
Sékou Touré and the two Imperialisms

Guinea's experience of France and Russia has bred determination for African unity

JAMES CURREY

THE TWO RUSSIAN SNOWPLOUGHS which rust under the palm trees in Conakry are monuments to the Russian attempt to make Guinea the "Cuba of Africa". Outside Sékou Touré's palace stands the memorial to the victims of the war against colonialism. But the snowploughs remind the President of how the Guineans became the victims of neo-colonialism.

At Dakar in July the new friendship of Sékou Touré with Jojo Wachiku, the Nigerian Foreign Minister, surprised the Addis Ababa Continuation Committee. This time a year ago Guinea could apparently be labelled 'Casablanca bloc'. That Nigeria was 'Monrovia bloc' seemed as certain as the return of the rainy season. This new understanding with Wachiku means that the snowploughs have served a purpose. Sékou Touré has learnt through his experience, at the hands of both France and the Iron Curtain countries, that only African unity can make the independence of individual African states real. Unity between the 'have-not' African states will enable them to take aid from the 'have' states without selling themselves. The President could not get francs without placing Guinea in the invidious neo-colonial position which de Gaulle demanded of the other French colonies. Then Sékou Touré, the convinced Marxist, found that he could not accept roubles without being expected to commit Guinea to the Iron Curtain bloc. In January 1962 Mikoyan, the first Deputy Prime Minister of the U.S.S.R., toured Guinea in an attempt to warm up cooling relations with Russia. But Sékou Touré told him in public that Guinea refused to be drawn "into choosing sides in the struggle between two blocs."

ADDIS, as the meeting of African heads of state is now affectionately called, was remarkable for great African handshakes of unity. Nasser clasping Bourguiba was a spectacular moment in the Hall of Africa. And yet in the aftermath of this burst of black and brown brotherhood Sékou Touré announced that the Ghana-Guinea-Mali union was at an end. The irony might seem to be as great

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as when Nasser grasped the hand of the man he had plotted to murder.

Mut in fact Touré's announcement was a new step towards African unity. His experiences at the hands of the developed countries has shown him that this neo-Marxist Union had recently placed individual African states even more greatly at the economic mercy of the countries with something to give. In 1960 the Union had seemed a step towards a "unité des patries", as Sékou Touré put it. But it turned out to be a divisive rather than a uniting factor.

This was partly because of the undoubted personal Pan-Africanist ambitions of Nkrumah. This offended many African states. The meeting at Casablanca produced, as counter-balance, the meeting at Monrovia. The Americans, French, Russians and British immediately tried to drag the two blocs into the cold war by playing off one against the other. The Casablanca bloc was dubbed pro-Eastern. The West tried to sign up the Monrovia bloc.

Last year it became increasingly evident that Guinea was edging out of the Ghana-Guinea-Mali Union and away from the Casablanca bloc. Sékou Touré has looked for rapprochement with France through the good offices of Houphouët-Boigny. Last year a delegation went to Paris after the Algerian peace and an observer to the meeting of the French-orientated *Union Africaine et Malgache*. In May this year accords were signed in Paris. But Touré does not want to be back in the Paris orbit any more than he wishes to be in the Moscow orbit. While he was in Dar es Salaam announcing the end of the Union, the heads of the other ex-French territories were supping with de Gaulle under the chandeliers of the Palais de Chaillot. Sékou Touré's journey back from Addis took him not only to Tanganyika but also to the two Congos and to Nigeria.

On 24 March this year, at the passing-out parade of the military academy in Guinea, Sékou Touré said: "We are looking for a name which, added to that of Patrice Lumumba . . . can also become a symbol of our army's and people's desire for perfection." The man he named was Sylvanus Olympio of Togo, who had been a Monrovia man. But he was, before his assassination, an African leader who had acted as a bridge between Monrovia and Casablanca.

Addis saw the end of the two blocs. It saw Nkrumah a wiser and more restrained man. And it saw Sékou Touré—in between long philosophical discussions of négritude which brought yawns to the throats of English-speaking delegates—moving into a new position in the forefront of the drive for African unity.

The history of Guinea since 1958 shows why Sékou Touré is determined to put his country, and all other African states, into a stronger position in their dealings with the economically richer countries of the East and West.

TOURE HAS SHOWN that, though he can be one of the best diplomats in Africa, he can also be fearlessly blunt when small and poor Guinea does not get what it wants out of a great power. In 1958 he deeply offended de Gaulle at the time of the referendum on France's constitution. During his tour of French Africa the General visited Conakry in August 1958, and he was given a copy of the

speech Touré was to make. In it, Sékou Touré, as President of *Parti Démocratique de Guinée*, asked for independence *but* with association with France; he was asking, in fact, for what de Gaulle was forced to give the other French territories in 1960. But de Gaulle was tired after his tour of the West African hustings, and he did not read the copy of the speech which had so carefully been given to him. Its contents came as a great shock to him as Touré made the demands. In his speech he stormed back "I say here even louder than elsewhere, that independence is available to Guinea. She can have it; she can have it on 28 September by saying 'No' to the proposition which is put to her, and in saying this I guarantee that Paris will raise no obstacle to it." After this Sékou Touré's efficient party machine moved into the full scale campaign which resulted in the rejection of the constitution by 1,136,000 votes to 57,500. It was the only French territory to reject the proposals absolutely. The women of the party were as passionately behind Sékou Touré then as they are now. Today the women wander along the streets of the capital in swathes of cotton printed with the head of the President.

De Gaulle determined to make the price of independence as high as possible. "La civilisation française" was ripped out with a malevolence which the Belgians never equalled in the Congo. Telephones were dragged out of their sockets; files were burnt; anything too heavy to move was destroyed. By the first week of December 1958, only twenty French administrators and technicians remained out of the 4,000 who had been there at the time of the referendum. De Gaulle purposefully smashed the administration in order to make Guinea an example to all the other French colonies. At the Algerian peace talks at Evian last year he tried to make use of the example of Guinea. It was of little use. He had already been forced to concede independence with association to all other French territories.

IN 1958 GUINEA therefore needed help. It turned to the Eisenhower-Dulles administration. Dulles asked de Gaulle what to do, and was told to do nothing. When Touré turned to the Iron Curtain countries, Russia saw her chance to make a 'Cuba in Africa'. Guinea could be used as a propaganda and revolutionary centre for the rest of

Report of a Special Branch Major

PART ONE

*A savage saboteur
And his perilous partner
Were arrested in the bundu
of the west of the Transvaal,
For with mischievous intention
They conspired in an invention
(Which I'm not allowed to mention
If I want to keep my pension)
To indoctrinate the kudu
in the west of the Transvaal.*

*In the west of the Transvaal,
in the west of the Transvaal
To indoctrinate the kudu
in the west of the Transvaal.*

*This calculating couple
Always on the look for trouble,
Yes, a very pair of killers
in the west of the Transvaal,
With fanatical devotion
They were working out a notion
(It's a secret, hence my caution,
For I'm longing for promotion)
Training monkeys as guerillas
in the west of the Transvaal.*

In the west . . . etc., etc.

*This pestilential pair,
With a verve beyond compare,
Were about to wage a war,
please, in the west of the Transvaal,
For in sinister disguise,
They designed an enterprise
(Which I mustn't publicise
If I want to get a rise)
'Twas to devastate the thorn-trees
in the west of the Transvaal.*

In the west

*This tantalising team
Had evolved an 'active dream'
By pulsating out their thought-throbs
in the West of the Transvaal,
They had found a means eternal
With an impudence infernal
(I must keep this news internal
If I want to be a colonel)
For deflating all the wart-hogs
in the west of the Transvaal.*

In the west

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PART TWO

*Now you may think I'm romancing
In unfolding such a plot,
But suspicions are advancing
(Though the evidence is not)
Which is further indication
(And we need it, I admit)
There's a subtle insurrection
Which we really can't permit.*

In the west

*Though the evidence is missing
And we cannot show the truth,
A policeman's intuition
Is worth more than any proof,
So we've thrown them into prison
And they'll stay in durance vile
For the evidence will come up
If we suck our thumbs awhile.*

In the west

*And they won't need any lawyer
And we shall not grant them bail,
And there isn't an indictment
So they'll have to stay in jail;
To imprison without trial
Is a democratic right
And I'm staunchly democratic
So I do it with delight.*

In the west

*Now my salary must rocket
Since I do the work of four,
For the judge and his assessors
Are not needed any more;
My promotion must be pending
And you know the reason why,
For I'll hold the scales of justice
Till I'm pensioned or I die.*

In the west

VAUGHAN STONE

West Africa. With this in mind the East Germans built an enormous printing works called the Imprimerie Nationale Patrice Lumumba. A large proportion of aid from the Iron Curtain countries has been spent on propaganda and in aiding oppositions in nearby countries. *Le Figaro* estimates that this aid has amounted to at least 280 million new francs. Guinea could be used as an example of the superiority of the Communist system and of the munificence of Russia.

BUT THE IRON CURTAIN BLOC has also failed. This has been due, in the main, to three facts. There has been bureaucratic inefficiency of the snowplough kind. Secondly, there has been economic exploitation reminiscent of Wall Street and the Katanga lobby. Thirdly, there has been an attempt to gain Communist (alias Russian Imperialist) control in Guinea.

THE BUREAUCRATIC MALADMINISTRATION of Soviet aid has been an Evelyn Waugh delight for everybody but the Guineans. The snowploughs are but the beginning of a list of trinkets which have piled up on the pretty palm-tree-covered peninsula on which the capital stands. Two million screwdrivers have been landed for a population of two and a half million; there do not seem to be enough screws. A frustrated bureaucrat off-loaded a five-year supply of paper clips to rust and rot in the warehouses through five rainy seasons. There is a field full of bidets, but there is no plumbing.

The Guinean franc has been totally valueless outside Guinea. Within the country the government did not know how much money there was in circulation. The Czechoslovaks printed all the new bank notes for the Republic, complete with pictures of the President. But the Guineans did not find out how much money they had before they put the notes into circulation; and the Czechs were unable to tell them how many notes they had printed. One day last year a British journalist was calling on Moussa Diakité, the Governor of the Bank of Guinea. Diakité pointed to three 1,000-franc notes on the desk in front of him. They all had the same number. He did not know whether they were forged or whether the Czechs had simply printed three identical notes. The Guineans have now placed a sedate order with Waterlows in England and will withdraw the old set of notes. In March this year the currency was reformed at forty-eight hours' notice.

THE IRON CURTAIN COUNTRIES have, secondly, driven very hard bargains with the Guineans. This is perhaps the most interesting feature. For in the West we ourselves are probably greater victims of Communist propaganda than we should like to admit. We do not think of the Russians as "exploiting" under-developed countries: only capitalists "exploit". But the Russian record in Guinea is one of exploitation. It was made clear to Mr. Mikoyan that one of the main reasons for Guinea's disillusion with the Eastern bloc has been with the quantity and, most important of all, quality of Eastern aid.

For example, Soviet technicians were sent to survey a district of Guinea in order to report on the possibility of growing rice there. They provided a report with a plan

which meant that the cost of production would be three times that of the world market price. They then charged the equivalent of \$4m. as the cost of making the useless plan.

The instances of bureaucratic mismanagement already mentioned may be a new form of dumping. To a great extent the Communist five-year plans put their emphasis on quantity. Factory managers work with Stakhanovite devotion to meet the targets they are set by the planners. They then overproduce paper clips, bidets and snowploughs. Trade delegations arrive from shattered Guinea and are grateful for any help which is given to them. Contracts are signed, amid a smoke of speeches about Soviet-Guinea friendship. The Guineans are provided with goods which the Eastern bloc have over-produced, regardless of whether they need the products or not. These are then chalked up against long-term credit. Sékou Touré realised that the Iron Curtain countries were taking advantage of the inexperience of his officials. He sent another member of his government to cancel certain of the contracts, which he felt were either useless or extravagant. In most cases his envoy found it impossible to annul these agreements.

The value of exports from Guinea to the Iron Curtain countries does not balance with the value of imports. In the first three-quarters of 1960, for instance, £2.3m. worth of produce was exported while £5.3m. worth was imported. The lack of balance of trade reflects the extremely favourable prices the Eastern Bloc has paid for bananas, pineapples and oil. At the same time the figure for imports is high because of the long-term credit which the Guineans have been given. This credit is commendable, of course, except that Guinea will eventually have to pay for many goods she has not needed.

THIRDLY, THE COMMUNIST GOVERNMENTS have tried to push the Guineans under Communist control. Just as de Gaulle under-estimated Sékou Touré's pride, so did the Russians. He wanted aid. But he wanted aid with no strings attached. The result was the crisis in Soviet-Guinea relations which came to a climax at the end of 1961. In November, 1961, the Communist-controlled Teachers' Union distributed a memorandum criticising Government policies. This was circulated among those centres of intrigue, the Iron Curtain embassies. On 16 November it was also circulated at the conference of Guinean trade unions. The twelve leaders of the Teachers' Union were sent to jail for varying periods of between three and ten years. Immediately there were disturbances in other parts of Guinea. Sékou Touré set out on a tour to reassert the party's authority but returned on 11 December to talk to the party activists in Conakry. Four days later, Touré summoned the heads of the Communist diplomatic missions to the Presidency—just across the road from the monument to the victims of colonialism. The next day the Russian ambassador left for Moscow.

Mikoyan attempted to warm up Soviet-Guinea relations in January 1962. His words at the opening of the Russian commercial exhibition in Guinea were: "Imperialists are unable to look with composure at the developments of relations between our countries. They cannot conceive

other relations between a big nation and a small nation except those they themselves have begotten, based on exploitation." Sékou Touré received his speech coldly. Mikoyan perhaps realised that Russian imperialism had failed just as French imperialism had failed.

THESE EXPERIENCES explain why Sékou Touré is deter-

mined to make the Addis Ababa spirit a reality in diplomatic terms. His experience at the hands of France and the Iron Curtain countries has fired his determination. His diplomatic ability will give him the tool. The chief danger is that personal ambition may intrude as it has done in Nkrumah's attempts to gain African unity. But his conception is less ambitious. His experience is tempered by snowploughs, bidets, bank notes and paper clips. ●

The Peace Corps and Ghana

DAVID BROKENSHA

ON 28 AUGUST 1961, 50 young American men and women arrived in Ghana as Volunteers with the first Peace Corps Project. They came at the request of the Ghana Government, which had asked for secondary school teachers in order to augment graduate teachers in Ghana. They were watched with curiosity and interest, and also some concern, by Ghanaians and by the Peace Corps headquarters, both because this was the very first project, and also as relations between the Ghana and U.S. governments were at that time somewhat strained.

A year later the original Volunteers were joined by a second batch numbering 69 and, since then, further groups totalling over 60 have gone to teach in Ghana. I propose to examine briefly the composition of these groups, to describe their training, to evaluate their usefulness to Ghana, and to consider their reception by Ghanaians.

FIRSTLY, then, the Volunteers, who come from almost all the states of the Union (including several from the Deep South), comprise about twice as many boys as girls. In age they range from 19 to over 50, most being in their early twenties: they are all college graduates, about one third of whom have had previous teaching experience. Each group has contained a few negroes. They are generally neither romantic idealists nor ultra-patriotic

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nationalists, merely extremely pleasant and competent young persons who are realistically attempting to assist one of the more vigorous of the new African nations in her rapid, educational development. And, as I hope to show, they are being largely successful in their attempts.

The Volunteers spend two years in Ghana, and they receive the same salary as a newly-graduated Ghanaian teacher—£G680 (R1,360) p.a. In addition, \$75 (R53) is banked for them each month in the U.S.A., so that each one has \$1,800 (R1,286) on return after two years' service with the Peace Corps. Whilst in Ghana, Volunteers are housed in comfortable furnished accommodation which has been built for teachers.

BEFORE GOING TO TEACH in Ghana, all Volunteers undergo an intensive training programme for eight weeks, during which they are instructed in several subjects. They learn some Twi (the principal vernacular language in Ghana) and are thoroughly exposed to the background of Ghanaian life; talks are given on the physical and cultural environment; in an attempt to describe the main formative factors in Ghanaian economic, political and social life. As the Volunteers will be teaching Ghanaian children, they are given thorough instruction on the background of their pupils. By the end of their training programme, Volunteers are unusually well prepared for the tasks ahead of them in Ghana, and they are probably better informed on Ghanaian life and affairs than most other newcomers to Ghana. (In fact, it is likely that they are, at least in some areas, better informed than *most* Ghanaians.)

THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT that this Peace Corps programme has been successful: this is generally recognised by the Ghanaians, and especially by the pupils taught by Peace Corps teachers, who usually demonstrate a remarkable enthusiasm for their duties, coupled with affection for, and understanding of, their students. Whilst students generally appreciate their Peace Corps teachers, and headmasters welcome their ability to work hard and to make effective contributions, some Ghanaians show an ambivalence to the Peace Corps. On the one hand they are pleased to have such useful help at the schools, but on the other hand, they resent any dependence for assistance in development on outside sources—particularly on the wealthy, and therefore vulnerable, U.S.A. Although the secondary school system in Ghana would be severely curtailed if the Peace Corps were withdrawn, there are occasional suggestions that this be done: the more vituperative sections of the press carry periodical editorials