

Village Voice
By Ella Taylor
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Cannily timed by lefty distributor Cinema Libre Studio to coincide with the release of Edward Zwick's *Blood Diamond*, Philippe Diaz's documentary claims to present Sierra Leone's civil war in a radically different light. More accurately, it shifts the emphasis and fills out the picture. Where Zwick fingers diamond moguls and the rebel Revolutionary United Front as chief culprits in the carnage, Diaz rushes to the defense of the RUF, which he sees as betrayed by a puppet government put in place by a United Nations bent on squeezing the rebels with food and weapon embargoes. Diaz's sympathy for the RUF may or may not be symptomatic of the leftist tendency to sanctify anything that calls itself a revolutionary front. Certainly, while he briefly concedes the RUF's involvement in atrocities, most of the brutality he shows is perpetrated by United Nations peacekeepers. Whether you believe the coda of *Blood Diamond*, which tells us that today Sierra Leone is at peace, or that of *The Empire in Africa*, which ends by ranking the country as one of the poorest in the world, the real tragedy of Sierra Leone, and of much of the region, is that both can be true—but only for so long.

<http://villagevoice.com/film/0649,taylor,75224,20.html>