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THE EXECUTIVE MANSION
OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF STATE
MONROVIA, LIBERIA

ADDRESS

TO THE NATION

BY

CIC DR. SAMUEL K. DOE
HEAD OF STATE AND PREISDENT
INTERIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

ON THE

STATE OF THE NATION

UNITY CONFERENCE CENTER

DECEMBER 11, 1985

THE EXECUTIVE MANSION
OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF STATE
MONROVIA, LIBERIA

MR. VICE PRESIDENT OF THE INTERIM NATIONAL
ASSEMBLY AND VICE PRESIDENT-ELECT;

MR. DEPUTY VICE HEAD OF STATE;

MR. SPEAKER, MR. SECRETARY GENERAL AND
MEMBERS OF THE INTERIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY;

MR. CHIEF JUSTICE AND MEMBERS OF THE
SUPREME COURT;

MEMBERS OF THE CABINET;

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE SPECIAL
MILITARY TRIBUNAL;

MR. CHIEF OF STAFF AND MEMBERS OF THE ARMED
FORCES OF LIBERIA;

MR. DOYEN AND MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC
CORPS;

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE SPECIAL
ELECTIONS COMMISSION;

SUPERINTENDENTS OF COUNTIES;

PARAMOUNT, CLAN CHIEFS AND ELDERS;

HEADS OF BUSINESS HOUSES;

PRELATES, FELLOW CITIZENS;

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

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WE ARE GRATIFIED BY YOUR KIND RESPONSE TO OUR INVITATION TO ASSEMBLE IN THESE GREAT HALLS TODAY.

THE HISTORIC PROCESS WHICH WE HAVE EMBARKED UPON AND THE MISSION WE UNDERTOOK FIVE YEARS AGO FOR THE LIBERATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THIS COUNTRY MAKE US DUTY-BOUND TO INVITE YOU HERE TO REVIEW THE CONDITIONS AND DEVELOPMENTS IN OUR COUNTRY, JUST AS WE ARE ABOUT TO EMBRACE THE ADVENT OF THE NEW YEAR AND TO OPEN PERHAPS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHAPTER IN OUR FORWARD MARCH TOWARDS THE SECOND REPUBLIC.

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MY FELLOW CITIZENS, DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: THE ALMIGHTY GOD HAS BESTOWED MANIFOLD BLESSINGS UPON US BOTH AS A PEOPLE AND AS A NATION. BY HIS GRACE WE HAVE SURVIVED MANY OBSTACLES.

WE WANT TO THANK ALL OF YOU, CITIZENS AND FRIENDS ALIKE, FOR YOUR EFFORTS, PRAYERS AND CONCERN IN BRINGING ABOUT AND MAINTAINING PEACE AND UNITY IN THIS COUNTRY.

THE REVOLUTION OF APRIL 12, 1980

AFTER MORE THAN 133 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE, THE SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT IN THIS COUNTRY HAD CEASED TO BE RESPONSIVE TO

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THE NEEDS AND ASPIRATIONS OF THE PEOPLE.
VERY FEW PEOPLE EXERCISED ALMOST ABSOLUTE
RULE OVER THE MAJORITY OF OUR PEOPLE.

THE GAP BETWEEN GOVERNMENT
PRONOUNCEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE INCREASINGLY
WIDENED. THE SOCIAL CONTRACT BETWEEN THE
GOVERNMENT AND THE GOVERNED WAS RENDERED
MEANINGLESS. THUS BY 1980, THE NATIONAL
CONSENSUS WAS THAT A CHANGE IN THE NATIONAL
LEADERSHIP WAS NECESSARY AND IMPERATIVE.

CONSEQUENTLY, THAT HAVING DETERMINED
THAT ALL AVENUES TO PEACEFUL CHANGE WERE
CLOSED, THE MEN AND WOMEN OF THE ARMED
FORCES OF LIBERIA, UNDER

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THE LEADERSHIP OF SEVENTEEN GALLANT NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS OVERTHREW THE TRUE WHIG PARTY GOVERNMENT ON APRIL 12, 1980.

THE OVERWHELMING SUPPORT WITH WHICH THE MASSES OF OUR PEOPLE GREETED THE APRIL 12TH REVOLUTION AND THE TESTIMONIES FROM THE TRIALS OF POLITICAL PRISONERS THEREAFTER CONFIRMED THE NECESSITY FOR SUCH A CHANGE.

NATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION AND RECONCILIATION

FELLOW CITIZENS: SINCE APRIL 12, 1980, WE HAVE ENDEAVOURED, WITH GREAT TENACITY, TO ENSURE STABILITY, ENCOURAGE INVESTMENT, PROMOTE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVE UPON THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ALL OF OUR PEOPLE.

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WE DECLARED AT THE OUTSET THAT OUR REVOLUTION WAS NOT DIRECTED AGAINST ANY PARTICULAR SEGMENT OF THE LIBERIAN POPULATION. RATHER, THAT WE SEIZED POWER TO CORRECT A SYSTEM WHICH PREVENTED THE MAJORITY OF THE PEOPLE FROM PARTICIPATING IN THE AFFAIRS OF THE STATE.

HAVING THE PROMOTION OF GENUINE NATIONAL UNITY AS OUR CARDINAL OBJECTIVE, WE SET UP A PEOPLE'S REDEMPTION COUNCIL WITH 27 MEMBERS, REPRESENTING ALL THE MAJOR ETHNIC GROUPS IN THE COUNTRY. WE HAVE SINCE MAINTAINED A CROSS-SECTIONAL REPRESENTATION OF THESE ETHNIC GROUPS IN GOVERNMENT.

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AS A MATTER OF FACT, WE HAVE ENDEAVOURED TO APPOINT TO POSITIONS IN GOVERNMENT THOSE LIBERIANS WHO HAVE SHOWN A WILLINGNESS TO WORK WITH US IN BUILDING A SOCIETY BASED ON LIBERTY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL, REGARDLESS OF THEIR ETHNIC AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND.

BUT TO SUIT THEIR OWN DESIGN, OUR DETRACTORS WOULD DISREGARD OUR RECORD ON THE ETHNIC MIXTURE OF OUR CABINET, IN THE INTERIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, IN THE JUDICIARY, OTHER GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS, ACCUSE US OF PRACTICING TRIBALISM.

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IN THE SAME VIEW, WE EMBARKED UPON A PROGRAM OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION AND RECONSTRUCTION. WE RELEASED ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS WHO WERE DETAINED IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE REVOLUTION, AND HAVE TRIED TO REHABILITATE THOSE WHO HAVE DEMONSTRATED A WILLINGNESS TO JOIN HANDS WITH US IN THE NATION-BUILDING PROCESS.

OUT OF OUR DEEP AND ABIDING CONVICTION THAT ECONOMIC GROWTH WOULD BE ACCELERATED AND THE PURPOSES OF UNITY ENHANCED IF WE BEGAN TO TRANSFORM OUR FOES INTO FRIENDS, IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE RECONCILIATION INSTEAD OF STRIFE; TO PROJECT LOVE INSTEAD OF HATRED, WE, ON OCTOBER 27, 1980, PARDONED AND ORDERED THE IMMEDIATE RELEASE FROM HOUSE ARREST OF THE FORMER FIRST LADY, MRS. VICTORIA TOLBERT AND RESTORED HER RIGHT TO TRAVEL.

WE ALSO PARDONED FORMER VICE PRESIDENT
BENNIE D. WARNER AND INVITED ALL OTHER
LIBERIANS LIVING IN SELF-IMPOSED EXILE
ABROAD, TO RETURN HOME AND CONTRIBUTE THEIR
QUOTA TO THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT EFFORT.

THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESS

AT THE SAME TIME, WE REMAINED
CONVINCED THAT THE ROLE OF THE PRC
GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE LIMITED TO USHERING IN
THE NEW LIBERIAN SOCIETY, BASED ON THE
IDEALS OF EQUALITY, LIBERTY, DIGNITY,
JUSTICE AND NATIONAL IDENTITY, WHICH
MOTIVATED THE FOUNDING OF THE NATION OVER
133 YEARS AGO.

CONSEQUENTLY, ONE YEAR AFTER WE
ASSUMED POWER, ON APRIL 12, 1981, A 25-
MEMBER COMMITTEE WAS APPOINTED TO DRAFT A
NEW CONSTITUTION FOR THE SECOND REPUBLIC.
THE COMMITTEE SUBMITTED THE DRAFT

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CONSTITUTION ON MARCH 30, 1983, WHICH WAS SUBSEQUENTLY TURNED OVER TO A CONSTITUTIONAL ADVISORY ASSEMBLY. FOLLOWING THE COMPLETION OF THE ASSEMBLY'S WORK WE ASSEMBLED IN THESE VERY HALLS ON OCTOBER 26, 1985, TO RECEIVE THE REVISED DRAFT CONSTITUTION.

FELLOW CITIZENS, YOU WILL RECALL THAT THROUGHOUT THIS PROCESS, GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN FACED WITH SERIOUS FINANCIAL PROBLEMS. HOWEVER, WE REMAINED UNDETERRED IN OUR PURSUIT TOWARDS SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS.

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IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE, HOWEVER, THAT THIS PROCESS HAS BEEN SOMETIMES BAFFLING AND SOMETIMES BITTER, PUNCTUATED REGRETTABLY, BY VIOLENCE, OBSTACLES AND BETRAYALS.

THE NIMBA RAID

ONE OF THE MOST FRUSTRATING SETBACKS DURING THIS PERIOD WAS THE NIMBA RAID ENGINEERED AND MASTERMINDED BY THE LATE COMMANDING GENERAL THOMAS G. QUIWONKPA, ON NOVEMBER 21, 1983. THE RAID WAS PART OF A TWO-PRONGED ATTACK AIMED AT OVERTHROWING THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REDEMPTION COUNCIL.

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HUMAN LIVES WERE LOST AND PROPERTIES DESTROYED DURING THAT RAID. HOWEVER, CONSISTENT WITH OUR DEEP AND ABIDING SENSE OF COMMITMENT TO NATIONAL UNITY, COUPLED WITH OUR CONVICTION THAT DEVELOPMENT AND PROGRESS CAN ONLY PROSPER IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF PEACE AND UNITY, WE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN PROMPTED TO PRACTICE THE VIRTUES OF MERCY AND FORGIVENESS.

ACCORDINGLY, IN WHAT WE CONSIDERED A SUPREME MOVE TOWARDS NATIONAL RECONCILIATION, WE GRANTED EXECUTIVE CLEMENCY TO ALL TEN PERSONS WHO HAD BEEN CONVICTED OF "TREASON, MUTINY AND

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CONSPIRACY" BY THE SPECIAL MILITARY TRIBUNAL, FOR THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN THE NIMBA RAID. THE LATE COMMANDING GENERAL THOMAS G. QUIWONKPA WAS ALSO PARDONED AND INVITED TO RETURN HOME WITH HIS SAFETY GUARANTEED BY GOVERNMENT.

THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

FELLOW CITIZENS: IN PURSUING THE CONSTITUTIONAL AND ELECTORAL PROCESS, WE WERE GUIDED BY THE IMPERATIVES FOR BUILDING LASTING DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS IN THIS COUNTRY.

IT WAS IN THIS LIGHT AND IN KEEPING WITH THE TRANSITION SCHEDULE, WE ANNOUNCED ON JULY 26, 1984 THE LIFTING OF THE BAN ON

POLITICS, THEREBY MAKING WAY FOR THE FORMATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES.

THE LIFTING OF THE BAN SAW AN UPSURGE OF A NUMBER OF PARTIES AND GROUPINGS WHEREBY THOSE OF VOTING AGE WOULD FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE HISTORY OF THIS COUNTRY EXERCISE FREELY THEIR FRANCHISE IN CHOOSING THEIR LEADERS.

YOU MAY RECALL, FELLOW CITIZENS, THAT ON MORE THAN ONE OCCASION, WE APPEALED TO ALL PARTIES AND OUR PEOPLE AS A WHOLE TO BE UNITED IN ORDER THAT WE COULD BUILD THIS NATION FOR OURSELVES AND OUR CHILDREN TO ENJOY.

WE NOTED THAT THE POLITICAL CONTEST SHOULD NOT BE VIEWED AS A BATTLEGROUND

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WHERE WE WOULD CONSIDER EACH OTHERS AS ENEMIES.

IT IS USEFUL TO MENTION ALSO THAT PRIOR TO THE FORMATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES MOST OF THE LEADERSHIP AND SOME MEMBERS OF THOSE PARTIES WERE GIVEN JOBS AND WORKED WITH THE PEOPLE'S REDEMPTION COUNCIL GOVERNMENT, UNDER OUR LEADERSHIP. WE THEREFORE ASSUMED THAT THEIR DECISIONS TO DISASSOCIATE WITH US AND FORM THEIR RESPECTIVE PARTIES WERE BASED ON MERE DIVERGENCE OF VIEWS AND POLITICAL IDEALOGIES. THESE DIFFERENCES WERE THEN TO FORM THE BASES FOR CHOICE BY THE ELECTORATE.

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FOR OUR PART, THE DECISION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROCESS WAS BASED ON OUR CONVICTION, WHICH HAS BEEN PROVEN TRUE THAT WE COULD LEND STABILITY, AND, INSURE AN ORDERLY TRANSITION FROM MILITARY TO CIVILIAN RULE AGAINST ALL EVIL EFFORTS BY THOSE WHO WANTED EITHER TO WIN AT ALL COST, OR HAVE ALL THE LIBERIAN PEOPLE TO LOSE WITH THEM.

WE NOW FEEL THAT WE HAVE A LEADERSHIP TO OFFER, WHICH IF WHOLE-HEARTEDLY SUPPORTED IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST, UNDER GOD AND FOR OUR PEOPLE, WILL LEAD TO SUBSTANTIVE RECONCILIATION AND ACCELERATED DEVELOPMENT.

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TO OUR SURPRISE AND DISMAY, HOWEVER, IT APPEARED THAT THE OTHER POLITICAL PARTIES FELT THEMSELVES FACED WITH A SITUATION WHERE THEY HAD TO WIN OR FIGHT TO DESTROY THE SOCIO-POLITICAL ORDER.

THIS ATTITUDE ON THE PART OF THESE PARTIES HAS BEEN SUBSEQUENTLY CONFIRMED BY INTELLIGENCE REPORTS WHICH WE HAVE RECEIVED. IN MANY INSTANCES, SOME OF THE PARTIES WERE SEEN TO ENGAGE IN ACTS INTENDED TO ILLEGALLY INFLUENCE THE OUTCOME OF THE ELECTIONS IN THEIR FAVOUR. NOTWITHSTANDING, BECAUSE OF OUR COMMITMENT TO THE SMOOTH COMPLETION OF THIS PROCESS, WE WERE CAREFUL NOT TO TAKE ANY PRECIPITIOUS ACTION THAT COULD HAVE DERAILED THE ENTIRE EXERCISE.

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WE THEREFORE DECIDED TO ALLOW THE SPECIAL ELECTIONS COMMISSION TO FULLY EXERCISE ITS MANDATE AND AUTHORITY IN KEEPING WITH THE ELECTIONS LAWS AND GUIDELINES.

DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: WE MUST EXTEND COMMENDATION TO THE CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE SPECIAL ELECTIONS COMMISSION FOR THE COURAGE TO PERFORM IN THE FACE OF UNJUSTIFIED AND SOMETIMES MALICIOUS CRITICISMS.

THESE PARTIES REFUSED TO COOPERATE AND ACCEPT THE ELECTIONS RESULTS ANNOUNCED BY SECOM, AND INSTEAD THEY EMBARKED UPON A MASSIVE MISINFORMATION AND DISINFORMATION CAMPAIGN INTENDED TO CREATE CONFUSION AND DISCORD AMONG THE LIBERIAN PEOPLE, WHILE DISCREDITING THE IMAGE OF THE COUNTRY ABROAD.

THE ABORTIVE INVASION OF NOVEMBER 12, 1985

MEANWHILE, AS ALREADY INDICATED, WE HAD BEEN RECEIVING PERSISTENT INTELLIGENCE REPORTS AS FAR BACK AS AUGUST 1985 THAT SOME LIBERIANS, INCLUDING POLITICIANS AT HOME AND ABROAD, WERE PLANNING TO DISRUPT THE WHOLE ELECTORAL PROCESS THROUGH VIOLENT MEANS. IT WAS IN THE WAKE OF THESE REPORTS AND THE INTRANSIGENCE OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES, THAT ON THE MORNING OF NOVEMBER 12, 1985, THE ENTIRE COUNTRY WAS PLUNGED INTO TURMOIL BY THE SO-CALLED PATRIOTIC FORCES LED BY THE LATE FORMER COMMANDING GENERAL THOMAS G. QUIWONKPA.

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I MIGHT MENTION AGAIN THAT IT WAS THIS SAME QUIWONKPA WHO TWO YEARS EARLIER, ON NOVEMBER 21, 1983 PLANNED THE ABORTIVE PLOT TO OVERTHROW OUR GOVERNMENT, WHICH RESULTED IN THE NIMBA RAID, AND TO WHOM WE HAD GRANTED CLEMENCY FOR THAT INFAMOUS ACT. BUT AGAIN, GOD BEING ON OUR SIDE, HIS INVASIONARY FORCES FAILED TO ACCOMPLISH THEIR SELFISH DESIGNS.

I THEREFORE WANT TO ONCE AGAIN THANK THE LOYAL MEN AND WOMEN OF THE ARMED FORCES AND ALL SECURITY PERSONNEL, PARTICULARLY THE EXECUTIVE MANSION GUARD AND THE FIRST BATTALION FOR THEIR BRAVERY IN DEFENDING THE NATION AGAINST THOSE WICKED FORCES.

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THOSE OTHER BATTALIONS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY AWAITING ORDERS IF THE SITUATION GOT WORSE ARE ALSO HIGHLY COMMENDED FOR THEIR VIGILANCE.

IT IS OUR HOPE THAT YOU WILL CONTINUE TO STAND IN READINESS TO PERFORM YOUR DUTY AT ALL TIMES.

AS YOUR COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, I AM ALSO PREPARED TO GIVE COMMAND AND STAND WITH YOU TO DEFEND AGAINST ANY AND ALL FORCES BROUGHT AGAINST THE NATION.

WE HAVE ALREADY REPORTED TO YOU THE EXTENSIVE DAMAGE AND DESTRUCTION CAUSED BY THIS TRAGIC EVENT AND THE GREAT SETBACK IT

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HAS BROUGHT UPON THE NATION. THE TRIALS HAVE BEGUN IN THE SPECIAL MILITARY TRIBUNAL OF THE MILITARY PERSONNEL INVOLVED. TRIALS OF CIVILIANS AND POLITICIANS ARE TO BEGIN IN THE CIVIL COURT AS SOON AS PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATIONS BY THE JOINT SECURITY ARE CONCLUDED.

CONSIDERING THAT THE INVESTIGATIONS ARE STILL CONTINUING, WE ARE NOT NOW IN A POSITION TO MAKE FINAL DETERMINATION OF THE FATE OF ALL THOSE CONCERNED. FOR, WE BELIEVE THAT MUCH AS WE MAY BE INCLINED TO SHOWING ACTS OF MERCY, IT IS IMPORTANT TO EXHAUST THE DUE PROCESS.

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MEANWHILE, BASED UPON SECURITY REPORTS AND CONSISTENT WITH OUR DESIRE TO SUSTAIN THE RECONCILIATION PROCESS, BEING PREACHED BY ME AND MANY OF OUR CITIZENS INCLUDING BISHOP GEORGE BROWNE AND REV. PETER AMOS GEORGE, WE HAVE DECIDED TO ORDER THE IMMEDIATE RELEASE FROM FURTHER DETENTION OF THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS AS UP TO NOW, WE HAVE NOT RECEIVED TO WARRANT THEIR FURTHER DETENTION. WE, HOWEVER, REQUEST THAT THEY REMAIN AVAILABLE TO ASSIST WITH THE ONGOING INVESTIGATION IF THE NEED ARISES:

1. SAM E. MATADI
2. ISAAC TOBY
3. GUNKOLON ZEKPEH
4. DOIMA YARKPAWOLO
5. FUFUS MESZEH
6. JIMMY FAYEAH
7. JUAN WREH
8. EMMANUEL S. KROMAH
9. EMMANUEL L. SHAW
10. J. RUDOLPH GRIMES
11. MARY A. BROWN-SHERMAN
12. ERVIN HENRIQUE BROOKS
13. ERNEST A. JENKINS
14. KWAME A. CLEMENT

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REJOIN THEIR FAMILIES AND LOVED ONES AND
CONTINUE TOMAKE THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE
DEVELOPMENT OF OUR COUNTRY:

IN AN ATTEMPT TO ADDRESS THE
DISLOCATIONS WHICH OCCURRED IN THE ECONOMY
AS A RESULT OF THE ABORTIVE INVASION, AND
TO ENSURE THE SURVIVAL OF THE COUNTRY, WE
HAVE ALREADY ANNOUNCED A SERIES OF ECONOMIC
MEASURES, INCLUDING THE REDUNDANCY AND
RETIREMENT SCHEME OF PUBLIC SECTOR
EMPLOYEES.

NATIONAL ECONOMIC RECOVERY

MY FELLOW CITIZENS, DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: CONSISTENT WITH OUR COMMITMENT, UPON ASSUMING POWER, TO PROMOTE THE DEVELOPMENT OF OUR NATIONAL ECONOMY AND IMPROVE THE WELFARE OF ALL OF OUR CITIZENS, WE HAVE INITIATED SEVERAL MEASURES OVER THE YEARS.

FROM 1981 UP TO NOW WE HAVE SOUGHT TO REVITALIZE THE ECONOMY BY ENCOURAGING GREATER FOREIGN INVESTMENT AND INSTITUTING SUCH MEASURES AS THE NATIONAL SAVINGS

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BOND SCHEME, ACROSS-THE-BOARD REDUCTION IN THE SALARIES OF PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYEES, TIGHTER EXPENDITURE CONTROL, AND THE RETIREMENT AND RETRENCHMENT OF CIVIL SERVANTS, AMONG OTHERS.

REGRETTABLY, ALL OF THESE MEASURES HAVE YIELDED LITTLE RESULTS. ADDITIONALLY, WE HAVE OBSERVED THAT MANY OF THESE MEASURES, RATHER THAN BRINGING ABOUT IMPROVEMENT IN THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR OUR PEOPLE, ARE CONTRIBUTING TO A DECLINE IN THE LIVING STANDARDS OF THE PEOPLE AS WELL AS IMPOSING INCREASING HARDSHIP ON THEM.

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FOR INDEED, WHILE THESE MEASURES ARE BEING TAKEN, THERE ARE THOUSANDS OF STUDENTS LEAVING COLLEGE ENTERING THE JOB MARKET. WHAT DO WE DO ABOUT ALL THESE QUALIFIED LIBERIANS? WHAT DO WE DO ABOUT THOSE TO BE RETIRED? WHAT DO WE DO ABOUT THE NUMEROUS REQUESTS FOR DEVELOPMENT AND JOBS AS WE TRAVEL THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY?

IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF GOVERNMENT TO CREATE THOSE CONDITIONS FOR GENERATING EMPLOYMENT WHICH WOULD ENABLE THESE YOUNG PEOPLE TO BECOME USEFUL AND PRODUCTIVE CITIZENS.

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IT WAS IN THIS LIGHT THAT IN MY SPEECH TO THE INTERIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND THE LIBERIAN PEOPLE IN GENERAL ON THE 5TH OF THIS MONTH, I ALLUDED TO THE FACT THAT OTHER MEASURES WHICH REQUIRE FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES IN OUR THINKING AND ATTITUDE WOULD HAVE TO BE RESORTED TO.

IN THIS INTERDEPENDENT WORLD, WE HAVE COME TO REALIZE THAT NO NATION CAN TRULY DEVELOP AND PROSPER IN ISOLATION BUT REQUIRES THE FULL PARTICIPATION OF ALL PEOPLE. IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE TO DETERMINE WHAT WOULD BE IN OUR BEST INTEREST.

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WE HAVE BECOME INCREASINGLY CONVINCED THAT THE PLACE TO START IS WITH THE LAND. OUR PEOPLE MUST DEVELOP AND GRASP A REDIFINATION OF THE CONCEPT AND SYSTEM OF LAND TENURE IN THIS COUNTRY. TRADITIONALLY, OUR PEOPLE HAVE NURTURED A STRONG EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT TO THE LAND.

IT WAS OUT OF THIS STRONG EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT TO THE LAND THAT THE FOUNDING FATHERS ENSHRINED IN THE CONSTITUTION OF 1847, THE PROVISION RESTRICTING LAND OWNERSHIP TO CITIZENS OF THIS COUNTRY, WHO MUST BE OF NEGRO-DESCENT.

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WHILE THIS STRONG EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT TO THE LAND HAS BEEN PASSED ON FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION UNTO THIS DAY, YET OUR PEOPLE HAVE NOT ADEQUATELY TAPPED THE LAND TO OUR NATIONAL ECONOMIC BENEFIT AND DEVELOPMENT.

CONSEQUENTLY, IN THE FACE OF OUR CONTINUING NATIONAL ECONOMIC DILEMMA AND THE HARSH REALITIES OF OUR ECONOMIC SITUATION, IT BECOMES INCREASINGLY IMPERATIVE TO ADAPT TO CHANGING WORLD CONDITIONS AND KEEP PACE WITH OTHERS IN THE COMITY OF NATIONS, PARTICULARLY THOSE OF THE AFRICAN CONTINENT.

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WE MUST CREATE THE ATMOSPHERE TO FREE THE LAND TO PROVIDE FOR ITS IMPROVEMENT FOR INVESTMENT AND EMPLOYMENT WHEREBY ALL WILL BENEFIT.

MOREOVER, WE ARE AWARE THAT MANY OF OUR PEOPLE OWN AND HAVE INVESTED EXTENSIVELY IN LAND AND REAL PROPERTIES IN OTHER COUNTRIES IN EUROPE AND THE UNITED STATES, THEREBY PROVIDING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE IN THOSE COUNTRIES.

ACCORDINGLY, I HAVE BEEN PLEASED TO HAVE RECEIVED THE FOLLOWING COMMUNICATION FROM THE DEFUNCT PEOPLE'S REDEMPTION COUNCIL DATED APRIL 26, 1984 WHICH I HEREBY QUOTE:

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SIR. HEAD OF STATE: THE COUNCIL ACKNOWLEDGES WITH THANKS, YOUR LETTER DATED APRIL 25, 1985, PRC-V/DM-2/509/'84, DIRECTING THAT WE CAREFULLY REVIEW YOUR PROPOSAL RELATIVE TO LAND-OWNERSHIP IN LIBERIA BY NON-AFRICANS.

SIR. HEAD OF STATE, LAND IS POWER AND WEALTH. THE MORE WEALTH ONE HAS, THE GREATER ADVANTAGE HE HAS TO ACQUIRE THE DESIRED AMOUNT. IN THIS MANNER, THE COUNCIL FORMS NO OBJECTION TO YOUR PROPOSAL AS LONG AS GRANTING THE RIGHT TO LAND-

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OWNERSHIP BY NON-ÁFRICANS WILL NOT BREATHE AN ATMOSPHERE OF SOCIAL UNREST AMONGST THE NOW GENERATION AND THAT OF THE NEXT TO COME.

FINALLY, SIR, WE REASSURE YOU OF OUR SUPPORT FOR THIS PARTICULAR PROPOSAL AND REQUEST YOUR KIND APPROVAL.

WITH SENTIMENTS OF ESTEEM AND RESPECT, WE REMAIN UNQUOTE.

AGAIN, ON DECEMBER 10, 1985, I RECEIVED THE FOLLOWING COMMUNICATION FROM THE INTERIM NATIONAL ÁSEMBLY ON THE SAME SUBJECT.

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QUOTE MR. PRESIDENT: I HAVE THE HONOUR MOST RESPECTFULLY TO INFORM YOUR EXCELLENCY THAT THE INTERIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY IN REGULAR SESSION, MET ON TODAY, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 1985 AND AFTER DELIBERATION, HEREBY SUBMITS THE FOLLOWING TO WIT:

1. THAT, IN ORDER TO PROVIDE A HEALTHY CLIMATE FOR RAPID DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH FOR THE LIBERIAN PEOPLE ESPECIALLY IN THE SECOND REPUBLIC, CERTAIN MEASURES SHOULD BE TAKEN BY GOVERNMENT, WHICH, IN THE MIND OF THE HONOURABLE BODY ARE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE COUNTRY. TOWARDS THIS END, THE INTERIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY HAS PASSED THE ATTACHED DECREE AND PRAYS FOR YOUR EXCELLENCY'S KIND APPROVAL THEREOF.

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2. THAT AFTER A CAREFUL EXAMINATION OF EXISTING OFFICIAL RECORDS, THE ASSEMBLY OBSERVES THAT THE ACTION NOW TAKEN BY IT IN THIS RESPECT, IS IN HARMONY WITH PREVIOUS ACTION TAKEN BY ITS PREDECESSOR, THE NOW DISSOLVED PEOPLE'S REDEMPTION COUNCIL. FOR EASY REFERENCE WE MOST RESPECTFULLY REFER YOU MR. PRESIDENT, TO A COMMUNICATION DATED APRIL 20, 1984, REFERENCE NUMBER DVHS/PRC/229/'84;

IN VIEW OF THE FOREGOING, THE ASSEMBLY, IN CONTINUOUS SUPPORT OF YOUR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS FOR LIBERIA AGAIN REASSURES YOU OF ITS FULLEST COOPERATION.

WITH SENTIMENTS OF OUR HIGHEST ESTEEM AND RESPECTFUL REGARDS UNQUOTE.

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BASED ON THE MANDATE CONTAINED IN THESE COMMUNICATIONS FROM THESE HONOURABLE BODIES, I HAVE DECIDED TO APPROVE THE "DECREE BY THE INTERIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA, GRANTING TO FOREIGNERS THE RIGHT TO OWN REAL PROPERTY WITHIN THE REPUBLIC," WHICH I QUOTE HEREUNDER:

DECREE BY THE INTERIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA, GRANTING TO FOREIGNERS THE RIGHT TO OWN REAL PROPERTY WITHIN THE REPUBLIC.

WHEREAS, THE NEW CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA SHALL NOT COME INTO FORCE AND EFFECT BEFORE THE INAUGURATION OF THE PRESIDENT-ELECT OF THE SECOND REPUBLIC;
AND

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WHEREAS, THE INTERIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, UNDER THE DYNAMIC, ILLUSTRIOUS, ESTEEMED, FARSIGHTED, PROGRESSIVE, AND GOD-FEARING LEADERSHIP OF ITS PRESIDENT, CIG DR. SAMUEL K. DOE, HEAD OF STATE, PRESIDENT OF THE INTERIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND PRESIDENT-ELECT, REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA, HAS REVIEWED, EXAMINED, AND ANALYSED THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND POLITICAL GROWTH AND WELL-BEING OF THE PEOPLE OF LIBERIA; AND

WHEREAS, IT IS THE DESIRE DETERMINATION, AND OBJECTIVE OF THE INTERIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY GOVERNMENT UNDER THE PRESIDENT, CIG DR. SAMUEL KANYON DOE TO PROVIDE AND IMPROVE THE LIVING STANDARD OF THE PEOPLE OF LIBERIA AND ACCELERATE THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS OF OUR COUNTRY, THEREBY BRINGING PEACE, UNITY, LOVE, AND UNDERSTANDING AMONG LIBERIANS AND THOSE WHO RESIDE WITHIN OUR TERRITORIAL CONFINES; AND

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WHEREAS, CERTAIN LAWS AND POLICIES PURSUED BY SUCCESSIVE PAST ADMINISTRATIONS RETARDED THE ECONOMIC GROWTH AND CREATED DISTRUST AND APPREHENSION IN THE MINDS OF GOOD INTENTIONED FOREIGNERS RESIDING IN OUR MIDST THEREBY ENGENDERING DISCOURAGEMENT ON THE PART OF SUCH FOREIGNERS OR ALIENS OF WHATEVER COLOUR OR CREED TO BECOME FULLY INVOLVED IN GENUINE LONG TERM DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC GROWTH OF THE COUNTRY; AND

WHEREAS, IN THE ECONOMIC INTEREST OF OUR COMMON PATRIOMONY AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE WELFARE OF OUR PEOPLE, IT IS NECESSARY THAT THESE BARRIERS AGAINST PHYSICAL AS WELL AS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PURSUED BY PRECEDING GOVERNMENTS BE REMOVED, SO AS TO CREATE CONDUCTIVE ENVIRONMENT AND ENCOURAGE INVESTMENT; AND

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WHEREAS, LIBERIA, AS A SIGNATORY TO THE DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE UNITED NATIONS AND A MEMBER OF THE COMMUNITY OF NATIONS, DEEMS IT EXPEDIENT AND APPROPRIATE AT THIS CRUCIAL TIME IN HER HISTORY TO FORMULATE, DEVISE, AND EFFECTUATE CERTAIN FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES IN THE ATTITUDE AND PERCEPTION OF THE LIBERIAN PEOPLE IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE NATIONAL UNITY, PROGRESS, PEACE, SOLIDARITY, AND A VIBRANT SOCIETY.

NOW THEREFORE

IT IS HEREBY DECREED BY THE INTERIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA AS FOLLOWS TO WIT:

SECTION I:

THAT IMMEDIATELY UPON THE PASSAGE OF THIS DECREE, NON-LIBERIANS, IRRESPECTIVE OF COLOUR, EXCEPT THOSE WHOSE SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES ARE ALIEN TO OURS, SHALL HAVE THE RIGHT TO PURCHASE AND OWN REAL PROPERTY INFEE SIMPLE IN THE REPUBLIC;

THIS RIGHT, HOWEVER, SHALL NOT BE CONSTRUED TO CONFER CITIZENSHIP ON SUCH ALIEN (S) OR FOREIGNER (S);

SECTION II:

THAT THE RIGHT TO PURCHASE AND POSSESS REAL PROPERTY IN THE REPUBLIC HEREBY GRANTED TO SUCH ALIENS OR NON-LIBERIANS SHALL NOT BE RESTRICTED TO PUBLIC LAND, BUT SHALL INCLUDE THE RIGHT TO PURCHASE PRIVATELY OWNED REAL PROPERTY FROM LIBERIAN CITIZENS; PROVIDED HOWEVER, IN THE CASE OF PRIVATELY OWNED PROPERTY, FORMALITIES FOR SUCH SALE SHALL INCLUDE PROCESSING THE SAME THROUGH THE MINISTRY OF LANDS, MINES AND ENERGY AND APPROVED BY THE PRESIDENT;

SECTION III:

THAT THE RIGHT TO SELL PUBLIC LAND SHALL CONTINUE TO BE VESTED SOLELY IN THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA;

SECTION IV:

THAT THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA SHALL RESERVE THE RIGHT TO DENY THE SALE OF PUBLIC LAND TO ANY APPLICANTS (S) FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE STATE, AND SUCH DENIAL SHALL NOT BE A SUBJECT OF PROCEEDINGS OR LITIGATION IN ANY COURT WITHIN OR WITHOUT THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA;

SECTION V:

ALL LAWS AND STATUTES PROHIBITING THE SALE OF LAND TO FOREIGNERS OR ALIENS ARE HEREBY REPEALED.

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SECTION VI:

THIS DECREE SHALL TAKE EFFECT IMMEDIATELY UPON THE SIGNATURE OF THE HEAD OF STATE AND PRESIDENT OF THE INTERIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY.

ALL LAW TO THE CONTRARY

NOTWITHSTANDING.

WE BELIEVE THAT THIS ACTION GIVES MEANING AND CONTENT TO A REAL OPEN DOOR POLICY, AND IF OUR ECONOMY IS TO IMPROVE TO PROVIDE EMPLOYMENT, WE MUST BE PREPARED TO FACE THE THE FUTURE WITH COURAGE. IT SHOULD ENGENDER A GREATER PROPENSITY TO INVEST IN THE COUNTRY AND GENERATE INCREASED EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME.

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AS WE TRAVELLED ABROAD OVER THE YEARS AND HELD DISCUSSIONS, A CROSS-SECTION OF INVESTORS WHO SHOWED INTEREST IN BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES HERE, HAD REFERRED TO RESTRICTION ON LAND OWNERSHIP AS A MAJOR OBSTACLE.

WITH THIS OBSTACLE, FINALLY REMOVED, ALL THOSE HOLDING AGRICULTURAL CONCESSIONS AND PLANTATIONS MAY NOW PURCHASE SAME. WE ALSO URGE AND ENCOURAGE BUSINESSMEN AND INVESTORS INCLUDING LEBANESE, AMERICANS AND ALL OTHER NATIONALITIES TO COME AND INVEST HERE AS WE STAND READY TO PROTECT THEIR INVESTMENT.

FOR THOSE INVESTORS AND MERCHANTS IN MONROVIA AND ITS SURROUNDINGS, WE CHALLENGE YOU TO IMPROVE OR RECONSTRUCT YOUR EXISTING

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BUILDINGS AND PREMISES WITHIN FIVE YEARS AND TO BUILD YOUR OWN STORES AND OFFICE BUILDINGS WHERE POSSIBLE. TOGETHER, LET US GIVE A FACE LIFT TO OUR CITY.

THE DOORS OF OUR COUNTRY ARE NOW GENUINELY OPENED FOR REAL DEVELOPMENT.

WE APPEAL TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, AS OUR CLOSEST ALLY, AND TO ALL OUR TRADITIONAL FRIENDS, TO COME TO OUR AID IN REALIZING THE OBJECTIVES OF THIS REAL OPEN DOOR POLICY AND IN THE ACHIEVEMENT OF OUR ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND LONG TERM DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM.

LET ME REASSURE ALL OF OUR PEOPLE THAT WE HAVE TODAY TAKEN THIS ACTION WITH ALL SINCERITY, BELIEVING THAT IT WOULD SERVE THE SUPREME INTEREST OF THE COUNTRY. WE THEREFORE URGE YOUR FULLEST COOPERATION AND UNDERSTANDING IN ITS IMPLEMENTATION.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND MORAL DISCIPLINE IN
SOCIETY.

MY FELLOW CITIZENS: THIS COUNTRY WAS ESTABLISHED ON RELIGIOUS AND ESPECIALLY CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES. THE FAMILY AND THE SOCIETY WERE HELD TOGETHER BY THE MORAL COURAGE AND FORTITUDE OF OUR PEOPLE. MOREOVER, OUR SURVIVAL THROUGHOUT OUR EXISTENCE AS A NATION AGAINST COUNTLESS OBSTACLES, IN A HOSTILE INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT WAS MAINLY THROUGH THE MORAL STRENGTH OF OUR POSITION.

TODAY, HOWEVER, IT WOULD SEEM THAT WE HAVE LOST SIGHT OF THESE VIRTUES AND IDEALS WHICH FORMED THE BEDROCK OF OUR SOCIETY. FAMILIES HAVE APPARENTLY LOST THE WILL TO INSTIL DISCIPLINE IN THEIR CHILDREN, WHILE SCHOOLS HAVE FAILED TO FILL THE GAP IN PROVIDING MORAL LEADERSHIP AND DISCIPLINE.

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IF THIS SITUATION CONTINUES UNCHECKED, OUR NATION WOULD RUN THE RISK OF PERISHING UNDER THE WEIGHT OF ITS OWN MORAL DECAY. WE WOULD ALSO LOSE OUR POSITION OF MORAL RECTITUDE, WHICH HAS BEEN OUR SINGULAR STRENGTH IN THE COMMUNITY OF NATIONS.

IN THIS LIGHT, WE HAVE DECIDED TO RE-INSTATE THE TEACHING OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN ALL PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN THE COUNTRY, EFFECTIVE ACADEMIC YEAR 1986.

MY FELLOW CITIZENS, DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: OUR GATHERING HERE TODAY MAY BE SEEN AS HAVING DUAL SIGNIFICANCE. WE ARE ABOUT TO GREET THE NEW YEAR, WHICH MAKES IT APPROPRIATE THAT WE TAKE STOCK OF THE EVENTS IN OUR COUNTRY DURING THE PAST YEAR.

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MORE IMPORTANTLY, UPON ASSUMING POWER ON APRIL 12, 1980, WE DECLARED OUR DETERMINATION TO USHER INTO THIS COUNTRY A NEW SOCIETY WHERE SOCIAL JUSTICE, EQUALITY AND FAIRPLAY WOULD PREVAIL. TODAY, WE STAND AT THE THRESHOLD OF THE BIRTH OF THAT NEW SOCIETY IN THE SECOND REPUBLIC. WE DEEM IT NECESSARY THEREFORE THAT WE REVIEW THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THESE LAST MOMENTOUS AND SOMETIMES TURBULENT FIVE YEARS.

HAVING REVIEWED OUR EXPERIENCES OVER THESE YEARS, LET ME REAFFIRM MY STRONG HOPE IN THE FUTURE OF THIS COUNTRY AND OUR ABIDING FAITH IN OUR PEOPLE. FIVE YEARS AGO, WE ALL HAD A SHARED VISION FOR A NEW DAY. TODAY, THAT VISION HAS COME WITHIN REACH.

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LET US WITH FAITH AND COURAGE
TRANSLATE THAT VISION INTO REALITY IN
USHERING IN THE SECOND REPUBLIC AND BUILD
THIS NATION INTO A VIBRANT AND PROSPEROUS
ONE FOR OURSELVES AND POSTERITY.

MAY GOD CONTINUE TO BLESS THE WORKS OF
OUR HANDS AND SAVE THE STATE.

I THANK YOU.

