

## FOOTPATHS TO DEMOCRACY TOWARD A NEW SIERRA LEONE

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### PROLOGUE

Each generation must out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfill it or betray it. (*Frantz Fanon*)

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When a society demands a change there is no need attempting to change it on old principles. (*Foday Saybana Sankoh*)

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In furtherance of sustainable peace, we call on the UN Security Council to place a universal arms embargo, including the importation and use of land mines, on Sierra Leone forthwith. (*People's War & Peace Council*)

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We deem as more dangerous the quick-fix and prescriptive hidden-agendas of self-seeking mediators. We have every right to be suspicious of those who have made careers out of Africa's plight. They invariably end up as meddlers in internal conflicts prolonging the suffering of our people. (*Foday Saybana Sankoh*)

### RUF/SL Anthem

RUF is fighting to save Sierra Leone  
RUF is fighting to save our people  
RUF is fighting to save our country  
RUF is fighting to save Sierra Leone

*Chorus: Go and tell the President, Sierra Leone is my home  
Go and tell my parents, they may see me no more  
When fighting in the battlefield I'm fighting forever  
Every Sierra Leonean is fighting for his land*

Where are our diamonds, Mr. President?  
Where is our gold, NPRC?  
RUF is hungry to know where they are  
RUF is fighting to save Sierra Leone

*Chorus: Go and tell the President, Sierra Leone is my home  
Go and tell my parents, they may see me no more*

*When fighting in the battlefield I'm fighting forever  
Every Sierra Leonean is fighting for his land*

Our people are suffering without means of survival  
All our minerals have gone to foreign lands  
RUF is hungry to know where they are  
RUF is fighting to save Sierra Leone

*Chorus: Go and tell the President, Sierra Leone is my home  
Go and tell my parents, they may see me no more  
When fighting in the battlefield I'm fighting forever  
Every Sierra Leonean is fighting for his land*

Sierra Leone is ready to utilise her own  
All our minerals will be accounted for  
The people will enjoy in their land  
RUF is the saviour we need right now

*Chorus: Go and tell the President, Sierra Leone is my home  
Go and tell my parents, they may see me no more  
When fighting in the battlefield I'm fighting forever  
Every Sierra Leonean is fighting for his land*

RUF is fighting to save Sierra Leone  
RUF is fighting to save our people  
RUF is fighting to save our country

## **Forward**

We can no longer leave the destiny of our country in the hands of a generation of crooked politicians and military adventurers...It is our right and duty to change the present political system in the name of national salvation and liberation...This task is the historical responsibility of every patriot...We must be prepared to struggle until the decadent, backward and oppressive regime is thrown into the dustbin of history. We call for a national democratic revolution - involving the total mobilisation of all progressive forces. The secret behind the survival of the existing system is our lack of organisation. What we need then is organised challenge and resistance. The strategy and tactics of this resistance will be determined by the reaction of the enemy forces - force will be met with force, reasoning with reasoning and dialogue with dialogue. (*Basic Document of RUF/SL*)

We entered Sierra Leone through Liberia and enjoyed the sympathy of Sierra Leonean migrant workers some of whom joined us to cross the border to start our liberation campaign. This generation of Sierra Leoneans who have had to migrate to make a living in Liberia are now referred to as "mercenaries and bandits" by the Freetown-based military junta. The military junta has also used this fact to gain support from Guinea, Nigeria, Ghana, the US and Britain in its avowed policy of war to rid Sierra Leone of "alien rebels".

We do not deny the fact that some of those who volunteered to join our cause were veterans of the Liberian civil war but majority were of Sierra Leonean parentage. However, this minor "alien" involvement in our just and human cause was curtailed as early as May 1992 when it became a nightmarish experience for our civil population. Ever since we have fought a self-reliant war depending mainly on what we capture from the troops of the rebel National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) of the regimes in Nigeria, Guinea and Ghana and of the United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO).

The RUF/SL is surrounded on all sides by hostile forces. To the north and west, Guinea exercises a strangle-hold on the

common border. To the east and south, the Liberian counties of Lofa, Bomi and Grand Cape Mount sharing a common border with Sierra Leone have been controlled by ECOMOG by way of ULIMO. The sea and air space are patrolled by ECOMOG. With the situation as it is, how do we get supplies from the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) or for that matter from anywhere else? The NPFL could not have lost those three strategic counties if it had sufficient arms to spare. Therefore, the theory and accusations that we receive weapons and ammunition from Libya by way of Burkina Faso and the NPFL and at the same time being a conduit for the supply of materials to the NPFL are nonsense. These are calculated lies to justify the pursuit of a policy of military option by the Freetown-based military junta against our entreaties for peace through dialogue. It is an insult to every patriotic Sierra Leonean for the "Libya card" to be played to confuse as well as betray the genuine democratic and equal opportunity demands of our people. In respect of the above, we, hereby, challenge the US and Britain to support and see to the implementation and monitoring of our call for the UN Security Council to place a universal arms embargo on Sierra Leone, forthwith. We are tired of being demonised only to prolong the civil war which, left to themselves, the African people of Sierra Leone are capable of resolving through an enlightened process of dialogue. And for this process of dialogue to be successful, it has to be entirely owned by the people as a vehicle for their empowerment.

It has become quite clear now, even in Freetown, that the NPRC was "introduced" to hi-jack the revolution and betray the cause of the uprising against a rotten plantation system which impoverished Sierra Leone while at the same time enriched its slave masters. Why is it therefore strange to the backers of the besieged NPRC that the historically neglected, used and abused countryside would rise up to the simple call that "No more slave, no more master" and "Arms to the people; power to the people and wealth to the people"? It is this rallying call that has been set to song as the RUF Anthem which journalists are jailed for, for publishing and distributing this motivating anthem in Freetown.

What is clear is that the patriotic and democratically minded Africans of Sierra Leone are waging a successful guerrilla warfare using their feet and brains, footpaths and by-passes to surprise, disarm and totally disorganise the offensive operations of the rebel NPRC. The rebel NPRC has made its priority the defeat and destruction of the RUF/SL. Why seek to defeat and as well as destroy your own brothers and sisters that you were forced into conflict with? Why inherit the destructive policies of the masters you overthrew if you mean peace when you say so? Where does the rebel NPRC want to drive us away to? May be this is why the regime in Guinea is fighting on the rebel NPRC side to prevent an anticipated spillover which has never occurred because the RUF/SL has no quarrel with the people of Guinea and likewise Nigeria, Ghana and Britain.

Our self-reliant revolution deserves a more objective study and analysis. We continue to be demonised by those who benefit by doing so. As Pan-Africanists, we are proud of our self-reliant struggle. Initially we fought a semi-conventional war relying heavily on vehicles of mobility. This method proved fatal against the combined fire power of Nigeria, Guinea and Ghana. By late 1993 we had been forced to beat a hasty retreat as successful infiltration almost destroyed our ranks. We were pushed to the border with Liberia. Frankly, we were beaten and were on the run but our pride and deep sense of calling would not let us face the disgrace of crossing into Liberia as refugees or prisoners of war. We dispersed into smaller units, whatever remained of our fighting force. The civilians were advised to abandon the towns and cities, which they did. We destroyed all our vehicles and heavy weapons that would retard our progress as well as expose our locations. We now relied on light weapons and on our feet, brains and knowledge of the countryside. We moved deeper into the comforting bosom of our mother earth - the forest.

The forest welcomed us and gave us succour and sustenance. The forest continues to be our main sources of survival and defense to date. We regained our composure and engaged ourselves in a sustained period of intensive self-examination and self-criticism. We moved forward with a clearly defined programme and liberation ideology. We learned from our mistakes and laboured hard to correct them. We continue to make mistakes but we are not overwhelmed by them. Our collective sense of discipline continues to mature and the result is an effective command and control procedures and structures in our administrative territory.

We have created settlements, we call *sowo* bushes (i.e. sacred grove for the initiated). We endeavour to provide limited

health care, schooling, housing and seedlings, free. Our civilians receive no humanitarian assistance. Efforts by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to supply much need relief aid have been undermined by the rebel NPRC. The rebel NPRC behaves as if we are despicable aliens from another planet and not Sierra Leoneans. We bear all these deprivations with equanimity and a collective sense of purpose. We have not lost our sense of humanity.

We have learnt the value of treating captives and prisoners of war with utmost civility. Our ranks keep swelling daily. We have no need to conscript by force. Forced conscription is an inferior method which tends to pose security risk in the long run. Those forcibly conscripted, when they manage to escape, lead enemy troops back to locations they are familiar with. Experience and honesty have been our best teacher.

We do exercise limited martial rule in our liberated zone for the sake of internal security. We are religiously Godly in our bearings and beliefs. We enjoy communal prayers and communication twice daily and on all occasions prayers are said both in the Islamic and Christian ways. The people, through their own initiative, have removed doctrinal differences from their way of worship. They say if there is one God/Allah then there ought to be one congregation. In respect of this awakening there has emerged the Jungle United Christian Council (JUCC) and the Jungle United Muslim Council (JUMC). The different divisions in Islam and Christianity respectively worship under one roof and under the guidance of a Chief Imam or Priest and a church Mother.

We survive by hunting, gathering and vigorous rice farming. We tend the cocoa, coffee and palm fruit and fruit farms and we find ways to barter them for drugs, clothes, footwear, supplementary food items, schooling materials and of course, radios, music cassettes and batteries. Sometimes we have the presence of mind to indulge our young ones with sweets and toys.

It is our collective sense of purpose, the ideals and ideas we believe in and discipline that have brought us so close to Freetown. Often times towns have fallen to our advancing troops without a single shot being fired. The rebel NPRC troops run away leaving behind quantities of weapons and ammunition. We are blessed by God/Allah because of our just cause.

It has become crucial that the world knows that there is something happening in the Sierra Leone countryside. A change for the better has gripped Sierra Leone. A consciousness of ourselves as an enterprising people has developed because of the self-reliant struggle. We are daily diversifying our stock of food and eating habits. We are discovering new nutritional values in the flora and fauna that we have grown to respect as our embodiment. We have become pro-active conservationists as we live close to and by the soil, rivers, streams, hills, valleys and mountains. In effect, we have come to know our country better and understand the potential of its pristine flora and fauna and the resources that lie underneath our soil. The developing consciousness is all embracing and enriching. We continue to say that we are blessed and by God/Allah. We are therefore guided by a liberation theology consistent with our pride in ourselves as Africans.

No more shall the rural countryside be reduced to hewers of wood and drawers of water for urban Freetown. That pattern of exploitation, degradation and denial is gone forever. No RUF/SL combatant or civilian will countenance the re-introduction of that pattern of raping the countryside to feed the greed and caprice of the Freetown elite and their masters abroad. In our simple and humble ways we say, "No more slave and no more master." It is these very exploitative measures instituted by so-called central governments that create the conditions for resistance and civil uprising. The importation of the "apartheid dogs of war", Executive Outcomes, to strengthen the chosen policy of war by the rebel NPRC is a case in point. What irks the population most is the fact that these mercenaries are business men to the boot and they are mining away the non-renewable resource of diamonds. If they came to fight the RUF/SL that would not have bothered the population because they know that the "apartheid dogs of war" will be handled the same way the Gurkhas were disgraced to a man on the battlefield.

As much as we continue to seek a peaceful solution to our internal civil conflict we do not at the same time seek to become a casualty of peace. We have every reason to mistrust military juntas and particularly those who are waging war against us, even if they have mutated into mufti-Presidents. How they came to power and how they manage their countries

are a matter for their own people. With Sierra Leone, our people continue to say no to the rotten system of the All People's Congress (APC) party which the rebel NPRC has inherited as a matter of course because they were the watchdogs of the APC government.

We continue to appeal to Guinea, Nigeria, Ghana and Britain not to interfere. We have put these concerns to song and sing them knowing that the people of these countries do not support the warring policies of the ruling elite. In this respect, we find it so reasonable to make a simple demand that all foreign troops, including military and intelligence advisers and trainers leave the soil of Sierra Leone to give the required space for Sierra Leoneans to settle their own internal conflict. The presence of foreign troops and the importation of mercenaries indicate a continuation of a policy of war and the choice of the military option. It signals that all the declared intentions of the rebel NPRC for a negotiated settlement have been mere prattles. This also justifies our conviction that the hopes of our people for an enriching and enterprising democratic culture cannot be placed in the hands of a military junta.

As a practical demonstration of our commitment to peace we call for a universal arms embargo to be placed on Sierra Leone forthwith. We herein appeal to the United Nations Security Council to seize itself of the grave matter of the spread of small arms and the planting of anti-personnel mines. The constant use of heavy artillery and cluster bombs have devastated the countryside. We demand an arms embargo now in anticipation of the problems associated with disarmament and demobilisation. The RUF/SL is confident that it can disarm its freedom fighters as soon as it becomes necessary to do so. Our stringent discipline is such that every single bullet is recorded and accounted for.

The RUF/SL is open to dialogue and has consistently demonstrated this fact by risking to meet with representatives of independent civic groups, peace movements, labour unions, teachers, students, professional bodies, religious leaders and chiefs and elders. In late 1994 we risked to meet with a Freetown-based peace group at the Mano River bridge but a scouting jet bomber forced us to abandon that contact. In September 1995, we entertained the idea of trying another meeting and went ahead and spoke with some political leaders and peace activists. An independent delegation being put together was rudely interfered with by the rebel NPRC which objected to the inclusion of certain personalities. Such is the character of military juntas that seek to control every aspect of national life in order to feel secure.

The RUF/SL seeks the path of peace. In this respect, our unilateral declaration of cease-fire announced in April 1992, as soon as the rebelling government troops seized power from their masters, still stands. We remain steadfast to this cease-fire declaration so far as we are not attacked and the civil society is allowed to determine its own future through a representative sovereign national conference leading to a people's constituent assembly which in turn would form a government of national unity.

We recognise that, even in the event of victory, they RUF/SL will have to sign a political, economic and social contract with the rest of society in keeping with the demands of democratic governance. We are democrats and we stand for progress through work and happiness. The New Sierra Leone we are striving for can only be built by the combined energy and industry of all Sierra Leoneans and others of good will in a programme of work and happiness drawn up by the empowered people to create that essential wealth vital to the elimination of the scourge of poverty and human degradation.

Our liberation ideology and theology are therefore clear and unambiguous.

**Foday Saybana Sankoh**  
The Zogoda  
Sierra Leone

## **What Are We Fighting For?**

We continue to fight because we are tired of being perpetual victims of state sponsored poverty and human degradation visited on us by years of autocratic rule and militarism. But, we shall exercise restraint and continue to wait patiently at the rendez-vous of peace - where we shall all be winners. We are committed to peace, by any means necessary, but what we are not committed to is becoming victims of peace. We know our cause to be just and God/Allah will never abandon us in our struggle to reconstruct a new Sierra Leone. (*Foday Saybana Sankoh*)

We are fighting for a new Sierra Leone. A new Sierra Leone of freedom, justice and equal opportunity for all. We are fighting for democracy and by democracy we mean equal opportunity and access to power to create wealth through free trade, commerce, agriculture, industry, science and technology. Wealth cannot be created without power. Power cannot be achieved without struggle. And by struggle, we mean the determination, the humanistic urge to remove the shame of poverty, hunger, disease, squalor, illiteracy, loafing and hopelessness from this African land of Sierra Leone blessed with minerals, forests, rivers, and all that is required to restore the dignity, prestige and power of the African as an equal competitor on the world stage. This is what we are fighting for and this is why we are fighting to save Sierra Leone. For, a society has already collapsed when majority of its youth can wake up in the morning with nothing to look up for.

### **Why the Armed Struggle?**

We have chosen the long and winding road (footpaths and by-passes) to democratic salvation. Sooner or later the citizens of Freetown, Bo and Kenema shall wake up to our call and with brooms and dusters, buckets and pans, sticks and stones, they will rid themselves of the rotten APC system along with its watchdogs, including the apartheid dogs. (*Foday Saybana Sankoh*)

Why not, when those who by our votes or default use state power to enrich themselves by accumulating wealth and property in foreign lands while teachers, doctors, nurses, civil servants, the police, soldiers and workers are not paid for weeks and months? And what happens to them, their children and other dependants, when they say "enough is enough" and ask for what is theirs? And what happens to them when in addition they demand wages they can survive on? What happens to them when they point out the fact that it is immoral for those who hold state power to run down the health services and go abroad periodically for medical check-up with all expenses paid out of state funds? What happens to those journalists and press houses who take up the cause of the suffering and denied and comment on it?

What did the All People's Congress (APC) regime do in response to the above? Where were the avenues and channels of protest, mediation and restitution? Why did the youth, particularly school children, take to the streets in support of their striking parents? And what happened to these school children who life had taught that if they did not stand up then they would be the next victims of the collapsing society where their seniors graduate without hopes of job and any form of social security; where their parents cannot make ends meet? The APC regime both under Siaka Stevens and Joseph Saidu Momoh showed "them where power lies."

Whenever society complained about their state of poverty, hunger, disease and hopelessness, the security forces were deployed against them. Intimidation, violence and threats of violence were used to control and contain the anger and frustrations of the suffering people. The APC regime will intimidate the people by a show of force with guns to "show the people where power lies". It is experience that has taught the suffering Africans of Sierra Leone that power lies in the gun and whoever controls the guns controls the means of suppression and the means to steal the wealth of the country. And the only way to stop this corruption of power is for the people to take up arms in order to take back their power and use this power to create wealth for themselves and generations to come by reconstructing a new African society in Sierra Leone consistent with the highest ideals of our glorious past and the challenges of the modern world we live in.

What we are saying is that the only way to a democratic future for all the Africans of Sierra Leone lies in the abolishment of militarism and dictatorship. And the only force that can defeat militarism and dictatorship is the armed force of the suffering people as expressed in a guerilla campaign. The guerrilla is the people in arms. It is the guerrilla who removes the fear imposed on society by the uniformed "men in arms". These watchdogs' of the corrupt and rotten APC regime are still with in the form of the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC).

With continued pressure from below and also from the international community Siaka Stevens transferred power to Joseph

Momoh who would protect Stevens and his stolen wealth from the angry population. The pressure continued under Momoh who responded with cosmetic reforms which were not far-reaching enough to transform the whole of society. Momoh was playing with the intelligence of the voting population by initiating an electoral process that would ensure the continued hold on power of the APC. It was at this juncture in March 1991 that the RUF/SL came out in the open and stated categorically that there will never be elections under Momoh. The RUF/SL demanded a process towards genuine democratic transformation of society within ninety days or the Momoh militaristic regime would be removed by force of arms. The APC scorned the RUF/SL and provided the spark that set off the armed challenge on 23 March 1991.

It was the successful challenge of the militaristic APC regime by the armed uprising of the historically denied and exploited countryside which brought a strain in the hitherto impregnable APC political machinery. The young, disaffected and demoralised soldiers who were deployed against the RUF/SL freedom fighters received education from RUF/SL vanguards at the frontline. We were patient with the government soldiers. We spoke to them and pricked their consciences as to why they were fighting us as we all were suffering at the hands of their commanders and politicians they kept in power with their guns. Why should they be fighting their own suffering brothers? We pointed out to them that for the first time they were out of the security of Freetown and the barracks into the insecurity and poverty of the countryside. They were now getting to know their country and they could see for themselves what all the diamonds and gold taken from the countryside have done to the environment and the people. The land has been despoiled and the irresponsible and corrupt mining magnates leave the villagers only with the gift of pits and craters that breed mosquitoes, malaria and cholera. Farmlands are destroyed in the insatiable quest for diamonds and gold. The only way out of their cringing poverty is for the youth and able to yield to the false attraction of urban and cosmopolitan life. We opened their eyes to the widening cycle of poverty and degradation and the increasing opulence of the very few. We encouraged them to rebel. We encouraged them to desert. We encouraged them to join us. Some did join the RUF/SL. Some left the army. It will be dishonest to attribute this education process to the RUF/SL alone. We believe that the ECOMOG experience in Liberia fertilised the minds of these young government soldiers.

By this process of education and armed struggle the RUF/SL strategically weakened the apparatus of government on which the APC rested. Panic struck the political apparatus and the loyalty of the armed forces was broken by hard economic realities. The unpaid, ill-armed and disgruntled front-line government troops, who had benefitted from RUF/SL political education and ideology, one day decided to leave the hard life of the bush to Freetown to demand their earned income and also to complain about their neglect by their commanders. Emboldened by a new consciousness and "the power of the gun" these young soldiers took to the streets of Freetown and to their surprise the military General turned President, Joseph Saidu Momoh and his APC stalwarts, took to flight at the mere sight of the barrel of the gun. The Commander-in-Chief really knew "where power lies". The young soldiers seized state power by virtue of its concentration in Freetown. In effect Freetown was Sierra Leone and has always been Sierra Leone, like Monrovia was Liberia and Port au Prince was Haiti.

How did RUF/SL react to the coup d'état later to be led by ECOMOG/Liberia war veteran, Captain Valentine Strasser-King? The leader, Foday Saybana Sankoh, called a public meeting of the chiefs, elders, religious leaders and citizenry of Kailahun district. This is what ensued. Sankoh told them that he brought the war to remove the rotten APC system and now that the APC had been removed by their own brothers in arms peace must be sought and the war brought to an end to pave way for national reconciliation, reconstruction and development. Sankoh frankly told the gathering of his mistrust of coup-makers and military rulers but he was willing to stretch an olive arm for peace, development and progress if the gathering advised him to do so. The chiefs and elders asked for three days to think over matters.

They gathered again to listen to the chiefs and elders. They said they promised and offered him support to wage a liberation war and also to rebuild the country after victory and peace. Their conviction remained the same and if he felt that it was time for peace, he had their support, and if he felt the liberation war should continue, he had their support. Sankoh, after reflection, told the gathering that it was time for peace and with their blessing he would approach the coup leaders and ask for peace talks backed by a unilateral declaration of cease-fire.

Sankoh communicated the offer of the olive branch and peace by radio to the young soldiers and some senior officers, who knew him personally. They reacted positively and particularly to the unilateral declaration of cease-fire. We proposed a representative and sovereign national conference of all Sierra Leoneans at a mutually accessible location to present a way forward for the bringing into being a new Sierra Leone.

The coup-makers promised to get back to us. The next thing we heard over the air was what amounted to summoned visits to the military rulers of Ghana and Nigeria, J J Rawlings and I B Babangida respectively. They returned to Freetown and without coming back to the RUF/SL announced a continuation of the APC policy of war. Assured of sponsorship, the young coup leaders opted for a military solution and made the defeat and extermination of the RUF/SL as their priority. It is said that birds of the same feathers flock together. It is sad that West Africa was under the boots of military dictators at that historical period and the NPRC chose to go the way of all dictators. The RUF/SL has been defending itself, ever since, from unprovoked military operations with various enthusiastic cod names (like Operation Clean Sweep for Kono district; Operation Destroy All for Kailahun district and Operation Locate and Destroy, to name a few).

The RUF/SL waited and hoped that the international community would wake up to the implications of the continuation of a policy of war. Locked up in the forest with no access to the outside world we could not communicate our frustrations and fears. We hoped that the junta would not be recognised in the light of the global call for democracy and good governance. We believed that the international climate did not favour coups and waited in anticipation for denunciations and condemnations.

### **Why, we continue to fight?**

Each generation has the onerous task to judge the performance of its institutions, particularly the government. The African people of Sierra Leone evaluated the performances of the APC regime and the consensus was that in order to save the nation from its perennial political, social and economic predicament, the entrenched systems could only be changed by the armed uprising of the people imbued with a clear ideology. And now what do we see? The watchdogs of the rotten APC system, the army, is standing in the way of the chosen path of the people, organised in their guerilla action. The struggle continues... *(Revised Basic Document of RUF/SL)*

We conferred again among ourselves and it dawned on us that it was suicidal to place the hopes of a society struggling to free itself from state sponsored poverty, denial and degradation in the hands of military rulers. And that militarism is an anathema to democracy. As liberation fighters it was unbecoming of us to have misread the situation. We therefore embarked on a serious study of coups and liberation movements and the historical tendency of the military holding on to power by any means necessary became obvious to us. The military can never be trusted. Nigeria under military rule points very well to the way of all military dictators. But, the African people of Sierra Leone do not want half-way measures to democracy. The African continues to be schooled to be satisfied with inferior measures, mediocre leaders and with crumbs from the tables of slave masters and plantation owners. The sickening mind-set of the "house niger" remains with us and it is only such a mentality that can import "apartheid dogs" to extract wealth, in diamonds, from a bleeding nation. Militarism and autocratic rule continue to stand in the way of the suffering African masses whose only salvation lies in democracy secured through their own seizure and protection of state power.

This seeks to explain our mistrust of the APC watchdogs, NPRC, and all military regimes. We accept our failure in explaining ourselves to that we can gain the support and understanding of all democratic forces and governments. The RUF/SL has been demonised and continues to be referred to as bandits even by no other international personality as James Jonah, a former UN under-Secretary General, who is now supposed to be an independent and neutral electoral commissioner. In order to justify their policy of war the NPRC must continue to demonise the RUF/SL. In order to gain support from the international community the NPRC must continue to demonise the RUF/SL. How long can this continue? How long will the international community allow itself to be misled and used by the military junta whose claim to power has been confined to Freetown ever since it seized this town, by default, from its masters, the APC?

By lending recognition to the NPRC military junta, in a civil war situation, ECOWAS, dominated by military rulers, set a pattern for the OAU and UN to follow without critical examination of the consequences. A military incursion, civil

uprising and sustained pro-democracy campaigns bring to question as well as challenge the centres of power and governance in a given nation state. In a successful guerrilla campaign, in the light of a full blown civil war, there the only source of strength and capability to engage the guerilla movement lies in external support and interests, the national capacity to resolve the conflict is removed by these very same external forces and interests. For it is their presence and contribution which prolong the civil conflict by ever confusing the balance of power on the ground. A state of permanent war develops only to the benefit of the hawkers of military hardware and those who benefit from the arms trade.

The rebel NPRC seized power from its masters whose hold on the country was the symbolism of the state capital. This is what the APC watchdogs (NPRC) have inherited. The APC watchdogs exercise no governance or administrative control over the whole of Sierra Leone. They can only extract taxes and custom duties in Freetown. The rebel NPRC can only play the game of governing without governance at the behest of its military backers. It is the blind recognition of these APC watchdogs by the international community which fuels the civil war situation in Sierra Leone. ECOWAS, OAU, Commonwealth, European Union and the UN have no business lending recognition to military regimes in the wake of Nigeria and Zaire. If the international community through pressure or through direct intervention can act in Haiti, Sao Tome and Principe and the Comoro Islands then it is not too late to act in Sierra Leone. The hopes of democracy in Africa cannot be placed in the hands of military juntas and mufti-Presidents.

The rebel NPRC, brought up and fed on the rotten and corrupt culture of its masters, the APC, like the proverbial house niger, can only mimick the habits of its masters. The rebel NPRC conjures opponents and executes them. The rebel NPRC jails and harasses journalists, closes down press houses, takes away the daily bread of presumed potential political opponents, and it has unleashed a pack of spies, informers and security agents on the population of Freetown. Freetown has reverted to slave town under the whip and boots of Captain Valentine Strasser-King and his cohorts. All our minerals are still unaccounted for and like Siaka Stevens when a valuable gemstone is found they jump into a plane and shoot off the Europe to sell the diamonds trusting no one but themselves. The greed and rush to accumulate wealth and property is such that even the elder Strasser-King works in the Executive Outcomes' controlled diamond fields as a commander. A thief is always a thief and those who steal power can steal the wealth of a country, like Mobutu of Zaire and Bokasa of Central African Republic. And when foreign diplomats, like the German, Karl Prinz, complain about corruption, human rights abuse and denial of civil liberties they are forced to be recalled.

In short, the rebel NPRC is cast in the image of its masters, the APC and it continues to be the watchdog of the APC rotten system that it plans to play musical chairs with. And who else would fall for this politricks but the same old politicians? The politicians are lending themselves to be used by the APC watchdogs to solve the problem faced by all military rulers and autocrats - the problem of legitimation and succession. It is therefore not an accident that Rawlings' neo-colonial castle has become the second home of the APC watchdogs. These politicians dancing to the tune of the rebel NPRC should seek advice from the politicians in Ghana, Nigeria, Guinea and Togo. We, the African people of Sierra Leone, do not want this curse to afflict us for we have suffered enough and continue to suffer under the rotten APC system. We are tired of the state sponsored poverty and degradation. We are tired of our children dying of preventable diseases. We are tired of drinking muddy water. We are tired of our rural folks being exploited day in and day out and not by apartheid dogs brought into the diamond areas by the APC watchdogs. These dogs are not only exploiting the wealth of the countryside but they are planting anti-personnel mines all over. What do they care about peace and the problems and challenges of peacetime reconstruction?

Against this background, patriotic and democratically-minded Africans of Sierra Leone are left with the option of armed struggle to remove the rotten APC system now bolstered by apartheid dogs.

It is also against this background of twenty-five years of APC misrule and its continuation by the rebel NPRC that the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone was and is still conceptualised and transformed into action by mobilising and organising patriotic Africans of Sierra Leone; the marginalised, neglected and excluded of society, intellectuals, workers, professionals, members of the armed forces and police, students, traders, farmers, chiefs and elders and people of all shades of opinion for a protracted and sustained armed struggle to remove the rotten APC system. A rotten system cannot

be reformed. When a society demands change there is no need attempting to change it on old principles.

Each generation has the onerous task to judge the performance of its institutions, particularly the government. The African people of Sierra Leone evaluated the performances of the APC regime and the consensus was that in order to save the nation from its perennial political, social and economic predicament, the entrenched system could only be changed by the armed uprising of the people imbued with a clear ideology.

## **The Ideas and Ideals We Believe In**

We seek preventive solutions to our endemic state of poverty and hopelessness. We deplore squalor and poverty. There is no virtue in being poor for God/Allah created us in the majesty of his own image. Poverty dishonors Allah/God. Poverty is a human imposed affliction which only the redeemed, organized and empowered population can eradicate. (*Foday Saybana Sankoh*)

The RUF/SL is committed to democratic ideals and holds as sacrosanct the right of a people to organise themselves to re-take power when a government fails to be representative and sustaining in all intent and purpose. Through the armed struggle we, the African people of Sierra Leone, have chosen not to fold our arms and sit on the fence while our society collapses in front of us. We have chosen to act to remove a rotten system and to own and champion our destiny. In pursuance, therefore, of the sacred objective of total empowerment of the people for genuine democratic order or culture, the RUF/SL has divided the struggle into three phases:

### **One: "Arms to the People "**

*Believing that it is an organised and informed people who constitute the motive force of any political and economical revolution, the RUF/SL has trained a large number of men and women including the elderly, youth, children and the disabled from all corners of Sierra Leone and given them arms to mantle the corrupt APC system and its sordid successors. This phase is currently being vigorously pursued and the RUF/SL will not relent until the task is accomplished. The RUF/SL believes that the possession of arms should not be the monopoly of a privileged group. Everybody should be a fighter to defend their rights.*

### **Two: "Power to the People"**

*The RUF/SL has abiding faith in the necessity of democratic empowerment of the people in order to wipe out the scourge of poverty and human degradation that affects us as a people. The power to initiate policies, and to make decisions must be the preserve of the people. Politics, the RUF/SL is convinced, is the process by which the people provide the standards of judgment and choose the government officials to apply them so as to get results that will not be intolerable to any section of the community.*

*Political power can only stand the test of time when it originates from the people themselves. This is the kind of political power the RUF/SL aspires for. All local government structures are going to be overhauled so that everybody participates fully and actively in the decision making and implementing processes according to their ability. RUF/SL's mission is to redeem Sierra Leone from economic, political and social enslavement and to radically bring about a change of positive attitudes so that people will live as humans should in an enabling environment.*

### **Three: "Wealth to the People"**

*We all know that Sierra Leone is endowed with natural resources that would have ranked us as one of the richest in the West African sub-region. Yet, the mass of our people leave in state sponsored squalor and our children denied a brighter future. We have a clique, a handful of unscrupulous elite, who enjoy our resources. This horrendous situation cannot be allowed to continue if posterity should live meaningful lives. We either destroy this horrible system or we perish by it.*

*When the RUF/SL voices out the slogan "Wealth to the People" this is what it means. It means that the people should empower themselves in order to harness their resources and use them for their own survival and development. The natural resources are the natural property of the people, therefore, the exploitation of these God/Allah given resources must be to their natural benefit. In the past we have seen how our resources have been snatched from us by small selfish groups. The wealth of this blessed nation of ours belongs to all of society. It should not be monopolised by anybody.*

As stated clearly in the **Basic Document of the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone (RUF/SL): The Second Liberation of Africa**, prepared in 1989:

*"We can no longer leave the destiny of our country in the hands of a generation of crooked politicians and military adventurers who, everyday since independence, have proved beyond all reasonable doubt that they are inefficient, irresponsible and corrupt. Posterity will never forgive us if we sit passively by while a few desperate men and women, who are nothing but an organised bunch of criminals, continue to despoil, rape and loot the people's wealth. It is our right and duty to challenge and change the present political system in the name of salvation and liberation. We must build a political system over which we, the oppressed people of Sierra Leone, must have absolute control. It must be reflective of our needs and aspirations; a political system that will give maximum priority to popular participation and control. This task is the historical responsibility of every patriot. We must be prepared to struggle until the decadent, backward and oppressive regime is thrown into the dustbin of history. We call for a national democratic revolution - involving the total mobilization of all progressive forces. The secret behind the survival of the existing system is our lack of organisation. What we need then is organised challenge and resistance. The strategy and tactics of this resistance will be determined by the reaction of the enemy forces - force will be met with force, reasoning with reasoning and dialogue with dialogue.*

*The economic crisis today is enough evidence to justify the level of determination. We are told that our foreign debt stands over one billion dollars. What happened to the money? Mismanagement, poor economic planning and shameless thievery of public wealth stand as the root causes of the loans having no impact. The 'vouchergate' and 'squandergate' phenomena have assumed a more frightening proportion under the much defamed regime of 'new order'.*

*We are determined, through our collective struggle, to liberate the economy from all forms of domination, both local and foreign. The wealth of the land belongs to the people.*

*The parasitic and unscrupulous few will have to live or perish on the people's terms. A people and environmental friendly, self-reliant, flexible and interdependent economy is our goal. The major sectors of the economy; agriculture, mining, industry and energy will have to feed each other in the noble task of national reconstruction. Cash crops production in itself does not help in the anti-neo-colonial struggle for genuine independence. This is because the crops goes to feed the industries of Europe and North America. In turn, we buy finished products at incredibly high cost. In the end we produce what we don't consume and consume what we don't produce. The centuries of unequal exchange can be corrected only through an integrated economic program that is designed, tailored, suited and implemented to fulfill and satisfy our internal, sub-regional, African and Pan-African needs and aspirations.*

*The RUF/SL position on the social plight is a radical social transformation of our society. To achieve this, the RUF calls for a cultural revolution whose main objective will be the liberation of our minds to instill in everyone of us a high sense of African patriotism. The building of alternative social structures created by the people and for the people is the only way to destroy the existing corrupt and rotten ones.*

*There is a need for a complete overhauling of the present educational system. The prevailing system is a major contributing factor to our current state of industrial and technological backwardness. The educational system was initially a colonial imposition, which did not take into consideration the aspirations and needs of our people. The sole intention was to train passive and obedient Africans to man the colonial state structure. What was expected of any serious minded African ruling class was to radically alter the inherited educational system immediately after the attainment of independence. In our country, the ruling class simply continued from where the British colonialist left. Now it has become*

*a common dictum of the APC ruling class that education is a privilege and not a right.*

*The way to end exploitation and oppression, economic and social injustice, ignorance, backwardness and superstition is to make education available to all - both the young and old, male and female, and also the disabled. We need to create a new educational system that is more purposeful, dynamic and relevant, which will take into consideration the demands of the present scientific and technological world and value of research, critical thinking and creativity."*

In summary, from the conceptualisation of the revolution, the RUF/SL has firmly believed in the organized power of the people as the motive force critical to the radical transformation of society and in our particular circumstances in the reconstruction of a new Sierra Leone. It is with this conviction that the RUF/SL has mobilized the people to pursue the armed struggle to bring about the demise of the decadent system. Every citizen in the liberated zone is made responsible for the security of the zone by the formation of a civil defense unit.

The RUF/SL believes that the new Sierra Leone cannot afford to keep a standing army for the defence of the state, because the experience has shown that a state army is manipulated by dictators to perpetuate their regimes and terrorise the people. What the RUF/SL is doing now during the "Arms to the People" phase is the development of a nucleus of a people's defence system, wherein every citizen will be equipped to defend the state at any time so no one person or a cabal of conspirators can monopolise the tools of physical violence.

The RUF/SL revolution is a democratic revolution whose aim is to create the enabling space for the democratic empowerment of the people. It is only an organised people who can liberate themselves from political suppression and economic exploitation.

It is the aspiration of the RUF/SL that the new Sierra Leone will decide on an economic policy that is consistent with our national and Pan-Africanist interest. We must seek not to be polarised to either state capitalism or private capitalism, instead, the RUF/SL believes, we must seek enabling and turn-key partnership with investors in the exploitation of the natural resources. It must be a partnership which leaves no opening for anybody to claim economic hegemony over others.

The RUF/SL is of the conviction that both political and economic powers are inalienable rights of the people. In recognition of this fundamental principle, the RUF/SL has encouraged and motivated the people in the liberated zone to form administrative structures through which they can effectively manage their resources and direct the course of the armed struggle to its successful conclusion.

This is our vision for in the period of the second liberation of Sierra Leone. Our mission therefore is to contribute to the task of total political and economic liberation and unification of Africa.