayer. As we sat in her office on Monrovia’s Capitol Hill, I asked why she selected this particular psalm. “I chose it because I am in a lot of conflicts at the moment,” she said.

Among Jewel’s troubles was the verdict handed down by The Hague in April in the trial of her ex-husband, who was found guilty on 11 counts of aiding and abetting war crimes and crimes against humanity—including murder, terrorism, rape, sexual slavery, and mutilations committed by rebel forces—during the horrific civil war in neighboring Sierra Leone. The 11-year conflict, which ended in 2002, killed more than 50,000 people. Taylor’s sentence will be handed down May 30; it is expected that he will spend the rest of his life in prison.

For Liberians, Taylor’s legacy continues to loom large. To some, he is the man who once projected a godlike aura and who is being demonized by the international community. To others, he is a warlord who helped tear Liberia apart during its own 14-year civil conflict, which left 250,000 dead and the country in tatters. To Jewel, he is the father of her two children, the man she fell in love with before he was a rebel leader, her husband for almost a decade.

The two met in the early ’80s, when Jewel was a first-year student at the University of Liberia, and soon had a child together. She later traveled to America in search of Taylor, who had fled there after being accused of embezzling \$1 million under the government of Samuel Doe. But by the time she arrived, Taylor—who was being held in a correctional facility in Plymouth, Mass.—had mysteriously escaped from jail.

Jewel stayed on in the U.S. to attend the American Institute of Banking in New Jersey and later worked in banking in the U.S. until 1996, when she returned to Liberia. The year after, Taylor proposed, and they were married in a “fairy-tale wedding” shortly before he was elected in a landslide.

Before long, the fairy tale started to sour. Jewel said she had a difficult relationship with her husband’s other wife, his ex-wife, and his mistresses. By August 2003, after Taylor had signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Accra, Ghana, and had agreed to step down, the couple was exiled to Calabar, Nigeria. They were soon joined by Taylor’s wife Victoria, a young Liberian whom he’d married in an Islamic ceremony in 2002. Jewel found herself living in a separate house from Taylor and Victoria in Calabar. When Jewel traveled back to Liberia in 2004, she discovered that she had been placed under a U.N. travel ban and was separated from the family. She also found out that Victoria was pregnant. It proved to be the final straw. Jewel filed for divorce in 2005, months before Taylor was arrested to be extradited back to Liberia.

Jewel denied rumors that the split was made to protect Taylor’s assets from sanctions and said she was left without a dime from the divorce. Investigators are still hunting for Taylor’s hidden wealth, which is believed to be anywhere between \$280 million and \$3 billion, according to a report by The New York Times. Jewel participated in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s economic-crimes inquiry process, which absolved her of any responsibility for economic and financial crimes. “I didn’t get a thing. I didn’t ask for it,” she said. “My lawyer asked me, ‘Are you sure?’ I said, ‘I didn’t marry him for property, and if he can’t love me, I don’t want anything.’”

Despite the couple’s divorce, the U.N. still has Jewel on Liberia’s travel-ban list and continues to uphold sanctions against her due to “ongoing ties” with Taylor. At the end of my time with Jewel, she was visited by the members of the U.N. sanctions committee, and there are rumors the restrictions could soon be lifted.



In Liberia, Charles Taylor remains revered by former soldiers and feared by victims. (Michael Zumstein / Agence Vu for Newsweek)

Jewel admitted that she has been in contact with Taylor over the years, but said her ties to him pose no threat to the country. “I’m a mother of two children to Taylor and a member of the Taylor family. It is to be expected that we talk ...

Are we planning on overthrowing the government? No!”

One of the most fascinating questions about the senator—and one that remains unanswered—is precisely how much she knew about Taylor’s crimes in Liberia and Sierra Leone while they were going on. During her time in the U.S., Jewel followed the war through international news outlets, such as CNN. It is difficult to believe she never heard the gruesome tales about Taylor’s commanders, who reportedly forced young boys to kill their parents and then turned them into foot soldiers, doping them up and sending them

to rape, murder, and pillage. According to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, between 1989 and 1997, some 150,000 Liberians were killed and 26,000 women and girls raped. Many of these atrocities were committed by Taylor's forces. The grim tales were so well known that one unofficial campaign slogan for Taylor in 1997 ran, "He killed my ma, he killed my pa, but I'll vote for him." Jewel was aware of the U.N.'s accusations that Taylor was trading weapons to Sierra Leone rebels in exchange for blood diamonds. In 2001, according to news reports, she marched in the streets along with thousands of others to protest U.N. sanctions against Taylor for his ongoing relationship with Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front (RUF).

I asked her if she questioned whether the allegations were true. She repeated the question and trailed off for a moment. "Mind you, they were talking about Sierra Leone," she said. "It was not a Liberian issue. I have never been to Sierra Leone before, I don't know what happened, and the issues were during the war, when I wasn't here. So it was a little bit difficult for me."

Some in Taylor's former inner circle claim Jewel had little influence over the president and say Taylor was capable of deep subterfuge. Peter Jallah, Taylor's former justice minister, said the man was "cunning" and "secretive" and that Jewel would likely have known very little about the details of the president's actions. "He was the sort of man who could send people to have one of your family members killed and make you feel like he had done nothing," Jallah told me. "You would never have thought he had anything to do with it."

Jallah—who resigned in 1998 over the unsolved murder and mutilation of a former Taylor comrade, Sam Dokie, and his wife, last seen being arrested by security forces—adds that as an African wife, Jewel would have had little power over her husband. "She had to make appointments to see him," he said. (Jewel also alluded to the fact that their marriage was, for many years, one without affection.)

For her part, Jewel has never outright acknowledged that Taylor committed crimes in Liberia or Sierra Leone. What she has done is admit that she doesn't rule out the possibility that he could have committed war crimes, while carefully distancing herself from the accusations. "People say [the RUF] was in and out of Monrovia," she said. "But as first lady, I never saw them, I never entertained for them, and I never interacted with them." I asked whether she questioned Taylor after the U.N. accused him of trading weapons for blood diamonds. "I had no clue of what they were talking about, and I was confused," she said. "The funny thing was, whenever I would ask him serious questions, he would always just laugh and say, 'Don't worry about it. It doesn't affect you.'"

"I kept on saying, 'You keep saying it doesn't affect me, but I know that it will, because whatever is happening will affect me and the children.'"

Jewel's insistence that she knew little about Taylor's crimes seems to hinge on the fact that she was abroad for most of his rebel years. "I was never involved in the war. I wasn't here for the whole of it," Jewel said. "I came home at the beginning of the presidency."

Still, Jewel admitted to visiting Taylor in rebel-occupied territory for three days in 1992, around the time of a major offensive to capture Monrovia. Jewel recalled seeing fighters, heavily armed and dressed in wigs and women's clothing. These were Taylor's soldiers, in macabre costumes that they believed gave them special powers. "I was appalled," Jewel said.



After seven years in Liberia's Senate, Jewel Taylor is well liked—and respected—across party lines. (Michael Zumstein / Agence Vu for Newsweek)

I asked her whether the sight made her question Taylor's activities. "The guys who brought me in, they said, 'They are just security people, and they have to dress like that, because we are not sure if this rebel territory is ours.' I thought maybe this is what

happens during the war."

Later, when talking about child soldiers, she told me that Taylor "loved children" and that the rebel's Small Boys Units were made up of children orphaned by government forces. "They were people who did not have access to their parents, because they had been killed," she said. "They saw [Taylor] as a father figure. And if you visit areas of Monrovia and talk to a lot of ex-combatants, they call him papay—'our father'—somebody who came to their aid when there was no one else," she said, underlining the eerie devotion that many former combatants still feel toward Taylor.

At another moment, when talking about the conflict years, she told me: "Things that happen during the war are evil spirits that take control of men."

This rationale—it was war, and chaotic things happened—is one Jewel invoked to talk about Taylor's time in office, when there were public allegations of torture and extrajudicial killings. Jewel said she questioned her husband about the reports, but was largely shut out. She said she pressed one case in particular—that of Tiawan Gongloe, a human-rights lawyer who was tortured, allegedly by police under Taylor's orders. "I raised the issue, and he said, 'Maybe it is security people just overstretching their bounds,'" she told me. "I said, 'Well, I don't think it's right, and you need to find out what is really going on.'" (Jewel is now friends with Gongloe.)

Jewel also said that at the time of the Gongloe case in April 2002, Monrovia had been flooded with citizens driven from the country's interior by anti-Taylor forces. (According to news reports, the deluge began in 2003.) From 2000 to 2003, Jewel was in charge of the National Humanitarian Task Force, and she said she spent most of her time distributing food, clothing, and aid. "There was a huge outcry for humanitarian support, there were bombings going on, and raids, and things were really crazy," she said. "There was too much going on at the time."

Her humanitarian work is well remembered. In the ruins of the old GSA slum, where many ex-combatants live, a 24-year-old prostitute named Teetee talked to me about her time as a child soldier fighting for Taylor. Her eyes were blank, and she spoke in a monotone shout, laughing when discussing the trauma of war. She said she was forced to fight for Taylor in 2000, after her parents were killed. "I feel bad. I was forced to do it to survive," she said. "I blame Charles Taylor." But of his ex-wife, Teetee said, "Jewel Howard Taylor is not a bad woman. She good. She take care of children and of people when the war is fighting ... Charles Taylor did bad things, but Jewel Taylor did good things."

When Taylor's guilty verdict was announced, Jewel was at home in Congo Town, an affluent suburb of Monrovia. She had gathered her two children and four of Taylor's adopted children to watch CNN's live broadcast. "I started talking to them about a week before, with all of what is going on," Jewel told me with a slight tremor in her voice. "I said that he didn't seem like he wouldn't be found guilty, but I thought he would be found guilty on some counts but not all counts."

"As they went into count one, count two, count three, and four, I was like 'Oh, God!' My daughter said, 'Mommy, didn't you say that he wasn't going to be found guilty on all counts?' I said, 'Just shut up. Let's listen,' because I didn't know what to say. It was a really difficult day."

In Monrovia, where crowds had gathered, many expressed sorrow at the verdict—a testament to the complicated relationship Liberians still have with Taylor. During the week I spent with her, Jewel was cautious when talking about the trial, noting that the sentence was yet to be delivered and that an appeal was pending. One day, while out at a tea-shop meeting with her constituents in Bong County—the de facto capitol of the state Taylor created as a rebel leader—she was careful to maintain a neutral position on the verdict, despite that the area remains a stronghold of Taylor support. A young onlooker asked her for her opinion on the trial.

"Let me be frank with you: whatever I say, one group will feel marginalized, so as senator I will stand in the middle," Jewel told him. "The Charles Taylor issue is not a Liberian issue, it was an issue concerning the international community and Sierra Leone."

But the following day, after a church service, Jewel told me that the trial was political. "I think from the beginning, we have seen that it is a politically motivated case," she said. "All of the key things have not been proven, yet he has been found guilty for aiding and abetting on all counts."

Mostly, when Jewel talked about the verdict, she stressed how tough it has been on her family and how she must move on with her life. But in many ways, she already has. As Taylor's influence in Liberia begins to wane, his ex-wife has become increasingly powerful. Her road to prominence started in a landslide victory in 2005 Senate elections in Bong County, the county with the third-highest number of registered voters in Liberia. It was a move made out of necessity—Jewel said she was unable to find work, despite that she held two university degrees at the time.

Now, seven years later, Jewel is the second-most-powerful woman in Liberian politics, behind President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf herself, and one of the most consequential members in the Senate. While carrying on a full-time schedule as a mother and senator, she also found the time to complete a graduate degree in law, making her one of the most educated members of the legislature. Recently, she was almost elected to the Senate's pro tempore position, but lost by one vote.

Jewel and other analysts blame the loss on political pressure from Johnson Sirleaf and Taylor's nephew Sando Johnson, a member of Taylor's former political party. Dan Saryee, who moderated the debate between the contenders for the position (for which only Jewel was present), said there was pressure from the executive mansion to go with a different senator. "There was concern that her winning would reignite the hopes of Charles Taylor's supporters," Saryee said. "She had the best experience and CV of all of the candidates."

According to other members of the National Patriotic Party, Johnson told party members that he was given direct instructions by Taylor not to vote for Jewel and insisted, "I will not vote for an irresponsible woman who abandons her husband." Johnson denied the claim and said he did not vote for Jewel on the basis that she was under U.N. travel sanctions. "We can't have a head of our Senate who cannot leave the country," Johnson told me.

Jewel said she doesn't know whether Taylor issued such an order, but she hasn't spoken to him since the vote, because "I was just so devastated." She also said she was certain the government played a major role in her defeat: "There was a concerted government effort to make sure that I didn't get elected."

The incident exposed strains between Jewel and Johnson Sirleaf. Jewel described her relationship with Johnson Sirleaf—whom she calls "a ferocious person"—as "tense." "I don't think we are enemies per se," Jewel said. "I am grateful that she is the first female president of Liberia, but of course the younger generation always sees things quite differently from the older generation, so we have had some real difficult times."

While Jewel said she backed the president in 2005, she also told me that Taylor's verdict would be "a guilty verdict" for those who played key roles in Liberia's civil war—an implicit reference to Johnson Sirleaf, who admitted to giving Taylor \$10,000 to help overthrow Doe in 1990. "It will reach all the way to the executive mansion," Jewel said. "There are others hiding in their offices under the clothing of government, hoping that it doesn't come to them."

Yet Jewel is opposed to war-crimes prosecutions in Liberia, arguing that the country is too fragmented. "It would only break us apart and further deepen the divide," she said. "We must forgive one another and move forward."

For the present, Jewel seems to be pulling off a successful, if fragile, balancing act. Her senior political adviser, Bong County's chairman of the National Patriotic Party, Marvin Cole, described it this way: she has "a responsibility to satisfy the Charles Taylor constituencies in the Republic of Liberia. And she also has a responsibility to appease the minds of the international community that are watching her, to be dissociated from Mr. Taylor."

Sen. John Ballout, a member of the ruling United Party, told me Jewel is no longer seen simply as Taylor's ex-wife. "After years of working together, we see her less and less as a former first lady," he says. "There is no special political treatment she enjoys. Senator Taylor remains one of the most respected senators and important politicians in the country." She is well liked across party lines and was the first opposition member to recognize Johnson Sirleaf's government after the push to boycott the most recent election, which was marred by violent protests.

There is now speculation that Jewel could even run for president herself one day. Her term expires in 2014. If she wins reelection—the battle is expected to be tough—she would be in a good position to run in the presidential elections in 2017. "In politics, every step forward grows another ambition," said Cole.

Jewel herself remained elusive on the matter. "One day is that possible? I think so," she said. "Anything is possible."

The Beast

Sunday, 28 April 2012

Liberian Nostalgia for War Criminal Charles Taylor

This week, Charles Taylor was convicted of aiding and abetting war crimes. But in Liberia, he still has

They sat stock-still on the hardwood benches of the dank, makeshift cinema in Monrovia. All eyes were fixed on their former president Charles Taylor, broadcast from the dock at The Hague courtroom of the Special Court for Sierra Leone. For almost three hours, Presiding Judge Richard Lussick rendered in sober monotone the court's judgment on Taylor's involvement in Sierra Leone's brutal late-1990s war. One of Africa's most infamous warlords and the man who oversaw Liberia's descent to dystopia was, at last, found guilty.

It took more than five years and 50,000 pages of convoluted testimony for the U.N.-backed court to reach its conclusion. Fragmented conflicts involving loosely affiliated militia-gangs operating across porous national borders do not distill neatly into watertight international prosecutions. The court, while unconvinced of prosecution claims that Taylor was the mastermind of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), found him guilty of aiding and abetting their atrocities with financial, military, and logistical support.

On hearing the news, the watchers sat quietly for a few moments before filing out into the late morning sun. No celebration, just contemplation. Taylor's pariah status abroad was never reflected at home, where he occupies a curious place in the national psyche. All in Liberia are painfully aware of the suffering Taylor caused. Still, there remains to varying degrees a lingering sense of dissatisfaction about his fate.

Liberia was a novel idea conceived in the United States in the early 1800s, an experiment in sending freed slaves "back" to Africa. In thrall to the U.S. culturally, perennially reliant on its aid and investment, "America's stepchild" has never really controlled its own destiny. Consequently, there exists among many a prevalent belief in an amorphous, omniscient "international community," spearheaded by the U.S., holding the puppet strings. Taylor's downfall, they believe, is what happens when an impudent Liberian leader starts to lead his own dance.

"We feel there are heavy, heavy hands behind this," says Robert Lupu, 30, one of those who spy a conspiracy. "It was always to happen to Taylor."

Issouf Sanogo / AFP / Getty Images

Taylor's ascent began in 1984 when he mysteriously walked out of a high-security Massachusetts prison. His escape is widely believed to have been facilitated by the U.S. government. (Earlier this year long-suspected links between the U.S. intelligence services and Taylor were finally confirmed). After undergoing guerrilla training in Gaddafi's Libya with a collection of other aspiring African dissidents, Christmas Eve 1989 saw Taylor reenter his home country from the north with around 100 revolutionaries.

The Liberia he entered was already well on its way to ruin, seething with ethnic strife thanks to the increasingly brutal policies of President Samuel Doe. This former army-sergeant had been plied with U.S. aid while a valuable pawn in Ronald Reagan's African Cold War game. But by the end of the 1980s, he had outlived his usefulness. Taylor, an ever-ebullient presence, was viewed as a liberator by suffering Liberians, and had strong support from those exiled in the diaspora.

This dissipated as the anticipated quick revolt turned into an astonishingly brutal and prolonged war. Other warring factions formed, seeking a slice of the pie. And President Clinton's administration, chastened by recent events in Somalia, did not intervene. It was not until a 1997 election, with 10 peace agreements having come and gone, that Taylor would finally take power. A country tired of war voted overwhelmingly to give him what he wanted. The warlord had become a democratically elected president.

Taylor the president filled his pockets with Sierra Leonean "blood diamonds," stymied freedom of speech, and reportedly shielded Al Qaeda operatives. The U.S. lost patience, finally deciding to "twist" the errant Liberian leader from its ever-shifting card hand of favored autocrats. Embassy cables confirm that in 2001 the U.S. began a concerted campaign to oust Taylor. By 2003, two former Pentagon officials had unsealed an indictment against Taylor. Congress would pass a bill offering \$2 million for his arrest. Amid vicious fighting with rebels who had reached the capital, Taylor was on his way. Standing up from a gold-painted throne to say farewell before going into exile, he told the nation he had "accepted this role as the sacrificial lamb ... I am the whipping boy." But for Taylor there would be no cozy end in exile as Idi Amin had. In 2006, ahead of a planned meeting, pressure from George W. Bush on Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo saw him extradited to stand trial.

While only 20 years old, Prince Valentine laments the selectivity inherent in international justice. "Lots of leaders do the wrong thing, especially in Africa. But not all go to the court." And glancing across the continent, many of Taylor's contemporaries have fared rather better. Former rebel Yoweri Museveni was declared one of a new type of African leader, before he started to look like rather an old type of African leader. His friend to the north, Paul Kagame, is another authoritarian with grubby hands, feted nonetheless.

"I feel sad he be going to jail, even though he committed atrocities," says Paye Sendolo, 42, from Monrovia. "Why does Liberia never get to have ex-president? They are all killed and now he's in prison, taken from us too." In Liberia, sadly, patriotic shame about the country's bloody past only seems to afflict those who had no control over it. What most Liberians yearn for is a normal past, present, and future. Normal countries have former presidents as statesmen. "Great men like Bush and Blair," Sendolo adds, sadly, perhaps not aware of the calls from some quarters for the Western leaders of the Iraq war to be prosecuted.

Financial realities are only one aspect of a sort of "Dictatorship Nostalgia" that one often hears expressed in Liberia

Alice Yekeh, 45, originally of Lofa County, while seemingly content with the verdict, is more concerned with realities closer to home. "I don't think he meant it to be this way, but Taylor brought the war here". She is angry that Liberia's other warlords are, as she puts it, "still eating."

The Liberian civil conflict was a bewildering alphabet soup of acronyms, each a rebel group led by a warlord. All are acknowledged to have committed similar atrocities. Yet as Taylor heads for prison, the other rebel leaders thrive. Most notably, Prince Yormie Johnson, who split from Taylor and formed his own rebel group early in the war, is a senator who came third in the country's recent presidential election. Alhaji Kromah, founder of the ULIMO-K group, is a university professor who President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf recently appointed ambassador-at-large. Dr. George Boley, formerly head of the Liberia Peace Council, returned to Liberia from the U.S. last month under a removal order made by a U.S. judge using the 2008 Child Soldiers Accountability Act.

All were recommended for prosecution by the country's postwar Truth and Reconciliation Commission. But they have little to fear in Liberia, where Nobel Prize winner Sirleaf has swept the report under the carpet.

This is probably because she's mentioned in it too, recommended to be barred from office for 30 years due to her early support and financing of Taylor. The internationally popular president, understandably, avoids the topic. When traveling across Liberia reporting on her reelection bid last year, I was struck by how frequently I was told that life was "better in Taylor-time." Liberia's poor majority have, in recent years, been badly hit by spiraling global food costs. Taylor, while accruing millions of dollars for himself through high-level racketeering, was keenly aware of the significance of affordable foodstuffs in maintaining order, and subsidized them accordingly.

However, financial realities are only one aspect of a sort of "Dictatorship Nostalgia" that one often hears expressed in Liberia. By all accounts, there is just something about Charles Taylor.

"The old ladies would crawl to the road, just to put eyes on Taylor. Can you imagine?" Alfred Sargbah, a longtime devotee of Taylor, tells me. "Now, president car goes past, nobody care. Is that right?"

Paul, 31, was close enough to Taylor that he must speak in anonymity. He joined Taylor's fledgling rebel movement as an 11-year-old, and quickly became a favored bodyguard to the man himself. As a fly on the wall throughout Taylor's rise, he is able to provide an intimate portrait of the warlord he still calls "the Chief."

"It was all about his personality. Taylor was the man who could meet you once, then see you in a line of 1,000 and call your name out. He always had time for anyone, he was never unfriendly." Paul smiles at the memory. "He always had something for everyone that came to him. Everyone from the outside got something. He was kind, he was so kind. You know, Taylor paid all of the other rebel leaders' hotel bills at the peace talks."

This "kindness" was actually an intrinsic part of Taylor's strategy, a counterpart to his ruthlessness. Patronage is a deeply embedded social norm in Liberia, a potent strategy in a place where so many have so little. I look after you, so you belong to me. Academic William Reno, in his 1999 book *Warlord Politics and African States*, describes how Taylor ran a "shadow state" based on personal links. Formal administrative institutions were largely impotent. Taylor was perfectly formed for the intuitive, opportunistic life of a rebel, but not for the stolid bureaucracy of government. Paul remembers how "everything collapsed as soon as he left (for exile in 2003). Because everything was built on him."

Even amid the pressure of maintaining such an unstable power base, Paul recalls an unflappable leader. "He was never afraid, always normal, playing tennis at his house. When you see your leader like that, you follow, you believe. He was incredible."

It was not only young lieutenants like Paul that were enchanted by Taylor. For a period, the BBC became his loudspeaker to the world, and the Rev. Jesse Jackson, Clinton's special envoy to Africa, his cheerleader. Far from a crude warlord, he was a chameleon, equally comfortable as a preacher or a warrior. His light skin and East Coast U.S. inflection allowed him to project the superior suaveness of Liberia's Americo-Liberian elite, while simultaneously taking on the Gola middle name "Ghankay" to inflate his grassroots appeal.

For those who campaigned against this formidable opponent, his downfall is sweet. Tiawan Gongloe, one of Liberia's foremost human-rights activists and lawyers, is cracking open a bottle of champagne. He was tortured for his outspoken criticism of Taylor's regime. "This is an absolute landmark decision. People thought he was invincible, that no one could deter him. He thought that. This is a decision that can change the mindset of our people." For Gongloe, the dividends of the verdict dwarf the \$250 million cost of the trial. "I don't believe there is any monetary value can be put to anything that brings about sustainable peace for us."

Any conversation on future peace in Liberia inevitably turns to the country's thousands of ex-combatants, many of them Taylor's child soldiers now grown. They are his most poignant, potent legacy.

When researching a recent article on the postwar experience of some of these young men, I was struck by the fact that the only person who escapes blame for their present predicament is the man who bears greatest responsibility: Taylor. For many, the coming of peace signaled the permanent loss of respect. In Monrovia, they squat in the crowded spaces between lavish compounds, the towering walls of which are a reflection of the mistrust that corrodes post-conflict reconciliation in Liberia.

When I was last here, in the old GSA slum on Monrovia's 25th Street, I brought up the impending trial verdict. One by one, they made me write down their names in my notebook, insisting I "tell the whole world and Barack Obama that Charles Taylor should be free." These young men continuously mythologize Taylor. They tell fables of his bravery, of his sexual exploits, of a blue diamond he had that was "almost the size of your head, I swear!" For them, most from poor country families, the lavish Taylor with his absolute power was no ordinary man.

On the afternoon following the verdict, amid their melancholy, they are taken by a strange phenomenon that appeared in the Monrovia sky around midday. Around the sun, a perfect circular halo has formed. "It's from him!" says Sam Hassan, 31. "He is telling us all will be fine."

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Finlay Young is a Scottish journalist and lawyer who has lived and traveled widely in West Africa.

New Vision (Kampala)

Saturday, 16 June 2012

Africa: ICC a Mockery of Justice

By Stephen Asiimwe

Analysis

THE Sierra Leone Special Court sitting in The Hague recently convicted, the former Liberian president, Charles Taylor for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

This is almost like colonialism in the 18th and (19th Century of Britain and France). While some people have commended the court, others are skeptical about the ability to strike a balance for all criminals on earth.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) was embraced with enthusiasm by a wide range of people, when it came into being on July 1, 2002. However, the court has turned to be of exclusive focus on Africa. No wonder Robin Cook the former British foreign minister said, before he died, if I may say so, this is not a court set up to bring to book prime ministers of the United Kingdom or presidents of the US.

On March 11, 2003 the ICC was officially established as a permanent tribunal to prosecute individuals for genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes of aggression.

To make it worse, the court can only prosecute crimes committed after July 1, 2002, the date the Rome Statute entered into force: European governors and presidents that participated in imperialism, plunder and pillage of the African continent in the two centuries never committed any crime and cannot even pay reparations.

The American crimes in Afghanistan, Iraq and other areas are not crimes, after all the US has not ratified the treaty. Under president George Bush Walker, America increased its hostility to the ICC, passing American service members protection Act of 2002 which became unofficially as "Hague Invasion Act ."

This law threatens American lawyers with legal action should they ever work on a case which could lead to a US citizen being put before ICC. Therefore, Taylor and others who have committed crimes should know that this court is for Africans.

ICC will continue to pick the weak people, take them to The Hague and hang them. ICC has turned a blind eye to self-evident human rights abuses in Iraq, Afghanistan and Gaza; they are just busy catching small rats. ICC has been selective on human rights abuses it chooses to pursue making it a mockery of its claims to bring about an end to impunity.

Lastly, on July 3, 2009, the African Union, although a lame duck, resolved not to cooperate with ICC regarding the indictment of Sudanese president Omar Bashir.

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