

GUINEA SHOWS

On September 28, 1958, a new state was born in Africa—the Republic of Guinea. This birth of Guinea must be seen against the stirring historical background of our times—a period of great and fundamental social and political changes which are profoundly affecting the lives and future of the common people throughout the world. In 1939 there were only two independent African states in the whole Continent. To-day, there are ten. The prospects are that there will be fifteen by the end of 1960.

Yet, though it is part of a great world process of rapid change in our times, the Democratic Republic of Guinea is well worth studying in itself, for it is one of the most exciting and dynamic factors ever to emerge in Africa. As a part of the former French West African Federation, the interests of this small country of 106,200 square miles were sadly neglected and subordinated to those of French imperialism. The country's great mineral and other natural resources were partly neglected, and then only developed in a one-sided way, in the interests of foreigners. Of the population—between 2½ and 3 million souls—95 per cent. were illiterate. 80 per cent. lived in the rural areas. Like all people under imperialist domination and economic stranglehold, the people of Guinea were generally poor and living standards of the workers and toiling masses was very low indeed.

Consider these facts. During 60 years of colonial rule, the French authorities built only six schools in the Beyla Province (South Eastern Guinea). During eight months of independent rule, 14 schools were opened in the same province. In 60 years the French built less than 200 miles of roads, while the Republic built several hundreds of miles of roads in its first 8 months. Throughout the whole period of French rule, only four hospitals were put up by the French. The Government has already opened three new ones by June, 1959.

Since independence the Government has embarked on what President Sékou Touré refers to as a "huge programme of development of economy and society", or exploitation of the country's "immense natural riches", and "huge works of construction".

DE GAULLE'S REFERENDUM

All these great developments of the Republic of Guinea spring from their historic decision of 1958, when they voted overwhelmingly for separation from France and the establishment of an independent Republic.

THE WAY FORWARD

Poor, illiterate and backward as they may have been, the people of Guinea did great things; they knew their true interests and how to achieve their objectives. Thanks to the alertness and efficiency of their national organisation and its farsighted and politically mature and wise leadership, which saw through and correctly answered General De Gaulle's proposals, the people of Guinea attained their emancipation.

Relying on his imperialist-minded officials and African stooges to persuade the African masses to vote their masters' way, De Gaulle asked the peoples of the French African territories to choose between—

- * complete independence;
- * autonomy within the French Community; and
- * the status of a province of Metropolitan France.

More than a dozen territories, including French West Africa, the French Equatorial Africa and the island of Madagascar, with over 30 million inhabitants were vitally affected by and deeply concerned over these proposals. Only Guinea voted solidly (95%) for complete independence.

SEKOU TOURE AND THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF GUINEA

This was possible, and could only be possible, because the people were united solidly behind the Democratic Party of Guinea, a strong, alert and efficient organisation with a politically mature and farsighted leadership, at the head of which stood a remarkable man: a brilliant and bold political leader, a genius for organisation and a great administrator, **Sékou Touré**.

President Touré is a working-class leader, a veteran of the African Labour Movement. As far back as 1945 he was elected General Secretary of the Communication Workers Union, and in February, 1956, he became President of the General Confederation of Workers of Black Africa (UGTAN) which embraces Trade Union Federations in many countries besides Guinea as far afield as the Sudan. He has been Secretary of the Democratic Party of Guinea since 1952.

DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM

The Democratic Party of Guinea is a popular and progressive national movement grouping together, regardless of race, religion or sex, all the forces bent on destroying colonialism, and establishing a truly democratic state in Guinea.

It is organised, conceived and orientated on different lines from the usual national liberation organisations. "While never forgetting past events and ever watching current trends", President Touré told the recent Party Conference held at Conakry in September, 1959 :

"The Democratic Party of Guinea is also absorbed in what must happen tomorrow. Indeed, it is precisely in the matter of what the party thinks its position tomorrow will be that it ought to avail itself, at the opportune moment, of all tendencies conducive to securing the happiest and the most prosperous future for the country . . ."

"The supporters of the Party who, relying on the present casts its programme in the future and for whom mistakes, far from disheartening him, far from dampening his resolution and energy, are, on the contrary, profitable elements because, once he has detected them through the help of external criticism and self-criticism, he will be able to avoid them and to perfect his action in the future. The leaders and the followers must know that action is the food of intelligence and that it is action which makes the thought of the party".

The Democratic Party of Guinea is based on the principles of democratic centralism. Organs of state are led by the Party; it is the Party that plans, formulates policies, chooses and decides strategy and tactics, and the Government approves and implements.

DEMOCRATIC DICTATORSHIP

In the speech cited above, President Touré pointed out that every State form is in essence a dictatorship. "We should bear in mind that nations are democratic or non-democratic but that, no matter what their nature be, their trying to achieve purposes which have been fixed in advance necessarily implies dictatorship". But, Guinea being a democracy, the dictatorship which is exercised is that of the people as a whole. "It is the power of the people exerted by the people and for the people."

"The forces of progress are, dialectically, the peoples forces." Therefore says Touré "the Democratic Party of Guinea has chosen democracy, it has endowed the Nation with democratic institutions, it exerts on the national level a dictatorship of the people."

FOUR THOUSAND LOCAL COMMITTEES

The administration of the Democratic Republic of Guinea is founded on the population; the country is ruled through some 4,000 local committees which are elected on the basis of adult suffrage. Some of the political keymen in the administration of countries are said to be peasants, including women who have never been to school.

The function committees, on the level of the district, village, section and county, general assemblies and congresses, is to wage "any action deserving to be waged on behalf of the Republic of Guinea." They make vital decisions affecting the daily lives of the people and binding the nation.

In many political and social fields the leadership of the new Guinea has drawn on the experience of the Peoples Republic of China. Being a poor country, like all colonial countries, which have been left stripped and backward by imperialism, Guinea has little in the way of large capital reserves. But she is drawing heavily upon her main capital—the enthusiasm, energy, inventiveness and patriotism of the people.

A BOLD PROGRAMME

A bold and ambitious programme of economic and industrial development, social and cultural advancement has been decided upon. Independent Guinea and its Democratic Party are winning success on the economic and political fronts at home and in international relations; new industries are being built, agricultural and internal trade reorganised and developed. Thanks to the mass movement of volunteer labour teams over 8,000 kilometres of roads, 335 school-rooms and 672 bridges have been constructed, and 67 state-owned plantations and 2,440 jointly-owned fields—the income from which is used for public needs have been established. Production of bananas, coffee, rice, palm nuts, peanuts and other foodstuffs has increased tremendously.

The cost of living has been reduced while wages of the workers have been raised. The 1960-62 plan stipulates that 50% of all state funds shall be set aside for production purposes, 30% for social welfare and 20% for administration. Diplomatic relations have been established with a number of countries, including socialist countries, and agreements on economic, technical and cultural co-operation concluded with them. Students are sent out to foreign lands to acquire the required knowledge.

In his speech on the 14th September, 1959, President Sékou Touré told the world that they "expected to be able to resolve once and for all, before July 1st 1960, the important problems which are going to condition the perfect application of Guinea plan of mining, industrial, agricultural, handicraft and social development: Guinea money, the national bank, the bank of issue, investment laws, customs regime, etc".

AIMS OF THE PARTY

Of all emergent African independent states, Guinea is the only one that seems to be headed directly towards its social and economic objectives: to abolish poverty, hunger and backwardness, and to create a life of happiness for the people of Guinea. The Party appears to know exactly what it wants and how to get it. Generally it aims at—

- * Political independence, social and cultural advancement and economic development and happiness of the African people;
- * forming the people of Guinea into one national entity and eliminating all causes of “tribal, ethnic or religious rivalries” which have in the “past caused so much damage” to the country and its people;
- * decolonising political and legal institutions, the economy of the country, and the minds and attitudes of the people of Guinea;
- * re-educating the youths of the country and harnessing their energies, courage, faith and enthusiasm in the service of the country and society;
- * emancipating the women of the Democratic Republic of Guinea; and
- * instilling a spirit of willingness to work, and pride in the country and the community.

IMPORTANT THEORETICAL PROBLEMS

However, questions of complete national independence and the fundamental development of national economy and society are matters that raise some important and profound theoretical social and political problems. Under which social system are these really possible? There are two systems existing side by side in the world today: capitalism and socialism.

It is quite obvious that being a society based on private ownership of the means of production—land, industry and transport—a society which consists of hostile classes with antagonistic class interests, a highly competitive system whose sole urge and purpose is production for profit and for selfish personal interests, capitalism is utterly incapable of eradicating poverty, hunger and backwardness. The experience of more than three centuries has shown that nowhere in the world, even in such a rich country as the United States of America, and in rich and vast empires as the former British Empire and the French Empire, has capitalism succeeded in ending social misery.

THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF SOCIALISM

On the other hand, however, SOCIALISM—a social order based on Marxist-Leninist revolutionary and scientific philosophy of laws of social development, a society whose whole wealth and production are collectively owned by the public and devoted solely to the interests and well-being of humanity and to the enrichment and further development of society—HAS, within a short space of a few decades, already demonstrated its superiority to the whole world.

In all countries which have adopted socialism as their way of life, gigantic programmes of social and economic construction have been undertaken and successfully carried out. Chronic social problems, formerly regarded as natural phenomena, have been tackled and overcome, and cultural and living standards of the mass of people are constantly raised. From this it will be seen that it is only under socialism that poverty, hunger, disease and ignorance can be abolished.

ON THE RIGHT ROAD

The people of Guinea will only succeed in the social objectives that they have set themselves if they adopt the Marxist-Leninist teachings as their guiding principles. But it is clear from the following extracts from the speech of President Sékou Touré that the Democratic Party of Guinea recognises the importance of theory or guiding principles in the conduct of the nation's affairs:—

“With a deeply sincere desire to serve a just cause, but lacking a real conscience, knowledge or experiences, man may compromise the deep desire.”

“Responsible leader or militant member, man or woman, young or old, each person must develop the sense and conception of conscience of this high degree of political value, without which the Democratic Party of Guinea would be unable to undertake its labour of liberation, emancipation and rehabilitation.”

But perhaps this quotation from “World Marxist Review” of December, 1959, will more clearly illustrate this point:—

“Independence,” said Sékou Touré, “presupposes doing away with the economic structure which retarded the raising of living standards and the development of the people. But one cannot destroy one system without replacing it with another. The colonial system robbed us of our products, buying them for a mere song and re-selling them at high prices. The producers—the creators and the owners of these products—benefited very little; the products passed through the hands of numberless middlemen (transport companies, import-export dealers, agents or wholesale traders),

and the profits were pocketed by the colonialists. Were we to replace the colonial agents, middlemen and employers by native ones, the peasants would not get a single penny extra. This would mean substituting home exploiters for colonial exploiters, and although we are independent, would not abolish the evils of colonialism; the system and concept of colonialism would remain”.

FOREIGN POLICY

The attitude of the Republic of Guinea towards peoples of other lands, and her official foreign policy as outlined by her president, M. Sékou Touré, is that Guinea :—

- * believes in the policy of neutrality and peaceful co-existence;
- * seeks understanding with all countries, and alliance with all independent African and Asian states;
- * desires economic and cultural relations with other countries;
- * has no desire to oppress anyone;
- * is dedicated to combating hatred, racialism, selfishness, war and injustices;
- * has the whole of Africa constantly in mind, the freedom of Africa is a guarantee for the permanent freedom of Guinea; and
- * prefers poverty—in liberty to riches in slavery.

We are sure that no politically sincere and honest person will quarrel with any of the points listed above. They are nothing but sound and wise political statements based on democratic principles, principles upon which this little republic is rightly and justifiably proud of having been founded, and along which its people are resolved to shape their destiny and way of life.

DIFFICULT PROBLEMS

But Guinea has a number of difficult problems such as—

- * shortage of trained personnel : engineers, technicians and other competent staff in every sphere of the country's economic and social life, to ensure efficient and full exploitation of its “immense natural riches.”
- * Lack of more schools and other training institutions.
- * The evils of under-developed national economy—poverty, ill-health and backwardness.
- * Insufficient transport and communication system.

- * Inadequate hospitals, clinics and other allied social institutions.
- * Emancipation of women and fitting them into the new social order.
- * Disease : Malaria, Leprosy, sleeping sickness, etc.

However, in one way or another these problems are being energetically and enthusiastically tackled and important successes recorded in many spheres.

AN INSPIRATION TO AFRICA

Guinea is on the right road to real democracy and freedom, and she has millions of friends and well-wishers throughout the world. But she also has enemies; her enemies are imperialists and colonisers, the reactionary feudal elements and speculators, the 5% that opposed the nation's aspirations and decision and voted against complete independence. Another possible enemy could be swollen-headedness on the part of the leaders as a result of imperialist flattery and the respect shown and homage paid to Guinea by the great powers of America, Europe and Asia. But her greatest enemy could be failure to arm the working class and masses of people generally—the very people upon whom the foundation of the Republic rests at present—with the knowledge and understanding of the Marxist-Leninist theory of social, economic and political development.

We are convinced and confident, that the Democratic Republic of Guinea will triumph in its noble objectives and lofty ideals. But she will only succeed if she fulfils these three essential conditions—

- (a) if her working class and toiling masses are taught and given the correct working class theory and principles;
- (b) if the workers and peasants are alert and keep constant vigilance; and
- (c) if the workers and peasants remain the foundation and source of power and authority : if political and economic powers, as well as the direction of the nation's day-to-day affairs are kept in the hands of the country's working people.

The workers of Guinea must realise and clearly understand that today Guinea is an example to all the oppressed and exploited peoples of the continent of Africa and that all look expectantly toward the success of their experiment. A great duty and grave responsibility, therefore, rests on the heads of the working class and people of Guinea to see to it that they do not fail the sacred cause, the cause of African freedom and independence. They are to constantly assert their rights, and to jealously guard against any attempts to undermine their strategic and dominant position in the life of the country.