

FRANCE AND THE PARTI DEMOCRATIQUE DE GUINEE

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
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London  
24 July 1993

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## ABSTRACT

The thesis traces post-war political development in Guinea leading to the independence of the territory in 1958. The particular focus is on the history of the Parti Démocratique de Guinée (PDG), chapter party of the interterritorial federal movement the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain, and its relations with the French colonial government.

Founded in 1946, the RDA was initially suppressed by the French administration due to its affiliation with the Communist Party. Although the RDA severed its ties with the Communists in 1950, in Guinea the PDG suffered from enduring suspicion because of its links with the Communist-dominated French trade union movement. Finally in 1955 the PDG and union leader Sékou Touré formally announced the party's disaffiliation from the Communists and his intention to create an autonomous African trade union. Subsequently the local authorities ceased the repression of the PDG and Touré was elected deputy to the National Assembly in Paris.

Reforms introduced in French West Africa under the 1956 Loi-Cadre increasingly accorded territorial administration to elected African bodies. In 1957 the PDG swept local elections and gained control of the Territorial Assembly, municipal communes, and town councils in Guinea. Henceforth the PDG effectively governed the territory, wiping out the opposition parties and abolishing the institution of the chieftaincy.

In May 1958 General Charles de Gaulle was called back to power in France and proceeded to form the Fifth Republic. The new Constitution created the French-African Community and suppressed the former Federation of West Africa. Despite repeated warnings of the consequences of "secession," Guinea was the sole territory to reject the Constitutional referendum of 28 September 1958, opting for immediate independence.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to numerous people and institutions which helped me complete this thesis. Most of all I would like to thank my supervisor Professor Donal B. Cruise O'Brien for his continuous support and encouragement in seeing me through the numerous difficulties I encountered while undertaking this project. Not only are his patience and guidance genuinely appreciated, but his insight and profound understanding of the politics of French West Africa are greatly respected and admired.

The major research for this thesis was conducted in Paris, Aix-en-Provence, and Dakar. In Paris I am very grateful to Claude Gérard who, apart from relating her vast experience with former African parliamentarians, has faithfully collected and maintained archives of the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain. The documents she graciously gave me access to have no doubt contributed to a better balance between French and African interpretations of events covered in this work. I am also thankful to her staff at the Centre de Recherche et de Documentation Africaine for their assistance, friendship, and for putting me in contact with many scholars and politicians with knowledge of my subject matter. In particular André Blanchet and Bruno Georges Daoudal were very helpful in recalling events and sharing their opinions with me. The entire staff at the French National Archives--Overseas Section in Aix-en-Provence were very kind; I truly appreciated their smiles in spite of the massive amount of work I bestowed upon them. I'd also like to thank the Director of the French archives, Jean-François Maurel, for granting me permission to look again into several files after they had been sealed and rendered incommunicado for another thirty

years. Likewise I am deeply indebted to Makane Fall of the National Archives in Senegal for his gracious hospitality, as well as invaluable help in considerably speeding up my research in Dakar. For their companionship through long hours in the archives, and thought-provoking conversations about Guinea, I am happy to acknowledge Bernard Charles and Barry Ismael.

Finally, I am forever indebted to my family for backing me during every step of this long endeavour. The initial inspiration to write a thesis came from my father; the love and encouragement of my parents and brother kept me going through the difficult times. The completion of this work would not have been possible without the tremendous assistance of my husband Sharief. His constant support, saintly patience, and unfailing devotion have been the source of the strength I needed to finish what I started, and therefore this thesis is dedicated to Sharief.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AEF	: Afrique Equatoriale Française
AGV	: Amicale Gilbert Vieillard
ANS	: Archives Nationales du Sénégal
ANSOM AP	: Archives Nationales, Section Outre-Mer - Affaires Politiques
AOF	: Afrique Occidentale Française
BAG	: Bloc Africain de Guinée
BDS	: Bloc Démocratique Sénégalais
CA	: Convention Africaine
CATC	: Confédération Africaine des Travailleurs Croyants
CEFA	: Comité d'Etudes Franco-Africain
CEG	: Comité d'Entente Guinéenne
CFTC	: Confédération Française des Travailleurs Chrétiens
CGT	: Confédération Générale du Travail
CGTA	: Confédération Générale des Travailleurs Africains
CRDA	: Centre de Recherche et de Documentation Africaine
DSG	: Démocratie Socialiste de Guinée
FEANF	: Fédération des Etudiants d'Afrique Noire en France
FIDES	: Fonds d'Investissement pour le Développement Economique et Social
FO	: Force Ouvrière
FCM	: France d'Outre-Mer
FSM	: Fédération Syndicale Mondiale
GEC	: Groupes d'Etudes Communistes
ICG	: Institut Charles de Gaulle
IFAN	: Institut Français d'Afrique Noire
ICM	: Indépendants d'Outre-Mer
JRDA	: Jeunesse de la Révolution Démocratique Africain
MRP	: Mouvement Républicain Populaire
MSA	: Mouvement Socialiste Africain
MUR	: Mouvement Unifié de la Résistance
PAI	: Parti Africain de l'Indépendance
PCF	: Parti Communiste Français
PDCI	: Parti Démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire
PDG	: Parti Démocratique de Guinée
PPAG	: Parti Progressiste Africain de Guinée
PPN	: Parti Progressiste Nigerien
PRA	: Parti du Regroupement Africain
RDA	: Rassemblement Démocratique Africain
RPF	: Rassemblement du Peuple Français
SFIO	: Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière
TOM	: Territoires d'Outre-Mer
UDSR	: Union Démocratique et Sociale de la Résistance
UDN	: Union Démocratique Nigérienne
UDS	: Union Démocratique Sénégalaise
UECF	: Union des Etudiants Communistes Français
UFG	: Union France-Guinéenne
UGEEG	: Union générale des étudiants et élèves de Guinée
UGTAN	: Union Générale des Travailleurs d'Afrique Noire
UPC	: Union des Populations Camerounaises
UPG	: Union Populaire de Guinée
URR	: Union Républicaine et Résistante
USCG	: Union des Syndicats Confédérés de Guinée

## INTRODUCTION

Pre-war colonial records commonly referred to French Guinea as "la Belle au bois dormant" (Sleeping Beauty). The present study covers the political awakening of the territory, the rapid developments of which culminated in the abrupt achievement of Guinean independence in 1958. Drawing mainly on archival sources, the aim of the thesis is to reconstruct Guinean post-war political history, with the dual focus on the growth of the predominant political party--the Parti Démocratique de Guinée, and the significant role played by the colonial administration in shaping the political events in the territory.

By rejecting the Constitution of the French Fifth Republic in a referendum on 28 September 1958, Guinea opted out of the proposed French-African Community and became a sovereign nation. The "consequences" of such defiance included the immediate cutting off of all French aid and assistance to the former colony. The French pull-out was ruthless, and much of what could not be carried away was destroyed. Fortunately for this research, strict orders were issued concerning the removal of the colonial archives, which were relocated to Paris and Dakar. The bulk of the "sensitive" (i.e. "secret" or "confidential") archives were sent to France and rendered incommunicado for 30 years.

I began my research in 1988, gaining access to hundreds of files that had been untouched since the independence of Guinea. The archives reveal a hitherto untold political history of Guinea. The French interpretation and handling of events can hence be accurately recounted. Previous accounts of the relations between the PDG and the French administration were normally in the form of uncorroborated stories. The factual evidence contained in the archives is striking, and will no

doubt contribute to a better understanding of some of the many "myths" surrounding the PDG and the Guinean ascension to independence.

Although it was my initial intention to carry the subject matter of the thesis beyond independence, several factors influenced my decision to limit the scope of the study to the time frame 1944-1958. First, after many months trying, I was denied a visa to enter Guinea for research. Secondly, most of the existing literature on Guinea focuses on the post-independence era, drawing on sometimes questionable (in light of recently consulted archival records) foundations to explain political events during the colonial era. Thirdly, on a subsequent trip in the summer of 1989 to the French archives in Aix-en-Provence, I found a new policy under enforcement whereby files had to be re-checked for political sensitivity before being handed out to researchers. After waiting for countless dossiers on Guinea, that I had seen before, to be re-evaluated, I stood and watched the staff repeatedly mark the files "incommunicado jusqu'à 2010"--sealed for another 30 years. The realization that the vast information I had already accumulated would not be available in the near future convinced me that I ought to use it in as much detail as possible in the present work.

Although the French authorities acquired a good deal of letters, circulars, newspapers, and reports written by the various political associations in the overseas territories, I am very grateful to the Centre de Recherche et de Documentation Africaine (predominantly archives of the RDA) for balancing what would have been a strong French bias to the interpretation of political events in Guinea in this study. French authorities routinely reported administrative interference in local politics such as rigging elections and transferring undesirable political agitators around West Africa; nonetheless I have tried to

present the RDA (and PDG) point of view wherever possible. All of the archival records used are in French, and the translations, often rough as I tried to keep them literal, are mine.

The thesis is organised chronologically, with certain deviations allowing for background information on particular subjects. Chapter I sets the stage by briefly outlining the ethnic and geographical composition of the territory of French Guinea, then traces the institution, implantation, and administration of French colonialism in West Africa. Also included in the chapter are sections on the use and role of the chiefs in the French colonial system, obligations placed on colonial subjects, military conscription and the war effort in the overseas territories.

Chapter II begins with the Brazzaville Conference of 1944, which heralded a shift in post-war French colonial theory and practice. Reforms pertaining to the overseas territories included the legalisation of political parties and trade unions, and the introduction of elections and representation in the metropolitan government. Such radical reform caught many of the territories by surprise, and hence rapid political organisation ensued. In September 1946 African deputies in Paris, representing various territorial political associations, called for the creation of a mass African political movement. A congress to this effect was held in October in Bamako, the outcome of which was the formation of the interterritorial Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (RDA). The chapter concludes with the creation of the Guinean chapter of the RDA which took place in May 1947.

Due to its affiliation with the Communist Party in the French government, the early history of the RDA is fraught with administrative repression in the overseas territories, which is the subject of Chapter

III. Archival records clearly illustrate the extent to which the official policy to suppress the movement was carried out by local authorities. In Guinea the nascent RDA was near to collapse, while trade unionism in the territory was making important strides under increasing suspicion from the colonial government.

The focus of Chapter IV is the decision of top RDA leaders to disaffiliate from the Communist Party, and the subsequent reconciliation with the metropolitan government. Under serious threat of dissolution by the French government, the désapparetement was seen as a necessary tactical move to safeguard the future of the African movement. Members of the Guinean section of the RDA were slow in accepting the new RDA orientation, as dictated by the central directing committee of the organisation, and this is the focus of Chapter V. Reluctant conformity in Guinea led to increased persecution of the PDG. Nevertheless in 1952 changes were introduced to strengthen the party, including a reshuffling of power in which Sékou Touré emerged as Secretary-General of the Parti Démocratique de Guinée (PDG), while at the same time becoming the hero of trade unionism in Guinea.

Chapters VI and VII depict the rise to power of the PDG in Guinea. Initially through trade union successes, the PDG grew rapidly in membership, and Touré wielded increasing influence throughout the Federation of French West Africa. Pressured by both the central leadership of the RDA and the French administration, in July 1955 Touré finally formally announced PDG disaffiliation from the Communists, and proposed the creation of an autonomous African trade union movement. Reconciliation with the local French authorities was far from smooth, however, as the process was repeatedly marred by violent incidents occurring in the territory. Particularly around election time, competition between rival

political parties in Guinea often turned violent; on several occasions the territory was reportedly on the brink of civil war. Aided by decentralising reforms and institutions introduced under the Loi-Cadre, in 1957 the PDG emerged triumphant in its quest for ultimate political control over Guinea.

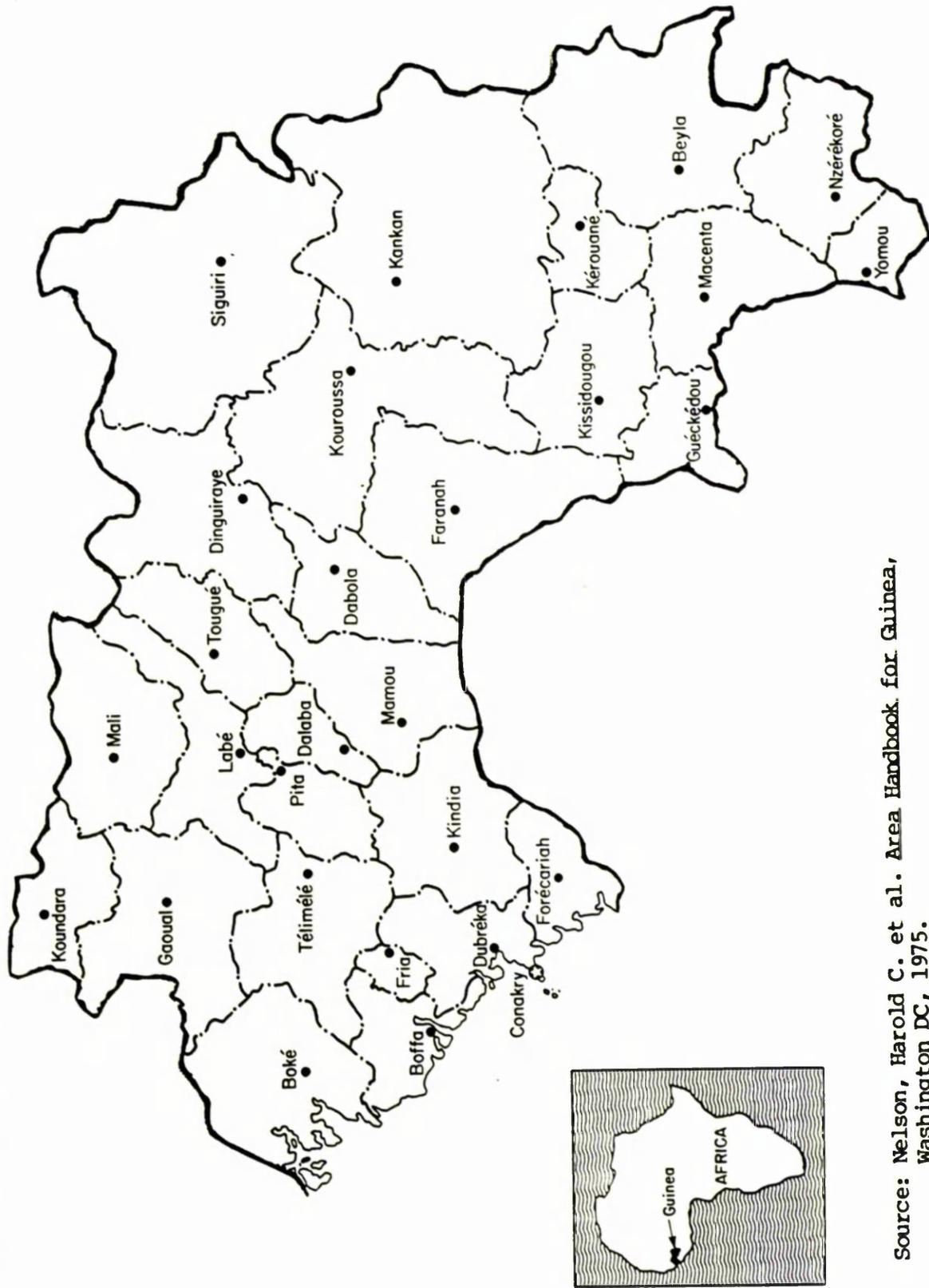
Proof of PDG supremacy is illustrated by an important event in Guinean political history discussed in Chapter VIII. In a skilful legal manoeuvre, one of the first acts of the PDG government installed in 1957 was the suppression of the chieftaincy. According to the PDG platform, the chieftaincy represented not only the last bastion of feudalism and slavery in the territory, but also administered the abuses of colonialism on the subject population. The abolition of the chieftaincy signalled the end to any remaining opposition to PDG rule, and in fact foreshadowed the end to colonial rule in Guinea.

Finally, Chapter IX covers the significant events leading to the critical "no" vote of 28 September 1958 which brought immediate independence to Guinea. Topics covered include the third RDA congress held in Bamako, the debate over the proposed French Fifth Republic, controversial issues of federalism and territorial autonomy, African positions concerning the constitutional referendum, the decision in Guinea to reject the proposed French-African Community, the vote, and consequences. The conclusions which follow further discuss the motivations behind the Guinean decision to vote "no," the remarkable political mobilisation which carried the vote, and general findings of the thesis.

A noticeable fact of the present study is its relatively minor use of secondary sources. As aforementioned, most of the published work on Guinea concentrates on the post-independence era. References and summaries of the colonial period, particularly concerning the PDG and its

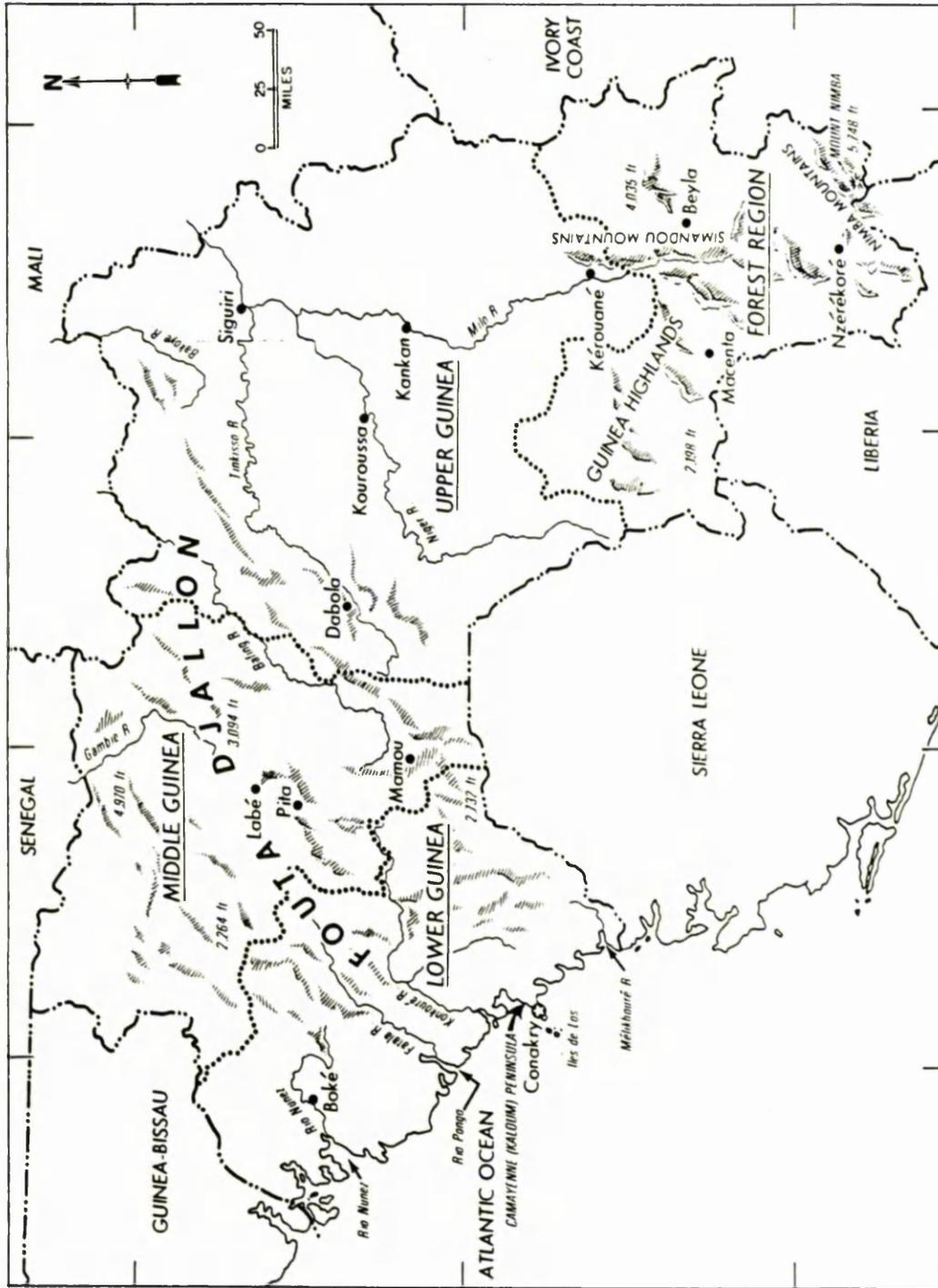
relations with the French authorities, are lacking in detail and often incorrect. Nonetheless there are a few sources on Guinea that were useful to this research. In particular Ruth Schachter Morgenthau's Political Parties in French speaking West Africa (1964) gives an overall history of the RDA and chapter parties, with added insight from knowing personally the "founding fathers" of the new African states. The PhD thesis by Victor D. DuBois entitled "The Independence Movement in Guinea: A Study in African Nationalism" (1962) outlines in great detail the organisation of the PDG and branches of the party (i.e. women, youth, peasants, etc.)--topics which are only briefly covered herein. Both of the above authors relied heavily on oral sources, and were without access to French records. Now with archival evidence many of the PDG claims have either been validated or refuted in the present study. Finally, compiled from secondary sources, Edward Mortimer's France and the Africans 1944-1960: A Political History (1969) was helpful as an overview of French politics and legislation during this period. Several of the main political currents covered in this thesis, for example the repeated outbreaks of considerable violence in Guinea, are not dealt with at all in the existing literature. I realise, however, that in detailed usage of original sources I have somewhat neglected to incorporate comparative analysis and recent theoretical debate into the present work, leaving these topics to future study.

Map 1: Territory of French Guinea.



Source: Nelson, Harold C. et al. Area Handbook for Guinea, Washington DC, 1975.

Map 2: Geographical Regions of Guinea.



Source: Nelson, Harold C. et al. Area Handbook for Guinea, Washington DC, 1975, p. 43.

## CHAPTER I

### Historic and Colonial Setting

The Territory of La Guinée Française, as demarcated by French colonisers in the late 1800s, arbitrarily cut across numerous ethnic groups and political boundaries, as well as geographical regions, historic commercial routes, and traditional socio-religious relationships. Roughly twenty-four ethnic groups are found within the Guinean frontiers, three of which constitute about 75 percent of the estimated total population of 2.57 million in 1955.<sup>1</sup> The predominant ethnolinguistic groups in Guinea broadly correspond to its four major geographical regions. In Lower Guinea, the Soussou are dominant and have largely assimilated a number of coastal peoples, including the Landoma, Baga, and Nalou. The highlands of the Fouta Djalon in Middle Guinea are home to Guinea's largest ethnic group--the Fulani,<sup>2</sup> who are spread over much of West Africa. Additionally, in the North of this area along the Guinea-Senegal border there are five ethnic groups, referred to collectively as Tenda, including the Coniagui and Bassari. Upper Guinea is characterised by savanna grasslands inhabited mainly by the Malinké, a branch of the culturally related West African people called Manding. Finally, while no single group predominates in the Forest region, where traditionally the terrain, including the Guinea

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<sup>1</sup> Harold C. Nelson, et al., Area Handbook for Guinea, Washington DC, 1975, p. 55.

<sup>2</sup> Also commonly referred to in the literature as Peul, Foulah or Fulbe, and their language being either Poular or Fulfulde. For further information see Victor Azarya, Aristocrats Facing Change: The Fulbe in Guinea, Nigeria, and Cameroon, Chicago, 1978.

Highlands and dense rain forest, discouraged larger settlement patterns, there nevertheless remain three distinct minor ethnic groups, namely the Kissi, Toma, and Guerzé.

By the early 1950s French Guinea was recognised as the territory most richly endowed in the West African Federation in agricultural, mineral, and hydroelectric potential.<sup>3</sup> The tropical climate along the Guinea Coast favoured the development of banana and pineapple plantations, while oil palm and Kola trees contributed to the increasing export figures from the territory. Each geographical region added variety to the export economy, as coffee and animal hides were furnished from the Fouta Djalon, rice and peanuts from Upper Guinea, and timbers from the Forest. In mineral prospects, Guinea has great economic potential through its vast reserves of Bauxite, iron ore, and alumina. Additionally, diamonds are mined in the Forest region; however during colonial times much was lost through smuggling into neighbouring Liberia. Finally, Guinea is the source of over one-half of the principal rivers as well as many other tributaries in West Africa, making the territory capable of producing enough hydroelectric power to supply the entire area. Thus although Guinea was often deemed politically "backward" until the very end of the colonial era, economically the territory proved to be potentially the richest in the Federation of French West Africa.

There no doubt exists much greater diversity than similarity among the wide array of historical political systems in the area. Socio-political structures existing at the time of European penetration

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Roland Pr e, *L'Avenir de la Guin e Fran aise*, Conakry, 1951.

included remnants of ancient empires, small chieftaincies, Islamic states, and nomadic as well as segmentary societies. In pre-colonial Guinea, social organisation ranged from the highly stratified class and caste systems of the Fulani cattle-herders to the numerous simple cultivating communities along the coast. Regarding the nature of political domination at the time of colonisation, complex hierarchies of hereditary rule dating from the early empires and later Islamic states of the Western Sudan remained among the Malinké and Fulbe. Islam was professed by three-fourths of the Guinean population at this time. In the Coastal and Forest regions, social units were small, dispersed, often economically oriented, and presided over by local chiefs or wealthy traders. As often was the case upon the demarcation of imperial boundaries and imposition of foreign rule, vastly different societies and ethnic groups in Guinea were divided, amalgamated, and reorganised to suit the administrative preferences of the colonial government.

#### Peaceful Penetration in Coastal and Middle Guinea

Much of Guinea's pre-colonial history is tied to the successive states in the Western Sudan--Ghana, Mali, and Songhai, spanning the eleventh to mid-sixteenth centuries. One of the most celebrated figures in Guinean oral history is Sundiata Keita, the founder of the Mali empire, who reigned from approximately 1230 to 1255.<sup>4</sup> The decline and eventual disintegration of Songhai in the sixteenth century coincided with a marked increase in tribal warfare and the development of new commercial routes, mainly the traffic of slaves and gold directed towards the

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For an interesting oral history of Sundiata, see D.T. Niane's *Sundiata: An Epic of old Mali*, London, 1965. For details of the Mali empire see Nehemia Levtzion, *Ancient Ghana and Mali*, London, 1973.

Atlantic coast.

Walter Rodney in his study entitled A History of the Upper Guinea Coast traced the migrations, as well as the social and political activities in the littoral region from approximately 1545 to 1800. While it was held that the early peopling of the coastal area was in large part due to expansionary pressure and resulting emigration from the politics in the Western Sudan,<sup>5</sup> Rodney claimed that the European presence on the Guinea coast from the seventeenth century onwards motivated further relocation and an overall reorganisation of African society in order to cater to the European market.<sup>6</sup> The Portuguese were actually the first Europeans to land on the Guinea coast, where the first shipment of slaves from the area dates back to the mid-sixteenth century;<sup>7</sup> nearly four hundred years passed before this trade was effectively abolished. According to Rodney the greatest impact of the slave trade in this area was the impetus it had in escalating tribal warfare for the purpose of procuring captives, and the degradation of the ruling classes in their victimisation of their indigenous subjects.<sup>8</sup> Alternatively, A.G. Hopkins has refuted the notion of "merrie Africa" which depicts pre-colonial society as egalitarian, arguing that "the existence of slave labour

5

Jaques Richard-Molard, Afrique Occidentale Française, Paris, 1949, p. 108.

6

Walter Rodney, A History of the Upper Guinea Coast, 1545-1800, Oxford, 1970, p. 80.

7

In 1513 over 500 slaves were transported from Guinea to Portugal, and nearly 1,000 the following year. This figure increased to over 3,000 annually from the mid-seventeenth century, and accounted for only the Portuguese trade from the region. The estimated total contribution from coastal Guinea is over half a million slaves, not including the great loss of life unrecorded in passage. Andre Lewin, La Guinée, Paris, 1984, pp. 32-3.

8

W. Rodney, A History of the Upper Guinea Coast, p. 258.

provides evidence of the inequalities which were present." Hopkins<sup>9</sup> claimed that there was a long-established labour market in Africa based on slavery, by which conquerors such as the Fulani achieved wealth, and subsequently lived "la vie de château."<sup>10</sup> In any case, slavery was a long-standing institution among the Fulani, which continued throughout the colonial period in Guinea with tacit approval of the French administration.

Although the seventeenth century was a period of fierce commercial rivalry in West Africa between the French, British, and Dutch,<sup>11</sup> the Guinean coast was deliberately side-stepped. Mainly due to the navigational hazards of the area, the coastal and river trade in Guinea was left almost completely in the hands of private merchants of Portuguese or afro-Portuguese origin, referred to locally as *lancados*. As French commercial interest expanded outwardly from Senegal in the eighteenth century, gradually trading practices were established along the coastal area of Guinea.

In competition with the British, whose economic influence was dominant in neighbouring Sierra Leone and growing throughout the region, the French in the mid-nineteenth century embarked on a campaign of drawing up trade agreements with local chiefs. Competition among coastal societies for trading monopolies facilitated European interference and increasing influence in the region. The colonial power easily inter-

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<sup>9</sup>  
A.G. Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa*, London, 1973, p. 26.

<sup>10</sup>  
*Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>11</sup>  
By this time Portuguese influence in the area had vastly decreased, and likewise the Dutch were eliminated from local competition towards the end of the century.

vened in local rivalries, was often responsible for the rise and fall of coastal chiefs with whom protectorates were then devised, and in at least one case brutally decided an outcome of rivalry between chiefs where both proclaimed French allegiance.<sup>12</sup> The usual stipulations of the agreements were that French sovereignty was accepted in the region, and in return French recognition, modest payment, and protection were accorded to the local chief or "king." Additionally included were the promises of free trade, and respect of local customs and systems of government, provided that they did not violate (European) humanitarian and moral standards.<sup>13</sup> Between 1845 and 1897, more than thirty "friendship and protectorate" treaties were concluded between France and tribal rulers along the Guinea coast.<sup>14</sup> These internal or colonial protectorates, as they were called, seemingly alluded to a system of indirect administration whereby indigenous leadership was left largely to function autonomously and according to custom. This, however, was clearly not the direction to be pursued in instituting local government administration in the colony.

Another example of the successful strategy pursued by the French colonisers of first peacefully signing protectorate agreements, promising the respect of local authority, then proceeding to gradually

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Despite the fact that both rival contenders professed loyalty to the colonial government, the French ended the chieftaincy dispute among the Nalou by destroying scores of villages and killing the unfavoured candidate. Jean Suret-Canale, "Guinea under the Colonial System," *Présence Africaine*, 29, 1, 1960, pp. 24-5.

13

Partial reprints of treaty texts are found in annexes of André Arcin, *Histoire de la Guinée Française*, Paris, 1911.

14

Diallo Ousmane, "Connaissance historique de la Guinée," *Présence Africaine*, vol. XXIX, 1960, p. 50.

dismantle the undersigned political systems, is the case of the Fouta Djalón. The migration of the Fulani into Middle Guinea occurred during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Moving southward from Macina in present Mali, the Fulani conquered the local populations in the name of Islam, and then lived as cattle herders in the area in a characteristically "feudal" society.<sup>15</sup> In 1725 a jihad was launched in the Fouta by the Fulbe cleric Ibrahim Musa. By the late 1770s his successor Ibrahim Sori had militarily secured control over the region and established a theocratic state.

Ruled by a Muslim aristocracy, the Fulani state was divided into semi-autonomous provinces. The top of the highly stratified political system was an almamy acting as military, religious and spiritual leader, elected by the council of elders at the political capital of Timbo, then ceremonially installed at the religious capital of Fougoumba. The families of both heroes of the holy war could claim legitimate right to rule. Eventually an agreement of hereditary succession was established whereby the almamys of the two branches, Alfaya and Soriya, alternatively ruled for two year periods.

Power struggles between the two leading families wrought instability and weakness in the imamate, facilitating French interference in its internal affairs.<sup>16</sup> In 1897 a protectorate was signed whereby the French agreed that they would respect the Constitution of the Fouta Djalón, including the practice of alternating rulers. Shortly afterwards the French reneged on their promise and intervened to depose the almamy and install their choice as successor. The next step in the

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See Paul Marty, *L'Islam en Guinée*, Paris, 1921.

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J. Suret-Canale, "Guinea under the Colonial System," p. 26.

process was to greatly reduce the territory under the authority of the imamate, incorporating the newly liberated areas into the French administration. The Fouta Djalon was again parcelled after the death of the almany in 1906, this time divided between the two leading families. Furthermore, the almanys were stripped of their status of paramount chiefs and demoted to provincial chiefs. Finally, a decree of 1912 reduced the almanys in the hierarchy of the French administration to the mere status of canton chiefs.

While in general the colonisation of the Coastal area and the Fouta Djalon in Middle Guinea was accomplished with little military might, much of Guinea was in fact "conquered" by the French in a state of outright war with African resisters. In particular the campaigns against the Islamic empires of Al-Haj Umar and Samory Touré devastated much of the Upper Guinea region before final capitulation in the 1890s. Likewise heavy military raids were required to "pacify" pockets of the Forest region and the area near the Senegalese border, where resistance to colonial administration, ending in French military reprisals, was reported as late as 1911.

#### Conquest and Pacification in Upper Guinea and Forest Region

Two Islamic empires expanding in the nineteenth century controlled Upper Guinea and extended both into the Fouta Djalon and the Forest region. The first was founded by Al-Haj Umar Tal, originally from the Fouta Toro in Senegal, who by 1850 had established the Tukulor empire based in  
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Dinguiraye. Spreading north and eastward in Bambara territory, Umar

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For a complete study on the life and work of Umar Tal, see David Robinson, The Holy War of Umar Tal, Oxford, 1985.

initially seemed willing to negotiate with the French. Nevertheless the European conquerors proved to be wary of militant Islam, and ignored Umar's propositions of co-operation. Although a commercial treaty promising respect for Tukolor sovereignty was signed with Umar's son and successor Ahmad in 1881, the French immediately began building military forts in the area and set out on a campaign to "liberate the

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oppressed Bambara." By this time, however, the French were also involved in skirmishes with Samory Touré on the borders of his Mandinka empire to the South. In 1883 Samory proposed to unite the Tukolor and Manding armies to oppose the French. The final destruction of Ahmad's empire in 1893 was attributed to his rejection of this offered alliance

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with Samory.

The greatest resistance to French military conquest came from the empire of Ouassoulou, the second Islamic state in Upper Guinea, founded by Samory Touré between 1870 and 1875. Uniting the remaining independent states after the disintegration of ancient Mali, Samory's empire covered the Manding territory between Siguiri in Guinea and Bamako in Mali, and later shifted east and far south into the Forest region while fighting and retreating from the French.

Samory's goals were the political reunification and renaissance of former Malinké glory, adding later the cause of Islam, all for which "he

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had the gift of inspiring the most fanatical devotion." In comparison

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Umar offered the French interior trade routes and markets in exchange for guns. A. Arcin, *Histoire de la Guinée Française*, p. 98.

19

J.B. Webster, A.A. Boahen with Michael Tidy, *West Africa since 1800: The Revolutionary Years*, new ed., Essex, 1980, p. 179.

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*Ibid.*, p. 25.

21

Yves Person, "Guinea--Samori," in Michael Crowder, ed., *West African Resistance*, London, 1971, p. 140.

to the Tukulor empire, Samory's state was both considerably more united and centralised.<sup>22</sup> Regarding Islam, however, whilst it was the motivating factor of Umar's state-building, in Samory's case it was seen as rather the justifying and unifying principles invoked only after initial conquest. It was not until 1886 that Samory adopted the title of *almamy*, proclaiming theocracy and demanding conversion of infidels in his empire.

A brilliant strategist, in his seventeen years of dealing with the French, Samory employed numerous tactics including the signing and breaking of commercial and political treaties with France, repeated patterns of ambush and surprise attacks followed by mass retreat, and attempting to ally first with the Tukulor empire and finally with the British to stave off impending French military victory and control of the region. Fully aware that his forces were not strong enough to decisively defeat the French army, Samory nevertheless decided to make a final stand and spent many months in preparation for battle. Once engaged in combat, Samory and his army made intermittent raids on enemy forces, all the while retreating south-eastwardly in the vain hope that the French would let him retire and settle in peace.<sup>23</sup> The *almamy* left a trail of complete destruction behind him, employing a "scorched-earth" policy whereby he instructed all local populations to evacuate their homes while the soldiers burned villages, fields, and anything of possible value to the approaching army and future colonisers. The seven year campaign to destroy Samory ended with his capitulation in 1898.

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For details of the organisation of the state and army see J. Suret-Canale, "Guinea under the Colonial System," pp. 34-6.

23

Y. Person, "Guinea--Samori," p. 137.

In the process of drawing up a peace treaty, however, Samory was deported to Gabon, where he died in captivity in 1900. Despite the  
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incredible hardship he imposed on his followers and subjects, Samory Touré has become a Guinean and indeed African nationalist legendary hero. As summarised by Yves Person, the leading authority on Samory:

Samori arouses the highest passions because more than any other leader in pre-colonial Africa he symbolises heroic and determined resistance to the European conqueror. (25)

Although in 1892 a frontier agreement was concluded between France and Liberia, it was in the pursuit of Samory that the French first entered the Forest region. The geography of the area and its ethnic composition historically favoured independent village settlements, politically loosely organised, and in 1899 it was divided and administered strictly as a military outpost. Even so, villagers fiercely resisted the imposition of French rule, as illustrated in the Report on the General Situation in French Guinea in 1903:

"The natives have a very great spirit of independence. They live in villages which are independent of each other. The authority of the village chiefs is very slight and that of the canton chiefs which it had been thought fit to install in the military Circles is absolutely nil." (26)

Violent and sporadic revolts by the Kissi, Toma, Guerzé and Manon peoples of the Forest occurred before the region was finally subdued in 1911.

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Especially during Samory's final retreat where his campaign is held responsible for a great depopulation in the area, and remembered for selling captives into slavery in order to acquire guns and cavalry horses for his army. J. Suret-Canale, "Guinea under the Colonial System," p. 38.

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Y. Person, "Guinea--Samori," p. 112. For a full account of the life of Samory see his doctoral thesis: *Samori: Une Revolution Dyula*, 3 vols., IFAN, Dakar, 1968.

26

Cited in J. Suret-Canale, "Guinea under the Colonial System," p.40.

Similarly historically independent were the Coniagui and Bassari ethnic minorities situated on the Senegalese border. So long as the French did not interfere with local activities, their presence was nominally tolerated. Once, however, the local administrator began demanding taxes payable in money, social unrest erupted. The area war chief, denying the knowledge or use of money in the region, acquiesced to the submitting of taxes in the form of millet or groundnuts. In 1902 a French military contingent appeared to enforce the payment of taxes in currency; when the chief refused to capitulate a skirmish ensued in which a small French force was utterly destroyed. Two years later the French losses were avenged as a troop of 500 soldiers arrived, burning<sup>27</sup> villages and massacring the local populations.

Overall the imposition of colonial rule in the territory of Guinea proved difficult and costly for the French, as the greater part of the colony was acquired by military conquest. Moreover, it took the French over sixty years after the signing of the first coastal protectorates to secure the hinterland, hence installing their colonial administration. Before turning to the actual structure of the territorial government, therefore, a brief look is appropriate into the motivations for the colonisation of West Africa and the theories developed to support and justify its existence.

#### **The Colonial Impetus**

Explanations of imperialism often take the form of after-the-fact justification, and normally are quite different even than the pretexts adopted for initial expansion. Moreover the interests and motivations of

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Ibid., p. 39.

the French government were not necessarily the same as the military officers who carried out the occupation, and indeed wielded considerable power and influence in the type and running of the administrations they installed.

It is widely held that the fundamental reason for the imposition of colonial rule was economic in nature. <sup>28</sup> Certainly the pretext most often cited warranting interference and later penetration into the interior was to protect the trading interest in the region. <sup>29</sup> The logical extension of this principle included the suppression of "tribal wars," internal slavery, religious fanaticism, struggles of succession, and powerful local merchants, all of which could potentially cause instability and threaten European commercial routes and monopoly of trade. Michael Crowder furthered this argument and claimed that throughout the colonial era the economic consideration was supreme, summarising:

For all the talk of a mission civilisatrice, the overriding motive for the European occupation in Africa was economic, whether it was to avoid a rival European power establishing a monopoly in one trading area, or to reduce an African ruler who was inimical to European trading ambitions. The administrative systems...were intended to facilitate trade with and the opening up of the resources of their African colonies. For the Europeans to successfully administer and exploit their African colonies, railways, roads, bridges and harbours had to be built and telegraph lines laid....The alternative to bringing out Europeans to provide these facilities and staff the commercial and governmental administrations even at the most junior levels, was to train Africans to assist them. (30)

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See A. G. Hopkins, An Economic History of West Africa, pp. 164-5.

29

Odile Goerg, Commerce et Colonisation en Guinée 1850-1913, Paris, 1986, p. 181.

30

Michael Crowder, Colonial West Africa: Collected Essays, London, 1978, p. 17.

Apart from the economic factor were visions of grandeur of the French Empire, and the missions to spread superior culture, language, education, and Christianity in Africa. According to the administrator Hubert Deschamps, "Waterloo, and later Sedan, were, in the opinion of the French, the most powerful stimuli for the overseas conquests."<sup>31</sup> In his recent book entitled *French Power in Africa*, John Chipman argues that "all acquisitions made overseas were intended to enhance French prestige," and that sustaining French influence in Africa (even through the process of decolonisation) was paramount to France's self-estimation as an important world power.<sup>32</sup> Despite claims to the contrary, Chipman holds that Black Africa was never an important trading area for France, and in fact the most tangible contribution made to French power by the Africans was their participation in French war efforts.<sup>33</sup> Finally, although the first French Catholic mission was established in Guinea in 1877, the religious and social elements of colonial theory were introduced much later, and more in respect to doctrine and policy than motivating factors for colonisation.

In sum, whether as impetus or justification, the reasons behind French expansionism in Africa were several, and critically dependent upon the various people and interests involved. As concluded by Maurice Delafosse:

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Hubert Deschamps, *Les Méthodes et les Doctrines Coloniales de la France*, Paris, 1953, p. 99.

32

John Chipman, *French Power in Africa*, Oxford, 1989, p. 34 and throughout. See also Jean-François Bayart, "France-Afrique: La fin du pacte colonial," *Politique Africaine*, 39, 1990, 47-53.

33

*Ibid.*, p. 3.

If we condescend to be frank with ourselves, we are forced to admit that it is not altruism that leads us to Africa, at least not as a nation. Granted that pious missionaries, having vowed to devote their lives to save the souls of their fellow-men, have gone there with the sole aim of being useful to their black brothers, in the next life if not in this. But these were not the motives that led us to raise our flags in Senegal or on the shores of Guinea, or to fight the natives in order to make them accept our authority.

At times we wished to ensure outlets for our trade, and sources of raw materials for our industry, at others we felt the need to protect the security of our nationals or the need not to be outdone by foreign rivals; sometimes we were moved by the obscure and unconscious desire to procure a little glory or grandeur for our country, at others we simply followed hazardous caprices or the tracks of an explorer, believing that we could do nothing different. In no case do I find as the motive force of our colonial expansion in Africa the real and reasoned wish to contribute to the welfare of our subjugated peoples. That is an excuse that we are all too ready to give after the event, but it was never our intention.... (34)

If social and moral obligations did not play a determinate role in the decision to colonise West Africa, however, they certainly did attract much debate in Paris when doctrine and policy were devised.

### Methodology in Theory and Practice

Considerable attention has focused on colonial ideology in French and British West Africa, and the differences in administrative procedures.

The differences in philosophies of direct and indirect rule, or assimilation and association, are drawn in theory while circumstances in the

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Cited in J. Suret-Canale, French Colonialism in Tropical Africa, New York, 1971, p. 316.

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See Michael Crowder, "Indirect Rule: French and British Style," Africa, 34, 3, 1964; Michael Crowder, West Africa Under Colonial Rule, Evanston, 1968; A.I. Asiwaju, Western Yorubaland under European Rule 1889-1945: a Comparative Analysis of French and British Colonialism, London, 1976; R.F. Betts, "Methods and institutions of European domination," in A. Adu Boahen, ed., UNESCO General History of Africa: VII, Africa under Colonial Domination 1880-1935; and A.E. Afigbo, "The establishment of colonial rule 1900-1918," in J.F.A. Ajayi and Michael Crowder, eds., History of West Africa, vol. 2, New York, 1974.

colonies more often blurred than illustrated their relative distinctions. In the end, it becomes obvious that "the French Empire in Africa was constructed by adventurers and justified by propagandists."<sup>36</sup>

Assimilation, or direct rule, was considered the traditional French colonial doctrine, as opposed to the British who theoretically followed the policy of indirect rule. The concept of assimilation was founded on the belief that all men were created equal, and that the duty of France was to aid the backward peoples to evolve to a higher civilisation. Raymond Betts referred to assimilation as a form of cultural imperialism whereby a "superior" society had the inherent right to dominate and instruct a "lesser" one, and the "conquered were to absorb the customs and institutions of the conquerors."<sup>37</sup> This doctrine was useful as a legitimising explanation both to French nationals and within the government itself. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, the mounting financial burden of the Empire and the difficulties of its administration, along with a new trend in social theory that attacked the foundations of assimilation, brought about a change in colonial thinking and a revised policy, "association."

The doctrine of evolution had a significant impact on French colonial thought.<sup>38</sup> The new theory stressed fundamental differences between races and cultures, and denied the earlier belief that all men were alike based on their power of reason, thus rendering the goal of assimilation unattainable. Furthermore new emphasis was placed on

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J. Chipman, French Power in Africa, p. 4.

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Raymond F. Betts, Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory: 1890-1914, New York, 1961, p. 30.

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Ibid., p. 59; L. Gray Cowan, Local Government in West Africa, New York, 1958, pp. 41-2.

economic self-sufficiency of the territories, and the idea that traditional political and social institutions should be respected. Although never clearly defined, the understanding of the doctrine in 1909 was offered by the prominent intellectual Chailley Bert:

"This policy of association rests on the idea that the natives are, at least provisionally, inferior to the Europeans, or at least different, that they have their past, their customs, their institutions and a religion to which they adhere. Even with the aid of education their minds cannot understand and accept our concepts any more rapidly. But it is the duty of the stronger people to guide the weaker people, to aid them in the evolution of their own civilisation, until that day when they are close enough to ours so that they may take from it what they deem good. While awaiting this result of education and of time, we must respect their ideas, their customs, religion and civilisation." (40)

The greatest advantage to the doctrine of association was the flexibility it allowed in local situations. Henceforth the particular characteristics of ethnicity, custom, and stage of development were to be considered in the determination of regional policy. It may be suggested that the policy of association was simply a codification of the existing state of affairs in the overseas territories. As consisely stated by Chipman:

Assimilation was the doctrine preferred by those who felt a public need to justify colonialism; association was adopted by those who had actually to administer the colonies, for whom the high ideals of assimilation were both abstract and dangerous. (41)

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In 1900 a financial decree stipulated that all civil expenditures including the police force were to be financed by their respective colonial budgets. Joseph-Roger de Benoist, *La Balkanisation de l'Afrique Occidentale Française*, Dakar, 1979, p. 23.

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Cited in R.F. Betts, *Assimilation and Association in French Colonial Theory*, p. 152.

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J. Chipman, *French Power in Africa*, p. 57.

There is no doubt that within the colonies local circumstances as dealt with by resident administrators consistently prevailed over ideology and doctrine emanating from the metropole. A.E. Afigbo has concluded that "strictly speaking there was no French or British style of Indirect Rule if we consider not the theory but practice of administration," and that the "departures from the so-called British and French styles were too many to be regarded as mere local or temporary aberrations."<sup>42</sup> In short, to understand French colonial policy in West Africa it is vital to focus attention on the individual colonies and local administrative methods and practices, as pointed out by Crowder:

There seems never to have been in the early years of colonial rule a sense of strong central direction in the administration of the eight colonies, so that actual formulation of policy lay with the Commandant de Cercle rather than the Lieutenant-Governors and the Governor-General who were meant to be responsible for it. Whilst there was no generally accepted "native policy," partly because of the lack of ability of the central powers to impose their wills effectively on their subordinates and partly because of the failure of any one of the advocates of assimilation, association (paternalism) or indirect rule, to make his particular policy prevail, there nevertheless emerged a general approach to the government of the peoples of West Africa: the replacement of the traditional chiefs by a new group who it was felt would be loyal to the French; and the break-up of traditional political units into smaller units, or the amalgamation of disparate smaller units into large groups so that there was some uniformity in the political units to be administered. (43)

### Territorial Administration

In 1891 the territory previously referred to as Rivières du Sud was officially designated French Guinea and Dependencies; two years later the dependencies were dropped and the colony hence assumed its

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A.E. Afigbo, "The establishment of colonial rule", pp. 463-4.

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M. Crowder, West Africa Under Colonial Rule, p. 175.

contemporary frontiers. The internal administration of La Guinée Française was similar to that of the other colonies which together formed the federal entity of French West Africa.

Located in Dakar, the headquarters of the Federation functioned under the leadership of the Governor-General of French West Africa. The role of the Government-General was to coordinate economic development of the colonies, including public works and communications, and to oversee interterritorial matters such as justice, the military, and medical services. Two crucial aspects of the centralising power in Dakar were the control of customs throughout the Federation, and the reallocation of monies from a central budget to which all the colonies contributed. Additionally, the Governor-General was considered "the depository of the Republic's powers," ruled by decree, and had the sole right to correspond with the Minister of Colonies in Paris. <sup>44</sup> Notwithstanding the considerable powers embodied in Federation headquarters, in practice the internal affairs of the colonies were left largely in the hands of the respective Lieutenant-Governors <sup>45</sup> and their subordinates.

The West African territories were divided into administrative districts (cercles), each headed by a French officer (Commandant de Cercle) who, wielding considerable personal power, was directly responsible to the Lieutenant-Governor. Normally districts were divided into subdivisions (circonscriptions) headed by assistant administrators. Beneath the districts and subdivisions directly administered by French

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Hubert Deschamps, "France in Black Africa and Madagascar between 1920 and 1945," in L.H. Gann and Peter Duignan, eds. Colonialism in Africa: 1870-1960, vol. 2, Cambridge, 1970, p. 234.

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"Lieutenant" was formally dropped by decree in 1937, hence the term Governor appears more frequently.

officials were the cantons and villages, which were under the direction of African chiefs serving as native authorities in the colonial government. Indigenous chiefs were initially appointed directly by the Lieutenant-Governor, however after 1921 the Commandant de Cercle was empowered to name the canton and village chiefs, albeit subject to the Governor's approval. The Federation of French West Africa, encompassing an area eight times that of France with an estimated population of 15 million, was divided into 118 cercles, 2,200 cantons and 48,000<sup>46</sup> villages.

It is interesting to note the eminent influence that the military officers enjoyed during the establishment and implementation of colonial rule. Clearly the officers of the Troupes de Marine who carried out the conquest and the pacification were later the promoters of the administrative organisation.<sup>47</sup> Their inherent preoccupation with strict hierarchy was reflected in the official positions which paralleled naval organisation, for example commandant meaning skipper, patron (boatswain), and ecrivain referring to a native clerk modelled after a ship's clerk.<sup>48</sup> Many of the first civil administrators came from the ranks of the navy, and as they were accustomed to a pyramid of authoritative power, naturally they proceeded to install a centralised and hierarchical administrative structure.

The historical period in Africa from 1885 to 1914 has been referred

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<sup>46</sup>

Robert Delavignette, Freedom and Authority in French West Africa, London, 1968, p. 72.

<sup>47</sup>Pierre Alexandre, "The Problems of Chieftaincies in French Speaking Africa," in M. Crowder and O. Ikime, eds., West African Chiefs, p. 37.

<sup>48</sup>

Pierre Alexandre, "Chiefs, Commandants and Clerks: Their Relationship from Conquest to Decolonization in French West Africa," in ibid., p. 12.

to as the time of the "Great Bachelors," single men who invented colonial rule. Limited contact from "bush" stations to central government meant that administrative practices in rural areas were largely subject to the personality of the Commandant. Indeed, according to Robert Delavignette, the Commandants de Cercle became the "true chiefs of the Empire."<sup>49</sup> Deschamps aptly depicted the role of the Commandant as such:

Responsible for the maintenance of order, head of the police, judge, tax collector, architect, he is in charge of the opening of markets, the development of agriculture and livestock, of education and medical assistance; he is the leader of the Europeans, but especially the chief and protector of the indigenous populations, the successor of local kings, the "roi de la brousse," tied to his work and his district like the French peasant to his field. (50)

In recognition of the immense power concentrated in the hands of one administrator, and the frequency with which it resulted in excessive behaviour and abuse, the rouage or "turn-table" policy was introduced in 1924 by the Government-General. Designed to thwart corruption, the new policy stipulated that henceforth it was forbidden<sup>51</sup> for an administrator to serve two consecutive tours in a given colony. Even within an average two-year stay, an official may have held as many as four to five different administrative posts. As calculated by Suret-Canale, over a sixty year period the average number of Commandants de

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R. Delavignette, Freedom and Authority in French West Africa, first published in 1941 as Les Vrais Chefs de l'Empire.

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H. Deschamps, Les Méthodes et les Doctrines Coloniales de la France, pp. 164-5.

51

William B. Cohen, "The French Colonial Service in French West Africa," in Prosser Gifford and Wm. Roger Louis, eds., France and Britain in Africa, London, 1971, pp. 504-5.

Cercle in a Guinean district was eighty. Thus there was great inconsistency in administrative practice, as illustrated by a French administrator following a tour of the Federation:

"The most obvious characteristic of our colonial administration is the instability at every stage of both men and matters....In the Colonies Lieutenant-Governors succeed each other with a disconcerting rapidity, each one bringing his own ideas and his methods of administration and colonisation...each Commandant de Cercle has his own policy, his chiefs, his projects for roads and agricultural development. This all passes before the eyes of the native like a kaleidoscope of which each new image is accompanied by additional burdens and tribulations." (53)

### Chiefs in the Colonial System

It is nearly impossible to speak of "legitimate chiefs" existing and operating within the colonial framework. Historically chieftain authority or right to govern derived from various sources, including descent from the founding father of a village or state, right of conquest, primogeniture, membership in a ruling clan, religious leadership, etc. Regarding the nature of the chieftaincy in Guinea at the time of colonisation, complex hierarchies of hereditary chiefs dating from the early empires and kingdoms of the Western Sudan remained among the Malinké and Fulani. In the Coastal and Forest regions, however, social units were small, the authority of the chief rarely extended beyond a village or cluster of settlements, and within his domain he was expected to act in coordination with the consensus of a council of elders representing the will of the people. In fact the majority of the inhabitants of Guinea at the time of European expansion were living in small communities of 10 to 100 families. Normally the traditional societies were patrilineal

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J. Suret-Canale, French Colonialism in Tropical Africa, p. 314.

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Cited in M. Crowder, West Africa Under Colonial Rule, p. 174.

(except the Coniagui and Bassari and other minor ethnic groups on the Senegalese border, which were matrilineal) and were made up of families of the male descendants of the founding father of the village or common ancestor.

Lack of understanding, appreciation or relative concern for the idiosyncrasies and differentiation of constitution and tradition of particular chieftaincies, led the French on a campaign to normalise these differences by defining the official position and adherent responsibilities of administrative chiefs. Additionally, for the purpose of bureaucratic ease, the colonial authorities set about revising the institution of the chieftaincy by reorganising its internal structure and territorial jurisdiction, creating hierarchical chieftaincies wherever they previously did not exist, and interfering when the rules of succession pointed to an unfavourable chief, in the opinion of the French administration.

In these circumstances, consequently, whether or not a chief can be said to have fulfilled all of the traditional qualifications for the assumption of the title, the fundamental transformation of the position rested upon the fact that the right to rule depended upon the colonial administration's delegation of power, acceptance, and lordship over the indigenous authorities subsequently referred to as "chiefs." In this context, therefore, following the period of conquest, the term "chief" used here will refer to the definition prescribed by the colonial power, designating and recognising chiefs as indigenous administrative authorities, arranged hierarchically with specific duties and functions, and integrated into the system of territorial government.

Once the colonial foundation was established, the French officials

were free to concentrate on the "steady suppression of the great chiefs and the destruction of their authority until the village becomes an administrative unit." <sup>54</sup> This was facilitated by the unilateral Land Decree of 23 October 1904 by which recognised land rights were annulled; the remaining sovereignty of the African chiefs thereby effectively abolished. The official doctrine of French policy from 1904 to 1914, succeeding that of the protectorate, was the policy of "direct administration." Raymond Buell, in his 1928 work The Native Problem in Africa, rationalised the motives behind the subsequent shift in policy:

When the French undertook the occupation of West Africa they were confronted with a number of native tyrants who cruelly exploited their subjects. Life and property were insecure; slavery and human sacrifice prevailed in many areas. In a few cases, local Almanys had imposed a form of discipline, maintained by terrorism, upon thousands of unwilling subjects. But in other cases, simple anarchy prevailed because of the want of any social organisation. The French authorities negotiated treaties with chiefs whenever they found them, originally out of regard for their "rights," and later in order to obtain a pacific hold upon territory until it could be more firmly occupied. But in view of the habitual abuses committed by these chiefs which, in the opinion of many Frenchmen, became greater when these chiefs could shelter themselves behind European authority, the French administration in Africa has gradually curtailed the powers of the chiefs, especially over judicial matters, land, and tribute.

Confronted with the question whether it was simpler to control the native kingdoms or to abolish them outright, the French, in contrast to the British, who follow the policy of control, chose the other alternative. Administrative convenience and the desire to suppress abuse have thus combined to end these treaties. But probably an equally strong reason had been the conviction that the institutions of Africa are not worth preserving and developing and that the boon of French civilisation should be bestowed on the native population. (55)

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P. Alexandre, "The Problems of Chieftaincies in French Speaking Africa," p. 37.

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Raymond L. Buell, The Native Problem in Africa, New York, 1928, vol. I, p. 995.

The lack of sufficient competent personnel, however, forced the colonialists to rely to a great degree upon African intermediaries--chiefs, clerks, and interpreters--to fulfill their administrative duties. Due to this predicament one of the colonial government's first priorities was to secure African collaborators within their administrative ranks.

Although theoretically preference was given to existing notables in the designation of positions of native authority, a number of difficulties confounded the operation and success of this practice. First of all, the parcelling of the territory into cantons rarely adequately corresponded to traditional boundaries and dominions of authority. Secondly, historical socio-political entities varied widely in geographic shape and size, nevertheless each maintained its independent and distinct identity. For this reason several ethnic groups defiantly resented being grouped together with, or administratively dominated by, neighbouring tribes in the region. Finally, for the sake of administrative simplicity and territorial conformity, the French attempted to impose uniformity among radically diverse traditional cultural norms, rites of succession, and systems of justice. Claude Rivière summarised the diversity of political systems to be incorporated into the colonial system of government:

In the Peul (Fulani) kingdom of the almami of Fouta, the chieftaincies were united and powerful; in the kafu and settlements of the Manding, they were based on lineage; in the forest zone they were limited to villages; and in coastal Guinea they were of recent date and acculturated. Despite these differences, the colonial power delegated its authority only to those who, after being chosen by the Notables from among rival contenders, were officially registered as chiefs in the territorial units that it had itself created. Its first step was to take away from the

people their right to choose chiefs, who henceforth were appointed and dismissed solely by the administration. (56)

The steady political reorganisation of the Fouta Djalon exemplifies the colonial government's determination first to divide and conquer traditional power sources, and secondly to replace them with administrative appointees conducive to French control. Piece by piece the once great state of the Fouta was dismembered, its symbols of authority dissolved. In 1912 the premier title of almany was abolished. French interference was commonplace, deciding victors in power struggles, displacing rebellious chiefs, and dividing up traditional jurisdictions.

Elsewhere in regions without centralised political systems the colonial administration freely set up local government authorities amenable to their wishes. This occurred particularly in the Forest region, as Rivière described:

The chieftaincy problem was resolved there either by choosing individuals for investiture as chiefs from among the masters of the land and warrior or religious chiefs those who appeared to the authorities to be Notables, or by naming as "straw chiefs" men who had been useful to the colonial cause, who possessed no traditional influence...This new method of selecting individuals for the chieftaincy ignored the hierarchical order, the rights of certain families, the qualifications required by tradition, and the support of the elders. (57)

It is often argued that the French administration nominated chiefs more out of regard for civil service qualifications, such as literacy in French and knowledge of administrative detail, than respect for traditional right to rule. These preferences, especially for chiefs with knowledge of French, may be explained in part by the nature of the

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Claude Rivière, Guinea: The Mobilization of a People, London, 1971, p. 42.

57

Ibid., p. 43.

French colonial service. As aforementioned, the rouage policy meant that administrators were constantly on the move, and were therefore usually ignorant both of local languages and custom in their brief official encounters. This situation led to isolated cases of interpreters, office clerks, war veterans, educated young men, and even a Commandant's former cook being appointed to the position of native chief.

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In order to avoid being incorporated into the colonial system, in many cases legitimate village headmen actually disguised themselves in the presence of French officers seeking local chiefs to fulfill their administrative functions. A former administrator in French West Africa, Robert Delavignette recited an experience of visiting a village in Upper Volta where he was introduced to a young chief; in a later encounter he discovered the young man standing behind what was obviously the real chief. Thus he coined the term "straw chiefs," the usage of which became common to denote chiefs of such stature in the French colonies. In his explanation, Delavignette also shed light upon the tiresome administrative duties imposed upon the native authorities:

Chiefs like the one I saw the first time in the village where I learned my lesson are, so to speak, more or less men of straw.....At any demand from the administrative--tax, labour service, recruiting, census, new crops to be tried--the fake chief is put forward. On him will fall the wrath of a hoodwinked administration. The reason for this is that the administration bothers the chiefs too much; it harasses them by perpetually summoning them for meetings; it hustles them with constant demands, exhausts them with requisitions, holds them responsible, on pain of forfeiting their property or even their liberty, for the carrying on of all the orders which it pours out at random. Is it any wonder that the chiefs take refuge in tricks and stratagems? (59)

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Henri Labouret, A la Recherche d'une Politique Indigène, Paris, 1931, p. 38.

59

R. Delavignette, Freedom and Authority in French West Africa, pp. 76-8.

While the duping of the French authorities in the setting up of straw chiefs occasionally succeeded on the village level, according to Delavignette the problem of the *Chefs de canton* was more acute, for they were purely administrative officers whose position was rebuked both by the colonial governors and the subject populations. Whereas the village chiefs could more easily retain the spiritual and sacral nature of their traditional power, the canton chiefs under strict colonial supervision were in a much more difficult position. Delavignette accused his colleagues of creating the following plight of the canton chief:

Instead of entrusting to him certain important tasks--a tax, a main road, a new crop--and judging his achievement on the spot in our tours, we make his authority a travesty by using him as an intermediary in small affairs--provisioning a camp, receiving a vaccinator, collecting witnesses for a petty court case, providing a supply of chickens. We think that because he is a native, we are carrying out a native policy with his assistance, while in fact by putting menial tasks on him we treat him as sub-European. And we tolerate a hypocritical manoeuvre: in theory, the canton chief executes administrative orders; in practice, he resorts to feudal methods to get them carried out. He turns the tax into feudal tribute, the labour service into a *corvée* (forced labour) and cultivation into requisitioning. (60)

Thus as intermediaries between the French and resident Africans, the chiefs played a crucial role in the colonial administration. Their position in society became increasingly unpopular, however, as demands placed on the subject population were filtered through government-appointed "chiefs"--a term which later became symbolic of colonial oppression.

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*Ibid.*

## Obligations of Colonial Subjects

Guineans under the colonial system were subject to a great number of harsh requirements and conditions; among the most significant were direct taxation, two types of requisitioned labour, the native code of law known as the *indigénat*, and military conscription. The imposition of these measures brought about great changes to traditional patterns of agriculture, commerce, migration, and familial and political unity.

Monetary taxation on the local level was one of the first and most disruptive policies introduced by the colonial administration. Instituted in 1897, a head tax of two francs was required of all Guinean subjects above the age of eight. The sums realised by direct taxation were considerable; by 1900 the head tax was the largest contributor to the territorial budget, at 70.8 per cent of government revenue. This percentage fell during the Second World War when produce was demanded to aid the war effort, but nevertheless remained substantial at approximately 46 per cent.<sup>61</sup>

Supplementary to taxes proper, and customary dues and requisitions, West Africans under French rule were subject to an annual labour tax referred to as the *prestation*. The tax involved a fixed number of days per year of unpaid labour performed by male subjects in territorial projects, mainly public works and the maintenance of communications such as roads, bridges, and telegraph lines. The frequency with which the *prestation* was used is demonstrated by the fact that in the Federation nearly all of the roads were built by regional administrators drawing on local labour, although construction work of this nature was forbidden.<sup>62</sup>

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C. Rivière, *Guinea: The Mobilization of a People*, p. 46.

62

R. L. Buell, *The Native Problem in Africa*, vol. I, p. 1039.

Apart from the prestation, the second form of forced labour was the corvée, which was requisitioned paid labour at the disposition of the colonial government and most often used in the territories for larger construction projects, examples being railways and ports. Furthermore, it was common administrative practice in the cercles to draft subjects as porters. And finally, a host of statutes enabled the Commandants de Cercle to forcefully employ labourers, including tax evaders, vagrants, and those imprisoned for the multitude of crimes punishable under the native system of justice.

The code of law often arbitrarily inflicted upon the colonial subjects of French West Africa until the end of the Second World War was known as the indigénat. First decreed in 1887, the indigénat aimed to speed up the conquest where judicial powers were regarded as too slow in terminating African resistance and interference to the imposition of colonial rule. <sup>63</sup> The common penalty for an offense was up to two weeks imprisonment and a fine of one hundred francs, imposed by the Commandant de Cercle without trial. The sentence could be revoked by the Lieutenant-Governor; in practice this was rarely done, and time would normally be already served well before cases could be reviewed. Thus the Commandant de Cercle had considerable means to imprison subjects at will, and it was possible to inflict consecutive and repeated sentences for different or multiple offenses. Included in the broad specifications laid out in 1907, to insult the government was a criminal act; however, the definition of "insult" was left to be determined by the administrator.

The indigénat was again codified in 1924, whereby the number of

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Ibid., p. 1016.

offenses was reduced from approximately fifty to twelve. Nevertheless, through this system of native justice the colonial government legally prevented public meetings and discussions, forbade publication of any kind, checked movements of the population, and benefited from the prisoner labour force. It was reported that the apogee of abuses associated with the indigénat was reached during the Second World War under the Vichy regime, and was subsequently abolished as an integral part of the post-war reforms.

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#### Military Conscription and the War Effort

As well as in France, wartime in Europe brought particular hardship to the French West African colonies. Military conscription, first introduced in 1912, not only caused great depopulation in certain areas, but more importantly deprived the economy of its primary source of manpower capable of meeting the increased production demands of the war effort. Thus the burdens of forced cultivation, selling of agricultural produce below market value to fill requisitions, and shortages and rationing of staple products and imported goods, were

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Among the twelve remaining were: interference with tax collection or prestations; refusal to carry out public works; refusal to submit any information of public interest; committing any act to "weaken respect for" or "abuse the good faith of," the French authority; failure to act as a commissioned porter; and refusal to accept legally circulating French currency. Ibid., p. 1018.

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Victor D. DuBois, "Guinea's Prelude to Independence: Political Activity 1945-58," American University Field Staff Reports: West Africa Series, V, no. 7, 1962, p. 1.

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It is reported that thousands of potential conscripts from every region in Guinea escaped the draft by emigrating across the borders into Portuguese Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Liberia: "entire cantons decamped, and the population of others suddenly halved." Anne Summers and R.W. Johnson, "World War I Conscription and Social Change in Guinea," Journal of African History, XIX, 1, 1978, p. 27.

borne mainly by the elderly, women and children.

The request for large numbers of military conscripts led the French officials to depend heavily upon the native authorities to meet the demand. Chiefs were thus actively encouraged to fill their division quotas, and it was hinted that their positions of power would be strengthened in return for soldiers supplied. Similarly the conscripts were tempted with an advance cash payment of 200 francs, and promises of rewards in the form of higher political and social status, including exemption from prestations. Whether forcefully seized or attracted by the idea of future liberated status, the great majority of the 20,000 to 30,000 soldiers enlisted in Guinea for the First World War were in fact slaves.<sup>67</sup> The contradictory nature of conscription at this time was described by Summers and Johnson:

In a sense, any World War I conscript was a man who had been positively induced not to run away. Any chief, moreover, who had furnished the quota of eligible males for his district, had been given strong incentives to part with the labour power of his locality. The respective inducements held out to conscripts and the agents of conscription were, necessarily, very different, and not always compatible; they highlighted the contradiction between the long-term hopes and short-term needs of colonial policy in this sphere. (68)

Returning home after their service abroad, the war veterans (anciens combattants) were a source of great instability during the interwar period in French Guinea. Cognisant of the liberties enjoyed by French citizens in contrast to their colonial subjects, the anciens combattants led demonstrations and strikes demanding better wages and working conditions throughout the territory. Furthermore, expectations

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Ibid., pp. 25 and 28.

68

Ibid., p. 27.

of civil service employment and the upgrading of their social status were dashed, embittering the veterans and inciting demonstrations of protest and insubordination. As reported by the Governor in 1917:

"They come back demanding a job as an agent or guard. They are always hanging about the Poste, always wearing their military uniforms. They are parasites and get angry when one cannot give them all jobs, claiming that they were promised jobs like this before they left France....Their indiscipline is notorious and we have to intervene continually to restore order." (69)

Territorial police often intervened to quell the disturbances, recalcitrant anciens combattants were arrested, and colonial rule accordingly was "tightened up" after 1920.<sup>70</sup> The situation of unrest worsened under the subsequent Vichy regime and Free French administration during the Second World War.

Both wartime eras were characterised by excessive demands and consequent suffering imposed upon the colonial subjects of West Africa. Production targets were set higher than pre-war levels in each district, canton and village, despite the fact that military conscription deprived villages of the mainstay of their labour force. Henceforth draconian measures were introduced to ensure the fulfillment of quotas, accompanied by a marked increase in forced labour. A popular illustration of the absurdity of requisitioning for the Second World War effort was depicted by Richard-Molard:

One district is required to produce so many tons of liana rubber, even though no liana grows in the territory. The native is therefore forced to travel on foot, sometimes over long distances, to buy rubber elsewhere, regardless of cost. He must sell this to the Commandant de Cercle at the

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Cited in *ibid.*, p. 28.

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G. Wesley Johnson, "African political activity in French West Africa," in J.F.A. Adayi and M. Crowder, eds., *History of West Africa*, pp. 544-5.

official price, which is several times lower than the purchasing price, in order to escape the hand of "justice." Another district is ordered to produce honey. None is available. The Commandant is punished for telegraphing his superiors "AGREE TO HONEY. STOP. SEND BEES." (71)

The fall of France and installation of the Vichy regime in 1940 was generally accepted by the colonial administration serving in the West African territories. In Equatorial Africa, however, the Governor of Chad, Félix Eboué, rallied to General Charles de Gaulle and the cause of the Free French, and within a few weeks of minimal fighting the Free French "re-took" possession of these tropical colonies and established Brazzaville as the capital of the French Empire. A similar but unsuccessful attempt was made to oust Vichy loyalists from West Africa, bombarding the Dakar harbour in September 1940. Governor-General Boisson of the West African Federation remained in the Vichy camp until the Anglo-American landing in North Africa in November 1942, when he proclaimed his allegiance to the Allies, the Free French and de Gaulle.<sup>72</sup>

While discrimination and arbitrary punitive justice were rampant under the Vichy regime in West Africa, the Free French movement brought the Federation into the war, intensifying economic hardship. The French National Liberation Committee (CFLN)<sup>73</sup> believed that France's honour was tied to her contribution of raw materials and provisions as well as armed forces. Hence further requisitioning of strategic raw materials

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J. Richard-Molard, Afrique Occidentale Française, p. 167.

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Boisson's attempt at reconciliation with the French Provisional Government failed, however, and he was deposed and imprisoned as a traitor where he died before being brought to trial.

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The Comité Française de Libération Nationale (CFLN) was installed in Algiers in June 1943.

(such as rubber) and foodstuffs was introduced as part of the "war effort" in West Africa.

Along with the increased demands to fuel the war effort, the changeover from Vichy to Free French control in West Africa brought new administrators, and subsequently a re-evaluation of policy and colonial doctrine. In consideration of the confusion and suffering experienced in the empire during the war, and grateful for its support, as well as the growing American influence and that of the Atlantic Charter, the French Provisional Government at Algiers convoked a Consultative Assembly, and convened two conferences to discuss a new colonial policy and the future of the French Empire.<sup>74</sup> The recommendations emanating from the Brazzaville Conference were the basis of fundamental post-war reform and signalled a new era of colonialism in the Federation of West Africa.

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In December 1943 the Commissioner of Colonies René Pléven summoned a "mixed Franco-Malagasy Commission" at Tananarive, and in January 1944 he called together the Brazzaville Conference.

## CHAPTER II

### Post-War Reforms and the Emergence of Political Parties

The Conférence Africaine Française, which met in Brazzaville from 20 January to 8 February 1944, heralded a turning-point in French colonial history. Motivating forces behind the conference were many, including sincere gratitude for the African commitment to the Free French movement; fear of a disintegrating Empire at the loss of Syria and Lebanon, and revolt in Indochina; the perceived necessity to reunite the Empire in order for France to reclaim the status of a world power; growing international pressure in reference to the inalienable right of mankind to self-determination embodied in the Atlantic Charter war aims; and the potential economic threat of capitalist expansion into former French strongholds. The defined objective of the Brazzaville conference was "to determine on what practical bases it would be possible progressively to found a French community, incorporating the territories of Black Africa."<sup>1</sup>

Presided by Commissioner René Pleven, the French African Conference gathered together 70 colonial administrators, trade unionists, and politicians in order to map out post-war reform and policy in the overseas territories.<sup>2</sup> It is noteworthy that despite the recurrent theme of increased participation by Africans in the management of their internal affairs, there were no African delegates present at the conference. The

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<sup>1</sup>

Charles de Gaulle, Mémoires d'Espoir, vol. II, Paris, 1970, p. 183.

<sup>2</sup>

French Guinea was not represented as the post of Governor was vacant until the arrival of Jacques Fourneau on 25 March 1944.

first resolution (unanimously passed) stated clearly the extent to which this liberalisation of policy could be conceived:

The aims of the civilising mission achieved by France in the colonies exclude any idea of autonomy, any possibility of development outside of the French Empire; the eventual constitution, even in the distant future, of self-governments in the colonies is to be rejected. (3)

Within the boundaries of the Empire, however, far-reaching social and economic reforms were proposed, the most salient being the suppression of the indigénat, the eventual cessation of forced labour, and the establishment of a code of workers' rights including the freedom to form trade unions. Additionally outlined in detail were reforms pertaining to education, the justice system, medical assistance, and even the rights of women. Finally, the conference recommended a policy of increased Africanisation in the organisation and administration of agriculture, industry, public works, and civil service.

Politically there was disagreement on whether the new Republic should be federal or centralised in form. The resultant resolution called for the creation of a federal parliament, "guaranteeing the intangible unity of the French world."<sup>4</sup> On the local level the territories were to evolve politically through administrative decentralisation, aided by the proposed creation of district and regional native councils, as well as representative assemblies comprised of both Africans and Europeans elected by universal suffrage. While the local councils were to function as consultative bodies, the territorial

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Cited in Joseph-Roger de Benoist, L'Afrique Occidentale Française de la Conférence de Brazzaville (1944) à l'Indépendance (1960), Dakar, 1982, p. 25.

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Dorothy Shipley White, Black Africa and De Gaulle, Pennsylvania State University Press, 1979, p. 125.

assemblies were also eventually to be deliberative over matters such as new services and the budget. Furthermore it was recognised that the colonies should be granted representation in the forthcoming Constituent Assembly. These last two recommendations underline the real significance of the Brazzaville conference; firstly the democratisation of local political institutions marking the initial step towards the management of internal affairs; and secondly, parliamentary representation in the metropole brought emergent African politicians directly into the French government.

Preceding the liberation of Paris and the reconstitution of the French government, the Provisional Government in Algiers began implementing a number of the intended post-war reforms. Between February and August a series of decrees applied a number of the Brazzaville recommendations, among which were the reorganisation of agricultural and medical services, revision of the colonial administrative and taxation systems, reform of the native penal code, and finally authorisation for the formation of trade unions in the overseas territories. The interim government, headed by General Charles de Gaulle from the liberation of Paris in August 1944 until the election of the first Constituent Assembly in October 1945, functioned essentially as a "dictatorship by consent."<sup>5</sup>

#### **The First Constituent Assembly**

In accordance with the Brazzaville recommendation, overseas representatives were elected to the Constitutional Commission. With the exception

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De Gaulle remained in office until disagreement over the constitution led to his abrupt resignation in January 1946. Gordon Wright, *France in Modern Times 1760 to the Present*, London, 1962, p. 529.

of Senegal and to a certain extent the Ivory Coast, the French African colonies were politically largely unprepared for the October elections. Apart from Senegal, a double-college system was instituted in all the African colonies, whereby French "citizens" and colonial "subjects" voted on separate polls, electing their respective candidates. Six West African deputies made the journey to Paris to participate in a total<sup>6</sup> Assembly of 586.

During the resistance years the French Communist Party had made a dramatic political comeback, registering almost a million members at the close of the war. Three main political parties dominated the first Constituent Assembly--the Communists, Socialists, and Mouvement<sup>7</sup> Républicain Populaire (MRP). Apart from these main blocs there were the Radicals, the Conservatives (sometimes loosely organised as Independent Republicans), and two former Resistance groups--the Union Démocratique et Sociale de la Résistance (UDSR) and the Mouvement Unifié de la<sup>8</sup> Résistance (MUR). Although the Communists numerically were the

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This number included Lamine Guèye, elected to the first-college due to Senegal's privileged citizen status. The West African second-college delegates were Léopold Senghor (Senegal-Mauritania), Félix Houphouët-Boigny (Ivory Coast-Upper Volta), Fily Dabo Sissoko (Soudan-Niger), Yacine Diallo (Guinea), and Sourou Migan Apithy (Togo-Dahomey).

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The Communist party in France was the Parti Communiste Français (PCF), the Socialist party the Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière (SFIO). The MRP emerged soon after the liberation out of the Christian-Democrat tradition of the Resistance, was supported by the Catholic church, and became France's lead party in 1946. Jean Suret-Canale, Afrique Noire: De la Colonisation aux Indépendances 1945-1960, Paris, 1972, p. 35.

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The UDSR combined the non-Communist wing of the Resistance movement which was normally aligned to the Socialist bloc. Supporters of de Gaulle, one-third of the UDSR delegates in the first Assembly were French colonials from overseas areas. The Communist Resistance force formed the MUR, subsequently known as the Union Républicaine et Résistante (URR), and voted regularly with the PCF.

predominant force in the Assembly, any coalition between two of the main parties would form a majority, and therefore it was the Socialists who actually held the controlling influence on the outcome of deliberation. It was held that de Gaulle's realisation, that the Socialists were not prepared to help the MRP build the kind of Fourth Republic that he envisioned, was the reason behind his decision to relinquish power in January 1946.<sup>9</sup> Throughout the remainder of the first Constituent Assembly the Provisional Government was made up of a broad left-wing coalition cabinet headed by the Socialist Félix Guin. Former chairman of the Colonial Commission in the Assembly, Marius Moutet became Minister of la France d'Outre-Mer (FOM) as the term "colonial" was henceforth discarded from government vocabulary.<sup>10</sup>

The undisputed doyen of the West African deputies was Lamine Guèye, who hoped that he would be able to unite the others in a bloc affiliated to the SFIO, of which he was a long-time member. His efforts were somewhat fruitful, as fellow Senegalese Léopold Senghor, Guinean Yacine Diallo, and Sourou Migan Apithy from Dahomey-Togo joined the Socialist group. Historically the prestigious position and privileges bestowed upon the Federation's capital were resented by its richest territory, the Ivory Coast. Not wanting to play second fiddle to Guèye, plus the consideration of the aid he had received from Communist administrators and teachers in the Ivory Coast, led Félix Houphouët-Boigny to join the MUR in the Constituent Assembly.<sup>11</sup> The remaining deputy, Fily Dabo

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<sup>9</sup> Gordon Wright, The Reshaping of French Democracy, London, 1950, pp. 131-2.

<sup>10</sup> Likewise former colonies became Territoires d'Outre-Mer (TOM).

<sup>11</sup> Houphouët was a wealthy Baoulé chief and plantation owner, who with the help of the Communist head of the Governor's cabinet had founded the influential trade union Syndicat Agricole Africain in 1944. Ruth Schachter Morgenthau, Political Parties in French speaking West Africa, Oxford, 1964, p. 166.

Sissoko representing Soudan-Niger, also joined the MUR.

Although active in the overseas colonies, the PCF did not attempt to recruit African members directly, instead it encouraged them to vote with the Communist bloc in affiliated organisations.<sup>12</sup> It is true, however, that the French Communists or their sympathisers welcomed the African deputies in Paris and offered them a wide variety of services and advice, ranging from sight-seeing tours to lessons in parliamentary punctuation.<sup>13</sup> Apart from the hospitality and good will displayed by the Communists to the newcomers, a parliamentary alliance with the dominant political party in France seemed strategically desirable to the African deputies at this time.

Despite the fact that the first Assembly was constituent in nature, it did have legislative powers and passed a number of notable laws reforming colonial policy. One of Moutet's first projects as Overseas Minister was the abolition of the native justice system (*indigénat*), which was finalised by decree on 20 February 1946. Forced labour was terminated by a law of 11 April named the *Loi Houphouët-Boigny* after its sponsor, who henceforth gained enormous prestige throughout the Federation. Freedom of assembly and association were granted in French West Africa by decrees in March and April. Economic policy was significantly

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At no time did the Communist Party create sections in the West African territories. For more information on the PCF doctrine on colonial questions see: François Fejtö, *The French Communist Party and the Crisis of International Communism*, Cambridge Mass., 1967; Grégoire Madjarian, *La question coloniale et la politique du parti communiste français 1944-1947*, Paris, 1977; and Jacob Moneta, *La politique du parti communiste français dans la question coloniale 1920-1963*, Paris, 1971.

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Edward Mortimer, *France and the Africans 1944-1960: A Political History*, London, 1969, p. 73.

altered with the creation of the Fonds d'Investissement pour le Développement Economique et Social (FIDES) on 12 April. The Provisional Government under de Gaulle had previously created an African currency, the franc CFA (Colonies Françaises d'Afrique) worth 1.7 and later 2 French francs. FIDES operated essentially as an investment fund in the form of long-term development loans with an interest rate of one percent. The importance of this act was twofold: firstly it demonstrated benevolence and gratitude of France toward her colonies, and recognition of the need for massive investments and coordinated planning; and secondly the investments not only contributed to the rapid advancement of infrastructure and communication networks, medical and educational services, and local industrialisation, but increasingly trained and employed Africans in the economic sector.

The Constitution that emerged from the first Assembly reflected the liberal tradition behind the prevailing coalition. The main dispute centred upon whether the Fourth Republic should be governed by a single-chamber legislature and minimal executive branch, as favoured by the Communists and Socialists, or a two-chamber legislature and strong executive as desired by the MRP. Similarly the major issue of debate concerning the new French Union was whether its Council would be a consultative body, as proposed by the Left, or a true legislative chamber as hoped by the Right. In both cases the Leftist majority carried the vote, leaving the MRP and Conservatives dissatisfied with the final text of the April Constitution.

Embodied in the text that was narrowly approved by the Constitutional Commission were clauses that would have radically transformed French colonial policy under the proposed Fourth Republic. The draft

Constitution declared that all inhabitants of the French Union were citizens and would eventually be entitled to vote. It also began with a Declaration of the Rights of Man, whereby citizens of the Union were to enjoy equal political, economic and social freedoms and benefits. Furthermore, although the federal nature of the African colonies was not specifically dealt with, territorial assemblies elected by direct universal suffrage were to be created, and African representation in the single-chamber legislature was assured. Finally, and most surprising, contained in Article 41 of the April Constitution was the following provision:

France forms with the overseas territories on the one hand, and with the associated states on the other, a Union freely consented to. (14)

The concept of free consent begged the question whether a territory might conceivably refuse to enter the Union or possibly later secede.

The April Constitution was presented to the French citizens by way of a referendum scheduled for 5 May 1946. African "subjects" were not yet "citizens" and therefore not entitled to vote. Acting on Pierre Cot's suggestion that the Assembly pre-empt the Constitutional referendum by an ordinary law granting citizenship to the colonial subjects, Lamine Guèye quickly drew up the bill proposal which became known as the Loi Lamine Guèye which was passed on 7 May, just two days after the key vote. The MRP had already decided to lead the fight for the rejection of the Constitution, and it was clear that overseas participation was likely to sway the vote in its favour. The referendum of 5 May rejected the April Constitution by 10.5 to 9.5 million votes;<sup>15</sup> consequently registered voters were called back to the polls in June to

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Cited in R. Schachter Morgenthau, Political Parties, p. 42.

elect the second French Constituent Assembly of 1946.

### The Second Constituent Assembly

The defeat of the April Constitution marked a resurgence of conservatism in metropolitan politics and opinion. The elections of 2 June not only registered the largest voter turnout on record, but also moved the MRP into the position of France's leading political party, with the Right-wing bloc controlling an outright majority of seats in the second Assembly. The Communists were placed second, while the Socialists were the biggest losers; this time an alliance of the two blocs would not automatically produce a majority vote. In the light of the shift in balance of power the government was re-shuffled, and MRP nationalist Georges Bidault replaced Gouin as Prime Minister.

The elections in the overseas territories reflected to what extent the inhabitants approved of the proceedings of the first Assembly. As a general rule, wherever the European voters held the electoral majority the April Constitution was rejected; where the native franchise dominated, the vote was in its favour. The elections to the second Assembly were a testimony to this difference of opinion: three out of the five first-college delegates from the West African territories were replaced, while all of the second-college representatives were re-  
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elected with overwhelming majorities. Additionally, whereas the bulk

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E. Mortimer, *France and the Africans*, p. 82.

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Lamine Guèye retained his seat as did the MRP candidate in Dahomey. The Ivory Coast-Upper Volta representative changed from a Radical to an affiliated MRP. The Soudan-Niger seat went from UDSR to MRP, and in Guinea from UDSR to SFIO. All first-college shifts were toward the political Right. By contrast the African delegates gained immense popularity in the TOM, enjoying full credit for colonial reforms passed by the first Assembly.

of the colonial delegates had occupied a rather weak position, aligned to the Leftist coalition in the first Assembly, they were split in the second. The African representatives remained on the Left (now in the minority), while the European overseas deputies became a necessary and thus powerful contingent of the conservative majority.

The clauses pertaining to the French Union were passed unanimously in the first Constituent Assembly. The rejection of the April Constitution was interpreted as a reaction against a strong single-chamber parliament, motivated by fear of Communist domination, and therefore it was initially assumed that the outline of the Union would remain intact in the second draft.<sup>17</sup> The colonialists, however, in a group known as the Etats Généraux de la Colonisation Française,<sup>18</sup> joined together to oppose the liberal concessions granted to the overseas territories by the first Assembly. The main arguments of the Etats Généraux were that steps toward local autonomy would foster nationalism and lead to separatism, and given the fact that the population of France was 40 million, compared to 60 million overseas inhabitants, equal voting rights and parliamentary representation would render France essentially a "colony of her own colonies." In consideration of these grievances the MRP motioned to discard the April texts on the French Union and to begin preparation of a new project.

In the face of a consolidating Right, threatening the retraction of liberal measures designed and envisioned by the first Assembly in regard

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G. Wright, The Reshaping of French Democracy, pp. 183, 200.

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Founded in Douala in September 1945, the group was reunited in Paris in well-publicised meetings during July-August 1946.

to the French Union, the African delegates attempted to form an independent "intergroup" to defend their interests.<sup>19</sup> Initiated by Lamine Guèye, this non-European group for non-European concerns concentrated its efforts and wielded influence particularly within the Overseas Commission in the Assembly. Both the MRP and the intergroup submitted projects for the framework of the French Union. The fundamental differences between the two proposals were the source of bitter debate among the African delegates, the European colonial deputies, and the leading government officials of the second Constituent Assembly.<sup>20</sup> The text which eventually emerged from these negotiations was said to have "pleased neither European overseas nor African deputies."<sup>21</sup>

The proposals for the French Union were contained in Title VIII of the constitutional draft. The African delegates had reduced their minimum demands to two: full French citizenship and the adoption of a single electoral college in the overseas territories. When the debate of Title VIII opened in the Assembly, the non-European deputies walked out in protest, and later offered their collective resignations to the government. Last minute concessions were made, whereby citizenship was obscurely granted to inhabitants of the overseas territories "on the same basis as French nationals," and the design of the electoral system

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"They were firmly decided to fight for the maintenance of the rights already acquired by the inhabitants of the overseas territories in the Constitution of 19 April 1946, which represent in their opinion a minimum." Lamine Guèye, *Itinéraire Africain*, Paris, 1966, pp. 159-60.

20

The President of the Commission was Vincent Auriol (SFIO), the Reporter Paul Coste-Floret (MRP), and the Overseas Minister remained Marius Moutet (SFIO).

21

R. Schachter Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, p. 48.

was omitted from the Constitution, leaving it under organic law and therefore adjustable.<sup>22</sup> Although the disgruntled deputies did return to their seats, satisfaction was far from achieved.

The French Union, as depicted by the October draft of the second Assembly's Constitution, consisted of the Republic on one hand, and the Associated States and Territories on the other. Overseas departments and territories (including AOF) were included in the Republic, while the Associated States (such as Morocco and Tunisia) and Associated Territories (the trusteeship territories such as Togo) were part of the French Union but not Republic. Furthermore the citizenship granted to former subjects was to the French Union, not to the Republic, which meant the retention of customary versus French private law and differing voter franchise.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless representation was granted to the overseas territories in nearly all levels of French government. Within the West African territories Conseils Généraux were created, however the clause in the April Constitution stating that the assemblies were to be elected by universal suffrage was deleted. The General Councils in turn sent representatives to the federal Grand Conseil located in Dakar. Finally, the overseas territories elected deputies to the French National Assembly (parliament), senators to the Council of the Republic (senate), and assemblymen to the newly created Assembly of the French Union.

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22

Yves Bénot, Les députés africains au Palais Bourbon de 1914 à 1958, Paris, 1989, p. 71.

23

With the exception of Senegal, the double-college electoral system was maintained in local elections, except for deputies to the National Assembly, who were elected from a single-college electorate throughout AOF.

The referendum for the draft Constitution of the second Constituent Assembly took place on 13 October 1946. Voter turnout epitomised the disillusionment felt by Frenchmen and former "subjects" alike. Nine million citizens voted in favour of the new draft, eight million against it, and eight million registered voters did not even go to the polls, recording the highest abstention rate since 1881.<sup>24</sup> In the West African territories the abstention rate was slightly higher than that of the May referendum, but the actual vote was quite similar, with Senegal's largest (and predominantly African) electorate carrying a landslide "yes" vote, overshadowing the slight European majorities rejecting the Constitution in the rest of the Federation.<sup>25</sup>

#### Organs of the Fourth Republic and Overseas Representation

As previously stated, the October Constitution divided the former French Empire into the Republic on the one hand and the Associated States and Territories on the other, all together forming the French Union. The former African colonies were renamed overseas territories and included within the statutes of the Republic. Representation of the overseas territories was therefore allotted in the elected bodies of both the French Republic and Union. The citizenship bestowed on the former African subjects, however, was to the French Union rather than the Republic, as differentiated by the term citoyens de statut local versus citoyens de statut Français.

The law of 5 October 1946 conferred electoral rights on citoyens de statut local who met specific qualifications, including: chiefs,

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24

G. Wright, The Reshaping of French Democracy, p. 227.

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ANS 20G 46, "Le Référendum du 13 Octobre 1946," pp. 3-5.

notables évolués (as defined locally), ex-servicemen, holders of decorations, government employees and those possessing work-permits of authorised establishments, licensed traders and planters, property owners, holders of hunting and driving licenses, literates in French or Arabic, and members and former members of native tribunals, local assemblies, trade unions, and co-operatives.<sup>26</sup> Overall the franchise in French West Africa thus represented a very small fraction and predominantly urban sector of the population, as depicted in Table 1.

Table 1: AOF Population and Franchise, 1946.

Territory	Population 1946		Franchise November 1946*			
	African	Non-African	Registered	% pop.	Voting	%
Dahomey	1,454,800	2,200	57,355	3.9	34,535	60
Guinea	2,117,100	6,900	131,309	6.2	96,102	73
Ivory Coast	4,044,500	10,500	187,904	4.6	127,670	68
Niger	2,166,470	1,530	43,760	2.0	21,288	49
Soudan	3,791,200	5,800	160,464	4.2	95,162	59
Upper Volta#	3,067,700	2,300	140,339	4.6	87,318	62
Mauritania	495,230	700	16,271	3.3	9,611	59
Senegal	1,856,900	33,100	192,681	10.2	131,167	67
Total AOF°	15,926,900	63,100	789,744	4.9	515,535	65

\*Election data to National Assembly 10 November 1946.  
#Figures for Upper Volta are after its reconstitution in 1948, prior to which it was divided between the Ivory Coast, Niger, and Soudan and reflected in their respective totals. Franchise and election data are from 27 June 1945.  
°Totals excluding figures for Upper Volta.

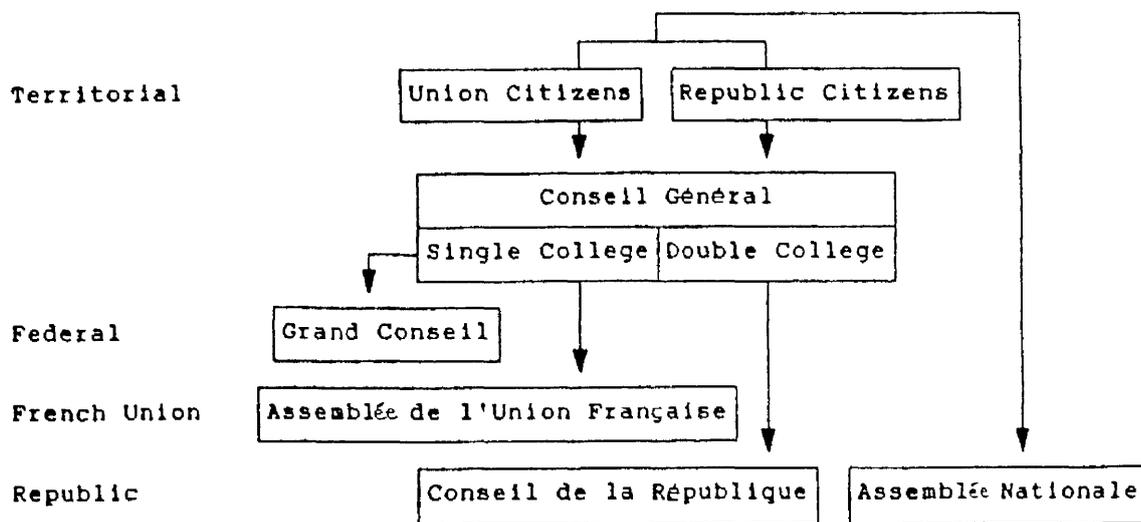
The only occurrence of Union and Republic citizens voting on a common roll was for deputies to the National Assembly in Paris. Otherwise the double-college electoral system was enforced, although indirect voting in lesser assemblies for representatives in higher bodies was

26

Kenneth Robinson, "Political Development in French West Africa," in Calvin W. Stillman, ed., *Africa in the Modern World*, Chicago, 1955, pp. 161-3.

sometimes by a single electorate. Figure 1 depicts the different levels of overseas representation and the way in which candidates were elected. Elections to the territorial Conseil Général were by the double-college system. From the General Council representatives were elected to the federal Grand Conseil and the Union Assembly by way of a single-college vote. To ensure European representation in the Council of the Republic, the double-college was maintained for the election of senators by the territorial assembly.

Figure 1: Levels of and Election to Representative Bodies.



Between 20 and 50 councillors were elected to the local assemblies on separate polls for first and second-college voters.<sup>27</sup> Presided by the colonial Governor, the main powers of the Conseil Général centred upon the territorial budget, first contributing to its proposal and second overseeing its allocation and disposal. Matters under the Council's jurisdiction included the territorial funding of public works, infra-

<sup>27</sup>

Refer to Table 2.

structure, health, education, the allocation of scholarships, and the regulation of taxation rates and standards of collection. Moreover, the Council had to be consulted about a host of territorial concerns, such as the organisation of local administration and education, development plans, land concessions, and regulations concerning hunting, fishing, mining and forestry. On the federal level the Grand Conseil functioned with similar powers to those of the territorial bodies, albeit with a wider scope and a coordinating function in matters which involved more than one territory or French West Africa as a whole. The President of the Grand Council was the former Governor-General, renamed High-Commissioner. Five representatives from each territorial assembly were elected to the Grand Council at Federation headquarters in Dakar.

Representation in the Assembly of the French Union was also via indirect elections held on a common roll in the General Councils. However, as shown in Table 2, the number of Assemblymen allotted varied among the territories. Although initially envisioned to function as a federal parliament, and composed equally of metropolitan and overseas representatives, the Union Assembly, located at Versailles, operated purely as an advisory body whose resolutions were for the most part ignored by the stronger organs of the Fourth Republic in Paris.

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Membership fluctuated between 150 and 240, depending upon whether the Associated States optionally chose to participate.

Table 2: Territorial Representation in Assemblies.

Territory	Conseil Général				Grand Conseil	Assemblée Nationale		Conseil de la République				Assemblée de l'Union Française
	1946		1948			1946	1948	1946		1948		
	* 1st	2nd	1st	2nd				1st	2nd	1st	2nd	
Dahomey	12	18	12	18	5	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
Guinea	16	24	16	24	5	2	2	1	1	1	1	4
Ivory Coast	20	30	18	*27	5	3	2	2	3	1	2	4
Niger	10	20	10	20	5	1	2	1	1	1	1	3
Soudan	20	30	20	30	5	3	3	1	3	1	3	5
Upper Volta	..	..	10	40	5	..	3	..	..	1	2	5
Mauritania	6	14	6	14	5	1	1	1		1		1
Senegal	50		50		5	2	2	3		3		3
Total AOF					40	13	16	19		20		27

\*Denotes double-college electoral system.  
 \*The Ivory Coast temporarily lost 5 representatives to the Upper Volta.

Sources: J.-R. de Benoist, *Afrique Occidentale Française*, Annex pp. 520-45;  
 K. Robinson, "Political Development in French West Africa," p. 162.

The two main bodies of the French Republic were the Assemblée Nationale and the Conseil de la République, otherwise referred to as parliament and senate. The National Assembly, composed of 618 members, had sole legislative sovereignty, including the powers to overthrow the cabinet and to initiate constitutional reform. Made up of 315 senators elected by indirect suffrage, the Council of the Republic could introduce bills for discussion in the National Assembly. However its only real power in legislative matters was the suspensive veto (filibuster) over laws with the exception of the budget. Apart from these institutions the executive branch consisted of the President of the Republic (equally ex officio President of the French Union), and his appointed cabinet who together formed the Council of Ministers.

The overseas territories including the West African Federation were placed under the Ministry of la France d'Outre-Mer (FOM). While the parliament had supreme legislative authority in the Fourth Republic,

usually the laws passed pertaining to the French Union were purposely broad to allow for application by decree either by the Overseas Ministry, or orders of the federal High-Commissioner and territorial Governors. With the power to rule by decree, aided by the tendency of Fourth Republic governments to be of short duration, the Overseas Ministry operated with a relatively free hand in colonial government.<sup>29</sup>

#### Political and Trade Union Development in French West Africa

A number of concurrent factors contributed to the growth of political consciousness, association, and parties in the West African territories. Within the federal structure of AOF, administrators and civil servants were frequently transferred from one territory to another. Additionally the educational system was organised on a grand scale, with central higher institutions where students from the different territories came together to study. Metropolitan party politics infiltrated into the African colonies in the era of the Popular Front government and increasingly following the Second World War. The Communists were the predominant early activists in West Africa, setting up local study groups and encouraging affiliates to Communist organisations. A significant effect of the liberalising post-war reforms was the burgeoning of trade unions, which quickly developed into a strong political and unifying force throughout the Federation. Finally, the creation of local assemblies under the Fourth Republic, the participation of overseas representatives in metropolitan government, and the widening electoral franchise together formulated an environment conducive to rapid political development.

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Fourth Republic cabinets lasted on average six months. The only new obstacle facing the Overseas Ministry in the post-war era was the 1947 requirement that the Overseas Ministry consult the Assembly of the French Union, whose advice however was in no way binding. E. Mortimer, *France and the Africans*, pp. 102-3.

Dating from the late nineteenth century, the main centre for civil service training of colonial subjects was the School for Sons of Chiefs and Interpreters. The aim of the school was to prepare native intermediaries for administrative positions, familiarising them with the necessary French language skills and bureaucratic procedures. <sup>30</sup> Located in the capital of Senegal at the time, Saint Louis, the school underwent sporadic changes in nature and composition, eventually giving way to the Dakar Ecole Normale William Ponty. Ponty became the principal secondary school of the Federation, and its students the educated elite of French West Africa. The majority of emergent West African political leaders were Ponty-trained; a number of them had earned the prestigious title of <sup>31</sup> major, denoting head of the class. Recruited by general exam, places at Ponty were strictly limited. It was estimated that less than 2,000 students graduated from the school between 1919 and 1945. Nevertheless, the importance of this institution and the elite which it created was significant, as illustrated by Hodgkin and Schachter:

At Ponty the student body built up connections which transcended territorial or ethnic boundaries. They mastered the French language and learned to evaluate European ideas. They conceived of themselves as Africans rather than as Ivory Coasters or Baule tribesmen. For the rest of his life a Ponty major enjoyed a status which enabled him to deal with his fellow political leaders with special confidence. (32)

Thus Ponty became a forum for interterritorial discussion of the

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The students were also instructed in courses of French history, geography and hygiene. R. Buell, The Native Problem in Africa, vol. I, p. 993.

31

In the Constituent Assemblies Houphouët, Sissoko and Diallo were graduates; Lamine Guèye had briefly been a Ponty instructor. In Guinea the first prominent political leaders were all Ponty men: Yacine Diallo, Mamba Sano, Madeira Keita and Barry Diawadou. Later party activists included two Ponty majors--Diallo Saifoulaye and Diallo Telli.

32

Thomas Hodgkin and Ruth Schachter, "French-Speaking West Africa in Transition," International Conciliation, No. 528, May 1960, p. 385.

colonial situation and a base which fostered coordinated efforts to work towards an improved standard of living in French Africa.

African civil servants, as products of the federal schools, were kept mobile by the administration and shifted often from one territory to the next. This turn-table (*rouage*) policy actually helped the native civil servants to deepen their understanding of regional problems, while at the same time aspiring politicians were able to gain exposure and establish ties transcending territorial boundaries. Although the rotating and federal nature of the civil service aided the development of interterritorial parties and unions, the transfer system was also used by the French administration as a means to combat the growth of such groups by dispersing potentially dangerous political elements. Transfers of political activists to remote areas, due to their local dealings and growing influence, were common in the early phase of West African political development.

Although the Socialists established an early foothold in Senegal, elsewhere in French West Africa it was the Communists that actively pursued association with Africans and offered assistance and guidance in the development of indigenous political institutions. French Communists and their sympathisers held various posts in the colonial administration such as officers, teachers, and technicians, since the Popular Front government. Of notable influence were the Communist teachers at Ponty and the upper primary and vocational schools of Bamako, Conakry, and Dakar. During the war the Communists gained enormous prestige as both heroes and martyrs of the resistance movement, distributing their propaganda in African circles. First created in Algiers, the Comité d'Etudes Franco-Africain (CEFA) with sections in the colonies comprised

predominantly of Ponty intellectuals, came under Communist influence in  
34  
its discussions of post-war relations. Out of these committees study  
groups known as Groupes d'Etudes Communistes (GECs) emerged in the major  
West African cities: Abidjan, Bamako, Bobo-Dioulasso, Conakry, and  
Dakar. The organisation of the GECs and the impact of Communist theory  
on African political thought were explained by a participant:

The GECs were study groups created and animated by Communist  
or Communist sympathiser French intellectuals following the  
Second World War, where simplified courses of Marxism were  
given to African intellectuals, trade unionists, and  
professionals. The prestige which encircled the PCF was  
great: "first party" leading the resistance to the fascist  
German invaders, then member of the French Government. Its  
theories and slogans were powerfully attractive to most of  
the African intellectuals and workers. All believed that the  
war had sounded the death knell of colonialism. In these  
conditions, the intellectuals and workers thought that the  
GECs dispensed "the theory" of happiness, liberty, and  
dignity of man. (35)

Aside from encouraging and directing study groups of Marxist-  
Leninist orientation, the Communists in West Africa were also heavily  
involved in the post-war trade union movement. As aforementioned, the  
Provisional Government by a decree of 7 August 1944 authorised trade  
unions in the colonies. The largest group of labour unions in France was  
the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT), which had been sending  
representatives to Sub-Saharan Africa since 1943. As the Communists grew  
rapidly in strength immediately following the war, by 1946 they held 80  
36  
per cent of the top positions in the CGT. In February of the same  
year, with the support of the Overseas Minister, a CGT delegation

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34

Virginia Thompson and Richard Adloff, French West Africa, London,  
1958, p. 85.

35

Doudou Guèye, Sur les Sentiers du Temple: ma rencontre avec Félix  
Houphouët-Boigny, Ventabren, 1975, p. 29.

36

G. Wright, The Reshaping of French Democracy, p. 67.

visited AOF and called a conference in Dakar of trade union representatives throughout the Federation. The objective of the conference was to unite European and African workers together "with a view to create a single powerful trade unionism in AOF."<sup>37</sup> Indigenous labour unions were grouped and paired with their metropolitan counterparts within the CGT. The advantages of such affiliation were numerous, including the attainment of funding, equipment, organisational and technical assistance, and in the words of Georges Martens, "they (African unions) were assured of political support in the bosom of the French government."<sup>38</sup> One outcome of this conference was the creation of the Union des Syndicats Confédérés de Guinée (USCG). The USCG was headed by five Europeans and five Africans; one of each was sent in 1947 to represent the union at the Twenty-seventh CGT Congress held in Dakar.<sup>39</sup>

In an effort to combat the Communist CGT, local sections of the Christian Confédération Française des Travailleurs Chrétiens (CFTC)<sup>40</sup> trade union were created in West Africa in 1946. When the Communists lost support and left the French government in 1947, the non-Communist wing of the CGT split off to form the Force Ouvrière (FO) officially constituted in April 1948 and henceforth favoured by the colonial

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37

J.-R. de Benoist, L'Afrique Occidentale Française, pp. 131-2.

38

Georges Martens, "Le syndicalisme en Afrique Occidentale d'expression française: de 1945 à 1960," Le Mois en Afrique, part I, 178-9, October/November 1980, p. 79.

39

The two delegates were Maurice Guignouard and Sékou Touré. Claude Rivière, "Les partis politiques guinéens avant l'indépendance," Revue Française d'Etudes Politiques Africaines, No. 107, November 1974, p. 64.

40

In Guinea the CFTC, headed by David Soumah, received the reluctant support of the bishop of Conakry Monseigneur Raymond Lerouge. C. Rivière, Guinea: The Mobilization of a People, p. 55.

administration. Nevertheless Communist influence remained predominant in West African trade unionism until 1956, when the African labour movement opted for their independence and broke all ties with metropolitan affiliations. It will be shown later that, particularly in the case of Guinea, trade unions were a decisive force in local political organisation and interterritorial coordination, protest and the attainment of significant labour reform, and the emergence of political leaders.

Finally, as concisely summarised by Léo Hamon,

The origin of African political life is parliamentary. It was not the party that preceded the elected candidate. It was the elected candidate that preceded the party. (41)

The inclusion of African representatives in metropolitan bodies of the Fourth Republic, and allowance of political association in the territories, served "to induce or to provoke nationalist leaders to convert their movements into political parties," and the introduction of the electoral franchise made it "technically possible for parties to seek power constitutionally." Thus while numerous social and economic factors contributed to the pace and direction of political development in French West Africa, the true precipitant was the constitutional reform enabling elected representatives to participate in the shaping of future French-African relations.

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Léo Hamon, "Introduction à l'étude des partis politiques de l'Afrique Française," Revue Juridique et Politique d'Outre-Mer, Avril-Juin 1959, p. 154. See also Maurice Duverger, Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State, London, 1955; James Coleman, "The emergence of African political parties" in Grove Haines, ed., Africa Today, Baltimore, 1955; and Dmitri G. Lavroff, Les Partis Politiques en Afrique Noire, Paris, 1970.

42

J. Coleman, "The emergence of African political parties," pp. 234-5.

## Political Associations and Elections in Guinea

The growth of political organisations in Guinea was directly related to post-war constitutional reform, as depicted in the 1949 annual report of the territory:

The political parties were born in 1945 and 1946 with the structural reforms and legislative elections. Previously there existed only a section of the SFIO consisting of several Europeans and Senegalese without influence on the masses, and several Europeans directly affiliated to the Communist party. (43)

As in Senegal, the Socialists were the first French political party activists on the scene in post-war Guinea, although very few Africans joined the local section of the SFIO. A number of influential European administrators who were Communist sympathisers were present in Guinea during the war and immediately afterwards. From the Communist dominated resistance movement a small political organisation was founded in Guinea called Union Patriotique, which became affiliated to the French Front National in 1945. Although composed essentially of Europeans, several young future Guinean leaders were active members of the Front National,<sup>44</sup> namely Sékou Touré, Abdourahmane Diallo, and Diallo Saifoulaye.

According to the Guinean historian Lansiné Kaba, the Front National:

--had a significant impact on the growth of African nationalism: Sékou Touré once served as its deputy chairman. It created the Groupes d'études Communistes numbering 44 around 1947, and introduced young urbanised Africans to Marxism. (45)

Furthermore, out of this organisation emerged the first Guinean politi-

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ANS 2G 49 37, "Rapport Politique Année 1949," Guinea, p. 5.

44

Ibrahima Baba Kaké, Sékou Touré: Le héros et le tyran, Paris, 1987, pp. 34-5.

45

Lansiné Kaba, "Guinean Politics: A Critical Historical Overview," Journal of Modern African Studies, 15, March 1977, p. 26.

cal party which was non-ethnic in orientation, the Parti Progressiste Africain de Guinée (PPAG), in 1946.

The introduction of the franchise and elections to the first Constituent Assembly in 1945 caught the African subjects almost by surprise, and their unpreparedness fostered scattered mobilisation of candidates and political associations. Madeira Keita, one of the first African political leaders in Guinea, described the situation in the territory as the following:

The first legislative elections of 1945 came as a surprise in Guinea where there were not true political organisations. Consequently it was natural, aided by a little demagogic ambition, to group the nationals of ethnic associations around candidates with guaranteed ties of race, region of origin, etc....The disorder of the electoral campaign would lead to the spread of so-called ethnic groupings in the end of 1945 and beginning of 1946. (46)

The first phase of post-war Guinean political history is characterised by the transformation of formerly social, ethnic, or regional organisations into political movements and fluid alliances for electoral purposes.

In 1941 a "mutual benefit association" called Union Mandé was created for natives of Upper Guinea, the Forest region, and Soudan (i.e. Manding peoples).<sup>47</sup> The association was active primarily in Conakry, where it organised social events such as dances and theatrical productions. The Union divided into two autonomous sections at the time of the October 1945 electoral campaign, those from the Forest region in one

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ANS 17G 573, Premier Congrès Territorial du PDG, "Rapport Général d'Activité 1947-1950," p. 4.

47

CRDA 9/1, Speech given by Sékou Touré, Adjunct Secretary-General of Union Mandé, 7 March 1947.

branch and members from Upper Guinea and Soudan in the other. By the 1946 elections the two sections became independently known as Union Mandé and Union Forestière; popular leaders were Framoi Béréte, Sékou Touré and Lamine Ibrahima Kaba of the former, Vassery Dioumandé was president of the latter. Mamba Sano, a Ponty-trained teacher born in Kissidougou in the Forest region, yet of assimilated Malinké origin, was backed by both Unions in the early election campaigns.

In Lower Guinea the incontestable leader was Amarah Soumah, a graduate of the upper primary school in Conakry and son of the Baga king who once owned the land on which the city was founded. The Union de Basse-Guinée represented the interests of the coastal peoples, namely the Soussou, Baga, and Nalou. Apart from the major ethnic associations, a number of smaller groupings existed, among which the Union des Insulaires for the populations of the Iles de Los just off Conakry, the Foyer Sénégalais for resident Senegalese, l'Union du Bénin likewise representing those from Dahomey and Togo, and a number of youth organizations such as Jeunesse du Foutah, Jeunesse Malinké, Jeunesse de l'Union des Toucouleurs, etc.

Fulani students at Ponty had created the club La Voix des Montagnards with the expressed aim "to help them overcome their shyness." Upon their return to Guinea these Ponty graduates

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Joseph-Roger de Benoist, "De la Conférence de Brazzaville au Congrès de Bamako," Fondation Houphouët-Boigny, Nos. 7-8, October 1986, p. 81; R. Schachter Morgenthau, Political Parties, p. 222.

49

Sékou Touré, Expérience Guinéenne et Unité Africaine, Paris, 1961, pp. 11-12.

50

T. Hodgkin and R. Schachter, "French-Speaking West Africa in Transition," p. 386.

constituted the Amicale Gilbert Vieillard (AGV) in February 1944. The original goals of the association were:

To maintain and strengthen the ties of solidarity and fraternity among the educated Foulah; contribute to the evolution of the Fouta and emphasise the value of its customs and history through conferences, theatrical productions, etc. (52)

Composed mainly of intellectuals, in the 1945 elections the AGV solicited the support of the Fouta region, particularly the traditional chiefs. For second-college deputy to the Constituent Assembly, the educated elite favoured the candidacy of Barry Diawadou, son of the Dabola canton chief, Ponty-graduate and government clerk, who at the time was in his early thirties. The Fulani aristocracy, however, preferred an older, more traditional candidate, that of Yacine Diallo, a Ponty-trained teacher in his fifties and the first African director of a Conakry school. In recognition of the need for the Fouta bloc of votes, the AGV relented and supported Diallo in the October campaign.

Elections to the first Constituent Assembly in the West African territories were through a double-college and a double ballot vote held on 21 October 1945. Among the registered second-college candidates on the first ballot, starting from most votes received, were Yacine Diallo, Mamba Sano, Lamine Kaba, Diafodé Caba, Fodé Touré, and Amarah Soumah. Diallo polled over twice the votes for Sano who was placed second. In an

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"Amicale" meaning friendly or professional association. Gilbert Vieillard was a French administrator posted in the Fouta Djallon in the 1930s, at IFAN in 1937 and killed in 1940. His linguistic studies were highly regarded, contributing to a better understanding of the Fulani people.

52

ANSOM AP 2263/6, High-Commissioner AOF to Minister FOM, "Les Partis Politiques en AOF et Consultations Electorales de 1945 à 1955," p. 8.

53

R. Schachter Morgenthau, Political Parties, p. 222.

attempt to combat Diallo's overwhelming majority, the three non-Fulani regions agreed to collectively vote in favour of Sano on the second ballot. This might have succeeded if it had not been for Kaba,<sup>54</sup> who insisted on running separately, obtaining 1,711 votes; consequently Diallo won the election with 5,774 votes against 5,065 for Sano. Although the overall second-college voter participation was 78 per cent, the abstention rate was considerably lower in the Fouta than in the other regions.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, as ethnic consideration was supreme, the Fouta bloc registered 98 per cent of its votes for Diallo--"the remarkable spirit of discipline of the Foulah bloc was thus brought to light."<sup>56</sup>

The introduction of the electoral process in Guinea was marred by protest and incidents in the capital city. Violent demonstrations unfolded outside the Police Commissioner's headquarters on 16 October 1945, when numerous envelopes sent to registered voters were found not to contain voting ballots. The later jailing of 94 protesters sparked further violence, and armed forces were called in to restore the peace. The French authorities attributed the cause of the conflicts to the recent activities of the Comité d'Etudes Franco-Africain, the growing number of évolués who incited the masses to protest their economic hardship, and the declining prestige of the white man and France as a

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Lamine Ibrahima Kaba was a radical Muslim scholar and teacher who was dismissed from the colonial service and later jailed for his anti-French and rebellious political activities which often provoked violent incidents in Kankan.

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Abstention rates per ethnic blocs were the following: Lower Guinea (Soussou, Baga) 25%; Fouta (Fulani) 7.5%; Upper Guinea (Malinké) 41%; Forest (Guerzé, Kissi, Toma) 26%. ANS 17G 140, "Bulletin de Renseignements d'Octobre 1945," Guinea, No. 398.

56

Ibid.

world (i.e. colonial) power.

During the session of the first Constituent Assembly in Paris, political development continued at a rapid pace in the overseas territories. Out of the Front National and "in collaboration with militants of Communist tendency" the Parti Progressiste Africain de Guinée (PPAG)<sup>58</sup> was created in April 1946. Founded by Fodé Touré, a Paris-educated lawyer of Soussou coastal origin, in October the PPAG came under the direction of Madeira Keita, a Soudanese Ponty-trained federal civil servant then working at the Conakry branch of the Institut Français d'Afrique Noire (IFAN). Other influential local PPAG activists included Sékou Touré, Abdourahmane Diallo, Amarah Soumah, Barry Diawadou, and Karim Bangoura.<sup>59</sup>

The formation of the PPAG was significant in that its members represented all regions of Guinea, and that it "declared itself resolutely 'anti-racist' thus giving birth to a true movement of union."<sup>60</sup> While the ethnic group leaders were attempting to work together, likewise the Communists and Socialists in Guinea were coordinating their activities and also in the process of forming an electoral alliance.

The Communist persuasion of the PPAG cannot be denied; however it has been claimed both that the PPAG grew out of the Groupes d'Etudes

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57

Ibid.

58

"Rapport Politique Année 1949," p. 5.

59

Diallo Saifoulaye had been transferred to Niger. ANSOM AP 2263/6, "Les Partis Politiques en AOF et Consultations Electorales de 1945 à 1955," p. 4.

60

ANS 20G 48, Letter Governor Guinea to High-Commissioner AOF, No. 172/APA, Conakry, 22 June 1946.

Communistes and that the Guinean GEC was created by the PPAG. According to archival records, although the Communist Comité d'Etudes Franco-Africain existed in Conakry by 1945, the local Groupe d'Etudes Communistes was officially constituted 20 April 1946, the same day as the founding of the PPAG. Testimony of Madeira Keita confirmed that while Communist study groups had previously been in existence, his and a number of his colleagues' participation began after they had created the PPAG.<sup>62</sup> Within the GEC the young politicians learned first of all how to prepare presentations, conduct meetings, and lead political debates. Secondly, through the study of various European publications mainly in brochure form, the GEC members were instructed in basic Marxist philosophy and doctrine.

As a registered member of the SFIO, Yacine Diallo joined the Socialist bloc in the first Assembly and voted in favour of the April Constitution. The June 1946 Guinean elections to the Second Constituent Assembly were less troublesome than the first; Diallo enjoyed the backing of the AGV and the PPAG, the outcome of which was a landslide victory over Mamba Sano in a peaceful electoral campaign.<sup>63</sup> The PPAG support of Diallo demonstrated its commitment to African unity, and soon afterwards the party began calling for a conference of native political movements to combine forces and work together for the emancipation of Africa.

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61

The first argument held by J.-R. de Benoist, R. Schachter Morgenthau; the second by Lansiné Kaba.

62

Recorded interview of Madeira Keita by Ibrahima Baba Kaké, Radio France, Abidjan, October 1986.

63

ANS 17G 146, Letter Governor Guinea to High-Commissioner AOF, No. 169/APA, Conakry, 15 June 1946.

Meanwhile in Paris, African reaction to 1) the rejection of the April Constitution and inherent liberal concessions granted to the overseas territories, 2) the hostile manoeuvrings of the Etats Généraux de la Colonisation Française, and 3) the conservative nature of the second Assembly and the retrograde Constitution which subsequently emerged, was to press for unity among overseas representatives and for interterritorial fusion of their supporting political institutions. The African delegates took the initiative and called a conference in the following manner:

On 18 September 1946, towards the closing of the Second Constituent Assembly, (the Charter of which, although progressive, was much less bold than the first), all the African delegates present in Paris, in a moving manifesto, convoked a great Congress of French Black Africa in Bamako on 18 October. (64)

The response in Guinea to the proposed gathering was immediate. On 22 September, in order to prepare for the heralded congress, the founding members of the PPAG created the Comité d'Initiative du Rassemblement. Headed by Madeira Keita, the official Guinean delegation to the Bamako congress consisted of ten members representing eight political associations. <sup>65</sup> Moreover, close historic, ethnic, and familial ties between the two territories led to the presence of a great number of Guinean observers and unofficial guests.

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64

M. Keita, PDG Congress I, "Rapport Général d'Activité...", p. 3.

65

The number of respective delegates was the following: 2 PPAG; 2 Mouvement Révolutionnaire Démocratique of Amara Sissoko; 1 AGV; 1 Union Mandé; 1 Union Forestière; 1 Basse-Guinée; 1 Union des Métis; 1 GEC. Members included Sékou Touré, Koumandian Keita, Amarah Soumah, and Abdourahmane Diallo. Doudou Guèye, "Ceux qui étaient au Congrès de Bamako...", Fondation Houphouët-Boigny, No. 2, July 1978, p. 45.

**The Bamako Congress and Birth of the  
Rassemblement Démocratique Africain**

The signatories of the manifesto were all the native deputies from West Africa,<sup>66</sup> plus Jean-Félix Tchicaya and former deputy Gabriel d'Arboussier from Gabon-Congo in AEF. It is claimed that the original author of the manifesto was d'Arboussier, a man of mixed French and Soudanese origin, who followed his father's career in the colonial service and was elected as a first-college deputy to the first Constituent Assembly. His membership in the Communist Party, and affiliation to the MUR and its African delegates in the first Assembly, however, made him an unpopular first college representative and consequently he was not re-elected to the second Commission. Thus having more time to work on the plan, d'Arboussier drew up the Manifesto which was then discussed and signed at the Paris residence of Lamine Guèye.<sup>67</sup> The main gist of the text was summarised in its concluding appeal:

It is to complete this work of union, that, in spite of hostile manoeuvres, we call a great gathering (Rassemblement) of all the organisations that are introducing political and social democracy in Black Africa, the conditions of which we have expressed in this Manifesto. (68)

There is a certain significance in the choice of the term rassemblement, as it implied unity as the expression of the "general will," and embodied the notion of a common front exercising a moral right to combat imperialism and injustice.<sup>69</sup>

The dream of African unity was shattered when, prompted by the

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Refer to footnote 6 this chapter. Senghor was actually outside of Paris at the time but sent his consent in a telegram to the others.

67

J.-R. de Benoist, "De la Conférence de Brazzaville...", p. 89.

68

Le Rassemblement Démocratique Africain dans la lutte anti-impérialiste, Dakar, 1948, p. 29.

69

Thomas Hodgkin, Nationalism in Colonial Africa, New York, 1957, p. 146.

suspicion that the gathering was inspired and would be dominated by the French Communist Party, the Overseas Minister advised the Socialist-affiliated Africans to boycott the Bamako congress. Bowing to this pressure, Guèye, Senghor, and Diallo all declined to participate in this historic event.<sup>70</sup> All established African associations and prominent leaders, as well as every French political party, were invited to attend the conference in Bamako. As a result of Moutet's actions, only the Communist Party in France responded favourably to the invitation and sent a delegation. Moreover, the Socialist withdrawal not only handed Houphouët the leadership of the union movement, it also marked a shift in the nucleus of West African political development from Dakar to Abidjan. The majority of the Senegalese contingent at Bamako, in fact, were delegates of the federal bureaus of the CEFA and GECs<sup>71</sup> with direct ties to the Communist bloc in France.

Once at the congress, Communist influence was especially evident. The head of the colonial section of the PCF was Raymond Barbé, whose actions at Bamako were thus illustrated:

The participation of Barbé at the Congress was active. It was all the better because of his grand gestures, expressive language, his beret, the whole "spectacle" helped assure him the sympathy of a good number of young professionals and intellectuals from Senegal, Guinea, Ivory Coast and Soudan.  
(72)

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70

In 1957 Senghor confessed it was a mistake not to attend the congress: "My error was in obeying orders which were imposed on me from outside." Diallo claimed that he did not go because he was afraid of losing his conservative electoral base. R. Schachter Morgenthau, Political Parties, p. 89; Doudou Guèye, Fondation Houphouët-Boigny, No. 1, p. 41.

71

D. Guèye, "Ceux qui étaient au Congrès de Bamako...", pp. 46-7.

72

Ibid., p. 38.

A delegate from Dahomey, Dr. Derlin Zinsou, substantiated the suspicion of Communist infiltration with the following commentary:

The Communist Party was in the government. Not only did it have ministers, it sent representatives to the Bamako Congress...The Communist Party had given Bamako the following order: do not speak of autonomy. It was necessary at the time, so that the mask was deceptive, that no trace, even the smallest, of orthodox Communism appeared. However several precautions were lost in the details. For example, one forgot to prevent those in charge of the colonial section of the Communist Party from coming to Bamako and directing in the wings...Oh! not really so much in the wings, because the strings were really too noticeable. (73)

Obviously not all of the Africans present were content with the blatant Communist participation and phraseology employed by African protégés.

The Sudanese deputy to the Constituent Assemblies, signatory of the manifesto, and host to the congress, Fily Dabo Sissoko, also fell under the pressure of the Socialist Governor and publicly denounced the movement while delegates were arriving on 18 October. Sissoko called the congress which was about to begin "a political swindle for Communist benefit."<sup>74</sup> An impromptu retaliatory speech delivered by Houphouët overshadowed Sissoko's condemnation; persuaded by Houphouët and the Sudanese crowd, Sissoko grudgingly presided over the congress.

Despite the attempts made by the administration to deter prospective representatives and the labelling of the congress as part of a Communist plot, from October 19-21 more than 800 African delegates converged at Bamako to participate in the birth of what became known as the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (RDA). In his opening speech Houphouët pointed out "the real goal, the only one of the rassemblement:

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73

Dr. Zinsou before the Assembly of the French Union in February 1950, cited by J.-R. de Benoist, "De la Conférence de Brazzaville," p. 91.

74

Ernest Milcent, L'AOE entre en scène, Paris, 1958, p. 37.

the union of Africans in their peaceful, freedom struggle." While denying that the African congress was serving the propaganda interests of the Communist Party, Houphouët's oration contained passages full of PCF rhetoric, for example when he spoke of:

The liberation of Africa from the odious tutelage of imperialism, of capitalism--source of strife, class struggles, misery, obscurity--requires total sacrifices from Africans, sacrifices from which no one among us ought to refrain. (76)

Still, Houphouët maintained that although if he wanted to become a Communist he would not wait for the triumph of Communism to register, he was "not yet of a Communist consciousness."<sup>77</sup> In response to the often repeated argument that the RDA grew out of the GECs in West Africa, Doudou Guèye offered the following explanation in his book about the relationship between the Communists and the RDA:

One must recognise that these circles were formed by a number of post-war African political activists, who responded with haste to the call for the Bamako rassemblement. Because of this, some believed that the RDA, from its inception, was supported by direct ties with the GECs.... However it was not only exaggerated, but incorrect to think and to say that the GECs profoundly marked the RDA. It was the RDA that helped itself to certain GEC activists to give its members an education and formation that seemed to respond, in the beginning, to its objectives and goals. (78)

The main objective of the RDA, clearly outlined at the Bamako congress, was the emancipation of the African people via the affirmation of their unique political, economic, social, and cultural "personality," and their attachment to a union of nations "freely consented to" with

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75

CRDA 2.46/br 1, Dossier on the RDA Congress in Bamako.

76

Ibid.

77

Ibid.

78

D. Guèye, Sur les Sentiers du Temple, p. 29.

guaranteed equal rights and responsibilities. The concept of autonomy was purposely omitted from discussion, and "emancipation" clearly meant within the French Union. In the pursuit of its ultimate goal, the RDA aimed at the union of all Africans without distinction of race, religion, social class, or ideology. From this standpoint the "means of struggle" were devised as such:

- 1) Union in the midst of a large political organisation encompassing all ideological conceptions, ethnic groups, and social classes in each territory;
- 2) Constitution of an African parliamentary group; and
- 3) Solidarity among all the peoples of the French Union and world democratic forces. (80)

Under the presidency of Houphouët, the congress was organised into working commissions in charge of drawing up respective resolutions, initially political, economic, and social. A fourth commission was added to prepare and then present a general resolution to the congress for ratification. In brief, the political resolution denounced the policy of assimilation, deplored the double-college electoral system and reduced powers of the territorial assemblies, and expressed general dissatisfaction with the October 1946 Constitution, calling for its revision.<sup>81</sup> While the economic report addressed African needs of increased industrialisation, marketing and native participation in development planning, the social resolution (reported by Madeira Keita) called for free and obligatory mass education and reform of the health sector. Finally, the general resolution reiterated the main points of the political report, the necessity for unity, and vowed the formation

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79

Gabriel Lisette, Le combat du Rassemblement Démocratique Africain pour la décolonisation pacifique de l'Afrique Noire, Paris, 1983, p. 25.

80

Ibid.

81

Reports of the four commissions contained in CRDA 2.46/br 1.

of an African democratic party. Furthermore it was decided to elect a Coordinating Committee in charge of organising future rassemblements, whose designated mission was:

to undertake all necessary action in bringing about the unity of political parties among the territories and to prepare their fusion in a single African movement.

In February 1947 conceptual details of the Bamako movement were being worked out by the Coordinating Committee meeting in Paris. In a communiqué from the meeting, the Committee stressed that:

The spontaneous Union that enabled and continues to encourage Africans to stand up against the misdeeds of colonialism is not due to such and such ideology. It is the unavoidable consequence of the oppression of the African masses and their consciousness of this oppression. (82)

Aside from stating that no political leader had the right to impose his ideology within the organisation, the communiqué clarified that the RDA:

is not a Party. It is a body of agreement and coordination, whose own life depends on the life of its member parties. (83)

The statutes and organisational framework of the RDA were prepared by the Coordinating Committee and circulated along with the above cited communiqué. Contained in the statutes were the following provisions: only one party per territory was allowed, which acted autonomously within the framework of RDA principles and decisions (Articles 2 & 10); the interterritorial congress was the supreme decision-making body of the movement, in between which the Coordinating Committee was charged with the application of its programme and overall direction (Articles 4 & 7); and RDA members in the metropolitan government represented, and

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82

CRDA 2.46/br 1, "Circulaire du Comité du Coordination à tous les élus Africains," 26 February 1947.

83

Ibid.

acted in Paris on behalf of, the Coordinating Committee (Article 8). A permanent secretariat in Abidjan, as well as federal delegations in Dakar and Brazzaville, were created as auxiliary organs of the movement.

Although in principle a congress was to be convened annually, only three such rassemblements occurred between 1946 and 1957 inclusive. In practice the Coordinating Committee, elected by the congress, directed the activities and maintained interterritorial liaisons of the movement. The Committee was composed of firstly the bureau of one President, four Vice-Presidents, and a Secretary-General, secondly the parliamentary members, and thirdly one representative from each of the federal delegations and territorial parties. The chain of command within the RDA is illustrated in Figure 2.

The link between the Coordinating Committee and the territorial sections was the Comité Directeur of the respective parties. In replica of interterritorial organisation, the Party Congress was the supreme body of the territorial section. Sometimes, however, when a congress was deemed impractical, a Territorial Conference was called in its place. The double role of the elected Comité Directeur was to apply and elaborate directives issued by the Coordinating Committee, and to lead the activities of the subordinate organs. The power centre of the

84

Article Eight was suppressed at the Second RDA Congress in 1949 but then reinstated in 1950. The RDA statutes are reproduced in Le Rassemblement Démocratique Africain dans la lutte anti-impérialiste, pp. 32-3.

85

The bureau of the Coordinating Committee in 1946 was comprised of: President: Félix Houphouët-Boigny; Vice-Presidents: Fily Dabo Sissoko, Sourou Migan Apithy, Jean-Félix Tchicaya, Gabriel d'Arboussier; Secretary-General: Fily Sissoko (of Ivory Coast). F.D. Sissoko resigned shortly after his election. S.M. Apithy left the RDA in 1948.

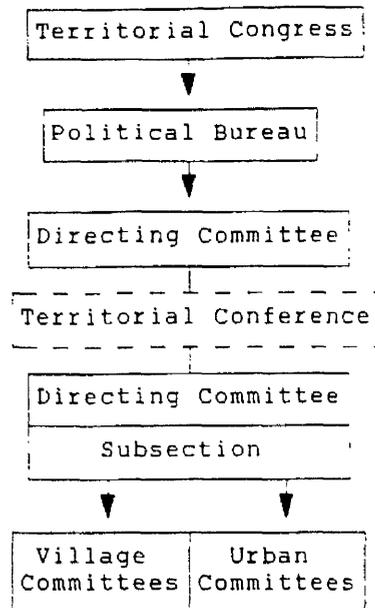
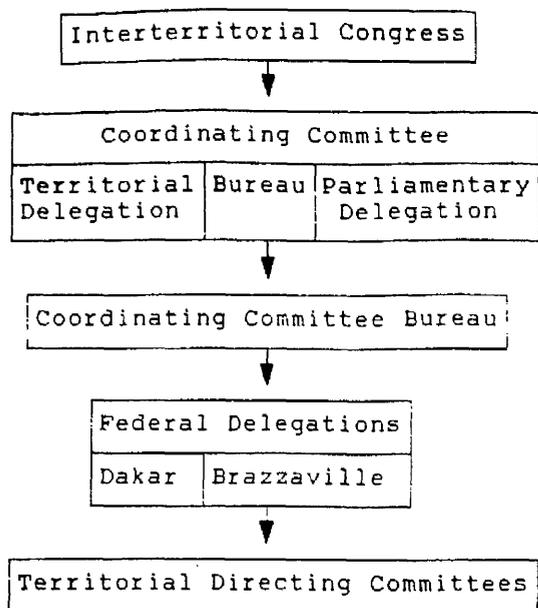
86

CRDA 3.55/br 1, Ouëzzin Coulibaly, "Rapport sur l'Organisation," RDA Coordinating Committee Meeting, Conakry, 9-11 July 1955.

Directing Committee was the Bureau Politique, the functioning secretariat elected by the party congress. Beneath the Directing Committee were the Comités de sous-section, normally organised on a regional (canton) basis, and finally on the village or city level were the Comités de village and Comités de quartier respectively (see Figure 3).

Figure 2: Structure of the RDA.

Figure 3: Territorial Organization.



#### Formation of the Guinean Section of the RDA

Upon his return from the Bamako Congress, Sékou Touré launched an appeal for the constitution of a Comité d'Union Démocratique, the organisation of which was confided to Madeira Keita.<sup>87</sup> In the meantime, however, Guinean political associations and aspiring leaders became preoccupied with the legislative elections held from November 1946 through January 1947. The most prestigious of these was of course the election of deputies to the French National Assembly, for which four alliance "lists"

<sup>87</sup>

ANSOM AP 2263/6, "Les Partis Politiques en AOF et Consultations Electorales de 1945 à 1955," p. 5.

were submitted. The resultant deputies of the November elections were Yacine Diallo on the Socialist and Progressive ticket and Mamba Sano for the Socialist Party of Guinea. Diallo benefited from the backing of the Fouta chieftaincy and the PPAG-Bamako supporters, while Sano owed his success to the ethnic organisations of Upper Guinea and the Forest region.<sup>88</sup> Fodé Touré, the fellow Socialist and number two on Diallo's list, was elected second-college senator to the Conseil de la République on 8 December. Finally, elections to the territorial Conseil Général were completed in January 1947.

Political mobilisation for the legislative elections in Guinea further strengthened the predominant ethnic nature of the existing associations. Subsequently efforts to found a territorial section of the RDA, proposed by the former leaders of the PPAG which was dissolved in early 1947, concentrated on uniting the heads of the regional organisations.<sup>89</sup> In public addresses soliciting support for the RDA, Madeira Keita repeatedly refuted the arguments that the movement was organised by the Communists and was anti-French in orientation. Keita explained that the African parliamentarians were not sufficient in number to create an independent bloc, and their choice of alliance to the Communists was "because the democratic interests of the PCF and the RDA are more or less the same."<sup>90</sup>

In mid-March it was announced that RDA Vice-President Gabriel d'Arboussier had been given a mission, funded by the Ivorian chapter, to create territorial sections throughout West Africa. Although Keita and

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88

ANS 20G 46, "Les Elections Générales du 10 Novembre 1946."

89

"Les Partis Politiques...1945 à 1955," p. 4.

90

ANS 17G 573, "Réunion publique organisée par le Rassemblement Démocratique Africain," Sûreté, AOF, No. 1208, 9 March 1947.

his associates had hoped that d'Arboussier would upon his arrival find a strong Guinean section already in place, and had enlisted over 125 members to this effect,<sup>91</sup> the actual founding and organisation of the local party occurred in the presence and with the assistance of the RDA federal delegation. After successful tours in Senegal and Soudan, d'Arboussier arrived in Guinea on 4 June 1947.

In Conakry d'Arboussier contacted the leaders of the various political organisations, striving to convince them of the necessity for concerted action not only within each territory but throughout French Africa as a whole. The result of these deliberations was transmitted via an RDA circular dated 15 June:

After making contact with all the political, cultural, and ethnic organisations in Guinea, an accord was reached with the following organisations: Union Forestière, Union du Mandé, Amicale Gilbert Vieillard, Union des Toucouleurs, Union des Insulaires, Union du Bénin, to which are also joined an important fraction of Lower Guinea and young Senegalese. (92)

Among the bases of the agreement were the following critical stipulations:

- 1) The organisations were to renounce their political rights in favour of the RDA;
- 2) The Comité Directeur of the RDA section contained representation of all ethnic elements of Guinea; and
- 3) Likewise regional commissions were included in the Directing Committee. (93)

Once the terms of the union were accepted, the party statutes of the RDA-Guinean section were drawn up and adopted in Conakry on 14 June 1947.<sup>94</sup> The organisation scheme was similar to RDA general format;

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91

ANS 17G 573, "Réunion publique RDA," Sureté, AOF, No. 1266, 13 March 1947.

92

CRDA 9/1, RDA circular, Conakry, 15 June 1947.

93

Ibid.

94

Party statutes found in CRDA archives 9/1.

however special provisions for regional commissions and bloc adherence to the party were unique to the Guinean statutes.

The concessions granting ethnic and regional representation meant the continuance of rivalry and local orientations, and were later blamed for the break-up of the Guinean section, which initially was no more than a loose coalition of competing organisations and political leaders.<sup>95</sup> Nevertheless among the 24 elected members of the first Comité Directeur were a number of the leading political activists in Guinea at the time, including: Madeira Keita as Secretary-General, Framoi Béréte, Amarah Soumah, and Ibrahima Sory Diallo as Secretaries, Sékou Touré responsible for Economic and Social Affairs, Abdourahmane Diallo for Organisation, Abdoulaye Diallo for Propaganda, and Mamadou Traoré<sup>96</sup> for Administrative Affairs.<sup>97</sup> The section's treasurer and his adjunct were residents from Togo and Senegal, illustrating the federal character of the RDA. In Paris deputy Mamba Sano confirmed his adhesion to the newly created Guinean chapter and the RDA parliamentary group.

After addressing crowds estimated at 800 to 900 people in Conakry, and founding the central organs of the Guinean branch of the RDA, d'Arboussier travelled north in the territory to spread the news as well as organise local subsections (sous-sections).<sup>98</sup> Accompanied by Keita, d'Arboussier held public meetings and presided over the formation of

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M. Keita, PDG Congress I, "Rapport Général d'Activité...", p. 5.

96

Mamadou Traoré was also known by his pseudonym Ray Autra. The two names are used interchangeably in archival and literary sources.

97

ANS 17G 573, "Groupements Politiques en Guinée," Conakry, 13 July 1947.

98

ANS 17G 573, "Compte-rendu sur la réunion publique organisée par le RDA section de Guinée," Sureté, Guinea, No. 516, 16 June 1947.

provisional subsection committees in Kindia, Mamou, Labé, and Kankan, as well as visiting influential persons in Pita, Dabola, and Kouroussa. Themes introduced to the masses were the main goals of the RDA--to protect African originality, unite all Africans, and combat colonialism, and RDA positions on issues such as the Constitution, PCF, French government, and powers of local assemblies. While enthusiasm and attendance were relatively low in the Fouta region, the delegation in Kankan registered an enormous success, where approximately 1,500<sup>99</sup> Africans were present for the formation of the party subsection.

The creation of the Guinean section of the RDA was officially<sup>100</sup> recognised on 4 July 1947. With the mass adherence of the various ethnic associations and political leaders, the movement expanded rapidly in subsection organisation and membership. The popularity and prestige of deputy Sano brought the bulk of his supporters from Upper Guinea and the Forest region into the RDA. In November 1947 elections to the Conseil de l'Union Française were held in Guinea, whereby Maurice Montrat and Momo Touré emerged as RDA assemblymen. Sékou Touré led the majority of the CGT-affiliated trade union members into the ranks of the<sup>101</sup> local RDA.

By the end of 1947 the party claimed to have 5,000 members in Conakry and its environs, and an equivalent number in the rest of the<sup>102</sup> territory. In September the section published and began circulation

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ANS 17G 573, "Renseignements," Sûreté, Guinea, No. 555, Kankan, 24 June 1947.

100

By letter No. 1838-APA Governor Guinea, 4 July 1947; "Groupements Politiques...", p. 1.

101

Rapport Politique 1949, p. 7.

102

Ibid.

of its first newspaper, *Phare de Guinée* (Guinea's Lighthouse). Propaganda themes of the Guinean party, as interpreted by the local French authorities, centred upon the union of Africans against imperialism and the colonial trusts, sympathies with the French Communist Party, administrative abuses, and necessary reforms to elevate the standard of living of the people and workers, and the constitution of a single pay schedule for government employees whether European or African. Party activists worked evenings and weekends, renting delivery-vans to disseminate information and solicit support of the masses in the outlying areas.<sup>103</sup>

Mobilisation efforts were largely successful, and so recognised by the administration:

In December 1947, the Guinean section of the RDA was at the apogee of its power. The party, by its activity, acquired an absolute preponderance on the political scene, although it had not "conquered" the land. (104)

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103

Madeira Keita, "Témoignage," in *Rassemblement Démocratique Africain, Actes du Colloque International sur l'Histoire du RDA*, vol. II, Abidjan, 1987, p. 189.

104

ANSOM AP 2143/9, Letter High-Commissioner AOF to Minister FOM, "Evénements de Guinée," Dakar, 14 March 1955, p. 4.

## CHAPTER III

### Opposition and Repression of the RDA

From the beginning of 1948 the first symptoms of disintegration were becoming apparent. The changing of the Governor coincided with a general shift in government policies. The reaction of the administrative authorities, initially transferring government employees deemed too turbulent, little by little bore fruit. A number of supporters disapproved of the RDA affiliation to the Communist party, the excesses of the leaders, and the choice of party directors who were trouble-makers such as Sékou Touré, Amarah Soumah and foreigners like Soudanese Madeira Keita. (1)

The euphoria surrounding the Guinean section of the RDA at its conception, and the initial unity which it inspired, proved to be superficial and ephemeral. The period of decline which ensued was largely the result of a deliberate administrative policy to break up the fledgling African movement.

In May 1947 a historical event occurred in metropolitan politics that had profound implications for colonial policy. The Communist Party, voting against the government, was "bundled out of office by presidential decree."<sup>2</sup> Henceforth the French Communists were forced into the opposition, as the domestic political balance shifted to the Centre. At the same time Gaullists organised a new party, the Rassemblement du Peuple Français (RPF), which swept the municipal elections of October 1947 and quickly spread into the overseas territories.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>  
ANS 2G 49, "Rapport Politique Année 1949," Guinea, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup>  
E. Mortimer, France and the Africans, p. 118.

<sup>3</sup>  
The Guinean section of the RPF was created 26 June 1947 and led by P. Auvray and assemblyman L. Delmas. A central principle of the party was "to maintain French pre-eminence in the world" and the integrity of

In November Paul Coste-Floret (MRP) took over from Moutet as Overseas Minister and instigated the anti-RDA policy under the justification of fighting Communism.<sup>4</sup> To this effect Coste-Floret appointed hardline administrators in West Africa, issuing specific orders to suppress the movement. The new High-Commissioner was the Socialist Paul Béchard, who initially tried to persuade Houphouët to form an alliance with the SFIO. The RDA President transmitted the proposal to d'Arboussier, who chose not to pass it on to other members of the RDA Coordinating Committee.<sup>5</sup> The attempt at conciliation having failed, the administration pursued a policy of repression. The main tactics of the campaign included: anti-RDA propaganda, bribery and coercion of elected officials and government employees, electoral machinations and support of non-RDA political parties, banning of RDA meetings, transferring of influential civil servants, and provocation of incidents warranting government intervention and the imprisonment of RDA militants.

The designated "tough" Governor to Guinea was Roland Pré, who arrived in Conakry in January 1948. Just before the Governor's arrival an RDA federal delegation toured Guinea, aiming to counter the negative publicity attacking the movement. Accompanied by Mamba Sano, deputies Quëzzin Coulibaly (Upper Volta/Ivory Coast) and Mamadou Konaté (Soudan) held public meetings refuting arguments that the RDA was anti-French, Communist in orientation, and anti-Muslim. Deputy Sano reassured his

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the French Union. In January 1948 the RPF claimed to have 300 French members and 141 Africans in Guinea, and was bitterly opposed by the local RDA section. ICG b. 70.

<sup>4</sup> R. Schachter Morgenthau, Political Parties, p. 91.

<sup>5</sup> J.-R. de Benoist, L'Afrique Occidentale Française, p. 121.

enthusiastic supporters that:

The RDA is not Communist and never shall be Communist because it has no interest in becoming Communist....The day when it will be against the interests of France, the day when it will be against the Muslim religion, the day when it will be against African traditions, is the day I will tell all my friends and supporters to turn their backs on it. (6)

Earlier Sano had professed a loyalty to France unusual for fervent RDA militants at the time, particularly in Guinea:

We are treated as anti-French, Communists, and adversaries of Islam and of custom. We are none of that. I am Guinean, certainly, but above all French. I speak only in French, I taught French to my students and I think in French. I pledged my adhesion to the RDA because the essential goal of the party is the unification of African people...within the French Union. The wish to separate Africa from France would be suicide. We are and will stay French. (7)

With such a political stance, it was hardly surprising that Sano led the general fall-out of the RDA section in Guinea when he left the party in late 1948.

Deputy Yacine Diallo decisively broke all ties with the Fouta-backed AGV when the organisation entered the RDA. With Senator and fellow Socialist Fodé Touré, Diallo founded the Union Franco-Guinéenne (UFG) and gathered support from the Coastal and Fouta regions, as well as the French administration. In May 1947 Fodé Touré had organised the Soussou population of Lower Guinea into the Comité d'Union de la Basse Guinée, which initially kept its distance from and later worked against the RDA. <sup>8</sup> Aside from his large personal following, Diallo gained the support of AGV members, particularly in the religious centers of Labé

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ANS 17G 573, Commissaire de Police, Kankan, No. 3402, 28 November 1947.

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ANS 17G 573, "Réunion Publique du RDA," Sûreté, Guinea, No. 1818, 20 October 1947.

8

ANS 2G 47, "Quatrième Trimestre 1947," Guinea, p. 8.

and Mamou, who disagreed with the decision to join the RDA. Hence the two leading political formations upon the arrival of Governor Pré were the RDA and the UFG, patronising their respective deputies Sano and Diallo.

The administrative policy of repression was successful in fomenting the disintegration of the RDA in Guinea. Opposition and conflict between the two main political groupings was encouraged by the French authorities, whose preference was made abundantly clear. An example of this administrative pressure and its outcome was the case of Kankan, an early nucleus of turbulent political activity and an RDA stronghold. In describing the rivalry between the local subsections of the UFG and RDA, the Kankan Police Commissioner remarked:

The Section of the Union Franco-Guinéenne has no sympathy for the RDA, which fights the UFG because it is aided by the administration and has influence over government employees, who intimidate the Dioulas and merchants who are already RDA members, in order to force them to break ties with the RDA and come to the UFG. (10)

By April 1948 the bureau of the Kankan subsection was reportedly divided into opposing factions over how to deal with the repressive situation. On the one side, fearing persecution because participating in the bureau was "mal vu" (negatively seen), some members favoured the reconstitution of the Kankan section Directing Committee of the Union Mandé to treat political questions. Bureau members of the opposing side argued that this sort of reaction would serve only to further weaken the RDA. The

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ANS 2G 47 22, "Rapport Politique Année 1947," Guinea, pp. 29-30.

10

ANS 17G 573, Commissaire de Police, Kankan, No. 1374/209, 20 November 1947.

11

ANS 17G 573, "Evolution RDA à Kankan," Sûreté, Guinea, No. 468/145, 17 April 1948.

outcome of the debate was the re-creation of the local section of the Mandé Union, and subsequent retraction of political alliance with affirmation of the ethnic basis of the association.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the RDA subsection of Kankan was officially dissolved several weeks later; its former members were scattered among the local sections of the Union Mandé,<sup>13</sup> AGV, and UFG. It was not long before other Guinean RDA subsections followed suit, similar patterns of disintegration were being reported throughout the territory.

In Conakry the ethnic leaders were conspicuously absent at RDA meetings, and many were cancelled due to lack of audience. Whereas six months earlier the crowds attending RDA public meetings were estimated at 1,500 to 1,700, in August a scheduled meeting which attracted 15 people was postponed to a later date, when an audience of 200 was present by personal invitation.<sup>14</sup> September 1948 marked the lowest point in the history of the Guinean section of the RDA. Not only was participation insufficient to hold public meetings, it was announced that the treasury was empty, and membership was declining in favour of re-created sections of ethnic associations. The Union Mandé was the first of the regional organisations to formally withdraw from the RDA, followed by the Union Forestière and the Amicale Gilbert Vieillard. The moment which clinched the downfall of the Guinean RDA was when "Mamba Sano

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ANS 17G 573, "Réorganisation de la Section de l'Union Mandé à Kankan," Sûreté, Guinea, No. 529/184, 4 May 1948.

13

ANS 17G 573, "Renseignements," Sûreté, Kankan, 20 May 1948.

14

ANS 17G 573, "Renseignements," Sûreté, Guinea, No. 860/269, 15 August and 11 September 1948.

spectacularly resigned from the RDA." Similarly, the remaining RDA Guinean parliamentarian, Momo Touré, renounced his membership and joined the African Overseas Independent group in October 1948.

The parliamentary group known as the Indépendants d'Outre-Mer (IOM) was launched in September 1948 by non-RDA deputies and RDA defectors representing the French Black African territories. Sponsored by the MRP, the IOM was attractive to anti-Communist RDA members as well as disenchanted Socialists desiring African unity in the representative bodies. Initiated by Sourou Migan Apithy (ex-RDA Cameroon), seven overseas deputies formed the new parliamentary group. Of its West African National Assembly representatives, the RDA lost three (of its former seven) to the IOM. Léopold Senghor of Senegal resigned from the SFIO and later became the leader of the IOM movement. Supported by Pierre Coste-Floret and the colonial administration, in 1949 the IOM had 14 deputies in the National Assembly, and therefore was entitled to full parliamentary representation on commissions.

Meanwhile in Guinea the administration was pleased with its success in breaking up the RDA, and turned its efforts toward thwarting any recrudescence of party influence or growth. The remaining RDA stalwarts, namely Madeira Keita and Sékou Touré, increased their efforts and toured the countryside in an attempt to regain lost support. Monitored closely by the authorities, the administrative reaction was the following:

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ANSOM AP 2143/9, "Evénements de Guinée," High-Commissioner AOF to Minister FOM, Dakar, 14 March 1955, p. 5.

16

Momo Touré was an assemblyman in the French Union. His defection was publicly debated and treated as scandalous by the local RDA leaders. ANS 17G 573, Sureté, Guinea, reports of 3 and 19 October 1948.

The excessive actions of the RDA led the administration to strive to direct its action toward replacing elected officials, traditional chiefs, and Commandants de Cercle according to their competence, while aspiring to a moderated equilibrium of stable elements in traditional rural society. (17)

In the same vein RDA militants in the outlying districts were routinely transferred at the request of local authorities. In Siguiri, for example, an African doctor by the name of Koniba Pléah arrived in June 1948, having been transferred from Macenta for spreading Communist/RDA propaganda. Pléah solicited support for the RDA in the region, and after a visit from Madeira Keita in November it was decided to form an RDA subsection in Siguiri. Upon Pléah's election as Secretary-General of the local party subsection, the Commandant de Cercle immediately petitioned his transfer from Siguiri. Pléah had been designated to represent the Guinean section at the forthcoming RDA congress to be held at Bobo-Dioulasso, but was denied authorisation to attend.<sup>18</sup>

#### Strengthening Ties with the Communist Party

From its inception the RDA suffered from its affiliation to the PCF. Nevertheless, growing conservatism in metropolitan politics and repressive policies in the overseas territories actually contributed to the intensification of the relationship between the Communists and RDA members as "democratic forces of the opposition." Pursued and greatly weakened by the administration, the RDA defensively sought increased support and guidance from the French Communists.

In preparation for a second congress, the RDA Coordinating Commit-

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17

ANSOM AP 2143/9, "Evénements de Guinée," p. 5.

18

ANS 17G 573, "Renseignements," Sureté, Kankan, 19 December 1948.

tee met in Dakar 2-4 October 1948, although Houphouët was unexplainably absent from the proceedings. As Vice-President in charge of organisation, Gabriel d'Arboussier prepared the groundwork for the meeting, as well as the publication which emerged from it, entitled Le Rassemblement Démocratique Africain dans la Lutte Anti-impérialiste. While most of the RDA parliamentarians at this time were preoccupied with repressive situations facing territorial sections, d'Arboussier concentrated his efforts in Paris and was left a relatively free hand in representing the movement. As a member of the Communist Party and learned in its doctrine, d'Arboussier used his influence and position to lead the RDA leftwards in orientation.

The pamphlet which emerged from the meeting of the Coordinating Committee was blatantly Marxist in orientation, containing cited passages from the Communist Manifesto, as well as works of Lenin and Stalin. In his general report of the situation facing the RDA, d'Arboussier divided the world into two opposing camps: the democratic anti-imperialist on the one hand, and the anti-democratic imperialist on the other. Within this Stalinist framework d'Arboussier pointed out "the facts which brilliantly justify Marxist scientific theory," adding "moreover few men today contest this evident truth." Proclaiming the Communist parliamentary group the "avant-garde of French democratic forces," the report lauded RDA affiliation to the only party that:

...never betrayed the primordial interests of the colonial masses and oppressed people around the world. (20)

Furthermore, d'Arboussier denied that the repression of the RDA was due

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19

Le Rassemblement Démocratique Africain dans la lutte anti-impérialiste, Dakar, 1948, p. 48.

20

Ibid., pp. 59, 72.

to its alliance with the Communist forces, claiming the persecution was due rather to the fundamental anticolonial position of the movement.

The resolution adopted by the Committee on 3 October 1948 reaffirmed the basic principles outlined in the first congress, and clarified the position of the RDA in the situation depicted by d'Arboussier:

The Coordinating Committee notes the free choice of the camp in which it stands: the camp of the exploited and oppressed, the camp of democrats and men of progress who represent the future of humanity. (21)

It was then decided to convoke the second RDA congress in Bobo-Dioulasso (Upper Volta) towards the end of December. Scheduled to immediately precede the congress was the inauguration of an RDA professional school, "for which the theoretical and practical formation had become necessary and urgent due to the development of colonial reaction."<sup>22</sup>

Present at the closing of the Coordinating Committee meeting on 4 October, PCF colonial expert Raymond Barbé was about to embark on a propaganda tour of French Black Africa, where he was hosted by RDA<sup>23</sup> militants and addressed Africans at joint RDA-PCF rallies. The inflammatory speeches delivered at these meetings, and public displays of intense loyalty between the two allies, would serve as the justification for the banning of the planned RDA congress at Bobo-Dioulasso.

It was never the intention of the Communist Party to form an

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21

Ibid., p. 92.

22

G. Lisette, *Le combat du RDA*, p. 77.

23

Barbé was in West Africa 3-28 October 1948 visiting Senegal, Guinea, Ivory Coast and Upper Volta. ANSOM AP 2301/1, Letter High-Commissioner AOF to Minister FCM, No. 1003 AP/2, Dakar, 18 November 1948.

African branch of the PCF, but rather to channel all social classes in the overseas territories into a mass democratic movement against imperialism and oppression. In a circular addressed to the Groupes d'Etudes Communistes dated 20 July 1948, Barbé articulated the position of the PCF regarding the development of Communism in Africa. Citing Stalin's Colonialism and the National Question, it was pointed out that due to low levels of industrialisation, French Black Africa had not yet developed a proletariat, nor had the bourgeoisie split into revolutionary and conciliatory factions. Taking these considerations into account, Barbé outlined the following programme for the unification of Africans under the yoke of French colonialism, essentially reiterating the RDA platform:

- 1) The organisation of a union including all social classes, not a political party representing one or another;
- 2) The creation of a large mass movement which would be the expression of the masses and not an avant-garde political party; and
- 3) Recognition of a large autonomy in the forms of organisation and orientation of action among the diverse territories, regions and local sections of the movement. (24)

Through the influence of the local study groups, the plan was to strengthen the alliance between the RDA and the French Communist Party. Although the creation of an African Communist party was ruled out of the question, Barbé ordered increased material assistance and collaboration of GEC militants with sectional leaders of the mass movement. Finally, it was deemed necessary:

To improve the content and orientation of the RDA itself, on the one hand by the development of democratic methods in the organisation from the base to the summit, and on the other hand the practice of criticism and self-criticism through education...notably through the institution of schools under

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24

CRDA, Dossier sur le désapparentement, Barbé circular to GECs, 20 July 1948, p. 2.

the direction of the Coordinating Committee of the RDA or its territorial sections. (25)

As aforementioned, Barbé toured West Africa in October 1948 following the close of the RDA Coordinating Committee meeting held in Dakar. The orations given at the joint RDA-PCF rallies consisted of standard Communist rhetoric with the expressed support of local RDA leaders. Excerpts from Barbé's public address in Conakry on 16 October illustrate the defiant tone which the administration interpreted as serious provocation:

Comrades, one must fight, united against this pack of Vichyists, reactionaries, colonialists, capitalists, who under the direction of a certain "General de Gaulle," go by the name RPF....It is necessary to retake your liberty, to stop the enslaving of the people of the French Union by the colonialists...the Communist party struggles against the enslavement of people by other people, only the Communist party can give people all over the world liberty and happiness, treading if necessary over the bodies of de Gaulle supporters, colonialism and capitalism...the day is approaching when the Communist party will gain access to power and establish a true Government of Democratic Union. It will give back the liberty of the oppressed peoples of Viet-Nam and Madagascar, as well as to you, African comrades.... (26)

Similar speeches were delivered alongside RDA militants throughout Barbé's mission in West Africa. In Abidjan Houphouët expounded the thesis that the world was divided into two opposing camps--the oppressors and the oppressed, while Barbé called for immediate action by residents of the Empire against the French government and its American paymaster.<sup>27</sup> The final straw was the public meeting held in Bobo-Dioulasso on 26 October, where Houphouët was again present along with

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25

*Ibid.*, p. 8.

26

ICG b.70, RPF, "Compte-rendu de la réunion politique du Parti Communiste," Conakry, 16 October 1948.

27

John D. Hargreaves, *Decolonization in Africa*, London, 1988, p. 94.

Ouëzzin Coulibaly and members of the local RDA section. In his report to the High-Commissioner, the Governor of Upper Volta noted:

The terms of the various speeches pronounced in the course of this meeting, notably those of M. Barbé, are particularly intolerable.

Furthermore, warning of the grave consequences of allowing such behaviour to continue, Governor Mourages concluded:

It is in this sense that I have decided to prohibit the forthcoming RDA Congress, which was scheduled to take place in Bobo-Dioulasso. (28)

Despite protest carried all the way to the floor of the National Assembly, the ban on the congress at Bobo-Dioulasso was upheld. Nevertheless the RDA received authorisation to hold its second congress in Treichville, a suburb of Abidjan, from 2-6 January 1949.

As planned, the opening of the first RDA school preceded the congress. On this occasion d'Arboussier gave an extraordinary salute to the Communists, and thus described the orientation of the RDA "école des cadres":

The masters are those of scientific socialism...We must move boldly in the direction of these masters of proletarian thought, who are in the vanguard of progressive humanity. We must move boldly towards Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin who is their present day brilliant continuator, Stalin the indisputable authority on the problems of nationality and colonial questions which are precisely our problems and our key questions. (29)

In Guinea an RDA school was active sporadically, particularly in 1949 and 1950. Course subjects included national and colonial questions of the Soviet Union, colonial oppression in political, administrative and

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28

ANSOM AP 2301/1, Letter Governor Upper Volta to High-Commissioner AOF, No. 429/APS, Ouagadougou, 26 October 1948.

29

Doudou Guèye, "Préludant à son Congrès, le RDA inaugure sa première Ecole Interterritoriale," Réveil, No. 346, 10 January 1949.

cultural forms, the economic base of oppression and exploitation, the peasantry and working class as fundamental bases of the RDA, the anti-colonial struggle and use of trade unions, and how to effectively lead a mass movement.<sup>30</sup> The primary instructors of the Conakry school were Sékou Touré, Madeira Keita, and Amarah Soumah.

The Second Interterritorial RDA Congress held at Treichville was attended by 123 delegates representing 11 of the 14 territorial sections, plus several hundred observers including invited guests and journalists.<sup>31</sup> As at the Bamako congress, all metropolitan political and press representatives were from the PCF or Communist-affiliated organisations. Again, the presence and influence of Barbé, "who expressed all over Africa the readiness of his party to help us hasten our emancipation,"<sup>32</sup> was noteworthy.

In a well-organised fashion, 12 reports were presented to the second congress, out of which eight resolutions were passed by the general assembly.<sup>33</sup> The resolution on organisation clarified that although elected members were to form RDA parliamentary groups within the metropolitan assemblies, these groups were entirely subordinate to the Coordinating Committee. Repeated in the political resolution were many of the general themes introduced at the meeting of the Coordinating

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ANS 17G 573, "Renseignements," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 396/205, 24 March 1950.

31

G. Lisette, *Le combat du RDA*, p. 83.

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He was also present at the opening of the RDA school several weeks earlier. Doudou Guèye, "L'Afrique Noire dans la lutte pour la Démocratie: Le II Congrès du RDA," *Démocratie Nouvelle*, February 1949, p. 105.

33

The subjects of the resolutions were: political, organisation, economic, peasantry, workforce, military, education, health, and hygiene.

Committee at Dakar. In conclusion the RDA reaffirmed its global position and support for the "progressive forces for change":

The Congress welcomes the powerful upsurge of the democratic forces in the world and affirms its confidence in their certain victory over the forces of imperialism and war...It expresses its faith in the alliance of the peoples of Black Africa with the great people of France, which, led by its working class and Communist Party, is struggling with courage and confidence for its national independence against American imperialism. (34)

Finally, a new Coordinating Committee was elected, whereby Houphouët was reconfirmed as President of the movement, d'Arboussier was given the key office as Political Secretary-General, and Ouëzzin Coulibaly became the Political Coordinator of parliamentary work.

#### The Ongoing Crisis in Guinea

The Guinean section of the RDA sent six official delegates to the congress at Treichville. Returning to Conakry, the Guinean representatives addressed a disappointingly small crowd, whose enthusiasm and interest were considerably less than anticipated. Attendance at RDA meetings was consistently low over the next few months, coinciding with the resurgence of ethnic associations on the political scene.

In March 1949 a partial election to replace a deceased member of the territorial Conseil Général was held in the districts of Upper Guinea. Several months before, in November 1948, elections took place

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CRDA 2.49/br 1, Résolution Politique, II Congrès RDA, p. 13.

35

Other members of the newly elected Committee were the four Vice-Presidents: Félix Tchicaya, Mamadou Konaté, Ruben Um N'Yobe and Doudou Guèye; Treasurer Seri Koré; and representatives of the federal delegation and territorial sections.

36

"Rapport Politique Année 1949," Guinea, p. 8.

in the General Assembly for senators to the Conseil de la République, whereby Fodé Touré lost his second-college seat to an independent Frenchman named Raphael Saller. Besides being the brother of the Governor's Chef de cabinet, Saller was overtly supported by Pré, and allegations of administrative duplicity were rampant among the évolués

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and RDA supporters. In the March election Governor Pré again made his electoral preference clearly known, supporting Moustapha Cissé (his alleged gardener) of the Mandé Union, who was running against the RDA activist Ray Autra. When the RDA hopeful arrived in Siguiri on a campaign tour, the Commandant officially forbade RDA public gatherings throughout the district in the stated interest of maintaining public

38  
order.

The election of Cissé, notwithstanding an abstention rate greater than 70 per cent, was protested by Autra for a number of reasons. 39  
Firstly, Autra claimed that his opponent had never even visited several of the electoral districts, and was virtually unknown in the areas which voted for him. Secondly Cissé's candidacy was ardently supported by administrative authorities of the different subdistricts, who had been suspiciously called together just prior to the polling. Thirdly, a postal agent attested that the following notice was circulated pertaining to the campaign:

"Mr. Moustapha Cissé is supported by the Governor Roland Pré. To vote for another candidate is a waste of time. Woe to those who don't vote for Moustapha Cissé." (40)

37

ANS 2G 48, "Revue des événements du quatrième trimestre 1948," No. 63/APA, Conakry, 22 February 1949.

38

ANS 17G 573, Commandant de Cercle, Siguiri, Décision No. 16, 15 March 1949.

39

ANS 17G 573, Letter Mamadou Traoré (known as Ray Autra) to High-Commissioner AOF, Conakry, 25 July 1949.

40

Ibid.

Furthermore, Autra charged that in an attempt to re-create an atmosphere of terror that surrounded the incarceration of Lamine Kaba the previous year in the same district, a rumour that he had been arrested by armed guards and subsequently jailed was maliciously spread. Finally, irregularities in the distribution of voting ballots, location of polling stations, and alleged proof of the subtraction of votes in favour of Autra were submitted to the High-Commissioner of West Africa to protest the March election.

Governor Pré, referred to as "Roland la misère," became the direct target of grievances against the administration. Deputy Diallo and the Guinean RDA repeatedly petitioned higher authorities for the removal of Pré from office, while Barry Diawadou collaborated with the Governor while receiving support from the AGV and Fouta chiefs. According to Madeira Keita, public declarations of Diawadou included the following statements:

"The RDA is fighting the politics of Governor Roland Pré. We are resolute in maintaining this high-ranking official and his Chef de cabinet Fernand Saller. We also have taken all the necessary steps to prevent the RDA leaders from holding their next public meeting." (42)

The Guinean section of the RDA claimed to be under threats of violence and provocation by opposition groups sabotaging their meetings and disrupting the peace.

Aside from the political scandals attributed to Governor Pré, his management of economic affairs was also considered questionable. In

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ANSOM AP 2144/7, Report from UFG to Y. Diallo, Conakry, 12 May 1949.

42

ANS 17G 573, RDA-Guinée Comité Directeur to M. le Procureur de la République, No. 05-RDA/G, Conakry, 9 July 1949.

January 1950 deputy Diallo reported to the French Overseas Minister that officially Guinea had accumulated a debt of 270 million francs CFA (moreover the unofficial tally was considerably higher), and that after a motion to censure the proceedings of the General Council sent to the Governor had narrowly failed, the subject of economic crisis and mismanagement was dropped from discussion.<sup>43</sup> The deputy relayed telegrams he had received from Guinea relating incidents of corruption and waste, and called for an official investigation into these matters.

Clashes between the French administration and the RDA soon erupted into violent incidents in N'Zérékoré, the Forest district bordering the territory of the Ivory Coast. In September 1949 a handful of RDA activists crossed the Ivorian border and began spreading propaganda in the region. Soon after their arrival a subsection of the Guinean RDA was constituted, which was credited with a sizeable following. Particularly noteworthy to the authorities was an event involving the canton chief of Lola, who reportedly allowed the first RDA meeting in his jurisdiction to take place on his veranda.<sup>44</sup>

Disputes arose in the N'Zérékoré marketplace over the discrepancy between the prices for goods sold to Europeans and Africans. The market-vendors claimed that foreigners demanded delivery of foodstuffs and paid less than market prices. The RDA propagandists pointed out the illegality of this practice and rumouredly patrolled the N'Zérékoré market. The police report gave the following description of the situation:

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ANSOM AP 2144/7, Letter Y. Diallo to Minister FOM, 7 January 1950.

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ANS 17G 573, "Note de Renseignements," Gendarmerie, Guinea, 29 September 1949.

Since the installation of an RDA subsection at N'Zérékoré, incidents occur practically daily between the members of this party and the European population as well as several African government employees. These incidents are provoked by the obstruction of free trade in the public markets by individuals wearing an RDA insignia reading "Service d'Ordre." The local people, particularly the women, no longer wish to sell their merchandise except at prices fixed by RDA members. Moreover it is important to specify that the prices fixed for the Europeans are well above those for the natives. (45)

Over the next few weeks a series of minor incidents leading to several arrests unfolded in the markets of Lola. The culmination of events was a march of 300 protesters from Lola to administrative headquarters at N'Zérékoré, whereupon the military was called in to disperse the crowd and 23 additional agitators were detained.

Investigations of the troubles in N'Zérékoré were commissioned by both Governor Pré and RDA-Guinea President Keita. The incident behind the protest involved the chief of Lola; however, the explanations provided by the RDA and the administration differed considerably. According to the RDA the Lola chief convened a meeting and announced that he was under administrative orders to furnish a list of RDA members in his subdistrict, and upon resistance the chief reported to the authorities that he had been attacked by three RDA men present at the gathering. The account furnished by the administration supported the chief's claim of assault, thus justifying the arrest of the three men cited.

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ANS 17G 573, "Note de Renseignements," Gendarmerie, Guinea, 12 October 1949.

46

ANS 17G 573, Telegram, Gendarmerie, N'Zérékoré, 18 October 1949.

47

CRDA 9/doss 7, Ray Autra, "Rapport sur la situation générale dans le cercle de N'Zérékoré," 14 November 1949.

48

ANS 17G 573, "Rapport sur la manifestation RDA du 18/10/49 à N'Zérékoré," Inspection des Affaires Administratives, No. I/C, 8 November 1949, p. 2.

different interpretations, the outcome of both scenarios was a march instigated by local RDA sympathisers in protest against these arrests.

Recommendations of the administrative investigation were far-reaching both in imparting much of the blame to the European authorities, and in outlining ways to redress the situation. The report, for example, carried this description of the administrative personnel:

None of them acted either with insight or professional awareness, nor did they act to annihilate, when there was still time, the action of the RDA. Not a single pertinent measure was taken by them to restrain the combativeness of the leaders of this party through repression when committing offences. (49)

Included in the recommendations were the dismissal of the native chief of Lola as well as several village chiefs and prison guards, the transfer of two RDA militants, and judicial prosecution of the RDA on at least four separate charges. The report concluded, in a hopeful manner, that peace would continue as long as the administrative personnel "give everyone the impression of leaving no stone unturned in the destruction  
50  
of the RDA."

Autra stayed on in N'Zérékoré several weeks after calm had been  
51  
restored, and registered over 4,000 new adherents to the RDA. Following his request for a gathering on 20 November, however, the Commandant de Cercle proclaimed public meetings prohibited in the period 19  
52  
November to 19 December. To ensure continued RDA suppression, Governor

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49

Ibid., p. 3.

50

Ibid., p. 5.

51

ANS 17G 573, "Renseignements," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 2576/102, 16 December 1949.

52

CRDA 9/doss 7, Ray Autra, "Déclaration de Réunion Publique," N'Zérékoré, 17 November 1949; "Décision," Commandant de Cercle, N'Zérékoré, 19 November 1949.

Pré relieved the N'Zérékoré Commandant of his duties and vowed to keep  
53  
the district under close surveillance.

Apart from N'Zérékoré the only other budding subsection of the  
Guinean RDA, towards the end of 1949, was the reconstituted party in  
Kankan. While RDA activists were succeeding in N'Zérékoré, Guinean  
propagandists were also gaining positive results in Kankan, re-enlisting  
54  
former party members who had deserted the movement the previous year.

In one week more than 800 RDA membership cards were distributed; the  
popularity of the movement soon soared when two sons of Kankan's  
55  
religious leader joined the party. The euphoria surrounding the rapid  
growth of the RDA was short-lived, however, when the following occurred:

The Grand Chérif, skilfully advised, declared himself  
hostile to the RDA movement and requested that his sons  
offer their resignations; they promptly complied. The same  
day at prayers, the Chérif advised his followers to stay  
outside of political struggles and declared that the RDA is  
anti-Muslim. The Chérif's intervention rapidly bore fruit;  
the progress of the RDA is halted; several resignations are  
registered. (56)

The local RDA president alerted Autra to the impending disaster,  
asking for instructions. En route from N'Zérékoré, Autra spent a week in  
Kankan, hoping to give a new impetus to the local RDA. Despite his  
efforts and a population generally sympathetic to the underlying princi-  
ples of the movement, administrative intervention and pressure

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53

ANS 17G 573, Letter Governor Guinea to High-Commissioner ACF, No.  
361-C, Conakry, 12 November 1949.

54

ANS 17G 573, "Renseignements," Services de Police, Kankan, 13  
October 1949.

55

ANS 17G 573, "Note de Renseignements," Gendarmerie, Kankan, No.  
738, 25 November 1949.

56

Ibid.

effectively nipped the growth of the party. Before the close of 1949 the French authorities had not only transferred Moricandian Savane, the Secretary-General and "true animator" of the Kankan party, to Mali (a desolate Northern district in Guinea), but had also secured the resignation of the subsection President. Thus the Guinean section of the RDA found itself again in a formidable situation, its every move checked by the administration, its leaders working in fear of personal repercussions, as illustrated in the 1949 annual report:

By the end of 1949 the RDA is no more than an opposition party abandoned by the large majority of its troops, officially comprised of only two subsections, N'Zérékoré and Kankan. Its financial means do not permit it to lead an effective propaganda campaign. It has been purged, and become more and more closed. It seems that the leaders have been requested not to attract attention to themselves. (58)

The precarious predicament of the Guinean RDA at this time was due in part to the consolidation of its competition. Created in July 1949, the Comité d'Entente Guinéenne (CEG) represented a united front of the four leading ethnic associations in opposition to the RDA. Comprised of the Union Mandé, Amicale Gilbert Vieillard, Union Forestière, and Comité de Rénovation de Basse-Guinée, the stated purpose behind the merger was "to combat the demagogues throughout the territory and the enemy agitators of peace, social order, and progress."<sup>59</sup>

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ANS 17G 573, "Note de Renseignements," Gendarmerie, Guinea, No. 141, 15 January 1950.

58

"Rapport Politique Année 1949," Guinea, p. 9.

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Respective leaders of the associations were: Framoi Bérété, Barry Diawadou, Mory Camara, and Karim Bangoura. The Comité de la Rénovation de la Basse-Guinée was the successor to the Comité d'Union de Basse Guinée, whereby the leadership of Fodé Touré was eclipsed. The CEG, supported by the administration, was in opposition to Yacine Diallo as well as the RDA. ANSOM AP 2263/6, "Les Partis Politiques en AOF...1945 à 1955."

Coming to the aid of the Guinean RDA, d'Arboussier arrived in Conakry in December 1949 to lead a defiant stand against administrative intimidation and threatened violence by political opponents. The RDA Political Secretary-General chided the Guinean section for lagging far behind the other territories due to its lack of union.<sup>60</sup> The ethnic organisations' plans to sabotage the public speeches of d'Arboussier were known in advance by the security police as well as the RDA.<sup>61</sup> Unmoved by harassment and continuous surveillance, during his visit d'Arboussier spoke to crowds of over 1,000 spectators, registered new adherents to the movement, and constituted a women's branch of the Guinean RDA.<sup>62</sup>

Following d'Arboussier's visit, RDA Political Coordinator Coulibaly embarked on a Guinean tour, and was present alongside Autra at a congress of the Union Forestière held in Macenta. During this congress Autra was arrested and indicted on charges of fraud emanating from Conakry, and sentenced to two years in prison.<sup>63</sup> Furthermore a local decree of 7 February 1950 prohibited RDA meetings in the territory of French Guinea. A dispute arose immediately over the legality of such a measure, and subsequently the decree was annulled on 26 March.<sup>64</sup>

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ANS 17G 573, "En marge de la conférence d'Arboussier," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 2444/77, 7 December 1949.

61

ANS 17G 573, "Compte-rendu, réunion publique," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 2443/76, 6 December 1949.

62

ANS 17G 573, "Renseignements," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 2485/80, 8 December 1949.

63

He later was acquitted by the Dakar Court of Appeals. ANS 17G 573, "Activité politique et sociale en Guinée pendant le mois de Décembre 1949," AOF, No. 141, Dakar, 23 January 1950.

64

Arreté No. I 016/APA, Journal Officiel de Guinée, 15 February 1950; Arreté No. 418/APA, J.O.G., 1 April 1950.

The ban on RDA meetings was scrupulously upheld throughout the territory, the lifting of which fostered a reorganisation of party subsections and the development of a new plan of action. At the request of the Guinean section, eight RDA propagandists were borrowed from the Ivory Coast to work with subsections in Upper Guinea and the Forest region.<sup>65</sup> Missions were sent out by the Directing Committee in order to determine regional strategies taking account of local considerations.

An important aspect of the campaign to spread the word and solicit support for the movement was the reappearance of an RDA-Guinean newspaper entitled *Coup de Bambou* (Bamboo Stroke). The former monthly newspaper *Phare de Guinée*, under the direction of Mamba Sano, survived nine months before folding in June 1948 due to administrative pressure, financial constraints, and the breaking up of the party. It was not until April 1950 that the Guinean section launched its replacement, the steady appearance of which was a mere two months and resulted in serious trouble for the Guinean RDA. The title *Coup de Bambou*, introduced by a poem in the first edition of the newspaper, signified the RDA striking the final blow to colonialism.<sup>66</sup> Fervently pro-Communist and anti-colonial, the paper was soon besieged with lawsuits, the first three of which cost the RDA 300,000 francs CFA and a three month (suspended) prison sentence for its Director, Madeira Keita.<sup>67</sup>

The militancy encouraged by d'Arboussier was taking effect in Guinea, where the RDA section entered its most defiant stage in opposition to the colonial government. While in Paris the RDA representatives

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ANS 17G 573, "Renseignements," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 311/173, 4 April 1950.

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CRDA, *Coup de Bambou*, No. 1, 5 April 1950.

<sup>67</sup>

Cheickna Diarra, "La presse du Rassemblement Démocratique Africain 1946-1951," *Mémoire*, Science Politique, Paris I, 1978, p. 190.

were reconsidering their relationship with the Communists and indeed negotiating a shift in alliance, in Guinea the RDA was publicly reaffirming its devotion to the Communist Party and affiliated organisations. In April 1950 Madeira Keita had the following to say about the rapport between the RDA and the PCF:

It is a total alliance of your leaders for the struggle against the colonialists, the exploiters, the blood-suckers; as you see we have chosen the clan of Stalin, Ho-Chi-Minh, Mao Tse-Tung; it is the clan which tomorrow will be victorious, the RDA is an offshoot of the French Communist Party.  
(68)

### The Growing Impact of Trade Unions

Although the French administration in Guinea effectively managed to subdue nascent nationalist aspirations of indigenous political organisations, it was far less successful at keeping the labour movement in check. Governor Pré was aware of the potential problems of burgeoning trade unionism in Guinea, as he signalled in the 1947 annual political report:

It cannot be hidden that the trade union issue is one of the factors most likely to disturb the tranquillity of the territory. If not attended to, the situation risks becoming very dangerous. The Metropole is, in large part, responsible for this state of affairs. The inconsistent policies of the Government vis à vis inflation, and strikes that are being launched at an accelerated pace, have the most troublesome effects. (69)

When the decree authorising trade unions in the West African Federation was promulgated in 1944, the Guinean labour movement was small and inconsequential. Led by Sékou Touré, the postal workers were the first African wage earners in the territory to organise. Railroad and other public sector employees followed suit, and shortly thereafter

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ANS 17G 573, "Compte-Rendu de la Réunion RDA," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 422/228, 7 May 1950.

69

"Rapport Politique Année 1947," Guinea, p. IV.

these budding unions were united under the aegis of the metropolitan CGT. Economic development and plans for industrialisation of the colony helped spur the growth of unionism. By 1950 administrative surveys revealed that French Guinea encompassed the greatest repository of natural resources in West Africa, and major projects involving iron ore and bauxite were already in progress.<sup>70</sup>

Grievances with regards to working conditions, pay scales, family allowances, accident compensation, paid vacations, and discrepancies of pay and opportunities between European and African labourers were sources of union activity and numerous strikes. While the French parliament painstakingly studied a uniform employment code for the overseas territories, the indigenous labour force grew increasingly intolerant and, with the support of the union movement, pressed for local reforms. At this time gubernatorial powers included the setting of the territorial minimum wage by decree. In Guinea, the culmination of grievances and repeated dissatisfaction over the gap between labour requests and administrative concessions resulted in a paralysing two-day general strike in June 1950.

The unquestioned leader of Guinean organised labour was Sékou Touré. A young man with only a primary school education, <sup>71</sup> in 1945 Touré

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See R. Pré, *L'Avenir de la Guinée Française*.

71

The official biography of Ahmed Sékou Touré held that he was born in Faranah on 9 January 1922. Numerous authors have refuted this claim and estimate his birth to be sometime between 1918-1920. After finishing primary school, Touré briefly attended the Georges Poiret Vocational Training School in Conakry, where he was kicked out rumouredly because of poor grades (his official biography stated Touré was dropped from the roster for refusing to recite a colonial account of "bloody Samory"). Touré's mother was a great granddaughter of the Malinke resistance warrior Samory Touré. Sidiki Keita-Kobélé, *Ahmed Sékou Touré: L'Homme du 28 Septembre 1958*, Conakry, 1977; I.B. Kaké, *Sékou Touré: le héros et le tyran*, pp. 18-25; A. Lewin, *La Guinée*, p. 49; J. Lacouture, *Cinq Hommes et la France*, p. 328; C. Rivière, *Guinea: The Mobilization of a People*, p. 86.

was working as an assistant in the postal service when he founded the first trade union in Guinea. In 1948 Touré was appointed Secretary-General of the Guinean branch of the CGT, and two years later Secretary-General of the Coordinating Committee of CGT unions for French West Africa and Togo. More than from his political endeavours in support of the RDA, Touré became involved with metropolitan politics and the Communists primarily as an African union activist.<sup>72</sup>

In contrast to the ongoing bitter struggle amongst Guinean political parties, competing trade unions in the territory often combined in protest and in action, thereby strengthening their position vis à vis the administration. Addressing a large gathering of union representatives in May 1950, Touré boldly announced that the battle for wages had begun, and threatened that if the Governor did not comply with their demands a strike would be called.<sup>73</sup> Once it became clear that the administration was unwilling to raise the minimum wage to the amount requested by the unionists, preparations were quickly underway to sustain an all-out strike. The local RDA helped spread the word, and women were the first to respond in stocking provisions in order not to leave their households for several days. Moreover it was rumoured that the success of this strike, and the measures taken by Touré, would ensure the departure of the "heinous" Governor.<sup>74</sup>

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It is held that Touré's first trip to Paris was to attend a CGT Congress in March 1946. He was not elected to a metropolitan assembly until 1956. J. Lacouture, *Cinq Hommes et la France*, p. 329.

73

ANS 17G 271, "Compte-Rendu Réunion Syndicats CGT, CFIC, et Cheminots Africains," Services de Police, Guinea, 13 May 1950.

74

ANS 17G 271, "Renseignements," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 614/311, 7 June 1950.

The strike of 9-10 June, although instigated by wage earners in the public sector, soon spread into private employment including domestic servants. The administration conceded that the union action crippled economic life in Conakry, and as a result granted more than a 20 per cent increase in wages.<sup>75</sup> The process of negotiation was far from smooth, however, as the six members of the strike committee were imprisoned. Reaction was swift in massive protest against the arrests of the union leaders, particularly that of Touré, on whose behalf it was threatened:

Touch one hair of our friend, and you'll raise up in unison  
all the workers not only of Conakry, but of all of Guinea.  
(76)

Amidst the uproar and impending endangerment of public order, Governor Pré was compelled to release the prisoners on suspended sentences with accompanying fines after just three days.<sup>77</sup>

#### Surviving under Siege and the First RDA-Guinea Party Congress

In the wake of the June strike and the fear which it instilled in the French officials, a series of reprisals was aimed at local political leaders, particularly of the RDA. The administration specifically targeted members of the RDA-Guinea Directing Committee, pursuing them with lawsuits, dismissals from public service, and transferrals both within and out of the territory. The RDA prepared itself for the worst, drawing up contingency plans in anticipation of the removal and dispersal of its chief activists.

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ANS 2G 50 133, "Rapport Politique Année 1950," Guinea, p. 2.

76

Coup de Bambou, No. 27, 14 June 1950.

77

ANS 17G 271, "Renseignements," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 642/327, 14 June 1950.

As Secretary-General of the Party and Director of its publication, Madeira Keita was bombarded with lawsuits and petitions filed by the local administration requesting his arrest. For a long time the authorities had kept a close surveillance on the RDA leader, and wanted to dispose of this "dangerous person" who in 1948 was thus portrayed:

Very intelligent, subtle and ardent subscriber to Communist doctrine, Madeira is irrefutably the soul and brains of the group, and it seems certain that if he were transferred to another territory in the Federation after his holiday, the RDA would not easily find in Guinea an animator and coordinator likely to equal him. (78)

The motion to transfer Keita was stalled by the Dakar office, however, and consequently the territorial administration pursued him via other legal measures. The attempt to condemn Keita for the incidents at N'Zérékoré was also dropped by the higher authorities; nevertheless, a plethora of local lawsuits led the populace to expect a firm prison sentence for their eminent leader.

In the event of his likely internment Keita proposed a division of responsibilities and territorial regions among the remaining loyalists, and allegedly designated Sékou Touré as his would-be replacement. Furthermore the party archives and materials were reportedly transferred from Keita's residence to that of Touré. To the general surprise of everyone concerned, Keita was handed only suspended

78

ANS 17G 573, Chef Service Sureté Guinée to M. l'Inspecteur Général de la Sureté en AOF, Sureté, Guinea, No. 1176/64, 5 November 1948.

79

ANSOM AP 2144/7, Letter R. Saller to Minister FOM, No. 378, 8 May 1950.

80

ANS 17G 573, "Renseignements," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 1016/577, 29 August 1950.

81

ANS 17G 573, "Renseignements," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 1022/578, 30 August 1950.

sentences and heavy fines for the numerous complaints brought before the Conakry tribunal. The RDA leader's victory was short-lived, however, as transfer orders were issued for him to leave Guinea and report to  
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Dakar.

Autra was the first member of the Directing Committee to be transferred to a distant region within Guinea, followed by Ibrahima  
83  
Diane and Moussa Diakité. Finally Sékou Touré was arbitrarily "put at the disposition of the Governor of Niger," (i.e. transferred to the  
84  
least politically active colony in AOF). Besought by the party members and Directing Committee, both Keita and Touré decided to resign from their posts in the colonial service rather than leave the territory.

The administrative shake-up of the Guinean RDA served as the impetus for the calling of the party's first Territorial Congress. Held in Conakry from 15 to 18 October 1950, the main focus of the first congress was internal organisation. In his general report to the assembly Keita acknowledged the fundamental weaknesses of the party, among which:

Our grass roots formations function intermittently. They have almost no connections with the central Committee; their leaders, despite their courage, good will, and devotion, are inactive due to lack of experience and know-how; the organisations rapidly become inert before disappearing completely.  
(85)

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ANS 17G 573, "Renseignements," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 712/511, 31 July 1950.

83

Ray Autra was displaced to Youkounkoun in June 1950. Ibrahime Diane was sent to Beyla, and Moussa Diakité to Mali. ANS 17G 573, "Renseignements," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 571/291, 2 June 50.

84

Decision No. 5277/INT/p.2 of 29 September, High-Commissioner AOF. ANS 17G 573, "Renseignements," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 1187/689, 5 October 1950.

85

CRDA 9/doss 2, Madeira Keita, "Rapport Général d'Activité 1947-1950," PDG Congress I, p. 5.

The party leaders complained that the regional representatives depended on the central committee to "do all the work and smooth over all the difficulties," and again that such action was sporadic and inconsistent.<sup>86</sup> It was decided that the task of the future was to foster direct and sustained contact with the masses, the aim of which was to educate, organise, and lead them in the struggle against oppression and the evils of colonialism. Furthermore, it was deemed imperative to reach out to the incipient African middle class, namely the merchants, artisans, transporters, planters, and former military servicemen. Likewise the potential boost to the movement via the organisation of women and youth branches was considered an essential component of the development plan. Lastly, in recognition of mutual interests and common pursuits, ties were to be strengthened between the party and the trade union movement.

The political resolution emanating from the first Territorial Congress echoed that of the RDA second congress in its choice of siding with the camp of the oppressed, fighting colonialism and imperialism in the struggle for world peace.<sup>87</sup> Similarly the resolution denounced exploitative capitalism, the war in Viet-Nam, American intervention world wide, and the onslaught of the impending third World War. Besides calling for equal rights and voting privileges among Europeans and Africans, the Guinean resolution added an appeal for the democratisation of the chieftaincy with free elections--an issue that was to become increasingly integral to the party platform.

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*Ibid.*, p. 9.

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CRDA 9/2, "Résolution Politique," PDG Congress I.

The final order of business at the congress was the designation of a proper name to the territorial section of the RDA. Officially recorded on 24 October 1950, the RDA-Guinea chapter became the Parti Démocratique de Guinée (PDG). The pomp and circumstance, however, was minimal, as the future of the party looked quite bleak. By this time virtually all of the leaders of the Guinean RDA, including Madeira Keita, Sékou Touré, Diallo Saifoulaye, and Ray Autra, had received orders to leave the territory; refusal to comply foreshadowed intensified repression as well as personal and economic hardship. Other party militants were transferred to remote areas within Guinea, and most were either facing charges or had already been imprisoned at one time or another. The situation would be aggravated further before either the RDA or the French administration recognised the necessity to seek peaceful co-existence and progressive reform.

## CHAPTER IV

### Tactical Retreat and Reconciliation Under Threat of Dissolution

The height of the conflict between the RDA and the French authorities was reached in 1950, when violent clashes were erupting almost daily in the West African territories, and the movement was faced with the prospect of being either outlawed by the National Government, or brutally crushed by local officials. Hard-line administrators, <sup>believing themselves</sup> justified in their struggle against world Communism, embarked on a ruthless campaign to suppress the RDA in Africa. Resultingly, elements of repression, fear, and pragmatism all contributed to the re-evaluation of RDA strategy and tactics by its leaders in parliament.

Reconsideration of the association and parliamentary alliance with the Communist Party, coupled with new opportunities arising out of a significant change in government, prompted the RDA formally to disaffiliate from the PCF and at the same time seek reconciliation with its former opponents--both the French government and non-RDA African representatives of diverse political associations. Despite negotiation attempts on numerous fronts, suspicion and rivalry clouded the process, ending in only partial success at rapprochement. Nevertheless, the RDA survived this difficult period; its new orientation effectively assured its future, and collaboration with the government instilled hope of legislative reform and progress for French West Africa.

### Incidents Engulfing the RDA

Birthplace and centre of RDA activity, the Ivory Coast was the main arena where the occurrence and severity of political disturbances

intensified throughout 1949 and early 1950, culminating in the attempted arrest of RDA President Houphouët-Boigny and the banning of RDA meetings in Africa. It appeared that the Governor sent to repress the RDA in the Ivory Coast was not producing results quickly enough to suit Overseas Minister Paul Coste-Floret, and consequently was replaced by the staunch anti-Communist Laurent Péchoux<sup>1</sup> in November 1948. Péchoux was given orders to break up the legal and educational systems instituted by the Parti Démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI), and to re-establish the pre-eminence of French authority over the considerable power wielded by Houphouët.<sup>2</sup> The first step in weakening the deputy's personal fiefdom was the detachment of the Upper Volta territory in 1948;<sup>3</sup> elections in June resulted in suspect victories for anti-RDA candidates backed by the administration.

In supporting RDA opponents, and pressuring members to resign from the movement, the local authorities often prompted public disturbances and added to the violent nature of the clashes that ensued. Moreover Houphouët loyalists in his home territory were quick to defend their leader; provoking them proved an easy means to justify calling in government troops to restore the peace and jail RDA agitators.

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R. Schachter Morgenthau, Political Parties, p. 188.

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Founded by Houphouët in April 1946, the PDCI was the strongest of the RDA territorial sections, claiming over 800,000 members in February 1950. G. Lisette, Le combat du RDA, p. 113; R. Schachter Morgenthau, Political Parties, p. 188.

3

The territory of Upper Volta had been divided among Niger, Soudan, and the Ivory Coast in 1933. The Northern districts of the Ivory Coast reattached to the Upper Volta were responsible for the election of native Ouézzin Coulibaly, RDA strongman and close personal friend of Houphouët, as deputy to the National Assembly in 1946.

Real trouble in the Ivory Coast began when a co-founder of the RDA-PCDI, Etienne Djaument, lost his re-nomination to the Council of the Republic in November 1948. Incensed at Houphouët and prodded by the administration, Djaument resigned from the PDCI, announced the formation of an opposition party, and proceeded to publicly insult the RDA President. The scheduled birthplace of the new party was Treichville--site of the RDA congress just one month prior--the choice of which greatly disturbed the RDA leaders, who interpreted the move as antagonistic. Houphouët and his supporters were present to hear Djaument's diatribe; their loud protests effectively drowned out the speaker, who was subsequently forced to adjourn the meeting. On 6 February the attempt to found the party was again thwarted when RDA officials notified the police that their opponents were armed and preparing a showdown. Although police intervention staved off a serious incident in the meeting hall, riots broke out that afternoon when angry mobs stormed the homes of those opposed to the RDA, ending in bloodshed and 46 arrests. Three days later eight members of the PDCI Directing Committee (those not protected by parliamentary immunity) were arrested; administrators gloated at their success in bringing about the downfall of the local RDA.

Facing a serious setback the RDA altered its tactics and strategy, but boldly continued the fight against administrative repression. In protest against ten months imprisonment without trial PDCI leaders began a hunger strike on 12 December 1949. In a remarkable show of solidarity a boycott of European goods was called in Abidjan in support of the detainees, followed by mass demonstrations, a women's march on the

prison, and strikes by domestic servants.

Incidents multiplied and spread into the Ivory Coast countryside. On 22 January three Africans were reported killed in Bouaflé, a town in close proximity to Houphouët's home village of Yamoussoukro. The RDA President, arriving at the scene of the crime to launch an investigation, was surrounded by crowds of supporters and visited by local RDA leaders, including Zoro Bi Tra who was wanted by the police. At that moment Houphouët could have been legally arrested for harbouring a fugitive, his parliamentary immunity lifted for being caught in the act of committing a crime.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless it was several days later that a warrant was issued for Houphouët's arrest; the military arrived at his home in Yamassoukro during the night of 25-26 January to take him into custody. Sent away by the watchman, the following day police again tried to apprehend the RDA leader, whereupon Houphouët, refusing the military escort, sent a message to the Public Prosecutor warning against the probable ramifications of his arrest, and agreeing to attend the summons.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile the news of the attempt to arrest Houphouët incited thousands of his supporters to march on Yamassoukro, blocking all the roads for miles.<sup>7</sup> Ouëzzin Coulibaly and Gabriel d'Arboussier were immediately dispatched from Yamassoukro to meet the Prosecutor in the

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Georges Chaffard, *Les Carnets Secrets de la Décolonisation*, Paris, 1965, vol. I, p. 111.

5

Parliamentary immunity was one of the greatest privileges bestowed on deputies to the National Assembly, and surely saved several African leaders numerous times from imprisonment or crippling lawsuits. A deputy could not legally be placed under arrest unless caught in the act of committing a crime, or if the Assembly voted to suspend his immunity.

6

Paul-Henri Siriex, *Houphouët-Boigny: an African Statesman*, Paris, 1987, p. 98.

7

R. Schachter Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, p. 195.

place of Houphouët. Having failed to convince the official to drop the charges against their leader, the two men telexed lawyers in Dakar to appeal to the federal Attorney-General on Houphouët's behalf. Once informed about the situation and impending consequences of such an action, the Procureur Général promptly nullified the warrant issued by the Ivory Coast Prosecutor.

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Still all was not calm in the territory. Houphouët had sent a letter to the Prosecutor of Bouaflé with Victor Biaka Boda--the RDA senator who had succeeded Djaument--who never reached his destination. Mysterious circumstances surrounded the disappearance of Senator Boda, whose remains were found six months later scattered in a wooded area off the road on which he was travelling. The tense atmosphere pervading the territory following news of Houphouët's abortive arrest erupted in a series of clashes between his supporters and government forces. The climax of these events occurred on 29 January in Dimbokro, when troops opened fire on a mass of armed protesters, killing 15 and wounding 38 Africans (official figures).

The toll of Africans killed in this wave of incidents surpassed fifty by January 1950, in addition to over 3,000 jailed in connection with the violence, protests, boycotts, and strikes largely attributed to RDA activity. In February the Council of Ministers banned RDA meetings throughout Africa. Furthermore the National Assembly sent a Commission of Inquiry to the Ivory Coast, and Overseas Minister Jean Letourneau and High-Commissioner Paul Béchard personally toured AOF on fact-finding

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G. Chaffard, Les Carnets Secrets, vol. 1, p. 116.

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J.D. Hargreaves, Decolonization in Africa, p. 14.

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missions. In the meantime Governor Péchoux began petitioning the French government, first to dissolve the PDCI, and subsequently the entire RDA organisation.

#### The Proposed Dissolution of the RDA

In mid-February 1950 the Ivory Coast Governor sent a telegram requesting that the PDCI be banned by a decree from the Council of Ministers, citing the law of 10 January 1936.<sup>11</sup> In response to his demand Governor Péchoux was asked to submit to the National Government a formal proposition, along with a detailed account of the circumstances justifying such an extreme measure. High-Commissioner Béchar, in complete support of Péchoux's initiative, furnished a report of his own outlining the illegal activities of the party, including:

- 1) Superimposing its authority over that of the administration;
- 2) Spreading propaganda against the administration and the traditional chiefs;
- 3) Imposing its own police force;
- 4) Controlling the markets and instigating related boycotts and strikes;
- 5) Sabotaging the public meetings of opposition parties; and
- 6) Provoking violent incidents. (12)

The High-Commissioner reasoned that the territory had "suffered too much from the virtual dictator that had been imposed upon it," and consequently "only a radical measure could, in destroying his legend of

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The ban on RDA meetings, its issuance more significant than its actual application, was rescinded in early April. The Commission's findings, though never officially discussed in parliament, were published in three large volumes the following year under the name of its reporter L. Damas.

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ANS 17G 569, Telegram Governor Ivory Coast to High-Commissioner ACF, No. 111, Abidjan, 14 February 1950.

12

ANS 17G 569, High-Commissioner ACF, "Note sur les activités illégales du PDCI," No. 799 INT/AP.2, Dakar, 2 March 1950.

invincibility, restore the peace in the Ivory Coast."

The detailed analysis submitted by Governor Pécoux focused on the viability of invoking the law of 10 January 1936 to formally outlaw the RDA. The law stipulated that associations or groups could be dissolved by the President of the Republic in accordance with the Council of Ministers, if found guilty on one of the following counts:

- 1) Provoking armed political demonstrations in the streets;
- 2) Constituting, in characteristic form or military organization, combat groups or private militias; or
- 3) Having the goal of interfering with the integrity of the National Territory or attempting the use of force to challenge the Republican form of government. (14)

Acknowledging that the third case would be inappropriate, whereas proof of the second was sketchy and incomplete, Pécoux based his proposition on the first case scenario to justify the formal dissolution of the RDA. The Governor argued that the political demonstrations--provoked by the party leaders, public, and armed in nature--fulfilled the necessary conditions as required by the law. Furthermore, Pécoux explained that now was the opportune time to dissolve the movement, the February ban on RDA meetings in Africa having served as a transitional period allowing for serious consideration and final judgement. Lastly, urging the suppression of the entire movement rather than solely the PDCI, Pécoux concluded:

To cut down the tree, one must attack the trunk. The trunk being the Ivory Coast, I am left with the hope that the other Territories which have secondary branches will not voice opposition to a necessary local decision (sic). (15)

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13

Ibid., p. 10.

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ANS 17G 569, Governor Ivory Coast to High-Commissioner AOF, "Dissolution du RDA," No. 223/INFO, Abidjan, 6 March 1950, pp. 1-2.

15

Ibid., p. 7.

In his last remark the Governor was referring to an inquiry of administrative opinion already underway, concerning the dissolution of the RDA in the Federation of West Africa. Telegrams were sent to the territorial capitals soliciting viewpoints of local officials and estimations of potential repercussions if such a measure were imposed. Overall the responses were favourable to the banning of the RDA, although several Governors failed to see the absolute necessity of a federal injunction. Governor Péchoux hence stepped up his campaign for the complete suppression of the movement, stressing that a number of its leaders were members of the umbrella organisation and not the Ivory Coast branch, and pointing out that if just the PDCI was dissolved, then its membership cards could simply be replaced by those of the RDA. The sole objection to the outlawing of the party came from Dakar, whence the Governor wrote:

The dissolution of the RDA for the entirety of AOF seems inopportune. It does not respond to our local necessities and will be on the whole poorly received. (17)

The reply from Bamako also signalled that such a move might result in a malaise social, however the Soudan Governor noted that it would be a good blow to the RDA. Governor Pré of Guinea alluded to potential problems in the Forest region, but nonetheless professed "general satisfaction and assured calm."

As aforementioned, the French Overseas Minister embarked on a tour

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ANS 17G 569, Telegram Governor Ivory Coast to High-Commissioner AOF, Nos. 183-190, Abidjan, 21 March 1950.

17

ANS 17G 569 (152), Telegram Governor Senegal to High-Commissioner AOF, Nos. 12-13, Dakar, 26 March 1950.

18

ANS 17G 569 (152), Telegram Governor Guinea to High-Commissioner AOF, No. 27, Conakry, 24 March 1950.

of West Africa following the gravest of the Ivory Coast incidents. The information gathered by Minister Letourneau in AOF and later in Paris apparently convinced him that it would be unwise to altogether outlaw the RDA.<sup>19</sup> Indeed while official activities in the territories clearly illustrated the continued repression of the organisation, dealings in Paris between the National Government and the RDA gradually led to a shift in respective attitudes and policies, thus opening the door to a general reconciliation.

### Negotiations in Progress

The leadership of the RDA was well aware that the organisation's pending dissolution was in consequence of both its opposition to the French government, and affiliation to the Communist Party. Administrators in West Africa repeatedly drew attention to Communist support of the RDA in their attempt to have the movement outlawed. Despite the fact that not one European was killed, the incidents in the overseas territories were branded by local authorities as part of an anti-French rebellion instigated predominantly by the RDA. The escalating violence, as well as genuine threats of imprisonment or assassination of activists, compelled RDA leaders to re-evaluate party platform and strategy. Undoubtedly the events which occurred in Madagascar in 1947--when the parliamentary immunity of one deputy was lifted in Paris while the other two were arrested in the territory, and repression of an "anti-French" revolt ending in the deaths of 90,000 Malgash--weighed heavily on the minds of RDA representatives in the metropole.<sup>20</sup>

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ANS 17G 569, Minister FOM to High-Commissioner AOF, Cable No. 387, Paris, 6 June 1950.

20

For further information see Yves Bénot, *Les députés africains au Palais Bourbon*, Paris, 1989, pp. 80-6.

RDA reactions to the ban on their meetings in Africa, and the proposition of dissolution, varied among the territories and their respective leaders, the result of which was internal dissension and divergent opinions concerning the organisation's future course of action. While some RDA activists favoured military preparedness and strengthened ties with the world's "democratic" (i.e. Communist) forces, others preferred negotiation and were hopeful of bettering relations with the French government and non-RDA African political groupings. D'Arboussier led the more militant faction of the RDA, calling for clandestine activity and reaffirmation of the alliance with the PCF. Reportedly d'Arboussier went so far as to notify the RDA section leaders that they could count on the eventual support of Russia in their struggle against imperialism and oppression.<sup>21</sup> On the contrary, pragmatic Houphouët and his loyal followers contemplated a shift in policy that would effectively terminate the violence and repression, without altering the goals of the RDA.

In April 1950 an RDA delegation, headed by Houphouët, was present at the Twelfth Congress of the French Communist Party. Members of the delegation recognised that the closing of the congress signalled the end of a period of RDA history; it was hence just a matter of time before the African movement would leave the Communists altogether.<sup>22</sup>

The first step in breaking with the PCF was to evict d'Arboussier from the influential office of RDA Secretary-General. Claiming the move

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21

ANS 17G 573, "Renseignements: Activités RDA," Services de Police, Guinée, No. 149/76, 12 February 1950.

22

D. Guèye, Sur les Sentiers du Temple, p. 106.

to be a necessary "tactical retreat," RDA parliamentarians asked d'Arboussier in June to give up his post.<sup>23</sup> Reassured that the gesture was purely symbolic and the movement would retain confidence in him, d'Arboussier duly submitted his resignation to the RDA Coordinating Committee on 7 July 1950.

The removal of d'Arboussier from office was seen as a necessary step towards African unity and reconciliation of formerly opposed parliamentary groups, namely the RDA and the IOM. Beginning in June, Houphouët initiated discussions of rapprochement with Raphael Saller, who at the time was senator from Guinea and Secretary of the IOM parliamentary group. The following month the French government fell, ending two years of MRP domination and bringing the Socialists back into office. The investiture of the new government, headed by René Pléven with François Mitterrand as Overseas Minister, was welcomed with enthusiasm by overseas representatives and, consequently, negotiations between the RDA and both the IOM and French national government ensued.

Benefiting from the slightly more liberal political atmosphere, Saller intensified his efforts to facilitate a reconciliation between the RDA and the French government. In this vein the IOM Secretary approached Governor Paul-Henri Siriex, who was then serving as advisor to the Prime Minister on affairs concerning the overseas territories,<sup>24</sup> requesting that he serve as intermediary between Houphouët and Pléven. Siriex accepted the role of liaison and scheduled a meeting between the two parties in late August. The encounter was a great success, after

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<sup>23</sup>

R. Schachter Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, p. 98.

<sup>24</sup>

P.-H. Siriex, *Houphouët-Boigny: an African Statesman*, pp. 112-3.

which Pléven instructed his Overseas Minister to cultivate the new relationship and subsequently adjust administrative policy pertaining to the RDA.

Meanwhile negotiations for unification continued between the RDA and IOM, culminating in a provisory accord signed on 9 August 1950. Signatories of the agreement included President Aujoulat, Saller, Senghor, Zinsou, and Momo Touré of the IOM, and Houphouët, Coulibaly, and Hamani Diori of the RDA. An explicit stipulation of the protocol, and pre-condition of future negotiation, however, was the disaffiliation of the RDA from the Communist Party.<sup>25</sup> Thus in the light of improved relations with the French government, as well as positive steps taken down the road to African unity, the leadership of the RDA felt the time was ripe to formally<sup>to</sup> sever all ties between their organisation and the French Communists.

#### "Le Désapparement"

Reunited in Paris prior to the opening of the new session, the RDA parliamentarians unanimously decided to terminate the movement's political alliance with the Communist bloc. On 18 October 1950 the following communiqué was released to the press:

The RDA members of the various metropolitan assemblies, recognising that common action among all the elected representatives of the overseas territories, in favour of a precise programme, provides the best formula for defending the higher interests of Africa, decide to disaffiliate from the metropolitan parliamentary groups to which they were affiliated until this date, in order to achieve the goal of unity. (26)

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For a summary of the accord see J.-R. de Benoist, L'Afrique Occidentale Française, pp. 123-4.

26

CRDA, Dossier sur le désapparement, p. 17.

In announcing this decision to the Communist delegation, Houphouët recounted briefly the history of the RDA, its creation at Bamako in 1946, and the formative political resolution which defined the movement as a rassemblement of all African social classes in the struggle against oppression and application of the reforms granted in the Constitution. Moreover, Houphouët continued, the ousting of the Communists from power in 1947, forcing them into the opposition, furnished a pretext for the suppression of the RDA by the colonial authorities. Consequently, to avoid the impending demolition of the "first and only mass movement in black Africa," the removal of the pretext (i.e. Communist affiliation) became a tactical necessity.

Apart from the administrative angle of the decision to break with the Communists, were two key elements of the movement that, having been somewhat side-lined, were brought again to the forefront, namely "mass" and "African." As depicted in its original statutes, the RDA was a movement independent of philosophical or religious convictions, irrespective of ethnic or class distinctions. Early instructions emanating from the Coordinating Committee strictly forbade the imposition of any leader's ideology on an RDA territorial section. In any case, following disaffiliation, Houphouët repeatedly insisted that:

We have never shared the Communist ideology; not one of us has preached in Africa the theories of the class struggle, division of land, etc. (27)

In the Constituent Assemblies the Africans were too small numerically to form their own parliamentary group, therefore affiliation to metropolitan parties was unavoidable. Not only were the Communists

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27

CRDA, Dossier sur le désapparentement, Speech made by Houphouët, 6 October 1951, p. 34.

in their heyday of political might, but they also seemingly supported the African causes; therefore joining the Leftist bloc seemed entirely à propos. In short, allying with the Communists was seen as simply a means to a jointly desired end, but as Houphouët later professed: "a man<sup>28</sup> dies for a goal, for an ideal, but not for a means."

Conflict arose within the ranks of the RDA leadership when the ideological convictions of a few were seen as interfering with the party's relationship with the African masses. First of all, due to Communist influence, the founding congress of the RDA had been boycotted by prominent African (Socialist) deputies. Secondly, desertions attributed to the non-observance of the Bamako goals and to the Communist aura surrounding the organisation soon multiplied, including parliamentarians Apithy, Aku, and Sano who were among the initiators of the IOM in 1948. Thirdly, propaganda spread by the administration and opposition parties labelled the RDA as Communist inspired and controlled, effectively deterring prospective members from joining the movement, as well as contributing to the campaign of repression. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, ideological tendencies were creating rifts and opposing factions within the RDA leadership, and alienating the masses from the central organisation of the party. Dating from the administrative policy to suppress the RDA, the widening gap between the party officials and the African population was explained in the following manner:

During this time, the intellectuals and the leaders directing the RDA reacted in their own ways, courageously, to the repression. They confronted the administrators, magistrates, and police. But their mentality was already different than

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CRDA 3.55/br.1, F. Houphouët-Boigny, "Rapport Moral et D'Orientation," Coordinating Committee Conakry, July 1955, p. 2.

that of the militant masses. Established, perhaps even unconsciously, in a philosophy of "self-consciousness," they let themselves be won over by Communist ideology....Thus over these years, in the heat of admirable and exalting action, a cleavage separated the intellectuals and the leaders of the movement, from the hundreds of thousands of members at the base....The principal steps of this tragic misunderstanding were the meeting of the Coordinating Committee held in Dakar in 1948 and the second RDA Congress held at Treicheville from 1-6 January 1949. (29)

The work of d'Arboussier, along with his personal convictions, made him an easy target as scapegoat for the organisation's decline. Although d'Arboussier contributed to the drafting of the announcement of disaffiliation from the Communist Party, at the last minute he reportedly failed to sign it over a procedural matter.<sup>30</sup> This incident sparked a well-publicised feud between Houphouët and d'Arboussier, culminating in the latter's exclusion from the RDA in July 1952.<sup>31</sup> In published letters both men hurled accusations and blamed one another for RDA shortcomings, exposing a clearly implacable rivalry. D'Arboussier pointed out that neither his resignation, nor the proposition to terminate the alliance with the Communists, were officially decided upon by the Coordinating Committee. This intentional oversight, according to d'Arboussier, rendered both actions illegal, necessitating the convocation of the "supreme directing organ" of the movement.<sup>32</sup> Although requests to this effect were frequently transmitted, in fact the Coordinating Committee did not formally meet from 1950 to 1955; its

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29

D. Guèye, *Sur les Sentiers du Temple*, p. 90.

30

F. Houphouët-Boigny, "Réponse à d'Arboussier," *Afrique Noire*, No. 27, 24 July 1952.

31

"Communiqué du Groupe Parlementaire RDA," *Afrique Noire*, No. 27, 24 July 1952. The charges against d'Arboussier included his personal politics, sending out circulars not cleared by the Coordinating Committee, and financial handling of RDA funds.

32

CRDA, Dossier sur le désapparentement, "Lettre ouverte de M. Gabriel d'Arboussier à M. Félix Houphouët-Boigny," Late June 1952.

tasks were essentially taken over by the RDA parliamentary group.

In turn Houphouët reviled d'Arboussier for his personal greed, lust for power, and attempt to divert the direction of the movement in favour of inappropriate Communist aspirations. The RDA second congress, single-handedly prepared by d'Arboussier, was branded a "deviation" from the organisation founded at Bamako. Finally, after directly associating the Communist tendency within the RDA to the persona of d'Arboussier, Houphouët claimed that high-ranking authorities in the French government had offered him the following explanation of the repressive campaign aimed at the RDA:

The RDA was not being fought in and of itself, but solely because of its alliance with the Communist party in its struggle against the regime. (33)

Once the RDA parliamentarians had made public the decision to disaffiliate from the Communist Party, support was immediately solicited from the Overseas Minister to diffuse the new orientation in the West African territories. Houphouët and his associates requested the authorisation of an RDA mission to traverse AOF in order to explain the désapparement and relay revised instructions. In spite of the budding relationship in Paris between the RDA and the French government, directives emanating from the top were met with long-lasting suspicion on the local levels, as Mitterrand noted:

The Governors consulted declared themselves almost unanimously hostile to such an initiative. Perhaps they saw it as a cunning and perverse way to organise clandestine action, that the vigour of the repression had until now succeeded in paralysing. I had to impose on them my conviction, in certain cases to the point of sanctions. The choice of the RDA and its leaders merited confidence. (34)

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F. Houphouët-Boigny, "Réponse à d'Arboussier."

34

François Mitterrand, Présence Française et Abandon, Paris, 1957, pp. 186-7.

Aware of the difficulties facing the delegation, the three chosen emissaries were among the "sages" of the movement, namely Mamadou Konaté, Ouëzzin Coulibaly and Hamani Diori. Not only did the mission anticipate administrative malice, but expected their assigned task of explaining the reasons behind the decision to disaffiliate from the PCF, as well as the unorthodox procedure by which it was taken, to be arduous.

#### Overseas Reaction

The news of disaffiliation generally came as a surprise to RDA activists in the territories, many of whom had long been diligently following the orders and analyses of d'Arboussier. Moreover some RDA section leaders resented the fact that they had been neither consulted nor informed of such a critical decision until after it had been made, and indeed under questionable circumstances.

Following the shake-up in the metropole, the arena in which to play out the Houphouët-d'Arboussier rivalry for RDA leadership was relocated in the overseas territories. As circulars from Paris repeatedly condemned the behaviour of the former Secretary-General, eventually the moderate wing within the sectional Directing Committees prevailed over the "extremist" tendency. The omnipotence of Houphouët was never seriously challenged, his image being inseparable from the entirety of

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An example of which was the case of Soudan, where the Secretary-General Modibo Keita, staunchly opposed to the decision to disaffiliate with the PCF, was forced to resign his post in favour of the sage Mamadou Konaté. ANS 17G 572 (152), High-Commissioner ACF to Minister FOM, "Orientation nouvelle du RDA, ses répercussions en ACF," No. 887 INT/AP2, Dakar, 2 December 1950.

the movement he both founded and presided over. Far more important than ideological considerations, the cult of personality surrounding local leaders was a predominant factor of post-war African politics, as illustrated by a future High-Commissioner of AOF:

The Communist ideology did not penetrate the masses, who remained loyal to local politicians and Houphouët, much more than to the Communist party; the RDA existed due to Houphouët and his subordinates (we are in an Africa where the men count as much as, if not more than, parties or ideologies). (37)

Nevertheless such a radical shift in policy, coupled with sudden moves toward reconciliation with the French government as well as former political opponents, was not easily accepted by the African masses nor trusted by local administrators.

Reports concerning the reaction in Guinea to the désapparement varied considerably depending upon the source. The central figure of Guinean politics from this point onward was Sékou Touré, whose travels in connection with his trade union and associated activities enabled him to be present at critical RDA gatherings in Paris. At this time the PDG was without elected members in the French parliament. Normally Secretary-General Madeira Keita should have represented the Guinean section in the RDA Coordinating Committee, which as previously stated had been eclipsed by the parliamentary group. Thus under these circumstances Touré gained considerable influence not only as a union activist but also as unofficial spokesman for the RDA-Guinea chapter. The

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As early as 1946 there were "Houphouët" photos, perfume, lockets, and clothes on sale in the markets of the Ivory Coast. There were also dances, plays, tales and songs retelling how Houphouët had freed the workers. R. Schachter Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, p. 182.

37

ANSOM 2143/9, High-Commissioner AOF to Minister FOM, "Evénements de Guinée," Dakar, 14 March 1955.

authorities in Guinea measured the reaction to the RDA disaffiliation from the Communist Party largely by the individual response of Touré. Administrative opinions from Paris, Dakar, and Conakry, however all differed in their interpretations of Touré's public appearances as well as his personal convictions.

Trade unionism in the Federation of West Africa was largely dominated by the metropolitan CGT; as one of its leading activists, Touré became inextricably linked with the French Communists. Despite the Communist stigma attributed to Touré's character, it appears that, at least in Paris, he was considered a Houphouët loyalist in complete agreement with the RDA decision to disaffiliate from the PCF. Amid the negotiations between the RDA and the French government, an early appearance of Touré at Houphouët's side was noted by Governor Siriex, who wrote the following in recollection of a meeting with the RDA President in August 1950:

...accompanied by a tall African that I did not know and to whom, a detail that struck me, I was not introduced. This strapping man was none other than Sékou Touré....At this time he was an obedient disciple of Houphouët-Boigny, while strictly allied with the CGT and the Communist Party. (38)

Further evidence of Touré's seemingly dual allegiance to the RDA and Communist-affiliated organisations was his participation (along with d'Arboussier) in November 1950 at the congress of the Partisans de la Paix held in Warsaw, where he was elected to serve as member of the World Council. Returning to Paris, Touré hosted a meeting between the African delegation to the peace congress and the RDA parliamentary group, the agenda of which was discussion of the current situation and subsequent programme of action. Acknowledging a hostile reaction in

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P.-H. Siriex, Houphouët-Boigny: An African Statesman, p. 116.

Guinea to the announcement of désapparentement, Touré expounded:

Guinea's dissatisfaction with the silence and muteness of the parliamentary group. He said that it is ignorance of the situation that drove the Guinean section to send a motion announcing its decision to no longer pay heed to the parliamentary group. He recommended also that we do everything to avoid division. (39)

Insisting that increased communication between the directing and subordinate organs of the movement be an immediate priority, Touré accepted an intermediary role in the attempt to retain organisational cohesiveness, and thus in conclusion:

He assured the group in his own name, in the name of the section and that of Africa; he said that the RDA will remain united, and expressed confidence in the leadership to redress the situation. (40)

Finally, attesting to his growing stature within the leadership circle of the RDA, Touré's signature could henceforth be found on directives from the parliamentary group, as well as rebuttals aimed at countering Communist Party criticism of the movement's new orientation.

In contrast to the common perception in Paris of Touré as a devoted follower of Houphouët and the revised RDA platform, French administrators in Dakar and Conakry depicted the up and coming leader as a fervent Communist resolutely opposed to the concept of disaffiliation, defiant of both RDA and governmental authority. A Conakry official described Touré's initial response to impending changes in RDA strategy accordingly:

Sékou Touré reacted strongly against the principle of désapparentement advocated by deputy Houphouët in his last correspondence. He estimated that this new orientation of the party could only be detrimental to its future. In any

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39

ANS 17G 572, "Procès-Verbal," Réunion à Villepints, 3 December 1950.

40

Ibid.

case, no action should be taken with the Independents before consulting the Directing Committees of the various territories, only they would be capable of making such a decision.  
(41)

Following his trips to Paris and Warsaw, however, bulletins from Conakry cited unusual behaviour of Touré; for example, he returned to Guinea incognito, alerting no one of his arrival date, later claiming to be "horrified by public demonstrations in his favour."<sup>42</sup> Local RDA supporters and the administration alike grew impatient as Touré failed to report about his journeys and activities abroad, as well as his own interpretation of events.

A likely factor behind the code of silence adopted by Touré and the PDG Directing Committee was the anticipated arrival of the RDA mission charged with explaining the policy changes and new orientation of the movement. Descending from Bamako, RDA delegates Coulibaly, Konaté, and Diori traversed the territory without stopping until they reached Conakry on 13 January 1951. The emissaries focused their attention firstly on the PDG leadership, speaking privately at great length with both Touré and Keita.

Despite their constant companionship, tension between the RDA deputies and the local party leaders was noticeable during public appearances. The major meeting held by the visiting delegates was "characterised by moderate discourses to which the public was no longer accustomed."<sup>43</sup> At one point in his discussion of relations with the

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ANS 17G 573, "Renseignements," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 1249/722, 24 October 1950.

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ANS 17G 573, "Rapport Hebdomadaire," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 377, 25 December to 1 January 1951.

43

ANS 17G 572, "Réunion publique tenue par les députés RDA," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 86/32, 19 January 1951.

French government, Coulibaly asked the audience actually to applaud High-Commissioner Béchard, the result of which was so reported:

Visibly, a good number of the listeners did not understand and so looked directly at Madeira Keita and Sékou Touré to gauge their response. (44)

Finally, in his closing statement on behalf of the Guinean RDA, Keita deliberately mentioned that the new orientation just presented had been adopted by the Grand Comité Directeur, thus distancing himself and the territorial sections from the decision, as well as abstaining from voicing his personal opinion.

The deputies spent five days in Conakry, after which they visited and held public meetings in Kankan, Beyla, and N'Zérékoré en route to the Ivory Coast. Overall the mission was perceived as a failure by the territorial administration, the delegation having been unable to convince the local leaders and party sympathisers to follow the new political course charted by the RDA parliamentarians.

Reporting from Dakar, the High-Commissioner outlined the impossibility of the Guinean section accepting the new RDA orientation. First of all, PDG Secretary-General Keita was considered hostile to disaffiliation from the PCF. Secondly, the Guinean leaders would never make amends with their bitter rivals--the heads of the Entente Guinéenne favourable to the IOM. Likewise the leaders of the Entente allegedly refused to envisage an eventual reconciliation with the local RDA.

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Ibid.

45

ANS 17G 572, "Séjour à Conakry des parlementaires RDA," Services de Police, Guinée, No. 87/33, 19 January 1951.

46

ANS 17G 572 (152), High-Commissioner AOF to Minister FOM, "Orientation nouvelle du RDA et ses répercussions en AOF."

Thirdly, the new political line adopted by the RDA parliamentary group advocated collaboration with both the administration and the traditional chiefs. If this programme were followed in Guinea, the party would effectively be reversing its political platform, and subsequently lose its popular support. In light of these circumstances, High-Commissioner Béchard offered the following conclusion concerning the Guinean reaction to the new RDA orientation:

Henceforth the Guinean section of the RDA is firmly decided to maintain its position, even against deputy Houphouët, and to pursue the essential goal that it had previously fixed, the struggle against the administration and the Fulani feudal system. (47)

Despite the overseas administration's serious doubts about the potential success of RDA reconciliation with governmental authorities as well as the sincerity of its leaders, fruitful negotiations in Paris rapidly progressed. Resultant official policy changes made in the Overseas Ministry were necessarily imposed on reluctant territorial administrators.

#### Reconciliation: Success and Failure

In disaffiliating from the Communist Party, the RDA was decidedly satisfying prerequisites for two of its main goals, namely African unity, and collaboration with the French government in the pursuit of progressive reform. Once the major obstacle to reconciliation had been removed, the RDA was able to engage in negotiations on both fronts.

The day after the RDA decision to disaffiliate from the Communist bloc was made public, members of the IOM met in order to determine further conditions required of RDA members in parliament before actual

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Ibid.

fusion of the two groups. Following several joint RDA-ICM discussions, a formal appeal signed by Houphouët, Saller, and Lamine Guèye was sent to all African parliamentarians, requesting their presence at a meeting scheduled on 22 December 1950. Three formal discussions in all were held to this effect, culminating in the creation of an intergroupe des élus d'outre-mer, presided over by Lamine Guèye, with Houphouët, Senghor, and Charles Cros serving as Vice-Presidents, and Saller as General-Secretary.<sup>49</sup> In mid-January the group formulated a common programme of action enumerating parliamentary reforms of high priority to the overseas territories.

In spite of an outward semblance of unity, fusion of the African parliamentary groups and respective political parties proved hopeless. By early February ICM President Senghor formally admitted the failure of the attempts at rapprochement:

"The ICM Group made contact with the RDA parliamentarians to study issues concerning the overseas territories, but there was never an alliance or regrouping between these two formations." (50)

The problems intruding on African unity basically centered upon questions of rivalry--between Senghor and Lamine Guèye, Houphouët and both Senegalese leaders, and sectional parties in particular. Additionally, a necessary stipulation of accord was shared electoral lists on the territorial level, an act truly inconceivable to local parties in the face of important forthcoming elections. And so African parliamen-

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J.-R. de Benoist, L'Afrique Occidentale Française, p. 127.

49

G. Lisette, Le combat du RDA, p. 162.

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Cited in E. Milcent, L'AOE entre en scène, p. 62.

tarians went their separate ways largely as before--several renewed their allegiance to the metropolitan SFIO, the IOM were sufficient in number to remain an independent group, and RDA representatives were forced to seek a new parliamentary alliance.

When it became clear that reconciliation with the IOM was unachievable, the RDA recognised that its most promising ally would be the party adhered to by Mitterrand and Pléven known as the UDSR. Moreover the UDSR was in dire need of increased membership; in January 1951 its number dropped to 13, and were it not for the Finance Minister's temporary allegiance, the Prime Minister's party would have been without commission representation. Besides, Mitterrand had boldly shown confidence in the RDA and its leadership, and was in the process of dismantling the administrative policy of repression of the movement.

In January 1951 the Overseas Minister relieved the Governor of Chad from his post. The following month the detested Governor of Guinea Roland Pré, on the verge of being suspended, was replaced by Paul-Henri Siriex.<sup>51</sup> A critical event displaying Mitterrand's determination to compel the overseas administration into reconciliation with the RDA was the inauguration of the Viridi Canal, an artificial port built in Abidjan out of FIDES funds. On 5 February, to the horror of High-Commissioner Béchard, Governor Péchoux, and onlooking colons, the Overseas Minister presided over the opening of the new harbour with Houphouët at his side. The same day Mitterrand reiterated the fundamental policy changes deliberated in the FOM Ministry in Paris, as he recalled:

On February fifth, I held a conference with the Governors of the eight territories in AOF and the principal administra-

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ICG b.69, Letter from assemblyman L. Delmas to Colonel Hous, Paris, 2 March 1951.

tors in the Federation. I gave them my orders. They voiced their objections. Most of them candidly expressed their misgivings. (52)

Distrustful that his instructions would be followed and that neutrality on the part of the administration would be maintained throughout approaching legislative elections in the territories, in May the Overseas Minister recalled both Béchard and Péchoux. Mitterrand was not part of Pléven's second cabinet constituted in August; instead he became the president of the UDSR, to which the RDA officially allied, forming the UDSR-RDA parliamentary group before the close of 1951.

Despite abrupt changes in the top administrative offices in the overseas territories, considerable time elapsed before new policy directives filtered down to local authorities, which historically functioned with a great deal of autonomy. Aware that the revised RDA orientation was imposed on the chapter parties by the parliamentary group in Paris, territorial administrations remained suspicious of the sincerity of local activists. Likewise party militants addressing the masses found it difficult to preach "collaboration" where they had recently pledged "open confrontation" with the colonial forces. Leaders of the chapter parties held the key to swaying local populations; however confusion and divergent opinions fomented dissension, culminating in opposing factions threatening the unity of the movement. In Guinea the atmosphere of distrust and PDG suppression continued for some time before final capitulation to the new RDA orientation would lead to improved relations with the French government. Guinean acknowledgement of the break with the Communists and acceptance of the new RDA line were

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F. Mitterrand, Présence Française et Abandon, p. 198.

finally proclaimed publicly by PDG officials nearly one full year after the announcement of ~~désapparement~~. In the meantime reluctance on the part of both the party and the administration to reconciliation signified heightened tension surrounding an embittered struggle.

## CHAPTER V

### Reluctant Conformity in Guinea

In the light of their new-found amicable relationship with the French National Government, RDA parliamentarians were not only confident in their decision to disaffiliate from the Communists, but also optimistic that their actions would foster an end to administrative repression and meet general satisfaction in the overseas territories. Nevertheless hesitance of local leaders and administrators significantly delayed the reconciliation process.

Adjustment to the new orientation by RDA chapter parties was severely hampered by various events of 1951, casting doubt upon the willingness on the part of territorial administrations to comply with policy changes dictated by the Overseas Ministry. Similarly local reaction and inconsistent behaviour fueled administrative suspicion and mistrust of RDA section leaders. In Guinea the campaign to suppress the RDA had been remarkably successful. The rhetoric employed by PDG militants, as well as the party's connection with the Communist labour union movement, furnished easy pretexts for administrative intervention in local politics. Change in PDG orientation as well as territorial government policy proved difficult, both initially to accept and subsequently to institute.

The RDA parliamentary group formally announced its decision to sever all ties with the Communist Party just as the first PDG Congress was coming to its close. In spite of the new orientation adopted by the RDA leadership in Paris, for the time being politics of the Guinean

section carried on virtually undisturbed. One week after the RDA declaration of désapparetement and accompanying collaboration with French authorities, PDG activists continued to pledge allegiance to the plan of action mapped out at the recent congress, including "open war to the bitter end against the administration."<sup>1</sup> In a particularly militant public address, Madeira Keita reportedly went so far as to state: "even dead,<sup>2</sup> our blood will serve our ideal."

An organisational programme for 1951, detailing specific instructions of proper procedure, was drawn up by the PDG directorate and circulated to party subsections. Discipline was regarded as the key to the survival and future success of the PDG, and emphasis was placed on the grass-roots level. The primary role of the party was to educate and lead the masses in their struggle against colonial oppression.<sup>3</sup> To this effect, directions and exemplars of letters, requests, protests, motions, etc. to bring grievances before local authorities, were issued from the Political Bureau to regional subordinates. Along with the delimitations of legal processes in dealing with local administrations, regional committee members were scrupulously instructed in matters of etiquette, propaganda strategy, and book keeping of subsection treasuries.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore a strict hierarchy and network of communication was formulated within the PDG whereby, for example, a local committee was forbidden to address the territorial government directly; procedure

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ANS 17G 573, "Compte-Rendu de la Réunion Publique du PDG," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 1248/721, 24 October 1950.

2

Ibid.

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CRDA 9/doss 6, PDG Year 1951, "L'Action Revendicative."

4

Ibid., Instructions "La Propagande en Brousse," "Correspondances et Réunions Publique," "La Trésorie."

dictated the channelling of requests through the district committee upward to the central Directing Committee. In essence the structural and procedural organisation of the PDG largely imitated that of the Communist Party, especially in regard to local cells, the format of gatherings and public meetings, and spreading of propaganda.

Much of the PDG reorganisation was hurriedly undertaken in preparation for the June 1951 elections to the National Assembly. Despite the new RDA conciliatory orientation and increased local mobilisation of the masses, the movement suffered surprisingly heavy electoral losses throughout West Africa. Apart from the reluctance of territorial administrations to give up the battle to suppress the RDA, it appears that the Overseas Ministry, in fear of European response to sudden RDA advances, tacitly allowed local intervention in the legislative elections in order to modify the movement's success. Largely in consequence of electoral machinations,<sup>5</sup> RDA leaders Ouëzzin Coulibaly, Hamani Diori, and Gabriel Lisette lost their seats in the National Assembly; only three of the former eight RDA deputies were re-elected, namely Félix Houphouët-Boigny, Mamadou Konaté, and Félix Tchicaya. Hopes pinned on a new era of RDA success through collaboration with the French authorities were thus dashed in the overseas territories, as the results of the June elections<sup>6</sup> "marked the nadir of RDA popularity."

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5

Complaints of administrative duplicity were submitted to the National Assembly by 23 out of the 30 overseas constituencies, including the Ivory Coast, Soudan, Niger, Mauritania, and Guinea. K. Robinson, "Political Development in French West Africa." p. 164

6

V. Thompson and R. Adloff, *French West Africa*, p. 93.

## National Assembly Elections, June 1951

Preparations and predictions for the 1951 legislative competition in Guinea were well under way six months in advance of the June elections. In November 1950 an RPF assemblyman representing Guinea heralded the onset of the electoral process in the territory, while at the same time attesting to the importance of administrative support:

The electoral campaign is here and now open in Guinea. Mr. Roland Pré will back a list composed of Mamba Sano and Barry Diawadou--in my opinion, only the former will pass. The SFIO will present a list with outgoing deputy Yacine Diallo which will be supported by Mr. Bécharđ. Mamba Sano and Barry Diawadou are not RPF and this is a point where I do not understand the action of Governor Roland Pré. With one word from him the candidates would adhere to the Rassemblement (RPF)--however this word has never been given. In any case it is likely that Roland Pré will no longer be in Guinea at the time of the elections. (7)

Not only was Governor Pré succeeded by Paul-Henri Siriex in February 1951, but a temporary High-Commissioner replaced Bécharđ in May--just one month prior to the crucial elections. Nevertheless the anti-RDA policies instituted by Bécharđ and Pré were carried over in the new administrations and legislative elections.

The format of elections to the National Assembly entailed voting for lists composed of two to three candidates, fostering a plethora of rapidly shifting alliances among political leaders and organisations. An electoral entente existed briefly between Yacine Diallo, the Comité de Basse-Guinée (Fodé Touré), and the PDG (Sékou Touré). The PDG had worked closely with deputy Diallo for the recall of Governor Pré from Guinea, after which Diallo vowed to support the organisation's grievances in parliament. In the end the three candidates ran on separate lists;

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<sup>7</sup>  
ICG b.70, Report of RPF assemblyman L. Delmas, Paris, 29 November 1950.

<sup>8</sup>  
ANS 17G 573, "Renseignements," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 187/72, 13 February 1951.

Diallo, assured of administrative backing, had been paired with Albert Liurette--the cousin of the Governor's Chef de cabinet. Predominantly European in composition, the RPF in Guinea was often in collaboration with the conservative territorial administration. In a letter to RPF President Jacques Foccart, assemblyman Louis Delmas explained an unfortunate misunderstanding in the jumble of electoral alliances which removed him from the predetermined party list in Guinea:

Over a span of 24 hours, that is to say Saturday evening until Sunday noon, I was the second candidate on the list of Barry Diawadou with the guarantee from the administration that a member of this list would be elected. In fact, it was confirmed that this list would have had two elected candidates. At noon on Sunday, following a letter from senator Saller, Barry Diawadou changed his mind and chose Marchi as his second. (9)

Subsequently Diafodé Caba was endorsed as the RPF candidate, while Barry Diawadou ran on an independent ticket. A total of eight lists was presented for the National Assembly elections held in Guinea on 17 June 10 1951.

Although the prevailing mood in Paris was conciliatory regarding the RDA, it appears certain that the federal government did not remain neutral in the overseas parliamentary elections. According to Georges Chaffard, the understanding in the Foreign Ministry was the following: if the RDA emerged victorious in the June elections, then European opinion would react with fear and malign the new policy of cooperation. 11 It was therefore decided that only limited success would be granted the RDA, thus allowing time for gradual acceptance of future

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ICG b.70, Letter from L. Delmas to J. Foccart, 30 May 1951.

10

See Table 3.

11

G. Chaffard, Les Carnets Secrets, vol. I, p. 128.

administrative collaboration with the movement. Furthermore, Chaffard claimed that Mitterrand actually forewarned Houphouët of his plan to defeat RDA candidates; in any case, it sufficed to let administrative interference in local elections take its usual course to achieve the intended result.<sup>12</sup> In Guinea the new government took into account the wishes of the higher authorities, as reported again by French assemblyman Delmas:

The administration thus foresees the election of the first two members of Yacine Diallo's list (SFIO), which corresponds to the orders from the Overseas Minister and Bécharđ, and the election of Mamba Sano--or else the election of the first two candidates on Mamba Sano's list plus Yacine Diallo. (13)

The interim High-Commissioner replacing Bécharđ, Paul Chauvet, toured AOF several weeks prior to the legislative elections. The Commissioner exerted pressure on Commandants de Cercle, canton chiefs, and local dignitaries; even a staunch adversary of the RDA admitted "Chauvet had given the order to combat only the RDA."<sup>14</sup>

The official tally of the elections on 17 June 1951, largely as anticipated by the administration and informed sources, proclaimed Yacine Diallo, his second Albert Liurette, and Mamba Sano as deputies representing Guinea in the National Assembly (see Table 3). Protests of electoral machinations, irregular and illegal practices surrounding voting procedure, and administrative falsification of results were mounted from nearly all losing sides, including Sékou Touré (PDG), Barry

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12

Ibid.

13

ICG b.70, Letter to J. Foccart, 30 May 1951.

14

ICG b.70, Barry Diawadou, "Compte-rendu sur le déroulement des élections législatives du 17 Juin en Guinée Française," 28 June 1951.

Diawadou (RPF), and Fodé Touré (SFIO).

By the law of 23 May 1951 the franchise in West Africa was expanded to include civil or military pensioners, heads of families or households, and mothers of two children "living or dead for France." In spite of the short time span between the publication of the new franchise and the June elections, in Guinea the number of registered voters for the 1951 elections to the National Assembly was three times what it had been in 1946. In contesting the validity of the elections, however, the PDG held that the registration of the increased electorate was unjust and manipulated to combat the RDA. Indeed it is interesting to note that, apart from Conakry, the main RDA strongholds in Guinea at the time--Beyla, Kankan, Kouroussa, and N'Zérékoré, were among the districts with the lowest percentages of registered voters per population. As well as being charged with violations of voting card distribution and omission of voters on electoral lists, the same localities accounted for the highest abstention rates in the territory. The case of N'Zérékoré was particularly fraudulent, where the official journal confirmed 48,340 registered voters in the district, and subsequent election results published the deflated figure of 38,340. Furthermore, due to stalled distribution, it was reported that between 13,000 and 17,000 ballots were not issued to registered voters in N'Zérékoré, undoubtedly contributing to the high percentage of "abstention."<sup>16</sup>

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15

Sékou Touré had run on a ticket listed as L'Union Démocratique des Travailleurs et Anciens Combattants, which contested the elections with the support of the PDG. As a party member, Barry Diawadou unsuccessfully solicited the RPF to call for the invalidation of the June elections in Guinea. The officially sponsored RPF candidate, Diafodé Caba, reportedly made a deal with the Governor not to contest the legislative results in exchange for assured victory in the forthcoming elections to the General Council. ICG b.69, Letter from L. Delmas to Diafodé Caba, 1 August 1951.

16

B. Diawadou, "Compte-rendu sur le déroulement des élections," p. 9.

Table 3: National Assembly Elections in Guinea, 17 June 1951.

Districts	Population Registered &	% of Voters	Votes Cast	Abstention &	Yacine Diallo	Manba Saro	Sékou Touré	Fodé Touré	Barry Diawadou	Diafodé Caba	Karim Banagoura	Moro Touré
<b>Coastal Guinea</b>												
Boffa	64,968	7,203	11.1	4,775	33.7	125	59	247	3,759	51	270	204
Boké	78,110	14,376	18.4	8,147	43.3	2,561	78	247	2,600	427	1,874	222
Conakry	47,429	15,627	32.9	7,642	51.0	1,195	220	2,163	2,770	347	530	347
Dubreka	69,190	12,300	17.8	7,931	35.5	128	185	93	5,334	41	55	2,043
Forécariah	63,714	19,346	30.4	12,840	33.6	304	55	233	11,521	41	47	305
Kirdia	91,397	12,409	13.6	6,038	51.3	1,739	317	677	1,718	274	306	910
Regional Total	414,808	81,261	20.7*	47,373	41.4*	6,052	914	3,660	27,702	1,181	3,082	4,031
<b>Outa-Djalon</b>												
Detola	140,765	25,634	18.2	14,850	42.1	5,969	2,639	2,263	111	3,512	121	46
Dalaba	89,522	18,291	20.4	16,002	12.5	12,543	12	39	54	3,286	61	4
Gaoual	112,755	16,120	14.3	8,327	48.3	5,382	153	448	15	2,123	189	5
Labé	425,472	55,751	13.1	27,053	51.5	19,015	560	1,461	520	2,859	2,184	150
Manou	87,485	12,092	13.9	9,070	25.0	5,250	264	646	237	1,345	971	60
Pita	221,413	21,483	9.7	14,304	33.4	7,079	108	241	160	6,441	181	35
Regional Total	1,077,412	149,371	14.9*	89,606	35.5*	55,238	3,736	5,098	1,097	19,566	3,707	300
<b>Upper Guinea</b>												
Kankan	152,865	22,215	14.5	9,805	55.9	651	957	3,844	51	90	4,081	37
Kouroussa	80,011	8,344	10.4	4,238	49.2	264	1,096	2,413	42	215	110	14
Siguiri	143,153	37,707	26.3	17,697	53.1	3,226	7,197	1,540	24	27	5,627	10
Regional Total	376,029	68,266	18.2*	31,740	52.7*	4,141	9,250	7,797	117	332	9,818	61
<b>Forest</b>												
Beyla	141,220	12,160	8.6	4,674	61.6	177	1,940	2,437	8	28	64	9
Gueckédou	100,598	9,755	9.7	6,178	36.7	1,371	2,286	1,875	57	80	440	15
Kissidougou	101,126	17,613	17.4	13,539	23.1	259	12,486	386	45	54	238	27
Macenta	106,200	15,329	14.4	11,653	24.0	102	10,474	589	13	14	403	7
N'Zérékoré	183,046	37,957	20.7	17,504	53.9	140	6,276	10,229	110	170	416	38
Regional Total	639,190	92,814	14.2*	53,548	39.9*	2,049	33,462	15,516	233	346	1,561	96
Grand Total	2,500,439	391,712	15.7*	222,267	43.3	67,480	47,362	32,071	29,149	21,425	18,168	4,488
Grand Total												

Notes: & - population figures from 1955. \* - averages by region.

Sources: ANSOM AP 2243/6, "Elections-Guinée, 1951 à 1955;" ANS 203 122, "Elections à l'A.N., 2 Janvier 1956," Guinea.

In lieu of the required direct distribution by a regulatory commission, in Conakry employers were charged with the issuance of voting papers, 4,680 of which were returned to the city hall and remained inaccessible. In this situation Sékou Touré was considered deprived of electoral recognition as undisputed leader of the Guinean labour movement as well as top PDG activist.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, grave irregularities surrounded the tallying of votes in the territorial capital. Although the law stipulated that district totals in the form of procès-verbaux be sent directly to the electoral commission, totals were instead calculated at the Governor's office. Furthermore, ten days after the vote, the procès-verbaux from Dabola, Dalaba, Dinguiraye, Faranah,<sup>18</sup> Gueckédou, and Kissidougou had still not arrived in Conakry.

The results emanating from the Fouta Djallon, widely considered the personal fiefdom of Yacine Diallo, went largely undisputed by opposition candidates. One major exception, however, was Sékou Touré's hometown of Faranah (which was actually a separate district in Upper Guinea), the delayed results of which were incorrectly submitted by the Commandant de Cercle of Dabola (of the Fouta region), and revealed an inconceivable loss for the city's native son.

In Upper Guinea the successes of Diafodé Caba and Mamba Sano were also questionable. One of few members of the RPF, Caba was a recognised longshot in the parliamentary elections, even with added help from the

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17

CRDA 9/doss 10, Joint report calling for the invalidation of the 17 June elections in Guinea, drawn up by the candidates on the list of L'Union Démocratique des Travailleurs et Anciens Combattants (Sékou Touré, Barry Mamadou Diouldé, Niankoi Samoe) and the PDG.

18

Assemblée Nationale, "Opérations électorales du Territoire de la Guinée," Sitting of 22 August 1951, p. 6396.

19  
administration. On a campaign tour of the region in March it was noted that deputy Sano had particular difficulty drumming up support from the Malinké population, which was naturally partial to kinsmen Sékou Touré and Madeira Keita. While greeted with indifference in Kouroussa, Sano was "coldly received" in Kankan, and in Siguiri the situation was described as "almost hostile."<sup>20</sup> Yet, albeit with serious violation of ballot distribution and high abstention rate, in Siguiri Sano reportedly<sup>21</sup> carried the vote.

Allegations and evidence of election tampering were most prominent in the Forest region. It seems that N'Zérékoré was not the only district where registered voters were prevented from exercising their rights. In Gueckédou a canton chief and childhood friend of Touré held that he had been threatened with losing his position if any votes were registered for the RDA; published results of the village marked one vote in Touré's<sup>22</sup> favour out of 1,034. In neighbouring Kissidougou voters with registered ballots in hand were turned away from the polls by administrators claiming their names were not on the lists.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, in an atmosphere of intimidation, it was observed that village chiefs were required to report to polling stations the number of registered voters

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19

ICG b.70, L. Delmas, "Note pour M. Soustelle," 11 June 1951.

20

ANSOM AP 2171/7, High-Commissioner AOF to Minister FOM, "Note sur les voyages effectués récemment dans la Fédération par certains parlementaires Africains," Dakar, 20 April 1951, pp. 19-21.

21

Voting cards in Siguiri were issued on the day of the elections; the decree of 24 May 1951 stipulated their distribution by a regulatory commission three days before the scheduled vote.

22

Joint report of candidates Sékou Touré et al. and PDG, p. 1.

23

B. Diawadou, "Compte-rendu sur le déroulement des élections," p. 9.

in their jurisdictions; subsequently as many envelopes were stuffed with  
24  
ballots for Sano. Such circumstances may explain the fact that a  
number of cantons in Kissidougou and Macenta registered 98 to 100  
per cent of both votes cast and ballots in Sano's favour. Additionally,  
the procès-verbaux of 14 polling stations from Macenta were allegedly  
25  
signed by the same hand.

Submitted primarily by Sékou Touré and supported by spokesmen for  
the Communist Party, the case for invalidation of the June legislative  
elections in Guinea was brought before the National Assembly on 22  
August 1951. After a brief discussion of the investigation into the  
matter, the chairman summarised the findings and recommendation of the  
commission accordingly:

It seems evident to us that certain fraudulent acts were  
committed. The fact that at several voting stations the  
totality of registered voters supported the same list is  
shocking. For example the voting bureau of Sebori submitted  
the following results: Registered voters 1,364; votes cast  
1,364. The list of Yacine Diallo obtained 1,363 votes and  
that of Diafodé Caba 1 vote. In any case, such a result is  
not an isolated case. Many others are comparable...If one  
had to rigorously judge the overseas elections none of them  
would be validated...though the facts of pressure and fraud  
that occurred are regrettable, we propose the validation of  
the elections in the territory of Guinea. (26)

And so the dubious results of the Guinean elections, along with  
suspicions of continued administrative repression of the PDG, were  
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confirmed by the French parliament.

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Joint report of candidates Sékou Touré et al. and PDG, p. 5.

25

CRDA 9/doss 10, Report submitted to the President of the National  
Assembly by Sékou Touré and fellow list candidates, p. 5.

26

Assemblée Nationale, Sitting of 22 August 1951, p. 6401.

27

Incidentally there was solid evidence to support the RDA claim that  
Ouëzzin Coulibaly of the Ivory Coast and Hamani Diori of Niger were also  
defeated due to local French electoral machinations. Their cases were  
also overruled by the National Assembly. R. Schachter Morgenthau,  
Political Parties, p. 103.

### Enduring Scepticism

I was alarmed at the reading of the election results of 17 June in your territory, in the realisation that the RDA list of Sékou Touré had obtained a relatively important proportion of suffrages (approximately 14 per cent of votes cast). I ask you to study very closely the factors which are at the base of this situation and to follow them very attentively.... (28)

Such was the reaction of interim High-Commissioner Chauvet to the legislative elections in Guinea; subsequently orders were issued for tighter surveillance on local RDA activity and monitoring of popular support. Curiously, the results of the June elections matched very closely the forecast of Governor Sirieux, particularly pertaining to Touré, and therefore should not have come as a great surprise. In any case, by playing a double role as a leading RDA activist and trade unionist in West Africa, Touré was increasingly the object of suspicion and distrust on the part of the administration.

In the wake of the falsified elections the French government was especially anxious to determine the RDA response and subsequent future course of action. The burning question posed to the territorial Governors was whether the new orientation should be interpreted locally as "a firm commitment to collaborate with the administration, or on the contrary camouflaged opposition politics." For the most part the

28

ANS 17G 573, Letter interim High-Commissioner AOF to Governor Guinea, No. 591/AP2, Paris, 25 June 1951.

29

The Governor's predictions compared to electoral results were the following:

	estimate	results		estimate	results
Y. Diallo	28%	30%	S. Touré	14%	14%
M. Sano	21%	26%	B. Diawadou	12%	10%

ICG b.70, L. Delmas, "Pronostics du Gouverneur Sirieux," 11 June 1951.

30

ANS 17G 572, High-Commissioner AOF to Governors AOF, No. 129 INT/AP, Dakar, 31 August 1951.

government received favourable analyses of the RDA chapters in the Ivory Coast, Soudan, Upper Volta, and Senegal respecting the directives revising party platform and calling for moderation. In Niger two opposing factions, Communist versus conciliatory, were reportedly still dividing the local section of the RDA. The territory of Guinea, however, was singled out as the trouble spot in West Africa, where:

The Communist tendency of the party, which had never ceased asserting itself, seems to be more and more pronounced under the pretence of a recrudescence of trade union activity orchestrated by Sékou Touré...Guinea thus appears to be the avant-garde of the Communist tendency in the Federation, under the guise of CGT unionism. (31)

Moreover administrative portrayal of the PDG depicted the spread of "Communist gangrene" like a "wave unfurling over the entire territory." In conclusion, the territorial administration claimed that the information collected "clearly shows that the actual attitude of the PDG has not conformed to that adopted--for the time being--by Houphouët."

An important aspect of PDG political activity in Guinea was its relationship to trade unionism, specifically the local CGT branch under the leadership of Touré. While the Guinean chapter of the RDA was without parliamentary representation, collaboration with the metropolitan CGT had definite advantages for union members, including training,

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31

ANS 17G 572, High-Commissioner AOF to Direction Générale de l'Interieur, "Note sur l'évolution politique actuelle du RDA," No. 778/AP2, Dakar, 31 August 1951.

32

Also commonly referred to as "Stalinist gangrene." ANS 17G 573, "Renseignements," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 1395/723, 30 August 1951.

33

ANS 17G 573, "Rapport Hebdomadaire," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 1435/745, 10 September 1951.

experience, travel, financial support, and allies in Paris. At a time when industrialisation was taking off in the territory, the labour movement was becoming a potentially explosive social force in need of organisation and direction. In the words of the Governor, Touré had proven himself to be "the only individual capable of leading a movement which consists of many hands but few heads." <sup>35</sup> Amidst confusion over the new orientation dictated by RDA parliamentarians in Paris, Touré returned to Guinea in January 1951 from several trips abroad in conjunction with his union responsibilities, and concentrated his efforts predominantly on labour issues in the overseas territories.

For a while Touré successfully skirted public discussion of controversial topics threatening political dissension within the PDG. Unfortunately his silence only fed administrative suspicions, surely adding justifiable cause to the continued repression of the movement. Awaiting enlightenment on his true convictions, the High-Commissioner gave the following description of Touré's inconsistent behaviour:

The local leaders were very late in accounting for changes in the political orientation of the party; the directors initially appeared to be rebellious--two tendencies emerged: "hard" and "soft". Sékou Touré is maintaining an ambiguous attitude; he seems to be in the middle of the two tendencies; he manoeuvres easily (at least in appearance) among contradictory activities which permit him to proclaim that the RDA has broken all ties with the PCF, as well as to propagate the ideals of the Fédération Syndicale Mondiale. It is precisely this double role, "trade unionist (CGT)" and "politician (RDA)", that characterises the Guinean leader--his desire to retain his future liberty of action and a certain independence with regard to his presumed mentors (CGT and RDA) is evident. (36)

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34

R. Schachter Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, p. 227.

35

ANS 2G 51 133, "Premier trimestre 1951," Guinea, No. 201 APA, 31 March 1951.

36

ANSOM AP 2143/9, High-Commissioner ACF to Minister FOM, "Evénements de Guinée," Paris, 14 March 1955, p. 8.

Nevertheless in the light of his outright defeat in the legislative elections, the perilous predicament of the PDG (including an empty treasury and approaching elections to the Territorial Assembly), and mounting hostile relations between the government and the party, Touré recognised that, for the sake of survival and future success, his only recourse was to solicit help from the RDA central leadership while making amends with the administration.

**Belated Recognition of Désapparement  
and Pan-African Labour Conference, 1951**

In a September letter addressed to members of the RDA Coordinating Committee, the PDG Directing Committee reported general confusion about the movement's new orientation, illustrating its apparent failure in an unchanged atmosphere of administrative repression.<sup>37</sup> The PDG directorate thus urgently requested a gathering of the full Coordinating Committee (i.e. with territorial delegates) in order to re-evaluate the organisation's course of action.

Contributing to the current PDG crisis was the prolonged absence of Touré from Guinea. In Paris for approximately six weeks, then Dakar for two, Touré was preparing for a forthcoming pan-African labour conference to be held in Bamako, while at the same time actively participating in RDA central activities. In a letter to Madeira Keita dated 6 September, Touré expressed concern over unanswered correspondence with the chapter Committee, mentioning also that he was temporarily acting with Gabriel Lisette as Secretary of the parliamentary group.<sup>38</sup> Interestingly,

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37

ANS 17G 573, "Rapport Hebdomadaire," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 1794/984, 8 October 1951.

38

ANS 17G 573, Copy of letter from Touré to Keita written in Paris, 6 September 1951.

several communiqués issued by the Paris delegation of the RDA Coordinating Committee at this time listed Touré as Secretary-General of the RDA in Guinea. <sup>39</sup> Technically Touré was not a member of the Coordinating Committee, nor was he the official leader of the PDG--theoretically both positions were currently occupied by Keita. Nevertheless Touré was building quite a reputation within the RDA directorate, as well as cultivating better relations with the French government.

Administrative reports of Touré's stay in Dakar depicted radical shifts in the attitude and behaviour of the emerging politician. Kept under close surveillance, Touré's actions were summarised accordingly by a federal sûreté officer:

With everyone, he has deplored the past errors of the party and shown that collaboration with the Communist Party only benefited the enemies of the RDA and that it was time, with Houphouët, for devotion to constructive work within the RDA, newly restored and expurgated. (40)

The investiture of Bernard Cornut-Gentile as High-Commissioner of French West Africa in late September proved an opportune time for Touré to display both preparedness in accepting the revised RDA platform, and desire for improved relations with the French administration. Through his persuasive efforts, evidently Touré was successful in momentarily convincing the higher authorities of his sincerity, as attested by the Commissioner in the 1951 last trimester report on politics in AOF:

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39

For example communiqué of 10 October 1951. Incidentally Touré left Paris for Dakar on 3 October; his name also appears on similar statements issued in Paris through November. CRDA, Comité de Coordination, textes de 1947 à 1958.

40

ANS 17G 573, "Extrait du Bulletin Quotidien de la Sûreté de Dakar," 4 October 1951.

The determining factor of internal development was incontrovertably the "conversion", towards the end of the last trimester, of militant unionist Sékou Touré, of whom it could have been said several months ago that he was capable of becoming the Communist leader in AOF. (41)

The way in which Touré seemingly clinched administrative approval, as well as the confidence of the RDA leadership, was by stating his intention to follow up RDA désapparement with a similar breakaway of the African labour unions from the Communist CGT. When questioned about the approaching labour conference, Touré reportedly made the following declaration:

It is possible that the administration will ban the Pan-African Conference in Bamako. For my part, such a decision would be regrettable, because I was intending to proclaim, face to face with Abdoulaye Diallo and CGT representatives from the metropole, that I have personally learned with certitude of the utopian and dangerous nature of the Communist hold on the African masses. Furthermore I would have affirmed my unyielding will to offer my resignation as Secretary-General of the Coordinating Committee of the AOF trade unions because this organism owes allegiance to the CGT and is therefore Communist. (42)

Pointing out the inability of the Communist Party to penetrate the African soul, Touré hinted that he was considering leading an organised  
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"movement of African essence."

Meanwhile, following another round of colonial service ending in suspension, Ray Autra returned to Guinea and dedicated himself to  
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restrengthening the beleaguered PDG. Preceding Touré in visits to

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ANSOM AP 2228/2, "Synthèse des Faits Politiques," Dernier trimestre 1951.

42

ANS 17G 572, "Renseignements: les sentiments actuels de TOURE Sékou," Sureté, Dakar, 5 October 1951.

43

Ibid.

44

Ray Autra had been suspended from the colonial service in September 1950, then reinstated in January 1951 and transferred to Niger, where he was suspended again in September and hence returned home to Guinea.

Paris and Dakar, Autra had also been convinced of the necessity to follow the trend set by Houphouët towards better working relations with the French authorities. In his efforts to quell dissension and confusion within the PDG, Autra illustrated the failure of the PCF in Africa, clarified Houphouët's position and the revised RDA orientation, toured Guinea on an information and propaganda mission, and announced that a meeting of the RDA Coordinating Committee would soon take place.<sup>45</sup> Despite the positively noted maturation and toil of Autra (who formerly was considered a dangerous menace), it appears that the future outlook of the PDG rested almost entirely on the enlightened opinions and conclusions of Touré. Less optimistic than the federal authorities, the local administration in Guinea, awaiting Touré's return and participation at the Bamako labour conference, continued to cast doubts on the sincerity of staunch Communist PDG militants, for example:

Moussa Sané Diallo and Madeira Keita--the former more so than the latter--are of strict Communist obedience.... Madeira Keita, torn by contradictory familial sentiments, could prove less firm in his convictions and follow Sékou Touré, if the latter would accept Houphouët's propositions--which seems possible, however uncertain--and consent to changing tactics. It is however difficult to believe that the union leader is going to suddenly "convert"...if he remains the head of the Union des Syndicats Confédérés de Guinée, and accepts the general secretariat of the CGT Unions of AOF, he would only be playing a "double game", the CGT being no more than a branch of the PCF. (46)

Touré flew from Dakar to Conakry on 13 October. Confident in his

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Autra divulged that a meeting of the Coordinating Committee would be scheduled in Bamako; later he announced St. Louis as the prospective site. This gathering in fact was never called but repeatedly stalled until 1955. ANS 17G 573, "Renseignements," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 1787/977, 8 October 1951.

46

*Ibid.*

amended political stance in line with the new RDA orientation, Touré reportedly made the following announcement:

For my part, I think that a certain French nationalism should not be excluded from the RDA. We must prove our sincerity vis à vis the administration which, moreover, watches over and monitors our actions to see if they conform to our words. Africa must have a purely African party for a solely African democracy. That is my point of view. I do not know if it is shared by Madeira Keita and the others. (47)

In recognition of recent controversies and opposing tendencies, a meeting of the PDG Directing Committee to define the party platform took place three days after Touré's arrival. In his opening address, Touré established that the RDA had broken all ties with the PCF, désapparementement was not a ploy to fool the administration but real, Houphouët had not reneged on the principles established at the Bamako congress, and that the new direction ought to be followed for the sake

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of African unity. Amarah Soumah wholly approved of the new orientation and methods adopted by the parliamentary group, while Keita agreed albeit with several reservations. The main opponent of the revised platform was Sané Moussa Diallo, who claimed that first of all Touré was wrong, and secondly many militants within the RDA territorial sections would follow d'Arboussier rather than Houphouët, thus remaining faithful

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to the PCF doctrine. The following day Touré received a letter from the RDA President, enclosed with a lump sum of money to assist his

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ANS 17G 573, "Renseignements," services de Police, Guinea, No. 1843/1015, 15 October 1951.

48

ANS 17G 573, "Rapport Hebdomadaire," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 1907/1053, 15-21 October 1951.

49

D'Arboussier at the time was attempting to set up a Communist party in Africa allied to the PCF.

efforts at bringing the Guinean RDA section back into the fold. Additionally, the President of the RDA announced his intention to personally visit Guinea in mid-November, promising to hold a public meeting in Conakry alongside his latest hard-pressed disciple--Touré.

In the meantime, the pan-African labour conference at Bamako took place as scheduled from 22-27 October 1951. Preceding the conference, Touré had been charged with the "report of labour union orientation in AOF", while his rival Abdoulaye Diallo had the honour of presenting the rapport moral. Despite preparatory remarks and media hype, the anticipated face-off between these two men failed to materialise in open discussion, evidently due to skilful manoeuvrings of the CGT metropolitan delegates, and "corridor games" aimed at cutting off Touré's attempts to lead a separatist movement. This in fact was as expected, the following administrative prediction proving true:

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This was not the first time the PDCI sent financial support to the PDG. Archival reports mention such contributions from the very inception of the PDG, for example 50,000 francs CFA in November 1948, 75,000 in November 1950 when the party was in dire straits, 50,000 in June 1950 for Touré's election campaign, and now 50,000 to show RDA support and encouragement in spreading the new orientation. ANS 17G 573, Surete report, No. 1176/64, Conakry, 5 November 1948; ANS 17G 573, Services de Police, Guinea, No. 138/775, 30 November 1950; ANS 20G 114, Services de Police, Guinea, No. 950/444, 30 June 1951; and ANS 17G 573, Services de Police, Guinea, No. 1907/1053, Week report 15-21 October 1951.

51

A Fulbe from Upper Guinea, Abdoulaye Diallo was a Ponty graduate, Guinean delegate to the RDA founding Bamako Congress in 1946 (although he reconciled with Yacine Diallo in 1948), and member of the Territorial Assembly. A. Diallo became a CGT activist leading the allied group of trade unions in Soudan, and was nominated Vice-President of the Fédération Syndicale Mondiale (FSM) in 1949. The choice of A. Diallo over Touré was apparently due to the former's membership in the French Communist Party where the latter had abstained. J.-R. de Benoist, L'Afrique Occidentale Française, p. 226.

For anyone familiar with the system, knowing the tactics of obstruction practised by the PCF when faced with danger, it can be assumed that all angles will be covered so that Touré is "stifled", "confined" to such an extent that he will not be able to freely express himself. (52)

Although secession was effectively circumvented, the Guinean and Senegalese delegations, in a show of protest, did refuse to vote for several resolutions passed by the general assembly.

In Guinea a malaise again reigned within the PDG Directing Committee, depicted as a struggle between three factions. On the one hand the majority of the members, led by Touré and Soumah, were resigned to follow Houphouët's orders and the new orientation of the RDA. On the other hand, denouncing Touré as both a "traitor" and "chameleon", Sané Moussa Diallo militated in favour of continued political and trade union solidarity with the Communist Party. Finally, Madeira Keita was seen as straddling the fence between the two opposing tendencies, finding it difficult to denounce his Marxist past and Communist orthodoxy, yet financially dependent on party funds since his suspension from the colonial service. In the end the faction headed by Touré prevailed, thus attesting to the foresight of the RDA President:

Mr. Houphouët himself holds him (Touré) in high esteem, and considers that he is the man most qualified to lead the Guinean masses towards a "new destiny." (55)

On 26 December 1951 to a crowd estimated at 550 people, Touré and Keita

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ANS 17G 572, "Renseignements," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 189/1048, 19 October 1951.

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ANS 17G 573, "Rapport Hebdomadaire," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 2008/1118, 29 October-4 November 1951.

54

ANS 17G 271, "Renseignements," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 2287/1297, 5 December 1951.

55

"Rapport Hebdomadaire," 29 October-4 November 1951.

formally outlined the present position of the RDA, including its programme, tactics and goals. At this belated time the PDG leaders finally declared publicly that the RDA no longer had any ties whatsoever with the Communist Party.<sup>56</sup>

#### Organised Protest and Territorial Elections

PDG recognition of désapparementement and acceptance of the new RDA orientation did not signal an appeasement in the otherwise confrontational relationship between the party and the local authorities. On the contrary, the PDG intensified its efforts to reorganise and indoctrinate the Guinean masses, while signs of administrative repression foreshadowed the forthcoming elections to the Territorial Assembly.

In January 1952 the PDG set up a "Commission of Orientation and Platform", composed of select members of the Directing Committee, to analyse the political situation in Sub-Saharan Africa and methods employed by the RDA in order to devise a programme of action. The findings of the Commission included harsh criticism of the RDA Coordinating Committee which, in conjunction with the parliamentary group, charted a new course of action without consulting the territorial sections. The resulting confusion fomented internal dissension and the emergence of opposing tendencies, threatening the unity of the chapter parties and indeed the life of the movement. According to the Commission's report, recognition of past mistakes led to the following conclusion:

The origin of our errors was in the over-estimation of parliamentary action, over-estimation of the ways and means of the administration, and belief in the possible applica-

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ANS 2G 51, "Revue des événements du quatrième trimestre 1951," Guinea, No. 20/APA, 21 January 1952.

tion of the Constitution. We realise now that the determining action is that of the masses--educated and directed in formulating and defending our interests at home, capable of supporting the action of the leaders and elected representatives. (57)

The PDG Commission held that while the RDA Coordinating Committee, depicted as out of touch with Africa through "lack of internal democracy", concentrated its efforts in Paris, the general masses suffering under administrative repression were almost completely neglected. And, since "all Africans have the same aspirations, they all suffer the same humiliations," the committee reasoned that "it is not impossible that they see eye to eye," and therefore unity stemming from the grass-roots level was to be given top priority in the PDG programme. <sup>58</sup> Additionally the goal of African entente necessitated increased contacts and collaboration with local associations, co-operatives, businesses, women and youth organisations, and trade unions. Finally, common action in organised protest was deemed the unifying factor drawing the masses into the anti-colonial struggle.

The first step in the PDG campaign for reform was to publicise local grievances and suppression of the RDA. In a report sent to the RDA Coordinating Committee (copies were also directed to the Overseas Minister and AOF High-Commissioner), the PDG directorate announced that despite its adoption of a "softer policy" aimed at "fruitful collaboration" with the administration, repression of the party and its militants <sup>59</sup> had actually intensified since the June National Assembly elections.

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ANS 17G 573, PDG Comité Directeur, "Analyse de la situation politique en Afrique Noire," Conakry, 14 January 1952, pp. 4-5.

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*Ibid.*, p. 8.

59

CRDA 9/doss 8, PDG Comité Directeur, "Rapport à la délégation du Comité de Coordination et Groupe Parlementaire RDA," Conakry, 14 January 1952.

According to PDG sources, under the pretext of regional economic conferences attended solely by European administrators, Governor Sirieux was in fact distributing orders to combat local RDA subsections. Moreover the committee reported a host of cases demonstrating arbitrary transfers, arrests, beatings and imprisonment of PDG militants, as well as forced labour and a pervading atmosphere of terror in certain areas. The majority of the complaints had been lodged in Beyla, Kouroussa, Kankan, and N'Zérékoré--districts which registered the greatest support for the RDA in recent elections. One example cited in the report concerned the President of the PDG subsection in Beyla, who reportedly refused under duress to resign from the party; subsequently he and four other local activists were sentenced to three months in prison on trumped up charges of failing to provide porters for medical workers.

The PDG was successful in seizing the attention of the Overseas Minister, who subsequently demanded an investigation into the party's  
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accusations. Several months later, however, the Governor claimed that due to the fact that the stated events took place in outlying districts, information was still insufficient to respond to the allegations put forward by the PDG. Referring to the Committee's assertion of softened policy and collaboration with the administration, the Governor wrote:

I am very sceptical of the sincerity of this attitude. In fact it is ascertainable that on the one hand the Guinean leaders of the local RDA, Madeira Keita, Sékou Touré, Sané Moussa Diallo, remain committed Stalinists, diffusing Communist publications and announcing that "the time of the true struggle for independence is approaching"; on the other hand RDA resignations are increasing at an accelerated pace, including RDA leaders and electoral candidates...Amara

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ANS 17G 573, Minister FCM to High-Commissioner AOF, No. 105, Paris, 29 January 1952.

Soumah has made known his intention to leave the party despite his position in the Directing Committee. This resignation would be a fatal blow to the PDG. (61)

Apart from Soumah, the Governor proudly announced the resignation of an influential RDA candidate in N'Zérékoré, as well as the President and entire subsection of Beyla.

Elections to the Territorial Assemblies in French West Africa were held on 30 March 1952. Touré ran as the PDG candidate in N'Zérékoré, the announcement of which prompted numerous incidents of alleged administrative interference throughout the district. <sup>62</sup> Out of seven RDA candidates only Soumah was elected in Conakry; however two weeks later he resigned from the RDA, thus leaving the PDG without representation in the territorial council of 50 members.

Shortly after the elections, Houphouët made a brief appearance in Conakry specifically to meet with Touré in the wake of his defeat and bitter local reaction. Several months earlier Touré had written a PDG member in Abidjan expressing his disappointment that the RDA President failed to live up to his promise to visit Guinea, and was ignoring desperate pleas for funds made by the PDG. <sup>63</sup> Infuriated over alleged proof of blatant administrative interference in the elections, the Guinean leader reportedly told Houphouët that: "Now, with the agreement of Madeira Keita, I am going to engage in open warfare against the administration." <sup>64</sup> The RDA President reproached Touré for refusing to

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ANS 17G 573, Governor Guinea to High-Commissioner ACF, No. 116/APA, Conakry, 17 March 1952.

62

ANS 17G 573, PDG Comité Directeur to Governor Guinea, No. 15, Conakry, 29 February 1952.

63

ANS 17G 573, Copy of letter from Touré to Moussa Diakité, Services de Police, Guinea, No. 88/51, 12 January 1952.

64

ANS 17G 572, "Renseignements," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 705/407, 15 April 1952.

run for an assembly seat in the Ivory Coast, where he had previously offered him solid backing and assurances. Furthermore, Houphouët rebuked the intransigence of the PDG leadership, pointing out the futility of reprisals aimed at the government, and in conclusion offered the following suggestion and assistance:

I advise you to act with prudence and learn to wait for your time to come. Regarding the debt incurred during the electoral campaign, never fear, I will pay it. (65)

The reason for containment and restriction of the PDG by the local authorities was its recent suspected link with the Communist Party. Fuel for administrative suppression of the Guinean section of the RDA was added by the Overseas Ministry when the territory was depicted as the main target for Communist infiltration and influence in French West Africa. Just prior to the assembly elections, the metropolitan government concluded that the "Guinean RDA has remained fundamentally Marxist (Sékou Touré as head)", and that the territory was on its way to becoming the "future bastion of Communism in West Africa." The situation worsened amidst administrative reports that the PDG was receiving financial assistance from the PCF in preparation for the impending "great war," heralding the birth of the "African Communist Party, destined to replace the old formula of the RDA."

At this point High-Commissioner Cornut-Gentille stepped in to

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Ibid. Houphouët wired 35,000 francs CFA to Touré the following day. ANS 17G 572, "Renseignements," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 703/405, 12 April 1952.

66

ANS 17G 573, Minister FOM to High-Commissioner AOF, "Activités du Parti Communiste en Guinée," Paris, 21 March 1952.

67

ANS 17G 573, "Renseignements," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 740/435, 22 April 1952.

rationalise the situation, submitting his interpretation of Guinean politics, the local RDA section, and Communist activity to the Overseas Minister.<sup>68</sup> The Commissioner asserted that he was well aware of the inflow of Communist propaganda in ACF, and although RDA activists in Guinea were among the frequent destinations, to imply that Communist activity in West Africa was centered on Guinea was premature, because other RDA leaders (such as Bakary Djibo in Niger and Abdoulaye Diallo in Soudan) clearly received as much attention as Touré. Finally, Cornut-Gentille had not yet made up his mind about the true convictions of Touré, as he wrote:

Concerning Sékou Touré, whose influence as a union leader largely surpasses the territorial boundaries, he also seems to be in the process of finding his own orientation....It thus appears difficult actually to prejudge the definite position of Sékou Touré. There is no doubt, however, that it will have a preponderant influence on the political and especially trade union orientation in Guinea. (69)

This hesitation in judgement essentially paved the way for better relations between the emergent leader of the PDG and the French government.

#### **Trade Union Activity: The Code du Travail**

Dating back to 1947, Overseas Minister Marius Moutet prepared a project for a uniform Labour Code in the TOM. Numerous obstacles and changes of government delayed the enactment of the bill into law. The Code finally passed in the National Assembly at the end of the first Legislature in April 1951. Following the extended pause for new elections, the Code was eventually laid before the Council of the Republic in December. In the

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ANS 17G 573, High-Commissioner ACF to Minister FCM, "Activité du Parti Communiste en Guinée," No. 1171 INT/AP2, Dakar, 28 April 1952.

69

Ibid.

senate the bill was discussed at great length and considerably amended before being returned to the National Assembly in February 1952 for promulgation. Further delays caused mounting impatience of African trade unionists, who hence decided to unite forces in order to pressure the government to finalise the proceedings and approve the Code.

Union leaders in Guinea, namely Sékou Touré (CGT) and David Soumah (CFTC), called for a conférence intersyndicale to discuss the problems caused by the delay of the Labour Code. The conference met in Dakar from 6-8 October 1952. In the presence of delegates from most of the trade unions operating in AOF, Soumah reported on the current contents of the Code, while Touré discussed measures needed to secure its passage. The conference recognised the necessity for united action, ordering a general strike in AOF on 3 November to impress urgency on the French government in adopting the Code.

The strike of 3 November was a triumphant success in Guinea, Soudan, and in the major cities of Senegal, where nearly all public and private sector employees joined in the protest. In the Ivory Coast, Upper Volta, and Dahomey, the strike registered a 50 per cent participation rate.<sup>70</sup> The strike achieved its aim when subsequently the National Assembly hurriedly passed the Labour Code, which became law on 15 December 1952. Included in the Code du Travail were passages affirming the abolition of forced labour, guaranteeing the rights of trade unions, prescribing equal pay for equal working conditions, protecting workers against sudden dismissal, and reducing the working week to 40 hours with one day of rest and annual paid holiday. In theory the Code gave the

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G. Martens, "Le syndicalisme en Afrique occidentale," pt. I, p. 95.

African labourer legal protection against exploitation. Union leaders in AOF rejoiced at what they reckoned to be the beginning of a new era of improved working conditions, benefits, and equal rights in African economic development. In Guinea Touré reaffirmed his image as a hero, capable of moving a mountain (in this case the French parliament), with the support of the masses firmly behind him.

#### Silent Transfer of PDG Leadership

Reconfirmed in his position of leading trade unionist in West Africa, Touré now turned his sights on assuming the highest seat in local politics. Under somewhat mysterious circumstances, Touré emerged at the summit of the PDG directorate in early 1953. It has been suggested that Touré persuaded the High-Commissioner to remove his competition in the PDG secretariat by transferring Keita out of Guinea. In retrospect, Ray Autra similarly noted Touré's rise to power:

As soon as he was taken in by the High-Commissioner Bernard Cornut-Gentille, he had us all transferred, one to the Ivory Coast, one to Dahomey.... (72)

Keita himself explained that after being summoned to the Governor's palace, he was informed of his reinstatement into the colonial service and immediate transfer to Dahomey. Instead of refusing, as he had done in the past, Keita decided to follow the Governor's orders. It is uncertain whether either Touré or the High-Commissioner played a part in

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71

C. Rivière, Guinea: Mobilization of a People, p. 87.

72

CRDA, Recorded interview of R. Autra by Claude Gérard, Paris, June 1978.

73

Recorded interview of M. Keita by Ibrahima Baba Kaké, Radio France, Abidjan, October 1986.

this manoeuvre; however at this time Cornut-Gentille was clearly undecided about Touré's reliability, and it is widely held that no hostility whatsoever existed between kinsmen Keita and Touré at any time.

Concerning the case of Autra, moreover, the administration in Guinea was indeed directly accountable for his latest transfer to the Ivory Coast, at the request of the Governor:

The presence in Guinea, in the course of the last few months, of the instructor Ray Autra, transferred two years ago first to Niger then to Dahomey because of his subversive attitude, has acted as a catalyst for confrontation....It would be nice if the territory could be definitively relieved of the more dangerous elements, authentically Communist, such as the pharmacist Sané Moussa Diallo...and Ray Autra, to the return assignment of whom I have already expressed my unfavourable opinion. (74)

Furthermore, in the eyes of the local authorities Touré remained very suspect; he was accused of playing a double jeu between the RDA moderates and the Communists, yet was also recognised as potentially competent to rally the PDG to Houphouët's side if he so desired. Nonetheless, to solicit the transfer of civil servants or otherwise, it is doubtful that Touré had any influence at this point in the territorial administration, evidence of honest collaboration being non-existent.

In December 1952 Touré accepted the sponsorship of the Communist Party, along with Gabriel d'Arboussier and Abdoulaye Diallo, in representing West Africa at the annual Congrès de la Paix. Touré participated in the African delegation to the chagrin of Houphouët, who then summoned his disobedient protégé to Abidjan to discuss the matter. According to sources in the Ivory Coast, Touré's behaviour was reckoned a "sin out of

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ANS 17G 573, Governor Guinea to High-Commissioner AOF, No. 444/APA, Conakry, 7 October 1952.

vanity," the young leader being unable to refuse an all-expense paid trip to Vienna where the congress was held.<sup>75</sup> Nevertheless, Touré reportedly apologised to the RDA President in admitting his mistake as well as promising a public retraction, and thus "returned to the bosom of the RDA."<sup>76</sup>

Erratic behaviour such as that displayed by Touré, amidst the most prominent RDA militants, was of grave concern to the RDA President. Upon his return to Conakry from Abidjan, Touré explained Houphouët's reasons for the repeated postponement of the Coordinating Committee meeting, fervently requested by RDA territorial sections. Apparently the delay was caused in part by financial difficulties, but more likely due to "the necessity to bring back to the RDA certain followers of d'Arboussier."<sup>77</sup> The considerable influence wielded by Touré in both the politics of the PDG and trade union activities was potentially either a great asset or colossal problem of the RDA. Keeping Touré in line with the movement's designated orientation was deemed crucial to RDA unity, proof of which was evident in Houphouët's tolerance and persistence in retrieving him from frequent deviations from the charted path.

The way in which Touré assumed the office of Secretary-General of the PDG is indeed questionable. Administrative reports of January 1953 designated Abdourahmane Diallo as Keita's replacement;<sup>78</sup> several months

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ANS 17G 573, "Renseignements," Services de Police, Ivory Coast, No. 101/19, 12 January 1953.

76

*Ibid.*

77ANS 17G 573, "Renseignements," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 87/48, 16 January 1953.

78

*Ibid.*; and ANS 2G 52, "Rapport Politique Année 1952," Guinea, No. 132/APA, p. 6. Contrary to popular belief, Amarah Soumah never served as Secretary-General of the PDG.

later the circumstances surrounding the changeover to Touré remain largely indeterminable. According to Keita a railway worker by the name of Traoré was officially left in charge; however Touré was in fact directing the party, and hence was unconstitutionally appointed Secretary-General by PDG militants before a congress could be convoked and elections held to this effect.

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Political power in the PDG was increasingly concentrated in the hands of a select few party members. While the Comité Directeur met less and less frequently, party directives were more often issued by a smaller "Comité Politique", later known as the Bureau Politique. Henceforth as the unequivocal master of the PDG as well as prominent union activist, Touré was on his way to becoming the most powerful African in Guinea. Intent on removing obstacles to his path toward personal dominance and PDG supremacy in the territory, Touré skilfully manoeuvred to obtain recognised status via legislative elections while at the same time setting out to discredit and decimate opposition parties and political foes.

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Recorded interview of M. Keita by I.B. Kaké, Radio France, Abidjan, October 1986.

## CHAPTER VI

### The Struggle for Power

Following his somewhat irregular ascension to the top position of the PDG, Sékou Touré aimed to strengthen the party through its ties to the local trade union movement. The success of the general strike of 3 November 1952 gave a considerable boost to the popularity of the trade unions, and heightened public awareness of the potential of united effort. Already recognised as a powerful union militant and organiser throughout French West Africa, Touré used this influence to coordinate the political action of the PDG with that of the trade unions operating in Guinea. The one thing Touré still lacked and desperately sought was election to public office, which seemingly would solidify his political position in Guinea, and earn him respect and hopefully improved relations with the French authorities. The importance of obtaining an elected office was aptly pointed out by Aristide Zolberg:

One might think that to co-operate with the colonial power might be interpreted as a sell-out and cost popular support. But in fact the opposite usually took place....To whatever charisma they (African leaders) possessed in the eyes of their followers was added the charisma of European power.  
(1)

In February 1953 Governor Siriex departed from Guinea, and was subsequently replaced by Jean-Paul Parisot. Meanwhile Houphouët was discreetly meeting with High-Commissioner Cornut-Gentille to press for administrative acceptance of Touré as an RDA loyalist rather than

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Aristide R. Zolberg, Creating Political Order: The Party-States of West Africa, Chicago, 1966, p. 17.

Communist menace. The chance arose to fulfill Touré's aspirations for elected office in August 1953, when partial elections to replace Paul Tétou, a deceased member of the Territorial Assembly, were held in the district of Beyla. Houphouët described his role in the election accordingly:

When, following a vacancy in the region of Beyla, we decided to nominate Sékou Touré, I visited Governor-General Cornut-Gentille. I was not asking for the support of the government or local administration, but simply neutrality. The promise was given; that night I visited administrative encampments with Cornut-Gentille...he had summoned the administrators and given the instructions that neutrality be absolutely respected. (3)

Touré mounted a large campaign for his election, aided by four RDA delegates, a car and a financial contribution, all supplied by Houphouët, and the support of vacationing Guinean students speaking on his behalf.<sup>4</sup>

In light of the considerable efforts to bring a resounding victory to Touré, the electoral results of 2 August 1953 were in fact rather obscure. In a district of 12,342 registered voters, Touré narrowly carried the election with 729 votes against 703 of the second place candidate. The 86 per cent abstention rate was officially attributed to "unfavourable weather dispersing the population."<sup>5</sup> At any rate Touré finally succeeded in gaining electoral office, the Territorial Assembly being the first step from which he would climb the ladder of African representation and participation in the French administration.

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P.H. Siriex, *Houphouët-Boigny: An African Statesman*, p. 135.

3

Rassemblement Démocratique Africain, *Actes de Colloque International sur l'Histoire du RDA*, Abidjan, 1986, p. 81.

4

ANS 2G 53, High-Commissioner AOF, "Revue des événements du 3e trimestre 1953, Guinée," Dakar, 12 September 1953, p. 3.

5

*Ibid.*, p. 1.

### Triumphant Trade Unionism

By 1953 Guinea had the fastest-growing economy in the West African Federation, becoming the third richest territory after the Ivory Coast and Senegal. Earlier a book written by Governor Pré, entitled L'Avenir de la Guinée Française, had outlined the vast mineral prospects in the territory, describing Guinea as the colony most endowed with natural resources.<sup>6</sup>

Statistics pointed to the dawn of an industrial era in Guinea: exports were up, from 17,000 tons in 1944 to 155,000 tons in 1952, and to 841,000 tons in 1953.<sup>7</sup> Coastal production of iron ore and bauxite rose sharply between 1953 and 1955, while further deposits were still being uncovered. In the Forest region, the official record of diamond excavation (widespread smuggling not included) increased from 50,000 carats in 1948 to 300,000 carats in 1955. The profits generated by the rise in world prices due to the Korean War helped finance the installation of numerous secondary industries in Guinea.

Industrial growth fostered an expanding labour force, which resulted in Africans flocking to the cities and production sites in search of gainful employment. The population of Conakry rose from an estimated 13,000 in 1937 to 40,000 in 1955, reaching 100,000 by late 1958.<sup>8</sup> In these circumstances the trade unions, particularly the CGT, were instrumental in organising and supporting the new breed of Guinean labourers.

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Roland Pré, L'Avenir de la Guinée Française, Conakry, 1951.

7

R. Schacter Morgenthau, Political Parties, p. 227.

8

A. Lewin, La Guinée, p. 20.

As aforementioned, following the strike on 3 November engulfing the Federation, the Code du Travail was finally adopted on 15 December 1952. Henceforth the preoccupation of the labour unions shifted to the actual application of the Code in the West African territories. The administration as well as local employers were reluctant to implement the reforms stipulated in the new code, and reportedly delayed its application, claiming that implied wage increases would place an intolerable strain on their budgets. The major conflict centered on the shortening of the work week from 48 to 40 hours, without assured pay rises of 20 per cent for the African labourers. The increase in hourly wages, to be set by the local administrations, was not forthcoming.

As in 1952, Guinean labour leaders called for a conférence intersyndicale in order to formulate a coordinated approach toward the successful implementation of the Code. Demonstrations spread throughout AOF in 1953, the culmination of which was a proposed general strike scheduled to begin in September. Sékou Touré was the main organiser of the impending strike. It is clear that the administration in Guinea hoped that Touré's election to the Territorial Assembly at this time would curb his appetite for trade union heroism and anti-colonial activities, as one official wrote:

One thought that the RDA leader would change his political line if he received an electoral mandate...however that did not prevent Sékou Touré from launching a general strike immediately afterwards, and maintaining it for a number of weeks with unquestionable success in Conakry. (9)

Just two weeks after Touré's election, Governor Parisot issued a decree establishing the reduced work week of 40 hours and an increase in

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ANSOM AP 2148/4, "Situation politique 1955," p. 3.

the minimum wage from 17.50 to 20 francs CFA. The pay rise of 14.28 per cent was broken down into 8.28 per cent in compensation for the shorter working hours and 6 per cent in consideration of the rising cost of living.<sup>10</sup> The 20 per cent salary increase demanded by the trade unions meant fixing the minimum wage at 21 francs CFA, and thus protest continued unabated.

A comité intersyndicale was created in Guinea, composed of the major trade unions, namely the CGT, CFTC, Railworkers and nominally the FO. Led by Touré of the CGT and David Soumah of the CFTC, the committee organised demonstrations on 18 August, 7 and 14 September 1953, and decided to call a general strike of unlimited duration until their demand for the 20 per cent wage increase was met by the territorial government.

From the onset of the union negotiations, administrative reports confirmed that "the personal action of Sékou Touré was the determining factor in the vote of the motion to strike."<sup>11</sup> Subsequently Governor Parisot alerted the High-Commissioner that the threat of massive strike<sup>12</sup> was serious, yet it could be avoided if concessions were granted.<sup>12</sup> The response of the federal government was an announcement that measures would be undertaken in order to reduce the cost of living in the West African territories, thereby increasing the purchasing power of the workers rather than their salaries.<sup>13</sup> There was little Parisot could do

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<sup>10</sup> Afrique Informations, "Les Grèves en AOF," No. 17/18, 15 December 1953, p. 7.

<sup>11</sup> ANS 17G 277, Telegram Governor Guinea to High-Commissioner AOF, Nos. 180-2, Conakry, 18 September 1953.

<sup>12</sup> ANS 17G 277, Telegram Governor Guinea to High-Commissioner AOF, Nos. 197-9, Conakry, 18 September 1953.

<sup>13</sup> ANS 17G 277, Telegrams High-Commissioner AOF to Governor Guinea, Nos. 34 and 35, Dakar, 18 September 1953.

in this stalemate, as he again admitted that "everything depends on  
14  
Sékou Touré's decision."

Touré launched the legendary general strike in Guinea on 21  
September 1953. In the 66 days which followed, Touré maintained  
discipline among the strikers, touring Conakry and surrounding areas  
daily to deliver speeches, news bulletins, and watchwords. The  
government reported that the strike was total, paralysing commerce in  
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the territory. Soon fed up with Touré's apparent hold on the capital,  
the Governor intended to have him arrested over a planned demonstration  
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that was subsequently cancelled. A personal conflict of wills  
developed between Touré and Parisot, while rumours circulated about the  
supremacy of the former over the latter in the territory. In a speech  
before 1,400 strikers, Touré displayed his intransigence in the follow-  
ing declaration:

We want nothing from individual persons. We do not want to  
"sack" the Governor as certain people are claiming. It is  
not a question of a political strike and we are not issuing  
any policies. We are fighting solely the politics of  
injustice and famine. If the Government does not want the  
workers to combat the administration and its authority, let  
it grant them the Code du Travail. (17)

By mid-November employers in Guinea were pursuing talks with the comité  
intersyndicale in search of a compromise pay rise. The union leaders,

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ANS 17G 277, Telegram Governor Guinea to High-Commissioner AOF,  
Nos. 202-4, Conakry, 20 September 1953.

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ANS 17G 277, Telegram Governor Guinea to High-Commissioner AOF,  
Nos. 245-6, Conakry, 5 October 1953.

16

ANS 17G 277, Telegrams Governor Guinea to High-Commissioner AOF,  
Nos. 264-5 and Nos. 266-7, Conakry, 12 October 1953.

17

ANS 17G 277, "Renseignements, la grève à Conakry," Services de  
Police, Guinea, No. 19026, 26 October 1953.

however, showed no interest whatsoever in an offer of a 16 per cent<sup>18</sup> salary increase over the initial proposal of 14.3 per cent. When Governor Parisot returned from a meeting in Dakar without any new initiatives, Touré and Soumah went personally to see the High-Commissioner. Finally, on 25 November, Cornut-Gentille was able to report that "following agreement reached after ultra-laborious negotia-<sup>19</sup>tions, work will resume today in Guinea." The Guinean labour leaders had secured from the federal government a minimum wage of 20.56 francs CFA, an increase of 17.5 per cent. Two days later a French ministerial decree raised the hourly wage in AOF by a uniform 20 per cent, the move for which the Guinean labour movement received the lion's share of the credit.

The impact of the strike in Guinea was manifold. Membership in<sup>20</sup> local trade unions as well as the PDG soared. The working class was mobilised into a weighty political force, capable of united sustained effort in pressing the administration for local reforms. Women played an important role in the strike, not only in supplying food for the strikers and their families, but also as messengers, organisers, and morale-boosters helping to maintain discipline among the troops.

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ANS 17G 277, "Renseignements, la grève à Conakry," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 19809, 10 November 1953.

19

ANS 17G 277, Telegram High-Commissioner AOF to Ministry FOM, No. 428, Dakar, 25 November 1953.

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Figures for membership in the CGT in AOF differ accordingly: Mortimer cites: 2,600 in 1953, 10,700 in 1954; and 39,000 in 1955, France and the Africans, p. 200; Schacter Morgenthau: 4,600 in 1953; 20,000 in 1954; and 44,000 in 1955, Political Parties, p. 229. What is important is the spectacular growth at this time. The CFTC had approximately 2-3,000 members, while the PDG claimed 300,000 members. Afrique Informations, No. 17/18, 15 December 1953.

Finally, in the words of the High-Commissioner, the strike:

made a star out of the union leader Sékou Touré, whose political "valour," from this moment onward, surpasses the framework of Guinea and takes on an importance on the federal level. (21)

As Secretary-General of the CGT in West Africa, Touré's rapidly accruing power worried even the central leadership of the French CGT. In February 1954 a congress of CGT unions in AOF was held in Abidjan, where the statutes were altered to elect three West African Secretaries (in lieu of one) to the Coordinating Committee.<sup>22</sup> Meanwhile Houphouët, concerned that Touré was manipulating the trade union movement for political ends, began pressing him to reaffirm strict allegiance to the RDA. Touré accordingly did so, and at this time hints at a possible<sup>23</sup> future rupture with the metropolitan CGT were laid.

#### Guinean Politics Redefined

The sudden death of Yacine Diallo on the night of 14 April 1954 created a considerable political void in Guinea. Diallo had been a major stabilising factor in Guinean politics, as he was supported by the administration as well as the traditional chieftaincy, and effectively maintained unity throughout the Fouta region. The replacement election for Diallo's seat in the National Assembly, held on 27 June, was engulfed in intense rivalry between his potential successors.

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ANSOM AP 2143/9, High-Commissioner AOF, "Situation politique 1955," No. 253, Dakar, 14 March 1955.

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At this time Touré was re-elected, along with Diallo Séydou of Mali and Bassirou Guèye of Senegal. Georges Martens, "le syndicalisme en Afrique occidentale d'expression française: de 1945 à 1960," *Le Mois en Afrique*, part II, Nos. 180-181, December/January 1981, p. 56.

23

ANS 17G 277, Telegram Governor Guinea to High-Commissioner AOF, Nos. 252-3, Conakry, 7 October 1953.

For the first time in Guinea, ethnicity did not play the determinant role in electoral alliances. From its inception the RDA consistently campaigned against regional and ethnic divisions; as a major defender of the labour force, the PDG was acquiring new supporters from all over the territory. Indeed the timing seemed opportune to elect Sékou Touré, now more famous and powerful than ever, as RDA-PDG representative in the National Assembly. In order to combat the greatly strengthened PDG in the forthcoming elections, a coordinating committee composed of representatives from the Amicale Gilbert Vieillard, Union Mandé, Union Forestière, and Comité d'Union de Basse-Guinée was created. Initially an electoral alliance, this coalition subsequently formed a political party known as the Bloc Africain de Guinée (BAG).

With the recommendation of the almamy Ibrahima Sory Dara, spiritual leader of the Fulani, Barry Diawadou was selected as the BAG candidate. Son of the almamy of Dabola, as well as Ponty graduate, Diawadou had been the popular intellectual of the AGV. At the age of 37 Diawadou had previously been an opponent of Yacine Diallo, running against him in the 1951 election to the National Assembly. As Diallo's appointed successor, Diawadou inherited the support of the administration as well as Fulani aristocracy. Shifting his political stance toward his conservative backers, Diawadou lost the support of the younger educated elite he hitherto represented. This faction of the AGV, including its former president Diallo Abdoulaye, thus split off to found a new party, the Démocratie Socialiste de Guinée (DSG). Aligned with the metropolitan SFIO, the DSG denounced the feudalistic ways of the Fouta chieftaincy, and put forth Barry Ibrahima, a university graduate known locally as Barry III, as its candidate for the June by-election.

The French government carefully planned to work against Sékou Touré

in the legislative elections. In fixing the dates for the by-election, special consideration was given to the Fouta region in order to register the highest voter turn-out possible. As was stated in a note for the Overseas Minister, "it is important that the Fulani vote in great numbers to defeat Sékou Touré, and to obtain representation in the National Assembly." <sup>24</sup> The July election date initially proposed by the High-Commissioner was rejected on the grounds of possible rains in the region, which might give an advantage to Touré; therefore the June date was finally agreed upon.

On the federal level, however, the High-Commissioner had a different opinion of Touré's candidacy. In a report dated 17 May, Cornut-Gentille tried to persuade the French government that Touré should not be considered an enemy of the administration, and instead should be given a fair chance, as he wrote:

If the political situation just before the election indicates that his candidacy has a real chance of being returned by electoral suffrage, it is important that this success is in no way a success "against" the administration....it is advisable in any case to examine his candidacy without "apriorism." (25)

Meanwhile rumours of Touré's dealings with the High-Commissioner spread in Paris, as he reportedly received Cornut-Gentille's pledge of support, and consequently "Parisot received instructions which did not please <sup>26</sup> him."

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ANSOM AP 2143/5, "Note pour Monsieur le Ministre," Paris, 11 May 1954.

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ANSOM AP 2143/9, High-Commissioner AOF, report No. 590, Dakar, 17 May 1954.

26

ANSOM AP 2143/5, "Note pour Monsieur le Ministre," Paris, 19 May 1954.

Just prior to the election, the government fell and a new Overseas Minister, Robert Buron, was appointed. Buron was considered "the most liberal politician to hold that office since Mitterrand."<sup>27</sup> In his determination to "integrate" the RDA into territorial government, Buron also reinitiated the proposals for municipal reorganisation, measures that would lead to decentralisation and the strengthening of the Territorial Assemblies. Buron replaced all the department heads at Rue Oudinot within a few weeks of his instatement, and began recalling alleged tough governors. Although the Mendes-France government ended in early 1955, the subsequent Overseas Minister Paul Teitgen under the Faure government carried on the policies adopted by Buron.

Six days before the Guinea by-election, Buron clarified his position concerning administrative policy in AOF:

At the very moment that I assume my duties I wish to affirm on the matter of Guinea, and in general all territories, my absolute will to keep the administration in an attitude of strict neutrality regarding electoral procedures. (28)

Cornut-Gentille reported back that he had already given imperative orders, both written and oral, to the Governor of Guinea concerning neutrality, and that he had sent numerous personal emissaries to reinforce his instructions.<sup>29</sup> Nonetheless, it seemed the orders fell on deaf ears, as reports of administrative opposition continued to circulate, for example:

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E. Mortimer, *France and the Africans*, p. 202.

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ANSOM AP 2143/5, Telegram Minister FCM to High-Commissioner AOF, No. 164, Paris, 21 June 1954.

29

ANSOM AP 2143/5, Telegram High-Commissioner AOF to Minister FCM, No. 252, Dakar, 23 June 1954.

In any case, it seems that Governor Parisot, much less confident than the authorities in Dakar, intends to combat Sékou Touré...whatever the instructions of the High-Commissioner. His chances of obtaining the seat vacated by Yacine Diallo suffer from hostility organised by the local government. (30)

The results of the elections of 27 June 1954 were largely as anticipated by the Governor's forecasts:

Barry Diawadou	145,497
Sékou Touré	85,808
Barry Ibrahima	16,098 (31)

As expected the Fouta region recorded the lowest abstention rate, totalling 91,935 votes in favour of Diawadou. Governor Parisot noted the following significant characteristic of elections in Guinea:

The Fouta Djalon essentially constitutes the political power in Guinea by the fact of its population (more than 750,000 inhabitants) and the number of registered voters (more than 190,000). Thus the Fouta can be the sole determining factor in legislative elections if it forms a united front. (32)

The predominance of the Fulani voting bloc was aided in the 1954 elections, when out of 82,980 newly registered voters, 72,056 were designated to the Fouta region.<sup>33</sup>

Apart from the disproportionate increase in number of registered voters per region, the PDG (supported by the DSG on many accounts) brought a multitude of the usual complaints and charges of administrative duplicity to the French government, such as:

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ANSOM AP 2143/5, "Note sur l'élection partielle à l'A.N. pour le remplacement de Yacine Diallo," Minister FOM, Paris, n.d.

31

ANS 2G 55(152), "Rapport politique pour l'année 1955," Guinea, No. 281/APA, p. 13.

32

ANSOM AP 2143/5, Governor Guinea to High-Commissioner AOF, "Rapport analytique sur les résultats du scrutin du 27 Juin 1954," No. 280/APAS, Conakry, 6 July 1954.

33

Afrique Informations, No. 34, 15 March-1 April 1955, p. 5.

- 1) 10,000 voters were stricken from the electoral lists in districts claiming PDG dominance;
- 2) RDA militants were wrongfully imprisoned;
- 3) The administration financed the campaign and travel expenses of Diawadou and his supporters;
- 4) Chefs de canton were threatened with losing their positions if they didn't force the vote for Diawadou;
- 5) Electoral ballots were not distributed by a commission but rather by Commandants de Cercle and local chiefs;
- 6) Delegates supporting Diawadou were designated presidents of voting stations and transported by administrative vehicles;
- 7) RDA members were not allowed to participate in the supervision of polling stations, ballot tallying, or reporting; and
- 8) Violent incidents were organised against the PDG. (34)

Governor Parisot insisted that strict neutrality was observed throughout the territory in the elections of 27 June, and dismissed Touré's objections with the simple statement that "the favourite dialectic of Sékou Touré is the lie."<sup>35</sup>

The case for the validation of the Guinea by-election was brought before the National Assembly in January 1955. The expected opposition of the UDSR and SFIO was however not forthcoming. In fact the only recorded protest to Diawadou's election came from the Communist deputy Charles Benoist. Members of the UDSR, to which the RDA was affiliated in parliament, were notably absent on the day of the vote, while the SFIO as a bloc abstained. Consequently the validation of Barry Diawadou to the National Assembly passed uneventfully on 21 January 1955.

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CRDA 9/doss 10, Letter of Sékou Touré to RDA Committees in Guinea, Paris, 1 October 1954; and letter of Touré to electoral committee of the "liste d'Union démocratique et sociale," Dakar, 19 July 1954.

35

ANSCM AP 2143/5, Governor Guinea to High-Commissioner AOF, "Réclamation relative aux élections partielles de la Guinée---scrutin du 27 Juin 1954," No. 320/APAS, Conakry, 7 August 1954.

### The PDG Takeover

The period following the June by-election and preceding the validation of Diawadou was very turbulent in Guinea. Incidents occurred at the slightest provocation; moreover mass protest and confrontation of political opponents were more often deliberately planned than spontaneous. The RDA-PDG was chiefly responsible for large demonstrations giving rise to damage of personal property and clashes with both Diawadou supporters and security forces. What enabled the PDG to organise such widespread protest and demonstration of strength was a highly successful mobilisation campaign launched by Touré immediately after the June election. According to the party newspaper, PDG membership rose from 5,000 in the beginning of 1954 to 300,000 by the end of that same year.

Building on the established trade union base, the PDG now aimed especially at incorporating women into the movement. Once mobilised, Guinean women constituted a vast political force, extremely loyal to Touré, and capable of inciting the masses to protest and violence. Touré also effectively used women in the campaign to agitate men; the courage and vigilance displayed by females was intended to bring shame on the weaker men. Speaking to crowds of over 1,000 women, Touré proclaimed:

Many among you have more courage than your husbands...Man owes everything to woman, women are like salt, a political party without women is a dish without seasoning. (37)

Moreover the PDG leader called for women to hold fast to the party line, and not to fear their husbands if they did not agree. It was reported

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36

La Liberté, 11 January 1955.

37

ANS 17G 586(152), "Renseignements sur réunion RDA à Conakry," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 5980, 9 August 1954.

that Touré went so far as to invite women to refuse their husbands if they were not party activists, telling them not to worry, because he would give them true democrats in their place. <sup>38</sup> Songs which became slogans of the women's movement included the following verses:

If men are afraid of repression, let them give us the trousers in their place.

We will no longer share a bed with any enemy of Sily, who is our legitimate husband, Sékou Touré will choose for us a democratic mate. (39)

Touré had a great charm with the ladies, not only was he considered very handsome, but "vigorously leading the struggle for women's liberation, he is the idol of Soussou and Malinké women." <sup>40</sup> The effects of the PDG's mobilisation of women was widespread, and beneficial to the strength of the party as well as that of the women's campaign for equal rights. As noted by an official reporting from Kindia in January 1955:

Custom has rapidly evolved in the course of the last few years and particularly in the year 1954, with the emancipation of women movement advocated by the RDA, which moreover has been a determining factor in its success. The Soussou woman can now be considered man's equal; no longer is there a question of marriage against her will. (41)

The PDG was in fact leading a social revolution in Guinea, confronting traditional views of the roles of women, youth, the chieftaincy, social organisation, and justice. Greatly in the fashion of the Communist Party, the PDG reorganised Guinean society on the grass

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ANS 17G 586, "Réunion publique RDA à Conakry et ses suites," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 6826, 8 September 1954.

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Ibid.

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ANSCM AP 2144/1, Report by FOM Inspector Pruvost, "Incidents de 1954-1955 en Guinée Française," p. 5.

41

ANSCM AP 2144/1, Custom report, "Contact avec les populations en Guinée," Kindia, 30 January 1955, p. 7.

roots level. With amazing speed the party instituted "parallel administrations" throughout the territory. In an analysis submitted in February 1955 by Administrator Brajot of the French Overseas Ministry, the case of Labaya was given as an example of the rapid RDA-PDG takeover:

In the elections of June 1954, the population of Labaya, grouped behind the chief David Sylla, voted as a bloc for Barry Diawadou. Six months later, the sub-division is almost completely won over by the RDA, the chief is injured, his friends molested, his compound ransacked, and he himself owes his life only to the intervention of the local police.  
(42)

The attack launched by the PDG on the chieftaincy was particularly fierce. Long considered puppets of the administration by many local populations, the village and canton chiefs not professing allegiance to the PDG were harassed to the point of capitulation, or suffered public humiliation and loss of control over their jurisdictions. Whereas the administration recognised chiefs as representatives of the government, the PDG campaigned that the chief was the representative of his people, and therefore a village with a majority of party members must be led by a PDG chief. In the above example, chief David Sylla proved an ideal case for PDG exposure of administrative chiefs as enemies of the people.

In the Coastal district of Dubréka, following a rapid implantation of RDA structure, non-RDA Sylla was repeatedly harassed by local villagers. His attempts to collect taxes and investigate disturbances were hampered by crowds of women insulting him and blocking his path. On several occasions Sylla was forced off his horse and relieved of his gun and saber. In mid-January 1955, "RDA policemen" supposedly uncovered

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Administrator Brajot, 26 February 1955, reprinted in Pruvost report, p. 66.

a plot by Sylla to murder the local PDG President Thierno Camara. The  
accused assassin, a Fulani, was subsequently held in RDA custody.<sup>43</sup>  
Interrogated in front of a large crowd, the suspect eventually admitted  
under duress that he was taking orders from the chief; after which his  
head was shaved and he was paraded around the village publicly  
confessing his crimes. When news of this unlawful arrest and trial  
reached district headquarters, nine arrest warrants were issued against  
the RDA perpetrators, including Thierno Camara. When the police arrived  
on 9 February to make the arrests, they were met by a large mob of RDA  
militants from several neighbouring villages, intending to prevent them  
from carrying out their mission. Sylla was accompanying the police in  
order to identify the wanted men. The crowd was armed and a riot broke  
out, whereby tear gas as well as grenades were employed by the police.  
Himself under attack, chief Sylla reached for his saber and rode through  
the crowd seriously wounding at least four women, and maiming up to ten  
people.<sup>44</sup> The wife of the local PDG President, M'Ballya Camara, received  
saber wounds which killed her unborn child, and she died several days  
later from her injuries. M'Ballya Camara thus became one of the most  
celebrated martyrs of the PDG, while David Sylla served as the public  
example of the heinous chieftaincy, brutalising the Guinean masses under  
administrative protection.

Numerous reports told of how the RDA successfully implemented a  
puppet organisation acting as a screen between the local populations and  
the French administration. Governor Parisot explained the situation to

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ANSOM AP 2144/1, Letter Court of Appeal AOF, Procureur General to  
Minister FOM, No. 1779, Dakar, 23 February 1955.

44

The official report cites 6 wounded, whereas the PDG claimed Sylla  
seriously injured 15, *La Liberté*, No. 89, 29 April 1956.

the High-Commissioner accordingly:

From Boké to Forécariah, Conakry to Kindia, there is no longer a village where an order is carried out, or a franc of taxes paid, without the consent of RDA officials. The party, which in order to do this used the pre-existing framework of village society, has put in place its police wearing insignias and its own tribunals. Practically no more communication relays exist between the Commandants de Cercle and the masses....The most insane circulars travel around the country about the invulnerability of whoever carries the party membership card, about the exoneration of RDA members from taxes, and about the legitimacy of refusing to obey any order not emanating from the party. (45)

Societies were restructured in the following manner: the existing village chief, having joined the RDA, was charged solely with official relations with the Commandant de Cercle, whereby a "president" was nominated, aided by a committee composed of an appointed attorney, judge, commissioner, doctor, and treasurer. The president was seconded by a présidente--the leader of the women's organisation, whose role was usually substantial in local party activity. Furthermore the puppet administration maintained a network of messengers and its own police force. Political restructuring was coupled with economic reorganisation, as PDG villages farmed communally, carried out local building projects, and shared the wealth of the community. Finally, cultural events were also designated, including frequent gatherings, meetings, and teaching of "progressive music" set to party songs and chants. Regarding the plethora of existing PDG villages, administrator Brajot concluded the following:

In sum, the village works en bloc, acts en bloc, votes en bloc, obeys en bloc. If necessary, and if the leaders give the order, it will rise up en bloc. (46)

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ANSOM AP 2144/1, Letter Governor Guinea to High-Commissioner ACF, No. 79/CAB, Conakry, 12 February 1955.

46

Brajot, cited in Pruvost report, p. 70.

The methods employed by the PDG to subjugate the Guinean masses were largely tactics learned from prior Communist education. The party cell was a totalitarian organisation, where participation was mandatory, and no defection was tolerated. According to the detailed report furnished by Brajot, the following steps were taken in order to implant PDG cells throughout the territory:

- 1) Public meetings of indoctrination: the party does not set out to prove anything, it merely affirms. Simple principles are endlessly repeated until they are accepted as truths by the masses. These affirmations are accompanied by absurd promises such as "we will soon share the wealth of the capitalists," "the party will equally divide the abundant riches of the country," and "because of this the people will be able to live without working";
- 2) Organisation of the party: starting at the base, cells are formed at the village level. Nominated officials are normally heads of large families or influential persons who are able to lead more or less the entire community into the party. Hence PDG membership cards are sold and distributed to all in a matter of days;
- 3) Elimination of opponents: initially by threats and propaganda stating that party cards are necessary to buy or sell goods, take buses or trains, receive medical care, send children to school, etc. Finally outright coercion is used, including boycotts of non-RDA goods and services, burglary, and incineration of property and homes; and
- 4) Call toward violence and creating incidents: final stage to subjugate the adversary. Harassment and provocation of opponents until clashes ensue, after which the PDG exposes violence on the part of its foes, puts forth martyrs, and further rallies the masses to protest RDA arrests and repression.(47)

#### Incidents

Incidents of unprecedented violence in Guinea occurred systematically throughout the territory following the election of Barry Diawadou to the National Assembly in June 1954. Over the next eight months, and corresponding to the PDG reorganisation and takeover of countless villages,

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Ibid., pp. 66-9.

clashes between political opponents and with the security forces were commonplace. Characteristically the violence was often initiated by women, whose insults provoked their victims to hostilities, as well as their own men whom they made ashamed of their hesitations. Skirmishes between political adversaries often escalated into beatings, stonings, attacks on personal property (including ransacking or burning), and the use of knives or occasionally guns. Upon their arrival at the scene, police were usually stoned, their paths blocked by the crowds and large objects placed in their way. It was reported that tear gas had little effect on the mobs; for example 57 bombs were used in Boffa in an attempt to break up a riot. In several cases grenades were thrown, under the pretext of protecting wounded security officers. The clashes were very often organised in nature, with specific opponents targeted in advance, and large numbers of militants recruited. Finally, the violence was not confined to urban areas, but spread into newly politically activated villages and sub-districts hitherto unmotivated by political issues.

The following is a brief summary of the most serious incidents, which occurred in Guinea between June 1954 and February 1955:

27 June 1954: Partial elections to the National Assembly. Protest demonstrations in Boké immediately after the pronouncement of Barry Diawadou as deputy.

July: A crowd of 3,000 people stage a mass reception upon the arrival of Touré in Conakry.(1.7)  
Arrival of Diawadou is met by insults leading to brawls between Soussous (RDA) and Fulani.(24.7) The following day more incidents, police intervention, approximately 30 arrests.

September: An RDA meeting denouncing Diawadou supporters led to the stoning of the latter's homes.(6.9)

Diawadou is carried away by an opposing crowd.(12.9) Same day following a private meeting held by Touré, RDA militants marched in the streets brandishing insults and throwing rocks at their opponents and respective houses. Demonstrations again the next day, police intervention, 5 arrests.

October: Random incidents occurred October 3-7.

In Conakry, Ansoumany Konté, insulted and threatened at his home by RDA activists, fired upon the crowd with a shotgun injuring 2 demonstrators. Konté himself suffered several knife wounds. Police intervention.(21.10) Same night and continuing for 3 days, RDA crowds attacked their opponents, ransacking and burning several houses, beating their victims and stoning the security police. Police used tear gas and batons to disperse the mobs.

Upon the arrival of French Overseas Minister Robert Buron, RDA militants attempt to block the path of the military parade. Massive RDA demonstrations at Conakry, Kindia, Mamou, and each railway stop along the Minister's tour. (end of October)

In Kindia and Forécariah, protest against the canton chiefs, police intervention.(31.10)

November: In Tatéma (Boffa district) 2 village chiefs are molested by RDA supporters, their homes pillaged.(4.11)

Violence in Conakry, 5 arrests.(16.11)

Further clashes in Madiné (Forécariah)(20.11), and Coyah (Dubréka)(21.11), involving 3 wounded, deployment of security forces.

Near Dubréka RDA militants stoned the houses of the village chief and 2 notables of Kénindé. A crowd opposing the police investigation blocked roads with tree trunks.(9.12) The following day 150 people stormed the district headquarters and clashed with police; 7 wounded, 15 arrests.

Coyah (Dubréka)--RDA ransacked the home of a political rival, and threw rocks at 2 policemen, who were subsequently forced to release 2 men in their custody.(9.12)

Sinsinkoro (Kissidougou)--The canton chief, surrounded and molested by RDA men, wounded 5 people with his shotgun.(17.12)

Quassou (Boffa)--Territorial councillor Amarah Soumah is threatened and manhandled by RDA supporters.(26.12) Same day village chief of Sagoma is attacked by a band of RDA militants, his house is destroyed, as well as that of his secretary.

January-February 1955: Boké--RDA demonstrations at meeting of Diawadouists. A Commandant de Cercle and an inspector are assailed with rocks, the latter wounded in the face. Aggression against canton chief and RDA opponents. Reinforcements of district security forces sent.(28.1)

Conakry--French Union Assemblyman, Karim Bangoura, announced in a private meeting that his party (BAG) would respond to RDA violence blow for blow. That evening clashes between RDA and BAG. Several arrests.(30.1) Following night, RDA militants attack and pillage the home of the Chef de quartier of Corinthie, who fired several gun shots. Other acts of aggression committed against 3 Diawadouists. Victims: 1 Fulani killed, 44 wounded of which 7 hospitalised. Security forces stoned by the crowds.

Following day, 2 brawls break out in the city, one in front of the Commissioner's office where demonstrators demanded the release of prisoners, the second involving the torching of a house. 25 arrests.(1.2)

The next night, in the suburb of Coléah, 1 dwelling and 4 market stalls owned by Fulani are burned. Political parties appeal for calm.(2.2)

Coyah (Dubréka)--demonstration with stoning, 5 homes of Diawadou supporters are attacked, 2 burned. Attacks conducted with the use of a bugle and whistle.(3.2)

Following night at Manéah, near Coyah, a compound of a Diawadouist burned. Police intervention, arrests.(4.2)  
The next few nights incidents involving the setting afire of cars and trucks of Diawadouists.

Banbaya (Dubréka)--On 8 February the canton chief is molested, beaten, pulled off of his horse, his gun taken from him. The next day 2 squads of police, arriving to execute warrants to arrest RDA militants, are attacked by several hundred demonstrators armed with guns, knives and sling-shots. During the ensuing scuffle, the chief uses his sabre. Victims: 9 wounded policemen, of which 2 seriously; approximately 20 wounded RDA, 8 seriously. One woman lost her unborn child and died one week later from her injuries.

Bakao and Colia (Boffa)--A trader and a canton chief are attacked and beaten by RDA elements. One compound pillaged and another incinerated.(16.2) Police make 13 arrests, and later use batons and grenades to break up a mob of several hundred demonstrators encircling the prison demanding the release of those detained.(19.2)

President and Secretary of the RDA section at Boffa, who had given written instructions capable of disrupting the peace, are arrested.(22.2)

## Negotiations and Appeal for Calm

Ouëzzin Coulibaly, Ivorian senator and Political Secretary of the RDA, arrived in Conakry on 15 February to serve as intermediary in negotiations between Sékou Touré and Governor Parisot. In spite of a rather ambiguous communiqué published in the PDG newspaper *La Liberté*, Coulibaly wrote, signed, and had Touré countersign a set of "instructions" to party officials clarifying points of RDA principles and doctrine.<sup>49</sup> Coulibaly's circular reminded the PDG sub-sections that the RDA was an interterritorial movement, with a discipline and orientation determined by its Coordinating Committee, to which the territorial sections owed strict allegiance and obedience. Secondly, the RDA "is a party in the government," nationally recognised and represented in parliament. Thirdly, Coulibaly stressed that the RDA membership card in no way rendered its holder above the law, and taxes must be paid even to chiefs of opposing political parties. Finally, and explicitly, "the RDA prohibits all demonstrations of a fascist nature, such as the creation of shock troops, so-called commissioners, and police publicly brandishing arm-badges and stripes."

A second communiqué, signed by Touré and members of the PDG executive,<sup>50</sup> followed on 18 February. While denying any responsibility for the recent incidents, the circular denounced the instigators of violence and reiterated that the "RDA will not tolerate any subversive activity." Professing loyalty to the RDA Coordinating Committee, the PDG

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"Instructions aux responsables du PDG," signed by Ouëzzin Coulibaly and reproduced in Annex 3 of Pruvost report.

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"Communiqué du Bureau du PDG," 18 February 1955, reprinted in Annex 4 of Pruvost report.

directorate vowed:

to defend the interests of the country within the framework of legality, in sincere cooperation with the public authorities and all men of good will in the private sector who are concerned about economic development and the evolution of African society within the French Union.

Negotiations between the RDA and the government included discussions of the economic future of Guinea, an issue of prime consideration to Touré. In fact the acknowledgement that public disturbances threatened the rapid development of the territory was the stated reason behind the appeal for calm. Ultimately the PDG circular ordered strict discipline among party ranks, and maintained that only the PDG executive had the authority to formulate written or oral instructions to party sub-sections. Five thousand of these orders were distributed, and it was reported that subsequently total calm was restored in Guinea.

Parisot sent instructions out to his subordinates as well, announcing the arrival of RDA representatives to redress the situation on the local level. The Governor, who believed that the major factor behind the incidents was the widespread belief that the possession of an RDA membership card exempted its holder from administrative legality, reported that he had received formal assurance that the "mentality of the masses" would be corrected without delay.<sup>51</sup> In this endeavour Parisot instructed his administrators to help the RDA as much as possible, however "without making it seem vis à vis the RDA, or vis à vis the population, that we are sharing the use of public power."

For some time now the personal power wielded by Touré was a thorn

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51

Governor Guinea, "Note d'orientation politique," No. 23/CAB, 25 February 1955, reprinted in Customs report, pp. 35-8.

in the side of the administration. In Guinea the RDA symbol, the elephant or "sily" (in Soussou language), became synonymous with Touré himself. Rice in Conakry was called "riz Sékou Touré" or simply "sily," and was available to those who asked for it by name, presenting their RDA membership card.<sup>52</sup> Another of Touré's nicknames was "Governor" of Conakry, as he was referred to in song and popular slogans.

Touré's ascendance to the position of Governor in the eyes of his followers stemmed from the visit of French Overseas Minister Buron to Guinea in October 1954. As acknowledged by Governor Parisot:

During the trip made by the French Overseas Minister, Sékou Touré submitted the proof that he was able to mobilise the quasi-totality of the urban centers according to his will.  
(53)

Buron was met by a giant reception sponsored by the PDG, whose members directed traffic and organised the parade. Demonstrators carried signs reading "Vive le Ministre" on one side and "Vive le RDA" on the other. PDG women, wearing dresses embroidered with the sily, sang songs proclaiming that the Minister was handing Guinea over to Touré.

Surely the RDA display of coordination and leadership had an impact on the visiting dignitary, who reportedly gave up his seat to Touré at a reception held in the Governor's palace.<sup>54</sup> Stories such as this, and the fact that Touré accompanied Buron on his tour of Guinea, fueled PDG propaganda that the Minister had conferred the governing of the territory to the PDG leader.

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52

ANSOM AP 2143/5, Governor Guinea to High-Commissioner ACF, No. 320/APAS, Conakry, 7 August 1954.

53

Governor Guinea to High-Commissioner ACF, No. 79/CAB, Conakry, 12 February 1955, Annex 5 in Pruvost report.

54

R. Schachter Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, p. 242.

In official correspondence between the Overseas Minister and the High-Commissioner, it is clear that both men favoured a policy of working with Touré rather than against him. In a letter dated 4 April 1955, Buron approved the following policy submitted by Cornut-Gentille concerning the course of action in Guinea following the incidents:

Practice with patience and firmness the policy of rapprochement between the leaders of diverse tendencies; appease instead of agitate...wisdom dictates to try to use the forces one considers harmful in order to prevent them from causing harm. (55)

#### The RDA Coordinating Committee meets in Conakry

The RDA Coordinating Committee had not officially convened since 1948. With the mixed feelings surrounding the désapparement from the PCF in 1950 and the d'Arboussier split in 1952, a formal RDA congress and Coordinating Committee meeting had been repeatedly postponed. Finally the leadership felt secure enough to call the central organ of the RDA together to solidify ties as well as weed out the remaining minimal dissension in the movement.

The choice of Conakry as the meeting place was deliberate on several accounts. First of all the RDA section in Guinea was influential in size and impact in federal activities. Moreover it was evident that since 1954 the growth of the RDA-PDG "was due, to a certain extent, more to the particular personality of Sékou Touré than to the influence of the party itself."<sup>56</sup> It was in the interest of the interterritorial RDA

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ANSOM AP 2143/9, Letter Minister FOM to High-Commissioner AOF, No. 372, Paris, 4 April 1955.

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ANSOM AP 2154/3, Letter High-Commissioner AOF to Minister FOM, No. 493, Dakar, 3 February 1955.

that the Guinean section be kept to the party line. Secondly despite the great strength of the RDA in Guinea, the party still suffered from administrative hostility and surprisingly was yet to have any elected representatives in the French government. Committee members wanted the meeting to take place in Conakry in order to display RDA support of its problematic section, as well as work towards bettering its relations with the French territorial government. Thirdly Houphouët and his RDA subordinates were anxiously waiting for Touré to make several public announcements, and it was agreed that the Coordinating Committee meeting in Conakry would be the appropriate time and place.

The meeting was initially scheduled to take place beginning 22 February 1955, but violent incidents in Conakry led to its postponement until July. The French government agreed to allow the meeting to be held in Conakry only after promises had been made concerning Touré's intentions. Houphouët and Gabriel Lisette persuaded the Overseas Minister that Touré, in front of his own people, would reaffirm his party's allegiance to RDA orientation and doctrine as well as to the movement's central leadership. Moreover Touré was expected to pledge PDG willingness to cooperate with the French administration and the traditional chieftaincy in the economic and social development of Guinea. Most importantly it was anticipated that Touré would finally publicly recognise the total split between the RDA and the Communist Party, and announce the creation of an African trade union movement, independent of the metropolitan CGT and the greater Fédération Syndicale Mondiale. A move long awaited by the French officials, severing ties with the CGT and FSM signalled the end of Communist influence over RDA members, and

heightened prospects of improved relations with union-oriented Touré and the PDG.

At this point Touré's main aspiration was to prove himself the undisputed political leader in Guinea by gaining a seat in the French parliament. Through violence, repression, and martyrdom Touré obtained popularity among his people, but was treated with unwavering hostility and suspicion by the local French authorities. It was Houphouët who once again brought Touré back into the fold. Touré was reminded that early incidents and repression in the Ivory Coast paved the way for cooperation, peace, and prosperity in the territory, greatly benefiting the RDA. It seems that this time Touré was convinced of the utility of cooperation versus resistance, and unity of action on political and economic fronts towards progressive reform in the West African Federation.

In May 1955 a preparatory conference was held in Dakar to set the agenda for the forthcoming RDA Coordinating Committee meeting, scheduled to begin 8 July in Conakry. Touré used this occasion to outline and discuss the situation facing Guinea and possible measures to relieve the underlying tension. In a subsequent letter addressed to Houphouët, Touré<sup>57</sup> reiterated his main points and concerns. According to the PDG leader, he and his party willingly accepted and followed the 1950 move of désappariement from the PCF. Touré explained that the PDG--basically a party of workers that grew out of a trade union base, and greatly aided by the youth and women's movements--was suffering from interference by

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57

ANSOM AP 2143/9, Letter Sékou Touré to Félix Houphouët-Boigny, Dakar, 20 May 1955.

the administration in political affairs, including its support of rival ethnic groups provoking violent incidents in the territory. Claiming that the PDG influenced more than half of the population, Touré repeatedly complained that the party was not represented in the existing municipal councils, nor the French government, and in fact he himself was the only PDG member serving in the Territorial Assembly. Touré committed himself to cooperation with the authorities, as long as the following conditions were met:

- 1) Administrative neutrality in elections;
- 2) Consultation of party leaders for opinions regarding potential projects concerning the territory; and
- 3) An end to deliberate transfers of political activists and unlawful imprisonment of citizens due to their political affiliations.

In conclusion, Touré summarised his position accordingly:

If I reach an understanding on these issues, my efforts in the triple plan, syndical, economic, and political, will gain quicker results, and rapidly lead to the installation in Guinea of a new atmosphere of mutual understanding and constructive action. (58)

To this end, Touré was again asking Houphouët to intervene on his behalf to the higher authorities in an effort to convince them of his sincerity and loyalty to the RDA and the Federation.

Twenty-nine delegates from six West African territories participated in the RDA Coordinating Committee meeting held in Conakry, 8-11 July 1955. In his opening remarks Touré upheld his <sup>part of the</sup> bargain by stating that the PDG held total confidence in the Coordinating Committee, and had broken all relations with the Communist Party. The close of Touré's speech was remarkably reformed in nature--"Vive le RDA! Vive l'Union

Française! Vive la France!" In fact one of the outstanding characteristics of the speeches and sentiment put forth by the Committee was a deep loyalty to France and the French Union. In his "Rapport Moral et d'Orientation," Houphouët thus stressed the bond between France and her overseas territories:

Our ardent wish is that French families understand that the RDA has turned toward the entire French people with the desire to build with them a durable community where inevitable family quarrels will not harm the loyalty, confidence, nor the willingness to live together. (60)

Moreover the 1949 RDA congress was labelled an aberration, and the principles of the founding Bamako congress of 1946 were reaffirmed. The goal of the RDA was again defined as:

The creation of a mass movement which is both the expression of the masses and the masses themselves, not an avant-garde political party, but uniting all social classes to lead to the emancipation of the African territories within the framework of the French Union by affirmation of their individual political, economic, social and cultural characteristics. (61)

Resolutions were adopted in the following areas: political, economic, social, organisation, the press, and anciens combattants. Two parties which had refused to follow the 1950 shift in orientation, the UDS of Senegal and the UPC of Cameroun, were excluded from the RDA. The general resolution emerging from the Committee called for

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CRDA 3.55/br.1, Sékou Touré, "Allocation d'Ouverture," RDA Coordinating Committee meeting, Conakry, 8 July 1955.

60

CRDA 3.55/br.1, Félix Houphouët-Boigny, "Rapport Moral et d'Orientation," RDA Coordinating Committee meeting, Conakry, 8-11 July 1955.

61

Ibid.

62

The UDS stood for the Union Démocratique Sénégalaise, and the UPC was the Union des Populations Camerounaises led by Um Nyobe. The UDN (Union Démocratique Nigérienne) of Bakary Djibo was also denied recognition as it was a splinter group from the formal Nigerien RDA Section the PPN (Parti Progressiste Nigerien).

universal suffrage and an end to the double-college electoral system, a federal orientation regarding West Africa, and true cooperation between Europeans and Africans.

Touré's moves towards breaking the alliance between the West African trade union movement and the French CGT and World Federation (FSM) were discussed in a private session of the Coordinating Committee.<sup>63</sup> In his closing remarks, however, Houphouët spoke about Touré's explanation of the problem and of the PDG leader's personal persecution due to his activities in a Communist-affiliated trade union. Houphouët then gave the following tribute to Touré, while proclaiming the advent of a new era of African trade unionism:

Union leader, having the total confidence of West African workers, he could not, just because the CGT is affiliated to a paracomunist organisation, abandon his responsibilities. He was fought against like a Communist, and even today this weighs against him. But we know the value of actions led by Sékou Touré to benefit African workers and masses, and further benefits will soon be revealed. The dawn of the truth is already on the horizon, and I, in the name of the RDA, thank him. (64)

Thus the Coordinating Committee in Conakry accomplished all it had set out to do, and the RDA was again strong in unity and refreshed in its commitments, goals, orientation, and purpose.

Coincidentally, Governor Parisot, who previously referred to Touré as his "archenemy," was replaced by Henri Bonfils on 12 July 1955. Henceforth the road appeared open for the paving of smoother relations between the PDG and the administration.

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63

G. Martens, "Le syndicalisme en Afrique occidentale," part II, p. 58; and R. Schacter Morgenthau, Political Parties, p. 241.

64

CRDA 3.55/br.1, Félix Houphouët-Boigny, "Allocution de Clôture," RDA Coordinating Committee meeting, Conakry, 11 July 1955.

## Rival Congresses in Conakry

By the end of 1955 there were three main political parties operating in Guinea, namely the RDA-PDG, BAG, and DSG. Following the RDA Coordinating Committee meeting in Conakry in July, the rival parties each held respective congresses, the BAG in August and the DSG in November 1955.

Although deputy Barry Diawadou and French Union assemblyman Karim Bangoura had been largely responsible for the formation of the BAG in late 1954, these men were later eclipsed as Koumandian Keita became the acting President of the party. Secretary-General of the union of primary school teachers and bitter enemy of fellow tribesman Sékou Touré, Keita organised the first BAG congress, held in Conakry from 4-7 August 1955.

Despite the little interest the masses had thus far shown in the party, the one hundred or so congress delegates included a fair number of elected politicians, such as: senator Fodé Touré, former French Union assemblyman Momo Touré, one member of the Grand Council in Dakar, and ten territorial assemblymen (most notably Amara Soumah and Assembly President Framoi Béréte<sup>65</sup>). Announcing its affiliation to the Radical Socialist (Edgar Faure) party in France, the BAG proclaimed its "solemn attachment to a single, indivisible Republic," and denounced the federalist orientation adopted by its major political opponent. Among the political resolutions passed by the congress were the following:

The BAG:

- 1) Is against Communism and all forces of totalitarianism;
- 2) Condemns all trade union activity which takes orders from foreign countries;

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Barry Diawadou was absent at the congress, being excused for having business in Paris to attend to. ANSOM AP 2143/7, Report of the BAG Congress from the High-Commissioner AOF to Minister FCM, No. 2466, Dakar, 23 August 1955.

- 3) Underlines the necessity of maintaining traditional structures but recognises that chiefs must adapt to modern times;
- 4) Is for reforming the French West African government into a coordinating and managerial body;
- 5) Is for decentralisation of the administration, with more powers to the Territorial Assemblies; and
- 6) Demands absolute administrative neutrality in future elections. (66)

Clearly the BAG relied on the conservative chieftaincy as its major source of support, and secondly the young educated "jeune elite"--<sup>67</sup> teachers, doctors, clerks, and government employees. As the political successor of Yacine Diallo, Diawadou and his party also received the unofficial backing of the local French administration.

Barry Ibrahima (known as Barry III), leader of the DSG, sought support for his party in his native Fouta region, while at the same time holding a defiant stand against the chieftaincy.<sup>68</sup> Party propaganda was targeted at the Guinean elite--the upcoming class of administrative functionaries, small businessmen, traders, and artisans.<sup>69</sup> Although affiliated to the metropolitan SFIO, the DSG remained weak in number and influence in the Fouta as well as elsewhere in Guinea. At one point, however, it seemed as though the DSG might join ranks with the PDG. Members of the PDG were present at the first congress of the DSG held in a suburb of Conakry from 20-22 November 1955. Although the platforms of the two parties were similar regarding federalism, administrative

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Ibid., Annex 4, "Résolutions Politiques."

67

Jean-François Bayart uses the term cadets sociaux, see his recent L'Etat en Afrique, France, 1989, pp. 174-179.

68

ANS 2G 55(152), "Rapport Politique pour l'Année 1955," Guinea, No. 281/APA, p. 22.

69

Victor D. DuBois, "The Independence Movement in Guinea; A Study in African Nationalism," PhD thesis, Princeton, 1962, p. 96.

chiefs, and proposed governmental reforms, the predominant leadership of uneducated Touré proved unacceptable to university graduate Barry III. Barry III was nicknamed "Silyoré," or little elephant, by PDG women of coastal Guinea, while Touré and the RDA were called "Sily". In the end, the violence pursued by the PDG in eliminating its political opponents drove the DSG gradually closer to the BAG until the two parties finally merged in 1958.

### Recurrent Violence

The arrival of Governor Bonfils was met with enthusiasm by the competing political parties, especially the PDG which looked forward to a new era of cooperation with the French administration. For several months a satisfactory calm reigned in the territory, which ended abruptly when Bonfils left Guinea on holiday in September 1955. Secretary-General Marchesseau, acting as interim replacement for the Governor, was soon to be blamed for fomenting violence.

Incidents occurred mainly in the outlying coastal districts, later spreading into the capital city. According to Marchesseau, PDG sections "en brousse" were slow to accept, even hostile toward the new orientation of cooperation adopted by the PDG directorate following the RDA Coordinating Committee meeting in Conakry. Districts hitherto dominated by the RDA were faced with the creation of BAG sections and found the public criticism of the PDG by BAG spokesmen intolerable. When clashes erupted and the BAG propagandists sought shelter from the district police, the PDG activists accused the administration of

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ANSCM AP 2148/4, Report written by Secretary-General Marchesseau to the Governor concerning the incidents of September/October 1955 and administrative relations with the RDA, p. 22.

supporting the opposition. Furthermore, as the vast majority of individuals arrested in connection with the violence were PDG members, the party charged the administration with continued persecution and injustice.

Latent hostility erupted first in Coyah (Dubréka district) on 11 September 1955. Two weeks of considerable violence consumed Dubréka and the neighbouring district of Forécariah. The PDG directorate, seemingly unable to control the situation, sought instead to cast blame on the administration and the BAG. Speaking to a crowd of 300 PDG supporters in Conakry on 29 September, Touré first of all denounced the administration for pursuing an anti-RDA campaign, despite PDG efforts at cooperation and reconciliation.<sup>71</sup> Secondly Touré supplied supposed proof of administrative collusion with the BAG--the example given was when the BAG announced the judicial decision (consisting of a fine) of a defamation of character suit filed by Fodé Mamadou Touré against Sékou Touré, before the case was officially closed. Thirdly Touré claimed that the administrative policy of transferring politically active RDA members had been reinstated, and that a number of critical PDG section leaders had been ordered to leave their districts. Finally, pointing to the coincidence that the transfers as well as the incidents began after the departure of Governor Bonfils, Touré accused Marchesseau of not only collaborating with the BAG, but also of taking orders from former Governor Parisot. As a result of this scathing attack on the administration and its cohorts the BAG, incidents in Conakry multiplied, occurring now on a daily basis. The following is a brief summary of the incidents

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71

Excerpts of Touré's speech cited in *ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

which took place in Guinea between 11 September and 7 October 1955:

11 September: Coyah (Dubréka district)--Clashes between RDA and BAG following a BAG meeting presided by Karim Bangoura.

14 September: Kéninké Lory (Dubréka)--After verbal provocation, RDA members later attacked 3 BAG activists, burning their compounds.

19 September: Various incidents in 3 villages in Forécariah district involving BAG members being attacked and 2 compounds torched.

23 September: Forécariah--BAG propaganda tour including 8 party leaders and Fodé Mamadou Touré led to skirmishes with RDA women. BAG cars were stoned and party members sought police protection.

28 September: Forécariah--Canton chief of Madiné is taken by force from his home by armed RDA men. Crowd of 300 people stoned, ransacked and burnt his dwelling. Members of his family were wounded, one seriously. 8 RDA arrested, including President and Vice-President of RDA Madiné section. Rocks used for the stoning were transported from a quarry 5 kilometers outside of Madiné, therefore the attack on the chief was deemed premeditated by the RDA.

Night 1-2 October: Conakry--RDA "commandos," approximately 20 young men, damaged a number of buildings, among which the homes of territorial assemblyman Amarah Soumah, senator Fodé Mamadou Touré, and the police barracks. Police were unable to catch vandals who were transported by car. Several other homes belonging to village and suburban (chefs de quartier) chiefs were attacked. 30 arrests, 15 remanded in custody.

2 October: Conakry--RDA activist Fodé Youssouf, already given 4 months suspended sentence and 3,000 franc fine for the Coyah incidents of 11 September, led a group of RDA militants to attack approximately 30 BAG members leaving a private meeting. Several serious injuries. BAG members sought refuge at the police headquarters, 2 squads of security police were called in and used tear gas to disperse the crowd of 300 or so who were using sling-shots and surrounding the station. While the police were blocked in the station, other RDA destroyed the house of another BAG notable, Kabelé Camara, wounding 2 women and killing a youth related to him.

3 October: Police broke up several violent demonstrations in Conakry, involving one death, one seriously wounded and several minor injuries to BAG members. Thirty-six demonstrators were slightly wounded by the police, and 22 policemen injured, 8 serious enough to be temporarily taken off the force.

4 October: Conakry--BAG leader and clerk to senator Fodé Touré, Baba Camara, was attacked and seriously wounded at his office. Numerous files disappeared or were destroyed, including a rumoured dossier of the illegal actions of the Secretary-General of the PDG that was due to be sent to Paris.

Same day PDG member Camara Bengaly received a head wound from a rock as he was getting into his car.

5 October: Conakry--8 BAG homes pillaged, Governmental decree banning all political meetings in Lower Guinea.

6 October: Conakry--Village of Kapora (majority BAG) was approached by a band of RDA, clash ended with RDA withdrawal. Several wounded RDA men wearing white armbands--reportedly new insignias for the "shock troops" of the party--were left behind and turned over to the police. Security reinforcements requested from Dakar, 2 squads arrived same evening.

7 October: Minor incidents in Conakry involving attacks on BAG individuals and aggression towards police.

As the situation approached anarchy in Conakry, Governor Bonfils was requested to return to Guinea without delay; he arrived in Conakry

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on 8 October. In the Governor's absence the events outside Conakry had resulted in 43 imprisoned RDA members, and 1 BAG who was subsequently released. In one week in Conakry, 30 September-7 October, 87 people were arrested, of which 35 were later prosecuted--34 RDA and 1 BAG. The wounded hospitalised in Conakry amounted to 1 PDG, 32 BAG, 7 policemen, and 16 of unknown political persuasion.

73

Bonfils was instrumental in the return of calm to Guinea. Upon his arrival the Governor met with PDG and BAG leaders, who were noticeably distressed from the violent turn of events and the little control they

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Sékou Touré had gone to Dakar on 3 October to give his interpretation of the unfortunate events in Guinea, and to petition the immediate return of Governor Bonfils to Guinea. He wrote several lengthy letters to the High-Commissioner and to the Overseas Minister to this effect. CRDA 9/doss 10, letter Sékou Touré to High-Commissioner AOF, Dakar, 5 October 1955; letter to Minister FOM, Dakar, 6 October 1955.

73

Figures cited in Marchesseau report, pp. 19-20.

held over subsequent vengeful attacks. Both sides placed trust in the neutrality of Bonfils, and peace accords were reached on 14 October. Cooperation with the administration, however, by no means brought any appeasement of ill feelings between the RDA and the BAG. In his summary of negotiations between the rival parties, Bonfils explained the opposing views accordingly:

The RDA keeps repeating its version of the incidents and revels in its persecution complex, contesting any illustration of facts that differs from its own interpretation, including that of the administration.

The BAG transmits its hatred of Sékou Touré in an utterly unrealistic denial of his political existence, accusing the administration of perpetuating the "Sékou Touré myth." (74)

In his report on the September-October incidents, Governor Bonfils offered a detailed analysis of his interpretation of the political situation in Guinea. <sup>75</sup> According to Bonfils the root of the problem plaguing Guinean society could be found in the distinction of class. Ethnicity no longer being a major consideration in political affiliation, the crux of the matter, as Bonfils reckoned, was the division of society into the following opposing groups: bourgeoisie vs. proletariat, haves vs. have-nots, traditional notables vs. peasants, educated elite vs. illiterate masses, etc. More so than a political party, the PDG grew up as a trade union movement with labourers and unionists filling the greater part of its ranks. Touré himself was not a highly-educated man, but a supreme organiser, extremely capable of arousing the masses to protest and united action. The PDG worked for major reforms in economic,

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ANSCOM AP 2143/7, Telegram Governor Guinea to High-Commissioner ACF, unnumbered, 14 October 1955.

75

ANSCOM AP 2143/8, Report Governor Guinea to High-Commissioner ACF, No. 520, Conakry, 22 October 1955.

administrative, and political affairs, with radical aims such as the emancipation of the African working class. By contrast the BAG stood for traditional values of chieftaincy and hierarchical ordering of society, while equally affirming the incorporation of West Africa into the French Republic.

Loyalists of both the PDG and the BAG found criticism of their parties, leaders, and ideals very difficult to tolerate. While initially clashes may have been sparked by political speeches and public insults raging between the rival parties, it seems that before long incidents were breaking out over personal vendettas or arguments that were indeed void of any political concern. Particularly in regards to the PDG, traditional rivalries, revenge, and personal antagonisms got mixed into politics, as local activists believed that the party should come to their defence in all matters, and that they should support fellow members in any struggle against the enemy.

The BAG in most cases fell victim to PDG aggression, however this helped the party to unite its forces and recognise its capacity to defend itself. Furthermore, playing the martyr actually benefited the BAG in gaining additional support from the chieftaincy and the administration. Thus while RDA aggressors were filling the local jails, the BAG was barely touched by the law, receiving police protection often and appearing blameless in the eyes of justice.

Despite numerous arrests, fines, and prison sentences, the PDG also managed to increase its support during this period. Perhaps not the most desirable elements to enlist, angry youths thirsty for action were among those to volunteer as PDG so-called commandos and mob supporters. Moreover, the violence even resulted in several BAG converts, as

Secretary-General Marchesseau reported:

Following the atmosphere of anxiety and insecurity that the commandos made reign in Conakry, police report that numerous new members are joining the RDA, with requests of immediate delivery of membership cards. They seem to be coming from BAG members...The intimidation campaign of the RDA has thus partially succeeded. (76)

As aforementioned, peace accords were agreed upon by both the PDG and BAG shortly after the return of Governor Bonfils to Guinea. As usual, RDA Political Secretary Ouëzzin Coulibaly was present in the negotiations, exercising his authority to compel Touré and the PDG towards quelling unrest in the territory and re-establishing an atmosphere of cooperation with the administration. On 19 October 1955 the PDG directorate issued a circular requesting an end to all hostilities and demanding the respect of the sub-sections regarding the following orders:

- 1) Do not respond to any provocation no matter where from or who against;
- 2) There are matters which have nothing to do with the party. Anyone who provokes personal quarrels will suffer the consequences and the RDA will not take up their defence. The party refuses to assume responsibility for matters which are merely the settling of scores; and
- 3) The peace which we are preaching must be explained and understood on every level, and every militant must prevent and calm any provocation whatsoever. (77)

Although peace was apparently desired by all active participants in the negotiations, the willingness of the rival political parties to seek peaceful coexistence was far from assured. In fact the clinching showdown was just on the horizon. This time however the competition for

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Marchesseau report, p. 16.

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ANSOM AP 2143/9, PDG circular to all sub-sections, No. 64, Conakry, 19 October 1955; Also published in La Liberté, 25 October 1955.

control of the territory would take place at the polling stations rather than in the streets, as the elections to the National Assembly of 2 January 1956 would prove critical to the direction of future political events in Guinea.

## CHAPTER VII

### PDG Supremacy

Having twice refused confidence in the Faure government, the French National Assembly was dissolved in November 1955. New legislative elections were scheduled for 2 January 1956 in France as well as the overseas territories. This was the opportunity long-awaited by Touré and the RDA to demonstrate the mass organisation and appeal of the movement. Furthermore when it appeared that, probably for the first time since 1946, the administration would uphold electoral neutrality, the PDG eagerly welcomed the chance to prove its dominant position in Guinea. To an African political leader, a seat in the French parliament was regarded as the apogee of elected office. Apart from high status, a deputy had access to education, travel, a regular salary, and immunity from colonial and normal processes of French law. Additionally, serving in the French government was of prime importance to an aspiring African politician, because it gave him "a sense of political acceptance in France."<sup>1</sup>

Following triumphant success in the National Assembly elections, Touré proceeded to fulfill his vow to create an independent African labour movement. The year 1956 brought sweeping changes in the overseas territories, not only in trade union activity, but also with the introduction of a wide range of decentralising reforms under the Loi-Cadre. In Guinea the PDG capitalised on every opportunity to increase its

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<sup>1</sup>

R. Schachter Morgenthau, Political Parties, p. 120.

dominance in the territory as well as wipe out its opposition. By March 1957 the party had secured 56 out of 60 seats in the newly elected Territorial Assembly, and subsequently Touré became Vice-President, acting as virtual Prime Minister of Guinea. In just over a year Touré orchestrated the PDG takeover of the territorial government in Guinea; the future of the country lay virtually in the hands of one man.

#### National Assembly Elections, January 1956

The opening of the electoral campaign was heralded by a radio broadcast emanating from the office of the High-Commissioner in Dakar. In his message of 13 December, Cornut-Gentile announced that there was to be an enforced absolute neutrality on the part of the administration in the forthcoming elections.<sup>2</sup> In Guinea, Governor Bonfils echoed the remarks and neutrality orders of the High-Commissioner in his own radio message<sup>3</sup> diffused the following day. The broadcasts were well-received by the various political parties, and generally the masses looked forward to an honest competition that would finally reflect the actual political support in the territories.

In Guinea the focus of the electoral campaign centered on the Fouta Djallon. Accounting for nearly half of the registered voters in the territory, the Fouta districts, when voting in bloc, had previously been the major determinant in electoral outcomes. Recognising that their best chance of success lay in support from their native areas, both the BAG and the DSG concentrated their campaign efforts in Middle Guinea.

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ANS 20G 123, Telegram High-Commissioner AOF to Governors AOF, Nos. 40186-88, Dakar, 12 December 1955.

3

ANS 20G 123, Telegram Governor Guinea to High-Commissioner AOF, No. 515, Conakry, 12 December 1955.

Moreover, financial and technical constraints, as well as admitted weaknesses in the Coastal and Forest regions, contributed to the Fouta-based strategies of the opposition parties. The PDG however was determined to gain a foothold in this region, so critical to elections in Guinea. Leaving the campaign organisation in the other three regions largely in the hands of his subordinates, Touré directed his attention mainly to the Fouta districts, speaking to crowds at local markets, while sending out his propagandists to outlying villages. Aiming the PDG message at the poorer masses (as opposed to the wealthy aristocracy), the party furthered its campaign to denounce the traditional chiefs, portraying itself as the champion of the peasants and workers. This platform proved remarkably successful, as Governor Bonfils noted:

Definitely, the propaganda themes employed by the RDA were received without verbal violence, moreover the criticism formulated against the traditional chieftaincy found a very favourable echo. In this sense the campaign was intelligently led. Otherwise the campaign was intense, utilising considerable means (groups of propagandists, representatives designated in every village, transport vehicles in constant use and in very large numbers) while the activity of the other parties was more discreet. In several districts these latter parties displayed a certain weakness in using their capabilities at hand. (4)

In branching out to nearly every village across the territory, the PDG touched hitherto politically disinterested areas, educating the masses regarding their electoral duty to their homeland, and getting eligible voters to register. Propagandists portrayed the RDA as the "grand liberator" of Africa, responsible for the abolition of forced labour and injustice, and serving as protector of its members and

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ANS 20G 122, Monthly report Guinea, No. 50/APA, December 1955, p. 7.

5

Registered voters in Guinea went from 472,837 to 975,119 for the January 1956 elections.

emancipator of the African people. PDG slogans which were particularly appealing to large audiences included the following:

Your taxes are squandered by the councillors and the administration, which causes them to be higher.

The association with France is like that of a cavalry man and a horse. We've had enough of always being the horse.

Unite and you will be more powerful than the whites.

A white man earns ten times more than a black and it's because they take everything that we have nothing.

Without the RDA, you will be always subjected to forced labour, slavery, and injustice.

The administration supports the chiefs who exploit you.

Struggle therefore to rid yourselves of these parasites.

If the fortune held by the whites and the big businesses were shared among you, you would all be rich and happy. (6)

Apart from the catch-phrases and rabble-rousing speeches delivered to enthusiastic listeners, the PDG official platform was largely synonymous with the political resolution passed at the Coordinating Committee meeting in Conakry five months earlier. The interterritorial RDA called for a federal orientation in Sub-Saharan Africa, deconcentration and decentralisation of governing powers, increased powers to the Territorial Assemblies, Africanisation of public services and economic positions, universal suffrage, and abolition of the double-college electoral system.<sup>7</sup> One slight noteworthy addition to the orthodox RDA platform was the PDG call for "the democratisation of the chieftaincy from the province to the village level."

Included in the BAG election platform were measures supporting the traditional chieftaincy, such as: pressing the vote of the statutes for the customary chiefs introduced by Yacine Diallo in 1948 (hence long debated but never passed in the National Assembly), improvement of the situation of village chiefs by the granting of a unique statute, and the

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ANS 2G 55, Annual report Guinea, No. 281/APA, 1955, p. 19.

7

La Liberté, No. 2115, 20 December 1955.

creation of a corps of secretaries and representatives of canton  
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chiefs. To sum up their position regarding the French administration,  
the BAG professed:

We are those who believe that the French Union is now more than ever a necessity for the Metropole as well as for the overseas territories. It is perfectly viable under the conditions that Frenchmen and Africans grant each other reciprocal confidence for a truer cooperation. (9)

Both the PDG and the BAG were selective in choosing complementary candidates for their electoral lists. Naturally Touré headed the list submitted by the PDG, and after Barry III of the DSG refused the invitation (preferring to run on a separate SFIO ticket), was seconded by a Fulani named Diallo Saifoulaye. Serving as Political Secretary of the PDG, Saifoulaye had been a Ponty major and an early active member of both the RDA and the Communist study groups (GECs) in Guinea, before being summarily transferred to Soudan and Niger. Son of Alpha Bocar Diallo, dean of the canton chiefs in the Fouta Djalon, it was hoped that Saifoulaye could muster some support for the PDG in his home region. Exploiting the fact that the name Saifoulaye, signifying "the sword of God," figures in a Koranic tale, the PDG also incorporated Islam into its political appeal. The BAG put forth two former deputies, Barry Diawadou as its first candidate, followed by Mamba Sano. Historically Sano enjoyed strong backing from the people in his native Forest region, who the BAG hoped would follow him to the polls on 2 January.

Despite the intense activity in preparation of the electoral campaign, for the most part the atmosphere remained remarkably calm. Only minor incidents were recorded across the territory, none involving

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CRDA AP, BAG election advertisement.

9

Ibid.

serious injuries or requiring more than local police intervention to  
restore order.<sup>10</sup> Likewise election day was reportedly peaceful, as the  
PDG had effectively organised and instructed its many supporters in  
procedure and format. The abstention rate in the territory reached  
nearly 58 per cent, which in fact was not extraordinary, as previous  
legislative elections of 1951 and 1954 registered 56 per cent and 52  
per cent respectively. Abstention rates varied significantly from region  
to region; however, the Fouta rate of 42 per cent marked a considerable  
increase over past records, while the Coastal region, mobilised by the  
PDG, registered the lowest rate of 26 per cent.

The success of the PDG in the legislative elections held on 2  
January 1956 in Guinea largely surpassed administrative expectations. In  
the forecasts submitted by the Commandants de Cercle and tallied by  
Governor Bonfils, it was estimated that two seats would go to Barry  
Diawadou and Mamba Sano on the BAG list, followed by one seat allocated  
to Sékou Touré of the RDA.<sup>11</sup> In reality the RDA carried the vote in 17  
out of the 20 districts in the territory, accounting for 61 per cent of  
the total votes cast. As a result, Touré and his second Saifoulaye were  
duly elected to the National Assembly, as well as Diawadou as a distant  
third.

As shown in Table 4, on the one hand the RDA outstripped the  
Governor's forecasts in all four regions in Guinea. On the other hand  
the BAG fell far short of administrative expectations throughout the

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<sup>10</sup>

ANS 20G 122, Monthly report Guinea, No.50/APA, December 1955, p.  
10.

<sup>11</sup>

ANSOM AP 2185/3, Governor's forecasts for National Assembly  
elections, 2 January 1956 in Guinea.

territory, totalling a mere 26 per cent of the votes cast. The DSG came in nearly as anticipated, taking 10 per cent of the overall tally. The real surprise came in the results registered in Middle Guinea (Fouta region). Apart from Dalaba where the vote was split three ways allowing the DSG to prevail, the RDA lost only Mamou by a small margin and Pita to the BAG (see Table 5). Overall the BAG won only half the votes expected of it, and the RDA proved shockingly victorious in the region.

Table 4: National Assembly Elections in Guinea, 2 January 1956.

Region	Forecast	Results	Forecast	Results	Forecast	Results
		RDA	BAG		DSG	
Coastal Guinea	78,000	124,227	21,500	13,611	7,300	3,036
Fouta Djalón	65,900	107,192	183,200	94,214	45,100	49,326
Upper Guinea	31,370	55,942	28,275	12,348	3,105	1,484
Forest	41,000	59,928	59,000	26,585	200	1,507
Total	216,270	347,289	291,975	146,758	55,705	55,353

Table 5: National Assembly Elections in Guinea, 2 January 1956:  
Fouta Djalón Region.

District	Forecast	Results	Forecast	Results	Forecast	Results
		RDA	BAG		DSG	
Mamou	3,000	8,076	13,800	8,899	5,000	4,447
Dalaba	7,000	10,057	21,000	7,454	3,000	11,147
Dabola	14,900	24,164	19,700	6,842	5,600	3,136
Pita	6,000	9,966	37,000	27,616	14,500	15,727
Labé	23,000	38,878	66,700	32,333	16,000	14,036
Gaoul	12,000	16,051	25,000	11,000	1,000	853
Total	65,900	107,192	183,200	94,214	45,100	49,326

Sources: ANSQM AP 2183/3, "Elections Legislatives, 2 Janvier 1956;"  
ANS 20G 122, "Elections à l'A.N., 2 Janvier 1956," Guinea.

Several days following the vote, Governor Bonfils submitted a report to the High-Commissioner in order to apologize for the gross margin of error in his forecasts, as he attempted to explain:

...why and how no one, not even among those who in principle live in contact with the population--some for more than 15 years--was able or knew how to look behind the veil which the vote of 2 January uncovered, suddenly making Guinea seem different than what had previously been believed. (12)

Bonfils believed that the election results attested to the "grave malaise" which had characterised Guinea since the partial election to the National Assembly in 1954. The strength of the RDA, he argued, was not a recent phenomenon, and the current situation corresponded more justly to the real state of political affairs in Guinea. Attributing the success of the RDA in the Fouta largely to the choice of Saifoulaye as the running-mate of Touré, Bonfils wrote:

Today the proof is given that the Fulani bastion is well won over by the RDA, and that the urban centers were not the only ones open to its actions. (13)

Bonfils concluded his report by noting a significant positive outcome of the January elections:

In conclusion, undoubtedly it has been a long time since the position of the administration has been as strong in Guinea as it is at this moment. Cleared of suspicious manoeuvrings, it proved its objectivity and willingness to respect the rules of the game. (14)

Outside of Senegal, the RDA was equally triumphant in the West African Federation, electing nine deputies to the National Assembly. The RDA thus became the largest African party, making up over half of the

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ANSOM AP 2185/3, Report Governor Guinea to High-Commissioner AOF, No. 6, 6 January 1956, p. 1.

13

Ibid., p. 2.

14

Ibid., p. 9.

UDSR group, whose name was consequently changed to UDSR-RDA. The RDA representatives in the French parliament were the following: those from the previous assembly--Félix Houphouët-Boigny (Ivory Coast), Mamadou Konaté (Soudan), Félix Tchicaya (Moyen-Congo); three who had sat in the 1946 assembly but failed to be re-elected in 1951--Ouëzzin Coulibaly (Ivory Coast), Hamani Diori (Niger), and Gabriel Lisette (Tchad); and three newcomers--Sékou Touré and Diallo Saifoulaye (Guinea), and Modibo Keita (Soudan). Furthermore Houphouët was appointed Ministre-délégué in the office of the new Socialist Prime Minister Guy Mollet, the first African to be awarded a French cabinet position, while Konaté became the Vice-President of the National Assembly. A grand patron of the RDA, Mamadou Konaté died in May 1956 and was subsequently replaced by Bocoum Baréma (RDA) in the National Assembly; the Vice-Presidency of the Assembly went to his Soudanese political successor Modibo Keita. Meanwhile the IOM, which was an independent group in 1955 due to its size of 14 members in parliament, had only seven re-elected, and was therefore obliged to affiliate formally with the MRP. At this time the RDA and IOM again contemplated uniting forces, however negotiations later broke off over disagreements concerning impending reforms.

#### **Trade Union Autonomy**

Riding high on RDA success in the January elections, the time was finally deemed appropriate for the creation of an African trade union movement, independent of foreign affiliation and domination. Touré had called for such an organisation at the RDA Coordinating Committee meeting in Conakry in July 1955, and had been encouraged both by the African labourers and the French administration to follow through with his plan. In actual fact it was in Senegal that the first steps were

taken toward trade union autonomy, when in November 1955, with Touré's blessing, the CGT unions of Senegal-Mauritania opted to create an independent Confédération Générale des Travailleurs Africains (CGTA);<sup>15</sup> provisional directors were Bassirou Guèye and Séydou Diallo. After his election as deputy in January and his expulsion from the AOF section of the CGT in February for refusing to accept orders from Paris, Touré set<sup>16</sup> out to organise the CGTA on the federal level.

The CGTA was envisioned as an African centrale, without formal affiliation to, but rather on par with, the CGT and the Fédération Syndicale Mondiale (FSM). Historically African unionists rejected certain CGT themes as inapplicable to the TOM, such as the Communist notion of class struggle, and the opposition to nationalist aspirations. Moreover, while pledging loyalty to the creation of a genuine French-African community, the CGTA hoped to broaden its horizons by encouraging foreign investment in Africa in the pursuit of rapid economic development.

The CGTA section in Guinea was officially constituted in April 1956. In a speech in Conakry before more than 1,000 trade unionists, Touré paralleled RDA history with that of the West African branch of the CGT. Reiterating the theme of debilitating consequences due to Communist affiliation, Touré explained the problems associated with PCF tutelage of the RDA:

We quickly realised that the "whites" directing this party dictated our line of action, gave us instructions, and wanted to force us to do things contrary to the better

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G. Martens, "Le syndicalisme en Afrique occidentale d'expression française," part II, p. 59.

16

Ibid., p. 60.

interests of Africa. Consequently we broke totally with the Communist Party. (17)

Continuing in this vein, Touré concluded:

In breaking with the CGT we wanted to rid ourselves of the last ties of allegiance with the Communist Party. (18)

In his quest for total adherence to the local CGTA, Touré announced that so far 22 out of the 27 trade unions in Guinea were in favour of joining the movement, adding that "those who wish to oppose it will be swept away by the masses."<sup>19</sup> Some opposition was aired concerning the decision for autonomy, particularly by Touré's political and union rivals, as well as Guinean students in France who labelled Touré's actions as "the paying of his debt after his election."<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless the CGTA quickly gained a strong foothold in Guinea and in Senegal, its success generating further moves toward autonomy as well as calling for unification of the various unions into a single African movement.

In turn the Christian CFTC decided likewise to become independent. Under the chairmanship of David Soumah, the CFTC transformed itself into the Confédération Africaine des Travailleurs Croissants (CATC) at its congress held in Ouagadougou in July 1956. The replacement of the word Chrétiens meaning Christians with Croissants (believers) was purposeful-- it was intended to open its membership to labourers of all faiths.

Not all the CGT members followed Touré in the motion to split and form the CGTA. Abdoulaye Diallo, leader of the CGT unions in the Soudan,

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ANS 17G 271, "Renseignements," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 78L/258, 29 April 1956.

18

Ibid.

19

Ibid.

20

ANS 2G 56, Monthly report Guinea, No. 185/APA, March 1956, p. 6.

Vice-President of the FSM, and personal foe of Touré, headed a faction that retained ties to the metropolitan CGT. After six months of waging a losing battle, however, Diallo eventually capitulated, conceding to the principle of autonomy, and the CGTA and CGT jointly called for a conference in Cotonou in order to unite all organised labourers in French West Africa. In December 1956 the CATC echoed the appeals for trade union unity.

A preparatory meeting for the Cotonou conference was held in Dakar, where CGT members formally announced their independence from the central French body, but the Force Ouvrière refused to renounce its allegiance to the SFIO. The actual conference took place in Cotonou, 16-19 January 1957, with the stated goal:

to unite and organise the workers of Black Africa, coordinate their trade union activities in the struggle against the colonial regime and all other forms of exploitation, to defend their moral and material interests, and to affirm the personality of African trade unionism. (21)

Furthermore the conference objected to "imperialist wars" and announced its support of the independence movements in Algeria and Cameroon. Adopting a federal approach concerning African development, the delegates denounced recent reforms diminishing the powers of the Grand Council in Dakar.

The outcome of the Cotonou conference was the formation of the Union Générale des Travailleurs de l'Afrique Noire (UGTAN). The dominant figure in the movement and indeed the conference was Touré. Abdoulaye Diallo was nominated to handle UGTAN's external relations. Animated by David Soumah, the CATC distrusted Communist jargon pronounced at

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G. Martens, "Le syndicalisme en Afrique occidentale d'expression française," part II, pp. 85-6.

Cotonou, as well as the influence of former CGT members (such as Diallo) in the new organisation, and therefore seceded from UGTAN shortly after its creation.

Personal motives and long term plans for African development aside, it certainly seems plausible that Touré's decision to break away from the CGT in April 1956 was hastened both by his increasingly prominent position in the RDA, and his recent election to the National Assembly. The French administration, as well as Houphouët, believed that such a split would end local Communist influence and enhance cooperation with the established authorities. In building an autonomous African union movement, however, Touré found it essential to co-opt the former CGT militants and use these experienced activists in the new organisation. Thus while Houphouët envisioned that such a move would rid Touré of his Communist stigma and help in keeping him "in line," in fact Touré wound up leading a powerful movement that propelled his ideas even further than he could have then anticipated. Again Touré would struggle between dual allegiances, his personal views--carried by the labour movement--not always correlating with those of Houphouët and the veteran RDA.

#### **The Loi-Cadre**

In the cabinet of Prime Minister Mollet, fellow Socialist Gaston Deferre was appointed Overseas Minister. Apart from increasing African demands of more territorial autonomy, large-scale bloodshed in Algeria had convinced Deferre that major decentralising reform was needed in the overseas territories to avoid similiar disaster in sub-Saharan Africa. Revision of French policy was directed into two channels. First, decentralization, transferring some authority from Paris and Dakar to African governing bodies. Secondly, deconcentration, transferring

authority from Paris to French representatives in Dakar "in order to streamline Franco-African communication channels." To avoid long delays previously characteristic of bills pertaining to Africa, Deferre presented his plan as purely an administrative reform, in the form of a loi-cadre (framework law). The French Overseas Ministry offered the following description of the reform at hand:

The Loi-Cadre is, in effect, much more than an outcome of French policy in her overseas territories; it constitutes the point of departure of a steady evolution of the will to lead the populations to their capacity to conduct their own affairs, all the while remaining strictly associated with France. (23)

Adopted by the French parliament on 23 June 1956, the Loi-Cadre operated accordingly: decrees submitted by the executive were sent simultaneously to the National Assembly and the Assembly of the French Union; the former had two months to accept, reject, or amend, while the latter had fifteen days in which to give its opinion; decrees had a four month time limit for promulgation. According to Article 74 of the French Constitution, reform of internal organisation in the territories required consultation of the French Union Assembly and the Territorial Assemblies--a procedure which the Loi-Cadre essentially sidestepped. Nevertheless, through this process more than two dozen decrees altering the structure of the TOM were issued between June 1956 and April 1957.

Radical reforms were instituted via the Loi-Cadre, such as universal suffrage for all persons over the age of 21 and abolition of the double-college voting system; an enlargement of the membership and

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W.A.E. Skurnick, "France and Fragmentation in West Africa: 1945-1960," Journal of African History, VIII, 2, 1967, p. 326.

23

ANSOM AP 2189/8, FOM circular, No. 4191, 17 May 1957.

powers of the Territorial Assemblies; reorganisation of the civil service; creation of circumscription and rural councils; the establishment of territorial executive Government Councils; and reduced powers of the federal government and Grand Council. Only matters associated with sovereignty remained under direct French control, namely: foreign policy, defence, monetary and fiscal systems, higher education, and broadcasting.

Perhaps the most significant reform introduced under the Loi-Cadre involved the creation of territorial Conseils de Gouvernement. Destined to function as embryo cabinets, the Government Councils were comprised of 6 to 12 members elected by the Territorial Assemblies; the member receiving the most votes would assume the office of Vice-President. The Governor nominally presided over the Council; however, the intention of the reform instituting territorial executives was for the Council to manage local affairs as autonomously as possible. Members of the Government Council, entitled Ministers, were assigned to lead various sectors of public services such as finance, transport, health, labour, etc. The Governor did reserve the right to petition the French government for annulment within three months of any decision of the Government Council or the Territorial Assembly. Such a measure could be proposed on the grounds of threatening national security, public order, private liberties, or concerning extraordinary measures considered to exceed the law.

The powers of the Territorial Assemblies were also greatly enhanced. By a law of 15 November 1956 the number of members in the assemblies was increased in each territory by ten. Before the Loi-Cadre, it was estimated that more than half of the expenditures approved by the

Territorial Assemblies were obligatory. As a result of the Loi-Cadre, 22 out of 30 categories of mandatory spending were abolished, leaving the assemblies much greater financial leverage and responsibility. Moreover the assemblies were granted legislative powers in a number of public sectors including works, services, land, agriculture, health, customary law, cooperatives, urbanisation, internal trade, forestry, fisheries, and most mineral rights. Primary and secondary education was also placed under the jurisdiction of the assemblies, although French standards were maintained for higher education, teachers, and major examinations.

As power was transferred to the territorial level, the federal government and Grand Council lost a great deal of their former authority. As stated in an official report by the Foreign Office:<sup>25</sup> "truthfully speaking, there will no longer be a government-general." The role of the federal government was reduced to overall coordination and arbitration between the overseas territories, mainly in matters pertaining to finance, geology and mineral surveying, higher education, and interterritorial concerns such as health, drought, and animal epidemics. Furthermore services previously administered from Dakar were shifted to Paris, namely the postal system and broadcasting. Finally the fatal blow to the federal government was financial, as most taxes now went directly into the hands of the Territorial Assemblies. Unlike the assemblies which had elected Government Councils, to the dismay of the

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R. Schachter Morgenthau, Political Parties, p. 67.

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ANSOM AP 2189/8, FOM report, "Réformes apportées dans les Territoires relevant du Ministère de la FOM par la loi No. 56.619 du 23 Juin 1956, dite Loi-Cadre," 21 March 1957.

Grand Council an executive was not created on the federal level, and therefore its decisions remained up to the High-Commissioner to implement. Coincidentally, Cornut-Gentille, who served as High-Commissioner of AOF for five years and was largely responsible for the successful reconciliation between the French administration and the RDA, was succeeded by Gaston Cusin on 5 July 1956. Thus, under the wide-open provisions of the Loi-Cadre, the structure and institutions of AOF were radically transformed in a very short period of time. The future path of development to be pursued by the African overseas territories, as one administrator despairingly recognised, was largely in their own hands:

The question in fact remains open: for better or for worse, what will prevail? The truth, and this is what is most alarming, is that the solution escapes us completely: it no longer depends upon us that our territories evolve harmoniously or anarchically....It no longer depends upon us that the irreversibility of history leads such or such territory, under the rule of educated Marxists, towards the negation of democracy, or that others erupt in partisan contradiction....The fate of each region of French Black Africa is henceforth completely in the hands of its inhabitants....In the course of history, our territories are marching towards their autonomy. (26)

Such a restructuring of the Federation caused some critics to denounce the Loi-Cadre as leading to the "balkanisation" of West Africa. The term, coined by Léopold Senghor, stood for the breaking up of AOF into independent territories, a process which many agreed would divide and destroy African unity, and necessary cooperation and aid between richer and poorer regions within the Federation. Senghor also pointed out that keeping the embryonic African states weak would assure their continued dependence on France, therefore further prolonging any possibility of independence. Against Houphouët and the formal position

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*Ibid.*, p. 2.

of the RDA, UGTAN later formally backed Senghor's stance, fearing the disintegration of African labour unity.

Touré's position concerning the Loi-Cadre was notoriously ambiguous. In a speech before a crowd of 2,000 in Conakry on 16 February 1957, Touré acknowledged that the reforms, particularly the additional powers granted to the Territorial Assemblies, undoubtedly constituted "a step ahead," however he added that "the Loi-Cadre voted at this time is today already outmoded."<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, Touré positively noted that "autonomy is, let's not forget, a step towards independence, the aspiration of all subjugated peoples."<sup>28</sup> In addressing the issue of federal government reform Touré mentioned that their (i.e. RDA) conception of the new administrative structure was different from that of Senghor, mainly for the purpose of expediency, as it would take one or two months to constantly refer simple matters to Dakar. Yet it was also clear that Touré at this time did envision the future creation of a federal government, or possibly a coordinating committee composed of the territorial Vice-Presidents to handle interterritorial affairs. Likewise Touré insisted upon the necessity to set up statutes pertaining to services within the Federation, in order to maintain mobility of civil servants and equal benefits from one territory to another. For the time being, however, Touré concluded:

Nevertheless, I am convinced that the Loi-Cadre will allow us to give our country a new life, full of progress that will radically change it into a new country. (29)

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ANS 17G 613, "Renseignements, conférence publique PDG," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 409/177, Conakry, 17 February 1957, p. 18.

28Ibid., p. 3.

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Ibid., p. 8.

### Violent Intimidation

Radical reform introduced in 1956 and 1957 in the overseas territories fuelled the fires of competition raging between rival political parties scrambling to fill newly created positions of power. Particularly in Guinea, the struggle once again turned violent, as the PDG aimed to secure total domination on the political front. Intimidation tactics were unleashed in order to quell remaining dissent, and the totalitarian nature of the PDG was clearly revealed.

After eight years of drafting and numerous delays in parliament, a bill reorganising municipal government in French Africa finally passed in November 1955. The bill elevated 25 towns in the West African Federation to the status of full communes (communes de plein exercice), while permitting territorial Governors to transform an indefinite number of others into lesser communes de moyen exercice. Elections of municipal councils and mayors of the new townships were scheduled to take place on 18 November 1956. In Guinea the political competition of the electoral campaign was largely overshadowed by outbreaks of considerable violence, in the end taking on an ethnic slant that threatened civil war.

In the span of one week, 29 September to 5 October 1956, the casualty list of violent incidents in Guinea amounted to the following: 7 dead, 263 wounded (not including 32 police, 26 territorial guards, and 10 civil servants), and over 500 arrested.<sup>30</sup> Of the seven dead, six were Fulani, one Soussou; all were members of the BAG or SFIO. According to administrative reports, the trouble began brewing in a private RDA

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ANS 17G 586, FOM Administrator J. Herly, "Rapport sur les Incidents de Conakry (29 Septembre-5 Octobre 1956)," Conakry, 7 October 1956.

meeting on 28 September in which Sylla Momo, better known as Momo Jo, declared:

From this day forward, we must not give the BAG the time or place to meet in the neighbourhoods. I ask all of you to take courage; as for me, I'm no longer afraid of prison.  
(31)

The following day deputies Touré and Saifoulaye publicly accused the administration of sabotaging the budgets and emptying the municipal treasuries on the brink of handing them over to future locally elected councils. That evening several brawls broke out, involving RDA attacks on BAG members, including a violent encounter outside the house of BAG territorial assemblyman Amara Soumah, in which an estimated crowd of 600 showered the street with stones. It took five police squads two and a half hours to restore order, by which time five servicemen and a European policeman were wounded.

Speaking to a crowd of 3,000 on Sunday 30 September, Touré again denounced the administration for misusing public funds, which he claimed would prevent the RDA (following their anticipated triumph in the forthcoming elections) from carrying out promised reforms, resulting in seeming PDG failure in the eyes of the people. Furthermore Touré implicated the authorities as the provoking agents in the recent incidents, purposely creating an atmosphere of instability, violence, and repression on the eve of crucial elections.

The same day incidents broke out once again at the home of Amarah Soumah, where Momo Jo received a knife wound from a BAG supporter. Police used tear gas to dispel the mobs, and blocked off several of the targeted streets in order to maintain order. Expecting an appeal for calm, the Governor allowed Touré to make a public statement, in which he

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*Ibid.*, p. 1.

did so only after renewed verbal attacks on the government. Nevertheless the audience of 1,000 people left the scene and returned home peacefully. In other Conakry suburbs, however, various incidents of houses and persons under siege were reported into the night. Throughout the following day scattered attacks took place on BAG and DSG homes, while market and street brawls occurred in which RDA gangs demanded to see party cards, roughing up any individual not having one in his possession.<sup>32</sup>

Amid increasing violence and frequency of assaults, Governor Bonfils issued an order banning all gatherings and demonstrations in Conakry, public or private, for 15 days beginning 1 October 1956. On 2 October a curfew from nine o'clock p.m. to six a.m. was further decreed by the Governor. Despite stricter police measures the violence intensified and spread into the outlying districts in Conakry. Scores of BAG homes, including that of party leader Keita Koumandian, were pillaged and burnt, as police stood by and watched, unable to ward off the onslaught. On 3 October Governor Bonfils extended the curfew order indefinitely.

In spite of appeals for calm by all three parties, violence continued unabated. After hearing reports that a massive purchase of knives was underway, the Governor banned future sales and ordered the major shops closed. The conflict hence assumed an ethnic dimension, as Fulani BAG and DSG supporters joined together in vengeance against RDA members of Soussou origin. Meanwhile the Foulah casualty list was mounting; 3 died in hospital on 3 October, including the chauffeur of

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Ibid., p. 6.

Barry Diawadou from an earlier stab wound to the lung, and an unidentified body was found with a fractured skull.

As police and firemen worked around the clock to the point of exhaustion, the situation placed the territory of Guinea on the brink of civil war. Nevertheless, a tripartite accord was reached between the rival parties late in the evening of 4 October. Supplied with transportation and loud speakers from the administration, tripartite teams circulated Conakry calling for peace. The following day calm was effectively restored; the week of terror had come to an end.

In the aftermath of the latest wave of violent incidents in Guinea, nearly all fingers pointed directly at Touré regarding the responsibility for the unrest. A handful of reports concerning the situation underlying the violence in Guinea were submitted to the central authorities, all except one (written by Madeira Keita, former president of the PDG and representative of the RDA in Soudan) blamed Touré as the major source behind the troubles. In the Governor's report, Bonfils argued that the so-called "administrative plot" against the RDA was nonsense, as were the PDG claims of budgetary sabotage in the municipalities. According to Bonfils:

The personality of deputy Sékou Touré is to be submitted as evidence number one. Self-educated trade unionist, he has remained and lives as a unionist, transposing the techniques of social agitation into political affairs. After having, for one year, tried to build up a relationship with him, I fear that he is incapable of any action other than violent.  
(33)

Citing the approaching municipal elections as the motive behind the timing of the outbreak of violence, Bonfils concluded that the "real

goal is the total triumph of the RDA and the equally complete  
elimination of the other parties."<sup>34</sup>

Similarly the analysis submitted by the High-Commissioner offered the following conclusion: "It is not its place that the RDA is aiming to secure, it is all the place."<sup>35</sup> Attributing the "quasi-total responsibility" of the incidents to the actions of deputy Touré, Cusin explained that the reasons behind former episodes of violence in Guinea were no longer valid since the PDG swept the January elections to the National Assembly. Moreover the High-Commissioner surmised that perhaps the administration had been duped by Touré's supposed "conversion,"--his rebuffal of Communism, particularly regarding the founding of the CGTA where essentially "no difference of doctrine exists between the CGT and CGTA."<sup>36</sup> Surrounded by notorious Marxists in the PDG and CGTA such as Diallo Saifoulaye and Gabriel d'Arboussier, Touré's ambiguous political nature and contradictions in practice made him once again an administrative target of suspicion and mistrust.

The RDA rebuttal amidst administrative accusations of PDG complicity in the latest incidents was feeble at best. Touré was summoned to Paris by Houphouët and left Guinea on 7 October. Upon his return, focus shifted to electoral preparations and the violence of the recent past was entirely overlooked in party gatherings and functions. In Soudan, however, apparently the RDA section commissioned former PDG President Madeira Keita to write a report about the Conakry incidents,

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*Ibid.*, p. 6.

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ANSCOM AP 2263/4, Report on Conakry incidents by High-Commissioner ACF, n.d., p. 3.

36

*Ibid.*, p. 9.

to be sent to the central RDA Coordinating Committee. In his analysis Keita cited out-of-date excuses such as administrative interference in elections, repression, judicial partiality, etc. Keita also claimed that the incidents were intentionally provoked by the administration, in order to: 1) repress the RDA, 2) break African unity, and 3) create an unstable atmosphere discouraging development, investment, and the industrialisation of the territory.<sup>37</sup> Containing these hardly convincing arguments, it is doubtful that this report or its conclusions received any serious attention, and certainly was not defended or even acknowledged in the metropolitan government.

The Guinean members of the French Union Assembly, however, urgently requested an investigation concerning the explosive situation<sup>38</sup> threatening civil war in the territory. A formal inquiry was subsequently launched by the Assembly, and a team of four members was sent to Guinea, charged with the following mission: "to establish the causes and responsible parties of the recent events in Conakry."<sup>39</sup>

In short, the committee found that economic and social issues were really not at the root of the disturbances. Employment in Conakry was estimated at 20,000 versus 17,000 in 1953; however this increase was far less than the rapid migration to the capital.<sup>40</sup> Nonetheless the inquiry determined that the unemployed were not to blame for the incidents, as

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ANS 17G 586, Madeira Keita, "Etude sur les événements de Guinée," Bamako, November 1956, p. 5.

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ANSOM AP 2263/4, Assemblée de l'Union Française, Sitting 9 October 1956.

39

ANSOM AP 2263/4, Assemblée de l'Union Française, "Rapport d'information," submitted by Political Commission of Inquiry, 29 November 1956.

40

Ibid., p. 26.

the PDG had claimed. Indeed the opposition parties held that the PDG had paid these out-of-work labourers to militate in favour of the party. Thus local politics, particularly around election time, were deemed the instigating factor behind the periodic outbreaks of violence in Guinea. Moreover the Commission held that the PDG was largely at fault for the unrest, as the report offered the following conclusion:

The responsibility of the PDG thus appears total in the incidents that have taken place in Guinea since July 1954.  
(41)

The report submitted by the Commission of inquiry detailed the action of the PDG in fomenting political instability in the territory. The clear aim of PDG activity was known to be the conquest of power, the methods for which could be divided into six categories:

- 1) Direct action--violence and attacks against persons and property of people not professing PDG allegiance or possessing party membership cards;
- 2) Party organisation--highly structured nature and discipline of the PDG, including its parallel administration and uniformed officers;
- 3) Parallel organisations--use of allied organisations such as the CGTA in coordinating and monopolising joint actions;
- 4) Infiltration--the police force in Conakry was said to be lax in its reactions due to the fact that an estimated 90 per cent of the force were pro-PDG;
- 5) Actions versus resistance--the PDG maintains no tolerance for "saboteurs" or political opponents, and stirs up the masses to take action against them; and
- 6) Legalism--the PDG also engages in incessant legal measures such as petitions, complaints, and lawsuits.(42)

Apart from the PDG, the administration was also criticised for its pacifism and lack of contact with the indigenous population. Recommendations of the Commission's report included a revamping of the politicised

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Ibid., p. 28.

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Ibid., pp. 28-36.

police force as well as understaffed administration, both of which the PDG had infiltrated to the extent that party intermediaries influenced and directed official orders and action. As a minor measure, the Commission also recommended the banning of public display of party flags or banners, as such properties became blatant targets of attack when inter-party tension ran high.

#### Municipal Elections, November 1956

The situation in Guinea following the most recent period of violence remained tense as the November municipal elections rapidly approached. An added factor of uncertainty was the arrival of a new Governor to replace Bonfils on 3 November. Jean Ramadier, an ardent Socialist, held the post of Chef de cabinet under High-Commissioner Béchard in 1948, after which he served as Commandant de Cercle in Boaké, Ivory Coast. A personal fiefdom of Houphouët, in Boaké Ramadier cultivated a trusting relationship with the RDA in advancing the controversial policy of cooperation and reconciliation. Considered a "leftist" politician, Ramadier's friendly relations with the RDA did not prevent him from favouring Bakary Djibo over Hamani Diori (RDA) in Niger, where he was appointed Governor in 1953.<sup>43</sup> Upon his arrival the position Governor Ramadier would assume in Guinea was unclear, while critical elections were just a fortnight away.

As aforementioned, the Municipal Reorganisation Bill of November 1955 elevated 25 West African towns to the standing of communes de plein exercice. In Guinea 5 major towns were granted the new status, namely

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G. Chaffard, Les Carnets Secrets, vol. I, p. 309.

Conakry, Kankan, Kindia, Mamou, and N'Zérékoré. Furthermore the following nine towns were raised to the level of communes de moyen exercice: Beyla, Boké, Dalaba, Forécariah, Kissidougou, Kouroussa, Labé, Macenta, and Siguiri. Elections for municipal councils of all the communes were scheduled for 18 November 1956. Mayors of the communes de plein exercice would hence be elected by their respective councils, while Commandants de Cercle would automatically assume the post of mayors in the lesser communes.

Once the October violence had subsided, the political campaign for the municipal elections was short but intense. Touré personally campaigned on behalf of the PDG, making a grand speaking tour across the territory. Reiterating his attacks on administrative "sabotage" and corruption of public funds, in Kankan Touré defiantly called for unity in action, urging the masses "to hunt anyone who is susceptible to treason."<sup>44</sup> For his part, deputy Saifoulaye was designated to solicit support from his native Fouta region. The party again capitalised on Saifoulaye's background as well as his name, with such propaganda statements and proverbs as:

The RDA is the party of the Fulani...Diallo Saifoulaye is the sword that cuts the ties that impede the liberty of the Foulahs oppressed by the chiefs. The word Saifoulaye in Arabic signifies "saber." (45)

Organised into election committees, the PDG clearly intended to retain party pre-eminence after anticipated victory in assuming high-ranking administrative positions. The party leadership would hence dictate

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ANS 17G 586, "Renseignements, conférence publique RDA à Kankan," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 2288/799, Kankan, 6 November 1956, p. 3.

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ANS 17G 586, "Renseignements, réunion publique RDA," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 2047/710, Conakry, 2 October 1956.

political action and government policy; for example Touré announced that "after the elections the RDA Directing Committee in Conakry will proceed to choose the candidates for the post of mayor."<sup>46</sup>

As for the BAG, the situation in the territorial districts was depicted as "catastrophic." According to a BAG spokesman, "not a single party sub-section nor village committee is functioning; outside of Kankan there is total inactivity."<sup>47</sup> Unable to be present in Guinea for the elections, deputy Diawadou summarised his election forecasts and outlined an appropriate BAG strategy in a letter addressed to a friend in Kankan. Acknowledging that the RDA would carry the majority of the votes in all of the communes de plein exercice except Manou, Diawadou considered options and conditions to formulating joint lists with the RDA in the hope of gaining moderate representation on the municipal councils.<sup>48</sup> In the end all negotiations of such nature failed, and the three parties submitted separate electoral lists on 18 November. In fact, instead of including members of different parties on their lists, the PDG presented eight Europeans and several women as candidates in the municipalities.<sup>49</sup>

Election day in Guinea was exceptionally calm. Administrative neutrality was noted by all competing parties, and voter turnout was

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ANS 17G 586, "Renseignements, conférence publique RDA à Kankan," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 2288/799, Kankan, 6 November 1956, p. 5.

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ANS 17G 586, "Renseignements, BAG et élections municipales," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 2200/763, Kankan, 24 October 1956.

48

ANS 17G 586, Copy of letter addressed to a friend from Barry Diawadou, Paris, 25 October 1956.

49

ANS 17G 586, "Renseignements, conférence du RDA sur les prochaines élections municipales," Services de Police, Guinea, Conakry, 29 October 1956.

above average. The outcome of the elections was largely as anticipated, the PDG landslide victory this time came as no great surprise. The major disappointment of the BAG was that the PDG also predominated in Mamou, where Saifoulaye was subsequently elected mayor. Across the territory the PDG registered 85 per cent of the popular vote, taking 113 of the 135 seats in the five communes de plein exercice. In the middle communes, the DSG held the majority in Dalaba and Labé; the remaining 7 municipalities were dominated by PDG elected councillors.

The atmosphere in Guinea following the announcement of the electoral results remained peaceful. PDG sections, anticipating the victory, maintained order and discipline among their ranks. Celebrations were kept to a minimum so as to display acceptance of responsibility as well as thwart possible provocation of the loser parties. The BAG and DSG made it seem as though they took their losses very well, and even announced their delight in seeing Touré elected mayor of Conakry. The justification for such ironic satisfaction was the following:

Sékou Touré promised that the Africans in Conakry would no longer have to pay taxes...that they would find work for all the unemployed....We will see what he will do now with his new responsibilities...the masses will soon learn the true value of their "idol". (50)

Elsewhere in the overseas territories, the RDA was equally triumphant. Houphouët became the mayor of Abidjan, Modibo Keita of Bamako, and Lisette of Fort-Lamy. Two recent affiliates to the RDA also did well: Léon Mba, the leader of the Bloc Démocratique Gabonais (BDG), became mayor of Libreville, and the Union Démocratique Dahoméenne (UDD)

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ANS 17G 586, "Renseignements, Commentaires sur l'élection de Sékou Touré comme Maire de Conakry," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 2392/846, Conakry, 21 November 1956.

gained control of Cotonou, the largest town in Dahomey, although Apithy's Republican Party secured the capital city Porto Novo. Coalitions of opposing parties defeated RDA leaders Félix Tchicaya and Hamani Diori in Congo-Brazzaville and Niger respectively. In Niamey, Bakary Djibo was one of 11 members of his party to be elected to the town council, versus 13 seats secured by Hamani Diori (RDA) and 4 seats to the Socialists. A last minute alliance between Djibo and the SFIO led to the election of Djibo, who became a member of the SFIO, as mayor of the capital city.

### The Opposition Unites

Two conferences were held simultaneously in French West Africa aiming to unite the scattered parties opposed to the RDA into interterritorial movements. In Conakry the affiliates to the SFIO met under the leadership of veteran politician and newly elected mayor of Dakar Lamine Guèye, while in Dakar Léopold Senghor organised a conference of former IOM members and their respective political parties.

Hosted by Barry III of the DSG, the founding congress of the Mouvement Socialiste Africain (MSA) convened in Conakry from 11-13 January 1957. One of the main purposes of the congress was to create an autonomous Socialist movement in Africa, independent of the metropolitan party. To this end the Africans received the official blessing of the SFIO, which sent a high-ranking delegation including its acting Secretary-General to attend the proceedings in Conakry.

Seventy delegates participated in the MSA founding congress, representing all of the Socialist parties in AOF and that of Chad in AEF. Rather than amassing into a single body, it was decided that the parties would remain autonomous in structure yet united in action, the

reason being: "a plurality of parties seems to us preferable to one<sup>51</sup> movement, because in no democracy do we find only one single party."

Nevertheless a Directing Committee, composed of 25 members serving two-year terms, was elected to administer the MSA. Seated in Dakar, the committee included President Lamine Guèye, Vice-President Fily Dabo Sissoko, Secretary-General Barry III, and Bakary Djibo as deputy Secretary-General.

Regarding MSA relations with the French government and the SFIO, the delegates repeatedly reaffirmed their commitments, as world Socialists, to continue cooperating with and backing the current Socialist administration in France. After heated debate it was decided that the MSA would remain allied to the metropolitan SFIO in the Paris assemblies. At this time the new movement wholly supported the Mollet and Defferre government, as well as the Loi-Cadre reforms. Sidestepping the issue of independence, the political report submitted to the congress by Lamine Guèye thus stated the main aims of the African Socialist movement:

The goal to strive for is to allow the accession of peoples to the management of their own affairs and their free association to the French community. The decrees applying the Loi-Cadre will help in this endeavour. (52)

Several months later in Kankan, where the RDA sub-section was notoriously outspoken in denouncing the Loi-Cadre and demanding independence, the DSG-MSA section campaigned for French-African collaboration, emphasising that:

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ANSOM AP 2257/4, FOM Ministry, "Congrès constitutif du Mouvement Socialiste Africain," Paris, 9 February 1957, p. 2.

52

Ibid., p. 3.

It is not actually in the interest of Africa that the whites leave us...Africans will certainly be able to govern themselves, but the time has not yet come. (53)

While Lamine Guèye and his associates were founding the MSA in Conakry, Léopold Senghor hosted his ICM colleagues at the Convention Africaine (CA) meeting in Dakar. The conference was attended by representatives of eight hitherto ICM parties, plus 6 observing parties including the RDA. Bolder and more defined in policy than either the MSA or RDA, the CA embraced Senghor's federalist ideas--in calling for both a federal French Republic and the strengthening of the East and West African Federations. The movement advocated autonomy of the overseas territories within their respective Federations, which would later become two member states in the federal Republic. Furthermore Senghor proposed a confederal union, to which the French Republic would hence belong, along with independent states such as Togo, Cameroon, Morocco and Tunisia. Regarding Algeria the CA requested an immediate cease-fire followed by negotiations and probable independent status within the envisioned confederation. As for the overseas territories, the eventual right to independence of the confederation's component parts was stressed, however ruled out in the near future.

Whereas the MSA was strictly opposed to the idea of creating a single African party or movement, the CA favoured such an approach toward African unity. Senghor's hopes of African union were dashed, however, when his call was ignored by the Socialists, and none of the observer parties to the congress, including the BAG of Guinea, officially joined the CA. Earlier, in fact, negotiations of a possible merger

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ANS 17G 613, "Renseignements, Assemblée Générale de la Sous-Section DSG-MSA de Kankan," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 1116/447, Kankan, 20 May 1957.

had taken place between the RDA and IOM. Following the January 1956 elections, RDA-IOM discussions took place in Abidjan and Paris. Unity was expected to be a main theme of an RDA congress scheduled to take place in Bamako. The congress, initially planned for October 1956, was repeatedly postponed. Then differences of opinion over decrees applying the Loi-Cadre signalled the end of RDA-IOM collaboration, as Senghor began denouncing the balkanising reforms that Houphouët had a large role in drafting. Besides the RDA had been steadily increasing in strength, and was looking forward to sweeping the Territorial Assembly elections scheduled to take place in March.

#### PDG Second Territorial Conference

Largely in preparation of the forthcoming elections, the PDG held its Second Territorial Conference, 23-24 February 1957. As a tactical move, the site chosen for the gathering was Labé--capital of the Fouta region and lingering bastion of "feudalism." The district of Labé also had recorded the least percentage of votes in favour of the RDA in the recent municipal elections, returning a DSG majority to the town council. Thus by situating the conference in Labé, the PDG ventured to impress the local inhabitants and hoped to drum up additional support in the territorial elections. Labé, in fact, was the most highly populated district in Guinea, with six seats in the Territorial Assembly at stake.

The PDG conference essentially overwhelmed Labé, as droves of participants, more than twice as many as were expected, arrived in search of accommodation. The official PDG delegates included 30 members of the Directing Committee and 140 territorial representatives (four from each of the 35 sections); an astounding figure of 620 additional

observers attended the conference.

Although Touré presided over and dominated the proceedings as usual, he encountered unusual opposition on several occasions. Upon the opening of the conference, the agenda was immediately revised, shortened to the following three items: analysis of the general political situation in the territory, the programme for the next elections, and the election of a new PDG Directing Committee. Discussion of other issues such as RDA work in parliament, the Loi-Cadre and its application, and economic and mineral prospects in Guinea, were subsequently deferred to a future party congress. Conference members objected to electing a new Directing Committee at this time, while Touré insisted that it was necessary in the face of new administrative responsibilities created by the recent reforms. In the end Touré was defeated on this matter, as the PDG directorate rejected the election proposal with 26 votes against 9. Interpreted in several circles as symbolic of "the beginning of the fall of the dictator," this minor failure in no way threatened the omnipotent position of the PDG leader.

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Touré later exhibited his remarkable oratory skills as he delivered his report on the general political situation in the territory, a speech which lasted more than four hours. After tracing the entire history of the RDA and its Guinean chapter, Touré went on to summarise the current political predicament of the overseas territories. Regarding the Loi-Cadre, Touré reiterated that "it is only a step and not an end in itself," noting that "in one year, the situation has evolved to such a

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ANS 17G 613, "Renseignements, seconde conférence territoriale du PDG-RDA tenue à Labé, les 23 et 24 Février 1957," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 478/210, Conakry, 28 February 1957, p. 1.

55

Ibid., p. 3.

degree that this old reform no longer responds to a single RDA aspiration.<sup>56</sup> Touré then aroused his audience by declaring that if the new administrative structure failed, "there will not be any other valid alternative left for us except independence." Furthering Touré's remarks, members spoke of liberty as the "magic word" missing in all the empty reforms recently introduced in the Federations.

The second day of the conference was largely devoted to presentation and discussion of the party platform in the forthcoming elections. The circumstances surrounding each party sub-section were taken into consideration, particularly in the Fouta region. Touré explained the absolute necessity of conquering the Fouta accordingly:

The Fouta remains the cattle pen where freedom is completely denied to its inhabitants, that is why we attach such importance to a victory in the Fouta, victory which we shall carry over our two enemies: the powerful feudal system and the administration which supports it. (57)

The triumph in the Mamou municipal elections was a source of considerable PDG pride, symbolising the first step in wiping out the feudal lords, in this case the supreme almany of the Fouta. In proverbial style, Touré gloated "once the head of the snake is cut off,<sup>58</sup> the rest of it can be made into a belt."

Subsequent debate concerning the electoral campaign heated up over controversial issues. Again Touré met stiff opposition in attempting to get his proposals adopted. Membership in the Territorial Assembly had been raised from 50 to 60 seats. Touré moved that the nomination of candidates should take place as follows: 36 elected by the party sub-

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56

*Ibid.*, p. 6.

57

*Ibid.*, p. 8.

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*Ibid.*

sections and 24 designated by an enlarged Directing Committee in Conakry. A major dispute arose when Touré announced that eight of the candidates put forth by the PDG directorate were to be European, Libano-Syrian, or mulatto. At this point Ismael Touré, representative of Kankan and half-brother of Sékou, voiced strong objection to including Europeans on PDG electoral lists. It appears that the majority of the audience sided with the opinions of Ismael Touré, as the people cheered, applauded, and whistled their support.<sup>59</sup> Nevertheless Touré remained intransigent, insisting that minorities as well as the various strata of society be represented in the Territorial Assembly. The opposition rebounded with the illustration that, for 5,000 Europeans residing in Guinea, eight assembly seats were allotted, whereby in certain districts, 70,000 Africans were represented by only two councillors. A virtual duel between the half-brothers ensued, prolonging the debate an additional four hours. This time, however, Touré refused to concede to his opponents, and the report detailing the election programme was finally unanimously adopted by the conference delegates without alteration. Thus, albeit slightly shaken, Touré presided over the closing of the conference, still standing firmly on his pedestal of power. The delegates and numerous observers departed from Labé without incident, returning home in order to prepare for the approaching elections.

#### **Territorial Assembly Elections, March 1957**

While the dominance of the PDG on the political scene in Guinea needed little proof, the outcome of the Territorial Assembly elections would prove determinant in the future development of the territory. Under the new provisions of the Loi-Cadre the Assembly would elect a Council of

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*Ibid.*, p. 10.

Ministers as well as a Vice-President acting as virtual Prime Minister. With largely extended powers the Territorial Assembly, particularly if controlled by a majority party, could enact legislation significantly altering the administrative and economic structure in Guinea. For this reason the PDG organised a vigorous election campaign covering all districts and cantons.

While the PDG campaign enveloped the territory, the opposition parties concentrated their efforts in the few areas where they still had a fighting chance of success. The DSG was strongest in the Fouta districts Pita and Labé, and the BAG hoped to consolidate support in Téli<sup>60</sup> and Gaoul. Barry Diawadou was in Guinea this time to campaign for the BAG, but confined his touring mostly to the Fouta region and the northern district of Youkounkoun. Otherwise both the DSG and BAG conceded victory to the PDG, and all but abandoned activities in PDG strongholds.

As a mass party with the majority of its members uneducated, the PDG faced difficulty in selecting worthy candidates for the Territorial Assembly elections. In the previous assembly Touré was the only representative of the PDG, and he and Saifoulaye were likewise the only party members having parliamentary experience. Touré's decision to include Europeans on PDG lists was an unpopular but necessary move, due to their knowledge and expertise on territorial administration. The option of allowing a few seats to trained BAG men, however, was utterly rejected. Furthermore the party sub-sections in each district were keen to see their native sons elected, and reportedly voiced opposition to voting

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ANS 17G 613, "Renseignements, vie politique à l'intérieur du territoire," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 617/266, 16 March 1957.

for "strangers" chosen by the Directing Committee in Conakry. A witness described the current PDG predicament accordingly:

It is very visible that the PDG is suffering from a growth crisis, due to an overly rapid swelling of its bottom ranks following the last two electoral campaigns. Its actual dilemma is that it lacks trained personnel. Moreover the party is a victim of the campaign of violence it unleashed over the past few years to destroy, to its benefit, the BAG. It could not, even if it wanted, incorporate worthy men of this party (who are not lacking) because RDA militants, "having suffered" in the struggle, would never comprehend why "saboteurs" were taking their places. (61)

Hardly unusual in Guinean politics, the electoral campaign was marred by scattered incidents of violent clashes between opposing parties. Minor but repeated skirmishes were reported in Conakry, Dubréka, Labé, and Gaoul, all involving the PDG versus the BAG or DSG. In Dabola and Pita more serious incidents occurred, corresponding to the campaign trails of Touré and Saifoulaye respectively. In Dabola Touré's presence excited RDA women to the extent that they led a crowd of more than 1,000 demonstrators to besiege the home of BAG deputy Diawadou. Dabola police, several of whom were wounded, needed reinforcements from Mamou to halt the onslaught. <sup>62</sup> Meanwhile simultaneous public meetings held in Pita by Saifoulaye and DSG leader Barry III produced violent <sup>63</sup> conflict resulting in one death and 15 seriously wounded.

In spite of the divers incidents preceding the elections, on polling day 31 March the prevailing atmosphere was calm. No one doubted

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ANS 17G 613, "Renseignements, situation en Guinée à la veille du dépôt des listes aux élections du 31 Mars prochain," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 555/247, Conakry, 9 March 1957.

62

ANS 17G 613, "Renseignements, vie politique à l'intérieur du territoire," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 734/316, 28 March 1957.

63

ANSCM AP 2185/5, Telegram High-Commissioner AOF to Ministry FOM, Nos. 967-8, Dakar, 24 March 1957.

the impending PDG victory; the opposition parties quietly awaited the results of areas where they still had glimmers of hope. The defeat of the opposition was indeed crushing: the PDG took 56 out of the 60 seats in the Assembly. Of the remaining four seats, three went to the DSG in Pita, and one to an independent canton chief in Dinguiraye. The BAG was completely wiped out of the Assembly. Even in his home town where his father was the canton chief, Diawadou received only 2,332 votes against 4,464 for the RDA candidate. Barry III just barely held on to his seat in Pita, and overall the DSG fared moderately better than the BAG. The March election results reduced the former opposition into almost inconsequential minor parties, with the following votes cast:

RDA	575,000
DSG (MSA)	78,000
BAG	45,000
Independents	67,000 (64)

The creation of the interterritorial MSA and CA movements, moreover, did little to affect the outcome of the territorial elections across West Africa, and subsequently Touré called for their integration into the RDA.<sup>65</sup> The main MSA victory was in Niger where the party of Djibo controlled two-thirds of the Assembly; the remaining seats were occupied by the RDA. Overall the MSA fared slightly better than the CA, whose 47 out of 54 total seats were concentrated in Senegal. In the Ivory Coast, Sudan, and Guinea the RDA gained overwhelming majorities, and in Upper Volta a slight majority. In total, the RDA acquired 51 per cent of the Territorial Assembly seats in AOF. Subsequent elections

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ANSOM AP 2185/5, "Résultats des Elections du 31 Mars 1957," Guinea.

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ANS 17G 613, "Renseignements, interview de Sékou Touré par l'A.F.P. sur les élections du 31 Mars," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 83/334, Conakry, 5 April 1957.

to the Grand Council returned a majority of RDA leaders (including Touré), and Houphouët thus was elected President. Gabriel d'Arboussier, who had been forgiven his past extremism and recently reintegrated into the upper ranks of the RDA, was elected Vice-President of the Grand Council.

On 9 May 1957 the Territorial Assembly in Guinea elected its Council of Ministers. Obtaining the most votes, Touré was thereby appointed Vice-President of the Council, and reportedly hand-picked the other candidates nominated for office.<sup>66</sup> The Assembly outrightly approved the proposed Council, whose members and respective Ministries included: Fodéba Keita--Interior; Alioune Drame--Finances; Bengaly Camara--Labour; Lansana Beavogui--Commerce and Industry; and Ismael Touré--Transport. The list of Ministers was submitted to the Assembly by the PDG Directing Committee without consultation of party sub-sections. Nonetheless, with the exception of Kankan, party sub-sections from all over Guinea expressed satisfaction with the new Government Council.<sup>67</sup>

In Kankan the radical PDG section criticised the election of the Ministers because not one of their three local councillors was selected. In actual fact the section President, Lamine Kaba, was an elderly PDG veteran suffering from ill health, and therefore deemed unfit to serve as Minister. After voicing the sole opposition to the list of candidates

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Nevertheless Touré was seemingly reluctant to assume control over the Government Council, claiming he preferred to dedicate himself to educating the masses. The Governor urged Touré to accept the post of Vice-President, after which he reportedly complied. ANSOM AP 2199/3, Telegram Governor Guinea to Ministry FOM, Nos. 1443-5, Conakry, 7 May 1957.

67

ANS 17G 613, "Renseignements, commentaires suscités par les derniers événements de Conakry," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 1094/437, Conakry, 16 May 1957.

in the Assembly meeting during which he insulted the PDG leadership, Kaba was consequently temporarily suspended from his post as President of the Kankan party section.<sup>68</sup> The other two councillors had been purposely overlooked due to similar displays of militancy and insubordination to RDA leaders. The aggressive character of the Kankan subsection was notoriously difficult to control. In a public meeting held on 12 May, for example, a municipal councillor was quoted as follows:

The RDA will never fail. The goal that it has assigned itself is to expose all that is going on in Africa so that Africa can obtain its freedom and independence, aims which are not accomplished without arms and the spilling of blood. It is therefore necessary to take up arms to achieve our independence. (69)

This oration brought thunderous applause, as members of the crowd chanted "arms and blood are needed to obtain independence." Thus while RDA leaders, most in new positions within the administration, worked for peaceful collaboration and development in the territories, it is clear that at least some lower-ranking segments of the PDG had already begun pressing the issue of independence.

Meanwhile in Conakry the Deputy-Mayor of Conakry and Vice-President of the Council of Ministers gave seemingly an inaugural address to the Guinean government and people. Touré spoke about the future of Guinea largely in economic terms. "If we don't find rapid solutions to the difficulties attacking the peasant, livestock-breeder, fisherman, farmer, workman, youth, woman, etc." Touré noted, "it will be difficult

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ANS 17G 613, "Renseignements, commentaires sur les élections au Conseil du Gouvernement, à Kankan," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 1156/462, Kankan, 23 May 1957.

69

ANS 17G 613, "Renseignements, conférence publique tenue à Kankan," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 1112/446, Kankan, 18 May 1957.

to justify semi-autonomy and the Loi-Cadre which introduced it." Industrialisation, in the eyes of the Vice-President, meant not only mineral mining, but also production of finished goods. In this vein Touré went on to discuss the necessity of substantial financing (i.e. foreign investment). A long-time suspected Communist, Touré defied his image by speaking explicitly about the urgent need to solicit and employ foreign capital in the development of the territory. "Happiness, dignity, and liberty for Africans" was deemed the motto of the new government. Finally, equality between all people was assured, as Touré concluded:

We must rapidly strip the old European of his superiority complex, and the old African of his inferiority complex as well as his fatalism, in order to create two beings that love each other, two complete men intimately fraternising because they are aware of their equality and their bonded destiny. (71)

Touré surprised the crowd by closing his address with the following cheer: "Vive la France, Vive la Guinée, Vive la Communauté Franco-Africaine." Apparently this was the first time he had sung such praises to France, and the supporting masses took note with unease.

Clearly Touré held the fate of his people in his hands. At this point, however, no one was quite sure in which direction he would lead them. Certainly he intended to carry the reforms introduced under the Loi-Cadre to their fullest extent. There was little even the French authorities could do to influence the future course of events in Guinea. Still one major obstacle remained in the path of Touré's quest for

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CRDA 9/br.2, "Discours prononcé le 12 Mai 1957 à Conakry par le Député-Maire Sékou Touré, Vice-President du Conseil de Gouvernement de la Guinée," p. 9.

71

Ibid., p. 20.

absolute power in Guinea--the chieftaincy. Thus in his determination to leave no stone unturned in the pursuit of his ideals, Touré now focused his attention on ridding Guinea of its "last bastion of feudalism," the enslaving forces that historically were responsible for the oppression of the masses, and had continued their malpractices under the protection of French colonialism.

## CHAPTER VIII

### The Abolition of the Chieftaincy

The official suppression of the "so-called customary chieftaincy" in Guinea took place on 31 December 1957. Although the simple decree, unique to French West Africa, seemed to pass almost entirely unhindered by the colonial authorities, its implications were significant in regard to the securing of the PDG's political supremacy in the territory, as well as contributing to the successful outcome of the future campaign for independence.

Authors addressing this somewhat mysterious act of government have been at odds in their analysis of the motivating factors behind the abolition of the chieftaincy in Guinea. One school of thought, best articulated by Suret-Canale, holds that:

The fall of the Guinean chieftaincy was the result of a deep-seated popular movement well before the years 1957-1958....The disintegration of the chieftaincy was an accomplished fact. Its legal suppression was only the final act of the movement.... (1)

This interpretation of events leads to unequivocal praise for the insight and wisdom displayed by Sékou Touré in wiping away "the worm-eaten cadre of unpopular and backward-looking notables."<sup>2</sup> It follows from this argument that there was an undeniable connection between the abolition of the "feudal" remnants in Guinean society and the option for immediate independence in September 1958.

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Jean Suret-Canale, "The End of the Chieftaincy in Guinea" in I.L. Markovitz, ed., *African Politics and Society*, New York, 1970, p. 98.

2

Jacques Rabemananjara, in introduction to Sékou Touré, *Guinée: Prélude à l'Indépendance*, Paris, 1959, p. 12.

The opposing school of thought that Suret-Canale indeed denounces is headed by B. Ameillon, and sees the suppression as a political manoeuvre by high-ranking PDG officials in their struggle for hegemony in Guinean politics. In essence the argument maintains that "It (the chieftaincy) constituted the single restriction to the total power of the party."<sup>3</sup>

The degenerate nature of the institution of the chieftaincy in the territory is a central theme common to both sides of the debate. Few would disagree that colonialism had transformed the very foundations upon which traditional chieftaincy was built and functioned, nor that the chiefs no longer represented and worked for the collective interests of the masses under their tutelage. From the very inception of the European conquest, chiefs found themselves in a precarious situation in regard to their future existence under colonial rule. Traditional rulers that resisted the French takeover were eventually crushed, their territories parcelled, and those that were captured most often found themselves imprisoned or exiled. The fate of those rulers generally termed "collaborators" of the French turned out to be no more secure in the long run than that of the resisters. Although initial treaties promised to respect traditional kingship and custom, annexation and complete administrative reorganisation were on the horizon. The implementation and evolution of the colonial system, its use of what it deemed "chiefs" and the designation of their purpose and role, and finally their integration into the administrative structure of the territory served eventually to alienate them from both what remained of traditional society and what was emerging as the modern African social and political setting.

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B. Ameillon, *La Guinée: Bilan d'une Indépendance*, Paris, 1964, p.24.

The evolution of the politique indigène can be summarised as passing through the following phases: 1) the initial protectorate policy where, in theory, customary practices and institutions of traditional authority were to be left intact under French supervision, leading to 2) direct administration including annexation, territorial division, and the often dubious selection procedure of native authorities, and finally 3) a reassessment of past mistakes, recognition of the increasing alienation of rulers from ruled and the precarious situation of the chieftaincy, and an attempt to rehabilitate customary chiefs, concentrating on the grass-roots level of territorial administration. The progression of the French native policy clearly reflects the undeniable degradation of the institution of the chieftaincy under colonial rule and the endeavour to adapt in order to save it from total collapse. To understand fully the abolition of the chieftaincy in Guinea three concurrent themes must be addressed: firstly the evolution and erosion of traditional society, secondly the contributing factors behind the decline of the native authorities, and finally the particular political circumstances that motivated the Guinean government to abolish rather than reform the institution of the chieftaincy, and the procedure that effectively enabled it to carry out its programme.

#### **The Erosion of Traditional Society**

Ironically, by the time the French came to terms with their past mistakes regarding the selection, treatment, and use of the chieftaincy in the West African colonies and subsequently devised a policy to re-establish the institution, indigenous society had evolved in such a way that the chieftaincy was fast becoming obsolete. By the early 1950s social evolution was evident in all sectors of African society,

expressed notably by the évolués, working and commercial classes, women, youth, and in Guinea even the peasants. Economic growth coincided with increased educational opportunities, society on the whole was considerably more mobile, and as a result reliance upon and deference shown to the customary chiefs steadily declined. The growth of political parties and their penetration into the countryside propelled desires for social and economic modernisation. Coupled with excessive behaviour, and the affiliation to the colonial system that the chiefs represented and the African populace resented, the institution of the chieftaincy was in dire straits.

Despite apparent detestation of the offices of native authority, at this time there was no satisfactory replacement available to appease both the colonial authorities and the African subjects. As a report on the situation in Guinea in 1955 pointed out:

One can neither support the rigid guardianship of the old chieftaincy and the administration, nor present in replacement a new human cell having any real stability. (4)

The report continued with the observation that the évolués constituted the new influential class in Guinea, resulting in the tendency to liberate the masses from traditional authority, custom, moral values and ancestral rites. Peasants and workers, cognisant of their expanding opportunities to elect these young African leaders, increasingly shifted their support to the politicians, most often at the expense of the chiefs.

By 1955 reports about the erosion of traditional society were arriving in the Governor's office from most districts in Guinea. The

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ANSOM AP 2143/9, Trimester report entitled "La Situation en Guinée," 10 February 1955.

head of the subdivision of Dinguiraye wrote in January 1955 that "custom is not evolving...in fact it is disappearing." He continued in more detail that:

It is particularly sensitive in the civil domain and in the organisation of the family. The traditional rules of marriage and customary divorce are disappearing bit by bit without anything arriving to replace them. This is followed by a degradation of the family unit of which the consequences are rapidly becoming serious. Marriages are becoming affairs of simple cohabitation or organised prostitution. Adultery is so banal that one no longer pays any attention to it. Even incest shocks no one and the cases are frequent. In the midst of this dissolution, children are born without any precise civil status. Pregnant women are remarrying without the slightest delay. (5)

The Commandant de Cercle of Dabola in February of the same year reported a similar situation of moral decay in his district. He too was particularly concerned about the questions of marriage, divorce, filiation, and the growing number of children born from adulterous relationships. The future, as predicted by the Commandant, was one where "the pillars of the family and social organisation will collapse." An integral part of this abandonment of custom was the liberation of women spearheaded by the political campaign of the PDG.

Tied to the emancipation of women was the liberation of the Guinean youth, also a programme incited by the PDG. Inspector Pruvost in his report on contact with the population cited an elderly trade unionist discussing the modern generation's disregard for the traditional custom of requesting certain family elders' permission for marriage:

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<sup>5</sup>  
ANSOM AP 2144/1, Cable from Dinguiraye dated 23 January 1955 cited in Pruvost report, "Contact avec les Populations," p. 3.

<sup>6</sup>  
District of Dabola, 4 February 1955, cited in *ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

"The youth, at least in Lower Guinea, no longer recognise this hierarchy. There is a complete split with their elders, they only do exactly as they please. There is a great gap between them and us." (7)

Suret-Canale discussed the erosion of traditional society in La République de Guinée, where he related the process, accelerating from 1950 onwards, to economic growth, namely the progress of the trade economy and the establishment of the first mines. This dissolution of traditional social structures, according to Suret-Canale, was manifested notably through the following factors:

- 1) The disintegration of the extended family favouring their replacement in the form of smaller private households;
- 2) The impoverishment of the masses accompanied by accentuation of social differentiation, particularly in the face of noticeable accumulation of wealth by a rising class of plantation owners and a salaried workforce;
- 3) Rural exodus to urban centres, administrative headquarters, and particularly to the capital;
- 4) Evolution towards the previously rare practices of buying and selling land and livestock;
- 5) The development of an indigenous commercial class, profitably establishing small enterprises such as shops, restaurants, transportation services, etc.; and
- 6) The economic and moral crisis of the chiefs, who were retaining their positions of authority solely through the support of the colonial government. (8)

The evolution and modernisation of African society under colonialism brought new choices and opportunities for the whole of the subject population. This "new world," and the difficulties of the chief's position within it, were aptly summarised by L.P. Mair:

The chief has ceased to be the ultimate source of protection to the humble, aid to the needy, and advancement to the ambitious. It is not simply that the superior government has taken his place, but that the new world offers opportunities which depend on the creation of relationships right outside

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7

Ibid., p. 3.

8

Jean Suret-Canale, La République de Guinée, Paris, 1970, pp. 140-1.

the traditional system. People can attain success in commerce, or eminence in the professions, without being beholden in any way to their political superiors....In these circumstances, resentment against the rule of chiefs is something more than a protest against injustice, even though it may express itself in that form. It is part of a wider demand: the demand for full participation in the institutions which control the destinies of Africans. (9)

Thus a gradual displacement of the institution of the chieftaincy was taking place in the evolution of African society.

### The Decline of the Chieftaincy

From the very onset of colonial rule and the incorporation of the chiefs into the system, their precise legal status was left largely undetermined. Throughout the colonial period the chiefs, completely without any clear legal rights, were subject to the same sanctions as their subjects. They no longer felt any security of tenure, as their positions of authority depended wholly upon the continued satisfaction of the colonial administration, judged by the productivity of the localities under their jurisdiction. Finally their position in colonial society was precarious in the sense that on the one hand the chiefs represented the administration and were responsible to carry out its policies and demands, while on the other hand in theory they were also representatives of the native subjects, expressing the will of the people to their governors. Caught in a position of being no more than "intermediaries," although useful on occasion to both sides, the chiefs struggled to survive within a system that rendered them unpopular with their superiors as well as their subordinates.

The main legislation codifying the institution of the chieftaincy

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9

L.P. Mair, "African Chiefs Today," *Africa*, XXVIII, July, 1958, pp. 198-9.

in French Guinea was the Decree of 15 November 1934 on Native Administration in Guinea. In the spirit of the time the decree stipulated that "the chief is designated according to local custom," however this was directly followed by an escape clause: "or, failing this, according to the rules laid down by the Commandant de Cercle and approved by the Lieutenant-Governor."<sup>10</sup> As designated by the 1934 decree, the main responsibilities of the chiefs were to collect taxes, oversee local production and the "protection of crops, plantations and harvests," guarantee free passage and the upkeep of roads, monitor hygiene, and maintain law and order.<sup>11</sup> Further requirements demanded of the chiefs in French West Africa were to supply labourers, and sometimes (especially during wartime) furnish products to the colonial government. Additional common administrative duties included the hosting of visiting officials, and bureaucratic requirements such as the keeping of public records of health, education, births, deaths, marriages, etc. To fulfill many of their administrative functions the chiefs normally solicited the help of clerks, interpreters, secretaries, messengers, and educated assistants, which they were responsible for paying out of their quite meager allowances. Finally, although severely limited in legal status, the chiefs were theoretically given the heavy responsibility of the administration of justice and the maintenance of general law and order in their respective provinces, to the extent of including the prevention of "brawls and disputes as well as any disturbance in

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10

Decree of 15 November 1934 on Native Administration in Guinea, reprinted in part in Annex F of P. Alexandre, "The Problems of Chieftaincy in French Speaking Africa," in Michael Crowder and Obaro Ikime, eds., *West African Chiefs*, New York, 1970, pp. 53-6.

11

*Ibid.*, Articles VI and VII.

public places."

Despite the wide assortment of specific functions relegated to the native authorities, their formal status in colonial government and society remained fundamentally undefined. The ambiguous legal position of the chiefs under the colonial system was concisely summarised by P. Alexandre:

It was impossible to define a chief in French administrative or constitutional law, or at least to define him other than in a negative manner: he was not a public official, nor an elected magistrate, he was not the representative of a public collectivity or of a legal entity in private law, no more was he an ordinary person who had assumed a de facto authority since his was defined and restricted by the local regulations. (13)

Apart from their constitutional dilemma of status, the traditional judicial powers of the chiefs over their subjects were gradually revoked by the colonial authorities. Initially during the protectorate phase of colonial rule, sanctioned by a decree in 1892 in French Guinea, the chiefs retained their customary rights in the administration of justice, except for cases of serious crimes which were sent to French courts. Due to the practical inexistence of functional French courts in the territories, criminal jurisdiction was reappointed to local chiefs in 1902. Apparently dissatisfied with the administration of justice in the hands of native authorities, the French decided rather than reorganise the system under closer supervision, instead to do away with it entirely.<sup>14</sup> In 1912 the judicial powers of village chiefs were completely abolished, and customary courts (tribunaux indigènes) were

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Ibid., Article VI.

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P. Alexandre, "The Problems of Chieftaincy," p. 43.

14

Raymond Buell, The Native Problem in Africa, vol. I, p. 1006.

created in district and subdivision headquarters. District courts were under European judges, while African judges were permitted in the lesser courts at the subdivision level. By a crippling decree of 1924, however, almost all legal matters and judicial powers were brought under direct French supervision.

It is often argued that the decline of the chieftaincy was due in part to the financial predicament of the chiefs. Whereas traditionally chiefs received tribute from a variety of sources - lesser chiefs, vassals, numerous dues and taxes, revenues from courts of justice, and taxes on trade and production - the colonial authorities denied chiefs their former sources of income, replacing them with only modest salaries insufficient to cover their expenses. Chiefs serving under the colonial system were paid on a sliding scale. Chefs de canton were on fixed salaries according to the grade of the office holder, those in densely populated districts normally deemed as having to carry more responsibility were therefore classified higher in grade. The Chefs de village were not paid salaries, but rather were entitled to a fixed percentage of the taxes they were responsible for collecting. This again was on a sliding scale, and a further regulation stipulated that the sooner the tax was returned the greater the rebate awarded to the village chief. In Guinea the rebate on tax collection on the village level ranged from five to eight percent.

The salaries of the chief were considered by most to be inadequate to support their status in society. The chiefs were responsible for paying their own administrative and tax-collecting agents, hosting colonial officers in the style to which they were accustomed, financing customary ceremonies, and maintaining their personal stature as men of wealth and power. Unable to sustain their positions of high social

status on their salaries alone, this situation of financial distress often led the native chiefs to shift the burden onto their subjects. Customary dues were multiplied, forced labour in the village included the tilling of the chief's fields, construction or repair of his private dwellings, and new taxes were introduced such as percentages of the harvest, inheritance, and for extravagances such as feasts and luxury items fancied by the chief.

An example of the despotism reportedly imposed by the chiefs of the Fouta Djallon in 1953 included a per capita tax for the purchase of a modern house and luxury car, a tax to cover the expenses of a pilgrimage to Mecca, plus a whole array of lesser taxes to contribute to each feast day as well as French holiday. Taxes were also levied on the death of anyone over the age of seven, and if left unpaid the lands and possessions of the deceased were confiscated.

The legal position of the chiefs was repeatedly brought into question in complaints of abuses and crimes committed against the subject populations. It is generally true that the French officers turned a blind eye to the oppressive operations of the chiefs so long as taxes were secured and law and order effectively maintained. When abuses of power were publicised incriminating the particular actions of a local chief, however, the colonial government absolved itself of any responsibility whatsoever.

The masses needed only the PDG's political organisation and encouragement to voice dissatisfaction, then join forces in working toward the achievement of positive results in the struggle against first chiefly then colonial "despotic" rule. In 1955 the process was already underway, as an administrator from Kindia reported:

The masses, who had seemed largely apathetic and one thought immune to all types of propaganda, have shown on the

contrary that they are capable of undergoing collective training and responding to orders. The masses today are greatly distraught, because they no longer know if they ought to continue to follow the traditional chiefs or on the contrary to listen to spokesmen of the RDA, who assure them that the administration is henceforth without the power to counteract the will of the party. The masses are in the end being seduced by the latter...and have complete confidence in their leader Sékou Touré, who they see as being the only one capable of realising their various aspirations. (15)

The loss of contact between the administration and the masses was one of the principal causes of the rapidly escalating violent incidents beginning in 1954. These disturbances coincided with the equally swift penetration of the PDG throughout the territory. It was commonly reported that the Guinean chapter of the RDA would with lightning speed infiltrate a village, then immediately proceed to set up a "puppet organisation" as a screen between the people and the local authorities. In this situation of sporadic chaos and violence, the Governor of Guinea in February 1955 requested that 20 administrators or functionaries be sent "to re-establish necessary contact with the population."<sup>16</sup> The fact that the envisioned solution involved the ordering of French administrators attests to the recognition that the chiefs were no longer capable of functioning as intermediaries or maintaining law and order in their jurisdictions. In short it was already evident that the native authorities were failing to serve their purpose in the colonial system. Nevertheless a primary recommendation to the colonial government in the wake of the 1954-1955 incidents was:

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District of Kindia, 30 January 1955, in Pruvost report, "Incidents de 1954-1955," pp. 49-50.

16

Pruvost report, "Contact avec les Populations," 12 February 1955, p. 29.

Finally, to study the means of safeguarding and reinforcing, in the shortest delay, the authority of the customary chiefs, upon which the administrators must be able to rely.  
(17)

This, however, was not by any means the first call for action to forestall the impending doom of the chieftaincy in Guinea. A brief recapitulation of the reforms underway will demonstrate two opposing tendencies, reflecting diverging schools of administrative thought: an attempt to strengthen the institution of the chieftaincy legally, morally and economically, while at the same time, progress towards the democratisation of territorial government which in the end enabled the Guinean government to abolish it.

#### Post-War Reforms and Democracy

The delegates at the 1944 Brazzaville Conference were aware of the plight of the chieftaincy. However, while reaffirming the principles of earlier theoreticians regarding the chieftaincy as an indispensable cog in the colonial system and of the necessity to re-establish it with appropriate measures of reform, legal statute was left to the determination of the French parliament.<sup>18</sup>

On 9 August 1947, in a session of the National Assembly, a resolution proposed by Yacine Diallo, Lamine Guèye, Léopold Senghor and other African representatives was adopted:

...inviting the Government to specify a statute on the indigenous chiefs in French West Africa, French Equatorial Africa, in Togo and Cameroon, on the triple points of their material and moral situation and the sanctions to which they are subject. (19)

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17

ANSCM AP 2143/9, "Note au sujet de la situation en Guinée," 1955.

18

Article 74 of the 1946 Constitution stipulated that only the National Assembly had the legal power to carry out this type of reform.

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ANSCM AP 2152/1, National Assembly, Proposition de Résolution No. 1711, Second Sitting 9 August 1947.

For nearly a decade afterwards a series of proposals and projects for laws were debated in the parliament and French Union Assembly. Despite universal agreement on the main objectives of reform: definition of a legal status of the chiefs and penalties for abuse of position, improvement in their material status, reinforcement of their prestige, and standardised selection procedure and specification of duties, each proposal was condemned on the grounds of being either too specific to include the wide variety of traditional practices, or overly vague to be of any true merit. The approximate number of administrative chiefs functioning in French West Africa in 1939 was 50,287, of which there were 32 provincial chiefs, 2,206 canton chiefs, and 48,049 village chiefs.<sup>20</sup> In attempting to standardise this diversity of local situations, each of the proposed statutes met insurmountable obstacles which eventually denied its passage. The fundamental contradiction of these efforts at reform was the desire to respect custom and the traditional authority of the chiefs, while at the same time encourage the process of evolution of democratic institutions as outlined by the Constitution and new colonial policy.

#### The Demise of the Guinean Chieftaincy

The untimely death of Yacine Diallo, the growth of the RDA-PDG, and the results of the 1956 elections together indicated the near certain doom of the chieftaincy in Guinea. The sudden loss of the eloquent spokesman Yacin Diallo left a void of political unity and representation of both the chieftaincy and the Fouta Djalon, that was henceforth never effectively filled. While in most of the West African territories the chiefs

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V. Thompson and R. Adloff, *French West Africa*, p. 204.

were a political force considered advantageous to have on one's side, in Guinea the tension between the emerging political elite and the "collaborators" was acute.

One likely factor enabling the Guinean politicians to strongly denounce the traditional authorities was the immense success of the PDG's rural campaign. From the introduction of universal suffrage in the overseas territories, generally the peasants in West Africa voted in allegiance to their historical rulers. For this reason most political parties actively sought the support of the chiefs in order to obtain that of the masses. This, however, was not the case in Guinea, where the PDG purposely exposed the weaknesses and abuses of the chiefs in the pursuit of direct contact with the peasants, establishing itself firmly between the representatives of the colonial authority and the subject population. On numerous occasions between 1955 and 1958, PDG supporters violently assaulted the institution of the chieftaincy, physically attacking certain chiefs and their henchmen, and burning residences and fields as a demonstration of their vulnerability.

There appears to be some debate over the motivation behind the PDG attack on the chieftaincy. As cited earlier, Suret-Canale maintained that the chieftaincy had lost all of its traditional and representation-al characteristics and was in fact already defunct, its legal suppression simply recognised this *fait accompli*. Ruth Schachter Morgenthau, after extensive interviews with the PDG leadership, claimed that their attitude was the following: "we are not against the chiefs, we are only  
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against the bad chiefs." She offered as evidence a strategy pursued by

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R. Schachter Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, pp. 249-50.

the PDG, namely to locate areas where traditional rules of succession had been violated, whereby the party would seek the support of the legitimate claimant. According to Schachter Morgenthau this meant that the PDG "did not disdain chiefly backing." <sup>22</sup> As the final proof of her argument she cited the RDA resolution to befriend the chieftaincy pronounced in Conakry in 1955.

The middle position of the debate, as expressed by Maurice Gastaud, saw the fundamental strategy of the PDG as a battle primarily against colonialism. In the pursuit of freedom, it was necessary to take a crucial step to unite the masses. This step, in his opinion, was the abolition of the chieftaincy--the principal support of the colonial <sup>23</sup> regime.

A different approach regarding the campaign for the abolition of the chieftaincy held that its suppression was the final measure securing the hegemonic position of the PDG in the Guinean Government. Ameillon saw this as the deliberate manoeuvre by the aspiring Guinean politicians; in fact this view may be supported by general tendencies characteristic of this era. Michael Crowder mentioned the general phenomenon that:

The French-speaking (African) politician was concerned not with the chief's power-base, for he had little except French support. He was concerned with the chief in so much as he was an obstacle provided by the French to his political ambitions. (24)

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Ibid.

23

Maurice Gastaud, "Naissance et évolution du P.D.G." Cahiers du Centre d'Etudes et de recherches Marxistes, 55, 1967, p. 8.

24

M. Crowder and O. Ikime, West African Chiefs, p. XXVI.

In his 1961 study of African political parties, Thomas Hodgkin also depicted the contradiction facing the chieftaincy in the modern political context:

The assumptions on which kingship or chiefly rule is founded--whether the ruler be hereditary or elected, absolute or constitutional, Animist, Muslim, or Christian--are in conflict with the assumptions on which party government is founded. The authority of the chief depends primarily upon his status within the traditional order, his capacity to perform ritual functions; the authority of the party leader depends upon his achievements within the modern order, his capacity to realise desired political change. (25)

The official stance adopted by the PDG in regards to the chieftaincy, in the words of Diallo Saifoulaye and published in *La Liberté* in 1956, was the following:

Our formal position regarding the problem of the chieftaincy is this: the chieftaincy, degraded by the colonial administration, no longer represents the tradition which gave rise to the office. In many circumstances the chiefs betrayed their functions by making themselves servile instruments of colonial power against the permanent interests of the people. Most were designated illegitimately and hold their posts only because they made themselves spokesmen and defenders of the colonial authorities. Others have used their administrative powers to the point of scandal....True traditional chieftaincy no longer exists...and nothing can replace it. (26)

Finally, one author has suggested that the responsibility of the abolition was shared between the "reform-minded colonial administrators under the leadership of Governor Jean Ramadier, and modern-minded political leaders such as Sékou Touré." <sup>27</sup> Victor D. DuBois explained in

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Thomas Hodgkin, *African Political Parties*, Massachusetts, 1971, p. 27.

26  
*La Liberté*, 5 June 1956.

27  
V.D. DuBois, "The Independence Movement in Guinea; a Study in African Nationalism," p. 343.

his thesis on the nationalist movement in Guinea that the chieftaincy had expired "once it had become purposeless in the eyes of the French and obstructive in the eyes of the Guineans." The point that the chieftaincy had lost much of its usefulness is indisputable. The argument that the French administrators actively encouraged its suppression, however, is seriously lacking in evidence and indeed highly doubtful.

#### Colonial Response to the Fall of the Chiefs

The attitude of the French authorities regarding the state of decline of the chieftaincy in Guinea was one of awareness but not alarm. Guinea had three successive Governors between 1954 and 1957, and the problem of the chieftaincy was recurrently addressed by each one in turn. Following the 1954 elections and subsequent incidents, the loss of contact with the population and the predicament of the chiefs became topics of serious study. In February 1955 Governor Parisot hosted a conference in Conakry of the Commandants de Cercle to address the question of the chieftaincy. In his report to the federal headquarters in Dakar, Parisot elucidated the following points emanating from the conference:

- 1) The chieftaincy remains an indispensable part of social life in the territory and the population would not accept its abolition;
- 2) Chiefs should not be elected, as this would negate the essence of the institution and result in perilous circumstances;
- 3) The financial situation of the chiefs is in crisis; customary dues are being denied, and they are heavily burdened by the expenses incurred through their administrative duties;
- 4) The administrators agree that the endowments of the chiefs should be increased;

- 5) The Chefs de circonscription are unanimous in stressing the necessity to maintain and confirm the chiefs' position in the domain of justice coutumière. (28)

Governor Parisot then recommended a project to be undertaken, firstly to reorganise customary justice, and secondly to improve the ranking and remuneration system in the territory. He concluded his report with the following supplication:

It is high time for intervention because the chieftaincy is anxious, banned or abused under the blows of those who are weakening it, and rendered distasteful in the eyes of the people....The chiefs, whose deep loyalty we have constantly enjoyed, doubt "French authority." (29)

The dissatisfaction felt by the chiefs, regarding the lack of support offered them by the colonial authorities, was a constant theme in Guinean politics throughout the mid-1950s. Numerous petitions were drafted, imploring the administration to reassure the position of the customary chiefs and to intervene in cases of disorder and intense conflict, particularly vis à vis the rapidly swelling ranks of the PDG. A crucial shift in French policy regarding the PDG took place in the wake of the 1954-1955 Guinean uprisings. Governor Parisot, a self-declared enemy of Touré in 1954, was in dire need of high ranking PDG cooperation in 1955 to reinstitute calm in the territory. A great deal of bargaining was going on at this time between the French authorities and the PDG, the outcome of which was the dispersion of PDG spokesmen to implore their followers to cease the violence, accompanied by a circular requesting that all possible administrative assistance be given to their mission. <sup>30</sup> Additionally, the RDA Coordinating Committee purposely met in

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ANSOM AP 2144/1, Report Governor Guinea to High-Commissioner AOF, No. 92/CAB, Conakry, 17 February 1955.

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Ibid, p. 14.

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ANSOM AP 2144/1, "Note d'Orientation Politique," Governor Parisot, No. 23/CAB, Conakry, 25 February 1955.

Conakry so that Touré could announce his agreed upon break with the Communists, a speech anxiously awaited by the colonial administration. It was at this meeting where the RDA reaffirmed its intention to work both with the French authorities and the chiefs for harmony in democratic progress. Touré, in order to reassert his loyalty to the RDA and its revised programme, clarified his position versus the chieftaincy in a letter to RDA President Houphouët where he carefully wrote:

I am anxious to reaffirm to you my ardent desire to contribute to the creation in Guinea of a peaceful social climate indispensable to the useful cooperation with the Administrative authorities as with the chieftaincies. (31)

In the same letter Touré repeatedly referred to the abuses of the chiefs, and responded to criticisms of his political stance, particularly in regard to the chieftaincy issue. The tone of this concluding paragraph expresses Touré's real opinion of the institution of the chieftaincy, revealing a slight resentment of having been obliged to defend his position:

Certainly, our militants who suffer from the actions of certain chiefs do not hide their indignation, perhaps they express the violent sentiment of the entire population. A number of chiefs are members of the PDG, I can with their help undertake action to reduce tension between the chieftaincies and the rural masses. Must I make myself clear that I am aware that the coexistence of the traditional framework and the responsible elites, promoted by the new institutions, is imperative to the harmonious evolution of African society? (32)

Governor Bonfils, who took over from Parisot in 1955, was equally concerned with the decline of the chieftaincy in Guinea. Acting on the recommendations of both Pruvost and Parisot, Bonfils reformed both the

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ANSCM AP 2143/9, Letter Sékou Touré to Félix Houphouët-Boigny, 20 May 1955.

32

Ibid.

ranking and remuneration system for the Guinean chiefs. In May 1955 the Territorial Assembly passed a Projet d'Arrêté improving the financial situation of the canton chiefs. Henceforth the 243 cantons were divided into 7 classes, their order of importance determined according to the following criteria: area, population, geographic location, existence of markets, commercial centers, etc. Respective salaries of the Chefs de canton ranged from 60,000 to 600,000 francs CFA per annum. Additionally, dignitary titles of Chef supérieur were bestowed on chiefs serving more than 15 years, along with varying salary increases. Finally, to respect the unique position of the almany of the Fouta (also the canton chief of Mamou), the title Chef de province was awarded with a salary of 1,300,000 francs CFA.

In a later communiqué sent to the Commandants de Cercle and subdivision heads in April 1956, Bonfils reminded his administrators that the "extremely difficult situation of the chieftaincy" was still a subject addressed at each conference of the territory's Commandants de Cercle. Bonfils made clear his position that "there is however no question of the disappearance of this traditional force, that is an indispensable element of political equilibrium in the life of this country." It appears that the Governor attempted to take on the role of mediator between the PDG and the chieftaincy, giving consideration to

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Previously they had been on a scale from 30,000 to 172,000 francs CFA per year.

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ANSOM AP 2152/1, Cable Governor Bonfils to High-Commissioner AOF, No. 556/CAB, Conakry, 29 November 1955.

35

ANSOM AP 2194/5, Governor Bonfils instructions to Commandants de Cercle and Chefs de subdivision in Guinea, No. 26/CAB, Conakry, 14 April 1956.

the grievances of each opponent. He acknowledged the PDG claim that it was only against the bad chiefs, and agreed that the French administration had been wrongfully tolerant of the well known abuses of some of its collaborators. The good chiefs, Bonfils claimed, were aware of some of the wrongdoings of fellow native authorities, and therefore were in the process of regrouping themselves. <sup>36</sup> The instructions to the district and subdivision heads laid out by Bonfils were strong and clear:

- 1) It is no longer admissible to retain useless illegitimate chiefs;
- 2) The chief must no longer be the absolute sovereign but the head of a collectivity from which he heeds advice;
- 3) The 1934 statute of the chieftaincy in Guinea must be re-established, for it includes the maintenance of advisory councils both at the village and canton level, and incorporates democratic measures that will increase the validity and popularity of the chieftaincy; therefore create village and canton commissions;
- 4) Multiply and choose carefully your Conseils de notables, giving them substantial matters to deliberate; and
- 5) Introduce women into your councils. (37)

In short, Governor Bonfils was demanding the democratisation of power and further autonomy of village and canton collectivities, which he expected would increase the acceptance of the chieftaincy in rural areas and by politicians concerned with blatant abuses of power. The main reason why Bonfils was calling for a re-evaluation of the 1934 Decree on Native Administration in Guinea is that by this time circulars announcing the unlikelihood of a common statute ever being adopted by the parliament for French West Africa were arriving in Conakry. Hence the recommendation of the French government was for the individual

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Governor Bonfils was referring to the creation of the Association of the Chiefs in French Guinea in March 1956, which he himself took credit for suggesting, in order to allay the chiefs' fears evoked by rapid RDA encroachment into their jurisdictions.

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Bonfils instructions, 14 April 1956, *op. cit.*

territories to work out their own reforms regarding the status and duties of the chiefs. Finally, in January 1957 a circular from the High-Commissioner addressed to the Governors of West Africa explicitly invited the territorial governments to sort out the perilous predicament of the chieftaincies, reading: "I leave you free to decide following the particular circumstances in your territory." The fundamental legal transformation which made a reform of this nature possible was a result of the Loi-Cadre of June 1956.

#### Legal Manoeuvring and the Suppression of the Chieftaincy

The stipulation of the Loi-Cadre that enabled the Guinean government to effectively abolish the institution of the chieftaincy was contained in Article 1. The structural reforms permissible by Article 1 included "the reorganisation of the federal governments and the modification of the attributions of the heads of territorial groups and councils." While interests common to the Republic were to remain in the hands of the French, local interests, including that of the civil service, were to be henceforth regulated by respective territorial governments.

The necessity to reorganise the administrative structure in Guinea had been recognised since 1955. The disturbances of 1954-1955 were blamed partly upon the lack of administrative personnel on the local level, and the fact that administrative districts were too large to permit constant contact with the population. In April 1955 the French Overseas Minister pointed out to the High-Commissioner that while Guinea's area and population were similar to that of the Ivory Coast,

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ANSOM AP 2152/1, High-Commissioner AOF to Territorial Governors, No. 59/AP, Dakar, 21 January 1957.

39

ANSOM AP 2189/8, Paper entitled "Loi-Cadre", August 1957.

Guinea had only 20 cercles and 7 subdivisions to Ivory Coast's respective 18 and 48. The Minister therefore recommended the creation of new administrative circonscriptions, which was also in accordance with the wishes of the Guinean parliamentarians in Paris.

The territorial reorganisation envisioned by the Loi-Cadre took place in April and May 1957, after elections for the new Territorial Assemblies had been held in the end of March. Immediately the Guinean government concentrated on the question of administrative reform. In June 1957 the High-Commissioner reported to Paris that in the wake of continued violence (particularly in October 1956), the obvious solution was to let the Guinean authorities handle their own internal and institutional affairs, as he wrote:

Finally the reform of the institutions will permit the Guinean political leaders, now equipped with governmental responsibilities, to participate in the re-establishment of a favourable climate. (41)

One month later, at a conference of the Commandants de Cercle, the administrative reforms to be implemented were decided upon. This territorial reorganisation finalised the abolition of the chieftaincy.

The historic conference of the Commandants de Cercle and African Ministers, presided over by Governor Ramadier and led by Vice-President Touré, took place in Conakry from 25 to 27 July 1957. In his opening address, Ramadier elucidated the diminished role of the French administrators in the decision-making process of Guinean politics:

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ANSOM AP 2143/9, Letter Minister FOM to High-Commissioner AOF, Paris, 4 April 1955.

41

ANSOM AP 2111/5, Telegram High-Commissioner AOF to Minister FOM, No. 1342, Dakar, 1 June 1957.

Our role, Administrators, is to make clear to them, to give them objectively, loyally, impartially, all elements of the decision, but the decision on these territorial problems is now their doing. And it is when these decisions are made by the Conseil de Gouvernement that you will be transmitted instructions that you will have to implement. (42)

The first speaker to the conference was Fodéba Keita, Minister of the Interior, who began by summarising the two problems associated with the Guinean chieftaincies. Firstly, Keita discussed the institutional conflict, where the chieftaincy was considered to be incompatible with the social and economic development of the country as envisioned by the Loi-Cadre. Secondly the Minister held that the chieftaincy as an institution suffered from the unacceptable lack of personal integrity of many of its chiefs. In full agreement with the Interior Minister, Governor Ramadier added: "we all know that the role of the chieftaincy has come to an end." <sup>43</sup> Next the Governor invited opinions of the Commandants as to the possible implications of the suppression of the chieftaincy in their respective districts. The following excerpts from the various cercles denote the general consensus concerning the recognised inefficiency and popular opinion of the chiefs:

Kouroussa: "In the district of Kouroussa, where one waits from one day to the next for the suppression of the chieftaincy, there will be no damage, because for almost 4 months, the Chefs de canton have been absolutely useless";

Kissidougou: "In Kissidougou, customary chiefs did not exist; those who are there are strictly artificial, they have neither activity, influence nor consideration";

Boffa: "For more than a year and a half, the canton and village chiefs are chiefs in name only. They no longer have any influence on the population whatsoever";

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S. Touré, Guinée. Prélude à l'Indépendance, pp. 141-2.

43

Ibid., p. 22.

Boké: "The population did not wait for our decision to reject the institution of the chiefs";

Gaoual: "There is absolutely no inconvenience in suppressing the canton chiefs who have no human or economic decency."  
(44)

Only two districts, Dinguiraye and Mamou, registered hesitation to the abolition of the chieftaincy. The case of Dinguiraye was particular in that the chiefs were direct descendants of Al-Haj Umar Tal. The Commandant explained that the chiefs still carried considerable religious and spiritual weight in the area, and that the population would accept the suppression of the chieftaincy, however not applaud it. Regarding Mamou, home of the almany of the Fouta Djalon, the Commandant expressed fears of anarchy following the abolition of the chieftaincy, particularly on the village level. Nearly all of the administrators, however, voiced concern over potential disorder and confusion during the transition period to new administrative organisation.

Touré demonstrated at the conference that he was well prepared to answer the numerous questions about a viable administrative replacement for the chieftaincy. In his initial address Touré explained that the chieftaincy, besides being tarnished with corrupt individuals, was outmoded as a pillar in the evolving political structure. Economically the old territorial divisions were inadequate, and peasants were unlawfully mobilised to perform tasks for the personal interests of the chiefs; according to Touré both factors were directly thwarting the pace and progress of national economic development. Following a study of the economic conditions of the territory and the prospects for industrialisation, the Guinean government was in the process of devising a national

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Ibid., pp. 37-8.

development plan. Based upon necessary regional reorganisation, Touré argued that the envisioned development scheme could not be successfully implemented by the chiefs:

We asked ourselves the question that, when it came down to it, would this reorganisation be possible through the institution of the chieftaincy? We have responded negatively, the chieftaincy no longer plays this economic role because it no longer has the confidence of the populace. Without the constraint, the administrative force which constitutes its only significance, it no longer can, I'm telling you, lead the peasant masses. (45)

By the second day of the conference it was considered agreed that the chieftaincy was to be suppressed, as Ramadier in his opening remarks stated:

We have killed the chieftaincy. It was destroyed automatically economically by the modification of peasant and rural life. Now, if we want to create a new organisation of peasant and rural life, it is a matter of finding a parallel administrative support. (46)

In these circumstances attention was turned toward the new administrative structures to be forthwith introduced. The organisational reform emerging from the conference altered the regional structure of cercle and subdivision, abolished the region referred to as canton, and added those of poste administratif and village. In accordance with PDG philosophy, the village collectivity was considered the critical cell of rural society, and 4,723 "rural communes" were organised. The local base of the party was hence concentrated in the form of councils elected by universal suffrage, of which the president was given the title of chief. In a radio address on 27 August Vice-President Touré declared that the Guinean Conseil de Gouvernement had adopted a text reorganising

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Ibid., p. 26.

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Ibid., p. 59.

the administrative structure of the territory, which would be submitted<sup>47</sup> to the forthcoming session of the Territorial Assembly for approval.

Just prior to Touré's radio announcement, Governor Ramadier wrote a letter summarising the recent political developments in Guinea to the French Overseas Minister. He set the stage by acknowledging that the Guinean government functioned as a team, completely dependent upon their eminent leader President Sékou Touré. Seemingly to justify Touré's behaviour, Ramadier then reminded the Minister that "the African conception of power is totalitarian," and that the political campaign of the PDG had for years been directed against the administration and the chiefs. The Governor explained the predicament facing the administration in Guinea accordingly:

If I succeeded in acknowledging that now the territorial administration was at the disposition of the Conseil de Gouvernement, and that it intended to aid the realisation of the Council's policies and not to contradict them, the chieftaincy remained, representing a force of monolithism and opposition, the very essence of all political movement that lacks direction. (48)

To address this predicament, therefore, Ramadier claimed that he suggested the July meeting of the Commandants de Cercle, at which a solution was envisioned. Following cautionary advice from the Governor and the administrators, it was there decided to suppress the chieftaincy, and structural replacements of profound significance were presented. Ramadier concluded by highlighting both the potential difficulties ensuing from the abolition of the chieftaincy and the

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ANSOM AP 2152/1, "Reorganisation Administrative en Guinée," Agence France Presse Spécial Outre Mer, No. 3336, 28 August 1957.

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ANSOM AP 2152/1, Letter Governor Ramadier to Minister FOM, No. 976/SP, Conakry, 22 August 1957, pp. 2-3.

personal character of Touré, including his apparent determination to prevail:

I advised President Sékou Touré that prudence was essential, that if in certain regions of the territory the suppression of the chieftaincy would proceed without incident, without complication, to the general satisfaction of the population, in the Fouta the problem is likely to be different. The Vice-President of the Conseil de Gouvernement has set the wheels in motion, it would be difficult to get him to turn back. Of course he will do everything possible to avoid struggle, but if the opposition wants to fight, he will not be able to refuse it. (49)

Perhaps a bit surprisingly, the reaction of the French Overseas Ministry was not one of grave concern. The reply to Ramadier's letter acknowledged the transmission of Touré's broadcast and requested details of the new administrative divisions. Finally the Director of Political Affairs responded that he would like to think that this reorganisation was combined with the institution of rural collectivities as commissioned by a French decree in April, and that these would help take over from the suppressed chieftaincies.<sup>50</sup>

While the French government under the Loi-Cadre had the power to annul the decisions made by a Conseil de Gouvernement,<sup>51</sup> in the case of the abolition of the chieftaincy in Guinea the authorities never even considered the possibility of intervention. Whatever the initial

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Ibid., p. 7.

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ANSOM AP 2152/1, Letter Minister FOM to Governor Conakry, No. 811, Paris, 13 September 1957.

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Article 12 of Loi-Cadre stipulated that the Governor of a territory, by the intermediary of the High-Commissioner, may draw the attention of the French Overseas Minister to any deliberations of a Conseil de Gouvernement that exceeded its powers or threatened national defense, public order, and the maintenance of security or public liberties. The Government had the right to annul by decree following the advice of the Conseil d'Etat. ANSOM AP 2189/8, Circular of Minister FOM, No. 4057, Paris, 15 May 1957.

attempts to impede the growth of the PDG and the ascendancy of Touré as its omnipotent leader, the French administration had since reconciled itself with the political supremacy of the party. Faced often with the necessity to work with the PDG to re-establish peace and the maintenance of law and order in the territory, successive Governors had little room for political manoeuvring, particularly against the wishes of the masses as expressed by the emerging political elite. Guinean politicians proved adept at making the most out of the sweeping reforms introduced by the Loi-Cadre, and in this situation it appears that the French strategy in dealing with this potent force was to attempt to maintain good relations with the Guinean nationalist leaders. The plight of the chieftaincy and loss of contact with the population was a well-documented administrative concern in Guinea. Although the extent of the relationship with the masses envisioned and achieved by the PDG may not have been foreseen by the French officials, nevertheless the Guinean government was wilfully handed the means of securing their future path of development.

From the standpoint of the PDG the importance of the political backing and participation of the masses was a recurrent theme in the movement to suppress the chieftaincy. In this respect, while no longer representing the collective will of the population, the chieftaincy was actually regarded as a dividing wall, its demolition therefore imperative in order to secure direct contact with the masses. Touré alluded to the simple fact that the abolition of the chieftaincy was required to dissolve opposition to the party when he stated: "politically, the chieftaincy was mobilised as an arm against the RDA."<sup>52</sup>

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S. Touré, Guinée: Prélude à l'Indépendance, p. 53.

Finally, the administrative reorganisation and suppression of the chieftaincy was deemed crucial to the dismemberment of the colonial system, as Touré explained in January 1958:

Which is why, immediately after the constitution of our Conseil de Gouvernement, the first step was to define our line of action, the popular objectives to reach. This line of action...rests essentially upon the integral decolonisation of all the structures of the country. It is impossible to fight against colonialism while maintaining the structures that favour its system of exploitation and oppression; it is impossible, finally, to struggle against colonisation without denouncing and destroying the causes which at the base are internal conflicts of which we have long suffered. As you know, our movement, which controls practically all the organisations introduced by the Loi-Cadre, in the sense of decolonisation, has indicated by concrete realisations, its absolute determination to bring down the colonial regime. We consider it incompatible with the dignity and African interest and also with the durability and the development of French influence. (53)

The same spirit propelled Touré to conclude:

Yes! The bastion of indigenous feudalism has fallen. The institution of the chieftaincy has been suppressed as of 1 January 1958, and with it have disappeared all of the abuses of which it was guilty with respect to the rural populations. (54)

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Sékou Touré, Expérience Guinéenne et Unité Africaine, Paris, 1962, p. 26.

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Ibid., p. 39.

## CHAPTER IX

### Guinea Opts for Independence

Despite the fact that the Territorial Assembly in Guinea had taken the provisions of the Loi-Cadre further than any other West African territory, particularly in its abolition of the chieftaincy, PDG leaders were among the first to voice dissatisfaction with the degree of autonomy granted under the 1956 reforms. Moreover, while in 1956 parliamentary debate pertaining to the overseas territories was dominated by the issues of territorial government and autonomy, by 1957 the focus shifted to the controversial subjects of federation and independence. As it was generally recognised that the natural progression of autonomy would lead to eventual independence, the question of what form it would take--as a federation or as many small states--was brought to the forefront of African political debate.

African deputies in Paris were divided over the future relationship between France and the overseas territories. As a Minister in the French government and major contributor in the drafting of the Loi-Cadre, Houphouët's preference, for dismantling the African Federations in favour of largely autonomous states, dominated the reform package. From first glance at the draft reforms, Léopold Senghor denounced what he deemed the "balkanisation" of Africa, calling for the return of powers that were stripped from the Grand Council, and for the creation of a federal executive. In subsequent National Assembly debate African

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See Donal Cruise O'Brien, "The Limits of Political Choice in French West Africa," Civilisations, XV, 2, 1965, pp. 1-15.

deputies, in turn, sided with either the "territorialist" position of Houphouët, or the "federalist" stance of Senghor. In the end the Loi-Cadre decrees, which greatly diminished the powers of the federal council yet failed to grant full territorial self-government, pleased neither side of the dispute.

In light of the triumphant success of the RDA in the March 1957 territorial elections, the Coordinating Committee was summoned to Yamoussokro in order to prepare the movement's third congress. Beginning on 4 April the Committee spent four working days discussing the recent elections, the new institutions and associated responsibilities introduced by the Loi-Cadre, the movement's relations with the French government with the future prospects of a French-African Community, and the details of the forthcoming congress. The RDA Third Inter-territorial Congress was scheduled to take place in July, but was later postponed until September, in Bamako--the birthplace of the RDA. Interestingly, although the hottest topic of debate in Paris among the deputies was federalism, the subject was deliberately omitted from the Ordre du jour set for the Bamako mass congress. Responding to criticism that the RDA was eluding the problem of independence, Doudou Guèye explained that the prospect of independence required the "mature conscience of a collective society"; however, he continued:

Is this the only fact that influences the recourse to independence? I would respond immediately in the affirmative if our societies did not suffer from an extraordinary imbalance between the degree of "political" evolution of this society and its degree of "economic" evolution. This imbalance between the "desire" and the "ability" is clearly at the root of the problem....There is only recourse to a solution of what is possible. (2)

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Doudou Guèye, "Après la réunion de Yamoussokro le RDA n'élué pas le problème d'indépendance." Afrique Nouvelle, 30 April 1957.

Albeit aware of Houphouët's views on the matter, Sékou Touré became a strong advocate of the federalist position. Perhaps Touré envisioned African independence in the not-too-distant future (Houphouët totally rejected the notion); Touré nevertheless realised that strength could only be achieved through African unity and interdependence. Touré launched his federalist campaign in a speech before the Guinea Territorial Assembly in July 1957, culminating in a vote demanding a federal executive at Dakar. Prior to this the argument had been purposely kept solely between high-ranking African politicians, primarily because the introduction of the debate to the territorial sections increased the threat of a possible split within the RDA. Touré pre-empted the working out of a common position at the Bamako congress by presenting a motion to the federal Grand Council in August. Co-authored by Doudou Thiam, a CA-BPS councillor from Senegal, the motion for the creation of a federal executive in charge of communal services and interests was passed unanimously by the Council on 29 August 1957. Houphouët was absent from the Council sitting; nevertheless all RDA members present supported Touré's proposal, including Council Vice-President Gabriel d'Arboussier, Doudou Guèye, and Modibo Keita. The adopted plan called for the constitution of a federal executive, the officers of which would be elected either from the territorial Government Councils or via procedures similar to those for the Territorial Assemblies.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore the Council decided to send a delegation to Paris to present the motion to the National Assembly. In the meantime a major battle over conflicting views, about the future shape of the French-African Community and

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ANSOM AP 2257/3, Agence France Presse interview by Paul Chauvet of Gabriel d'Arboussier, Sékou Touré and Fodéba Keita, 4 September 1957.

federalism issue, proved irrepressible at the third RDA mass congress.

### The Third RDA Interterritorial Congress

The historic third RDA congress, the largest of its kind in African history, opened in Bamako on 25 September 1957. The congress was attended by 254 delegates from 10 out of the 12 territories within AOF and AEF, 570 official observers, 25 journalists, and more than 2,000 additional territorial delegates who, due to lack of space, were forced to remain outside the conference halls where loudspeakers were provided. Among the 254 main delegates, apart from a Minister and Secretary of State in the French government, were 6 territorial Vice-Presidents, 32 Council Ministers, 17 parliamentarians, 16 Grand Councillors, 67<sup>4</sup> territorial assemblymen, 51 municipal councillors, and 14 mayors. Distinguished observers included French politicians François Mitterrand, Edgar Faure, Pierre Mendès-France, and representatives of all metropolitan political parties except the Communists, who ironically had been the only ones present at past RDA congresses. Leaders of other African political parties present at the congress included Mamadou Dia of the CA and Barry Diawadou of the BAG.

RDA President Houphouët-Boigny arrived for the congress in regal style. Treated as one of the highest-ranking Ministers in the French government, Houphouët was met at the Bamako airport by a detachment of troops, then ushered to the Governor's palace where he was graciously accommodated. In his opening address Houphouët reaffirmed the principal aims of the RDA, calling for unity between all African political movements in the struggle for emancipation and equality between the overseas

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Interafrigue Presse, No. 129/30, 4 October 1957, p. 34.

territories and the metropole. Insisting on the revision of Title Eight of the French Constitution, Houphouët outlined his vision of a French-African Community where member states would be on equal footing with one another. The form of government under which the Community would function, Houphouët announced, was federalist. Initially delighted, the excitement of the crowd favouring the federalist approach slowly waned, as Houphouët went on to describe his plan in detail. Indeed his proposal aimed at the creation of a federal government and federal parliament, but on the level of the overall Community, for example such as the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The clinching remark that foreshadowed a serious conflict within the RDA was when Houphouët stated:

We specify that in order for us to achieve this goal, the steps which seem the most effective are on one hand: the rapid suppression of intermediary organs between the central federal power and the territories; and on the other hand: that the personality and autonomy of the territories be more strongly asserted daily. (5)

The debate over the issue of federalism was not officially on the agenda for discussion. It was not until the close of the congress, when delegates disputed the contents of the general resolution, that opposition to Houphouët's ideas finally surfaced. In fact the heated arguments which ensued delayed the closing of the congress for two days, until a compromise resolution was eventually passed.

In the meantime the congress progressed quite peacefully, as nine reports were presented on all aspects of African society, including one

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CRDA 2.57/br.1, "Troisième Congrès Interterritorial du RDA," Félix Houphouët-Boigny, "Rapport Moral et d'Orientation," 25 September 1957, p. 11.

by Touré on trade unionism. Several minor disruptions during the first few days of the congress can be traced to various observer groups rather than RDA delegates. As usual, representatives of the students' union FEANF (Fédération des étudiants d'Afrique noire) spoke out with vengeance against oppression, calling for "unity, liberty, and independence for our people."<sup>7</sup> The newly created Dakar Parti Africain de l'Indépendance (PAI) seconded the motion made by the youth for immediate independence. Finally trade unionists from UGTAN applauded militants demanding independence for Algeria, and affirmed their position favouring the creation of a federal executive in AOF. All in all, the RDA demonstrated a high level of political maturity by allowing dissenting voices and outside organisations to air their grievances during congress proceedings.

Real trouble began brewing on 28 September, the last scheduled day of the congress, over the political resolution presented to the delegates for ratification. The resolution called for a revision of the French Constitution allowing for the creation of a French Community comprised of autonomous states with a federal government and parliament. Touré, now present at the deliberations, led the majority of the delegates in rejecting the proposed resolution. Flamboyantly attired in Guinean national dress, Touré read excerpts from the political resolution unanimously passed by the recent PDG Territorial Conference held in Kankan just prior to the RDA congress, including the following passages:

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Due to a fall in which he was injured, Touré was unable to attend the first 3 days of the congress. His speech was pre-recorded and played for the delegates.

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Afrique Informations, No. 129/30, 4 October 1957, p. 16.

The Loi-Cadre, with the absence of federal executives, constitutes the parcelling out of the AOF and AEF Federations.

The people of Black Africa, like all dependent populations, aspire to obtain their sovereignty and demand their right to self-determination: this means the right to decide their futures, including the right to separate from the metropole and to form independent states...however the right to separation does not imply an obligation to secede. Also, it affirms that the prerequisite to the creation of a true French-African Community is the recognition of our right to self-determination.

This is why we demand the immediate ascension of the AOF and AEF Federations to internal autonomy by the institution of federal legislative assemblies and the creation of federal executives elected by these assemblies and their leaders, which will permit these groups to form federal states. (8)

Thus Touré's vision was that of a confederation with France, whereby direct territorial representation in French government would cease, to be replaced by representatives of the two African Federations acting as states on equal par with the metropolitan state.

The majority of the delegates at the Bamako congress supported the federalist approach to future Franco-African relations, believing that separate territories would be too weak economically to take on the management of important services, and therefore if the Federations were dismantled these would revert back to metropolitan control. In this sense the federal issue was tied to the desire for full internal autonomy, seen possible only if and when African governments were set up at the federal level. As long as concessions were made only to individual territories (i.e. units with populations of 1-4 million each) they would always be in the form of "toys and lollipops." Morgenthau<sup>9</sup> has argued that the French government accepted territorial autonomy as a

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Ibid., pp. 29-30.

9

E. Mortimer, France and the Africans, pp. 274-5.

way to prevent African independence, and that the existence of a self-governing federation was perceived as a threat.<sup>10</sup> By contrast, Mortimer held that the French government considered such a "balkanisation" of Africa disastrous, explaining:

The Federal solution was economically desirable from both French and African points of view, but politically it was impossible for France to impose it on Africans who did not want it. (11)

Skurnick has claimed that the Federation was created initially to serve French interests, yet the individual colonies were always regarded as the fundamental political units, and therefore the Federation was only a temporary structure that was discarded when it outlived its usefulness.<sup>12</sup> This argument does not correlate with archival evidence, and as pointed out by Crowder and Cruise O'Brien: "effective power in French West Africa lay with the Governor-General in Dakar, who had overriding authority over the Territorial Governors."<sup>13</sup> Additionally, as summarised by Morgenthau:

Only the Governor-General could correspond with the government. He had control over civil police and the military, and no French law or decree was in force until promulgated by him. Therefore the permanent administration, a specially significant force while governments changed often, once again enjoyed considerable power. (14)

Moreover, by 1944 the whole of the Federation was more important than

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R. Schachter Morgenthau, Political Parties, p. 72.

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E. Mortimer, France and the Africans, p. 239.

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W.A.E. Skurnick, "France and Fragmentation in West Africa: 1945-1960," Journal of African History, VIII, 2, 1967, p. 317.

13

Michael Crowder and Donal Cruise O'Brien, "French West Africa, 1945-1960," in J.F. Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder, eds. History of West Africa, vol. II, New York, 1974, p. 674.

14

R. Schachter Morgenthau, Political Parties, p. 54.

its component parts, and the African political elite was much more  
federal ("AOFienne") than territorial in outlook.<sup>15</sup>

The leader of the largest federal interterritorial political movement balked the federalist position for several reasons. Firstly, as a net contributor to the federal budget, the Ivory Coast had for some time considered itself the "milch cow" of French West Africa. By 1957 Ivory Coast export income amounted to 46 per cent of the federal total,<sup>16</sup> produced by one seventh of the population of AOF. A second economic consideration was that the Ivory Coast was not dependent on any of its neighbours for trade. Thirdly, the Ivorian Territorial Assembly was firmly against the idea of creating federal executives, particularly in Dakar. Finally, as an insider and prominent member of the French government, Houphouët was not hostile to the notion that France would continue to have an important role in African affairs, as he envisioned a French-African government and community.

Meanwhile back at the congress, obviously in a minority position,<sup>17</sup> supported only by the delegations from the Ivory Coast and Gabon, Houphouët stormed out of the scheduled closing hearing, where the federalism debate continued throughout the night. Likewise the RDA president refused to return to the conference hall the following day, instead remaining in the Governor's palace. Furthermore Houphouët decided not to stand for re-election as President of the RDA--elections

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M. Crowder and D. Cruise O'Brien, "French West Africa," p. 683.

16

Elliot J. Berg, "The Economic Basis of Political Choice in French West Africa," *American Political Science Review*, LIV, 2, June 1960, p. 402.

17

Gabon was in a similar "milch cow" economic position in AEF.

which should have taken place the day before, at the close of the congress. Nevertheless a compromise resolution was drawn up in Houphouët's absence, which read as follows:

The Congress considers that the independence of peoples is an inalienable right permitting them to dispose of the attributes of their sovereignty according to the interests of the masses.

But it considers that interdependence is the golden rule of people's lives and is manifested in the 20th century in the constitution of large political and economic groupings ...under these conditions the Congress proposes the realisation and reinforcement of a French-African Community, democratic and fraternal, based on equality.

The Congress mandates its parliamentary group to present in the least possible delay a motion for the constitution of a Federal State, composed of autonomous states with a federal government and federal parliament serving as the supreme organ of a unified state. (18)

By failing to specify whether the federal state should be at the level of the French-African Community or the level of African federation, the resolution was approved by the congress, admittedly as a cover-up to retain RDA unity. Touré then urged RDA delegates to maintain Houphouët as RDA president:

Houphouët must remain president of the RDA, not in service to his ideas, but in service of the ideas expressed by this congress. (19)

Hence in the absence of the RDA President, Touré presided over the elections of a new RDA Coordinating Committee, as well as giving the closing address to the Third Interterritorial RDA Congress on 30 September 1957.<sup>20</sup> Touré's behaviour at the close of the congress could

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<sup>18</sup>Afrique Informations, No. 129/30, 4 October 1957, p. 16.

<sup>19</sup>

Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>20</sup>

Members of the newly elected Committee were as follows: President--Félix Houphouët-Boigny; Vice-Presidents--Modibo Keita, Sékou Touré, Doudou Guèye, and Gabriel Lisette; Secretaries--Ouëzzin Coulibaly, Hamani Diori, Gabriel d'Arboussier and Justin Ahomadegbé.

be seen as almost contradictory. While assuming the role of champion and major spokesman of the point of view conflicting with Houphouët, Touré at the same time became the conciliator and major advocate for maintaining unity within the RDA, and was largely responsible for the re-election of Houphouët as the leader of the movement. In sum, the London Times gave the following account of Touré's character, intellect, and influence at the RDA congress:

Sékou Touré commands astounding loyalty and devotion from all who come in contact with him, he has equally won great respect for his remarkable intelligence from all who work with him, Africans and Europeans alike. Sékou Touré, an orator of power, speaks for the new politically conscious generation of French Africa, which wants the freedom to create African nations with modern institutions....He is trying to replace chieftaincy, tribalism, and other institutions which have helped to retard African development.... Sékou Touré's performance at Bamako made his pre-eminence in the RDA quite obvious. (21)

#### The Bamako Aftermath and the PDG Third Territorial Conference

Although the RDA congress ended on a conciliatory note with a compromise resolution, it was clear that grave differences in opinion remained. RDA delegates returned to their respective territories, proceeding to drum up support for individual points of view, proving that indeed no common perspective or platform had been finally adopted in Bamako.

Shortly after his return to Guinea, Touré held a public conference in Conakry, attended by 4,000 people, at which he gave a report of the Bamako proceedings. Touré opened his discussion of the RDA congress accordingly:

The first aim of the Congress was to fix the destiny of Africa, the second, to show that immediate independence is an inalienable right of all people, big or small.

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The Times, 24 October 1957, p. 5.

However, independence is not as one may think, an end in itself, but a way to a freely determined future, it is an absolute right, but one which does not exclude the possibility to enter into interdependence, a framework of alliance with France, and this is why the Congress finally called for a French-African Community. (22)

Depicting the proposed community as a marriage of sorts, Touré explained that the union was not necessarily founded on love, but rather on reason and interests. He then pointed out how both sides will benefit from such a relationship: Africa would attain cultural and economic aid from France, and in exchange France will profit from the great economic potential of Africa. Regarding the form of the community, Touré presented both sides of the federal argument to his supporters, albeit with conspicuous bias, as follows:

On one side: to form autonomous African republics in the midst of this community, for example the republics of Soudan, Ivory Coast, or Guinea, which would amount to the division of Africa since Guinea is nothing without Senegal or the Ivory Coast, etc....and the Fouta or other regions of our territory are nothing without the support of the others. This view is held by a minority which does not understand the true needs of Africa.

On the other side: to form the following nations: AOF, AEF, and Madagascar, associated with France on equal footing, in a federal republic. This idea was firmly defended by the majority of the delegates, among whom the Guinean representatives. (23)

At this time Touré was not advocating outright independence for the overseas territories, as he repeatedly campaigned for African federalism and continued close ties with France.

Two weeks later the newly elected RDA Coordinating Committee was convoked in Paris. The stated purpose of the gathering was to discuss

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ANS 17G 622, "Renseignements, conférence publique d'information sur les travaux du Congrès Interterritorial de Bamako," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 2292-854, Conakry, 14 October 1957.

23

Ibid., p. 4.

the lessons of the Bamako congress, a possible regrouping of African political parties, and designation of specific tasks to committee members. Touré was listed as "absent and excused" from the proceedings which met on 29, 30, and 31 October 1957. The Committee acknowledged that a certain malaise was prevalent at the Bamako congress, due largely to newcomer RDA leaders suffering from "demagogy and extremism."<sup>24</sup> Calling for stricter discipline, the committee urged members to stop seeking individual publicity and confounding territorial autonomy with the liberty to say whatever a person wishes. Moreover the committee reported that the metropolitan government was "worried if not hostile about our undertakings." Houphouët denied that the RDA was divided over the issue of a federal executive, claiming that political opponents had exploited the events in order to discredit the movement. Finally, in recognition of the need to retain closer ties between territorial sections, secretariats were designated to deal with particular aspects of coordination, such as political, social, administrative, financial, and trade union activities.

Back in Guinea, Touré was preparing for the Third PDG Territorial Conference, which met from 23-26 January 1958. In his opening Rapport Moral et Politique, Touré denounced the balkanisation of AOF on the following grounds:

The breaking up of the Federation is an indication that France wishes to divide the Africans in order to create opposition between them, and to separately arbitrate local conflicts. (25)

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CRDA 3a.50.57/doss 1, RDA Coordinating Committee circular, signed by Houphouët, Paris, 1 November 1957.

25

Sékou Touré, Expérience Guinéenne et Unité Africaine, Paris, 1961, vol. I, p. 27.

The federal issue was of paramount importance to Touré because he believed that it was inextricably linked with African unity. Despite his unquenchable thirst for total control over Guinean affairs, Touré's repeated willingness to defer certain powers to an African federal government proved that he was indeed an African nationalist at heart. Touré considered that Guinea was nothing outside the West African Federation, and moreover the Federation needed continued assistance from, and association with, France. Realistically speaking, Touré explained his position regarding future French-African relations:

We are for the French-African Community, to which African States acquiesce a part of their sovereignty, because we are aware that, at this point in time, Africa has nothing to gain from isolation, and that France will be our most valuable partner. (26)

Thus Touré brought home the debates over the federal executive and the French-African Community. In fact these issues dominated the PDG conference, while territorial matters were almost completely ignored. Touré knew that he would face opposition from Houphouët, and possibly from the RDA Coordinating Committee which usually wound up supporting the opinions of the President, for his recent actions. Perhaps this was why Touré preferred to be absent at the Paris meeting, instead solidifying his position by bringing the debate into the territorial sections and enlisting the support of the PDG masses.

Closing on 26 January, the PDG conference delegates put forth the following party objectives:

- 1) Increase the powers of the Territorial Assemblies;
- 2) Territorial autonomy, with administration managed solely by the Conseils de Gouvernement;
- 3) Grands Conseils to be transformed into federal parliaments electing a federal executive responsible for all common services; and

- 4) An end to all assimilation policies and African representation in metropolitan organs of government, except the Assembly of the French Union which deals with communal interests of the French-African Community. (27)

Attesting to his renewed emphasis on unity as well as slight distancing from France, Touré concluded the conference with a noticeable chant variation: "Vive le RDA! Vive l'Association Franco-Africaine!"

#### Expulsion of the PDG Mamou Section

Just prior to the third party conference a significant event occurred in PDG history. In reaction to severe criticism from leaders of the Mamou sub-section of the party, the PDG directorate expelled the entire section, making clear their intolerance for so-called "deviant" behaviour. The case of Mamou was held as an example, in the words of Touré, "to anyone refusing to submit to the decisions of the directing organ of the party."<sup>28</sup>

R.W. Johnson has written an illuminating account of the PDG and the Mamou "deviation", in which he traced the history of the turbulent sub-section.<sup>29</sup> Mamou was a small town in the Fouta region where French colonisers had forcibly relocated the almany of the Alfaya line at the turn of the century. The most revered of the Fouta chiefs, almany Ibrahima Sory Dara, was given the unique title of Chef supérieur du Fouta Djallon in 1950, in recognition of his loyalty to the French administration. The almany was a major supporter of veteran politician

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Ibid.

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ANS 17G 622, "Renseignements, conférence publique," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 2578-956, Kankan, 22 November 1957.

29

R.W. Johnson, "The Parti Démocratique de Guinée and the Mamou Deviation," in Christopher Allen and R.W. Johnson, eds., African Perspectives, Cambridge, 1970.

Yacine Diallo, and was himself elected to the first Conseil Général in 1946 as well as the federal Grand Conseil.

Mamou grew largely as an administrative town, under the religious and political dominance of the almany who had served as canton chief since 1928. The town, situated between Guinea's two largest cities, Conakry and Kankan, benefited from road and rail links which contributed greatly to its commercial development. According to Johnson, despite the presence of the almany and general hostility of the Fulani people towards the PDG, the party was able to take root in Mamou aided by several factors, namely:

- 1) Mamou was a "new" town, artificially created at a pivotal location in the territory;
- 2) Hence, for various commercial and occupational reasons, the town drew an ethnically diverse population for settlement; and
- 3) Aware of the town's strategic importance and mixed population, the PDG set out to gain a foothold in Mamou as early as 1951. (30)

Interestingly, the French administration unwittingly played a role in the "extremist" nature of the PDG section at Mamou. Considering the Fouta capital and fiefdom of the almany relatively safe from PDG infiltration, the territorial administration frequently transferred radical (particularly "Communist") RDA activists to Mamou, for example Saifoulaye Diallo and sub-section President Pléah Koniba. These civil servants, many of whom were highly educated Ponty graduates as well as earlier members of the Groupes d'Etudes Communistes, formed the core of the PDG leadership group in Mamou. This particular aspect of the Mamou section is significant, as Johnson pointed out:

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Ibid., p. 350.

The fact that the PDG leadership in Conakry was firmly in the hands of men of Touré's own stamp (i.e. uneducated), with a well-developed suspicion of Ponty-trained "intellectuals," goes not a little way to explaining the later tension between Mamou and Conakry. (31)

Furthermore it is noted that the Mamou leadership paid allegiance first and foremost to PDG principles and revolutionary doctrine, not to the persona, myth, and "charisma" associated with the party's eminent leader.

While Johnson traced the beginning of the open confrontation between Mamou and Conakry to an incident surrounding the January 1956 elections to the National Assembly, RDA-PDG archives reveal an earlier starting point for ensuing hostile relations. In fact the most severe attack on the Conakry Directorate by the Mamou section leaders took place in August 1955. The most probable explanation why this episode blew over without formal disciplinary action is because Touré and the PDG had not yet secured electoral office and dominance on the Guinean political scene. In any case the Mamou critique of PDG organisation and activity was boldly outlined in a seven page letter from the Directing Bureau of the Mamou section to the PDG Directing Committee in Conakry<sup>32</sup> dated 1 August 1955.

The above mentioned letter, intended as an analysis of the Guinean section of the RDA with recommendations for reform, was divided into two parts, entitled "anarchic organisation" and "catastrophic management." In part one, the Mamou leadership denounced PDG organisation on the following grounds:

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Ibid., p. 351.

32

CRDA/9 doss 7, Letter from PDG section at Mamou to PDG Directing Committee Conakry, Mamou, 1 August 1955.

- 1) The absence of collective direction. "It is in fact obvious that comrade Sékou Touré is doing all the work, the other members are merely figureheads...proven by the fact that in Touré's absence the central organ of the party is paralysed, and with it the life of the movement";
- 2) The practice of censorship of ideas. "Our position is the following: no dictatorship from within the party, no matter where it comes from";
- 3) The tendency to rest on one's laurels: Following the falsified elections of 27 June 1954, a cult of personality was erected around Sékou Touré. "Touré, overcome with dizziness, seems to take pleasure in this adulation, sacrificing the future of the movement to the edification of his personal glory";
- 4) Trips and frequent contacts with the AOF High-Commissioner. These trips risk the PDG being interpreted as a party "of the administration";
- 5) The decrease in trade union activity; and
- 6) The increasingly timid contents of La Liberté and the non-publication of the newspaper. (33)

In the second part of the letter, the Mamou section drew attention to the faulty management of the PDG, linking empty party treasuries to the lavish lifestyles of high-ranking party officials. In short, the recommendations of the Mamou intellectuals called for:

- 1) The return to collective leadership of the party;
- 2) Installation of self-criticism (auto-critique);
- 3) Substitution of party ideals for the personality cult and myth of Sékou Touré;
- 4) Resumption of trade union activities;
- 5) Tighter financial regulation and control;
- 6) Holding of a PDG Territorial Congress; and
- 7) The return to Guinea of party activists Madeira Keita and Ray Autra from Dahomey, Moussa Diakité from the Ivory Coast, and Lansana Diane from Mauritania. (34)

The effect of this scathing report on PDG organisation and management is not entirely clear. In a circular two years later in which the history of the problem with the Mamou section was explained, it was briefly mentioned that a delegation of the Directing Committee had been sent to Mamou in 1955 in order to confront the deviant behaviour of

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Ibid., pp. 2-5.

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Ibid., p. 6.

local party leaders. The August letter had been labelled "strictly confidential" by its authors, and is not referred to in PDG public meetings in Conakry or Mamou, or even acknowledged by French officials reporting at that time. Thus it appears that this early breach of discipline was quietly smoothed over and excused (but certainly not forgotten) by the PDG central leadership. Such was not the case, however, when the same Mamou section leaders attempted public criticism of the party directorate in 1957. By this time the PDG was essentially governing Guinea, and after wiping out the opposition parties in the quest for power, attacks on PDG elected officials and their management of government from within the party proved entirely unacceptable.

The catalyst for the expulsion of the Mamou section was a similar critique of the PDG Directorate submitted by the Mamou Directing Committee in a letter dated 2 August 1957. Although much more moderate in tone than its 1955 predecessor, the analysis of the situation in Guinea following territorial elections in 1957 reiterated many of the former accusations of party mismanagement, censorship and intimidation of subordinate sections, and excessive lifestyles of party officials (although this time individual offenders were not named).<sup>36</sup> The Mamou leaders claimed that internal democracy no longer existed within the PDG, as fundamental decisions were made only at the highest level without any consultation of party sub-sections or the masses.

In the summer of 1957 Mamou became the hotbed of discontent with

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ANS 17G 622, Circular from PDG Directing Committee, Conakry, 12 November 1957.

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CRDA 9/doss 7, Letter from PDG section at Mamou to PDG Directing Committee Conakry, No. 126, Mamou, 2 August 1957.

the new PDG government when students, railway workers, and teachers-- three of the most troublesome groups thwarting total PDG control of the territory--all held their annual congresses there. The students were notorious for demanding immediate independence; the railway union historically resented being subordinated to PDG domination; and the teachers rejected the educational policies proposed by the new government. The congress of the teachers' trade union, held in Mamou from 6-9 August 1957, particularly drew the wrath of the PDG administration. Headed by Koumandian Keita, BAG President and arch rival of Touré, the teachers' congress passed motions critical of the new government, in spite of the fact that many of its activists were PDG members. Furthermore the congress proposed a strike of unlimited duration if their demands were not met, one of which was the reinstatement of union member Ray Autra.

Returning to his hometown of Mamou in 1957, Autra began making waves within the PDG by openly campaigning for independence and denouncing the increasingly common practice of multiple office-holding by party leaders. <sup>37</sup> While Autra (incidentally also a Ponty man) refrained from pointing a finger at particular party headmen, it was clear who the principal pluralist offender was, as Touré's portfolio by this time included the following posts: Secretary-General of the PDG, deputy to the French National Assembly, member of the Guinean Territorial Assembly, Councillor to the federal Grand Conseil, Vice-President of the Guinean Council of Ministers, Mayor of Conakry, Vice-President of the RDA and member of the Coordinating Committee, and Secretary-General of both the federal labour organisation UGTAN and the

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R.W. Johnson, "The PDG and the Mamou Deviation," p. 358-9.

Guinean branch of the movement. In classic administrative style, the PDG government summarily transferred Autra to the coastal (loyalist PDG) district of Boffa.<sup>38</sup> In refusing to take up his new teaching post, Autra's status was left undetermined. The fact that the anti-PDG teachers' union protested on behalf of Autra further enflamed party officials; consequently Autra was expelled from the PDG in November 1957.

The outspoken and deviant character of both the Mamou section and Ray Autra embarrassed the PDG central leadership at a time when Touré was making serious efforts toward reconciliation with the French authorities. Touré recognised that although the PDG had swept into power through recent elections and institutions created under the Loi-Cadre, there were still many loopholes in which the French government could overturn intended PDG reforms. Another prime consideration of the PDG government was the economic development of Guinea, for which French financial and technical assistance were deemed crucial. Thus in the PDG's attempts to wipe out opposition simultaneously from above (i.e. in the French government) and below (within Guinea), many "extremist" elements of the party were purged.

As in 1955, the August 1957 condemnation of the PDG directorate was not immediately acted upon by party officials. It wasn't until the Mamou sub-section decided to go public with its criticisms and seek support from other PDG sub-sections that the Directing Committee decided that enough was enough. The Mamou leaders surpassed the tolerance level of their superiors by publishing a manifesto of their complaints against

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ANS 17G 622, "Renseignements," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 2486-920, Conakry, 8 November 1957.

the PDG, and by attempting to draw Houphouët and fellow RDA leaders as well as French politicians into the dispute. Finally on 9 November Touré led a delegation to Mamou to discuss the situation and demand formal apologies. Members of the Conakry delegation included five Council Ministers, President of the Territorial Assembly Diallo Saifoulaye, four Assembly members representing the Fouta region, and a number of additional party workers. No official reception was waiting for the members of government at the Mamou train station. That evening negotiations between the Conakry delegation and select representatives of the Mamou section took place behind closed doors. During 10 long hours of debate continuing throughout the night, the following issues were reportedly discussed:

- 1) The Mamou section's criticism of government salaries and the supposed growth of a "new colonialist bourgeoisie";
  - 2) The support given by the Mamou section to the teachers' union and the affair involving Ray Autra;
  - 3) Courses in Marxism recently given to intellectuals of the Mamou section;
  - 4) The support and attendance of local PDG members at a student conference held in Mamou after having been forbidden elsewhere;
  - 5) The active participation of the Mamou section at the teachers' congress in August and the railway union conference (the Secretary-General of which had earlier been expelled from the PDG); and
  - 6) Mamou responses in "vexatious terms" to letters from the Directing Committee concerning internal party matters.
- (40)

Discussions ended in deadlock, however, when the Mamou representatives refused to repent by denouncing their section leaders. Consequently Touré marched his delegation straight back to the train station, and

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ANS 17G 622, "Renseignements, exclusion du PDG/RDA de plusieurs dirigeants de la s/section de Mamou," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 2540-941, Mamou, 15 November 1957.

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*Ibid.*, p. 2.

left Mamou without even having been offered a meal. Stopping in Kindia, Touré announced the expulsion of the entire Mamou section from the PDG.

Isolation of the expelled section was swift and total. Previously sympathetic party sub-sections quickly condemned the ousted section and renewed their allegiance to the PDG Directing Committee in Conakry. Saifoulaye, Mayor of Mamou and Touré's right-hand man, was charged with the reconstitution of the Mamou section. After resisting for some time, the expelled Mamou leaders eventually capitulated and sent a delegation to Conakry in order to negotiate a settlement. Humiliated by reciprocal coldness, first displayed in Mamou to the Conakry delegation, the Mamou representatives found the city center deserted as they dispersed seeking food and accommodation. Negotiations with a select few PDG hardline leaders were long and intense. This time, however, discussion of Mamou criticisms was forbidden, as the debate was kept to the wrongful behaviour of the section leaders. Still without a clear resolve, the Mamou delegation returned home tired and dispirited. On 26 December the Mamou section leaders formally resigned and, in the presence of Saifoulaye, a new "moderate" Directing Bureau was elected on 5<sup>41</sup> January.

The expulsion of the PDG section at Mamou was significant in that it confirmed the dictatorial nature of the PDG government. What happened to the Mamou sub-section and its leaders served as an example to other PDG sub-sections of punitive action resulting from insubordination and criticism of the party directorate. Internal democracy of the PDG proved to be a farce, and hence was not tested again from within party ranks.

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41

ANS 17G 622, "Renseignements: élection du Comité politique de la Sous-Section PDG-RDA de Mamou," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 64-22, 10 January 1958.

### African Parties Attempt to Regroup

At the RDA Third Interterritorial Congress in Bamako in September 1957, observer parties, including the CA and BAG, formally proposed:

The holding of a conference of all African political parties, as soon as possible, in order to define conditions and means of regroupment. (42)

The political resolution of the Bamako Congress seconded the motion for regroupment, charging its Coordinating Committee with the organisation of a meeting to this effect.

In mid-October non-RDA parliamentarians assembled in Paris to reconsider the idea of African unity. Fily Dabo Sissoko was charged with writing to Houphouët, calling for the regroupment conference to be held towards the end of December in Bamako. The initial RDA response was disappointing. A letter, signed by Gabriel Lisette on behalf of the bureau of the RDA Coordinating Committee, agreed in principle to such a conference, however with the following stipulations: that, after devising a common programme, parties essentially had to regroup around the existing RDA, minor parties merging into majority parties and hence forming territorial sections of the RDA.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore the RDA insisted that the conference be held in Paris on 9 December. Many of the African leaders (several of them RDA including Touré) were opposed to the idea of holding a purely African conference in Paris; nonetheless Houphouët determined Paris was preferable because of past local hostilities between territorial parties. Sissoko regarded the RDA attitude as unwilling to seriously negotiate, and thus temporarily cooled his efforts.

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42

Afrique Informations, No. 129/30, 4 October 1957, p. 16.

43

Interafrique Presse, No. 129/130, 4 October 1957, p. 20.

On 2 November the Bureau of the RDA Coordinating Committee met again, this time discussing more earnestly the unity proposal. After further contacts, agreement was finally reached and the regroupment conference was scheduled to take place in February. Meeting in the Salle Colbert of the Palais Bourbon in Paris, the Conférence du regroupement des partis africains opened on 15 February 1958. The sixty-odd delegates included representatives from the three interterritorial movements--RDA, CA and MSA, as well as eight territorial parties (including the Guinean BAG).<sup>44</sup> Eleven out of the twelve Vice-Presidents of the AOF and AEF Conseils de Gouvernement were present at the proceedings; only Apithy of Dahomey was unable to escape pressing problems at home.

Hosted by the RDA and chaired by Hamani Diori, the conference designated a multi-party commission to draw up a minimum programme and process for regroupment. The RDA group was comprised of Sékou Touré, Modibo Keita, Abdoulaye Diallo, and Gabriel d'Arboussier, all of whom were known to oppose Houphouët's views about the federal executive. It seems that the other parties also chose "leftist federalists" to represent them on the commission, such as Bakary Djibo of the MSA, and Léopold Senghor and Mamadou Dia of the CA. The proposals submitted to the conference on 17 February were in fact the work of three men: Sékou Touré (RDA), Abdoulaye Ly (CA), and Ya Dombia (MSA). The "minimum political programme" contained two major points:

- 1) Internal autonomy for the territories: "In AOF, AEF, and all other groups of territories, there should be federations democratically constituted by these territories on the basis of solidarity, equality, and voluntary renunciation of territorial sovereignty"; and

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The newly created Parti africain de l'indépendance (PAI), an extremist splinter group from Senghor's BPS in Senegal, later withdrew from the conference after delegates refused to demand immediate independence.

- 2) Relationship between France and the former overseas territories: "A federal republic comprised of France, the groups of territories, and the ungrouped territories, should be built on the basis of free co-operation, absolute equality and the right to independence...Such a republic could develop into a confederal union joining the federal republic with already independent states or those in the process of becoming independent." (45)

Concerning the method of regroupment, the commission's report stated that parties in each territory would join the majority party, the amalgamation taking on a new name. Each territorial section was to be equally represented in the governing body of the federal movement.

The question of a new name for the movement was the point of major discord at the conference. The RDA insisted to keep its abbreviated name, refusing even a slight compromise, such as RPA (Rassemblement Populaire Africain). The matter was left unresolved at the February conference, deferred to discussion at a future RDA Coordinating Committee meeting scheduled to take place in Abidjan in mid-March. A second conference on regroupment was planned in Dakar to precede the opening of the Grand Conseil in late March.

The central committee of the RDA convened in Abidjan, 12-14 March. The only reference to the prospect of regroupment in the published circular of the meeting was the statement that the committee had considered the positions of the different movements concerning the name change, and had charged a delegation to contact the others on this matter. Evidently nothing had been decided upon, and in the midst of disagreement Houphouët again retired into seclusion at his Yamoussoukro home.

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André Blanchet, L'itinéraire des partis africains depuis Bamako, Paris, 1958, pp. 196-9.

Houphouët in fact already planned to give up his presidency of the Grand Council, and did not appear in Dakar for either the second regroupment conference or the opening session of the federal council. Arriving late for the meeting, Touré found the regroupment process already defunct; the RDA had refused to alter its name, and the other parties felt strong enough to snub the RDA and band together against it. That night all the conference parties except the RDA merged and founded a new interterritorial party called the Parti du Regroupement Africain (PRA). The next day at the Grand Council proceedings the RDA just barely managed to maintain a majority, due to a last minute compromise with the unaffiliated Mauritians. D'Arboussier was elected President of the Council, and in return for their support a Mauritanian took the Vice-Presidency. On 5 April, the closing day of the Grand Council session, with the Ivorian members conspicuously absent, a resolution was passed reaffirming the "urgent necessity to create a federal executive of the group of territories."<sup>46</sup>

Several days later the Ivory Coast Councillors disassociated themselves from the federal motion, participating in a unanimous condemnation of it by the Ivory Coast Territorial Assembly on 12 April. Additionally the Assembly announced it would seek to "integrate directly into the French-African Community."<sup>47</sup> Houphouët was not present at the session. Touré retaliated by issuing a communiqué stating that the RDA members in the Council stood firmly behind the motion of 5 April. The RDA Coordinating Committee was again convoked on 24 April in Paris, where differences were smoothed over on the surface. It appears that

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46

Ibid., pp. 97-8.

47

E. Mortimer, France and the Africans, p. 294.

Touré and Keita, at least partially in deference to their senior President, backed off in the face of causing an irreparable split in the movement.

Meanwhile in Guinea it had been clear for some time that political union between the RDA and local opposition parties was a very unlikely prospect. In between the PDG Third Territorial Conference at the end of January and the regroupment conference of 15 February, the leaders of the BAG and MSA-DSG, Barry Diawadou and Barry III respectively, embarked on a joint campaign tour across Guinea. Canvassing together for the first time, Diawadou and Barry III widely denounced the PDG government, urging the people to "react with force" against it. In the Fouta the opposition leaders announced that the region was being reduced to slavery, while at the same time funding the wealthy government officials with their taxes. Speaking in Mamou, Diawadou claimed that over the last few years the inhabitants of the Fouta Djalon were the only ones who paid taxes, while Coastal peoples had not. He thus instructed his followers:

From today onward, when someone asks you to pay your taxes, do like the inhabitants of the Coast or Upper Guinea. But never say that you are refusing to pay. On the contrary, say that you are immediately going to "search" for the money...after twelve months make it known that you are still "searching" but have not yet "found" it. (48)

Diawadou and Barry III proclaimed that the BAG and MSA-DSG were "firmly united" in the struggle "to the end" against the tyranny of Sékou Touré and the PDG. The danger of such remarks, whether perceived

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ANS 17G 622, "Renseignements: Activités de personnalités BAG et MSA dans le Cercle Mamou," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 320-112, Conakry, 18 February 1958, p. 2.

49

ANSOM AP 2292/4, Report Police Commander Pita to Police Commander Labé, No. 19/4, Pita, 31 January 1958.

or imagined, prompted the opposition leaders to send telegrams to the French authorities claiming that an assassination plot was brewing against them, warning the government that any such attempt would be reciprocated against Sékou Touré and Diallo Saifoulaye. These events took place just three days before Diawadou and Barry III were to attend the regroupment conference in Paris, as the former explained:

Barry Ibrahima and I are going to Paris on 13 February to participate in the Conference of African political parties. It is a matter of joining these parties into the Convention Africaine. We are in favour of this union and hope that it will come to pass, because it will enable us to fight on equal par with a majority party like the RDA. (51)

Diawadou failed to mention that the conference was hosted by the RDA, and the plan was to unite all the interterritorial movements and minority parties together. It is hard to imagine that such unity could possibly have been attained in Guinea at this time, and surely Guinea was not the only territory to suffer from fierce local rivalries.

The breakdown in the unity negotiations and subsequent formation of the PRA suited the Guinean opposition leaders fine. The official creation of the Guinean section of the PRA took place in Conakry on 13 April 1958, when 3,000 people gathered at the graveside of Yacine Diallo and then held a public meeting. In reality, the major aspects of the PRA programme outlined at this conference essentially reflected Touré's own views. Concerning the federal executive, for example, Diawadou called for:

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ANS 17G 622, Copy of telegram to various French Ministers and politicians, dated 10 February 1958.

51

ANS 17G 622, "Renseignements, passage de personnalités BAG et DSG à Labé," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 333-121, Labé, 20 February 1958.

The revision of Title Eight of the French Constitution and the creation of a Federal Government in Dakar, elected by a federal assembly, on the same level as France. (52)

Diawadou did add one final point to the party platform, that "the PRA has decided to systematically oppose Sékou Touré." Now with united forces, Diawadou and Barry III would attempt an abrupt return to the political scene in the run-up to the forthcoming May elections in Guinea.

#### The Guinean Opposition Attempts a Violent Electoral Comeback

Under the administrative reorganisation programme involving the abolition of the chieftaincy, Chefs de canton were replaced by government officials nominated in Conakry. These administrators were to be assisted by locally elected Conseils de conscription, the first elections for which were scheduled to take place on 18 May 1958.

A common occurrence in Guinea around election time was outbreaks of considerable violence between rival political factions. Although the PDG had single-handedly governed the territory for over a year, the creation of the PRA and merger of the two minority parties in Guinea fostered an upsurge in opposition activity. In a distinctly provocative campaign, the Union Populaire de Guinée (UPG—Guinean branch of the PRA) sought electoral support by denouncing and discrediting the PDG administration. Moreover it is evident that the UPG did incite numerous incidents during the campaign for the May elections, after which it attempted to expose the "racist" persecution of the Fulani by the PDG, again stirring up the possibility of civil war.

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ANSOM AP 2194/4, Government AOF to FOM Ministry, "Bulletin de Renseignements," No. 1021, Dakar, 19 April 1958.

As aforementioned, Barry Diawadou and Barry III began a united campaign to degrade the PDG and its government in February 1958. The initial PDG reaction to what it labelled "subversive propaganda," particularly in the Fouta region, was to urge the masses to "stay calm and do not respond to any provocation whatsoever."<sup>53</sup> By mid-April, however, the impending organisation of the PRA in Guinea, as well as the increased threat of civil disobedience and revolt encouraged by the opposition leaders prompted a stronger PDG response, as the Directing Committee announced:

The motion we propose is to no longer rest on the defensive...We can no longer stand back with arms folded as people set out to destroy what we have painstakingly constructed. Concerning our adversaries, we will not outlaw their demonstrations, but the masses will be ready to react if provoked. (54)

Hence the creation of the PRA-UPG on 13 April and subsequent formation<sup>55</sup> of party sub-sections took place amid mounting antagonism between supporters of political rivals.

As tension peaked, a wave of serious incidents swept through the territory, commencing in Conakry on 29 April. Violence first erupted in Camayenne, a suburb of Conakry, when a group of Fulani PRA members was<sup>56</sup> attacked by a Soussou crowd; 19 were wounded and two houses burned. The following day reprisal claimed six Soussou homes by fire. On 1 May

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ANSOM AP 2197/9, "Bulletin de Renseignements," High-Commissioner AOF to FOM Ministry, No. 749, Dakar, 12 March 1958.

54

ANSOM AP 2194/4, Report entitled "Incidents de Conakry, 29 Avril-5 Mai 1958," written by a French administrator in Guinea, n.d., p. 3.

55

For example in Dinguiraye on 20 April; Dubréka--21 April, Pita--22 April, and Guéckedou--26 April.

56

"Incidents de Conakry," p. 1.

aggression spread into the outskirts of the capital city, where armed Fulani gangs circulated, spreading terror and provoking clashes. The violence reached its climax on the night of 2-3 May, when serious incidents occurred in several Conakry suburbs, ending in 16 deaths and more than 100 people injured. PRA supporters continued to incite unrest in the areas surrounding Conakry on 3 May; hospitals admitted numerous gunshot victims.<sup>57</sup> Sporadic attacks on persons and property continued over the next two days until calm and order were finally restored on 5 May. Moreover, clashes between political opponents during this period were not confined to the Conakry area, as similar outbreaks of violence and destruction were reported in the districts of Forécariah, Pita,<sup>58</sup> Dabola, Kindia, and Gaoul.<sup>59</sup> In total, 26 people were killed, 392 wounded, 174 properties burnt out, and 184 activists arrested between 29 April and 8 May 1958 in Guinea. All territorial forces were employed in the six centers where the incidents occurred, including police, security forces, army, territorial guard, reserves, and a squadron of tanks. Additionally, two squads of police reinforcements were requested and sent from Dakar.<sup>60</sup>

Administrative reports attribute the latest storm of events in Guinea largely to nascent PRA "enthusiasm." Amidst escalating violence,

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*Ibid.*, p. 6.

58

ANS 17G 622, Scattered police reports dated 9-16 May 1958 from cited districts.

59

Of which 17 Fulani, 6 Soussou, 1 Kissien, and two officers--a European and a Senegalese who died in a jeep accident. ANS 17G 622, "Bilan des Incidents du 1 au 8 Mai 1958," French administrative report, Conakry, n.d.

60

"Incidents de Conakry," pp. 7-8, 13.

French administrators summoned (separately) Barry III and Sékou Touré to demand the immediate diffusion of appeals for calm. The rival leaders defiantly responded to questioning on 2 May almost identically:

"The PRA will defend itself if attacked."

"The RDA will not provoke but will defend itself if attacked." (61)

Nevertheless the following day the Conseil de Gouvernement published a communiqué, and Touré made a radio broadcast in which he echoed PDG accusations of "certain opposition political parties" deliberately fomenting the prevailing unrest, while calling for an end to all hostilities and the restoration of an "atmosphere of confidence, friendship,  
62  
and absolute calm." Furthermore Touré outlined the economic sabotage committed by the PRA, discouraging investments and threatening the ongoing development and industrialisation of the territory. Addressing the masses, Touré thus described the plan of his opponents, who:

rely on the misery of Guineans to attain power. In such a quest, it matters little to them if they ruin the country and compromise its future. (63)

The way in which the PRA hoped to gain power in Guinea was through the May elections. It appears that the party aimed to discredit the PDG by instilling chaos and terror in the territory (similar to earlier PDG tactics which proved successful). The PRA strategy backfired, however, when the polling masses on 18 May clearly opted for outright dictatorship over anarchy and civil war. Claiming the party had passed the stage

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61

"Incidents de Conakry," p. 4.

62

Radio broadcast printed in annex of report, "Bilan des Incidents," p. 4.

63

ANSOM AP 2194/4, Interior Ministry, PDG Government, "La vérité sur les événements de Guinée, Livre Blanc," No. 590, Conakry, 7 May 1958, p. 10.

of spreading propaganda, the PDG actually did very little campaigning for the local council elections. As it turned out, the PDG had no need for serious concern about potential PRA success. The outcome of the elections for the Conseils de circonscription was as follows: the RDA-PDG secured 88.3 per cent of the total votes cast; the PRA-UPG 11.7 per cent.<sup>64</sup> An abstention rate of nearly 40 per cent was justifiably attributed to the rainy season. Although somewhat successful in the Fouta districts of Pita, Mamou, Labé and Dalaba, the PRA failed to achieve a single council majority. Crushing electoral defeat reportedly prompted a number of former Fulani PRA supporters either to flee from Conakry or request immediate PDG membership.<sup>65</sup>

#### Constitutional Revision and the French Fifth Republic

Meanwhile in Paris the Fourth Republic was crumbling. The crisis began with the fall of the Gaillard government on 15 April 1958. Overthrown by a revolt of right-wingers who believed the government's policy on Algeria had been too soft, three "Algérie Française" politicians subsequently attempted and failed to form cabinets. On 13 May serious riots broke out in Algiers, and General Charles de Gaulle was called to Paris to try to solve the Algerian problem. This endeavour led de Gaulle to create both a new government and Constitution establishing the French Fifth Republic. The investiture of the de Gaulle government by the National Assembly took place on 11 June. The cabinet included Houphouët-

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<sup>64</sup>

ANSOM AP 2194/4, Governor Guinea to Minister FOM, table of election results, No. 974, Conakry, 2 June 1958.

<sup>65</sup>

The Fulani exodus was estimated at 1,700. "Incidents de Conakry," *op. cit.*, p. 15.; A meeting "to study the possibility of a massive rallying of Fulani PRA to the RDA" took place on 22 May. ANS 17G 622, "Renseignements," Services de Police, Guinea, No. 987-381, Conakry, 27 May 1958.

Boigny as Ministre d'Etat, and Bernard Cornut-Gentille (former High-Commissioner of AOF) as Overseas Minister.

Immediately the de Gaulle government began the process of drafting a new constitution, which took place in three phases: preparation of an avant-projet by the government; discussion of the project by a Consultative Constitutional Committee; and the adoption of a revised version by the government. The avant-projet was devised by a group of chosen "experts," of which State Minister Houphouët was the only African representative. By this time it was clear that a new relationship between France and the overseas territories would be a major facet in a new constitution, and African positions on what form of relationship to pursue were now crystallised.

In Guinea the PDG held its Fourth Congress in Conakry from 5-8 June. In his Rapport Moral et Politique Touré congratulated the PDG in Guinea for understanding, "better than any other territory," the inadequacy of the Loi-Cadre and the necessary steps to undertake for the sake of African unity, explaining:

This is why Guinea finds itself at the forefront in the struggle for the reinforcement of African unity and interterritorial solidarity, for which the institution of the federal executive remains one of the surest ways to guarantee collective security. (67)

Touré thus connected the "avant-garde" nature of the PDG with responsibility to fight for a federal executive in Dakar and a confederal relationship with France.

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Curiously, no Third PDG Congress ever took place. The Fourth Congress did follow the Third Territorial Conference; perhaps the numbers somehow got confused.

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S. Touré, Expérience Guinéenne et Unité Africaine, pp. 47-8.

Although willing to concede certain aspects of sovereignty to a greater (African) union, Touré announced "we will not renounce our independence." Nonetheless Touré reaffirmed that "France remains the nation with which we intend to link our destiny."<sup>68</sup> Regarding constitutional revision the PDG congress stipulated the following necessary provisions:

- 1) Recognition of full internal autonomy;
  - 2) Constitution of a federal executive;
  - 3) Transformation of the Grand Conseil into a legislative Assembly; and
  - 4) Creation of a French-African Community which groups France and the states of AOF, AEF, and Madagascar. This Community must have a federal government and parliament.
- (69)

The political resolution of the congress boldly demanded "the recognition of independence as an inalienable right of mankind."<sup>70</sup> In sum, the statements and declarations made during the Fourth PDG Congress proved that the Guinean section of the RDA was not following the orders nor orientation of the central directing body of the movement. In fact, issues of African federation and independence cut across party lines, uniting leaders of opposing movements such as Touré of the RDA and Senghor of the PRA.<sup>71</sup>

The PRA benefited from a great morale boost during its founding congress held in Cotonou 25-27 July 1958. The excitement generated at the

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68

Ibid.

69

Ibid., p. 50.

70

"Resolution Politique du IV Congrès du PDG," La Liberté, 25 June 1958.

71

See E. Berg, "The Economic Basis of Political Choice in French West Africa"; D. Cruise O'Brien, "The Limits of Political Choice in French West Africa"; and William J. Foltz, From French West Africa to the Mali Federation, New Haven, 1965.

congress, however, carried the movement far further to the radical side than anticipated. Léopold Senghor, much like Houphouët at the latest RDA congress, found that his "followers" had surpassed his moderate ideals.<sup>72</sup> PRA congress members rejected Senghor's claim that "independence does not have positive content, it is not a solution," while Bakary Djibo carried the day with his declaration that "you can only associate when you are already independent. National independence first, the rest later."<sup>73</sup>

The PRA cry for independence may have been due to early leakage of several provisions of the constitutional avant-projet which was published on 30 July. It was rumoured that the choice would be given to the overseas territories of either federation with France or secession. Furthermore within the federation the territories were not to be recognised as states, nor was there any mention of the right to independence. Incensed at these prospects, congress members condemned de Gaulle's draft, passing the following resolution:

The Congress adopts the password (~~not d'ordre~~) of immediate independence, and decides to take all the necessary measures to mobilise the African masses around this password and to translate into fact this desire for independence. (74)

The PRA stance on the federal issue was largely the same as advocated by Sékou Touré. Like Touré, the PRA stood for the creation of a federal executive and a confederal union with France, the only added PRA stipulation being that independence precede amalgamation. The motion in the political resolution (read by Senghor) calling for immediate

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72

See the recent biography of Léopold Senghor by Janet G. Vaillant, Black, French and African, London, 1990.

73

E. Mortimer, France and the Africans, p. 306.

74

L. Guèye, L'Itinéraire Africain, p. 190.

independence reportedly was greeted by an "indescribable enthusiasm"<sup>75</sup> which continued through the close of the congress on 27 July.

The following day, in an extraordinary session of the Guinean Territorial Assembly, Touré alluded to the possibility of rejecting a constitution which did not suit African desires, as he announced:

We have already alerted the metropolitan government to the fact that any constitutional project which does not put an end to the out-dated and inappropriate policy of assimilation and integration; does not recognise the right to independence of people in the territories; and does not affirm the principle of equality, will meet unanimous and firm rejection from us. (76)

At this time Touré seemingly accepted the notion of independence à terme, and limited his campaign to the "inalienable right" to independence, obviously distancing himself from the calls for "immediate independence." After all, in the same speech before the Assembly, Touré had the following message for the French government:

Do not confuse the exercise of our right to self-determination with any wish whatsoever to separate ourselves from France. (77)

Clearly the economic future of the territory and substantial French investment weighed heavily on the minds of the Guinean politicians. It was noted that even the Guinean PRA contingent at the Cotonou congress<sup>78</sup> voiced caution at the prospect of cutting ties with the metropole.

The economic considerations influencing political choice in French West Africa have been outlined by Berg.<sup>79</sup> Foreboding dilemmas over-

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ANSOM AP 2257/4, Agence France Presse Spécial Outre Mer, No. 3612, 27-28 July 1958.

76

S. Touré, Expérience Guinéenne et Unité Africaine, p. 71.

77

Ibid.

78

E. Mortimer, France and the Africans, p. 308.

79

E. Berg, "The Economic Basis of Political Choice."

shadowed the lure of immediate independence for most of the African territories, such as: dependence on substantial French capital investment and aid; close trade integration in a highly protected franc zone; lack of national economy and minute trade relationships with African neighbours; the vast majority of AOF's imports and exports coming from and going to France at favoured terms; and European personnel occupying key posts in the civil service and skilled labour. It has been estimated that between 1946 and 1958 over 70 per cent of total public investment and more than 30 per cent of civil and military recurrent expenditure was financed by France. <sup>80</sup> Regarding interterritorial trade, partly due to inadequate road and railway links, in 1956 Guinea sent less than 2 per cent of its exports to neighbours, from which it received less than one-fifth of its imports. Moreover, approximately 70 per cent of French West Africa's imports came from France, and roughly the same percentage of AOF's exports went there. Furthermore, the imminent breakup of the Federation left the poorer territories (which previously benefited from the federal redistribution of wealth) even more dependent on France. Nevertheless Guinea seemed to be in a stronger position than its neighbours, as Berg explained:

economic and other conditions were more permissive there, allowing it to opt for independence with slighter risks than in most of the other territories: it was highly organized politically; it was not greatly dependent on aid from the other FWA territories through the federal budget; its mining boom was attracting new injections of foreign capital; its economic future was hopeful. (81)

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Theresa Hayter, "French Aid to Africa--Its Scope and Achievement," International Affairs, XLI, April 1965, pp. 239-40.

81

E. Berg, "The Economic Basis of Political Choice," p. 405.

Furthering Berg's arguments, Cruise O'Brien has pointed out that the economic explanation should be considered along with the political, administrative, and sociological situation facing the West African leaders.<sup>82</sup>

Approved by the French government on 28 July, the ~~avant-projet~~ of the Constitution was hence handed over to a Consultative Constitutional Committee. The Committee included 26 deputies and 13 members chosen for their "competence"; African members were Félix Houphouët-Boigny and Gabriel Lisette of the RDA, Léopold Senghor and Lamine Guèye for the PRA, and Philibert Tsiranana of Madagascar. According to Georges Chaffard, Sékou Touré was kept out of the committee at the request of Houphouët.<sup>83</sup> Chaffard claimed that the newly appointed Overseas Minister, Bernard Cornut-Gentille, vigilantly campaigned for Touré's appointment to the Consultative body. Apparently Cornut-Gentille, who had a long history in dealing with the problematic PDG leader, insisted that Touré could still be "recuperated" in the eyes of Houphouët and the French government. Houphouët had refused to present Touré as an RDA candidate for the committee, which was elected by the National Assembly. Cornut-Gentille next approached de Gaulle directly, asking that Touré be appointed a member of the committee "due to personal competence." Again Houphouët intervened to stress his disapproval, and Touré was hence denied further consideration.

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82

D. Cruise O'Brien, "The Limits of Political Choice in French West Africa."

83

Georges Chaffard, *Les Carnets Secrets de la Décolonisation*, Paris, 1967, vol. II, pp. 178-82.

The Consultative Constitutional Committee was divided between supporters of Houphouët's proposals and those of Senghor. The text eventually adopted was a compromise formula which provided for federation as well as confederation: territories were free to choose the form of their association with France, grouped or independent, and this status would be revisable after five years.

Opposed to any allusion to independence, Houphouët called the RDA Coordinating Committee to Paris on 3 August for the purpose of drawing up a statement of the movement's position to be presented personally to de Gaulle. Despite certain reservations of Touré and Modibo Keita, Houphouët's views were more or less accepted by the Committee. Ouëzzin Coulibaly played an important role in persuading dissenting opinions to relent for the sake of RDA and African unity. The RDA platform, as agreed by the Coordinating Committee in Paris, stood for: territorial autonomy, suppression of the AOF government and no federal executive in Dakar, creation of a French-African federation, and rejection of immediate independence (but possible future evolution).<sup>84</sup> No doubt partly to secure compliance, Houphouët bestowed on Touré the honour of defending the RDA position to de Gaulle. Touré led the RDA delegation which met the General on 5 August. Having fulfilled his duty, Touré then left Paris, heading for Dakar to meet with UGTAN representatives.

Meanwhile de Gaulle increasingly intervened in the deliberations of the Constitutional Committee, impressing his views on its members. On 8 August the General clarified his position to the Committee with the following remarks:

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84

Sylvain Soriba-Camara, "Les Origines du Conflit Franco-Guinéen," *Revue Française d'études Politiques Africaines*, 114, June 1975, p. 40.

We are going to build a modern federal State, on the basis of spontaneous acceptance by the overseas people and by France. Of course I understand the lure of secession. But it involves danger, independence has its costs. The referendum will tell us whether secession carries the day. But what is inconceivable is an independent state which France continues to help....People talk of "federation," "confederation," which is just a dispute over vocabulary. I say federation, and there we stop. It is the referendum that will put an end to the debate. (85)

These statements, wholly supported by Houphouët and Lisette, came as a great disappointment to Senghor and Lamine Guèye. The PRA representatives resented having to choose between a French-African Community void of constituent African federations, and outright independence (or "secession" as de Gaulle preferred).

Upon hearing de Gaulle's declarations over Dakar radio, Touré admitted in an interview that he was "shocked." Touré went on to say:

My own attachment to African dignity was shocked. We were told that we can choose independence, but that it will come with all its consequences. Well, I say that these consequences will not only be for Africans, they may also affect the French. (86)

Touré was backed by PRA and UGTAN leader Bakary Djibo, who subsequently announced that "we are not afraid of the economic consequences of secession."<sup>87</sup>

The Constitutional draft was approved by the Consultative Commission and sent to de Gaulle on 14 August. The term "federation" was dropped altogether, replaced by "community." Provisions for the overseas territories within the Community included the "right" to independence,

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85

G. Lisette, *Le combat du FEA*, p. 337.

86

Interview with Radio-Dakar on 9 August 1958, cited in G. Chaffard, *Les Carnets Secrets*, vol. II, pp. 189-90.

87

*Ibid.* Indeed the consequences for the poor landlocked territory of Niger would have been devastating. See again E. Berg, "The Economic Basis of Political Choice."

but not immediate independence nor a confederation. The final text of the Constitution was produced by the government on 21 August 1958. Most of the proposals of the Consultative Committee were incorporated into the final draft, with two significant last minute amendments: the option of Community members changing their status after five years was deleted, and a member state could become independent at a later date, but only by withdrawing from the Community.

As independence and membership in the Community were deemed incompatible, the Constitution failed to meet "confederalist" aspirations. The question of a federal executive was left unanswered; theoretically the territories were free to enter the Community "either as groups or single units." The Constitution was to be presented to the French and African populace in a referendum scheduled for 28 September. In the meantime, de Gaulle embarked on a campaign tour of Africa, explaining his conception of the French-African Community and urging the overseas territories to join with a "yes" vote to the referendum.

#### Showdown in Conakry

Between 21 and 28 August General Charles de Gaulle visited Fort Lamy, Tananarive, Brazzaville, Abidjan, Conakry and Dakar. In Brazzaville de Gaulle expounded his idea that joining the proposed Community did not rule out independence at a later date, guaranteeing that France would not oppose such an action. De Gaulle's promises of an open future, freedom to create their own federations within the Community, and continued French aid and technical assistance, brought satisfaction to the crowds and politicians in Chad, Congo, and the Ivory Coast, whose leaders announced they would be voting "yes" to the referendum.<sup>88</sup>

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88

Adotevi Stanislas, *De Gaulle et les africains*, Paris, 1990, pp. 149-51.

In Abidjan Houphouët had reassured de Gaulle that the RDA would, as  
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a bloc, be behind him. The reception that awaited the General in  
Guinea seemed initially to confirm such optimism. De Gaulle arrived in  
Conakry in the afternoon of 25 August. In PDG fashion, the masses were  
impeccably organised at the airport and along the parade route leading  
to the Governor's palace. School children, workers, and civil servants  
were mobilised to greet the French delegation, welcoming the visitors  
with a great show of African dance, music, and folklore. The crowds,  
dressed in magnificent colour, waved and sang to "Sily" as the official  
delegation passed. Delighted and no doubt impressed, de Gaulle commented  
90  
to Touré: "I hope it will be as nice as this in Dakar." Touré  
responded that he hoped so too, and intended himself to travel to Dakar  
the following day. De Gaulle then invited Touré to accompany him in his  
private plane. In such a friendly atmosphere Touré offered to accommo-  
date Overseas Minister Cornut-Gentille and AOF High-Commissioner Pierre  
Messmer at his home, while the General settled in at the Governor's  
91  
palace.

In the Governor's office de Gaulle asked Mauberna what he expected  
the referendum results would be. The Governor responded that a vote of  
95 per cent would follow Touré's wishes, however he thought that the  
92  
final decision whether to vote "yes" or "no" had not yet been made.  
Mauberna then gave de Gaulle a copy of the text of Touré's intended

89

Jean Lacouture, Cinq Hommes et la France, p. 348.

90

Georges Chaffard, Les Carnets Secrets, vol. II, p. 194.

91

Jean Mauberna replaced Jean Ramadier as Governor of Guinea on 29  
January 1958.

92

J. Lacouture, Cinq Hommes et la France, p. 349.

speech, the significant passages underlined in red. Whether or not de Gaulle read in advance Touré's text or not is unknown. After such a tremendous reception, however, certainly the tone and passion of Touré's address before the National Assembly came as a shock to the normally stoic de Gaulle. Attired in national dress, Touré directed his oration mainly to his devoted audience, at times even turning his back on his distinguished guest. The crowd erupted with irrepressible excitement and jubilation as Touré announced:

We will never renounce our natural and legitimate right to independence. We prefer poverty in liberty to wealth in slavery. (93)

Finally Touré reiterated the conditions to be met before Guinea would agree to the new constitution, as if it was not too late to amend the final draft.

The impromptu retaliation of de Gaulle to such a scathing attack on France included the following remarks:

You have talked of independence, I say here even more loudly than I have elsewhere that independence is at the disposition of Guinea. It can obtain it on 28 September by voting "no" to the proposal, and I guarantee that the metropole will make no objection. There will, of course, be consequences.... (94)

This face-off in Conakry on 25 August marked the beginning of the end of Franco-Guinean relations.

In a subsequent private meeting with Cornut-Gentille, Messmer, and Mauberna, de Gaulle concluded: "Gentlemen, there is a man whom we shall never get along with; one thing is clear--we will be leaving Guinea the

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93

S. Touré, Expérience Guinéenne et Unité Africaine, pp. 81, 84.

94

Ibid., p. 87.

morning of 29 September." Furthermore the luggage of the Overseas Minister and High-Commissioner was removed from Touré's residence, and Touré was informed that there would not be space for him on the

96

General's plane. De Gaulle chose to dine alone that evening, refusing to meet Touré except to say "Bonne chance pour la Guinée" at the airport the next morning. Looking back, the General had the following to say about his reception in Conakry:

I found myself enveloped by the organisation of a totalitarian Republic. There was nothing that was hostile or offensive towards me personally. But from the aerodrome to the centre of the town, the crowd lined up on both sides of the road in well ordered battalions, and cried Independence with a single voice. (97)

In Dakar de Gaulle was met by popular protest (mainly by students, PAI, PRA, and UGTAN members) calling for immediate independence and African unity. Aware of likely confrontation, PRA leaders Léopold Senghor and Mamadou Dia chose to remain in Paris, while Lamine Guèye<sup>98</sup> cordially hosted the General on behalf of the Senegalese government. Speaking to the dissident crowds, the general reaffirmed that the option for independence was available to the overseas territories. On 27 August the French President left Dakar for Algiers, leaving behind Cornut-Gentille.

Still hopeful of restraining Touré, the Overseas Minister sent his private plane to Conakry to bring the rebel leader to Dakar. According

95

J. Lacouture, *Cinq Hommes et la France*, p. 199.

96

Lansiné Kaba, *Le "non" de la Guinée à de Gaulle*, Paris, 1989, p. 114.

97

Général de Gaulle, *Mémoires d'Espoir: Le Renouveau 1958-1962*, Paris, 1970.

98

Sylvain Soriba-Camara, *La Guinée sans la France*, Paris, 1976, p. 91.

to Chaffard, Cornut-Gentille and Touré then spent all night discussing the proposed Constitution. Touré remained intransigent in insisting on a revised text providing for a confederal union and the creation of federal executives for AOF and AEF. If these two concessions were added in the text, then Guinea would vote "yes". "If not?" asked Cornut-Gentille.<sup>99</sup> "Well then, we will think about it," was Touré's final retort.

#### Organisations Favouring Independence: PRA, UGTAN, FEANF, and PAI

At this point Touré had good reason to believe that if the PDG formally decided to press for a "no" vote, Guinea would not be alone in this venture. At the founding congress of the PRA in July 1958, a resolution had been passed calling for immediate independence. Other organisations, namely UGTAN, FEANF, and the PAI, soon followed suit in joining the campaign for the rejection of the Constitution.<sup>100</sup>

The main reason why Touré travelled to Dakar on 27 August was to meet with the UGTAN Directing Committee. Niger Council President Bakary Djibo and Soudanese Labour Minister Abdoulaye Diallo had already made clear their preference for immediate independence. In Dakar the UGTAN central committee adopted a resolution to be sent to de Gaulle, reading:

Any limitation of the future sovereignty of African states in the economic and judicial sectors will compromise their chances of national development. (101)

The trade union directorate demanded independence within a united

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99

G. Chaffard, *Les Carnets Secrets*, vol. II, p. 202.

100

See Michael Crowder, "Independence as a Goal in French West African Politics," in William H. Lewis, ed. *French-Speaking Africa, the Search for Identity*, New York, 1965.

101

S. Soriba-Camara, *La Guinée sans la France*, p. 92.

confederal system.

An UGTAN conference subsequently took place in Bamako, 10-11 September. Delegates to the conference represented all the territories of AOF (with the exception of Ivory Coast), plus Togo and Cameroon. The report presented by the Directing Committee was unanimously approved. Moreover the conference decided to reject the proposed Constitution, opting for immediate independence. Thus UGTAN, calling for trade union unity and coordinated efforts with the youth movement, entered the West African mobilisation campaign for a "no" vote.<sup>102</sup>

The main organisation of African students was the Fédération des étudiants d'Afrique Noire en France (FEANF), created in Bordeaux in 1950.<sup>103</sup> Initial goals of the FEANF included: the grouping of all associations of African students in France; the improvement of their "moral and material status"; and the study of problems relating to Africa.<sup>104</sup> The organisation of the FEANF was as follows: the union was led by an executive committee, elected at annual congresses and meeting three times yearly; sections were created in most French universities, and in 14 overseas territories--eight in AOF, four in AEF, plus Togo and Cameroon. The FEANF regularly published its own newspaper entitled L'Étudiant d'Afrique Noire.

Although the federation vowed to remain independent, not adhering to any political party or movement, FEANF soon focused most of its

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102

ANSOM AP 2257/3, "Revue des événements politiques en AOF," September 1958, p. 5.

103

The history of the movement is covered in Charles Diané, La FEANF: et les grandes heures du mouvement syndical étudiant noir, Paris, 1990.

104

Ibid., p. 43.

attention and activities in the political arena. The students' union became a forum for African nationalism, taking on a "progressive" and "revolutionary" stance for the emancipation of Africa. The founding members of FEANF were members of the RDA; its statutes and goals similar to those outlined in the RDA congresses of 1946 and 1949. The two movements parted company, however, when FEANF disapproved of the RDA disaffiliation from the Communist Party. The students' union remained leftist in orientation, in close alignment with the Union des Etudiants Communistes Français (UECF), and the Union Internationale des Etudiants (UIE) seated in Prague.

The FEANF first called for the independence of the African overseas territories at its sixth annual congress held in Paris in December 1955. From this point onwards the two principal goals of the movement were defined as "the struggle for the conquest of independence and the reassertion of African unity."<sup>105</sup>

The students were among the first protesters denouncing the balkanising effects of the Loi-Cadre reforms. In June 1958 FEANF circulars deplored the new government of de Gaulle, blaming the "fascist, fierce enemies of the independence of countries under French domination"<sup>106</sup> for his political comeback. The same month the organisation held an extraordinary congress to work out its position concerning the constitutional issues at hand. The resolution of the ninth FEANF congress, held in Paris from 21-23 June 1958, proclaimed:

Neither the revision of the French Constitution, nor the referendum, nor any other project will alter the

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105

Ibid., p. 96.

106

FEANF circular dated 11 June 1958, reprinted in ibid., p. 103.

determination of the African people to attain total independence. (107)

Moreover the students' union accused the African parliamentarians of "treason" in "abusing the confidence of the African masses by their collaboration with a regime that signifies the enslavement and misery of our people."<sup>108</sup>

In August the students were joined by a number of organisations to formulate a united appeal for immediate independence. Meeting in Dakar on 12 August 1958, members of associations including the PAI, FEANF, Conseil de la Jeunesse d'Afrique, UGTAN Senegal branch, a women's union, and Muslim cultural union participated in talks culminating in the publication of a declaration entitled "Front de lutte pour l'indépendance nationale." This united front was essentially led by the PAI, of which many FEANF militants were members.

In sum, during the summer of 1958, apart from the Senegalese PAI, three interterritorial movements: the PRA, UGTAN, and FEANF, declared their intentions to press for immediate independence and rejection of the Constitution of the French Fifth Republic. Apart from domestic considerations, certainly the common position adopted by these organisations had an influence on the Guinean decision to call for a "no" vote on 28 September.

#### Guinea Decides to Vote "No"

In spite of his leftist reputation as the enfant terrible of the RDA, Touré was not always a popular figure of FEANF. Particularly after his election to the French National Assembly in 1956, FEANF often accused

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107

Ibid., p. 108.

108

Ibid., p. 107.

the PDG leader of "repaying his debt" to the administration with undue collaboration. In April 1958 a FEANF delegation met with Touré in Paris, announcing that the organisation was intensifying its struggle against the policies pursued by the RDA leadership. At this time the Guinean leader was reportedly sympathetic to the students' position, admitting that he too held considerable reservations about the direction Houphouët was leading the movement.

The Guinean branch of FEANF was the Union générale des étudiants et élèves de Guinée (UGEEG), created in 1950 with headquarters in Conakry. At its annual congress in Conakry, 17-20 July 1958, the UGEEG echoed the FEANF call for the rejection of the constitutional project, proclaiming: "we prefer independence, even in misery." This time, however, Touré was less supportive of the students' platform, warning them that they had better not count on him, nor the PDG, in building a campaign around the theme of independence. In fact the PDG had officially set up its youth branch, the Jeunesse de la Révolution Démocratique Africaine (JRDA), on 29 March 1958. As pointed out by Achille Mbembe, however, youth organizations such as the JRDA were really directed by elder party members, with their orientation and directives dictated from the top. In any case, although FEANF was very outspoken and active in Guinea as well as elsewhere in the overseas territories, evidence suggests that the position held by the students did not have a significant impact on

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109

ANSOM AP 2154/3, "Bulletin de Renseignements," French Overseas Ministry, No. 1326, Paris, 28 April 1958.

110

ANSOM AP 2111/8, "Comptes rendus au Congrès et de conférences organisées par les étudiants de Guinée," Governor Guinea to Minister FOM, Conakry, 24 August 1958.

111

Achille Mbembe, Les jeunes et l'ordre politique en Afrique Noire, Paris, 1985, p. 79.

the voting choice of African political leaders. In Guinea the students encouraged the masses by their display of fervent nationalism; however, the influence they had on the omnipotent Touré was, at most, very slight.

The matter of UGTAN, however, was a different story. As Secretary-General, Touré could hardly ignore the workers and leaders of the inter-territorial labour movement who (albeit in Touré's absence) had adopted a resolution calling for independence and rejection of the Constitution at the UGTAN conference of 10-11 September in Bamako. As it turned out, the loyalty Touré felt towards his trade union background, and the organisation which more clearly reflected his own ideas, was stronger than his attachment to the political movement of the RDA.

Presenting the RDA position to General de Gaulle (which differed from his personal convictions) on 5 August was Touré's final act of capitulation to RDA President and elder statesman Houphouët-Boigny. From this point onwards Touré began distancing himself not only from RDA orientation but also from fellow members of the Coordinating Committee.

Upon his return from Dakar on 29 August, Touré held a mass public meeting. The speech Touré gave on this occasion reflected an obvious "hardening" of his position regarding the forthcoming referendum.<sup>112</sup> Addressing a large crowd, Touré focused on the lack of internal autonomy prescribed in the text of the new Constitution. In outlining the shortcomings of the proposal, Touré presented the dilemma of the vote as a moral issue, explaining:

Rest assured that in this state of slavery we will continue to fight to destroy what is being built on our backs. It is

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112

ANSOM AP 2181/6, Telegram Governor Guinea to Minister FOM, No. 3467-73, Conakry, 31 August 1958.

better to continue in this way than to have from us a "yes" to a Constitution by which we will freely consecrate our state of perpetual dependency, our state of indignity, our state of subordination, continuing to sacrifice our originality and nationality. (113)

In conclusion Touré stated that if the demands integral to African unity and dignity were not included in the Constitution, then Guinea would take "independence with its consequences" on 28 September. As Touré saw it, the choice was now up to the French government, the conditions of African acceptance were clear.

Ignoring Touré's pleas for constitutional reform and denying Cornut-Gentille another chance to negotiate, de Gaulle decided it was best to let Houphouët deal with the unruly PDG leader. Houphouët, in turn, was reportedly relying on his deputy Ouëzzin Coulibaly to persuade Touré into accepting the proposed French Community.<sup>114</sup> A meeting of the RDA Coordinating Committee was scheduled to take place in Ouagadougou on 4 September. In protest against an RDA circular dated 31 August, criticising his recent public declarations and signed by Coulibaly,<sup>115</sup> Touré intended to boycott the gathering. Meanwhile in Paris Coulibaly was found to be seriously ill, and the Coordinating Committee was summoned to his hospital bedside. Despite the close friendship Touré had shared with Coulibaly, he sent two representatives in his place. On 5 September Coulibaly dictated his final communiqué, confirming that the RDA was satisfied with the promises made by General de Gaulle and consequently would vote "yes" on 28 September. In a final note seemingly

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113

Text of Touré's address printed in *La Liberté* under the title "Le PDG contre l'intimidation," No. 136, 10 September 1958.

114

G. Chaffard, *Les Carnets Secrets*, vol. II, p. 204.

115

L. Kaba, *Le "non" de la Guinée*, p. 154.

directed at Touré, Coulibaly warned:

It is inadmissible that a territory, due to local considerations, would fail to fulfill its obligations. Democracy begins with submission, not with domination. (116)

Ouëzzin Coulibaly died from liver cancer on 7 September 1958 at the age of 51. Funeral services were set to take place in his birthplace Bobo-Dioulasso in Upper Volta; the entire RDA Coordinating Committee was expected to attend. According to Governor Mauberna, Touré was "touched very profoundly" by the death of his close friend and confidant.<sup>117</sup> Mauberna reported that Touré planned on making the trip to Bobo-Dioulasso, suggesting that it would be very difficult for him to remain in opposition to RDA leaders and Coulibaly's last wish for unity within the movement. Touré scheduled an extraordinary PDG congress to finalise a decision of the referendum vote on 14 September, later (he claimed) learning that Coulibaly's burial would take place the same day. Although it seemed probable that Touré would delay the congress for two days, he decided at the last minute not to attend Coulibaly's funeral.

Touré's decision to remain in Conakry and hold the congress was interpreted as a definite sign that he intended to pursue a "no" vote. Indeed while RDA leaders gathered in Upper Volta to mourn the passing of Coulibaly, Touré made the following announcement to the Guinean masses:

We will vote "no" to a Community which is nothing but a rebaptised French Union, old merchandise with only a changed label. We will vote "no" to irresponsibility. As from 29

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116

Claude Gérard, *Les Pionniers de l'Indépendance*, Paris, 1974, p. 222.

117

ANSOM AP 2181/6, Telegram Governor Guinea to FCM Ministry, No. 3201-2, Conakry, 8 September 1958.

September, we will be an independent state. We will take total responsibility for our affairs. A new nation will be added to the list of free countries. (118)

Stopping in Conakry on his way to Bobo-Dioulasso, RDA Vice-President Gabriel Lisette headed a delegation to attend the PDG congress. Following the request of Lisette, a paragraph was added to the political resolution mandating the PDG Political Bureau to:

make immediate contact with the RDA Coordinating Committee and territorial sections in view of safeguarding African unity. (119)

In this vein Lisette accompanied a PDG delegation to Coulibaly's funeral. His intention was to call an urgent meeting of the RDA Coordinating Committee, preferably to take place in Conakry. Lisette's proposition was utterly rejected by the RDA leaders attending the services in Bobo-Dioulasso, as noted by High-Commissioner Messmer:

Minister Houphouët was very incensed by the position adopted by Sékou Touré. He told me that Touré absolutely must be beaten, by depriving him of all metropolitan aid from 29 September, and leading a vigorous propaganda campaign against him in Guinea. (121)

Thus Houphouët ordered that all efforts to bring Touré back into the fold be abandoned. After countless past incidents in which Houphouët forgave Touré's rebellious diversions and indiscipline, the RDA leader had finally reached his breaking point, beyond which there would be no reconciliation.

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118

"Rapport Politique" of PDG Extraordinary Congress, Conakry, 14 September 1958, printed in *La Liberté*, No. 138, 23 September 1958.

119

*Ibid.*

120

ANSOM AP 2181/6, Telegram Governor Guinea to FOM Ministry, Nos. 3965-9, Conakry, 15 September 1958.

121

ANSOM AP 2181/6, Telegram High-Commissioner AOF to FOM Ministry, Nos. 3986-8, Bobo-Dioulasso, 16 September 1958.

At this point Touré was hardly paying attention to RDA opinions of him. The 14 September was a marked day in Guinean history, when the masses seemingly took their destiny in their hands. The PDG congress took place in a carnival atmosphere; people from all over the territory flocked to Conakry for the momentous occasion.<sup>122</sup> The euphoria, lasting several days, intensified after a meeting between PDG officials and PRA leaders Barry Diawadou and Barry III led to a joint communiqué announcing a united campaign for an all out mobilisation of the masses to vote<sup>123</sup> "no."

The PRA Coordinating Committee, meeting on 14 September, had given their territorial sections the right to choose between a "yes" and "no" vote depending upon the "local political context."<sup>124</sup> Cognizant that UGTAN and FEANF were pressing for independence, Bakary Djibo was rallying for a "no" vote in Niger, and Senegal was expected to reject the Constitution, Guineans were fearless in their anticipation of independence and African unity. When Mamadou Dia (of Senegal) informed Touré that Senghor had reconsidered his position and persuaded the territorial section to vote "yes" to the French Community, this was deemed only a

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122

L. Kaba, *Le "non" de la Guinée*, p. 160.

123

In fact the PRA section in Guinea held its congress from 4-7 September and had decided to vote "no", for once Diawadou and Barry III had been ahead of Touré and the PDG instead of behind. Victor D. DuBois, "The Guinean Vote for Independence: The Manoeuvring before the Referendum of September 28, 1958," *American University Field Staff Reports*, West Africa Series, V, 7, 1962, p. 6.

124

Léo Hamon, "Introduction à l'étude des partis politiques de l'Afrique Française," *Revue Juridique et Politique d'Outre-Mer*, 3, July-September 1961, p. 179.

minor and inconsequential setback.

It appears that neither the PDG leadership, nor the Guinean masses, truly believed that they would suffer serious "consequences" following a "no" vote. Governor Mauberna sent numerous telegrams alerting higher authorities of this phenomenon, for example:

As already signalled time and again, Sékou continues to believe, despite contrary assurances on my part, that the day after the negative referendum vote he will be able to negotiate an association agreement with France. Moreover all his actions are seemingly inspired by this belief. (126)

Oblivious to repeated warnings from the Governor, on 24 September a PDG delegation led by Touré asked Mauberna to transmit a message to the French government stating that the day after independence Guinea intended to send a delegation to Paris to work out accords conforming to article 88 of the Constitution which stipulated:

The Republic or Community may conclude agreements with states desiring association in order to develop their civilisations. (127)

The Governor accordingly sent word to Paris, and without receiving a response, was ordered to leave the territory two days later. As Mauberna left Guinea, a squadron of military parachutists arrived from Dakar to "ensure order" on voting day, 28 September.

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125

Ibrahima Baba Kaké, Sékou Touré: Le héros et le tyran, Paris, 1987, pp. 82-3.

126 ANSOM AP 2181/6, Telegram Governor Guinea to FOM Ministry, Nos. 357-60, Conakry, 17 September 1958.

127

S. Soriba-Camara, La Guinée sans la France, p. 100.

### The Referendum and Subsequent Consequences

Except perhaps to intimidate the population, in which case the effort was entirely in vain, there was no cause whatsoever for a show of force to maintain order on polling day in Guinea. The PDG government had scrupulously organised the elections, setting up 1,692 voting stations across the territory. As of 27 September, all bars, cafés, cinemas, and markets in Guinea were closed to ensure peace and orderly conduct throughout the voting hours of the following day. Demonstrations, public meetings, and even the tom-tom drum were banned by government order.

Masses began queueing at polling stations from the early hours of the morning; by noon on 28 September the majority of votes had already been cast. As reported by Victor D. DuBois:

The efficient PDG organisation, which over the past few years had meticulously built up an impressive system of communications with the bush, proved its worth. (128)

Discipline and calm reigned throughout Guinea. Returning to their homes, the population waited for the signal from the government to let the celebration begin.

To gauge the result of the vote, Le Monde special envoy André Blanchet, who visited forty polling stations, concluded that one needed only consider the spectacle of the voting booths. Rejected white "yes" ballots were strewn all over the floor, as voters had deposited only the yellow "no" cards in the ballot boxes. Similar reports from numerous voting stations confirmed that the election was conducted in a fair manner without government or outside interference.

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128

V.D. DuBois, "The Guinean Vote for Independence," pp. 6-7.

129

L. Kaba, Le "non" de la Guinée, p. 166.

The result of the referendum vote in Guinea was entirely as expected: 95 per cent of the votes cast on 28 September returned a "no" ballot.<sup>130</sup> The abstention rate of 15 per cent was the lowest ever recorded in Guinea.<sup>131</sup> In the Coastal districts, "no" votes registered between 94 per cent in Conakry and 99 per cent in Boké, Boffa, and Forécariah (see Table 6). The negative vote in Upper Guinea and Forest districts ranged between 95.8 per cent in Kankan and 99.9 per cent in Faranah. As anticipated, the majority of the "yes" votes, as well as abstentions,<sup>132</sup> were found in the Fouta region. More than half of the total "yes" votes in the territory came from Labé, which also had the highest abstention rate (over 50 per cent). Incidentally, the re-implantation of the FDA in Mamou proved remarkably successful, where 98 per cent of the voters returned "no" ballots. In all over one million Guineans flocked to the polls on 28 September to claim their right to independence. The triumph of the masses was complete: on 2 October 1958 Guinea became a sovereign nation.

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130

Guinea was entirely alone in voting "no." Elsewhere in AOF an overwhelming "yes" vote was returned, with the following percentages: Ivory Coast--99.9, Dahomey--97.8, Mauritania--94.0, Niger--78.4, Senegal--97.5, Soudan--97.5, and Upper Volta--99.1.

131

Incidentally the referendum vote in the Ivory Coast topped the charts with a 97 per cent rate of participation. ANSOM AP 2257/3, "Revue des événements politiques en AOF," September 1958, p. 20.

132

The percentage of "no" votes in Fouta districts was as follows: Labé--58%; Dalaba--78%; Tongué and Mali--80%.

Table 6: Referendum Results in Guinea, 28 September 1958.

Districts	Registered Voters	Votes Cast	Yes	No
Beyla	73,401	71,973	37	71,764
Boffa	33,422	31,544	133	31,368
Boké	40,476	31,070	99	30,951
Conakry	44,389	41,513	991	39,232
Dabola	20,349	19,247	8	19,225
Dalaba	45,128	31,523	6,903	24,676
Dinguiraye	26,537	23,537	76	23,438
Dubrêka	45,479	44,109	23	44,049
Faranah	35,595	33,835	0	33,124
Forécariah	42,206	40,309	30	39,632
Gaoual	31,551	26,711	73	26,634
Gueckédou	59,771	57,089	1	57,070
Kankan	79,869	66,358	693	63,590
Kindia	55,213	53,928	1,021	49,904
Kissidougou	71,039	64,017	70	63,626
Kouroussa	43,476	31,940	643	31,200
Labé	113,349	68,471	27,440	40,143
Macenta	90,622	85,963	97	85,808
Mamou	54,562	44,288	455	43,453
Mali	53,328	41,779	5,701	33,824
N'Zérékoré	104,510	85,312	2,158	83,001
Pita	52,586	52,300	3,117	48,634
Siguiri	80,488	71,841	377	71,514
Tougué	29,256	21,024	3,905	17,006
Télimélé	52,426	37,584	2,907	84,527
Youkounkoun	26,958	22,906	1	22,899
Total	1,405,986	1,200,171	56,959	1,130,292

Source: S. Touré, *Expérience Guinéenne et Unité Africaine*, p. 200.

Arriving on referendum day, Governor Jean Risterucci was sent by the metropolitan government to oversee the French withdrawal from Guinea. Through Risterucci, Guinea was informed that the French government intended to transfer all French civil servants out of the former territory within a period of two months, and that all budgetary and economic assistance was terminated. A group of 80 French teachers returning to Guinea from holiday were ordered off their ship in Dakar and notified that their contracts had been cancelled. Investments by FIDES were immediately halted, while future projects were annulled.

Banks cut credit; most of them hurriedly left the country. The pensions of Guinean war veterans were suspended. Guinean exports ceased to be admitted to France under the favoured-nation policy. Administrative files were emptied, those that could not be carried were burned. In offices all over Conakry furniture was destroyed and telephones ripped from the walls. The military barracks were burned. The departure of the army included all medical personnel, who reportedly took their medicines and supplies along with them. Finally, in taking possession of the Governor's palace, Touré entered a scene of desolation: all furnishings had been removed, kitchenware smashed, cellars emptied, and telephones gone. Such proved to be the initial "consequences" of the Guinean "no" vote. The forced isolation of the former French colony, the only one to reject the French Community by opting for immediate independence, had begun.

Repeated Guinean appeals for association agreements with France were ignored. Delayed correspondence from the French government often was sent un-signed on blank paper bearing no letter-head. De Gaulle was determined to make an example out of Guinea (while giving a warning to others), inflicting a harsh punishment which undoubtedly had a considerable impact on the growth and development of the new nation.

## CONCLUSIONS

Authors have been at odds in discussing the causes of the rupture between France and Guinea. Two of the most common arguments are that the conflict stemmed from 1) missed opportunity and 2) psychological error. Both theories are employed by Chaffard and Lacouture. Chaffard claims that if Touré had not been kept out of the Constitutional Committee, and if de Gaulle had read Touré's speech of 25 August in advance, things would have turned out differently.<sup>1</sup> Lacouture also regrets that de Gaulle apparently failed to read the text of Touré's address, pointing out that the content was really not surprising to anyone who was familiar with the mannerisms of the PDG leader.<sup>2</sup> Both authors stress that the actual wording of the speech was not as influential as the tone in which it was delivered. R.W. Johnson also traces the split to the confrontation in Conakry, seeing Touré's actions as a "tactical error," and independence almost as an accident, "won by a reluctant revolutionary in a state of psychological trauma brought on by compulsive resort to rhetoric."<sup>3</sup> According to Johnson, after realising what he had done, Touré "sought to retrieve the situation and apologise."<sup>4</sup>

These arguments are rejected by Guinean authors Camara and Kaba. Camara holds that Touré knew exactly what he was doing, the wording of

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G. Chaffard, *Les Carnets Secrets*, vol II, pp. 200-4.

2

J. Lacouture, *Cinq hommes et la France*, p. 349.

3

R.W. Johnson, "Guinea," in John Dunn, ed., *West African States: Failure and Promise*, Cambridge, 1978, pp. 38-40.

4

*Ibid.*, p. 40.

the address was intentional, and that the decision to opt for immediate  
independence had already been made.<sup>5</sup> Camara further suggests that Touré  
was deliberately offending de Gaulle in order not to take responsibility  
for the impending rupture in Franco-Guinean relations. Overall both  
Camara and Kaba argue that the conflict was irreducible, stemming from a  
long struggle against colonialism and inferior status, thus a matter of  
simple pride.<sup>6</sup>

All of the above cited authors agree that the Guineans truly did  
not believe that France would brutally cut off her former colony and  
impose the threatened "consequences" of secession. Finally, Hamon claims  
that in the beginning of September Touré was still wary of independence,  
not knowing exactly where he was going. Nevertheless, according to  
Hamon, the split was somewhat fatal in view of the personalities  
involved and the political mobilisation of the masses.<sup>7</sup>

It was, in fact, exactly this "mobilisation" that was the  
propelling force behind the Guinean "no" vote and subsequent  
independence. This thesis has traced post-war political development in  
Guinea with particular emphasis on the relationship between France and  
the PDG. The French impact on politics in the overseas territories was  
preponderant. As explained in Chapter II, African political organisation  
in the Federation of French West Africa was largely the result of post-  
war political reform. The colonial power contributed to the shaping of  
local African politics in a variety of ways, examples including

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5

S.S. Camara, *La Guinée sans la France*, p. 109.

6

L. Kaba, *Le "non" de la Guinée à de Gaulle*, pp. 228-9.

7

L. Hamon, "Le Parti Démocratique de Guinée (D'Avant l'Indépendance à 1960)," *Revue Juridique et Politique D'Outre-Mer*, 3, July-September 1961, p. 361.

electoral tampering, supporting or suppressing political parties, coercing administrative chiefs and civil servants, transferring political activists around the Federation, and imprisoning party militants. Meanwhile in Paris the French influence on African parliamentarians was more subtle, taking the form of alliances, negotiations, and tacit agreements.

It was the French Communist Party which initially welcomed the African deputies to Paris, and was instrumental in the organisation of the RDA. The repression of the RDA following the ousting of the Communists from power in France led to a re-evaluation of the movement's orientation. The new hard-line administration made it perfectly clear to the RDA that the costs of continued alliance with the Communists far outweighed the benefits. Facing outright dissolution, in 1950 the RDA leadership adjusted their policies and reconciled with the French authorities.

In Guinea the adjustment process proved to be lagging. The RDA section in Guinea developed alongside the Communist study groups, where most of the activists received their political training. Moreover, the case of Guinea was particular in that the party was also intrinsically tied to the trade union movement. During the time when the RDA was being suppressed, political action in Guinea was redirected through the local branch of the Communist-oriented CGT, the success of which made Sékou Touré the most celebrated union leader in the Federation. Adept at organising mass strikes pressing for various reforms, Touré remained suspect in the eyes of the French longer than any other RDA leader. Defeated in several election campaigns due to administrative interference, Touré was caught in a difficult position of accepting RDA

disaffiliation from the Communist Party and reconciliation with the French government, while maintaining his position as Secretary-General of the CGT in West Africa. Hence for the time being Touré adopted an ambiguous attitude, keeping the authorities guessing until he decided upon his next move.

After losing the election to the National Assembly in 1954, Touré led a campaign to reorganise the PDG from the grass-roots level, implanting party cells throughout the territory modelled after the PCF. Strict hierarchy and party discipline were enforced, while parallel administrations acted as screens between the local government and the Guinean masses. Highly indoctrinated with party rhetoric and anti-colonial sentiment, the masses were mobilised and unleashed into open conflict with PDG opponents and colonial forces. The violent incidents of 1954-1955 were PDG inspired and orchestrated, intended as a show of force. The mobilisation campaign proved remarkably successful, as administrative reports confirmed that the PDG village lives, works, and rises up *en bloc*.

Desperate for elected office and confirmation of his eminent position on the Guinean political scene, Touré finally chose to appease both the RDA leadership and the French government by publicly announcing in 1955 the severing of ties between the PDG and the PCF, as well as the creation of an independent African trade union movement. For Touré this was a tactical manoeuvre, well calculated as soon afterwards he was elected deputy to the National Assembly and then was heading the territorial government.

At this point it can be said that France lost the upper hand in controlling political events in Guinea. Although the French authorities

"allowed" Touré to rise to power at this time, essentially they had little choice. Clearly the French government was counting on Houphouët to keep Touré in line with the RDA policy of collaboration. Nevertheless it was evident that the French administration in Guinea had little remaining authority, and in fact order in the territory was at the behest of Touré alone. For in Guinea the RDA "Sily" was synonymous with Touré, the "myth" surrounding his persona was powerful.

The same conclusion applies to the abolition of the chieftaincy. While the French government had the power to annul such an act, no intervention was forthcoming. Under the circumstances, namely the long-established campaign to degrade the chieftaincy and the PDG government now in power, the suppression of the institution was accepted as inevitable. For the PDG, the end of the chieftaincy not only eliminated a historically potent force of opposition to the party, but symbolised the destruction of a main pillar of colonialism.

The anti-colonial struggle was a recurrent theme throughout PDG history. To what extent, then, did such rhetoric influence the Guinean decision to opt for immediate independence in the referendum of 28 September? To attribute a decision of such magnitude to simple mistake, accident, or personality conflict is surely inadequate. To trace the rupture in Franco-Guinean relations to Touré's speech in front of de Gaulle is also overstated.

The address which Touré made before the Guinean National Assembly in the presence of de Gaulle was not impromptu. It has been claimed that Touré was not even the author of the famous harangue, but that a committee was responsible for its contents. In any case, certainly the text

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8

L. Kaba, *Le "non" de la Guinée à de Gaulle*, p. 105.

reflected Touré's views at the time, as much of it had been heard before. In fact the much cited remark: "We prefer poverty in liberty to wealth in slavery" was a proverb often quoted by PDG propagandists; in a speech on 2 February 1958 Touré stated: "we will find that it is preferable to live unhappily in liberty than happily in slavery." As for the proclamation that "we will never renounce our natural and legitimate right to independence," the key word here is "right." Up to this point Touré had not campaigned for independence, however he had countless times insisted on the "inalienable right" to it. Touré was making a deliberate stand, for African dignity in demanding the right to independence, and for African unity in creating a confederal Republic.

Evidence suggests that at this time Touré had not yet decided which way to vote. As in the past, the PDG leader had kept the RDA leadership as well as the French government wondering which direction he would take. His hesitations prove that the final decision was not accidental but rather carefully deliberated. It seems that Touré was leaning toward a "no" vote, and was either testing de Gaulle for a last minute compromise or concession, or drumming up extra support from the Guinean masses for the difficult path that lay ahead.

Among the West African politicians, Touré has been characterised as belonging to the third generation (along with cohorts such as Bakary Djibo), that of trade unionism and revolution. The second generation politicians were the Ponty intellectuals, having usually served in the

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9

CRDA 9/br.3, Text of a speech of Sékou Touré entitled "Le RDA et l'Action Syndicale," given at a trade union conference in Conakry on 2 February 1958, p. 14.

10

J. Lacouture, Cinq hommes et la France, p. 328.

French administration or federal civil service. Houphouët, a trained medical doctor and 20 years Touré's senior, belonged to the first generation of African leaders, beside elder highly-educated politicians such as Lamine Guèye and Mamadou Konaté. The conflict of generations was visible in all the African political groupings.<sup>11</sup> Touré led the younger, nationalist federalists, who also filled the ranks of UGTAN. It must be remembered that the uneducated men like Touré retained a great deal of their formative training received by the Communist study groups in the beginning of their political careers. Particularly in the case of the PDG, Communist organisation, propaganda, and indoctrination strategies were meticulously applied from the Directing Committee to the grass-roots level of the party.

Official reports depict the Guinean masses ready and eager to take "independence with its consequences," while the leadership remained somewhat reluctant to accept de Gaulle's dare. In the week preceding the referendum, an observer described Touré's behaviour accordingly:

At no time during this historic week was it possible to detect the least glimmer of triumph or exultation in the somber regard of "Sily": rather a controlled anxiety. (12)

PDG indoctrination and rhetoric over the years had prepared the masses for the "revolutionary struggle" to bring about the downfall of colonialism. Nevertheless although this massive mobilisation and overflow of enthusiasm for the prospect of independence undoubtedly had an influence on Touré, the PDG leader could be certain that whatever his decision, most of his people would be behind him.

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11

R. Schachter Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, p. 116.

12

André Blanchet, "Guinée: Comment est née la République," *Jeune Afrique*, 1447, 28 September 1988.

Touré certainly also considered the aspirations of the trade unionists he represented, as UGTAN was decidedly campaigning for a "no" vote. Additionally, the call for independence had been heralded by Djibo of Niger, the PRA, PAI, and FEANF, and thus it is likely that Touré expected that he would not be alone in such a decision. The PRA leaders in Guinea, Barry Diawadou and Barry III, had adopted their movement's position on the referendum and decided to call for the rejection of the Constitution. It would have been very difficult for Touré to accept being outdone by his political rivals. Finally, as a matter of African dignity, there was only one choice, the consequences for which unfortunately brought Guinea "poverty in liberty," albeit with pride.

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