

The Yearning for Relief

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The Yearning for Relief

A History of the Sawaba Movement in Niger

By

Klaas van Walraven



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2013

Cover illustration: Daouda Hamadou, Ayorou, 2009. Photo by Klaas van Walraven.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Walraven, Klaas van, 1958-

The yearning for relief : a history of the Sawaba movement in Niger / by Klaas van Walraven.
p. cm. -- (Afrika-Studiecentrum series ; v. 25)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-90-04-24574-7 (pbk. : alk. paper) -- ISBN 978-90-04-24575-4 (e-book) 1. Niger--History--Autonomy and independence movements. 2. Sawaba (Political party)--History. 3. Government, Resistance to--Niger. 4. Decolonization--Niger. 5. Political parties--Niger. 6. Bakary, Djibo. I. Title. II. Series: Afrika-Studiecentrum series ; v. 25.

DT547.75.W35 2013
966.26--dc23

2012047177

This publication has been typeset in the multilingual "Brill" typeface. With over 5,100 characters covering Latin, IPA, Greek, and Cyrillic, this typeface is especially suitable for use in the humanities. For more information, please see www.brill.nl/brill-typeface.

ISSN 1570-9310

ISBN 978-90-04-24574-7 (hardback)

ISBN 978-90-04-24575-4 (e-book)

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κτῆμά τε ἔς αἰεὶ

Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*,
Book I, XXII, 4

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

'Nous avons tout perdu', said Mounkaila Albagna, recounting a conversation that he had had with Djibo Bakary in the early 1990s when a reckoning took place over the disasters of the past.¹ We had picked up the former commando in the Téra sector at his usual spot in Niamey, close to the National Assembly, where he had come in his habit of spending his afternoons with friends locked in talk and games. We had gone to the Terminus Hotel, as the quiet and shade of its garden provided a good setting for an undisturbed exchange. It was October, still very warm, and while Albagna and I had met several times before, by now (2011) the guerrilla from Dargol had grown visibly older—if not frail, he had begun walking with a stick. He did not make the remark about the losses he had sustained with particular sadness in his voice. Rather, he mentioned his disastrous fate in an even, matter-of-fact way that betrayed a sense of resignation (although in the past I had encountered outbursts of anger and bitterness).

The blandness of his comment drove home once more the terrible destruction that history can wreak on humanity, and a couple of days later I was witness, yet again, to its enduring weight on individual lives. I had gone to a compound in central Niamey that was home to Sawaba's 'party bureau'. Now really a dead political structure, it functioned more as a clubhouse where cadres (the old guard, as well as children of Sawabists) could meet and enjoy each other's companionship, buttressed by a shared past of agony. At one point an old man entered the compound, raising a mock military salute to his comrades, as if to underscore the inescapable character of his political heritage. Like this, ever since the return of political pluralism in the 1990s, Sawabists in the capital have been meeting Saturday mornings to talk about the news, to exchange views or just to say hello to old friends, before moving on to attend to their daily concerns. This Saturday, the conversation turned on the book manuscript, which I had just finished and come to talk about. I knew from past encounters of the interest that many took in the project, and this time was no different.

A few days earlier I had met Mounkaila Beidari, a cadre who had suffered terribly under the brutality of the RDA regime that ruled Niger from late 1958 until its overthrow by the military in 1974. Now living in comfort-

¹ 'We have lost everything'. Interview, Niamey, 19 October 2011.

able retirement, after a successful career since the RDA's fall, I had come to know him as an angry man who, haunted by the demons of the past, always proved co-operative in furthering my endeavours, responding in all seriousness to my questions, declining an answer if he did not know of a particular matter, and in such cases referring me to other interlocutors who could, perhaps, be of help. It had not been necessary to visit Beidari at his home, since he came to the research institute where I benefited from the assistance of Nigérien colleagues. He patiently helped me with some remaining queries, emphasising once again how he had been marked by Sawaba's history and how he preferred to seek out friends among fellow cadres, rather than among people who had never had any dealings with the movement. He showed keen interest in the completion of the book. In response to my request, he returned the following day to bring a photograph of his Sawabist father, whose premature death in 1960 seems at least in part to have been the result of detention and maltreatment—and made his young son join the cause.

Beidari clearly lived entirely for and with his personal history (which, at the same time, was the history of the Sawaba movement and its rebellion), and I met a great many people like him in the course of the years. As another cadre, Ali Amadou—a former Sawaba 'chef de camp' in Ghana—told me just a few days later on a busy roadside in northern Niamey, living in old age was difficult without the public recognition of the historical fate suffered by the movement. He was thrilled that the book was now finally ready and a French translation forthcoming, just as many others expressed their enthusiasm, such as people at the party compound: Sanda Mounkaila, a relative of Djibo Bakary and of the second generation; Sidibe Ousseini, whom Sawaba had sent to the Soviet Union to study agronomy; and former guerrillas like Aboubacar Abdou, who had done training in China, and Ibrahim Baro dit Tri Tri, who had developed his martial skills in Algeria, among other countries. As previous exchanges showed—also with Sawabists elsewhere in Niger—these reactions were not mere politeness.

In effect, my 2011 journey was a renewed encounter with the passionate side of history. Doing fieldwork in this community of men had always been a moving experience—my interviews with Sawabists usually being marked by an overwhelming and unreserved response, if not giving way to an unstoppable flood of facts and stories or, on occasion, culminating in emotional breakdown on the part of my interlocutors. All this was inextricably bound up with their history. Theirs involved a universe of militants who, in the 1950s, strove for change and dreamt of a new society marked by the

good life and an end to the influence of chiefly authority and, indeed, the unbearable condescension of the European. Anti-colonial agitation and union work became the hallmark of Sawabists—many of whom were ‘petit peuple’, marginals who were part of a growing urban proletariat and together with better-placed people (but below Western-educated ‘évolués’) formed the core of a modern social movement. As a party, it grew into a formidable machine, which conquered political power and established Niger’s first autonomous government under colonial rule but which, with the crisis in Algeria and the advent of Gaullist supremacy in the metropole, was toppled in Africa’s first coup d’état: roughly shoved aside and subjected to permanent persecution by the French-installed and -protected RDA, it saw no way but to stage a comeback by guerrilla war. In the wake of a fatal decision to do battle in the autumn of 1964, it suffered a crushing defeat followed by years of darkness (prison, house arrest, harassment of family, hindering of careers). For some, this would only end with the return of political pluralism in the ’90s—but still without public acknowledgement of their role in Niger’s history or any sympathy for the fate that had befallen them.

This history goes a long way in explaining the impassioned response of Sawabists to the endeavour that I began several years ago and that culminated in this book—the first scholarly study of their history. Its writing was driven by the desire to resurrect from anonymity those who were part of a movement that vastly enriched the history of Niger but who were, so far, not saved from the political oblivion to which they were consigned. The result was that many of Sawaba’s actors—even some of its leading personalities—never gained a place in the country’s historiographical pantheon. Where are the Daouda Ardaly, the Dandouna Aboubakars or the Mazou Dan Mazels, whose incredible travails and action, whose ideas on social justice and the political order and whose travels and military pursuits represented such a remarkable phase in the evolution of Niger? They are largely absent in the country’s histories, although—and I feel indebted here to Eric Hobsbawm’s idea on the history of ‘commoners’²—they were important historical actors: what they did and what they thought *mattered* and made a difference, for Niger but also, more widely, for our understanding of Africa’s historical evolution in the post-World War II era and its entrance into that elusive age of post-colonialism, which, notably in Niger, proved so full of promise and disillusionment.

² E. Hobsbawm, *Uncommon People: Resistance, Rebellion, and Jazz* (New York, 1998), vii.

Moreover, in a country with a poorly institutionalised collective memory, earlier boots of terror are easily forgotten, and it is here that the history of Sawaba could be instructive. Niger's political culture, even in the age of democratic politics, is still short of inner restraints. In the final analysis, this has little to do with constitutional safeguards. The risk of political derailment can only really be diminished by internalising one's history so as to inform perceptions of the present and affect expectations of the future. However, if several of my Sawaba interlocutors slated Niger's historians for never having addressed the movement's rebellion, it should be realised that, till this day, it remains a sensitive topic: too much happened in the course of the altercations with the French and RDA, too much pain was registered in the repression of Sawaba for the subject to be dealt with lightly.

Here a foreign historian enjoys an obvious advantage, and the time that I started the research for this book (2002-2003) proved highly propitious: a quiet period in Nigérien politics, many cadres were still alive and, in old age and retirement, had time to look back at the past. This proved ideal for the writing of this book, which aims to give back a voice to all those who suffered the historical forces of destruction. But it is not a eulogy: conceived, as much as possible, from the perspective of the movement and the world views of its activists, so as to understand their universe and grasp what drove them, the narrative is one of a dreamed revolution. Like all revolutions, this involved violence—violence that, albeit socially and politically motivated, had uglier sides that cannot be ignored. This pertains, among other things, to the role that Sawabists played in the street battles in Niamey in April 1958, the blind spot that they developed for the potentially counter-productive consequences of strategies of violence and, especially, the responsibility that the movement's leadership bore in this respect.

This history is, above all, a *salvaging operation*—salvaging a universe before it is too late and eyewitnesses have passed away, and doing so for the Sawabist community itself as well as for the benefit of Niger's history as such. The theoretical reflections underlying this book are discussed in fuller detail in the Prologue. It is hoped that it will contribute to the historiography of Niger's First Republic, which has so far shed little light on the despotism that characterised this era (1958-1974). As a corollary, this history puts in sharper relief the painful limitations and contradictions ingrained in the structures of post-colonial relationships and the roles that the former metropole played in these shifting contexts. While this book

can bring to light the richness of Niger's social history during the latter days of colonial rule, restoring Sawaba's activists to the historical pantheon of their country may, at the same time, fulfil some of the yearnings for deliverance that always marked their community.

In doing so, errors are perhaps unavoidable, especially as much of the terrain traversed in this book was, until now, complete *terra incognita*. For where I have strayed, I ask for forbearance. No doubt the interpretations given to Sawaba's history (and the criticisms included) will not please everyone, but to members of the Sawabist community one could say that rendering meaning to an historical narrative, the historian's duty, takes place within the realm of perception. While my interpretation, it remains *their* history—to whose actors, therefore, this book is dedicated.

An endeavour of this nature could never have been realised without the co-operation of a great many people. First and foremost, it is to Sawabists themselves that I owe an enormous debt of gratitude. Without their assistance this book would simply not have materialised. But as the annexes show, they were too numerous to be thanked specifically or without doing injustice to those left unmentioned. May the dedication of this book be sufficient recompense. I must also thank some people of RDA persuasion, who, despite belonging to the 'opposite camp', assisted me in my queries, sometimes more than once. If they do not share my assessment of the Sawaba movement, and of its insurrection, their co-operation stands nevertheless acknowledged.

I received help in my research from various Nigérien institutions—academic and other. The 'Archives Nationales du Niger' were of crucial importance. Idrissa Maïga Yansambou, the head of the archives, was indefatigable in helping me in the search for documents. I would also like to thank Sade Elhadji Mahaman and Mahaman Gazali Abdou. I must also acknowledge the kind help of Dr. Boubé Gado of the 'Institut de Recherche en Sciences Humaines'. Lt. Col. Halidou Gado, commander of the 'Gendarmerie Nationale', assisted in the search for documents on former Sawaba fugitives.

Of the academic institutions, I must note the considerable assistance provided by the 'Laboratoire d'Etudes et de Recherche sur les Dynamiques Sociales et le Développement Local' (LASDEL) and the 'Université Abdou Moumouni' in Niamey. The LASDEL institute gave every possible assistance, ranging from providing an environment where scholars away from home can thrive, to advice and help in the course of fieldwork. Prof. Maha-

man Tidjani Alou, also of the Université Abdou Moumouni, did more than anyone to turn this book into a reality; his invaluable comments on the manuscript stand acknowledged. I owe a debt of gratitude to the historians of the Université Abdou Moumouni, notably Prof. Adamou Aboubacar, dean of the faculty of humanities; Dr. Mallam Issa Mahamane, head of the history department; Prof. Kimba Idrissa; Dr. Mamoudou Djibo; and Dr. Zoumari Issa Seyni—historian and Sawabist himself. They kindly invited me to share my research findings at the university and engaged in stimulating debate. I also owe a great debt to Issa Younoussi, Ph.D. candidate at LASDEL and for many years my companion in the field. I retain good memories of our travels together searching for eyewitnesses, in western Niger as well as in Niamey itself—on the moped finding our gruelling way in the cacophony of the capital's traffic. Of the LASDEL institute I would also like to thank Prof. Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan; Dr. Abdoulaye Mohamadou; and the latter's brother, Agali Mohamadou, who accompanied me on that adventurous journey to Lake Chad. Maï Boukar Maï Ali assisted me there with interviews, as did Amadou Sidibe during my fieldwork in Madaoua, Niamey and Zinder.

I am grateful to Vladimir Shubin of the Institute of African Studies in Moscow for his help in explaining the historical background of Sawaba's support in Eastern Europe, and to Nick Rutter, Ph.D. student at Yale, for his references on communist youth festivals. Murray Last of the University of London assisted me with details on the movement's network in Kano, Northern Nigeria. France's 'Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre' in Vincennes and the 'Centre des Archives d'Outre-Mer', Aix-en-Provence, provided invaluable help, as did the French government in releasing for study important documents of the 'Service de Documentation Extérieure et de Contre-Espionage'. The Ghana and British National Archives also assisted me in retrieving documents. I owe a debt to Peter Levi of the Map Room of the Royal Tropical Institute in Amsterdam for his help in tracing some of the innumerable small localities in the Nigérien countryside that figure in this book. The Dutch government's decision to end the funding of that institute is scandalous. Finally, I am indebted to my own institute, the African Studies Centre in Leiden, for funding and supporting my research. The library staff assisted me on numerous occasions to trace rare literary references. I also owe a debt to several of the ASC's researchers for engaging me in debate. I am particularly grateful to Jan-Bart Gewald for pointing out novel visions of historical research, to Lotje de Vries for her advice and moral support, and to Piet Konings, formerly of the African Studies Centre,

for his valuable comments on the manuscript. I am grateful to Dick Foeken of the publication committee for his work in preparing the manuscript for publication, Ruadhan Hayes for his proof reading and linguistic advice, and to Brill Publishers for its help in producing this photo-rich book. My last debt, but not the least, is to Ingrid, my companion in life and travel—in the Sahel and elsewhere.

Leiden, September 2012

ABBREVIATIONS

AAC	African Affairs Centre
AAPC	All-African People's Conference
AEF	Afrique Equatoriale Française
AENF	Association des Etudiants Nigériens en France
AESN	Association des Etudiants Sawaba du Niger
AFP	Agence France Presse
ALN	Armée de Libération Nationale
ANL	Armée Nigérienne de Libération
AOF	Afrique Occidentale Française
BAA	Bureau of African Affairs
BCL	Bureau de Coordination et de Liaison
BNA	Bloc Nigérien d'Action
BYM	Bornu Youth Movement
CFA (franc)	Colonies Françaises d'Afrique; Communauté Française d'Afrique; Communauté Financière Africaine
CFAO	Compagnie Française d'Afrique Occidentale
CGT	Confédération Générale du Travail
CJA	Conseil de la Jeunesse d'Afrique
CLAS	Club des Amis du Sawaba
CPP	Convention People's Party
EPS	Ecole Primaire Supérieure
FAN	Forces Armées Nigériennes
FDN	Forces Démocratiques Nigériennes
FEANF	Fédération des Etudiants d'Afrique Noire en France
FIDES	Fonds d'Investissement pour le Développement Economique et Social
FLN	Front de Libération Nationale
FMJD	Fédération Mondiale de la Jeunesse Démocratique
FRF	French franc
FROLINAT	Front de Libération Nationale du Tchad
FSM	Fédération Syndicale Mondiale
GDR	German Democratic Republic
GEC	Groupes d'Etudes Communistes
IFAN	Institut Français d'Afrique Noire

JMSA	Jeunesse Mouvement Socialiste Africain
MNSD	Mouvement National pour la Société du Développement
MPLA	Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola
MSA	Mouvement Socialiste Africain
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NCNC	National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons
NEFO	Nigerian Elements Freedom Organisation
NEPA	Northern Elements Progressive Association
NEPU	Northern/Nigerian Elements Progressive Union
NPC	Northern Peoples' Congress
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
OCRS	Organisation Commune des Régions Sahariennes
PAI	Parti Africain de l'Indépendance
PAIGC	Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné et Cabo Verde
PCF	Parti Communiste Français
PCI	Partito Comunista d'Italia
PFA	Parti de la Fédération Africaine
PINE	Parti Indépendant du Niger-Est
PNDS	Parti Nigérien pour la Démocratie et le Socialisme
PPN-RDA	Parti Progressiste Nigérien-Rassemblement Démocratique Africain
PRA	Parti du Regroupement Africain
PSP	Parti Progressiste Soudanais
PUN	Parti de l'Unité Nigérienne
RDA	Rassemblement Démocratique Africain
RDD	Rassemblement Démocratique Dahoméen
RIAOM	Régiment Interarmes d'Outremer
RPN	Rassemblement du Peuple Nigérien/du Niger
RSS	Runduna(r) Samarin Sawaba
SCOA	Société Commerciale de l'Ouest Africain
SDECE	Service de Documentation Extérieure et de Contre-Espionage
SEN	Syndicat des Enseignants du Niger
SFAN	Syndicat des Fonctionnaires de l'Administration Générale du Niger
SFIO	Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière
SNAG	Syndicat National de l'Administration Générale

SONARA	Société Nigérienne de Commercialisation de l'Arachide
UCFA	Union pour la Communauté Franco-Africaine
UDFP(-Sawaba)	Union des Forces Populaires pour la Démocratie et le Progrès
UDFR(-Sawaba)	Union Démocratique des Forces Révolutionnaires
UDN	Union Démocratique Nigérienne
UFN	Union Franco-Nigérienne
UGTAN	Union Générale des Travailleurs d'Afrique Noire
UJDN	Union de la Jeunesse Démocratique du Niger
UJN	Union de la Jeunesse Nigérienne
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNIS	Union Nigérienne des Indépendants et Sympathisants
UPC	Union des Populations du Cameroun
UPN	Union Progressiste Nigérienne; Union des Populations Nigériennes
US	Union Soudanaise; United States (of America)
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USCN	Union des Syndicats Confédérés du Niger
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
USTN	Union Syndicale des Travailleurs du Niger
UTSN	Union Territoriale des Syndicats du Niger

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Photographs are all of persons in the Sawaba movement or people close to it, in addition to places and subjects that played a role in its history. While care has been taken to present a pictorial record as comprehensive as possible, numerous people mentioned in this book are missing. In several cases no photos were found or the pictures, which were found, were too poor in quality. Sources for old photographs were political pamphlets and archival material, such as police files.²

While not perfect, these pictures are of central importance to this book: many of them hitherto unknown, they form part and parcel of the salvaging nature of this history, as explained in the Preface. Moreover, they add to a history of agitators (see on this the Prologue) more powerfully than would be possible by a narrative alone. For full titles of the sources cited,

¹ The maps were produced by Nel de Vink, DeVink Mapdesign, Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex, United Kingdom.

² All from Surveillance du Territoire (Bureau de Coordination), no. 396/SN/ST: Organisation Terroriste “Sawaba” (Recueil des dirigeants et militants actifs en fuite); ex. no. 000148, dest. le Sous Préfet de Dosso.

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PROLOGUE

HISTORICISING SAWABA



The rich and fascinating history of the Sawaba movement in Niger has never been the subject of scholarly study—historical or other.¹ Political scientists during the 1960s and 1970s covered a vast range of countries in their analyses of movements, political parties and their programmes, but these studies usually passed Niger by.² Certainly, scholars later published analyses of Niger but these focused on the country's general history or politics,³ rather than a specific movement and its role in the social ferment of the 1950s—which some claimed had hardly gripped Nigériens in the first place.⁴ In 1995 Claude Fluchard published an account of the PPN-RDA, the party that dominated the First Republic, and in 2010 André Salifou added a biography of its leader,⁵ but this left the only modern social movement that Niger boasted in the post-World War II era—and that developed into the most formidable force in the politics of that country's decolonisation—unstudied; the same was true for Sawaba's attempt to reconquer political power by way of a guerrilla campaign during the 1960s.

By contrast, a cursory look at the index of the *Journal of African History* and other bibliographic references shows that insurgency movements like Mau Mau, the UPC of Cameroon, Madagascar's 1947 rebels, FROLINAT or, earlier, the Maji Maji fighters of Tanganyika—admittedly all involved in far larger conflagrations—became the subject of detailed historical studies

¹ The journalistic account in a chapter of Georges Chaffard's *Les carnets secrets de la décolonisation* (Paris, 1967), vol. 2, is discussed below.

² Seminal among these comparative studies are G.M. Carter (ed.), *Five African States: Responses to Diversity* (Ithaca, NY, 1963); J.S. Coleman & C.G. Rosberg (eds), *Political Parties and National Integration in Tropical Africa* (Berkeley, 1964) and R. Schachter-Morgenthau, *Political Parties in French-Speaking West Africa* (Oxford, 1964). Niger was treated in V. Thompson, 'Niger', in G.M. Carter (ed.), *National Unity and Regionalism in Eight African States* (New York, 1966), 151-230.

³ See f.e. R.B. Charlick, *Niger: Personal Rule and Survival in the Sahel* (Boulder, San Francisco and London, 1991); M. Djibo, *Les transformations politiques au Niger à la veille de l'indépendance* (Paris, 2001); A. Mayaki, *Les partis politiques nigériens de 1946 à 1958: Documents et témoignages* (Niamey, 1991); and the writings of the prolific André Salifou. Thompson's 'Niger', has some comments on the rise and fall of Sawaba.

⁴ F. Fuglestad, *A History of Niger 1850-1960* (Cambridge, 1983).

⁵ C. Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA et la décolonisation du Niger 1946-1960* (Paris, 1995); A. Salifou, *Biographie politique de Diiori Hamani: Premier président de la république du Niger* (Paris, 2010). See also F. Martin, *Le Niger du Président Diiori: Chronologie 1960-1974* (Paris, 1991).

and have been revisited by historians ever since.⁶ Yet, while a couple of decades into the inception of modern African studies political scientists had covered innumerable topics and aspects of politics in Africa, the principal political vehicle of Niger in the 1950s, and its struggle against the French, was not among them. At first sight, this is the more remarkable as the coincidence of Africa's independence with the establishment of modern African studies was often reflected in the subjects chosen by scholars, focusing, among other things, on nationalist struggles or resistance to European rule in the more distant past.⁷ If political conditions in Niger and restricted access to archives could explain an earlier lack of interest in the Sawabist movement, however, by the 1980s a more general decline set in with regard to studies of the struggles for independence: Africa's worsening political and economic crisis began to make itself felt, leading to disillusionment about decolonisation and, as a result, a gradual shift in subjects chosen for study.⁸ 'Resistance studies', in particular, with all their conceptual difficulties,⁹ quickly became considered outdated, while historians were still lukewarm about tackling topics such as ideologies or political formations as these came up in the 1950s.¹⁰ In fact, by 2008 it could still be noted that historians were only 'in the early stages of taking up the topics pursued by political scientists during the 1960s'.¹¹ Whatever the reason, the upshot was that the Sawaba movement and its political and social struggles were

⁶ The Biafran war is another example.

⁷ See for a discussion of this S. Ellis, 'Africa's Wars of Liberation: Some Historiographical Reflections', in P. Konings, W. van Binsbergen and G. Hesselning (eds), *Trajectoires de libération en Afrique contemporaine—Hommage à Robert Buijtenhuijs* (Paris and Leiden, 2000), 69-91; J.C. Miller, 'History and Africa/Africa and History', *American Historical Review*, 104 (1999), 1, 1-32.

⁸ See S. Ellis, 'Colonial Conquest in Central Madagascar: Who Resisted What?', and K. van Walraven & J. Abbink, 'Rethinking Resistance in African History: An Introduction', in J. Abbink, M. de Bruijn & K. van Walraven (eds), *Rethinking Resistance: Revolt and Violence in African History* (Leiden and Boston, 2003), 83 and 4 respectively. Perhaps some countries proved an exception here, such as Tanzania, at least in terms of its politics during the 1960s, which continued to trigger scholarly interest.

⁹ See Van Walraven and Abbink, 'Rethinking Resistance in African History'; Ellis, 'Africa's Wars of Liberation'.

¹⁰ Interestingly, some exceptions can be found in the *Journal of African History*, some of which pertained to Niger: F. Fuglestad, 'Djibo Bakary, the French, and the Referendum of 1958 in Niger', *Journal of African History*, 14 (1973), 313-330; *Ibid.*, 'UNIS and BNA: The Rôle of 'Traditionalist' Parties in Niger, 1948-1960', *Journal of African History*, 16 (1975), 113-135; M. Staniland, 'The Three-Party System in Dahomey', *Journal of African History*, 14 (1973), 291-312 & 491-504.

¹¹ F. Cooper, 'Possibility and Constraint: African Independence in Historical Perspective', *Journal of African History*, 49 (2008), 173.

left unstudied. In a more general way this perhaps reflected the fairly limited state of Niger's historiography as a whole, mirroring the country's modest socio-economic development as compared with the other franco-phone states of West Africa. Hence, rational grounds can be found to explain the lack of scholarly interest taken in the movement founded by Djibo Bakary—its rapid demise in the mid-1960s and the limited nature of its military exploits as compared with other insurgencies undoubtedly also played their role.

Still, my astonishment about this grew steadily as in the course of archival research I began to stumble on sources that not only pointed at a more complex and drawn-out history of the (armed) conflict than previously assumed, but also revealed an unexpectedly fascinating and varied social universe, whose analysis could vastly enrich our view of the modern history of Niger. The urgency that the discovery of Sawaba, *as a social movement*, imposed on the subject was only enhanced by the encounter, in the course of fieldwork, with surviving adherents. Fortunately, many witnesses of the turbulent events of the 1950s-1960s were still alive and now—for the very first time—could give an account of their experiences to an historian. However, in some cases this process was threatened by problems of old age, illness or approaching death, which hindered the registration of life histories or made this impossible. It was far from easy to make sense of the account given by Hassane Djibo, a former Nanking-trained guerrilla and now a kind old man who seemed to have a good memory but had great difficulty speaking as a result of a stroke. Adamou Assane Mayaki, a former Sawaba cabinet minister, gave his life story while struggling against a terminal illness. As one by one people began to fall away, a race against the clock started in order to register in time what would otherwise be lost forever. While the rich documentary evidence uncovered proved vital for the reconstruction of the history of Sawaba, the testimonies of its activists were crucial, not just to provide meaning but also for the unearthing of innumerable historical facts as such—the great and the little events that, taken together, form the historical narrative of this movement. As noted in the Preface, Sawabists responded with enormous enthusiasm to this historical quest, the sheer wealth of detail that they could provide confirming the relevance of that cliché image about libraries vanishing upon the demise of old men.

The writing of this monograph can therefore be set in the broader context of African studies—a context that is still marked by a relative lack of historicising perspectives on the politics of the 1950s and '60s, notwith-

standing the fact that, with the gradual opening of government archives and, for the time being, the survival of historical witnesses, *now* is the time, more than ever, for a reinterpretation of the political history of that epoch. Whatever the nature of the 'rupture' that independence was suggested to represent,¹² this book seeks to combat the view that the writing of histories of 'nationalism', 'liberation' movements or decolonisation should be discarded as outmoded. In fact, increasingly, Africanist historians are taking up the subjects of decolonisation, independence (struggles) and the formations involved, attempting to historicise the politics of the era by employing, among other perspectives, insights of social history in order to draw attention to the role that grass-roots forces played in political movements.¹³ This approach harks back to an awareness that the first histories of 'nationalism' were biased towards the role played by elite Africans and that struggles or revolts against colonial rule also represented conflicts within African societies themselves, setting different 'classes' of people against each other, quite apart from their relations to colonial overseers.¹⁴

As will be shown in this book, this was certainly also true for the struggle of Sawaba—just like that of its 'sister' movement in Northern Nigeria, NEPU.¹⁵ This reflects Clapham's contention in his discussion of later guerrilla wars that revolts against the regimes of independent African states grew out of failures in decolonisation settlements that subjected peoples to governing elites largely seen as alien and illegitimate.¹⁶ The Nigérien case clearly demonstrates how the struggle for political autonomy in the latter days of the French empire involved a social project aiming at a broad if vaguely imagined transformation of society that should, above all, benefit a class of semi-urbanised marginals and some better-placed workers (but still below the level of 'évolués'), who were developing into a horizon-

¹² See for a critique S. Ellis, 'Writing Histories of Contemporary Africa', *Journal of African History*, 43 (2002), 1-26.

¹³ See f.e. E. Schmidt, *Mobilizing the Masses: Gender, Ethnicity, and Class in the Nationalist Movement in Guinea, 1939-1958* (Portsmouth, NH, 2005); S. Geiger, *TANU Women: Gender and Culture in the Making of Tanganyikan Nationalism, 1955-1965* (Portsmouth, NH, & Oxford, 1997); the writings of Meredith Terretta on the UPC; O. Rillon, 'Corps rebelles: La mode des jeunes urbains dans les années 1960-1970 au Mali'; paper for 'Lutter dans les Afriques', Paris I Panthéon Sorbonne, 22-23 Jan. 2010.

¹⁴ A. Isaacman & B. Isaacman, 'Resistance and Collaboration in Southern and Central Africa, c. 1850-1920', *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 10 (1977), 1, 39; Ellis, 'Colonial Conquest in Central Madagascar', 85.

¹⁵ See K. van Walraven, 'From Kano: Clandestine Politics in Niger and Nigeria and Sawaba's Cross-Border Ties with NEPU (1958-1966)', in S. Awenengo Dalberto and C. LeFebvre (eds), *Boundaries and Independence 1940-1964* (forthcoming), ch. 3.

¹⁶ See the introduction to C. Clapham (ed.), *African Guerrillas* (Oxford, 1988).

tally structured proletariat. In the spring of 1958 these ‘petit peuple’, or little folk, spurred on by a Sawaba-controlled government that had essentially empowered them, got involved in rioting in the capital in an attempt to get even with the opposition of the PPN-RDA, by then very much representing ‘évolué’ interests (besides that of Niger’s western region as such). A French inspector was sent to investigate and produced a detailed report on these tumultuous events. Filed in the colonial archives in Aix-en-Provence, this source has so far been ignored by scholars, yet it allows a reconstruction on an almost hourly basis of three days of ferocious street battles that not only included the raucous youths of the capital, or marginals mobilised as ‘thug’ elements, but also market women, girls even, besides adult men—thus rendering a fascinating insight into the unruly and excited atmosphere, which in Niger too, marked the political struggles of the 1950s.¹⁷ The battle for independence not only targeted the vestiges of European rule but also involved claims against African society that, more than anything, made the struggle against colonialism such an explosive set of developments. It would thus, more generally, be illuminating to revisit the processes of decolonisation as they unfolded in African societies, but then much more viewed from the perspective of the street: political agitation, set in the context of ‘l’histoire du quotidien’, then becomes an expression of the action of a social—rather than immediately nationalist—movement.¹⁸

If a focus on Nigérien society and its manifold contradictions hardly warrants an assumption that the French role in this process should be downplayed, there is an additional reason for the importance of Sawaba in the context of African historical studies. The very fact that the movement failed to remain and return at the helm of the state and realise its vision of a new society can provide insight into the nature of the post-colonial status quo and what the forces that dominated it actually came down to: the narratives of historical actors that are defeated differ fundamentally from the histories of victors and indicate turning-points at which history failed to turn. In other words, they involve alternative histories-to-be-imagined that,

¹⁷ See also K. van Walraven, ‘Vehicle of Sedition: The Role of Transport Workers in Sawaba’s Rebellion in Niger, 1954-1966’, in J.B. Gewald, S. Luning & K. van Walraven (eds), *The Speed of Change: Motor Vehicles and People in Africa, 1890-2000* (Boston and Leiden, 2009), 75-103.

¹⁸ S. Ellis and I. van Kessel, ‘Introduction: African Social Movements or Social Movements in Africa?’, in *Ibid.* (eds), *Movers and Shakers: Social Movements in Africa* (Leiden & Boston, 2009), 13.

by treating the present as just one possible outcome among many,¹⁹ can be more revealing of the historical reality that *did* materialise. As Tony Chafer has pointed out, decolonisation in French West Africa looked radically different to the various political and social groups involved, depending on whether they became part of the winning coalition or fell by the wayside. Since established history is written from the victor's perspective, it neglects the many other voices, including of those who lose—an alternative history that, in the narratives about decolonisation, often went unheard:²⁰ the Sawabist generation could have provided the known faces of Niger, and, therefore, reinserting it into the country's history (it was more or less removed from the country's official pages for political reasons) can give back some complexity to a narrative about the 1950s-1960s that, until now, was too linear. Indeed, more generally, Africanists are increasingly taking on subjects involving some of the innumerable forces, actors or personalities—with their accompanying projects—that did not succeed in reaching the pinnacle of success, were destroyed or defeated by rival claimants or visions, or in the end, proved one of those many historical cul-de-sacs that, together with victors' narratives, constitute the complex whole of Africa's modern history.²¹

However, this book is not an exercise in historical philosophy or theory—on the contrary. It was written with a feeling that Africanist historiography of recent vintage has seen a greater preoccupation with theoretical abstraction than a desire to engage in empirically driven historical reconstruction with the primary aim of rescuing 'facts' from oblivion, before they get lost in the mists of the past—and in this case for ever, since so much of this history (as that of others) is owed to the testimonies of eyewitnesses. Africanist historiography has certainly made enormous

¹⁹ See, in this regard, Ellis, 'Writing Histories of Contemporary Africa', 3-4.

²⁰ *The End of Empire in French West Africa: France's Successful Decolonization?* (Oxford and New York, 2002), 225, citing Alistair Cook.

²¹ Jan-Bart Gewald's project on the history of Barotseland is one such example, as is that of Miles Larmer on the Katangese gendarmes. See also M. Larmer, 'Enemies Within? Opposition to the Zambian One-Party State, 1972-1980', in J.B. Gewald, M. Hinfelaar & G. Macola (eds), *One Zambia, Many Histories: Towards a History of Post-Colonial Zambia* (Leiden, 2008), 98-125; M. Larmer, 'Chronicle of a Coup Foretold: Valentine Musakanya and the 1980 Coup Attempt in Zambia', *Journal of African History*, 51 (2010), 391-409; G. Macola, *Liberal Nationalism in Central Africa: A Biography of Harry Mwaanga Nkumbula* (Basingstoke, 2010). Apart from Zambian studies one must mention research on Biafra and Meredith Terretta's writing on Cameroon's UPC. See also K. Skinner, 'Reading, Writing and Rallies: The Politics of 'Freedom' in Southern British Togoland, 1953-1956', *Journal of African History*, 48 (2007), 123-147; A. Biney, 'The Development of Kwame Nkrumah's Political Thought in Exile, 1966-1972', *Journal of African History*, 50 (2009), 81-100.

strides since the 1960s, and this in many respects. Yet, unsurprisingly, it remains underdeveloped in comparison with the historiography of Europe, which is marked by a vast variety of histories and historical texts going into every conceivable direction, ranging from grand syntheses to micro-studies and from dynastic histories through social or economic history down to the level of ‘Alltagsgeschichte’—or ‘l’histoire du quotidien’—together with their theoretical underpinnings. If theory is necessary to enable historians to ask new questions and imagine new forays, the discovery of Sawaba (undoubtedly, countless other narratives would have this potential, too) led me to conclude that the state of African studies still requires scholars to put much more emphasis on basic research of empirical data that remain hidden in memory or archival sources. It has, perhaps, become customary to lament the state and dearth of African archives, and in countries that went through civil conflicts these have, indeed, often suffered greatly (at times beyond repair), while more generally, the quality of state archives for the era starting roughly with the 1970s has declined as a result of poor maintenance and unsystematic conservation.²² Yet, part of the problem of current Africanist historiography also seems to be that we must be prepared to check every archival collection, if only to make sure that we have missed nothing (Sawaba’s story was lying there for some time to be picked up!), and on the basis of it construct histories, more for their own sake than to corroborate a theoretical proposition or satisfy a contemporary fixation. The state of African historiography still warrants this.

The comparison with European historiography also leads to another observation. If the history writing of Europe (nowadays) allows for the registration of the voices of eyewitnesses to the titanic clashes of the past and pays attention to the minutest details or the recollections of the seemingly most insignificant individuals, African historical studies still appear less advanced in this respect—and to their detriment: Frederick Cooper thus noted that

[t]he last fifty years of African history cannot be understood apart from the suffering and disillusionment experienced in Africa, something that academic historians, especially those who do not live on the African continent, have difficulty in conveying in their texts.²³

²² Ellis, ‘Writing Histories of Contemporary Africa’, 12–13. The latter observation is also true for Niger, as became clear to me in discussion with those managing its official archives.

²³ Cooper, ‘Possibility and Constraint’, 194.

One particular reflection underlying this book in this respect is the impression that, quite often, Africanist historians do not sufficiently write histories that are histories of *people*—i.e. persons of flesh and blood. Rather, they appear as histories in which people certainly figure, but subjected to a grander theoretical design, almost as an illustrative (dehumanised?) detail, serving the more noble objectives of the historian, who towers in aloof superiority over his topic. Of course, historiography, taken as a whole, is made up of a variety of texts that come in different shapes and sizes; historians legitimately differ in the self-conception of their trade. There is, however, also a question of morality involved in the historian's tasks: as is discussed further in the epilogue of this book, the gathering of the oral data was frequently an emotional event, with Sawabists clearly touched by the interest taken in their historical fates or getting overwhelmed by the emotional power of their own recollection. In my view, historians cannot simply stand apart from this, ignoring, for example, violent acts against humanity in the historical cases they study. In view of Cooper's observation above, it would be poor history if this book had been conceived without reference to these feelings or written totally outside the context of the passions of the movement and its cadres, with the dry facts carefully sifted from the intensity of personal experience—the more so as such passions were so important in the past that comes under scrutiny here. One of the aims of this book is, therefore, to try and come as close as possible to the historical actors involved and how they underwent the trajectories of their lives, how they felt the obliterating power of the forces they confronted and how they personally experienced the historical cul-de-sac in which they finally found themselves. Naturally, as conceived by the outsider (a concept on which more below), this history can never be fully equated with the memory of eyewitnesses, but it wants to be a history that is at least recognisable to them: the famous observation of Carl Becker that if professional historians do not relate history in a way that the audience, whose history is concerned, can understand, such history will be for naught, is certainly as acute for contemporary African historiography as it was for the writing of American history more than 80 years ago.²⁴

Above all, it was the enthusiasm with which my interlocutors co-operated that led me to approach the conception of the book in this way. Initially, when interviewing Sawabists it was difficult to understand why so many of them kept going on about the 1958 referendum (we were, after

²⁴ See 'Carl Becker's Perspectives on Historiography and Popular History', www.associatedcontent.com, accessed 26 May 2011. See also note 30 below.

all, living in 2003!),²⁵ but in due course the realisation that its interpretation was no harmless matter, as it interlocked with decades of persecution, destroyed careers or long-term declines in personal and family fortunes,²⁶ had a decisive effect on my approach to the subject. Here, too, lies my objection to the stance taken by Finn Fuglestad on the plebiscite as published in his 1973 article:²⁷ revisionist interpretations are, of course, crucial building blocks in the evolution of historiography, but in this case it was not only based on biased reading of insufficient evidence but also conceived in total disregard of the suffering by the forces destroyed in the referendum (notwithstanding a trailing acknowledgement to this effect at the end of the author's analysis).²⁸ Reading through the records of Niger's parliamentary debates in the late 1950s, where RDA MPs castigated Djibo Bakary's government and Sawaba's representatives fervently pleaded their causes,²⁹ is a surreal experience, knowing that only a couple of years later one speaker would send the other to the execution post, while others were subjected to torture or rotted away in the country's dungeons.

The Sawabist universe represents one of those many 'forgotten' generations that litter the path of history. This book attempts to act, in Becker's words, as the 'artificial extension' of its memory³⁰ in the sense that—as David Cohen has noted³¹—the social recomposition of collective history may in part require the intervention of a 'stranger', i.e. the professional historian, who, as sympathetic as he may be, is (and must remain) to some extent an outsider in the series of events described. Although the historian cannot, of course, detach him- or herself completely from it (the production of history takes place in a social context of which the historian is part), the notion that the scholar ought to maintain some distance as if acting like a 'stranger' has a pedigree going back to classical antiquity: Lucian of Samosata defined the ideal historian as such³² and, while doing so, also

²⁵ Typical here was an interview with Tahir Moustapha, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003.

²⁶ K. van Walraven, 'Decolonization by Referendum: The Anomaly of Niger and the Fall of Sawaba, 1958-1959', *Journal of African History*, 50 (2009), 290.

²⁷ Fuglestad, 'Djibo Bakary'. For my critique, see previous note.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 330. See for further discussion ch. 4 below and Van Walraven, 'Decolonization by Referendum'.

²⁹ See f.e. Extrait du procès-verbal de la séance plénière, Assemblée Territoriale, 14 June 1958; CAOM, Cart.2211/D.1. Also the parliamentary record under CAOM, Cart.2289/D.7.

³⁰ C. Becker, 'Everyman His Own Historian', *American Historical Review*, 37 (1932), 221-236 (accessed via www.historians.org/info, 25 May 2011).

³¹ D.W. Cohen, *The Combining of History* (Chicago and London, 1994), 216.

³² ξένος ἐν τοῖς βιβλίοις: 'in his books a stranger'. *How to Write History* 41, Loeb Classical Library, vol. 430, 56-57. See also M. Visscher, 'The Past Perfect and the Present

explicitly harked back to even earlier times, i.e. the work of that ‘father’ of scientific history (if not international relations theory)—Thucydides. In the opening pages of his monumental *History of the Peloponnesian War*, the Greek historian thus noted that ‘... it ha[d] been composed, not as a prize-essay to be heard for the moment, but as a possession for all time’. Rather than aspiring to please the readers of his own days, he aimed that his book get to the truth of the titanic clashes described.³³

If Thucydides would fail the modern requirements of empiricism, his observation nevertheless inspired this history of Sawaba—but with a double twist: while not wishing to make a comparison with the work of the great Greek, his concept of a ‘possession for always’ should be understood here to mean that this book was written not primarily as a contribution to present-day theory on African history, but with the object of salvaging an historical episode—for good. Secondly, it was written for the Sawabian community. As will become clear, its members never had the opportunity to tell their story to a professional historian. The interest that they took in the book project and the emotions surrounding its long-term conception mean that it was also written with the aim that the historical fates involved finally earn recognition—first and foremost from Nigériens and the French—and that, in this regard, the book might have some therapeutic value for the movement’s adherents or those of the second generation.

It is in this light that one must see the dedication at the beginning of this book. While constructed, as much as possible, from inside the *Weltanschauung* of Sawaba’s members—so as to clarify what they thought and why they acted the way they did—, this does not mean that this history involves uncritical acceptance of everything the movement’s cadres did or aimed at. It does not wish to paper over flaws in strategy or the uglier features of their agitation. Sawaba’s would-be revolution in the late 1950s could be particularly violent—as revolutions usually are. As shown by Thucydides, the historian’s objective should be the truth, not to delight one’s audience *per se*.

Still, if the April 1958 riots in Niamey represented the darker side of Sawaba, it is important to realise that the movement’s history cannot be

Tense: A Comparison between Three Treatises on the Ethics of Historical Practice’, www.sintezis.org, accessed 26 May 2011.

³³ κτήμά τε ἐς αἰεὶ μᾶλλον ἢ ἀγώνισμα ἐς τὸ παραχρήμα ἀκούειν ξύγκειται, *History of the Peloponnesian War* 1.22.4, Loeb Classical Library, vol. 108, 40-41. Also P. Zagorin, *Thucydides: An Introduction for the Common Reader* (Princeton and Oxford, 2005), 29.

understood without reference to beliefs, underlying and professed ones, that were held in this political community—indeed, were central to it: like nationalist movements elsewhere,³⁴ its ideology involved the constitution of an imagined community. As Cooper continued in his essay on African historiography:

The courage and persistence of people who fought injustice should ... not be lost from view ... The discipline of historical writing and the intensity of memory should not be mutually contradictory.³⁵

Since so much occurred in the realm of the imagination—rendering the 1950s, early 1960s such an exciting epoch—this book, while trying to offer an objective analysis, was purposively not written without personal passion. Here, too, scholars can find guidance not just in the work of fellow Africanists but also in that of the ancient Greek historian. Thucydides cared profoundly about the events that he described. It has been noted that the *History of the Peloponnesian War* possesses emotional power and intensity, in addition to an ability to recreate the pathos, or experience of the developments concerned, so as to allow its readers to participate, as it were, in the agony of this classical conflict.³⁶ Perez Zagorin has argued that one would be mistaken to construe this as a sign of lack of objectivity on Thucydides' part. As he pointed out,

[o]bjectivity does not mandate an attitude of cool impersonality and emotional non-involvement or disengagement, nor does it entail a stance of neutrality, noncommitment, and absence or suppression of values ... It does not call for a passionless observer, but for an inquirer whose primary allegiance ... is to know what is true and who therefore strenuously tries to avoid falsehood, error, credulity, unexamined assumptions, and preconceived conclusions. The opposite of objectivity is not passion or emotional involvement, but prejudice, bias, and the uncritical projection of one's own ... beliefs in disregard or violation of the evidence.³⁷

This history of Sawaba wants to be, as in the words of Thomas Bisson's *Tormented Voices*, an 'essay in compassionate history',³⁸ which tries to resurrect, in its fullest meaning, the hopes and dreams, besides the disil-

³⁴ Ellis, 'Africa's Wars of Liberation', 90-91.

³⁵ Cooper, 'Possibility and Constraint', 194-195.

³⁶ Zagorin, *Thucydides*, 153-154, discussing the work of W.R. Connor.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 154.

³⁸ T.N. Bisson, *Tormented Voices: Power, Crisis, and Humanity in Rural Catalonia, 1140-1200* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 1998), v.

lusionment and sufferings, of the adherents of one of the more fascinating social movements in twentieth century Africa.

The book is nevertheless empiricist in conception so as to approximate, in the Rankean sense, how the history of Sawaba actually was. It is also, above all, a narrative in the sense that history must be a *story*. While trying to avoid (as much as is possible in an academic text) the alienating language of polysyllabic theory, this narrative perspective should not be dismissed as anecdotal: it is oriented towards actors and the great and little events in which they were involved. One could justify this by reference to recent theorising on the concept of agency,³⁹ yet there is a more direct connection with the subject matter that legitimates this. Sawabists, firmly embedded in Niger's cultural contexts, conceived their history principally in terms of stories when trying to provide meaning to the acts of which they were once part—stories commonly marked by a synthetic, more than an analytical, approach and a chronological order that focused on individuals, their thoughts and their acts. Hence, while this history naturally aims to analyse the essence of the Sawabist universe, it was deliberately constructed around persons and their experiences, cast in a diachronic perspective that should render it a narrative recognisable to the people concerned. Indeed, more generally, one could argue that, without the story as instrument, our understanding of historical actors could be seriously undermined and that one can only do justice to the complexity of history by way of narrative (besides aesthetic) means. If it is objected that this story, to some extent, concerns mere 'histoire événementielle' that may be deceptive, even Fernand Braudel, with his focus on long-term socio-economic factors, admitted that 'there is more to history than the study of persistent structures and the slow progress of evolution'. And, he continued, an event might also be defined as important if it seemed so to contemporaries—even if they involved illusions that helped give meaning to their lives.⁴⁰

This is not just a history about any persons in Niger but, specifically, one about *agitators* (the concept will be used here in the Marxist—not the Western pejorative—sense), since a history about social and political struggles is per force also one about those believing in and struggling for their cause. As argued above, it is this agitation for a range of objectives

³⁹ See, among the many studies of this concept, M. de Bruijn, R. van Dijk & J.B. Gewald (eds), *Strength Beyond Structure: Social and Historical Trajectories of Agency in Africa* (Leiden, 2007).

⁴⁰ F. Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (ed. University of California Press: Berkeley etc., 1995), vol. 2, 901-902.

that makes the narrative of the nationalist movement in Niger into such a fascinating history. If, in the post-Cold War era, people find it difficult to comprehend that those living in an earlier epoch engaged in a fierce struggle for political change and were prepared to use violence to further their cause, it should be stressed—as Elizabeth Schmidt has concluded for Guinea—that nationalism in Niger, as embodied by the Sawaba movement, was also a ‘fundamentally positive force’,⁴¹ fighting not just against colonial rule but also *for* a broad transformation of society.

Thus, this narrative is at the same time also a social history. In order to assess the meaning of the movement in the country’s social context, data were collected on the personal backgrounds of individual adherents, including their years of birth, the towns or villages they came from, their ethnic background and their profession in the 1950s and later, adding up to hundreds of names and rich sociological detail. This allows a correction of established views about Sawaba’s political character that were ill-researched—for example, that it would have been a ‘Hausa’ movement or a mere ‘administrative party’ that was the creature of colonial officialdom;⁴² both contentions are utterly false. The research into the backgrounds of its adherents shows that cadres came from different echelons and segments of society, though with the core made up of semi-urbanised marginals and some slightly better placed strata. In their totality they therefore constituted a truly social movement and it is this, together with what we know of Sawaba’s professed social and political objectives—and underlying social anger⁴³—that renders the movement’s narrative a social history, besides a political one.

In the end the community involved was made up of individuals and, as this book tries to show, often such remarkable ones that they inspired much of its writing. The focus on persons and their backgrounds was, in another context, rationalised by Eric Hobsbawm by way of the concept of ‘uncommon people’, i.e. persons who built up political roles that are not normally associated with the activities of the private lives involved, their professions or their social position.⁴⁴ In analysing the Sawaba movement, the distinction between public roles and the private dimensions of adherents’ lives is therefore to some extent blurred; also, in certain ways the depiction of

⁴¹ Schmidt, *Mobilizing the Masses*, 12.

⁴² The latter view was held by Finn Fuglestad. See Fuglestad, ‘UNIS and BNA’, *passim*.

⁴³ See on anger in the post-colonial era more generally Cooper, ‘Possibility and Constraint’, 194.

⁴⁴ E. Hobsbawm, *Uncommon People: Resistance, Rebellion, and Jazz* (New York, 1998).

these lives approaches the level of micro-history. In this regard the book follows the views of culture theorist Aby Warburg, who, long ago, argued that 'the dear Lord [hid] in the detail', referring to a method of looking for the seemingly marginal aspect that could act as the perspective on the greater whole.⁴⁵ In that sense, in the reconstruction of this generation of agitators, there is little of their private lives that must be considered as irrelevant. As this history has the nature of a salvaging operation, this book will, moreover, list hundreds of names of individuals involved; leaving them out would risk forever condemning them to oblivion. It is also in this light that one should see the numerous photographs included in this book—old ones found in pamphlets or archival sources, as well as new, taken in the course of fieldwork. Taken as a whole, it is hoped that this narrative will not just recreate the Sawabist universe and give back to its former adherents what is due to them, but in the process also provide Niger with a rich social history that was so far little noticed, let alone considered as an integral part of the country's historical development since World War II.

The importance of the Sawaba movement and its rebellion nevertheless goes beyond the history of its actors as such. There is a fundamental ambiguity, a certain *awkwardness*, in the tale of their political struggles, the later attempt to transform the movement's agitators or electoral canvassers into 'commandos' (guerrilleros), and especially, in the violent action that constituted the high point of the uprising. This is not, however, a story of mass violence or huge numbers of casualties. Sawaba's history defies easy classification in terms that are familiar to scholars studying 'revolutions' and insurgencies, guerrilla wars and liberation forces, or nationalist struggles and social movements—even more so when looking beyond the African context. As will be shown, part of the complexity surrounding the rising lies in the evolutionary stages that Sawaba went through in its development: from a simple political vehicle into a modern movement supported by different social segments that carried an increasingly politicised message, and then from a nationalist movement, whose core was made up of little-folk agitators canvassing for support, into a military organisation pursuing the hit-and-run logic of guerrilla war. In both phases, this process went only halfway: in the first stage the development into a fully-fledged nationalist force—borne by a horizontally stratified group whose social mobility remained limited—was stymied by the French just before it could

⁴⁵ W. Schäffner, S. Weigel and T. Macho, *Der Liebe Gott steckt im Detail: Microstrukturen des Wissens* (Paderborn, 2003).

consolidate its control of the state machinery; in the second phase, Sawaba met defeat on the battlefield before it could complete its evolution from a social force-cum-political party into a real (militarily organised) 'liberation movement'. These ambiguities were enhanced by the blend of ideas encompassing its political discourse, which consisted of a Marxist-inspired nationalism articulating the message of an impending new age, but whose millenarian undertones were not so much grounded in the romantic imagination of Marx and Lenin as in local cultural repertoires that legitimised the resort to force, side by side with the justification of violence given by Marxism's revolutionary prescriptions.

The above constituted a context that goes some way in explaining why the movement's rising failed to meet with success and, thus, these insights could, in turn, be useful in comparative perspectives on the conditions and requirements for the growth and achievement of 'revolutions' or insurgencies—perhaps better than an analysis of revolts that succeeded. Although this history is purposively a monograph for the reasons outlined further above, some remarks will be made towards the end about the contrasting trajectories that Niger and its eastern neighbour, the Republic of Chad, experienced in this regard. As a preliminary, it can be stated that Robert Buijtenhuijs, in his first monograph on the FROLINAT insurgency, noted several features of Chadian society—and of African societies more generally—militating against genuine revolution that were also of relevance for the Sawabist rising, though not in all respects. Thus, he identified the important feature of Chad's divergent social stratification, marked by a relative lack of class structure (certainly still so in the 1960s), and more especially of a well-developed urban proletariat and, therefore, of political struggle in the few cities of the country. Here the Nigérien case deviates somewhat, as Sawaba's 'petit peuple' were fairly well established in the country's emerging cities even if the proletariat that it represented still constituted a numerical minority. FROLINAT was confronted with an overwhelmingly peasant population that, with the exception of the centre-east, was hard to mobilise for want of an insurgent spirit—its political discontent real but diffuse and its position in the larger political economy elusive. Although much of this could be observed for Niger as well, Sawaba's urban little folk at least retained links with the countryside that could be used for the purpose of mobilisation (even if, as will be shown, other factors were, in the end, to neutralise the rural populace as a factor in the military equation). Other contrasts (such as the Chadians' predilection to mobilise on the basis of regional sentiment) will be discussed in the epilogue of this

book, but here it should be noted that FROLINAT was rather lacking in concrete proposals for the restructuring of society and ideas for the country's future.⁴⁶ In this sense the movement of Djibo Bakary put in at least some effort to make a sketch for an alternative society and political economy, although its precipitate defeat was to preclude further development of this. This difference had much to do with Sawaba's firmer foundation in the trade union world and its immersion in Marxist ideology and its offshoots, which—if its political and military enterprise in the end fell short of a genuine revolution—made the movement's discourse certainly qualify as revolutionary in aims and objectives. It is for this reason that this book will speak of 'revolution' when discussing the movement's project. Sawaba typically represented an advocate of 'grand ideas' (as one cadre would later explain the difference from Niger's other political formations), and if the views of the grass roots were much more driven by immediate passions, the leadership at least tried to make them more articulate and give them ideological depth. For example, in the movement's struggle for upward mobility, modern Western education was singled out as one of the key areas of action. Sawaba owed its significance at least in part to the role that it played in this respect.

In presenting the story of Sawaba, this book eschews specific models of social movement theory (as of theories on revolution),⁴⁷ most of which have been formulated on the basis of case studies about the European, North American or Latin American contexts and which can at best explain parts of the Nigérien case. As in so many African contexts—often marked by hybrid examples of movements with overlapping social, economic, cultural, religious and political features⁴⁸—the history of Sawaba includes various aspects that are emphasised in those theoretical models and that, taken together, constitute (part of) its explanatory context, if in a confused combination of the variables concerned: the rise of the Sawabist movement had much to do with changes in an old socio-economic order, more or less along the lines in which classical social movement theory depicted the role of socio-economic breakdown in protest movements in Western contexts.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ R. Buijtenhuijs, *Le Frolinat et les révoltes populaires du Tchad, 1965-1976* (The Hague, 1978), 446-9.

⁴⁷ The literature on revolutions is too large to cite and of little relevance to the subject of this monograph. As will be shown, however, the Cuban and Algerian revolutions (in the latter case perhaps better called a war of national liberation) were of some relevance to Sawaba, as a source of inspiration.

⁴⁸ See Ellis and Van Kessel, 'Introduction', 4.

⁴⁹ See the useful overview by J. van Stekelenburg and B. Klandermans, 'Social Movement Theory: Past, Present and Prospects', in Ellis and Van Kessel, *Movers and Shakers*, 17-35.

Yet, in the Nigérien case this went hand in hand with a growth, rather than decline, in prosperity. Nevertheless, the ambivalent position of Niger's little folk meant that relative deprivation played an important part in the evolution of the movement, just as shown in the classical exposé about this factor.⁵⁰ But Sawabists rebelled because they had the resources to do so (not least through their contacts with the international union world and, later, Eastern Bloc governments)⁵¹ as well as a broadened personal horizon—elements that would better fit in resource mobilisation perspectives on movements or social constructivist approaches emphasising the meaning that people attribute to their environment. As will be shown, anger, even rage about the present with which they were confronted, underlay much of Sawabists' action (as has, indeed, been common to much of the post-colonial era in Africa).⁵² Numerous party cadres were, besides their familiarity with communist dogmas, thoroughly absorbed in the mystique of Sufism, as if to confirm Le Bon's old ideas about the pathology of protest.⁵³ However, their revolt against the existing order was not just negative but aimed at something better to replace it. Their behaviour was a mixture of rational and 'irrational' acts⁵⁴—as recognised in more recent theorising on social movements. As movement theorists working on non-African contexts have recently stressed, contentious politics is a multi-faceted phenomenon with political, social, psychological and other roots, and in order to catch all relevant factors, one has to analyse it by way of an inclusive approach.⁵⁵

Another aspect for which Sawaba's history is important is that it sheds light, more generally, on the concept of 'neo-colonialism' in the immediate aftermath of Africa's struggles for independence. If this notion stands much abused by African elites and is more an ideological construct than an analytical concept, the Nigérien case demonstrates that it cannot be dismissed as totally irrelevant. Cooper has rightly argued that, while the depiction of

⁵⁰ T. Gurr, *Why Men Rebel* (Princeton, 1970).

⁵¹ Extraversion is esp. discussed in ch. 9. See for its theory J.F. Bayart, 'Africa in the World: A History of Extraversion', *African Affairs*, 99 (2000), 217-267. Also, Ellis and Van Kessel, 'Introduction', 4-7.

⁵² C. Monga, *The Anthropology of Anger: Civil Society and Democracy in Africa* (Boulder, 1996); original: *Anthropologie de la colère: société civile et démocratie en Afrique* (Paris, 1994).

⁵³ See the discussion in Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans, 'Social Movement Theory', 18-21.

⁵⁴ If deemed irrational, it should be realised that in Africa spiritual notions can play a crucial role in political calculations. S. Ellis & G. Ter Haar, *Worlds of Power: Religious Thought and Political Practice in Africa* (London, 2004).

⁵⁵ Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans, 'Social Movement Theory', *passim*.

authoritarianism in colonial rule and its post-colonial successor states contains much truth, the description of colonialism has often been generic in the sense that the extent to which Africans managed to challenge autocracy and transform it into a more complex dynamic of ruler and ruled tends to be overlooked; there are distinctions to be made in the extent of repression marking the European presence in Africa (and, one might add, its 'neo-colonial' successor states).⁵⁶ Still, while one therefore has to keep an open eye for nuances in the different paths of Africa's decolonisation, the history of Sawaba reveals an amazing degree of cynicism on the part of the French (more especially of the Gaullist establishment) in the course of the intervention in Niger's 'autonomous' politics during the autumn of 1958 and its aftermath—a far-reaching degree of political interference that was to extend well beyond the country's formal accession to independence. It points to the potentially vicious nature of the metropolitan polity itself—in the form of its present-day Fifth Republic—, at any rate in the way that the Gaullist state was established. The consequences of France's action, however, were far more serious for Niger itself (and, indeed, there are close parallels here with the post-colonial histories of Cameroon, Kenya and Madagascar): the foundations for the repressive state were laid, not by the military regime of Seyni Kountché (1974-1987) but the Franco-RDA combine that held sway from the end of 1958 until Kountché led the army to prominence. Insight into the repressive capacities of the state in Niger, until this day, requires a full understanding of one of its earliest acts, i.e. the destruction of the movement of 'petit peuple' during the First Republic—in the course of which institutional practices were developed for the persecution of enemies that subsequent regimes inherited, elaborated upon and expanded to suit their specific needs.

Related to the above problematic, the Sawaba narrative demonstrates the necessity to develop a more refined periodisation in the analysis of modern African history than the classical distinction between 'colonial' and 'post-colonial', in which the date of formal independence assumes the quality of a caesura. In the history of Niger, perhaps more than in other cases, these conventional phases prove largely meaningless. Rather, the history of the Sawaba rising shows that the high point of the country's 'decolonisation' in the sense of *de facto* freedom from French control came earlier than the accession to independence—this formal 'transition' an uneventful occurrence that actually confirmed the recent return of French

⁵⁶ Cooper, 'Possibility and Constraint', 172-173.

influence and that was to endure until the mid-1970s, when thanks to the military, Niger once again wrested greater control over its affairs from the metropolitan power. Since there is a parallel between the advent of the Kountché regime (and the consequent decline of French influence) and what happened at the time in other African countries, this may indicate, more generally, an intriguing turning point in the continent's historical evolution, where a shift operated that warrants a rethinking of the periodisation of modern African history.⁵⁷

As noted, the historiography of Niger is still comparatively limited, both in its conceptions and development. It is much more marked by, for example, histories of regions or narratives that amount to ethnographies than truly social histories or historical analyses of horizontally stratified communities. Sawaba's story is, therefore, of importance for the history of Niger *as a country*, notably for its younger generations, among whom there are many who are unaware of the systematic persecution that the people of Djibo Bakary had to endure, from the time of the movement's overthrow in September 1958 until well into the Kountché era.⁵⁸ Official memory about a country's history is, after all, a highly political concept that can be easily manipulated by governments, especially undemocratic ones. While Niger is not unique in this sense (post-colonial remembrance in Kenya and Cameroon is infamous for the selective character of the official recollection of the past),⁵⁹ the history of Sawaba has suffered from the conscious attempts by the RDA and its French allies to smother the facts, not just of the movement's persecution but of its entire narrative.⁶⁰ Thus, as the research for this book progressed, I began to realise more and more just

⁵⁷ See also Ellis, 'Writing Histories of Contemporary Africa'. Even Djibo, in *Les transformations*—to all intents and purposes the most important book on the history of Niger's decolonisation—made use of the conventional periodisation, cutting off his analysis in 1960.

⁵⁸ Books on Nigérien history usually devote only a couple of lines, if at all, to the high point of Sawaba's military action. Instructive here is a school history book (S. Hima et al. [eds]. *Histoire C.M.2* [INDRAP: n. pl. or d., but after 1992]), which fails to describe the persecution of Sawabists, which started in the course of the 1958 referendum, as well as the guerrilla campaigns, including their climax in 1964-1965.

⁵⁹ See for Kenya R. Buijtenhuijs, *Mau Mau, Twenty Years After: The Myth and the Survivors* (The Hague, 1973) and M.S. Clough, *Mau Mau Memoirs: History, Memory, and Politics* (Boulder, 1998). For Cameroon, see A. Mbembe, 'Pouvoir des morts et langage des vivants: les errances de la mémoire nationaliste au Cameroun', *Politique Africaine*, no. 22 (1986), 37-72.

⁶⁰ See for an explicit example on the part of the French, *Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire*, 3-9 sept. 1962, no. 25-547; SHAT, 5 H 121.

how significant these lacunae actually were in the context of Niger's post-colonial history.

The silence over Sawaba was maintained by repression and restricted access to archives. Fortunately, after the end of the Cold War the political conditions in Niger improved. Statutory delays in access to archival sources have also lapsed since, both in Niger and France, including for files of the French intelligence services, both of the military and those of the 'Service de Documentation Extérieure et de Contre-Espionage' (SDECE).⁶¹ In principle, this should allow those interested in and concerned by the history of the Sawaba rising and its repression—in Niger, but also in France—to come to terms with what represents one of the tragic pages of Franco-African encounters. As will be argued in the Epilogue, this is not just of importance for Niger (though the ageing Sawaba population provides this with a certain urgency), but also for the metropole: what the Germans call *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (confronting one's past), extends to Europe's relations with former colonies, and if much has already been written about France's role in Algeria, Madagascar and Cameroon, among other countries, its actions with regard to Niger's Sawaba community were never dealt with at all.

Confronting this past also allows us to correct the distorted picture that came into being after the movement's defeat, which was the result of a deliberate effort by the Nigérien regime to humiliate its enemies and boost its legitimacy. Western journalists of necessity relied on regime sources when reporting on Sawaba's military action in 1964-1965, despite the bias and the numerous distortions involved. Independent reporting was impossible in the political conditions that obtained in Niger under the RDA. The result was that, since nothing else was written at the time about the rebellion, regime propaganda found its way into the public conscience (not just in the West but even in Niger itself) and, indeed, came to be the 'knowledge' that we have had about the movement's rise and fall ever since: my first publication on Sawaba and its uprising, based on secondary sources that, in retrospect, contained many of these distortions, provided a description of what this established view of the movement had become.⁶² The distortions involved (and the picture they created) will be discussed in the course

⁶¹ For the intelligence services, see f.e. R. Faligot and P. Krop, *La piscine: Les services secrets français 1944-1984* (Paris, 1985) and R. Faligot, *Services secrets en Afrique* (Paris, 1982), 56-86.

⁶² K. van Walraven, 'Sawaba's Rebellion in Niger (1964-1965): Narrative and Meaning', in Abbink, De Bruijn and Van Walraven, *Rethinking Resistance*, 218-252.

of Part III, as this book aims to provide a totally fresh reconstruction not affected by this political bias but based on primary source material obtained from archives and data gleaned in the course of fieldwork. Here, however, it may be noted that, as was falsely asserted at the time, Sawaba's military action was not limited to a few mistaken, poorly planned attacks during the autumn of 1964. Rather, it represented the culmination of several years of guerrilla infiltrations, which had started around 1960. Nor is it true that its cadres were lured by Sawaba's leadership into participating in these operations.

Contemporary observers, however, painted a highly unsympathetic picture of the movement and its men. Construed as another example of Cold War confrontation (Sawaba, after all, obtained help from Eastern Bloc countries), the actors in the uprising were portrayed as mistaken Maoists who lacked popular support and had no chance whatsoever to topple the regime. Western journalists blithely referred to them as 'terrorists'—the put-down used by the RDA—and notably French reporters sympathised with Niger's government, its French backers and the counter-measures they took against the Sawabists. A man like Gilbert Comte (who, though working as a journalist for *Le Monde* in Paris, was a close friend of the regime's president, Hamani Diori, and acted as his adviser) wrote in a way that reflected France's hostility vis-à-vis Sawaba rather than proper standards of journalism.⁶³ Comparable bias against the movement of Djibo Bakary or partiality to the RDA regime crept into historical studies by French and Nigérien authors.⁶⁴

To add insult to injury (although this cannot have been intended), the revisionist picture of Sawaba published by Fuglestad during the 1970s had

⁶³ Some of this writing will be quoted in the course of this book. Comte was also close to Houphouët-Boigny and several French politicians and later occupied political positions in France. J. Baulin, *Conseiller du Président Diori* (Paris, 1986), 11–12 and 121.

⁶⁴ E. Séré de Rivières (*Histoire du Niger* [Paris, 1965]) had the preface of his book written by Diori. P. Bonardi (*La république du Niger: Naissance d'un état* [Paris, 1960]) dedicated his book to him. André Salifou's writing is more complex, being factual but marked by an unsympathetic attitude to Sawaba. See *Histoire du Niger* (Paris, 1989), 247, where he fails to mention the turnout in the referendum and ensuing repression. In *Le Niger* (Paris, 2002), 175, he speaks of Sawaba's 'virulent attacks' in the Assembly at the end of 1958 (when it actually had endured a terrible beating) and at 185 suggests that, despite their mistakes, the men of the ruling triumvirate loved Niger sincerely. In *Biographie politique* (note 5 above), 268, Diamballa Maïga is called the 'incarnation of a sense of honour, strictness and the given word'. His and Hama's responsibility for the First Republic's repression is ignored while the final assessment of Diori borders on a eulogy, citing with approval de Gaulle's view of Diori ('attaques virulentes'; 'incarnation de sens de l'honneur, de la rigueur et de la parole donnée').

the effect of burying the movement even further, as it disputed its significance by suggesting that it, too, was a mere ‘administrative party’, i.e. a political vehicle built up and controlled by the French,⁶⁵ and not a genuine social movement in which—like in Guinea⁶⁶—leadership and rank and file were tied in a balancing act, influencing each other on the basis of common aspirations so that political decisions were as much the outcome of pressures from below. While Fuglestad at least to some extent ‘denationalised’ our view of the 1958 referendum, taking it outside the ideological format of the language of ‘neo-colonialism’, his analysis leaned heavily on the limited colonial archives that were then available and tainted his views of Sawaba and, more generally, of Nigérien history with the partial perceptions of French officialdom.⁶⁷

The result was that, after so many years, the journalistic account by Georges Chaffard still remained the best description of Sawaba and its rebellion.⁶⁸ In fact, Chaffard was one of the few contemporaries who was not affected by partisanship or enmity towards his subject. However, it is clear that, as far as the uprising in the mid-1960s is concerned, he based his story to a considerable extent on regime sources (such as the government organ, *Le Niger*) and thereby reproduced numerous notions and ‘facts’ that had their origins in purposive disinformation.⁶⁹ Chaffard nevertheless produced a view of the 1958 referendum that in retrospect was closer to the truth than Fuglestad’s and has remained intact as far as its main outlines are concerned. The doctoral thesis of Mamoudou Djibo, whose work on Nigérien politics in the run-up to independence remains unsurpassed, effectively debunked Fuglestad’s claim that the French did not concoct the referendum outcome and that their intervention in the plebiscite was ‘lightheaded’ and the electoral contest a cleaner affair than previously suggested (by Chaffard and Sawabist publications). Yet, Djibo did not effectively tackle the nature of Sawaba’s power base: while Fuglestad asserted that this was rather fragile—clearly underestimating its grass-roots character—and that Bakary owed his defeat to this, Mamoudou Djibo failed to understand Sawaba’s post-referendum focus on inter-territorial politics,

⁶⁵ Fuglestad, ‘UNIS and BNA’.

⁶⁶ Schmidt, *Mobilizing the Masses*.

⁶⁷ As its ethno-regional prism of Nigérien politics. Also Van Walraven, ‘Decolonization by Referendum’.

⁶⁸ Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 269–332 (entitled ‘La longue marche des commandos nigériens’).

⁶⁹ The murder of Daouda Ardaly, which the regime blamed on Djibo Bakary, is one of the best examples of this. See ch. 11 below.

which was essentially a ploy to rebuild its strength with foreign help after its political activity in Niger had become impossible.⁷⁰ Curiously, he also did not discuss the memoirs published by French officials, who were involved in the fraudulent organisation of the plebiscite and the parliamentary elections following it, and whose belated but brazen confessions to this effect definitively settled what remained of the referendum controversy. In this book, these memoirs will be used side by side with additional documentary evidence and testimonies of Sawaba cadres to shed light on the catastrophe that befell the movement of 'petit peuple' in the autumn of 1958 and that so strongly was to affect its future.

In the course of writing this monograph it was realised that the few biographical dictionaries in Niger's historiography provide a one-sided overview of the country's historical personalities. This is so because they focus especially on people whose trajectories were to prove victorious and not those whose claims or projects met an untimely end. Moreover, some of these overviews focus disproportionately on people who gained official positions (such as that of member of the National Assembly). This means that few if any activists or union workers without formal state jobs, let alone peasant cadres of a movement like Sawaba or its guerrilleros, are present in these pages, and this to the detriment of our knowledge of Niger, since many of these people were extraordinary personalities that could enrich our impression of the country's historical significance.⁷¹ Hence, the history of Sawaba could provide reason for redrafting reference works or composing a specific one, focusing on the movement's actors.⁷²

However, there is, finally, also another way of looking at Bakary's little folk that shows that it is inappropriate to stick to the geographical cadre of Niger alone. It is necessary to situate the analysis of Sawaba's travails in a broader historical context. First, France's policy vis-à-vis Niger and its decolonisation was closely tied to its interests in Algeria and the development of its nuclear energy needs and 'force de frappe'. This takes Sawaba's history and, one could argue, the tragedy that befell the movement to the very core of the Fifth Republic. Second, the Diori regime was closely bound to the French as well as the leadership of the Entente countries (notably Côte d'Ivoire). Third and more important still, the history of Sawaba's

⁷⁰ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 230-233.

⁷¹ See S. Decalo, *Historical Dictionary of Niger* (Metuchen, NJ, & London, 1979) and C. Maman, *Répertoire biographique des personnalités de la classe politique et des leaders d'opinion du Niger de 1945 à nos jours* (Niamey, 1999 and 2003), 2 vols. A new edition of the *Historical Dictionary of Niger* (forthcoming) will include a few additional Sawabists.

⁷² Ideas for this are currently under development.

actions goes well beyond Niger's borders: as will be shown in this book, the construction of its political alliances, its support networks in the course of its guerrilla infiltrations, its communication hubs and arms depots, as well as the alliances with supportive regimes, drew the movement's actors within the ambit of the politics and societies of neighbouring countries—from eastern Mali to the ancient cities of Northern Nigeria, and from the turbulent politics of Nkrumah's Ghana to the comparative solitude of Algerian desert towns. A strict distinction between 'Nigérien' politics and that of other countries is, in that sense, unhelpful and must be replaced by an analysis that sets the story in the complex political context of West Africa as a whole. In the course of Sawaba's struggle, the movement's sympathisers found refuge in various countries in the region, while RDA-Sawaba rivalry overflowed into Nigérien diaspora communities, especially in Ghana, where the adversaries developed their own support networks, their spy rings and their counter-espionage: if anything, this history demonstrates that formal boundaries (and even the state sovereignty of other countries) mattered little or could be used in a constant game of cat-and-mouse involving persecution, evasion and subversion. Moreover, the diaspora politics was not just limited to the West African region, as shown by the political action and competition of Nigérien students in the Eastern Bloc. The history of the 'petit peuple' is amazing for its geographical spread: Sawabists travelled the four corners of the earth, writing a history of globalisation *avant la lettre*.

All histories of failure, be the subject toppled regimes, revolutions gone amiss or rebellions suppressed, carry the risk of anachronism. Anachronism is the supreme sin of history as it precludes respect for historical specificity. Naturally, an interpretation of the past can only be made in the present, which in that sense is inescapable in every historical reconstruction.⁷³ Yet, this does not absolve the historian from a responsibility to try and avoid a 'presentist' analysis, i.e. one that exclusively sees the past from a contemporary perspective in which the benefit of hindsight helps to detect 'mistakes' by historical actors at specific moments in time but which, in fact, constitutes a trap full of anachronisms.⁷⁴ Hindsight can be particularly

⁷³ N.D. Paige, 'The History of Anachronism: Montaigne, Augustine, and the Becoming of Autobiography', *eJournal Philosophie der Psychologie*, Oct. 2006, www.jp.philo.at/texte/PaigeNi.pdf, accessed 4 Aug. 2011.

⁷⁴ See for Sawaba's context Salifou, *Le Niger*, 156, referring to Fluchard's work on the RDA.

insidious in a *post factum* analysis of failure. This is shown by the work of the journalists and scholars mentioned above, whose reference to Sawaba represented no more than a teleological perspective that read history backwards and allowed the movement's insurgency to culminate inexorably in defeat. Fundamentally, such linearity is unhistorical.

Events in the distant past were once in the future for those involved⁷⁵ and historians have the duty to reconstruct what people thought, what they knew (or could have known) at what time and how this affected their behaviour at particular junctures. As will be shown, the failure of Sawaba's opposition, even of its armed uprising, was not a foregone conclusion.⁷⁶ French intelligence reports regularly expressed concern about the fragility of the regime that the Gaullists supported—even several years after they had put it in place. Long after Sawaba had been pushed underground, they opined that, if Djibo Bakary was allowed to return home, the RDA would rapidly go under. Archival sources make clear that, after the movement had refused to accept the *fait accompli* of the referendum, its fortune in terms of the popularity it enjoyed knew ups and downs, even after its formal banning in 1959. It also experienced an upsurge in this sense in 1960, as well as during later years. All this demonstrates that Sawaba's history did not amount to a simple linear narrative—its history was far from over upon its eviction from power in the autumn of 1958: with the flaws and weaknesses in the regime's power base, the movement had little reason—certainly at first sight—to think that the attempt to return at the helm of the state by violent means could not work. Its systematic (even vindictive) persecution practically barred all alternatives, especially after attempts to effect a *rapprochement* had come to naught. Furthermore, it is important to set the action pursued by Sawabists firmly in the temporal context in which they found themselves. This was characterised by the global competition of the early Cold War era, when the Eastern Bloc could convincingly pose as a genuine alternative to the manna of the Western world. Its economic and especially military aid (in addition to the higher education it could offer) was seen to make a positive difference in the furtherance of successful uprisings that erupted in such widely different places as Cuba and Indo-China, and Algeria and Angola. Violent liberation became the established mode of extricating political forces from their *cul-de-sac*. That

⁷⁵ F.W. Maitland, 'Memoranda de Parlamento' (1893), in *Selected Essays* (Cambridge, 1936), 66.

⁷⁶ As writings based on regime sources claimed. Van Walraven, 'Sawaba's Rebellion in Niger (1964-1965)'.

Sawabists thought that they could make a military come-back is therefore not unimaginable. The movement's military position was not static but subject to change, as, for example, shown by the accession to independence of Algeria, which improved its strategic situation substantially. As will be pointed out, when the armed confrontation reached its climax, neither regime personalities nor external observers were sure about the outcome.

'All sources are suspect', said A. J. P. Taylor once,⁷⁷ meaning that one must be circumspect in the use of what are deemed to be historical data. This is equally true for written sources and oral ones. Due to the special nature of the subject—the rebellion of a clandestine movement whose failure led to an attempt to remove it from history—, documentary evidence had to be assembled from a large range of archival collections, official as well as private. Government archives in France and Niger were naturally of great importance. Those in the former metropole concerned the colonial papers, covering the period up to Niger's independence and stored in Aix-en-Provence, and—for the era since independence—the archives of the French military in Vincennes. These included intelligence reports of the metropolitan secret service, the SDECE. Numerous files in these collections were, in principle, closed but could be accessed through a dispensation procedure, including SDECE reports that were sent to the Matignon for the attention of the prime minister.⁷⁸ Apart from Niger's national archives (see below), some research was undertaken in the national archives of Ghana, where documents were traced on Sawaba's Ghanaian connections (notably concerning Sawaba commando Amadou Diop). In the British National Archives numerous files were found about the movement's relations with its sister party in Northern Nigeria, NEPU.⁷⁹

In addition to these archival collections, certain documents were obtained from private sources.⁸⁰ As will be shown, in response to the persecution unleashed against it, the movement burned part of its own records, while in its desire to delegitimise its enemies and eliminate them from Niger's historical record the regime, too, proceeded to destroy documents pertaining to Sawaba, such as party publications. Other documents deemed

⁷⁷ *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe 1848-1918* (Oxford, 1954), 569.

⁷⁸ Many of these SDECE reports can be found in the 'T series' at Vincennes. While part of the military archives, they used SDECE sources for intelligence gathering. See for further discussion of documents (colonial and military), Annex 3.

⁷⁹ See the annexes for the meaning of the reference codes used in the footnotes of this book.

⁸⁰ The identity of these sources is indicated in footnotes.

too sensitive (for example, lists of fugitive Sawaba cadres) were kept under lock and key, outside the country's official archives. Numerous documents could therefore not be found in official records, although the 'Archives Nationales du Niger' (ANN) are professionally organised and therefore allowed a good start to the research. With the help of former Sawaba cadres, however, as well as the 'Gendarmerie Nationale', I could retrieve various key sources.⁸¹

Nevertheless, several types of documents or data were never recovered. First, records maintained by the police, the 'Sûreté' or the 'Bureau de Coordination et de Liaison' (BCL), stored at the ANN, in later years become increasingly sparse,⁸² with dossiers on specific persons or illegal party meetings often halting altogether (especially after 1961). This was the paradoxical result of successful repression, which pushed members further underground or made them flee abroad, beyond the regime's horizon. Thus, for the construction of an historical narrative the use of other archival records and types of sources—such as oral ones—was a methodological necessity, as the records of the government by definition precluded the reconstruction of developments unknown to it. Second, even in France certain documents went missing, such as sources covering the sensitive referendum period (September–October 1958, though as Mamoudou Djibo already pointed out, the colonial power rarely wrote down its orders for intervention in electoral contests in the first place).⁸³ In another case, it was found that a page on Sawaba opposition had been torn out of a monthly report produced by the French military attaché in Niamey.⁸⁴ An attack plan that Sawaba's guerrilla commander referred to in a memorandum, sent to the Ghanaian authorities and stored in the British National Archives, also vanished.⁸⁵

The same is true for written mission orders of Sawaba commandos; notebooks that some of them used during training in communist China; notebooks filled with data in the course of guerrilla infiltrations; and pro-

⁸¹ Sometimes cadres possessed documents on the movement. It is important for these to be donated to the ANN (at least in copied form), so that Niger's archives obtain a fuller record.

⁸² See, for instance, the files of the *Ministre de l'Intérieur*, stored under ANN, 86 MI 3 F. More details on Sawaba-relevant files in the ANN are given in Annex 2a.

⁸³ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 29 and 113. This is discussed further in Chapter 4.

⁸⁴ *Rapport Mensuel* Sept. 1969, AI 9; SHAT, 10 T 715/D.2-3.

⁸⁵ *Mémoire pour l'opération révolution du parti Sawaba du Niger*; Commandant A. Danggaladima to President of African Affairs [sic], Bremeu, PO Box M.41, Accra, Ghana; PRO, FO 371/177230.

protocols of Sawabists' interrogation by French security officers. Many of these documents were referred to in government organs and by Western journalists, who even cited (substantial) parts of them, but they could not be retrieved from French or Nigérien archives. Thus, that these documents exist—or once existed—is beyond doubt, including the interrogation protocols, also because some early examples of these have survived and Sawaba commandos have pointed out in interviews that French officers had notes taken in the course of the questioning. Moreover, Niger's government organ in 1964-1965 published bits and pieces of what appear to have been interrogation reports. It could be that certain documents were later destroyed (perhaps to cover up evidence of persecution and maltreatment or French complicity in this respect) or that, as far as the interrogation protocols are concerned, these were taken into possession by members of the French intelligence community upon their return to Europe.⁸⁶ Alternatively, they might still be located at Niger's presidency (where the BCL was once housed) or lie buried in the records of the Sûreté. It is known that Niger's powerful ministry of the interior possesses numerous records that it has refused to hand over to the national archives. The same is true for the justice department.⁸⁷

Fortunately, a vast range of documents has survived that contain a wealth of data on Sawaba's political and military actions. Reports with information of SDECE provenance, especially, are often detailed,⁸⁸ sometimes allowing considerable insight into the movement's organisation, both inside Niger and abroad.⁸⁹ Yet, such sources must be used with caution. The world of secret intelligence is marked by uncertainty. 'Disinformation'—i.e. the deliberate spreading of false information—is one of the instruments of counter-intelligence, and the security institutions in Niger, too, were no

⁸⁶ The latter possibility was suggested by a commando once interrogated by the French. It is unknown, however, on what he based his hypothesis. Interview with Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 6 Dec. 2003. If true, their location remains unknown to me. The interrogation protocols are apparently also absent at Niger's Gendarmerie, whose chief kindly assisted in the quest for their recovery. It is not sure, though, whether they differed substantially from the reports published in *Le Niger* in 1964-1965.

⁸⁷ Conversations with Idrissa Maïga Yansambou, Archives Nationales du Niger, Niamey, 14 Dec. 2009 & 24 Oct. 2011. See also C. Lefebvre, 'Archives et centres documentaires au Niger', *Afrique et Histoire*, 2006, no. 5, 177-183. In *Le Niger*, 31 May 1965, there is a reference to the interior minister promising a Western journalist access to some Sawaba leaflets and the notebooks discussed above. Much of the archives of the justice department went up in flames early in 2012.

⁸⁸ Notably those in SHAT's '10 T' series at Vincennes.

⁸⁹ See for a French euphoric statement in this respect *Événements survenus en Afrique Francophone pendant la semaine du 19 au 25 octobre 1964*; secret; SHAT, 10 T 210.

exception to this.⁹⁰ Moreover, in their efforts to maintain the political security of the regime—which itself was so fundamentally insecure, even paranoid—they worked with a huge network of informers, who were paid to produce information on the comings and goings of the regime's enemies. Although such intelligence was often based on hearsay not corroborated by other evidence, in an oral culture like that of Niger this was often the only way to obtain information on the political enemies of the state. However, as will become clear, the use and spread of rumour was a key instrument of agitation and defence employed by Sawabists and the regime alike. The little folk used it with subversive intent, while regime informers, besides performing their duty, could be motivated by the benefits that denunciation could bring—money, the victim's job, lust for vengeance. The partisan attitudes of members of the intelligence community themselves—Nigériens as well as Frenchmen—and even their outright hostility vis-à-vis the men of Djibo Bakary only increased the potential for abuse. All data furnished in the context of these institutions therefore require prudent evaluation. Fortunately, numerous different documentary sources have been found, and the historical narrative based on them is rendered more sure by the similarities in the content of the data concerned. Nevertheless, examples of flawed intelligence were regularly encountered and these will be indicated in appropriate form.

Generally, however, both the French and the Nigérien securocrats that they trained aspired to the highest standards of professionalism. For example, for the Nigériens it made no sense to hunt down those that were not part of the enemy's network. Their intelligence files therefore often distinguish between Sawabists and members of other groups or communities not considered to be an outright security risk (although, as will be shown, mistakes and muddled-up observations did occur). Reports occasionally contain corrections or rectifications of earlier observations.⁹¹ The French themselves graded the value of their intelligence by assigning lettered codes to them, indicating whether information had been confirmed or was fragmentary,⁹² and phrasing their observations in the conditional mode if

⁹⁰ Interviews with Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 2 Dec. 2003 and 15 Dec. 2009.

⁹¹ For an example of a mistaken security alert and its later rectification, see *Bulletin Mensuel de Renseignements*, no. 417, 20 Oct.-20 Nov. 1964, Madaoua; ANN, FONDS DAPA.

⁹² An example of how this was noted is *Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire*, 2,262, no. 44, 28 Oct.-3 Nov. 1963; SHAT, 5 H 131. The United States archives contain an absurd report about a paranoid French military officer who told an American diplomat in Niger about a spy ring run by supposed East Europeans, working in Agadez. One would be a certain 'Bob' from Vladivostok. The American reported that much of this intelligence turned

they stood on their own. Overall, this enhances the usefulness of the material in the construction of the historical narrative.

A specific problem concerns the reliability of data obtained through interrogation of arrested Sawabists. In principle, sources that derive from a context marked by duress can still be useful in the building of an historical narrative, as Le Roy Ladurie demonstrated in his study of the Occitanian village of Montailou in the Middle Ages, based on documents of the Inquisition and involving records composed in the course of interrogation of suspected heretics. The application of torture in these cases led to absurd confessions and showed that maltreatment could be counter-productive. But, interestingly, the Montailou story also showed that a lot of information was obtained through the sheer relentlessness and length of the questioning. The deliberate use of exhaustion, food deprivation and interrogation over extended periods of time, besides attempts to catch suspects telling an incidental lie (creating a psychological disadvantage), have been common techniques to break down suspects' resistance since time immemorial:⁹³ thus, the interrogator of Montailou's inhabitants focused endlessly on details and the tiniest of contradictions in confessions (of one person or between different detainees) and this, in principle, allowed a more reliable reconstruction of facts, assisted by the effect of milder forms of coercion in the form of imprisonment, chaining and the effects of isolation.⁹⁴ As will be shown in detail, the interrogation context in Niger was also marked by extreme duress, physical but also—through the threat of maltreatment—psychological. The written and oral sources show beyond doubt that it was very hard, even impossible, *not* to talk or respond to questions. Duress made it essential to, at least, *seem* to be giving information. Occasionally, Sawaba detainees tried to dodge questions, evade answers or plead ignorance, and while a few acts of bravery can be found (with some withstanding their tormenters), generally arrested cadres cracked sooner or later. Undoubtedly, the repetitive routines of the interrogations, in addition to the Sûreté's obsession with detail, helped to minimise the risk of factual error, especially in the questioning handled by the French security officers, who demonstrated higher standards of professionalism (though not necessarily less cruelty) than interrogators of the

out to be false. Airgram, Department of State, A-222, 26 March 1963; USNARA, II RG 59, POL 24-1, Niger, 2/1/63, Box 3997.

⁹³ G.H. Gudjonsson, *The Psychology of Interrogations and Confessions: A Handbook* (Chichester, 2003), 8-15.

⁹⁴ See E. Le Roy Ladurie, *Montailou: Village occitan de 1294 à 1324* (Paris, 1975), esp. the discussion entitled 'Avant-propos: De l'Inquisition à la ethnographie', 9-21.

regime's paramilitary arm. In the latter case, questioning was marked by random brutality that often led to wild confessions with little utility in establishing facts. Thus, as in the case of other types of documents, the interpretation of data obtained through interrogation requires careful analysis. Where no certainty or confirmation by other sources can be established, the narrative takes recourse to the conditional mode.

In the course of the research numerous interviews were held with survivors of the titanic clashes of the past, some of RDA persuasion, the majority Sawabists.⁹⁵ Effort was taken to effect an even spread in terms of regional origins,⁹⁶ as well as in terms of the functions or roles that the movement's members performed in the past, i.e. guerrilleros, students who went to Eastern Europe, domestic (party) cadres and union workers, cadres who had worked as announcers for Radio Peking, commandos who had been to communist China, North Vietnam or Algeria, and Sawabists who had acted as 'chef de camp' in Ghanaian training camps. Both grass-roots cadres and people high up in the party hierarchy were interviewed (sometimes more than once). Generally, however, middle-rank cadres are better represented.⁹⁷ Selection of eyewitnesses was partly purposive (prior knowledge about specific cadres led me to search them out), partly effected with the help of those already interviewed. All in all, over a hundred interviews were conducted.⁹⁸

As noted above, most interlocutors responded with enormous enthusiasm to my historical quest—the fact that I was the first scholar to take up their story had much to do with this. This raises the question of how reliable the data obtained in this context actually were. Are, for example, victims, especially traumatised ones, good witnesses? Here, in theory, history and memory can be at odds, although the social context of the scholar and interviewee engaged in conversation may produce a much larger number of pitfalls that have regularly been addressed in methodological debates.⁹⁹ One specific problem concerns the question of how inextricably

⁹⁵ While the RDA's perspective is important here, too, this imbalance does not impair the objectivity of the narrative, which focuses on the forgotten history of the Sawabist universe. General histories of Niger provide abundant treatment of the RDA.

⁹⁶ Though in this respect there remain lacunae. No Sawaba cadres in Maradi and Nguigmi, for example, were interviewed, although fieldwork extended from the far east in Bosso on Lake Chad to the far western town of Ayorou, on the border with Mali.

⁹⁷ About Djibo Bakary more has been written. His autobiography has also been published.

⁹⁸ See for further details on interviewees Annex 7.

⁹⁹ See for an introduction C.K. Adenaike and J. Vansina (eds), *In Pursuit of History: Fieldwork in Africa* (Portsmouth, NH, and Oxford, 1996), notably the prologue, xi–xliv.

the present is bound up with the past in the sense that reminiscences are affected (though one should add: not necessarily determined) by current or later circumstances and experiences.¹⁰⁰ In the fieldwork on Sawaba, hindsight regularly influenced presentations of the past, such as on the struggle for independence; on the vicissitudes of Sawaba's military exploits, notably the attempted onslaught on the regime in 1964-1965; and on the relationship between the movement's leadership and the middle and lower cadres, which was later to some extent spoiled by mutual recriminations and the difference in subsequent personal trajectories. The political squabbles in which cadres became embroiled in the 1990s and the difficulties encountered by the resurrected party produced background noise that occasionally affected interviews about the more distant past.

In all these cases an attempt was made to sift out the influence of hindsight and establish where oral data provided a reliable perspective on the past and where it did not (or was representative of more recent times). Generally, however, the extended period of fieldwork, made up of various trips between 2002-2011, was marked by relative political calm in Niger, and this positively affected the ease with which interlocutors produced their recollections, as well as the quality of the evidence as such. I was frequently astounded by the accuracy of the testimonies, especially concerning the details of stories, whose tiniest features were confirmed by, for example, SDECE reports stored in Vincennes that respondents could never have had access to. For example, some of the later clashes between Sawaba's forces and the regime that took place around the town of Malbaza in 1965 were recounted by a guerrilla, who at that moment in time was already in prison. Yet, in a report of French military intelligence I found the identical story relayed in its entirety.¹⁰¹ Similarly, the confrontation between commando leader Siddi Abdou and regime forces in the Ader region was recounted in an interview with a guerrillero who knew him but was active in a different zone. The essence of his story was confirmed by a report in France's military archives.¹⁰² It shows that surviving cadres, brought together in prison, talked with each other about what had happened, and undoubtedly the long years of incarceration, if nothing else, enabled them

¹⁰⁰ Schmidt, *Mobilizing the Masses*, 13. However, as noted above in the discussion about the dangers of anachronism, this problem affects all historiography, not just that based on oral sources.

¹⁰¹ Interview with Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003 and *Événements survenus en Afrique francophone pendant la semaine du 17 au 23 mai 1965*; SHAT, 10 T 210.

¹⁰² Interview with Soumana Idrissa, Gothèye, 18 Dec. 2009 and untitled document, n.d., 1964-1965; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2.

to maintain the memory of some of the clashes in which members of the movement had been involved. If ageing eyewitnesses at times showed they had forgotten the precise years in which these cataclysmic events took place, the exact course of infiltrations in which they had engaged, or the occurrence of incidents reported in archival records, overall the quality of Sawabists' recollections stood out. The oral culture in which they had been raised certainly had much to do with this. Of course, interviewees occasionally contradicted each other (though the opposite was more frequently the case)—for example, disputing the question whether the attempted assassination of the president was the act of a lone individual or the party leadership. Generally, however, it seems that the dramatic nature of their recollections assisted eyewitnesses in preserving a memory of these events—at least in their essence.¹⁰³

Naturally, the oral evidence must be interpreted with caution.¹⁰⁴ In all cases where testimonies appeared improbable or outlandish when set in the overall context, or where they could not be confirmed by other oral evidence or written data, the narrative employs the conditional mode. It is inevitable that several aspects of Sawaba's history remain unclear owing to contradictory sources or missing evidence. Efforts have been made to retrieve as many details as possible but in many cases events could not be reconstructed. As will be noted, the identity of specific individuals is occasionally problematic, because the historical evidence mixes them up with others or because different spellings of names or the use of pseudonyms by activists produced their own confusion.¹⁰⁵ This book, while attempting to resurrect the Sawaba universe, represents a certain stage in our knowl-

¹⁰³ Thus, in one case a torture ordeal to which a Sawabist had been subjected was relaid to me three times over a six-year period but remained consistent in its narrative. See ch. 14 below.

¹⁰⁴ For example, in the dynamic context of fieldwork, interviewees often have a tendency to put their own role at centre stage, something that may lead to an overestimation of their particular contribution or activity. For general discussion of fieldwork in history, see Adenaike and Vansina, *In Pursuit of History*.

¹⁰⁵ A note on orthography & reference: different spellings of personal names are sometimes given, depending on the sources. Efforts have been made to identify which names are alternatives for the same person and which different individuals were involved. The most widely accepted order in personal names is followed ('Djibo Bakary' instead of 'Bakary Djibo' etc.), as is the most widely accepted spelling of ethnic categories (Zarma for Djerma, Hausa for Haoussa, Songhay & Sonrhāi ([people & language])). In this historical study, modern rendering of Chinese names has been eschewed, hence Mao Tse-Tung (not Mao Zedong), Peking (not Beijing). However, spelling of Nigérien toponyms follows that of the 1:2000.000 map of Niger by the Institut Géographique National du Niger (even if some names have changed since the 1950s).

edge. Others can add to this narrative. Notably local circumstances that impinged on the rebellion or the role of certain personalities in the politics of particular towns in the 1950s and '60s are issues that can be elaborated upon.

This book is divided in three parts tied together by one central theme, i.e. the longing for and efforts undertaken by the Sawabist community and its adherents to achieve deliverance: first, from a general situation of domination and misery, in political, social and economic respects, marking Niger as a colony in the post-World War II era; then, when this deliverance appeared to have been realised in the form of the empowerment of the party of little folk but was lost again as result of the intervention of the metropole, by taking the long drawn-out preparatory steps to win back supremacy by violent means—only, finally, to result in a defeat that left Sawabists with nothing but the yearning for relief from the life in prison camps and, later still, the humiliating lack of recognition for their role in the struggles of the 1950s. Thus, the desire for deliverance—which formed the key element in the movement's ideology but in practice became a wish for deliverance from changing forms of malaise—constitutes the common thread running through this book.

Chapter 1 begins with a brief introduction to Nigérien society, as numerous general studies already exist on this subject, to which reference will be made (further necessary elements of social, cultural and economic contextualisation are given in the course of the book). The chapter then discusses the nature of the country's politics as this developed in the post-1945 period; the rise of the Sawabist movement and its role in the struggle for autonomy; and the complex manoeuvring ahead of its victory in the 1957 elections. The movement's ideological make-up is treated in outline (and further developed later on, in Part II, where the effects of Sawaba's changing fortunes on its ideology are discussed). Much of the analysis in the first chapter is based on secondary literature, yet research of primary sources that were so far not discussed¹⁰⁶ as well as data from interviews with Sawabists provide a new perspective on the *Zeitgeist*, activism and energies marking Nigérien politics during this era. Chapter 2 discusses the formation and functioning of the Sawaba-dominated government and the rivalry with chiefly interests and the 'évolué' cadres of the PPN-RDA, including the role of regional-ethnic factors, as well as that of the (private sector) unions that

¹⁰⁶ Even the seminal work of Djibo, *Les transformations*, has in this respect occasionally left interesting primary sources unstudied.

were so closely bound up with the movement (the role played by unions and union workers will come back regularly in the course of the book). Chapters 3-5 go into the complexities of inter-territorial politics that impinged on Niger and the consequences of the Algerian crisis, showing how this effected huge changes in the metropole and then in the politics of decolonisation, and how this led the movement of little folk and its Gaullist adversaries to embark on a collision course. The role of chiefs, RDA politicians and the French military in the toppling of the Sawaba government is analysed in detail.

Part II describes the development, across the national territory, of Sawaba's underground activism against the background of Niger's retarded accession to French-controlled independence and the repression of its cadres by the Franco-RDA governing combine—whose political mobilisation led to a rise in regional, rather than straightforward ethnic, rivalries (Chapters 6-7). The dissension within Sawabist ranks caused by worsening persecution is treated in Chapter 8, as are the failed attempts to achieve a rapprochement with the RDA regime. This formed the prelude to a complex set of developments abroad, which were closely interconnected and are therefore analysed in one special chapter: the build-up of a foreign network, the efforts to assist Sawabists to flee the country, the organisation of programmes for the nurturing of educated cadres that, one day, should resume government power, and the training of the guerrilla forces that should effect the RDA's downfall. In doing so, Chapter 9 provides a detailed perspective on Sawaba's diaspora politics, the studying and life of its cadres in the Eastern Bloc and the ideological and military aspects of the development of its guerrilla units.

Part III describes the evolution of guerrilla infiltrations in Niger's frontier zones; the build-up of support networks in Northern Nigeria, Dahomey, Mali and Algeria, and the complexities of the local politics that impinged on Sawaba's presence, as well as the regime responses to all this (Chapters 10-11). The development of the military confrontation, the renewed efforts to strike at the regime and the final defeat, followed by the arrest, incarceration and destruction of the Sawabist cadres are treated in Chapters 12-14. While it is the fascinating social activism underlying Sawaba that is the key to its historical import, this book ultimately focuses on the evolution of its guerrilla campaigns—not because the hostilities were significant from a military point of view but because they were to lead to the annihilation of the political community that Sawaba, as a social movement, had created.

The Epilogue addresses Sawaba's ultimate significance for the history of Niger, the history of African social activism and that of decolonisation in the French-dominated territories. For this purpose it will also, in a limited way, draw a comparison with the historical trajectories of Guinea and Chad. As said, however, this book was conceived as a much-needed salvaging operation and therefore focuses predominantly on the history of Sawaba in Niger as such. Yet it is hoped that the content of this monograph will feed into the insights that can be gained from more comparative studies of Africa's social movements, and their insurgencies.

PART I

DELIVERANCE,
CONQUERED AND LOST

CHAPTER ONE

THE RISE OF THE UDN, 1946–1957

World War II had substantial consequences for French rule in Africa. The defeat of France in 1940 and the bitter divisions between the 'Free French' of de Gaulle and those siding with 'Vichy', dealt a serious blow to French prestige. The fighting that took place in Africa, the involvement of thousands of African soldiers in numerous theatres of operation, and France's dependence on the Allied Powers for its own liberation all stimulated the political consciousness of those Africans who had misgivings about French colonialism.

This was also true in Niger, which during the war saw European personnel depart to take on more urgent tasks elsewhere but was itself subjected to a range of repressive measures from a colonial administration ruling firmly within the Vichy fold.¹ The weakening of France's position not only allowed some of Niger's chiefs to reinforce their status, severely jeopardised under colonial rule, but also encouraged an incipient nationalist awareness among the handful of Nigériens whose horizons had widened through the benefit of a modern education. Especially the later war years—1944 and 1945—were, in the words of one of these people, 'the years of the great illusions'.² They were inspired by the struggle of the United States against the racist Axis Powers, with black American soldiers fighting side by side with their white brothers, and the heroic struggle of the Soviet Union, as well as the actions of the Free French, who affirmed at a conference in Brazzaville (1944) that, once the war was over, Africa could expect colonial reform.³

One Nigérien who took note of these events was what his people then called a 'commis', i.e. someone who had been to a colonial school or had adopted the customs of white people—what the French condescendingly called an 'évolué'. His name was Djibo Bakary. Contrary to the great major-

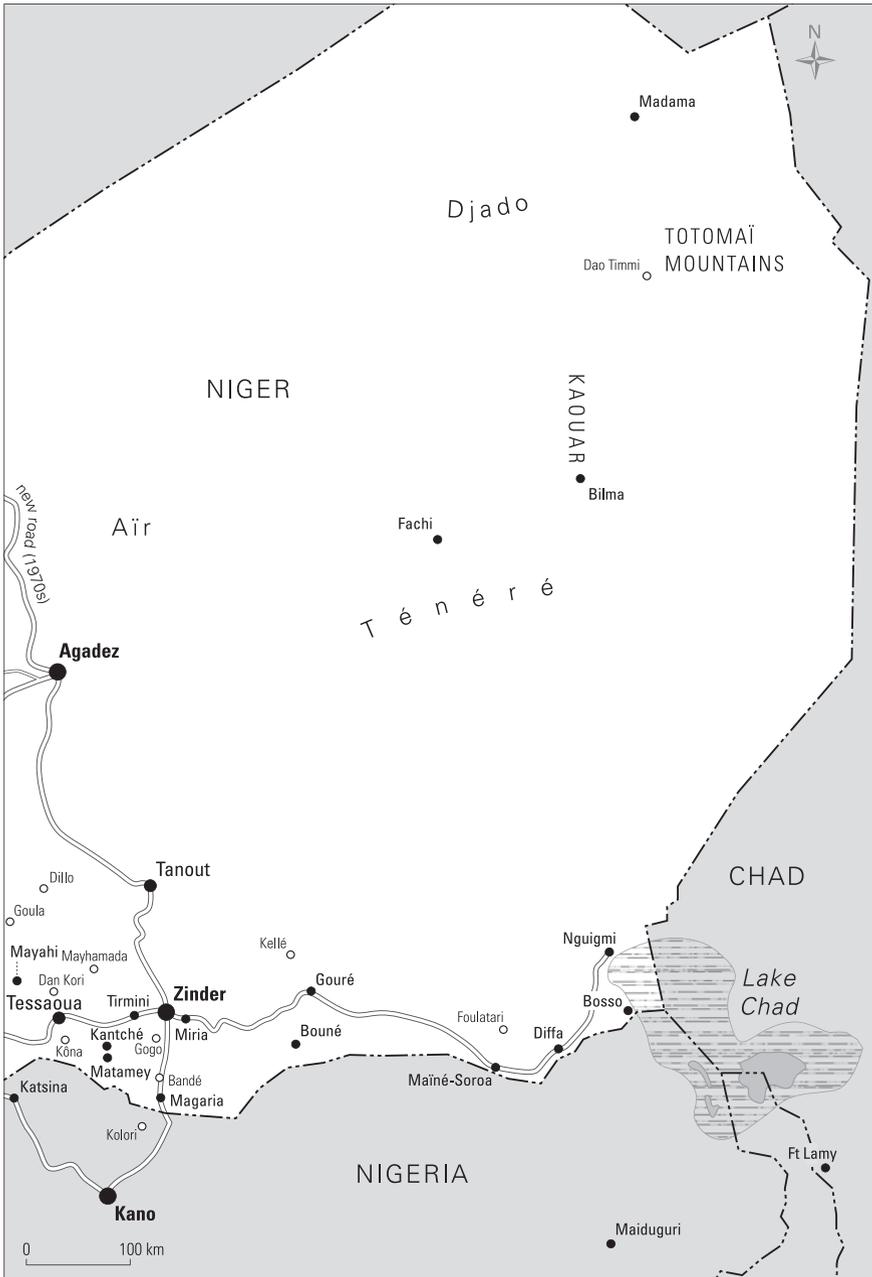
¹ M. Djibo, *Les transformations politiques au Niger à la veille de l'indépendance* (Paris, 2001), 45 and F. Fuglestad, 'UNIS and BNA: The Rôle of "Traditionalist" Parties in Niger, 1948-1960', *Journal of African History*, 16 (1975), 119.

² D. Bakary, *Silence! On décolonise: Itinéraire politique et syndical d'un militant africain* (Paris, 1992), 16 ('les années des grandes illusions').

³ *Ibid.*



Map 1.1 Niger.



ity of 'commis' from before the war,⁴ he did not hail from a princely family, i.e. a family of noble chieftains. He was a 'talaka' (pl. 'talakawa') or 'commoner', someone who in the traditionally status-oriented society of Niger was regarded as of 'low' rank. Yet, Bakary had been to French schools, in the central town of Tahoua and the capital Niamey, and like many other promising young men later enrolled in Niamey's 'Ecole Primaire Supérieure' (EPS), before moving on to the prestigious 'William Ponty' school in the Senegalese town of Sébikhotane. He thus became a true 'Pontin', someone who graduated from Ponty with a teacher certificate, returned home, and began to instruct youths in different schools in the country. At the time, only some 50 Nigériens had made it to Ponty or a similar educational centre.⁵

Niger was, in many respects, the Cinderella of France's federated possessions in West Africa—'Afrique Occidentale Française' (AOF). One of the poorest colonies in the Federation, barely two per cent of the population had received Western schooling by the end of the war, a figure that had climbed to just four per cent in 1960. In 1958, the country had only 546 pupils enrolled in secondary school—against more than five thousand in Senegal. In a population of roughly two and a half million, Niger had only 13,000 wage earners (1960),⁶ the majority of the working population engaging in agriculture (subsistence and commercial), animal husbandry or trade. Most wage earners were, moreover, unskilled workers, usually seasonal labour recruited for harvesting groundnuts, Niger's principal export crop. The permanent wage force stood at just 6,000,⁷ half of whom were immigrants from more developed AOF colonies, such as Dahomey (Benin), Senegal and Soudan (Mali).

'Commis' were, as their nickname suggested, usually employed in the colonial service or else in the French-dominated private sector. With the exception of teachers, the highest position that a Nigérien could attain was

⁴ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 43-44. Where 'commis' is used in connotation, it is given with quotation marks, if in the literal sense, it is rendered without.

⁵ Fuglestad, 'UNIS and BNA', 122; Djibo, 50, *Les transformations*; C. Maman, *Répertoire biographique des personnalités de la classe politique et des leaders d'opinion du Niger de 1945 à nos jours* (Niamey, 1999) vol. 2, 175. Though a chief's son, Bakary was of low birth. F. Fuglestad, *A History of Niger 1850-1960* (Cambridge, 1983), 161. Talaka means one has no power, that one can be given orders, and therefore can even include the chief's children. Interview Issa Younoussi, Niamey, 22 Febr. 2008.

⁶ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 47. F. Fuglestad, 'Djibo Bakary, the French, and the Referendum of 1958 in Niger', *Journal of African History*, 14 (1973), 316, gives a figure of 14,000 for 1956.

⁷ Figure for 1959. Djibo, *Les transformations*, 47.

that of 'commis expéditionnaire' or clerk, such as an administrative assistant, scribe or translator. Management positions demanded or were reserved for better-educated personnel from the metropole or for 'AOFiens', who in the assimilationist logic of French colonial rule did not hide their contempt for their Nigérien brothers. These, in turn, through their training, preferred to live in one of the country's few urban areas, in search of jobs and leaving behind the rural work their newly acquired skills had made them loathe.⁸

In this context of slowly shifting social hierarchies the 'commis' were in an ambivalent position. On the one hand, they were often the object of European contempt, with colonial officers despising their aspirations to higher status and considering them as potential 'troublemakers'. On the other hand, they were to some extent alienated from their original environment. The majority of 'commis', after World War II, came from the ranks of the talakawa, often from former enslaved families who continued to suffer from their low social status. They came especially from the Zarma- and Songhay-speaking areas in the west of Niger, which had suffered much from government-imposed taxation, forced labour and the uprooting effects of migration. Despite being commoners, however, in the eyes of the peasantry the 'commis' came one step closer, through their command of new skills, to the world of the seemingly omnipotent French.⁹ French administrators were themselves drawn predominantly from France's middle classes or its historical peripheries, such as Brittany and Corsica. Catapulted into positions of arbitrary power, they were regarded with fear by the population.¹⁰

While an overwhelming majority of the people lived in the rural areas, life in the countryside had undergone changes. The growth of groundnuts had made the central and eastern Hausa-speaking areas into the economic core of the colony, engendering regional sentiments that fed on their disproportionate share in the tax burden, the transfer of the colonial capital from the eastern city of Zinder to Niamey in the west (1926), and the preponderance of Zarmas and Songhays in modern education and, hence, the colonial administration. French education had made much less headway in the centre and east, where the great Hausa chiefs or 'Sarakuna' (sing. 'Sarkin'), though their power had been curtailed, still exerted considerable

⁸ Ibid., 47-48.

⁹ Fuglestad, 'UNIS and BNA', 121-124 and R.B. Charlick, *Niger: Personal Rule and Survival in the Sahel* (Boulder, San Francisco and London, 1991), 21.

¹⁰ Interview with Elhadj Illa Salifou, Niamey, 25 Nov. 2003.

influence over rural communities.¹¹ However, throughout Niger, the role of chiefs had changed drastically under colonial rule. Transformed into colonial civil servants during the 1920s, ‘canton’ and ‘village chiefs’ had compromised their position in the eyes of the population by the role they now played in tax collection, army and labour recruitment, the maintenance of compulsory grain reserves, and the abuses that went with these responsibilities.¹²

It was especially the ‘commis’, with their humble social backgrounds and modern skills that had brought them to the city, who had a potential conflict of interest with chiefly authority. The same was true for groups of rural folk who were placed lower on the social ladder but by their economic activities had broken the confines of village life. In part this played on older traditions of pre-colonial trade, which had brought people, especially in Hausaland, to the far corners of West Africa.¹³ With the onset of colonialism, however, commercial activity gained new dimensions as a result of technological innovations such as the motorcar and the telegraph, which together with the demands of modern administration brought into being entirely new professions and activities. Thus, various kinds of artisans, manufacturers, workers and an assortment of petty traders had flocked to Niger’s emergent urban agglomerations, which also provided work to all kinds of petty employees as domestics, office boys and keepers. They were called ‘petit peuple’ (small folk, little people)¹⁴ who, like most ‘commis’, belonged to the ranks of the talakawa and had a strong interest in social mobility—something they shared with slightly better placed, technologically more sophisticated workers such as drivers, mechanics, postal clerks and lower-placed administrative cadres (whose position drew nearer to that of the ‘commis’ proper). With new public investments after World War II, they developed into a semi-urban proletariat whose members retained close links with the rural areas, assuring a constant flow of goods and ideas between city and countryside.

Consequently, the interests of the ‘petit peuple’ and related strata were, like those of the ‘commis’, at variance with a chiefly class¹⁵ whose power depended essentially on a rural status quo and the benevolence of an alien

¹¹ Fuglestad, ‘UNIS and BNA’, 125.

¹² Djibo, *Les transformations*, 45. Government granaries were unpopular because of the top-down approach with which they were introduced and the lack of control peasants exercised over their maintenance. A. Salifou, *Le Niger* (Paris, 2002), 138–143.

¹³ See P.E. Lovejoy, *Caravans of Kola: The Hausa Kola Trade, 1700–1900* (Zaria, 1980).

¹⁴ Fuglestad, *History of Niger*, 171, 181; Bakary, *Silence!*, 76, 126, 137–8, 145, 152, 158.

¹⁵ Charlick, *Niger*, 48.

master. Both these new social groups constituted a small minority in underdeveloped and barely urbanised Niger.¹⁶ Yet, they were present in nearly all regions with major urban centres—the west, harbouring the capital, as well as the centre and east, which not only formed the colony's economic core but also possessed relatively new urban concentrations like Maradi and Tahoua, besides the old city of Zinder. The presence of these horizontally structured groups, which were often cross-ethnic in composition, to some extent counter-balanced the regionalist undercurrents in Nigérien society. This cautious social evolution naturally created its own malcontents—the 'petit peuple' (but also many 'commis') were, at least potentially, 'social climbers', i.e. people who attempted or managed to improve their actual social status (hence, the term 'social climbers' is used in this book as a sociological phenomenon or category, not in a pejorative sense).

Niger, however, was a harsh place, and not just for its climate, characterised by insufficient rainfall and scorching heat. The Nigérien territory was ruled by the French military until 1922, the stern desert surroundings of the eastern oasis town of Bilma, close to the border with Chad, serving as the classical penal colony to which recalcitrants could be sent. Colonisation had taken place through military and very violent¹⁷ conquest and the maintenance of French rule depended up to the 1930s on the occasional use of military force against attempted uprisings.¹⁸ A hardly less brutal form of civilian rule succeeded and used the 'indigénat', a special legal regime for France's African 'subjects', to maintain control, summarily punish the disobedient and ensure implementation of forced labour projects. Especially in western Niger these were the years of 'pottol', a popular term derived from the French word 'portage' (carriage), symbolising the suffering during the era of forced labour.¹⁹

The eradication of forced labour and the indigénat in 1946 was part of a general overhaul of the French colonial empire in the wake of World War

¹⁶ By 1960 just 5 per cent of the population lived in towns. Charlick, *Niger*, 23. In 1955 Niamey had 15,000 inhabitants (but this had doubled since 1945), Maradi 10,000 and Zinder 13,000. Fuglestad, *History of Niger*, 171, who estimates the urban proletariat at less than 1 per cent of the population.

¹⁷ See esp. J. Suret-Canale, *Afrique noire occidentale et centrale, vol. 1: géographie, civilisations, histoire* (Paris, 1958), 239-269.

¹⁸ F.e. K. Idrissa, 'The Kawousan War Reconsidered', in J. Abbink, M. de Bruijn and K. van Walraven (eds), *Rethinking Resistance: Revolt and Violence in African History* (Leiden and Boston, 2003), ch. 8.

¹⁹ C. Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA et la décolonisation du Niger 1946-1960* (Paris, 1995), 24 and Djibo, *Les transformations*, 40-41 and 48.

II. However, in Niger this did not have much effect on the style of colonial rule, embodied by Governor Jean Toby, the only Vichyst allowed to continue as colonial governor. Toby, a Breton who had also served as an administrator in Niger's remote countryside, was a tough officer entertaining old-fashioned ideas about the practice of colonial rule. In his ethnicised conception of Niger, the country's chieftaincies were transformed into a full-scale system of government, with chiefs' positions, despite their compromised status, strengthened by a number of measures, such as salary increases, the introduction of allowances and the creation in 1948 of an 'Association des Chefs Traditionnels du Niger'. Moreover, in spite of the greater political freedom allowed under the colonial reforms of 1946, Toby did not hesitate to interfere in politics, openly supporting the chiefs, taking sides in the emergent post-war nationalist scene, harassing the 'commis' and manipulating electoral contests.²⁰ Nevertheless, his gubernatorial reign, which was to continue until 1954, was out of tune with the times, both in Niger and metropolitan circles. Both 'commis' and the small rural folk who were staking out a new economic life for themselves, were to clash head-on with the country's privileged chiefs. In the process, they were also to find the colonial administration in their way.

Niger's First Political Party

By the end of the Second World War there was, therefore, sufficient grounds for political agitation.²¹ Just a few months after the Brazzaville conference (January 1944), which announced major colonial reforms, a group of 'commis' secretly met on an island of the Niger River in the capital to discuss the country's future. They founded an association called 'Group of the Second Brazzaville Conference'.²² It began its political life not only by circulating tracts denouncing the colonial governor but also by barring all 'foreigners' (i.e. AOFiens) from leadership positions. The group, which typically represented the interests of Nigérien 'commis', elected Boubou

²⁰ Fuglestad, *History of Niger*, 158-160; *Ibid.*, 'UNIS and BNA', *passim*; and Djibo, *Les transformations*, 45-46. Even Fuglestad, an historian apologetic about the French role in Niger and with revisionist ideas about the last period of French colonial rule, admitted such electoral malpractices took place.

²¹ The best general account of post-war politics in Niger is the excellent analysis (though a bit liberal with chronology) by Djibo, *Les transformations*.

²² Djibo, *Les transformations*, 49. Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 31, referred to it as 'Amicale des fonctionnaires' ('Groupe de la 2è Conférence de Brazzaville').

Hama as chairman. Hama was a Songhay, but of low birth,²³ who was educated at Ponty and worked as a teacher. A volatile character, he fell out publicly with Governor Toby during the latter's visit to the EPS in Niamey where Hama taught. This would have led to his obligatory transfer to a school in Dori,²⁴ although several other 'commis' were also confronted with forced relocations that were often inspired by the administration's wish to neutralise unwanted political activity in the capital. Being civil servants, 'commis' were always vulnerable to such forms of government retaliation, masked as the normal workings of administrative rotation. Thus, Djibo Bakary was sent off to the ancient town of Agadez, in the Aïr region at the southern end of the trans-Saharan caravan trail. Another leader of the 'commis' political group, Hamani Diori, was posted to a school in Filingué, 180 km north of Niamey. Diori, a Zarma and distant relative of Djibo Bakary,²⁵ was also a teacher, who, before going to Ponty, had studied in Niger under Boubou Hama, which was to be the beginning of a long political friendship between both men.²⁶

The main effect of these transfers was that these three men were absent when 'commis' in Niamey established a formal political party, the 'Parti Progressiste Nigérien' (PPN) in May 1946. For despite the administration's desire to keep Nigérien politics within the controlled cadre of a perverted chieftaincy, political evolution went ahead inexorably. Metropolitan France, in coming to grips with the end of the German occupation, had embarked on a laborious process of establishing a Fourth Republic. This required the election, twice, of constituent assemblies (the first constitution being rejected in a referendum), in which a limited number of colonial people were allowed to take part, in October 1945 and June 1946 respectively. The outcome was the adoption of a French constitution that transformed the empire into an integral part of an 'Union Française' made up of the French Republic and the colonies, renamed 'Territoires d'Outre-Mer'.

From now on, Nigériens were no longer subjects but 'citizens', liberated from forced labour and the indigénat though endowed with a limited franchise and voting powers devalued by the existence of a double electoral

²³ A biography in S. Decalo, *Historical Dictionary of Niger* (Metuchen, NJ, & London, 1979), 115-116.

²⁴ Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 32. The region of Dori was then part of Niger. Early in 1948, with the reconstituting of the colony of Upper Volta, it was made part of Voltan territory.

²⁵ See for the nature of these blood ties, Salifou, *Le Niger*, 155-156. For a biography, see A. Salifou, *Biographie politique de Diori Hamani: Premier président de la république du Niger* (Paris, 2010).

²⁶ Decalo, *Historical Dictionary*, 90.

college. This restricted African electorate chose, together with an over-represented European minority, a colonial assembly called ‘Conseil Général’. These reforms went a limited way in recognising the indivisible logic and equality of Jacobine tradition but were abhorred by many in Niger’s colonial administration. In Nigérien society they constituted, in essence, a victory for the ‘commis’, who with their literacy and fluency in French were allowed to vote—to the detriment especially of the chiefs. With the powers of summary justice no longer in the hands of colonial administrators, the equality of the ‘commis’ had been achieved.²⁷

Yet, with a rather impotent colonial assembly, absent local councils, and administrators unwilling to play by the book, this was a largely theoretical equality that the ‘commis’ had to consummate. The formation of the PPN, Niger’s first modern political party, was triggered by the advent of the plebiscite for the second constituent assembly in France, in June 1946. With African representation an essential part of the new reforms, and hence of political competition, a bewildered administration, whose governor was on leave, had no choice but to recognise the new formation.²⁸ Among the principal figures present at the PPN’s establishment were Issoufou Saidou Djermakoye, a man somewhat unrepresentative of the ‘commis’ as he had been educated in France and was the scion of a noble family of chiefs—the Djermakoyes of Dosso²⁹—with good ties with the French;³⁰ Djibo Yacouba, Ponty-educated and teacher from the Téra region in western Niger;³¹ Léopold Kaziendé, friend of Hamani Diori and also a Pontin with teaching experience throughout Niger, but with a Catholic Mossi background from Upper Volta;³² Courmo Barcourgné, a Pontin and class mate of Diori from the town of Say, to the south of Niamey;³³ Adamou Mayaki, educated at a

²⁷ See Fuglestad, *History of Niger*, 147-152, who is generally stronger on the French role in Nigérien politics than the Nigérien dimension.

²⁸ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 49 and Fuglestad, *History of Niger*, 155.

²⁹ ‘Koy’ is the title of a Zarma chief. The koyes of Dosso, some 140 km east of Niamey, became supreme among other Zarma chiefs during colonial rule, when koyes were assimilated to ‘chefs de canton’. J.P. Rothot, *L’ascension d’un chef africain au début de la colonisation: Aouta le conquérant (Dosso-Niger)* (Paris, 1998) and Djibo, *Les transformations*, 36 n. 3.

³⁰ Decalo, *Historical Dictionary*, 95; Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, vol. 1, 245-246; Fuglestad, *History of Niger*, 154.

³¹ Decalo, *Historical Dictionary*, 93-94 and Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, vol. 1, 408.

³² Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 34 and Decalo, *Historical Dictionary*, 136. Also the memoirs of L. Kaziendé, *Souvenirs d’un enfant de la colonisation* (Porto Novo, 1998), vol. 4, 48 ff.

³³ Decalo, *Historical Dictionary*, 76, claims he was Zarma. Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 36 says he was Peul (the term used for people of Fula[ni] origin in Niger and elsewhere in francophone Africa).

less prestigious college in French Soudan and belonging to a family of chiefs from a Hausa subgroup around the town of Filingué in western Niger;³⁴ and Diamballa Yansambou Maïga, a simple clerk in the colonial administration with a rudimentary education but from a family of Songhay chiefs, and an aggressive and intimidating personality.³⁵

That this group included people with chiefly backgrounds is not surprising, because the colonial administration had always encouraged chiefs to have their sons educated. Belonging to a chiefly family did not ensure one's election to the chieftaincy in view of rival claims and colonial interference. This could easily engender hostility to incumbent chiefs and feuds that had a tendency to merge with wider political issues. The involvement of Issoufou Djermakoye, who was made chairman, was itself the result of a compromise as he had had plans for a political party himself but was forced to give it up in order to achieve a workable settlement with the local 'commis'. He was subsequently sidelined over the candidature to the French constituent assembly.³⁶ Other striking aspects of the PPN's formative background were, besides its 'commis' and teachers' bias, the over-representation of Zarma- and Songhay-speaking people from Niger's western regions and the role played by the circle around Hamani Diori.

The party's programme stipulated, in moderate language,³⁷ the elaboration of a policy that would recognise 'African originality' ('l'originalité africaine'), reject what was deemed 'false assimilation' ('fausse assimilation') in the French Union, encourage development and fight colonialism. The three principal leaders who had been absent were quickly informed of the party's formation. All three established local cells of the party in the towns in which they lived—Diori in Filingué, Hama in Dori and Djibo Bakary in Agadez. While Courmo Barcourgné was made secretary-general, Diamballa Maïga was charged with party propaganda. It was Boubou Hama, however, who rapidly became the party's main ideologue.³⁸ The PPN began to agitate against both the chiefs and colonial administration, though never against France as such. It systematically exploited the abuses of

³⁴ Decalo, *Historical Dictionary*, 161; Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, vol. 1, 336-337; Fuglestad, 'UNIS and BNA', 128.

³⁵ Decalo, *Historical Dictionary*, 152-153. Maïga is the title of Songhay chiefs claiming descent from the rulers of the Songhay empire, Askia Mohamed. Djibo, *Les transformations*, 211 n. 3.

³⁶ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 49 and Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 36.

³⁷ As recounted by Adamou Mayaki, in A. Talba, *Une contribution à l'étude des partis politiques nigériens: Le témoignage de Adamou Mayaki* (Bordeaux, 1984), 22-23.

³⁸ Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 38-39.

chiefs and tried to destroy the prestige of administrators, leading to an exacerbation of local conflicts, such as between chiefs and pretenders, former slaves and masters, Peul nomads and sedentary Zarma/Songhay, landowners and tenants.³⁹

An important issue that the PPN⁴⁰ had to confront was its participation in the wider politics of AOF. While anti-AOFien sentiment had so far been curbed, as can be gleaned from Léopold Kaziendé's role in the party, many PPN leaders feared that, like Niger's interests in the colonial Federation, the impact of the PPN in a federal party made up of groups from different AOF territories would be inconsequential. Nevertheless, under the influence of the federal-minded Pontins, the party sent a delegation to a conference in Bamako, Soudan, which in October 1946 discussed the formation of a grand, inter-territorial party. With the exception of a reticent Issoufou Djermakoye, the Nigérien delegates, among whom were Boubou Hama, Diamballa Maïga, and the AOFien and postal worker Tiémoko Coulibaly, participated enthusiastically in the conference's deliberations. These led to the establishment of the inter-territorial 'Rassemblement Démocratique Africain' (RDA), presided over by the Ivorian Houphouët-Boigny. Its manifesto pleaded the liberty of peoples and equality of races, rejected the reality of autocracy behind the mask of colonial assimilation, and criticised the concept of 'autonomy' (as ingrained in the colonial reforms) though proclaiming its adhesion to the French Union.⁴¹ The PPN's formal affiliation to the RDA was achieved a year later at the insistence of federal enthusiasts. These included Djibo Bakary.⁴²

The reserve of Issoufou Djermakoye, who left what was now known officially as the 'PPN-RDA', was in part related to the fact that RDA representatives in Paris had associated with the French communists rather than the French socialist party, 'SFIO',⁴³ with which he sympathised. RDA association with the communists had much to do with the latter's anti-colonial stance, the support given by communist parliamentarians to their RDA colleagues and the participation of the PCF, or 'Parti Communiste Français', in the French government, through which the RDA hoped to gain conces-

³⁹ Fuglestad, *History of Niger*, 157-158.

⁴⁰ For the most detailed (though rather) factual account of the PPN's history, see Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*.

⁴¹ Text in G. Lisette (a participant), *Le combat du Rassemblement Démocratique Africain pour la décolonisation pacifique de l'Afrique Noire* (Paris and Dakar, 1983), 26-28.

⁴² Fuglestad, *History of Niger*, 155; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 45-48, 55; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 50.

⁴³ 'Section française de l'Internationale ouvrière'.

sions. However, when the PCF was excluded from the metropolitan government in May 1947 and henceforth treated as a threat to the Fourth Republic,⁴⁴ its political allies in Africa became, in effect, outlaws. The PPN-RDA thus called down the double wrath of the French, since Governor Toby had lost little time in lashing out against the party that attacked the foundations of his reign. In the first elections for the new colonial assembly (December 1946–January 1947) he had interfered openly in the campaign, telling the chiefs, in their native tongue, to combat the RDA's candidate, thereby limiting the party's success, notably in the east where the colonial administration still exerted considerable influence through the chiefs or Sarakuna. The governor also encouraged a number of chiefs, some of them near illiterates, to run for office and thus managed to have several docile supporters elected to the colonial assembly.⁴⁵

Some of the RDA's leaders, however, were not that easily cowed. At the initiative of Djibo Bakary, the party sent a petition to France's colonial minister during his visit to Niger in January 1948. It openly dubbed Toby a Vichyst, denounced his intervention in the elections for the colonial assembly, pointing to the administration's duty to maintain neutrality towards local politics, and called for the governor's replacement.⁴⁶ Under the circumstances this was a brave thing to do,⁴⁷ because the French had no qualms in hitting back against what was essentially the exercise of a democratic right. Toby's retaliation was to come quickly. Since Niger was provided that year with a second seat in the 'Assemblée Nationale',⁴⁸ the metropolitan parliament in Paris, the PPN-RDA had to decide on an electoral candidate for this post. In the internal struggle that ensued over the party's candidature, several members would have made clear their preference for someone from the east.⁴⁹ Niger's first seat in Paris was occupied

⁴⁴ Fuglestad, *History of Niger*, 157.

⁴⁵ Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 73 and Fuglestad, *History of Niger*, 156.

⁴⁶ See for its text Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, annex 5.

⁴⁷ And hence not a 'puerile' act as deemed by Fuglestad (*History of Niger*, 160), who in his apology of the French failed to take into account the resentment among 'commis' caused by the administration's behaviour. The fact that the colonial minister had contemplated Toby's replacement and then changed his mind does not change this.

⁴⁸ The general politics of the elections to the metropolitan assemblies is not treated here as it was dealt with extensively elsewhere. See J.R. de Benoist, *l'Afrique Occidentale Française de la conférence de Brazzaville (1944) à l'indépendance (1960)* (Paris, 1982) and E. Mortimer, *France and the Africans 1944-1960: A Political History* (London, 1969).

⁴⁹ The exact circumstances of the RDA's candidature are difficult to reconstruct because of conflicting evidence. See Fuglestad, *History of Niger*, 161 (based on unidentified interviews) and Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 79 (based on a retrospective PPN-RDA publication.) Bakary, in his autobiography (*Silence!*), remained silent on this.

by Hamani Diori, who hailed from the west of the country, which was already over-represented in the party. Potential contenders would have been Adamou Mayaki and Georges Condat, the latter from Maradi. However, Mayaki, though Hausa, came from the west and Condat was too gentle a character and of mixed blood (French, Peul), which in the racial context of colonial politics was a disadvantage. The party would then have decided to advance the candidacy of Djibo Bakary. However, while Bakary was raised in Tahoua and spoke Hausa, he was himself Zarma and from the party's radical wing.⁵⁰ Whatever the background to this decision, Bakary's nomination encouraged latent resentment among eastern members, some of whom immediately left the party.⁵¹

Others, like Condat and Harou Kouka, a Zinderois of Mossi origin, wanted to establish a party that would represent 'eastern' interests.⁵² This would have become the 'Parti Indépendant du Niger-Est' (PINE), but it would have been at that moment that Toby intervened, ostensibly to prevent the formation of a regional group. Whether or not this was true and the governor began to act only when the regional split in the RDA became apparent, he did get in touch with disgruntled party members, among whom was Issoufou Djermakoye, and had the most important eastern chiefs come to Niamey to counsel them on the establishment of a rival party with national appeal. A constitutive conference held in Maradi in May 1948 thus led to the formation of the 'Union Nigérienne des Indépendants et Sympathisants' (UNIS), which agreed on the meaningless objective of 'determining common political, economic and social interests'.⁵³ UNIS brought together chiefs who had endured the RDA's attacks and disgruntled politicians like Issoufou Djermakoye, although others, such as Harou Kouka, did not join because of disapproval over the governor's intervention. Condat was advanced as the UNIS candidate for the metropolitan parliament.⁵⁴

The government vigorously intervened in the election process. By that time it had begun reassigning the near totality of the RDA's leadership to

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 79.

⁵² Interview with Georges Condat, Niamey, 27 Nov. 2003. Both were lifelong friends, based on a shared regional background. Interview with Harou Kouka, Niamey, 26 Nov. 2003.

⁵³ 'déterminer les intérêts communs (politiques, économiques et sociaux)', as laid down in statutes that would have been drawn up in the governor's cabinet. See Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 77-78.

⁵⁴ Adamou Mayaki joined later. Fuglestad, *History of Niger*, 161; Ibid., 'UNIS and BNA'; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 77-80; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 5; Talba, *Une contribution*, 46; Bakary, *Silence!*, 85.

administrative positions in distant places, in Niger and other AOF territories,⁵⁵ for lack of discipline, bad service or other trumped-up charges. This continued the patterns of administrative harassment that had accompanied Toby's interference in politics ever since the PPN's formation and the exclusion of the PCF from the French government. If Toby himself needed an excuse to pursue his enemy 'subjects', in the mind of French bureaucracy the Cold War provided additional reason to pursue those who were deemed a threat to the French state. France's national archives are testimony to the obsession that its securocrats had with all individuals and organisations, in France and Africa, that were considered communist, as well as to the legitimacy attributed to their surveillance and persecution.⁵⁶ In Niger this meant that all those who were more or less associated with the communists, i.e. people from the RDA, were considered fair game. Consequently, besides forced relocations RDA members were subjected to suspension, dismissal or imprisonment.⁵⁷ While this badly shook the RDA's campaign for Bakary, chiefs dressed in blue 'boubous' (the traditional robe) in allusion to the UNIS colour, drove around in official cars and campaigned openly for the UNIS candidate. In addition, there is clear indication, even through retrospective admission of officials,⁵⁸ that the administration manipulated the results, through pressure on voters and tampering with the count. With some genuine support in the east, Condat thus defeated Djibo Bakary easily, taking a good 70 per cent of the vote. Bakary, however, succeeded in gaining half the vote in the country's urbanised zones (Maradi, Zinder and Niamey) besides a majority in the western 'Subdivisions' (districts) of Say and Filingué.⁵⁹

What was more important, however, was that the 1948 election showed that the French were able and willing, if they considered this to be in their interest, to fix electoral contests as they saw fit.⁶⁰ In doing so, they also harked back to old metropolitan traditions of electoral manipulation,⁶¹ as exemplified by the decision of the French parliament to validate Condat's

⁵⁵ Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 76 and 88-89; Fuglestad, *History of Niger*, 160-161; Bakary, *Silence!*, 56.

⁵⁶ A typical Cold War file showing how the PCF and related institutions in Europe and Africa were being watched is CAOM, Cart.2246. See also Fuglestad, 'UNIS and BNA', 129.

⁵⁷ People who were sentenced in this way included Diamballa Maïga, the party's propagandist, and Courmo Barcourgné, the secretary-general. Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 87-88.

⁵⁸ Fuglestad, 'UNIS and BNA', 129.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 82.

⁶¹ See A. Garrigou, *Le vote et la vertu: Comment les Français sont devenus électeurs* (Paris, 1992) and J.P. Charnay, *Les scrutins politiques en France de 1815 à 1962* (Paris, 1964).

victory. For the PPN-RDA, moreover, this was a mere signal of what was to come. Early in 1950 Ignace Colombani, the interim governor, used violent incidents in Côte d'Ivoire to ban all RDA meetings in Niger. This was accompanied by the arrest of hundreds of RDA militants, police raiding offices and confiscating membership lists,⁶² chiefs persecuting party members, a steady emptying of party coffers and numerous defections. With each new election, and fresh intimidation, the party began to lose ground to UNIS until, by late 1953, it had no official representatives left. While having little support in the west, the party became virtually non-existent east of the town of Dogondoutchi. In effect, as of 1951 Niger's first political party had become a party without voters.⁶³

Djibo Bakary and the PPN-RDA

The petition in which the PPN-RDA had boldly called for Toby's replacement, early in 1948, had been drawn up under the auspices of Bakary, who also forced Toby's substitute into a humiliating re-issue of the ban on RDA meetings by appealing to the French Council of State over a legal technicality.⁶⁴ It demonstrated the courage and intelligence of a talaka who, when transferred to Agadez at the end of World War II, had begun to speak out against the abuses of colonial administrators. As 'secretary-general' of a local 'groupe d'action politique',⁶⁵ Bakary agitated against the continuance of forced labour, the compulsory preparation by women of food for the military and penal camps, and the practice of corporal punishment, targeting in particular a Corsican military, sub-lieutenant ('adjudant-chef') Scarbonchi, whose actions had attracted the opprobrium of the local population.

His political consciousness had, according to Bakary himself,⁶⁶ begun early in life. He was born in the village of Soudouré near Niamey in 1922 as the son of a local chief. At the age of seven, he was taken by his uncle to the city of Tahoua in the centre of Niger, where the latter served as a translator. Bakary, a diligent boy by all accounts, was enrolled in primary school

⁶² See f.e. Photocopie de listes d'Africains trouvés lors des dernières perquisitions dans les différents locaux du P.C. Pour exploitation locale éventuelle, 3 July 1952, 15; CAOM, Cart.2246/B3.

⁶³ Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, ch. 6; Fuglestad, 'UNIS and BNA', 130; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 51-52; and Talba, *Une contribution*, 73.

⁶⁴ Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 76 and 94.

⁶⁵ Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, vol. 2, 175.

⁶⁶ See his autobiography *Silence!*.

and learned Hausa before returning to Niamey. It was there, while studying at the EPS, that he had one of his earliest confrontations with the realities of colonialism. Walking in the streets of the capital, he ran into his father, who was chief of Soudouré and nearly 60 years old, busy breaking rocks for the repair of a local road. The sight of his father, although a chief, press-ganged like a criminal into heavy physical labour,⁶⁷ painfully demonstrated how the indigénat violated Niger's deep-seated rules of respect for seniority and traditional authority.

Being a clever boy, Bakary passed the entrance exam for Ponty, studying there for three years (1938-1941) during which he became a scouting enthusiast. It was Bakary who introduced scouting to Niger, indicating his interest in activism and a network of connections⁶⁸ that multiplied in the course of transfers to other teaching positions. Having taught in Niamey and Birnin Konni in central Niger, he came to Agadez, where he fell under the influence of a local marabout (religious leader), 'Papa' Sidi Kâ, a man of Senegalese origin endowed with a broad horizon, preaching a message of love and the solidarity of men. His agitation quickly led Bakary into trouble with French officials, who decided to reassign him to a school in Zinder for the year 1946-47. This led to a protest march organised by Sidi Kâ to the office of the 'Commandant de Cercle' (the provincial governor). Fellow activists, among whom was the Togolese Joseph Akouété—then an operator at Radio Niamey known for his insubordination to white superiors—sent a telegram to Toby asking for the annulment of Bakary's transfer. This was in vain, and Bakary made his way to the regional school of Zinder, where he established a section of the PPN and organised members of the local 'Gardes (de) Cercle'—the paramilitary force of the colonial administration.⁶⁹

An enthusiastic and dynamic organiser, Djibo Bakary built up his influence. When he visited Niamey for family reasons in September 1947,⁷⁰ he and other party militants successfully pleaded for affiliation to the RDA⁷¹

⁶⁷ Bakary, *Silence!*, 22-23; interview with Abdramane Adamou (son of Bakary's younger brother), Soudouré, 27 Febr. 2008; J.R. de Benoist, 'Du parti progressiste nigérien au *Sawaba*: Djibo Bakary parle', *Politique Africaine*, June 1990, no. 38, 98.

⁶⁸ For the importance of Bakary's socialisation through scouting, see the preface to his autobiography, *Silence!*, by N'Diaye Abdoulaye. His scouting group was called, ironically, 'Troupe Monteil', after a French captain who had led one of the first military missions into Niger at the end of the 19th century.

⁶⁹ Bakary, *Silence!*, 26-28, 72-75; Benoist, 'Djibo Bakary parle', 100; file Akouété ANN, 86 MI 1 C 1.2.

⁷⁰ Benoist, 'Djibo Bakary parle', 101.

⁷¹ Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 55. Based on the testimony of Bakary.

at a meeting from which some important party members were absent, including Hamani Diori, Boubou Hama and Diamballa Maïga. In addition, Courmo Barcourné ceded his position as secretary-general to Bakary, who thus became the PPN's principal official.⁷² Political mobilisation now began in earnest. Having obtained unpaid leave from his Zinder post, Bakary tried to reinforce the party. Its internal organisation had borrowed from the practice of communist parties. A 'comité directeur' of 34 people representing the various regions delegated its power to a central committee and a 'bureau politique' of five that included the secretary-general, whose key position was ensured through the principle of democratic centralism.⁷³ In theory, the party possessed geographical representation throughout the country, modelled on administrative organisation, down to village and neighbourhood level (i.e. 'comités de canton', 'comités de village' and 'comités de quartier'). The problem, however, was that grass-roots mobilisation was severely hindered by administrative harassment and interference by the chiefs.⁷⁴ Yet, undaunted, Bakary set to work. Having foregone his right to a salary, Bakary was given money levied from Diori's parliamentary proceeds. He made numerous tours by car, together with other important leaders such as Diori and Boubou Hama, to enhance the visibility of the party in the country. Lower-placed party workers travelled on foot, with pack-animal or by 'pirogue' (canoe), to visit villages, collect complaints about chiefs or administrators and incite people to join up and contribute money. At the central level, in Niamey, the party office was put on a permanent footing, modelled on that organised by Bakary in Zinder, where he had benefited from the support of local marabouts.⁷⁵

These Muslim clerics, as well as traditional religious leaders, played a profound—spiritual—role in political agitation. The marabout or 'mal(l)am' (from the Hausa 'malami', meaning learned person, scholar or teacher) was recognised for his Islamic knowledge, devotion and often mystical powers. In contrast to the chiefs, who had to greater or lesser extents been compromised by their administrative, hence non-religious roles, it was this Muslim cleric who could more easily persuade people to support a particular party, with prayer time an ideal occasion for mobilisa-

⁷² Ibid., 55-56.

⁷³ Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 57-58 and Bakary, *Silence!*, 52. According to Bakary's autobiography (*Silence!*, 52), the PPN had been modelled on the 'Parti Progressiste Soudanais' (PSP) of Soudan, with which Niger for a while shared its metropolitan representation. But this may refer especially to its name.

⁷⁴ Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 57 and Bakary, *Silence!*, 78-79.

⁷⁵ Bakary, *Silence!*, ch. 6.

tion. Moreover, adherents of specific Islamic Sufi orders, such as the ‘Tijaniya’, usually occupied a marginal position in society themselves, combining a broad, universal horizon with a spiritual authority that competed with existing chiefly powers. Hence, they were themselves, like the small itinerant traders whose interests depended on a high degree of socio-economic mobility, receptive to nationalist agitation. Offshoots of the Tijaniya, such as the ‘Hamallist’ order, preached a strongly individualistic doctrine that opposed all forms of worldly authority and per force resisted the colonial order. The fact that the colonial power represented the infidel ‘Nasara’—man of Nazareth, i.e. Christian—reinforced this penchant, as did the proximity of North Africa and Northern Nigeria, from where Islamic propaganda penetrated the country. In turn, political leaders were themselves, as witnessed by Bakary’s connections with Papa Sidi Kâ, sensitive to the occult powers of marabouts, who could pray for their careers, protect them from harassment, and create misery for their opponents.⁷⁶

Besides mobilising the support of religious leaders Bakary also tried to reinvigorate the ‘samariya’, suppressed under the French. The samariya, meaning ‘youth’ in Hausa, represented a traditional youth association where boys and girls were separately organised in quasi-age groups for recreational events or collective work to the benefit of the village. Possibly a left-over from a period in which lineage and clan organisation was important, the samariyas were in pre-colonial days most developed among Hausa and Peul communities. Introduced into Zarma and Songhay country, the PPN-RDA hoped to integrate these groups in the party fold and reorient their function to political mobilisation.⁷⁷

Thus, with the help of the ‘sarkin samari’, or youth leader, and of marabouts, Bakary attempted to wrest the peasant population from the stranglehold of the chiefs—i.e. the administration. As a consequence, by the late 1940s RDA sections were established in several towns, and the party probably gained several thousand members.⁷⁸ Besides mobilising various indigenous channels of support, Bakary used his inter-territorial connections to put pressure on the colonial authorities. He and other party members began to write articles in a newspaper called *Réveil*, published by a

⁷⁶ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 46; Charlick, *Niger*, 21 and 48; and Fuglestad, *History of Niger*, 131.

⁷⁷ Charlick, *Niger*, 14; Decalo, *Historical Dictionary*, 198; H. Djibo, *La participation des femmes africaines à la vie politique: les exemples du Sénégal et du Niger* (Paris, 2001), 104.

⁷⁸ Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 60-64 and K. Idrissa, ‘La dynamique de la gouvernance: administration, politique et ethnicité au Niger’, in *Ibid.* (ed.), *Le Niger: Etat et démocratie* (Paris, 2001), 47.

French member of the RDA in Dakar, the capital of AOF, denouncing colonial abuse and the position of the chiefs. By this time, persecution of the RDA had begun in earnest. With most of its leadership reassigned to distant localities, early in 1948 Bakary too was told that he would be transferred, in his case to the Dahomean city of Cotonou. He refused, however, and was sacked from his post, an administrative decision that made him less vulnerable to government pressure but more dependent on support from his party.⁷⁹

In spite of the persecution to which Bakary was almost daily subjected, he continued his party work, for which he also attended the RDA's second inter-territorial meeting in Treichville (Côte d'Ivoire) in January 1949, together with a few other PPN members like Hama and Diori. This conference, which was attended by French communists, fired the enthusiasm of African political activists, calling for reinforcement of the anti-imperialist struggle and, in Bakary's words, stiffening the political resolve as a result of 'l'effet communiste'. In addition, Bakary, as PPN secretary-general, was elected to the RDA's co-ordinating committee.⁸⁰ However, as shown above, the growth in closer ties with the communists, besides the violence in Côte d'Ivoire early in 1950, resulted in a head-on clash between the PPN and the administration. Bakary could do little against the massive persecution unleashed against his party, nor could the transfer of political activity to so-called 'comités de la paix', age groups, or sports and cultural associations prevent the gradual demolition of the RDA's base.⁸¹

More importantly, the severe harassment of the RDA led to serious disagreement between members as to what strategy the party had to adopt. A split developed between a moderate wing, headed by Hamani Diori and Boubou Hama, and hardliners led by Bakary, who preferred to continue the struggle against the colonial administration, including in Côte d'Ivoire, to which he returned early in 1950 to protest the arrest of Houphouët-Boigny. The disagreement over the PPN's strategy came on top of growing irritations between Bakary and moderate members, in particular Boubou Hama. Already in the autumn of 1947 Bakary would have questioned the genuineness of the latter's militancy. Campaigning for a seat in the assembly of the French Union, Hama would have declined to deliver a speech in

⁷⁹ Talba, *Une contribution*, 29-32; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 58, 61, 63, 66, 89-90; Bakary, 56.

⁸⁰ Benoist, 'Djibo Bakary parle', 102; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 68-69. Texts in Lisette, *Le combat du Rassemblement Démocratique Africain*, 88-108 ('Comité de coordination').

⁸¹ Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 95.

Zinder for fear that it would cost him his election, asking Bakary to give it instead. Bakary concluded that 'it [was] then that I understood that he was not a real militant, but rather was seeking honours'.⁸² Even if this represented the retrospective thrashing of a later arch-enemy, it is clear that there were differences of interests between members who, through their party work, subjected themselves to administrative harassment, and those members who, as representatives to metropolitan assemblies, did not face persecution as a result of their parliamentary immunity. In these circumstances frustrations and disagreements were bound to occur. Thus, Bakary himself was forced to stand trial for selling subscriptions to the *Réveil* among the samariyas. But when he denounced the dismissal of the PRDA chiefs of some Niamey districts in an article signed in the name of the PPN's comité directeur, he was criticised by Boubou Hama, who feared that the party risked a libel suit. Bakary, in retrospect, derided this attitude (and its underlying difference in risk assessment) by arguing that, once people got elected to assemblies, they began thinking of other things than agitation.⁸³

Nevertheless, with the party's militants getting sacked and imprisoned, its representatives losing assembly seats and, consequently, a steady drying up of funds, several RDA leaders, especially the parliamentarians, began to think of ending their collaboration with the communists. Hoping this would end the hostility of the French administration, Houphouët-Boigny, Hamani Diori and Ouezzin Coulibaly from Upper Volta took control of the RDA's co-ordinating committee, signed an agreement with independent African MPs in Paris and officially broke with French parliamentary groups, i.e. the PCF (May–October 1950).⁸⁴ Bakary, as the PPN's secretary-general and member of the RDA's co-ordinating committee, felt outflanked. He wrote a sharp rebuke, demanding the MPs be subordinated to the co-ordinating committee and a mission come to Niger to explain the 'undemocratic' change in policy.⁸⁵

He and young PPN activists felt that the MPs, enjoying the pleasures of Parisian life, had lost touch with the party's base. It, by contrast, was con-

⁸² 'C'est alors que j'ai compris qu'il n'était pas un vrai militant, mais recherchait plutôt les honneurs'. Benoist, 'Djibo Bakary parle', 101. Also Union Démocratique Nigérienne: Lettre Ouverte aux Nigériens, Paris, 30 Apr. 1954 (text in Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 374 ff.).

⁸³ Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 61, 89–90, 96; Benoist, 'Djibo Bakary parle', 102–103; Bakary, *Silence!*, 90.

⁸⁴ Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 99–101; Lisette, *Le combat du Rassemblement Démocratique Africain*, ch. 3.

⁸⁵ Text in Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 97–99.

tinually engaged in a struggle with the administration, did not see a transformation in its attitude and therefore did not understand the change in tune of RDA men like Hama, who began collaborating with the government and visited Toby in his palace.⁸⁶ But the more fundamental objection was that, as became clear afterwards from RDA directives, the rupture with the communists entailed a real change in policy towards the colonial administration. Not only did all communist propaganda have to cease, but the campaign against the administration had to be halted as well and a more conciliatory attitude adopted towards the chiefs. Clearly, this put at stake the defence of 'commis' interests and especially of the small rural and urban folk in search of new horizons. It also jeopardised the party's agitation against chiefly abuse of the peasantry and surrendered—so it was felt by Bakary—the party's apparatus to the mercy of an unyielding administration.⁸⁷ Bakary must also have opposed the rupture with the communists for its own sake, because he identified with their militancy (if not their ideology) and risked losing an important network of connections and resources.

The extent of the change in strategy also became clear from the way in which the RDA came to explain itself in Niger. Its mission, as Hamani Diori later reminisced, was given a warm welcome by Governor Toby and first contacted—instead of the bureau politique led by Bakary—Boubou Hama, although he was not one of its members. This indicated a shift of power to the party's parliamentary representatives and deeply annoyed Bakary. During the meeting with the mission he kept a disapproving silence but seeing himself confronted with a *fait accompli*, signed the resolution that approved the new position taken by RDA MPs in Paris. Although Bakary subsequently continued campaigning for the party, going on tour to Say and Zinder and speaking at a political meeting in Nigeria on behalf of the RDA, his obvious disapproval of the new line had made his position as supreme official untenable. In May 1951 he was downgraded to propaganda secretary, trading places with Diamballa Maïga, who became the party's new secretary-general.⁸⁸

Yet, faced with internal divisions and an administration that persevered in its hostility, the PPN was again defeated at the elections for the Assem-

⁸⁶ As asserted by Maï Maïgana, a career bureaucrat. Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 102.

⁸⁷ Benoist, 'Djibo Bakary parle', 103 and Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 104. In this regard Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 103-104, is clearly wrong in his view that the disagreement over the break with the communists was simply the result of personal rivalry rather than ideological differences.

⁸⁸ Salifou, *Le Niger*, 160 and Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 102-104.

blée Nationale in Paris, in June. Bakary felt vindicated. In December 1951, however, Diori called on members to continue collaborating with the administration. Bakary then incited cadres to abandon the party, condemning the rupture with the communists as treason and deriding the friendly attitude of Hama and Diori towards Toby. In retaliation, Diori announced Bakary's expulsion, accusing him of misappropriating funds and communist-oriented union agitation. The accusations of embezzlement were, according to PPN historian Fluchard, unfounded because Bakary was not paid by the party after July 1949 and had since lived on gifts of political friends.⁸⁹

The Righter of Wrongs: Towards the Union Démocratique Nigérienne

Bakary did, indeed, get involved in trade union work. Upon his dismissal as a teacher early in 1948, he had gone to his native village of Soudouré, 12 km from Niamey. With the help of his family he constructed a commercial garden near the Niger River. While this venture satisfied his passion for gardening, it also enabled Bakary to establish a union for agricultural workers and become its secretary. Vegetable growers, garden personnel and agricultural labourers represented a large number of people in the suburban environment of Niamey but, like domestics and unskilled wage earners generally, they had difficulty in getting organised. Union personnel required a primary school certificate—an insurmountable hurdle for illiterate workers. Consequently, numerous unskilled workers got in touch with Bakary asking him to assist their unions, for which he managed to gain administrative recognition in January 1951.⁹⁰ From the start, Niger's unions were affiliated to the 'Confédération Générale du Travail' (CGT), the French communist trade union organisation. After his defection from the PPN, Bakary regrouped them into the 'Union des Syndicats Confédérés du Niger' (USCN), which rejected Boubou Hama's request to sever ties with the CGT.

From late 1951 Bakary began campaigning from his union platform, but without losing sight of his political objectives. In order to participate in the elections for the Territorial Assembly (March 1952), he established a new political group, the 'Entente Nigérienne', together with activists who had followed him in his defection from the PPN. These included Abdoulaye

⁸⁹ Like Maïga Abdoulaye, a veterinary doctor born in Soudan. *Annuaire Politique du Niger* (Paris and Dakar, n.d., ca. 1957-58); Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 109-111.

⁹⁰ Bakary, *Silence!*, 125-126; Benoist, 'Djibo Bakary parle', 105; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 139.



Photo 1.1 Hima Dembélé (*Les raisons de notre lutte*, 10).

Mamani, a modest employee of the French trading firm SCOA in Zinder and an active unionist; Ousmane Dan Galadima, a clerk from the central town of Madaoua, who worked as an assistant interpreter for the administration and was a confidant of Bakary; Issaka Samy, a veterinary assistant from Maradi, who had been sacked and sentenced to prison and actively campaigned against the PPN; Amadou Hamidou 'dit' (alias) Gabriel, a telephone and telegraph operator at the post office; Hima Dembélé, a cinema operator from Niamey; Pascal Diawara, a young man from Dogondoutchi who was employed at the post office of Niamey; and Boukari Karemi dit Kokino, a Zinder shopkeeper from Bilma later employed as a keeper.⁹¹ It was with these people, employed in modern but fairly low-status urban functions, that Bakary tried to break into the political scene. Yet, with his new party barely established, both he and his PPN rivals failed to make headway in elections dominated by the government-sponsored UNIS.⁹²

By contrast, Bakary's union platform fully allowed him to pursue his passion for social justice, working together with Abdoulaye Mamani, establishing union cells in Tahoua, Niamey, Maradi and, with more difficulty, Zinder. In the spring of 1952 he began publishing a newspaper on behalf of

⁹¹ Based on biographical data from several archival sources and Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, vol. 1. Galadima, as his name suggests, came from a chiefly dynasty but remained outside the circles of chiefly power. Karemi's nickname derived from the cinema chain of Entreprises 'Petrocokino' in Niamey/Zinder, for which he once may have worked or in whose vicinity he may have lived. Interviews Mounkaila Beidari and Ousmane Dan Galadima, Niamey, 23 Febr. 2008; Bakary, *Silence!*, 152. See on the 'Galadima' title Decalo, *Historical Dictionary*, 107.

⁹² Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 127-128 and Fuglestad, 'UNIS and BNA', 130.



Photo 1.2 Abdoulaye Mamani (*Les raisons de notre lutte*, 10).

the USCN. It was appropriately called *Talaka* and was edited by himself, a task soon handed over to Hima Dembélé.⁹³ Lashing out against employers and administration alike, Bakary also focused on concrete steps, scorning the PPN especially for what he saw as agitation by words alone and contrasting it with his own field record.⁹⁴ He established a 'Société Coopérative Ouvrière de Consommation', joined by practically all the workers of Niamey, and began preparing for strike action to improve the lot of Niger's wage earners. Union activities in Maradi in November 1952 still met with administrative sanction, but a new labour code that came into being in 1953—providing unions theoretically with the same rights as those in France—allowed Bakary and Abdoulaye Mamani to organise Niger's first mass strike action, in July and August of that year. With wages that were the lowest of all AOF and overtaken by the cost of living, workers responded enthusiastically, taking French employers completely by surprise.⁹⁵

The substantial wage increases that resulted from this made Bakary's name, both in the international union world and among the 'petit peuple' of Niger's urban communities. In 1951 he became secretary-general of a committee that co-ordinated the action of unions in AOF and liaised with

⁹³ A. Mayaki, *Les partis politiques nigériens de 1946 à 1958: Documents et Témoignages* (Niamey, 1991), 58; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 139; Fuglestad, *History of Niger*, 172.

⁹⁴ See Union Démocratique Nigérienne: Lettre Ouverte aux Nigériens, Paris, 30 Apr. 1954; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 110; and Bakary, *Silence!*, ch. 7.

⁹⁵ Fuglestad, *History of Niger*, 172; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 140; and Bakary, *Silence!*, 137-139.

the CGT. Two years later, Bakary's prominence gained a global dimension with his election to the communist-dominated 'World Federation of Trade Unions' (known in Niger under its French initials FSM—'Fédération Syndicale Mondiale'). As one of the CGT's more important leaders, he beat his colleague from Guinea, Sékou Touré, for a seat on the metropolitan 'Economic and Social Council' (February 1954).⁹⁶

That Bakary and participants in the 1953 strikes were subsequently sentenced to prison terms⁹⁷ did not prevent, indeed could advance, his spectacular rise to prominence. His record so far had shown him to be a very different kind of politician. Contrary to many of his fellow 'commis', who congregated in the RDA and, as Ponty graduates, had developed luxury styles marked by social gatherings in colonial fashion, Djibo Bakary did not look down on the lower classes.⁹⁸ As the garden worker who could at least intimate that he was not averse to soiling his hands, he associated openly with the humble folk who were trying to eke out an existence in Niger's (sub)urban world.⁹⁹ That he exerted a strong appeal to them had also much to do with what he said and how he spoke. A tall, slender man with handsome features, his activism and urgency impressed Nigériens and French alike. Many people were curious about him and wanted to see him.¹⁰⁰ When he spoke, he stirred people, for he argued without reserve: at one meeting, he told his audience that colonial officials who abused the poor should go—the first African in Niger having the nerve to do this.¹⁰¹ Referring in this manner to the stalwarts of colonial rule, Bakary gained an enormous popularity, winning the trust of the population, which began to see him as its 'saviour'.¹⁰² In effect, '[f]or the small people Djibo was a prophet'.¹⁰³ This image was promoted by his followers, who liked to portray Bakary as:

⁹⁶ Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 141; Benoist, *l'Afrique Occidentale Française*, 228; Fuglestad, *History of Niger*, 172; Salifou, *Le Niger*, 162; Confidential/NOFORN. Department of State. Bureau of Intelligence and Research. Research Memorandum RAF-26, 30 March 1962; PRO, FO 371/161689.

⁹⁷ Territoire du Niger. Affaires Politiques et Administratives. Revue des événements du quatrième trimestre 1953, Niamey, le 13 déc. 1953, J. Toby, 18; Synthèse de l'activité syndicale pour le quatrième trimestre 1953, 6; both CAOM, Cart.2246/D.4.

⁹⁸ Fuglestad, *History of Niger*, 162 and 172 and Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 148.

⁹⁹ Bakary, *Silence!*, 137-138.

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Ali Talba, Niamey, 4 Febr. 2003.

¹⁰¹ Interview with Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 6 Dec. 2003.

¹⁰² 'sauveur'. *Ibid.*, 29 Nov. and 6 Dec. 2003.

¹⁰³ 'Pour le petit peuple Djibo était un prophète'. *Ibid.*, 29 Nov. 2003.

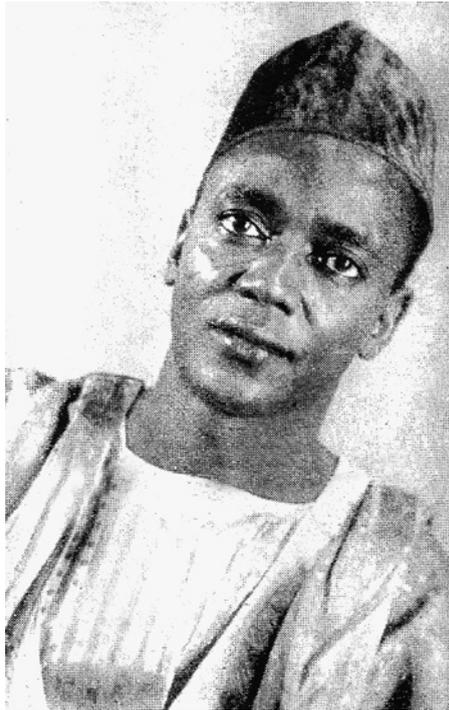


Photo 1.3 Djibo Bakary (*Les raisons de notre lutte*, 3).

the righter of wrongs, the invulnerable, the prophet who travels by camel.¹⁰⁴

The allusion to the Prophet Muhammad presented a powerful symbol, enhanced by the image of the camel that was to become the official emblem of Bakary's movement and stood for loyalty, toughness and endurance.¹⁰⁵ Even the French were impressed with Bakary's oratory. If his 'nervous', 'feverish' style reminded one administrator of the 'toiling and sweating of the Sahel peasants',¹⁰⁶ other officials warned about this 'fanatic, skillful and dangerous agitator' that should be fought with prudence and resolve.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ 'le redresseur des torts, l'invulnérable, le prophète qui se déplace à chameau'. As noted by one of his political enemies, Adamou Mayaki (*Les partis politiques nigériens*, 58), who also likened him to a flying carpet, which went from one town to the next and brought his 'so-called' disinterested aid to the destitute and the victims of injustice.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Zoumari Issa Seyni, Niamey, 5 Febr. 2003.

¹⁰⁶ In a conversation with Fuglestad, 'Djibo Bakary', 319.

¹⁰⁷ 'un agitateur fanatique, habile et dangeureux'. Quoted in Fuglestad, *History of Niger*, 181.

Having appealed his sentence, Bakary and friends finally broke into the political scene in the spring of 1954. By establishing their 'Union Démocratique Nigérienne' (UDN), they aimed at 'assisting the masses to organise and struggle' and 'building something of one's own, something sincere, brotherly, with an absolutely democratic leadership'.¹⁰⁸ The militant, populist tone of this message was in line with the social background of the UDN's founders, who included—besides Djibo Bakary, Ousmane Dan Galadima, Issaka Samy and Amadou dit Gabriel—Hama Sanda dit Pascal, a veterinary nurse in Niamey and father of Pascal Diawara; Bokar Touré, a bookkeeper in the capital; Soumaïla Maïga, a bar-tender; Issoufou Kadri, a baker; and Madougou Bindio and Amadou Tini, both master-masons. The party was, in other words, run by little people and related strata, i.e. petty employees, craftsmen and traders, many of whom agitated in the unions. Its sections in the eastern towns of Tessaoua and Zinder boasted few people who could lay claim to the status of 'commis', while the bureau of the Agadez youth section, 26 members strong, included six tailors, three cobblers and two joiners amidst a host of other petty vocations. Bakary naturally became the party's secretary-general, with Dan Galadima in the role of organisational secretary.¹⁰⁹

The fact that the UDN's activists did not work for the administration made the party less vulnerable to governmental sanction. Moreover, barely a month after the party's birth, Toby left Niger for good—to be replaced by Jean-Paul Ramadier, a socialist. Ramadier would quickly embark on a policy promoting economic development, something that necessitated closer co-operation with the 'commis' and less collusion with the chiefs.¹¹⁰ However, while this meant that Niger was run by a governor less ruthless than Toby, it did not imply that the French, let alone administrators who had worked under his predecessor, looked kindly on a party that appeared to represent the political arm of communist unions and aim at the empowerment of the lesser classes.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ 'd'aider les masses à s'organiser et à lutter' and 'construire quelque chose de propre, de sincère, de fraternel, avec une direction absolument démocratique'. Quoted in Salifou, *Le Niger*, 163.

¹⁰⁹ One year later Galadima became assistant secretary-general. *La Voix Libérée*, no. 1, March-Apr. 2011, 42; Mayaki, *Les partis politiques nigériens*, 57; Procès-verbal de la réunion de la "jeunesse Sawaba" d'Agadez, 8 Aug. 1958; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 52. See also Fuglestad, 'UNIS and BNA', 132-133. Abdoulaye Mamani in Zinder held the 'CEPE'—a primary school certificate. Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, vol. 1, 333. In Tessaoua, Abdou Ali Tazard, a teacher, was member of the UDN since its formation. Interview with Abdou Ali Tazard, Tessaoua, 9 Febr. 2006 ('secrétaire à l'organisation').

¹¹⁰ Fuglestad, 'UNIS and BNA', 131-2.

¹¹¹ Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 144.



Photo 1.4 Ousmane Dan Galadima (*Les raisons de notre lutte*, 9).

An open letter of the UDN published on 30 April 1954 set the tone of what to expect. In militant language the party castigated the chiefs, the administration and its rivals in the PPN. Analysing colonial society in terms of dialectical interests, it squarely emphasised social and political struggle as the key to the UDN's programme, not just against colonial rule but also against certain aspects and institutions of Nigérien society. In oblique reference to Toby, the party dubbed the colonial governor to be a passing bird, who could not prevent the evolution of society if all its children vowed to engage in struggle. Such struggle was a necessity and with it, sacrifices, since no political movement had ever achieved anything without it. Bakary singled out as the party's targets what he saw as a return of forced labour, food requisitioning, increase in taxation (which, indeed, led to a fiscal burden greater than in other AOF territories),¹¹² the exploitation of groundnut farmers by French companies, the government's refusal to increase the wages of the lower-paid and social misery in general. The UDN's letter

¹¹² To cover expenses of Niger's new infrastructure. Fuglestad, *History of Niger*, 174-176.

clearly cast its net wider than the conquest of political power alone. It criticised the emergence, through parliamentary indemnities, of a 'caste' of 'petty-bourgeois', pointing out that parliamentary representatives were there to execute 'the will of the masses'. In addition, chiefly authority was condemned as the representative of 'feudalism' and held partly responsible for the 'cynical exploitation of the rural masses'. All these 'vampires', the letter continued, regarded the UDN as a threat to their tranquillity.

It meant that the UDN saw its anti-colonial programme also as a project of social transformation that was as much, if not more, directed against the rural chiefs and the 'commis'-based PPN, singling out in particular Boubou Hama for its vociferous attacks. The letter intimated, logically, that one could not fight colonial abuse by siding with the administration if the latter was the very source of oppression. This was a biting critique of the PPN, which was accused of having given up the struggle and having allowed itself to be bought by the administration. Hinting at its Marxist inspiration, the UDN stressed it would fight colonialism as a system of exploitation, rather than aim at individuals, openly priding itself on its contacts in the Eastern Bloc, though cleverly adding that it did not target the people of France. Hama was derided for his 'unmeasured ambition', while the PPN organ he edited, *Le Niger*, was slated as a 'rag' that merely printed government propaganda. In short, the UDN presented itself as the natural successor party that continued where the PPN had left off through 'cowardice and ambition'.¹¹³

Niger's decolonisation struggle now began in earnest.¹¹⁴ Having learnt the lesson of the PPN's repression, the UDN's local sections were given far greater autonomy. This allowed its activists to cut more easily into local political issues and use them for the mobilisation of support. Uncontrolled by the administration, the petty traders, craftsmen, marabouts and workers spread the UDN's message with enthusiasm. Its uncompromising message and the candour of its language led to a legendary popularity. The build-up of support proceeded rapidly, so much so that the UDN gained genuine mass support and realised mass participation within its structures—the first party in Niger to achieve this.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Union Démocratique Nigérienne: Lettre Ouverte aux Nigériens, Paris, 30 Apr. 1954. ('un oiseau de passage'; 'caste de petits bourgeois'; 'la volonté des masses'; 'la cynique exploitation des masses de la campagne'; 'ambition démesurée'; 'feuille de chou'; 'lâcheté et par ambition').

¹¹⁴ See also 'Création de Club des Amis du Sawaba' CLAS, Niamey, no date (ca. 1990s).

¹¹⁵ M. Djibo, 'Les enjeux politiques dans la colonie du Niger (1944-1960)', *Autrepart*, no. 27, 2003, 48 and Fuglestad, *History of Niger*, 181.

While this was in itself a substantial achievement, the most remarkable aspect of the UDN's rise was the fact that, first, its fame did not remain limited to the urban areas but quickly spread among the peasantry. Barely a year after its foundation, one French observer noted that the UDN was winning recruits in the countryside at an alarming pace. The party's message proliferated easily and could be passed on discreetly since many of its semi-urbanised activists retained links with their home areas. In the case of lorry drivers, 'coxeurs' (drivers' assistants), marabouts, itinerant traders and postal workers, mobility constituted the essence of their activities. The result was that the politics of decolonisation finally penetrated into the rural world. Second, the UDN not only gained popularity among the lower classes but also obtained the backing of a certain intellectual elite.¹¹⁶ For example, the party was able to attract the support of numerous veterinary specialists as well as schoolteachers,¹¹⁷ even if a majority of the latter were mobilised in the PPN-RDA. Thus, by aiming at comprehensive and fundamental change in the social order, the UDN attracted support from very different echelons of Nigérien society. It not only constituted a political party but, together with allied institutions, began to assume the hallmarks of a genuine social movement.

That the UDN could lay claim to such status also becomes apparent from the name with which it was greeted by the rural population in the centre and east, i.e. 'Sawaba'. This name was borrowed from the identical call with which a radical political party in Northern Nigeria was hailed, the 'Northern (or Nigerian) Elements Progressive Union' (NEPU).¹¹⁸ NEPU was established in 1950 with a radical anti-colonial programme committing itself to 'democracy and social progress', which was heralded in a statement that became known as the 'Sawaba Declaration'. NEPU's leaders—petty traders, second-rank clerks and talakawa themselves—, agitated for the have-nots of Northern Nigerian society.¹¹⁹ These referred to the party as

¹¹⁶ Ibid.; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 54; Idrissa, 'La dynamique de la gouvernance', 47.

¹¹⁷ Such as Abdou Ali Tazard, the Tessaoua teacher mentioned in note 109 above, and Mounkeïla Issifi, a teacher from Téra. Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, vol. 1, 347.

¹¹⁸ Bakary himself attributes it to this source. *Silence!*, 146.

¹¹⁹ *People's Redemption Party: Basic Party Documents. A Short Profile of the People's Redemption Party. The Principles and the General Programme of the People's Redemption Party. The Constitution of the People's Redemption Party* (no pl., 1996); R.L. Sklar & C.S. Whitaker, 'Nigeria', in J.S. Coleman & C.G. Rosberg (eds), *Political Parties and National Integration in Tropical Africa* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London, 1964), 597-654; and Despatch no. 5: H.A. Twist, Kaduna, to Viscount Head, High Commissioner United Kingdom, Lagos, 31 July 1961; PRO, DO 177/59. Text Sawaba Declaration in A. Abba (ed.), *The Politics of Malam Aminu Kano: Documents from the Independence Struggle 1950-1960* (Kaduna, 1993).

'Sawaba', a Hausa term¹²⁰ related to the word 'sawki', which is difficult to translate but approximates the English 'relief', i.e. deliverance from a situation of misery, constraint or domination. The fact that the population in Niger began to refer to the UDN as 'Sawaba' points to a yearning for relief from poverty and oppression and was directly linked, not so much to the party's more formal political goals, as to its social programme and the social movement it wished to lead.¹²¹

In order to do so, the party commanded a good organisation—indeed, the only structured political organisation in the country—, methodically geared to agitate for change. The party's autonomous base committees (on which more below) were grouped in sections that had to popularise the party slogan, denounce abuse and assist 'the masses to organise and struggle'. The sections, in their turn, were grouped in three regions (west, central and east/north), linked to party headquarters in Niamey.¹²² The 'congress' constituted the party's highest organ, which would convene annually to determine the party line and elect a 'bureau' of ten members or more and, from that bureau, a secretariat of six. Apart from Djibo Bakary and Dan Galadima this secretariat included, during the first year, Hama Sanda dit Pascal as assistant secretary, Amadou dit Gabriel as administrative secretary, Bokar Touré as treasurer and Issaka Samy responsible for propaganda.¹²³ While democratic decision-making was theoretically assured at all levels, the party's structure, clearly inspired by that of communist organisations, also contained regulations to guarantee discipline and respect of the party line. Yet, unlike other parties, the UDN's grass-roots committees were

¹²⁰ Of Arabic origin, where 'saaba'/'sawb' means 'to be correct'. *Online Bargery's Hausa-English Dictionary* (www.koshigaya.bunkyo.ac.jp/hslaiman/, accessed 11 Jan. 2005).

¹²¹ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 54 & 'Les enjeux politiques', 52; interview Ali Issaka, Niamey 29 Febr. 2008. 'Sawaba' is translated less appropriately as 'independence'. More to the point would be 'freedom', 'quietness', 'tranquillity'. G. Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets de la décolonisation* (Paris, 1967), vol. 2, 274; Fuglestad, *History of Niger*, 185. The names of the party organ and its union affiliate (*Le Démocrate* and *Talaka* respectively; see below) also point to this social dimension.

¹²² The west consisted of the 'Cercles' or provinces of Tillabéri, Niamey and Dosso; the centre of Tahoua and Maradi; and the east/north of those of Zinder, Gouré, Agadez & Nguigmi. Statuts de l'Union Démocratique Nigérienne, arts. 6-7 (text ANN, 86 MI 1 E 5,2) ('les masses à s'organiser et à lutter').

¹²³ In addition, a 'comité directeur' made up of the bureau and 2 delegates of each region were to convene weekly to guide decision-making in between congresses. When the comité directeur was not in session, the bureau—with inside it the secretariat with its secretary-general—constituted the party's highest organ. See Statuts de l'Union Démocratique Nigérienne, art. 21 ('secrétaire général adjoint'; 'secrétaire à l'Organisation'; 'secrétaire administratif').

no bloodless structures.¹²⁴ As in the PPN these consisted of village or urban district committees, in addition to committees established in companies or government agencies. In line with the UDN's dual mobilisation strategy (urban and rural), these tried to absorb people of the union movement as well as traditional organisations, while rival associations were established where such penetration failed.¹²⁵ Building on Bakary's PPN experience, UDN activists took over PPN-unfriendly samariyas, which instead of assembling age sets now grouped men of all ages and backgrounds and staffed the village and district committees. The samariyas thus became political groups that abandoned their recreational and self-help functions and began to compete with the chiefs for influence. The sarkin samari acted as the party delegate and propagandist of the lowest echelon, constituting local cells, selling membership cards and collecting contributions. Similarly, the UDN engaged the traditional crafts guilds or 'sanaa' (Hausa for 'trade', 'profession') as well as various women's groups, notably the local 'karuwai' ('free women' in Hausa).¹²⁶

The karuwai were women who were generally widowed or divorced, many of them ending up in prostitution,¹²⁷ notably those who did not hail from the region where they lived and therefore had no family connections to fall back on. Such prostitution was accepted in pre-colonial custom and occurred not only in the towns but also the villages and approximated the role of courtesane. The karuwai enjoyed a more free life than that of their ordinary sisters as well as a relative material independence and enlarged personal horizon. Nevertheless, theirs was a marginalised existence involving a degree of insecurity: they were merely tolerated. Thus, in many ways the karuwai had a social profile similar to that of the little people who had flocked to the UDN.¹²⁸ While some karuwai lived independently, many cohabited in the compound of the 'magajiya', or patroness of the local free

¹²⁴ Also, the UDN statutes at least stipulated that party members elected to colonial or metropolitan bodies were responsible to the political organs of the party and their decisions. *Ibid.*, art. 15.

¹²⁵ Fuglestad, 'Djibo Bakary', 316.

¹²⁶ 'weykuru' in Songhay/Zarma. Djibo, *La participation des femmes africaines*, 104. Fuglestad, *History of Niger*, 181; *Ibid.*, 'Djibo Bakary', 316; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 142; Idrissa, 'La dynamique de la gouvernance', 47. 'Free women' were also very active in NEPU. R.S. Kwewum, *The Story of Gambo Sawaba* (Jos, 1990).

¹²⁷ 'Karuwanci' is Hausa for prostitution, synonymous to the 'waykuurataray' in Zarma/Songhay. F. Mounkaila, 'Femmes et politique au Niger: présence et représentations', in Idrissa, *Le Niger*, 381.

¹²⁸ Which appeared to be their natural political home, although they and their leaders were also mobilised for the cause of the RDA. See Djibo, *La participation des femmes africaines*, 92 and Chapter 2 below. After 1958, when the RDA established its dominance,

women,¹²⁹ who not only protected the karuwai proper and ensured their voice in political agitation but also defended the interests of local women generally.¹³⁰ Chosen for her personality and freed from family obligations, the magajiya could more easily engage in public life and become politicised. She was thus ideally placed to mobilise political support.¹³¹ The griots, attached to her compound to indicate the presence of karuwai to potential clients, were used to organise 'séances de tam-tam'—performances of song, dance and drums that preceded political meetings. Engaged by the party, the magajiya would incite men and women to vote or go on strike, sell them membership cards, collect dues and organise receptions for political leaders.¹³²

Agitation and Manoeuvres, 1954–1956

The UDN completely reshuffled Niger's political landscape.¹³³ Its political idealism was clearly noticed among the people,¹³⁴ while its socio-political message, unambiguously expressed in its statutes as the 'realisation of a political programme of rapid democratisation, emancipation of exploited populations and elevation of their living standards',¹³⁵ could not fail to antagonise the administration and other political parties. Of these, UNIS

prostitutes also enrolled in this party. See f.e. Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 710, no. 21, 20–26 May 1963; SHAT, 5 H 123.

¹²⁹ Used in singular and plural. Originally, 'magajiya' was the title of the oldest sister or daughter of a Hausa sovereign responsible for women's affairs in the palace. During the twentieth century it began to signify the patron of local free women's interests and, then, that of 'madam' of a brothel. The Songhay term is the same. Mounkaïla, 'Femmes et politique', 380.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 381–382. On prostitution, see S. Bernus, *Niamey: Population et habitat; documents d'enquêtes* (Etudes nigériennes 'documents', 11; IFAN-CNRS: no pl., ca. 1964), 34–35 and C. Piault, *Contribution à l'étude de la vie quotidienne de la femme Mawri* (Etudes nigériennes, 10; Paris, 1972), 104–109.

¹³¹ The first 'association de femmes' (1956) was thus headed by the four magajiya of Niamey. Yet, while a symbol of female force that men had to reckon with, it was these women who were mobilised for the party cause rather than the other way around, with women's issues getting little attention and the magajiya being used for party propaganda and electoral objectives. They were also hindered by a lack of response from a substantial part of the female population and lack of competent cadres. Bernus, *Niamey*, 35; Djibo, *La participation des femmes africaines*, 104–105; Mounkaïla, 'Femmes et politique', 381.

¹³² Piault, *Contribution à l'étude de la vie*, 105; Djibo, *La participation des femmes africaines*, 91, 104 and 415 n. 149.

¹³³ Idrissa, 'La dynamique de la gouvernance', 64.

¹³⁴ Interviews with Moumouni Daouda, Tillabéri, and Djibo Foulan, Bandio, 3–4 Nov. 2005.

¹³⁵ Art. 1 ('réalisation d'un programme politique de démocratisation rapide, d'émancipation des populations exploitées et d'élévation de leur standard de vie').

was progressively getting weaker as a result of internal splits while the PPN felt directly challenged by the UDN's claim that it represented the real heir of the RDA's anti-colonial zeal. This was made even more acute by the fact that Bakary found it hard to leave the wider RDA framework,¹³⁶ in part because of the international connections it afforded but also because of a sense of attachment to the RDA—still a prestigious symbol in the country—and its grand, anti-colonial idea that militant nationalists felt the inter-territorial group had betrayed.¹³⁷ The UDN's statutes thus openly said to work for the 'triumph of the ideal and programme of the R.D.A.' and dubbed the Entente Nigérienne, its aborted predecessor, as an 'R.D.A. action committee'.¹³⁸ The party's organ, *Le Démocrate*, stressed it remained loyal to the spirit that gave rise to the RDA and page after page claimed adherence to the RDA framework.¹³⁹ Worse, in February 1955 Bakary wrote to the RDA's chairman, Houphouët-Boigny, demanding that the UDN participate in the meetings of the RDA's co-ordinating committee, of which he had been a member when secretary-general of the PPN. Yet, during its meeting in July 1955, the committee voted the PPN as Niger's sole representative in the RDA.¹⁴⁰ Bakary then published, with two like-minded politicians from Senegal and Soudan, a manifesto claiming to represent the 'real' RDA, calling for a conference of grass-roots organisations and denouncing his opponents as defeatists who abused the RDA as an electoral platform. In effect, this consummated the UDN's rupture with the inter-territorial party.¹⁴¹

While persevering in its agitation, the UDN also had to contend with the administration. The new development policies of Ramadier, who felt contempt for the chiefs of UNIS, put a premium on co-operation with 'évolués' and thus encouraged a more favourable line towards the 'commis'-based PPN, a line that had, in fact, cautiously been started by Toby after 1952.¹⁴² The UDN, whose socio-political programme could only be considered a

¹³⁶ Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 113.

¹³⁷ 'The RDA has betrayed Africa'. Interview with Sao Marakan, Niamey, 29 Jan. 2003.

¹³⁸ 'née de comité d'action R.D.A. créé le 15 janv. 1952, l'UDN entend œuvrer pour le triomphe de l'idéal et du programme du R.D.A.'. Art. 1 Statuts de l'Union Démocratique Nigérienne. Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 142; Bakary, *Silence!*, ch. 10; Benoist, 'Djibo Bakary parle', 105-106.

¹³⁹ See, for example, *Le Démocrate. Organe bi-mensuel de l'Union Démocratique Nigérienne*, no. 57, 30 June 1956. Also Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 146-147.

¹⁴⁰ Whether Bakary was excluded or chose not to come is unclear. See for different political versions of these events Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 156-160 and Bakary, *Silence!*, ch. 8.

¹⁴¹ See 'Manifeste pour un véritable Rassemblement Démocratique Africain', Conakry, 9 July 1955 (text in Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 385-391).

¹⁴² Fuglestad, 'UNIS and BNA', 131-2; *Ibid.*, *History of Niger*, 180; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 151.

threat to these evolutionary policies, met with firm official hostility. Toby had warned his subordinates about the party, with one of these vowing to oppose it with ‘the greatest determination’.¹⁴³ That this administrative enmity went far—indeed, could even assume a personal touch—can be gauged from an early confession of one administrator, who in 1950 attested to his hatred of one of Bakary’s principal lieutenants, Ousmane Dan Galadima, at the time still employed in the administration:

He is wicked, they say. Little, puny, often sick but with the tongue of a viper ... I would have no objections to being deprived of his services.¹⁴⁴

An occasion for administrative obstruction presented itself with the metropolitan elections in January 1956. With the UDN ticket of Bakary and Abdoulaye Mamani campaigning on an anti-tax theme, the party narrowly failed to win a seat. A combined list of the UPN and BNA, new groupings that had broken away from UNIS under Georges Condat and Issoufou Djermaoye respectively, won one seat, the other being recovered by Diori for the PPN. The UDN cried foul play, claiming Ramadier had been instructed by Paris to defraud Bakary from his rightful seat.¹⁴⁵ This allegation cannot be confirmed with certainty since only the global electoral results have survived. Tellingly, however, the federal authorities in Dakar later remarked that major progress of ‘this extremist party’ had been stopped owing to the ‘firm attitude of the administration’.¹⁴⁶ Moreover, Diori defeated Bakary by a margin of only 8,000 votes (Condat of the UPN/BNA ticket coming comfortably first), suggesting there was at least a good possibility of tampering by the French, who had Houphouët-Boigny campaign for the PPN among the chiefs of western Niger, possibly with help of the governor. It is certain, in any case, that the UDN faced ‘heavy opposition by the Administration’ during the campaign.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³ Fuglestad, *History of Niger*, 181, n. 204 (‘la plus grande détermination’).

¹⁴⁴ Quoted (and translation by) W.F.S. Miles, *Hausaland Divided: Colonialism and Independence in Nigeria and Niger* (Ithaca, NY, and London, 1994), 135.

¹⁴⁵ Bakary, *Silence!*, 114. Bakary also alleged this in an interview with Djibo, *Les transformations*, 54. Also Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 174 and Fuglestad, *History of Niger*, 182. See for UPN (‘Union Progressiste Nigérienne’) and BNA (‘Bloc Nigérien d’Action’) Fuglestad, ‘UNIS and BNA’.

¹⁴⁶ Synthèse des Faits Politiques pour le Premier Trimestre 1956; CAOM, Cart.2233/D.2. (‘Au Niger ... la ferme attitude de l’administration a stoppé les importants progress réalisés par ce parti extrémiste’). Also Djibo, ‘Les enjeux politiques’, 48.

¹⁴⁷ As even noted in Fuglestad, ‘UNIS and BNA’, 132. Also see Djibo, ‘Les enjeux politiques’, 48 and *Ibid.*, *Les transformations*, 54–55, citing an interview with Condat on Ramadier’s role.

But by far the biggest surprise of these elections was the fact that the UDN, barely two years in existence, took a total of 74,000 votes, ending in third place, well before UNIS (which gained 24,000 votes, 82,000 going to the PPN and 126,000 to the UPN/BNA). Out of nothing, it had given a first show of strength, benefiting from a substantial extension in the franchise that drew in younger and ever more rural people into the political system. Youths were mobilised by way of the samariyas as well as the 'Union de la Jeunesse Nigérienne' (UJN), a modern affiliate association of the UDN with links to the trade unions. It was led by Djibo Sékou (dit Soumari Goudel), head of the union of wood, metal and construction workers; Mamadou André dit Moussa, a cook and leader of the union of domestics; and Hima Dembélé, editor of the union organ *Talaka*.¹⁴⁸

Geographically, the patterns of support were more complicated. The literature on Niger has generally made out that the UDN or Sawaba was an eastern party, whose support was mainly confined to the Hausa-speaking central and eastern regions.¹⁴⁹ To some extent this may be attributed to the work of Fuglestad, an historian whose analysis was unduly affected by the ethno-regional lens of French colonial documents on which he depended.¹⁵⁰ The support for the party was, in fact, regionally more widespread and also changed over time. In 1948, as PPN secretary and a Zarma, Bakary drew support from the western districts of Filingué and Say, besides a good part of the urban vote in Niamey, Maradi and Zinder. Eight years later, however, in the 1956 metropolitan polls, most of his following came from central and eastern districts, both urban and rural, benefiting from the NEPU example across the border in Northern Nigeria. Thus, in the district of Zinder, the UDN took more than half the votes; in Maradi it gained up to 70 per cent; and in the central-eastern districts of Tahoua and Tessaoua it scored over 40 per cent. Its popularity in Tessaoua derived partly from NEPU influence and the dynamism of local UDN leaders, while in Maradi it was assisted by the enthusiasm of radical students at local technical and

¹⁴⁸ The UJN had its own organ, *La Tribune des Jeunes*. L'action communiste en A.O.F., 1955; CAOM, Cart.2246. One of the leaders of UDN youths in Zinder was Amada Bachard, vice-president and then 22 years old. Interview with Amada Bachard, Niamey, 14 Dec. 2009 ('Syndicat des ouvriers du bois, des métaux et du bâtiment'; 'Syndicat des gens de maison').

¹⁴⁹ See, for example, Idrissa, 'La dynamique de la gouvernance', 64. More nuanced views in regard to this during the 1950s are Charlick, *Niger*, 46 and Djibo, 'Les enjeux politiques', 58.

¹⁵⁰ See his *History of Niger*, 182 and especially 'Djibo Bakary', *passim*.

other facilities.¹⁵¹ Hence, Bakary himself stated that Sawaba felt ‘more comfortable’ in the east, dubbing Maradi the ‘cradle of the party’.¹⁵²

These remarks, however, were made in the 1990s and—affected by hindsight—ignored the support the party once enjoyed in towns and villages in the Niger River valley, west of the capital.¹⁵³ In the latter half of the 1950s, towns like Gothèye, Bandio, Dargol, Ayorou and, to a lesser extent, Téra, developed solid cores of Sawaba following. Generally, this was related to the UDN’s union origins in Niger’s western region¹⁵⁴ and the small folk base of its core, which concentrated support in all major and minor cities in the land, including Niamey.¹⁵⁵ Yet, there were also more specific reasons for this support in western towns. As Bakary hailed from the village of Sou-douré, to the west of the capital, many people in the western valley saw him as a son of the land, in the process considering him as a Songhay—the distinction between Songhays and Zarmas not always being clear-cut.¹⁵⁶ Bakary had, moreover, personal links with the town of Gothèye. After spending his childhood in Tahoua, he was for some time entrusted to the care of a tailor, El Hadji Harouna Téra, who was based in Gothèye. The chief of the town was a relative of Bakary, whose mother, too, had family there. Gothèye thus developed as a springboard for the UDN, with Bakary establishing political alliances there, visiting Gothèye and the neighbouring towns of Dargol and Bandio, and promising aid and projects to local communities in return for their vote.¹⁵⁷

By 1956, however, it was not yet clear how this translated into electoral terms—the most striking geographical feature of the metropolitan elections being the inroad made by the UDN in some of the eastern districts. In contrast, the PPN won substantially only in the west (52,000 of its 82,000

¹⁵¹ Interviews Kane Boukari, Niamey, 7 Aug. 2008 (by Issa Younoussi) & Hamidou Adamou Abdoulaye, Niamey, 19 Dec. 2009; Fuglestad, *History of Niger*, 182; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 176; Benoist, ‘Djibo Bakary parle’, 107; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 55, n. 2, who speaks of 44 per cent in Zinder.

¹⁵² Benoist, ‘Djibo Bakary parle’, 107 and Bakary, *Silence!*, 153 (‘A l’est, nous étions plus à l’aise’; ‘le berceau du parti’).

¹⁵³ Conversations with Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan and Mounkaïla Sanda, Niamey, 27–28 Oct. 2005.

¹⁵⁴ As aptly noted by Decalo, *Historical Dictionary*, 43.

¹⁵⁵ Charlick, *Niger*, 46.

¹⁵⁶ Interviews with Boubakar Djingaré and Tahirou Ayouba Maïga, Niamey, 27–28 Oct. 2005; conversation with Issa Younoussi, Niamey, 28 Oct. 2005; J.P. Olivier de Sardan, *Les sociétés Songhay-Zarma (Niger-Mali): Chefs, guerriers, esclaves, paysans* (Paris, 1984), 274.

¹⁵⁷ Bakary, *Silence!*, 151; interviews with Mounkaïla Albagna, Niamey, 29 Nov. and 6 Dec. 2003; Mamoudou Béchir, Dargol, 31 Oct. 2005; Djibo Harouna, Gothèye, 1 Nov. 2005; and Mamane Boureïma, Bandio, 4 Nov. 2005. For UDN/Sawaba support in Ayorou, see ch 7.

votes), with great majorities in the five western districts, although Tillabéri represented a divided community and the Niamey region was marked by a sizeable UDN presence.¹⁵⁸ Yet, the problem for the UDN was that its support did not amount to a majority of the electorate. As a social movement it contained a range of different social segments, yet its core was formed by semi-urbanised little folk, who constituted a minority in society. It therefore required allies, both for the achievement of its social and political goals and to prevail over administrative hostility. This had not lessened, as became clear in Gothèye on 6 February 1956, when a UDN meeting where Bakary spoke was disturbed by 'gardes nomades' (paramilitary forces), obliging the UDN leader to stay indoors and compelling a UJN delegation from Niamey to return to the capital. Court action followed against Bakary and the local UDN delegate while Gothèye's chief was dismissed from his post.¹⁵⁹ Abdoulaye Mamani and Boukari Karemi (dit Kokino), who had succeeded Issaka Samy as director of *Le Démocrate* after the latter got himself into trouble with the authorities, were subjected to court action, ending in prison sentences and stiff penalties for defamation of the director of the 'Sûreté' (the central police organisation). For similar reasons, the party stopped publication of its organ and replaced it with a new one, called *Sawaba*, later in the year.¹⁶⁰

Hoping to enlarge its room for manoeuvre, the UDN, besides searching for political allies began to look for some sort of working relationship with the administration. Appeals were published, in conciliatory language, calling for co-operation on the basis of mutual respect and understanding, followed by an admission that the UDN had made the 'inevitable mistakes' inherent in all young movements. This was as near as it came to an apology to the governor, whose return from leave was even welcomed in the party's organ. A statement that the UDN adhered to the 'French system' and preferred a union, entered in freedom, with France—the slogan of 'independence' was not yet sounded—alluded to its acceptance of the basic outlines of France's sphere of influence in Africa.¹⁶¹ All this was to

¹⁵⁸ Interview with Moumouni Daouda, Tillabéri, 3 Nov. 2005. In the Niamey area the PPN won 58 per cent. The UPN/BNA took 7 provinces in total, in the west, east and north. Djibo, *Les transformations*, 55.

¹⁵⁹ Bakary, *Silence!*, 149-151 and interview with Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003.

¹⁶⁰ Headed by Hima Dembélé, who had faced court action the year before, Bakary and Adamou (Assane?) Mayaki. Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 146, 178 and 188 and Djibo, *Les transformations*, 57.

¹⁶¹ *Le Démocrate*, no. 54, 5 May 1956, 1-2 ('les inévitables fautes inhérentes à tout jeune mouvement').

prove in vain, however, as the administration, both under Ramadier and his successor in the autumn, Paul Bordier, was to persevere in its preference for Niger's other parties and, consequently, efforts to block the UDN's electoral advance.¹⁶²

Trying to bolster its position, Djibo Bakary sent out feelers in various directions both in and outside Niger, by appealing for national, indeed, wider African union and pointing out the need for a common political front. While he now acknowledged the PPN as Niger's sole RDA representative, the PPN responded by demanding an unconditional return of the UDN inside the PPN-RDA and a rupture of its links with the PCF and all its affiliates. In view of the balance of forces, this was asking for too much. Moreover, these *démarches* were not without their problems since they had to be acceptable to the rank and file, especially in the case of the UDN where the political base could not simply be committed by its leader to an alliance of which it did not approve.¹⁶³ Thus, in May and June incidents took place in the capital, with a UDN woman getting molested by girls of the PPN and UDN youths trading insults with a PPN leader. In the end, the *démarches* faltered over the candidatures for a by-election in the western 'Circonscription' (district) of Tillabéri, the contested stronghold of the PPN. The party advanced Boubou Hama as its contender, expecting the UDN, like UNIS and the BNA, to desist from nominating a rival. Yet, the UDN was not without support here and only withdrew its candidate, Adamou Sékou, a judicial clerk and tough UDN militant from Téra, at the eleventh hour. The PPN then declined to engage in formal talks and Bakary's *démarches* ended in acrimony, the UDN organ putting Hama down as 'the petty bourgeois from Téra'.¹⁶⁴

Bakary also tried to find allies on the inter-territorial scene where he was now without a formal network of contacts. The desire to break his isolation became more urgent because of a major colonial reform with which the

¹⁶² Fluchard's contention that Bakary and Ramadier managed to realise a rapprochement in return for Bakary's adherence to Ramadier's SFIO, is mistaken and based on the inaccurate writings of Chaffard, which may have been influenced by the subjective views of Bakary's enemy, Boubou Hama. If Ramadier made offers to the UDN, it is unclear what this amounted to and it was counter-balanced by support for the PPN and to a lesser extent the BNA and, in November 1956, an attempt to invalidate Bakary's election as mayor of Niamey (see below). See Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 176-178; Fuglestad, 'Djibo Bakary', 317; and *Ibid.*, *History of Niger*, 183; and for a lucid account of this Djibo, *Les transformations*, 56-59.

¹⁶³ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 57. On Bakary's plea for unity, see *Le Démocrate*, no. 57, 30 June 1956.

¹⁶⁴ See Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 179-185, who accessed the correspondence between both parties on this issue ('le petit bourgeois de Téra'). Data on Sékou were taken from Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, vol. 1, 378 and interview with Harou Kouka, Niamey, 26 Nov. 2003.

French tried to keep pace with political developments in Africa (June 1956). This new legislation, the 'Loi Cadre', introduced universal suffrage in the colonies on the basis of a single electoral college. This did away with the over-representation of European colonists and established territorial assemblies with enlarged powers and autonomous governments led by Africans, though under supervision of the governor. Based on an optimistic assessment that France would be able to contain the devolution of power and maintain influence in its colonies,¹⁶⁵ the Loi Cadre actually set them on an inexorable course of political evolution and carried two major implications for Bakary.

First, by adding numerous youngsters to the electorate, it especially improved the chances of the UDN, but by increasing the stakes—the seizure of real political power—the Loi Cadre also sharpened political competition. Second, by conceding autonomy to individual territories the Loi Cadre jeopardised the survival of the colonial Federation AOF, so dear to Bakary and other militant nationalists, and thus necessitated his action on the inter-territorial scene. In July 1956 the UDN's organ published an open letter to Houphouët-Boigny, the RDA leader from Côte d'Ivoire who was now Bakary's enemy but also a metropolitan minister, and to Léopold Senghor from Senegal. Rendering homage to both men, it apologised for the bad language used against Houphouët in the past. It also appealed for the unification of all political parties in the Federation so as to achieve the greatest degree of autonomy within the French Union, while preserving the structure of AOF and warding off the 'balkanisation' of West Africa (meaning its weakening through territorial partitioning and consequent domination by extra-African powers). While drawing a positive response from Senghor, it met with silence from Houphouët, as RDA leader an ally of the PPN and like the French a protagonist of individual territorial entities.¹⁶⁶

In the course of his démarches towards the PPN-RDA, it was claimed that Bakary had agreed to sever his links with the PCF. Indeed, much has been made of these links, the alleged communist convictions of Bakary and his party, his supposed dissociation from the communists in 1956, and his ideological flexibility that would have led to an alliance with the met-

¹⁶⁵ Mortimer, *France and the Africans* and A. Keese, 'Quelques satisfactions d'amour-propre: African Elite Integration, the Loi Cadre, and Involuntary Decolonisation of French Tropical Africa', *Itinerario*, 27 (2003), 1, 33-57.

¹⁶⁶ See Bakary, *Silence!*, 163-8 (incl. for text letter); *Le Démocrate*, no. 57, 30 June 1956; Benoist, *L'Afrique Occidentale Française*, 322; Fuglestad, *History of Niger*, 183. On balkanisation, see B. Neuberger, 'The African Concept of Balkanisation', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 14 (1976), 523-529.

ropolitan socialist party, SFIO. In this connection Bakary was accused of insincerity, both in terms of his ideological convictions and supposed readiness to break with the communists. Both this and the later alleged links with SFIO (on which more in the next section) were used to block a rapprochement with the RDA, which, while supporting the metropolitan socialist government was allied to another French government party and did not favour close ties with SFIO as such.¹⁶⁷

The accusations appear to a considerable extent to have been based on a misreading of the UDN's ideology—indeed, on ignoring the party's rhetoric on this point. In the crude context of the Cold War both the French and their African allies simply refused to take its ideology seriously—accusations of communism constituting an effective weapon to fight the party.¹⁶⁸ The issue that was made of this may, additionally, have been based on their fear of Bakary's formidable organisational abilities.¹⁶⁹

Bakary himself denied that the UDN had ever had what he called an 'organic relation' with the PCF and claimed the trade unions should be organised in an inter-territorial movement that would not be tied to either the CGT or any other metropolitan union.¹⁷⁰ While his denial of an 'organic' link between the UDN and PCF was basically correct, it skirted the existence of relations that members of the UDN, including Bakary himself, entertained with communist organisations—French or other—in Africa and Europe. Moreover, formal links did exist by way of Bakary's membership for the CGT of the metropolitan Economic and Social Council (from 1954 until early 1957) and through the membership of the party's youth wing UJN of the 'World Federation of Democratic Youth' (in Niger known as 'Fédération Mondiale de la Jeunesse Démocratique' – FMJD), an organisation linked to the communist-dominated FSM.¹⁷¹ At a personal level contacts with PCF members and the allied CGT entailed communist assistance in various forms, such as legal counsel in court cases, help in metropolitan bodies, invitation to international conferences, or the provision

¹⁶⁷ Fuglestad, *History of Niger*, 183. Also see Benoist, *l'Afrique Occidentale Française*, 322–323.

¹⁶⁸ According to Bakary, his party was sometimes dubbed 'UDN-RDAK'—the 'K' standing for Kominform. Benoist, 'Djibo Bakary parle', 105.

¹⁶⁹ See Letter from Niamey dated 15 Nov. 1957 to Neufinck, Chef de Cabinet du Haut-Commissaire Dakar, no. 1835/SP, unsigned; CAOM, Cart.2199/D.15: Djibo Bakary, 'formé dans les écoles de cadres para-communistes', was 'certainement le personnage le plus doué, le plus travailleur, le plus dynamique et le plus méthodique du personnel politique nigérien'.

¹⁷⁰ Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 181 ('relation organique').

¹⁷¹ Letter from Niamey dated 15 Nov. 1957 to Neufinck; *L'action communiste en A.O.F.*, 1955.

of courses on union work, either at PCF centres in France or through the so-called 'groupes d'études communistes' (GEC) that were active throughout francophone Africa.¹⁷² In addition, members of the PCF participated in conferences in Africa and occasionally visited UDN people in Niger, such as Bakary and Daouda Ardaly, a UDN militant from Niamey who attended a PCF youth festival in Paris in 1954.¹⁷³

Much of this, in fact, dated back to the days that members of the UDN were active in the PPN-RDA. Indeed, many African nationalists had enthusiastically accepted this aid when the RDA was still affiliated to the PCF. UDN members, in particular talakawa who were slowly pushing forward in the social hierarchy by their command of modern skills, saw no reason in foregoing this support. Men like Daouda Ardaly, Hima Dembélé and Dandouna Aboubakar—an illiterate joiner or cabinet maker who later learnt to read and write and worked his way up as union organiser in Maradi—continued interacting with the CGT or established new contacts with communist organisations in Eastern Europe.¹⁷⁴ This way the party managed to mobilise external resources for its struggle, in money or in kind.¹⁷⁵

Yet, all this did not amount to a formal link with the communist party, let alone the UDN's political subordination to it, however much the Soviet Bloc wished to integrate the UDN and kindred movements in its 'anti-imperialist' struggle against the West. Nor did it automatically mean that Bakary or the UDN professed a communist ideology. Bakary was quite frank about not being a communist, retrospectively referring in this context to being a Muslim believer. The UDN and its leader, early in 1956, stated that they strongly approved of the anti-colonial position of the communists. They were grateful for the services rendered by them to the party's struggle and refused to profess hostility towards them. At the ideological level, how-

¹⁷² Djibo, *Les transformations*, 57; Benoit, *l'Afrique Occidentale Française*, 228; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 53-4; Salifou, *Le Niger*, 64.

¹⁷³ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 501, 5 Jan. 1961 & 19 May 1961, annex; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; Présidence du Conseil. S.D.E.C.E., référence 7.894/IV, 2 June 1958; CAOM, Cart.2195/D.5.

¹⁷⁴ Bulletin de renseignements, 22 March 1957; CAOM, Cart.2198/D.2; *L'Action Communiste en A.O.F.*, July 1958 & Présidence du Conseil. SDECE, Notice de Documentation: *L'Action Communiste en Afrique Noire*, 17 Dec. 1958, Référence 14005/IV/K; both in CAOM, Cart.2246; Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de Dakar pour la période du 30 juillet au 5 août 1959, no. 41; CAOM, Cart.3687; interviews with Ali Amadou, Abdou Adam & Hamidou Adamou Abdoulaye, Niamey, 31 Jan. 2003, 29 Nov. 2003 & 19 Dec. 2009.

¹⁷⁵ Such as through the provision of plane tickets, a fact Bakary provocatively bragged about vis-à-vis his adversaries. See further Chapter 9.

ever, Bakary argued not to share the same ideas, nor those of the metropolitan socialists, and to reject Africa's submission to 'imported' ideologies. Rather, the continent's problems should be tackled by Africans themselves at first, and with the aid of others after, while taking into account 'African realities' and Africa's own human values. While giving pride of place to the talaka as the 'man of the people', this entailed an ideology that aimed to 'transcend the contradictions of ... Nigérien society', involving a range of different social echelons working together for the emancipation of the country from colonial rule and exploitation. In other words, Djibo Bakary articulated an impassioned *nationalist* discourse, with militant, Marxist-inspired undertones.¹⁷⁶

His claim that the RDA's association with the communists had been a 'simple tactical necessity' of metropolitan politics was, however, less than the entire truth.¹⁷⁷ This also became apparent after Bakary's alleged distancing from the communists in the course of the 1956 démarches and the supposed development of closer ties with the French metropolitan socialists later that year—manoeuvres which, whatever their veracity,¹⁷⁸ had hardly any effect on individual activists. From another angle, one could say that Bakary did not dissociate from the communists for the simple reason that he was not a real Marxist in the first place. Rather, he shared common interests with them that survived the tactical manoeuvres that were now taking place.

The Triumph of the Camel

After the failure of the UDN's rapprochement with the RDA, other realignments were attempted, with which parties tried to position themselves for the political sea change expected from the Loi Cadre. First, Condat's UPN merged into the BNA, something that bolstered the position of chiefly, predominantly eastern, interests. Then talks began between the BNA and PPN-RDA, which failed at the eleventh hour either because of disagreement between Issoufou Djermaakoye and Boubou Hama—political rivals since 1946—or because of metropolitan intervention on behalf of a new, SFIO-friendly, inter-territorial grouping that should include the UDN.

¹⁷⁶ See *Le Démocrate*, 4 Febr. 1956 (text Bakary, *Silence!*, 114 ff.). Also see Djibo, *Les transformations*, 58 and Benoist, 'Djibo Bakary parle', 102 ('idéologie importée'; 'nos réalités africaines'; 'l'homme du Peuple'; 'transcender les contradictions de [la] Société nigérienne').

¹⁷⁷ Bakary, *Silence!*, 118 ('une simple nécessité tactique').

¹⁷⁸ Fuglestad, 'Djibo Bakary', 318. I have found no evidence for either of these manoeuvres.

Whatever the truth of this latter contention, it squarely went against the preference of the administration for the PPN.¹⁷⁹

With several realignments having failed, Niger's political parties faced the electorate on their own during the country's first municipal elections, held on 18 November 1956 in Niamey and Zinder. These were urban centres where the UDN enjoyed strength. The prize consisted of fully elected councils and, for Niamey, an elected mayor.¹⁸⁰ The UDN had already publicly challenged the French not to interfere with electoral freedom in order for the *Loi Cadre* not to become a 'Loi Bluff'. During a fierce election campaign its organ mocked the parties, by which it had been shunned, for their 'silence' during the previous years for fear of irritating 'Lady Administration'.¹⁸¹ It argued it was UDN militants who had borne the brunt of colonial wrath, rather than the 'cowards' of the BNA and the 'braggarts' of the PPN, who would have helped to break some of the party's strike action for better wages. Neither the 'fat-cats of the elephant' (the RDA's symbol) nor the 'profiteers of the horse' (the chiefly symbol of the BNA) nor the 'waverers of UNIS' had dared to fight racial and social discrimination, heavy taxation of the urban population and oppression of the rural masses. And they knew full well that it was the UDN that had been the target of police harassment, judicial action, 'ideological slander' and administrative sanction precisely because it aspired to 'more well-being and freedom'. The party's organ concluded, however, by appealing to 'all men of good will' to assist in the triumph of the only party loyal to the cause of unity without exclusion of others and to help ameliorate 'the fate of all segments of the population'.¹⁸²

If the electorate did not read its diatribes, at least they set the tone of the campaign. The allusion to wider social ambitions and the presentation of the party as a social movement aspiring to unite the country's political and social groups under its nationalist guidance delivered, at any rate, tangible results. For the first time the UDN emerged as the largest party, taking 21 seats out of a total of 54—27 for Niamey and Zinder each—, more

¹⁷⁹ Most reliable on this point appears to be Djibo, *Les transformations*, 56-8. Also see Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 45, 49, 186-187 and Talba, *Une contribution*, 47.

¹⁸⁰ Fuglestad, *History of Niger*, 182 and Salifou, *Le Niger*, 165.

¹⁸¹ *Le Démocrate*, no. 57, 30 June 1956 and *Ibid.*, no. 65, 17 Nov. 1956 (latter as extract in Mayaki, *Les partis politiques nigériens*, 58-60). Also Talba, *Une contribution* ('mutisme'; 'Dame Administration').

¹⁸² See *Le Démocrate*, no. 65, 17 Nov. 1956 ('lâches'; 'matamores'; 'les « engraisés » de l'éléphant'; 'les profiteurs du cheval'; 'les hésitants de l'UNIS'; 'calomnies idéologiques'; 'plus de bien-être et de liberté'; 'tous les hommes de bonne volonté'; 'améliorer le sort de toutes les couches de la population'). Also see Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 186.

or less evenly divided over both cities. With 11 seats it became the first party of Zinder, the BNA being a fair runner-up (9), the PPN lagging behind with 4 and the remainder going to a local list. Even in the capital, located in a PPN-dominated district, Bakary's men managed to capture 10 seats, ending second behind the PPN-RDA (13), the BNA trailing with 4. While the PPN's victory in Niamey demonstrated its electoral stamina, the overall results showed that it had overplayed its hand in the previous talks with political rivals.

The UDN, having substantially reinforced its position as compared with the metropolitan elections in January but still without a majority, started talks with the BNA. There is conflicting evidence about how these talks and a subsequent agreement came about. Before the elections Bakary had sounded friendly signals, even to Niger's Association des Chefs, with a plea to avoid fratricidal conflicts.¹⁸³ The sudden failure of the PPN-BNA talks, a few weeks before polling day, now provided him with a golden opportunity to outmanoeuvre the PPN. Either Bakary would have approached Issoufou Djermakoye or the latter would have got in touch with the leader of the UDN—as seems to be suggested by the witness to their talks, Adamou Mayaki, and the trade-off agreed between the two parties: without consulting its followers, the BNA offered its support to Bakary to obtain Niamey's mayorship in exchange for the BNA getting the deputy mayorship in Zinder, where it was the second party in strength. Shared hatred of Bou-bou Hama, also intent on Niamey's mayorship, would have undergirded this accord. More importantly, it was reinforced by a surprise announcement on 19 November, the day after the polls, that both parties would merge into Niger's section of a new inter-territorial group called 'Mouvement Socialiste Africain' (MSA) to be founded afterwards.¹⁸⁴

While the merged party became formally known as 'MSA-Niger' (or 'Massa', in the popular parlance), in practice it continued to be called by the informal designation of its UDN component—'Sawaba'. Sawaba's provisional ruling committee, presided over by Djermakoye, had Bakary as secretary-general, with Amadou dit Gabriel, co-founder of the UDN, as second vice-president and Diop Issa, UDN member and an electrical engineer from Senegal, as second assistant secretary. Although the first vice-

¹⁸³ Bakary suggested the rapprochement began in the east. Rapport moral présenté par le secrétaire général du mouvement socialiste africain (M.S.A.), no date, but presented at the second party congress in May 1957 (text in Talba, *Une contribution*).

¹⁸⁴ Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 186 and 190-191; Benoist, 'Djibo Bakary parle', 108; Mayaki, *Les partis politiques nigériens*, 60; Talba, *Une contribution*, 43; Fuglestad, 'UNIS and BNA', 132.

president and first assistant secretary were members of the BNA, the UDN wielded substantial influence in the new formation, something that became clear from the MSA's political programme. This vowed, among other objectives, to fight all forms of oppression and discrimination and to defend the interests of its urban and rural supporters alike. This would include assistance for trade unions and a broad programme to improve social security as well as credit aid for a whole range of urban occupations—petty traders, all manner of artisans, i.e. the little people that made up the UDN's core.¹⁸⁵

The programme also supported the peasantry by calling for abolition of 'servitudes incompatible with individual freedom and human dignity'; defence against abuses committed in the course of tax collection; and the banning of expropriation of land and of the 'dîme', an unpopular tax amounting to ten per cent of a Muslim's annual income that chiefs regarded as due to them. This part of the MSA's programme—or rather, Sawaba's—went squarely against the interests of the country's chiefs. Several other provisions hardly constituted adequate recompense for this in view of their ambiguity: political education of the chiefs and 'restoration' of their institution; support for their 'legitimate demands'; their 'genuine democratisation'; direct intervention to resolve conflicts between chiefs and the talakawa; abolition of customs that were at variance with harmonious relations between the two; safeguarding the 'normal prerogatives of the chiefs'; and the banning of all servility that could damage the interests of the masses and the chiefs' prestige. Undoubtedly, some of these provisions were inserted at the behest of the BNA. Yet, they could be equally construed as menacing the interests of its chiefly supporters and hinting at the influence that the UDN had exerted over the programme. Moreover, while the merger ensured Niger's chiefs a say under the new dispensation of the Loi Cadre, the political compromise, brilliant from the point of view of the UDN, also extended to the field of symbols, so vital in the electoral politics of an underdeveloped society: adopting, for the time being, the yellow of the BNA, Sawaba continued under the UDN's symbol of endurance—the camel.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵ It specifically named butchers, cattle and groundnut traders, 'dioulas' (Muslim long-distance traders), bakers, tailors, cobblers, blacksmiths, tanners, weavers, potters, and dry cleaners. Programme d'action de la section nigérienne du M.S.A. (26/12/1956), Niamey, 8 Febr. 1957 (text in Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 395-400). Mayaki, *Les partis politiques nigériens*, 63; Bakary, *Silence!*, 168; Salifou, *Le Niger*, 166; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 192 and 394; and Djibo, *Les transformations*, 63.

¹⁸⁶ Programme d'action de la section nigérienne du M.S.A.; Bakary, *Silence!*, 168; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 210; Olivier de Sardan, *Les sociétés Songhay-Zarma*, 224 ff; Fuglestad,

As MSA-Niger, Sawaba was to come into contact with the socialists of SFIO.¹⁸⁷ This was the outcome of the post-electoral deal between UDN and BNA rather than of any premeditated accord between Bakary and outgoing Governor Ramadier.¹⁸⁸ Bakary denied having had contacts with SFIO before February 1958 and argued that the merger was the result of local circumstance rather than metropolitan socialist interference—the notion of a socialist inter-territorial grouping matching well with his Marxist-inspired nationalism and desire to break the UDN's federal isolation.¹⁸⁹ The merger, in fact, represented a triple coup for Bakary, since it provided Sawaba with control of the two largest cities, ended its inter-territorial isolation and gave it official representatives in Paris (Condat, Mayaki and Djermakoye sitting on different metropolitan bodies). In his retrospective autobiography he consequently portrayed the merger as the imposition of Sawaba's political line, even though it also constituted a positive, if uneasy, move for the BNA, which no longer benefited from administrative favour and required allies to protect its interests under the democratising changes of the Loi Cadre.¹⁹⁰

The PPN-RDA, outflanked, was furious. Its members on the city council boycotted the meeting that led to the election of Djibo Bakary as mayor of the capital, seconded by Diop Issa as his first deputy. Mobilising all their support in the RDA, the PPN councillors tendered their resignation. Governor Bordier then dissolved the council and announced new elections to

History of Niger, 183 ('servitudes incompatibles avec la liberté individuelle et la dignité humaine'; 'rénovation'; 'légitimes revendications'; 'véritable démocratisation de la chefferie'; 'primauté des contacts directs pour résoudre les conflits'; 'prérogatives normales de la chefferie').

¹⁸⁷ Fluchard (*Le PPN-RDA*, 190) claims Bakary had agreed during his merger talks with the BNA to send a letter to Jacques Duclos of the PCF to notify his resignation from the CGT and another one to adhere officially to SFIO. The first letter might have involved his membership, for the CGT, of the metropolitan Economic and Social Council, which ended early in 1957. Bakary would also have issued a declaration condemning the Soviet invasion of Hungary. Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 272. But see note 178 above.

¹⁸⁸ Possibly, Issoufou Djermakoye, who entertained close relations with SFIO since the 1940s, played a role here, as suggested by Bakary, *Silence!*, 168. On the mistaken role of governor Ramadier in this, see note 162 above. The contention by Chaffard (*Les carnets secrets*) that Bakary was forced by the governor to engage in the merger under the auspices of SFIO and therefore owed his ascendancy to Ramadier was discounted in Djibo, *Les transformations*, 56-58. Bakary was too self-assured to be bullied.

¹⁸⁹ Benoist, 'Djibo Bakary parle', 108 and Bakary, *Silence!*, 167-168. Fuglestad's reference (*History of Niger*, 182-183) to close links being established between MSA and SFIO is contradicted by the autonomy claimed by the former's territorial sections and the latter's acquiescence in this. Benoist, *l'Afrique Occidentale Française*, 325.

¹⁹⁰ Bakary, *Silence!*, 168 and Fuglestad, *History of Niger*, 183.

force the inclusion of other groups—a step that went too far for it clearly demonstrated his political preferences. In a humiliating development, the colonial minister forced him to retract his measure. Bordier then sent Bakary, Djermakoye and Hamani Diori to Paris to confer with Houphouët-Boigny, minister in the metropolitan government for the RDA, to hammer out an accord. In an agreement of 30 November 1956, signed by Diori and Houphouët and—for MSA—Djermakoye and an official of SFIO, the PPN agreed to co-operate with the municipal council in exchange for a new election of the mayor and his deputies. It stipulated that the mayorship would go to the MSA and one deputy post to both parties each and prohibited any objections to their nominations.¹⁹¹ Nine days later Niamey's council reconvened. Bakary, guarding a superior silence throughout the meeting, was the sole candidate for the mayorship and re-elected by all members of the council. Diop Issa settled for the second deputy post to make way for Boubou Hama as first deputy, who declared the PPN had no more reason not to co-operate with the MSA, warm applause being his due.¹⁹²

At Bakary's residence the election of the little folk's spokesman as principal official of the capital was celebrated in jubilation.¹⁹³ Notwithstanding Boubou Hama's newly declared loyalty, however, the PPN had no intention of accepting defeat in grace. In an internal circular Diori claimed the MSA was a dishonest ploy to wrest Niamey's government from the PPN. The party would, by ostensibly co-operating, foment discord, letting the MSA's internal contradictions do their work. Diori vowed to use every occasion to denounce 'this hybrid monster'. This also pointed to a fundamental problem of the merger: how could the MSA unite people as different as, say, Saloum Traoré (a UDN member from Soudan active in the union world) and someone like the Sultan (Sarkin) of Zinder?¹⁹⁴ While the MSA opened the way for Sawaba to penetrate the historical chiefdoms of Gobir, Katsina and Damagaram (Zinder) in the centre and east,¹⁹⁵ the merger with the BNA represented an alliance of forces with contradictory interests.

¹⁹¹ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 58–59; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 190–191; Bakary, *Silence!*, 167. Text of agreement in Talba, *Une contribution*, 44–45.

¹⁹² Procès Verbal. Session de déc. 1956 du conseil municipal de Niamey and Rapport sur la séance du conseil municipal de Niamey, du 9 déc.; both CAOM, Cart.2185/D.4.

¹⁹³ Talba, *Une contribution*, 46.

¹⁹⁴ Diori falsely alleged that the MSA was simply the result of administrative pressure. Parti Progressiste Nigérien (Section Nigérienne du R.D.A.) no. 263/CD: Circulaire (undated but ca. 30 Nov. 1956; CAOM, Cart.2185/D.4 ('ce monstre hybride')).

¹⁹⁵ C. Raynaud and S. Abba, 'Trente ans d'indépendance: repères et tendances', *Politique Africaine*, 1990, no. 38, 7.

Its announcement at a meeting in Niamey met with some disbelief from a rank and file¹⁹⁶ that was carving out a new existence in the country's semi-urbanised worlds. The exploration by Sawaba's little people of the widening horizons of a cautious modernisation hardly seemed to be served by a deal with social forces that symbolised the confines of the quasi-traditional life they were trying to break. Djibo Bakary, however, was quite aware that if his movement was to achieve the social changes it craved, circumstance required a deal with political forces that could substantially expand Sawaba's following.¹⁹⁷ Since an accord with the country's 'commis' could not deliver the necessary numbers and was at any rate ruled out by the PPN, Bakary had no alternative but to turn to the chiefly representatives of the BNA. Its necessity in terms of realpolitik, moreover, went much further than control of municipal councils, because under the universal suffrage of the Loi Cadre the MSA could deliver Sawaba a majority in the general elections scheduled for 1957. Hence, party strategists did their best to win over chiefly leaders to their side. For example, in Bosso on the banks of Lake Chad, the local sub-canton sector chief, Aba Kaka, as well as the town's sarkin samari, were brought round with the promise of Bosso's rehabilitation as a full-blown chieftaincy, which had earlier been suppressed by the French to the advantage of a rival town.¹⁹⁸

Sawaba's leader was thus determined to sell the merger to his UDN base.¹⁹⁹ Smelling power, a circular published in December 1956 spoke of a decisive turning point, rendering the electoral accord with the RDA as valid for Niamey only. The MSA leadership promised to tour the country to explain the merger with the BNA and pleaded for calm within the ranks. Now that the people were on the verge of taking control of their own affairs, the era of propaganda had to make way for effective action. As a reassurance to its UDN militants, Niger's chiefs were warned that their interests lay in co-operation in a movement respecting everyone's legitimate demands. The party promised to mediate conflicts between chiefs and peasants. It explained that the merger endowed it with representatives in France and, more boldly, that it would deliver control of two-thirds of Niger's Territorial Assembly. The party would strive for the satisfaction of 'the legitimate demands of all social categories' and the 'political emancipation'

¹⁹⁶ Talba, *Une contribution*, 43.

¹⁹⁷ See his arguments in his autobiography (*Silence!*, 168-169).

¹⁹⁸ Interviews with Katiella Ari Gaptia and Aba Kaka, Bosso, Lake Chad, 13 Febr. 2006.

¹⁹⁹ The BNA did not face this need as it was governed top-down. Fuglestad, 'UNIS and BNA', 132.

of Niger in the framework of a 'real French Union'. The followers of the UDN and BNA should know that the 'sign of greatness' lay in 'dying in oneself to be reborn in the greatest number'. The sole objective now was to rise above the 'resentments of the past' and take on the concrete responsibilities of the country's affairs.²⁰⁰

This was easier said than done. Bakary realised that taking on board the chiefly barons of the BNA required a huge adjustment from his followers, provoking 'delicate problems'. But he was determined to resolve them, fired by nationalist conviction and the popular activism inside the UDN.²⁰¹ By the end of the year, the first territorial congress of MSA-Niger approved Sawaba's political line, which argued for a socialist solution to underdevelopment, though with due regard to Africa's 'originality' and Niger's 'real conditions'. The next month Bakary added to his international stature with the formation of the MSA's inter-territorial group, of which he became secretary-general, uniting political parties from Senegal, Soudan, Mauritanie, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Niger and creating a federal group that could rival the RDA.²⁰²

This was followed, in February 1957, by a grand tour of the country. In a convoy of three Land Rovers, Bakary, together with leaders of the BNA, travelled right up to Maïné-Soroa in the far east, appeasing the party faithful, explaining the new political strategy and, in the process, canvassing for votes for the parliamentary polls scheduled for 31 March. Popular reaction, it was claimed, was jubilant, the party delegation everywhere greeted with ecstatic rallying calls: 'Sawaba! Sawaba sawkiga Allah!'.²⁰³ This enthusiasm was certainly felt in Zinder, where one of the largest meetings took place.²⁰⁴ While MSA and PPN actively canvassed for support in the countryside, the MSA's stronghold in Zinder saw little formal campaigning since

²⁰⁰ Circulaire, Bureau Provisoire, MSA, 9 Dec. 1956 (in Mayaki, *Les partis politiques nigériens*, 66-68 ('des légitimes revendications de toutes les catégories sociales'; 'l'émancipation politique'; 'véritable Union Française'; 'le signe de la grandeur'; 'mourir en soi pour renaître dans le plus grand nombre'; 'les ranceurs du passé').

²⁰¹ Bakary, *Silence!*, 169 and Rapport moral présenté par le secrétaire général du mouvement socialiste africain ('problèmes délicats').

²⁰² Rapport moral présenté par le secrétaire général du mouvement socialiste africain (M.S.A.); Bakary, *Silence!*, 169-170; Benoist, *l'Afrique Occidentale Française*, 325 ('originalité'; 'des conditions réelles').

²⁰³ Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 198 and 215. 'Sawaba! Sawaba the Blessing of God!' (translation courtesy of Issa Younoussi).

²⁰⁴ Mayaki, *Les partis politiques nigériens*, 68 and Bakary, *Silence!*, 170.



Photo 1.5 Djibo Bakary (*Les raisons de notre lutte*, 9).

both parties regarded the result there as a foregone conclusion.²⁰⁵ More generally, the party was sure that success could no longer elude it and that Niger's little people, urban and rural, would rally in large numbers to its call for their relief. With the rural electorate of central and eastern Niger added to its union base and the youth vote, swollen by the introduction of universal suffrage, this indeed proved the case. Scoring nearly two-thirds of the overall vote (64 per cent), the MSA captured 41 of the Assembly's seats, leaving only 19 for the PPN-RDA. It got over 80 per cent of the votes in the populous centre and east, more than half of the votes cast in the far east and an impressive 37 per cent in the west.²⁰⁶ In compliance with the *Loi Cadre*, Djibo Bakary was appointed 'vice-président' of the 'Conseil de Gouvernement', or *de facto* prime minister, and was invited by the French to form Niger's first autonomous government. Sawaba was victorious.

²⁰⁵ Rapport sur le moral. Le Colonel Barbotu (?), délégué du commandant militaire pour le Niger Est à Monsieur le Général commandant la 4^{ème} Brigade, Niamey. Elections Territoriales, Zinder, 3 Apr. 1957; SHAT, 5 H 239.

²⁰⁶ Charlick, *Niger*, 49; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 198-199; and Fuglestad, *History of Niger*, 184.

CHAPTER TWO

TO REVOLUTIONARY SUPREMACY, MARCH 1957–MAY 1958

'Not everything is rosy for the MSA in Niger', observed Djibo Bakary in a speech at his party's second territorial congress, a month after his election victory.¹ The PPN-RDA had done better than expected, winning in five western districts (Dogondoutchi, Filingué, Tillabéri, Dosso and Niamey), although Téra went to the MSA. Bakary spoke of the PPN's revival, which, he claimed, it owed to the French administration. He set out to criticise some of the electoral achievements of his own party, expressing disappointment about the number of votes scored in some central and eastern districts, which had swollen by universal suffrage and the merger with the BNA but not increased as much as he had wished.² In these districts, it was independent candidates rather than the PPN that had snatched votes from the party. Bakary also lamented the turnout rate, which in Niger's rural setting was always very low and in this election, though varying considerably from region to region, overall barely reached 29 per cent.³ He squarely blamed this on the PPN-RDA, which would have presented the MSA as an ally of 'feudalism', i.e. the chiefs, leading thousands of potential voters to stay away.⁴ Furthermore, of the 41 parliamentary seats that the MSA had gained at least 25 had gone to members of the former BNA.⁵

¹ Rapport moral présenté par le secrétaire général du mouvement socialiste africain (M.S.A.), no date, (text in A. Talba, *Une contribution à l'étude des partis politiques nigériens: Le témoignage de Adamou Mayaki* (Bordeaux, 1984) ('Tout n'est pas rose pour le MSA au Niger').

² The combined vote of the UDN and BNA was, indeed, 2 per cent lower than in the metropolitan polls of Jan. 1956. F. Fuglestad, 'Djibo Bakary, the French, and the Referendum of 1958 in Niger', *Journal of African History*, 14 (1973), 324.

³ C. Maman, *Répertoire biographique des personnalités de la classe politique et des leaders d'opinion du Niger de 1945 à nos jours* (Niamey, 1999) vol. 1, 40. The northern turnout, always lower owing to its nomadic population, was 13 per cent, thus depressing the figure in other regions. In the east it was 35.6 per cent. C. Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA et la décolonisation du Niger 1946-1960* (Paris, 1995), 199.

⁴ Rapport moral présenté par le secrétaire général du mouvement socialiste africain. Also see Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 199 and F. Fuglestad, *A History of Niger 1850-1960* (Cambridge, 1983), 184.

⁵ M. Djibo, *Les transformations politiques au Niger à la veille de l'indépendance* (Paris, 2001), 60, n. 4.

Yet, Bakary's criticism was not without some conceit and, in fact, obscured the momentous victory achieved by his movement. Rather, it was evidence of his confidence and exemplified his desire to incite the party faithful to work towards even greater triumphs.⁶ For the camel's victory meant that Sawaba's social revolution was now under way, or so it seemed at least in many UDN quarters. As the righter of Niger's wrongs said himself, the cry of 'Sawaba', heard across the length and breadth of the Sahel, represented a 'cry of hope and courage', expressing the will of a people that things would change. 'Our Sawaba' had the duty to lead 'the masses ... to happiness and prosperity' and should not regard the election victory as an end in itself but as a means to ameliorate the fate of the rural and urban masses. For this, it was not enough for the rank and file to wave with the party manifesto. Each militant should maintain vigilance so that 'each peasant, each worker, each artisan, each petty trader' would feel that the party was on his side, ready to render assistance.⁷

Bakary's problems, indeed, lay precisely there—in the fact that his victory constituted the unmistakable advance of a social movement, besides the electoral triumph of a political formation. Now that Sawaba was entering the corridors of power, this movement gained momentum, unleashing energies that had been stymied for many years and at present rode on the exciting waves of political conquest. Bakary, the revolutionary, was not immune to this euphoria and for a moment lost control of himself in his speech to the party faithful.⁸ He blamed the country's chiefs, many of whom were now supposed to be his allies, for what he had presented as setbacks in certain districts, arguing that, with the exception of 'some sincere friends among the traditional chiefs', most had combated the party's lists, especially in Dogondoutchi, Tahoua, Maradi, and Gouré in the east. He advised the ranks not to count on the friendship of Niger's chiefs simply because some of them had been co-opted into the party. Claiming that the political influence of 'feudal institutions' had weakened and would continue to decline, Bakary warned that Sawaba would defend those chiefs who were its friends but never support the country's chieftaincies as an institution. The elections had shown that one should not believe the promises made by the majority of traditional leaders. And to underline that he

⁶ See Rapport moral présenté par le secrétaire général du mouvement socialiste africain, section III, last paragraph.

⁷ *Ibid.*, *passim* ('cri d'espoir et de courage'; 'les masses ... vers le bonheur et la prospérité'; 'chaque paysan, chaque ouvrier, chaque artisan, chaque petit commerçant').

⁸ Synthèse des événements politiques qui ont précédé au Niger l'élection du conseil du Gouvernement. Très confidentiel; CAOM, Cart.2187/D.7.

meant business, Bakary asked the congress to approve the replacement of the party's presidency with a 'collective secretariat'. The elimination of the presidency was proposed by Abdoulaye Mamani, the union worker from Zinder, and hit directly at Issoufou Djermakoye, the MSA's chairman and BNA leader who had been defeated in his own district by the PPN and was absent from the congress.⁹

While this was to have repercussions for the stability of his government, it is difficult to see how Bakary could have avoided, at this juncture, some of these attacks. Speaking about 'our Sawaba' instead of MSA demonstrated that he had to satisfy his own rank and file, represented by the boisterous wing of little folk and related groups who had already shown, according to the governor, extreme passions during the MSA's first congress a few months earlier. Bordier, in reporting to Paris, pointed to the absence of unity in the party, considering it a 'heterogeneous entity' whose cohesion was precarious. The party consisted, in fact, of two opposing wings, which in their struggle for internal supremacy developed their distinctive labels: 'moderate' in the case of the BNA and 'hardline' or 'progressive' for the ex-UDN, which, in respect of its aspiration for comprehensive social change, was regarded by its founder as nothing less than 'revolutionary'. According to the French the UDN wing, led by Mamani, was not completely free from communist influence.¹⁰

While trying to balance these forces, Bakary had actually pitted the congress against the chiefs. Temporarily losing control of the conference's direction, he was forced to allow his 'Young Turks', as the French called them, some room to let off steam.¹¹ Some of these hardliners were not adolescents anymore (being around 25 to 30 years old). Yet, in Hausa society age was also seen in cultural terms. As participation in politics meant engaging in argument, making provocative jokes, telling lies or even using violence, it was associated with the young ('yara')—who by definition had low social status—, rather than the traditionally defined behaviour of the elders. This

⁹ Ibid.; Rapport moral présenté par le secrétaire général du mouvement socialiste africain, *passim*; and Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 199 and 204 ('quelques amis sincères parmi les chefs traditionnels'; 'les institutions à caractère féodal'; 'secrétariat collectif').

¹⁰ Rapport moral présenté par le secrétaire général du mouvement socialiste africain, *passim*; Le chef du territoire du Niger, P. Bordier, to Monsieur le Haut-Commissaire de la République en A.O.F., 20 May 1957. Très confidentiel; CAOM, Pol. Cart.2187/D.7; Section de Coord. no. 78 (or 3) 4 SC.FOM. Bulletin de renseignements, 22 March 1957; CAOM, Cart.2198/D.2; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 60 ('rassemblement hétérogène').

¹¹ Synthèse des événements politiques qui ont précédé ...



Photo 2.1 Sallé Dan Koulou – one of the few known pictures of him
(*Sawaba*, Dec. 1964).

also required political leaders to behave in the style of the *yara*.¹² Culturally 'young', many of *Sawaba*'s hardliners had managed to make a formidable advance in their professional career when the camel prevailed, considering themselves the spokesmen of Niger's petty folk. Thus, Ousmane Dan Galadima, the assistant interpreter from Madaoua, actually hailed from a chiefly family but was already known for his role as an agitator; he was elected MP for Madaoua (though by then he had apparently not been represented on the party's ruling body for more than a year). Sallé Dan Koulou, a humble clerk working in the transmissions department of the postal services, was elected MP for his home town of Tessaoua. Amadou dit Gabriel, with a similar professional background, had risen to the vice-presidency of the MSA before its dissolution and became deputy mayor of Niamey. At a later date, he was to work closely with Adamou Sékou, the judicial clerk from Téra. Sékou, with a Ponty background, had worked for the French military in Madagascar and was a hardened militant with a gift for drafting political tracts. He was elected for the important constituency of Maradi and three months later invited to become the party's organisational secretary.¹³

¹² M. Last, 'Towards a Political History of Youth in Muslim Northern Nigeria, 1750-2000', in J. Abbink and I. van Kessel (eds), *Vanguard or Vandals: Youth, Politics and Conflict in Africa* (Leiden and Boston, 2005), ch. 2.

¹³ Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, 231 and 378; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 205, 384 and 394; Parti *Sawaba*. Pour l'Indépendance effective du Niger: Les raisons de notre lutte (Bureau du Parti *Sawaba*: Bamako, 15 Jan. 1961), 66; Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de Dakar pour la période du 20 au 26 août 1959, no. 44; CAOM, Cart. 3687; interviews Sao Marakan & Harou Kouka, Niamey, 16 Nov. 2002/26 Nov. 2003 ('secrétaire à l'organisation').

The hardliners expressed open hostility to the chiefs, arguing, as Bakary had insinuated in his speech, for the suppression of them as an institution.¹⁴ Later, in August 1957, Adamou Sékou, having risen to interim secretary-general, issued a communiqué to MSA militants discouraging them from co-operating with the Association des Chefs.¹⁵ At the congress UDN activists had few problems in making their weight felt. They took control of the key positions of the new secretariat or bureau headed by Bakary, who was seconded by Diop Issa, Bokar (Aboubakar) Touré, the bookkeeper from Niamey and co-founder and treasurer of the UDN, Adamou Sékou and Pascal Diawara, party militant from the very beginning. Together they could dominate the BNA members on the bureau, who included Georges Condat, Tiémoko Coulibaly, Adamou Mayaki and Issoufou Djermakoye.¹⁶ Bakary thus reiterated his belief in socialism as the only viable solution to Niger's problems.¹⁷ Tellingly, the congress decided to adopt the blue of the UDN as the new colour of the party, whose name was officially changed into 'MSA-Sawaba'.¹⁸ Since the BNA wing was a typical 'patron' party, i.e. a party with little membership participation, poor discipline and vulnerability to internal strife,¹⁹ it had great difficulty in coping with the determination of a fighting machine such as the UDN.

The rifts that this created inside the MSA were caused not only by Niger's social contradictions, as the hostility between chiefly members and the UDN's little people overlapped in part with generational tensions. In a society where a premium was set on respect for seniority, many MSA moderates considered it unbearable to be under the tutelage of boisterous radicals who were usually younger than themselves. Yacouba Siddo, a 'commis' and career politician in the BNA who had accumulated numerous

¹⁴ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 60.

¹⁵ Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 205.

¹⁶ Synthèse des événements politiques qui ont précédé ... ; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 394.

¹⁷ Although he added that it should be adapted to the realities of the country and that socialism could not be equated with any particular socialist party. The congress adopted a resolution emphasising the party's 'organic independence' from metropolitan groups, while maintaining relations with SFIO. Rapport moral présenté par le secrétaire général du mouvement socialiste africain, section VII; Synthèse des événements politiques qui ont précédé ... ; telegrams Bordier to France Outre-Mer, nos. 44-5 and 46-7, 7 & 10 May 1957; CAOM, Cart.2198/D.2.

¹⁸ D. Bakary, *Silence! On décolonise: Itinéraire politique et syndical d'un militant africain* (Paris, 1992), 168; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 59; interview Oumarou Janba, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003. The blue may initially have been copied from UNIS, an eastern party, and point to the east's importance in the UDN.

¹⁹ See on this F. Fuglestad, 'UNIS and BNA: The Rôle of "Traditionalist" Parties in Niger, 1948-1960', *Journal of African History*, 16 (1975), 113-114.

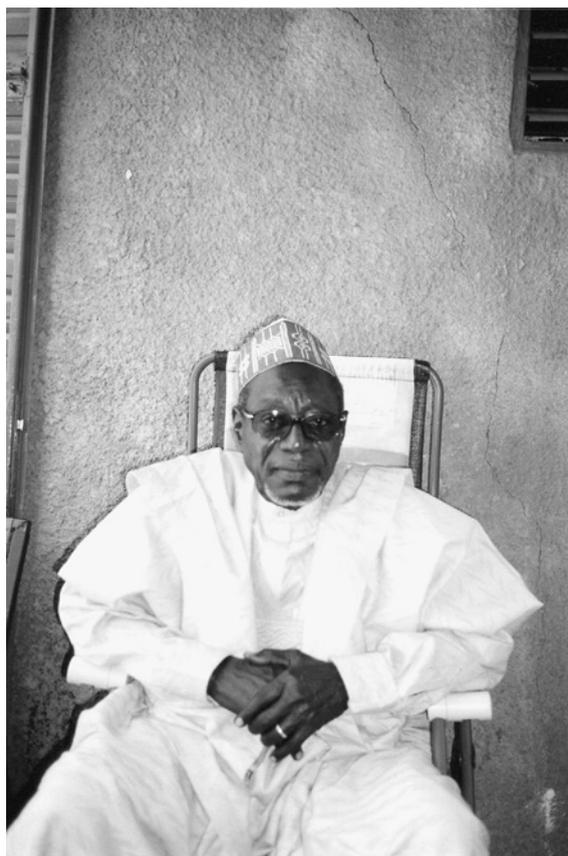


Photo 2.2 Gonimi Boukar, Niamey, 2005.

official functions and was by then in his forties, was the *bête noire* of the young rank and file. He was thrown from the MSA's bureau, although he had been re-elected MP for Zinder.²⁰

The consequences were not slow in coming. The chiefs temporarily forgot their differences, with some 20 former BNA members threatening to leave the party both because of the attacks by hardliners and in an effort to gain representation on parliamentary and government bodies, where few important places were reserved for people really representative of the BNA. Thus, while membership on the parliamentary committees was fair-

²⁰ Synthèse des événements politiques qui ont précédé ... ; Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, 381-382; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 392.

ly balanced, the actual partition of posts betrayed a good understanding among members of the UDN of the workings of power. The social affairs committee was typically controlled by the UDN, with its chairman, though of BNA extraction, sympathetic to the party and Abdoulaye Mamani in the crucial role of rapporteur. The same position was held by Dan Galadima in the economic affairs committee, by Maurice Camara, a veterinary specialist from Guinea and pro-UDN, on the 'Committee of Finance' and by Mounkeïla Issifi, teacher and UDN MP for Téra, on the 'Committee on Various Affairs'. The 'Permanent Committee' was dominated by the UDN, with three of its members being UDN or sympathetic to it: Malick N'Diaye, a Senegalese born in Madaoua who had been an MP for UNIS; Gonimi Boukar (Boucar), a teacher from Maïné-Soroa loyal to the UDN wing; and, again, the energetic Dan Galadima. The less important committees were more or less relegated to the BNA, as was the presidency of the Assembly, which was given to Georges Condat, and the vice-presidencies. The 'quaestorships' (parliamentary officers in charge of financial-organisational matters), however, fell into the hands of Adamou Sékou and Hima Dembélé, the former cinema operator who was editor of the UDN's organ *Sawaba*.²¹

The rebellion of disgruntled BNA members was led by Pierre Vidal and Issoufou Djermakoye, but failed in its objective because of internal divisions between the party's patrons and superior manoeuvring by Bakary. Vidal, a French businessman, had major interests in Niger's construction industry and transport sector. Although president of Niger's Assembly until the elections, he was, like Issoufou Djermakoye, beaten in the district of Dosso and hoped for a comeback by forcing new elections. He had, moreover, an axe to grind with Bakary, who had put him down as an exploiter of Niger's petty traders and transport workers. With the help of his fortune, he hoped to strike an alliance between BNA dissidents and the PPN-RDA. For this he tried to use Djermakoye, who in exchange expected a PPN MP for Dosso to step down in his favour. Djermakoye, however, had been weakened by his electoral defeat and was not very popular among other members of his party, such as Adamou Mayaki, Condat and Tiémoko Coulibaly. Many of these originated from the east, which had strengthened its position in the party since the elections. BNA members like Condat and May-

²¹ Telegram Bordier to France Outre-Mer, no. 53, 12 May 1957; CAOM, Cart.2198/D.2; Maman, *Répertoire biographique, passim* ('Commission des Affaires Sociales et du Travail'; 'Commission des Affaires Economiques et du Plan'; 'Commission des Finances'; 'Commission Permanente'; 'Commission des Affaires Diverses').

aki were firmly opposed to any rapprochement with the RDA, which as a 'commis'-based party had demonstrated as much hostility to chiefly institutions as the UDN. When Vidal saw his intentions unveiled, he backtracked, leaving Djermakoye to face the wrath of the MSA. Since Bakary had taken care to include him on the party bureau and had Condat offer him a senator post in France by way of compensation for the suppression of the party presidency, Djermakoye ended up as the scapegoat and lost all rights to a post in the cabinet. By contrast, Vidal agreed to bring the dissidents back to the party fold in return for a government position. Disliked by the little folk of the UDN, his fortune made him a strategic partner for Bakary, who offered him the post of minister of public health. Mayaki, too, backed down, denying that there ever were plans for 'secession'. In negotiating a post, he evinced 'incredible palinodes', according to Bordier, and beat his own record in changing positions. When he was denied the finance ministry, he settled for a position on the federal 'Grand Conseil' in Dakar.²²

In the middle of these complex manoeuvres was Bakary, who, strengthened by his designation as government leader,²³ emerged as the MSA's supreme arbiter, balancing the different wings, making concessions or denying favours. The definitive distribution of government posts was, nevertheless, highly uneven. The UDN gained six ministerial seats against three for members of the BNA—some of whom were very close to the UDN, such as Tiémoko Coulibaly, postal worker from Soudan (animal husbandry) and Amadou Aboubakar dit Kaou, a teacher from the south-western town of Gaya but elected MP for Tessaoua (economic affairs). Diop Issa, who had been elected for the UDN in the eastern town of Magaria, became minister of finance; Maïga Abdoulaye, an old UDN companion of Bakary and veterinary specialist from Soudan, became minister of the civil service; Issaka Koké, UDN parliamentarian for Gouré and Ponty-educated vet, minister of public works; Adamou (H)assane Mayaki dit Ghazi, UDN member from Dosso and one of the first farming engineers in the country, minister of agriculture; and Saloum Traoré, the union worker from Soudan and book-keeper, minister of social affairs. The only French member of government, besides Pierre Vidal of the BNA, was Robert Fréminé, teacher and dean of

²² Bordier to Monsieur le Haut-Commissaire de la République en A.O.F., 20 May 1957; Synthèse des événements politiques qui ont précédé ... ; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 60-63; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 201-205; Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, 403 ('incroyables palinodies').

²³ All party sections save that of Dosso, which preferred Condat, put him forward as their candidate, whereupon the French asked him to form a government. Synthèse des événements politiques qui ont précédé au Niger l'élection du conseil du Gouvernement.



Photo 2.3 Adamou Assane Mayaki (*La Voix Libérée*, no. 1, March-April 2011, 41).

the ‘Collège de Niamey’—a non-partisan, who became minister of youth and education. With two exceptions, the African ministers were between 31 and 37 years old.²⁴

This was, hence, very much a ‘Sawaba’ government. With only the PPN-RDA voting against, it had little difficulty in gaining the Assembly’s approval. The vote of confidence, on 18 May 1957, was only marred by the absence of Amadou Mayaki—disenchanted over his exclusion from the cabinet—and two abstentions. The latter constituted a quiet protest by Robert Dumoulin, a French entrepreneur elected for the MSA’s progressive wing in Tahoua, and UDN hardliner Ousmane Dan Galadima, who crossed out Vidal’s name and denounced his ministerial appointment as ‘scandalous’.²⁵ While pointing at underlying tensions among the rank and file, party discipline was maintained, notably in the election for the federal Grand Conseil, for which mistrusted MPs were closely watched by dependable whips up to the moment of depositing voting bulletins in the ballot box. Four MSA members were designated in this way including Maurice

²⁴ *Annuaire Politique du Niger* (Paris & Dakar, n.d., ca. 1957-58); interview Adamou Assane Mayaki, Niamey, 29 Jan. 2003; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 60, 63; Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, 185-186 & 306-307. Bakary was elected MP for Tahoua. Djibo, *Les transformations*, 63 (‘Elevage et industries animales’; ‘Affaires économiques et Plan’; ‘Travail et affaires sociales’; ‘Education publique et jeunesse’).

²⁵ Bordier to Monsieur le Haut-Commissaire de la République en A.O.F., 20 May 1957; Synthèse des événements politiques qui ont précédé ... ; Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, 254 (‘scandaleux’).

Camara and the leader of the UDN wing, Abdoulaye Mamani.²⁶ This regimented voting was predominantly aimed at denying the PPN-RDA a second seat on the Grand Conseil. While the PPN already possessed one seat under federal rules of proportional representation, Adamou Sékou persuaded Bakary to deny it a second position by orchestrating the parliamentary vote.²⁷

The isolation of the PPN-RDA was potentially more damaging for the government's stability than the outflanking of the BNA. The PPN's failure to gain a second seat on the Grand Conseil led to bitter disappointment. Not only did the PPN not enter government—in contrast to many other RDA sections in AOF—, but the MSA also monopolised the Assembly's bureau and parliamentary committees, not a single committee membership being granted to its rival. This was essentially the result of tactical failures on the part of the PPN and complex manoeuvres by Bakary, who had to contend with different forces and interests. The PPN first tried to recover Bakary to its side, the RDA's chairman Houphouët-Boigny asking him to appoint Boubou Hama and Hamani Diori to his cabinet. This conformed to the wishes of Governor Bordier, who feared the consequences of the PPN's isolation and tried to persuade Bakary to make some concessions. The practical advantages did not escape Bakary as it would have provided him a more comfortable position vis-à-vis BNA leaders as well as his own rank and file.²⁸ According to him, however, PPN representation was made impossible by Mayaki and Djermaakoye of the BNA and PPN hardliner Diamballa Yansambou Maïga.²⁹ Whether or not this was true, Bakary had in any case to contend with the UDN's little folk, who Dan Galadima's protest showed could not be gagged outright.³⁰ Bakary's attacks on Niger's chiefs, while cunningly disabling the PPN's denunciation of his alliance with the BNA,³¹ encouraged his own rank and file to go

²⁶ The Frenchman was Hermann Achaume, an engineer. *Synthèse des événements politiques qui ont précédé ...*; Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, 170-171; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 201.

²⁷ *Synthèse des événements politiques qui ont précédé ...*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ J.R. de Benoist, *l'Afrique Occidentale Française de la conférence de Brazzaville (1944) à l'indépendance (1960)* (Paris, 1982), 340; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 200-201, citing Bakary's testimony.

³⁰ This is somewhat underestimated by Mamoudou Djibo ('Les enjeux politiques dans la colonie du Niger [1944-1960]', *Autrepart*, no. 27, 2003), 52.

³¹ During the election campaign the PPN referred to the 'stain that constitutes the support of the chiefs' ('la souillure que constitue l'apport des chefs'). Quoted from *Le Niger*, no. 102, 18 March 1957 in Fluchard, *le PPN-RDA*, 198.

for an uncompromising bid for power, sacrificing an entente with the PPN.³²

In its turn, the PPN pushed too far and too quickly by trying to lure BNA dissidents. It also made a mistake by deploying Djermakoye for this purpose. In addition, it erred in hoping to blackmail the BNA into co-operation by pleading for the release of the brothers of chief Mouddour Zakara, elected for the MSA in Tahoua. Zakara's brothers had been involved in a violent incident with Amadou Kountché (Kountie), MP for the PPN in Filingué, the previous month. Kountché had gone to Bonkougou, a town just south of Filingué and of which Zakara was chief, to hold a public rally at the market, accompanied by PPN griots and militants. Allied to a local dignitary who once rivalled Zakara for the local chieftaincy and whose son was a PPN MP, Kountché would have insulted the chief, waving a pistol at a menacing crowd. This led to a violent scuffle with local people, who badly worked him over, incapacitating the MP for several days. The Bonkougou incident not only landed the Zakara brothers in jail but also reignited the dispute over the chieftaincy by splitting local factions along PPN-MSA lines.³³ While this was not the first violent incident with rival parties,³⁴ the PPN's subsequent attempt to make capital out of it squarely pitted the BNA's chiefs against it, enabling Bakary to lure them back into the MSA by rallying to the defence of the Zakara brothers, incarcerated at least in part because of the PPN's actions.³⁵

The governor persuaded the MSA not to go for a showdown and bring the Bonkougou incident before the Assembly. Instead, Bakary made some late conciliatory gestures to the PPN to persuade it to co-operate in the work of the Assembly, but this could not efface the latter's fundamental exclusion.³⁶ While the ease with which Bakary got out of these manoeuvres won the admiration of the governor, relations between the rival parties

³² Synthèse des événements politiques qui ont précédé ...

³³ Ibid.; telegram Bordier to France Outre-Mer, nos. 114-115, 5 May 1957 & 161/APA Affaires Politiques & Administratives; letter to France Outre-Mer & Dakar, ca. 9 May 1957 (both CAOM, Cart.2198/D.2); Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, 309 and 341. The incident took place on 20 Apr. 1957 and not, as seems to be suggested by Fluchard (*Le PPN-RDA*, 231), at the end of the year. A. Mayaki, *Les partis politiques nigériens de 1946 à 1958: Documents et Témoignages* (Niamey, 1991), 37, claimed the incident was ridiculous, as the MP's injuries were light. While this is confirmed in the French reports cited above, the MP was nevertheless attacked by some 50 people who incapacitated him for ten days.

³⁴ In May and June 1956 violent incidents took place between the PPN and UDN. See Chapter 1.

³⁵ Synthèse des événements politiques qui ont précédé ...

³⁶ Bordier to Monsieur le Haut-Commissaire de la République en A.O.F., 20 May 1957.

thus continued to be as bitter as during the previous year.³⁷ Bordier was worried about this and opined that ‘only an understanding between Djibo Bakary and the RDA [could] ... provide Niger’s political life the stability it [had] always lacked’. The balance of the country’s political forces was considered precarious as it was doubtful whether Bakary could at all times count on the political centre in view of the MSA’s internal contradictions. Nevertheless, while the French deplored having the PPN on the opposition’s bench, they now seemed to prefer Bakary in government. The exclusion of his movement was thought a greater risk because of its links with forces deemed ‘hostile’ to France’s influence—i.e. international communist organisations—and because of Bakary’s strong power base in Hausaland, itself closely tied to Northern Nigeria.³⁸ Sawaba could be better watched while under the nose of the administration.

Sawaba as Government

As Niger’s first prime minister, Djibo Bakary presented himself as a responsible national leader intent on working for the greater good of Nigérien society. His speeches at the congress and on the occasion of his investiture on 18 May, while naturally part of his public relations, provide indication of a genuine aspiration to put together an efficient government team that could work, in co-operation with the French, towards the much-needed socio-economic improvements in the country. Thus, at his party’s congress, the leader of Sawaba had declared that his cabinet would strive for ‘healthy and frank collaboration’ with the colonial administration. While the saviour of Niger’s ‘petit peuple’ had articulated a fiercely anti-colonial message during the struggle for power and, indeed, did not shy away from recounting past misdeeds of French officialdom, at the party congress following his victory, he also reached out, in magnanimous confidence, to those same administrative institutions that had fought him with such determination in the past. Bakary called, twice, for the creation of a ‘brotherly Franco-African Community’, emphasising that this did not stand in the way of the

³⁷ See for mutual mud-slinging Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA, 198-200* and Rapport moral présenté par le secrétaire général du mouvement socialiste africain.

³⁸ Bordier to Monsieur le Haut-Commissaire de la République en A.O.F., 20 May 1957; Synthèse des événements politiques qui ont précédé Communist institutions were seen as ‘internationales-hostiles à l’établissement d’une communauté franco-africaine et eur-africaine’ (‘seule une entente entre Djibo Bakary et le R.D.A. peut ... donner à la vie politique nigérienne la stabilité qui lui a toujours fait défaut’).

emancipation of Niger or the interests of its people.³⁹ At his installation he reiterated this, offering the governor a ‘collaboration without restrictions’ and calling on the French to forget past rancour and racial mistrust. Pointing at the two white ministers he had nominated, he predicted that colonial officials would discover in his government people who were willing to work with French administrative personnel, now called ‘technical’ staff, for the development of the country. Indeed, Bakary expressed several times a desire to prove that Niger’s first autonomous government was up to the challenge ahead. With the paradoxical ambivalence of nationalist self-esteem, so offended in the racial context of colonial rule, he considered it essential to prove that France was right in putting its trust in him. Still, he warned those French officials who continued to express racial hatred that they did France a disservice and that he would not admit of any affront to the dignity of his people.⁴⁰

Determined to ‘kill the legend according to which there were only incapable and mediocre people in Niger’, Bakary called for self-sacrifice. The Loi Cadre was a decisive historical step but also entailed a heavy responsibility. While vowing that his ministers would work in a spirit of sacrifice and austerity, Sawaba’s leader declared that people would be judged for what they did for the party and the greater good. The time for judging people on the basis of their origins, region or religion was over, Bakary stretching out a ‘brotherly hand’ to his fellow Africans—‘friends and adversaries’. The party would seek alliances with all social groups and Sawaba’s prime minister went out of his way to mention Niger’s numerous ethnic groups by name and promise the people of ‘other Territories’ (i.e. AOFiens) that their confidence in the country would not be betrayed.⁴¹

However, he also made it clear that he regarded Sawaba’s victory as part of a grand social project. There would be no question of a ‘politics of mates’ distributing perks. Freely accepted discipline would be the order in the party, in which there was room for politicians struggling for the emancipation of the talakawa but not for opportunists using the party as springboard for personal ambitions. Politicians and colonial officials alike were warned that the time of administrative favour or sanction was over. Party leaders

³⁹ Rapport moral présenté par le secrétaire général du mouvement socialiste africain, *passim* (‘saine et franche collaboration’; ‘Communauté fraternelle franco-africaine’).

⁴⁰ Allocution prononcée le 18 mai 1957 par le Président [sic] Bakary Djibo après son investiture (text in Bakary, *Silence!*, 189-191) (‘collaboration sans restriction’).

⁴¹ *Ibid.* and Rapport moral présenté par le secrétaire général du mouvement socialiste africain, *passim* (‘tuer la légende selon laquelle au Niger il n’y a que des incapables et des médiocres’; ‘la main fraternelle’; ‘amis et adversaires’; ‘autres Territoires’).

and militants should understand that the masses followed them, not for their 'beautiful eyes' or 'eloquent speeches' but because they would help them fight injustice and repression and make future abuses impossible.⁴²

Rather than regard these statements as rhetoric, they point to optimism and resolve on the part of Sawaba's leadership. Indeed, quite a few Frenchmen in official circles were struck by the earnestness and industry with which Bakary's ministers set to work.⁴³ The same was true for some of the party's MPs. Ousmane Dan Galadima, for example, was an active debater in the Assembly's Permanent Committee, intervening regularly on issues ranging from agricultural matters and animal husbandry to wider social and economic questions. Abdoulaye Mamani, too, unreservedly defended the cause of Niger's little folk. Once he chastised a parliamentary colleague of the PPN for the way he spoke about illiterate people, lashing out that 'commis' put in charge of rural collectives took money for themselves and that, so far, it was only civil servants who had benefited from credit facilities. He stressed that peasants could very well represent their own interests, in Hausa or any other vernacular, and argue as well as any 'qualified professor from France'.⁴⁴

Political zeal was, of course, not enough and could not make up for what French officials thought was a lack of competence among some of Bakary's ministers. Some of these judgements may have been affected by political considerations. However, Saloum Traoré, minister of social affairs and union worker, would not have sufficient moral standing because of a conviction for theft. While the circumstances of this are unclear, it should be noted that criminal records among UDN militants were not exceptional, not just because of the wheeling and dealing that marked the life of Sawaba's little folk—quintessential social climbers—but also because of their history of political agitation.⁴⁵ The French also thought that Aboubakar dit Kaou, MP for the former BNA and teacher, was not really up to the

⁴² *Ibid.* ('politique des petits copains'; 'beaux yeux'; 'discours éloquentes').

⁴³ Fuglestad, 'Djibo Bakary', 320.

⁴⁴ See for these fascinating insights into Niger's early parliamentary debate CAOM, Cart.2289/D.7 ('n'importe quel professeur agrégé de France'). This file contains proceedings of the Permanent Committee from early 1957 until autumn 1958, and of the Assembly.

⁴⁵ Traoré's sentence dated from 1951. It may have been for something serious, since he was given 10 years, though he never served his entire sentence. I could not find details, but see a later report attached to Le Ht Commissaire de la République en Afrique Occidentale Fr. to M. le Ministre de la France d'Outre-Mer, 5 July 1957; CAOM C.2257/D.3. Around the same time, fellow cadre Joseph Akouété was sentenced to 5 years forced labour and fined for embezzlement. He was dismissed from his job as radio operator and postal employee. See ANN, 86 MI 1 C 1.2 for this case, which also involved his wife.

job of minister of economic affairs and planning. For the rest they deplored the fact that professional backgrounds did not always match the mandates of departments to which ministers were assigned. They made exceptions for Diop Issa, UDN militant and minister of finance, and Tiémoko Coulibaly, of the BNA and minister of animal husbandry, both considered very capable, as was the Frenchman Fréminé, minister of education.⁴⁶

In government, Sawaba certainly did not lack in plans or aspirations. Bakary, in an interview published in June 1957,⁴⁷ presented a long list of priorities and intentions: improvement of food security; better organisation of groundnut exports with a view to benefiting African producers; development of rural insurance schemes; training of vets, drilling of wells, and domestic processing of animal skins; improvement of roads; construction of schools and dispensaries in the countryside and further development of higher education in Niamey and Zinder; reorganisation of the civil service; and facilitation of labour migration to other countries, one of the lifelines of rural communities, especially in the west.

Improvement of the transport of the groundnut crop had high priority. It formed the major source of the national income, but Niger was at a great distance from any harbour. Faced with logistical bottlenecks in Nigeria, which suffered from endemic strikes, the French had recently begun a yearly 'Operation Swallow', in which the surplus not handled through Nigeria was diverted by lorry to northern Dahomey and from there taken by rail to the port of Cotonou. This saved the administration foreign currency and could loosen eastern Niger's links with British Nigeria while creating profits for (mostly French) transporters. The economy had generally benefited from this operation, one quarter to a third of the produce getting diverted to Cotonou and bought up at a subsidised price. However, the operation was essentially funded by peasant producers who, forced to expand production to meet the growing tax burden, were levied a certain sum paid into a stabilisation & transport scheme that ensured uniform prices. This levy was naturally unpopular. For the eastern districts, moreover, which grew 80 per cent of the crop, Northern Nigeria remained the natural outlet.⁴⁸

The Sawaba government therefore tried to fix a higher purchase price for producers, who were among its major supporters, leading to tensions with (metropolitan) trading houses and transporters. During the sales

⁴⁶ See Djibo, *Les transformations*, 62.

⁴⁷ Text in his autobiography *Silence!*, 192-194.

⁴⁸ Synthèse Politique. avril-mai-juin 1958; CAOM, Cart.2233/D.2 and Fuglestad, *History of Niger*, 169 ('Opération Hirondelle').

season, in November–December 1957, Bakary went out of his way to give satisfaction to the population, emphasising in his budget speech that everything would be done to make it a good campaign. During this period the party itself did everything to maintain contact with the countryside and stand up for its rural supporters. When the crop purchase began to slow down, Bakary went on a grand tour of the east, together with Abdoulaye Mamani and his private secretary Gandah Djibo, former school director in the central town of Birnin Konni. They held meetings with purchasers and reported on this to the peasantry at public rallies. In Maradi Bakary violently accused agents of purchasing houses of having caused the trade to grind to a halt. Ousmane Dan Galadima and Malick N'Diaye organised information meetings in Zinder and Magaria, where they gave bold assurances on the maintenance of the purchasing price and the commission granted to buyers, promising peasants that they could sell their produce in Nigeria if they got stuck with it. In the characteristic fashion of UDN activism, they added the innuendo that the present situation was caused by the collusion of Houphouët-Boigny and capitalist firms. Similarly, Dandouna Aboubakar, the carpenter-unionist from Maradi who got a job at the public works ministry, organised meetings where he accused metropolitan trusts of having caused the failure in the trade. This came to a complete standstill despite an effort of the minister of economic affairs, Aboubakar dit Kaou, to relaunch the campaign by the end of the year. To add to the difficulties, food prices went up and tax collection slowed down, in part because of PPN agitation to defer payment.⁴⁹

The French argued that this pointed to rural dissatisfaction setting in, amplified by Sawaba's effort to improve the lot of wage earners, who were such an important part of its rank and file but seemed unaware of the widening gap between paid labour and the rural populace.⁵⁰ Indeed, it is likely—as Mamoudou Djibo contended—that by the end of 1957 the rural population felt somewhat disappointed about the lack of progress. With the government having had little time to make more than a feeble impact in what was a poverty-stricken country, the desire for relief that Sawaba had set free had so far not received its promised satisfaction.⁵¹ Yet, it is not easy to assess the magnitude of this alleged discontent. Djibo himself does not give any sources to back up his claim, noting merely that figures of

⁴⁹ Aperçu sur la Situation Politique du Territoire du Niger Durant la période du 15 nov. 1957 au 31 déc. 1957; CAOM, Cart.2154/D.3; Bulletin de Renseignements Particuliers, 18 Oct. 1964, no. 1234/2/S—Note d'information; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2

⁵⁰ Aperçu sur la Situation Politique du Territoire du Niger ... 15 nov. 1957 au 31 déc. 1957.

⁵¹ Djibo, 'Les enjeux politiques', 52.

popular appreciation of the government's record are lacking.⁵² The French entertained contradictory views on peasant attitudes. On the one hand, they claimed that peasants and nomads were becoming more sensitive to the slogans of political parties and that the rural population could become quite enthusiastic about political principles. On the other hand, they argued, quite plausibly, that peasants attributed more importance to the solution of tangible problems and that they were more inclined to follow specific personalities than grand political programmes. Consequently, in this somewhat derogatory perspective, the rural population constituted a fluctuating clientèle that was ready to listen to anyone who promised it the earth.⁵³

Some of these statements are indeed borne out by interviews with peasants and village dwellers a good 40 years later,⁵⁴ although in other respects they appear to say more about colonial prejudice than historical reality. Support for Sawaba was at least in part conditional on concrete initiatives to improve rural life. For example, there was quite some support for the party in towns and villages in the Niger River valley west of Niamey, which benefited from government action ranging from the building of dispensaries and the provision of minor infrastructural facilities to the settlement of land disputes with Peul pastoralists (to avoid favouritism, Bakary's native Soudouré only got a new well). In other cases people gave their allegiance to the party because relatives or locals had been awarded jobs or become involved in party work—with villagers deciding to follow those who appeared to show the way to a better future. In Bosso, in the far east, the majority of villagers followed the party in gratitude for the rehabilitation of the town's chieftaincy. Once established, this loyalty seemed able to withstand setbacks, as people were not immediately let down by government failures but prepared to stick by an impassioned leader who had brought small improvements or enabled a son of the village to conquer a new horizon. The steadiness of this allegiance may, in addition, also have been tied to the sheer idealism that characterised Sawaba as a social movement and that had certainly not dissipated by 1957-1958, despite the assumption of government responsibility.⁵⁵

⁵² Djibo, *Les transformations*, 67 and *Ibid.*, 'Les enjeux politiques', 51-52.

⁵³ *Aperçu sur la Situation Politique du Territoire du Niger ...* 15 nov. 1957 au 31 déc. 1957.

⁵⁴ Including with former Sawaba supporters in towns and villages in the Niger River valley, held in Oct.-Nov. 2005. See next footnote.

⁵⁵ Interviews Mamoudou Béchir, Dargol, 31 Oct. 2005; Djaouga Idrissa, near Dargol, 31 Oct. 2005; Mamane Boureïma & Djibo Foulan, Bandio, 4 Nov. 2005; Abdramane Adamou, Soudouré, 27 Febr. 2008; Katiella Ari Gaptia, Bosso, Lake Chad, 13 Febr. 2006.

In any case, some parts of the government programme did proceed, whether or not as part of previous government planning, such as the opening of a new operating theatre in Zinder's hospital.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, government room for manoeuvre was very limited owing to budgetary and institutional constraints, while in his efforts to improve the lot of cash crop farmers Bakary quickly ran into the fundamentals of political economy. Thus, retrospectively, Sawaba activists would claim that development plans were 'systematically sabotaged'.⁵⁷ Metropolitan credits were, indeed, slow in coming, in the preceding decade halting at five times lower than the per capita investment that took place in Senegal. While this was partly caused by Niger's poverty and its limited capacity to absorb funds, the fact was openly deplored by the new colonial governor Louis Rollet, in April 1958—nearly one year after Sawaba had come to power.⁵⁸

This sympathetic statement concealed the problematic nature of the autonomy that Bakary's government enjoyed under the Loi Cadre, especially under Rollet's predecessor Bordier, who left Niger in February 1958. With the Assembly's majority leader as *de facto* prime minister but the governor as the formal president of the Conseil de Gouvernement, the Loi Cadre had stipulated a bicephalous form of administration. However, the legal partition of powers was such that Bakary, as prime minister, did not really have his hands free to develop a comprehensive form of government. Foreign affairs, defence, monetary matters and numerous other questions grouped under the so-called 'services d'état', were still the preserve of French decision-making. The governor also exercised general control over administrative management and was entitled to refer for annulment by Paris any decisions of parliament or the cabinet deemed contrary to the law, security, national defence, or public order.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Aperçu sur la Situation Politique du Territoire du Niger ... 15 nov. 1957 au 31 déc. 1957. Later, Sawabists claimed credit for improving rural health care, building schools, establishing agricultural co-operatives, constructing roads and bridges and starting the Africanisation of government personnel. *Les raisons de notre lutte*, 24-25; *Survul sur le Sawaba de mars 1957 à septembre 1958*, signed Assane Adamou Mayaki (and his courtesy), no place or date; *Contribution de la délégation de l'UDFP-Sawaba au succès de la conférence nationale des forces vives du Niger*, Niamey 29 juillet 1991; République du Niger. *Union des forces populaires pour la démocratie et le progrès*, Niamey.

⁵⁷ *Contribution de la délégation de l'UDFP-Sawaba au succès de la conférence nationale des forces vives du Niger*, 4 and *Les raisons de notre lutte*, 22 ('systématiquement sabotés').

⁵⁸ Djibo, 'Les enjeux politiques', 52. One result of these funds was to widen the gap between the rural and urban areas. Fuglestad, *History of Niger*, 170-171.

⁵⁹ *Survul sur le Sawaba de mars 1957 à sept. 1958* and Fuglestad, *History of Niger*, 179.

Sawaba had, therefore, to govern under an unstable administrative architecture that depended considerably on the relationship struck between governor and prime minister.⁶⁰ With Bordier Sawaba's leader found this difficult. Bordier had not only tried to frustrate his assumption of Niamey's mayorship, or so it seemed, but also took active part in the deliberations of the cabinet, preserving his prerogatives to the letter of the law and acting more as a guide than a counsellor.⁶¹ Already in August 1957 Bakary's party complained that the governor should leave Sawaba's government free to prove itself and restrict his own role to that of arbiter and avoid the construction of a 'state within the state'. Bakary felt greatly annoyed by the governor and retrospectively complained that he was constantly kept under 'vigilant surveillance', with each reform proposal being opposed by Bordier.⁶² This could not only offend the sensibilities of his nationalist self-esteem but also hindered efforts to implement the programme of relief that had brought him to power.

It was certainly true that, in his striving to establish control, the governor stood in Bakary's way. Thus, each nomination to an administrative post, as well as major political and administrative decision, required Bordier's prior approval. This formed a major problem for the Sawaba government because the territorial administration was still completely in the hands of French personnel. Much of this continued to be hostile to the further devolution of power. Moreover, the French Commandants de Cercle and 'Chefs de Subdivision' or 'Chefs de Poste' acted not as provincial delegates of Bakary's cabinet but as the representatives of the governor, with the ability, through their orders to subaltern chiefs, to impose decisions on the population. Mamoudou Djibo argues, in this respect, that the Sawaba government did not show sufficient eagerness in Africanising the administration. Yet, at a conference of territorial governments in Dakar in June 1957, Bakary asked that his cabinet at least be consulted in the appointment of administrators. An additional problem here was that, as one of the poorest territories in AOF, Niger lacked qualified personnel, which made it difficult for Bakary to find suitable candidates to replace French officials. Thus, only one year after his accession to power did he manage to have eight Nigériens appointed to the territorial administration, with the concurrence of the new governor, Rollet. Yet, Niger had a total of 16 'Cercles'

⁶⁰ Survol sur le Sawaba de mars 1957 à sept. 1958.

⁶¹ Benoist, *l'Afrique Occidentale Française*, 364.

⁶² *Sawaba-MSA*, no. 11, 16 Aug. 1957, cited in Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 203-204; Bakary, *Silence!*, 184; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 70; ('État dans l'Etat'; 'surveillance vigilante').

or provinces, while none of the nominees rose to the rank of Commandant.⁶³

Consequently, instead of forming the genuinely African government of Bakary's aspirations, his cabinet was a group of semi-autonomous apprentices who had to start from scratch, establishing a physical presence, organising social services and overcoming the obstacles of meagre budgets and unco-operative officials. All this impeded Sawaba's ability to put its message across and prepare the population for its programme of emancipation and social justice. Hence, the opposition had enough ammunition to make life difficult.

Tam-Tam: Canvassing in the Late 1950s

One of the first issues the opposition tried to exploit was the appointment of foreigners in Bakary's cabinet. With two Frenchmen and four AOFiens in a government of ten, this was an easy target. Territorial particularism fed on discontent about the superior positions that AOFiens and Frenchmen had for long occupied in the economy and administration. The cabinet appointments thus contributed to malaise, also inside the MSA, whose members were determined to rise in the country's social hierarchy. The issue allowed the PPN to accuse Bakary of having delivered the government to foreigners, although it conveniently forgot that it had stuffed its own party organs with AOFiens as well. The problem was that Bakary had little choice in view of the lack of qualified personnel. Many AOFiens had, moreover, suffered the same repression during the UDN's agitation against the colonial administration, in the course of which bonds of solidarity had been struck with fellow militants.⁶⁴

Bakary was therefore unwilling to bow to xenophobic sentiment, which also went against his inter-territorial convictions. His education at Ponty, his Marxist-inspired ideas and his need for an international network all made for this disposition. His struggle had always been wider than the territorial cadre of Niger, whose landlocked position and poverty made the retention of federal structures, in Bakary's eyes, indispensable. These economic considerations and internationalist outlook interlocked with sheer political ambition to make Niger simply too small for him. Bordier, who knew Bakary from close observation, remarked in November 1957 that

⁶³ Synthèse Politique, avril-mai-juin 1958; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 69-70; *Ibid.*, 'Les enjeux politiques', 54; Benoist, *l'Afrique Occidentale Française*, 342.

⁶⁴ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 62-64 and Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 202-203.

Djibo Bakary certainly does not wish to confine his ambition to being a Nigérien personality, even of the first order, but wants to become one of the political leaders and arbiters of the New Africa.⁶⁵

Bakary was, thus, bigger than Niger and in need of larger audiences. He was in this respect comparable to his Ghanaian counterpart Kwame Nkrumah.⁶⁶ Yet, the MSA as such could also benefit from a reinforcement of inter-territorial links. In the autumn of 1957 Bakary therefore encouraged his party to explore the possibilities of co-operation with formations in other territories, at first in areas closest to Niger where Sawaba could capitalise on cross-border links (ethnic, economic) and, as a result, contacts were already maintained by the rank and file. These concerned the northern part of Dahomey and the eastern part of Soudan, grouped around the regional centres of Parakou and Gao respectively.

At that point in time, any expansion into Northern Nigeria was complicated by the fact that Sawaba's socio-political counterpart there, NEPU, was seeking an alliance with the PPN-RDA. This was perhaps odd in view of NEPU's background and programme, geared to the liberation of an assortment of lower classes and an end to the domination by Fulani aristocracies. Yet, NEPU did not wish to forego the support of the thousands of Nigériens living in Kano, especially in the Fagge (Fegge) district, most of whom were pro-RDA then. People being Hausa on either side of the border, many saw themselves—traders especially—as residents of cities in both countries (for example, of Kano and Zinder or of Katsina and Maradi) and were affiliated to both NEPU and the RDA, even participating in each other's elections. Also, when NEPU's leader, Mallam Aminu Kano, failed to win a seat in Northern Nigeria's regional assembly in 1956, it appeared logical to him to strike an alliance with Niger's opposition. Early in 1958, NEPU began working for an alliance with PPN sections in eastern Niger, using the economic attraction Nigeria exerted over eastern Nigériens, which was gaining in strength by the promise of Nigeria's independence for 1960 and ideas on cross-border federation. Conversely, since Sawaba constituted Niger's government it was not unnatural to engage in ties with the Nigerian 'Northern Peoples' Congress' (NPC), which represented Northern Nigeria's conservative aristocracy but also formed the regional government. In December

⁶⁵ Bordier to France Outre-Mer and Dakar, 10 Nov. 1957; CAOM, Cart.2198/D.2 ('M. Djibo Bakary ne veut certainement borner son ambition à être une personnalité nigérienne, même de premier plan, mais devient un des responsables politiques et un des arbitres de la Nouvelle Afrique').

⁶⁶ See for this f.e. his autobiography, *Silence!, passim*.

1957, for example, Sawaba's section in Zinder invited MPs of the NPC for discussions on economic issues, in the course of which the Nigériens emphasised, atypically, the common identity of both parties. Nevertheless, the prime minister of Northern Nigeria expressed little interest.⁶⁷

Expansion into Dahomey and Soudan was less complicated. Bakary's contacts with a political grouping in Parakou, the 'Rassemblement Démocratique Dahoméen' (RDD), had been facilitated by a local section of the UDN in Cotonou (presumably made up of Nigérien migrants), which helped the RDD members in approaching Sawaba's leader during a visit of Bakary to the Dahomean capital. The initiative for this came from the RDD, which was made up of northern Dahomean MPs who resented domination of the country by southerners and had established the RDD in opposition to this. Bakary, however, proceeded with caution. He wished for wider (regional or federal) unity, not secession of parts of territories, something to which the RDD at least alluded, playing on northern Dahomey's ethnic ties with Niger (through the Dendi, a Songhay subgroup) and their geographical and economic similarities. Thus, when the RDD held a conference in Parakou, in late October-early November 1957, Bakary attended with a delegation of 11 members of his party, ministers as well as MPs. According to the French it did not include hardliners—although Adamou Sékou was part of the delegation—and avoided declarations that could generate hostility, including from chiefs in the north of Dahomey. In response to its warm reception, the delegation made a general offer of help to resolve northern Dahomey's problems, which, however, was enough to antagonise southern Dahomean politicians. The northern plea for autonomy and possible association with Niger was met with non-committal language about Niger's relations with the disfavoured region.⁶⁸ While Bakary avoided un-

⁶⁷ Despatch no. 5 (H.A. Twist, Office of the Deputy High Commissioner for the United Kingdom, Kaduna) to Viscount Head, High Commissioner for the United Kingdom, Lagos, 31 July 1961; Mallam Aminu Kano, M.P.: Leader of the N.E.P.U. and Government Chief Whip in Federal House of Representatives; n.d., ca. late 1961; PRO, DO 177/59; Présidence du Conseil. SDECE. "Nigéria—A.O.F. (Niger). Collusion de Partis Politiques". Référence 10738/A, 2 Sept. 1958; CAOM, Cart.2181/D.1 bis; Synthèse Politique. avril-mai-juin 1958 (note 48); Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Études de l'A.O.F. pour la période ? [1958] (ca. Sept. 1958); CAOM, Cart.2248; Aperçu sur la Situation Politique du Territoire du Niger ... 15 nov. 1957 au 31 déc. 1957 (note 49); Renseignement du SDECE a/s de la Nigéria 1955—1959: Président du Conseil. SDECE Destinataire no. 562. Ref. 14335/A, 29 Dec. 1958; CAOM, Cart.2180/D.5.

⁶⁸ Bordier to France Outre-Mer and Dakar, 2 and 10 Nov. 1957; CAOM, Cart.2198/D.2; *Le Monde* (Paris), 26 Nov. 1957; Bakary, *Silence !*, 171–172; Benoist, *l'Afrique Occidentale Française*, 347; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 68.

veiling his intentions, realising probably that any reference to secession would antagonise the French,⁶⁹ the trip to Parakou at least enhanced the party's sphere of influence.

A party delegation that went to Gao similarly strengthened Sawaba's contacts, but with more difficulty. Here it could also make use of ethnic ties, as Songhays lived on both sides of the border along the length of the Niger River and people from the Gao area, such as members of the Kurtey ethnic group, had in the past migrated to Niger, notably to the Niamey area. Other people native to the Gao region living in Niamey were so-called 'Bellas', which in Songhay/Zarma originally referred to black slaves of the Tuareg but became a generic term for people of former slave origin or, in the process, for people of low social status (among Hausa-speaking peoples, at any rate). Many of these Bellas were unskilled workers employed in menial jobs, such as in the construction industry. Communication with the Gao region was, moreover, kept up by lorry drivers or bus drivers working for the 'Transafricaine' company, travelling the arduous road linking the two cities. Both Bellas and transport workers belonged to the core groups of Sawaba supporters.⁷⁰

The delegation that headed for Gao on 1 November was therefore quite large, and included 12 party members led by Hima Dembélé, considered a hardliner by the French, and some 30 people from Soudan living in Niamey. They had been invited by members of the 'Parti Progressiste Soudanais' (PSP), which was part of the MSA but languished in opposition since the 'Union Soudanaise' (US) of Modibo Keita, itself member of the inter-territorial RDA, led Soudan's autonomous government. While Sawaba aimed to extend its field of operation into this natural hinterland as a stepping-stone to federal influence, the PSP hoped to gain from relations with its dynamic counterpart. For the same reason, local RDA representatives tried to stop the Sawabists from visiting the city. When the car carrying Dembélé and Hama Garba, secretary at Niger's Territorial Assembly, turned into Gao, children hurled stones at it, smashing its windows though apparently not injuring its occupants. This was followed by a night-time tam-tam, organised in Sawaba's honour, which was interfered with by RDA supporters.

⁶⁹ Bordier to France Outre-Mer and Dakar, 10 Nov. 1957.

⁷⁰ Compagnie Transafricaine S.A. On Bellas ('Bugaje', sing. 'Buzu', in Hausa), see Fuglestad, *History of Niger*, 28; S. Baier, *An Economic History of Central Niger* (Oxford, 1980), 16; S. Decalo, *Historical Dictionary of Niger* (Metuchen, NJ, & London, 1979), 48; interview with Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 2 Dec. 2003. On the Kurtey, see S. Bernus, *Niamey: Population et habitat; documents d'enquêtes* (Etudes nigériennes 'documents', 11; IFAN-CNRS: no pl., ca. 1964), 3.

Serious incidents followed in the wake of the delegation's departure. Though the get-together established a Sawaba presence, Dembélé's delegation was forced to find its way back to Niamey with a battered convoy, a financial loss and an infantile blot on its prestige.⁷¹

The event not only showed how politically charged dance and drum performances could be; it also demonstrated that the RDA had not softened its opposition since Sawaba had assumed the reins of power. More generally, it revealed that Niger's political parties had a tendency to ignore the country's territorial boundaries when canvassing for support.⁷² The children of Gao, however, also showed that parties regarded their strongholds as territorial bastions where political rivals did not have the right of entry. Any attempt at competitive canvassing amounted to trespassing, an attitude which, in the context of Niger's decolonisation struggle, was bound to lead to trouble. Thus, when the PPN wished to celebrate the nomination of Hamani Diori as vice-president of the French Assemblée Nationale with a welcome in the streets of Niamey (August 1957), the French banned any so-called 'lai-lai', or public demonstration,⁷³ fearing grave disorder. The PPN was sure, however, that this humiliating ban came from the Sawaba government,⁷⁴ whose prime minister, after all, was also the capital's mayor.

By the end of 1957 competition between Sawaba and the PPN-RDA was as intense as ever, with the political climate in certain regions, such as Tillabéri, deteriorating sharply. The PPN responded to rural visits of Sawaba ministers during Operation Swallow with meetings of counter-propaganda, some high party officials such as Boubou Hama and Diamballa Maïga holding 'information' exercises accompanied by lai-lais. In December the regions of Tessaoua, Dogondoutchi, Téra, as well as Tillabéri, were the scene of inter-party clashes,⁷⁵ with brawls between griots engaged in

⁷¹ Bordier to France Outre-Mer and Dakar, 2 and 10 Nov. 1957. A confidential police report is attached to the second letter.

⁷² This could also compensate for the lack of support in some of their home areas, a point not taken into consideration by Djibo, 'Les enjeux politiques', 53. The relevance of local cultural repertoires and violence in canvassing is discussed in K. van Walraven 'Sawaba, Niger and the Revolution of a Social Movement (1954-1966)'; paper 'Lutter dans les Afriques'; Université de Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne, 22-23 January 2010. See also J.P. Olivier de Sardan, 'Le culturalisme traditionaliste africaniste: Analyse d'une idéologie scientifique', *Cahiers d'études africaines*, 50 (2010), 419-453.

⁷³ See for this term f.e. Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus pour la période du 26 nov. au 2 déc. 1959, no. 58; CAOM, Cart.2251.

⁷⁴ Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 205-206.

⁷⁵ Interview with Moumouni Daouda, Tillabéri, 3 Nov. 2005.

rival tam-tams. Youth sections were multiplied in various districts. Those of the PPN, including those established in central and eastern towns like Maradi and Zinder, were ordered to fight the establishment of youth sections of the MSA ('JMSA', i.e. 'Jeunesse Mouvement Socialiste Africain'). With the merger of UDN and BNA, Sawaba was especially interested in establishing a new youth segment in the capital. As the west was PPN country, yet with substantial Sawaba strongholds in towns along the Niger River, including Niamey, it was here that confrontations took place. During a government tour in the Téra region, a PPN militant hurled an insult at Bakary, who, growing increasingly authoritarian, filed a legal complaint likely to aggravate matters further.⁷⁶ The east had hardly had any PPN presence since the early 1950s and was in the hands of Sawaba (its UDN or BNA wing).

The PPN's opposition was, indeed, outright destructive, trying to create as many problems as it could.⁷⁷ By the end of November, the PPN committee in Zinder, led by hardliner Issa Ibrahim, went on tour to Magaria, to the south of Zinder, and openly foretold the impending disintegration of the MSA. This was not far-fetched, since the government was now facing cracks in its power base. There was wide dissatisfaction with what was seen as the total control exercised by cabinet ministers over the country's administration.⁷⁸ This had to do, however, not only with an emerging patronage network but also with strike action inspired by the PPN.

Since January 1957 trade unions in French Africa had come together in an inter-territorial association, the 'Union Générale des Travailleurs d'Afrique Noire' (UGTAN), inside which Sawaba-PPN rivalry continued incessantly. The minister of social affairs, Saloum Traoré, had difficulty in keeping the UDN-oriented USCN and unionists allied to the PPN-RDA together. When Daouda Ardaly and Dandouna Aboubakar, UDN militants and CGT-oriented unionists, went on a tour of the Eastern Bloc, unionists loyal to the PPN tried to take control of UGTAN's Nigérien office to secure approval for a teachers' strike. Niger's teachers, who in the majority were loyal to the PPN-RDA, had demanded improvements in fringe benefits and an end to arbitrary transfers in July, threatening strike action for November if demands were not met. The minister of education, the Frenchman

⁷⁶ Aperçu sur la Situation Politique du Territoire du Niger ... 15 nov. 1957 au 31 déc. 1957.

⁷⁷ Djibo, 'Les enjeux politiques', 53. See f.e. an RDA election pamphlet entitled 'Un visage du M.S.A.: Téra ville martyre' (n.d., but between 1956 and March 1957); ANN, 1 E 45-34; and 'Le gouvernement croupion MSA' (by RDA politician Noma Kaka; text in *La Voix Libérée*, no. 1, March-Apr. 2011, 15).

⁷⁸ Aperçu sur la Situation Politique du Territoire du Niger ... 15 nov. 1957 au 31 déc. 1957.

Fréminé, nevertheless decided to transfer certain teachers for the new school year, including highly placed PPN men like Léopold Kaziendé. Whether or not political reasons were involved,⁷⁹ its effect was to remove members of the PPN from the volatile western region, including the Niamey area. The strike went ahead and expanded to other public services such as the post office, general administration and customs. While Bakary accused the strikers of political motives and went so far as to incite people to report on those who stopped work, the PPN in effect had tested its strength by using Bakary's union tactics against him.⁸⁰

However, Minister Traoré, with the help of Abdoulaye Mamani and Djibo Sékou, mason and personal friend of Bakary who was important in the building industry, managed to keep the strike confined to the public sector. Private sector workers were generally less vocal, many of them being lower-paid and loyal to Sawaba. Farka Maiga, secretary of the union of company and construction workers, assisted Traoré in regaining influence over UGTAN's Nigérien office. The government consequently refused to budge, and suggestions were made to have troublesome civil servants fired and thrown in prison. Yet, in late December there were new strikes, which also involved protests of PPN-loyal civil servants in the public gallery of the Territorial Assembly, with PPN MPs walking out in solidarity.⁸¹

By then the government had survived a major revolt by MPs of the BNA who, led by Adamou Mayaki and senator Yacouba Siddo, had tried to form an independent parliamentary group. When Georges Condat did not support them and Pierre Vidal, minister of public health, intervened to thwart the move with the help of Issoufou Djermakoye and the latter's relative—the esteemed Djermakoy of Dosso—the rebellion disintegrated. Mayaki was thrown out of the MSA and the MPs were pressed into line. Before they were accepted back in the party fold, Mouddour Zakara, Tuareg chief of the Filingué area, was given a written warning and Siddo was forced to give a public demonstration of his loyalty. The rebellion had been instigated by Oumar Bâ, secretary of the Association des Chefs. In fact, all rebelling MPs were close to the Sarakuna, who felt that their overtures to the government had been met by hostility. Thus, although the revolt was nipped in the bud, in part because Bakary promoted certain lower-placed chiefs and promised an increase in their remuneration, it revealed the instability of Sawaba's power base, both in parliament and society at large. Bakary, who hated

⁷⁹ Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 221-20, doubts this.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 220-224. In Febr. 1958 this was repeated, with a 95 per cent walkout of civil servants. Fuglestad, 'Djibo Bakary', 321.

⁸¹ Aperçu sur la Situation Politique du Territoire du Niger ... 15 nov. 1957 au 31 déc. 1957.

Mayaki, calling him a 'sluggard, a miser and a fraud', had made several uncompromising declarations about Niger's chiefs. Although for the moment abandoning plans to do away with them, he did not discontinue all criticism, as he also had to contend with the little people among his rank and file. During a visit to Zinder on 14 December he said he could depose chiefs without any reason whatsoever, making clear that they had better show civic responsibility. This could only strengthen the Sarakuna's defensive attitudes. In the event that their interests were not accommodated further, the French considered repetition of a chiefly revolt likely.⁸²

Riot in April

By the spring of 1958 the tension between Sawaba and the opposition was reaching fever pitch. After a conference in Paris in February had failed to bring together the RDA, MSA and minor parties in one, new inter-territorial group because the RDA insisted that this take place under its name, non-RDA groups—including Sawaba—headed for a new and bigger inter-territorial party, the 'Parti du Regroupement Africain' (PRA).⁸³ In Niger, this also included the small 'Forces Démocratiques Nigériennes' (FDN), the former UNIS led by Zodi Ikhia, a Tuareg from Filingué, which thereby isolated the PPN further. The PPN—or 'RDA', as it was commonly known—began to harden its attitude. Clashes took place with Sawaba in Téra, Tillabéri and Gaya in February. As of April the RDA began to engage in a country-wide campaign trying to exploit local conflicts and enhance its standing, saying the days of coercion were over, deriding the chiefs and insinuating that French control was coming to an end.⁸⁴

This last point was not completely beside the truth since by now Djibo Bakary could take greater control of the reins of power as Governor Bordier had left and been replaced by Rollet. Louis Rollet, an older and more experienced official, from the start developed a friendly relationship with Sawaba's leader and was willing to allow him considerable latitude.⁸⁵ Nigériens could now, for the first time, be appointed to higher positions in

⁸² Ibid.; telegrams Bordier (who did not support the revolt; KVV) to France Outre-Mer, no. 94-5 and 96, 26 & 27 Nov. 1957; CAOM, Cart.2198/D.2; Talba, *Une contribution*, 94-97. Djibo, *Les transformations*, 61, claims Sidde was also thrown out of the party, which is contradicted by the Aperçu ('paresseux, un avare, un fumiste').

⁸³ Benoist, *l'Afrique Occidentale Française*, 355-358.

⁸⁴ Synthèse Politique. avril-mai-juin 1958; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 230-231.

⁸⁵ Bakary, *Silence!*, 185-186 is full of praise for this governor. Also Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 230.

the administration. Also, as a true government leader (though in contravention of Loi Cadre legislation) Bakary initiated steps for a foreign policy by paying a visit to Ghana in March, meeting his Ghanaian counterpart, Nkrumah, as well as representatives of the Nigérien migrant community.⁸⁶

As both Sawaba and the RDA began flexing their muscles, confrontations were in the offing. With the RDA boldly trying to gain a foothold in Sawaba strongholds in the centre and east, the government somewhere in the month of April decided to cut it down to size. The way it went about this, by unleashing a carefully orchestrated wave of violence on RDA cadres in the capital, provides a unique insight into the early use in modern Africa of mob violence for political gain, in this case even with a French dimension involved. By targeting RDA militants, among whom were high-ranking officials, it aimed at silencing an opposition whose substantial presence in Niamey constituted an unmistakable challenge to Sawaba as the government in the land. Suppressing the PPN-RDA in the capital would paralyse its campaign and undermine its position in the country as a whole. Thus, the attacks on RDA cadres essentially came down to a government-sponsored coup d'état, if not an attempt to complete the social and political revolution yearned for by Sawaba's rank and file. The violence involved was justified, in the eyes of its organisers, by a Marxist-inspired revolutionary rhetoric defending the cause of the talakawa and, more specifically, by reference to the RDA's trespassing on Sawaba territory.

Oddly, Niger's historiography has largely overlooked this important event. Whilst Mamoudou Djibo, in his excellent analysis of Niger's decolonisation, devotes a mere four lines to the April hostilities, only Fluchard's overview of PPN-RDA history contains a cursory narrative, unfortunately based on the party's partisan publication, *Le Niger*.⁸⁷ France's colonial archives, however, contain a detailed report by a French inspector, Marcel Boyer, who was sent by Paris during the second half of May to conduct an on-the-spot investigation of the riots. His report renders a fascinating insight into contemporary conceptions of violent politics and provides a good impression of the revolutionary excitement and near millenarian atmosphere that reigned among segments of Niger's population—the little folk, the town dwellers, the young.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de Dakar pour la période du 24 au 31 déc. 1959, no. 61; CAOM, Cart.3689; Bakary, *Silence !*, 184.

⁸⁷ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 74 and Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 230-234.

⁸⁸ I/D 2 juin 1958. Strictement Confidentiel. L'Inspecteur de la France d'outre-mer Marcel Boyer à Monsieur le Ministre de la France d'outre-mer Paris. Objet: Incidents au Niger (hereinafter Mission Boyer, Report); I/E: Incidents au Niger et en Guinée—Exécution

Early April Ramadan had come to an end, cadres of both parties praying separately as a sign of hardening attitudes. The end of fasting allowed RDA cadres on the campaign trail to better cope with the scorching heat, which during this month climbs easily above 40 degrees centigrade. On the 1st of April a verbal exchange took place in Zinder between the local RDA leader and the assistant of the mayor, a Sawabist. As a result, youngsters of both parties began touring the city armed with sticks, calling their opponents names as they crossed each other's path. The incident was possibly reported to Niamey—as happened with others during that month—, thus sparking off a fight in the capital the next day when RDA women and children besieged Sawaba cadres at a gathering. As the Sawabists left the meeting, stones, bottles and sand flew through the air.⁸⁹ A week later Zinder was again the scene of a fracas, though this time potentially more serious. A group of 600 RDA militants clashed with Sawaba youths, who were armed with sticks and machetes, but police intervened to prevent the worst. However, the next day, on 9 April Sawabists went to the compound of the leader of Zinder's RDA (presumably Issa Ibrahim), hurling insults at him. A police car was besieged and Sawaba youths only withdrew when RDA cadres arrived armed with machetes, knives and clubs. It would have been none other than Diamballa Yansambou Maïga, first vice-president of the PPN's bureau and party hardliner, who had organised their armament.⁹⁰

That the RDA attempted to establish a large presence in Zinder, Sawaba's most important stronghold, demonstrated that the party was getting ready for a trial of strength. Sawaba was prepared to take up the challenge, as became clear at its territorial congress that also began on 9 April and consecrated the union with the FDN by joining their youth wings into the 'Jeunesse Sawaba'. Dandouna Aboubakar accused the RDA of having betrayed Africa, an opinion widely shared among party hardliners, and Ousmane Dan Galadima warned that Sawaba would 'flinch from nothing' and that 'those who would try to block its way [would] be driven away with a

de mes instructions no. 944/DC du 13 mai 1958 confirmées par T.O. chiffré du 22 mai 1958 (hereinafter Mission Boyer, Conclusions); Annexe au rapp. 1 D du 2 juin 1958 de M. l'Inspecteur Général Boyer "Incidents au Niger". Fascicule des Pièces Annexes du Rapport sur les Incidents de Niamey avril 1958. Maintien de l'ordre (hereinafter as Mission Boyer, Annexes); all CAOM, Cart.1041 & 2255/D.2.

⁸⁹ Mission Boyer, Annexes and Synthèse Politique. avril-mai-juin 1958. This may have been the same incident that took place in the Lakouroussou district, which, according to the PPN, involved Amadou dit Gabriel, who had a high position in Sawaba's hierarchy. Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 232.

⁹⁰ Mission Boyer, Annexes, also containing party accusations. Where these are used, this is indicated by conditional text.



Photo 2.4 Koussanga Alzouma (undated Sawaba pamphlet; ca. 1964).

giant blow'. Koussanga Alzouma, a vet and director of cabinet of the interior ministry (then held by Bakary himself), menacingly spoke of the role of Niger's youths in the country's liberation.⁹¹ This was a clear portent of trouble, since if the political parties were contemplating a violent showdown, it was adolescents that would be deployed for this purpose. A few days after the conference the organs of both parties published articles whipping up hatred.⁹²

On 20 April Altine Diallo, MP for the RDA on tour in the Madaoua area, got involved in a scuffle with Alfou Bébé, a local peasant and Sawaba activist. Diallo broke his jaw, possibly by striking Bébé with the butt of a rifle, necessitating his evacuation to a hospital in Niamey.⁹³ The next day, small

⁹¹ Synthèse Politique. avril-mai-juin 1958; Bulletin de Renseignement. No. 1027/BE, 18 Apr. 1958; CAOM, Cart.2181/D1 bis; interview Sao Marakan, Niamey, 29 Jan. 2003 ('ne recule devant rien'; 'ceux qui essaieront de lui barrer la route seront chassés d'un coup de pied magistral').

⁹² Mission Boyer, Annexes. On the association between youth and political violence, see Last, 'Towards a Political History of Youth in Muslim Northern Nigeria'.

⁹³ Mission Boyer, Annexes. Another RDA MP, Hima Hamani, might also have been involved in this.

incidents took place in Nguigmi in the far east of Niger, upon the arrival of an RDA mission led by Diamballa Maïga. The mission would have tried to reignite a chieftaincy dispute by encouraging a deposed village chief to assault his superior, the canton chief. In a village close to Tanout, a town to the north of Zinder in the Damergou region, Maïga would have been involved in a brawl with Mahaman Dan Bouzoua, a local Sawabist, forcing the RDA leader, as Bakary's party saw it, to 'flee the fury of the Sawaba masses'. In the same vein, Sawaba youths would have forced Boubou Hama to withdraw from a public meeting in Maradi at the end of the month. However, it was incidents that took place on 21-22 April in Margou, between Niamey and Dosso, that caused tempers to reach dangerous levels. With the RDA determined to exploit every dispute, it had incited Zarma peasants not to pay a customary tribute to groups of Peuls, who retaliated by reclaiming fields they had rented out to them. On the 21st Zarma youths attacked a couple of Peuls associated with Sawaba. Three people were wounded. The row continued into the next day resulting in another three people—Zarmas—getting injured and one Peul killed. This death, the first recorded fatality, was explosive news, not only because an RDA official, Djibrilla Maïga, was involved in the Margou troubles (as had been another RDA leader in the same region earlier that month), but also because the inter-party struggle now seemed to gain an ethnic dimension it had not had before (RDA/Zarma vs Sawaba/Peul). Although Boyer stressed that the reasons for the riots were political and that no ethnic dimension was involved, it is likely that the RDA worked on this in its effort to mobilise people for its cause. The death of the Peul was immediately phoned through to Niamey, which led militants on both sides to prepare for action.⁹⁴

A few days later an RDA MP, Sama Alhadji Ibrahim, was hindered by a canton chief in Gaya from taking up residence at a compound he had rented, requiring intervention of the Chef de Subdivision to avoid trouble. In another incident the same day, a Sawaba and an RDA activist, surrounded by their comrades and armed with a knife and a club, engaged each other. Gendarmes prevented the worst. Other incidents would have taken place at Dogondoutchi and Filingué, involving beatings, RDA MPs calling on people to withhold taxes and attempts to prevent opponents from entering town. On 25 April Hamani Diori and Gabriel d'Arboussier, an MP for the PPN though hailing from Soudan and of mixed blood, arrived in the

⁹⁴ Mission Boyer, Report, Conclusions & Annexes; and Synthèse Politique. avril-mai-juin 1958 ('prendre la fuite pour éviter la colère des masses Sawaba').

capital accompanied by an armed escort of young men and women. This clearly raised the stakes, as can be gauged from a complaint by Sawaba that d'Arboussier would have called for violence at a meeting the following day.⁹⁵

By now Sawaba felt exceptionally taunted by what Boyer's investigation established was a full month of propaganda tours undertaken by high-ranking RDA officials travelling the length and breadth of the land. Their agitation was deliberately geared to stir up trouble and, especially, establish an RDA presence in the east.⁹⁶ That the RDA had dared to penetrate cities where Sawaba claimed, not without reason, to enjoy the support of the majority of the population had particularly angered its leaders. And what was seen as the involvement of Diamballa Maïga in the incidents in Nguigmi, Zinder and Tanout had simply infuriated them.⁹⁷

The events that subsequently unfolded in Niamey from Sunday 27 April to Wednesday the 30th, can be reconstructed from Boyer's report, even if it is difficult, in his words, to establish the responsibilities for incidents in view of contradictory testimonies, inspired as these were by political passions. Nevertheless, Boyer's conclusions were unambiguous as far as the responsibility for the main events were concerned. First, the troubles began when Sawaba enticed RDA members to defect to its side in an attempt to strengthen its support in a city where both had a substantial presence and which therefore constituted disputed territory. Second, while Rollet reported to Paris that government ministers were 'nervous' during this episode—which suggests that Sawaba was triggered by the RDA's agitation into lashing out—, Boyer's report suggests that the way Sawaba went about putting the RDA in its place required some organisation and, thus, advance preparation. Exactly when Sawaba took the decision to do so and when the required measures were put into action remains unclear, yet the heated exchanges that continued all through the month gave it ample opportunity for this.

Among the different groups that were involved in the violence that now engulfed the capital, one should note, in particular, the role of women. While Sawaba posed as the defender of the talakawa, for example by criticising 'commis' women at its April congress for contempt of their lesser

⁹⁵ Mission Boyer, Annexes and Synthèse Politique. avril-mai-juin 1958.

⁹⁶ Mission Boyer, Conclusions and Annexes; and Synthèse Politique. avril-mai-juin 1958. Tellingly, in its own accusations the RDA by and large ignored the incidents that took place before the very end of April.

⁹⁷ Mission Boyer, Annexes.

sisters,⁹⁸ women on both sides of the divide took an active part in the agitation. Although Boyer thought this unusual for a society such as Niger's, where women had a subordinate status, their mobilisation suggests that both parties were now heading for a showdown. Moreover, although Sawaba's following encompassed specific social categories that were present throughout the country, support in both parties also had regional (rather than straightforward ethnic) features. With Sawaba's support strongest in the east and centre, in addition to several western towns along the Niger River, the PPN-RDA was—apart from a 'commis'-based party—, very much the party of the west and by implication of a substantial part of the population of the capital.⁹⁹ Thus, different groups got involved in the riots, including women and, in their wake, children. For example, magajiya of both parties played a central role, even if these patrons of the local free women, who had worked themselves up as leaders of women sections, executed rather than initiated party strategies.¹⁰⁰ Such involvement was not new since, as shown in the previous chapter, women and girls had already engaged in confrontations during the days of UDN-PPN rivalry. Now this participation took place on a larger scale.

Thus, the troubles began on the evening of Sunday the 27th—on the eve of the opening of parliament¹⁰¹—when a reception took place of Sawaba women at the house of one Mrs Boubou, formerly of the FDN, not far from the Great Market. Celebrating the defection of three RDA women from the Lakouroussou district, which the RDA claimed as its fief, the occasion was cheered up with a tam-tam that would have accompanied a barrage of

⁹⁸ Bulletin de Renseignement. No. 1027/BE, 18 Apr. 1958.

⁹⁹ Djibo, 'Les enjeux politiques', 58 rightly argues that ethnic-regional considerations mattered little until independence. Indeed, colonial archives show this was an obsession of the French, who observed Niger through this reductive prism. Djibo maintains it would be unfair to reduce the PPN to being a Zarma-Songhay party, pointing to the several Hausas and individuals of other ethnic groups who were member of the PPN regime. Yet, this was partly the consequence of the PPN's mobilisation of support in the centre and east *after* it assumed power in late 1958. See Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Études pour la période du 18 au 24 juin 1959, no. 35, ex. no. 1; CAOM, Cart.2249. Its key organ, the bureau politique, up to the party's fall in 1974, never contained a single Kanuri (the ethnic group in Niger's far east) or Hausa member (with the exception of three Maouri's, a Hausa subgroup from Dogondoutchi in the west). R. Higgott and F. Fuglestad, 'The 1974 Coup d'État in Niger: Towards an Explanation', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 13 (1975), 386-387.

¹⁰⁰ With the UDN formed by people who defected from the PPN, Sawaba copied from the RDA the magajiya as model of women party organisation. Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 64, 153 & H. Djibo, *La participation des femmes africaines à la vie politique: les exemples du Sénégal et du Niger* (Paris, 2001), 104-105.

¹⁰¹ Rollet to France Outre-Mer & Dakar, 28 Apr. 1958; CAOM, Cart.2181/D.1 bis (letter).

insults addressed at the RDA, one of whose leaders, Maurice Dejean, lived nearby. When the reception ended, the novices left with an escort of party men and women, according to the RDA led by one Djibo Tessa and involving more than 150 people. Singing and walking along Salama(n) Avenue, one of the capital's principal arteries, now called Boulevard de la Liberté,¹⁰² the escort passed the compound of a magajiya of the opposition, which led to insults flying to and fro and a scuffle cut short by police. The Sawaba escort was dispersed. The next morning at ten o'clock an argument took place at the 'Petit Marché' in the Maourey district south-west of Lakourousou. This was an area which, while its name derived from a Hausa subgroup, had a mixed population of Lebanese traders, artisans and Hausa and Peul karuwai cohabiting in magajiya compounds. Tani Traoré, an RDA magajiya of the Tafa district near the 'Tree of Liberty' to the north of the Petit Marché, quarrelled at the market with Sawaba women of the neighbouring quarter about the incidents on Salama Avenue the previous evening. The bickering ended without incident, but two hours later Tani became embroiled in another squabble, near the Tree of Liberty. Being alone, she was attacked, blows were exchanged, and police intervened to disperse the antagonists. Police patrols continued throughout the afternoon and evening. That same day, unidentified persons assaulted a Sawabist in Zinder, Issa Boukary, leading immediately to clashes between party elements armed with clubs and knives. One person got injured. It is more than likely that it was reported to people in the capital.¹⁰³

At half-past seven on 29 April, the day began with another scuffle at the Tree of Liberty, between women of both parties, now armed with sticks. Some men would also have been involved. An RDA woman, Salleye Bibaïze, and a girl accompanying her, would have been beaten up by Sawaba people (Sawaba made an opposite accusation). RDA supporters would then have called in Diamballa Maïga for help. Maïga, an aggressive character,¹⁰⁴ hurried to the scene and became involved in an argument with Sanda Hima, no ordinary Sawabist but the brother of Bakary himself. While the RDA alleged that Hima grabbed Maïga to provoke him, Sawaba maintained that Maïga stated aloud that he would 'bash in the face' of the prime minister and then made his way to Bakary's brother. When the two men hit each

¹⁰² Interview Idrissa Yansambou, Archives Nationales du Niger, Niamey, 27 Febr. 2008. Not to be confused with *Rue Salaman*, to the south of the old avenue. Both were/are named after a colonial officer.

¹⁰³ Mission Boyer, Annexes and Bernus, *Niamey*, 5.

¹⁰⁴ Decalo, *Historical Dictionary*, 153.

other, women of both sides joined in a massive frenzy punching their opponents as well as the two men, tarnishing Maïga's station as scion of a noble family tracing its lineage to the Songhay empire. The RDA leader fled the fury of the Sawaba women by driving to the party headquarters at the IFAN building in the Gaouey district, where Boubou Hama was director, presumably to report to the leadership and alert the authorities. Agents of the Sûreté and police rushed to the scene and disarmed rioters but had difficulty in driving them away. Hama had meanwhile phoned the French Commandant de Cercle, Delarozière, to warn that the IFAN building was being besieged by people who worked at the town hall (hence, Sawabists). They were apparently dispersed after intervention by another French official.¹⁰⁵

At nine o'clock another brawl took place at the Tree of Liberty as party followers had rearmed with sticks. Police intervened again, led by Delarozière and assisted by a couple of Gardes de Cercles. Followers of both sides took light injuries but by now appeared unwilling to be put off. An hour later there was another tussle almost at the same spot. Maïga and his chauffeur rushed back to the scene while the RDA alleged that Sawaba, too, dispatched a representative, i.e. Amadou dit Gabriel, deputy mayor, driven by his chauffeur in a municipal vehicle called 'Versailles'.¹⁰⁶ This merely added to the disturbance. Boyer's investigation suggests that Maïga's 'command car', as it was called, ended up in a crowd of Sawaba supporters, getting treated to a barrage of stones. Maïga's driver reversed the car, hit a 10-year-old boy and made his way out of the fracas without—as Sawaba did not fail to point out—bothering to help the child, whose leg was broken. Although police brought the boy, who belonged to an RDA family, to hospital and managed to disperse the mob, the incident heightened political tensions. With the sun establishing its ascendancy over the capital,

¹⁰⁵ Mission Boyer, Annexes; telegram Rollet to France Outre-Mer. *Priorité Absolue sans délai*. Confidential. no. 113, 29 Apr. 1958; CAOM, Cart.2181/D.1 bis (latter blamed Maïga for incident with Bakary's brother); interview Mossi Salifou, Niamey, 29 Febr. 2008. Diori, too, talked with Delarozière about incidents that morning during a scheduled visit and falsely asserted that his house had come under attack. IFAN was a research institute ('pour lui casser la gueule').

¹⁰⁶ Ford Versailles, a car brand introduced to France in 1955. K. van Walraven, 'Vehicle of Sedition: The Role of Transport Workers in Sawaba's Rebellion in Niger, 1954-1966', in J.B. Gewald, S. Luning & K. van Walraven (eds), *The Speed of Change: Motor Vehicles and People in Africa, 1890-2000* (Boston and Leiden, 2009), 75-103.

immersing it in singeing heat, Delarozière noted that rioters became more aggressive and numerous, their arms multiplying rapidly.¹⁰⁷

The riots began to expand. During the next hour fights broke out near the Great Market and at several points along Salama Avenue, involving men and women armed with a variety of sticks and ‘coupe-coupes’, a kind of chopping knife.¹⁰⁸ The rapid spreading of the riots was partly caused by the intervention of groups of Bellas, who were mobilised by Sawaba, armed and transported to trouble spots by lorries of the transport company of Pierre Vidal, the minister of public health. With its interests in the building and transport sector, ‘Entreprises Vidal’ employed many Bellas and owned numerous vehicles. These were not simply commandeered by Bella Sababists; the minister himself had ordered the lorries to pick up Bella supporters in the city as well as from the surrounding countryside the previous evening and early on the morning of 29 April.¹⁰⁹ Vidal, an emigré businessman born in Mexico and loathed by French officialdom, thus acted in accordance with the wishes of Bakary, who later told Inspector Boyer that he had not hesitated to tell the party faithful to respond vigorously to the provocations of the RDA. A letter of Bakary to Governor Rollet on the 29th and a cabinet communiqué of 30 April stated that Sawaba had decided to resort to ‘self-defence’ in the face of the police’s inability to maintain order and that the ‘vigour’ of Sawaba’s ‘opposition’ would be applied whatever the consequences.¹¹⁰

The orchestration of the riots meant that the police were getting overwhelmed by the pace of events. The riots’ partially organised character and, especially, the involvement of the government in its planning and execution, were an entirely new phenomenon in Niger, incongruously marking its incipient transition to statehood and the deployment of all conventional and unconventional measures that could go with it. The police were now faced not just by angry women and children but able-bodied men, armed and ready to fight. Though referred to as ‘Bellas from Gao’, it appears they came from both the rural areas close to Niamey and the capital itself.

¹⁰⁷ The RDA came with a less probable version: Amadou dit Gabriel’s driver, ‘Dodo’, blocked the road for Maïga’s vehicle, which, however, escaped, leading Gabriel’s Versailles to go after it. It would have been then that Gabriel’s car, and not that of Maïga, hit the boy. Boyer did not accept this. Mission Boyer.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Le Procureur de la République à Monsieur le Chef du Territoire du Niger, 27 août 1958. Confidentiel; CAOM, Cart.2189/D.12.

¹¹⁰ Mission Boyer, Report and Annexes; Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, 403; Fuglestad, ‘Djibo Bakary’, 323 (‘vigueur’, ‘opposition’).

Wage earners generally were regarded by the French as the ‘shock troops’ of Niger’s political parties, within which the Bellas, especially those employed in Entreprises Vidal, played an active role, mostly on behalf of Sawaba.¹¹¹ They might be compared with what one British official called the ‘scallywag and thug element’ that supported Sawaba’s social counterpart in Nigeria, NEPU. Raucous youths, in age or behaviour, they formed a special category of yara or young, i.e. ‘yan iska’—Hausa for ‘sons of the wind’, who, living in an urban environment, had escaped the hierarchies of rural life and were unattached: they were ideal for recruitment as ‘thugs’ (‘yan banga’ in Northern Nigerian parlance).¹¹²

Until noon on the 29th police as well as forces of the ‘Garde Territoriale’, commanded by Philippe Fratacci, captain of the Gendarmerie, got involved in skirmishes with rioters along Salama Avenue. While they disarmed and dispersed protesters, the latter simply fled to reassemble further away. Hence, the Gendarmerie was now put in place, with a mobile platoon of auxiliaries held in reserve and another one with French officers stationed nearby. The Gendarmerie was better trained and organised, in contrast to the police and Territorial Guard. Both the police and Territorial Guard had been fragmented if not politicised by Sawaba’s government, with the Guard’s mobile platoons having been devolved by Bordier, in breach of the Loi Cadre, to the ministry of the interior and thus receiving its orders directly from Bakary. Yet, the Gendarmerie, too, was unable to keep the camps apart. While an RDA militant, who hit a Sawabist with a spear head, was arrested, at noon women of his party attacked the house of a Sawaba woman, Kouya Alaoussa, in the Lakouroussou quarter. Lakouroussou (a corruption of ‘la course’, the area of the hippodrome before it moved to the east of Niamey), was one of the liveliest and ethnically most diverse districts.¹¹³ Like the district of Banizoumbou (‘peace has arrived’) further west, it bordered on Salama Avenue and the Great Market and consisted of a dense network of streets making crowd control difficult. The

¹¹¹ Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d’Etudes de Dakar pour la période du 20 au 26 août 1959, no. 44 ex. no. 1, 95; CAOM, Cart.3687; interview Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 2 Dec. 2003.

¹¹² Last, ‘Towards a Political History of Youth in Muslim Northern Nigeria’, 40 & 49; R.L. Sklar & C.S. Whitaker, ‘Nigeria’, in J.S. Coleman & C.G. Rosberg (eds), *Political Parties and National Integration in Tropical Africa* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London, 1964), 623; and Despatch no. 5 (H.A. Twist, Office of the Deputy High Commissioner for the United Kingdom, Kaduna) to Viscount Head, High Commissioner for the United Kingdom, Lagos, Secret, 31 July 1961 (note 67 above), which contains a scribbled note on Arabic connotations of ‘wind’ as referring to illegitimacy or a form of invective.

¹¹³ Bernus, *Niamey*, 5. Originally, it had a population of Zarma of the Kalle subgroup.

attack on Alaoussa was followed by the arrival of a delegation of senior Sawabists. Apart from one former UNIS member, Labo Bouché, it included several UDN hardliners such as Ousmane Dan Galadima, Dandouna Aboubakar, Sallé Dan Koulou and Hima Dembélé. This underscored the role of party interventions at the different trouble spots, since as Boyer noted later there was no moderating influence from the leaders of either party on their rank and file. In other words, these party delegations visited the riotous scenes to fire their followers and whip up political passion. The Sawaba party was attacked by RDA women and party cadres, who manhandled Labo Bouché and battered Dembélé's car until police intervened and Territorial Guards took position on Salama Avenue.¹¹⁴

By now Djibo Bakary had postponed a cabinet meeting until later in the afternoon and held a meeting at city hall—in the district of the Petit Marché—, which, controlled by Sawaba, formed one of the party's nerve centres. While nothing is known of what transpired there, it suggests that he closely monitored events. Only some minor incidents were reported now, as groups of both parties remained in their districts, possibly because of the midday heat. When Delarozière went back to his headquarters he noticed that the streets near the Great Market were empty, with the exception of a grey pick-up truck which toured the area, loaded with a dozen individuals brandishing clubs, shouting 'Sawaba! Sawaba!', and looking for trouble. Large concentrations of Bellas, armed with steel rods, appeared at the party's headquarters at 14.30, after which they were brought in several lorries to Salama Avenue. Walking in closed formation (according to the RDA), they descended on the area and engaged in a massive clash with RDA cadres at the point of the water tower, near the RDA office. Several people sustained injuries. Captain Fratacci had meanwhile been given orders by Bakary to position a platoon between the water tower and the Protestant mission, which was further down the avenue. The order, of which Delarozière was unaware, was given through the director of cabinet Gherardi at the Vice-Presidency and may have had a biased purpose though its effect was unclear. Police separated combatants as reserve units were put in place and a mobile platoon pushed back protesters. Yet around 15.30 rioters (presumably Sawabists upset over this interference) overwhelmed the police, seizing their truncheons and chasing them away. About a hundred men, armed with clubs, knives, iron bars, sabres and spades, assembled at the south-eastern corner of the Great Market, shouting and waving their weapons. Shortly afterwards Delarozière arrived on the scene, had

¹¹⁴ Mission Boyer, Report and Annexes.

reinforcements come and ordered Fratacci to construct a barricade close to the water tower. Excited crowds engaged the police several times before being dispersed. They reassembled further down the avenue in the direction of the Protestant mission. Here the Gendarmerie engaged them, confiscating weapons, including a dagger covered in blood.¹¹⁵

Lorries with Bellas meanwhile descended on the compounds of RDA leaders. One of these parties, according to the RDA led by Djibo Tessa (who was accused of involvement in the first riots on 27 April), would have attacked an RDA man, Irkoye Gomni, and his family, leading to several injuries. Another Bella convoy, according to the RDA under Hima Yenkori, a nurse attached to the cabinet of Pierre Vidal, would have visited the house of Altine Diallo, the RDA MP who had broken the jaw of a Sawaba peasant in the Madaoua area ten days before. This vengeful party would have been seen by Delarozière and been pushed back by RDA defenders. Yet another group attacked the compound of El Hadj Hima, a 59-year old RDA man from Niamey, who was badly beaten and had two ribs broken while his son, 27, was worked over with a machete. At another scene, Garba Issa, a veteran and former member of the PPN comité directeur, fired shots in the air, probably to scare off a lorry of Bella assailants. Although police seized his rifle, the use of firearms marked a new phase. New scuffles erupted on Salama Avenue while Delarozière's forces charged to break up crowds in the streets adjacent to it. When people threatened to attack the compound of Hamani Diori, police intervened, but they could not prevent an assault on the house of the hated Maïga. The RDA alleged that two lorries with Bellas went to his address and—rather wildly—that they were commanded by a European. Stones and other objects were hurled into Maïga's compound.¹¹⁶

In its struggle to regain control police threatened to go under at the northern end of the Great Market in the Banizoumbou district, where they clashed with demonstrators armed with sticks, bottles and knives. A butcher loyal to the RDA had his sabre taken from him, but the battle resulted in several injuries and the police were practically overwhelmed. One European officer narrowly avoided being struck down by a 'Hausa sabre', and Delarozière could free himself from a ferocious group of assailants only by seizing the steel pole from a protester. When auxiliary forces were confronted by 50 well-armed fighters, another French officer ordered them, contrary to Delarozière's instructions, to fire tear-gas grenades to disen-

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

tangle themselves.¹¹⁷ French intelligence later reported that, at one portentous juncture, a detachment of troops in pursuit of rioters was photographed by an unidentified individual. By six o'clock the cabinet, angered over Delarozière's interventions, demanded that the Commandant de Cercle be replaced. Bakary sent a letter to Rollet simply informing him that he had relieved Delarozière of his post.

Bar Rivoli: Consummating Victory

The photographs that were taken of riot police graphically illustrate that the French authorities were no longer in absolute control and intimate that others—Sawaba's forces under the auspices of Bakary's government—were attempting to take over. The governor acquiesced in Delarozière's replacement (effective the following day) in order to prevent a further hardening of the government's attitude and stop its interference in the maintenance of law and order. Bakary's cabinet alleged that the Commandant de Cercle had shown bias in policing. He would have worked in collusion with RDA forces and protected armed RDA elements. A more outlandish accusation was that he would have publicly declared his sympathy for the RDA, while Bakary claimed that Delarozière had struck a Sawaba militant with his own hands—a reference to the action he had taken to extricate himself from a Sawaba mob. Yet, Delarozière categorically denied all charges, taking pride in his professional ethos. Rollet stressed he was without blemish, and Boyer later stated that his replacement was an understandable but regrettable measure.¹¹⁸ The reason he had incurred Sawaba's wrath was that he had actively led the operations to control the crowds and prevent attacks on RDA cadres (and people generally) to the point of taking over the command of Fratacci's mobile platoons, which the prime minister had reserved for himself. Delarozière had also witnessed how Sawaba's Bella gangs had toured the city and got involved in street battles if not outright attacks on RDA compounds. Since he had seen too much and stood in the way of Bakary's control of Niamey, he had to go.

Early that evening, police forces were confined to barracks, possibly as result of Delarozière's discharge, although four company sections were kept on alert. Calm returned to the city as protesters reassembled at their

¹¹⁷ 'Grenades de maintien de l'ordre'. Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.



Photo 2.5 The former Bar Rivoli, 2005.

respective party headquarters. By then it was clear that the RDA had taken a severe battering. Sawabists could take satisfaction in the fact that they had got back at the RDA for its provocations that month, that they had demonstrated that its leadership was not invulnerable and that they were establishing a presence in districts that the opposition considered as its fief, in particular Lakouroussou. Inspired by an insurrectionary passion centring on the emancipation of the talakawa, Sawaba's little folk, moulded into a political movement and spearheaded by armed marginals, were a force to reckon with. Thus, at 'Bar Rivoli', the drinking establishment in the hotel of that name, party supporters were celebrating their success, within a stone's throw of the Petit Marché and its petty traders, artisans and prostitutes who were among the party's core supporters. A gang of 20 rowdy customers, armed with sticks and rifles, were drinking and partying, threatening to provoke trouble. At 21.30 police were called in, presumably by the hotel management, to prevent the bar from getting ransacked. When troops appeared, the mob made off, fleeing before the police and loudly cheering 'Sawaba! Sawaba! Sawaba!'.¹¹⁹

The revolutionary delirium holding Niamey in its grip continued as RDA cadres were not yet defeated and even went on the offensive. The lull ended at 22.00 hours when a new scuffle broke out on Salama Avenue. RDA men attacked the compound of Georges Condat, the gentle Assembly

¹¹⁹ Ibid., Annexes and telegram of Rollet to France Outre-Mer. *Priorité Absolue sans délai*. Confidential. copy to Dakar. no. 114-115, 29 Apr. 1958; CAOM, Cart.2181/D.1 bis.

president but of mixed blood, who was in Paris at the time and got a barrage of stones and bottles hurled into his plot. Sawaba cadres retaliated with an assault in Lakouroussou on the house of Dan Dobi Mahamane, RDA MP for Dogondoutchi and assistant secretary-general of the party. The house of Elhadj Ibrahim Sama, RDA MP for Dosso, would also have been attacked. Gendarmes managed to disperse the mobs but an hour later Territorial Guards clashed violently with Sawaba supporters on the avenue, numerous people sustaining injuries from sticks, stones and bottles filled with sand. While gendarmes dispersed crowds shouting insults at the compound of Diamballa Maïga near the Protestant mission, Sawaba once more sent its motorised columns into the city, this time equipped with shotguns.¹²⁰

At midnight on the 30th of April the month reached its riotous peak. Bellas would have attacked the compounds of three RDA leaders, among them that of Tani Traoré, the magajiya of the Tafa district who was the centre of trouble two days before, and, again, that of Altine Diallo. Then a large crowd of Sawaba supporters turned up at the gates of Maïga's residence, no. 81. According to the RDA, a 'Versailles' of city hall appeared. Threats were exchanged and a scuffle broke out in front of the residence, ending in shots being fired from and into the compound. Maïga's keeper, Abdou Kimba, fired a shotgun into the mob—or 'passers-by' in Sawaba's propaganda—wounding one or a couple of protesters and killing Adama Mahamane, a 15-year-old from Gao, possibly Bella but apparently not a formal member of any party. The shots were returned, injuring Maïga's nephew, Hamani, and killing Alassane Diadie, Maïga's own brother-in-law, who appeared to be in front of the compound.¹²¹ As Gendarmerie arrived to evacuate the wounded, Sawaba's mobs had already made off, scared, perhaps, by the fatal turn that events had taken. Now that the first deaths were registered, one of them striking at the heart of the RDA's leadership, the raw violence that had taken possession of the country had attained its dramatic climax. The governor was warned. Rollet put the totality of Niamey's garrison on alert, stationing soldiers at all sensitive points in the

¹²⁰ Mission Boyer, Annexes, and interview with Georges Condat, Niamey, 27 Nov. 2003. Most RDA leaders would have regrouped in Boubou Hama's residence, which would also have been attacked. Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 233.

¹²¹ Mission Boyer, Annexes and Telegram of Rollet to France Outre-Mer Paris, copy to Dakar. *Priorité Absolue*. no. 116, 30 Apr. 1958; CAOM, Cart.2181/D.1 bis. The RDA admitted that Abdou fired first, but in the sky, to frighten off the attackers. Sawaba alleged both fatalities were caused by Maïga himself, who would have tried to prevent his brother-in-law from firing into the crowd. The 15-year-old killed, Adama Mahamane, had recently arrived in Niamey and was employed as a boy.

capital. He telegraphed to Paris and delegated powers to the head of the Sûreté and the commander of the Gendarmerie who worked in close liaison with the governor's office. A mobile platoon was put in front of Maïga's residence while police began investigations. At six o'clock in the morning, the bereaved hardliner, who would have been caught with a dagger hidden under his boubou, was brought to the Sûreté for questioning. While his keeper was prosecuted for murder, Maïga was charged with illegal arms possession. The public prosecutor deemed Maïga a 'particularly virulent politician and object of tenacious hatred'. In order to prevent further incidents, the magistrate told him to stay in Niamey and remain at the disposal of the authorities while troops guarded his house.¹²²

At ten o'clock the victims of the previous night were buried without further ado. Twice that day trouble loomed, once at the compound of an MP and, in the afternoon, when police were asked to disperse a crowd—yet the violence began to die down. Besides the two deaths, the French recorded 13 badly wounded in hospital, roughly evenly divided between both parties, and 98 people who had suffered lighter injuries. Bearing in mind the extent and duration of the fighting this was probably an underestimate, which, based on registered cases, ignored larger numbers of unrecorded injuries. In any case, Boyer emphasised that all injuries occurred in inter-party clashes rather than the confrontations with the police. The saddest casualty was Alfari Soumaila Kadi, a toddler of three, who sustained a head injury from a stick while being carried on the back of his Sawaba mother.¹²³

The French had other worries, however, since it had become clear that the foundations of their control were not secure. Even though Boyer did not dig up evidence of political bias, neither the police nor Territorial Guards had demonstrated effectiveness in maintaining law and order. Only the Gendarmerie had shown itself to be genuinely apolitical and disciplined. While Rollet was considered to have acted firmly, the role of the police was judged as negative. What was worse, Boyer found that the intelligence apparatus could not be relied upon owing to interference of Bakary's government. He considered this a logical consequence of the devolution of power, which had set in under the Loi Cadre but had gone

¹²² Mission Boyer, Annexes and Le Procureur de la République à Monsieur le Chef du Territoire du Niger, 27 août 1958 ('homme politique particulièrement virulent et objet de haines tenaces').

¹²³ As his name was listed under Sawaba casualties, I presume his mother followed that party. See the list in Mission Boyer, Report and Annexes. According to RDA leaders, numerous Bellas were killed by 'Zarmas' in revenge, their bodies dumped in the Niger River. Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 234.

further than the internal autonomy foreseen and had reduced France's possibilities of intervention. While he advised that security forces be augmented, he emphasised to his superiors in Paris that France should not intervene anymore in Niger's domestic affairs as this could whip up anti-French sentiment. The risks involved were the greater as Niger was aligning with the ruling party of Guinea, which exhibited aspirations to independence. Paris therefore ought to intervene as a last resort to protect Europeans or Niger's territorial integrity, leaving the maintenance of law and order to the local government at its own cost. For this, it should quickly adapt its army units, since platoons for the Gendarmerie could easily follow the fate of the Territorial Guards. The territorial government would only receive some 'technical' aid for the upkeep of its forces. While Boyer predicted that it would be hard to cast such a new role into an unambiguous legal framework, he thought it necessary so as to avoid France becoming the guarantor of a government that did not respect the principle of political opposition.¹²⁴

As Sawaba's Niger appeared to slip from French control, some metropolitan advisers were contemplating the possibility of a partial pull-out. For French officials in Niger, however, this was not so simple. Rollet, who felt sympathy for Bakary, was angry about the cabinet communiqué published on 30 April, protesting firmly against the accusation that his forces would only have intervened against Sawaba militants. He was astounded that, even before the opening of judicial inquiries, the communiqué accused Maïga of having personally fired the shots that killed a protester at his compound. Rollet also issued a sharp warning to Bakary not to pursue the last point of the communiqué, which threatened that his ministers would execute the orders of the party as the sole popularly recognised force of Niger, thereby engaging their responsibility as members of the cabinet.¹²⁵

Boyer's investigations concluded squarely that it was Sawaba that bore the responsibility for the violence of 29 April. The involvement of Vidal's lorries and Sawaba's Bellas was 'objectively established'. Worse,

¹²⁴ Mission Boyer, Report and Conclusions, which opine that, had gendarmes intervened on the 27th, the riots might have been prevented. The RDA alleged that police and Gendarmerie had received orders not to intervene—orders that could only have come from the interior ministry controlled by Bakary. Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 233-234. See for other accusations by the RDA its communiqué (text in *La Voix Libérée*, no. 1, March-Apr. 2011, 12-14). Boyer's recommendations, while explicitly targeted at Niger, were also informed by similar events in Guinea.

¹²⁵ Rollet to Bakary, 30 Apr. 1958, in Mission Boyer, Annex VII.

at not a single moment [had] the Ministers of the Council of Government and the Vice-President [i.e. Bakary] been able or willing to maintain the necessary objectivity and make a distinction ... between their functions as Ministers and their qualities of political party leaders.¹²⁶

This verdict was later largely corroborated by Sawabists themselves, who in interviews admitted that it was Bakary's men, rather than the RDA, who had provoked the violence in Niamey. They had done this because their leaders had been threatened, although there was 'no honour' for Sawaba in what had happened and it actually did the party a disservice.¹²⁷ Yet, this was not how it was seen at the time. Despite his damning statement, Boyer acknowledged that the RDA's 'exasperating' and 'biting' propaganda and month-long provocations had formed the immediate cause of the fighting. Maïga's role as *agent provocateur* stood out in particular, although the French refused a request by Sawaba to banish him from the capital. For their part, Sawaba's ministers openly bragged that their party had brought the RDA 'to its senses'.¹²⁸ In other words, the violence as such was seen as legitimate. In the party's Marxist-inspired revolutionary notions, it was considered as the legitimate response of Niger's talakawa to provocations against the party of the people. This had been forewarned by Ousmane Dan Galadima at the party congress earlier in the month, while the fact that the violence came partly down on inhabitants of the capital who belonged to the same social class, but defended the party of the region (the RDA), was not seen to matter much when the decisive battle was at hand. Additional arguments were found in Sawaba self-defence; reciprocating the RDA's actions and trespassing; and the refusal of the RDA, that 'bourgeois' party, to merge in an inter-territorial group under the local leadership of Sawaba—itsself, after all, the vanguard of the people.¹²⁹

On the 1st of May the traditional May Day Parade was allowed to proceed unhindered, as the situation had quietened down. Soldiers, three companies strong, were stationed at different posts in the capital, commanded by a French official, Pinaud, who had been made Commandant de Cercle.

¹²⁶ Mission Boyer, Report ('objectivement établis'; 'à aucun moment, les Ministres du Conseil de Gouvernement et le Vice-Président n'ont su, pu ou voulu garder l'objectivité nécessaire et faire la distinction ... entre leurs fonctions de Ministres et leurs qualités de leaders politiques d'un Parti').

¹²⁷ Interviews with Georges Condat, Mounkaila Beidari and Elhadj Illa Salifou, Niamey, 27 Nov., 2 Dec. and 25 Nov. 2003.

¹²⁸ Bureau Exécutif, Parti Sawaba, to Rollet, 1 May 1958, in Mission Boyer, Annex III; Mission Boyer, Report & Annex VI ('corrosif'; 'exaspérant'; 'mis à la raison').

¹²⁹ Synthèse Politique. avril-mai-juin 1958 and *Azalai* (a Sawaba organ), 7 June 1958.

The parade involved unionists only of Sawaba persuasion, some 600 to 800 in total, some of them very young. Led by Saloum Traoré, minister of social affairs and UGTAN official, they marched—armed—through Niamey and congregated at UGTAN headquarters. No incidents took place as RDA unionists (public sector workers such as teachers, postal workers and civil servants) stayed indoors, gathered in the compound of Boubou Hama. With the opposition licking its wounds, the parade became a triumphal procession for Sawaba, which was concluded that evening by a rally involving hundreds of people that included Bakary and other party leaders and all Sawaba MPs present in the capital. The events of the preceding days were quickly reported to the rural areas and widely seen as a victory for Sawaba.¹³⁰

This the party was determined to exploit to the full. Ousmane Dan Galadima went on tour to the east, bragging about victory in Zinder, inciting party militants to ‘subdue the RDA by force’ and warning that civil servants and chiefs who were not loyal to the party would be sacked. While party activity in other regions—with the exception of Niamey—was less extreme, most Sawaba MPs went to their home areas after a congress in early May to exploit the party’s victory and boost its prestige among the people. In callous reference to the events in the capital, Sawaba in Niamey incessantly hammered at the message that those who would oppose ‘the onward march’ of the party would be ‘crushed’. The RDA, for its part, threatened Sawaba with the ‘terrible anger of the people’ and was involved, on 16 May, in an inter-party clash in Tessaoua, but otherwise had no answer to the campaign of its adversary. By continually accusing the RDA of sabotage and provocations, Sawaba managed to enhance its position and subdue its rival.¹³¹

But this strategy, which was promptly put into operation after the riots, involved more than the silencing of an opposition after a bloody day of reckoning. Sawaba’s scheme to cut the RDA down to size, carefully planned and executed, was also destined to deliver it full control of parliament, the bureaucracy and the country’s chieftaincies. Together with the deployment of its marginals, these measures could be interpreted as a creeping coup d’état that aimed at a near-revolutionary take-over in the name of the ta-

¹³⁰ Telegram Rollet to Dakar & Paris, no. 199, 1 May 1958; telegram Rollet to France Outre-Mer. *Priorité Absolue*, no. 36, 2 May 1958 (both CAOM, Cart.2181/D.1 bis); *Synthèse Politique*. avril-mai-juin 1958.

¹³¹ *Synthèse Politique*. avril-mai-juin 1958. In the Tessaoua brawl, three people were injured (‘mater le R.D.A. par la force’; ‘la marche en avant’; ‘écrasés’; ‘la colère terrible du peuple’).

lakawa, guided by their avant-garde, the 'petit peuple' and related strata. Thus, it was in May that Bakary's cabinet finally appointed its first Nigériens—all Sawaba loyalists—to command positions in the territorial administration. Early that month the Assembly voted a resolution, by 26 to 8 (the 'No's' coming from the RDA), demanding total internal autonomy from France. With the parliamentary bureaux remaining under the control of Sawaba, the chairmen of the different political groups were now excluded from the meeting that fixed the parliamentary agenda, which effectively eliminated the RDA's voice. Control of the parliamentary treasury was taken away from the Committee of Finance and vested in the relevant ministry, making RDA monitoring of the Assembly's budget impossible. Its MPs, in effect, were made powerless.¹³²

It was the RDA's offensive of April, as the culmination of its year-long agitation, that pushed the Sawaba government to put its new strategy into practice. Besides muzzling the RDA's parliamentary voice, it involved harassing its members—including people high up in the party hierarchy—and enticing others to defect. Boubou Hama, for example, was sacked from his position at the IFAN institute, which had served as an RDA stronghold during the fighting. He was replaced by Zodi Ikhia of the FDN, which had merged with Sawaba into the inter-territorial PRA. Djibrilla Maïga, Niger's only African Chef de Subdivision, RDA member and former metropolitan senator, was transferred to a post in Tahoua. This was done in retaliation for his involvement in the Margou troubles, which had led to the first recorded death. Other civil servants, too, were confronted with administrative transfers. Starting at the top, this punitive policy spread to the rural areas to the point of getting at petty objects, such as a school in the native village of an RDA MP in the Dosso region, whose construction had been envisaged since 1955 but was discontinued by the minister of education at the behest of Sawabists in Gaya. In addition, the RDA suffered numerous and spectacular defections, sometimes of influential members in the community, whom Bakary promised a warm welcome in the party. At Sawaba meetings in the capital many new people joined up.¹³³

Finally, the party lashed out in particular at those who were most detested by the rank and file: that unlikely component in Bakary's coalition, the chiefs. While he had all along had difficulty in restraining the hostility of his hardliners, now he felt strong enough to impose sanctions on some

¹³² Ibid. and letter Rollet to France Outre-Mer and Dakar, 10 May 1958; CAOM, Cart.2181/D.1 bis.

¹³³ Synthèse Politique. avril-mai-juin 1958.

of the Sarakuna, still not in order to suppress them as an institution but to rein them in and prevent any recurrence of rebellions such as had nearly cost him his cabinet in November the previous year. Much has been made of the dismissal of chiefs during Sawaba's period in government. Yet, this appears to a considerable extent to have been the result of later French propaganda, which had its own political motives in depicting these dismissals as an outrageous act of government (see Chapter 4). This interpretation was given added substance by the historian Fuglestad, who in a revisionist analysis of Bakary's government exaggerated the number of dismissals, asserting that a total of 20 chiefs, among whom were not the least important, were sacked. This was effectively debunked by Mamoudou Djibo, who showed that some nine out of 149 canton chiefs were revoked or suspended, the pretext usually sought in 'mismanagement'. Three of these cases occurred in August 1958, while one appeared to be based on solid administrative rather than political reasons.¹³⁴

Six chiefs, indeed, were sacked during the spring for 'mismanagement', of whom five were canton chiefs and one was the Sarkin Katsina, or 'Chef de Province', of Maradi, co-founder of UNIS. While Mamoudou Djibo portrayed this as normal acts of government but regretted the underlying political motivation, here it is important to realise their temporal context. Thus, all dismissals occurred *after* the riots in April, which led to an immediate hardening of the government's attitude. The five canton chiefs were sacked by a decree of Bakary as minister of the interior on the 30th, i.e. the very day that the fighting reached its peak. These dismissals were therefore intended as punitive measures designed to cow the remainder of the Sarakuna into submission. This was successful, for the time being, as it provoked a U-turn of chiefs who had flirted with the RDA. Having little confidence in Sawaba but aware that they would otherwise not be left in peace, they rallied back to the government side, adopting a pliant attitude and, in some cases, initiating a campaign on its behalf. This could not but give satisfaction to Sawaba's little folk, as demonstrated in the dismissal of the Sarkin Katsina of Maradi, Bouzou Dan Zambadi. When he was given the sack on the 5th of May, the news was greeted in the town of Madarounfa with 'general euphoria'.¹³⁵ The camel appeared invincible.

¹³⁴ Fuglestad, 'Djibo Bakary', 325 and Djibo, *Les transformations*, 64-65.

¹³⁵ Synthèse Politique. avril-mai-juin 1958 ('allégresse générale').

CHAPTER THREE

THE CHALLENGE OF THE FIFTH REPUBLIC

The wavering of some metropolitan officials vis-à-vis the Sawaba government lost much of its urgency when spectacular developments in Algeria demanded the undivided attention of the French government from the second half of May. The French had been engaged, since November 1954, in a bloody war of attrition against the nationalists united in the 'Front de Libération Nationale' (FLN). The Algerian nationalists opposed the idea of Algeria as an overseas part of metropolitan France—a conception that took its strength from the presence of a million European colonists. After the 'battle' of Algiers in 1957 the war developed, from a military point of view, to France's advantage but at the expense of massive human rights violations. Politically, therefore, the war became untenable, with metropolitan conscripts caught between the guerrillas of the FLN's army, the 'Armée de Libération Nationale' (ALN), and the intransigence of colonists in fear of losing a privileged lifestyle. The Fourth Republic, which had already suffered the loss of Indo-China, stumbled from crisis to crisis to the point that it satisfied neither side in the conflict.¹

In the midst of a ministerial crisis in Paris, French colonists on 13 May 1958 established a 'Comité de Salut Public' in the capital Algiers, which met with sympathy from high-ranking army officers frustrated by the politics of the Algerian crisis. One of them was General Raoul Salan, commander-in-chief of the French forces in Algeria. He supported the colonists' call for a return to power of Charles de Gaulle, the saviour of France's honour during World War II, who was expected to finish the Algerian war to French advantage. Other Comités de Salut Public followed and confronted the metropolitan government by taking over prefectorial powers. On 24 May paramilitary forces took power in Corsica. The threat of a coup d'état in Paris became imminent. With the High Command in Algeria having come out for de Gaulle and making it clear that it would not be able to prevent—indeed, was itself threatening—an attack on the metropole, political pressure became intolerable and the road to power was cleared for the esteemed general. De Gaulle, who refused to repudiate the actions of the military,

¹ See generally A. Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954-1962* (London and Basingstoke, 1977).

agreed to assume the position of prime minister on the condition that the Assemblée Nationale provide him with full powers for six months and adjourn *sine die*. This period would be used to rewrite the constitution so as to do away with the Fourth Republic—and with it, its parliamentary indecision—that de Gaulle had loathed since his retreat from politics in 1946.²

Invited by President Coty to form a new government, de Gaulle demanded popular legitimation of what actually represented a coup d'état. On 1 June the Assemblée approved his taking office by 329 votes to 224, a parliamentary ballot that disappointed the general. He had all along made clear that he would only return to power if a vast majority of the French expressed themselves accordingly.³ Since the new—'Fifth'—Republic would mark a radical break with the past in providing for a strong executive, this made popular approval of the constitution all the more important. As experience had shown that the holding of a constituent assembly would be too arduous an instrument to gain this sanction,⁴ it was by way of a referendum that de Gaulle hoped to legitimise his taking power. Both the stakes involved—a sweeping reinforcement of the French state and its institutions—and the constraints of time to achieve this⁵ meant that the team of de Gaulle was under considerable pressure to achieve a positive outcome. A substantial minority of 'No' voters would detract from the coup's legitimacy and make the creation of a strong republic headed by decisive leadership difficult. Thus, after the formulation of the constitution, in late August, early September the Gaullists embarked on a massive campaign for a 'Yes' vote involving direct appeals to the Paris crowds, a huge dispense of resources and a propaganda campaign that dwarfed the dissenting voices of a left that was pushed on the defensive. With the Gaullists, by then still a minority, taking control of key ministerial departments (foreign and colonial affairs, defence, the interior) in addition to state radio and television, the outcome of the referendum was not in doubt. With the whole state apparatus geared to 'Yes', the question was simply how large the favourable margin would be.⁶

² Horne, *Savage War of Peace*, ch. 13 and C. de Gaulle, *Mémoires d'espoir*. vol. 1: *Le renouveau 1958-1962* (Paris, 1970), 22-31.

³ Horne, *Savage War of Peace*, 280 and 298.

⁴ F. Rouillois, *Les origines de la Vè République* (Paris, 1998), 26.

⁵ See Foccart *parle*. vol. 1: *Entretiens avec Philippe Gaillard* (Paris, 1995). Its fifth chapter is entitled 'Sept mois pour changer de régime'.

⁶ See P. Viansson-Ponté (an editor of the left-wing *Le Monde*), *Histoire de la république gaullienne: Mai 1958-avril 1969* (Paris, 1971), 37-51. For the African context, *Outre-Mers: Revue d'histoire*, vol. 96 (2008), nos. 358-359 and for Niger, K. van Walraven, 'Decolonization by

As no one could doubt to whose stature the Fifth Republic's presidency was being tailored, the vote, scheduled for 28 September 1958, was meant to be a choice for de Gaulle rather than a new constitution as such. The general's vision of France and the future of its empire are therefore of some importance in order to understand the fundamental shifts that took place during the summer of 1958, both in terms of the more determined and single-minded elite that took over the reins of metropolitan power and the ideas and policies it was meant to pursue. Central to de Gaulle's vision was the problem of how to restore the authority of the state so that it would be able to defend the interests of France in what was perceived as a hostile world. For this purpose, the head of state should constitute the incarnation of real power rather than represent a symbol. The power that de Gaulle aimed to accumulate was, however, not an end in itself but meant to achieve the strong republic that he deemed indispensable for the defence of France's interests. A 'No' vote would mean a return to the mistakes of the Fourth Republic whose indecisiveness had made the defence of these interests impossible.⁷ De Gaulle's overriding concern was to re-establish France as a world power, something that not only required a strong presidency as a counter-weight to factious politicians but also the modernisation of the economy begun under the *ancien régime* and the re-equipping of the armed forces, including by providing it with a nuclear strike force, or 'force de frappe', that would give France back some of its lost status. The state of the empire—including Algeria—was only secondary to this central goal.⁸

This meant, first of all, that France's new leader had little sympathy for a classical colonialism now moribund, let alone for Algeria's Europeans, whose political establishment had entertained Vichy sympathies and whose intransigence was tying the army down in a costly war that was draining French resources.⁹ It also meant that, with the indecision of the Fourth Republic exorcised, it was now possible to act on the logic of the Loi Cadre and the gradual loss of control this had entailed. With the constitution of the French Republic under revision, the status of the colonies, which would also take part in the referendum, could be adjusted to the

Referendum: The Anomaly of Niger and the Fall of Sawaba, 1958-1959', *Journal of African History*, 50 (2009), 269-292.

⁷ A. Teyssier, *La Vè République 1958-1995 de de Gaulle à Chirac* (Paris, 1995), 39 and 44; Rouvillois, *Les origines*, 28-29; de Gaulle, *Mémoires d'espoir*, 24, 35 and 37.

⁸ J.D. Hargreaves, *Decolonization in Africa* (London and New York, 1988), 169 and de Gaulle, *Mémoires d'espoir*, 19, 23, 33, 42, 139-171 and 211-282.

⁹ Hargreaves, *Decolonization in Africa*, 169 and Home, *Savage War of Peace*, 281.

new situation. For the metropolitan establishment, however, there could still be no question of independence, which in its assimilationist traditions was considered tantamount to secession. Instead, the constitutional debate started from the premise that the overseas territories and the metropole would remain within a joint constitutional structure, with arguments centring on the question what form this should take: a multinational federation made up of equal and autonomous parts but which would lead to a partial sacrifice of metropolitan sovereignty, or a loose confederation in which the overseas territories would be practically independent? African politicians of the RDA and the recently formed Parti du Regroupement Africain (PRA), of which Sawaba was a founding member, were united in their demand for recognition of the right to self-determination. They argued that a federal republic should consist of autonomous states with the powers of the federal government confined to foreign affairs, defence, education and some socio-economic issues. However, they also pleaded for the possibility of a confederal union in which the federal republic would be linked to states that were already independent. This would make it possible for the autonomous states (i.e. African territories) to become independent without a complete rupture of links with France, thereby averting any loss of aid and markets.¹⁰

De Gaulle, however, preferred a tight 'federal' formula in which the autonomous parts would not be genuine states but form part of a federation whose institutions would be run by France. African territories would have to choose, once and for all, between this 'federation' and 'secession' and would lose the right to self-determination and independence if they opted for the former. There could be no choice for a federation *and* a confederal union, as those territories that would go for confederation would then have all the advantages of union with France and a greater degree of independence than territories opting for the federal formula. If countries wanted independence they could take it by voting 'No', 'secede' and bear its consequences, since it would be unthinkable for France to continue providing aid to states that were independent. This stark choice painfully demonstrated the general's insensitivity towards, indeed his impatience with, the anti-colonial polemics that were by now openly articulated in many francophone colonies.¹¹ His stance was not, however, without logical consistency. While de Gaulle does not seem to have considered the new

¹⁰ E. Mortimer, *France and the Africans 1944-1960: A Political History* (London, 1969), 303-306.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 308-311.

constitutional set-up to endure forever,¹² his pursuit of the reinforcement and modernisation of France for the moment made the build-up of a powerful federal state and, hence, the preservation of French influence or control overseas, an essential if derivative objective. By mid-1958, therefore, the empire, under whatever name it was to continue, played not the least of roles in the new strategic calculations of the metropole. In view of what the new metropolitan elite considered to be at stake—consolidation of the Gaullist bid for power and formation of institutions thought to save France from disaster—the reference by its architect to the freedom of African territories to pursue the ‘No’ option should be interpreted as largely rhetorical.

This was particularly true for Niger, which did not represent just another territory among France’s African possessions. Though extremely poor, it occupied a strategic position between West and North Africa. As a bridge between AOF and France’s possessions in equatorial Africa, it had formed an obstacle to the expansion of British influence from Nigeria and that of the Turks and then Italians based in Libya. This blocking influence became more important when the latter acceded to independence in 1951, allowing for the expansion of Islamic orders of Sanûssiya persuasion deemed disruptive of French interests.¹³ The promise in 1956 of independence for Nigeria in the near future similarly reinforced Niger’s role as a check on the influence of its powerful southern neighbour. Nigeria constituted a veritable obsession to French officialdom that grew worse when contacts between Sawaba and members of NEPU began to develop in the course of 1958.¹⁴ Moreover, to the west there was Soudan, whose governing party was in the socialist camp and favoured retention of AOF’s inter-territorial structures, a position that the French had abandoned when the *Loi Cadre* came into operation.¹⁵

¹² *Foccart parle*, 153.

¹³ M. Djibo, *Les transformations politiques au Niger à la veille de l’indépendance* (Paris, 2001), 86. The Sanûssiya was a brotherhood with a tradition of resistance to colonial expansion. See. K. Idrissa, ‘The Kawousan War Reconsidered’, in J. Abbink, M. de Bruijn and K. van Walraven (eds), *Rethinking Resistance: Revolt and Violence in African History* (Leiden and Boston, 2003), 191–217.

¹⁴ Bulletin Trimestriel de Renseignements. Extérieurs. Deuxième Fascicule. 1^e Partie. Afrique Occidentale Britannique et Libéria. Sources: SDECE. Presse. Ex. no. 11/65, not dated but July–Oct. 1958; 94 Niger: 944 Etats Indépendants d’Afrique. Origine S.D.E.C.E.; both CAOM, Cart.2195/D.7 and 2197/D.10 respectively.

¹⁵ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 27; Mortimer, *France and the Africans*, 236–240; W.J. Foltz, *From French West Africa to Mali Federation* (New Haven and London, 1965), 75–76;

More important, however, was Niger's bridge function with Algeria, with which it shared a long border.¹⁶ Tied to this were strategic interests that were linked to de Gaulle's objective to make France into a middle power in the Cold War era, i.e. the building of an atomic force de frappe and the safeguarding of metropolitan energy supplies, hydrocarbon as well as nuclear.¹⁷ Both Algeria and Niger were important here. Algeria had vast oil and gas reserves, which de Gaulle, for now, did not wish to give up.¹⁸ The same was true for the testing site of Reggane, located in the Algerian part of the Sahara, west of the town of I-n-Salah. Here the French planned to test their first nuclear bomb. The project for the force de frappe had already started under the Fourth Republic, with the decision to build a testing site at Reggane taken in 1957. Corresponding with de Gaulle's desire to rebuild France as a world power, it was decided to continue with the project. On 17 June 1958, barely two weeks after de Gaulle had assumed office, his government resolved to proceed with detonation for the coming year.¹⁹ Thus, by the summer of 1958 de Gaulle still hoped to hold on to these strategic Algerian assets while he had, at the same time, not yet formulated an effective policy to deal with the FLN or the intransigence of European colonists and the army's officers corps.²⁰

In this state of flux, Niger mattered to the French for a number of reasons. Sawaba, as a movement inspired by a militant nationalism with Marxist undertones, sympathised with the FLN and its war against French suzerainty.²¹ Niger's border with Algeria could serve as a conduit for arms and funds for the FLN. Hence, if it were to become independent or manage to leave the French sphere of influence, the country could fortify the FLN's position, for example by serving as a base for its operations.²² Second, only two years previously, in 1956, geologists in Niger confirmed the presence

W.A.E. Skurnik, 'France and Fragmentation in French-Speaking West Africa: 1945-1960', *Journal of African History*, 8 (1967), 2, 317-333.

¹⁶ Also K. van Walraven, 'From Tamanrasset: The Struggle of Sawaba and the Algerian Connection (1957-1966)', *Journal of North African Studies*, 10 (2005), 3-4, 507-527.

¹⁷ De Gaulle, *Mémoires d'espoir*, 143, 159, 162-163 and 214-228.

¹⁸ Hargreaves, *Decolonization in Africa*, 169 and de Gaulle, *Mémoires d'espoir*, 162-163.

¹⁹ After a delay this atmospheric test took place on 13 February 1960, with plutonium produced from France's domestic uranium supply. www.nuclearweaponarchive.org/France, accessed 10 Nov. 2005.

²⁰ Hargreaves, *Decolonization in Africa*, 169-170 and Horne, *Savage War of Peace*, 303-308.

²¹ See, for example, Ministère de la F.O.M. Cabinet du Ministre. Bureau d'Etudes no. 822/BE. Bulletin de Renseignements. Origine: Haussaire AOF, 31 March 1958; CAOM, Cart.2189/D.3.

²² Djibo, *Les transformations*, 86, mentioning French intelligence reports about arms trafficking.

of large deposits of uranium in the Air region, not far from the border with Algeria. These deposits, first suspected in 1942-1943, could become useful for metropolitan energy needs and the force de frappe, as domestic uranium was not available in sufficient quantities.²³ The presence of this strategic resource, in addition to newly discovered reserves of copper and tin, confirmed the importance of Niger and other parts of the Sahara to the French, who could also continue to use its vast spaces for the stationing of troops or the testing of nuclear weapons.²⁴

Here, the 'Organisation Commune des Régions Sahariennes' (OCRS) could be expected to play a role, amongst others by serving as a metropolitan safety net in the event that Algeria and its mineral resources had to be given up. Established in January 1957 under the Fourth Republic, the OCRS was meant to detach the Algerian Sahara from the rest of the country in order to form a separate administrative entity together with the Saharan regions to be removed for this purpose from the territories of Soudan, Chad and Niger. Aimed at the unification of the Sahara, the OCRS was essentially geared towards containing the political evolution of francophone Africa so as to protect the desert's strategic resources for French interests. It violated the provisions of the Loi Cadre, which had given Niger and the other colonies governments that reigned over specifically delimited territories, parts of which would now be taken away—in the case of Niger the larger part of its land mass. With its establishment closely bound up with the constitutional transformation of the empire, the OCRS was supervised by Jacques Soustelle, former governor-general of Algeria and stubborn advocate of 'Algérie française', who had become metropolitan 'minister-delegate' with special responsibility for the Sahara. This demonstrated the body's profoundly political rationale. While it was officially meant to encourage the economic development of the desert, its main objective became the exploitation of its sub-soil resources. OCRS investment was therefore principally directed at Algeria's petroleum supplies and the construction of a pipeline. Some circles saw the institution as a means to safeguard the region as a testing ground for nuclear weapons.²⁵

²³ Ibid., 189 and G. Pallier, 'L'uranium au Niger', *Les cahiers d'outre-mer*, 37 (1984), no. 146, 175.

²⁴ See for this Djibo, *Les transformations*, 87. Yet, I did not find French statements on Niger's role in providing space for troops or nuclear testing. Uranium was also discovered in Chad's Tibesti region. A. Bourgeot, 'Sahara: espace géostratégique et enjeux politiques (Niger)', *Autrepart*, 16 (2000), 35 & 38.

²⁵ E. Grégoire, *Touaregs du Niger: Le destin d'un mythe* (Paris, 1999), 31-34; Bourgeot, 'Sahara', 33-47.

All these strategic considerations, then, merited that the French closely follow Niger's political evolution so that it would correspond to metropolitan interests. The idea that it could slip from French control was a worst-case scenario that the more resolute political team of the Fifth Republic wished to avoid at all costs.²⁶ This meant, in effect, that Niger would simply *have to* agree to de Gaulle's constitutional proposals.

The Love for All Peoples

Since the referendum would also involve the peoples in the colonies, Niger's electorate and political class were suddenly confronted with the Gaullist determination to alter the strategic parameters of France's gradually emancipating empire. While this transformation represented an advance on the reluctance of the Fourth Republic to act on the consequences of the Loi Cadre's provisions for autonomy, its underlying ideas were considerably out of tune with political developments in Africa, not least in Niger. Already on 20 May 1958, i.e. some ten days before de Gaulle was returned to power, Sawaba's leader expressed veiled criticism about the way the general was being put forward, arguing that France should remain a democratic republic.²⁷ A fortnight later, at a meeting of the comité directeur of the inter-territorial PRA, Bakary said that he harboured no prejudices against the person of de Gaulle—a daring statement considering the sacrosanct reverence in which the general was held.²⁸ He also sent a telegram to France's newly appointed colonial minister, Bernard Cornut-Gentille, congratulating him with the constitutional reforms that the metropolitan government was about to undertake.²⁹ All these declarations marked the unease with which Sawaba's government followed the developments in France and Algeria.

By contrast, since the April riots its position at home was more comfortable than ever. The RDA still agitated against the government, exploiting problems like family feuds, chiefly dismissals and land disputes, which led to sporadic violence in the western region. Yet, the French noted that its influence was waning. On 7 June a public meeting planned to welcome the

²⁶ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 27 and 87. On his government's resolve, see de Gaulle, *Mémoires d'espoir*, 60.

²⁷ Extract AFP Bulletin Quotidien d'Information, Niamey, 20 May 1958; CAOM, Cart.2181/D.1 bis.

²⁸ Synthèse Politique. avril-mai-juin 1958; CAOM, Cart. 2233/D.2.

²⁹ G. Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets de la décolonisation* (Paris, 1967), vol. 2, 277.



Photo 3.1 Adamou Sékou (*Les raisons de notre lutte*, 10).

return home of Hamani Diori had to be delayed for lack of audience and then proceeded in an atmosphere of indifference. RDA representatives vainly tried to attack the government's record on health care during a debate in the Territorial Assembly, in which Boubou Hama, the sacked director of IFAN, was easily sidelined by Sawaba MPs.³⁰ In a cabinet reshuffle at the end of the month Adamou Sékou, Sawaba parliamentary quaestor, was appointed minister of public works, succeeding Issaka Koké, who relieved Adamou Assane Mayaki, newly appointed minister of the interior, at the department of agriculture. On the 21st the Assembly concluded its ordinary session before the summer recess.³¹

With the reinforcement of its domestic position, it was only natural for Sawaba to try and push for the completion of its political programme. Having from the start been a populist party that agitated against different manifestations of colonialism, it now called for the winding up of colonial rule altogether. As noted in the previous chapter, by early May Sawaba's MPs had voted a resolution calling for 'total internal autonomy', a demand

³⁰ These were Sallé Dan Koulou, Ousmane Dan Galadima and Abdoulaye Mamani. *Synthèse Politique*. avril-mai-juin 1958 and *Extrait du procès-verbal de la Séance Plénière, Assemblée Territoriale*, 14 June 1958; latter in CAOM, Cart.2211/D.1. The weakening of the RDA and strengthening of Sawaba were ignored by F. Fuglestad, 'Djibo Bakary, the French, and the Referendum of 1958 in Niger', *Journal of African History*, 14 (1973), 321 and 324.

³¹ *Marchés Tropicaux*, no. 659, 28 June 1958, 1614.

that reiterated a general policy statement as voted at an MSA congress in April.³² On 7 June, the demand for total internal autonomy was reinforced with the plea that it should be ‘immediate’.³³ Bakary himself, in May, went a fundamental step further in speaking of the need for the progressive accession to ‘independence’ or, in any case, the recognition of the ‘right to self-determination’.³⁴

In now publicly articulating the concept of independence, Bakary was ahead of other government leaders, even such militant nationalists as Modibo Keita of Soudan. The assimilationist prism through which the metropolitan power viewed colonial politics, in addition to the poverty of France’s African territories and the need to preserve French aid flows, had always forced African politicians, even those with more radical objectives, to be circumspect with the articulation of political demands. Notably politicians with government responsibility had to tread carefully. Thus, for a long time the concept of independence was shunned, lest their political aspirations be equated with ‘secession’. Instead, African politicians employed the term ‘Franco-African Community’ in their dealings with France while trying to push for greater autonomy within this conceptual framework.³⁵ Even when articulated by the more militant nationalists, this concept involved a revisionist—and not a revolutionary—perspective on the political economy of international relations that was conciliatory towards France’s African interests. However, from 1957, political developments, such as Ghana’s accession to sovereignty, made this terminological restraint increasingly unsatisfactory. African students, for one, especially those in France, refused to accept it and unashamedly called for independence. Marxist-oriented union workers, too, had by 1957-1958 become open partisans of independent statehood. Mainstream nationalist politicians found it increasingly difficult to avoid the issue. Even the inter-territorial RDA, at its conference in Bamako in September 1957, was confronted with radical student calls and heard Sékou Touré from Guinea, whose party had

³² Résolution de la politique générale, Niamey, 5-7 Apr. 1958; CAOM, Cart.2197/D.10. Translation by author.

³³ Letter Rollet to Minister of France Outre-Mer, 17 June 1958; CAOM, Cart.2154/D.3 (‘immédiate’).

³⁴ A. Blanchet, *L’itinéraire des partis africains depuis Bamako* (Paris, 1958), 149 (‘indépendance’; ‘droit à l’autodétermination’).

³⁵ M. Crowder, ‘Independence as a Goal in French West African Politics: 1944-1960’, in W.H. Lewis (ed.), *French-speaking Africa: The Search for Identity* (New York, 1965), 15-41 and Mortimer, *France and the Africans*, 295.

remained within the RDA, argue that the independence of peoples was an inalienable right.³⁶

Sawaba, as a nationalist party with links to the union world, was not immune to this. The inter-territorial union federation UGTAN, which on 1 May 1958 called for the liquidation of the colonial system,³⁷ had many adherents among Sawabists. Hardly one month previously, it had held a meeting in Niamey, where hundreds of people listened to a speech of Saloum Traoré, Sawaba's minister of social affairs and UGTAN official. The rally was concluded by Dandouna Aboubakar, Sawaba hardliner and CGT-oriented unionist, playing a tape with a speech by Jacques Duclos, French communist, agitating against colonialism and in favour of self-determination. UGTAN's influence was, in fact, growing, amongst other reasons because Marxist influences were more pronounced in Niger than in other territories, with the exception of Senegal and Guinea.³⁸

Bakary himself was represented on UGTAN's inter-territorial comité directeur and could therefore hardly ignore the stance of the unions, even had he wished to.³⁹ He took the plunge, committing himself to the demand for independence, at an inter-territorial conference in Cotonou, on 25-27 July 1958, consecrating the formal launching of the PRA. The Sawaba delegation reached the city in grand style, in a caravan of 40 vehicles that travelled to the coast and triumphantly hooted their horns upon arrival in a town that was predominantly pro-RDA. It was Sawaba's leader, dressed in an elegant light-blue boubou, the party colours, who set the tone of the conference. Right at the start of the meeting, Bakary stood up for 'National Independence first, the rest afterwards', in the process lashing out against the colonial power, dubbing it 'the occupier' and condemning it for its 'abject regime' and 'cynical exploitation'. Carried along by the radical currents of a social movement that he had done so much to forge and considering his political position secure enough, Bakary sided unequivocally with the militant nationalists. Niger's delegation, which included Maïga Abdou-

³⁶ C. Diané, *Les grandes heures de la F.E.A.N.F.* (Paris, 1990); Blanchet, *L'itinéraire*; Mortimer, *France and the Africans*, 273; and Crowder, 'Independence', 32-33.

³⁷ A. Salifou, *Histoire du Niger* (Paris, 1989), 246.

³⁸ Ministère de la F.O.M. Cabinet du Ministre. Bureau d'Etudes no. 822/BE. Bulletin de Renseignements. Origine: Haussaire AOF, 31 March 1958; Synthèse politique, no. 085 CP/BE, juillet-août 1958, le 5 sept. 1958; *L'Action Communiste en A.O.F.*; July 1958; CAOM, Cart.2189/D.3, 3684 & 2246.

³⁹ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 77 and interview with Gonimi Boukar, Niamey, 5 Nov. 2005. This point was ignored by Fuglestad, who portrayed Sawaba as an administrative party rather than a social movement. F. Fuglestad, 'UNIS and BNA: The Role of "Traditionalist" Parties in Niger, 1948-1960', *Journal of African History*, 16 (1975), 133.

laye, Saloum Traoré, Ousmane Dan Galadima, Issaka Koké and Adamou Sékou, stood as one man to applaud Bakary, taking the rest of the conference by storm.⁴⁰ To his own surprise, Sawaba's leader was later elected secretary-general of the PRA, confirming his stature as one of AOF's great politicians and enhancing his prestige at home.⁴¹

The message of the conference was sharpened by the demand that independence was to be 'immediate' and 'total'.⁴² In so rallying behind Bakary's call, the delegates followed, in a way, the philosophy of Ghana's national leader, whom Bakary had visited in the spring and who had always argued to seek the political kingdom first, i.e. formal independence as the basis for socio-economic change. In another way the call for 'independence first, the rest afterwards' meant that Sawaba wished to freely shape Niger's relations with the former colonial power *after* the attainment of independence. This freedom was considered essential as otherwise African countries would not be able to mould their foreign relations according to their best self-interest. The option favoured by de Gaulle, i.e. a choice for membership of a French-controlled federation leading to autonomy but the loss of the right to self-determination and independence, clearly put this freedom on hold and bore the risk of jeopardising it. Consequently, the Cotonou delegates argued that relations with France would 'of necessity pass through independence'. Upon his return to Niamey, Bakary added that 'only the unconditional recognition of its independence [would] create the favourable conditions for a sincere dialogue of Africa with the ... representatives of the Metropole'. In his vision, 'one [could] only associate (i.e. with France) when one [was] independent', adding that one could not prevent the youth of Africa saying 'No' to such association. However, this did not mean that Sawaba's government intended to break with France. As he had

⁴⁰ D. Bakary, *Silence! On décolonise: Itinéraire politique et syndical d'un militant africain* (Paris, 1992), 199, citing approvingly Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 182-183; and G. Dugué, *Vers les Etats-Unis d'Afrique* (Dakar, 1960), 91; *La Voix Libérée*, no. 1, March-Apr. 2011, 12. C. Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA et la décolonisation du Niger 1946-1960* (Paris, 1995), 239, claims that a constitutional change introduced that month, elevating the vice-presidents of the councils of government to president and thus strengthening their position vis-à-vis the governor, convinced Bakary that his position was safe to press on. I found no sources to back this up ('Indépendance nationale d'abord, le reste ensuite'; 'L'occupant'; 'régime abject'; 'exploitation cynique').

⁴¹ Synthèse politique, no. 085 CP/BE, juillet-août 1958, le 5 sept. 1958 and Chef du Territoire du Niger à Monsieur le Ministre de la F.O.M., Paris, et M. Le Haut-Commissaire de la République en A.O.F., Dakar, 9 Aug. 1958; CAOM, Cart.2181/D.1 bis. Statutes PRA in ANN, 86 MI 1 E 5.2.

⁴² Crowder, 'Independence', 33.

explained a few months before when talking about the future structures of Franco-African co-operation, these ought to include the 'right to separation' for countries pursuing their national interest, explaining, however, that for him 'the right to divorce' did not 'necessarily imply divorce.' Nor did it involve, at that time, any hostility towards the maintenance of certain French interests in the region.⁴³

On the contrary, even though delegates were, in the heat of the moment, carried away by dreams of economic nationalism substituting for French credits or association with the European Common Market, most politicians aspired to development in ways that were, in Cotonou's words, 'adapted to African realities', implying among other things continuance of French aid flows and thus a French sphere of influence to some extent. In this sense, even the nationalism articulated at Cotonou had a revisionist, co-operative basis respectful of the international political economy. This came to the surface in negotiations on the conference resolutions, which adopted 'immediate independence' as a 'password'—in other words, something that would be struggled for instead of being expected to be realised at once. While announcing an international gathering at which African leaders would themselves structure the new relations with France instead of passively waiting for de Gaulle's formulas, France was asked to facilitate such an assembly, for which no date was fixed.⁴⁴

Thus, Sawaba's leader himself intended, upon attainment of Niger's independence, to 'confederate freely with France',⁴⁵ something that Cotonou did not preclude and was in accord with what the UDN and Sawaba had argued on this point before. His reference to a sincere dialogue with metropolitan representatives indicated a desire to negotiate, rather than break,

⁴³ Rollet to Minister of France Outre-Mer, 17 June 1958; interview with Abdou Ali Tazard, Tessaoua, 9 Febr. 2006; M. Djibo 'Les enjeux politiques dans la colonie du Niger (1944-1960)', *Autrepart*, no. 27, 2003, 56; J.R. de Benoist, *l'Afrique Occidentale Française de la conférence de Brazzaville (1944) à l'indépendance (1960)* (Paris, 1982), 407; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 241; Dugué, *Vers les Etats-Unis d'Afrique*, 97. When Sawaba lost power, its attitude to 'neo-colonial' interests became sharper. See Parti Sawaba. Pour l'Indépendance effective du Niger: Les raisons de notre lutte (Bureau du Parti Sawaba: Bamako, 15 Jan. 1961) ('passent obligatoirement par l'indépendance'; 'Seule la reconnaissance inconditionnelle de son indépendance créera des conditions favorables à une dialogue sincère de l'Afrique avec des représentants ... de la Métropole'; 'On ne peut s'associer que quand on est indépendant'; 'droit de séparation'; 'le droit au divorce'; 'n'implique pas forcément le divorce').

⁴⁴ Crowder, 'Independence', 34; Mortimer, *France and the Africans*, 309; Dugué, *Vers les Etats-Unis d'Afrique*, 100-03 ('indépendance immédiate'; 'mot d'ordre'; 'adapté aux réalités africaines').

⁴⁵ See his autobiography, *Silence!*, 199, where he cites with approval Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 182, on this point ('confédérer librement avec la France').

with the French. In explaining the meaning of the Cotonou conference Bakary later declared that '[the] friendship with the people of France [had] never suffered the least infraction' and 'those who [had] let triumph the thesis of Independence [were] sincere friends of France'. The only point was that the type of relations they would engage in would have to be agreed on in freedom, i.e. after the attainment of political independence: 'friendship only has value in so far as it is freely consented to and Independence is the necessary prelude to the construction of a Community'.⁴⁶ In itself this stance was perfectly sensible and fed by information that leaked out at the time of the Cotonou conference about de Gaulle's proposals, which—in its autonomy in a French state with continuation of aid versus independence without it—did not provide equivalent alternatives and, all too clearly, did not involve a free choice or take into account the sensibilities of the times.⁴⁷

Just how far the French propositions were out of tune with the *Zeitgeist* was made clear by Sawaba's delegates at Cotonou. Abdoulaye Mamani, party leader in Zinder, a town with close ties with neighbouring Nigeria, told the conference that Niger demanded 'the freedom to confederate with Nigeria or other territories'. As Bakary himself explained in a reference to the Hausa-speaking population in both countries, Niger's 'development and commercial outlets opened more logically to the south' than to the Saharan frontiers where 'nomads ... tracked the northern horizon'. Consequently, if the Africans could not come to an agreement with the French, Mamani stressed, they would have 'the right to separate from the French ensemble'. Historically, added Bakary, Niger was linked 'to other states, which [would] become independent in 1960' (i.e. Nigeria). And in later explaining the Cotonou stand, he said that he would reserve 'the right to contract alliances with other African States' and that he would not hesitate to 'deploy efforts necessary for the creation of an African ensemble crossing existing Frontiers'. Cotonou would have the value of making everyone understand that French Africa intended to free itself from all colonial complexes.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Cited in Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 242 ('L'Amitié avec le peuple de France n'a jamais subi la moindre entorse et ceux qui ont fait triompher la thèse de l'Indépendance sont de sincères amis de la France'; 'l'amitié n'est valable que dans la mesure où elle est librement consentie et que l'Indépendance est le préalable nécessaire à l'édification d'une Communauté').

⁴⁷ Mortimer, *France and the Africans*, 308-309.

⁴⁸ Quotations in *Ibid.*, 307; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 242; and Dugué, *Vers les Etats-Unis d'Afrique*, 95 ('la liberté de se confédérer avec le Nigéria ou avec d'autres territoires'; 'mise

While these statements expressed the views of many militant nationalists, including Sawaba's peasant supporters in the east of Niger, they touched a raw nerve among the French, whose obsession with Nigeria pointed to a determination to maintain their sphere of influence and, thereby, their status as a world power. As a result, it was the first part of Bakary's shock-formula, 'National Independence first, the rest afterwards', that got stuck in public memory, despite Cotonou's revisionist stance on France's interests.⁴⁹

Yet, contracting new foreign alliances would do little to impair France's position since the African territories—like Sawaba's Niger—had no real intention of leaving the French fold. In fact, the political atmosphere got heated up partly because, with the exception of Houphouët-Boigny, West African politicians wished to preserve the federal structures of AOF and AEF. These, endowed with full autonomy or even formal independence, should enter into a wider federation or confederation with metropolitan France, thereby preserving vital relations and economic benefits. The issue of the inter-territorial structures (including strong federal executives), which was close to Bakary's heart, considerably complicated the constitutional debate of the summer of 1958. Since the Loi Cadre, France had essentially given up on the old colonial federations—in the debate called 'primary federations' in order to distinguish them from the larger structure that was now to unite them with the metropole. The French feared that these primary federations would feel strong enough to demand independence or that, if France participated with them in a wider constitutional arrangement, it would be dominated by them.⁵⁰

Conversely, Bakary had argued in May for a confederal union uniting France 'on an equal footing' with AOF, AEF, Madagascar and North Africa. The metropole was expected to take part in this confederation 'in the same way' as the others. The delegates at Cotonou also stressed that a constitutional arrangement should consist of 'free and equal peoples', of which the African ones would, moreover, reserve the right to come together in a 'United States of Africa', i.e. enhance their position within the joint consti-

en valeur et les débouchés commerciaux s'ouvrent plus logiquement vers le sud'; 'nomades ... scrutent l'horizon du nord'; 'le droit de se séparer de l'ensemble français'; 'avec d'autres États qui seront indépendants en 1960'; 'le droit de contracter des Alliances avec d'autres États Africains; 'efforts qu'exige la création d'un ensemble Africain débordant les Frontières actuelles').

⁴⁹ Bakary, *Silence!*, 199 and Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 183.

⁵⁰ Crowder, 'Independence', 33-34 and Mortimer, *France and the Africans*, 273 and 344.

tutional arrangement with France.⁵¹ The emphasis on relative weight and influence pointed to a real-political perspective on international relations in which power was considered of prime importance—a vision similar to that of the French, with which, as a consequence, it clashed. France's definitive constitutional proposal, in which the joint constitutional arrangement was baptised 'Community' rather than federation or confederation, did little to resolve the disagreement on the partition of powers between Africans and the metropole.⁵²

Nevertheless, in so far as Sawaba had, by mid-1958, developed a clear idea on foreign policy, it intended to nibble at the international configurations of power, not steer towards a revolutionary upheaval. Since states could play multiple roles, even alliances with other countries would not, in this perspective, have to jeopardise Niger's ties with France. Bakary would declare on 15 September, just before the referendum, that an 'independent Niger [would] do everything possible to conserve ... the aid of France, and [would] give preference to allying with France within an economic system different from the present one'.⁵³ It would aim to stay within the 'French ensemble' provided its independence was respected and it would not be subjected to economic pressure. That there was enough in this statement that should reassure the French about the preservation of their influence, along with the development of Niger's economic interests and foreign ties, was made clear at Sawaba's constituent conference, as a section of the PRA,⁵⁴ at the end of August. Here Bakary declared that African nationalism was marked by 'the love for all peoples', articulating a non-conflictual, co-operative vision of international relations that would inform Sawaba's foreign policy.⁵⁵ The stance on de Gaulle's constitution was detailed by Adamou Sékou, by now an important party ideologue,

⁵¹ Blanchet, *L'itinéraire*, 149; Dugué, *Vers les Etats-Unis d'Afrique*, 104; Rollet to Minister of France Outre-Mer, 17 June 1958 ('sur un même pied d'égalité'; 'au même titre'; 'des peuples libres et égaux'; 'Etats-Unis d'Afrique').

⁵² Mortimer, *France and the Africans*, 312.

⁵³ Bulletin d'Information du 15 août au 20 sept. 1958; CAOM, Cart.2248 ('Le Niger indépendant fera tout son possible pour conserver ... l'aide de la France, et donnera la préférence à la France de s'allier au sein d'un système économique différent du système actuel').

⁵⁴ It now also officially changed its name from 'MSA-Sawaba' (adopted in the spring of 1957 as an alteration of the official 'MSA-Niger', introduced in Nov. 1956 to signify the UDN-BNA merger) into 'Sawaba' *tout court*. Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 215 and Benoist, *l'Afrique Occidentale Française*, 359.

⁵⁵ Bulletin d'Information du 15 août au 20 sept. 1958; ('l'ensemble français'; 'l'amour pour tous les peuples').

when he stated emphatically his desire for ‘Independence yes and straight away’ but added that

[N]o one of us has turned the eyes towards Washington, Moscow, London or Berlin more than to Paris, that Paris of which we bear the mark through our culture, through all the facts of our present situation. One must not deny the facts of history and it is precisely because of that that we intend to form with France, in our interest and hers, a Confederation of free peoples. Through our wish for independence, we remain attached to France, which we consider as our natural partner, thanks to its teachers, its engineers, its lawyers.⁵⁶

He could not have been more explicit in reaching out to the French, making clear that French influence *would not have to* suffer from Niger’s accession to independence. Indeed, even if this statement was deliberately intended to reassure a French audience, it came dangerously close to legitimising what Sawaba would later dub France’s ‘neo-colonial’ influence in the region.⁵⁷ But this was not what it intended. Its government aspired to take control to the extent that it would be better able to shape Niger’s destiny than under French rule, involving, for sure, the establishment of ties with other countries and thus a reduction of French influence, but by no means its eclipse. With other nationalist parties Sawaba shared a revisionist view of the future, in which ‘African realities’ would be taken into account, i.e. the need of French aid.

Its nationalism, however, was mature enough for it not to swallow everything that the Gaullists had on offer. This became clear in its attitude to the OCRS. Sawaba fiercely opposed a project that would take away the greater part of the national territory. The Territorial Assembly had unanimously—i.e. including the RDA—voted against ceding land. Thus, Bakary, acting as the national leader, declined to hand over sovereignty of Niger’s desert region.⁵⁸ Hostility to the OCRS was partly fed by the Tuaregs, who were reticent to become subjects of a government controlled by black sed-

⁵⁶ Congrès constitutif de la section nigérienne du P.R.A.: Rapport de politique générale, 29-31 août 1958; CAOM, Cart.2181/D.1 bis (‘personne de nous n’a les yeux tournés vers Washington, Moscou, Londres ou Berlin plus que vers Paris, ce Paris dont nous portons l’empreinte par notre culture, par toutes les données de notre actuelle situation. Il ne faut pas nier les faits de l’histoire et c’est pour cela justement que nous entendons former avec la France, dans notre intérêt et dans son intérêt à elle, une Confédération de peuples libres. A travers notre volonté d’indépendance, nous demeurons attachés à la France que nous considérons comme notre partenaire naturel, grâce à ses professeurs, ses ingénieurs, ses juristes’).

⁵⁷ See note 43 above.

⁵⁸ Although he did, like the other Sahelian territories, send representatives to OCRS meetings in Paris. Mortimer, *France and the Africans*, 360-361 and Bakary, *Silence!*, 240.

entary groups—the Tuaregs' past source of slaves—and supported the venture in order to regain autonomy. This made Sawabists even more suspicious and led to allegations of metropolitan divide-and-rule and, later, accusations about exploitation of sub-soil resources to metropolitan benefit.⁵⁹ The result was that, with Sawaba opposed to control of Niger's desert regions by the OCRS, its prospective development area faced a geographical gap and the French were confronted with a serious obstacle to the realisation of their Saharan designs.⁶⁰ Sawaba's attitude to the impending Fifth Republic, then, involved a mixture of nationalist tenets that it was not willing to trade and a revisionist stance on France's interests it was prepared to countenance. Yet, as Bakary told Governor Rollet in a personal conversation, the very essence of his party's stance was the expectation that the metropole be prepared to engage in negotiations in order to come to a mutually agreeable settlement. A rupture outside a negotiating framework was not envisaged.⁶¹

The Blackmail of Isolation

The builders of the Fifth Republic felt that they were dealing with colossal stakes—nothing less than the survival of France as a great nation. With only half a year to gain the upper hand in the metropole, legitimise their takeover and establish control in Algeria, the Gaullists thought in grand designs and entertained wide strategic concerns. While they were prepared to let a delegation of African politicians participate, on a consultative basis, in the drafting of a constitution for France and the empire, they wanted this to be a one-time and collective affair rather than a series of negotiations with individual territories. The consultative committee in which this was to take place, from the end of July until mid-August 1958, was a committee of the Assemblée Nationale with restricted African representation.

⁵⁹ These misgivings became stronger after Sawaba's fall from power. Bordier to Minister of France Outre-Mer, 18 Jan. 1957; CAOM, Cart.2198/D.2; Aperçu sur la Situation Politique du Territoire du Niger Durant la période du 15 nov. 1957 au 31 déc. 1957; CAOM, Cart.2154/D.3; 'Nous disons NON à l'O.C.R.S.', in *Unité: Organe Hebdomadaire du Parti Sawaba*, 14 May 1959; Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau de Synthèse pour la période du 6 au 12 août 1959, no. 42; CAOM, Cart.2249; Les raisons de notre lutte, 6, 16-17; Parti Sawaba du Niger: Pour Un Front Démocratique de la Patrie (Bureau Politique: Niamey, 1962), 27-28.

⁶⁰ Mauritania and Soudan, too, never signed conventions of co-operation with the OCRS, which lost these territories. Bourgeot, 'Sahara', 39 and Mortimer, *France and the Africans*, 361.

⁶¹ Letter Rollet to France Outre-Mer and Dakar, 9 Aug. 1958.

Moreover, France's loyal ally, Houphouët-Boigny of Côte d'Ivoire, made sure that it kept out Sékou Touré, the radical nationalist from Guinea who, like Bakary, had already made clear his wish for immediate independence. With accommodating politicians like Philibert Tsiranana from Madagascar and Gabriel Lisette from Chad sitting on the committee, it was the views of Houphouët (and, hence, the Gaullists) that predominated, while the aspirations of Bakary and Touré were articulated only by Léopold Senghor and Lamine Guèye, PRA politicians from Senegal not known for their penchant to confront the French. De Gaulle's object for the joint quasi-federal state, called 'Community' at the suggestion of Tsiranana, was to construct an overarching framework, which, though transitory, would be rigid enough to prevent 'secession' of individual territories and endure for a considerable time so as to allow the metropole to ride the waves of decolonisation and safeguard vital French interests.⁶² This meant that there was no thinking along lines of individual territories' aspirations and that all of these were expected to participate in the joint constitutional framework, even though the federal structures of AOF and AEF were in the process of being discarded.

The initial constitutional draft that so incensed PRA delegates at Cotonou did not even mention the possibility of independence, otherwise than in the French conception of 'secession' and the economic threats that went with it. The option of independence did not fit in Gaullist designs. It was felt that France was not in a position to offer the Africans what it still refused to Algeria.⁶³ However, there was also no readiness to defer to the political sensitivities of African nationalism. Gaullist views in this context were marked by disdain and indifference, if not a lack of awareness about the negative aspects of colonial rule.⁶⁴ Thus, the Community was to be a French-run structure, in which even the domestic affairs of the African territories were put under the supervision of the French governor, with African ministers, though elected, practically relegated to the status of civil servants.⁶⁵ This meant a step back from the evolutionary logic ingrained in the Loi Cadre, especially in Niger where the Sawaba government was expanding its control.

⁶² De Gaulle, *Mémoires d'espoir*, 69-70; Foccart parle, 158, 169-179, 223; Mortimer, *France and the Africans*, 309-310.

⁶³ A. Salifou, *Le Niger* (Paris, 2002), 169; Mortimer, *France and the Africans*, 308-310; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 76.

⁶⁴ Also at the highest level. De Gaulle, *Mémoires d'espoir*, 41; Mortimer, *France and the Africans*, 310.

⁶⁵ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 76.

Militant nationalists therefore widely considered the quasi-choice between membership of the Community or secession-independence with an end to French aid as a form of blackmail and, as such, an affront to African dignity—that key notion in nationalist ideology. Thus, when on 8 August de Gaulle addressed the consultative committee of the *Assemblée Nationale* and his speech was relayed over AOF radio—including his threat to cut aid—Sékou Touré lashed out that his love for the dignity of Africa had been shocked and that the metropole, too, could be confronted with the consequences threatened by the general.⁶⁶ Bakary, however, observed that de Gaulle and his entourage had ‘at least theoretically’ conceded that the Africans could, by a negative vote, recover their independence. He deplored that that ‘generosity’ had been ‘accompanied by veiled threats referring to “all economic and other consequences”’, adding that this was tantamount to ‘the blackmail of isolation and economic suffocation’ and that this ‘did not suffice to buy our dignity as men’.⁶⁷

His words exposed, with deadlier precision than Touré’s, the crudeness of the Gaullist strategy in forcing Africa’s leaders with the help of their countries’ poverty to submit to an arrangement that showed utter disregard for the passions of the times. The uncharacteristic French disrespect for the intellectual contents of the nationalist idea—but more typical reliance on power-play—deeply offended Sawaba’s nationalists, a feeling that would run through all their pronouncements on the issue. At the party congress held on 29–31 August Adamou Sékou noted that the French not so much reproached Sawaba for its doctrine as its style, which he described as:

that sense of our dignity as men that too many of our metropolitan friends have trouble accepting; dignity we will never be able to give up, for the black African wants to be himself first.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Mortimer, *France and the Africans*, 312 and Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 189. Also E. Schmidt, ‘Anticolonial Nationalism in French West Africa: What Made Guinea Unique?’, *African Studies Review*, 52 (2009), no. 2, 1–34.

⁶⁷ Synthèse politique, no. 085 CP/BE, juillet–août 1958, le 5 sept. 1958; declaration of Djibo Bakary, undated but 9 Aug. 1958, CAOM, Cart.2181/D.1 bis (‘au moins théoriquement; ‘générosité; ‘assortie de menaces voilées se référant “à toutes les conséquences économiques et autres”; ‘le chantage à l’isolement et à l’étouffement économique; ‘celles-ci ne suffisent pas à acheter notre dignité d’hommes’).

⁶⁸ Congrès constitutif de la section nigérienne du P.R.A.: Rapport de politique générale, 29–31 août 1958 (‘ce sens de notre dignité d’homme que trop de nos amis métropolitains ont du mal à admettre; ‘dignité à laquelle nous ne saurons jamais renoncer car l’homme négro-africain veut être lui-même d’abord.’).

Bakary had already put much emphasis on self-esteem on 2 August, just after the Cotonou conference, when he said that his people had opted for the 'road of honour and of dignity'. The essential lack of choice provided by the French offended these notions and would make him portray the referendum, retrospectively, as a 'diktat'.⁶⁹

This key importance of political *ideas* in Niger's impending decolonisation, as well as of psychological sensibilities—in short, of an entire mental complex—was not understood very well in earlier studies of this period. Notably the historian Fuglestad misunderstood its relevance when he argued that Bakary's decision to fight for immediate independence was a flight forward, brought about by a desire to cling on to a power base that, according to Fuglestad, was fast eroding—an observation which, as shown above, was clearly false. With independence and control of the state apparatus, Fuglestad continued, Bakary could have crushed his enemies for good.⁷⁰

Yet, if it was only political power that Bakary desired, he could have taken what was offered by de Gaulle's administration and enjoyed the fruits of its support. Fuglestad noted, however, that Bakary 'had the bad luck to believe in ideas' and stand for a nationalist policy for which there was, according to the historian, no firm socio-economic basis. While this economic aspect is discussed below, here it must be noted that the 'bad luck' of believing in ideas reveals more about the historian than the period in question, which was marked by deep political passions on the part of Sawaba's leader, his militant supporters and to some extent the movement as a whole. Although the question of independence was mainly a matter discussed in Niger's small urban centres, Fuglestad failed to understand the role of ideas and how these drove or affected the behaviour of men—rendering his presentation of Bakary's role in Niger's decolonisation devoid of an ideological dimension and, hence, making it unhistorical.⁷¹

True, numerous delegates of the Cotonou conference engaged in verbal acrobatics to backtrack on their statements once they found out what the Gaullists had in store for their territories.⁷² But elsewhere, such as in Guin-

⁶⁹ Bulletin d'Information du 1er juillet au 15 août 1958; CAOM, Cart.2248 ('le chemin de l'Honneur et de la Dignité'); Bakary, *Silence!*, ch. XIII.

⁷⁰ It seems that some of Fuglestad's arguments were informed by the limited archival sources accessible at the time of his research. Fuglestad, 'Djibo Bakary'.

⁷¹ Fuglestad also made a teleological error in presenting Bakary's preference for immediate independence as a 'blunder' simply because it would subsequently lead to his downfall. *Ibid.*, 324-325. Also F. Fuglestad, *A History of Niger 1850-1960* (Cambridge, 1983), 185.

⁷² Crowder, 'Independence', 33 and Mortimer, *France and the Africans*, 31-312.

ea, in Marxist-oriented circles such as Senegal's 'Parti Africain de l'Indépendance' (PAI) and, more generally, among West Africa's students and in the union world, this was not the case. For Sékou Touré these were factors not to be ignored.⁷³ In Niger, too, the Gaullist plan went squarely against the passions that Sawaba had set free. As a movement of different social groups with a core of little folk, it had on several occasions unleashed political energies that the leadership could not simply arrest but that it had to reckon with in its responses. Hardliners had partially hijacked the MSA's victory congress of the spring of 1957, in the process pushing Bakary towards tougher stands on the hated Sarakuna. On other occasions the leadership managed to mould these passions into a fighting force with which it could powerfully affect the political equation, such as in April 1958. Young Sawabists were also more inclined to push for independence than older partisans.⁷⁴ Leadership and rank and file thus influenced each other as they were tied in a bond based on social and political values that had partial roots in the union movement and a Marxist-inspired militancy. By taking the stand on immediate independence and assuming the PRA's leadership, Bakary had enhanced his prestige among his followers considerably,⁷⁵ but also strengthened the position of his hardline supporters.⁷⁶

Thus, on his return from Cotonou Bakary was welcomed with great enthusiasm. On 30 July, he told an audience in Niamey that Africa had taken a decisive turn by demanding independence and by rejecting the talk of autonomy. It was an inspiring message that went down well with the rank and file.⁷⁷ On 1-3 August Bakary scored a further coup by uniting unionists of Sawaba and RDA persuasion under the same political banner. At the first congress of the 'Union Territoriale des Syndicats du Niger' (UTSN—now UGTAN's Nigérien office), which was attended by 200 people and included politicians from Sawaba as well as the RDA, he urged unionists to work together. With the help of his loyal confidant and minister of social affairs, Saloum Traoré, he managed to have both unionists from the public sector—generally loyal to the RDA—and those working in private businesses (usually Sawaba-oriented) elected in the UTSN 'bureau directeur'. Sawabists, however, had a comfortable majority and Traoré was re-elected

⁷³ Crowder, 'Independence', 35.

⁷⁴ Interview with Gonimi Boukar, Niamey, 5 Nov. 2005.

⁷⁵ Rollet to France Outre-Mer and Dakar, 9 Aug. 1958.

⁷⁶ See in the same vein Djibo, *Les transformations*, 77-78.

⁷⁷ Bulletin d'Information du 1er juillet au 15 août 1958.

secretary-general.⁷⁸ RDA partisans did not want or dare to express reservations before a fiery speech of Bakary that elaborated on the failure of the Loi Cadre and the need for unity of action and political independence. In fact, deriding the cautious language of other politicians, his address met with approval among RDA unionists and went some way in reconciling the cleavages that had hardened in the union movement in the wake of the April riots. Thus, Bakary's appeal for unity and a call for sacrifice by Ousmane Dan Galadima were matched by a plea of Noma Kaka, RDA union leader who had led strike action against Sawaba's government the previous year, for all Nigériens to work together to chase away the colonialists.⁷⁹

With its position vis-à-vis the RDA reinforced, its supremacy in the union movement reaffirmed and the passion for independence set free, Sawaba faced the task of winning over Niger's different social forces to the fundamental step to which its leader had committed the party at Cotonou. Mobilising the urban population was not that difficult, since Sawaba possessed a good organisation in nearly all urban centres. During July and the first half of August, the party continued expanding its sway, just as in the previous months, by setting up new committees, as local sections of the PRA, in various urban districts. This went hand in hand with an intensification of propaganda, especially among women and girls, and the designation of representatives for the party congress scheduled for the end of August.⁸⁰

In the remote countryside this was much harder to accomplish, although many of the little folk maintained contact with the rural areas and thus assured a constant flow of propaganda. Sawaba's rural sections and committees, which had multiplied substantially since it had come to power,⁸¹ provided the means with which it could try and mobilise the peasantry. This, in effect, came down to the advice to vote 'No' to de Gaulle's constitutional proposals in the referendum of 28 September. Thus, by the 3rd of August Djibo Bakary had given the order to take the call for independence to the bush.⁸² At the time French Commandants de Cercle

⁷⁸ On a board of 9, only 3 were RDA: René Delanne, Kabo Ibra and Noma Kaka. The Sawabists included Dandouna Aboubakar, Daouda Ardaly, Farka Maiga, and Hima Dembélé as a technical adviser. Letter Rollet to France Outre-Mer and Dakar, 8 Aug. 1958; CAOM, Cart.2181/D.1 bis.

⁷⁹ Ibid.; Rollet to France Outre-Mer and Dakar, 9 Aug. 1958; Bulletin d'Information du 1er juillet au 15 août 1958; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 244.

⁸⁰ Bulletin d'Information du 1er juillet au 15 août 1958.

⁸¹ Rollet to France Outre-Mer and Dakar, 9 Aug. 1958.

⁸² Synthèse politique, no. 085 CP/BE, juillet-août 1958, le 5 sept. 1958.

claimed that the rural population was not really conscious about the message of Cotonou, arguing that propaganda expanded slowly in such a vast country as Niger.⁸³ Yet, if no important leader stood up to challenge Bakary—Governor Rollet estimated—the matter would be decided in favour of Sawaba's stance.⁸⁴ As shown in Chapter 2, several of the Sarakuna rallied back to the government in the wake of the April showdown, with the result that, by now, Bakary had the support of several chiefs or politicians close to them. Rollet reckoned that Mouddour Zakara, one of the vice-presidents of the Territorial Assembly, Amadou Kountché, Moha Rabo from Tahoua and even Issoufou Saidou Djermakoye, brother of the Djermakoy of Dosso, would not take the risk of turning against Bakary. Only in late June had his rivals in the RDA suffered the defection of a major Tuareg chief.⁸⁵ Thus, despite the fact that Sawaba's government had a dormant fracture because of its alliance with the chiefly BNA and the FDN of Zodi Ikhia, by early September the French estimated that the chiefs were unwilling to go against it and that the population would be likely to follow the government.⁸⁶

This did not mean, however, that the word of 'independence' was on everyone's lips. In the vast countryside, where a poverty-stricken and largely illiterate population lived its own traditions, this modernist idea was naturally conditioned by the urgency of local needs and experienced through local cultural views. But this did not mean that peasants had no notion of grander political ideas, as colonial officialdom all too readily assumed.⁸⁷ Many were aware that Djibo Bakary was a special, visionary politician who was agitating for something which mattered to them, too, and which they conveyed or lived through in straightforward terms like 'freedom for the people', 'justice', 'dignity' or 'total liberty'.⁸⁸ That people did not understand the subtleties of the constitutional debate, as Mamoudou Djibo noted even for members of the urban elite, was hardly decisive.⁸⁹

⁸³ Rollet to France Outre-Mer and Dakar, 9 Aug. 1958 and Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de l'A.O.F. pour la période du 18 au 31 août 1958, ex. no. 3; CAOM, Cart.2248.

⁸⁴ Rollet to France Outre-Mer and Dakar, 9 Aug. 1958.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* and Bulletin d'Information du 1er juillet au 15 août 1958.

⁸⁶ Synthèse politique, no. 085 CP/BE, juillet–août 1958, le 5 sept. 1958.

⁸⁷ Colonial documents in this period abound with European biases with regard to African 'traditional' life.

⁸⁸ Interviews with Saïbou Abdouramane, a peasant, Dargol, 31 Oct. 2005; Djaouga Idrissa, also a peasant, near Dargol, 31 Oct. 2005; and Boubakar Djingaré (at the time a mason in the capital), Niamey, 27 Oct. 2005 ('liberté totale').

⁸⁹ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 77 n. 2 and 85.

Even the French noted that the prestige that Bakary now enjoyed—which they did not consider deeply rooted because of the size of the country—had been developed on the basis of his claim that independence constituted the only way that Niger could obtain deliverance from its pressing needs.⁹⁰ His contention typically pointed to the yearning for relief, or ‘sawki’, that had nurtured Sawaba’s struggle and that constituted the basis of its support among the people—a broad desire for change that would mean an end to debilitating poverty.

People in the urban areas and, more particularly, opinion-makers such as party officials, union activists and people working in the administration or other modern jobs, may have had a clearer idea about the choice at hand, if not about its consequences. The fact that nearly no one knew the text of the constitution, which was not published until 4 September,⁹¹ says little about their political consciousness. Few people engaged in plebiscites, in Africa or elsewhere, base their views on constitutional texts. Attitudes crystallised on the basis of the straightforward political message of the government, in the process assisted by the offensive lack of choice which the French had formulated and which, in the political circumstances of the summer of 1958, was obvious to many. Thus, Ousmane Dan Galadima, admittedly a hardliner, retrospectively said that the referendum amounted to a choice between being free or slave and that, hence, one’s conscience dictated that one vote ‘No’.⁹² Contrary, therefore, to what Fuglestad intimated, Nigériens did not have to be law students to make up their mind about de Gaulle’s constitution.⁹³

Moreover, as he had demonstrated on several occasions, Djibo Bakary himself was not immune to the passions he had helped to release. The French had difficulty to understand this—an incomprehension that ultimately derived from the ambiguity of their own attitudes to political power. Even Governor Rollet, a man who felt sympathy for Sawaba’s leader, suggested that a victory in the referendum would allow Bakary to go for a more realistic solution (in the French view) than immediate independence. Yet he also opined, more correctly, that Bakary might stick to the stance to which he had been committed by his own political passion.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Rollet to France Outre-Mer and Dakar, 9 Aug. 1958 and *Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 18 au 31 août 1958*, ex. no. 3.

⁹¹ Mortimer, *France and the Africans*, 313-314; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 77; and interview with Elhadj Illa Salifou, Niamey, 25 Nov. 2003.

⁹² Interview with Ousmane Dan Galadima, Madaoua, 7 Febr. 2003.

⁹³ Fuglestad, ‘Djibo Bakary’, 323-324.

⁹⁴ Rollet to France Outre-Mer and Dakar, 9 Aug. 1958.

This passion was fed by the notion of independence and the preservation of AOF's structures, which had gained in importance since he had established himself as one of West Africa's leading politicians. However, the French government's new adviser on African affairs, Jacques Foccart, deemed the PRA project 'totally unrealistic' and regarded Bakary's suggestion of a confederal union between AOF and the metropole as a 'house of cards'.⁹⁵

Consequently, reports now began to portray Bakary as 'an intransigent nationalist'.⁹⁶ Sawaba's stance, however, never changed after Cotonou,⁹⁷ despite the fact that the French, who registered every utterance of its leader,⁹⁸ tried to read things in his statements that were not there. This was partially fed by Bakary's decision to announce his party's formal stance on the constitution—whose final text was not ready until 21 August—after a meeting of the inter-territorial PRA scheduled for 14 September, in order to get all territorial sections united on the issue. Thus, some French observers recorded that Bakary had not yet made up his mind or that he had said that Niger *might* go for a 'No'-vote. Others noted, by early September, that his position had become more nuanced and flexible, hoping some 'modifications of form' would pull him over—a statement that was triggered by a remark of Bakary that he had had a good conversation with de Gaulle when they met during the latter's tour of Africa at the end of August (see next section). It was also noted, however, that once Bakary returned home from this meeting his position hardened again and that, even before de Gaulle's African tour, party ideologue Adamou Sékou had already produced Sawaba's official stance.⁹⁹

That the French thought that the honour of an interview with the illustrious general would make Sawaba reverse its stand¹⁰⁰ shows that they completely misjudged the situation. Bakary drove this home rather pointedly when he said, at the beginning of August, that there could be no compromise between immediate independence and 'misleading formulas that

⁹⁵ *Foccart parle*, 158 ('totalement irréaliste'; 'un château de cartes').

⁹⁶ Bulletin d'Information du 1er juillet au 15 août 1958 ('un nationaliste intransigent').

⁹⁷ See also Pour Un Front Démocratique de la Patrie, 45.

⁹⁸ France's colonial archives show the French always knew what Bakary said about the issue and when.

⁹⁹ Synthèse politique, no. 085 CP/BE, juillet–août 1958, le 5 sept. 1958; Copie d'une communication de notre ambassadeur à Accra en date du 12 sept. 1958; letter of A. Bernier, date unknown; CAOM, Cart.2266/D.6 & 2181/D.1 bis respectively; *Foccart parle*, 169 ('modifications de forme').

¹⁰⁰ See uncoded and undated set of papers (ca. Aug. 1958); CAOM, Cart.2198/D.15.

[had] no place anymore in the relations between men and between peoples'.¹⁰¹ A few days later his accusation of metropolitan blackmail led Rollet to telegraph to Paris in exasperation about Bakary's criticism of the general's comments on the consequences of a 'No'-vote. The governor concluded:

The insolence without reserve of that declaration dissipates all ambiguity on the resolve of its author to thoroughly exploit at whatever cost the themes and conclusions of the PRA Congress of Cotonou up to their most extreme consequences.¹⁰²

Ali Amadou and de Gaulle on the Place Protêt

In a way the governor was right, notwithstanding his partisan language.¹⁰³ At a party meeting in Niamey on 16 August, which was attended by 600 people, Bakary reiterated the themes of Cotonou, while two days later, Sawaba's party organ confirmed that there could be no question of accepting anything but independence.¹⁰⁴ The stakes were now rapidly getting higher, the more so as the PPN, in line with the inter-territorial RDA,¹⁰⁵ expressed itself in favour of de Gaulle's proposal. Niger's RDA section had little to lose from a continuation of the French presence because its position vis-à-vis Sawaba's government had deteriorated and its parliamentary opposition was largely ineffective. Despite its agitation, its political support remained mainly restricted to the western region. In view of the show-down in the spring, moreover, the RDA had reason to believe that the government might try and eliminate it altogether in the course of what Sawabists saw as the revolution of Niger's talakawa. Bakary's success at

¹⁰¹ Bulletin d'Information du 1er juillet au 15 août 1958; AFP Spécial Outre Mer, no. 3619, 5 Aug. 1958; CAOM, Cart.2198/D.15; Benoist, *l'Afrique Occidentale Française*, 411 ('des formules trompeuses n'ayant plus leur place dans les rapports entre hommes et entre peuples').

¹⁰² Telegram Rollet to France Outre-Mer. Diffusion Restreinte—Priorité Absolue, no. 64, 11 Aug. 1958; CAOM, Cart.2181/D.1 bis ('La brutalité sans retenue de cette déclaration dissipe toute équivoque sur la résolution de son auteur à exploiter à fond quoiqu'il en coûte les thèmes et conclusions du Congrès P.R.A. de Cotonou jusque dans leurs conséquences les plus extrêmes').

¹⁰³ Thus, the contention by Fuglestad ('Djibo Bakary', 322) that Bakary and his followers changed their minds several times during this period can be dismissed outright as flawed contextual reading.

¹⁰⁴ Bulletin d'information (no date, Aug. 1958); CAOM, Cart.2248; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 245.

¹⁰⁵ Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 244.

Cotonou therefore greatly worried the RDA.¹⁰⁶ Thus, as shown in the previous chapter, it had already voted against the Assembly's resolution in the spring in which the majority of MPs asked for total internal autonomy from France. De Gaulle's constitution, however, which would prevent the severing of ties, provided an ideal opportunity to assure the party of protection and help it gain, with French assistance, the political power it could not acquire on its own. For this purpose the party was already in touch with officials in Paris in mid-July, exploring their positions during an informal meeting.¹⁰⁷ It may subsequently even have tried to encourage Sawaba, possibly in the course of the UTSN congress in early August, to opt for the constitution's rejection in order to trap it in an anti-French stance and itself monopolise metropolitan support.¹⁰⁸

While Sawaba's socio-political profile made this hardly necessary, Bou-bou Hama in any case announced the position of his own party on 7 August, rejecting immediate independence. This position was confirmed by the PPN's bureau politique on the 29th. The stand of the PPN—very much the party of the 'commis'—was also fed by the concern of civil servants, who owed their position to French administrative favour, about the consequences of a rupture with the metropole. Yet, Rollet considered the electoral consequences of the RDA's stand to be limited since its overall support, i.e. including from lower social strata, was largely restricted to the western region.¹⁰⁹ However, as it had a solid party organisation in the west, its propaganda helped to increase political tension. During the night of 25 August a tam-tam degenerated into fighting with Sawabists, leading to injuries and several arrests.¹¹⁰

It was under these circumstances that Sawaba held its party congress from 29 to 31 August. Adamou Sékou gave an impassioned address that could be considered as the party's blueprint for the future. He spoke of an abnormal situation marked by social inequalities, as well as inequalities between Africa and Europe, that should be confronted by a 'radical de-

¹⁰⁶ Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de l'A.O.F. pour la période du 11 au 17 août 1958, ex. no. 2, ex. no. 4; CAOM, Cart. 2248.

¹⁰⁷ See Djibo, *Les transformations*, 80-81 (based on interviews with former PPN-RDA officials).

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 79, based on one interview with an RDA-oriented unionist.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 79-81; Rollet to France Outre-Mer and Dakar, 9 Aug. 1958; Synthèse politique, no. 085 CP/BE, juillet-août 1958, le 5 sept. 1958.

¹¹⁰ Bulletin d'Information du 15 août au 20 sept. 1958; Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de l'A.O.F. pour la période du 8 au 14 Sept. 1958, no. 5; CAOM, Cart.2248.

colonisation' and the introduction of a socialism adapted to African conditions (which meant, among other things, an explicit respect of people's religious beliefs). This was to be a 'peaceful revolution' rather than a 'revolt', for which a solid party organisation down to the village level was required, as well as improved youth sections assembling men and women for the party cause. Profiteering by party militants or elected officials would not be condoned, and while unions would be assisted in their struggle for better working conditions, 'false syndicalism based on hatred'—a reference to the RDA unions and their previous strike action—would not.

In giving expression to the popular yearning for relief that the party wished to embody, Sékou held up independence as the sole possibility to liberate Niger from political, economic and cultural alienation. The *Loi Cadre*, he argued, had been a constant source of conflicts and had shown that half measures did not work. Therefore, only total independence would enable Niger to introduce profound reforms in its social structures and to become the master of its destiny. The relations with France could only be given form by way of free negotiations, i.e. upon the acquisition of independence. An imposed form of association was unacceptable. Yet, Sékou emphasised that *Sawaba's* tactics were based on loyalty and confidence in its relations with the metropole. Self-determination could not be considered as a form of secession, since it had been an ideal of the French Revolution. The 'No' of *Sawaba* was prompted by the fact that it loved Niger as much as de Gaulle loved France. Inciting party cadres to take up the challenge, *Sawaba's* ideologue passionately concluded:

From Téra to Nguigmi, the refrain of independence must have its echoes in each village, in each hut ... Tell everyone that Independence is the end of backward colonialism with its trade economy, its plunder, its social injustice; it is the end of calculating values on the basis of people's colour, it is the end of prejudice, it is the resurrection of our race.¹¹¹

To this Bakary added an intelligent mixture of the party stance and statements designed to appease the French. He told delegates point-blank that the PRA would not renounce Africa's independence nor be forced to mort-

¹¹¹ Congrès constitutif de la section nigérienne du P.R.A.: Rapport de politique générale, 29-31 août 1958 ('décolonisation radicale'; 'révolution pacifique'; 'révolte'; 'faux syndicalisme basé sur la haine'; 'De Téra à Nguigmi, le refrain de l'Indépendance doit avoir ses échos dans chaque village, dans chaque case ... Dites à tous que l'Indépendance, c'est la fin du colonialisme retardataire avec son économie de traite, ses spoliations, ses injustices sociales, c'est la fin du calcul des valeurs basé sur la pigmentation des hommes, c'est la fin des préjugés, c'est la résurrection de notre race').

gage the future of Niger. It would go for preservation of AOF and vote for independence 'whatever the procedure' employed. While this suggested a readiness to risk a rupture with the French if necessary, Bakary's confession of his love for all peoples demonstrated a co-operative vision of relations with the metropole, which, he hoped, would unite in a confederation with the West African federation. Accusing the territorial administration of supporting the RDA, he nevertheless paid homage to de Gaulle, whom he had just met in Dakar, and claimed rather optimistically that the dilemma of 'federation' versus secession had been circumvented by the proposal for a Community that would be freely consented to by the metropole and the African territories. Consequently, the party congress was concluded with a resolution calling for immediate independence, the creation of an African Community, and negotiations with France to establish a multinational confederation of free and equal peoples. It squarely rejected the French plan to hold nuclear tests in the Sahara and called on Paris to recognise Algeria's 'national fact'.¹¹²

The French had meanwhile undertaken a few manoeuvres to coax sceptical leaders, not just Sékou Touré and Djibo Bakary but also the lukewarm supporters of metropolitan designs, such as Léopold Senghor and Mamadou Dia of Senegal. These manoeuvres had a token character as they contained no genuine concession. Only at the eleventh hour did the government accept some amendments to the constitution, which by their contents and manner of introduction demonstrated the metropole's unwillingness to allow its African territories a normally negotiated accession to independence. Thus, it was well into August before de Gaulle let himself be persuaded by his financial guardian, Georges Pompidou, to accept the principle of self-determination in the constitution. The final text, however, thinly articulated this in terms of a right of a territory to ask for a 'transformation' of its 'status' to be confirmed by a local referendum controlled by Community institutions, i.e. the metropole. In this way the right to independence was too conditioned to be of significance and unlikely to satisfy nationalist feelings. Moreover, if the procedural hurdles were taken, the territory would also cease to be a member of the Community; in other words, independence would still come down to secession and the loss of

¹¹² The congress (at Niamey's cultural centre) encompassed 100 people, was opened by Condat and heard a report by Issaka Koké on agriculture. *Synthèse politique*, no. 085 CP/BE, juillet–août 1958, le 5 sept. 1958; *Bulletin d'Information* du 15 août au 20 sept. 1958; *Ibid.*, 1er juillet au 15 août 1958; *Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de l'A.O.F. pour la période du 1 au 7 sept. 1958*, no. 4; CAOM, Cart.2248; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 248 ('quelle que soit la procédure'; 'l'amour pour les peuples').

aid. In addition, de Gaulle accompanied this with his threats about economic consequences, which transformed the concession into a punitive measure and—in the words of his adviser, Foccart—a risk-free public relations exercise: the metropole went on record as offering independence, which, however, few leaders dared to accept.¹¹³

In this context the definitive constitutional draft amounted to what Adamou Sékou denounced as an *imposed* form of association. Instead of recognising the right to independence and promising not to penalise those going for statehood, de Gaulle repeated his threats during a stay in Brazzaville in the course of his African tour (21–26 August), promising not to raise obstacles if a country opted for independence after a period that he refused to specify.¹¹⁴ The reluctance and dishonesty of his remark only reinforced the impression that the constitutional proposals effected, in the words of Bakary, an eternal subordination to the metropole.¹¹⁵ Hence, in Sawaba's view the Gaullist design involved a unique offer that would not repeat itself. A 'Yes' vote would amount to 'submission' since one could not renounce membership of the Community without metropolitan co-operation. This added to the movement's vision that only total independence and, thus, a 'No' vote could provide Niger deliverance from misery—the French having inadvertently stimulated its yearning for relief.¹¹⁶

Much of this was completely unnecessary as militant nationalists had frequently articulated a revisionist perspective accommodating France's interests: even Sékou Touré had made it clear that he did not want to make the choice that the Gaullists had formulated. If de Gaulle had expressed his readiness to recognise unequivocally the right to independence and had declined to issue threats, Guinea's leader would have been won over.¹¹⁷ Yet, the French chose to ignore the co-operative mindset of nationalist leaders even though they registered, in the case of Niger, every declaration in which Sawaba articulated its readiness to conciliate the metropole's

¹¹³ The French now also conceded the right of territories to enter the Community in groups—an allusion to African leaders' desire to preserve AOF/AEF structures. *Foccart parle*, 158–161; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 76–77; Mortimer, *France and the Africans*, 313 ('transformation'; 'statut').

¹¹⁴ After private conversations with Barthélémy Boganda, the reluctant Pan-Africanist leader of Oubangui-Chari (Central African Republic). Mortimer, *France and the Africans*, 314–315 and *Chroniques d'Outre-Mer* (Ministère de la France d'Outre-Mer), Oct. 1958, 19.

¹¹⁵ Retrospectively in his *Silence!*, 140.

¹¹⁶ Renseignements; Territoire du Niger, Direction des services de police, no. 1485/PSC/RG, Niamey, 16 Sept. 1958; CAOM, Cart.2181/D.1 bis, containing Communiqué, Bureau politique du Sawaba, 15 Sept. 1958 ('la soumission').

¹¹⁷ Mortimer, *France and the Africans*, 315.

interests side by side with those of other nations. What the French, however, demanded from Niger was not its love for all peoples but an unre-served concurrence in the Gaullist bid for power and, consequently, its *total submission*,¹¹⁸ pure and simple, to the constitutional proposals—to the extent of offending elite African notions of dignity.¹¹⁹

Besides making token concessions and sounding out the opposition, the Gaullists therefore began to prepare for stronger measures in case Sawaba's Niger would not bow to their wishes. At the beginning of August Governor Rollet, on leave in the metropole, had an audience with Cornut-Gentille,¹²⁰ the new minister of colonies, or 'France Outre-Mer'. Cornut, an adept political schemer of Breton extraction and governor-general of AOF during the early 1950s, would have expressed concern about Bakary's statements at Cotonou. He would have told Rollet that a defeat at the hands of Sawaba's leader was unacceptable and that, therefore, the governor had to act in order to change the electoral situation, including if necessary by putting pressure on the chiefs, handing out bribes or stirring up violent incidents. Whatever the veracity of these accusations,¹²¹ it is certain that Rollet, who despite his troubles had struck a friendly relationship with Bakary, objected.¹²² He would have asked Cornut for a written order¹²³ and argued that he wanted to implement the policies of France rather than those of de Gaulle. He therefore refused to interfere in the electoral process, preferring to let Nigériens cast their vote in freedom.¹²⁴

The essence of this meeting was later confirmed in political memoirs. Foccart recalled that Rollet was little disposed 'to take sides', while Pierre Messmer, Cornut-Gentille's successor as High Commissioner (Governor-General) in AOF, noted that the governor was 'intellectually too honest to

¹¹⁸ Thus, de Gaulle himself later wrote that he realised most elites desired independence but that, what mattered, was whether 'this would be in agreement with us, or without and, even, against us'. De Gaulle, *Mémoires d'espoir*, 43 ('ce serait d'accord avec nous, ou sans et, même, contre nous').

¹¹⁹ In his speech to de Gaulle during the latter's visit to Conakry, Sékou Touré talked about the 'obstacle of indignity'. *Chroniques d'Outre-Mer*, Oct. 1958, 30 ('l'obstacle de l'indignité').

¹²⁰ He left for Niger again in the week of 9 August. *Marchés Tropicaux*, no. 665, 9 Aug. 1958, 1888.

¹²¹ See Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 275-277, also for biographical details on Cornut-Gentille. Chaffard did not reveal his sources. *Fluchard, Le PPN-RDA*, 250.

¹²² Interview with Georges Condat, Niamey, 27 Nov. 2003.

¹²³ Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 278.

¹²⁴ Rollet would have told this to Georges Condat (the latter was interviewed by Djibo, *Les transformations*, 87).

“demolish” Bakary politically.¹²⁵ Consequently, on 20 August Rollet was replaced and demoted, three days later taking his leave from Niger at a reception with Bakary’s cabinet.¹²⁶ On the 25th he was succeeded, with de Gaulle’s blessing, by Don Jean Colombani. Colombani, a Corsican with a modest educational background, had worked his way up in the colonial administration of Senegal. When Governor-General of AOF, Cornut-Gentille had got to know him as an adroit manipulator who finally became the colony’s governor in 1955 but two years later had to abandon his post when the Loi Cadre came into operation.¹²⁷

Preceded by his reputation as a ‘bulldozer’, Colombani assumed his office in record time and arrived in Niger at the moment that Bakary, together with Rollet and the chairman of the Territorial Assembly, Georges Condat, had left for Dakar for the meeting with de Gaulle.¹²⁸ De Gaulle arrived in Senegal from Conakry, Guinea’s capital. Here he had made a disastrous stop-over at the suggestion of Cornut-Gentille, who still hoped to entice Sékou Touré, although Messmer had advised against it. As shown above Touré was deeply annoyed by the Gaullist endeavour, although he hesitated more than Bakary over the consequences of a ‘No’ vote, despite the fact that his political control was more secure than Sawaba’s. Demonstrating his domestic support, the crowds of Conakry were indifferent towards de Gaulle, in contrast to their enthusiastic response to Sékou Touré and the warm welcome de Gaulle experienced in Brazzaville and Abidjan.¹²⁹ Inflamed by the French challenge and the force of his domestic following, Touré, with his back half-turned to the general, gave a speech which referred to the friendship with France but chided its colonial record and affront to African dignity, provoking applause from the audience. This time de Gaulle felt insulted, although the men in his entourage did not consider the speech particularly offensive.¹³⁰ Piqued, the general gave a

¹²⁵ *Foccart parle*, 170 and P. Messmer, *Après tant de batailles: Mémoires* (Paris, 1992), 239 (‘à prendre parti’; ‘intellectuellement trop honnête pour le “démolir” politiquement’).

¹²⁶ Benoist, *L’Afrique Occidentale Française*, 425; Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 278; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 251.

¹²⁷ Messmer, *Après tant de batailles*, 239; Salifou, *Le Niger*, 170; Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 278-9.

¹²⁸ Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 251; Salifou, *Le Niger*, 171; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 87.

¹²⁹ Actually, de Gaulle was already confronted in Brazzaville with independence banners—to which he responded by repeating his threats about the consequences. Crowder, ‘Independence’, 34-35; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 246; *Foccart parle*, 165; Mortimer, *France and the Africans*, 315-316; de Gaulle, *Mémoires d’espoir*, 59.

¹³⁰ Foccart (in *Foccart parle*, 162-163) claimed none had seen the text of Touré’s speech beforehand, which is denied by Messmer (*Après tant de batailles*, 148-149).



Photo 3.2 Place Protêt (*Chroniques d'Outre-Mer*, Oct. 1958).

condescending response and reiterated his threats. He refused to entice Touré with some accommodating gesture as he had apparently decided that Guinea was a lost cause. In a purposive snub de Gaulle had social engagements cancelled and proceeded to Dakar.¹³¹

The atmosphere in AOF's capital was tense. Late afternoon on 26 August, as France's legendary general got ready to address the public on the Place Protêt, Dakar's central square, crowds invaded the area and adjacent streets, with young men taking position on roof tops, in trees and on balconies. Militant circles were not prepared to backtrack on Cotonou and, determined to go for a 'No' vote, were planning demonstrations. Senghor and Mamadou Dia had decided to stay away from de Gaulle and avoid a painful confrontation. When told about this by Foccart, who was part of his travelling entourage, the general felt snubbed and irritated. A tape with Senghor's speech at Cotonou was played on a loudspeaker and shouts were heard of 'Down with de Gaulle!' and 'Assassin of Thiaroye!', an allusion to a repressed mutiny of 14 years before. When de Gaulle mounted the platform, protected from the audience by loyal war veterans, he faced a noisy crowd shouting and holding up banners clamouring 'No!' and 'Independence! Independence!'. Foccart tried to reassure his superior that the dem-

¹³¹ Mortimer, *France and the Africans*, 316-317; de Gaulle, *Mémoires d'espoir*, 60; *Chroniques d'Outre-Mer*, Oct. 1958, 28-30; Crowder, 'Independence', 35.

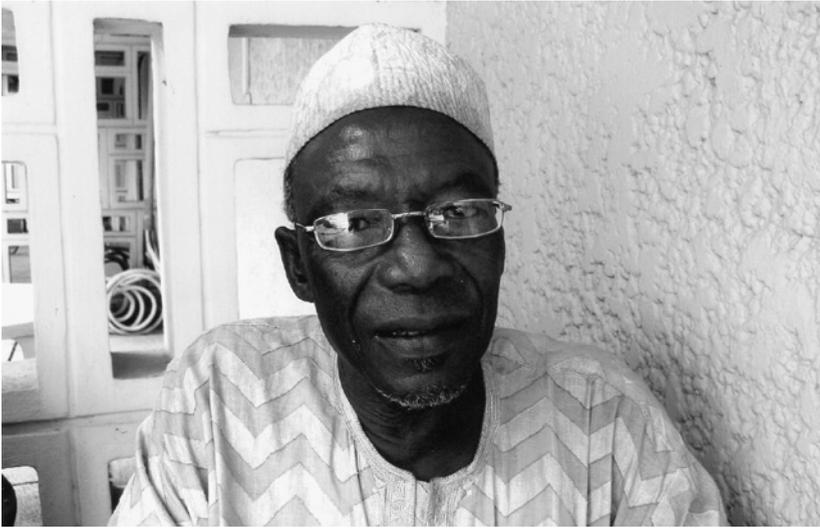


Photo 3.3 Ali Amadou, Niamey, 2009.

onstrators were illiterates who had been fooled by agitators to wave placards told to be in his favour.¹³²

This, of course, said more about the attitudes of de Gaulle's adviser than the mentality of the crowds. As in Guinea, passions on the independence issue were running high, with Dakar cinema audiences cheering when Sékou Touré's face appeared on screen.¹³³ Among the crowds there was a young man by the name of Ali Amadou, who watched the spectacle with keen interest. Hailing from the Téra region in western Niger, Ali was working for the government's mining department, which had dispatched him for an apprenticeship to Dakar. He heard de Gaulle give his familiar message, telling the demonstrators to go for independence if they wanted to but warning that this was an era of 'efficiency' instead of 'demagogues' and callously adding that, while France would compel no one, it would draw its conclusions if people voted 'No'.¹³⁴ This cold message hardly convinced the demonstrators, and certainly not Ali Amadou, by then a 17-year-old

¹³² De Gaulle, *Mémoires d'espoir*, 61; *Foccart parle*, 167-168; Mortimer, *France and the Africans*, 317; *Chroniques d'Outre-Mer*, Oct. 1958, 32; ('A bas de Gaulle'; 'L'Assassin de Thiaroye').

¹³³ Crowder, 'Independence', 36. Also O. Sembene, *L'Harmattan*: (Paris, 1980; 1st ed. 1964), 289-292.

¹³⁴ De Gaulle, *Mémoires d'espoir*, 61; *Chroniques d'Outre-Mer*, Oct. 1958, 32 ('efficacité'; 'demagogues').

with little political experience. His confrontation with de Gaulle and the spectacle of the Senegalese clamouring for independence aroused his consciousness and would lead him to join Sawaba. Ali felt that the general simply refused to engage in a normal dialogue and thought, perhaps for the first time, that it was *real* independence that his country required.¹³⁵

The scene on the Place Protêt showed that Sawaba and de Gaulle were heading for a clash of wills. Hence, Sawaba's leader, who in contrast to Senghor decided not to seek avoidance¹³⁶ but go to the general's audience, refused to dodge the issue, though his confrontation with de Gaulle took place in the courteous atmosphere customary among government leaders.¹³⁷ De Gaulle received the Nigériens¹³⁸ in a conciliatory mood, telling them that a 'Yes' vote did not preclude independence at a later date but that they should be patient. He advised them to vote 'Yes', which would mean they would remain with France. De Gaulle also alleged that they were at liberty to vote as they wished and that they should vote 'No' if they wanted independence. The Nigériens, while hardly convinced by the general's plea, listened politely.¹³⁹

This was followed by a tête-à-tête between de Gaulle and Bakary. It is not entirely clear what went on during that meeting, which lasted three quarters of an hour. Only Bakary's testimony survives—de Gaulle keeping silent in his memoirs.¹⁴⁰ The general would have tried to play on Bakary's youthful age, tempting him by pointing out that, if Niger were part of the Community, his stature would be greater than if he represented only Niger. Although Bakary was sensitive to international prestige, he would have answered that he owed his position to the Nigériens. De Gaulle would then have offered French assistance and inquired about his stand on the referendum. Bakary, who claims not to have known then about the independence clause that the French had belatedly included, would have said that

¹³⁵ In his own words. Interviews with Ali Amadou, Niamey, 28 and 31 Jan. 2003.

¹³⁶ On Sawaba's view of this, see *Les raisons de notre lutte*, 30.

¹³⁷ Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 280 suggests it took place just *after* the confrontation on the Place Protêt. Other sources are silent, though *Chroniques d'Outre-Mer* (note 134) suggests it took place before.

¹³⁸ The delegation included Condat and, according to Djibo (*Les transformations*, 97), Gaston Fourrier, a Frenchman and MP for Sawaba. Bakary (*Silence!*, 210), denies other people than Condat were present.

¹³⁹ Based on an interview with Condat by Djibo (*Les transformations*, 97). Condat would have told de Gaulle that he would vote 'No'. Interview with Georges Condat, Niamey, 27 Nov. 2003.

¹⁴⁰ What Chaffard (*Les carnets secrets*, 280-281) wrote about that meeting was contradicted by Bakary on several points. Bakary, *Silence!*, 196 and 210-211.

he wished the constitution would provide for independence, adding that his definitive position would follow after the PRA meeting on 14 September. His counterpart would then have argued that Bakary could influence the PRA decision, especially because he was its secretary-general. De Gaulle would not have mentioned the independence clause—which was not supposed to be consummated—but would have repeated his pledge of assistance.¹⁴¹

Djibo Bakary would have thanked the general and bid his farewell, with the feeling that this would not be the end of the matter.¹⁴² It seems that, although Foccart described their discussions as ‘very open’ and claimed that his boss pointed out the consequences of a ‘No’ vote,¹⁴³ the meeting was marked by an ambiguity in relation to which the illustrious general and the saviour of Niger’s little folk cared to remember what suited them.¹⁴⁴ They both parted content, Messmer recalled,¹⁴⁵ with Bakary going on record with the meaningless statement that he was ‘impressed’ by his conversation with de Gaulle.¹⁴⁶ It seems unlikely, therefore, that the later testimony of a Nigérien,¹⁴⁷ who was not present at the meeting, had more than apocryphal value: de Gaulle, when realising that his counterpart remained unmoved, would have got irritated and in the end have lashed out at Bakary, telling him that, whether Niger voted ‘Yes’ or ‘No’, ‘Air [would] not go to Moscow’.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴¹ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 97 (based on interviews with Bakary); Bakary, *Silence!*, 195–196 and 211; *Les raisons de notre lutte*, 31.

¹⁴² Bakary, *Silence!*, 211. Though, of course, this testimony may have been contaminated by hindsight.

¹⁴³ *Foccart parle*, 166 (‘très libres’).

¹⁴⁴ P. Messmer, *Les blancs s’en vont: Récits de décolonisation* (Paris, 1998), 153, contradicting Diougou Sangaré (a member of the BNA and then Sawaba) that Bakary had insinuated to de Gaulle that he would vote ‘yes’. Interview with Diougou Sangaré, Tessaoua, 9 Febr. 2006. See also Chapter 4.

¹⁴⁵ Messmer, *Les blancs s’en vont*, 153.

¹⁴⁶ Copie d’une communication de notre ambassadeur à Accra en date du 12 sept. 1958 (note 99). Later, Bakary would deny that it was a success. *Silence!*, 210–211.

¹⁴⁷ Namely Diougou Sangaré, who began working for the RDA regime in 1959. Sangaré to author, 26 March 2006. Djibo, *Les transformations*, 282 & C. Maman, *Répertoire biographique des personnalités de la classe politique et des leaders d’opinion du Niger de 1945 à nos jours* (Niamey, 1999), vol. 1, 375–376.

¹⁴⁸ Quoted from Djibo’s interview with Sangaré (*Les transformations*, 97: ‘l’Air n’ira pas à Moscou’). Sangaré repeated this in my own interview with him. Interview, Tessaoua, 9 Febr. 2006.

The Hour of Sputnik

Yet, in the late 1950s 'Moscow' did have an unmistakable attraction for African nationalists, not least for some of Sawaba's supporters. At the height of the Cold War the Soviet Union—with its global network of allies, its satellites in Eastern Europe, its huge military resources and aid ranging from arms, technical advisers and trade agreements through to the provision of any form of training and education—represented the equal of the Western world. It was the only credible superpower rivalling the United States. Even if the Eastern Bloc was not an equivalent source of economic support, in the late 1950s it certainly appeared as a compelling alternative to Western funds, particularly to individual activists: men like Dandouna Aboubakar and Daouda Ardaly made several journeys to Eastern Bloc countries or took part in FMJD festivals—just as Hima Dembélé, Gatakoye Sabi, a Sawaba activist from Zinder, and Badou Traoré, an UGTAN union worker.¹⁴⁹ They could see with their own eyes that their aspirations could be promoted by forces outside the purview of the omnipotent metropole.

Bakary told journalists after his meeting with de Gaulle that abstaining in the referendum was no option, for this would be an act of cowardice.¹⁵⁰ For the same reason, the French were not as certain of Niger as de Gaulle's behaviour suggested—as Foccart would later admit.¹⁵¹ The general, who left Dakar for Algeria the next day, ordered his colonial minister to stay in Senegal to try and persuade Sawaba's leader to reconsider his position. Cornut-Gentille would have phoned Bakary early in the morning of the 27th to invite him for a rendezvous, which, however, led to a repetition of views.¹⁵² African politicians closer to the French also did their best, like Gabriel d'Arboussier and Issoufou Djermakoye, who found Bakary in his hotel while involved in talks with Ousmane Dan Galadima and Abdoulaye Mamani, his hardline deputies. Djermakoye, an isolated figure in Niger's political landscape, would have warned Bakary not to listen to Sawaba's radicals.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ Circulaire no. 605, Ministre de l'Intérieur to all Commandants de Cercle, Chefs de Subdivision, Chefs de Poste Administratif; undated (ca. 1960); ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.3; Présidence du Conseil. S.D.E.C.E., référence 7.894/IV. 2 June 1958; CAOM, Cart.2195/D.5.

¹⁵⁰ Bakary, *Silence!*, 210.

¹⁵¹ Foccart parle, 169.

¹⁵² Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 246; Bakary, *Silence!*, 210-212; *Les raisons de notre lutte*, 31-2; *Chroniques d'Outre-Mer*, Oct. 1958, 33.

¹⁵³ Djermakoye had been contacted by Cornut and Messmer on Bakary's stance. He alleged that Bakary asked his interior minister Adamou Assane Mayaki to plead with Djermakoye and that, when this failed, Dandouna Aboubakar, Ousmane Dan Galadima and



Photo 3.4 Daouda Ardaly (*Les raisons de notre lutte*, 10).

It quickly became apparent that all these démarches were to no avail. That same day Bakary met Sékou Touré and others in Dakar at a meeting of UGTAN's comité directeur. It issued an appeal to West Africa's population to vote 'No' if the constitution did not recognise the right to independence, free adhesion to the Community and establishment of AOF and AEF as sovereign states. The text of the resolution would have been handed to de Gaulle's entourage shortly before the general's departure.¹⁵⁴ It represented an attempt to mobilise the electoral response on a West African scale and served as a stepping stone for organising the PRA stance to be announced in September. On the same day, Sawaba's leader declared that the position at Cotonou had been defined after careful examination and not under demagogic influence—a straight rebuke of de Gaulle's speech on the Place Protêt—which was followed by some soothing but non-committal remarks directed at the French. He also criticised the dem-

Abdoulaye Mamani were sent to threaten him and his family. Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 246 and 249.

¹⁵⁴ UGTAN also harshly criticised de Gaulle and his entourage, accusing them of dividing the African territories and delivering them at their mercy and waging a demagogic campaign using the support of feudal elements, i.e. the chiefs. *Les raisons de notre lutte*, 32; Benoist, *l'Afrique Occidentale Française*, 423; Bakary, *Silence!*, 140-141 and 212; and Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 247.

onstrations on the Place Protêt but, on the 28th, emphasised the importance of independence and AOF's unity, adding more crucially that he rejected French control of Niger's economy.¹⁵⁵ Thus, on 1 September, just after its party congress, Sawaba dispatched a telegram to the metropolitan government asking it to insert Africa's 'national fact' into the constitution and recognise the right of the inter-territorial federations to establish themselves as sovereign states in equality with France.¹⁵⁶

UGTAN's appeal for Africa's adhesion to the Community on the basis of free choice showed that, even at this late stage, Sawaba wished to avert a head-on collision. During a visit of Messmer to Niamey in mid-August, Bakary told the High Commissioner that Africans did not want to break with France and denied that the desire for independence was marked by hostility to the colonial power. Later in September he added that, once the principle of independence had been conceded, he would not wish to separate from the metropole, whose teachers and technicians he deemed indispensable.¹⁵⁷ Indeed, he tried to fight opposition propaganda which tried to whip up fears that independence would lead to the departure of the Europeans.¹⁵⁸

However, the complete submission to the Gaullist design that the French demanded was out of the question, which meant that Sawaba had to rebuff the threat that France's leader had issued to militant nationalists. The party did so, first, by playing down the consequences of an eventual rupture with France and, second, by pointing at the alternative alliances that Niger could cultivate. Bakary had already argued, early in August, that more than 80 per cent of France's 'FIDES' funds were remitted to the metropole in the form of money transfers and profits of colonial companies; a rupture would hurt the metropole as much as it would Africa. Moreover, he complained about the level of metropolitan credits, which contrasted poorly with funds allocated to, for example, Gabon, an oil-producing country with a smaller population. Consequently, he concluded that there was no need to fear the consequences of 'secession', alluding in this respect to

¹⁵⁵ Direction des Services de Sécurité de l'A.O.F.: Bulletin d'information (no date, Aug. 1958).

¹⁵⁶ Synthèse politique, no. 237 CP/BE, sept. 1958, le 4 oct. 1958; CAOM, Cart.3684; and Benoist, *l'Afrique Occidentale Française*, 422 ('fait national').

¹⁵⁷ Synthèse politique, no. 085 CP/BE, juillet-août 1958, le 5 sept. 1958; Copie d'une communication de notre ambassadeur à Accra en date du 12 sept. 1958; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 245.

¹⁵⁸ Bulletin d'information (no date, Aug. 1958).

the economic significance of Niger's Saharan regions. This theme was repeated in a more general way by Adamou Sékou at the party congress at the end of the month. Sékou noted that they had been told that they did not have technicians or money, but retorted that this did not mean they could not govern themselves.¹⁵⁹

More concretely, early on the party leader began to boast about the 'necessary alliances' his country could strike to protect it against the loss of French assistance. Thus, on 9 August Bakary had hit back against de Gaulle's attempt at blackmail by coolly observing that metropolitan threats could 'no longer impress anyone in the hour of Sputniks and Explorators'.¹⁶⁰ This reference to the rivalry of the superpowers—which less than 12 months before had led the Soviet Union to stun the West with the world's first satellite, belatedly followed by an American response—could not have driven home more painfully how France's global status had declined. Bakary's statement, which was carefully recorded, struck at the heart of French concerns, particularly of the Gaullists who were crafting the legitimacy of their takeover on the idea of metropolitan renaissance.

While the statement led Governor Rollet to send Paris his exasperated telegram,¹⁶¹ in view of its background it was only natural for Sawaba to think about looking for help in the East. Thus, at the first congress of the UTSN, Saloum Traoré, who had led the traditional May Day Parade the previous spring, lashed out that Niger could always hire Russian teachers, in addition to German and English ones, to help develop the country's educational sector. Its trade unions, he continued, could always rely on the solidarity of the Eastern Bloc, having sent delegates to conferences in Russia, Poland and even China, despite French surveillance.¹⁶² To Sawabists, then, recourse to the East represented a conceivable alternative.

This was less straightforward with regard to Nigeria, despite that country's economic attraction to traders in Niger's central region. Although the idea of a potential alliance had been openly mooted at Cotonou, it would entail co-operation with a country whose vastly greater population and

¹⁵⁹ Declaration of Djibo Bakary, undated but 9 Aug. 1958 (note 67); Synthèse politique, no. 085 CP/BE, juillet–août 1958, le 5 sept. 1958; Congrès constitutif de la section nigérienne du P.R.A.: Rapport de politique générale, 29–31 août 1958.

¹⁶⁰ Declaration of Djibo Bakary, undated but 9 Aug. 1958 ('ne peut plus émouvoir personne à l'heure des « Sputniks et des Explorateurs »'; 'les alliances nécessaires').

¹⁶¹ See text at note 102.

¹⁶² Rollet to France Outre-Mer and Dakar, 8 Aug. 1958 (note 78) and Bulletin d'Information du 1er juillet au 15 août 1958.

economy could easily dominate Niger as an independent state. The chiefly aristocracies of Northern Nigeria made this an unappealing prospect.¹⁶³ However, Sawaba now began to develop contacts with Northern Nigeria's opposition—and its social counterpart there—, NEPU. NEPU had worked towards an alliance with local RDA sections in the east of Niger, but by the spring of 1958 the patterns of cross-border alignments began to shift.¹⁶⁴ A NEPU-friendly trader, Zukairou Laoula, established contact with Badéri Mahamane, municipal councillor for Sawaba in Zinder.¹⁶⁵ NEPU's leader, Malam Aminu Kano, was still reluctant to forego the support of the Nigérien community in Kano, which was largely pro-RDA. By September, however, NEPU's ruling committee was ready to link up with its social counterpart in the north. This was partly caused by Bakary's independence statement in Cotonou, which influenced NEPU's stance on relations with political parties in Niger. Conversely, Bakary's posture on a Nigerian alliance was already more clear before the Cotonou conference, when he alluded in a positive sense to Nigeria's economic importance. The French noted in this respect that Nigeria's religious leaders retained a powerful influence in Niger¹⁶⁶—a factor that may have affected Bakary's calculations as well. Possibly in August or September, a delegation of the 'Action Group', a political party from south-western Nigeria with which NEPU shared ideas on socialism and West African unity, went to Maradi to visit the local community of Yorubas (south-western Nigeria's major ethnic group).¹⁶⁷ Meanwhile, a Sawaba envoy by the name of O.P. Labo would have established contact with NEPU with the object to detach the Nigérien community of Kano from the RDA. In its turn, Northern Nigeria's ruling party, the NPC, invited a Sawaba delegation from Maradi for talks to Katsina.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶³ Mortimer, *France and the Africans*, 321 and Fuglestad, 'Djibo Bakary', 322-323.

¹⁶⁴ This is something Fuglestad ('Djibo Bakary', 322) completely ignored.

¹⁶⁵ Synthèse Politique. avril-mai-juin 1958 (note 28) and Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, 199.

¹⁶⁶ Extract AFP bulletin 18 July 1958 sent by A. Bernier on behalf of Governor Rollet to France Outre-Mer & Dakar; CAOM, Cart.2181/D.1 bis; Bulletin Trimestriel de Renseignements. Afrique Occidentale Britannique et Libéria.

¹⁶⁷ Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de l'A.O.F. pour la période ? [1958], no. ?; Présidence du Conseil. S.D.E.C.E. Secret. « Nigéria—A.O.F. (Niger) Collusion de Partis Politiques ». Référence 10738/A, 2 Sept. 1958; CAOM, Cart.2248 and 2181/D.1 bis; R.L. Sklar & C.S. Whitaker, 'Nigeria', in J.S. Coleman & C.G. Rosberg (eds), *Political Parties and National Integration in Tropical Africa* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London, 1964), 641-642.

¹⁶⁸ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 8 au 14 Sept. 1958, no. 5 and 94 Niger. 944 Etats Indépendants d'Afrique. Dan Maningo, a Sawaba trader, would have led it.

These growing contacts made the alternative of an alliance with Nigeria, despite the obstacles involved, appear all too real, especially to the French. On 10 September Messmer telegraphed to Paris that Bakary had recently gone to Nigeria. The initiative for this would have come from Bakary and the trip would have been prepared by Arouna Zada Souley, a Niamey youth leader and unionist who had been to Moscow and Peking, and Dan Bouzoua Mahaman Abari, a junior Sawaba activist.¹⁶⁹ Both men met with Aminu Kano and Nnamdi Azikiwe, a popular nationalist from south-eastern Nigeria, and—in Ghana—with representatives of Kwame Nkrumah, discussing the eventuality of Niger's independence.¹⁷⁰ By October, Aminu Kano himself launched ideas about Nigeria's possible division into a few dozen states, of which some should merge with parts of central and eastern Niger. By then, he had been in touch with Djibo Bakary.¹⁷¹

If Bakary actually travelled to Nigeria,¹⁷² it was probably part of a trip he made to Ghana. Already independent for one and a half years under the flamboyant Nkrumah, Ghana was a source of inspiration for any militant nationalist leader. It was keen on helping the struggle elsewhere and thus an obvious choice when looking for more concrete support than NEPU could provide. As shown in the previous chapter, Bakary had already visited Ghana in the spring. He had attended the first anniversary of its independence, in the course of which he met nationalists like Julius Nyerere from Tanzania, Kenya's Tom Mboya, and Azikiwe from Nigeria. He had also received the support from the substantial community of Nigériens in the country, most of whom hailed from the western part of Niger and were firmly pro-Sawaba, particularly those from the Gothèye area.¹⁷³

In arranging his second trip, Arouna Zada and Dan Bouzoua had been preceded, on 22 August, by Koussanga Alzouma, the director of cabinet at the ministry of the interior and close associate of Bakary. Alzouma, who

¹⁶⁹ Telegram Messmer to France Outre-Mer, no. 704-706, 10 Sept. 1958; Présidence du Conseil—S.D.E.C.E., Destinataire no. 562, Référence 11237/A/11005/A, le 12 Sept. 1958; CAOM, Cart. 2181/D.1 bis; Bulletin Trimestriel de Renseignements. Afrique Occidentale Britannique et Libéria; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 69.

¹⁷⁰ Telegram Messmer to France Outre-Mer, no. 704-706, 10 Sept. 1958.

¹⁷¹ Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de l'A.O.F. pour la période du 14 au 31 oct. 1958, no. 9; *ibid.*, 9 au 15 nov., no. 11; both CAOM, Cart.2248.

¹⁷² Bakary is silent about this trip in his autobiography, *Silence!*

¹⁷³ Crowder, 'Independence', 31; W.S. Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy 1957-1966: Diplomacy, Ideology, and the New State* (Princeton, 1969), 31; Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de Dakar pour la période du 24 au 31 déc. 1959, no. 61; CAOM, Cart.3689.

had presented himself as minister of the interior, stayed in Ghana for five days as the guest of George Sam Pennie, who had been a trader in Abidjan, was an attaché at the cabinet of Nkrumah and could therefore act as liaison between Ghana and its francophone guests. Alzouma met Nkrumah and his ministers, besides members of the ruling 'Convention People's Party' (CPP). He also got acquainted with local Nigériens and Pan-Africanist leaders who had taken up residence in Ghana, such as George Padmore, who had attended the Cotonou conference and held talks with Alzouma on the referendum, and Ras Makonnen, a Gyanese activist and businessman. The French embassy was avoided. During the spring visit it had tried to interfere in a declaration that Bakary wanted to issue.¹⁷⁴ This greatly frustrated the French, who had some trouble to discover Bakary's plans as a result of the secrecy surrounding his mission. The new governor, Colombani, cabled to Paris that 'despite thorough inquiries' he had not discovered what Bakary was up to. It was reported that Sawaba's leader left Niamey either on 2 or 4 September. While his personal cabinet reported an illness as the reason for his absence,¹⁷⁵ he would have crossed the river in a pirogue at four o'clock in the morning, with two cars taking the ferry and awaiting him at the other side to proceed in the direction of Ouagadougou, the capital of Upper Volta.¹⁷⁶

That this mission carried considerable importance for Bakary became clear from the length of his stay. Having left for Ghana on 2 or 4 September, he was probably still there around the 12th, only to return to Niamey—without meeting Ghana's French ambassador—shortly before the PRA meeting on the 14th. Bakary asked Ghanaian leaders for financial assistance in the case that French aid would be cut, while his Ghanaian counterparts approached him with plans for a future union with Dahomey and Togo. Bakary spent a lot of time with Makonnen, who was a member of the preparatory committee of a conference of nationalist organisations, the 'All-African People's Conference' (AAPC), planned for December. Makonnen introduced Bakary to the ambassador of Israel to talk about technical

¹⁷⁴ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 1 au 7 Sept. 1958, no. 4; Ibid., 8 au 14 Sept., no. 5 (note 110); Ibid., 15 au 21 Sept., no. 6, and 24 avril au 5 mai 1959, no. 28; CAOM, Cart.2248/3685; Copie d'une communication en date du 29 août 1958 de notre Ambassadeur à Accra; CAOM, Cart.2266/D.6; Bakary, *Silence!*, 184.

¹⁷⁵ Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 283.

¹⁷⁶ Telegram Colombani to France Outre-Mer, no. 247, 4 Sept. 1958; CAOM, Cart.2181/D.1 bis; Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 8 au 14 Sept. 1958, no. 5 ('[m]algre investigations poussées').

assistance. After Bakary's departure, Ghana's leaders discussed the financial aid to be set aside, leading to a compromise 7,000 pounds sterling, to be disbursed through Sam Pennie and his brother-in-law, who worked for Ghana's Cocoa Marketing Board. Bakary would have intended to use the money to purchase 18 vehicles for propaganda purposes.¹⁷⁷

He returned to Niger via Parakou in Dahomey, where he had attended a conference of northern Dahomean politicians barely one year before and now discussed the referendum with local PRA members.¹⁷⁸ Delegates of the PRA's different territorial sections began to arrive in Niamey on the 13th, just as Bakary had returned from his exhausting journey. They included representatives from Guinea, Upper Volta, Dahomey, Soudan and Senegal, some of whom had dinner with Governor Colombani. On 14 September proceedings opened, behind closed doors, with Bakary in the chair. Sawaba was represented by a large delegation made up of Condat, Bakary's financial minister Diop Issa, Abdoulaye Mamani and Dan Galadima, in addition to Sawaba sympathisers who included students, Professor Abdou Moumouni—an intellectual—and, from Ghana, George Padmore and John Elliot, Sam Pennie's brother-in-law.¹⁷⁹

The proceedings began with a disappointment for Sawaba, which thought that the decision on the referendum was the province of the PRA's comité directeur rather than its territorial sections. Apparently to its surprise, most delegations shied away from the consequences held out by the French and made clear that they intended to vote 'Yes'.¹⁸⁰ Sawaba pleaded that all territories be advised to vote 'No' and that the PRA should renew the stand of Cotonou, appeal to French residents to stay, and after the referendum organise a conference to preserve AOF unity. But it was Senghor who dominated the debates with numerous interventions. He had never been enthusiastic about the stance that he had taken at Cotonou and

¹⁷⁷ Padmore and Makonnen had wanted 40,000 and 20,000 respectively, but Kodjo Botsio found 1,000 enough. They would also have discussed establishing a 'Gouvernement de liberation du Niger' in Ghana. *Recueil des principaux renseignements ...* 8 au 14 Sept. 1958, no. 5; *Ibid.*, 15 au 21 Sept., no. 6; Copie d'une communication de notre ambassadeur à Accra en date du 12 sept. 1958.

¹⁷⁸ Telegram Colombani to France Outre-Mer, no. 247, 4 Sept. 1958 and *Recueil des principaux renseignements ...* 1 au 7 Sept. 1958, no. 4.

¹⁷⁹ *Recueil des principaux renseignements ...* 8 au 14 Sept. 1958, no. 5; Territoire du Niger. Direction des Services de Police. Renseignements a/s Réunion du Comité Directeur du P.R.A. à Niamey. No. 1481/PSC/RG Confidentiel. Niamey 15 Sept. 1958; CAOM, Cart.2181/D.1 bis; Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 284-285.

¹⁸⁰ *Recueil des principaux renseignements ...* 8 au 14 Sept. 1958, no. 5.

now engaged in verbal acrobatics that convinced only his own delegation, although Senegal's political scene—while in majority favouring a 'Yes' vote—was rather divided. Even the Dahomeans, on whose territory the PRA's founding conference had taken place, recoiled from the economic consequences, also because they were about to receive aid for a harbour in Cotonou. The only PRA section to follow Sawaba was the one from Guinea, whose leader Sékou Touré, albeit part of the rival RDA, also favoured independence.¹⁸¹ Thus, the comité directeur could do nothing else than issue a communiqué inviting all territorial sections to take a stance in accordance with 'their own political context'.¹⁸²

This was a serious blow to Sawaba, yet could not affect the stance to which the core of the movement was already committed. The party therefore issued a communiqué that gave a considered account of its nationalist principles, starting with the observation that, contrary to those ready to swallow everything for a couple of million, it did not have the right to bind Niger to something without reflection. The constitution was a step back on the Loi Cadre as it gave all power to the metropole, which could bind Niger internationally and legislate for it without its representation.¹⁸³ The communiqué complained that the governor would exercise administrative control over representative institutions, while Niger would have no control over foreign affairs, defence, justice, secondary education and financial and economic policy including the exploitation of natural resources. Since only independence would encourage the investment of capital, the country would not be worse off with a formal rupture, the more so as metropolitan credits had been disappointing. Boldly alluding to assistance from across the Atlantic, the communiqué stated that if France cut aid, other countries would step in. Fiscal independence would lead to the tripling of

¹⁸¹ Bakary had synchronised his moves with his Guinean counterpart. Thus, before going to his audience with de Gaulle, Bakary dispatched Ousmane Dan Galadima and Abdoulaye Mamani to Guinea, after which they joined him in Senegal. It was also Bakary who would have taken the initiative for the UGTAN meeting with Touré after his discussion with de Gaulle. Fluchard claims on the basis of an interview with Bakary that Soudan's PRA section had also opted for 'No' (*Le PPN-RDA*, 246-247, 249).

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 249-250; Territoire du Niger. Direction des Services de Police. Renseignements a/s Réunion du Comité Directeur du P.R.A. à Niamey. No. 1481/PSC/RG Confidentiel. Niamey 15 Sept. 1958; Benoist, *l'Afrique Occidentale Française*, 422; Mortimer, *France and the Africans*, 321-323. According to Bakary, Soudan's section had also pleaded for 'No' ('leur contexte politique propre').

¹⁸³ The joint PRA communiqué added that the draft still did not cater for immediate independence. Comité directeur du PRA, Motion de Politique Générale, 14 Sept. 1958 (in Territoire du Niger. Direction des Services de Police [see note above]).

resources. Pursuing Nkrumah's argument that political self-determination was the prerequisite to development, the communiqué stressed that there were no criteria to decide at what level of development a country could become independent. People would, moreover, readily make sacrifices for the construction of a 'new African society'. The communiqué also pointed to the fact that all peoples were now aspiring to independence, including in Togo, where the French were forced to be more accommodating because of its status as a UN trust territory.¹⁸⁴ Niger should therefore not hesitate. The document referred explicitly to France's 'blackmail' and demand for 'submission', rejected this and pointed out that de Gaulle himself had said that no one was obliged to approve his constitution—adding it would keep the general, whom everyone respected, to his word. The communiqué promised that the chains of the peasantry would be broken to allow real development. Salaries and pensions of civil servants and veterans would continue to be paid while chiefs were assured of the maintenance of their institution. European residents were asked to stay, with the communiqué stating emphatically that their rights and prerogatives would be respected. Sawaba would lead Niger to national dignity without taking the initiative for a rupture with the metropole, since it was not animated by the spirit of secession but wished to remain 'on the side of France'. Thus, Nigériens should vote without fear and assume their historic role.¹⁸⁵

In so rejecting submission to the Gaullist design in a revisionist expression of faith that shifted responsibility for a negative fall-out to metropolitan shoulders, Bakary gave the official start of the referendum campaign. On the 15th, when the communiqué was published, it became known that Guinea, too, would go for 'No'.¹⁸⁶ Sawaba's stand was reported to the rank and file the evening before, during a break of the PRA gathering. Party activists had flocked to the place of meeting from across the capital as well as its environs, brought by lorries or coming on foot. Djibo Bakary and Ousmane Dan Galadima came out to address the crowd, and Bakary, speaking in Zarma, told his followers that voting 'Yes' meant putting a rope around one's neck and was tantamount to maintaining slavery, while

¹⁸⁴ Mortimer, *France and the Africans*, 298-299.

¹⁸⁵ Communiqué, bureau politique du Sawaba, 15 Sept. 1958 (note 116) ('la nouvelle société africaine'; 'chantage'; 'soumission'; 'du côté de la France').

¹⁸⁶ Crowder, 'Independence', 35. Bakary sent a telegram to the union and youth movement in Senegal, telling Niger would vote 'No'. Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 8 au 14 Sept. 1958, no. 5.

voting 'No' stood for 'freedom, emancipation and a better future'. Dan Galadima repeated the message in French and Hausa. They got a resounding ovation. The crowds withdrew, crying out 'No!, No!, No!'. A little later, young militants went into the city—with 'No' leaflets tied in their button-holes.¹⁸⁷ Sawaba's battle was on.

¹⁸⁷ Territoire du Niger. Direction des Services de Police. Renseignements a/s Réunion du Comité Directeur du P.R.A. à Niamey. No. 1481/PSC/RG Confidentiel. Niamey 15 Sept. 1958 ('la liberté, l'émancipation, l'avenir meilleur').

CHAPTER FOUR

A REFERENDUM

The following morning Pierre Messmer, while on an inspection tour in Ouagadougou, met with Don Jean Colombani, who had travelled from Niamey to Upper Volta to see AOF's High Commissioner. As shown in the previous chapters, Sawaba's government, though a coalition with intrinsic weaknesses, had reinforced its domestic position since the spring, while the RDA on its own was in no position to mount an effective challenge to Bakary's leadership and his party's campaign. Thus, on 5 September Messmer's office in Dakar reported to Paris that the RDA's propaganda for 'Yes' was unlikely to meet with popular favour, noting that the chiefs would not like to go against the government's wishes. It was reported, for example, that Maïdanda Djermakoye, a former left-wing student in France but also one of the brothers of the Djermakoy of Dosso, had rallied to the Sawaba side.¹

Like his superior Cornut-Gentille,² Messmer was worried. He realised, as he later wrote in his memoirs, that Niger was the only country where the referendum would not be a foregone conclusion. On the morning of 15 September he discussed the situation with Colombani. Rather than stage an ultimate attempt to win over Bakary,³ the two men agreed to start a counter-campaign that would be—in the words of Messmer—'openly favourable to "yes" by relying on the RDA.'⁴ Colombani would not be alone in implementing the plan but was promised the full backing of federal authority. Thus, Messmer dispatched Xavier Deniau, a member of his personal cabinet, in order to help the governor, as he wrote later, to 'cover his

¹ Synthèse politique, no. 085 CP/BE, July-Aug. 1958; CAOM, Cart.2233/D.2; interview & telephone conversation with Sa Majesté Djermakoye Maïdanda Saïdou, chef de province de Dosso, Dosso/Niamey, 17 Febr. 2006/21 Febr. 2008.

² G. Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets de la décolonisation* (Paris, 1967), vol. 2, 279.

³ As claimed by Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 285. There is no archival evidence to back this up, while Messmer's memoirs flatly contradict it. See note 4. Bakary, in his memoirs (*Silence! On décolonise: Itinéraire politique et syndical d'un militant africain* [Paris, 1992], 205) appears to confirm this.

⁴ P. Messmer, *Après tant de batailles: Mémoires* (Paris, 1992), 239. Also see *Ibid.*, *Les blancs s'en vont: Récits de décolonisation* (Paris, 1998), 153-154 ('ouverte favorable au « oui » en nous appuyant sur le R.D.A.').

rear', 'sweep away Djibo Bakary' and 're-establish control over the situation in Niger'.⁵ In the course of the campaign, Deniau would make a dozen trips to Niamey, and instead of meeting distrust of a governor intent on proving that he was up to the task, Messmer claims that both men established a rapport and pulled together for the task ahead.⁶

Besides federal backing, Colombani was assured of metropolitan support including, in all probability, from the minister of France Outre-Mer Cornut-Gentille⁷ and—what *is* certain—from Jacques Foccart, de Gaulle's adviser on African affairs. The latter admitted many years later that Niger's new governor had received his and others' support, and since Foccart had an audience with the head of government every evening to discuss current issues,⁸ it is more than likely that metropolitan backing included the blessing of the highest authority—the man whose political future depended on the referendum's outcome, de Gaulle himself.⁹

Typically, at the time, Bakary found it difficult to believe that the backers of the plan to destroy him included the leader of the Free French, to whose side, after all, he had rallied in 1940 with such enthusiasm.¹⁰ The above-mentioned recollections, however, show that the impending Fifth Republic had brought to power a metropolitan *équipe* that differed radically from its predecessor. Attributing strategic importance to Niger in particular, it resolutely rejected past tendencies of meeting local pressures with a sympathetic posture that involved the surrender of ever greater degrees of control, even the harbouring of sentiments of withdrawal.¹¹ This particular history made the determined hostility of the new metropolitan elite less foreseeable to Bakary¹² than the teleological writings of historians have

⁵ Messmer, *Après tant de batailles*, 240 and 243. Also *Ibid.*, *Les blancs s'en vont*, 153-154 ('couvrir ses arrières'; 'balayer Djibo Bakary'; 'reprendre en main la situation au Niger').

⁶ Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 290 and Messmer, *Après tant de batailles*, 240. As far as I know, Colombani never wrote his memoirs.

⁷ C. Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA et la décolonisation du Niger 1946-1960* (Paris, 1995), 250-251.

⁸ See *Foccart parle*. vol. 1: *Entretiens avec Philippe Gaillard* (Paris, 1995), 157 and 171.

⁹ As is perhaps to be expected, de Gaulle maintained his silence about this in his autobiography. See C. de Gaulle, *Mémoires d'espoir*. vol. 1: *Le nouveau 1958-1962* (Paris, 1970).

¹⁰ During his William Ponty days. Bakary, *Silence!*, 15 and 212-213. See also K. van Walraven, 'Decolonization by Referendum: The Anomaly of Niger and the Fall of Sawaba, 1958-1959', *Journal of African History*, 50 (2009), 269-292.

¹¹ See Chapter 2 above.

¹² Parti de regroupement africain, Conférence de presse, 19 nov. 1958; CAOM, Cart.2257/D.4.

later intimated¹³—despite the threats of some French officials.¹⁴ The understanding attitude of someone like Governor Rollet was replaced by the coldness of an entirely new metropolitan team,¹⁵ which involved many people who were not prepared to countenance the loss of Algeria or abandon control of adjacent regions. These included, among other people, Jacques Soustelle, not a friend of de Gaulle but as former governor-general of Algeria the leader of the French Algeria lobby and now minister of information and soon to become responsible for the OCRS.¹⁶

Soustelle was among the more hostile opponents of Bakary¹⁷ and formed the *trait d'union* between the latter's metropolitan adversaries and French hardliners in Algeria. Thus, the day after the Ouagadougou meeting of Messmer and Colombani, General Manière discussed the referendum forecast for Niger and Soudan with General de Crèvecoeur in Tamanrasset. Manière, commander of AOF's 3rd brigade, had gone to the southern Algerian town on the orders of the military authorities in Dakar, but the initiative for the high-level get-together was taken by General Salan and was executed with the blessing of Messmer.¹⁸ Salan, as commander-in-chief of the French forces in Algeria and metropolitan representative, was an implacable opponent of French withdrawal from Algeria, and the whole of the Sahara for that matter. He considered it 'indispensable', as he later opined in his memoirs:

that the Sahara be completely French! ... It therefore became essential that the neighbouring countries to the south: Mauritania, Soudan, Niger, Chad vote "yes".¹⁹

¹³ A. Salifou, *Le Niger* (Paris, 2002), 156 and E. Mortimer, *France and the Africans 1944-1960: A Political History* (London, 1969), 322. The same may be true for Sékou Touré, who was warned by de Gaulle but may not have realised how far the latter would go. M. Crowder, 'Independence as a Goal in French West African Politics: 1944-1960', in W.H. Lewis (ed.), *French-speaking Africa: The Search for Identity* (New York, 1965), 35; A. Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954-1962* (London and Basingstoke, 1977), 304; de Gaulle, *Mémoires d'espoir*, 60. Issoufou Djermaakoye's statement that Bakary risked getting buried by his hardliners smacks of hindsight. Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 246.

¹⁴ M. Djibo, *Les transformations politiques au Niger à la veille de l'indépendance* (Paris, 2001), 95-96.

¹⁵ Even if the new metropolitan team included members of the old, 4th Republic guard, the key posts were firmly in the hands of Gaullists or Algeria hardliners. See Chapter 3 above and *Foccart parle*, 154-5.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 155.

¹⁷ Mortimer, *France and the Africans*, 361.

¹⁸ Message 5.674/CHI GENESUPER Dakar à IFTOM Paris. Secret & urgent, 18 sept. 1958, CAOM, Cart.2195/D.1.

¹⁹ R. Salan, *Mémoires*, vol. 4: *Fin d'un empire. L'Algérie, de Gaulle et moi. 7 juin 1958—10 juin 1960* (Paris, 1974), 116 ('indispensable'; 'que le Sahara soit complètement français! ...

For this purpose the generals meeting in Tamanrasset discussed, as was put in condescending euphemism, the ‘morale of the natives of those territories’, and it was reported back to Dakar that

General Salan [had] proposed to aid financially the campaign for yes in Niger.²⁰

Backed by the civilian (federal) authorities, the military in Dakar concurred, and Salan, though overstepping his geographical mandate, wrote to his colleagues south of the desert offering assistance. General de Crève-cœur, seconded by Commandant Laure, was dispatched to AOF to establish the necessary contacts, bringing propaganda material and money and collecting intelligence on the political situation. As far as Niger was concerned they had it that the proportion between ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ votes was roughly equivalent, with the nomadic population in favour of French annexation of the Sahara.²¹ General Manière reported to Dakar on tension between Bakary and Governor Colombani. Salan considered it necessary to act with the greatest urgency and provided Manière, whom he knew well, with ‘substantial funds’. Manière then reported that

he thought [it possible] to reverse the situation in favour of “yes”.²²

In other words, a coalition was fast coming together composed of metropolitan, federal and territorial forces—civilian as well as military—, which in their determination to legitimise the new set-up in the metropole and preserve Algeria and the empire, were resolved to defeat Bakary. In the process, Sawaba’s government was getting sucked into the orbit of France’s hardliners in Algeria, who, since Niger was the only Sahelian country where a ‘No’ vote was a distinct possibility, now converged on it to crush the Sawaba campaign.²³

In an article published in the 1970s, Fuglestad questioned the accusations by Sawaba, later popularised by Georges Chaffard,²⁴ about the lack

Il devenait donc primordial que les pays riverains du sud: Mauritanie, Soudan, Niger, Tchad votent « oui »).

²⁰ Message 5.674/CHI GENESUPER Dakar à IFTOM Paris. Secret & urgent, 18 sept. 1958 (‘moral originaires ces territoires’; ‘Général Salan a proposé aider financièrement campagne pour le oui au Niger’).

²¹ Ibid. and Salan, *Mémoires*, 116-117.

²² Salan, *Mémoires*, 117 (‘gros moyens’; ‘il pense renverser la situation en faveur du « oui »’).

²³ Also see K. van Walraven, ‘From Tamanrasset: The Struggle of Sawaba and the Algerian Connection (1957-1966)’, *Journal of North African Studies*, 10 (2005), 3-4, 507-527.

²⁴ Parti Sawaba. Pour l’Indépendance effective du Niger: Les raisons de notre lutte (Bureau du Parti Sawaba: Bamako, 15 Jan. 1961), 33-40 and Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 278 ff.

of French neutrality in the referendum, their interference on behalf of the RDA and a vote for 'Yes', and the hostility of Governor Colombani to the Sawaba cabinet.²⁵ He opined that, retrospectively, Colombani was treated 'very ungallantly' by historians of the referendum; that—erroneously as shown above—Bakary's power base was very weak and needed only a 'light-handed' push by the French in order to crumble; that many parts of the French administration remained neutral during the campaign; that where the French did intervene this was limited in scope and nature; and that overall the referendum was a 'cleaner affair' than expected, as it would not have been marked by much rigging. This revisionist stance, repeated in his *History of Niger*,²⁶ became quite influential, if only because the historiography of Niger is rather underdeveloped and Fuglestad's argument elicited little response. However, it must be noted, first, that his assessment leaned heavily on available archival sources, which coloured his view of the French administration. Second, Fuglestad did not provide much evidence to back up his claim but, rather, established it on the basis of apologetic, even tendentious, reasoning that was in certain ways contradictory, for example, by admitting that the French campaigned for 'Yes' but were also fairly neutral in their referendum posture.

The substance of his argument has been brought down by the brazen admissions of former French officials themselves that they decided to vigorously intervene in the referendum and turn around the balance of forces, sweep aside Bakary and re-establish French control. Furthermore, more parts of Niger's and France's archives have become accessible since the publication of Fuglestad's work, which makes it possible to test his assertions against documentary evidence. It should be noted, however, that certain documents are missing in France's colonial archives, otherwise meticulously organised, that cover exactly the period of the referendum. As already shown by Mamoudou Djibo in his history of Niger before independence, there is a lacuna in the *Recueil des principaux renseignements* maintained by the federal authorities in Dakar, starting on 21 September and ending on 13 October 1958, i.e. one week before and two weeks following the referendum on the 28th.²⁷ Yet, although it is rare for any govern-

²⁵ F. Fuglestad, 'Djibo Bakary, the French, and the Referendum of 1958 in Niger', *Journal of African History*, 14 (1973), 326-330.

²⁶ Published by Cambridge University Press in 1983.

²⁷ *Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de l'A.O.F. pour la période du ...* (Haut-Commissariat de la République en Afrique Occidentale Française—Conseiller Politique—Bureau d'Etudes; CAOM, Cart.2248. Also, Djibo, *Les transformations*, 113.

ment to confess about—and leave paper traces on—their attempts at electoral interference, with most incriminating evidence getting removed,²⁸ several traces have been left that testify to the partiality of the administration and its hostility to the Sawaba side. There is also some indication that orders were given to officials orally,²⁹ as the overall hostile context made it crystal clear to members of the colonial bureaucracy what was being expected of them. All this evidence allows us to reconstruct the context in which the referendum took place and interpret the course of the campaign and its outcome.

The hostility of the administration, whose action, as will be shown, was far from 'light-handed', was especially embodied in the person of the governor, Don Jean Colombani. If Fuglestad thought he was treated ungalantly, both the man himself and French officials have admitted that he was extremely active in his pursuit of Bakary and his party. Not as scrupulous as his predecessor, Colombani was a determined man. Less than a fortnight in office, for example, he telegraphed to Paris about Bakary's visit to Ghana, discussed in the previous chapter, assuring his superiors that '[he continued] to take measures with discretion but efficiency in order not to be taken by surprise'.³⁰ Indeed, the federal authorities in Dakar reported with satisfaction that the governor went about his task with an 'energetic attitude'.³¹ Both his enemies and allies explained this by way of prejudice. Colombani, a Corsican, was deemed 'efficient' by Foccart, who later confessed that his role in the referendum campaign had been very important and argued that the governor had intervened with his typical temperament, treating the referendum 'as a Corsican electoral history' in which 'Bakary was the adversary' and Colombani had 'to seize the occasion to bring him down'.³² If this was a racist and hypocritical way of passing re-

²⁸ See also Djibo, *Les transformations*, 29.

²⁹ As alleged by Sawaba during the parliamentary elections following the referendum in December 1958. Maïga Abdoulaye to Chef du Territoire, Bureau politique Sawaba, no.18/E, 4 Dec. 1958; Direction du Contrôle, Mission Pinassaud; CAOM, Cart.1040.

³⁰ Telegram Colombani to France Outre-Mer, no. 247, 4 Sept. 1958; CAOM, Cart.2181/D.1 bis ('Je continue prendre dispositions avec discrétion mais efficacité afin de ne pas me laisser surprendre').

³¹ Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de l'A.O.F. pour la période du 15 au 21 sept. 1958, no. 6; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire—Semaine du 6 au 13 oct. 1958. no. 3193/GCS/AOF/2. Commandement supérieur des forces armées de la zone de défense A.O.F.-Togo. Etat-Major—2ème bureau; CAOM, Cart.2248 and 2195/D.7 respectively ('attitude énergique').

³² *Foccart parle*, 170-171 ('efficace'; 'comme une histoire électorale corse'; 'Bakary était l'adversaire'; 'saisir l'occasion de le couler').

sponsibility for the events to Niger's governor, it must be realised that Colombani himself regarded the referendum as 'a battle'.³³ Not surprisingly, therefore, Bakary later opined that the metropolitan government had appointed Colombani on purpose because, Sawaba's leader held, Corsicans knew no middle way but were either extremely good or very bad—Niger's governor being assigned to the latter category.³⁴ Colombani was, however, seconded by several territorial officials who had served in Niger since the days of Toby³⁵ and therefore knew how to act tough.

On the very day that the generals met in Tamanrasset, Colombani, having returned from his meeting with Messmer in Ouagadougou, had a hard word with Bakary. The two men had met at least once before, at the end of August, when Bakary had made some soothing remarks about the referendum question. On 16 September, Niger's prime minister tried to explain Sawaba's stance, arguing that its 'No' vote did not signify a desire to break with France. Colombani, however, responded by levelling several charges against Bakary that centred on the abuse, as the governor presented it, that Sawaba's ministers made of government funds, cars and gasoline for the purpose of the campaign and on the government's transfer of civil servants and dismissal of chiefs. Djibo Bakary sought to avoid a confrontation, would have argued over the details of the accusations and promised Colombani that he would send a circular on the subject to his ministers. The governor would then have said that a circular did not suffice and that the prime minister had to phone his colleagues immediately upon return to his office—Bakary tepidly yielding to Colombani's decree.³⁶

A Corsican Coup

Sawaba and its leader had, of course, no intention of giving up the perks that government office had brought and that could be mobilised—as government parties elsewhere in AOF did in campaigning for 'Yes'—for the battle for independence. Having organised the forces in his movement into

³³ See his Rapport sur les opérations électorales concernant le scrutin du 28 sept. (Référendum), no date, attached to Rapport sur le Référendum du 28 sept. 1958 en Afrique Occidentale Française, Dakar 25/10/58; CAOM, Cart.2221/D.1.

³⁴ Bakary, *Silence!*, 204.

³⁵ Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 251.

³⁶ Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 281-282, 287; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 253; J.R. de Benoist, *l'Afrique Occidentale Française de la conférence de Brazzaville (1944) à l'indépendance (1960)* (Paris, 1982), 426. Whether this conversation went that far is hard to say, as sources are silent. Yet, in the context it does not seem unlikely.

a fighting machine that had channelled various aspirations into a call for a clearly circumscribed constitutional objective, of which each and everyone expected his own kind of relief, there was no question of Bakary backing down. Moreover, as Colombani himself calculated, the forces of the opposition were divergent and incoherent. The RDA was strong in western districts, particularly Dosso, Filingué, Dogondoutchi and, he estimated, Tillabéri. But the party had little influence in the east, which was more densely populated.³⁷ Its cadres were generally discouraged by the expansion of Sawaba cells, which according to the governor had spread into the smallest villages, agitating for the government's cause and watching over the execution of party orders. Colombani claimed that Sawaba had a majority of some 66 per cent in the country. Even if this was a retrospective exaggeration for the purpose of emphasising the difficulty of his task, the RDA, according to the governor, at first managed to do little more than wage a meek campaign, seeking to avoid confrontation with its rival.³⁸

Yet, the desire of French officialdom for a 'Yes' vote, so clear to everyone, introduced a new element in Nigérien politics, which began to affect the balance of forces. Ever since their incorporation in the colonial bureaucracy, the country's chiefs, though influential among the rural populace, had not exactly been independent-minded. Dependent on government goodwill, they were a timid lot, usually going with the flow, trying to please the powers that be, instead of going against the government's wishes.³⁹ Now that they saw that the French administration, still very present in the country, was openly favourable to 'Yes', they realised that they had an opportunity to settle scores with a party whose hardliners had treated them badly despite the participation of their BNA and FDN in the governing coalition.

Thus, in the early days of September Zodi Ikhia, the Tuareg leader of the FDN and cousin of the canton chief of Damana, south of Filingué, announced he was going to campaign for 'Yes'. Ikhia, an archetypal opportunist, felt disappointed by his limited share of government perks, among other things because Bakary had taken away his directorship of the IFAN institute. Sawaba retaliated by expelling him and his followers, and the

³⁷ Chef du Territoire du Niger à Monsieur le Ministre de la F.O.M., Paris, et M. Le Haut-Commissaire de la République en A.O.F., Dakar, le 9 août 1958; CAOM, Cart.2181/D.1 bis; and Rapport sur les opérations électorales concernant le scrutin du 28 sept.

³⁸ Rapport sur les opérations électorales concernant le scrutin du 28 sept.

³⁹ Synthèse politique, no. 085 CP/BE, July-Aug. 1958; N. Bako-Arifari, *Dynamique et formes de pouvoir politique en milieu rural ouest-africain: Etude comparative sur le Bénin et le Niger* (Ph.D. Paris, 1999), vol. 1, 228.

rupture with the FDN was consummated even before the PRA meeting of 14 September.⁴⁰ Colombani, however, guessed that the FDN's support was limited, i.e. some 300 voters in the Filingué region plus 500 veterans in the capital who were Ikhia's clients. The French hoped for a coming out for 'Yes' by Issoufou Saidou Djermakoye and Adamou Mayaki, both disgruntled politicians who had had several rows with Sawaba. This would trigger more large-scale defections, not least because Issoufou—though related to Maïdanda Djermakoye, a Sawaba sympathiser—was the brother of Hamani Seydou, the Djermakoy of Dosso and president of the Association des Chefs.⁴¹

The exact chronology of defections is not easy to establish. Issoufou's views were already known for some time, also because of a journey to Paris in late August/early September when he offered his services to the forces of 'Yes'. According to the French, he took the plunge on 13 September, i.e. a day before Sawaba announced its stance to the rank and file in Niamey. Issoufou resigned from the senate of the Union Française, to which he had been elected with the support of Sawaba the previous June, and pulled Mayaki with him, if the latter had not already taken that step earlier. The French estimated, in their ethnicised perspective, that the decision of Djermakoye would influence the Zarma-speaking populations in the west.⁴²

Quickly thereafter France's military stepped up the pressure. On 18 September, only two days after the clash between Colombani and Bakary, they put the garrison of Niamey and a unit of troops in the Gao region on alert for the 'possible application of [a] protection plan'.⁴³ The next day Colombani followed by striking out against the government in full force with a series of measures that were unprecedented since the autonomy regime of the Loi Cadre. By decree, and with the approval of Cornut-Gentille,⁴⁴ he

⁴⁰ Bulletin d'Information du 15 août au 20 sept. 1958; Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus pour la période du 10 au 16 sept. 1959, no. 47; CAOM, Cart.2248 and 2251 respectively; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 81-2; Communiqué, bureau politique du Sawaba, 9 Sept. 1958 (in A. Mayaki, *Les partis politiques Nigériens de 1946 à 1958* [Niamey, 1991], 81).

⁴¹ Rapport sur les opérations électorales concernant le scrutin du 28 sept. and Bulletin d'Information du 15 août au 20 sept. 1958.

⁴² Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 238, 246-7, 254; Salifou, *Le Niger*, 171; Benoist, *l'Afrique Occidentale Française*, 425-6; Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de l'A.O.F. pour la période du 8 au 14 sept. 1958, no. 5; CAOM, Cart.2248.

⁴³ Message 5.674/CHI GENESUPER Dakar à IFTOM Paris. Secret & urgent, 18 sept. 1958 ('application éventuelle plan protection').

⁴⁴ Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 253. Yet, he gives no evidence for Cornut's required (written) approval.

took away the powers of Djibo Bakary as well as his ministers of the interior (Adamou Assane Mayaki), finance (Diop Issa), the civil service (Maïga Abdoulaye), public works (Adamou Sékou), and economic affairs (Aboubakar dit Kaou)—with the exception of Kaou, all members of the government's UDN core. The prerogatives that Colombani seized, albeit 'provisionally', pertained as far as the prime minister was concerned to the 'high direction of domestic affairs', information services, allocations and subsidies, and covered both the powers in these areas themselves and the right to delegate signature to others. From the minister of the interior the governor took the near totality of prerogatives: political and administrative affairs; religious matters; electoral issues; chieftaincies; immigration; judicial matters, including the prison regime; police and paramilitary forces; rural collectivities and communal affairs; and censorship issues, to name only the most important ones. In significant contrast to this, Diop Issa, who handled the portfolio of finance, at first only suffered the loss of the government car pool, which was, however, crucial during election time. Another decree, issued the next day, added to this by banning all movement of government vehicles.⁴⁵ Four days later a decree emasculated Issa entirely by taking away his powers to authorise expenditures from the budget, as well as the control of accounts, audits and salaries of civil servants. The minister of the civil service, Maïga Abdoulaye, lost the heart of his ministerial mandate—personnel matters—, while Sawaba's ideologue, Adamou Sékou, as minister of public works and mining, was forced to hand over the management of road traffic matters and the control of explosives. Finally, Aboubakar dit Kaou lost his mandate over rural insurance funds. All ministers thus affected were obliged to report the delegation of signature over these issues, and their subordinate staff were placed under the 'direct authority and control' of Colombani, including the personnel of Prime Minister Bakary.⁴⁶ To complete the intervention, two other decrees banned meetings on the public road, something that was implemented only a few days later, on the 25th, when an UGTAN meeting in Niamey was proscribed.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Arrêté no. 0576/CAB. See Djibo, *Les transformations*, 88 n. 4.

⁴⁶ Arrêté no. 0574/CAB du 19 sept. 1958 du Chef du Territoire du Niger; CAOM, Cart.2211/D.1. Also Djibo, *Les transformations*, 89 ('provisoirement'; 'haute direction des affaires intérieures'; 'l'autorité et le contrôle directs').

⁴⁷ Arrêté no. 0575/CAB du 19 sept. 1958 du Chef du Territoire du Niger; *Ibid.*, no. 0596 du 27 sept. 1958; *ibid.*, no. 0591/CAB du 25 sept. 1958 du Secrétaire Général (A. Bernier, for the temporarily absent Colombani), Suppléant légal; all CAOM, Cart.2211/D.1.

Fuglestad asserted that this series of measures, unique in AOF, was a perfectly legal step to take since, under the *Loi Cadre*, the cabinet only governed by delegation of the governor. This contention was disputed by Mamoudou Djibo, who pointed out that under regulations enacted in April 1957 the appointment, allocation and withdrawal of powers of cabinet ministers required the advice and signature of the prime minister. Intervention measures by the governor, moreover, had to be taken by the *Conseil de Gouvernement*, i.e. the cabinet with—since the summer of 1958—the prime minister as its formal ‘President’.⁴⁸ Cabinet deliberations could only be annulled by the governor through intercession of the High Commissioner of AOF and the minister of France Outre-Mer, with due advice of the metropolitan Council of State.⁴⁹

While constitutionally dubious, the real point of these measures was their political effect. In the case of Bakary they covered key government responsibilities (domestic affairs) and fields that were electorally relevant, i.e. the powers over subsidies and the control of government information. They transformed Sawaba’s prime minister into a hamstrung leader, particularly because cabinet colleagues like the ministers of the interior and finance were practically stripped of their powers. Having lost government prerogatives, the control of personnel, the management of funds and the ability to pay salaries, Sawaba was now all but a government in name, made up of powerless figureheads. With one stroke Colombani had suspended the constitutional order⁵⁰ and dismantled Niger’s first autonomous government. Indeed, it was this event—instead of the murder of Prime Minister Olympio of Togo in 1963—that represented Africa’s first coup d’état, in which forces outside the government took control of the state machinery or, rather, retook the power they had progressively lost since the *Loi Cadre* had come into operation.

Moreover, the fact that the measures were almost singularly directed at ministers who belonged to Sawaba proper, betrays something of their underlying motivations. Instead of an administrative measure of gubernatorial oversight, correcting cabinet actions in ‘a few well determined sectors’, as Colombani later euphemistically had it, his intervention was thoroughly political.⁵¹ That the minister of finance at first only suffered the loss of

⁴⁸ Chapter 3 above, n. 40. Also *Parti de regroupement africain*, *Conférence de presse*, 19 nov. 1958.

⁴⁹ Fuglestad, ‘Djibo Bakary’, 327 and Djibo, *Les transformations*, 89–90.

⁵⁰ See on this also *Parti de regroupement africain*, *Conférence de presse*, 19 nov. 1958.

⁵¹ *Rapport sur les opérations électorales concernant le scrutin du 28 sept.* (‘quelques secteurs bien déterminés’).

the government car pool demonstrates that its primary motivation lay in the electoral field, i.e. a desire to immobilise Sawaba's campaign. Furthermore, its campaign had to be made completely impossible by withdrawal of Sawaba's control of government spending. The secondary purpose, however, was a full government takeover, as shown in the dubious constitutional nature of the decrees and their excess. Colombani's overkill is graphically illustrated when the measures are set against the official reasons given for their enactment. The French claimed that Sawaba continued employing the material means of government for its 'No' campaign 'without restraint',⁵² mentioning in particular the use of cars and gasoline for propaganda trips, but also, oddly, government housing—and all this in spite of the warning issued by the governor on 16 September. They also accused Bakary and Diop Issa of misappropriation of funds.⁵³ Colombani alleged, in the referendum report issued later to justify his actions, that Sawaba had embarked, since the 16th, on an 'extremely violent offensive'. Each minister, accompanied by bodyguards, would have gone to a particular region and have transported 'veritable "commandos"' to the bush by government cars, requisitioned from the administrative services, to canvass in the rural areas, blackmail people and threaten voters.⁵⁴ In fact, the occasion that would have prompted the governor to take his action would have been the seizure by the minister of finance of a Land Rover used by a French inspector.⁵⁵ Finally, the French alleged that on 16 and 17 September the government had dismissed 'without reason' various members of municipal committees and chiefs, among them influential ones. They would have been replaced by appointees loyal to Sawaba. All this, the French held, could negatively affect the referendum.⁵⁶

Quite apart from the veracity of these accusations, on which more below, it is clear that a few counter-measures would have sufficed to remedy the situation: by, for example, starting procedures rescinding the dismissals and by simply taking control of the government car pool. There was no

⁵² Revue des événements politiques A.O.F., sept. 1958; CAOM, Cart.2233/D.2 ('sans retenu').

⁵³ Telegram Messmer to France Outre-Mer, no. 854-855, 25 Oct. 1958. Urgent; CAOM, Cart. 2181/D.1 bis ('graves détournements').

⁵⁴ Rapport sur les opérations électorales concernant le scrutin du 28 sept. ('offensive d'une extrême violence'; 'véritables "commandos"').

⁵⁵ Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 285-286; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 252; Benoist, *l'Afrique Occidentale Française*, 426.

⁵⁶ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 65; Rapport sur les opérations électorales concernant le scrutin du 28 sept.; and Message 5.674/CHI GENESUPER Dakar à IFTOM Paris. Secret & urgent, 18 sept. 1958 ('sans raison').

reason to completely take over the affairs of the ministry of the interior or the core of the work of the minister of the civil service, let alone emasculate the minister of finance and remove from the prime minister's portfolio the conduct of domestic affairs. However, as shown by the decree forcing the minister of public works and mining to give up such mundane matters as road traffic, another immediate objective of Colombani was to effect, in his own words, 'a very sharp drop in prestige'.⁵⁷ This meant that Adamou Sékou and his colleagues had to be humiliated in the eyes of the population, something that would bring the governor's next and ultimate objectives a significant step closer—a victory for 'Yes' and Sawaba's fall from power.

The draconian nature of Colombani's action stands out especially when looking at the context and reality of the charges. The decrees were issued barely three days after the governor's warning to Bakary, which shows that the French were in a hurry to thwart the latter's campaign and not prepared to give his government a chance to mend its ways. The comprehensiveness of the measures betrays a degree of planning that must have started already before Bakary's altercation with Colombani on the 16th. The latter's accusation that the party had embarked on a very violent offensive may be a bit of an exaggeration since the governor admitted that the campaign 'did not really begin before the 16th of September' (even if canvassing had already begun earlier). Fuglestad alleges that Bakary commandeered all government cars on the 15th, but does not give any evidence for this.⁵⁸ Yet, there can be little doubt that Sawaba did use government vehicles for its 'No' campaign. The French—and in their wake Fuglestad⁵⁹—asserted that this was illegal, but even if this observation was correct, it was besides the point. Government funds in the metropole were used for the 'Yes' campaign on a vast scale,⁶⁰ while governments in AOF territories canvassing for 'Yes' were allowed to do so unhindered as well. Moreover, as shown further below, after their seizure following Colombani's decrees many of Niger's administrative vehicles were handed over to the RDA and other partisans of 'Yes', while French officers and administrators embarking on a propaganda tour also used the government vehicles at their disposal.⁶¹ The mis-

⁵⁷ Rapport sur les opérations électorales concernant le scrutin du 28 sept. ('une baisse très nette de prestige').

⁵⁸ Ibid. ('ne commença véritablement que le 16 septembre').

⁵⁹ Fuglestad, 'Djibo Bakary', 327.

⁶⁰ See Chapter 3 above.

⁶¹ Interview with Tahirou Ayouba Maïga, Niamey, 28 Oct. 2005; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 90; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 255-256.

appropriation of funds that Bakary and the minister of finance were accused of referred to the handling of the car pool and the use of gasoline for Sawaba's propaganda tours, while the reference to the misuse of government housing presaged the requisitioning of the houses of Sawaba's ministers later.⁶²

The contrived character of the charges was also obvious in the case of the chiefly dismissals. In his referendum report Colombani alleged that Sawaba had threatened dismissals, which was correct. But he also claimed that the party had issued threats of prison sentences, without specifying who would be the target of these reprisals. He referred to 'draconian measures' which the minister of the interior would have taken, entailing the replacement of 'all the chiefs' by officials loyal to Sawaba. However, the same report specified that, in the two weeks preceding the referendum, Bakary's government would have dismissed 'a few chiefs' (although very influential ones).⁶³ As shown in Chapter 2, Fuglestad in turn claimed that a total of 20 chiefs, no less, would have been affected in this way. Yet, Mamoudou Djibo has demonstrated that around nine out of 149 canton chiefs were ever revoked or suspended during Sawaba's reign, arguing that no evidence can be found to back up Colombani's accusation that Bakary would have sacked several chiefs on 16 and 17 September—i.e. days before the governor seized the prime minister's powers and when such action would have become difficult in view of the governor's increasing interference. Bakary and his minister of the interior, Adamou Assane Mayaki, later denied having sacked so many traditional leaders. Moreover, of the nine chiefs that *were* dismissed only three were disciplined during August, with only one of these getting fired in response to a trip undertaken by chiefs and RDA leaders to Côte d'Ivoire, where Houphouët-Boigny promised them support if they would campaign for 'Yes' (see next section).⁶⁴ While Fluchard, in his history of the RDA, alleged that several chiefs had been subjected to house arrest and ordered to present themselves daily at the ministry of the interior, no source other than Fuglestad's article was given to substantiate this.⁶⁵ Finally, throughout AOF, chiefs were subjected to the disciplinary measures of the autonomous governments that the Loi

⁶² Telegram Messmer to France Outre-Mer, no. 854-855, 25 Oct. 1958. Urgent; Parti de regroupement africain, Conférence de presse, 19 nov. 1958.

⁶³ Rapport sur les opérations électorales concernant le scrutin du 28 sept. ('mesures draconiennes'; 'tous les chefs'; 'quelques chefs').

⁶⁴ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 65. Fuglestad did not give any source to back up his claim that 20 chiefs had been sacked. See his 'Djibo Bakary', 325.

⁶⁵ Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 252.

Cadre had brought into being. In several cases these measures were certainly politically motivated but did not prompt opposition from the supervising French authority.⁶⁶ Thus, while there can be no doubt about the difficult relations that several of the country's chiefs maintained with the Sawaba government, this could hardly have been the real grounds for Colombani's actions.

By contrast, since the governor quickly reinstated the chiefs that Sawaba had dismissed since May 1958—exercising a prerogative belonging to the minister of colonies—but made their enthronement effective as of 1 October, i.e. three days *after* the referendum, he now had at his disposal 'traditional' leaders who had a strong interest in collaborating with the French. As shown in Chapter 5, this conformed to Colombani's view of how a colony like Niger ought to be administered, i.e. with the help of chiefly authorities that could ensure that the French could maintain the control that had been slipping from their hands since Sawaba's accession to power. Similarly, the gubernatorial intervention increased, as if that was necessary, the dependence of civil servants on the French administration. As shown in the previous chapter, many civil servants, certainly the higher placed, had their worries about the consequences of independence, but with Colombani's coup d'état on 19 September became subject again to the whims of the colonial governor.⁶⁷

Defections and Regrouping

The ferocity with which Colombani intervened in Niger's domestic affairs had a profound effect on the underlying political equation. While Sawaba was immobilised and humiliated for all to see, other forces such as the RDA, the Sarakuna and associated formations were encouraged and emboldened to break with the party or throw in their lot with the 'Yes' campaign to try and seize the political power that had eluded them since the little folk and kindred groups had put themselves at the helm of the state. The latent social and political tensions of Nigérien society could now come into the open. With the required co-ordination and orchestration, they could, as Governor Rollet had already observed in August, create a powerful political force in opposition to the Sawaba movement.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Parti de regroupement africain, Conférence de presse, 19 nov. 1958.

⁶⁷ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 89–90.

⁶⁸ Chef du Territoire du Niger à Monsieur le Ministre de la F.O.M., Paris, et M. Le Haut-Commissaire de la République en A.O.F., Dakar, 9 Aug. 1958; CAOM, Cart.2181/D.1 bis.

Thus, in mid-August a group of a hundred Sawaba party members, now part of the inter-territorial PRA, would have signed a petition complaining about AOFien favouritism by Bakary's administration. The petition, which was the outcome of a meeting held at the house of Madougou Namaro, trader and transporter in Niamey, alleged that, in contrast to people from Soudan, Senegal or Dahomey, Nigériens were disfavoured in the purchase of land, the granting of credit and the awarding of contracts. It even claimed, less plausibly, that Nigériens were the victim of dismissals to the advantage of AOFiens, articulating old anti-AOFien sentiments and a latent inferiority complex towards AOFien brethren, which, from time to time, led to the surfacing of xenophobic tension. The issue was politically charged since, as the petition did not fail to note, several cabinet members were AOFiens, who were accused of extending favours to their countrymen. They should therefore be replaced by Nigériens. The petition was sent to Sawaba leaders and unidentified sources disseminated it a month later, around mid-September—a particularly sensitive moment, probably in order to damage the party's position ahead of the referendum. With AOFiens predominantly in the 'No' camp, Bakary, the Pan-Africanist, had in August reacted violently, threatening the exclusion of the petitioners but thereby aggravating the potential split in the movement.⁶⁹

His August warning had also been accompanied by threats to canton chiefs that they would be sacked if they did not abide by government policy.⁷⁰ This was probably in response to the trip members of the PPN-RDA had made to Abidjan to seek Ivorian support. At the invitation of Houphouët-Boigny, who treated all of them to journeys by air, the 'commis' of the PPN travelled to Côte d'Ivoire in the company of no less than 18 chiefs—their erstwhile rivals. Accompanied by Issoufou Saidou Djermakoye, unofficial leader of Niger's chiefs and about to break with Sawaba, they included Bouzou Dan Zambadi, the Sarkin Katsina of Maradi who as shown earlier, had been dismissed on 5 May that year, so much to the joy of the townspeople of Madarounfa.⁷¹ The meeting in Abidjan had already been predated by a get-together of Hamani Diori and Houphouët at the beginning of August in Paris, where the latter also served as minister in de

⁶⁹ Bulletin d'Information du ? au ? (ca. Aug. 1958); CAOM, Cart.2248. Petition in Mayaki, *Les partis politiques nigériens*, 70-72. Djibo, *Les transformations*, 107, was unsure about the signatures' authenticity, perhaps because the petition appeared in the book by Mayaki, a Sawaba opponent. See for details on Madougou Namaro, République du Niger—Présidence Décret: no. 65-066/BIS/PRN du 5 Mai 1965 portant mise en accusation devant la Cour de Sûreté de l'Etat; République du Niger.

⁷⁰ Bulletin d'Information du ? au ? (ca. Aug. 1958).

⁷¹ Chapter 2 above.

Gaulle's cabinet. Fêted by the wealthy Ivorian leader, the chiefs and the PPN were told that they could expect massive support in the form of funds, logistical assistance and staff (armed personnel, political advisers, election specialists) if they would go for 'Yes'. This was of some importance since, as shown above, the French did not deem the PPN able to wage an effective campaign on its own. As a result, Diori, upon his return from the funeral of fellow RDA leader Ouezzin Coulibaly in Upper Volta in early September, suddenly betrayed a newly-won confidence.⁷²

In turn, the chiefs now dared to take the plunge as well. With the French administration and Côte d'Ivoire's leadership behind them, the threats of Sawaba's leader had lost their potency. In the week following Issoufou Djermakoye's coming out, the French registered the support of his brother Hamani Seydou, the Djermakoy of Dosso and president of the Association des Chefs, who on 18 September called publicly for 'Yes' and invited his friends to do the same.⁷³ The Sultans of Zinder and Agadez followed suit, on 19 and 20 September respectively—on the very day and in the wake of Colombani's dismantling of the government. The adherence of these aristocrats was helped along, in so far as this was necessary, by Mohamed Mahmoud Ould Cheikh, a Soudanais known as the 'cadi of Timbuktu', who at the request of Max Lejeune, official at the OCRS, was touring Niger to mobilise the nobles. After that, at least eight chiefs of nomadic communities in the Tahoua region followed—enticed by Zodi Ikhia, their former teacher who had the disposal of a vehicle from unknown sources. They included his brother-in-law Algabit Ag Moha, a Tuareg of the Kel Gress tribe, canton chief of Azarori near Madaoua, and BNA member. Among other Tuareg leaders who went over to the 'Yes' camp was the Anastafidet, or head of the Kel Ewey—a Tuareg confederation in the Air mountains—a noble second in rank to the Sultan of Agadez.⁷⁴ The Sarkin of Kantché near Zinder and chef de canton, Amadou Issaka, also declared for 'Yes', a U-turn that involved threats by the local administration. The chiefs of Tanout north of Zinder and of Birnin Konni and Illéla, central Niger, followed suit.⁷⁵

⁷² Fuglestad, 'Djibo Bakary', 326; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 65 and 94; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 244.

⁷³ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 15 au 21 sept. 1958, no. 6; Rapport sur les opérations électorales concernant le scrutin du 28 sept.; and Djibo, *Les transformations*, 82.

⁷⁴ Ibid.; C. Maman, *Répertoire biographique des personnalités de la classe politique et des leaders d'opinion du Niger de 1945 à nos jours* (Niamey, 1999), vol. 1, 179; S. Decalo, *Historical Dictionary of Niger* (Metuchen, NJ, & London, 1979), 29. Djibo, *Les transformations*, 84, who cites French military documents on the role of Lejeune. Ewey is also spelled Owey.

⁷⁵ R.B. Charlick, *Niger: Personal Rule and Survival in the Sahel* (Boulder, San Francisco and London, 1991), 50, based on Zinder archives; Rapport sur les opérations électorales concernant le scrutin du 28 sept.

Mouddour Zakara, third vice-president of the Assembly, also defected. Like Algabit Ag Moha and Amadou Issaka, he had been involved in the revolt of BNA MPs against the MSA in late 1957.⁷⁶ He would have asked for an audience with Colombani and have warned the governor against Bakary, his formal political leader.⁷⁷ In most cases, however, it was the governor who took the initiative. He personally convoked chiefly leaders, among whom were some suspended by Sawaba, for an audience at his palace. There they talked with Colombani or Xavier Deniau, Messmer's lieutenant. What went on during such occasions can be gauged from the testimony of Bouzou Dan Zambadi—an enemy of Bakary and therefore not hostile to the governor—, who later admitted that the chiefs were simply ordered to instruct the talakawa to vote 'Yes'.⁷⁸ How painfully effective such commandments were was illustrated by Albadé Ismaghil of Taghazar, Ikhia's uncle and Tuareg chef of Tabla, between Niamey and Filingué. He was seen arriving at Colombani's palace with a purple poster symbolising the 'No' vote pasted onto his car, only to depart the premises with a yellow poster for 'Yes' in exchange.⁷⁹

Some of these defections show that Sawaba's coalition was now disintegrating fast. As shown in the previous chapter, in early August Governor Rollet had still estimated that some of the BNA people, although they had had their problems with Sawaba, would not dare to turn against Bakary, including people like Zakara and Issoufou Djermakoye, disgruntled politicians with an opportunistic penchant but little backbone to face Sawaba's tribune. Yet they had now crossed the political line, as did others that Rollet had deemed incapable of doing so, such as Moha Rabo from Tahoua (who had also been involved in the BNA rebellion of 1957). With Colombani's coup d'état the defections turned into an avalanche, as Yacouba Siddo, Toumani Sidibé, El Hadj Kadi Oumani (all three in the 1957 rebellion), Maïtournam Moustapha, Boukari Zakaria and the Frenchman Gaston Fourier crossed over to 'Yes'. Most of them traced their political history to the BNA or UNIS.⁸⁰

Yet, not all former BNA members, let alone those of Sawaba's UDN core or union wing, wished to abandon the 'No' camp. In this, a mixture of political conviction, party discipline or, in the case of BNA people, loyalty to

⁷⁶ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 61 and Chapter 2 above.

⁷⁷ Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 283-284.

⁷⁸ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 90, citing an interview he had with Zambadi in 1989.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 82 and 90. Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 252, mixed up the colours.

⁸⁰ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 83 and Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, *passim*.



Photo 4.1 Diougou Sangaré, Tessaoua, 2006.

their new political house played its role. Thus, at a party meeting, all those present were asked where they stood and were forced to come out with regard to their stance.⁸¹ Members of the UDN core such as Ousmane Dan Galadima, Issaka Koké and Maurice Camara, youngsters like Gonimi Boukar, or Sawaba sympathisers such as Sao Marakan, were passionately inspired by what they saw as the struggle for freedom and real independence. They were confirmed protagonists of 'No'.⁸² Yet, several party members of BNA or kindred extraction, too, threw themselves with passion into the

⁸¹ Interview with Diougou Sangaré, Tessaoua, 9 Febr. 2006. I do not know the date of that meeting. Possibly, it was the meeting on or around 14 September, where the party's stance was decided.

⁸² Interviews with Ousmane Dan Galadima, Madaoua, 7 Febr. 2003; Gonimi Boukar, Niamey, 5 Nov. 2005; and Sao Marakan, Niamey, 16 Nov. 2002 & 21 Febr. 2003. Yet, rarely there were UDN members who preferred to vote 'Yes'. In one case this may be explained

battle for 'No'. Hassane Sourghia (ex-UNIS at Tillabéri), Diougou Sangaré, Amadou Aboubakar dit Kaou and Georges Condat became determined campaigners for Sawaba's cause.⁸³ The last three were all of BNA provenance but had their political base in Tessaoua—like Zinder an important Sawaba fief—, where they collaborated with UDN members Sallé Dan Koulou and Hima Dembélé to organise the campaign. This may explain why Diougou Sangaré and Georges Condat, who belonged to the moderate wing of the Sawaba coalition, threw in their lot with the 'No' camp. In addition, there may have been personal reasons to side with the struggle for independence. Aboubakar dit Kaou had, as minister of economic affairs, become a direct victim of Colombani's coup d'état. Hassane Sourghia, Sangaré and Condat had managed to build up careers inside the coalition, with Sourghia working together with Dan Galadima in the Assembly's economic affairs committee, Diougou Sangaré as MP for Tessaoua rising to the position of administrative party secretary and Condat towering above the political field as parliamentary chairman. Moreover, Sangaré and Condat belonged to ethnic minorities (the former Peul, the latter of mixed blood) and were therefore in somewhat dependent positions.⁸⁴ That they later claimed that they had feared the consequences of opposing the French and were lukewarm about Sawaba's stand may have been informed by hindsight and a desire to justify their actions.⁸⁵

Thus, in the run-up to the referendum the BNA camp also suffered splits. This slightly limited the negative repercussions of the defections for Bakary's disintegrating coalition. Sawaba's leader, however, relied more on the radical wing of his movement, which, indeed, must have pushed him

by the career position of the individual concerned. Interview with Elhadj Illa Salifou, Niamey, 25 Nov. 2003.

⁸³ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 114–115.

⁸⁴ Maman, *Répertoire biographique, passim* ('Commission des Affaires Economiques et du Plan').

⁸⁵ Both would have warned that Sawaba would be defeated. Interviews with Georges Condat, Niamey, 27 Nov. 2003 and Diougou Sangaré, Tessaoua, 9 Febr. 2006. Condat's reluctance would have been fed by a visit to Paris around this time, where he would have received warnings that a 'No' vote would not be accepted. Upon his return he would have passed those warnings on to Sawaba's leadership. In addition, Condat and Sangaré later claimed that, in order to assess his chances, Bakary established a committee composed of Sangaré, Condat and Maurice Camara, which would have come to a negative conclusion. But Bakary would have rejected its assessment. Yet, no documentary evidence to this effect has been found, while Bakary never confirmed it. Djibo, *Les transformations*, 96 and 114, based on interviews with the men in question and accepting Condat's and Sangaré's assertion. *Le Sahel*, 2 Aug. 2010 (via www.tamtaminfo.com, accessed 24 Jan. 2011) suggests Condat wanted a boycott of the referendum.



Photo 4.2 Georges Condat as a young man (courtesy Condat).

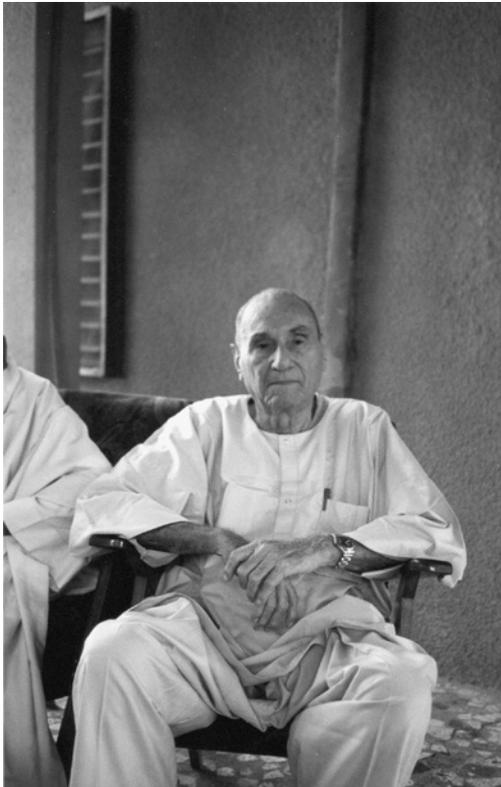


Photo 4.3 Georges Condat, Niamey, 2003.

on to pursue the course he had charted.⁸⁶ The leaders of the UDN core, moreover, did not fully trust their BNA partners, something that was aggravated by French attempts to separate Condat from Bakary with the help of lies and rumour. Colombani would have personally told the Assembly chairman that Bakary would have promised de Gaulle that he would vote 'Yes', which was clearly untrue. When Condat did not budge, a rumour was spread that he had resigned from the party, something that Sawaba's bureau politique had to dispel with a communiqué.⁸⁷

Even at this late stage, Bakary made an effort to explain Sawaba's decision to the French. Around 15-16 September he dispatched Pierre Vidal and Maurice Camara to Paris with a letter saying that the 'No' did not mean 'secession' but presaged an accord that France and Niger would sign to arrange their future co-operation. The French deemed their mission 'pointless', denying them access to de Gaulle and callously telling them, by way of Cornut-Gentille's director of cabinet, that 'Niger was perfectly informed of the option of the Constitution and its consequences'. Bakary's letter remained unanswered.⁸⁸ The result, however, was that a few days later, on 20 September, the two Frenchmen on Bakary's cabinet, Fréminé and Vidal, tendered their resignations.⁸⁹ To the Sawaba campaign this meant the loss of Vidal's resources—funds as well as vehicles. It was exceptional when Europeans chose Sawaba's side, such as Henri Georget, an entrepreneur who was to campaign actively for independence.⁹⁰

Others, too, abandoned ship. Alkaïdi Touré, the marginalised former chairman of UNIS close to the chiefs and now president of Niger's 'Association des Musulmans', sent de Gaulle an expression of loyalty entitled 'Appeal to Muslims', in which he promised not to ask for independence as Nigériens would not be ready for it. He concluded with a wish that 'Yes' would triumph. More important than acts of self-ingratiation—which the general actually read⁹¹—was the decision of Niamey army veterans to side

⁸⁶ Most authors ignore this aspect of grass-roots influence. See f.e. Djibo, *Les transformations*, 114.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁸⁸ Telegram France Outre-Mer to Colombani, no number but 17 Sept. 1958; CAOM, Cart.2181/D.1 bis; Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 8 au 14 sept. 1958, no. 5; Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 15 au 21 sept. 1958, no. 6 ('sans objet'; 'le Niger était parfaitement averti de l'option de la Constitution et de ses conséquences').

⁸⁹ Bulletin d'Information du 15 août au 20 sept. 1958; interview Diougou Sangaré, 9 Febr. 2006.

⁹⁰ Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de l'A.O.F. pour la période du 22 sept. au 5 oct. 1958, no. 7; CAOM, Cart.3685.

⁹¹ Niger. Administration—Gestions électorales. Incidents pendant la campagne électorale. nov.-déc. 1958. Rapport de l'Inspecteur de la FOM chargé de contrôler les opérations

with the forces of 'Yes'. While not unexpected, the French estimated that this decision, already taken on 9 September, would not only yield thousands of votes but also votes that would cut across party lines. This appeared to be confirmed a couple of days later when the Tahoua section of Niger's veterans followed suit.⁹² On 21 September Issoufou Djermakoye and Bâ Oumar, instigator of the BNA's 1957 rebellion and secretary of the Association des Chefs, announced the establishment of a 'Comité d'Entente Franco-Nigérienne pour le Oui', thus strengthening the RDA's campaign. It warned that Sawaba's goals were not in the interests of Niger, that the Fifth Republic constitution responded to its aspirations and that everyone should therefore vote 'Yes'.⁹³

By this time, just six days since Sawaba's stand had been reported to an elated rank and file, the balance of forces had been thoroughly shaken up. Colombani's coup d'état, the dismantling of Bakary's administration, the French attempt to literally bring his campaign to a standstill and the large-scale defections of different political patrons and opinion-makers had profoundly altered Sawaba's prospects. Yet, in view of the political circumstances at the time and the limited nature of the available archival evidence, it is far from easy to assess how much support the party had now actually lost—one week from polling day.

In principle, Sawaba did not command a majority of the electorate without the support of the BNA, which in 1957 had provided large-scale access to the remote rural votes of Niger's central and eastern regions (the former Katsina, Gobir and Damagaram chiefdoms). Without this, Sawaba represented a movement of the little people, whose (semi-)urban and union roots made it a minority of the population, albeit a vocal one. However, since coming to power, and especially since its confrontation with the RDA in April 1958, the party had done its best to expand its organisational structure to those rural areas where it was not yet represented. Not all BNA leaders had defected either, notably those in the Tessaoua region. While Niger's principal chiefly nobles had now abandoned the cause, the question is to what extent this factor would matter—as the French liked to suggest it would—in the response of the electorate. Mamoudou Djibo has claimed, in contrast to Colombani's referendum report, that Sawaba's roots

électorales; CAOM, Cart.2174/D.1; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 82; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 77 & 134 ('Appel aux Musulmans').

⁹² Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 8 au 14 sept. 1958, no. 5; *Ibid.*, 15 au 21 sept. 1958, no. 6.

⁹³ Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 254-255.

were still rather precarious, pointing at the restricted number of administrative posts that had been Africanised and arguing that many canton chiefs had managed to preserve some authority over the talakawa. Moreover, although the campaign period was decreed to commence on 7 September and the RDA had already begun campaigning for 'Yes' during August, Sawaba, while also having started canvassing earlier, had to wait with its all-out campaign until after the PRA meeting on the 14th. This way, it did not only lose a week of valuable campaign time but with Colombani's coup d'état interfering on the 19th the party had barely four days during which it could canvass in freedom.⁹⁴ Condat asserted retrospectively that he warned his colleagues that the party did not command a majority.⁹⁵ Around 20 September French intelligence appeared to confirm this. Yet, amazingly—considering what had happened during the previous week—it estimated that the margin between 'Yes' and 'No' was very small and that the outcome remained unpredictable.⁹⁶ As shown above, this confirmed the findings of General de Crèvecoeur and Commandant Laure, who around this time came more or less to the same conclusion.

Campaigning

Nevertheless, the full implications of Colombani's actions were that Niger was now in a state of constitutional limbo, which meant that the question was not how much support Sawaba could command but how far the colonial administration would go to get the results it wanted. While one should not ignore the role of their African allies, French officials were prepared to resort to the full range of electoral trickery in which many of them had been nurtured, not just in Niger (witness the 1948 elections), but also in the context of metropolitan tradition.⁹⁷ Here it was not without importance that the administration still had seasoned officials at its disposal who could help deliver the desired result. Numerous officials engaged themselves actively in the battle for 'Yes', even if—as Fuglestad argued on the basis of Tessaoua, where Sawaba was strong—there were younger administrators who preferred to maintain a lower profile.⁹⁸ Thus, in his referendum report

⁹⁴ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 101 and 113-114.

⁹⁵ Interview with Georges Condat, Niamey, 27 Nov. 2003.

⁹⁶ Bulletin d'Information du 15 août au 20 sept. 1958.

⁹⁷ See Chapter 1 above; A. Garrigou, *Le vote et la vertu: Comment les Français sont devenus électeurs* (Paris, 1992); J.P. Charnay, *Les scrutins politiques en France de 1815 à 1962* (Paris, 1964).

⁹⁸ Fuglestad, 'Djibo Bakary', 327.

Colombani stressed emphatically that the 'Chefs de Circonscription' were remarkably active in countering Sawaba's propaganda.⁹⁹ RDA officials, too, later confessed to the involvement of administrators in persuading chiefs to opt for 'Yes'.¹⁰⁰ Some of the veteran Commandants de Cercle, such as Yves Riou, who was stationed in Tahoua, Pierre Brachet in Maradi, Francis Nicolas (based in Zinder) and Jean Espallargas (Filingué) were prepared to use their influence with the chiefs and press for a 'Yes' vote.¹⁰¹ Maurice Espitalier, one-time director of the Sûreté, took it upon himself to work on the populous eastern regions.¹⁰²

What their actions entailed exactly can, on the whole, only be established on the basis of interviews. Indeed, considering the active involvement of the administration, as retrospectively admitted in officials' memoirs, the referendum dossier deposited in France's colonial archives is remarkably thin.¹⁰³ But by now the goal hardly needed spelling out. Thus, French administrators, who included members of the military from Algeria and AOF, actively summoned, ordered, threatened, bullied or tried to entice Sawaba activists to give up the struggle for independence and vote 'Yes'. In Tahoua, Bakary's parliamentary district, Yves Riou was said to have convoked Sawabists, ordering them to fight for 'Yes', after which he had them loaded into lorries to have them repeat their new commitment in front of village inhabitants.¹⁰⁴ Administrators by the name of Bonfils, Carreau and Prudon were similarly accused of intimidation.¹⁰⁵ Condat, a favourite target, got a visit from a European representative in Côte d'Ivoire, Senator Borg, who issued threats at his address in case Condat would not vote 'Yes'. Pierre Sempastous, a 'pied noir' from Algeria, would have confronted him with a choice between money or death. In Zinder Condat was stopped by

⁹⁹ Rapport sur les opérations électorales concernant le scrutin du 28 sept.

¹⁰⁰ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 101.

¹⁰¹ Fuglestad, 'Djibo Bakary', 326 and Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 251.

¹⁰² Benoist, *l'Afrique Occidentale Française*, 425-426 and Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 26.

¹⁰³ See f.e. CAOM, Cart.2187/D.3, 2195/D.1, 2211/D.1 and 2221/D.1.

¹⁰⁴ Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 289-290.

¹⁰⁵ Parti de regroupement africain, Conférence de presse, 19 nov. 1958. Sawaba's cabinet ministers had been forewarned about the active involvement of administrators in a meeting with Colombani in early September. The latter argued that administrators had the right to 'inform' the public about the referendum and that he should therefore send them instructions. Sawaba's ministers opposed this, arguing that this was tantamount to propaganda and taking sides by the administrators and that they therefore distanced themselves from this move. *Compte rendu analytique de la séance du Conseil de Gouvernement du 6 sept. 1958*; from a private French source and copied full text in C. Lefebvre, *Territoires et frontières: Du Soudan central à la république du Niger 1800-1964* (Ph.D. Paris, 2008), annex LVIII.

French administrators, who also told him how he should vote. Worse, the chairman of Niger's Territorial Assembly was detained for an entire night by officers of General Massu—the leader of French paratroopers in the 'battle' of Algiers¹⁰⁶—, getting interrogated about his decision to vote 'No'.¹⁰⁷ Numerous Sawaba activists were likewise detained,¹⁰⁸ sometimes until well after the referendum. This also happened to other high-rank party men: Ousmane Dan Galadima, MP and key organiser, was arrested during a meeting on what appeared to be flimsy charges, only to be released much later (probably somewhere in 1959), when a court concluded that he could not be held on political grounds.¹⁰⁹

These sorts of high profile acts fitted in an overall context of intimidation, which set the tone for the plebiscite. With the military in Gao and Niamey on alert and fresh paratroopers coming in from Algeria, the French decided to put up a show of strength. Two motorised columns travelled the length and breadth of the land, one departing from Niamey and visiting Filingué, Tahoua and Dakoro right up to Nguigmi in the far east, the other joining it from Miria, just east of Zinder. This second column would have been equipped with machine guns and have descended from southern Algeria, crossing Niger from north to south.¹¹⁰ Fluchard, historian of the PPN, assumed that some of these troop movements could not have originated from Algeria since this country was in a state of insurrection.¹¹¹ Yet, as confirmed by the personal experience of Condat, as well as other eyewitnesses,¹¹² troops did arrive from Algeria (though not necessarily from its contested northern regions). This also constituted the logical consequence of the interest that the French military there had taken in Niger's politics, as shown in the generals' meeting in Tamanrasset just three days before Colombani's coup. While the motorised columns criss-crossing the country did not seek direct contact with the population, they traversed

¹⁰⁶ See Chapter 3 above. Massu was responsible for the widespread practice of torture in Algeria. A. Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954-1962* (London and Basingstoke, 1977), 196 & 204-205.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Georges Condat, Niamey, 27 Nov. 2003; *Le Sahel*, 2 Aug. 2010 (n. 85 above); Djibo, *Les transformations*, 91-92 and 94; *Les raisons de notre lutte*, 35-36 (note 24 above).

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Maman Tchila, Zinder, 9 Febr. 2003.

¹⁰⁹ Interview Ousmane Dan Galadima, Madaoua, 7 Febr. 2003; Parti de regroupement africain, *Conférence de presse*, 19 nov. 1958. An appeals court would later sentence him anyway. See ch. 7 at n. 80.

¹¹⁰ *Les raisons de notre lutte*, 35-36.

¹¹¹ Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 256-257.

¹¹² Interview with Limane Kaoumi, Diffa, 12 Febr. 2006.

Niger's most populous regions—which were also largely pro-Sawaba—, simply to drive home the point that power was on the side of 'Yes'.¹¹³ Its effect was the greater as the military were going to man the polling stations on referendum day, with troops stationed nearby. In fact, eyewitness accounts have testified that the army was omnipresent, soldiers positioned near towns and military trucks stationed everywhere.¹¹⁴

More dramatically, the run-up to 28 September witnessed the first display of air power in Niger's history. Fluchard believed a testimony by Hamani Diori that Niger had only two aircraft at its disposal, used for the campaign journeys of the governor and his military counterpart, General Manière. Accusations of planes being used to give the country's inhabitants an intimidating show of strength would have been exaggerated.¹¹⁵ Diori's testimony, however, was less than honest. According to Sawaba, a squadron of planes was based at the airport of Niamey to undertake daily propaganda missions, with planes nose-diving over villages and nomadic camps, throwing out tonnes of leaflets together with effigies of France's saviour—though de Gaulle had forbidden the use of his portrait.¹¹⁶ Indeed, people from across Niger have testified to planes hedge-hopping over villages and hamlets, showering them with propaganda. Testimonies collected in the east,¹¹⁷ Niamey¹¹⁸ and the western region confirm this. Some of these stories were told not by former Sawaba activists but volunteered by ordinary villagers, some of them illiterate.¹¹⁹ One peasant spoke about helicopters visiting his town, Dargol, dropping ballot papers besides propaganda leaflets. This was confirmed by a peasant's testimony from nearby Bandio.¹²⁰ Whilst the airlifting of ballot papers in a country as vast as Niger could be seen as an inevitable aspect of election logistics, the attending propaganda leaflets that villagers picked from their fields urged them to

¹¹³ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 92–93, based on an eyewitness account by Gonimi Boukar.

¹¹⁴ Interviews with Tahirou Ayouba Maïga, Niamey, 28 Oct. 2005 and Ousseini Dandagoye, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003.

¹¹⁵ Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 256–257.

¹¹⁶ *Les raisons de notre lutte*, 36.

¹¹⁷ Interviews with Limane Kaoumi, Diffa, 12 Febr. 2006 and Georges Condat, Niamey, 27 Nov. 2003; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 104 (testimony Gonimi Boukar, MP for Gouré).

¹¹⁸ Interviews with Elhadj Illa Salifou; Kaïro Alfari; Tahirou Ayouba Maïga; Gonimi Boukar, Niamey, 25 Nov. 2003, 30 Oct. 2005, 28 Oct. 2005 and 5 Nov. 2005.

¹¹⁹ Admittedly of Sawabist persuasion: interviews with Mamoudou Béchir, Dargol, 31 Oct. 2005 and Djaouga Idrissa, vicinity of Dargol, 31 Oct. 2005.

¹²⁰ Interviews with Saïbou Abdouramane, Dargol & Mamane Boureïma, Bandio, 31 Oct. and 4 Nov. 2005 respectively.

vote 'Yes'¹²¹ and warned not to vote for Bakary 'for he [wanted] to sell [them] to the communists'.¹²² The threat of communism was a popular theme among supporters of 'Yes', with the RDA and the chiefs suggesting that a vote for Sawaba would mean that the communists would ban Islam and the practice of polygamy, taking away wives, houses and property.¹²³ This was accompanied by the more vicious threat that de Gaulle would eliminate all who would not vote 'Yes', something for which the French word 'Oui' was assimilated to the Zarma verb 'wii', meaning 'to kill'.¹²⁴ Thus, the aerial campaign and military presence on the ground not only constituted a display of European power that Niger had never witnessed before but it also created a climate of unease, marked by an ill-understood danger from the air for those who would disobey the powers that be. This was actively encouraged by the 'Yes' campaign prophesying bombardment of the deviants.¹²⁵

Planes were also put to use to directly neutralise Bakary's campaign. Sawaba's leader, who had at his disposal some vehicles borrowed from private sources—possibly with the help of Ghanaian funds—,¹²⁶ toured the country with Colombani and General Manière closely following in his footsteps. For this, they used government aircraft to quickly visit every town that Bakary called on, to counter Sawaba's appeals. In the groundnut-producing areas of the centre and east, France's plenipotentiaries would have promised that the metropole would continue to buy up peasants' produce above world prices if they would vote 'Yes'.¹²⁷ In his referendum

¹²¹ Interview with Djaouga Idrissa, vicinity of Dargol, 31 Oct. 2005. One testimony spoke of pamphlets with the RDA's elephant and Sawaba's camel. Interview with Mamoudou Béchir, Dargol, 31 Oct. 2005. This seems unlikely or could at any rate be a mix-up with the campaign for the parliamentary elections two months later. The referendum bulletins were yellow for 'Yes' and purple for 'No', without any other distinctive emblems, such as party symbols. Djibo, *Les transformations*, 107.

¹²² Interview with Tahirou Ayouba Maïga, Niamey, 28 Oct. 2005 and confirmed by Mamoudou Béchir, Dargol, 31 Oct. 2005 and Mamane Boureïma, Bandio, 4 Nov. 2005 ('car il veut vous vendre aux communistes').

¹²³ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 103; *Les raisons de notre lutte*, 35. This theme was also used later in anti-Sawaba propaganda. Interview with Ousseini Dandagoye, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003.

¹²⁴ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 104 and *Les raisons de notre lutte*, 36. Diori allegedly threatened Bakary with death several times. Interview Issa Younoussi with Kane Boukari, Niamey, 7 Aug. 2008.

¹²⁵ Interviews with Limane Kaoumi, Diffa, 12 Febr. 2006 and Elhadj Illa Salifou, Niamey, 25 Nov. 2003; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 104 (citing an interview with Gonimi Boukar); Parti Sawaba, *Les raisons de notre lutte*, 36.

¹²⁶ See Chapter 3 above and Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 288.

¹²⁷ Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 257; Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 290, 293; Fuglestad, 'Djibo Bakary', 327.

report, which was larded with gibes, Colombani wrote that he 'had to enlighten the ignorant voter about the real meaning of his vote' since Sawaba's action was 'deceitful', marked as it was by 'violence and howling', 'sterile agitation' and 'drunkenness'. In fact, the governor boasted that 'close contact' could now be established between administrators and a 'population that was deceived for too long'.¹²⁸ Thus, the French tried to break into the relations between Sawaba and its following, if not encroach menacingly on Niger's electorate.

Money was made available in sufficient quantities. At Colombani's request, the French government approved a direct credit line to the value of 44 million metropolitan (old) francs meant to cover the costs of the organisation of the referendum. At least 24 million was disbursed, possibly after the generals' meeting in Tamanrasset.¹²⁹ As shown in the first section of this chapter, 'substantial' though unknown sums also arrived from Algeria to assist the campaign for 'Yes'. In addition, at the instigation of its leader Guy Mollet, the French party SFIO provided unidentified sums to politicians prepared to canvass for 'Yes', something that was confirmed by several testimonies.¹³⁰ Probably much more important, however, were funds from Côte d'Ivoire, which would also have offered vast sums to Sudan and Upper Volta and whose donations to Niger may to some extent have emanated from metropolitan sources. The sums involved are unknown, but witnesses of both Sawaba and the RDA have been unanimous about the importance of Ivorian aid, which also took the form of material assistance (see below). The funds would have been brought to Niger by one Ladjî Sidibé, for use by the RDA.¹³¹ Finally, a member of the moderate wing of the Sawaba coalition, Diougou Sangaré, has claimed that Pierre Vidal, Sawaba's richest ally who had abandoned the party, attempted to buy votes for the benefit of the 'Yes' camp in Zinder and Nguigmi, offering envelopes with undisclosed amounts of money.¹³² This practice was confirmed by Sawaba member Gonimi Boukar for another eastern district, that of

¹²⁸ Rapport sur les opérations électorales concernant le scrutin du 28 sept. Kane Boukari also testified to Colombani's participation in the campaign. Interview by Issa Younoussi, Niamey, 7 Aug. 2008 ('se devait d'éclairer l'électeur ignorant sur la signification réelle de son vote'; 'action sournoise'; 'violences et hurlements'; 'l'agitation stérile'; 'l'ivresse de son action'; 'le contact étroit'; 'population trop longtemps dissimulée').

¹²⁹ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 95 and Van Walraven, 'From Tamanrasset', 513 and 523.

¹³⁰ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 96. Guy Mollet remained silent on it in his memoirs (*13 mai 1958—13 mai 1962* [Paris, 1962]).

¹³¹ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 94-95; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 255; Bakary, *Silence!*, 214; interview with Mamane Boureïma, Bandio, 4 Nov. 2005.

¹³² Interview with Diougou Sangaré, Tessaoua, 9 Febr. 2006.

Gouré, the sums involved standing in no comparison to what a Sawaba MP in Madaoua—Ousmane Dan Galadima—was accused of having offered to a potential ‘No’ voter.¹³³

If it was true that Sawabists, too, struggled for their cause without too much respect for procedure, such acts were rather futile as the electoral playing field was now highly uneven. Motorised transport, such a logistical necessity for electioneering in a country as large as Niger, was a particular case in point. Party activists who still had vehicles were refused gasoline. The public humiliation over the confiscation of vehicles was made worse when the same cars were handed over to campaigners for ‘Yes’, who used them to tour the country unhindered—as did, of course, Colombani and his subordinates. Thus, the car of Prime Minister Bakary would have been taken by a unit of paratroopers from Algeria. It was handed over to Gabriel d’Arboussier—PPN MP from Soudan close to Houphouët—, who used it not just for canvassing but also to liaise with the disparate forces of ‘Yes’. In addition, Ladji Sidibé brought not only funds from Côte d’Ivoire but also vehicles, destined for use by the RDA. They would have constituted an entire motorised column made up of Land Rovers, Peugeots 403s¹³⁴ and, in addition, lorries called ‘bouledogues’.¹³⁵ Some of these may have been used to transport Ivorian policemen, division commissioners and gendarmes,¹³⁶ who came to reinforce the authorities’ presence on the ground. Thus, Condat spotted Land Rovers between Madaoua and Maradi filled with policemen from Abidjan. Several of the Ivorians were armed. They also included election specialists.¹³⁷ In an effort to offset all these moves, Bakary between 20 and 22 September wrote one letter to George Padmore, asking for the financial help Ghana had promised, and one to the Egyptian ambassador in Accra, asking for 100,000 pounds, 40,000 of which would have been granted. It is possible that the money was paid out.¹³⁸

¹³³ 750,000 francs given to a potential ‘Yes’ voter as against 500 offered by Galadima. Parti de regroupement africain, Conférence de presse, 19 nov. 1958 and Djibo, *Les transformations*, 104.

¹³⁴ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 90 and 108; Bakary, *Silence!*, 206; Rapport sur les opérations électorales concernant le scrutin du 28 sept.; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 255; Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 288.

¹³⁵ I.e. Bulldogs. K. Alfari, *Mémoire sur les fraternelles relations franco-nigériennes* (Union de la Jeunesse Patriotique du Niger: Niamey, 2003), 39.

¹³⁶ Sawaba alleged there were also Gendarmerie units from Dahomey, Upper Volta, Senegal and Soudan. *Les raisons de notre lutte*, 37.

¹³⁷ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 93-94.

¹³⁸ Whether Egyptian pounds or pound sterling is unclear. All CFA banknotes in Accra were gone as a result of the transaction. *Recueil des principaux renseignements ...* 22 sept. au 5 oct. 1958, no. 7.

However, with (para-)military forces present in many places this did not make for a level playing field, even if village visits by government forces were of short duration.¹³⁹ Thus, in contrast to Sawaba meetings RDA gatherings could take place unhindered, although this contravened Colombani's decrees. In fact, the party's meetings enjoyed protection from the security forces.¹⁴⁰ With its solid support in western districts (Tillabéri to Dogondoutchi), it did not need to campaign there much and it could concentrate on the populous centre and east, where it had so far had little support. A week before polling day Diori went on the campaign trail in Maradi and Zinder, while Boubou Hama canvassed in Sawaba's stronghold of Tessaoua. The latter, however, ruined his campaign by less than diplomatic manoeuvring vis-à-vis the Sarakuna. The volatile Hama, as the 'commis' of low birth no friend of the chiefs, considered the referendum as a personal vendetta against those who had crossed him in the past. In this respect the party benefited considerably from the advice and diplomacy of d'Arboussier, who provided some cohesion that the 'Yes' campaign would otherwise have lacked. Thus, Bouzou Dan Zambadi, Maradi's dismissed Sarkin Katsina, later confided that he could not imagine having to live with the talakawa on the basis of equality.¹⁴¹ He had nevertheless taken the gamble and thrown in his lot with the 'commis' of the RDA, as did so many other chiefs.¹⁴² In fact, according to Colombani, the near totality of the chiefs now threw themselves into the electoral struggle without hesitation, campaigning vigorously, dispatching envoys to the remotest outposts and telling their subjects to vote 'Yes'. In his referendum report he singled out for praise the Sultans of Agadez and Zinder, as well as chiefs of various Tuareg tribes such as the Kel Ewey, Kel Férouan, and Kel Fadei; the chiefs of Illéla and Konni; the Sarkin of Kantché, Amadou Issaka, who had felt the menace of the administration; and Mouddour Zakara.¹⁴³ In addition, trade unions not affiliated to the PRA (especially teachers and better-paid public sector workers) embarked on an offensive for 'Yes' in some urban centres, such as Niamey, Zinder and notably the Maradi region, where the RDA expected a majority with the exception of the canton of

¹³⁹ As stressed in the apology of Fuglestad, 'Djibo Bakary', 328.

¹⁴⁰ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 90.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 103.

¹⁴² Interviews Adamou Assane Mayaki, Niamey, 29 Jan. 2003; Abdou Ali Tazard, Tessaoua, 9 Febr. 2006.

¹⁴³ Rapport sur les opérations électorales concernant le scrutin du 28 sept. Bakary would later add others to this list, such as the Djermakoy of Dosso. Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 256.

Gabi, whose chief remained loyal to Sawaba.¹⁴⁴ Finally, Issoufou Djerma-koye and Bâ Oumar assisted the French ‘Yes’ camp with their Comité d’Entente Franco-Nigérienne pour le Oui, as did Alkaïdi Touré’s Association des Musulmans; the ‘Section Nigérienne de l’Association pour le Soutien à l’Action du Général de Gaulle’ established by Pierre Sempastous and another Frenchman, Audibert; and Niger’s veterans’ association. These organisations agitated freely for ‘Yes’ although some had not been granted permission to canvass, and the veterans, assisted by Adamou Mayaki, campaigned only along the Niamey-Zinder motorway.¹⁴⁵

As noted above, some of the campaign arguments were none too subtle. In the rural areas the rumour was spread that a ‘No’ vote would mean war with the French, their departure and the collapse of groundnut exports. The administration also played on latent ethno-regional differences, as can be gauged from Colombani’s report, stirring up fears among northern nomads about the sedentary south and among the Songhay-Zarma about the Hausa areas, and vice versa. More innocuous was the assimilation by marabouts, loyal to the RDA, of the word ‘Oui’ to the Arabic transcription of ‘Allah’. Another rumour that was spread to win ‘Yes’ voters was the tale that the French would recruit Nigériens for the war in Algeria—always a useful argument in a country with chronic underemployment.¹⁴⁶ Against this Sawaba, too, resorted to lies and trickery. Thus, it suggested that the French word ‘Non’ resembled the Zarma-Songhay verb ‘noo’, meaning ‘to give’ and, hence, implying a gift for those voting ‘No’, while ‘Oui’ referred to the threat of death uttered by the RDA but that would rather befall those voting ‘Yes’. Worse, in the Zinder, Magaria and Maradi regions, the party deliberately tried to confuse voters. Abusing the ‘Yes’ tune so dominant in the campaign, it suggested that, if people did not want the French to leave, they should vote ‘No’ as a ‘Yes’ vote would lead to their departure. A ‘No’ vote, in addition, would also involve no more taxes, customs duties and other unpopular measures. The threat of a collapsing economy was countered by promises that groundnut prices would be raised and that the crop could be sold to Nigeria in the case of a boycott by France. Fears whipped up by the ‘Yes’ camp that money would disappear with a French departure were heroically if wildly defied with the assertion—no doubt fed by the passion

¹⁴⁴ Rapport sur les opérations électorales concernant le scrutin du 28 sept.; Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 15 au 21 sept. 1958, no. 6.

¹⁴⁵ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 84 and Rapport sur les opérations électorales concernant le scrutin du 28 sept.

¹⁴⁶ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 103 ff and Rapport sur les opérations électorales concernant le scrutin du 28 sept.

of the struggle—that an independent Niger could always manufacture its own money, if need be from tree leaves! More grimly, marabouts linked to Sawaba would have forced people to swear on the Qur'an that they would vote 'No', while party activists assisted by UGTAN workers would have issued threats about future dismissals, prison sentences or other measures against disobedient chiefs and civil servants, notably in the Gouré region.¹⁴⁷

These last allegations, however, stem from Colombani's referendum report and pertain to the period before his intervention on 19 September. Such threats would otherwise have been counter-productive. Whether guarantees about groundnut exports were convincing in view of the difficulties surrounding the 1957 harvest is uncertain. Some of the economic assurances made to voters, if not altogether signs of responsible government, can be considered as the normal promises political parties make in the heat of electoral contests. Yet the tricks played on people and pressure exerted on voters were signs of disregard for the democratic process that must be read not just in the light of the party's desperate battle for survival but also in terms of its past resort to unconventional tactics, seen in its revolutionary perspective as the legitimate defence of the talakawa by its vanguard—the 'petit peuple' and allied strata.

However, the effect of Sawaba's activities was seriously limited before the total mobilisation of the administrative apparatus,¹⁴⁸ while the overwhelming presence of the forces of 'Yes' compelled cadres to adopt a low profile, thereby constricting the reach of their message. According to Sawaba, Radio Niamey—a vital means of propaganda—had been put under the control of Colombani and could therefore not be used for the campaign.¹⁴⁹ In the rural areas the preponderance of 'Yes' forces, as represented by the chiefs, made canvassing difficult. Fuglestad's apology noted, not completely accurately, that no shots were fired, no people killed, no riots reported in the course of the campaign,¹⁵⁰ yet the administration's mobilisation only hindered Sawaba activists. One campaigner later reminisced how he was obstructed by army and chiefs from entering villages, constraining him to visit hamlets during night-time hours, going from door to door and trying to persuade people to vote 'No'. He slept at the local

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.; Fuglestad, 'Djibo Bakary', 327; and Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 289.

¹⁴⁸ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 105.

¹⁴⁹ *Les raisons de notre lutte*, 36.

¹⁵⁰ Fuglestad, 'Djibo Bakary', 328.



Photo 4.4 Sékou Hamidou in 2002; during the 1958 referendum secretary of a Sawaba section in Tillabéri (*Seeda*, no. 5, Aug. 2002).

market sites, on the village perimeters.¹⁵¹ All other Sawaba activists confirmed the impossibility of campaigning freely.¹⁵²

As can be gauged from his referendum report, Colombani's accusations about a fierce Sawaba offensive related exclusively to the period before 19 September, when Saloum Traoré, minister of social affairs, would have 'violently' taken position for 'No', Adamou Sékou would have visited Maradi, Issaka Koké gone to Gouré, and Aboubakar dit Kaou to Tessaoua.¹⁵³ During the two weeks before polling, however, the situation was different. 'No' campaigners were chased from villages, and Sawaba leaders, when entering urban centres, would have been treated to jeers from French paratroopers. In the customary hyperbole of party propaganda, Sawaba later spoke of 'ambushes' laid intended to harm its leaders wherever they passed, including at Tahoua, Maradi, Tessaoua and Zinder.¹⁵⁴ While there was,

¹⁵¹ Interview with Ousseini Dandagoye, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003.

¹⁵² As interviewed by Djibo, *Les transformations*, 93.

¹⁵³ Rapport sur les opérations électorales concernant le scrutin du 28 sept. ('violentment').

¹⁵⁴ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 92 and *Les raisons de notre lutte*, 37-38.

however, no widespread violence—in all probability because the presence of the ‘Yes’ camp was overwhelming—, incidents did occur. In Tessaoua there was a violent scuffle,¹⁵⁵ and Sékou Hamidou¹⁵⁶ sustained a bullet wound in the course of the campaign in Tillabéri.¹⁵⁷ With a tradition of violence well established on different sides of the political spectrum, Sawaba leaders had reason for concern, particularly since Colombani had rejected their applications to carry firearms.¹⁵⁸ The gentle but pestered Condat would have begun to cave in and planned to see the governor but have been swayed by Bakary at the eleventh hour to stick it out, only to abstain from active campaigning during the last days before polling.¹⁵⁹ There were signs that Bakary, too, was tense and nervous as his political world appeared to be crumbling.¹⁶⁰

Polling

It would have been out of character, considering its history of agitation, if Sawaba had borne all the harassment passively. Already on 16 September its bureau politique published a communiqué to protest against the propaganda campaign waged by the Commandants de Cercle.¹⁶¹ On the 19th it had the temerity to dispatch a telegram to de Gaulle and Messmer demanding the establishment of an electoral commission and condemning the banning of its meetings and harassment of its members. Another was dispatched to the secretary-general and the chairman of the General Assembly of the United Nations, complaining about the pressure of the colonial administration and the violation of the general’s assurances that voting would be free.¹⁶² The latter telegram cannot have gone down well with the Gaullists in view of their tendency to see Niger as an undisputed part of France’s sphere of influence. UGTAN leaders in other parts of AOF took up Sawaba’s accusations.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁵ Interview with Georges Condat, Niamey, 27 Nov. 2003.

¹⁵⁶ Secretary of Sawaba’s local section.

¹⁵⁷ *Seeda: Mensuel nigérien d’informations générales*, No. 5, Aug. 2002.

¹⁵⁸ Fuglestad, ‘Djibo Bakary’, 327.

¹⁵⁹ Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 293.

¹⁶⁰ Fuglestad, ‘Djibo Bakary’, 325.

¹⁶¹ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 91.

¹⁶² Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 15 au 21 sept. 1958, no. 6 and *Ibid.*, 16-22 nov., no. 12; CAOM, Cart.2248.

¹⁶³ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 91.

All this was to no avail. The high level of mobilisation of ‘Yes’ campaigners, including the administration, continued until polling day. On the 28th, Niger’s capital was practically in a state of siege, with Gendarmerie and army personnel guarding public buildings.¹⁶⁴ Tessaoua, Sawaba’s stronghold, saw the transfer from Zinder of the military’s general staff. Uniformed officers and NCOs, including from paratroop regiments, presided over polling stations, often with troops stationed in the vicinity. This was not just the case in cities, such as Madarounfa and towns in the Tessaoua region, but even happened in tiny settlements, like, for example, the village of Foulatari near Maïné-Soroa, well to the north of Niger’s principal east-west motorway.¹⁶⁵ This did not bode well for the party, as administrative hostility was targeted without exception against its cadres. Witnesses of RDA persuasion have confirmed that, on polling day, Sawabists were the victim of bullying and different acts of humiliation. Some were chased away from the polling booth, others were made into public symbols of impotence as they were tied up in front of the polling station. Again others were forced to eat their ‘No’ ballot papers rather than deposit them in the ballot box. Some voters faced allegations of being Nigerian and were threatened with expulsion and confiscation of their fields.¹⁶⁶ According to Mamoudou Djibo these abuses were part of a general pattern, although persecution was probably directed at known Sawaba activists rather than the electorate as a whole. Its effect, however, was broader—as must have been intended—in the sense that it created a climate of fear, as testified by numerous eyewitness accounts.¹⁶⁷ It would even have led some 40,000 people in Hausa areas to flee to Nigeria, giving rise to new settlements in Nigeria’s border region, such as the village of Fasuwankay.¹⁶⁸ If true, these people were probably not individual targets of persecution but in line with the traditions of the border region¹⁶⁹ preferred to sit out the troubled times among their Nigerian kinsmen. This would also explain part of the low

¹⁶⁴ Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 293.

¹⁶⁵ Interviews with Georges Condat, Niamey, 27 Nov. 2003 and Diougou Sangaré, Tessaoua, 9 Febr. 2006; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 93; *Les raisons de notre lutte*, 39.

¹⁶⁶ This is based on interviews conducted by Djibo, *Les transformations*, 92.

¹⁶⁷ Interviews with Mamoudou Béchir, Dargol, and Djaouga Idrissa, vicinity of Dargol, both 31 Oct. 2005; Mamane Boureïma and Djibo Foulan, both in Bandio, 4 Nov. 2005.

¹⁶⁸ Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 289 and Djibo, *Les transformations*, 92.

¹⁶⁹ D. Collins, ‘Partitioned Culture Areas and Smuggling: The Hausa and the Groundnut Trade across the Nigeria-Niger Border from the Mid-1930s to the Mid-1970s’, in A.I. Asiwaju (ed.), *Partitioned Africans: Ethnic Relations across Africa’s International Boundaries 1884-1984* (London and Lagos, 1985), 198.

turnout—on which more below—, as people chose to vote with their feet instead of a fruitless confrontation at the ballot box.

In this context, intimidation on polling day itself remained largely absent. Thus, while most testimonies speak of a sense of threat, one eyewitness account suggested that during the voting there was no harassment as such. A sense of constraint, however, was obvious, with people not daring to wear anything blue, Sawaba's colour.¹⁷⁰ With military personnel manning the polling station and chiefs and guards dressed in yellow boubous (the colour for 'Yes') welcoming voters, the political message was clear and polling assumed something of a well-organised, military exercise in the best tradition of French electoral manipulation—polling stations where the above-mentioned incidents took place excepted. In the rural areas of Matamey (south of Kantché), Magaria and other BNA fiefs, chiefs controlled the voting process completely.¹⁷¹ While in most cases Sawaba cadres were kept well away from the voting station, if they were not chased away altogether, in some places they managed to withstand the pressure, such as in Tessaoua, where pro-independence students were tolerated by the French military and could monitor the voting.¹⁷² This helped prevent irregularities, if not the simultaneous distribution by a local RDA man of voter cards and 'Yes' ballots ahead of the referendum. In other places members of the military would have voted several times. In still others illiterate voters inclined to vote 'No' were deceived into keeping the purple 'No' ballot (which had no sign to indicate its meaning) and depositing the yellow 'Yes' one in the ballot box. Painfully, upon leaving some dared to wave the purple ballot paper over their heads in pride over the electoral choice they assumed they had made.¹⁷³

These incidents were almost certainly less important in determining the outcome than the general sense of anxiety and constraint that the 'Yes' camp had managed to create. While the campaign and voting conditions described above leave no doubt about the gravity of administrative interference,¹⁷⁴ theoretically one still needs to establish whether—and, if

¹⁷⁰ Interviews with Mamoudou Béchir, Dargol & Djaouga Idrissa, vicinity Dargol, both 31 Oct. 2005.

¹⁷¹ Charlick, *Niger*, 50.

¹⁷² Interview of Issa Younoussi with Kane Boukari, Niamey, 7 Aug. 2008; interview of author with Diougou Sangaré, Tessaoua, 9 Febr. 2006; Djibo, *Les transformations, passim*.

¹⁷³ Interview with Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 27 Oct. 2005; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 104-107. Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, 45, shows a ballot paper with 'Yes' written in French, but which was probably used in the metropole, not Niger.

¹⁷⁴ And completely refute Fuglestad's contention described in the first section above.

so, to what extent and how—these affected the results of the referendum. Thus, it must be noted that the near total control exercised by the administration and ‘Yes’ camp over the campaign and voting procedures equally extended to the counting and collating of the votes, over which Sawaba could not exercise any surveillance.¹⁷⁵ Counting took place at the individual polling stations under the supervision of the military, but neither the provisional nor the definitive version of these results have survived—in contrast to many other of Niger’s electoral contests. The collated results by constituency (Cercle), which did survive, were declared by the Commandants de Cercle—also without monitoring by the ‘No’ camp. The central commission responsible for the collating of constituencies also worked on its own; it was made up of three Frenchmen, members of the judiciary.¹⁷⁶ Hence, it is difficult to check whether the results were tampered with, although the referendum’s overall context suggests that the French would go to any length to secure a majority for ‘Yes’. Thus, the day after the referendum but three days *before* the central commission announced its outcome, Messmer telegraphed to Paris that the Sawaba government had lost the vote and could therefore ‘no more remain in office’.¹⁷⁷

Not unexpectedly, the central commission on 2 October announced an overwhelming victory for ‘Yes’. Out of a total of 1,320,174 registered voters, 477,226 would have validly cast their ballot, of which 372,383 for ‘Yes’ and only 102,395 for ‘No’. Of the country’s 16 Cercles only Tessaoua and Nguigmi saw a majority of ‘No’s’. All other constituencies, including Sawaba strongholds or places where it had a substantial presence, such as Zinder, Maradi, Niamey and Téra, returned officially with a majority for ‘Yes’. Even Tahoua, Bakary’s own parliamentary district, reported a ‘Yes’ victory and a mere 5,360 for ‘No’. In the capital, with a reported 28,498 for ‘Yes’ against a ‘No’ of 8,095, the party was heavily defeated. In practically all other Cercles its stance was similarly thrashed by colossal margins, especially in Agadez, Tahoua, Dosso, Madaoua and Magaria (see Table 4.1).

¹⁷⁵ Interview with Gonimi Boukar, Niamey, 5 Nov. 2005.

¹⁷⁶ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 124 and Consultation du Peuple français par voie de referendum (28 sept. 1958): procès-verbal du recensement des votes émis dans les collèges électoraux du territoire du Niger; Niamey, 2 oct. 1958; CAOM, Cart.2187/D.3.

¹⁷⁷ Telegram Messmer to France Outre-Mer, no. 784-785. 29 Sept. 1958; CAOM, Cart.2181/D.1 bis (‘ne peut plus demeurer en fonction’).

Table 4.1 Registered voters, turnouts and results in the 28 September 1958 referendum.

Cercle	Reg. Voters March 1957	Turnout March 1957	Reg. Voters Sept. 1958	Turnout Sept. 1958	'Yes' Votes	'No' Votes
Agadez	30,194	4,095	33,417	20,103	19,720	282
B. Konni	76,190	19,875	73,077	16,102	13,592	1,966
D.doutchi	52,752	12,933	57,024	19,439	17,580	1,495
Dosso	79,955	20,984	85,023	27,065	24,285	2,385
Filingué	37,108	9,886	50,416	14,505	12,596	1,449
Gouré	70,192	17,462	72,414	23,490	15,466	7,406
Madaoua	73,497	11,878	76,151	33,511	30,531	2,788
Magaria	96,967	57,382	102,207	57,751	52,261	3,777
Maradi	94,097	15,169	97,586	24,800	12,156	11,802
Nguigmi	20,881	5,168	23,464	5,535	2,346	2,742
Niamey	99,931	28,270	106,530	38,254	28,498	8,095
Tahoua	116,843	29,291	127,707	72,375	65,162	5,360
Téra	66,113	14,836	63,926	14,298	8,480	5,593
Tessaoua	97,840	44,516	104,067	40,130	12,634	25,322
Tillabéri	75,971	23,137	88,924	36,686	24,300	6,664
Zinder	150,260	38,209	158,241	49,909	32,776	15,269

Sources: Consultation du Peuple français par voie de référendum; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 125-6.

Notes: 1. For purposes of comparison, figures pertaining to March 1957 (general election) are included. 2. 'Yes' and 'No' votes taken together need not match turnouts because of invalid votes. 3. Totals are not given as they did not tally in view of the careless manner in which results were issued.

Even Tessaoua and Nguigmi, while going to 'No', reported substantial numbers for 'Yes' (12,634 against 25,322 in the former and 2,346 against 2,742 in the latter). Whereas in the March 1957 elections Sawaba won indisputably in 12 out of 16 Cercles, with an overall score of nearly two-thirds of the vote, now it reigned supreme in only two of them. In 1957 it got 80% of the votes in the centre and east, more than half in the far east and 37% of the votes in the west, by Cercle taking 51% to 87% in nine of them and 30% to 50% in five others. The RDA, in that election, won convincingly only in five western districts: the Cercles of Dogondoutchi, Filingué, Tillabéri, Dosso and Niamey, with margins of 58% to 79%. Now, Sawaba nowhere gained 70% of the vote, with its strongest showing in Tessaoua (66.02%), Nguigmi (53.89%), Maradi (48.46%), Téra (over 39%), Gouré (32.28%) and Zinder (31.78%). In more than ten Cercles it did not reach the 30% benchmark,

which the 'Yes' camp achieved in all of them, with an absolute majority in 14 of the 16.¹⁷⁸

This defeat was not only a devastating rout but also constituted a fundamental, sudden rupture with Sawaba's victory in the 1957 polls and the steady strengthening of its position, which started after the riots in April 1958 and continued all through the summer until early September. The causes of this apparent sea-change could, theoretically, be multiple, such as genuine opposition among the population to independence, dissatisfaction about Sawaba's government record, popular support for the RDA, French interference, or a combination of these factors.

In order to get a reliable picture of the referendum outcome one should first distinguish the results by Cercle and attendant local circumstances.¹⁷⁹ Agadez saw a phenomenal increase in turnout—something that it had in common with all nomadic zones and is discussed below. The French-stimulated defection of the Sultan played its part in the outcome, but the wildly inflated figure of the local electorate (33,417 in a population estimated in 1957 at no more than 50,000) and its 'Yes' component were a sure indication of fraud—as also admitted by Fuglestad—and the dominant position of the French military there.¹⁸⁰ The result for Gouré in the east had much to do with the defection of chiefs, still influential in the region, which, however, was also the fief of Sawaba's (UDN-originated) minister of agriculture, Issaka Koké, as well as of Gonimi Boukar, and hence delivered a substantial minority of 'No's'. Madaoua, where 'Yes' won by a huge margin (i.e. 'Yes' minus 'No' = 27,743), was also a region where chiefs had defected and remained influential, although interference by the French, as symbolised by Dan Galadima's incarceration, may have played its part. This factor must have played a more profound role in Maradi, since as shown earlier the dissident Bouzou Dan Zambadi carried little weight in the region, as did Adamou Mayaki, who began campaigning late in the day and whose rebellion against Sawaba in November 1957 had not triggered any support. Zambadi himself retrospectively attributed Maradi's suspiciously small margin between 'Yes' and 'No' votes (354) to the low turnout (but which had increased compared with 1957), which in this region and under the

¹⁷⁸ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 127 and Chapters 1-2 above.

¹⁷⁹ The analysis is largely based on Djibo, *Les transformations*, *passim*, as well as my own calculations.

¹⁸⁰ Procès-verbal du recensement des votes émis dans les collèges électoraux du territoire du Niger (note 176 above); Fuglestad, 'Djibo Bakary', 328; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 117ff. Yet, registered voters were according to Djibo (*Les transformations*, 125) also some 30,000 in 1957.

circumstances at hand meant deterrence of potential 'No' voters as a result of the administration's actions. As a principal urban concentration, Maradi possessed a substantial union-based Sawabist community. Zambadi, moreover, later claimed that Sawaba's position there had been broken with 'physical force'.¹⁸¹ In contrast, Magaria reported the country's record margin between 'Yes' and 'No' votes (48,484). Here, as shown above, chiefs still exerted considerable control over the voting process, while the French threat not to buy groundnuts may have been another factor that produced 'Yes' votes. In addition, Sawabists were assaulted here during the campaign and the French had intimidated Amadou Issaka into defecting. However, Issaka's influence was limited to the town of Kantché and his defection after campaigning a week for 'No' can hardly have convinced the Cercle's electorate, especially those areas close to Nigeria, whose impending independence influenced local voters. Thus, interference played a significant role in the local outcome, but especially in terms of a stagnant turnout as compared with the Cercle's grown registered electorate—hence, deterrence of potential 'No' voters (officially 3,777 in all). In addition, one RDA activist would have voted for dozens or hundreds of absentees. Similarly, while Birnin Konni and Téra did not suffer the defection of chiefs that were truly influential, they saw both the number of registered voters and those turning out decline. Only in the latter area, which had developed a substantial Sawaba following, could substantial numbers of 'No' votes be recorded (5,593 against 8,480 for 'Yes'). Tahoua not only witnessed several defections of chiefs to the 'Yes' camp, as well as of veterans, but like Agadez saw a phenomenal increase in turnout. As argued further below, this indicated fraud and contributed to Sawaba's devastating defeat. However, as shown above, this region would also have been the scene of bullying. In the Niamey area, with a substantial minority of union-based Sawabists in the capital, such interference would have been more difficult. Thus, with 8,095 'No' votes against 28,498 for 'Yes', the Niamey outcome may to some extent have reflected the balance of forces—though quite apart from the turnout question. The role of one reported irregularity (135 soldiers voting without voter cards) was insignificant,¹⁸² although this cannot be said about the poor distribution of voter cards. While in 1957 all of them were

¹⁸¹ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 114, 128, 130, based on an interview with Zambadi ('force physique').

¹⁸² Référendum du 28 sept. 1958: Rapport sur les travaux de la Commission de recensement du Niger, 3 oct. 1958 and JD/JR Direction des Affaires Politiques. 2^{ème} Bureau. Note sur le Référendum au Niger, no date but after 19 Oct. 1958; both CAOM, Cart. 2195/D.1.

handed out well ahead of the elections, now an enormous 40 per cent of the cards remained undelivered, in contrast to the remote nomadic regions, which were 'Yes'-inclined and where the rate of distribution reached 80 per cent. While Colombani alleged that this was the result of action by the Sawaba-controlled municipality, it is not certain in view of the outcome what interest the party would have had to act like this nor whether it still exercised control over the local administration since the governor's coup d'état. Moreover, numerous Sawaba eyewitnesses have claimed that entire zones favourable to the party were deprived of voter cards and/or 'No' ballots or that ballot boxes disappeared at the moment of counting.¹⁸³ Thus, with Niamey's turnout figures increasing in absolute numbers as compared with 1957, it seems that the poor voter card distribution went to the detriment of the 'No' vote. The Niamey Cercle shared the absolute increase in registered voters and turnouts with the four western regions that were predominantly RDA and therefore 'Yes'-inclined: jointly the five Cercles (Dogondoutchi, Dosso, Niamey, Filingué and Tillabéri) saw an increase of 42,200 registered voters and an increase of over 40,000 in those turning out. The accusation by Sawaba's minister of the interior, Adamou Assane Mayaki, that especially in the west people could not vote themselves but saw this done for them cannot be verified. Thus, the victory for 'Yes' in Dosso could have its basis in popular support for the RDA since Sawaba dissidents Issoufou Djermaakoye and Pierre Vidal had both lost the elections there the year before.¹⁸⁴ Moreover, a substantial number of 'No's' was recorded in Tillabéri (6,664 against 24,300), a region which had seen intense rivalry between the two main political formations since 1957. Of the two Cercles that reported a majority for 'No', that of Tessaoua had much to do with the local party committee, which included UDN hardliners Sallé Dan Koulou and Hima Dembélé, who had organised well and managed to maintain vigilance over the voting process. The 'No' victory in Tessaoua, against a declining turnout compared with 1957, was potentially even greater as the results for the area of Mayhamada were annulled. According to the French this was done because the number of void ballot papers and envelopes was higher than the number of voters (in their calculation, that is), although the local RDA man later admitted that Sawaba's victory extended over the whole of the Cercle. The defeat of 'Yes' in Nguigmi, where

¹⁸³ Rapport sur les opérations électorales concernant le scrutin du 28 sept. (Colombani's referendum report—see note 33 above) and Djibo, *Les transformations*, 93.

¹⁸⁴ Ch. 2 above. French interference could also have played a part. Djibo, *Les transformations*, *passim*.

the turnout was largely stagnant, was caused, especially, by the fact that the French had thought much of the defection of Toumani Sidibé. Sidibé did not carry much local weight, however, while the local chief, Maï Manga, was a loyal Sawaba follower who thus took numerous voters with him. As in Tessaoua, the Commandant de Cercle may have been lukewarm about intervening more forcefully.¹⁸⁵ Finally, the victory of ‘Yes’ in Zinder did not preclude a strong showing of ‘No’. With the support from its proletarianised members, Sawaba still commanded a good 15,000 votes, i.e. over 30 per cent of those turning out. Like the Cercles of Maradi and Tessaoua, the threat of losing an outlet for the groundnut crop was not entirely effective. Yet, its support took a colossal plunge as compared with 1957, when on average it took 80 per cent of the vote in the region. The ‘Yes’ vote was more than double that for ‘No’. The defection of the Sultan, much esteemed by the local talakawa, played an important role here, more than that of Maïtournam Moustapha mentioned above, formerly of UNIS. In addition, both the number of registered voters and that of people turning out increased, which appears to have gone predominantly to the ‘Yes’ vote.¹⁸⁶

Thus, the data by Cercle point to a mixed bag of circumstances affecting the results. Each Cercle, and sometimes different areas within it, had its own local factors playing a role in the outcome. Moreover, in some constituencies the results partially mirrored the actual balance of power, such as in Tillabéri, Téra, Niamey, Maradi, Zinder, Gouré—which were known to have substantial Sawaba following and produced considerable numbers of ‘No’ votes—and Tessaoua and Nguigmi, where Sawaba’s majorities could not be overturned. The administration’s dissuasion of the ‘No’ vote, pursued by various means, did not everywhere discourage the supporters of Sawaba. In contrast, Dosso, solid RDA territory, fell easily to ‘Yes’. Yet, overall Sawaba’s previous popularity makes it likely that the ‘Yes’ majority, if genuine, was directly linked to the dominance of the ‘Yes’ campaign and the tendency of the electorate not to vote against the powers that be but prevent the realisation of their worst fears, such as activating ill-understood dangers, angering known powers or putting groundnut sales at risk. During this key moment, any association between the yearning for ‘sawki’ and immediate independence was less than obvious.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.; Rapport sur les travaux de la Commission de recensement du Niger, 3 oct. 1958; interviews with Abdou Ali Tazard & Diougou Sangaré, Tessaoua, 9 Febr. 2006; Kanembou Malam, Diffa, 12 Febr. 2006; Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 15 Febr. 2006; Georges Condat, Niamey, 27 Nov. 2003.

¹⁸⁶ Djibo, *Les transformations, passim*.

Nevertheless, there are strong grounds to doubt the veracity of several (though not necessarily all) of the figures that the French produced and, in the process, of the genuineness of the majority for 'Yes' and the minority for 'No'. The central commission responsible for the collating of the votes went about its task in an exceptionally nonchalant manner, which betrays indifference as to the credibility of the figures. Messmer's premature victory claim was in this respect matched by retrospective testimonies of RDA leaders admitting that the real results did not matter, since it had been decided beforehand that 'Yes' would win, by all conceivable means.¹⁸⁷ Thus, the total number of voters reported to have turned out minus the votes that were invalid did not tally with the total number of votes supposedly expressed, leaving a gap of over 14,000, spread over all constituencies. The total number for 'Yes' plus those for 'No' did not match the total of votes validly expressed, with nearly 3,000 missing, coming from the Cercles of Agadez, Dogondoutchi and Filingué. The number of votes reported as void (below 2,500) was suspiciously low for a country with a large illiterate voters' corps.

These anomalies, however, were symptomatic of the carelessness with which the French went about their work—they could not have produced a different outcome. Based on the administration's own (certainly invented) figures, Sawaba would have faced a shortfall of 269,988 votes. Much of this can be traced to the figures on the voters register and, especially, the turnout rates. While the electoral roll by 31 August totalled 1,306,109 (an increase of nearly 100,000 since March 1957), the register used in the referendum added another 14,065 to the potential electorate. As mentioned above, some of the nomadic zones were credited with fantastic increases in the voters' corps and of those participating. Agadez would have had two-thirds of its population on the register, of which 60 per cent would have turned up at the polling booth, voting massively for 'Yes' (19,720 as against 282 for 'No'). Tahoua's oscillating population had a voters' roll of some 127,000 at the referendum, an increase of 10,000 compared with 1957 and well over the 50 per cent mark if set against the 1960 population estimate (whereas in Niger's wholly sedentary areas voters rarely totalled half the inhabitants).¹⁸⁸ No less than 56 per cent of Tahoua's voters, i.e. significantly higher than in other Cercles and a record second only to that of Agadez, would have turned out. Of the 72,000 that would have voted, the

¹⁸⁷ Ibid. (based on interviews in the late 1980s, early 1990s).

¹⁸⁸ This and following figures have usually been rounded down or up to the next thousand.

French claimed 38,000 came from Tahoua's 'nomadic zone' (which would have had a total of nearly 47,000 voters), of which the near totality would have gone for 'Yes'. However, neither did the region have a distinct nomadic zone nor was the nomadic community more numerous than Tahoua's predominantly sedentary population. In all, some 65,000 people out of 72,000 would have voted 'Yes', in stark contrast to the 1957 elections when Bakary himself polled 86 per cent of the Cercle's vote.¹⁸⁹ Although many nomads feared independence under the sedentary population, and the administration established additional voting stations in the Agadez, Maradi and Tahoua regions, demographic evidence flatly contradicts the above figures. In these underpopulated zones pastoralists were difficult to trace and enroll, especially in September when they left the region on a southward trek in search of pastureland, water and salt, thus diminishing their numbers further. The turnout of the Agadez electorate, while the most dispersed of all Niger and living in some of the most inhospitable desert regions, contrasted suspiciously with what the region was accustomed to (60 per cent as opposed to a maximum of 16 per cent in all elections since 1956). As Colombani callously noted in his report, these were 'astonishing proportions'.¹⁹⁰

The same inflation in voters' roll and turnout rates took place, as noted above, in the five western Cercles that were predominantly pro-RDA, providing an extra 42,000 registered voters compared with 1957, of which 41,000 more turned out. 107,000 voters out of 136,000 were reported for 'Yes'. The same happened in those Cercles where chiefs were still influential or Sawaba had suffered major defections: for the totality of six Cercles that included Agadez and Tahoua in addition to Gouré, Madaoua, Maradi and Zinder the registered electorate rose by another 30,000 to 566,000, with the total turnout compared with 1957 rising by an absurd 108,000 (224,000 as opposed to 116,000, of whom 176,000 would have voted 'Yes'). As noted above, this contrasted sharply with those Cercles where Sawaba had solid followings or few defections took place or, alternatively, defecting politicians carried little weight: the voters' roll in Téra and Konni declined in absolute numbers (5,000),¹⁹¹ while the turnouts in these districts including

¹⁸⁹ Djibo, *Les transformations, passim*; Procès-verbal du recensement des votes émis dans les collèges électoraux du territoire du Niger; Rapport sur les opérations électorales concernant le scrutin du 28 sept.

¹⁹⁰ Djibo, *Les transformations, passim* and Rapport sur les opérations électorales concernant le scrutin du 28 sept. ('proportions étonnantes').

¹⁹¹ This was different in the others probably because of mistaken French gambles: Magaria, where the French had hoped to benefit from Amadou Issaka's defection, reported

that of Tessaoua declined compared with 1957 to a total of nearly 9,000. The turnout in Magaria and Nguigmi stagnated, but since their registered voters' corps had increased, this constituted a fall when set against 1957. Thus, the 11 Cercles that were sure to go to 'Yes' (Dogondoutchi, Dosso, Niamey, Tillabéri, Filingué) or pressed to do so by spectacular defections or other means (Agadez, Gouré, Madaoua, Maradi, Tahoua, Zinder) gained 149,000 new voters, while the five where such interference had been (partially) ineffective (Konni, Téra, Magaria, Tessaoua, Nguigmi) lost voters or retained by and large the same number as in 1957.

In other words, districts attached to Sawaba were deprived of voters (registered and/or participating), while those predicted to go to 'Yes' gained new ones, in extravagant numbers. Looked at solely from the perspective of the turnout, it should be noted that Cercles with the lowest rates generally delivered considerable gains for 'No', while those with the highest turnout were regions where 'Yes' predominated.¹⁹² This means that potential 'No' voters were disenfranchised on a massive scale, either by not getting registered or by not reaching the polling booth, owing to discouragement, fear, deprivation of voter cards, being turned away—as many later complained—or disappearance of 'No' ballots from the ballot box.¹⁹³ Thus, while this puts the above testimonies of harassment into perspective, Colombani's explanation of the overall low turnout (37.41 per cent) was hypocritical and unconvincing, claiming this was caused by obligations of harvest time in the sedentary areas.¹⁹⁴ In view of the importance that the Gaullists attributed to the referendum, it is unthinkable, as Mamoudou Djibo has pointed out, that a colonial administration such as Niger's would not simply have ordered work to be halted, as was customary on polling day. One day off would not unduly upset the seasonal calendar since this

a rise of registered voters of over 5,000, as did Tessaoua (6,000) where the French put their stakes on military intervention, and Nguigmi (2,500), where they had Toumani Sidibé. Djibo, *Les transformations, passim*.

¹⁹² Maradi had a turnout of 25.41%, 11,802 'No' votes and 12,156 for 'Yes'; Nguigmi: 23.58% and 2,742 for 'No', 2,346 'Yes'; Téra 22.36% and 5,593 'No' and 8,480 'Yes'. High turnouts: Agadez (60.15%) with 19,720 for 'Yes' and 282 for 'No'; Tahoua (56.67%) and 65,162 for 'Yes' and 5,360 'No'; Magaria (56.50%) and 52,261 for 'Yes' against only 3,777 for 'No'. Exceptions were Konni and Filingué, which had low turnouts (22.03% and 28.77%) but a high proportion of 'Yes' votes (13,592/12,596 against 1,966/1,449 for 'No'), thus still disenfranchising 'No'. Tessaoua was special: a marginally high turnout (38.56%) and low on 'Yes'. Tillabéri was above average (41.13%), but with over a quarter for 'No'.

¹⁹³ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 117.

¹⁹⁴ Fuglestad, 'Djibo Bakary', 328-329 and Rapport sur les opérations électorales concernant le scrutin du 28 sept.

was not yet the all-important period of groundnut sales.¹⁹⁵ Fuglestad's argument that the low turnout was evidence that the referendum was 'not too rigged after all', since it meant that people had the option to stay away is, in view of the above, perverse.¹⁹⁶ That the high turnout in pastoral communities bent on their southward trek went unexplained (beyond attributing this to chiefly intervention) pointed, in contrast, to part of the trick that the administration had played: the decline of 'No' voters it had engineered was matched by the deliberate inflation of registered and participating (would-be) voters in constituencies that were known to be loyal to the RDA or had seen administrative interference and hence stood a fair chance to go for 'Yes'—something that, at first sight, provided the overall result with a plausible gloss.

The 'Yes' majority thus produced had an imaginary character, just as Sawaba's reported shortfall of nearly 270,000, skilfully dispersed and hidden in a range of figures.¹⁹⁷ It demonstrated, if nothing else, the totalitarian control the French had exercised over the referendum process, in which they could—and did—fabricate results at will. Something of this could not be concealed from the public eye, however, not only because the 372,383 votes allegedly expressed for 'Yes' barely represented 28 per cent of what the French claimed was the registered electorate—and thus, in fact, was a minority—, but also because the overall turnout halted at just 37 per cent: this was the lowest in all AOF, as a possibly embarrassed Messmer would later recall, and thus still glaringly out of tune with territories where 'Yes' assumed Stalinist proportions.¹⁹⁸ Perhaps in view of this Colombani emphasised that the turnout rate was still higher than at the 1957 elections that brought Sawaba to power.¹⁹⁹ Even if, for this reason, the administration could not blow up the turnout any further, in France it was reported

¹⁹⁵ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 121.

¹⁹⁶ Fuglestad, 'Djibo Bakary', 329, comparing it with high turnouts in other AOF territories.

¹⁹⁷ The turnout increase in 11 'Yes' Cercles, plus their decline in Téra and Konni, would cut the shortfall by 153,000—presuming increases and decreases were in 'Yes' and 'No' respectively—leaving 117,000. Although certainly fictitious, this figure could be easily covered in other districts, where Sawaba enjoyed substantial following but 'No' stagnated: excepting Maradi, Tessaoua and Nguigmi, these were Gouré, Zinder, Magaria, Niamey and to some extent Tillabéri, whose officially reported voter totals amounted in sum to 196,000, of which 41,000 were reported for 'No' only, leaving nearly 153,000 officially for 'Yes'.

¹⁹⁸ As in Côte d'Ivoire. Messmer, *Les blancs s'en vont*, 153 (note 4 above).

¹⁹⁹ JD/JR Direction des Affaires Politiques. 2ème Bureau. Note sur le Référendum au Niger. As noted in Chapter 2, this was always low owing to the country's rural character, size, poor infrastructure, illiteracy and, as added by Fuglestad, a tendency of Muslim women not to vote ('Djibo Bakary', 329). Bakary himself later retorted the referendum's real turnout

that the number of 'No' votes actually totalled 9,000 only,²⁰⁰ underlining, perhaps, de Gaulle's desire to obtain public legitimation for his coup d'état at any cost, including concocted numbers.²⁰¹ Reporting such a low 'No' vote could help portray the referendum as in line with other territories, where, with the exception of Guinea and Madagascar, the 'No' vote never attained significant heights.

Niger's governor, however, was more than satisfied. The massive—and far from 'light-handed'²⁰²—intervention operation carried out under his command had led to what he reported to Paris as 'very beautiful results' that beat Djibo Bakary and his 'not very intelligent, greedy and overexcited' deputies.²⁰³ His callousness prompted Emile Zinsou, fellow PRA leader in Dahomey, to send Bakary a telegram crying out that 'swindle' had triumphed and encouraging him to continue the struggle.²⁰⁴ Of course, this was of no consequence. The French had simply stolen the referendum. The camel had lost.

was 20 per cent, without giving arguments but possibly to tarnish the referendum record by comparison. *Silence!*, 208.

²⁰⁰ R. Bourgi, *Le général de Gaulle et l'Afrique Noire 1940-1969* (Paris and Abidjan, 1980), 346, referring to a government bulletin of Oct. 1958.

²⁰¹ Also Djibo, *Les transformations*, 131.

²⁰² Fuglestad, 'Djibo Bakary', 330.

²⁰³ Rapport sur les opérations électorales concernant le scrutin du 28 sept. ('des très beaux résultats'; 'peu intelligents, avides et surexcités').

²⁰⁴ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 22 sept. au 5 oct. 1958, no. 7 (note 90) ('escroquerie').

CHAPTER FIVE

DECLINING FORTUNES

The defeat of 'No', while orchestrated, was not just a correction of a political standpoint. Its repercussions extended far beyond the corrective influence that Niger's electorate had supposedly exercised over an aspect of government policy. Since the summer, metropolitan strategy had amounted to a demand of unreserved submission to a constitutional design that had to legitimise de Gaulle's bid for power and maintain France's influence north and south of the Sahara, at least for now. That Sawaba had had the audacity to stand up against the French therefore made its total downfall necessary, at least in the minds of key officials. This was the more so as the metropole had to stomach the loss of Guinea, which as expected voted 'No', thanks in part to the control that Sékou Touré's party exercised over the country. On 2 October Guinea assumed its independence followed by a spiteful French withdrawal that consummated a complete, but from the Guinean side unwanted, rupture intended to make the country a negative example of what could happen to those who crossed the illustrious general.¹

The humiliation de Gaulle felt to have suffered at the hands of Guinea's leader also involved Djibo Bakary, whom the general considered to be 'in connivance with Sékou Touré'.² His revealing negative language aside, Sawaba, indeed, entertained several political and union links with Guinea and had, as shown in Chapter 3, closely synchronised its position with the Guineans. However, in the minds of hardliners like Soustelle, Lejeune and Michel Debré—soon to be the Fifth Republic's first prime minister—it was Niger's strategic importance as represented by its uranium deposits, its proximity to Algeria and its challenge to an OCRS-controlled Sahara that formed the principal reason for wishing to rid themselves of Bakary. They were close to the French generals in Algeria and saw in the Nigérien who

¹ M. Crowder, 'Independence as a Goal in French West African Politics: 1944-1960', in W.H. Lewis (ed.), *French-speaking Africa: The Search for Identity* (New York, 1965), 35-36. For the pathetic lengths to which the French went, see E. Mortimer, *France and the Africans 1944-1960: A Political History* (London, 1969), 329-334.

² C. de Gaulle, *Mémoires d'espoir*. vol. 1: *Le renouveau 1958-1962* (Paris, 1970), 62 ('de connivance avec Sékou Touré').

had dared to say 'No' a dangerous agitator that had to be eliminated. Soustelle, in particular, was believed to be at the heart of these designs.³ The hostility and vindictiveness that had so far characterised Colombani's actions should be seen against this background.

Thus, the party's fall from power—and not just the defeat of the 'No' campaign—was already part of the governor's planning since mid-September. Houphouët-Boigny, too, metropolitan minister and leader of the inter-territorial RDA, had already before the referendum promised his allies in Niger that Sawaba's government would be dissolved if 'No' were defeated. Houphouët's hostility to Bakary dated from the days that the RDA had broken with the communists and had only been aggravated by Bakary's rising star as leader of the rival PRA.⁴ With the defeat of 'No' Bakary was therefore, in the words of Foccart, a 'marked' man. His continuance in office as prime minister of Niger and mayor of Niamey represented, according to Messmer, an 'absurd situation full of threats' that had to be resolved as soon as possible.⁵ Three days before the referendum results were announced the High Commissioner precipitately stressed that Bakary's government would have to resign willy-nilly. At that moment, however, Messmer still preferred to handle this without dissolving the Territorial Assembly.⁶

Yet there is good reason to believe that the French desire to see Bakary's ruin also included Sawaba as a whole. At any rate, this conclusion must have been drawn soon after. At first the French, who had a strong preference for PPN leader Diori to take over as prime minister, would have tried to continue dividing Sawaba by detaching Condat from Bakary, hoping Condat would back Diori's candidature (he did not).⁷ Then, by the middle of October the PRA's comité directeur expressed the fear that the French would go so far as to dissolve not just the cabinet but also the Assembly⁸—

³ Mortimer, *France and the Africans*, 361 and G. Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets de la décolonisation* (Paris, 1967), vol. 2, 295.

⁴ M. Djibo, *Les transformations politiques au Niger à la veille de l'indépendance* (Paris, 2001), 132.

⁵ *Foccart parle*. vol. 1: *Entretiens avec Philippe Gaillard* (Paris, 1995), 170: 'Bakary en a été marqué pour la suite' and P. Messmer, *Après tant de batailles: Mémoires* (Paris, 1992), 243 ('situation absurde et pleine de menaces').

⁶ Telegram Messmer to France Outre-Mer, no. 784-785, 29 Sept. 1958; CAOM, Cart.2181/D.1 bis. Background also in K. van Walraven, 'Decolonization by Referendum: The Anomaly of Niger and the Fall of Sawaba, 1958-1959', *Journal of African History*, 50 (2009), 269-292.

⁷ Parti de regroupement africain, Conférence de presse, 19 nov. 1958; CAOM, Cart.2257/D.3/4.

⁸ For text of its communiqué, see Djibo, *Les transformations*, 134.

the source of Sawaba's power. Indeed, in his referendum report, which was part of a file dated 25 October but must have been drafted earlier,⁹ Colombani noted that the formation of a new government could only be realised by dissolving the Assembly (and thus forcing new elections). Two days later he opined that Sawaba still commanded considerable support both in and outside the Assembly and that this allowed it to have a moderate Sawabist head a new cabinet.¹⁰ This was not only unacceptable to him because it provided the party with a blocking influence but also because the French wished to do away with Sawaba altogether for its pursuit of independence and standing in the way of their Community project.¹¹ This was notwithstanding a declaration of Sawaba MPs and ministers on 6 October that they accepted the referendum outcome and were prepared to work inside the autonomous cadre of the Community.¹²

As their declaration suggested, harassment of Sawaba cadres was continuing. In the wake of the referendum Niger witnessed a wave of administrative transfers, dismissals and promotions. Particularly the country's chiefs became subject to a political purge, such as—to give but one example—Aba Kaka, now canton chief of Bosso near Lake Chad, who was demoted, sacked and subsequently incarcerated.¹³ Both the PRA and Sawaba complained about lack of freedom, terror and arbitrariness, with the governor placed above the law as in the days of the *indigénat*.¹⁴ Even if these statements contained the inevitable hyperbole, it is certain, for example, that upon the dissolution of Bakary's cabinet (on which more below) his African ministers were immediately ordered to vacate their residences on threat of expulsion—in humiliating contrast to their European colleagues. Contrary to custom, the party was not allowed to head a caretaker cabinet.¹⁵

⁹ Rapport sur le Référendum du 28 sept. 1958 en Afrique Occidentale Française, Dakar 25/10/58; CAOM, Cart.2221/D.1.

¹⁰ Chef du Territoire du Niger à Monsieur le Ministre de la F.O.M., Paris, et M. Le Haut-Commissaire de la République en AOF, Dakar, 27 oct. 1958; CAOM, Cart.2181/D.1 bis (letter).

¹¹ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 137.

¹² Communiqué Sawaba MPs, 6 Oct. 1958. Text of this communiqué as following ones, unless stated otherwise, in Parti Sawaba. Pour l'Indépendance effective du Niger: Les raisons de notre lutte (Bureau du Parti Sawaba: Bamako, 15 Jan. 1961), 41.

¹³ In Nguigmi, for six months. Interview with Sawaba's sarkin samari Katiella Ari Gaptia, Bosso, Lake Chad, 13 Febr. 2006.

¹⁴ Communiqué Sawaba MPs, 6 Oct. 1958 and Parti de regroupement africain, Conférence de presse, 19 nov. 1958.

¹⁵ The ministers got 5 days to pack. Parti de regroupement africain, Conférence de presse, 19 nov. 1958; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 135; telegram Messmer to France Outre-Mer, no. 854-855, 25 Oct. 1958; urgent; CAOM, Cart. 2181/D.1 bis.

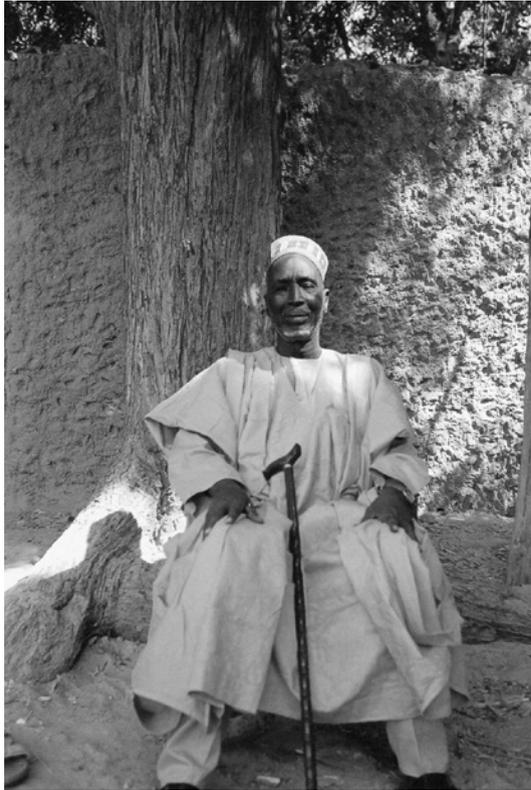


Photo 5.1 Aba Kaka, Bosso, Lake Chad, 2006.

That the desire for Sawaba's downfall also meant the destruction of the only thing in Niger resembling a modern social movement did not matter to the French. Messmer wished to re-establish full control over the country.¹⁶ This conformed closely to the view of Colombani, who lamented Niger's 'administrative abandonment' in the face of Sawaba's expanding political organisation, which to him amounted to a shadow government against which nothing but 'divergent and little-coherent forces' had been brought to bear.¹⁷ In fact, the idea that the country had slipped from French control closely mirrored the conclusions of Marcel Boyer, who had investigated the riots in April and discovered a faltering intelligence apparatus

¹⁶ Messmer, *Après tant de batailles*, 243: 'one has to retake in hand the situation in Niger' ('il faut reprendre en main la situation au Niger').

¹⁷ Rapport sur les opérations électorales concernant le scrutin du 28 sept. (Référendum), no date. For source see note 9 above ('l'abandon administratif; 'forces divergentes et peu cohérentes').

and security forces that were on their way to escaping from French influence. However, contrary to Boyer, who served under the closing instructions of the Fourth Republic, Colombani did not call for further metropolitan retreat. Instead, his referendum report constituted an abrupt break with the past,¹⁸ pleading renewed administrative commitment that would rely on the chiefs to remain on top of things. Articulating a heavily ethnicised view of Niger, it betrayed a conception of chiefly control which, in its outdated caricature, was reminiscent of the days of Toby¹⁹ and saw no place for a movement of social forces as embodied by Sawaba. In this context Colombani asserted that the victory of 'Yes' was in large part due to the work of the chiefs—an idea that was to become ingrained in Niger's historiography, yet was erroneous since it was the administration's actions that formed the ultimate source of the defeat of 'No'.²⁰

Formally speaking, the referendum outcome did not oblige Bakary's cabinet to resign, let alone the members of the Territorial Assembly to return their mandate. The government had technically not faced a vote of confidence. It had expressed its willingness to continue working in the Community cadre and could still rely on substantial support of MPs, in spite of the wave of defections that it had suffered. Thus, Sawaba's declaration of 6 October, a week after the referendum, reiterated the confidence of 33 MPs in Bakary and Condat, the Assembly's president.²¹ Nevertheless, this number must have included at least three parliamentarians who were no longer solid supporters of the prime minister since ten out of Sawaba's 40 MPs,²² most of them of BNA stock, had come out for 'Yes' in the run-up

¹⁸ There is the interesting possibility that Colombani actually read Boyer's report on the April riots when assuming office, as this was one of the more important recent briefs on the country.

¹⁹ His report concluded: 'Above the commotion, the Chiefs and traditional social bodies, sure of their actual force, observe and judge us; it seems to me difficult to deny the consideration and protection that these secular values merit' ('Au-dessus de ces remous, les Chefs et les corps sociaux traditionnels, sûrs de leur force actuelle, nous observent et nous jugent; il me paraît difficile de nier la considération et la protection que méritent ces valeurs séculaires ...'). Rapport sur les opérations électorales concernant le scrutin du 28 sept. (Référendum).

²⁰ Ibid.; Chapter 4 above; F. Fuglestad, 'Djibo Bakary, the French, and the Referendum of 1958 in Niger', *Journal of African History*, 14 (1973), 313-330 and V. Thompson, 'Niger', in G.M. Carter (ed.), *National Unity and Regionalism in Eight African States* (Ithaca, NY, 1966), 153; N. Bako-Arifari, *Dynamique et formes de pouvoir politique en milieu rural ouest-africain: Etude comparative sur le Bénin et le Niger* (Ph.D. Paris, 1999), vol. 1, 228; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 130 and 271.

²¹ Communiqué Sawaba MPs, 6 Oct. 1958.

²² Originally 41. In late 1957, however, Adamou Mayaki was thrown out of the party. See Chapter 2.

to polling day.²³ On 1 October the Comité d'Entente Franco-Nigérienne pour le Oui de Issoufou Djermakoye and Bâ Oumar had called on the French to appoint a new cabinet. Their committee was transformed on the 6th into a formal political party—'Union Franco-Nigérienne', UFN—headed by Djermakoye, old rebel Adamou Mayaki and Gaston Fourrier.²⁴ Fourrier was one of the ten referendum dissidents, as was Moha Rabo, MP for Tahoua, who formally resigned from Sawaba on the 9th. Thus, by mid-October French intelligence reported that 34 MPs now demanded Bakary's resignation as prime minister, mentioning six of these ten (former) party members by name.²⁵ Yet, considering this number, at least 14 (former) party members must have joined forces with the RDA (18), in addition to Adamou Mayaki and one MP who had apparently broken ranks with the RDA.²⁶

If Bakary's position was by now contentious this did not mean that, as a parliamentary party, Sawaba was a spent force. By the end of October Colombani estimated that Sawaba could still rely on 26 or 27 representatives. In a parliamentary gathering of 60, this meant that the party still commanded a relative majority against the RDA (18 MPs), the defectors in the chiefly UFN (14 or 15, in addition to Mayaki) and one independent—provided these did not form a front. Since this unity was not easily forthcoming in view of competitive ambitions for the post of prime minister and the risk that a dissolution of the Assembly entailed by way of new elections and potential loss of seats, this gave Sawaba the power to steer or block the selection of Bakary's successor, the more so as several MPs outside Sawaba had, according to the French, not yet made up their minds about a new government.²⁷

²³ Mouddour Zakara; Alghabit Ag Moha; Amadou Issaka; Moha Rabo; Yacouba Siddo; Toumani Sidibé; El Hadj Kadi Oumani; Maïtournam Moustapha; Boukari Zakaria; Gaston Fourrier.

²⁴ C. Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA et la décolonisation du Niger 1946-1960* (Paris, 1995), 260.

²⁵ Moha Rabo; Yacouba Siddo; Maïtournam Moustapha; Toumani Sidibé; Boukari Zakaria; and El Hadj Kadi Oumani. Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de l'A.O.F. pour la période du 14 au 31 oct. 1958, no. 9; CAOM, Cart.2248.

²⁶ In view of what transpired afterwards one must conclude that, in the end at least, 15 MPs for Sawaba were to prove unreliable or to cave in under pressure: Yacouba Siddo; Maïtournam Moustapha; Paul Achaume; Mouddour Zakara; Moha Rabo; Robert Dumoulin; Yahaya Touraoua; Boukari Zakaria; Toumani Sidibé; Kadi Oumani; Algabit Ag Moha; Gaston Fourrier; Abdoussalé Tankari; Amadou Issaka; Hassane Sourghia Maïga. Political records in C. Maman, *Répertoire biographique des personnalités de la classe politique et des leaders d'opinion du Niger de 1945 à nos jours* (Niamey, 1999), vol. 1.

²⁷ Chef du Territoire du Niger à Monsieur le Ministre de la F.O.M., Paris, et M. Le Haut-Commissaire de la République en AOF, Dakar, 27 oct. 1958.

But the administration first had to contend with Bakary himself. With a solid voting block behind him, Sawaba's leader initially planned to persevere. In referring to the governor's coup d'état of 19 September, he appealed for a return to legality, calling for cessation of the harassment of his cadres and pressure on his MPs to abandon the parliamentary faction. Communiqués were issued pointing out that only the Assembly and not the governor could send the cabinet home.²⁸ By mid-October, at the meeting of the PRA's comité directeur in Paris, Bakary protested against attempts to dissolve the cabinet.²⁹ Young militants, too, protested the governor's actions, which in effect had placed their party outside the law. They accused him of having ordered punitive expeditions in regions that had voted 'No'.³⁰ That Colombani was, indeed, bent on extending his measures against the government to the point of judicial persecution became clear when the trumped-up charges against cabinet ministers—used to legitimise the coup d'état and immobilise the party's campaign—were exploited to institute legal action against Bakary, Saloum Traoré (minister of social affairs) and the minister of finance Diop Issa for 'grave misappropriation' of funds.³¹ Colombani's abusive qualification of Issa as the most remarkable of Bakary's stupid, greedy and overexcited advisers,³² gave these superfluous moves—centring on the trifle of cars and gasoline—a malicious touch.

Hence, on 6 October Sawaba ministers and MPs appealed for an end to harassment and the freeing of political detainees.³³ In order to back up this call, the next day Niger's UGTAN section met in Niamey with union delegates from Maradi, Zinder and Magaria. In response to its inter-territorial comité directeur in Conakry (on which Bakary was represented), it called on members to be prepared for a 'general and unlimited strike' in case their tribune be forced to resign.³⁴

²⁸ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 14 au 31 oct. 1958, no. 9 and Sawaba communiqué, undated but October 1958.

²⁹ For text of the Paris communiqué, see Djibo, *Les transformations*, 134.

³⁰ Lettre ouverte au Bureau Politique du Sawaba; Groupe de jeunes, Niamey, 5 oct. 1958; CAOM, Cart.2181/D.1 bis.

³¹ Telegram Messmer to France Outre-Mer, no. 854-855, 25 Oct. 1958. Urgent; CAOM, Cart. 2181/D.1 bis ('graves détournements'); Les raisons de notre lutte, 47.

³² Rapport sur les opérations électorales concernant le scrutin du 28 sept. and Chapter 4 above.

³³ Communiqué Sawaba MPs, 6 Oct. 1958.

³⁴ Résolution Section Nigérienne de l'U.G.T.A.N., Niamey, 7 oct. 1958 (signed Zakou—president and Hima Dembéle—secretary). Text in Les raisons de notre lutte, 45-46 ('grève générale et illimité' [sic]).

Yet circumstances had changed radically since the heyday of Sawaba supremacy. With the decrees of September still in force, the strike, scheduled for 9 October and dependent on private sector workers, could be easily proscribed.³⁵ Moreover, while other parties freely cried victory and ventilated their ambitions, Sawabists now had to be on their guard.³⁶ As political personalities jockeyed for position and the RDA, in particular, was intent on revenge and exhibited new-found confidence, Bakary was not left off the hook. On 8 October Boubou Hama (RDA), Issoufou Djermakoye (UFN), Zodi Ikhia (FDN) and Audibert of the Section Nigérienne de l'Association pour le Soutien à l'Action du Général de Gaulle, sent a triumphant telegram to the metropole demanding the dissolution of the cabinet and Assembly.³⁷ The French, too, did not want to make the slightest concession for fear that Bakary might use it to get back at them. As Messmer put it:

I do not want to make gifts to a man who will certainly seek to take his revenge.

Thus, the pressure was stepped up. Colombani invited Bakary to draw the consequences of the defeat of 'No'—which the latter rejected.³⁸ Then, Messmer got engaged in talks with the inter-territorial PRA, represented by the Senegalese Senghor and Lamine Guèye, Hammadoun Dicko (Soudan), Jean Hilaire Aubame (Gabon) and Sourou Apithy (Dahomey). It is not known who took the initiative nor what motivated the PRA to get involved. The men themselves, who also included Hubert Maga of Dahomey, later suggested that the initiative came from Messmer, who would have phoned Senghor on the evening of 13 October.³⁹ Although Messmer's memoirs leave the matter open,⁴⁰ PPN historian Fluchard suggested that the initiative emanated from the men of the PRA, who would have realised Bakary's difficult position and wished to salvage as much as possible of Sawaba's influence.⁴¹ By that time, however, Sawaba youths already dis-

³⁵ Thompson, 'Niger', 166 and Djibo, *Les transformations*, 91.

³⁶ These changed circumstances become clear in a letter by Maurice Camara, Bureau Politique Sawaba, to Chef du Territoire du Niger, 5 Oct. 1958 (text in *Les raisons de notre lutte*, 43-44).

³⁷ Text in Djibo, *Les transformations*, 132.

³⁸ Messmer, *Après tant de batailles*, 243 ('[J]e ne veux pas faire de cadeaux à un homme qui cherchera certainement à prendre sa revanche').

³⁹ While the latter may have been in Paris for the meeting of the PRA comité directeur with Bakary. Parti de regroupement africain, Conférence de presse, 19 nov. 1958.

⁴⁰ Messmer, *Après tant de batailles*, 243.

⁴¹ Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 261.

trusted their motives, pointing out that Senghor had stayed away from Bakary's Dakar meeting with de Gaulle in August. Moreover, with the exception of the Guineans, the PRA's other territorial sections had decided to go for 'Yes'. The young Sawabists therefore warned that Senghor and other PRA leaders would seek to eliminate Bakary, who, as secretary-general, had been the party's dominant personality since Cotonou.⁴² Yet, if it is true that PRA leaders tried to stab their rival in the back, such motive was seemingly contradicted by Senghor's later action. In any case, it would damage the PRA's standing as it could contribute to the decline of its section in Niger. Senghor may have seen the manoeuvre too lightly as a temporary but necessary step to normalise relations between France and Niger.⁴³

Considering with whom they were dealing, the PRA men—who did not have a mandate to negotiate on Sawaba's behalf—went about their task in an extremely cavalier manner. Based on the political reality that continuance of Bakary as prime minister was impossible but Sawaba still represented a substantial voting block, they suggested, to Cornut-Gentille in Paris and Messmer in Dakar, the formation of a government of national unity in which all parties would be represented and which would be headed by another member of Sawaba—presumably Condat—, or Issoufou Djermaakoye. It has even been suggested that there was talk of a portfolio for Bakary himself.⁴⁴ Senghor, Guèye, Aubame, Apithy and Dicko met with Messmer in Dakar during the afternoon of 14 October in the absence of Bakary, supposedly at Messmer's insistence but most probably because Sawaba's leader was still in Paris. The men reached an agreement, which apparently was not put down on paper. Senghor and his lieutenants later asserted that it involved the immediate resignation of Bakary's cabinet; the convocation of the Assembly, which, while assured of gubernatorial neutrality, would vote into power an all party government; and the restoration of the constitutional order. Guèye, Dicko and Maga would go to Niamey and persuade Bakary to agree. However, Messmer later reminisced that he listened to the proposals but refused to commit himself, insisting that, whatever transpired, Bakary's resignation constituted a preliminary condi-

⁴² Lettre ouverte au Bureau Politique du Sawaba; Groupe de jeunes, Niamey, 5 oct. 1958, ending with the exclamation 'May God save me from my friends' ('Que Dieu me préserve de mes amis'). The Senegalese Mamadou Dia would have been the one on the comité directeur to oppose Bakary's resignation. Djibo, *Les transformations*, 133-134 and 136.

⁴³ Les raisons de notre lutte, 47.

⁴⁴ Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 295. Also Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 261-262.

tion and should be obtained first. Colombani, too, demanded Bakary resign unconditionally.⁴⁵

Thus, as much as the French hated Bakary, this was just a pretext to get to the next step⁴⁶—the Assembly's dissolution. Sawaba's leader later claimed he realised it was a trap. Yet, since he wanted to salvage the position of his party he agreed to step down on the condition that Sawaba appoint his successor.⁴⁷ Nothing, however, was apparently committed to writing. On the evening of 19 October, one month after Colombani had staged his coup d'état, Guèye, Dicko and Maga arrived at the governor's palace in Niamey to witness the execution of the 'accord' with Messmer. Bakary, perhaps reassured by their presence and seconded by Condat, handed in his resignation. The political circumstances gave him no choice. From a legal standpoint the occasion itself was unusual since the cabinet should have presented its resignation to the body that had approved its formation—the Territorial Assembly. It reflected the absence of constitutional rule.⁴⁸

Deceit and Dissolution: The Break-Up of the Assembly

From the French perspective this left the Assembly to be dealt with. However, several politicians were still pursuing the option of a government succession without the Assembly's dissolution and parliamentary elections. Others were staking out a claim for the position of prime minister themselves. For the moment, Colombani let political manoeuvring continue⁴⁹ but, partly due to his own actions, deadlock soon set in and provided him with the possibility to steer events in the desired direction.

The RDA flatly rejected the PRA's compromise for a government of national unity, while in Paris Minister Cornut-Gentille was still intent on eliminating Sawaba from the political scene altogether. In order to secure its position the party advanced Georges Condat as Bakary's successor.

⁴⁵ Parti de regroupement africain, Conférence de presse, 19 nov. 1958; Messmer, *Après tant de batailles*, 243.

⁴⁶ As the PRA leaders argued retrospectively as well. Parti de regroupement africain, Conférence de presse, 19 nov. 1958.

⁴⁷ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 136 (interview with Bakary). Preferably Condat, perhaps because the gentle Assembly president could be more easily controlled. *Les raisons de notre lutte*, 47.

⁴⁸ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 134-135 and Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 295.

⁴⁹ Chef du Territoire du Niger à Monsieur le Ministre de la F.O.M., Paris, et M. Le Haut-Commissaire de la République en AOF, Dakar, 27 oct. 1958.

While Condat, of mixed blood and a veteran of the French army, enjoyed some support in Paris, the RDA considered him tainted by his involvement in the 'No' campaign and proceeded to smear his reputation with a metropolitan envoy. It argued that the new prime minister should come from the 'Yes' camp. Sawaba then advanced Maïtournam Moustapha, who was one of the vice-presidents of the Assembly but as defector to the 'Yes' campaign did not go down well among its UDN core. He did not seem to enjoy much support in other parties either. Even Gabriel d'Arboussier staked out a claim, yet hailing from Soudan and of mixed blood himself, this did not go down well among members of the RDA, let alone the majority of Sawabists. According to Issoufou Djermakoye, Sawaba would have gone so far as to offer the post of prime minister to him for the period of one year through Maurice Camara, Bakary's envoy. Sawabists appear to have accepted him, though with difficulty, as many accused him of treason when he defected to the 'Yes' camp. It was Hamani Diori of the RDA, however, who rejected his candidature as well.⁵⁰ Adamou Mayaki, who had already broken with Sawaba in November 1957, would also have been advanced, in his case by dissidents who had defected from Sawaba during the referendum. Bakary launched an appeal to Niger's political leaders to rise above their quarrels and form a government coalition. All this was to no avail as the RDA considered itself the architect of the 'Yes' victory and squarely demanded the position of prime minister for Diori—even though the party represented a minority in the Assembly. Sawaba, however, considered him as much marked by his referendum stance as the RDA viewed Condat.⁵¹

Part of the impasse was caused by the fact that Colombani did not maintain the neutrality that he feigned in his correspondence with Cornut-Gentille and Messmer.⁵² As Messmer later recalled, the governor discreetly but actively encouraged MPs to hand in their resignation in order to trigger the dissolution of the Assembly.⁵³ Since the RDA knew that the French favoured Diori as Bakary's successor and had seen how they had managed the referendum, it had a strong interest in forcing elections

⁵⁰ According to Djermakoye himself, he would have declined, as he had an understanding with Houphouët-Boigny. Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 261.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 261-263; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 136-137; Chef du Territoire du Niger à Monsieur le Ministre de la F.O.M., Paris, et M. Le Haut-Commissaire de la République en AOF, Dakar, 27 oct. 1958; Parti de regroupement africain, Conférence de presse, 19 nov. 1958; Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 14 au 31 oct. 1958, no. 9.

⁵² Chef du Territoire du Niger à Monsieur le Ministre de la F.O.M., Paris, et M. Le Haut-Commissaire de la République en AOF, Dakar, 27 oct. 1958.

⁵³ Messmer, *Après tant de batailles*, 243.

under Colombani's dispensation rather than continue as a minority in a coalition where its influence would count for less. This made the deadlock difficult to overcome. On 26 October Sawaba's bureau politique again called on the political class to rise above petty quarrels and coalesce in a government of national unity, whilst appeals to stop the harassment of its cadres were repeated.⁵⁴ In an earlier letter to Colombani Maurice Camara had bravely warned the governor that the party would not have itself removed from the political chessboard by unconventional means,⁵⁵ yet the reality since 19 September was that its room for manoeuvre had been greatly reduced. Even a moderate Sawabist like Condat later recalled that, after the referendum, it rained arrests and interrogations,⁵⁶ which, while hardly putting an end to a movement with roots in both the union world and the rural areas, naturally hindered the party in its activities.

Hence, politically, Sawaba's appeal of 26 October was a plea of the weak.⁵⁷ Barely a fortnight later a delegation of the PPN-RDA and chiefs, who had defected from Sawaba, visited Houphouët-Boigny in Côte d'Ivoire. Following on their first visit in August Houphouët now helped to mediate an accord on the partition of government posts. Not each other's natural bed-fellows, the leaders of the RDA's 'commis' and Niger's chiefly representatives came to an agreement, but with difficulty. Issoufou Djermakoye, now head of the newly constituted UFN, would have preferred the powerful ministry of the interior or the chairmanship of the Assembly. However, as an opportunist who had changed tack several times, he was not in a position to ask for much. The ambitions of Diamballa Yansambou Maïga, the PPN's hardline vice-president who had been at the centre of the April riots, stood in his way, as did Boubou Hama, PPN chairman. Consequently, it was agreed that Diiori, the PPN's secretary-general, would become president of the Council of Government (prime minister) and Hama chairman of the Assembly, while Djermakoye had to settle for the cabinet's vice-presidency and, as promised, a future ministry of justice. Maïga gained the ministry of the interior.⁵⁸ Certain of French-Ivorian assistance, the hasty agreement evinced an arrogant expectation that the RDA-UFN alliance—

⁵⁴ Text in Djibo, *Les transformations*, 139.

⁵⁵ Maurice Camara, Bureau Politique Sawaba, to Chef du Territoire du Niger, 5 Oct. 1958.

⁵⁶ Interview with Georges Condat, Niamey, 27 Nov. 2003.

⁵⁷ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 139.

⁵⁸ Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 263 (who claims the Abidjan meeting took place on 28 October, but without giving a source other than Chaffard) and Djibo, *Les transformations*, 174.

baptised 'Union pour la Communauté Franco-Africaine' (UCFA)—would emerge victorious at prospective elections.

Colombani was in a hurry to dissolve the Assembly in order to let a newly constituted parliamentary gathering participate in the election of the Fifth Republic's president.⁵⁹ The election by the metropolitan and colonial assemblies of the new head of state—de Gaulle, naturally—was scheduled for 21 December and under the prevailing circumstances a mere formality. Yet, in order not to detract from de Gaulle's legitimacy, it should not be marred by negative votes. Therefore, a Territorial Assembly not dominated by Sawaba MPs was considered politically safer. Since a constitutional delay of one month was required between the Assembly's dissolution and new elections the governor had to act before the third week of November.⁶⁰ While he was helped by MPs such as Adamou Mayaki, who resigned from the Assembly on the 7th,⁶¹ many parliamentarians were reluctant to do so. By 27 October Colombani sent Messmer and Cornut a motion signed, he asserted, by 33 MPs calling for the Assembly's dissolution.⁶² While the motion, which was dated by hand 23 October, contained at least 32 recognisable names, this action was precipitate because by 7 November the governor confessed to his superiors that only 29 MPs out of 60 could be counted on.⁶³ It took another week before he could deliver a total of 32—or 31⁶⁴—names. Several among these were MPs who had been pushed, bought or tricked. According to chiefs who had defected from Sawaba, Colombani called hesitant parliamentarians to his palace to persuade or intimidate them. In some cases MPs or relatives were threatened with dismissal from chiefly positions or transfers to remote posts in the territorial administration. The journalist Chaffard claimed that several MPs, who were illiterate, were lured into signing resignation papers inserted in bundles of indemnity payment forms. Defectors from Sawaba confessed that some people accepted money from Pierre Vidal or were promised other posts. In at least two cases resignations were followed by

⁵⁹ Chef du Territoire du Niger à Monsieur le Ministre de la F.O.M., Paris, et M. Le Haut-Commissaire de la République en AOF, Dakar, 27 oct. 1958.

⁶⁰ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 141.

⁶¹ Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 264.

⁶² Chef du Territoire du Niger à Monsieur le Ministre de la F.O.M., Paris, et M. Le Haut-Commissaire de la République en AOF, Dakar, 27 oct. 1958. Motion in CAOM, Cart.2181/D.1 bis.

⁶³ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 139 (based on a telegram of Colombani).

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 142 and as Senghor claimed in a press conference on 16 December. Text in D. Bakary, *Silence! On décolonise: Itinéraire politique et syndical d'un militant africain* (Paris, 1992), 215-220.

appointments to important positions in the administration.⁶⁵ As shown above, Messmer later confirmed Colombani's involvement but did not go into the details of his actions. However, several resignations signed by MPs had a fishy side to them. At least 17 were drawn up in identical form and probably not individual acts of resignation.⁶⁶

Yet, this hardly mattered because the validity of the resignations could not be ascertained. Contrary to parliamentary procedure, the letters were not addressed to the presidency of the Assembly but Colombani, who on 13 November dispatched them to Cornut-Gentille in Paris. The next day Cornut submitted a proposal to the metropolitan cabinet to dissolve Niger's Assembly and organise elections scheduled for 14 December. Only in the afternoon did the letters of resignation arrive at the Territorial Assembly itself for registration the following morning (15 November). By then, its chairman and remaining MPs had been confronted with a *fait accompli*. The governor had post-dated the letter accompanying the resignations to the 13th in order to legitimise his move. Later, he would argue that the extraordinary turn of events was justified by the fact that the Assembly chairman had been absent, something that Condat, however, denied. In any case, Colombani had not bothered, instead, to give timely warning to the Assembly's vice-presidents or its Permanent Committee—one of whose members, Ousmane Dan Galadima, was still in jail anyway. In fact, the governor and the minister of France Outre-Mer had already begun with the electoral logistics on the 9th—four days before Niger's parliamentary gathering was sent home.⁶⁷

The inter-territorial PRA was outraged. Senghor, in particular, was furious, in all probability because he felt his reputation was at stake since he had helped to convince Bakary to step down in return for a government of national unity. On the 19th Senghor and Lamine Guèye held a press conference in Paris. The two Senegalese, both pro-French in orientation, delivered a scathing critique of the French actions since mid-September. They accused the French of immoral acts and flagrant illegalities, referring to the suspension of Bakary's government on 19 September, the dissolution of the Assembly and the violation of the accord between Messmer and the PRA on an all-party government. Outlining the measures that Colombani

⁶⁵ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 140 and Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 296-7 (latter without giving source).

⁶⁶ See Parti de regroupement africain, Conférence de presse, 19 nov. 1958; press conference, 16 Dec. 1958 (note 64 above); Djibo, *Les transformations*, 142.

⁶⁷ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 141-144. Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 264-265, believed Condat was absent.

had introduced, they accused him of deceit and trickery and held him responsible for a regime of arbitrariness and terror. The most elementary principles of democracy had been violated, while the breaking of their word by the representatives of the French Republic pointed to a shocking ‘contempt for the moral principles that govern the relations between countries’. This also called into question their confidence in a Community that the French were so determined to install. The PRA men refused to believe that all this could have taken place without the blessing of Messmer and the minister of France Outre-Mer. Typically for French Africa’s politicians, however, they claimed not to believe that de Gaulle himself had known—which as shown is questionable.⁶⁸

Colombani responded to the criticism with nonchalant confidence. He merely repeated the trumped-up charges that he had levelled against Bakary in September but made sure this was not published in Niger itself, since under the circumstances this was likely to inflame passions further.⁶⁹ Meanwhile, Lamine Guèye was received by de Gaulle and reiterated the PRA demand that instructions should be given for the elections to be free and fair. More specifically, an electoral commission should monitor the conduct of the polls. France’s general would have given his word.⁷⁰

Elections

Yet, the French had no such intentions. Key hardliner Jacques Soustelle, metropolitan minister of information, let it be known that ‘[in] view of the opposition agitating at the present time in Niger, the next electoral consultation in that territory [would] be followed by the government with particular vigilance.’⁷¹ Instead of an independent commission, the French gave the control of the electoral operations, as in the referendum, to a member of the judiciary—in this case the chairman of the court of appeal in Cotonou. Colombani sent French administrators instructions that they should

⁶⁸ See the beginning of this chapter and Chapter 4. Parti de regroupement africain, Conférence de presse, 19 nov. 1958 (‘le mépris des principes moraux sur lesquels se fondent les rapports entre pays’). The accusations were repeated in the press conference of 16 December.

⁶⁹ Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 297-298.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 297; Parti de regroupement africain, Conférence de presse, 19 nov. 1958; G. Dugué, *Vers les Etats-Unis d’Afrique* (Dakar, 1960), 155.

⁷¹ Quoted in Dugué, *Vers les Etats-Unis d’Afrique*, 155 (‘En raison des oppositions qui agitent actuellement le Niger, la prochaine consultation électorale dans ce territoire sera suivie par le gouvernement avec une vigilance particulière’).

observe strict neutrality in the upcoming polls. However, as these orders were made known to the public and in view of what was actually to come, they were more likely part of a public relations exercise intended to conceal administrative involvement.⁷² Thus, while the governor sent his subordinates a missive that it was forbidden to use administrative vehicles for campaigning, Sawaba's bureau politique already complained early on that government vehicles were deployed for tours by administrators and members of the UCFA alliance.⁷³ Even Fuglestad admitted in his apology for the governor that his orders went 'to a certain extent' unheeded.⁷⁴

Against this background the ban on public meetings enacted in September could be enforced in a partisan way, as an ambiguous telegram of Colombani alluded to when emphasising the freedom of association while adding that meetings could be banned in the case of threats to public order or if such meetings were held on the public road.⁷⁵ Sawaba, rather than the UCFA alliance, was to complain several times that its meetings were made impossible, banned or threatened with being broken up, while UCFA representatives and French administrators went on record calling for a ban on Sawaba rallies or expressed a desire to proscribe them—sometimes to be warned by Colombani to be cautious in doing so.⁷⁶ Yet, with memories of the previous months still very much alive, it was clear to every member of the administration what the French government had in store for a movement that had been unwilling to co-operate in the transition to the Fifth Republic—at least from the Gaullist perspective. Crushing Bakary's party completely was the goal in view,⁷⁷ which early on led to predictions that Sawaba would lose the elections. Mid-November French intelligence was sure that the party would be 'largely beaten', something that Colombani repeated in a prediction a week before polling. Looking back, the French

⁷² *Ibid.*, 155-156. As Sawaba intimated in its organ *Azalaï*, no. 68, 29 Dec. 1958 (text in Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 269-270). Fuglestad ('Djibo Bakary', 329) took Colombani's instructions literally.

⁷³ Maïga Abdoulaye, Bureau Politique Sawaba, to Chef du Territoire, letters no.17/E + 18/E, 4 Dec. 1958; letter dated 8 Dec. 1958. Unless otherwise indicated, correspondence on the elections is from Direction du Contrôle, Mission Pinassaud; CAOM, Cart.1040.

⁷⁴ Fuglestad, 'Djibo Bakary', 329.

⁷⁵ Telegram Chef du Territoire to all Cercles and Subdivisions, 27 Nov. 1958.

⁷⁶ Maïga Abdoulaye, Bureau Politique Sawaba, to Chef du Territoire, letter 8 Dec. 1958; Fiche de renseignements, source: E, valeur A/1, origine Maradi, n.d.; telegrams: Cercle Madaoua to Chef du Territoire, 10 Dec.; Chef du Territoire to Cercle Madaoua, 11 Dec.; Cercle Zinder to Chef du Territoire, 7 Dec.; Maidah Achaume, Tessaoua, to Chef du Territoire, 8 Dec.

⁷⁷ Fuglestad, 'Djibo Bakary', 329.

would conclude that the elections had brought nothing unexpected.⁷⁸ This context also made for a situation in which oral orders sufficed to steer chiefs and administrators in the desired direction, as Sawaba suspected in the course of the campaign.⁷⁹

The elections thus threatened to become a re-run of the referendum, only this time much more violent,⁸⁰ as the RDA smelled victory and the possibility to avenge itself for the past, and Sawaba, for its part, was fighting a battle for survival. Soustelle's remarks had caused great unrest in Sawaba circles.⁸¹ Yet, party activists were determined to put up a fight. Maïga Abdoulaye, former minister of the civil service, was appointed campaign leader.⁸² The first thing he had to come to terms with was putting together a list of candidates, for which the party had only nine days at its disposal, despite Colombani's administrative measures that made regrouping difficult. The result was that the party came with less than a full list. Its candidates in Dosso, Dogondoutchi, Niamey, Filingué and Tillabéri—with the exception of the capital all areas where its presence was weak or contested—were all newcomers, while the defections from its ranks left it with no one to run in Nguigmi and Agadez. Having been the scene of considerable fraud in the referendum, Bakary substituted Tahoua for Maradi, where he hoped to stand a better chance to retain his parliamentary base. A strong Sawaba force, consisting of Condat, Sallé Dan Koulou, Diougou Sangaré, Hima Dembélé and Aboubakar dit Kaou, was put up for election in Tessaoua, which the referendum had shown was a key stronghold and benefited from support by students. All in all, Sawaba put five former ministers in the field while the majority of its (UDN) militants got engaged in the impending battle. The choice of candidates betrayed a strategy that abandoned the western provinces (with the exception of Téra) to the advantage of the central and eastern regions. With Bakary campaigning in Maradi, Condat running in Tessaoua and Mamani fighting in Zinder, the focal point

⁷⁸ Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de l'A.O.F. pour la période du 16 au 22 nov. 1958, no. 12; *Ibid.*, 8 au 14 Déc. 1958, no. 15 (both CAOM, Cart.2248); and telegram Chef du Territoire to France Outre-Mer, copy to Dakar, no. 150, 8 Dec.; CAOM, Cart.2181/D.1 bis ('largement battu').

⁷⁹ Maïga Abdoulaye, Bureau Politique Sawaba, to Chef du Territoire, letters no.18/E, 4 Dec. 1958.

⁸⁰ Fuglestad ('Djibo Bakary', 329), was completely wrong on this point.

⁸¹ Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 266 and Dugué, *Vers les Etats-Unis d'Afrique*, 156.

⁸² Djibo Bakary, Secretary-General Sawaba, to Chef du Territoire, 24 Nov. 1958.

of the confrontation lay there. The French estimated that Sawaba would stand the best chance in Tessaoua and Maradi.⁸³

That Zinder was not mentioned was, perhaps, due to the fact that Hamani Diori decided to stand there rather than in Niamey. Seconded by the candidatures of a son of the Sultan, Yacouba Siddo and French Sawaba defector Robert Dumoulin, he hoped to evict Abdoulaye Mamani from the heartland of Sawaba's following. This could provide the RDA, which enjoyed little support east of Dogondoutchi, with the national spread required of a ruling party. UCFA appears to have benefited from foreknowledge of the Assembly's dissolution and managed to submit a list of 60 names by 21 November, i.e. a candidate for every parliamentary seat. The coalition hammered out in Côte d'Ivoire was based on joint constituency lists and an agreement that 31 of the Assembly's seats would be contested by the RDA, 18 by chiefs, eight seats by the UFN and the remaining three by other allies. However, a total of 30 candidates represented chiefly interests or were members of chiefly families. With nine Frenchmen contesting parliamentary seats, the UCFA alliance also represented a step backwards, allowing for renewed metropolitan influence by way of resurrected chiefly power, though this time in precarious alliance with the 'commis' of the RDA, themselves largely talakawa. Hence, the UCFA coalition contained potential fractures from which Sawaba hoped to benefit. Yet, as noted in Chapter 1, many of the first 'commis' agitating in the RDA emanated from chiefly (even princely) families, a fact that buttressed the new coalition as did the shared past of opposition to the 'petit peuple'.⁸⁴

A belated attempt by Léopold Senghor to mediate a rapprochement between RDA and Sawaba came to naught during a visit to Niger early December, after which he helped to campaign on Sawaba's behalf. The party also tried to mobilise support from Ghana, which received a request from Bakary for 25 million francs to re-establish his position. Ahead of polling day the French expected him to visit Ghana (the All-African People's Conference was about to take place) together with Ganda(h) Djibo, his former private secretary, and Koussanga Alzouma, his associate previously at the ministry of the interior.⁸⁵

⁸³ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 150-152; interview by Issa Younoussi with Kane Boukari, Niamey, 7 Aug. 2008; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 269; Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 16 au 22 nov. 1958, no. 12.

⁸⁴ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 150-152, 203; Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 16 au 22 nov. 1958, no. 12.

⁸⁵ Copy communication 1 Nov. 1958, French ambassador Accra to France Outre-Mer, 4 Nov. 1958, no. 11771; CAOM, Cart.2181/D.1 bis and Recueil, note 84. It is unknown whether

Not unexpectedly, the resources put at the disposal of the RDA were infinitely greater. As in the referendum, Côte d'Ivoire made available vehicles, manpower and—according to Sawaba—funds besides propagandists and gendarmes who entered the country from Upper Volta. Bakary protested to Colombani that at least three lorries with gendarmes and guards arrived from Upper Volta and appealed to him to bar armed Ivorians from the campaign. The governor only denied the charge of arms' smuggling. The UCFA campaign was allowed to use administrative vehicles as well as vehicles that came from Northern Nigeria.⁸⁶ The latter were part of an aggressive campaign waged by the Sarkin of Gobir and Bouzou Dan Zambadi, the Sarkin Katsina of Maradi. As observed in Chapter 3, religious leaders in Northern Nigeria still had some influence in these regions. Hence, the Sarakuna benefited from contacts with Nigerian chiefly authorities. These must have been more inclined to be bound up with the UCFA alliance now that Bakary had fallen from grace and their own opposition, NEPU, had struck an alliance with Sawaba (consolidated in the course of contacts at the AAPC).⁸⁷ With Nigerians and Nigériens in the frontier regions sometimes voting in each others' elections, Colombani instructed his subordinates to let vehicles from Nigeria pass unhindered—vehicles that probably transported people on their way to the polls or could be used for the UCFA campaign. Sawaba protested vehemently, accusing the Sarkin of Gobir of recruiting yan banga, Nigerian thugs, for participation in scuffles and denouncing the distribution of ballot papers to Nigerians and their transportation to polling booths.⁸⁸ The same practice would have occurred in Magaria, involving Dumoulin and Djermakoye.⁸⁹ In contrast, vehicles for Sawaba's campaign were frequently obstructed. In

these resources were made available. There is one indication that Bakary briefly attended the AAPC, perhaps with Abdoulaye Mamani, one Mamouida Maida and Isa Ibrahim (probably Ibrahim Issa—a Sawaba-oriented journalist & cadre—, not Zinder RDA man Issa Ibrahim). T. Yakasai, *The Story of a Humble Life: An Autobiography*, vol. 1 (Zaria, 2004), 144.

⁸⁶ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 154, 159-160; Djibo Bakary, Secretary-General Sawaba, to Chef du Territoire, Niamey, letters 25 and 27 Nov. 1958; P. Deu, Commissaire Divisionnaire, Chef des Services de Police du Niger, to Chef du Territoire, no. 1780/PSC-RG, Niamey, 3 Dec.

⁸⁷ NEPU leaders attending the AAPC were Aminu Kano, Malam Abubakar Zukogi, M.K. Ahmed, Gambo Sawaba, Malam Yahaya Sabo, Sani Darma and Tanko Yakasai, who claimed he met Sawaba's leaders (note 85 above) there. Yakasai, *The Story of a Humble Life*, 143.

⁸⁸ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 159; Malick N'Diaye, comité Sawaba Maradi, to Chef du Territoire, 27 Nov. 1958; Sawaba Maradi to Commandant de Cercle Maradi, 11 Dec.; candidates Sawaba Maradi to Chef du Territoire, 11 Dec.; Chef du Territoire to Cercle Madaoua, 13 Dec., telegraphing: 'Demand give proof of tolerance with regard to vehicles not registered Niger. Assure free circulation all vehicles' ('Vous demande faire preuve tolérance à l'égard des véhicules non immatriculés Niger. Assurez libre circulation tous véhicules').

⁸⁹ Telegram Sawaba Magaria to Sawaba Niamey, undated.

one case a mechanic working in government service was reprimanded for repairing the car of Sawaba candidate Laro Sako, something the Commandant de Cercle of Tahoua considered a political act.⁹⁰

UCFA engaged in the electoral battle with the RDA symbol of the elephant, in addition to yellow colours—the marker of the ‘Yes’ campaign—and photographs of de Gaulle, although this contravened regulations.⁹¹ This imparted an impression that the elections were another referendum, something that hardly contributed to a relaxed atmosphere. The alliance’s campaign thus formed a sequel to the one waged in the plebiscite. Diiori and Djermakoye tried to make the most of Sawaba’s call for independence, issuing a declaration that emphasised the need to eliminate a party that had tried to place Niger outside the Community with France. A victory for Sawaba would lead to a Marxist dictatorship marked by terror. Bakary protested against attempts to smear his regime as anti-French and appealed for a true parliamentary contest instead of a repetition of the referendum. His party retaliated by slandering the RDA as a group that had succumbed to the lure of money. In a more direct move to win voters Sawaba would have promised farmers an increase in the price of groundnuts marketed at the time.⁹² Beyond that, programmatic issues appeared absent. Rather, the campaign was formed by the engagement of the dominant political forces as such, making clear to the electorate that the powers that be were on UCFA’s side. Against this Sawaba could only wage—as in the referendum—a low-key campaign, predominantly spreading its message by word of mouth. There are no data to assess the effect of the referendum on people’s attitudes nor of the humiliation to which Sawaba had been subjected since September or of chiefly and administrative support for UCFA. Sawaba’s government record was too short to compensate for this, especially as many of its decisions favourable to sympathisers were rescinded. The party could only hope that established loyalties would not waver and that the social stratum that formed its backbone, the small folk and related groups, would persevere in their allegiance. However, the ‘petit peuple’ were a

⁹⁰ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 159; telegrams Chef du Territoire to all Cercles and Subdivisions, undated and Cercle Madaoua to Chef du Territoire, 14 Dec. 1958; note Y. Riou, Commandant de Cercle Tahoua, to Mr Sylvain, service de hydraulique Tahoua, 1 Dec.

⁹¹ Such as in the Ouallam area in the west. Issa Bakary Maïga, Sawaba Tillabéri, to Chef du de Subdivision Ouallam, letter, 8 Dec. 1958.

⁹² 25,000 instead of 21,000 or 20,000 francs a tonne. Djibo, *Les transformations*, 150 and 154; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 267; telegrams Issa Ibrahim, RDA Zinder, to Chef du Territoire and Chef du Territoire to Cercles Maradi, Madaoua, Tessaoua, Zinder, Magaria, 1 and 2 Dec. 1958.

minority while, more generally, the electorate probably felt that it had to tread carefully amidst the domineering campaign of chiefs and their metropolitan backers.⁹³

Repression made this all the more important. At the start of the campaign Sawaba protested against a rain of transfers to which cadres were subjected, many of whom were relocated to places far from their region of origin. Abouba Yattara, a clerk from Soudan living in Gothèye, would have been 'parachuted' to Zinder, nearly 1,000 km to the east. Bakary complained to the governor that some 20 party cadres were transferred for political reasons and that private companies had started laying off staff suspected of Sawaba sympathies.⁹⁴ In addition, he told his Ghanaian friends, many of his militants were in prison.⁹⁵ To judge from the complaints deposited to the administration, arrests of campaigners did, indeed, occur, though not in massive numbers. There were also threats of incarceration, interrogations, orders to remain at the disposal of the Gendarmerie and accusations about arbitrary fines. UCFA campaigners made no such complaints. The object would have been to provoke defections, discourage campaigning or sanction involvement in scuffles.⁹⁶

Evidence about campaign conditions has survived in greater detail than in the case of the referendum. Sawaba bombarded the administration with telegrams and letters informing it about the campaign practices of its adversaries. These messages, in addition to communications of administrators, were collected by a metropolitan inspector sent to monitor the polls and then filed in France's colonial archives.⁹⁷ While the next section goes into the problems that Sawaba encountered in campaigning, here we focus on the chiefs and administrators who played an important role in canvassing and in the persecution of Sawaba activists—actions that went hand in

⁹³ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 153 and 157.

⁹⁴ Also Entreprises Vidal, which employed many Bellas. Bakary listed the following cadres transferred, and the towns where they probably ended up: Mainé-Soroa: Ousmane Ben Mamadou, Maï Laouane; Tahoua: Amadou Alkali, Ibrahim Doka, Mahaman Toga; Téra: Amadou Sallé, Amadou Ouabanaïzé; Maradi: Barmou Batouré, Djibo Maïlafia, Moussa Hassane; Tillabéri: Issa Bakary; Say: Ousmane Diallo; Niamey: Hassaou Néino, Dodo Hamballi, Mamoudou Pascal. Bureau Politique Sawaba to Chef du Territoire, 29 Nov. 1958; Djibo Bakary, Secretary-General Sawaba, to Chef du Territoire, letter 24 Nov.; Maïga Abdoulaye, Bureau Politique Sawaba, to Chef du Territoire, letter 18/E, 4 Dec.

⁹⁵ French ambassador Accra to France Outre-Mer, 4 Nov. 1958, no. 11771 (note 85 above).

⁹⁶ Telegrams Georges Condat, Tessaoua, to Chef du Territoire, 9 Dec. 1958; Cercle Tessaoua to Chef du Territoire, 10 Dec.; Taambari Tchiloko, Sawaba Dakoro, to Chef du Territoire, 14 Dec.; Maïga Abdoulaye, Bureau Politique Sawaba, to Chef du Territoire (letter), 10 Dec.

⁹⁷ The mission by Pinassaud cited in note 73 above.

hand. Commandants de Cercle would have organised meetings to assure chefs de canton of government protection. Chiefs therefore campaigned actively for the UCFA cause, under cover of the candidatures of some of them, who had been designated at a meeting of the Association des Chefs in the second half of November. Thus, Magaria's Commandant de Cercle admitted that non-candidate chiefs in the region campaigned vigorously for UCFA.⁹⁸ The Chef de Subdivision of Tanout, too, reported to Colombani that the chef de canton was visiting village chiefs but was not campaigning openly and that, therefore, he did not really want to order him back to town.⁹⁹ This ambiguity allowed sufficient room for manoeuvre, permitting chiefs to use their functions (such as official tours) to pressure voters without leaving paper traces pointing to French responsibility. Tanout's administrator telegraphed Colombani, somewhat hypocritically, that he could 'not be held responsible rapprochement chiefs RDA and [that] it [was] impossible to interdict voter express personal opinion because of his relationship with chiefs. There is no question then intimidation voters'.¹⁰⁰

However, canton chiefs in the Tessaoua region would have admitted that the Commandant de Cercle there had told them to assault Sawaba militants. The chef de canton of Mayahi, for example, would have given orders to pursue any Sawabist in his canton. Physical violence, bullying and intimidation were undertaken on chiefs' behalf by their auxiliaries, the 'dogari', pretending they had received orders to do so in the course of the meeting of the Association des Chefs in Niamey, or even from the governor himself. For example, as the French admitted themselves, in Miria, east of Zinder, Sawaba activist Abdou Kankoura was manhandled by a representative of the chef de canton without the latter intervening.¹⁰¹ Harassment

⁹⁸ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 154; Telegram Cercle of Magaria to Chef du Territoire, 9 Dec. 1958.

⁹⁹ Telegram Chef de Subdivision Tanout to Chef du Territoire, 5 Dec. 1958.

¹⁰⁰ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 154; telegrams Chef de Subdivision Tanout to Chef du Territoire, 12 Dec. 1958 ('ne peut être rendue responsable rapprochement chefferie RDA et il est impossible d'interdire à l'électeur manifester opinion personnelle en raison de sa parenté avec chefs. Il ne s'agit pas donc intimidation électeurs').

¹⁰¹ Aboubakar dit Kaou, Diougou Sangaré, Sallé Dan Koulou, Comité Sawaba Tessaoua, to Chef du Territoire, letter no.4/CST, 27 Nov. 1958; Diougou Sangaré, Sawaba Tessaoua, to Commandant de Cercle Tessaoua, letter no.12/CST, 5 Dec.; Maïga Abdoulaye, Bureau Politique Sawaba, to Chef du Territoire, letters, 28-30 Nov.; telegrams comité Sawaba Zinder to Chef du Territoire, Chef du Territoire to Commandant de Cercle Zinder, 29 Nov.; Cercle Zinder to Chef du Territoire, 1 Dec.; Sawaba Tahoua to Bureau Politique Sawaba Niamey, 26 Nov.

and provocations often took place under the pretext of the maintenance of law and order. In Miria, Gardes de Cercle stopped a Sawaba meeting because campaigners used a loudspeaker at the local market, while in Karofane, north of Madaoua, the Commandant de Cercle wanted to ban a meeting ‘in view of’—as he cabled to the governor—‘intention that candidates Sawaba have shown to me to create troubles if hindered in free speech by opposing propagandists.’¹⁰² Gardes de Cercle everywhere would have been sent around with UCFA ballots.¹⁰³ Chiefs in and around Maradi were particularly active, possibly because Bakary was standing there.¹⁰⁴ The chiefs of the Gobir region would have met in Tibiri, near Maradi, on 26 November at the initiative of Bouzou Dan Zambadi, to organise the harassment of Sawaba cadres, which apparently continued for several days. Zambadi himself would have ordered the persecution of anyone shouting Sawaba slogans. On his orders, an armed commando unit would have been formed to hunt down activists.¹⁰⁵ The Sultan of Zinder, whose son stood for a seat together with Diori, made intensive propaganda for UCFA during several sorties, while both he and the chief of Miria were accused of harassment and intimidation of Sawaba activists, vowing the expulsion of the party’s representatives. In the Golé region south of Dosso Issoufou Djermakoye and Diori would also have threatened voters with deportation if they were to vote Sawaba.¹⁰⁶

In this context it often sufficed for French administrators to maintain a passive attitude vis-à-vis acts of violence.¹⁰⁷ Yet they, too, intervened directly in the campaign, some of them even before it had officially started,

¹⁰² Colombani advised not to ban the meeting, but intervene if trouble broke out. Telegrams Cercle Zinder to Chef du Territoire; comité Sawaba Zinder to Chef du Territoire; Cercle Madaoua to Chef du Territoire; Chef du Territoire to Cercle Madaoua, 7, 8, 10, 11 Dec. 1958 (‘en raison intention que m’ont manifesté candidats Sawaba créer des troubles si étaient gênés pour liberté de parole par propagandistes adverses’).

¹⁰³ Chef du Territoire to all Cercles & Subdivisions, 13 Dec. 1958, many of which denied this.

¹⁰⁴ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 154.

¹⁰⁵ Malick N’Diaye, comité Sawaba Maradi, to Chef du Territoire, letter, 27 Nov. 1958; Lettre ouverte de la section Sawaba de Maradi à Monsieur le Commandant de Cercle de Maradi, 28 nov. 1958; telegrams Sawaba Maradi to ?, 29 Nov. and Ibid. to Chef du Territoire, 4 Dec.

¹⁰⁶ Maïga Abdoulaye, Bureau Politique Sawaba, to Chef du Territoire, letter, 28 Nov. 1958; telegrams Sawaba Zinder to Chef du Territoire, 3, 9 & 13 Dec. Telegram Cercle Zinder to Chef du Territoire, 5 Dec. The French denied coercion. On Dosso telegram Chef du Territoire to Cercle Maradi, 7 Dec. and Cercle Dosso to Chef du Territoire, 9 Dec. Here, too, the French denied.

¹⁰⁷ Telegram Sawaba Maradi to Sawaba Niamey, date unknown.

such as in Maradi, Say and Niamey, and often under cover of the logistical responsibilities that the elections entailed.¹⁰⁸ The Chef de Subdivision of Tanout went on tour to re-establish contact (the telegram did not say with whom) and watch over the organisation of polling stations, in the process denying Sawaba allegations of assistance to the RDA.¹⁰⁹ Yet, when putting in place the committees organising the distribution of voters cards, the Chef de Subdivision of Maïné-Soroa admitted that he had tried to counter false rumours spread by Sawaba campaigners.¹¹⁰ The administrator of Maïne would have authorised teachers, nurses and chefs de canton to go on a campaign tour. Both he and his colleague in Madaoua were accused of holding election meetings on behalf of UCFA. Sawabists in Zinder accused police inspector Roger of distributing photographs of de Gaulle, which were also carried by Djermakoye and generally adorned UCFA cars.¹¹¹ Pierre Brachet, Commandant de Cercle in Maradi, would have ordered village chiefs to molest Sawaba cadres or anyone shouting slogans or attempting to hold party meetings. He as well as his Chefs de Subdivision were accused of making numerous sorties into the countryside (for propaganda purposes). Together with the Sarkin Katsina and administrators in the Dakoro region they would have coerced Sawaba followers to abandon the party. They presented their activities as normal administrative tours, or as visits to chiefs to discuss electoral logistics, denying any intimidatory practices. Yet, the Chef de Subdivision of Dakoro would have threatened that France would abandon the population if it were to vote for Sawaba, with dire economic consequences. He would also have intimidated campaigners, threatened with arrests and imposed arbitrary fines.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 154; Djibo Bakary, Secretary-General Sawaba, to Chef du Territoire, letter, 24 Nov. 1958.

¹⁰⁹ Telegrams Chef de Subdivision Tanout to Chef du Territoire, 6 and 12 Dec. 1958; comité Sawaba Tanout to Chef du Territoire, 10 Dec.

¹¹⁰ Telegram Subdivision Maïné-Soroa to Chef du Territoire & Cercle Gouré, 2 Dec. 1958, Sawaba Maïné-Soroa to Chef du Territoire, 29 Nov. The administrator cabled 'I had ... to pass by markets to redress certain propaganda' ('J'ai dû ... passer sur marchés pour redresser certaine propagande').

¹¹¹ Telegrams Sawaba Zinder to Chef du Territoire, 9 Dec. 1958; Maïga Abdoulaye to Chef du Territoire, undated; Cercle Zinder to Chef du Territoire, 12 Dec.; Sawaba Maïne to Direction Sawaba Niamey, 1 Dec.; Adame Zaroumeyé, Sawaba Dosso, to ?, 1 Dec.; Djibo Bakary, Secretary-General Sawaba, to Chef du Territoire, 25 Nov.; Maïga Abdoulaye, Bureau Politique Sawaba, to Chef du Territoire, letter no.17/E, 4 Dec.

¹¹² Telegrams Sawaba Maradi to ?, 29 Nov. and Sawaba Maradi to Chef du Territoire, 4 Dec.; Chef du Territoire to Cercle Maradi, 7 Dec.; Cercle Maradi to Chef du Territoire, 8 Dec.; Taambari Tchiloko, Sawaba Dakaro, to Chef du Territoire, 14 Dec.; P. Garreau, Chef de Subdivision Centrale Maradi, to Commandant de Cercle Maradi, letter, 10 Dec.

In the key region of Tessaoua the Commandant de Cercle, Périé, actively campaigned on UCFA's behalf, touring the Cercle and telling chiefs to use all means of repression against Sawaba cadres. Périé would have presented Sawaba as the enemy of France and tried to intimidate followers to abandon the party. The Commandant de Cercle denied campaigning on UCFA's behalf, attacking Sawaba or inciting to violence, claiming (falsely) that the region was calm and that only a few people got hurt in the course of canvassing. Yet, while asserting that his tours were social calls upon assuming office, he admitted having commented to chiefs on the 'situation born from the Referendum'.¹¹³ Moreover, during a meeting with Condat and Senghor, Périé would have gone out of his way to insult the parliamentary chairman and his Senegalese partner. The allegations may have had some truth in them since Périé had been appointed to reassert French control, after his predecessor Marsan had been unable to prevent a 'No' victory in the referendum. The same happened in Nguigmi, where the Commandant de Cercle was replaced by Laroza.¹¹⁴

Generally, administrators needed little encouragement in pestering a party whose militant cadres had lambasted colonial bureaucrats. This put Colombani in the comfortable position of merely curbing their enthusiasm now and then, such as when the Commandant de Cercle of Madaoua planned to file a complaint for slander against Bakary after the elections.¹¹⁵ The same thing occurred in the case of the Chef de Subdivision of Tanout, who was warned not to intervene in electoral propaganda, although Colombani ambiguously added that he should travel around to organise the polling stations. He as well as the Commandant de Cercle in Magaria were lukewarm about discouraging the chiefs, or only advised them to tone down their propaganda.¹¹⁶ Yet, in an attempt to avoid a complete breakdown of public order administrators sometimes tried to temper the chiefly appetite for revenge on the little people that had kept them down. Thus, the Commandant de Cercle of Konni wrote his chef de canton not to bar

¹¹³ Telegrams Sawaba Tessaoua to Chef du Territoire, 3 Dec. 1958; Cercle Tessaoua to Chef du Territoire, 3 and 5 Dec.; interview by Issa Younoussi with Kane Boukari, Niamey, 7 Aug. 2008 ('situation née du Référendum').

¹¹⁴ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 128; interview with Georges Condat, Niamey, 27 Nov. 2003.

¹¹⁵ Telegram Cercle Madaoua to Chef du Territoire, 10 Dec. 1958 and Djibo Bakary to Commandant de Cercle Madoua (letter), 9 Dec. Colombani scribbled 'No' in the margin.

¹¹⁶ Telegrams Chef du Territoire to Chef de Subdivision Tanout, 6 Dec. 1958; Cercle Magaria to Chef du Territoire, 9 Dec.; Subdivision Tanout to Chef du Territoire, 5 Dec. In Tanout this did not lead to an end to Sawaba complaints.

entry to the mosque to people who were not members of the RDA, as this was likely to cause trouble. The chef de canton of Tirmini near Zinder would have obliged his talakawa to swear on the Qur'an to vote for the RDA.¹¹⁷

Pistols and Polling Booths: Campaigning under Harassment

Under the circumstances it was impossible for Sawaba to campaign normally. In contrast to the complaints lodged by the UCFA alliance, its protests constituted a bulky file as its cadres kept telegraphing the authorities about harassment. While the French argued that this was merely to build up a contentious case file, denying several of the charges and simply ignoring the rest, the protests were consistent and repetitive until the last days of the campaign, thus rendering them convincing as far as the overall picture is concerned.¹¹⁸ In fact, the party's protests provide a unique insight into the violent nature of canvassing in the latter days of colonial rule.

The biggest problem was that the traditional places for political meetings—markets, mosques, public places—were cut off, forcing the party to make itself vulnerable to police intervention if it wanted to make itself heard. In the villages Gardes de Cercle patrolled to prevent Sawaba meetings, and with the chiefs feeling reassured about the comeback of French protection, the rural balance of power had shifted in many localities to 'traditional' authorities that had sensitised the populace to a change in sides, thus making the party vulnerable to a hostile welcome.¹¹⁹ Yet, the party could not always let itself be intimidated, and both leaders and cadres felt constrained to come out in the open on several occasions to campaign for the cause.

The result was that, contrary to days gone by, Sawaba candidates were regularly treated to booing and hissing or worse.¹²⁰ On 27 November Sawaba's committee in Tessaoua wrote to Colombani demanding that its opponents stop hurling sand and stones at party vehicles, threatening

¹¹⁷ E. Bruneton, Commandant de Cercle Konni, to El Hadj Assane, Chef de Canton Konni, letter, 8 Dec. 1958; Maïga Abdoulaye, Bureau Politique Sawaba, to Chef du Territoire, letter, 28 Nov. Nothing appears to have been done about this latter case.

¹¹⁸ Telegram Chef du Territoire to France Outre-Mer, 9 Dec. 1958; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 156.

¹¹⁹ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 153. Even the French admitted as much. See a report by Pierre Brachet, Cercle Maradi, 30 Nov. (Direction du Contrôle, Mission Pinassaud).

¹²⁰ Telegram Cercle Madaoua to Chef du Territoire, 7 Dec. 1958.

counter-measures if nothing were done.¹²¹ Apart from the humiliation, so revealing in itself of the plunge in the party's fortunes, these incidents could easily degenerate into more serious trouble. For example, when an UCFA sympathiser jeered at campaigners arriving by car in the Madaoua region, Sawaba candidate Abdou Doka would have grabbed the culprit by the throat and in his fury torn his shirt, threatening him with a knife while his associates engaged political adversaries. One person was wounded.¹²² As the incident demonstrated, Sawaba's militants had taken precaution to arm themselves. This not only befitted a tradition of revolutionary agitation and a familiarity with brawls but also formed a logical response to a balance of power that had drastically changed to the party's disadvantage. As shown below, party leaders in particular had concerns about their personal safety.

Thus, throughout the country, Sawaba was confronted with obstructions, giving rise all too frequently to incidents. Party delegations were prevented from entering towns and villages, cars were damaged or forced off the road, and meetings were banned or interfered with. UCFA had actually wished to ban Bakary, Diop Issa and Saloum Traoré from standing for election on the grounds that the authorities had instituted legal action against them for misappropriation of funds during the referendum. This, however, was not in the interest of Colombani, for whom Sawaba's tribune had to be credibly defeated, i.e. on the battlefield.¹²³ While western Niger appears to have been comparatively quiet, in view of the RDA's overall dominance, there were troubles in the river valley, as well as the Gaya, Konni and Margou regions. On the night of 26 November a scuffle broke out in Gothèye, a Sawaba stronghold, after which the Sawabists were arrested and brought to Téra. In the Gaya, Konni and Margou areas there would have been incidents created by Djermakoye and other chiefs. The tour that Léopold Senghor made on Sawaba's behalf, including to the Tessaoua and Madaoua regions, seems to have led to an increase in scuffles there. The UCFA committee in Tessaoua complained about the presence of this 'agitator', and other UCFA candidates wanted to chase him out.¹²⁴

¹²¹ Aboubakar dit Kaou, Diougou Sangaré, Sallé Dan Koulou, Comité Sawaba Tessaoua, to Chef du Territoire, letter no.4/CST, 27 Nov. 1958.

¹²² Telegram Cercle Madaoua to Chef du Territoire, 11 Dec. 1958.

¹²³ Telegrams Issa Ibrahim, RDA Zinder, to Chef du Territoire and Chef du Territoire to France Outre-Mer, 1-9 Dec. 1958.

¹²⁴ Maiga Abdoulaye, Bureau Politique Sawaba, to Chef du Territoire, letter, 28 Nov. 1958; telegrams Comité Maidah (UCFA), Tessaoua, to Chef du Territoire, 4 Dec.; Chef du Territoire to Paris and Dakar, 9 Dec.; Commandant de Cercle Tillabéri to Chef du Territoire,

In fact, it was the central and eastern regions that were the scene of the greatest trouble, since it was here that Sawaba tried to defend its power base. In Matamey, south of Zinder, Yaou Ibrah, Sawaba candidate from Magaria, was slapped in the face during an election rally; in Maïné-Soroa a rally was banned; and in Souloulou near Guidan-Roumji, west of Maradi, a party delegation was forced to call off a visit when it was met by UCFA supporters. Similar hostile receptions took place in Kornaka and the town of Dakoro, as well as in Goula and Djirataoua (north and south of Maradi).¹²⁵ More seriously, further to the east auxiliaries of the chef de canton of Bouné, south of Gouré, would have made Sawaba partisans walk naked over the market for their political opinions, a charge denied by the chief.¹²⁶ Abdou Kankoura, the activist in Miria mentioned above, was assailed with a sabre and had to be treated in hospital for injuries that were serious according to Sawaba but light in the view of the French.¹²⁷ Even the top leadership ran certain risks to judge, for example, from incidents on the roads. On 10 December RDA activist Adamou Bako and his partisans driving in a lorry in the Maradi area would have tried to crash into a Peugeot 203 in which they believed Djibo Bakary to be travelling. The Peugeot would have avoided collision by going off the road, after which the lorry driver, one Bily, would have stopped the engine to let off his comrades, who proceeded to smash the windows of the vehicle while gendarmes would have stood by. Bakary, who was not present, dramatically cabled to Senghor and other PRA colleagues that

Adversaries try to crush by big lorry car Peugeot in which suppose to be Djibo then organised ambush on road market Souloulou.¹²⁸

Bakary's hyperbolic ambush was not just provoked by the heat of the moment but also by the genuine risk of physical contact with opponents. On 26 November, for example, Sawabist Dan Maningo came by car to Tibiri on

29 Nov. While in Zinder Senghor was housed by Abdoulaye Mamani. See last source cited in n. 107, ch. 6.

¹²⁵ Telegrams Sawaba Magaria to ?, Cercle Magaria to Chef du Territoire, 2 & 9 Dec. 1958; Subdivision Maïné to Chef du Territoire & Cercle Gouré, 2 Dec.; Sawaba Maradi to Commandant de Cercle Maradi, letter, 12 Dec.

¹²⁶ Telegrams Chef du Territoire to Cercle Gouré & Cercle Gouré to Chef du Territoire, 10-12 Dec.

¹²⁷ Telegrams comité Sawaba Zinder & Cercle Zinder to Chef du Territoire, 29 Nov., 1 Dec.

¹²⁸ Telegram Djibo Bakary to Senghor, Dia, Lamine Guèye, Maradi, & Sawaba Maradi to Commandant de Cercle Maradi, letter, 11-12 Dec. 1958 ('adversaires tentent écrasser par gros camion voiture Peugeot dans laquelle supposent être Djibo puis organisèrent guet-apens sur piste marché Souloulou').

market day. He tried to speak but was repeatedly interrupted and the atmosphere grew so hostile that he had to withdraw to a friend's house. A fight broke out and two Sawaba cadres guarding the car were wounded and had to be driven to Maradi for treatment. Maningo did not dare to leave his friend's house and could depart only upon arrival of the Chef de Subdivision and his gendarmes.¹²⁹ Moreover, after years of free canvassing, the UCFA cadres standing guard at the outskirts of towns must have appeared as veritable waylayers ready to assault campaigners or prevent them from visiting. Even Bakary's principal lieutenants were not spared such a reception. On 28 November, for example, a delegation made up of Malick N'Diaye, Dan Galadima's associate from Madaoua, Labo Bouché, MP for Maradi, and the indomitable Dandouna Aboubakar went on tour in the Maradi region, followed by a car with party guardians. On their way to Dakoro they tried to stop at Kornaka but found they were unwelcome, only to stop further north at the village of Ajékoria and to be jeered at and forced to drive on. When they delivered their speeches at Dakaro's market, they were booed and insulted, so much so that one Kaka, a Sawaba cadre, grabbed a stone and threw it at an opponent armed with a sabre. He was arrested and his colleagues withdrew from the hostile crowd and left town. The humiliating scenario also happened to the righter of wrongs himself, again at Dakoro but two days before polling, when Bakary, escorted by N'Diaye and Dandouna, was prevented from holding a meeting. Apparently they felt threatened, for N'Diaye went into hiding with a local merchant and together with Bakary and Dandouna—once the glorious vanguard of the talakawa—left the little town for Zinder in the dead of night.¹³⁰ Bakary must have sensed this sort of menace more often because a few days earlier a Sawaba militant from Maradi telegraphed to party headquarters in the capital:

Plot aimed assassination Bakary Djibo discovered Madaoua Commandant Cercle referred confront governor with responsibilities and alert Dakar.¹³¹

On his way from Niamey Sawaba's leader had travelled to Maradi and Madaoua on the night of 8 December, apparently to be confronted with the rough-and-tumble of canvassing as he theatrically asserted that a plot had been organised against his life. In a more revealing explanation he

¹²⁹ Report Pierre Brachet, Cercle Maradi, 30 Nov. 1958.

¹³⁰ Ibid. and Fiche de renseignements, source: E, valeur A/1, origine Maradi, n.d.

¹³¹ Telegram Maradi I 22 9 0807 Urgent Kaiga Sawaba Niamey, 9 Dec. 1958 ('Complot destiné assassinat Bakary Djibo découvert Madaoua Commandant Cercle saisi mettre gouverneur devant responsabilités et alerter Dakar').

stressed that he would use his right to self-defence ‘in case of attacks’.¹³² Indeed, in view of this and other events described below even Colombani seems to have had concerns about a breakdown in order, cabling his subordinates that serious incidents had occurred and confronting them with their responsibilities:

As far as you are concerned you must prevent incidents within all possible means and act with the greatest firmness in view of the maintenance or restoration of public order.¹³³

The physical threats aside, the obstructions must have been hugely frustrating for a party that was so familiar with campaigning. Sawaba in Tessaoua angrily cabled several times to Colombani and his subordinates that it had irrefutable evidence about Périé’s interference, that its activists were beaten up with impunity and that it was determined to defend its position. With regard to the hostility of the chiefs, it stated unequivocally that, ‘knowing well the mentality of the latter’, it remained convinced that ‘they [could] only act on the express recommendation of the local authority’. In the Magaria region Diop Issa conveyed his frustration in a letter to the Commandant de Cercle, complaining that the chiefs stopped candidates from penetrating the cantons ‘to make propaganda’ for the party cause.¹³⁴ In Madaoua a certain Moustapha graphically cabled to party headquarters in Niamey about the Bouza region north of the city:

Canton Bouza remains private hunting grounds chiefs administration where no militant Sawaba can penetrate—STOP—Commandant and gendarme would appear maintain Madaoua state of emergency.¹³⁵

¹³² Djibo Bakary to Commandant de Cercle Madaoua (letter) and telegrams Chef du Territoire to Cercles Maradi and Madaoua, Cercle Madaoua to Chef du Territoire, 9-10 Dec. 1958, the last one disclaiming such an attempt or even the occurrence of incidents (‘en cas d’attaques’).

¹³³ Telegram Chef du Territoire to all Cercles and Subdivisions, 9 Dec. 1958 (‘En ce qui vous concerne vous devez prévenir incidents dans toute mesure possible et agir avec la plus grande fermeté en vue maintien ou rétablissement de l’ordre public’).

¹³⁴ Telegrams Sawaba Tessaoua to Chef du Territoire, 25 Nov. & 3 Dec. 1958; Diougou Sangaré, Sawaba Tessaoua, to Commandant de Cercle Tessaoua, letter no.13/CST, 5 Dec.; I. Diop to Monsieur l’Administrateur en Chef de la FOM Commandant le Cercle de Magaria, 5 Dec. (‘connaissant bien la mentalité de ces derniers; ils ne peuvent agir que sur recommandation expresse de l’autorité locale’; ‘pour faire la propagande’). Also W.F.S. Miles, *Hausaland Divided: Colonialism and Independence in Nigeria and Niger* (Ithaca, NY, and London, 1994), 135.

¹³⁵ Telegram Mustapha, Madaoua, to Sawaba Niamey, 30 Nov. 1958 (‘Canton Bouza demeure chasse gardée chefferie administration où aucun militant Sawaba ne peut pénétrer—STOP—Commandant et gendarme sembleraient maintenir Madaoua loi exception’).

Abdoulaye Mamani Zinder also issued numerous telegrams, which were not directed at the governor but Sawaba's headquarters in the capital and therefore revealing of campaign conditions, since not primarily meant as propaganda. Albeit a traditional stronghold like Tessaoua, canvassing in Zinder was far from easy. Grave incidents took place 'everywhere', meetings were systematically banned and the 'administration [waged] open campaign against us' with 'market Zengou ... armed guards police and dogaris preventing Sawaba propaganda'. The maddening experience was curtly depicted in a cable of 29 November in which Mamani told party headquarters in Niamey:

Impossible to campaign freely.¹³⁶

These protests could do little to take away the sense of impotence, as Sawaba's committee in Zinder made clear when it accompanied accusations about the Sultan of Zinder and the chief of Miria with a complaint about the governor's silence. The party maintained, however, a steady flow of remonstrations—if only because it could do little else—, vainly reiterating demands for an electoral commission, pleading with Commandants de Cercle to bar chiefs and guards from polling booths and asking for an end to harassment and administrative mobilisation for UCFA's cause.¹³⁷

In this context, canvassing developed towards a violent climax. As shown above, the Maradi region in particular was practically closed to Sawaba canvassing as a result of the actions of the administration and Sarkin Katsina Bouzou Dan Zambadi and the Sarkin of Gobir. Since Bakary stood for parliament in this Cercle it was here that the altercations with UCFA assumed their most vicious character. One of the first incidents took place on 25 November, when Malick N'Diaye and Dandouna Aboubakar arrived in Dan Issa, south of Maradi. Although they were escorted by two carloads of supporters, their speech at the local market was ill received. The crowd was hostile, insults were traded and Sawaba activists got involved in violent exchanges. Even N'Diaye and Dandouna himself—a tall,

¹³⁶ Telegrams Mamani Zinder 10 28 8 to Sawaba Niamey, no date; Mamani Zinder to Sawaba Niamey, undated; Mamani to ? (probably Sawaba headquarters) 29 Nov. 1958 ('administration entreprend campagne ouverte contre nous'; 'Impossible faire campagne librement'; 'marché Zengou en Cercle gardes armés police et dogaris empêchant propagande Sawaba'). Zengou is one of the city's old quarters.

¹³⁷ Telegrams Sawaba Zinder to Chef du Territoire, 3 Dec. 1958; Bureau Politique Sawaba to France Outre-Mer & Dakar, undated; letters Djibo Bakary, Secretary-General Sawaba, to Chef du Territoire, 27 Nov.; Maïga Abdoulaye, Bureau Politique Sawaba, to Chef du Territoire, 10 Dec.; I. Diop to Monsieur l'Administrateur en Chef de la FOM Commandant le Cercle de Magaria, 5 Dec.

imposing man and dauntless character—, would have taken part in the fighting, wounding two opponents before retiring to safer ground.¹³⁸

In the Maradi area around the 28th one Hama Santa would have been maltreated at his home, a man called Labo would have received a gunshot and another by the name of Goje would have been knifed.¹³⁹ In Maradi itself agents of the Sarkin Katsina would have assaulted three Sawaba militants, while in another incident a cadre would have been shot by the local police commissioner, Georges Clément. This was the momentary peak in exchanges during which Sawaba militants, true to the tradition of street-fighting of the *yan iska*,¹⁴⁰ would have attacked an RDA car coming from Niamey, smashing its windows and besieging the house of RDA leader François Perret, armed with clubs and hatchets. Gendarmes dispersed them with difficulty, after which people defending the house staged a counter-attack in which several Sawabists were wounded—one by a gunshot, or a knife as the French claimed—and had to be treated in the community clinic. With gendarmes patrolling the streets of Maradi, Commandant de Cercle Brachet reported that the first week of canvassing had passed ‘under the sign of brutality’, blaming nearly all incidents on the *yara*, or young, of Sawaba.¹⁴¹

This formed the prelude for several more confrontations, in the Maradi region and elsewhere. Tibiri was again the scene of a brawl on 3 December when a Sawaba supporter, Hadji Bouzou, would have been wounded by followers of the Sarkin Katsina.¹⁴² A week later the campaign reached new heights. On the morning of 10 December Bakary, N’Diaye and Dandouna Aboubakar staged a rally for the townspeople of Madarounfa, who so much detested the Sarkin Katsina of nearby Maradi. At 11 o’clock they began making speeches at the local market, with the fearless Dandouna and the righter of wrongs himself standing on the boot of a Land Rover addressing hundreds of followers. After 20 minutes a couple of cars and a lorry carry-

¹³⁸ Report Pierre Brachet, Cercle Maradi, 30 Nov. 1958; interview with Hamidou Adamou Abdoulaye, Niamey, 19 Dec. 2009; Le Chef du Territoire du Niger, Officier de la Légion d’Honneur, to le Ministre de la France d’Outre-Mer, 23 Dec. 1958, with three comptes-rendus of incidents in Madarounfa, Tibiri and Dan Kori; CAOM, Cart.2189/D.12 (hereinafter as Chef du Territoire, comptes-rendus). Brachet’s report was openly partisan.

¹³⁹ Lettre ouverte de la section Sawaba de Maradi à Monsieur le Commandant de Cercle de Maradi, 28 nov. 1958.

¹⁴⁰ Chapter 2 above.

¹⁴¹ Report Pierre Brachet, Cercle Maradi, 30 Nov. 1958; Maïga Abdoulaye, Bureau Politique Sawaba, to Chef du Territoire, letter, 28 Nov.; press conference Senghor, 16 Dec. (note 64) (‘sous le signe de brutalité’). For the *yara*, see Chapter 2 above.

¹⁴² Telegram Sawaba Maradi to Chef du Territoire, 4 Dec. 1958.

ing RDA supporters arrived, led by Adamou Bako, François Perret and an Ivorian MP named Abdoulaye Amadou. The French alleged that Sawaba's leader himself would have drawn the attention of his supporters to the RDA cadres, who according to Sawaba were armed with sticks and stones. Their arrival, provocative in itself, would have made Sawaba's youngsters go on the attack, according to the French and UCFA led or incited by Dandouna. The RDA men would have hurled stones and the French reported a 'violent clash' in which Sawabists would have attacked the RDA cars, breaking the windows and maltreating the occupants. Before a thousand adversaries the RDA delegation withdrew, forced to make a detour through Nigeria to reach a safe haven in Maradi. Seven to ten of them were wounded, including the Ivorian MP and a French agricultural agent who inadvertently ended up in the fighting and got beaten up. Sawaba alleged that some of its cadres were maltreated by customs officials. Djibo Bakary must have been shaken by the violent scene for he hurried away followed by his lieutenants, a decision that escalated the fighting further. The governor consequently cabled to Dakar:

Appeal urgent dispatch additional platoon Gendarmerie for Maradi where plane could drop it off.¹⁴³

Bakary had meanwhile continued to the market of Tibiri, north of Maradi, where he arrived around 15.30 with four cars carrying N'Diaye, Dandouna, Labo Almajir (a trader and Maradi cadre) and a sturdy foreigner (probably a bodyguard), besides himself. While around a thousand people had gathered to hear them speak, giving them lively applause,¹⁴⁴ many in the crowd were not favourably disposed. With the morning's shocking encounter behind them Bakary and Dandouna mounted their cars and attempted to speak to the howling mob. Apparently they felt threatened because the bodyguard handed Bakary a pistol, which Sawaba's tribune would have put in his boubou.¹⁴⁵ The throng tried to shout him down by bawling out 'Yes', the referendum slogan. The passionate Dandouna yelled back in Hausa that the governor, the Europeans and the chiefs were nothing and that he would kill everyone who would vote 'Yes', driving his point home by pulling

¹⁴³ Various telegrams (Sawaba, UCFA, administration), 10-11 Dec. 1958; Chef du Territoire, comptes-rendus. The French squarely blamed the incident on Bakary rather than partly on the RDA, with a Maradi judge even considering to take him into preventive custody ('échauffourée violente'; 'Sollicite envoi urgent peloton Gendarmerie supplémentaire pour Maradi où avion pourrait le déposer').

¹⁴⁴ Fiche de renseignements. source: E, valeur A/1, origine Maradi, n.d.

¹⁴⁵ After loading it first, according to one witness. Chef du Territoire, comptes-rendus.



Photo 5.2 Dandouna Aboubakar—the only known picture of him (*Sawaba*, Dec. 1964).

a gun and waving it at his audience—which surged back. With his pistol in one hand, the union agitator began throwing leaflets, marked with the camel, with the other—the noisy mob collecting them and tearing them up in front of *Sawaba*'s leadership.¹⁴⁶

The scene graphically illustrated the unusual conditions in which the party's canvassers found themselves, in despair responding with self-defeating tactics. Thus, the following morning Malick N'Diaye got involved in a brawl with a representative of the RDA at the airport of Maradi, where he had driven in Bakary's vehicle to collect a lawyer and political friend, Maître Diaw. According to the squadron leader of the Gendarmerie, N'Diaye would have accidentally dropped his gun (a 9 mm automatic pistol) and was alerted about this by a local Frenchman, after which he put it back in his clothes. Brachet, the partisan Commandant de Cercle, however, alleged that he pulled it during his altercation with the RDA man. In any case, RDA youngsters found the car of Bakary—who was not present—, parked at the other side of the airport and proceeded to work it over thoroughly with stones, bars and clubs, smashing all windows and demolishing the bodywork, thus putting the Peugeot out of action. All this, whether or not related to the pistol incident, would have happened under the eyes of the administration, which according to *Sawaba* had remained

¹⁴⁶ Another source claims Dandouna had by then put his pistol back in his pocket. N'Diaye, too, mounted a car, but would have put his gun into his clothes when he began addressing the crowd, possibly in an attempt to calm tempers down. *Ibid.*, containing five eyewitness accounts that slightly differ on certain points.

impassive. Brachet, indeed, brushed it aside as a 'simple infraction' of 'rascals', adding that N'Diaye would be prosecuted for illegal arms' possession. Bakary sent a telegram to the PRA about the fracas, which must have been hugely upsetting for a man in whose world the small folk were mobilised for the greater good of the talakawa, occasionally unleashing the violent energies of marginals against their enemies—youngsters who now seemed, as riff-raff, to have turned on the tribune himself.¹⁴⁷

Yet, a tradition of revolutionary agitation did not die that easily. Many in the party's following were still prepared to come to the camel's aid, if need be by force of arms. This was especially the case in the Tessaoua and Zinder regions, where the party's support was much stronger. On 5 December violence engulfed Dan Kori, a village 20 km north of Tessaoua, divided by old chieftaincy disputes that had split the community along Sawaba-RDA lines. In majority Sawaba territory, Illiassou Katché, a Sawaba sympathiser and claimant to the canton chieftaincy, entered the village on horseback seconded by two party cadres. According to the village chief they incited the populace to attack followers of the RDA. Shortly afterwards a couple of cars appeared with Sawaba dignitaries on the campaign trail, including Aboubakar dit Kaou, parliamentary candidate for Tessaoua. They made speeches urging the inhabitants to vote Sawaba, played records, and handed out change to the children. Upon their departure fights broke out between people armed with sabres, clubs, knives and hatchets. A certain Kassoum Dan Tanin and someone called Bouzou—Sawaba supporters—would have attacked an UCFA follower on his way to the mosque, while another Sawabist would have set fire to the compound of an inhabitant. A dozen people were injured, some of them seriously, including an RDA sympathiser who was attacked with a hatchet and had to be brought to hospital in Zinder.¹⁴⁸ Finally, two days later four Sawaba candidates from Zinder accompanied by no less than 50 supporters travelled by lorry to Miria, where the local chief had put so much in the way of the campaign.

¹⁴⁷ P. Brachet, l'Administrateur en Chef Commandant le Cercle de Maradi, à Monsieur le Gouverneur de la FOM Chef du Territoire du Niger, letter, 14 Dec. 1958; message Commandant Escadron Maradi to Commandant Groupe Niger Niamey no.422/4, 12 Dec.; telegrams Sawaba Maradi to Sawaba Niamey, date ?; Bakary to Senghor etc., Maradi, 11 Dec. ('simple contravention'; 'garnements').

¹⁴⁸ UCFA blamed local Sawabists Arzika (uncle of Illiassou), Labo, Argi-Amoumoune, Dan Zakara, Balla and Chawai. Illiassou and Arzika were questioned. Chef du Territoire, comptes-rendus; telegrams UCFA candidates Tessaoua to Chef du Territoire, 5 Dec. 1958; Maidah Achaume Tessaoua to Chef du Territoire, 8 Dec.; Chef du Territoire to France Outre-Mer, copy to Dakar, no. 149, 8 Dec.

At five o'clock in the afternoon they began canvassing on the market but Gardes de Cercle intervened to stop the men from making speeches. In retaliation their companions would have assaulted them with clubs, stones and cranks, injuring three policemen including the brigadier.¹⁴⁹ It was a Pyrrhic victory.

Fall

The most glaring aspect of the election results was the turnout, which halted at 24.8%—the lowest in Niger's electoral history. While the French explained it away by reference to agricultural duties (groundnut sales, the trek of pastoral communities), their mention of electoral fatigue may have come closer to the truth, but in the sense that the generalised state of coercion, marked by occasional violence, must have put many voters off. The climate created by the administration and the chiefs had, for a second time, driven home a message that the electorate did not have a real choice, something that must have reinforced voters' indifference and encouraged a strategy of withdrawal. That agricultural duties had little to do with the low turnout is shown by the fact that voters' attendance in groundnut-producing districts such as Madaoua and Magaria was significantly above average (45.65% and 30.4%), probably in part because of the degree of mobilisation by the regions' chiefs.¹⁵⁰ The Maradi area, the scene of so many incidents, saw only 17% of registered voters turn out, while turnout in the Cercle of Zinder—fiercely contested by Sawaba and chiefly powers like the Sultan and his ally Diiori—represented nearly the lowest figure in the country (13.7%). In fact, turnout nowhere came above the 50% mark and in 11 of the 16 Cercles did not reach a quarter of the registered electorate. Compared with the referendum, turnout dropped everywhere, sometimes significantly, with the exception of Konni and Madaoua (the latter showing only a slight increase). Even in the capital barely 20% of the electorate went to a polling station.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ Telegram Cercle Zinder to Chef du Territoire, 7 Dec. 1958; Chef du Territoire to France Outre-Mer, copy to Dakar, no. 151, 8 Dec.

¹⁵⁰ In Konni and Tahoua (both not producing groundnuts), too, turnout was significantly above the average (32.8% and 40.9%), while slightly so in Tessaoua (27%). Djibo, *Les transformations*, 164-166 and Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 268-269.

¹⁵¹ Lowest were 2 Cercles in the east: Gouré (13%) and Nguigmi (12.2%). See for an excellent analysis Djibo, *Les transformations*, 164 ff.

The elections were marked, like the referendum in September, by considerable administrative—including military—mobilisation.¹⁵² Besides the platoon of Gendarmerie flown into Maradi at Colombani's request and armed gendarmes coming from Côte d'Ivoire, a Gendarmerie unit from Soudan, present since its call-up for the plebiscite, had stayed put.¹⁵³ While Sawaba complained to the governor about the intimidating effect of troop deployments on the roads between Téra, Niamey and Nguigmi, Colombani explained the use of army vehicles as for the transportation of ballot boxes and other election material to the more remote regions.¹⁵⁴ For this purpose local garrisons had furnished more than 50 vehicles and 100 officers and NCOs, who were also charged with manning polling stations. A complaint about this by Condat was brushed aside, amongst other reasons on the pretext that civilian chairmen (of Sawaba persuasion) would or did defect from their duties—Colombani merely instructing his subordinates to exercise the presidencies as much as possible in civilian clothes. Assessors of the voting procedures could be—and actually were—chosen from among the chiefs, even members of the RDA or UCFA alliance. A serious irregularity was formed by the decision to let people without voters' cards cast their vote upon proving their identity, which in practice gave undue influence to the chiefs present at the polling booths.¹⁵⁵ There were also lesser irregularities, which cannot have been decisive.¹⁵⁶

While at some stations Sawaba sympathisers, too, may have assumed the role of assessor or been able to choose someone to their liking,¹⁵⁷ generally the upshot of the administration's measures was that the voting process was kept under firm political control. Consequently, with weeks of violence and a dominant UCFA campaign behind it, polling day itself was relatively free from incidents.¹⁵⁸ Yet, there were several complaints against

¹⁵² Interview with Gonimi Boukar, Niamey, 5 Nov. 2005.

¹⁵³ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 153.

¹⁵⁴ Maïga Abdoulaye, Bureau Politique Sawaba, to Chef du Territoire, letter no.20/E, 6 Dec. 1958 and the notes scribbled by Colombani in the margin of the text.

¹⁵⁵ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 154-158; telegrams Cercle Magaria to Chef du Territoire and Chef du Territoire to all Cercles and Subdivisions, 13 Dec. 1958.

¹⁵⁶ Some polling stations would have been relocated without demographic reasons to areas where UCFA enjoyed much support. Ballot papers would have been handed out to Nigerians, while Sawaba would have received substantially fewer ballot papers in the Tahoua and Zinder regions than it was entitled to. Djibo, *Les transformations*, 157-159; Sawaba Maradi to Commandant de Cercle Maradi, letter, 11 Dec. 1958 and Maïga Abdoulaye, Bureau Politique Sawaba, to Chef du Territoire, letter no.19/E, 6 Dec.

¹⁵⁷ Telegrams Cercles Magaria and Madaoua to Chef du Territoire, 14 Dec. 1958.

¹⁵⁸ Telegrams different Cercles and Subdivisions to Chef du Territoire, 14 Dec. 1958.

the degree of control exercised by the opposing side. Diop Issa criticised the presence of chefs de canton and dogaris at the polling booths, since these had clearly demonstrated their intention to make voters choose UCFA. For example, at Illéla north of Konni, the chef de canton's son, an UCFA candidate, would have sat near the ballot box to show voters which ballot paper to take. At other stations voters would have had to show the contents of the envelope to the chef de canton before depositing it in the ballot box. In certain localities chiefs' auxiliaries would have escorted voters right up to the polling booth. In contrast, at Tajaé south of Illéla they would have beaten up Sawaba's local representative, Dan Tchi, while at Madarounfa and Korohane, west of Dakoro, Sawaba representatives would have been expelled from the station. Dakoro was the region from where unspecified charges of fraud were reported, which would have affected no less than 60 per cent of the votes cast. In the Cercle of Tahoua nomadic UCFA voters would frequently have been authorised to cast 10 to 50 votes on behalf of their kinsmen, exercising the right to vote by proxy that the French had extended—despite Sawaba protest—, ostensibly to enable military personnel to cast their vote. It was also in Dakoro, the town where Sawaba's campaign had been systematically hindered, where Sawaba assessors would have been obstructed in reaching the polling booths. Complaints of party representatives, however, were systematically ignored.¹⁵⁹

Administrative pressure probably was, overall, quite important in affecting the results, which produced a resounding victory for the UCFA alliance, albeit established only recently. In an Assembly of 60 seats Bakary's party plummeted from 41 to 11, UCFA taking 48—compared with the RDA's 1957 capture of 19—, with one seat going to an independent in Nguigmi close to the RDA. Yet, the outcome and turnout suggest that manipulation was not all-embracing or totally effective everywhere. Nor was this, in terms of French political interests, entirely necessary. Some of the irregularities analysed by Mamoudou Djibo with regard to the voters register and reporting of the vote had probably more to do with a general sloppiness, characterising electoral logistics, than with deliberate fraud. They cannot, in any case, have been decisive for the outcome.¹⁶⁰ What was at stake for the French was the creation of an Assembly with a comfortable UCFA major-

¹⁵⁹ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 158 & 169-171; telegrams Sawaba Dosso & Taambari Tchiloko, Sawaba Dakoro, to Chef du Territoire, 14 Dec. 1958; Issa Diop to Monsieur l'Administrateur en Chef de la FOM Commandant le Cercle de Magaria, 5 Dec. 1958; Sawaba Maradi to Commandant de Cercle Maradi, letter, 11 Dec.

¹⁶⁰ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 162, 166 and 170.

ity, which would participate in the proper election of de Gaulle and safeguard French influence over Niger (and its parts of the Sahara). For this, it was necessary that Sawaba would by and large be defeated, including its leader, so as to put an end once and for all to Bakary's influence over Niger's institutions.¹⁶¹

Thus, overall the results dealt a crushing blow to the party's political position. Sawaba only took the Cercles of Tessaoua and Zinder, while 14 of the country's 16 constituencies went to the opposing side. In all western Cercles, with the exception of Téra and the capital, the opposite side won by colossal margins, Sawaba's vote barely reaching a third of that of UCFA, or substantially less.¹⁶² The same was true for Tahoua, scene of massive fraud at the referendum, and for regions where administration and chiefs had waged an intensive campaign of intimidation, i.e. Madaoua and Magaria. In constituencies where Sawaba was strong there were signs, more or less patent, of fraudulent acts or intentions with regard to the counting and proclamation of the votes. One official telegram proclaiming results omitted the results for Gouré, where Sawaba's side realised a score representing more than half of the total won by UCFA (3,693 against UCFA's 5,294). During the counting of the vote in Maradi, so fiercely contested by Bakary and the administration's side, results fluctuated considerably, remaining almost at parity until well over half the votes had been counted and then suddenly delivering a narrow lead for UCFA, with the Sawaba list halting at 6,020 votes, i.e. well over half the number of UCFA's (10,079).¹⁶³

Just how blatant French attempts at fraud could be was demonstrated in the Cercle of Tessaoua, where Périé, the Commandant de Cercle, invalidated the results of three voting stations—apparently without giving any reason, but good for a thousand votes for Sawaba—and then on 16 December declared UCFA's list victorious with a margin of 290. This result so manifestly contradicted the reality of Sawaba's strength that its Tessaoua representatives telegraphed Dakar. PRA leaders Senghor and Mamadou Dia cabled to Cornut-Gentille in Paris to protest against the turn of events. Colombani was informed and forced to telegraph Périé, inquiring about the reason for the annulment. Without bothering to provide an explanation for his action, the Commandant de Cercle simply changed the tally and two days after the initial proclamation declared Sawaba's list elected

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 167.

¹⁶² See the list in Ibid., 163. In Niamey, Sawaba gained 6,960 votes against UCFA 14,310, in Téra 4,850 and UCFA 6,857.

¹⁶³ This telegram also omitted results for Magaria. Ibid., 162.

with a margin of 677 (13,643 against UCFA's 12,966).¹⁶⁴ In Sawaba's other stronghold, Zinder, fraudulent action was more difficult, although the low turnout would suggest that the authorities tried to discourage Sawaba voters. They would also have attempted to cancel the results of certain polling booths.¹⁶⁵ The final results, however, proclaimed Sawaba's list elected, which included Mahaman Dan Bouzoua—whose work in the Tanout area contributed substantially towards the party's victory—, Abdoulaye Mamani and Badéri Mahamane.¹⁶⁶ The margin between the UCFA and Sawaba lists reported by the French was extremely narrow (126) and may have been doctored. In any case, the administration's reliance on the Sultan, so typical of French thinking, miscalculated the strength of the union vote and the importance of the local little folk. The candidature of PPN secretary-general Diiori, so alien to the region,¹⁶⁷ could not compensate for this and turned into a humiliating defeat for a man destined to become the new prime minister. Diiori, who obviously had hoped to legitimise his appointment as head of government by election to the Territorial Assembly, vainly cabled the governor to delay proclamation of the vote on the grounds of irregularities in two of Zinder's districts.¹⁶⁸

Nevertheless, everywhere else Sawaba's official presence was obliterated, the party losing all its seats to the UCFA alliance,¹⁶⁹ also in constituencies where the camel had always been strong. West of Tessaoua nothing of the party's representation survived, i.e. the urban communities of Maradi, Tahoua and Téra, while (as in 1957) its traditionally substantial following in the capital and smaller towns like Gothèye and Gaya did not make it to a majority in the respective Cercles—these, too, were lost to the RDA. As a symbol of the party's fall from grace, even Djibo Bakary, the talaka and prophet, who had gloriously led Niger's 'petit peuple' to the helm of the state, was defeated by a list headed by—of all people—Adamou Mayaki, the twisting opportunist of chiefly status that the tribune so detested. His defeat was perhaps partly brought about by the fact that the Maradi region was not his old battlefield, having left his fief in Tahoua to Maurice Camara. That Sawaba's list in Maradi included influential personalities like

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 167 and telegram Chef du Territoire to Cercle Tessaoua, ? Dec. 1958.

¹⁶⁵ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 168, who does not, however, give any source for this.

¹⁶⁶ Fuglestad, 'Djibo Bakary', 330. See for these Sawabists, Chapters 2-3 above and Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, 47. See for all MPs elected note 176 below. The elections took place on the basis of party lists and relative majorities (half the votes plus one).

¹⁶⁷ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 168.

¹⁶⁸ Telegram Hamani Diiori to Chef du Territoire, 15 Dec. 1958.

¹⁶⁹ Apart from the one independent who won in Nguigmi.



Photo 5.3 A rare picture of Baoua Souley, West Berlin, 1964 (Ibrahim Bawa Souley).

Dandouna Aboubakar, one of the city's carpenters and a fierce agitator, could not make up for this, as Bakary's participation triggered the mobilisation of powerful chiefs, such as the Sarkin Katsina, and members of the French administration determined to thwart his re-election.¹⁷⁰

Proud foremen of the party, who had fought numerous campaigns and built the movement into an effective fighting machine, suffered similar fates. Ousmane Dan Galadima, the petty clerk from Madaoua so active in parliamentary debate, had not stood for re-election as he was still in jail. Men like Adamou Sékou, party ideologue and parliamentary quaestor; Issaka Koké, the Ponty-educated vet and UDN MP for Gouré, who had been minister of public works and of agriculture; Diop Issa, who was assistant mayor of Niamey under Bakary, second assistant secretary of the MSA and minister of finance; Baoua Souley, a trained nurse, Sawaba activist and MP for Maradi; and Maurice Camara, member of the UDN core who had been rapporteur on the Assembly's financial committee—all these men were evicted from the Assembly to make way for acolytes of the RDA, which

¹⁷⁰ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 167.

suddenly saw its representation expand beyond Dogondoutchi. In this context the victory in Tessaoua and Zinder of well-known Sawabists with UDN backgrounds—Sallé Dan Koulou, Hima Dembélé and Abdoulaye Mamani—provided little consolation.

Yet, after months of thrashing by Colombani's administration and the campaign difficulties of preceding weeks the overall result cannot have come as a surprise. At the very least it must have seemed a continuation of the misery and persecution that had beset the movement since September.¹⁷¹ Thus, campaign co-ordinator Maïga Abdoulaye did not bother to turn up at the last meeting with the metropolitan inspector monitoring the polls. These encounters had become increasingly grim as the inspector, Pinassaud, had done absolutely nothing about Sawaba's protests.¹⁷² He cut short his mission even before the proclamation of the results he was supposed to scrutinise and admitted in his report that he never set foot outside the capital but relied exclusively on information furnished during meetings with the governor. Needless to say, Sawaba's complaints were never investigated *in situ*, while the 'Conseil du Contentieux' never replied to its remonstrations.¹⁷³

It was also before the official proclamation of the results that the new Assembly was convened in session. This absurdity marked the final sequel to a period of unconstitutional rule begun with Colombani's coup d'état. Boubou Hama, president of the PPN-RDA and arch-enemy of Bakary, was elected to the chair of the Assembly. The following day, on 18 December, the Assembly proceeded to appoint the members of government. Although he now lacked a parliamentary seat, Hamani Diori was voted Niger's new prime minister—in contravention of the Loi Cadre, which required that the government leader should be the one heading the majority list in parliament. Diori's cabinet included several members of the BNA who had abandoned Bakary, such as Issoufou Djermakoye (vice-president of the cabinet), Adamou Mayaki, Zodi Ikhia, and Mouddour Zakara. The RDA, however, retained overall dominance with seven ministers against the UFN two, Ikhia's FDN one and two positions for the Association des Chefs. The UCFA alliance had thus to all intents and purposes ceased to exist—to the benefit of the RDA.¹⁷⁴ This was no better symbolised than by the appoint-

¹⁷¹ Interview with Gonimi Boukar, Niamey, 5 Nov. 2005.

¹⁷² Note Pinassaud to France Outre-Mer, 18 Dec. 1958.

¹⁷³ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 171.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 172-173, 187; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 270-271; Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, 50; Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 300.

ment, in conformity with the accord of Côte d'Ivoire, of Diamballa Yansambou Maïga as minister of the interior. The election to this powerful department of the only RDA leader to mourn a family member in April's street battles was to prove of momentous import.¹⁷⁵

The 11 MPs for Sawaba, whose presence on the standing parliamentary committees was dwarfed by members of the RDA, declined to take part in the appointment of the cabinet.¹⁷⁶ Abdoulaye Mamani presented a resolution to the Assembly calling for the creation of a 'Primary Federation', together with the other territories of AOF, that would then adhere to the Community with France. He expressed fears about Niger's weakness as a territory on its own, but the proposal was rejected. Half an hour after Diori's cabinet had been invested, the Assembly voted, in the presence of Don Jean Colombani, that Niger become a republic and state member of the Community. All the Sawabists abstained—the highest number of abstentions in France's overseas territories. The Loi Cadre hereby ceased to apply.¹⁷⁷ The next day, Colombani lifted the intervention measures of September, giving back full powers to the government.¹⁷⁸ Niger's parliament duly participated in the election, on 21 December, of Charles de Gaulle as president of the Community.¹⁷⁹

Painful especially for the cadres of Sawaba, Diori paid homage to the mission that France's 'explorators, builders, peacemakers, soldiers, civil

¹⁷⁵ See Chapter 2 above.

¹⁷⁶ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 172. Possibly they were absent, as Hima Dembélé, Sallé Dan Koulou, Diougou Sangaré, Eugène Tégama and Amadou Aboubacar (dit Kaou) were the previous day, or perhaps the government refused to register their action in the parliamentary records. Abdoulaye Mamani and Georges Condat were at least present when the session restarted after a break the same evening of 18 December. Contrary to Mamoudou Djibo's claim, Sawaba's MPs (Mamani, Abdou Boukary, Mahaman Dan Bouzoua, Badéri Mahamane, Brah Moustapha, Tégama [Zinder]; Condat, Dan Koulou, Sangaré, Dembélé, Aboubakar dit Kaou [Tessaoua]) did gain admission to the parliamentary committees, but never more than 1 to 3 seats on a total of a dozen or so. Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, 47. République du Niger Assemblée constituante. Procès verbaux. Session extraordinaire du 17-12-58 au 22-12-58; session ordinaire du 29-12-58 au 20-1-59, 27-30. ANN, 86 MI 1 PO 22.14.

¹⁷⁷ The Assembly's proceedings suggest this vote took place by acclamation, which equally had the effect of sidelining the minority of Sawaba MPs. Assemblée constituante. Procès verbaux, 15-17; Synthèse politique, no.167/CP, déc. 1958-jan. 1959; CAOM, Cart.3684; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 270 (based on an interview with Bakary); Djibo, *Les transformations*, 172-173 ('Fédération Primaire').

¹⁷⁸ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 175.

¹⁷⁹ J.R. de Benoist, *L'Afrique Occidentale Française de la conférence de Brazzaville (1944) à l'indépendance (1960)* (Paris, 1982), 430. I have no information on the vote of the Sawaba MPs, of which there is no parliamentary record.

servants ... missionaries' had accomplished, for which 'the children of the country [wished] to show all their gratitude'. The camel, whose patron still had a precarious power base as mayor of the capital, appeared stricken numb and at this moment could do little more than pester one of the RDA's ministers, Courmo Barcourgné, by questioning the legitimacy of his Assembly election. However, this could not stop the RDA's cabinet, three days before year's end, from asking parliament to provide it with special powers for a period of six months, officially in order to put in place the republic's institutions.¹⁸⁰ It ominously demonstrated that Sawaba had been beaten.

¹⁸⁰ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 175-6, which has Diori's text, and Assemblée constituante. Procès verbaux, 40-50 ('explorateurs, bâtisseurs, pacificateurs, militaires, fonctionnaires..., missionnaires'; 'les enfants de ce pays veulent témoigner toute leur gratitude').

PART II

PREPARING FOR RELIEF

CHAPTER SIX

GOING UNDERGROUND, 1958–1961

When on 4 December Sawaba's campaign manager, Maïga Abdoulaye, sent Colombani a letter to complain about the course of canvassing, someone scribbled in the margin that it be dispatched to the chief of police.¹ Nothing symbolised better how all those who were involved in the Sawaba movement were, from now on, marked men. The RDA, having spent most of the decade in political isolation, was determined to avenge itself for the years of warfare with its rival, which had developed to such a dramatic climax during the previous spring. On 22 January 1959 the cabinet was officially endowed with the full powers it had asked for from the Assembly. While denying that these would be used to curtail political freedom, their introduction was nevertheless explained by reference to the struggle that had led to Niger's adherence to the Community and left 'after-effects of instability that could generate troubles'.²

That the RDA thought in this respect of Sawaba was made clear by Bakary's ancient foe, Boubou Hama, who in the discussions on the government's special powers had made reference to the riots of April 1958. The new Assembly chairman got engaged in a sharp confrontation with Abdoulaye Mamani, who bitterly opposed the vote for full powers and was warned that, if he continued to argue against the contents of Hama's speech, he would be considered an 'agitator' and would have to face the consequences.³ Thus, under Hama's presidency the parliamentary body rapidly began passing an impressive array of decrees aiming to outlaw every form of opposition to the new regime. The decrees emanated from the office of Diamballa Maïga, the RDA hardliner who as interior minister

¹ Maïga Abdoulaye, Bureau Politique Sawaba, to Chef du Territoire, letter no.18/E, 4 Dec. 1958; Direction du Contrôle, Mission Pinassaud; CAOM, Cart.1040.

² Quoted in C. Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA et la décolonisation du Niger 1946-1960* (Paris, 1995), 275. The full powers were officially valid until Niger's new constitution, then being written, would come into force. Yet, see below. M. Djibo, *Les transformations politiques au Niger à la veille de l'indépendance* (Paris, 2001), 176 ('séquelles d'instabilité génératrice de troubles').

³ République du Niger Assemblée constituante. Procès verbaux. Session extraordinaire du 17-12-58 au 22-12-58; session ordinaire du 29-12-58 au 20-1-59, 46-49. Sawaba's MPs abstained from voting ('agitateur').

was authorised on 23 February to expel all subversive elements from the country, a move targeted at AOFien members of Sawaba. A day before, all public political meetings in the Cercle of Niamey had been banned—which in practice meant those of the opposition—, something that on 18 March was extended to cover gatherings of UGTAN union members oriented to Sawaba.⁴ In rapid succession nearly all of the movement's press organs were muzzled. On 21 March the government seized the copies of *Azalai*, a Sawaba publication that was banned a week later. *Talaka*, the union organ edited by Hima Dembélé, was also hit, and when *Azalai* was succeeded by another paper, simply called *Sawaba* and edited by Adamou Sékou, it, too, was banned after two issues.⁵

A day after it had obtained its extraordinary powers, on 23 January, the government dissolved Niamey's city council, still under control of Bakary and his men. Four councillors of the former BNA had rallied to the members of the RDA and helped to outvote the Sawaba councillors, rejecting the new budget presented by Bakary. The same day a government decree established a three-man 'delegation' chaired by Boubou Hama, who was subsequently ordained with the *de facto* powers of mayor until the municipal council would be reconstituted. Three days after Bakary was evicted from the mayoralty, Maïga issued a decree approving the original budget. Zinder's city council was to follow in July the next year, when a similar government delegation took over from Sawaba's majority there.⁶

These actions were unprecedented and what it meant for individual lives quickly became clear. People whose loyalty had been with Bakary began to be laid off. Many of these were typical 'petit peuple', or representative of related strata, who thanks to Sawaba had climbed the social ladder and found employment in ministries or administrative services, the municipalities of Zinder and Niamey, or French-owned firms. Many of these tumbled back to lower positions or outright unemployment. Examples abound. Abdou Boukary, a road inspector in Tessaoua and Sawaba 'agita-

⁴ *Unité: Organe Hebdomadaire du Parti Sawaba*, no. 1, 30 Apr. 1959; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 221; *Ibid.*, 'Le Sawaba dans l'évolution politique du Niger (1954-1960)'; unpubl. paper, 9-10; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 275; J.R. de Benoist, *L'Afrique Occidentale Française de la conférence de Brazzaville (1944) à l'indépendance (1960)* (Paris, 1982), 459.

⁵ Synthèse politique, no. 524 CP, Apr. 1959; Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de Dakar pour la période du 13 au 23 avril 1959, no. 27; 24 avril au 5 mai 1959, no. 28; 6 au 13 mai 1959, no. 29; CAOM, Carts.3684-6. Copies of foreign papers would have been seized, too. Parti Sawaba. Pour l'Indépendance effective du Niger: Les raisons de notre lutte (Bureau du Parti Sawaba: Bamako, 15 Jan. 1961), 50.

⁶ Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 276 and Djibo, *Les transformations*, 220 ('délégation').

tor', was fired early in the year.⁷ One Tiecoura Traoré was chauffeur at the 'Dumoulin' company but by November 1959 noted to be out of that job, as was his fellow driver at the (governor's?) 'palace' Amadou Songhoi [sic], who was known for his anti-RDA stance. Moustapha Hamidou, a Sawabist from Nguigmi, got fired from his position as clerk at Niamey's post office, while Boukari Karemi (dit Kokino), who had worked with Bakary in the early 1950s, lost his position as keeper at the townhall. People higher up in the party hierarchy were not spared either. Dandouna Aboubakar lost his job in joinery. Ousmane Dan Galadima got fired from his post as assistant interpreter in the capital, and Sallé Dan Koulou was soon to return to an unassuming position as postal clerk, at the post office of Niamey.⁸

Across the country chiefs, who followed Sawaba, were dismissed as well—but on a far greater scale than had occurred during the reign of Bakary. Worse, some ended up in prison. In this way the canton chief of Bosso near Lake Chad, Aba Kaka, spent half a year in the jail of Nguigmi. According to Sawaba, the 'Tazar' of Tessaoua, a chief in that region, was revoked for his party membership. Another local chief (or possibly the same) was convoked by the interior minister and replaced by someone in his family, who was not a member of Bakary's party.⁹ Several chiefs in the Cercle of Filingué would have been dismissed as well, as were chiefs in Maradi, Zinder and Gouré.¹⁰ Mamoudou Djibo has confirmed these accusations in their generality.¹¹ Moreover, in towns along the Niger River valley, the RDA regime clashed violently with Songhay chiefs. As shown in previous chapters, Sawaba had early on built up support in this area, playing, among other things, on the supposed Songhay parentage of Djibo Bakary, or presenting him, the native of Soudouré, as fellow son of the land. Many of the Songhay chiefs had not abandoned Bakary, who was himself related through family ties to the chief of Gothèye. Relations with the new government deteriorated quickly, also because Songhay nobles dis-

⁷ He may have been another person than the MP for Zinder by that name. Chapter 5 n. 176 and C. Maman, *Répertoire biographique des personnalités de la classe politique et des leaders d'opinion du Niger de 1945 à nos jours* (Niamey, 1999), vol. 1, 47 and 164-165.

⁸ Renseignements, 6 nov. 1959; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.8; Ibid., 4 nov. 1959; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.9; Procès-verbal gendarmerie nationale, 9 sept. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.7; Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 13 au 23 avril 1959, no. 27; Bureau de coordination et de liaison, no. 879/BCL, 18 oct. 1968; Etudiants et Boursiers du Sawaba de Retour des Pays de l'Est; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14; *Le Niger*, 26 Oct. 1964; ('palais').

⁹ *Unité*, no. 1, 30 Apr. 1959 and interviews with Abdou Ali Tazard, Tessaoua, and Katiella Ari Gaptia, Bosso, Lake Chad, 9 and 13 Febr. 2006 respectively.

¹⁰ *Unité*, no. 1, 30 Apr. 1959.

¹¹ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 221.

approved of Boubou Hama, who, being Songhay himself but of low caste (it was rumoured he was of slave origin), wished to get even. This mutual social pique led to bad blood and enticed Hama to sack dignitaries loyal to Sawaba, some of whom subsequently fled abroad. Notables of Gothèye became the target of police harassment, as did Mounkeïla Issifi, the party's former MP for the Téra region.¹²

It is clear that Sawaba had never gone that far, nor in such a short space of time, even when compared with what it did in the course of the rioting in April the year before. As far as the chiefs were concerned, RDA vengeance was partially fed by the party's social core, which was made up of 'commis', who, largely coming from the ranks of the talakawa, shared the resentment of Sawaba's small folk vis-à-vis 'traditional' leaders. But the hostility towards the opposition was especially political in motivation and betrayed a desire to eliminate the party for good, even to the point of erasing it from history. In the process, the adversary was likened to filth that had to be cleaned or a disease that had to be combated and against which vigilance should be maintained. While the political psychology of repression is often marked by allusions to hygiene,¹³ in Niger these developed a malevolent touch. Thus, in June 1959 the RDA distributed a leaflet in which it declared that, now, there was a unique occasion to 'cleanse that destructive party [Sawaba] for ever from the serene sky of Niger'. Although this was taken to herald Sawaba's 'definitive death', the new regime felt a need to maintain a watchful eye. In this it was encouraged by the French. Despite Niger's autonomous status they retained considerable control over the country's affairs (see following section) and not only shared this hostility towards Sawaba, but developed a habit of regarding Bakary's movement as a 'virus' that was 'virulent' and thus required constant vigilance.¹⁴ As shown

¹² Interviews with Ibrahim Bawa Souley, Niamey, 26 Nov. 2003; Tahirou Ayouba Maïga, Niamey, 28 Oct. 2005 & 21 Oct. 2011; Mamane Bourèïma, Bandio, 4 Nov. 2005; Djaouga Idrissa, near Dargol, 31 Oct. 2005; Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes pour la période du 25 juin au 1 juillet 1959, no. 36; CAOM, Cart.2249; email Issa Younoussi to author, 5 Aug. & 26 Oct. 2010.

¹³ This is well known from Nazi persecution of the Jews—admittedly an extreme example.

¹⁴ Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes pour la période du 18 au 24 juin 1959, no. 35; CAOM, Cart.2249; *Ibid.*, 28 mai au 3 juin 1959, no. 32; CAOM, Cart.3686; Georges Clément, Chef de Section ST et Frontières, to Directeur des Services de Police, Niamey, 16 Sept. 1960 (letter); ANN, 86 MI 3 F 7.10; J. Colombani, Direction des Services de Police, to Ministre de l'Intérieur, 13 Febr. 1961 (letter); ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.3 ('nettoyer à jamais ce Parti destructeur du ciel serein du Niger'; 'mort définitive'; 'virus'; 'virulent').

in the enmity of a colonial officer towards Ousmane Dan Galadima,¹⁵ these attitudes had an established pedigree.

The tone was thus set for comprehensive repression, which occasionally escalated into a veritable manhunt, including against Sawabists of high rank. On 12 March Diamballa Maïga ordered the expulsion of Saloum Traoré, which was followed on 18 April by that of Tiémoko Coulibaly. Both men were originally from Soudan and led to the border with that country. While their deportation played on anti-AOFien sentiments, it also formed a calculated blow to Sawaba. Traoré had been minister of social affairs, a close collaborator of Bakary and a key personality in the union world, while Coulibaly, of BNA extraction, had also been a member of cabinet and an important activist in the capital. Their expulsion showed that no one was safe.¹⁶ In late March Abdoulaye Mamani, albeit MP for Zinder, was searched at the Nigerian border near Matamey, and on 10 or 11 April party ideologue Adamou Sékou was arrested and heavily fined for 'rebellion' and insulting a policeman (he had already been sentenced to eight months and a fine of half a million CFA for defamation a couple of months earlier—a sentence he would vainly appeal). Later that month the omen in Colombani's correspondence about Maïga Abdoulaye came true when Sawaba's campaign leader and another activist were reportedly arrested. Sallé Dan Koulou was sentenced to a three-month conditional prison term for a 'press offence'; a Sawabist from Gaya, Issoufou Danbaro, was convicted for 'abuse of confidence; and Amada Bachard, UDN youth leader in Zinder, also landed in jail.¹⁷ In early July the Government stepped up its measures by enabling the interior minister to impose at his discretion unconditional sentences of internal exile or house arrest for persons deemed a threat to 'public order and peace'.¹⁸

¹⁵ See Chapter 1.

¹⁶ Synthèse politique, no. 365 CP, March 1959; Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de Dakar pour la période du 19 au 29 mars 1959, no. 25; CAOM, Carts. 3684-5; Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 24 avril au 5 mai 1959, no. 28.

¹⁷ Police would have beaten Abdoulaye with whips. Dates of some convictions unknown, but Koulou's was in 1959. Notables would have been threatened in writing to defect. Synthèse politique, no. 524 CP, Apr. 1959; Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 13 au 23 avril 1959, no. 27; *Unité*, no. 1, 30 Apr. 1959; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 12.19; Procès-verbal gendarmerie nationale, 9 sept. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.7; <http://droit.francophonie.org/publication.do?publicationId=667>, accessed 2 March 2011; interview Amada Bachard, Niamey, 14 Dec. 2009 ('rébellion'; 'délit de presse'; 'abus de confiance').

¹⁸ Quoted in Djibo, 'Le Sawaba dans l'évolution politique du Niger', 10 ('l'ordre et la tranquillité publics').



Photo 6.1 Amada Bachard, Niamey, 2009.

The measures taken against Mamani and Dan Koulou demonstrated that even parliamentarians were not invulnerable. This came as no surprise as the RDA found Sawaba's victory in the December 1958 polls in Tessaoua and Zinder hard to swallow. On 28 April 1959 the Assembly was called back into session to discuss the report of a committee that had scrutinised election results. It found nothing untoward for the 14 constituencies taken by the UCFA alliance but concluded that serious irregularities had occurred in Zinder and Tessaoua. In a repetition of the cavalier performance by Perié, the Commandant de Cercle of Tessaoua, the Assembly reversed Sawaba's victory into an UCFA one, throwing out of parliament five of Bakary's lieutenants: besides Dan Koulou and Condat—the previous Assembly chairman—, Diougou Sangaré, Hima Dembélé and the former minister of economic affairs, Aboubakar dit Kaou.¹⁹ Their eviction led to widespread purges in the constituencies of Tessaoua and Gouré, further east. This affected different people in the party, including high-rank personalities like Issaka Koké, former minister of agriculture. The French reported the 'surrender' of the Tessaoua strongholds of Dan Kori and Kaouna (Kôna)

¹⁹ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 179-180.



Photo 6.2 Issaka Koké (Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, vol. 1, 306).

to the RDA, as well as that of Kellé (Gouré), where the chef de canton deserted Bakary.²⁰

Near Zinder, too, Sawabists abandoned the party, such as the members of the village committee of Gogo—though many in the region refused to budge.²¹ Here the results of the December 1958 polls were invalidated as well, although new elections were called, in which Diori, the prime minister, again put up his candidature. Witnesses of RDA persuasion have retrospectively admitted that both annulments were based on concocted grounds and solely aimed at obliterating Sawaba and delivering Diori his parliamentary seat. In fact, Diamballa Maïga informed administrators of the cancellation of the Zinder and Tessaoua votes *before* the Assembly came into session. The Zinder by-election was called for late June, the period for submission of candidacies kept short and only RDA ballot papers were ordered for use. Thus, while the French initially feared Sawaba would put up its own list with Dembélé, Mamani and even Bakary himself,²² this was made logistically impossible. Moreover, Bakary was concerned about his personal safety. The elections in December had brought forth the rough-and-tumble of Niger's political violence, which had come danger-

²⁰ One Dodo Harakoye was transferred, while someone called Abba Kelle was sacked from a development agency. A Sawaba teacher in Tessaoua, Abdou Ali Tazard, was by then in prison. Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de Dakar pour la période du 14 au 20 mai 1959, no. 30; CAOM, Cart.3686; interview Abdou Ali Tazard, Tessaoua, 9 Febr. 2006 ('reddition').

²¹ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 14 au 20 mai 1959, no. 30.

²² Besides Moussa Maharou, unionist from Magaria; Maman Tchil(l)a, shopkeeper/municipal councillor in Zinder; Gayakoye Sabi; Garva Diori dit Ye(n)ni, labourer. Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de Dakar pour la période du 4 au 10 juin 1959, no. 33; CAOM, Cart.3686.

ously close to a person who, being no more head of government, felt a strong physical fear of the brawl (as the French claimed). For this reason, Bakary would have chosen not to stand.²³

Hence, the party decided—as was the RDA's intention—not to contest the polls. In order to prevent a low turnout detracting from Diori's legitimacy, the government mobilised its forces and allowed voting for an unprecedented three-day period. Sawaba and UGTAN gatherings were banned or broken up on the grounds that both organisations had called for a boycott. Several activists were arrested, including members of Zinder's city council.²⁴ The RDA did not have a programme but simply stated that the election was a matter of honour and that Sawaba no longer existed. Diori naturally got elected, with the official turnout at an all-time record of nearly 70 per cent.²⁵ Sallé Dan Koulou vainly consulted a French lawyer as to whether his disenfranchisement could be contested before the metropolitan Council of State.²⁶

This left Sawaba without formal representation in the state, save, for the time being, in Zinder's city hall. Yet, while this certainly sapped its strength, the source of the party's power derived in large part from its ties with the union world. Even if only few Nigériens were so organised,²⁷ trade unions had formed one of the stepping stones for the UDN. It was, consequently, only a matter of time before the government began to tackle the unions. After the prohibition of UGTAN meetings in March and the banning of *Talaka*, the traditional May Day Parade came in view, not least because the year before it had turned into a triumphal procession of Sawabists while RDA unionists stayed indoors licking their wounds from the preceding rioting. The government banned Sawaba unionists—now known as 'UGTAN-orthodoxe' and mostly private sector workers—from participating altogether. They were replaced by cadres allied to the RDA, known

²³ Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de Dakar pour la période du 20 au 26 août 1959, no. 44; CAOM, Cart.3687.

²⁴ Parti Sawaba. Bureau politique: Communiqué (text in *Unité*, no. 8, 8 June 1959). 21 arrests were made, which included Sawaba municipal councillors Mahamane Chila [sic], Gayakoye Sabi and Boubou Taïfou. Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 18 au 24 juin 1959, no. 35.

²⁵ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 18 au 24 juin 1959, no. 35; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 179-182; *Unité*, no. 8, 8 June 1959. The French claimed the people voted massively, up to 71 per cent. Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes pour la période du 2 au 8 juillet 1959, no. 37; CAOM, Cart.2249.

²⁶ From a letter of a French lawyer to Sallé Dan Koulou, Paris, 14 May 1959; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3-7.

²⁷ Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 279, speaks of 0.04 per cent of the population.

as 'UGTAN-autonome'. Mostly civil servants, these were accompanied, according to Sawaba's derisive comment, by a parade of administrative vehicles, underlining the triumph of the 'commis' over the movement of little folk. Finally, on 4 July, the day that measures of internal exile and house arrest were introduced, the cabinet provided itself with the powers to 'dissolve by decree every political party, union or association whose activities seriously disrupt[ed] public order and undermine[d] the principles of democracy, the Community and the Republic'. That same day, Sawaba's UGTAN section was disbanded for acting as the office of a 'residual political party'.²⁸

As the measure shows, the government had by then resolved that the very existence of Sawaba was unacceptable. A month before, a French police inspector would have raided party offices in Niamey to break up a political meeting. Across the country party activists or sympathisers were subject to acts of harassment. Village and canton chiefs around Niamey would have been forced to attend a visit of Houphouët-Boigny upon threat of dismissal and police would have raided different quarters in the city including the Great Market, where hundreds of people were questioned.²⁹ On 7 August full government powers were extended for another six months. By now, the stage was set for the ultimate step.³⁰ On 12 October Diamballa Maïga, as well as Prime Minister Diori, signed a decree dissolving Sawaba as a legal party and threatening anyone trying to reconstitute the party with penalties. Police and Commandants de Cercle, most of whom were still French, were charged with the decree's execution. The following day Maïga ordered all Cercles to notify Sawaba's cells and committees of the move. He also had firearm permits withdrawn, with the French—tellingly—noting that the government did not want a repetition of 'April 1958'.³¹ Less than ten months in office, the RDA had made conventional opposition

²⁸ Ibid.; *Unité*, no. 1, 30 Apr. 1959; Djibo, 'Le Sawaba dans l'évolution politique du Niger', Ibid., *Les transformations*, 222 ('dissoudre par décret, tout parti politique, syndicat ou association dont les activités troublent gravement l'ordre public et portent atteinte aux principes de la démocratie, de la Communauté et de la République'; 'parti politique résiduel').

²⁹ On 30 May several Sawaba notables in Niamey would have been arrested and beaten, while that same week others got visits from the police. In Tessaoua and Maradi, people would have been expelled to Nigeria, and in Zinder three Sawabists would have been arrested. One Haman Maoury would also have been beaten and arrested. *Unité*, no. 8-9, 8 and 11 June 1959.

³⁰ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 223.

³¹ Décret no. 59-174 portant dissolution du parti Sawaba, Niamey, 12 oct. 1959; telegram 1102/MI/AI. Tous Cercles et Subdivisions, 13 oct. 1959; both ANN, 86 MI 1 E 5.2; Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes pour la période du 15 au 21 oct. 1959, no. 52, CAOM, Cart.2250.

impossible. From now on, both the French and the RDA spoke about the 'former' or 'ex-Sawaba' when referring to the movement of Bakary and his men.

A French Colony

The instructions that Messmer's private secretary was given when sent to assist Colombani in the referendum revolved ultimately around the restoration of French control. With the work of Xavier Deniau completed, Niger was now, officially, an autonomous republic inside the Community. In reality the country was still a colony, not just in a material sense but in many formal respects as well. The homage Diiori paid to the French in his maiden speech to the Assembly had made his dependence on them clear. A good seven months in office the prime minister declared that, instead of 'sterile independence', his government programme aimed at 'autonomy, nothing but autonomy, total autonomy'.³² Interior Minister Maïga, too, declared shortly after that the government would not wish to leave the Community 'for anything in the world'.³³

While marking the RDA's ideological distance from the opposition and dependence on the French, these comments also alluded to friction concerning the practice of the autonomy regime. For in reality the leaders of the RDA, naturally ambitious to make their mark, had little administrative latitude and still required metropolitan approval on a range of issues. The new constitution, which introduced Niger's republic and was approved by the Assembly in February 1959, had to be endorsed by the signature of de Gaulle, who alone was 'head of state' (of the Community). Providing for a constitutional structure modelled on the Fifth Republic it catered for a powerful executive, which could not be dismissed by the Assembly (now called 'Legislative') during the first three years of its existence. Moreover, the adoption of the constitution did not trigger new elections, something that contrasted with the political practice in other West African territories. The Assembly was also made supreme arbiter of election disputes, while political freedoms were conditioned by the demand of respect for the principles of the Community and the Republic.³⁴ In reference to the govern-

³² Quoted in Djibo, *Les transformations*, 193 ('indépendance stérile'; 'l'autonomie, rien que l'autonomie, toute l'autonomie').

³³ Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus pour la période du 10 au 16 sept. 1959, no. 47; CAOM, Cart.2251 ('pour rien au monde').

³⁴ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 176-8; J.J. Raynal, *Les institutions politiques du Niger* (Saint-Maur, 1993), 17-18.

ment's refusal to organise new elections, Bakary lashed out in an article published in Bamako that the government was a 'clique' of 'ill-elected' people, who only represented themselves and were prepared to do anything to guarantee their survival.³⁵

Apart from the sneer, this criticism pointed to the fact that the regime was still not much rooted politically. This could not be ameliorated in a short space of time either, as many areas that normally fall within a government's domain belonged to the Community—which meant French control. Foreign policy and defence matters were naturally the province of French decision-making, but so were monetary and financial issues, economic policy (including strategic raw materials—i.e. uranium), higher education, transport, the justice system and telecommunications. This meant that little fell under the competence of Diiori, notwithstanding the existence of ministerial departments for such things as public works, finance and the economy. Niger's treasury was firmly tied to that of France, which guaranteed the convertibility of the CFA franc, in exchange for which the metropolitan government handled Niger's treasury accounts.³⁶ Similarly, while a minister of justice was appointed in October 1959, the underdevelopment of professional cadres meant that many positions in the judiciary, especially the higher ones, continued to be filled by French magistrates.

In fact, it was the general secretariat of Governor Colombani (now 'High Commissioner') that constituted the nerve centre of government, to the extent that its secretary-general, *de facto* appointed by Paris, sat in on cabinet meetings and Assembly sessions. The cabinet was not allowed to confer with the metropolitan government or Dakar—seat of AOF's administration soon to be wound up—without reference to Colombani. Cabinet reshuffles required his permission or that of Paris. Compared with how Bakary had expanded the latitude of his government in the latter days of the Loi Cadre, this was a significant step backwards. The territorial reach of the administration was, in any case, extremely limited. In March 1959 Diiori became the only government leader, together with his Chadian colleague, to accept detachment of the larger part of the national territory for the constitution of an OCRS-run Saharan region. The reversal of Sawa-ba's stance also involved unconditional support for the projected testing of France's nuclear weapon—widely condemned elsewhere. In a defence

³⁵ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 13 au 23 avril 1959, no. 27 ('clique'; 'mal-élus').

³⁶ The French and Nigérien treasuries were not separated officially until 1971, while the French collected the requisite funds in Niger until 1973. Djibo, *Les transformations*, 187-190.

that pretended parity with the metropole Diamballa Maïga stated that ‘the Community’ needed the atomic bomb to fend off nuclear war.³⁷

Practically all key positions in the government, however, were still manned by Europeans.³⁸ All technical posts in the central administration were headed by Frenchmen who, to the chagrin of Maïga, tended to acknowledge the authority only of the High Commissioner. The situation in the territorial administration was similar. Much of this was due to—and France considered justified by—the lack of trained personnel. By June 1960 British diplomats noted that Niger was ‘singularly short of cadres capable of running a modern state’. Instead, it was Frenchmen and AOFiens from Soudan, Dahomey and Togo who fulfilled that task.³⁹ As Bakary had made limited headway in appointing Nigériens to territorial posts, by 1959 all 16 Cercles were still supervised by metropolitan ‘Commandants’. It was early in 1960 before two of the more important Cercles, Maradi and Magaria, got their first Nigérien commanders, in opposition to the French military who warned that filling administrative positions with political appointees was detrimental to efficiency.⁴⁰ ‘Africanisation’ of posts proceeded cautiously, however, despite pressure from young job seekers. By the end of 1960, 24 Frenchmen still occupied key posts in the territorial administration. It took until April 1961—nine months after Diiori had reluctantly agreed to official independence (see below)—before half of the 16 Cercles were controlled by Nigériens. Only by late summer 1961, a year after the country had gained independent statehood, had metropolitan personnel made way for Nigériens in the majority of Cercles and subordinate structures.⁴¹ The French were apprehensive about this, as many of these men had originally been selected for academic training by Sawaba’s government.⁴²

³⁷ Djibo, *Les transformations, passim*; E. Mortimer, *France and the Africans 1944-1960: A Political History* (London, 1969), 361; A. Bourgeot, ‘Sahara: espace géostratégique et enjeux politiques (Niger)’, *Autrepart*, 16 (2000), 42-5; Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 10 au 16 sept. 1959, no. 47.

³⁸ By the end of 1960 there were 62 ‘agents’ of ‘technical assistance’ in the general administration, including 32 for ‘services’. De l’Africanisation des Cadres dans la République du Niger. Mission dirigée par M. l’Inspecteur Général de la F.O.M. Debay, déc. 1960, CAOM, Cart.1053.

³⁹ Confidential Inward Saving Telegram Dakar to Foreign Office, no. 71, 29 June 1960; PRO, FO 371/147583.

⁴⁰ Synthèse de Renseignements. 1er Trimestre 1960, Période du 1er févr. au 30 avril 1960. No. 1120/G.C.S./ZOM1/2; SHAT, 5 H 95; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 191. Djibrilla Maïga, active in the 1958 April riots, became head of the Cercle of Magaria.

⁴¹ By April 1961, 35 of the 40 Subdivisions and ‘Postes’ were led by Nigériens. By late summer, 13 out of 16 Cercles and 16 out of 18 Subdivisions. See following note.

⁴² Synthèse de Renseignements Intérieurs. 3^{ème} Trimestre 1960, Période du 1^{er} août au 30 oct. 1960, no. 2619; 1^{er} Trimestre 1961, no. 1/36, Période du 1^{er} févr. au 30 avril 1961; 3^{ème}

This concern showed that the French intended to continue monitoring affairs, something that—despite misgivings over his government's latitude—corresponded with the interests of Diori, whose rise to prominence was so bound up with metropolitan intervention. Thus, for a long time all directors of cabinet continued to be European. Many of them were Corsican, chief among whom was Nicolas Leca, who had risen through the ranks of the colonial administration and in 1959 became—and was to remain—director of Diori's cabinet. A close friendship developed between the two and helped consolidate this arrangement, but not without Leca attracting the resentment of Nigériens. Corsicans were so prominent in the administration (the result of their over-representation in the French colonial service generally and accidental transfer to Niger in particular) that they were to become known as the 'Corsican mafia'. The cohesion of this group was grounded in a measure of insular solidarity distinct from mainland France and a bureaucratic, partly family-based patronage.⁴³ At the end of 1961 a Sawaba leaflet derided the fact that Corsicans still headed the cabinets of four ministries. In fact, with more than 90 French citizens continuing in senior posts Niger's administration was to remain one of the least Africanised governments (set against an overall French presence in the country, civilian and military, that actually *rose* after independence). With the superiority complex of Europeans very tangible and Nigériens aspiring to promotion, this became a source of simmering friction.⁴⁴

The French—Corsicans among them—were not only well represented in departmental functions but also the judicial system⁴⁵ and security services. During the 1950s the Sûreté was led by Espitalier, a socialist from

Trimestre 1961, no. 2355/2/S, no. 925/BS/S (all SHAT, 5 H 95); De l'Africanisation des Cadres ... Niger.

⁴³ V. Profizi, 'Niamey village corse, 1958-1960: Le critère régional dans les relations officieuses de l'administration franco-nigérienne pendant la transition vers l'indépendance'; oral presentation, Centre d'études des mondes africains, Paris, 14 March 2008; R. Aldrich, 'France's Colonial Island: Corsica and the Empire'; <http://www.h-france.net/rude/rudevolumemiii/AldrichVol3.pdf> accessed 14 Apr. 2010; A. Salifou, *Le Niger* (Paris, 2002), 182; www.corse.presse.org/articles/leca.htm, accessed 26 Oct. 2006; R. Higgott and F. Fuglestad, 'The 1974 Coup d'État in Niger: Towards an Explanation', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 13 (1975), 3, 388 ('mafia corse').

⁴⁴ Déclaration; Le bureau politique (Sawaba), Accra, 12 Apr. 1962; Mémoire sur la situation politique du Niger, Parti Sawaba, Bureau politique, Bamako, 13 nov. 1961; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2. Sawaba listed the following Corsicans: Pianelli (post and telecommunication); Gambarelli (health); Bachioki (labour); and Lucciardi (justice). Also Djibo, *Les transformations*, 192. For the overall French presence, see annex XLIII in C. Lefebvre, *Territoires et frontières: Du Soudan central à la république du Niger 1800-1964* (Ph.D. Paris, 2008).

⁴⁵ Initially filling 5 out of 9 posts in the 'Cour d'État'. At least 2 of these were Corsican. *Ibid.*, 189.

Toulouse, who subsequently became police commissioner in Zinder. At the Sûreté he was assisted by Jean Ambroise Colombani (neither the High Commissioner nor family but from the same area in eastern Corsica), an energetic personality who succeeded Espitalier as director.⁴⁶ During the first years of RDA rule these men developed an active role in pursuing the opposition, while also training and advising the Nigériens in maintaining security. As police commissioner in Zinder, a key Sawaba area, Espitalier organised the surveillance of opposition activities and constantly furnished Sûreté headquarters in Niamey with intelligence. The same was done by Georges Clément, who as chief of territorial and frontier surveillance had numerous Sawabists arrested. Other Frenchmen noted for activities in this field were Abel Mercier and Maurice Espitalier,⁴⁷ both working as police commissioner in Maradi; R. Roger, employed in that capacity in Zinder; G. Voisin, director of the 'prison civile' of Niamey; Captain Delavault, commander of the capital's Gendarmerie; and his colleagues in the Gendarmerie at Gaya—Molto and Buchillot—and Agadez (Roger Billet). Clément and Colombani, who was assisted by fellow Corsican Jean Arrighi, led the interrogations at the Sûreté, where another Corsican, Péraldi, was also employed. The execution of police duties was taken up with dedication, if not marked by a vengeance (many of these men belonged to the right in France or had vehemently opposed the loss of empire).⁴⁸ In the process, some of them were to develop notorious reputations, especially Arrighi, Colombani and Clément.

While the intelligence that this yielded was turned over to Interior Minister Maïga, the French involvement in this field had an important educational value for the Nigériens that came to be employed in the security services. The French military, who remained in Niger after independence, in 1962 claimed that agents of Niger's Sûreté were gathering intelligence on French nationals.⁴⁹ Initially, indeed, there was no liaison with the French Sûreté, something that Maïga hoped to address with re-

⁴⁶ A. or Freddy Espitalier. G. Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets de la décolonisation* (Paris, 1967), vol. 2, 271 and Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 26; Profizi, 'Niamey village corse'.

⁴⁷ I am not sure if this was another person than the Espitalier in Zinder and, if so, family.

⁴⁸ On the background of Corsicans' attitudes to empire, see Profizi, 'Niamey village corse' and Aldrich, 'France's Colonial Island', 120. Intelligence files ANN, 86 MI 3 F; interviews with Sawabists, including Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 Nov. 2003. Another Corsican at the Sûreté was Vesperini.

⁴⁹ Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, no. 25471, 20-26 Aug. 1962 and Rapport de Fin de Commandement du Général de Division Revol. Délégué pour la Défense de la Z.O.M. du 28 juin 1963 au 28 févr. 1965, part III; SHAT, 5 H 121 and 35.

ciprocal intelligence-sharing in conventions regulating co-operation with France.⁵⁰ In any case, it was not before December 1961 that Diori had to decide on a Nigérien successor to Jean Colombani, which led him to give the Sûreté's command to his own half-brother, Boubakar Moussa.⁵¹

But this did not mean that the French role was over. Jean Colombani, who was said to be a personal friend of Diori, became 'technical adviser' at the 'Bureau de Coordination et de Liaison' (BCL), a service in (counter-) espionage and political policing based at the presidential palace. Georges Clément, too, was later stationed there.⁵² Upon independence Don Jean Colombani was appointed French plenipotentiary representative and was also to become responsible for the marketing of Niger's groundnut crop. In these capacities he retained an important role as go-between for the two governments. Guarding the regime's political security constituted the crucial part of this work and was facilitated by a sense of camaraderie among the Corsicans. Each morning key personalities conferred over the telephone to discuss the issues of that day, using the Corsican vernacular to preserve a degree of confidentiality—as if they congregated in a Corsican 'amicale'. After this it would be decided whether Don Jean would call Diori. In fact, the latter's security depended in large part on the dedication of these men. Much later, when he was mayor of the village of Belgodère on Corsica, Jean (Ambroise) Colombani was given a loan of 25 million francs by Diori to help in the construction of a local aqueduct. The money was never paid back.⁵³

Government Architecture and Party Mobilisation

Early on the regime developed as a triumvirate made up of Diori, Boubou Hama and Diamballa Maïga. Diori was the friendly face of the regime, often

⁵⁰ Stratégie de l'Opposition Sawaba: Ingérences Etrangères. Très Secret. Report by J. Colombani, 33/C/SU, 13 Jan. 1961, to Minister of the Interior; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.2.

⁵¹ Synthèse de Renseignements Intérieurs ... 1^{er} févr. au 30 avril 1961; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 26; S. Decalo, *Historical Dictionary of Niger* (Metuchen, NJ, & London, 1979), 219-220.

⁵² Others were Fromant, a Corsican, and someone called Cousin. Interviews Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey 29 Nov. 2003, and Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 23 Febr. 2008; Salifou, *Le Niger*, 270. The personnel files of the Sûreté (ANN, 86 MI, 1C 3.1, 4.1, 5.1 & 6.1) do not contain information on the French officers at the Sûreté/BCL. While documents may still linger in the cellars of the presidency or interior ministry, they may also have been taken to France when these officers finally left, some time in the later 1960s.

⁵³ O. Colombani, *Mémoires coloniales: La fin de l'empire français d'Afrique vue par les administrateurs* (Paris, 1991), 177. On the role of Corsican 'amicales' in the empire, see Aldrich, 'France's Colonial Island', 115; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 258; Higgott & Fuglestad, 'The 1974 Coup d'État', 388.

combining the post of prime minister, and later that of president, with foreign affairs. His ties with the French and Houphouët-Boigny became intimate, bolstered by the fact that he owed his ascendancy to them and fuelled by anxieties over security. De Gaulle had great sympathy for Diiori, and the French committed themselves to come to the defence of his regime if the need arose, trying as much as possible to tender to his needs. Don Jean Colombani would only call Diiori about security issues if this was important so as not to cause unnecessary apprehension.⁵⁴ As a politician who appeared more gentle than his colleagues, Diiori could act as the regime's human face. Together with Courmo Barcourgné and René Delanne, finance minister and RDA union leader respectively, he represented the moderate wing of the party. By mediating between the different tendencies in party and government, Diiori was able to maintain a degree of pre-eminence in the regime that he came to personify.⁵⁵

As Assembly chairman and president of the PPN-RDA Boubou Hama, too, built up a power base. Although he was handicapped by his lowly social status he benefited from a long-standing association with Diiori as well as other strategic connections, which included Jacques Foccart. His role as party ideologue was reinforced by his writings on traditional culture, partly undertaken out of rancour towards the Songhay nobility. Endowed with an impulsive disposition and consumed by an old grudge against Bakary, he also became one of the more implacable enemies of the opposition. As a Sawaba activist would later reminisce, Hama may have been a writer but he was a 'man without a heart'.⁵⁶ Together with Diamballa Maïga he led the hardliners of the regime, who were popularly to become known as 'the Reds'.⁵⁷

Maïga, in turn, represented the first line of defence. As minister of the interior in charge of the Sûreté and married to a sister of Diiori, the aggressive scion of Songhay nobility stood in as acting president during the lat-

⁵⁴ *Foccart parle*. vol. 1: *Entretiens avec Philippe Gaillard* (Paris, 1995), 338-9; Colombani, *Mémoires coloniales*, 177; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 3-9 Sept. 1962, no. 25,547; SHAT, 5 H 121.

⁵⁵ Diiori officially became president of Niger, elected by the National Assembly, in November 1960. Higgott & Fuglestad, 'The 1974 Coup d'État', 387; Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, vol. 1, 63; Decalo, *Historical Dictionary*, 90-91.

⁵⁶ Interview with Ali Amadou, Niamey, 28 Jan. 2003; conversation with Issa Younoussi, Niamey, 22 Febr. 2008; Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de Dakar pour la période du 3 au 9 sept. 1959, no. 46; CAOM, Cart.3687; *Foccart parle*, 95.

⁵⁷ Interview with Abdou Adam (former RDA official), Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003 ('les Rouges').

ter's absence.⁵⁸ In this he surpassed Issoufou Djermakoye, the member of Dosso's Djermakoy dynasty, whose defection from Sawaba had been rewarded with the vice-presidency and the position of minister of justice. Maïga had resisted Djermakoye's appointment as second-in-command, just as he had vainly opposed the selection of Mouddour Zakara—Tuareg chief in Filingué and also minister of Saharan and nomadic affairs—as state secretary in his own ministry with responsibility for chieftaincy issues. In October 1959 he helped to engineer Djermakoye's downfall in the wake of the latter's mishandling of the judicial action taken against Bakary (Chapter 7). Djermakoye lost the vice-presidency and was confined to his duties at the ministry of justice, which was still very much under French control. With Diori, who by then had consolidated his position, coming out in favour of his interior minister and Hama acting to prevent the cabinet's breakup over the issue, Maïga effectively established his position as the number two of the regime. In 1962 Zakara abandoned his secretarial functions in the interior ministry, thus reinforcing Maïga's position further.⁵⁹

The internal battles for power were fought over a range of issues. The ambitious Maïga opposed Diori's desire for a powerful presidency in favour of sharing prerogatives among ministries. He also led the party hardliners in adopting a hostile attitude to the country's chiefs. Although member of an esteemed line of chiefs himself, the interior minister considered them an obstacle to the expansion of party influence in the rural areas, guarding memories of chiefly resistance to party mobilisation and having been reared in the 'anti-feudal' rhetoric of the 'commis'-based RDA. Boubou Hama, the low-status commoner, supported Maïga on this point, forcing Diori to cave in. With Djermakoye out of the way, those who defended chiefly interests lost out. As shown below, this opened the way for an all-out attack on the country's chiefs. On the issue of independence, it was again Maïga who was to push for a change of heart. In December 1959 he openly distanced himself from the triumvirate's adherence to the Community, fearing the consequences of de Gaulle's decision to consent in the independence of the 'Mali federation', made up of Senegal and Soudan. As this would provide Sawaba with a springboard to continue its opposition, Maïga concluded that Niger would have to follow suit and tried to push an

⁵⁸ As f.e. in August 1962. Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, no. 25547, 3-9 Sept. 1962.

⁵⁹ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 211-212, 215-216; Decalo, *Historical Dictionary*, 239; Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 3 au 9 sept. 1959, no. 46.

unwilling Diori to change course.⁶⁰ Finally, it was also the interior minister who took the hardline view on Sawaba's persecution. The regime opposed any reconciliation enabling Sawaba—as a party—to rejoin the government. Rather, it attempted by way of Boubou Hama to lure moderate members away from Sawaba's core, enticing them to defect and hunting down the militant representatives. Diori initially supported this approach but in late 1961 changed tack to come out in favour of Maïga's uncompromising posture. This pressed for total unity, papered over internal contradictions and disallowed even veiled forms of dissent.⁶¹

Of course, this could only increase the power of the interior minister himself, whom the French soon dubbed as the 'real chief of all police'.⁶² With unfailing tenacity and a ferocious vengeance Maïga began to organise Sawaba's persecution. He spent long hours reading each and every intelligence note, concerning himself with the minutest details and keeping track of countless individuals. In this he demonstrated great personal knowledge as well as a resolve bordering on obsession. Thus, at one point the French noted that Maïga was worrying about Sawaba 'day and night', ordering police to hound activists on the basis of intelligence that at times constituted pure fantasy. At other times he would have personally led police operations to maintain a nightly curfew in the capital and chase opposition activists.⁶³ His fixation, indeed, appears too great to be explained by reference to his aggressive character alone. In all probability it was heightened by his experiences during the riots in April 1958, when he was the target of physical assault and saw his house and family come under attack.

Consequently, the interior minister exhibited a vindictiveness that could even strike at Europeans. When a French military surgeon personally removed two women—who happened to be Maïga's wives—from his hospital for disturbing the peace of the operating theatre with their chatter,

⁶⁰ Synthèse de Renseignements Intérieurs ... 1^{er} août au 30 oct. 1960; Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus pour la période du 8 au 14 janv. 1960, no. 63; CAOM, Cart.2252; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 211-2 and 252-3.

⁶¹ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 235; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 275; Synthèse de Renseignements Intérieurs, 3^{ème} Trimestre 1961; 2^{ème} Trimestre 1960, Période 1^{er} mai au 31 juillet 1960, no. 1814; SHAT, 5 H 95. See further Chapter 8.

⁶² Recueil des principaux renseignements collectés au cours de la période 9 au 15 nov. 1961, no. 151; SHAT, 5 H 95 ('vrai chef de toutes les polices').

⁶³ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 8 au 14 janv. 1960, no. 63; interview with Ali Amadou, Niamey, 28 Jan. 2003; Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 324 ('jour et nuit').

he was led to the Sûreté the same day and summarily deported.⁶⁴ As far as the opposition was concerned Maïga's hatred was so intense that he regularly scribbled insults in the margins of reports, accusing Sawabists of 'sabotage', calling them names like 'fools', 'asses' or 'windbags' or threatening them with brutalities. Reading the files of the interior ministry yields a shocking picture of indecorum and abandon on the part of one of the highest officers of state.⁶⁵ Both in resolve and hostility, however, Maïga developed a close rapport with officers like Espitalier and Jean Ambroise Colombani. Their advice on the reinforcement of border controls and the dispatch of spies to Sawaba circles in Nigeria would earn an approving 'yes' scribbled in the margins of their correspondence to the minister, while Maïga assessed as 'absolutely correct' the observation of Colombani that magnanimity towards the opposition could turn into tragedy if no solid police organisation were built up. The latter wondered rhetorically whether one could believe in the neutrality of certain Sawabists—something his boss excluded with a dismissive 'never!'—and shared in his superior's hostility towards Sawaba's leader. When Georges Condat accompanied Bakary on his way to court to face trial over the abuse of funds and vehicles in the referendum, they were met by Colombani, who caustically inquired whether the former parliamentary chairman was 'with that bastard over there?'.⁶⁶

Thus, the first three years of RDA rule led to the development of a highly authoritarian regime marked by close metropolitan involvement at the

⁶⁴ This was *before* Niger's official independence. Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus pour la période du 26 févr. au 13 mars 1960, no. 70; CAOM, Cart.2252.

⁶⁵ For Maïga's name-calling, see f.e. the scribbled notes in the report of the 12th Congress of the Association des Etudiants Nigériens en France (AENF), Antony, 24-26 Dec. 1964; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.2; Sékou Ismaila Bery to President Diouri, 21 Oct. 1961 (letter); ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.19; and telegram of East German youth organisation to Minister of the Interior, n.d.; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.8 ('fous'; 'baudets'; 'fanfarons'). It is beyond doubt that it concerns his handwriting: letters, f.e. of Boubakar Moussa, Sûreté director, addressed to the minister of the interior, contain scribbled notes followed by a y-shaped paraph found in many documents, which probably refers to the 'Y' of Yansambou, part of Maïga's name, and closely resembles the initial part of his full signature found in other documents. Moussa's signature was different. The scribbled notes give orders to the Sûreté, sometimes disagree with the director's assessments or, at one point, deny a rumour of Maïga's opposition to a government policy—thus proving Maïga's identity. Correspondence of other people to Maïga contain the same paraph. In later years, notes are occasionally followed by the paraph 'DYM', clearly Maïga's full initials. See various correspondence stored at ANN, but notably files of the interior ministry such as 86 MI.

⁶⁶ Interview with Georges Condat, Niamey, 27 Nov. 2003; A. Espitalier, commissioner police Zinder, to director Sûreté, 3 Oct. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.6; Stratégie de l'Opposition Sawaba ('oui'; 'très juste'; 'jamais'; 'avec ce salaud là?').

bottom line of governance—persecution. The psychotic touch of some of its key indigenous officers brought a mixture of paranoia and obsessive vengeance into the heart of government. This meant that there were elements of instability in the administration that were enhanced by the state of RDA hegemony. As noted in Part I, the RDA had by 1951 lost the near totality of its backing east of Dogondoutchi. With the growth of the UDN, its support in the western provinces, though genuine, did not remain uncontested either. Its sudden and unlikely rise to prominence in 1958 was the result of French interference that transformed the RDA into an ‘administrative party’, i.e. one that developed because of colonial benevolence instead of its social roots.⁶⁷ If its reign were to acquire any degree of stability it had to expand its base in terms of social strata and the regions represented. In the west the party also enjoyed support from segments other than the ‘commis’, but this did not go uncontested in towns along the Niger River. As shown above, with the social antagonism of Boubou Hama attempts to establish party control led to violent clashes with Sawaba-oriented chiefs and thus tainted the RDA’s claim to newly found legitimacy. In the centre and east the situation was even more difficult. As these regions constituted the core of Sawaba’s support and were economically oriented towards Nigeria, the regime’s administrative control and political base were in question. Immediately in 1959 the government asked the French for reinforcement of the military presence in Maradi and Nguigmi, while it also created new frontier and administrative posts and planned a state information agency in Zinder.⁶⁸

Establishing a sound political base was more complicated, however. Party sections were hastily formed, bringing people to positions of influence who were indifferent or bent on enrichment, or who had an axe to grind and therefore enjoyed little popular confidence. Party activity petered out quickly and got bogged in personal issues, paralysing mobilisation. The expansion of RDA cadres, moreover, led to problems with older members, who felt outmanoeuvred by new and better-educated members, whose belated rallying to the party was rewarded with jobs and appointments. In Zinder the party committee was struck by a bitter feud between Issa Ibrahim, the MP who had fought Sawaba in the past, and a prosperous trader who enjoyed the support of Diamballa Maïga. Different groups of youngsters—loyal party supporters, employed intellectuals ea-

⁶⁷ F. Fuglestad, ‘UNIS and BNA: The Rôle of ‘Traditionalist’ Parties in Niger, 1948-1960’, *Journal of African History*, 16 (1975), 113-115.

⁶⁸ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 18 au 24 juin 1959, no. 35.

ger to replace less-educated superiors, and a mass of unemployed—felt especially prejudiced. While incorporation of youths, chiefs, veterans and unionists could curb the consequences of the east-west divide, quite the opposite occurred when dissatisfaction and generational tension set in. This also took on a regional form, as central and eastern Niger represented the country's economic core, while also delivering the larger part of the tax revenue. In 1960 the French reported that discontent was growing despite the visits that RDA unionists and politicians made to the centre and east. The emergence of a regionalist discourse, more salient than during the 1950s, was facilitated by the fact that the RDA's bureau politique remained under the control of people from the west. The inclusion in the cabinet of people of Hausa extraction hardly compensated for this since it was the bureau politique that represented the major decision-making body.⁶⁹

Part of the discontent could be deflected towards the chiefs. Their new alliance with the RDA was undermined by the antagonism of 'commis' and youths towards traditional authorities. At a national conference in 1959 Diori could hold off an all-out attack on them, but at a gathering in May 1960 Hama prevented their suppression only by pleading that chiefs be allowed to wither away and calling on cadres to work towards their gradual replacement. Since chiefs were also represented in the cabinet, their institution could not be eliminated as such. It was therefore decided to establish rural party committees that had to substitute for chiefly authority. Chiefs got sidelined, even powerful ones like the Sarkin Katsina of Maradi, who had done so much to hinder Bakary during the canvassing of December 1958 but now saw his province suppressed.

Policy on the chiefs led to tensions in the cabinet, where Boubacar Diallo, health minister and chief of Lamordé, refused to condone RDA extension into his principality. Worse, with the sacking of Sawaba-oriented chiefs, the fall of Djermaakoye and the suppression of a succession tax funding chiefly incomes, it helped to poison the atmosphere in the countryside, engendering feuds in chiefly families and popular opposition to incumbents that in turn triggered government reprisals. Problems surrounding chiefs erupted everywhere—not only in Maradi, but also in Téra, Konni, Tahoua, Tessaoua, Gouré and Magaria. The effect of government policy was

⁶⁹ Ibid.; ... 23 au 29 juillet 1959, no. 40; ... 29 janv. au 4 févr. 1960, no. 66; CAOM, Cart.3687 & 2252; ch. 2 above; K. Idrissa, 'La dynamique de la gouvernance: administration, politique et ethnicité au Niger', in Ibid. (ed.), *Le Niger: Etat et démocratie* (Paris, 2001), 66; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 216-218; Ibid., 'Les enjeux politiques dans la colonie du Niger (1944-1960)', *Autrepart*, no. 27 (2003), 59; Higgott & Fuglestad, 'The 1974 Coup d'État', 385-387.

limited only by the strife that wrecked party committees, notably in Zinder and Maradi. The rural landscape, however, was further redrawn by the regime's decision to organise peasant co-operatives that took away development issues from the chiefs and sidelined the samariya—the traditional youth associations that Sawaba had transformed into local party committees. The mediatory role of the chiefs was partly taken over by local party men, census work was given to a state agent and tax collection transferred from canton chiefs to their village counterparts. Daily government became the affair of newly established 'conseils d'arrondissement' and the 'sous-préfets'. In the cities political restructuring was less radical, with the magajiya, or patroness of free women, now elected by local members and charged with women and youth affairs.⁷⁰

On the whole, the drive for new members was successful in the west, while in the north it led to marginal expansion as a result of nomadic reluctance. In the east undisputed gains were made, according to the French, but they doubted their permanence.⁷¹ Popular disaffection became apparent in a report of the interior ministry of December 1959, which complained about tax evasion in regions suffering from increases in an already heavy fiscal burden, notably the groundnut-producing areas of the centre and east. While during the whole of 1960 not a single school or clinic was built, the budget deficit did not preclude regular increases in the funds of Maïga's ministry.⁷² The same report betrayed a siege mentality vis-à-vis the clandestine opposition.⁷³

The crusade against the chiefs hardly helped in dampening the malaise, particularly among the young, which in view of the country's demographic structure was potentially destabilising. School youths were generally Sawabist in orientation. The French reported that students, who were inspired by Abdou Moumouni, a teacher at Niamey's 'Collège' (later the 'Ly-

⁷⁰ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 3 au 9 sept. 1959, no. 46; Synthèse de Renseignements Intérieurs, 1^{er}-2^{ème} Trimestres 1960; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 211-3; Idrissa, 'La dynamique de la gouvernance', 47-8; N. Bako-Arifari, *Dynamique et formes de pouvoir politique en milieu rural ouest-africain: Etude comparative sur le Bénin et le Niger* (Ph.D. Paris, 1999), vol. 1, 179-81; H. Djibo, *La participation des femmes africaines à la vie politique: les exemples du Sénégal et du Niger* (Paris, 2001), 112-3.

⁷¹ The French spoke of 15,000 new members. Synthèse de Renseignements Intérieurs, 1^{er} Trimestre 1960.

⁷² République du Niger. Ministère de l'intérieur: Situation politique; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.2; F. Fuglestad, *A History of Niger 1850-1960* (Cambridge, 1983), 174; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 218. For the fiscal regime at independence, see Notes on Local Budgets and Taxation in the Republic of Niger as at Sept. 1, 1960; PRO, FO 371/147586.

⁷³ Ministère de l'intérieur: Situation politique.



Photo 6.3 Hamidou Adamou Abdoulaye, Niamey, 2009.

cée National'), were dreaming of the government's downfall.⁷⁴ This invited police action against educational institutions, such as in January 1959, when the capital's Collège was raided, pupils brutalised and the establishment closed down. A similar incident occurred in May 1961, with complaints about harassment and interruption of courses adding to dissatisfaction about unemployment and admission procedures. In August that year police broke up a meeting of students who protested against arrests and the suspension of the leftist Moumouni. They had denounced the absence of elections and France's continued presence in the country, while lauding the Eastern Bloc and its African allies. In Maradi young students—among whom was Hamidou Abdoulaye, an assistant teacher in technical education—gathered together in a group that was baptised the 'Red Cord', after the distinguishing red ties they wore.⁷⁵

The continued service of French personnel in superior positions in the administration, educational institutions and health services became a

⁷⁴ Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 320, n. 1; Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 8 au 14 janv. 1960, no. 63.

⁷⁵ Nouvelle agression du gouvernement du Niger contre les établissements secondaires; Union des scolaires nigériens, 22 March 1962 (source: *Gaskya: Organe Officiel du Parti Sawaba*, no. 21, 25 March 1962); Parti Sawaba, Pour Un Front Démocratique de la Patrie (Bureau Politique: Niamey, 1962), 33-4; Premier Ministre. SDECE Destinataire no. 501, 13 Sept. 1961; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.7; Confidential/NOFORN. Department of State. Bureau of Intelligence and Research. Research Memorandum RAF-26, 30 March 1962; PRO, FO 371/161689; interview with Hamidou Adamou Abdoulaye, Niamey, 19 Dec. 2009 ('Cordon Rouge').

symbol of the malaise, fuelling unrest and demands for Africanisation. In January 1960 the RDA decided that the administration be subordinated to the party, which had the effect of encouraging the growth of clientèles following rival politicians. As a result the French expressed concern about the efficiency of governing institutions.⁷⁶ Also, while people who had Sawabists among their relations got tainted by association and became the target of persecution, in numerous extended families there were people who followed either political formation or who had relatives employed in the administration while other family members continued to be loyal to Sawaba. Alternatively, it could happen that one had friends in the opposite party; apart from the persistence of established loyalties, this was to some extent determined by the vicissitudes of personal lives and prospects. Fear and the necessity of work and travel led people to join the RDA, as party cards were needed for unmolested movement or entry into government jobs. It also afforded protection when friends or relatives were Sawabist.⁷⁷

In this context it was the RDA's base that pushed the regime on the course to independence. Despite the Gaullists' hope that the Community would forestall this transformation, by the spring of 1960 Africa's political evolution had led many countries to accede to independence, while others were about to do so soon, including neighbouring Nigeria, the Mali federation, Cameroon and Togo, the latter two French UN trusteeships. The demand for independence became urgent, also among Niger's youths and other groups in the country, much to the chagrin of Houphouët-Boigny and his Nigérien client, Diiori, who would have cried over the issue out of frustration or, possibly, fear.⁷⁸ Predictably, the country's chiefs, including the Sultan of Zinder, were also lukewarm about the impending change because of RDA hostility and domination by the western regions, as were many nomadic communities in the north, whose concern about sedentary domination led to calls for separation from Niger.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de Dakar pour la période du 12 au 18 nov. 1959, no. 56; CAOM, Cart.3689; Synthèse de Renseignements ... 1er févr. au 30 avril 1960; Synthèse de Renseignements Intérieurs, 2^{ème} Trimestre 1960; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 219.

⁷⁷ Interviews with Sao Marakan, Niamey, 16 Nov. 2002; Harou Kouka (former RDA minister), Niamey, 26 Nov. 2003; Georges Condat, Niamey, 27 Nov. 2003; Moumouni Daouda, Tillabéri, 3 Nov. 2005; K. Alfari, *Mémoire sur les fraternelles relations franco-nigériennes* (Union de la Jeunesse Patriotique du Niger: Niamey, 2003), 48.

⁷⁸ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 253-4.

⁷⁹ Synthèse de Renseignements Intérieurs, 2^{ème} Trimestre 1960. OCRS control of the northern region continued for the time being. Djibo, *Les transformations*, 262.

The French, however, had already covered their interests by a range of bilateral accords, not just with Niger but also Upper Volta, Dahomey and Côte d'Ivoire, with which Niger now formed the 'Entente', a French-inspired and Ivorian-funded framework of co-operation. If France's consent to Niger's independence conceded at least part of what it had refused to Bakary two years earlier, from the French perspective this seemed 'centuries' ago, as a cynical Foccart would later reminisce.⁸⁰ With a loyal client at the helm of the state and the formation of Niger's army achieved by a simple transfer of African units from the French forces—many of which stayed put—the metropole had little to worry from this 'independence'. The same was true for members of the Assembly, who saw their fear of losing positions allayed by the cancellation of elections.⁸¹ Independence celebrations, though attracting large crowds in Niamey, were uneventful. In many places the transformation was announced by the French Commandant de Cercle. Only chiefs attended the ceremony in regional capitals, where French-language speeches, translated by interpreters, emphasised the friendship with the metropole. Don Jean Colombani presented his credentials to Hamani Diori as France's first ambassador, and at midnight on 3 August 1960 independence was greeted by the playing of the Marseillaise. Niger's national anthem, 'La Nigérienne', was still to be composed—by Frenchmen.⁸²

*We Celebrated Independence in Our Cell:*⁸³ *Patterns and Themes of Emerging Opposition*

For the government the problem was that, while it had quickly managed to ban the party, Sawaba could not be so easily eliminated as a social movement. Thus, a few weeks after independence Georges Clément wrote that the 'Sawabist virus' was asleep but not totally neutralised. According to Jean Colombani the genuine Sawabists were 'implacable': they picked

⁸⁰ 'Two years? It seemed centuries!'. *Foccart parle*, 223 ('Deux ans? Cela paraissait des siècles!').

⁸¹ Rapport de Fin de Commandement. Situation politique et militaire de l'Ex-Afrique Occidentale Française, Dakar, le 30 juin 1962; SHAT, 5 H 31; Synthèse de Renseignements Intérieurs ... 1^{er} août au 30 oct. 1960.

⁸² Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 345-346; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 258, 262-4; Synthèse de Renseignements Intérieurs ... 1^{er} août au 30 oct. 1960. A handwritten example of music and text, with copyright reserved by the authors, can be found in SHAT.

⁸³ Barmou Batouré, prison civile Niamey, to President Diori, 28 Sept. 1960 (paraphrased); ANN, 86 MI 3 F 7.8.

up their 'demolition' work the moment they left prison.⁸⁴ Sawaba activists derived much of their energy from the desire for social betterment, the legitimacy of which appeared to be vindicated by the popularity they had encountered among the electorate. Even if vaguely delineated, their social and political goals could not simply be given up, the more so as the government added an unrelenting persecution to this that made the lives of many Sawabists impossible. Anger and bitterness over the party's overthrow and the repression they suffered gave fresh impetus to the yearning for 'sawki', which was at the bottom of the movement's *raison d'être*. Repression also helped supply new recruits, as in the case of Mounkaila Beidari, a young lad of 14 who joined the movement in 1960—the year that his 50-year old father, a Sawabist, died after having been beaten while in detention.⁸⁵

Consequently, if the repression had pushed Sawaba's cadres on the defensive, the movement was by no means a spent force. It could notably draw on its strength in the union world, from where some of the first protests erupted. On 2 January 1959 a partially followed general strike took place in Niamey to protest against new labour legislation. The move was inspired by the Sawaba-oriented wing of UGTAN, whose inter-territorial congress held in Guinea a fortnight later endorsed Bakary as vice-president. This caused concern as UGTAN was considered tainted by Guinea's rupture with the metropole.⁸⁶ That same month Sawaba called for new municipal elections when Niamey's city council was disbanded, while the provision of full powers to the cabinet the day before elicited a provocative comment in *Azalai* challenging the regime with popular vengeance. Other provocations were more sensitive as they took place on the public road. To the fury of Boubou Hama, an official delegation travelling from the airport to Diori's office was booed by crowds yelling 'Sawaba!'. The same thing happened in mid-February to the prime minister himself and Pierre Messmer, AOF's High Commissioner, during a visit to Tahoua and Maradi where Sawaba followers loudly tarnished the legitimacy of the Franco-RDA combine. This was a serious affront as it had become customary for people to stand along the road and clap when dignitaries on official visits passed by,

⁸⁴ Georges Clément, Chef de Section ST et Frontières, to Directeur des Services, Niamey, 16 Sept. 1960 and Stratégie de l'Opposition Sawaba ('virus sawabiste'; 'irréductible'; 'démolition').

⁸⁵ His father, Beidari Touré, by then 50 years old, was a labourer employed at city hall. He died either in detention or after his release, according to some as a result of his maltreatment. Interviews with Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 Nov. 2003 and 23 Febr. 2008.

⁸⁶ Undated AFP report; CAOM, Cart.2198/D.15; A. Salifou, *Histoire du Niger* (Paris, 1989), 247; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 272.

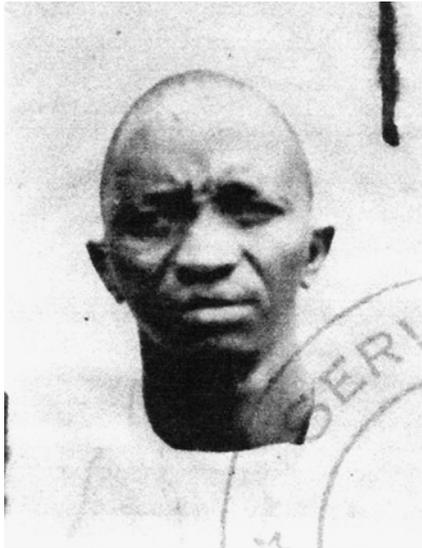


Photo 6.4 Beidari Touré—father of Mounkaila Beidari (M. Beidari).

with all work halted and shops closed.⁸⁷ On 14 March the opposition would have gone a significant step further with an attempt to sabotage the water supply of Zinder, a city perennially suffering from water shortages.⁸⁸ In the same region tax collectors were attacked, according to the French by Sawabists (who were arrested), while Sawaba activist Abdou Sabo dit Sabo Riga was held responsible for stirring up trouble against the chiefs of cantons north and south of Zinder.⁸⁹

With the disenfranchisement of Sawaba's local MPs and the calling of the by-election for late June, the climate heated up. Ousmane Dan Galadima, by then released from prison, flew to Zinder to bring funds for the campaign (apparently before the decision to boycott the polls). Court action in Dakar over the eviction of the party's MPs for Tessaoua had al-

⁸⁷ F. Ansprenger, *Politik im schwarzen Afrika: Die modernen politischen Bewegungen im Afrika französischer Prägung* (Cologne & Opladen, 1961), 359; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 273-276; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 221; Alfari, *Mémoire*. Messmer remained silent about the incident in his writings.

⁸⁸ Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes pour la période du 30 mars au 12 avril 1959, no. 26; CAOM, Cart.2249. At the time it seemed somewhat out of place in the repertoire of party activities. It could have tarnished the popularity of the régime, but also that of Sawaba if it were responsible. While Djibo (*Les transformations*, 225) interprets it as an act of the opposition, I have no data to confirm this.

⁸⁹ Recueil de Renseignements ... 30 mars au 12 avril 1959.

ready failed. In Magaria scuffles broke out when Sawaba employees of a groundnut oil mill engaged RDA cadres, leading to a fight that the French noted involved 'the major part of the city's population'. Six Sawabists were seriously wounded including Moussa 'Maaroud' (i.e. Maharou) and Mahamane 'Tchilli' (Maman Tchila), municipal councillor for Zinder and 'well known in the intelligence services'.⁹⁰ Sawaba had by then issued a statement that came down to a declaration of war. It observed that the legal order had been superseded, and it threatened violent reprisals for each and every blow of the regime, which, in its turn, congratulated local representatives for all repressive action taken against the opposition.⁹¹

By this time there were the first signs that party leaders were contemplating the necessity of going underground. Although the party had not yet been banned, Sallé Dan Koulou asked fellow activist Mallam Abdou to tell comrades that they were 'in the resistance'. In May leaders at the party headquarters in Niamey, target of regular police raids, began burning parts of the archives.⁹² Yet, with many of the party's core based in the union world, opposition through trade union activities continued, even after the banning of Sawaba's UGTAN section in July. Sawaba unionists infiltrated the ranks of the RDA's UGTAN-autonome. At the trading company 'SCOA', for example, they won over the majority of workers' representatives. Sawaba-oriented unions benefited from contacts with the French CGT and the communist world union federation FSM, bringing in Eastern Bloc propaganda and, possibly, funds. By 1959 much of the liaison work with Eastern Europe was assured by Daouda Ardaly.⁹³

Union activism therefore carried on, with Bakary's encouragement. A week after UGTAN's dissolution, unionists met to regroup in a federation called 'Union Syndicale des Travailleurs du Niger' (USTN). Representing different crafts and professional unions it was led by Sawaba activists Nouhou Ibrahim, Farka Maiga—who represented workers in the construction industry—and Djibo Sékou, among other people.⁹⁴ Its establish-

⁹⁰ Ibid., 16 au 22 juillet 1959, no. 39; CAOM, Cart.2249. Also see notes 22 & 24 above ('la majeure partie de la population de la ville'; 'bien connu des services de renseignements').

⁹¹ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 222; Synthèse politique, no. 524 CP, Apr. 1959; Recueil de Renseignements ... 18 au 24 juin 1959, no. 35.

⁹² Sallé Dan Koulou, PTT Niamey, to Mallam Abdou, 27 June 1959; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3-7, and Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 14 au 20 mai 1959, no. 30 ('dans la résistance').

⁹³ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 18 au 24 juin 1959, no. 35, 2 au 8 juillet 1959, no. 37; Ibid., 30 juillet au 5 août 1959, no. 41; CAOM, Cart.3687.

⁹⁴ Others on the USTN's board were Boubacar Maiga, Ango Issa, (H)arouna Zada and Brah Dandine, Sawaba leader in Agadez. Le Secrétaire général du Sawaba Agadez to M. Le Chef du Territoire du Niger, Niamey, 14 Aug. 1958; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 52. See Chapter 2 and following notes.

ment led to a plethora of crafts unions under new names to avoid prosecution. These were either affiliated to the USTN or not, but in all cases controlled by Sawaba cadres. They included a trade union for private-sector workers—traditionally Sawabist in orientation—and unions for civil servants, chauffeurs, domestics, employees of the meteorological service, metal and wood workers and postal and telecommunications employees, as well as a teachers' union.⁹⁵ The French estimated that the union for civil servants and, especially, the one for postal workers, could become a powerful challenge, dismissing the others as of minor importance, notably the union of teachers, most of whom had always been RDA. Maïga did not want to recognise them, going so far as to refuse receipts for the submission of their statutes, although there was disagreement about this with René Delanne, the RDA's union leader. Angered by the union challenge and by criticism of the violation of union freedom at an UGTAN conference in Bamako, the interior minister retaliated by ordering the expulsion of three unionists of foreign origin, Farka Maïga, Yaya Ouattara and Idrissa Maïga. Employed at Entreprises Vidal they were accused of having fomented a strike on the occasion of Bakary's appearance in court. On 23 August they were escorted to the border. Their expulsion contributed to unrest among Soudanais living in the frontier zone, many of whom, such as Songhay, Kurtey and Bella, shared cultural bonds with the menial and construction workers of Niamey.⁹⁶

Contrary to French assessments the incident showed that it was especially private-sector workers, most of whom received lower pay than public employees, who remained stout supporters of the opposition. In September 1959 it was reported that employees of Vidal were still susceptible to party propaganda, participating in meetings and wearing the camel, Sawaba's symbol. In Maradi, earlier in the year, Abdoulaye Mamani incited workers to reject promised pay rises as derisory, while in Zinder the party's unions remained influential in the private sector as well: in elections of union representatives at 'Entreprises Petrocokino', an import trading company, in August Sawaba cadres easily beat RDA-oriented delegates.

⁹⁵ 'Inter Syndicat du secteur privé et assimilé'; 'Syndicat des services civils du S.M.R.'; 'Syndicat des chauffeurs'; 'Syndicat des gens de maison'; 'Syndicat des fonctionnaires de l'administration générale du Niger' (SFAN), led by Nouhou Ibrahim; 'Syndicat des employés de la météo', led by Sékou Beri Soumaila; 'Syndicat des travailleurs des postes et télécommunications et assimilés du Niger', led by one Amoussou and Amadou dit Gabriel, UDN co-founder and Niamey's former assistant mayor; 'Syndicat des Enseignants du Niger' (SEN), led by Garba Abdou and Aboubakar dit Kaou; and the 'Syndicat des travailleurs du bois et des métaux'.

⁹⁶ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 3 au 9 sept. 1959, no. 46, 20 au 26 août 1959, no. 44; Synthèse politique, no. 1214 CP, Sept. 1959; CAOM, Cart.3684.

The teachers' union, too, continued engaging in politics, benefiting from the clandestine import of propaganda material from Guinea and, from November, starting to issue bulletins protesting against the lack of political and union freedom. Public employees, however, were vulnerable to reprisals and could not pose a powerful threat. A planned strike in the health sector in the autumn was prevented.⁹⁷

Yet, as the regime was fragile and Nigérien society was marked by various fissures and tensions, there was ample opportunity for agitation. In doing so, Sawaba harked back to the tradition of opposition politics as it developed during the 1950s, i.e. by tapping into the entire range of problems, fractures and beliefs marking society and using these to damage the regime and improve its standing among the people. This comprehensive conception of opposition, occasionally tempered by tactical concerns, was informed by an ideological baggage made up of militant nationalism, Marxist-inspired topics and local cultural repertoires. Depending on the nature of the audience to which this 'agit-prop' was directed, cadres would to greater or lesser extents refine or simplify their message. Thus, in the spring of 1959 the bureau politique mobilised activists for 'peaceful but effective resistance' and called for systematic exploitation of 'all the mistakes made by the adversary':

Comrades ... arm yourselves for the crusade against the evil that oppresses us and know that only struggle pays for a country as oppressed as ours.

The party organ condemned the government for its 'fascist' measures, such as the banning of meetings and publications, harassment of unions, expulsion of Sawabists of foreign extraction, arbitrary arrests, the takeover of Niamey's city council and plundering by the chiefs. It was stressed that the regime's violence could only widen the 'gap of hatred' between it and the masses.⁹⁸

Early in 1959 the party intensified its propaganda. On 12-13 March Sawaba cadres from Tessaoua, Magaria, Gouré and Zinder held a conference

⁹⁷ The teachers bulletin was edited by Moussa Ide, Gonimi Boukar and Garba Abdou. Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 3 au 9 sept. 1959, no. 46; Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 30 juillet au 5 août 1959, no. 41; Synthèse politique, no. 167 CP, déc. 1958-janv. 1959; Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de Dakar pour la période du 5 au 14 févr. 1959, no. 21, 24 au 31 déc. 1959, no. 61, 1 au 7 janv. 1960, no. 62; Haut Commissariat auprès de la République du Niger: Télégramme Postalisé à Presicom Paris. Compte Rendu Hebdomadaire no. 5; CAOM, Cart.3684, 3685, 3689, 2252, 2221/D.2.

⁹⁸ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 24 avril au 5 mai 1959, no. 28; ('résistance pacifique, mais effective'; 'toutes les fautes commis par l'adversaire'; 'Camarades ... arméz-vous pour la croisade contre le mal qui nous opprime et sachez que seul la lutte paie pour un pays opprimé comme le nôtre'; 'fossé de haine').

discussing plans to organise the party's agitation in the centre and east. Bakary, however, met with Tiémoko Coulibaly—still in the country—, Dandouna Aboubakar and others, instructing his followers to avoid anti-French statements, possibly in an attempt to divide the ruling coalition and out of awareness of the vulnerability of the RDA and the metropole's power. Also, he wished to avoid further expulsions and therefore urged cadres to react with restraint and keep the ranks closed. According to the French, he seemed to think that time was on his side. The party thus paid considerable attention to the role it could play in municipal elections in Niamey, in which it intended to take part itself or by way of a new political grouping—a recurrent theme in its propaganda during 1959 and the first half of 1960.⁹⁹

Issues of foreign policy and political economy were not shunned either. Propaganda was made for the impending Mali federation as an alternative to the Entente and acquiescence in the French sphere of influence. Activists throughout the country were given copies of Soudan's newspaper *l'Essor*, while OCRS control of the Saharan region was condemned as treason against the national cause. By the end of 1959, with independence of the Mali federation consented to by de Gaulle, propaganda for its political neighbour intensified. Hoping to draw Niger into the orbit of the federation, where foreign Sawabists and several of the party's national leaders (like Bakary) had by then taken up residence, cadres led by Dandouna Aboubakar were instructed to make propaganda for Mali's independence. About this time, the party stepped up its propaganda against celebration of the establishment of the 'autonomous' republic, on 18 December the previous year, a day that formed the culmination of France's intervention in Niger and that Sawaba's propaganda therefore portrayed as marking 'nothing national'.¹⁰⁰ Rural cadres were asked to mobilise as many people against the anniversary as possible, while in the capital roneoed tracts were distributed to passers-by, rousing the populace:

Down with the Puppets. To the Polling Booths! To the Polling Booths ...
Nigériens Remember.

The attempt to contact rural cadres over the issue failed, however. So did the call for a boycott, as people flocked to Niamey to see the festivities,

⁹⁹ Synthèse politique, no. 365 & 524 CP, March-Apr. 1959; *Ibid.*, no. 230 CP, Febr. 1959 (CAOM, Cart.3684/2249); Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 19 au 29 mars 1959, no. 25; Note d'information, 8-9 March 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.2.

¹⁰⁰ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 28 mai au 3 juin 1959, no. 32; *Ibid.*, 19 au 25 nov. 1959, no. 57, 21 au 27 mai 1959, no. 31; CAOM, Cart.3689/86; *Ibid.*, 1 au 14 janv. 1959, nos. 62-63; Pour Un Front Démocratique de la Patrie, 50 ('rien de national').

which—more than the date of independence one and a half years later—were intended to legitimise Franco-RDA supremacy. With some urban activists lukewarm about following the party call, Sawaba's leaders could do little else than allow their followers to take part, on the advice that the men wear blue boubous—the party's colour—and the women the colours of Mali. The federation's imminent independence was seen as a challenge to Diori who, it was hoped, would be forced to go the same way. The quasi-millennarian relief that Sawabists attributed to this transformation was underscored by the expectation that Diori would have to appeal to Bakary, whose impending return to Niger was announced by militants everywhere and was expected to be followed by the recovery of power.¹⁰¹

The near messianic role ascribed to Bakary was an alluring theme in a culture that, as elsewhere in Africa,¹⁰² blended the political and religious into one and the same *Weltanschauung*. As observed in Chapter 1, marabouts, notably those of the Tijaniya order and its Hamallist and Nyassist offshoots, had already played their part in a proselytism that mixed politics with the occult in subversive resistance to the worldly order—especially in western Niger.¹⁰³ Party leaders now mobilised marabouts by promising an alliance against the infidel. Hence, during the emerging repression many clerics kept the party colours high. At a Friday prayer meeting in May 1959, Ali Gati, a leading Hamallist, encouraged the faithful of seven villages to persevere in their allegiance to Bakary. Marabout teachers at Kolori in Nigeria, just across the border with Magaria, also professed goodwill towards the party, as did Malam Baba Boubakar Sadeck, a marabout who embarked on a propaganda tour to Agadez in July. By the end of 1959 the ministry of the interior cautioned vigilance against marabouts who were twice involved in incidents near Dogondoutchi.¹⁰⁴ Next, in January 1960 Dahomean fetish specialists got themselves arrested for agitating against the RDA. Maïga had the confiscated fetishes ('gris-gris') burnt or thrown in the Niger River.¹⁰⁵ Finally, by the summer of that year, the regime arrested

¹⁰¹ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 24 au 31 déc. 1959, no. 61; Ibid., 10 au 16 déc. 1959, no. 60, and 22 au 28 janv. 1960, no. 65; CAOM, Cart.2251-2 ('A bas les Fantoches. Aux Urnes! Aux Urnes ... Nigériens Souvenez-vous').

¹⁰² S. Ellis & G. Ter Haar, *Worlds of Power: Religious Thought and Political Practice in Africa* (London, 2004).

¹⁰³ Fuglestad, *History of Niger*, 132.

¹⁰⁴ One marabout, the Nyassist Malam Ibrahima in the Dogondoutchi area, was pressed by his superior to cease party activity. Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 5 au 14 févr. 1959, no. 21; 13 au 23 avril 1959, no. 27; 20 au 26 août 1959, no. 44; Ibid., 26 nov. au -2 déc. 1959, no. 58 (CAOM, Cart.3689); Ministère de l'intérieur: Situation politique.

¹⁰⁵ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 13 au 23 avril 1959, no. 27 and 22 au 28 janv. 1959, no. 65.

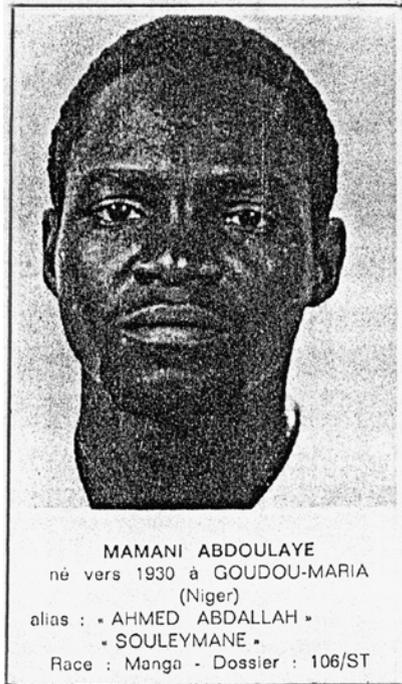


Photo 6.5 Abdoulaye Mamani (police files).

or imposed house arrest on marabouts in Maradi, Zinder and Dogondoutchi, who were disciples of Niger's principal Nyassist—El Hadji Aboubakar Assoumi—for fear of collusion with Sawaba.¹⁰⁶

The existence of beliefs centring on the forces of the invisible world provided possibilities for agitation beyond the modernist conventions of opposition that Sawaba had learned to practise, while it put a premium on the subversive role of rumour. This was to become more important as repression was closing up more direct means of agitation. Thus, during the summer of 1959 Abdoulaye Mamani, who then still held on to a job with government information, was making potentially damaging propaganda with observations about the disappointing rains. The spreading of rumours, true or false, became part of the standard repertoire of party activists. By the end of 1959 Sawabists in Dosso were circulating the story that Issoufou Djermaakoye was actually the representative of Bakary. In 1960, rumours were constantly spread announcing Bakary's homecoming, even to the point that the government would be preparing his triumphal recep-

¹⁰⁶ Synthèse de Renseignements Intérieurs, 2^{ème} Trimestre 1960.

tion. Maïga scribbled an order to punish the author of this tale. The following year, in July, Sawabists were spreading stories about arms trafficking to scare the regime. It is against this background of rumour and the supernatural that one should see an intelligence note of June 1961 warning that Nyassism was more dangerous than a political party, which, after all, could be dissolved at any time.¹⁰⁷

At the level of the leadership, the movement's aspirations were cast in a more articulate programme, which, in combination with the themes of local cultural repertoires, completed the mental and ideological baggage guiding cadres in their clandestine struggle. In addition, this programme—laid down in two major policy statements, the first published in Bamako in 1961 and the second in 1962¹⁰⁸—helped to situate the movement in the broader context of Pan-African relations and global politics. It also informed and facilitated its choice of the foreign assistance on offer in the arenas of the Cold War, non-aligned politics and regional affairs. For example, the first policy statement, *Les raisons de notre lutte*, classified the RDA regime in the same category as that of Batista—recently overthrown in Cuba by Fidel Castro—and other Third World regimes uncritical of the global political economy or maintaining cordial relations with the West. Diori and Boubou Hama were thus put on a par with Senghor, Tshombe and Mobutu. The party reiterated its 1958 posture in which it accommodated the French sphere of influence but reserved its independence of foreign policy action. The 1961 policy statement, however, added a clear preference for radical nationalist regimes such as Guinea, Ghana and Mali—whose federal link with Senegal had by then been broken. Theirs had to be considered as 'total' and 'effective' independence in contrast to that of Niger, which was 'nominal'. The struggle for *effective* independence therefore became the central tenet in Sawaba ideology, which revolved around condemnation of the referendum and the usurpation of power by the Franco-RDA combine. The failure of the 'No' vote was turned on its head as a source of ideological strength enabling Sawabists to pose as the

¹⁰⁷ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 30 juillet au 5 août 1959, no. 41 and 1 au 7 janv. 1960, no. 62; Fiche de renseignements, 25-28 June 1963; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 18.9 (Direction de la Sûreté Nationale/Commissariat de police de la ville d'Agadez: Notes d'information concernant le Sawaba en liaison avec Tamanrasset); Note d'information, 16 June & 12 Dec. 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.5; Renseignements, 8 June 1961 and Fiche de renseignements, 8 July 1961; both ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.5. Mamani's information job probably ended in 1960. See *Projet de restitution et de diffusion des oeuvres des hommes de lettres et de culture nigériens du 20^{ème} siècle*, n.d. but dating from the late 1980s, early 1990s (courtesy Mrs Mamani).

¹⁰⁸ *Les raisons de notre lutte* and *Pour Un Front Démocratique de la Patrie* (notes 5 & 75). The latter was supposedly published in Niamey. If this is true, which considering the circumstances pertaining at the time seems unlikely, this was done clandestinely.

ones who had dared to stand up against the French. As Niger's government paper would later scoff, they made the 'No' into their 'talisman'.¹⁰⁹ With time criticism of the French was to become sharper, assisted by reflections on the concept of 'neo-colonialism'. Thus, according to the 1961 statement, independence had been forced on Diori as a diversion from the real struggle for liberation, i.e. one in which the people would be free to choose its destiny without external pressure and have its socio-economic problems resolved. In this line of thinking the battle for independence was only beginning and Sawaba was, consequently, entitled to mobilise all forces to launch the 'final combat' for the liberation of the people, meaning among other things economic independence and the withdrawal of French troops.¹¹⁰

This argument could, of course, help legitimise the use of force, something that was not surprising in view of the nature of Nigérien politics and the movement's history. However, as shown in the next chapters, for some years the party was to engage in a dual policy of pursuing non-violent politics and a peaceful way out (by proposing some sort of rapprochement with the regime), while on the other hand contemplating and preparing for the possibility of violent action. From an ideological perspective it found its justification for this in the contention that the Franco-RDA combine was 'anti-national' and hostile to the people, as it had been imposed by 'French bayonets'. This amounted to a situation of 'pseudo-independence' denying the government freedom of action.

This also touched on a double frustration in the movement, namely that it had been denied independent statehood, which the RDA—in contrast—was granted two years later and which, when it finally came, did not bring the expected 'sawki' but oppression for those who had fought for it. Also, the enthusiasm that inevitably accompanied the 3rd of August temporarily weakened support for the movement.¹¹¹ The resultant sense of despair over how a millenarian conviction was turned upside down is illustrated in the letter that Barmou Batouré, former assistant Commandant de Cercle of Maradi, sent to President Diori in September 1960. Writing on behalf of

¹⁰⁹ Interviews with Ali Amadou, Niamey & Ousmane Dan Galadima, Madaoua, 31 Jan. & 7 Febr. 2003; *Le Niger*, 26 July 1965; Pour Un Front Démocratique de la Patrie, 48 ('talisman').

¹¹⁰ *Les raisons de notre lutte*, 55-75. While the RDA also emphasised economic independence, Sawaba claimed this could only be achieved with freedom of action in the field of foreign policy and political economy ('total'; 'effective'; 'nominale'; 'combat final').

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 58-72; interview with Ali Amadou, Niamey, 28 Jan. 2003; Research Memorandum RAF-26, 30 March 1962; Confidential Inward Saving Telegram Dakar to Foreign Office, no. 71, 29 June 1960; ('baïonnettes françaises'; 'anti-national'; 'pseudo-indépendance'; 'néo-colonialisme').

eight fellow inmates, he complained about their incarceration and conditions of internment. Batouré pointed out that in June that year the RDA had come down on the side of independence, that there were therefore no disagreements anymore, but that they were arrested in July, that they felt bitter that they had been excluded from national development and that they celebrated Niger's independence in jail, under very bad circumstances.¹¹²

The 1961 policy statement thus insisted on a return to the constitutional order, unconditional amnesty for Sawaba activists, annulment of repressive measures, free elections and a democratic government including the restoration of dissolved city councils. The party had developed a habit of couching its aspirations in Marxist-inspired language, claiming a scientifically proven basis for its ideals, which showed a rhetorical disdain for the question of which persons should direct the affairs of state. But since it presented itself as a movement with a broad popular base and stressed that the goal of independence was the well-being of the people, it was obvious that it thought that Sawaba was the natural candidate to guide the masses, alone or with the RDA in a government of national reconciliation.¹¹³

The social dimensions of its drive for genuine independence constituted an important part of its programme and was to result in an extensive analysis of Nigérien society in the next policy statement (1962). At the same time, this enabled the party to assail the RDA. Thus, it was noted that two years of RDA rule had delivered nothing in the social domain, with not a single new clinic, school or public building constructed or any development in urban infrastructure. Much of this was true and therefore constituted powerful ammunition. The 1961 programme said that the urban areas suffered from an increase in unemployment, social insecurity and declining living standards that had worsened as a result of the increases in taxation. Field propaganda was cruder, with activists arguing that the current independence was illusory and that, when Sawaba was in power, everyone had work.¹¹⁴ Early in 1960 the French reported that the number of malcon-

¹¹² Barmou Batouré, prison civile Niamey, to President Diiori, 28 Sept. 1960. One of the inmates was Baoua Souley, who already did time there in 1950, together with Joseph Akouété. See Le Gendarme Lagrave, régisseur de la Prison Civile de Niamey, to Le Chef du Bureau des Finances, Niamey, 20 July 1950; ANN, 86 MI 1 C 1.2; Les raisons de notre lutte, 67. Condat and several high-rank Sawabists were also in prison then, in the wake of the 'Plan B' affair. See ch. 8 at n. 6-8 and *Le Sahel*, 2 Aug. 2010 (via www.tamtaminfo.com, accessed 24 Jan. 2011).

¹¹³ Les raisons de notre lutte, 59-76; interview Ousmane Dan Galadima, Madaoua, 7 Febr. 2003.

¹¹⁴ Maurice Espitalier, commissioner of police, Maradi, to chef des services de police, Niamey, 5 Jan. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.8.

tents was, indeed, growing—also because of a poor groundnut harvest—and that the opposition had become less discreet and its tone sharper. American intelligence observed that independence was quickly followed by disillusionment over unchanged conditions.¹¹⁵

Hence, Sawaba's programme expressed harsh criticism of the government record, also with regard to electrification work in the commercial city of Maradi and the improvement of Zinder's water supply, which would have come to a halt because the requisite funds had been used for the 'imbecile festivities' of 18 December. The 1961 policy statement also demanded that petty traders, transporters and artisans should not be hindered by restrictions enacted to the benefit of European trading houses or companies in the hands of cabinet ministers. On the ground such sentiments were driven home in rudimentary fashion: by 1962 there would be a war between the whites and the Africans, so predicted Aboubakar dit Kaou to his Maradi followers in October 1959, while Tini Abdouramane dit Malélé, activist from Gothèye, told Ghana's Nigérien community in the summer of 1961 that Sawabists did not like Diori because he lived with the whites and they did not want white people in Niger.¹¹⁶ While the party did not really articulate racist sentiments, this tapped into simmering discontent over the limited Africanisation of jobs and posts. Corsicans, in particular, became the target of recriminations—almost as a latter-day resurrection of European prejudices about the 'Corsican bandit'—, not least because they occupied positions in the security apparatus:¹¹⁷ it was felt that the French had deliberately recruited them, as well as the Bretons, because they were hot-blooded and tough.¹¹⁸

The official party programme cast its net much wider, however, by demanding suppression of unjust taxes and agrarian reform to end peasants' exploitation by chiefs, put down as 'retrograde', 'feudal' or 'parasitical' institutions that must be abolished. Cast barriers should be suppressed and women given the same rights as men; they should actively participate in

¹¹⁵ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 29 janv. au 4 févr. 1960, no. 66; Research Memorandum RAF-26, 30 March 1962.

¹¹⁶ A. Bernier, 1st conseiller French embassy Accra to Diori, 2 Aug. 1961 + attached renseignements; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 4.11; report of Maréchal des logis, chef Draouler, Commandant la Brigade, sur les activités du militant Sawaba: Kao [sic] Aboubakar, Maradi, 12 Oct. 1959; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.11.

¹¹⁷ Pour Un Front Démocratique de la Patrie, 51; Mémorandum sur la situation politique du Niger (note 44); *Gaskya*, no. 12, 12 Sept. 1961.

¹¹⁸ Les raisons de notre lutte, 58-73; interview Adamou Assane Mayaki (Niamey, 29 Jan. 2003), whose wife was half Corsican. The characterisation came from his son. Also D. Bakary, *Silence! On décolonise: Itinéraire politique et syndical d'un militant africain* (Paris, 1992), 204. On European pejorative views about Corsicans, see Aldrich, 'France's Colonial Island' ('festivités imbeciles').

public life. The association with the downtrodden was given practical application by cadres in the Tahoua region, who incited illiterate ‘captives’ still living in conditions of slavery to demand emancipation. This fitted well in the party’s revolutionary rhetoric and reflected badly on a regime that had not put an end to these conditions.¹¹⁹ Similarly, its comprehensive opposition strategy led it to plead the cause of the Hausa language, which should become the country’s first or national language, although not by eliminating French or discriminating against other native tongues. While it could help reinforce Sawaba’s support in the central region, greater concessions in this regard would go against its nationalist project, which, after all, had the little folk of towns across the country at its base.¹²⁰ Thus, the 1961 policy statement went out of its way to plead for reform in the whole of Niger, involving regional ‘collectivities’, peasant co-operatives, and village councils to take local affairs away from the chiefs (as the RDA actually did), besides calling for improvement of relations between nomads and the sedentary population.¹²¹

Finally, the party’s social critique struck at the heart of the triumvirate by alleging that Diori had rented out his government villa and developed interests in the transport sector. Ministers were criticised for similar practices. It was, indeed, public knowledge that government property was rented out to expatriates or state corporations at exorbitant rates, notably by Diori’s wife, who amassed a fortune in Niamey real estate. It earned her a nickname among students as ‘l’Autrichienne’, as a disparaging allusion to Marie Antoinette. Thus, in July 1961 Hima Dembélé and Adamou Sékou were reported to be investigating the fraudulent practices that cabinet ministers had developed in the building industry.¹²² The 18 December celebrations that year were openly derided for the expenditure of what were claimed to be vast sums of money—including for Mercedes cars—and for compulsory contributions from peasants and people in the city.¹²³

However, by that time various forms of more surreptitious action had become part of the movement’s repertoires to challenge the regime.

¹¹⁹ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 28 mai au 3 juin 1959, no. 32 (‘captifs’).

¹²⁰ *Gaskya* (which occasionally ran articles in Hausa), no. 12, 12 Sept. 1961.

¹²¹ Les raisons de notre lutte, 72-5; Pour Un Front Démocratique de la Patrie, 36 (‘collectivités’).

¹²² Les raisons de notre lutte, 70; Note d’information, 22 July 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.9; Higgott & Fuglestad, ‘The 1974 Coup d’État’, 390; *Seeda: Mensuel nigérien d’informations générales*, no. 12, Aug. 2003.

¹²³ Déclaration, Bureau Politique, Parti Sawaba, Bamako, 1 Dec. 1961 (in *Gaskya*, no. 18, 6 Dec. 1961); Les raisons de notre lutte, 70.

CHAPTER SEVEN

BUILDING TO UNDERMINE, 1959–1962

In order to engage in opposition effectively, the party had to organise. In the face of the regime's battering, the first task was to maintain the party's structures, including its internal chain of command and a system of communication with local party committees, spread as these were across the national territory and which, in view of the repression, were progressively taking on the character of clandestine cells. Structures also had to be devised to enable the party to decide on strategy and tactics, preferably as much as possible shielded from public view.

Without a doubt, Djibo Bakary remained the supreme leader, deciding the general line of strategy but also giving orders to his subordinates stationed not just in Niamey but also in other towns in the country. The *Sûreté* file on Bakary, stored at Niger's national archives,¹ is stuffed with letters that Sawaba's leader, once he had taken up residence in the Mali federation, began dispatching to his lieutenants. For example, in January 1960 Dandouna Aboubakar travelled from Maradi to the capital with 'personal instructions of ... Bakary' to execute a propaganda plan in Niamey. Bakary's settlement in the course of 1959 in what was to become the Mali federation had the effect of enhancing his quasi-messianic status as the future saviour of Niger's little folk. Much to the anger of Diamballa Maïga, people were keen to listen to the weekly broadcasts that the government of Soudan/Mali allowed Bakary to air on Radio Bamako. Street propaganda in Niger sang the praise of the righter of wrongs, such as in January 1960 when Al-assane Dantata, former keeper of Bakary at city hall and 'virulent Bakaryst', was heard extolling his leader and insulting the RDA on the Great Market of Niamey.²

Yet, Bakary's departure forced the leadership to rearrange the lines of command and reallocate tasks and duties even if, in a social movement where much was driven by individual passions and efforts, this was always somewhat fluid. In the early days, French intelligence had some ideas

¹ ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3-5.

² Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus pour la période du 8 au 14 janv. 1960, no. 63; CAOM, Cart.2252 ('instructions personnelles de ... Bakary'; 'virulent bakaryste').

about Sawaba's internal hierarchy, while reports on clandestine meetings organised in the houses of leaders gave clues as to the relative importance of Bakary's lieutenants: at whose house did a meeting take place? Who was present? All this was meticulously recorded by French and Nigérien intelligence and, if interpreted with care,³ provides some insight into the movement's internal organisation during the first clandestine years. The settlement in Mali of various Sawaba leaders was to induce further changes by providing liaison duties to activists, who thereby saw their position enhanced. As shown below, a strategy of violent action, which was to progressively gain in importance, engendered other shifts in the hierarchy and enhanced the position of those performing functions in the foreign branches of the movement, which came to be established in neighbouring countries or further afield.⁴

Thus, in July 1959 the French estimated that those closest to Sawaba's leader were Georges Condat, the Togolese Joseph Akouété—as shown in Chapter 1, an old comrade of Bakary—, Ousmane Dan Galadima and Abdoulaye Mamani. Deemed to be the 'indisputable chiefs of "Sawaba" propaganda', they were followed by what the French considered the second echelon, i.e. Diougou Sangaré of the BNA; Amadou dit Gabriel, UDN co-founder and ex-deputy mayor of Niamey; Adamou Assane Mayaki (dit Ghazi), former interior minister; one Habi Djibo; and—surprisingly—Sal-lé Dan Koulou and Adamou Sékou, party ideologue. Yet, the French were perhaps not far off the mark, for by this time meetings were frequently held at the Bakary residence or that of Condat on Salaman Avenue.⁵ On 16 August there was a large meeting at the house that Bakary had constructed in his ancestral Soudouré (he had had no house there of his own). Besides the above people it included a certain Amadou Boucary; one Pascal Rama; 'Gazi' (presumably Adamou Assane Mayaki); Gonimi Boukar; Issaka Samy, as shown in Chapter 1 an early collaborator of Bakary; and Amidou Sékou—possibly Sékou Hamidou, the Tillabéri secretary who was shot during the referendum. These foremen of the 'petit peuple' came together while watching over cadres (including Bellas) volunteering their labour on

³ As noted in the introduction to this book, issues as disinformation, rumour, hearsay, paid informers and circumstantial evidence come into play. With regard to Sawaba's internal hierarchy, interviews also provide clues, but especially for the later years.

⁴ See for this below.

⁵ Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de Dakar pour la période du 23 au 29 juillet 1959, no. 40; CAOM, Cart.3687 ('chefs indiscutés de la propagande "Sawaba"). The house of Bakary was probably that of his wife in the Kalley district.

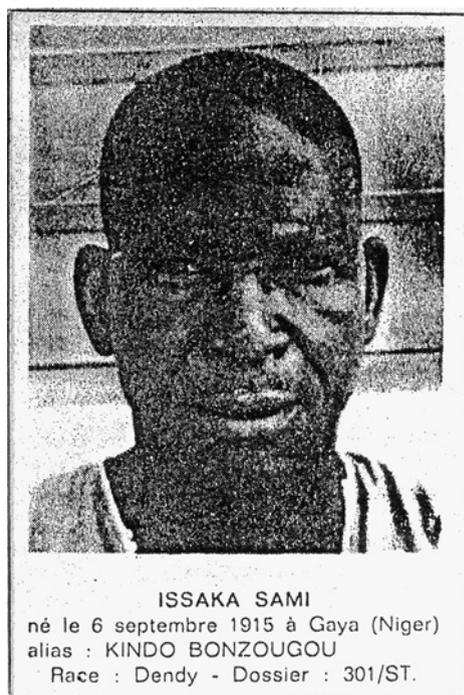


Photo 7.1 Issaka Samy (police files).

a dike that protected the Bakary property, as the French noted in a possible flash of irony.⁶

In the autumn of 1959 Condat was made the second-in-command representing and liaising with the absent Bakary, a choice that might seem odd in view of Condat's background and moderate inclinations but one that probably reflected Bakary's preference at the time for conventional politics while keeping the option of violent action in reserve. Thus, according to the French, Adamou Sékou, Sallé Dan Koulou and Amadou dit Gabriel were advocates of an armed response, as was Dan Galadima, who was also considered to be close to Bakary and thereby possibly reflected the dual strategy that Sawaba's leader was pursuing. To some extent this was echoed in the appointments Bakary made of fellow Sawabists in a new inter-territorial party founded in Dakar in July, which should play a role in the Mali federation and of which Sawaba was to become a component part,

⁶ Ibid., 20-26 août 1959, no. 44; CAOM, Cart.3687.

the 'Parti de la Fédération Africaine' (PFA): while Bakary became vice-president of its 'bureau exécutif'—being second-in-command to Senghor, together with the Dahomean Emile Zinsou—, the Sawabists in the comité directeur were the Habi Djibo mentioned above, Maurice Camara, Abdoulaye Mamani and Dan Galadima. Condat was made propaganda secretary.⁷

Naturally, the influence that Bakary's deputies wielded evolved with the circumstances. Thus, upon Sawaba's forced dissolution in October 1959 Condat had the important task of securing its continuation by registering as a new political party, the 'Union des Populations Nigériennes' (UPN), which as Nigérien section of the PFA simply took over Sawaba's entire membership. With Bakary's blessing, it was presided over by Condat, who was seconded by Issaka Koké, former cabinet minister and UDN MP for Gouré, Diougou Sangaré and Sékou Hamidou, among other people.⁸ When, however, Maïga refused to recognise the UPN and Condat began to organise meetings all the same, a wave of arrests was triggered involving more than 30 party leaders (November 1959).⁹ This, in turn, led to a hardening of attitudes among cadres, something in which they were encouraged by Maurice Camara, who had arrived from Dakar with news of the PFA. It strengthened the position of Adamou Sékou, who in August had had a fierce altercation with Bakary over what was seen as the latter's soft approach (see Chapter 8). While Sékou—then considered by the French as a vigorous activist—had found himself in a minority position, by the end of October he was seen as Sawaba's principal organiser and liaison officer. The French reported that strategy and developments were discussed at his house rather than that of Condat, who was described as 'discreet'. Other Sawabists built up crucial roles by assuming responsibility for the movement's contacts abroad or by exploiting a power base in regions where they represented the national leadership. Thus, Hima Dembélé, Daouda Ardaly and Dandouna Aboubakar assumed vital duties by developing contacts in Eastern Europe. Dandouna—like Aboubakar dit Kaou—also possessed a

⁷ Ibid.; Congrès Constitutif du Parti de la Fédération Africaine; Dakar, les 1^{er}, 2 et 3 juillet 1959 (no pl. or d.); M. Djibo, *Les transformations politiques au Niger à la veille de l'indépendance* (Paris, 2001), 231; C. Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA et la décolonisation du Niger 1946-1960* (Paris, 1995), 291.

⁸ One Alhassane Abba became organisational secretary. Dodo Harakoye, victim of a government transfer in the spring (Chapter 6, n. 20), became youth representative. Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus pour la période du 22 au 28 oct. 1959, no. 53; CAOM, Cart. 2251.

⁹ Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 323.

local power base in Maradi, as did Abdoulaye Mamani in Zinder, where he was considered Bakary's right-hand man. In turn, Joseph Akouété, later assistant at the meteorological service, played an important role as secretary-general of the 'Association Daho-Togo', which represented the interests of Dahomean and Togolese immigrants and which the activist used to advance Sawaba influence.¹⁰

Yet, for the time being Condat was the official leader of Sawaba's domestic wing. In August an attempt by Diori to lure him away with an offer of a diplomatic post in Rome or Geneva had come to naught, as Condat rejected it, and some of the regime's 'Reds', as well as René Delanne, opposed reconciliation with the former parliamentary chairman.¹¹ Thus, a letter of Bakary's read at a meeting at Sékou's house in November testified to Condat's status as Sawaba's domestic leader. By that time the French referred to the existence of a Sawaba 'general staff', which, judging from an intelligence note, included at least Condat, Sékou, Dembélé, Ardaly, Sallé Dan Koulou and possibly one Kaka Kous(s)ou, a driver. While nothing more is known about the nature of its organisation, it confirmed remarks made by Bakary at the time that Sawaba's infrastructure was still by and large intact.¹²

Geographically, too, the movement was by then far from dead. Instead, it profited from the regime's growing unpopularity as it was the country's only alternative organised force. In the spring of 1959 village chiefs in the Gouré and Gaya regions already resisted regime actions and openly supported Sawaba's opposition.¹³ The establishment of the PFA in July led

¹⁰ Synthèse politique, no. 1373 CP, Oct. 1959; Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de Dakar pour la période du 29 oct. au 11 nov. 1959, nos. 54-5, 13 au 19 août 1959, no. 43, 19 au 25 nov. 1959, no. 57 (CAOM, Cart.3684, 3687, 3688, 3689); Ibid., 20 au 26 août 1959, no. 44; Surveillance du Territoire (Bureau de Coordination), no. 396/SN/ST: Organisation Terroriste "Sawaba" (Recueil des dirigeants et militants actifs en fuite); ex. no. 000148, dest. le Sous Préfet de Dosso. Document in Gendarmerie archives, Niamey. Copy Sanda Mounkaïla, minister of youth affairs, UDFP-Sawaba, 2003; file Akouété ANN, 86 MI 1 C 1.2; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 229; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 322-3 ('discret').

¹¹ Condat would have turned it down, as he preferred to withdraw to France. Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 20 au 26 août 1959, no. 44. While he was a moderate potentially open to talks with the regime, this may have been disinformation. In his early days, he seemed to have a preference to remain in Niger. Interview with Georges Condat, Niamey, 27 Nov. 2003; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 322.

¹² Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 29 oct. au 4 nov. 1959, no. 54 and Ibid., 12 au 18 nov. 1959, no. 56; CAOM, Cart.3689 ('Etat-Major').

¹³ As noted by Djibo (*Les transformations*, 224-5), this situation sometimes makes it hard to distinguish Sawaba activists from other people dissatisfied with the RDA regime.

Sawabists to form PFA sections, notably in the east (Tessaoua, Zinder, Gouré, Maïné-Soroa and Nguigmi), but also in Agadez, Dosso and Tillabéri. The last three were not traditional or uncontested fiefs and hence represented an expansion or consolidation of local committees. The same was true for the Filingué area, also in the west, where Djibo Tessa, involved in the April 1958 riots, was actively engaged. While Mamani was responsible for political activity in Zinder, one Kassatchia, a veterinary nurse, made PFA propaganda in Gouré. Djibo Seyni (Seini), a nurse, did the same in Maïné; a certain Bourem Kissoumi, a teacher, was active in Dosso; and the French registered an Abdou Karemi and Barmou Batouré as hardened propagandists in Nguigmi.¹⁴ Tillabéri's section was led by a peasant/trader by the name of Moussa Diarra and one Oumarou Yacoudima, assistant at the meteorological service. The PFA's message, centring on independence from France and continuation of AOF unity, attracted many Sawaba sympathisers. But it also struck a chord among professional groups like nurses and teachers, as well as people from Soudan or Senegal, who now found themselves on the margins of Nigérien politics.¹⁵

At the end of 1959 and the start of 1960 the regime began to worry about the growth of Sawaba activity, which was observed right across the territory and in different regions, such as the north, Dosso—where Sawaba's cell was very active—, the Téra region—where government reports claimed cadres found a strong response among the population and civil servants—, and Niamey, where the women's section led by a certain Ms Bio was particularly active in anti-government agitation.¹⁶ While a French report claimed that Sawaba propaganda on the Mali federation was confined to urban centres such as the capital, Maradi, Tahoua and Zinder, with 'absolute calm' reigning in the countryside, this was not borne out by a government mission sent to investigate (February 1960). It found Sawaba sections active not just in Zinder and Maradi, but also in the Manga region, a rural area west of Nguigmi in the far east. But it was especially in the western regions that political developments gave grounds for concern, not just in Dosso, Téra and the capital, but also in the town of Gaya and its surround-

¹⁴ See for Barmou Batouré also Chapter 6.

¹⁵ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 13 au 19 août 1959, no. 43 and *Ibid.*, 15 au 21 janv. 1960, no. 64; CAOM, Cart.2252.

¹⁶ Another cadre noted to be active in the Niamey cell was one Dogo Dankamba (see below). Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 15 au 21 janv. 1960, no. 64; *Ibid.*, 1 au 7 janv. 1960, no. 62; CAOM, Cart.2252; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 225-6.

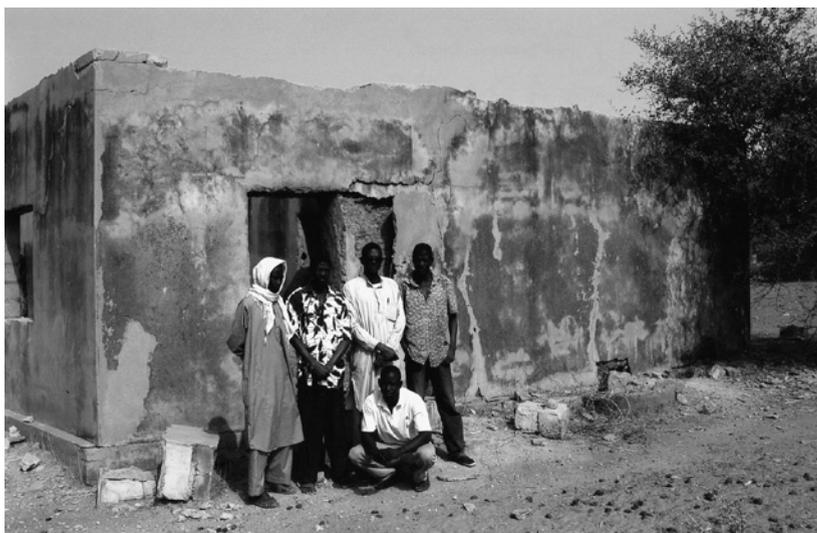


Photo 7.2 The ruins of Djibo Bakary's residence in Soudouré, with family, 2008.

ing villages, Dogondoutchi and Tillabéri, where traders and notables were reported not to be solidly behind the RDA.¹⁷

The point is not so much that the opposition was making progress across the board, as government reports of January 1960 concluded, or that this involved a volte-face precisely in the regions that had been RDA territory.¹⁸ The important thing to note is that Sawaba was still able to give organisational expression to the regime's unpopularity¹⁹ by reinvigorating or establishing sections that now had to operate under challenging circumstances. As noted above, meetings in the privacy of militants' homes was one way of keeping the party afloat, although this presented its own problems. During the first years of clandestine action these were held—in the Niamey area—at a number of different locations, such as Bakary's residence in Soudouré, Condat's home, the house of Adamou Sékou and, occasionally, the compounds of Daouda Ardaly, Mamadou Diori—

¹⁷ Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus pour la période du 22 au 28 janv. 1960, no. 65; CAOM, Cart.2252; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 324; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 225-6 ('calme absolu').

¹⁸ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 225-226. I.e. the western provinces, except the river valley west of Niamey and the Téra region, which had a solid Sawaba following, and Tillabéri, which was divided.

¹⁹ Which also touched the professional category of civil servants. Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 324.

a transporter—and Zada Harouna (Arouna Zada Souley), the Niamey youth leader and unionist who lived in the eastern Gamkallé district. In part, this pointed to the importance of the host in the party hierarchy, although after early 1960 Bakary's home in Soudouré appears to have been used less and less. This was probably due to the fact that it was located at some distance from the capital. Moreover, Bakary had by then gone into exile, constraining his wife and chauffeur, Dodo Bana, to attend meetings at the house of Adamou Sékou. In contrast, Condat's home was centrally located, reinforcing the importance of the domestic leader's house as a meeting place, especially during 1959. During that year a pattern was established with daytime meetings held at the house of Adamou Sékou, followed, occasionally, by a meeting at that of Arouna Zada, and regular night-time discussions at Condat's. Since it was usually the same people that took part, this may point to efforts to maintain the party's internal balance of power.²⁰

By the end of the year, however, the meetings at Sékou's home became markedly more frequent, something that continued the following year and well into 1961. This reflected a weakening of the position of Condat, who, although Bakary's representative, did not have the stomach for tough clandestine action or still put his hopes on some kind of rapprochement with the RDA (see below). Consequently, by January 1960 the French described Sékou as Sawaba's 'militant no. 1' and the result of this was that, one and half years later, his compound was described as 'the real headquarters' of the party. Usually, meetings numbered some 10 to 20 people, most often involving the principal lieutenants in addition to some lower-placed militants, some of whom had been sacked from their petty jobs in the administration. Occasionally, it was only the higher party cadres that congregated to discuss political matters, but at times the number could run into 40 or 60 participants, at least as far as Niamey and some of the bigger cities like Maradi were concerned.²¹

²⁰ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 8 au 14 janv. 1960, no. 63, 15 au 21 janv. 1960, no. 64, 29 janv. au 4 févr. 1960, no. 66, 5 au 11 févr. 1960, no. 67; CAOM, Cart.2252; Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus pour la période du 24 au 31 déc. 1959, no. 61; CAOM, Cart.2251; Renseignements, 4 Nov. 1959 & Note d'information, 22 March 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.9; Note d'information, 1 Apr. 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.5; Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 23 au 29 juillet 1959, no. 40; *Ibid.*, ... 24 au 31 déc. 1959, no. 61; CAOM, Cart.3689.

²¹ Renseignements, 4 Nov. 1959; Note d'information, 22 Febr., 22 & 27 March, 2 June 1961; all ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.9; Renseignements, 17 Dec. 1959; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.10; Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus pour la période du 5 au 11 nov. 1959, no. 55; CAOM, Cart.2251; *Ibid.*, 24 au 31 déc. 1959, no. 61, 8 au 14 janv. 1960, no. 63, 15 au 21 janv. 1960, no. 64,

Technically, the ban on meetings did not extend to what occurred within private compounds, although people could be arrested for reconstituting the party. Possibly, larger numbers afforded some protection against this since attempts to arrest a small crowd more easily upset public order. Perhaps partly for this reason Sawaba's lieutenants developed a habit of sending welcoming parties (to the airport, for example) to collect or send off colleagues returning from or embarking on missions abroad or to the interior. In the smaller towns, however, such high-profile action did not afford the same degree of protection as the authorities there could interfere with less risk. Consequently, here the number of cadres participating in meetings was usually smaller.²²

Under these circumstances meetings also had a social function, as they provided the movement's members a sense of comfort that could compensate for harassment or drive home the message that they did not stand alone. When corresponding with fellow activists, Sallé Dan Koulou made a point of transmitting greetings to numerous others known to his addressees. Cadres would come to party meetings wearing blue or green boubous (Sawaba's colour and that of Islam), effigies of the camel or the colours of Mali.²³ This underscored a sense of togetherness and conveyed a message of resistance, which, at that stage, did not yet provoke a reaction from the regime, at least not in the urban areas.²⁴

Meetings, however, primarily served political purposes. It was here that the mail was examined, political developments discussed and decisions

22 au 28 janv. 1960, no. 65; 29 janv. au 4 févr. 1960, no. 66; 5 au 11 févr. 1960, no. 67; 29 oct. au 4 nov. 1959, no. 54; Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de Dakar pour la période du 4 au 10 mars 1960, no. 71; CAOM, Cart.3690; Renseignements, 6 Nov. 1959; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.8 ('militant no. 1'; 'la véritable permanence').

²² Note d'information, 1 Apr. 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.5; Renseignements, 6 Nov. 1959; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.8; Renseignements, 11 Sept. 1959; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.9; Note d'information, 2 Dec. 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.9; Report of the Maréchal des Logis, chef Draouler, Commandant la Brigade sur les activités du militant Sawaba: Kao [sic] Aboubakar, Maradi, 12 Oct. 1959; ANN, MI 3 F 3.11; Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 29 oct. au 4 nov. 1959, no. 54.

²³ Others brought pictures of Kwame Nkrumah or Sékou Touré. Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 29 janv. au 4 févr. 1960, no. 66.

²⁴ In rural areas such acts already led to reprisals during the referendum. Interview with Djaouga Idrissa, near Dargol, 31 Oct. 2005. Sallé Dan Koulou, PTT Niamey, to Mallam Abdou and to Ounié, 27 June 1959; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.7; Synthèse de Renseignements Intérieurs. 4^{ème} Trimestre 1960, no. 500; SHAT, 5 H 95; Renseignements, 17 Dec. 1959; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.10; Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau de Synthèse pour la période du 3 au 9 sept. 1959, no. 46; CAOM, Cart. 2250; Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus pour la période du 10 au 16 déc. 1959, no. 60; CAOM, Cart.2251; Ibid., 8 au 14 janv. 1960, no. 63.

taken. Thus, it was at a meeting on 29 October 1959, at Condat's home, that the ban imposed on the party was discussed, with Condat trying to reassure members that 'nothing [was] yet lost'. In mid-December a meeting at the homes of Sékou and Condat focused on the effects of the expected independence of the Mali federation; and meetings at the houses of Sékou and Arouna Zada at the end of January 1960 debated the municipal elections for Niamey.²⁵ Meetings would be followed by action, for example, for the establishment of new party sections or the waging of propaganda campaigns. In the wake of a meeting at Sékou's house on 15 December 1959, it was decided to intensify propaganda against the celebration of the republic and immediately that evening tracts appeared in Niamey's streets inciting passers-by to rally to Sawaba's cause. Similarly, discussions a few days earlier on Mali were concluded by visits of party dignitaries to local Senegalese and Soudanese to congratulate them on the coming of independence.²⁶

In short, party structures at the level of the leadership continued operating more or less normally, at least until early or mid-1961. More significant than this, however, is the fact that this did not elude the authorities, who often knew about the meetings. Of course, the getting together of dozens of individuals could not be kept secret, but even meetings of limited numbers became known to the regime. Browsing through the intelligence files shows that the *Sûreté* must have stationed people at Sawabists' compounds, all of which had been earmarked. They would report at what time exactly cadres would arrive and how long a meeting would last, while faithfully listing the names of all the participants involved. Worse, they reported what topics were discussed and what decisions were taken. Thus, one finds intelligence reports such as that of July 1959—which dryly noted that party leaders discussed an upcoming teachers' conference and how to sabotage it—or reports of January 1960, which noted that Bakary's propaganda orders were specified at a particular meeting or which provided a detailed list of discussion topics, the leadership's thinking and its decisions: Mali's independence would thus pull along Dahomey and Niger, the leadership was sure the party would survive, it was expecting Diiori's response

²⁵ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 29 oct. au 4 nov. 1959, no. 54, 5 au 11 nov. 1959, no. 55, 15 au 21 janv. 1960, no. 64, 29 janv. au 4 févr. 1960, no. 66 ('rien n'était encore perdu').

²⁶ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 23-29 juillet 1959, no. 40, 24 au 31 déc. 1959, no. 61.

to Mali's independence, Abdoulaye Mamani was charged with propaganda in the Zinder region, Bakary's return was eagerly awaited, etc.²⁷

This means, in effect, that eavesdroppers were placed at Sawaba residences or that the regime possessed spies inside compounds. Against the background of a communal and orally oriented culture, with compound life involving groups wider than the nuclear family, the possibilities for this were legion. It was, consequently, extremely difficult to maintain a level of confidentiality. In January 1961 Dandouna Aboubakar was carefully agitating for the party cause from his house in Maradi, never receiving more than three or four people and not leaving his compound. Still, Maurice Espitalier, Maradi's police commissioner, could report that Dandouna was unaware of being watched and that he had had a conversation with three activists about the government's economic record—hence, clearly indicating the presence of an informer.²⁸

Usually, however, cadres were aware of the surveillance, something that the Sûreté would at times pick up as a result of a change in activists' behaviour. For example, in August 1959 it was reported that Abdoulaye Mamani knew that he was being watched and that he was very discreet, not organising any meetings nor receiving cadres at his home. Generally, the party was, or became, aware that police were stationed at the 'walls of the compounds' or that people were listening at one's house during the night. The result was that, after 1961, Sûreté records on meetings become sparse, as the success of regime repression pushed Sawabists further underground or made them flee abroad.²⁹

Thus, already by 1959 the French could note that Sawaba leaders in Agadez opted 'to remain in the shadow', leaving the work in committees to others. In the Niamey area, too, propagandists would visit surrounding villages in the course of 'nocturnal trips' rather than during daytime. In February 1960 the French reported night-time meetings in the capital and that same month, in the Dosso region, Sawaba's former interior minister,

²⁷ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 23 au 29 juillet 1959, no. 40, 8 au 14 janv. 1960, no. 63, 15 au 21 janv. 1960, no. 64; conversation Issa Younoussi, Niamey, 22 Febr. 2008.

²⁸ Maurice Espitalier to Chef des Services de Police, Niamey, 5 & 6 Jan. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.8.

²⁹ Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de Dakar pour la période du 30 juillet au 5 août 1959, no. 41; CAOM, Cart.3687; Recueil des principaux renseignements collectés au cours de la période 9 au 15 nov. 1961, no. 151; SHAT, 5 H 95; interview Ali Amadou, Niamey, 31 Jan. 2003; Hima Dembélé, Niamey, to Daouda Ardaly, Vienna, 1 June 1959; ANN, 3 F 4.11 ('les murs des concessions').

Adamou Assane Mayaki, organised a meeting at midnight, which, however, could not prevent its break-up by the Gendarmerie.³⁰ Consequently, a cat-and-mouse game began to develop in which Sawaba had to find ways and means to further its fortunes and outwit its persecutors.

Noms de Plume and Lorry Drivers: Early Communication, Funding and Intelligence

In organising its clandestine life the party made use of the professional background of its supporters, most of whom were employed in the humble positions of the urban world. As shown in previous chapters, numerous Sawabists were, at one time or another, employed as petty clerks at one of the country's post offices. Thus, Sallé Dan Koulou worked as a clerk at Niamey's post office after his expulsion from parliament, as did Barmou Batouré, who became an 'agent d'exploitation' of the PTT in the capital before his arrest in July 1960. Other Sawabists employed in this way were a certain Arzika Issaka; one Goba Ekwe, who worked as a commis at the post office of Maradi; (Mashoud) Pascal Diawara, early UDN militant and commis at the PTT of Niamey; someone called Moumouni (Moumini); and Hamidou Moustapha dit Saidou (i.e. Moustapha Hamidou, a.k.a. Hamidou Mustapha Mahama/Mahamane)—the PTT commis who hailed from Nguigmi and was considered by the Sûreté as a 'notorious Sawabist'.³¹

In the beginning these people could help maintain the party's communication network. Dan Koulou, for example, used his post to engage in correspondence with key activists, such as Mallam Abdou and Dandouna Aboubakar.³² Men like Batouré and Arzika Issaka assisted fellow activists to get in touch with each other, in all probability by receiving or dispatching letters under their own name that were meant for, or came from,

³⁰ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 3 au 9 sept. 1959, no. 46, 29 oct. au 4 nov. 1959, no. 54; Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de Dakar pour la période du 19 au 25 févr. 1960, no. 69, and 4 au 10 mars 1960, no. 71; CAOM, Cart. 3690 ('à rester dans l'ombre'; 'déplacements nocturnes').

³¹ Procès-verbal gendarmerie nationale, 9 Sept. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.7; Barmou Batouré, prison civile Niamey, to President Diiori, 28 Sept. 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 7.8; Léopold Kaziendé, ministre des travaux publics, to ? (letter), 24 June 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.5; Message Radio, 22 Sept. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 12.32; Note d'information, 21 Dec. 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.8; Ibid., 18 Oct. 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.2; Ibid., 8 May 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 4.11 ('Sawaba notoire' [sic]).

³² Sallé Dan Koulou, PTT Niamey, to Mallam Abdou, 27 June 1959 and Ibid., Direction du Groupe Postal Niamey, to Dan Dicko, 28 Febr. 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.7.

someone else—some of them top cadres whose functioning was hindered by surveillance. For example, Abdoulaye Mamani, who was usually in Zinder, corresponded with a certain Aboubakar Ibrah from Maïné-Soroa in the far east via Barmou Batouré at the PTT in the capital.³³ As postal clerks, Sawabists could intercept letters before the police would, remove them from circulation and get them delivered through private channels. This became more important when cadres began to correspond under pseudonyms, which in theory were known only to activists, including the postal employees concerned. Ousseini Dandagoye, for example, a Zinder cadre who had been active in the referendum and worked at the post office, knew all the fictitious names in use: he would open the envelopes concerned, read the messages and pass on their contents orally to the addressees.³⁴ The same thing happened at the airport, which employed workers with modern skills typical of some of the movement's core. Mounkaila Beidari, a young Sawaba cadre, for example, later worked at the airport for 'Air Afrique', a job he used to open mail and luggage and transmit messages and material to party cadres.³⁵ He was a colleague of Sékou Beri Ismaila, an auxiliary of the airport's meteorological service and unionist with Eastern Bloc contacts.³⁶

With the Sûreté on its tail, the movement continually had to try and stay one step ahead. Letters were consequently drafted in code (for example, as business correspondence marked by a commercial vocabulary) and written under various *noms de plume*. On 5 November 1959, for example, Dandouna Aboubakar travelled by plane to Maradi under the name of 'Dan Dicko', a pen name under which he corresponded with Sallé Dan Koulou.³⁷ Djibo Bakary sometimes signed letters as 'Ibrahim Diallo', assuming the identity of a trader in Dillo, north of Maradi, and sometimes as 'Moussa' or

³³ Léopold Kaziendé, ministre des travaux publics, to ? (letter), 24 June 1960 and Note d'information, 23 June 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.5.

³⁴ Interview with Ousseini Dandagoye, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003.

³⁵ Interview with Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 Nov. 2003.

³⁶ J. Colombani, Chef de la Sûreté, to Ministre de l'Intérieur, 22 Sept. 1961 and Note d'information, 12 Oct. 1961; both ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.19. Obviously, Sékou Beri Ismaila is identical to Sékou Beri *Soumaila*, founder of Sawaba's new 'Syndicat des employés de la météo'. See Chapter 6, note 95.

³⁷ Rather than to Hammadoun Dicko, PRA politician from Soudan (see Chapter 5), this may allude to Ahmadou Dicko, an Upper Voltan student who agitated for 'No' in the referendum in his country. Ahmadou A. Dicko, *Journal d'une défaite: Autour du référendum du 28 septembre 1958 en Afrique noire* (Paris, 1992); Note d'information, 7 Aug. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.10; Renseignements, 6 Nov. 1959; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.8; Sallé Dan Koulou to Dan Dicko, 28 Febr. 1960.

'Tamboura'. 'Soriba' was one of the aliases of Adamou Sékou. As Sawaba's clandestine life consolidated, numerous cadres were to assume one or more false names—and sometimes a great many—to mislead the authorities.³⁸ This practice was facilitated by the cultural practice, widespread in Niger, of assuming or giving nicknames. This repertoire was not without significance, although it did not take long before Niger's Sûreté, painstakingly coached by its French officers, found out about the evasive strategies. On 13 May 1960 an intelligence note reported that the names cited in telegrams between Bakary and his domestic staff were false. New pseudonyms, however, could be invented quickly, thus giving Sawabists something with which they could continue to deceive the regime.

However, the authorities found out about the subversive work of the postal workers.³⁹ Correspondence began to be intercepted, not just domestic mail but also letters from abroad, especially the Eastern Bloc—a provenance that often led to immediate action by the regime. When, for example, Arouna Zada began to receive Russian magazines he was put under surveillance.⁴⁰ Letters were brought to the Sûreté, studied and typed out. A letter dated 27 January 1960 written by Maradi trader Lawali Baro to Sallé Dan Koulou, asking for advice about a request of Dandouna Aboubakar for financial help, ended up on police desks—as did countless others. In this case it was explicitly stated that the letter should be put back in circulation in order not to draw attention to the leak. Undoubtedly, this was standard practice, something that effectively nullified Sawaba's orders to destroy letters upon reading.⁴¹ Ironically, this Sûreté coup also led to its own undoing, as it did not take long before cadres discovered that their correspondence was under scrutiny. On 8 September 1961 Espitalier, then police commissioner of Zinder, wrote to Jean Colombani, his successor at the head of the Sûreté, that it was becoming increasingly difficult to gain intelligence on the Zinderois opposition, as mail from Bamako did not pass anymore through the post office, where, Espitalier concluded, a Sawaba sympathiser must be crossing the authorities.⁴²

³⁸ Note d'information, 7 Aug. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.10; *Ibid.*, 2 and 13 May 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.2; interview with Ali Mahamane Madaouki, Zinder, 14 Febr. 2003.

³⁹ Léopold Kaziendé, ministre des travaux publics, to ? (letter), 24 June 1960, warning about the activities of Barmou Batouré and Arzika Issaka.

⁴⁰ See his file in ANN, 86 MI 3 F 12.32.

⁴¹ Lawali Baro to Sallé Dan Koulou, 27 Jan. 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.8 and Sallé Dan Koulou to Dan Dicko, 28 Febr. 1960.

⁴² A. Espitalier, Zinder, to Directeur de la Sûreté, Niamey, 8 Sept. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.5.

It meant that the movement was going deeper underground. A month before Espitalier's letter to Colombani, it was reported that Sawaba, since suffering from postal interceptions, was planning the establishment of a radio installation (presumably in a foreign country). An intelligence note added reassuringly that broadcasting frequencies would be immediately known.⁴³ The mobilisation of radio, anyway, must have been intended (primarily) for propaganda purposes. Clandestine communication had to be assured by other means, something which—in the capital at least—could assume dimensions reminiscent of the Cold War. An intelligence note of 3 February 1961 reported how Adamou Sékou and Amadou dit Gabriel were sitting in the car of the deported Saloum Traoré driving through Niamey (by then not yet the large city of today) for more than an hour, presumably to have a confidential conversation. This suggested that they were being followed by another car or were being watched by informers stationed at different points in the capital. Hima Dembélé, when he tried to go to Mali by air in August 1961, had his ticket registered under the name of his servant, with whom he drove to the airport to switch places at the car park before attempting to board the plane.⁴⁴

By that date communication was assured by other groups of supporters, i.e. traders and transporters. As noted, these professional categories belonged to the core of the movement: mobile people engaged in humble trades but with enlarged horizons and equipped with modern skills, eager to climb the social ladder. In its 1962 policy statement, the party devoted a separate chapter to what it called the 'average categories', in which it singled out for attention petty traders, coxeurs, 'piroguiers' (boatmen) and transporters using donkeys and camels, in addition to lower-placed Qur'anic teachers or marabouts—many of them travelling. Many of these people, Sawaba claimed, had been ruined by government policies catering to large-trader interests or RDA clients. For example, coxeurs—people recruiting clients for transporters against a small commission—were struck by government intervention giving this activity to party supporters. Itinerant traders, in addition to 'tabliers' (traders with a small market stand), had also been hit by unfair licensing practices, besides customs abuses. These people could therefore, as the 1962 policy document noted, be recruited for the struggle.⁴⁵

⁴³ Note d'information, 7 Aug. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.10.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 3 Febr. & 16 Aug. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.9 & 10 respectively.

⁴⁵ Parti Sawaba, *Pour Un Front Démocratique de la Patrie* (Bureau Politique: Niamey, 1962), 14-17 ('catégories moyennes').

Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that Sawaba deliberately mobilised these professions, the reason for which lay in the mobility they embodied. Early in 1960 Bakary established a new political group, which had to take over from the non-recognised UPN formed after the party's banning the previous October. This 'Rassemblement du Peuple Nigérien/du Niger' (RPN) was established in Gao in eastern Soudan, close to the border with Niger. This allowed Bakary to intensify his propaganda by way of 'transporters and ... traders'⁴⁶ and secure his lines of communication: already in the spring of 1959 it was reported that the party avoided the post office when relaying mail from the Mali federation destined for Bakary (then still in Niger). Instead, the French noted that, 'as a precautionary measure and to avoid [the mail] being intercepted by the security services of the Ministry of the Interior', correspondence was dispatched to Gao and entrusted by Saloum Traoré to a lorry driver, who was ordered to hand it over personally to Sawaba leaders in Niger.⁴⁷

It did not take long before this system was practised on a wide scale, using not only lorry drivers, but also traders, marabouts, bus drivers and coxeurs. Since travel was part of their job they could carry letters for the party, or better still, oral instructions, in addition to propaganda material (photos, pamphlets), money for cadres and intelligence. Petty itinerant trade, a common occurrence in the region, provided an excellent cover that was more difficult to break than that of clerks working in a state-controlled environment.⁴⁸ Thus, in 1963 the police commissioner of Agadez made a reconstruction of Sawaba's domestic network, listing the members of some of its cells. They included an assortment of tradesmen alternatively described as 'dioula', 'commerçant', 'vendeur', 'intermédiaire vente', etc.⁴⁹ That some of these covers were blown does not mean that the cells did not function. These disclosures do not reveal the existence of other underground

⁴⁶ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 15 au 21 janv. 1960, no. 64 ('transporteurs et ... commerçants').

⁴⁷ Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de Dakar pour la période du 21 au 27 mai 1959, no. 31, CAOM, Cart.3687 ('par mesure de précaution et afin d'éviter d'être interceptée par les services de sécurité du Ministère de l'Intérieur').

⁴⁸ *As a contrario* shown in the interrogation of a petty trader (probably not a Sawabist). Direction de la Sûreté Nationale, no. 232/CSN: Déclaration Amadou Darey, 25 March 1965; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.1.

⁴⁹ Meaning Muslim itinerant tradesman, trader, merchant, and middleman respectively. M. Aboubakar, le commissaire de police, Agadez, to Directeur de la Sûreté, Niamey, 6 Nov. 1963; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 18.9 (Direction de la Sûreté Nationale/Commissariat de Police de la Ville d'Agadez: Notes d'information concernant le Sawaba en liaison avec Tamanrasset).

cadres, who, as shown below, developed three major networks covering the entire country. Moreover, in a political context marked by repression, new recruits could be mobilised more or less easily to take over from arrested cadres.

Apart from traders, it was lorry and bus drivers, in addition to mechanics and coxeurs, who were at the heart of Sawaba's communication system.⁵⁰ In a landlocked country such as Niger, lorry drivers formed a crucial link in the economy, notably in handling the groundnut crop. Bus drivers of the Transafricaine company ensured passenger transport, plying Niger's roads and the routes linking the country with neighbouring territories. Lorry drivers were in the employment of firms like SCOA and CFAO,⁵¹ the Dumoulin company and Entreprises Vidal. Examples of Sawaba supporters among these men abound. One could mention Bara Sani, born in Tessaoua in 1940 and working as a driver for SCOA in Niamey; Amadou Ide Niameize, employed at Vidal's;⁵² and Gonda Kéletigui, who worked as a clerk for Transafricaine in Agadez. A certain Ramane, a driver on the route between Maradi, Agadez and, further, to the desert town of Bilma in the north-east, distributed the party's correspondence along this lengthy route. Souma Maiga, a transporter from Kidal in Mali, plied the arduous road between Niamey and Gao, while an unidentified transporter reportedly ensured the delivery of letters to Elhadji Ibro (Garba), a former Sawaba MP for Konni resident in Tahoua. Usually, drivers would not man a lorry or bus on their own, but have an 'aide-motoriste' with them to take over the wheel at intervals. Garba Saley, a young man born in Niamey and a Sawaba cadre, was employed in this way.⁵³ Together these transport workers covered practically the whole of the territory.

⁵⁰ Also see K. van Walraven, 'Vehicle of Sedition: The Role of Transport Workers in Sawaba's Rebellion in Niger (1954-1966)', in J.B. Gewald, S. Luning and K. van Walraven (eds), *The Speed of Change: Motor Vehicles and People in Africa, 1890-2000* (Boston and Leiden, 2009), 75-103.

⁵¹ Both private French conglomerates.

⁵² Bureau de coordination et de liaison, No. 879/BCL: Etudiants et Boursiers du Sawaba de Retour des Pays de l'Est, 18 Oct. 1968, 4; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14; Jean Colombani, chef Sûreté, to Minister of the Interior, 13 Sept. 1961, ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.10.

⁵³ Notes d'information concernant le Sawaba en liaison avec Tamanrasset; file on Soumah Maiga; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 12.32; Renseignements, 13 March 1962; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.19; Fiche de Renseignements, 23-25 Nov. 1963; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 18.9; Etudiants et Boursiers du Sawaba. Elhadji Ibro could be Ibro Alirou or, probably, Ibro Garba, a trader-transporter imprisoned several times for political activities. C. Maman, *Répertoire biographique des personnalités de la classe politique et des leaders d'opinion du Niger de 1945 à nos jours* (Niamey, 1999), vol. 1, 282-283.

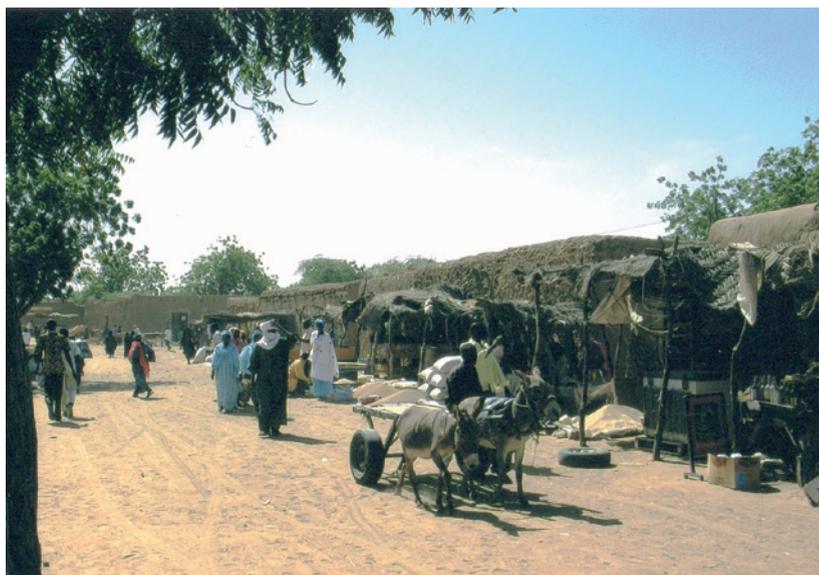


Photo 7.3 Ayorou, 2009.

As shown by the example of Djibo Issa, a Zarma born in the Dosso region (c. 1943), mechanics, too, were active on Sawaba's behalf, something that corresponded to the technological sophistication that marked some of the movement's strata.⁵⁴ In this they differed from the coxeurs, who stayed put at key points of the communication system and were considered by Sawaba's 1962 programme as 'particularly well placed for furnishing intelligence on the movement of people'. Archetypal marginals equipped with a 'hunter's instinct' for winning customers, they could provide the party with its own espionage. Labo Moussa from the town of Galmi in the

⁵⁴ Van Walraven, 'Vehicle of Sedition'. Examples are the Dahomean Marc Foly from Niamey (also employee of the cattle-breeding service); one Moussa from Filingué; Ousseyni Djibo, born ca. 1924 in Bandé, between Magaria and Zinder; Soumana Magawata dit Balle Ali, driver and mechanic at Niamey's government garage; Mounkaila Mahamane dit Lamama, mechanic at the same place and boxer; and Louis Bourgès, from Agadez and of mixed blood, trained as a driver/mechanic. Organisation Terroriste "Sawaba"; Direction de la Sûreté, Surveillance du territoire, no. 630/SN/ST, Examen de situation de nommé Souleymane Hako, 20 July 1967; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14; Cour de Sûreté de l'Etat, Arrêt de condamnation no. 9, June 1969; ANN, M.27.26; Etudiants et Boursiers du Sawaba; Bulletin de Renseignements Particuliers, 18 Oct. 1964, no. 1234/2/S—Note d'information; SHAT, 10 T 717, D. 2; Notes d'information concernant le Sawaba en liaison avec Tamanrasset; Bulletin Hedomadaire, semaine du 8 au 14 oct. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 12.16.

centre of the country, a 'chef coxeur' who had other coxeurs working for him, was one such person in the party's employ. So, too, were Amadou Foulani, a coxeur from Téra; Mahamane Dogo and a certain Massaki, both coxeurs from Tahoua; and Kanguèye Boubacar, a peasant turned coxeur in the strategic city of Ayorou, a vibrant market town on the border with Mali.⁵⁵ The prevalence among coxeurs of Sawabists was one of the reasons why the regime licensed the activity to its own 'clientèle of intelligence agents', as Sawaba's 1962 programme put it. French intelligence reported that regime coxeurs acted as informers at bus stations, monitoring the comings and goings of vehicles, especially those arriving from or heading for foreign destinations.⁵⁶

Building up the clandestine network naturally required funding, also because cadres and families got into problems as a result of arrests and dismissals. During the early days Sawaba benefited from financial support of the more prosperous sympathisers. An uncle of Hima Dembélé assisted activists with money, as did, perhaps, Baelo Abdoulmahas, an affluent cadre in Zinder and owner of several bars in the city.⁵⁷ As time progressed, however, and the authorities closed off internal sources, funds had to come from abroad. Much of the evidence on funding is sketchy, but data provide an impression of the practices in this area. At first, some of the party leaders still had bank accounts, such as Sallé Dan Koulou, whose account was checked by police in May 1961. Only a few months before, in January, it was reported that a Sawaba cadre, Salifou Soumaila (Soumeila), had deposited funds from Ghana into a Nigerian bank (in Lagos or, more probably, Kano), from where the money was transferred to a bank account in Maradi or Zinder.⁵⁸ Yet, from the beginning it seems that much of the financial flows

⁵⁵ Another was one Nouhou, from the region of Labo Moussa. Bulletin Mensuel de Renseignements, no. 472.3, 1-31 Oct. 1964, Konni, ANN, FONDS DAPA; Organisation Terroriste "Sawaba"; *Le Niger*, 16 Nov. 1964.

⁵⁶ Pour Un Front Démocratique de la Patrie, 15-16; 'Coxeur, un emploi pour les jeunes', *Diagonales*, no. 48, Nov. 1998; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 25.463, no. 13, 25-31 March 1963; SHAT, 5 H 123 ('particulièrement bien placée pour fournir des renseignements sur les déplacements des personnes'; 'clientèle d'agents de renseignements'; 'instinct de chasseur').

⁵⁷ Sallé Dan Koulou would have helped himself by selling copies of a newspaper on his own account, leading to a complaint by its French editor. Ministre de l'Intérieur to Chef des Services de Police, Niamey, 31 May 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.8; Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes pour la période de 30 mars au 12 avril 1959, no. 26; CAOM, Cart.2249; Note d'information, 3 June 1960; 86 MI 3 F 8.6.

⁵⁸ Note Direction des services de police to Ministre de l'Intérieur, 15 May 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.7; and Note d'information, 31 Jan. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.10.

occurred partly underground, something in which transporters played a role. Thus, in January 1960 letters were intercepted from Tossou Yavo—a driver—containing a bank cheque of Abdoulaye Mamani destined for Georges Condat to a value of 10,000 CFA francs:⁵⁹ it showed that banks in Niger could not be used anymore and that funding had to take place in cash, while—as will be discussed later—larger amounts could be deposited in foreign banks. The role that travelling cadres played in the funding of Sawaba's operations therefore increased in importance, as money was smuggled into the country. Some of the evidence contains allusions to the role played by drivers. In July 1961 Hima Dembélé went to Tillabéri and met a bus driver of Transafricaine, who had arrived from Gao. A few days later Dembélé returned to Niamey and it became clear that he had acquired funds, since around that time he bought furniture and entertained leading cadres at his house. Alternatively, money from abroad was sent by letter, although in that case one ran the risk of interception.⁶⁰

Cadres often had to fend for themselves, paying for their own trips, putting up fellow activists or making some other sacrifice. This was, of course, not unusual in the context of Nigérien society and set against the objectives that Sawabists felt were at stake.⁶¹ Nevertheless, the party did occasionally assist cadres facing problems, while funds were available to help activists in the execution of their duties. Thus, Bakary's lieutenants made regular trips by plane to other cities in Niger, or to Bamako, indicating that the movement had substantial external funds at its disposal. Malick N'Diaye, for example, Dan Galadima's associate who had been expelled and become Chef de Subdivision in the town of San in Mali, at one time paid for the ticket expenses of Dandouna Aboubakar.⁶² Those who became the victim of regime action or who undertook important tasks for the movement sometimes received donations in cash, or had help provided to their family. When, for example, a certain Moussa, a cook and party cadre of Chadian origin, was deported to his home country in November 1959, Sawabists in Niamey made a collection for his benefit. In May 1960 the

⁵⁹ J. Colombani to Ministre de l'Intérieur, 16 Jan. 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.5. As of Jan. 1960 1 CFA equalled FRF 0,02. Hence, CFA 10,000 equalled FRF 200.

⁶⁰ Note d'information, 20 & 31 July and 5 Aug. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.10; interview with Bachir Boukary, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003.

⁶¹ Interviews with Maman Tchila, Zinder, 9 Febr. 2003 and Monique Hadiza, former wife of Hima Dembélé, Niamey, 5 Nov. 2005.

⁶² See f.e. the Sûreté files on Adamou Sékou and Dandouna Aboubakar; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.9 and 3.8.

Sûreté reported that Sawaba's 'general staff' convened at the house of Ousmane Dan Galadima—then already out of the country—to assist in the celebration of his son's birth, giving his wife a present of 25,000 CFA francs. Such practices also occurred in other cities. Abdoulaye Mamani, in July 1961, sent Maman Tchila, Sawaba's former councillor in Zinder, 10,000 CFA francs for the benefit of an activist (Abdou Diambale). A certain Alou from Téra handed out cash to families of arrested cadres.⁶³

Shock Troops: Early Agitation, Meetings and Missions

If its structures were still more or less up and running, Sawaba had to agitate among the people and stir up supporters to regain preeminence. The holding of meetings, undertaking of missions and establishment of contacts with foreign allies all served this purpose.

Early in 1959, Abdoulaye Mamani went on a mission to Nigeria, where he took part in a seminar in Ibadan involving intellectuals, journalists and politicians, among whom were Patrice Lumumba of the Belgian Congo and Emile Zinsou of Dahomey. Mamani gave a speech on unionism and witnessed the occasionally heated exchanges on different subjects, such as the pros and cons of the Mali federation.⁶⁴ It was a good occasion for establishing contacts. He spoke with Indian journalists, while on 24 March he attended a meeting in Kano of the 'Zikist National Vanguard'. This was an offshoot of the Zikist movement, a radical Nigerian group of the late 1940s, remnants of which associated with the NCNC and circles around NEPU.⁶⁵ While Mamani was in Nigeria, Bakary and Condat attended meetings in Dakar on the establishment of the PFA.⁶⁶ The following month, N'Dao N'Dene Gorgui, leader of the 'Mouvement de la paix africaine', was wel-

⁶³ Moussa = Mamadou André dit Moussa, domestics union leader (ch. 1 at n. 148)? Late 1961, Zinder cadres collected money for the imprisoned Nakanderi (Nakandari). Renseignements, 24 Nov. 1959; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.8; Note d'information, 25 May 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.6; Note d'information, 20 July 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.5; Recueil des principaux renseignements collectés au cours de la période 16-22 nov. 1961, no. 152; SHAT, 5 H 95; interview Monique Hadiza, Niamey, 5 Nov. 2005.

⁶⁴ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 30 mars au 12 avril 1959, no. 26. On the Ibadan seminar, see the review by J.W. Holme, *Journal of Negro History*, 49 (1964), 4, 270-271.

⁶⁵ NCNC: National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons, run by Nnamdi Azikiwe, or 'Zik', and an inspiration to young nationalists, hence calling themselves 'Zikists'. Synthèse politique, no.834/CP, juin 1959; CAOM, Cart.3684; E.E.G. Iweriebor, *Radical Politics in Nigeria, 1945-1950: The Significance of the Zikist Movement* (Zaria, 1996).

⁶⁶ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 30 mars au 12 avril 1959, no. 26.

came in Niamey by Dembélé and Sallé Dan Koulou for talks with Bakary, before flying to Cotonou the following day.⁶⁷

On 25 May Bakary and Maïga Abdoulaye visited Issaka Koké, Sawaba's former MP for Gouré, for talks on the political situation in the country. The three men concluded that the party's fortunes were not too bad in view of growing discontent, especially in the rural areas.⁶⁸ Thus, in the summer, with the political climate warming up as a result of Sawaba's disenfranchisement in Zinder, cadres increased their agitation. The arrest of party ideologue Adamou Sékou in the Yantala district in Niamey in April (see Chapter 6) had already angered them and led to a meeting of the comité directeur at the house of Tiémoko Coulibaly, shortly before his expulsion, to discuss countermeasures. Agitation received a double boost with Bakary's election to the vice-presidency of the PFA—confirming his West African stature—and the judicial action taken against leading Sawabists.⁶⁹ The trial of Bakary, Saloum Traoré and Diop Issa (both expelled) over the alleged abuse of government funds and vehicles in the referendum—starting on 28 July—gave the party a major propaganda opportunity. By now, Bakary was fearing for his life and was accompanied to court by Sawabists as well as three defence counsels. Amid tight security and confronted with a court-room packed with RDA militants, Sawaba's leaders emerged triumphant with a postponement granted in defiance of an angry prosecutor. Bakary and his lieutenants went to the house of Issaka Koké, receiving well-wishers and overseeing propagandists—led by Salifou Soumaila—spreading the message that the righter of wrongs would never be sentenced. In addition, strike action, though limited, led to a partial walk-out at city hall and paralysed Entreprises Vidal, where a cabinet maker, Agga Almoustapha, stirred up the work force. A collection was made for Bakary's defence.⁷⁰

The propaganda feat added to the action taken after the formation of the PFA. Bakary's return from Dakar on 8 July led to an intensification of agitation with daily meetings informing cadres, targeting the regime's ac-

⁶⁷ Ibid., ... 24 avril au 5 mai 1959, no. 28; CAOM, Cart.3685.

⁶⁸ Ibid., ... 28 mai au 3 juin 1959, no. 32; CAOM, Cart.3686.

⁶⁹ In the comité directeur former assistant Commandant de Cercle and prison director Sissoko by then played an important role. Ibid., 13 au 23 avril 1959, no. 27; CAOM, Cart.3685.

⁷⁰ A boycott of the Petit Marché had also been planned. Afterwards, Bakary and lieutenants, including Condat, 'Gazi' (Adamou Mayaki?), Dan Koulou, Adamou Sékou, met at Condat's until late. Agga Almoustapha, of Malian origin, was expelled the following day. Ibid., ... 6 au 12 août 1959, no. 42; CAOM, Cart.2249; interview Georges Condat, Niamey, 27 Nov. 2003.

tions, criticising its dependence on France and predicting its fall. The internal difficulties of the RDA and the blunders of its sections only encouraged this, and propagandists were told to visit city districts, besides shop floors, to say that Sawaba would fight side by side with the Mali federation. The resolve of cadres, the French noted, hardened. On 22 July there was a major meeting at Condat's involving Sawaba-oriented teachers discussing the party's stand on a national teachers conference in Niamey (25–27 July), in addition to the transformation of party committees into PFA sections.⁷¹

Regime action fuelled agitation further. On 11 August Maïga Abdoulaye and Sallé Dan Koulou were arrested for selling copies of the party's organ. Together with Adamou Sékou they were charged for press infractions and they had to appear in court on the 25th. Although, as shown at the start of this chapter, this led to an altercation between Adamou Sékou and Bakary, the government was worried that a protest strike might take place. The day of the trial was used for the party's publicity, with the three men accompanied by a high-profile delegation, including Bakary.⁷² By September the French reported that there was no sign of opposition lessening, noting that in certain villages PFA propaganda was making headway, balancing RDA influence. On the 8th Bakary himself had to reappear in court. Escorted by Dandouna Aboubakar, Joseph Akouété, Adamou Sékou and others, his appearance provided the party another bout of publicity, the more so as it had called in groups of Bellas—possibly to act as body-guards—who were, however, stopped by the police. Bakary's French lawyer succeeded in getting another deferment. Cadres portrayed this as evidence of government fear—a message that resonated in rural areas such as Tillabéri, Téra and Filingué.⁷³

However, on 14 September Djibo Bakary, together with Mamani and a certain Adamou Aboubacar, left the country to attend a conference of

⁷¹ The teachers were Henri Messan, Moussa Ide, Amadou Moumouni, a certain Boniface, Gonimi Boukar, Mounkeïla Issifi and Garba Sidikou. It also involved Bakary (chair), Condat, Adamou Sékou, Dan Koulou, Aboubakar dit Kaou & Jean Poisson. *Recueil des principaux renseignements ...* 23 au 29 juillet 1959, no. 40; *Ibid.*, 13 au 19 août 1959, no. 43; 3 au 9 sept. 1959, no. 46; 16 au 22 juillet 1959, no. 39; last two CAOM, Cart.3687/2249.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 20 au 26 août 1959, no. 44 and *Renseignements*, 25 Aug. 1959; 86 MI 3 F 3.9. The delegation included Amadou dit Gabriel; Issaka Samy, an early party activist (see Chapter 1); Gonimi Boukar; one Garba Abdou; and Soumaila Abdou and Joseph Akouété.

⁷³ Though not in Niamey. *Synthèse politique*, no. 1214 CP, Sept. 1959; *Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus pour la période du 10 au 16 sept. 1959*, no. 47; CAOM, Cart.3684/2251. Others escorting Bakary to court were Condat, Issaka Koké, Amadou dit Gabriel, Mamani, Kady Souka.



Photo 7.4 Crowds witnessing Bakary's appearance in court, Niamey, 8 September 1959 (ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3:5).

Sékou Touré's ruling party.⁷⁴ While Mamani subsequently returned, in retrospect it would appear that Bakary's departure was to be permanent. The regime was determined to put the lid on matters and was by then already heading for the banning of the party. At the trial Diamballa Maïga had boasted that Bakary was finished, and after the deferment he said that, if he wished to silence him, he could simply deport Sawaba's leader to a far corner of the country. Bakary's supporters, outraged, were warned. On 6 October the court failed to pronounce a verdict on his alleged abuse of administrative vehicles, yet a court in Maradi sentenced Bakary *in absentia* to a fine of 50,000 CFA for unlicensed possession of a gun during the December 1958 campaign. While the court case on referendum resources was postponed *sine die* and the minister of justice, Issoufou Djermakoye, was punished for this with the loss of the vice-presidency, on 12 October the party was banned and that same month Dandouna Aboubakar arrested for 'communist activity'.⁷⁵ Party cadres would then have advised Bakary, who appears to have thought that he would return after a PFA conference in Dakar, not to come back. Some would have told him that he risked getting murdered, others that he would be deported to a penal camp in Bilma, the north-eastern desert town.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de Dakar pour la période du 17 au 23 sept. 1959, no. 47; CAOM, Cart.3688.

⁷⁵ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 10 au 16 sept. 1959, no. 47; 8 au 14 oct. 1959, no. 51; CAOM, Cart.2250; Synthèse politique, no. 1373 CP, Oct. 1959.

⁷⁶ Djibo Sékou claimed cadres sent Kaka Koussou to Dahomey to bring a message to a

The effect was that the movement began to develop an internal and external wing, the latter made up of expelled AOFiens and Nigérien Sawabists fleeing the country in steadily rising numbers.⁷⁷ While necessitating further co-ordination, the development of an external wing proved a blessing in disguise as it enabled cadres to mobilise desperately needed support and funds, in and outside the West African region. Bakary, who had always had a fascination for West African-wide politics, immediately embarked on a tour of the region's cities and capitals. After his meeting with Sékou Touré he went to Dakar for the PFA conference and then to Bamako and on to Accra, where he heard of Sawaba's banning and promptly announced the opening of a party office, also at the instigation of the Ghanaian government. Then he flew to Bamako and on 17 October arrived in Gao, where he was received by Soudan's justice minister, Madeira Keita, and welcomed by enthusiastic crowds. The authorities of Soudan were ready to lend him political backing in exchange for Bakary's support for the Mali federation, among other things by giving a helping hand in efforts to lure Dahomey—which had been deterred by the French from joining—into the new federal fold. Thus, each Monday Bakary got the right to broadcast on Radio Bamako, the city where he took up residence. At the Gao meeting on 17 October he held long discussions with Soudan's government and party officials, as well as with several of his own lieutenants. Adamou Sékou and Georges Condat had come to the city from Niamey, warning Bakary not to return. Diop Issa, now director of Soudan's power company, also took part, as did Maïga Abdoulaye, who hailed from Soudan and stayed in the town of Ansongo, south-east of Gao and close to the border with Niger. Here he co-ordinated the implementation of Bakary's orders from Bamako.⁷⁸

Dahomean minister, warning Bakary not to return. *Seeda: Mensuel nigérien d'informations générales*, no. 6, Sept. 2002. That Bakary would have been advised to flee abroad thus appears incorrect. Interviews Ali Amadou & Ousseini Dandagoye, Niamey/Zinder, 28 Jan./11 Febr. 2003; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 321-322 (based on Bakary's testimony). Bakary's memoirs (*Silence! On décolonise: Itinéraire politique et syndical d'un militant africain* [Paris, 1992]) are unclear on this. Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 12-18 nov. 1959, no. 56, asserts he feared house arrest.

⁷⁷ This is discussed further in Chapter 9.

⁷⁸ About then Amadou dit Gabriel also visited Mali, in addition to Ghana. On Diop Issa one source claims he was energy director in the Upper Voltan town of Bobo-Dioulasso. Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 29 oct. au 4 nov., no. 54 & 5 au 11 nov. 1959, no. 55; *Ibid.*, ... 15 au 21 oct. 1959, no. 52; 24 au 30 sept. 1959, no. 49; 22 au 28 oct. 1959, no. 53; CAOM, Cart.2250; 1 au 7 janv. 1960, no. 62; Synthèse politique, no. 1373 CP, Oct. 1959; Renseignements, 26 Oct. 1959, ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.2; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 321-323.

On 30 October Bakary arrived in Bamako again, having made a trip to Dakar. By now he was regularly seen in Soudan's capital and heard on its wave-lengths. In mid-December, however, he revisited Ghana, where a party office was opened in Kumasi with help of Sawabists from Gao. He also went on an important mission to Dahomey in November 1959, officially to discuss PFA matters, in the course of which he stayed with Emile Zinsou in Cotonou. Preceded by a mission of Adamou Sékou in September, Bakary used the occasion to revive union contacts developed in the framework of the CGT and UGTAN, as well as his ties with politicians from the northern region, which he had visited as government leader in October-November 1957.⁷⁹ It was during his stay in Cotonou that he ran into Ousmane Dan Galadima, who was sentenced on 6 November by a Cotonou appeals court to one year on charges tied to the referendum, thus constraining him to start operating underground.⁸⁰

These developments meant that the internal leadership had to start co-ordinating policy and agitation in line with the external leaders, besides maintaining domestic organisation and overseeing the cadres that stayed put. The party's banning had greatly upset the domestic leadership, which had thought that the regime would not go so far that quickly, triggering a flurry of meetings to co-ordinate the opposition's confused responses (14-15 October). In early November Adamou Sékou, Abdoulaye Mamani and Daouda Ardaly returned from a long meeting with Bakary in Bamako, bringing a lot of propaganda material and discussing their strategy meeting with the internal leadership. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, Maurice Camara came to the country with PFA news from Dakar. He went back to Senegal two days later, carrying substantial correspondence for Bakary. The French reported another mission of Sékou, Ardaly and Mamani to Bamako early December, again followed by domestic discussions.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Ch. 2; Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 12 au 18 nov. 1959, no. 56, 10 au 16 déc. 1959, no. 60, 22 au 28 janv. 1960, no. 65; Synthèse politique, no. 1480, Nov. 1959; CAOM, Cart. 3684; Renseignements, 11 Sept. 1959; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.9; Bakary, *Silence!*, 258-9.

⁸⁰ The charge was electoral corruption and threatening to kill someone. Bakary, *Silence!*, 259; Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 16 au 22 juillet 1959, no. 39; Note d'information, 27 June 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.6.

⁸¹ In addition, at the end of October Abdou Moumouni, leftist intellectual and contact of Bakary, arrived in Niamey from Conakry, to be welcomed by Condat, Dan Koulou, Koké, Habi Djibo, Dodo Harakoye, a Marcelin Mouskoura, Ibrahim Noufou, Ab(b)a Alassane (Alassane Abba) & Amadou Moumouni. Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 15 au 21 oct., 29 oct. au 4 nov., 12 au 18 nov. 1959, 10 au 16 déc. 1959, nos. 52, 54, 56, 60; Renseignements, 4 Nov. 1959; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.9. The meeting at Sékou's in early November involved

It was concluded that the morale of cadres had to be reinforced, something for which Camara's next visit to Niger in mid-November was apparently meant, as numerous militants were reportedly enthused by his assurances about the PFA and the Mali federation. Flying to Tahoua a week later, Camara was prevented by the authorities from disembarking—furious about this, he returned to Niamey.⁸² Next, 'shock propagandists' were dispatched to Maradi, Filingué, Tillabéri and Ayorou, the town near the border with Soudan that attracted many visitors, Nigériens, Arabs and Tuaregs alike. Cosmopolitan in nature, the movement had many followers here. The two-week mission there was led by a certain Seydou Keine, while that to Filingué was taken on by Djibo Tessa, whom the French considered to be one of the fiercest of cadres. Meanwhile, daily meetings were held at Adamou Sékou's house in Niamey, with discussion centring on the independence of Mali and Niger's 18 December celebrations. Sékou was emphatic that the failed boycott was no reason to give up propaganda, believing the RDA's rule was drawing to a close.⁸³

Nevertheless, at the start of 1960 Sékou expressed concern about morale and ordered Boukari Karemi dit Kokino, one of the more determined activists, to boost militants' confidence in the course of a visit to Tillabéri.⁸⁴ That Niger's western region received so much attention was probably due to a combination of factors. While the river valley had been a traditional stronghold, support for the movement was—as shown in the first section—growing right across the region. With the independence of the Mali federation looming and the external leadership establishing a presence in the border region with Niger, the west became a strategic hub in the confrontation with the regime. As noted, in the battle against Sawaba's banning, Bakary in early January had created another party in Gao, the RPN, ordering Condat to deposit its statutes with the government in Niamey. There would be a meeting of Sawabists in Ayorou and an unlikely rumour circulated that Bakary would come over for a visit. The party was, in any case, manifesting

Condat, Amadou dit Gabriel, Mamani, Ardaly, Dembélé, Dan Koulou, Habi Djibo, Kaka Koussou, Ali Moussa, chief of Niamey's Gaouey district, and one Assaguet (Assagueye) Touré.

⁸² After a brief stopover in Zinder. He threatened that he would demand Diori compensation and then flew to Paris. *Recueil des principaux renseignements ...* 29 oct. au 4 nov. & 19 au 25 nov. 1959, no. 54 & 57; *Ibid.*, 26 nov. au 2 déc. 1959, no. 58; CAOM, Cart.2251.

⁸³ On the boycott, see Chapter 6. *Ibid.*, 5 au 11 févr. 1960, 10 au 16 déc. 1959, 24 au 31 déc. 1959, nos. 67, 60, 61 ('propagandistes de choc').

⁸⁴ The Commandant de Cercle pressed Kokino to leave Sawaba, which the latter flatly refused. *Renseignements*, 11 Jan. 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.9.

a new presence, with meetings multiplying and attracting larger numbers of people, in Niamey as well as at the Bakary property in Soudouré. Cadres were told that 'one upcoming day Sawaba [would] recapture power'. In the capital, they were reported to be working 'tirelessly', with meetings following up on each other, and also in the surrounding villages. Dogo Dankamba, a Niamey cadre, was very active and expected to be dispatched to Maradi to engage in agitation there.⁸⁵

By the end of January, the government decided to establish an administrative post in Ayorou to keep an eye on Sawaba's activity spreading from Gao. However, as shown in the previous chapter, popular discontent was growing for various reasons and not just in the west. In Zinder, faced with a disappointing groundnut harvest, Mamani was reported to be doing effective work. Consequently, on the 31st the French issued a sharp warning:

Sawaba activity is not at all slackening, quite the contrary ... It is fairly evident that if the local Government does not show itself to be extremely vigilant, an unpleasant surprise cannot be excluded.⁸⁶

The regime took this to heart and lashed out against its opponents. Civil servants who participated in political meetings were threatened with dismissal, while two Sawabists were deported to Bilma, where they were put under house arrest. The government also expelled Maïga Abdoulaye, who had come back from Ansongo but was deported on 3 February for good, plus another activist who hailed from Soudan but who worked in Maradi. This followed on three similar expulsions in January. The following month, therefore, meetings in Niamey were mostly held at night and agitation assumed a more discreet character. Condat, who had been thwarted by Diamballa Maïga in depositing Bakary's RPN statutes, on 17 February went to Bamako for a 'general staff' meeting with Bakary, together with Adamou Sékou and Dan Galadima. By the end of the month several smaller meetings took place at Sékou's.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 8 au 14 janv. 1960, 15 au 21 janv. 1960, 29 janv. au 4 févr. 1960, nos. 63, 64, 66 ('un jour prochain le Sawaba reprendra le pouvoir; 'inlassablement').

⁸⁶ Ibid. and Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 22 au 28 janv. 1960, no. 65 ('L'activité Sawaba ne se ralentit, bien au contraire ... Il est bien évident que si le Gouvernement local ne se montre pas extrêmement vigilant, une désagréable surprise n'est pas exclue').

⁸⁷ Ibid., 15 au 21 janv., 5 au 11 févr., 19 au 25 févr., 4 au 10 mars 1960, nos. 64, 67, 69, 71 ('Etat-Major').

Condat continued liaison work with the external leadership in the following months, taking part in a PFA conference in Dakar in April and, together with Adamou Sékou, visiting Bamako in May. In early June Sékou arrived in Niamey from Bamako (possibly in the course of the same trip) and went with Condat on a night-time mission in the direction of Gao. Later that month, Ousmane Dan Galadima secretly visited Niamey but, after one night, made off to avoid capture.⁸⁸ By now—May to July 1960—the movement was taking a severe battering in a wave of arrests, house searches and seizure of membership lists (see next chapter). This naturally had a profound effect on organisation, while it pushed agitation work further underground. In October it was reported that Bakary had visited Malanville—a town in northern Dahomey on the border with Niger, across the Niger River opposite the city of Gaya—, obviously in order to confer with some of his followers. These liaison duties were by then still undertaken by Adamou Sékou, who visited Bakary again in Bamako in December 1960 and in January 1961, when he also consulted with cadres in Gao. As mentioned above, his house in Niamey was now a nerve-centre for the party, something that was to last until the autumn of 1961, when he was himself arrested. Thus, it was Sékou who organised a women's demonstration in Niamey in the course of a visit by Houphouët-Boigny.⁸⁹

While the movement therefore demonstrated renewed activism at the end of 1960 and the start of 1961,⁹⁰ agitation work and co-ordination of activities were becoming more and more difficult. In February both Hima Dembélé and Abdoulaye Mamani had to go to Bamako for a staff meeting with Bakary. Dembélé travelled by a Transafricaine bus to the border with Mali, but got off a few kilometres south of Firgoun, a village north of Ayorou and some 25 km from the border. He then got into a canoe and paddled along the Niger River until he crossed the frontier, to continue his journey to Gao and Bamako. Meanwhile, Mamani had left Niamey by car for Upper Volta, from where he travelled to Bamako to be reunited with Dembélé and Bakary.

⁸⁸ Note d'information, 21 Apr. 1960 and 13 May 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.2; Renseignements, 9 June 1960; 86 MI 3 F 3.9; Note d'information, 27 June 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.6.

⁸⁹ Jean Colombani to Ministre de l'Intérieur, 4 Oct. 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.5; Note d'information, 2, 7, 9 Dec. 1960 and 25 Jan. 1961 & Madame Adamou Sékou to Ministre de l'Intérieur, 28 Sept. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.9; Stratégie de l'Opposition Sawaba: Ingérences Etrangères. Très Secret. Report by J. Colombani, 33/C/SU, 13 Jan. 1961, to Minister of the Interior; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.2.

⁹⁰ Note d'information, 2 Febr. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.10.

As Mamani had left the country to take up liaison duties abroad, it was decided that Dembélé had to return to Niamey, to assist Adamou Sékou by contacting members of Niger's army (see Chapter 10), intensifying propaganda under workers, civil servants and youths, and collecting intelligence on France's military presence.⁹¹ The problem was that, while the RDA was by now very unpopular, this did not automatically translate into concrete support for the movement in view of the risks this entailed. Thus, already in the spring of 1959 butchers began to waver in their support. They had been regarded as some of the 'shock troops of Sawaba', but their activism was beginning to take its toll in terms of government action and a diminishing clientèle fearful of regime reprisals.⁹² With more of Bakary's lieutenants taking up duties in the external wing, the domestic movement had to go deeper underground. In the repressive context of Nigérien politics this did not mean, however, that agitation halted. For example, in March 1962 Adamou Assane Mayaki, Sawaba's former interior minister, continued with liaison work in Konni and Madaoua—as he had done in Zinder and Tahoua before, and despite having spent time in prison for his political activities (July-December 1960).⁹³

The Bars of Zinder: Towns and Agitation

Mayaki's work showed that it was the towns that formed the heart of Sawaba's agitation. With the little folk at its core the emergent cell structure centred ultimately on the cities, where activists did not stand out as much as in villages and hamlets. Soon, these clandestine cells became part of networks for intelligence gathering and infiltrations (as is discussed later)—the remainder of this chapter focuses on how they were put to use in the political agitation and how local circumstances affected this, giving a *tour d'horizon* of the towns that made up the domestic wing.

⁹¹ Note d'information, 20 June 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.10 (includes Dembélé's interrogation report).

⁹² One Ousmane, a butcher, possibly in Maradi, suggested to rally to the regime. Most of his colleagues would have agreed. Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de Dakar pour la période du 14 au 20 mai 1959, no. 30; CAOM, Cart.3686 ('troupes de choc du Sawaba').

⁹³ Interview Adamou Assane Mayaki, Niamey, 29 Jan. 2003; Jean Colombani, Chef des Services de Police, to Ministre de l'Intérieur, 21 Nov. 1960; Renseignements, 29 Aug. 1961 & 13 March 1962; Minister of the interior to ministers of finance and education, youth and sports, 22 Sept. 1961; ANN, MI 3 F 8.19; I.A. Mayaki (his son), *La caravane passe ...* (Paris, 1999), 7.

As noted above, by 1959 the three networks—covering the western region, the south and the north—were in outline already present, centring on old Sawaba committees or PFA successor sections and embracing much of the national territory. Predictably, the movement's largest presence and the most difficult to tackle for the regime was right under its nose—in the capital. Even if Sawaba and the security apparatus were engaged in a game of cat-and-mouse, it was impossible for the regime to keep all of the movement's cadres in view. Generally, the Niamey section drew a lot of strength from unionised workers, naturally more numerous than anywhere else, as well as from 'petit peuple' suffering the regime's economic measures, students at the Lycée National and, for a while, people working at city hall. For some time it also had support among AOFiens, who were often better trained but politically marginalised under the RDA. As noted, Joseph Akouété therefore used the Association Daho-Togo as his springboard.⁹⁴

It is therefore impossible to give a complete picture of the capital's section as it consisted of numerous cells and regularly received cadres from other cities or abroad, who liaised with national leaders. In addition, it welcomed activists deported to Niamey, as in the case of ten Zinderois exiled by the government to the capital at the beginning of 1960. Early on, in 1959, a lot of activities concentrated themselves at the Bakary property in the Kalley area in the centre of the city. Later, as noted above, Adamou Sékou's house became the most important hub, besides the houses of Condat (Salaman Avenue), Daouda Ardaly and Mamadou Diori and Arouna Zada's compound in the Gamkallé district. In addition, Amadou dit Gabriel together with Diori constituted part of a cell in the Deizébon district near the Katako market. A certain Mah N'Diaye was engaged for the party in the Zongo district, closer to the river, together with Dandouna Aboubakar, while as noted earlier Ms Bio led a women's cell and Sawaba had several people working in the airport area, further east. The result was that the regime had difficulty in repressing the movement. By January 1960 the French noted that Maïga had failed to put down the party in Niamey, a situation that would not essentially change during the coming years, with the cells going deeper underground.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 13 au 19 août 1959, no. 43.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 22 au 28 janv. 1960, no. 65 and 8 au 14 janv. 1960, no. 63; various documents ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.5; Renseignements, 17 Dec. 1959; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.10; Note d'information, 19 June 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.8 (Mah N'Diaye = Malick N'Diaye?); interview Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 Nov. 2003. It is impossible to give numbers as sources are silent and only show that several dozens were involved—clearly an underestimate. Based on tentative

With the western region a strategic site, several towns became hotbeds of activity. Ayorou was important not only for its proximity to Mali but also for its market, which constituted an important assembly point for nomads, peasants and traders travelling in the north-west. Similarly, Gothèye, further to the south-east, represented an important hub in the network, not just because of Sawaba's local support (which included its school director, the town's chief—a relative of Bakary—, and numerous inhabitants with migrant ties to Ghana), but also because it was located at what became the only ferry crossing on the road between the capital and the south-west. The Ayorou Sawabists enjoyed substantial support from Soudan/Mali, as well as their own canton chief, Amirou Yacouba, who in the past had led the population into the party. The chief was dismissed in September 1959 when a Soudan official from the district of Ansongo (where Maïga Abdoulaye was based) visited Ayorou to contact him, assuring local cadres of Soudan's support. Sawaba's profile in Ayorou was thus described as 'very active'.⁹⁶

North-east of Niamey the network had expanded into the Filingué area, including the towns of Bonkougou and Damana. While this region, which had several of its sons in the government,⁹⁷ had never been a Sawaba fief, the absence of RDA cadres made it free territory. Newly constituted PFA committees had given Sawaba the necessary boost, imparted especially by better-educated activists such as teachers and veterinary workers. The latter, also in state service, were well represented in the movement, which corresponded to the technological sophistication that marked part of Sawaba's core. Moreover, veterinary specialists were—like traders and transporters— itinerant and possessed a connection with the countryside, useful in agitation.⁹⁸

national figures (see below), hundreds must have been involved—in itself a substantial reduction as compared with the period before clandestine politics.

⁹⁶ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 6 au 12 août 1959 & 10 au 16 sept. 1959, no. 42/47; 1 au 7 janv. 1960, no. 62; interview with Daouda Hamadou, Ayorou, 20 Dec. 2009. Niger's government was outraged over the visit ('très active').

⁹⁷ Zodi Ikhia, Adamou Mayaki, Léopold Kaziendé and Mouddour Zakara. According to the French, the peasant population was inclined to follow the government. Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 10 au 16 sept. 1959, no. 47.

⁹⁸ Some leading cadres were veterinary doctors: Maïga Abdoulaye; Maurice Camara; Issaka Koké; Koussanga Alzouma. Others, mentioned previously, were veterinary assistant or nurse: Issaka Samy; Hama Sanda dit Pascal; Kassatchia; Dodo Hamballi; Yansambou Boubakar from Birnin Gaouré (on the last see ANN, 86 MI 3 F 12.32); and Kaïro Alfari (see below), before his dismissal (Note d'information, 18 Oct. 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.2); conversation Issa Younoussi, Niamey, 22 Febr. 2008.

A certain Diawara Maizouma, a Sawaba-oriented vet, was at the origins of the PFA committee in Filingué (besides Djibo Tessa mentioned above). He organised meetings at the house of the local headmaster, Moussa Mayaki, secretary of Sawaba's teachers' union, who was allied to Aljouma Kantana (Kantama), a teacher at Filingué's secondary school. Kantana organised sports activities for the young, probably—as the French suspected—as a way to spread propaganda. As for Mayaki, he used to visit Filingué's market together with Pascal Ouedraogo, probably an activist of Upper Voltan origin, urging traders to follow the party's call and maintain confidence in Bakary. The same was done in Bonkougou by Jimra Orgo (Orgao), the town's headmaster, who allegedly benefited from the support of local RDA MP Amadou Kountché and Damana's canton chief, both reported to be sympathetic to the PFA.⁹⁹ Thus, in September 1960 the wife of Djibo Bakary and three of their children held a political meeting with Damana's headmaster, Yacouba Birma.¹⁰⁰ By then, Orgao and Kantana would have managed to organise 200 activists, and police clamped down in the wake of a secret meeting at Orgao's house. Georges Clément, chief of territorial and frontier surveillance, noted that some people did not easily give up political loyalties, notably teachers, whom he considered affected by the 'Sawabist virus'. Having found Sawaba tracts in Orgao's house, he subjected Bonkougou's headmaster to a thorough interrogation—it is more than likely that he had Orgao beaten up, as he reported euphemistically that Orgao was 'very touched' by the operation and 'severely called to order'.¹⁰¹

As noted, other western towns where Sawaba agitation occurred, whether or not facilitated by PFA-oriented action, were Tillabéri and Doso, as well as Téra and Gaya. Sometimes, the local roots of cadres may have

⁹⁹ Kountché, involved in an incident there in 1957 (ch. 2, n. 33), would have liaised with the PFA in Niamey. *Recueil des principaux renseignements ...* 10 au 16 sept. 1959, no. 47; Georges Clément, Chef de Section ST et Frontières, to Directeur des Services, Niamey, 16 Sept. 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 7.10.

¹⁰⁰ This meeting was attended by Noma Garba, a nurse, and Issa Bakary, probably no family but an old UDN militant. J. Coulier, Administrateur Commandant le Cercle de Filingué, to Ministre de l'Intérieur, 4 Sept. 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 7.9.

¹⁰¹ People at Orgao's meeting were Tawaye, peasant from 'Tonfalis' (= Tounfaliz, 2 km south of Filingué at 14.20 N 3.19 E); Mallam Oumarou (relation of Orgao); Oumarou's brothers Elhadji Amza and Mamadou Guida Arki, from 'Tonfalis'; and Bondiere, possibly a driver at Filingué. See Georges Clément, Chef de Section ST et Frontières, to Directeur des Services, Niamey, 16 Sept. 1960; *Ibid.* to Direction de la Sûreté Niamey, 14 Sept. 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 7.10 ('virus sawabiste'; 'très touché'; 'rappelé sévèrement à l'ordre').

played a role. Thus, late in 1960 the regime worried about Sawaba agitation in Téra, hometown of Adamou Sékou, but this concern also extended to the surrounding areas.¹⁰² Similarly, in Gaya, if the region itself had never been Sawabist in majority, by 1959 it had become restive. In November 1959 two Sawaba cadres were caught agitating in the market of Dolé village. Part of this interlocked with disputes about chiefly successions, setting Gaya's canton chief and the village chief of Tenda, both Sawabists, against the local RDA. With Sawaba's banning, this divide had hardened and persisted to affect the politics of Gaya city, which had a traditional Sawaba following and had produced some of the movement's leading cadres, such as Issoufou Danbaro and Aboubakar dit Kaou. Not surprisingly, the regime established an administrative post in the town.¹⁰³

In central Niger, agitation diminished in Tahoua, possibly because of the town's connections with the surrounding countryside—a pastoral zone where support had never been what it was in the city itself. Upon the party's dissolution dozens of cadres assembled at the house of local activist Nomao Zongo, but within half a year the French asserted that the Tahoua section was non-existent, composed of cadres of the second echelon who were the object of ridicule. In itself this alluded to some sort of clandestine cell that continued functioning. As noted in the previous chapter, cadres were still capable of inciting captives to revolt against their masters, while there were liaison operations with the town's Sawabists, such as Elhadji Ibro Garba—who by the spring of 1962 was still in touch with Adamou Assane Mayaki—and possibly Siddi Addou (Abdou), Tahoua's Sawaba youth secretary in 1958. The Konni cell also remained partly in place—it had originated by way of a network of men who in the Second World War fled to nearby Nigeria to join the Free French.¹⁰⁴ The state of agitation in Tessaoua, however, was comparable to that in Tahoua. This was the direct result of the purges that the Franco-RDA combine had undertaken imme-

¹⁰² Djibo, *Les transformations*, 226, quoting a government report.

¹⁰³ The two activists in Dolé were one Ibrahim Madougou and Mahaman Hamidou. Report of Gendarmerie Molto, commandant la brigade de Gaya, 24 Nov. 1959; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3-14; N. Bako-Arifari, *Dynamique et formes de pouvoir politique en milieu rural ouest-africain: Etude comparative sur le Bénin et le Niger* (Ph.D. Paris, 1999), vol. 1, 65; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 227.

¹⁰⁴ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 29 oct. au 4 nov. 1959, no. 54; Ibid., 18 au 24 mars 1960, no. 73; CAOM, Cart.3690; Jeunesse Sawaba du Tahoua: Procès verbal de l'assemblée générale du 12 août 1958; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 52; conversation Mahaman Tidjani Alou, Niamey, 20/22 Febr. 2008. List of Konni's youth wing in 1958 in Procès verbal, jeunesse Sawaba de Birni-N'Konni, 10 Aug. 1958; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 52.

diately in 1959 and which had also affected the city of Gouré.¹⁰⁵ In June that year the French asserted—not entirely correctly, as shown below—that the movement in the centre and east had been practically decapitated, with cadres in Tessaoua, Madaoua and Maradi consisting mainly of unimportant individuals. In Tessaoua, at least, it was these men who had to take over from local party lieutenants, who had been badly hit by regime actions. Thus, in April 1959 Diougou Sangaré had trouble arranging a meeting planned to take place at the house of Abdou Boukary, the road inspector who was fired and had probably been cowed as a result. Other activists therefore became more important, such as Mallam (Abdou) Kalla, a peasant/marabout who began to recruit new cadres in the Maradi, Dakoro and Tessaoua regions, interrupted by a spell in prison (in October 1961–March 1962).¹⁰⁶

Generally, the centre and east suffered political marginalisation despite the fact that they formed the country's economic heart. The exploitation of this depended on cadres in the cities. In the absence of Tessaoua it was in Zinder and Maradi that agitation took place. Both large urban concentrations, the regime's 1959 report on the Zinder region admitted that political activities continued there on a significant scale. This appeared to be limited to Zinder-city and a couple of villages nearby, such as Kagna, and not to extend to areas further afield. Although the struggle between rival UGTAN sections had weakened the union voice,¹⁰⁷ the movement's strength benefited from the many private-sector workers. In addition, cadres were invigorated by the presence of one of their sons in the national leadership—Abdoulaye Mamani, who co-ordinated their action, welcomed militants upon release from prison and for long remained the liaison with national headquarters, travelling constantly between Zinder and Niamey.¹⁰⁸ With the formation of the local PFA section, Mamani became its secretary-general, working with Maman Tchila, the municipal council-

¹⁰⁵ See ch. 6 at n. 20.

¹⁰⁶ In the Gogou area cadres were also active. Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 28 mai au 3 juin 1959, no. 32, 13 au 23 avril 1959, no. 27, and file on Mallam Kalla in ANN, 86 MI 3 F 12.32 (Mallam [Abdou] Kalla = Mallam Abdou, known to Dan Koulou?; not according to Mounkaila Beidari, usually a reliable witness; interview, Niamey, 23 Febr. 2008). His full name was Mallam Kalla Madougou. Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 14 Oct. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2. On Boukary, ch. 6 at n. 7.

¹⁰⁷ As exemplified in the course of an UGTAN mission to Magaria, where former Sawaba MP Moussa Maharou continued to agitate for Sawaba. Cercle de Zinder. Rapport Annuel 1959; CAOM, Cart.2181/D.1 bis.

¹⁰⁸ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 14 au 20 mai 1959, 30 juillet au 5 août 1959, nos. 30/41; Note d'informations, 1 & 28 Apr. 1960, 30 Nov. 1960, 22 & 28 Jan. 1961 (ANN, 86



Photo 7.5 Alleys and courtyards in an old district of Zinder, 2003.

lor, and Garba (Garva) dit Yen(n)i, the Sawabist worker.¹⁰⁹ They collaborated closely with Gayakoye Sabi and Boubou Taïfou—the city councillors who, like Tchila, were arrested in the wake of the 1959 by-election—and two marabouts, Malam Saley Madaouki (Kadouaki?) and Malam Bab (Baba) Boubakar Sade(c)k. The Tijaniya order, from which Sawaba drew support, was dominant here, although the regime stressed that only a minority of marabouts continued to follow the movement. Malam Saley Madaouki organised prayers for Sawaba, inciting the faithful in his mosque, while Boubakar Sadeck together with Mallam Issoufou, marabout/teacher responsible for party activities in Zinder, took care of liaison duties with the cell in Agadez.¹¹⁰

The community of AOFiens in the city also provided support, notably many Dahomeans, who were still committed to Mamani. The local section of the Association Dahome-Togo was controlled by Baelo Abdoulmahas, who had played an important role in election campaigns. Abdoulmahas gave cadres a place to meet in the various bars he owned, where they could

MI 3 F 8.5); Renseignements, 6 Nov. 1959; Note d'information, 13 Jan. 1961 (ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.8-9).

¹⁰⁹ Ch. 6, at n. 22.

¹¹⁰ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 6 au 12 août 1959, no. 42; Cercle de Zinder. Rapport Annuel 1959; file on Malam Issoufou in ANN, 86 MI 3 F 12.32; Chapter 6, last section.

enjoy a sense of camaraderie, share information or plan action. The bars of Zinder symbolised the urban character of this agitation, which was harder to control and centred on two old districts—Zengou, where a lot of cadres lived, and Birni—, both of them made up of meandering streets and alleys lined with traditional mud-brick houses. Private homes, such as that of Abdoulaye Yaye, a mason living in Zengou's Boukary quarter, could be used for meetings when party buildings were closed down. It was at the house of Mahaman Dodo in Birni, assistant in the administration's agricultural service and secretary-general of Birni's executive committee, that cadres decided during the Easter weekend of 1959 to stage a 'soirée théâtrale', mocking the Sultan and chefs de canton.¹¹¹ In due course this sort of action became impossible, with cadres forced deeper underground.

The cell in Maradi was particularly active. Niger's economic capital, it was especially the city's traders besides unionised workers that were engaged on the movement's behalf. In addition, the Red Cord played a role, assembling radical students from Maradi but also elsewhere. Possessing strong links with Northern Nigeria, this busy town could be unruly, as Hamani Diori and Messmer had discovered when they were booed by city crowds.¹¹² As shown earlier, Boubou Hama, too, never had much luck in the region, where disappointing groundnut harvests could poison the political climate, and even the former head of the Sûreté, Espitalier, faced protests from city folk in May 1961.¹¹³ Sawaba's local section was headed by Labo Almajir, by the end of 1959 chair of Maradi's section. He was seconded by Dandouna Aboubakar, who performed the same liaison duties as Mamani did for Zinder. In addition, Aboubakar dit Kaou, the former economics minister evicted from his parliamentary seat in Tessaoua, was active in the area. His father stayed or lived in Maradi and Kaou worked closely with Dandouna.¹¹⁴ Though transferred as a teacher to Illéla, this did not stop his activities. At one meeting, in October 1959, Kaou held out the

¹¹¹ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 30 mars au 23 avril 1959, nos. 26-7; Ibid., 18 au 24 juin 1959, no. 35; CAOM, Cart.2249; Etudiants et Boursiers du Sawaba; Procès-verbal, comité Sawaba Birni-Zinder, 31 Aug. 1958; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 52.

¹¹² Chapter 6 above. See on Maradi's economic importance f.e. E. Grégoire, *Les Alhazari de Maradi (Niger): Histoire d'un groupe de riches marchands sahéliens* (Paris, 1986).

¹¹³ *Gaskya: Organe Officiel du Parti Sawaba*, no. 5, 29 June 1961 and Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 29 janv. au 4 févr. 1960, no. 66.

¹¹⁴ Kaou's father was Aboukar Soumane, who was in touch with Dandouna, Almajir & other cadres. Renseignements, 24 Nov. 1959; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.8; Note d'information, 21 Dec. 1960; Maurice Espitalier, Maradi, to Chef des Services de Police, 6 Jan. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.8.

prospect that, one day, Sawaba would get arms from America, while on another occasion he advised cadres to infiltrate the RDA by joining its ranks. The latter was not an uncommon tactic for Maradi Sawabists and seemed spearheaded by Dandouna, who, inspired by what he had learnt from communist infiltration techniques, encouraged cadres to join the government party. This took place against the background of a local administration where several employees remained Sawaba loyalists—as was the case with N'Diaye Sidi, a customs official who attended Kaou's October meeting. As will be shown in Part III, this situation was to be exploited further at a later date.¹¹⁵

Agitation in Maradi centred around Dandouna, Sawaba's bold campaigner whom the French dubbed a 'notorious Bakaryst militant'.¹¹⁶ In November 1959 he came to Maradi to hold meetings with cadres, informing them of a trip he had made abroad, giving advice on strategy and discussing financial matters. Numerous activists were present at these meetings, one of which was held at the compound of Baoua Souley, the nurse and former MP for Maradi who lived in the 'Sabongari' (new town) district.¹¹⁷ His agitation landed Dandouna in jail in Niamey, where he organised a prisoners' protest against insufficient soap rations (February 1960). Having successfully appealed his six months' prison term (which was reduced to three), he wanted to appeal further but risked a prison transfer to Agadez. By the end of the year, he returned to Maradi and immediately restarted agitation. An RDA official complained that Dandouna was spreading rumours and was holding meetings where he propagated the Marxist message, criticised the government's record and dismissed Niger's independence

¹¹⁵ Other cadres in the Oct. 1959 meeting were Dan Maningo, active in the Dec. 1958 campaign and talks with Northern Nigerian leaders (Chapters 3 & 5); one Abdoulaye Maiga Amadou, commis at '(Du)moulin'; a certain Dan Gogo; Harouna Sara, 'boy', hailing from Fort Lamy in Chad; and Boubakar (Boukary) Serkin Karma, former representative of UGTAN—Guinea. See Report of Maréchal des logis, chef Draouler, Commandant la Brigade, sur les activités du militant Sawaba: Kao [sic] Aboubakar, Maradi, 12 Oct. 1959; Amadou Aboubakar Kaou, Niamey, to El Hadj Mahaman Hameth, Matamey, 3 Dec. 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.11.

¹¹⁶ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 8 au 14 janv. 1960, no. 63 ('militant bakaryste notoire').

¹¹⁷ Ch. 5 above. Dandouna was welcomed in Maradi by his sister Dan Maninga (related to Dan Maningo? [see n. 115 above]), Aboubakar (dit Kaou?) and Boukary Serkin Karma. The meetings were attended by Almajir, N'Diaye Ibrahim, son of Malick (= N'Diaye, the cobbler?), Tiecoura Traoré, dismissed driver of Dumoulin (Chapter 6), Abdoulaye Maiga (Amadou), El Hadj Soumaila, trader (= Al[h]adji Soumaila, one-time Hausa clerk at the finance ministry [see ch. 9]), Boukary Serkin Karma, Issaka Diori, mechanic, and Kaou's father, among other people. Renseignements, 6 & 24 Nov. 1959; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.8.

as illusory. In March 1961 he was seen praying with a dozen cadres at a mosque, shortly before getting rearrested in the wake of a liaison mission to Mali and Guinea. After this, he went to Niamey. Here Dandouna, an intimidating presence with a reputation for physical confrontations, got involved in a fist-fight with a former RDA MP, who made a condescending remark about Sawabists. It led Sawaba's tribune to file a complaint at the Sûreté. In Maradi he worked together closely with a certain Souley Katto, a clerk at the Subdivision authorities, and one Abdou Makama, employed at CFAO—besides Kaou and Dodo Hamballi, the veterinary worker who suffered a forced transfer to Niamey after the referendum and was fired afterwards.¹¹⁸ Dandouna's pivotal role perhaps rendered the Maradi cell more vulnerable, although his arrest in May 1961 and definitive departure abroad in the autumn of that year did not halt agitation, as others took over.¹¹⁹

Finally, when in 1959-1960 the movement began to expand into regions where it had never been much engaged, this certainly counted for the city of Agadez. As shown above, travelling marabouts took care of liaison work, while lorry drivers, such as the Ramane mentioned earlier, ensured the distribution of correspondence destined for the city, assisted by Gonda Kéletigui, the local clerk of Transafricaine. Abouba Yattara, the Malian clerk transferred to Zinder but now living in Agadez, contributed to liaison work with Sawabists in Gao, as well as with Abdoulaye Mamani in Zinder.¹²⁰

If Sawaba's leaders in Agadez remained in the shadow, this did not prevent agitation. This was partly a result of the regime's own making. In July-August 1959, political activities increased markedly with the arrival from Zinder of Badéri Mahamane, the MP/municipal councillor who after his eviction from parliament was transferred to Agadez as civilian employee

¹¹⁸ Ch. 5, at n. 94; Bulletin de Renseignements Particuliers, 18 Oct. 1964, no. 1234/2/S.

¹¹⁹ See ch. 8. Dandouna also worked with Boniface Lobit, teacher, Issaka Diori, one Bania Malidiana Tacharon, Boukary Boy, & possibly Henri Georget, the European who in the referendum campaigned for 'No' (ch. 4 at n. 90). Note d'information, 20 Jan., 7 March & 21 Dec. 1960, 30 May, 19 June & 7 Sept. 1961; interview with Hamidou Adamou Abdoulaye, Niamey, 19 Dec. 2010; G. Voisin, directeur prison civile Niamey, to Commandant de Cercle Niamey, 16 Febr. 1960; J. Caillard, Commandant de Cercle Niamey, to Ministre de l'Intérieur, 17 Febr. 1960; Madi Konaté, comité local de la sous-section du PPN-RDA du Maradi, to Ministre de l'Intérieur (ca. end 1960-early 1961); Maurice Espitalier, Commissaire de Police, Maradi, to Chef des Services de Police, Niamey, 5-6 Jan. 1961; Message Radio Police, 27 March 1961; all ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.8.

¹²⁰ See ch. 5 at n. 94 and Note d'information, 28 Jan. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.5.

in the army.¹²¹ The local RDA was largely dysfunctional, suffering from disagreements and antagonising inhabitants with coercive policies. Badéri felt encouraged to intensify agitation, supported by newly arrived activists like Boubacar Sadeck, the Zinder marabout who had experience with street brawls from the elections of December 1958, and a certain Sanda—according to the French a ‘fierce Bakaryst’ who had been expelled from Tessaoua. The focus of agitation thus shifted northwards. Meetings were organised on a weekly basis and held in different houses, attracting hundreds of people, among whom were many local employees of Vidal’s. Sadeck made propaganda for the PFA, distributing hundreds of membership cards.¹²²

¹²¹ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 3 au 9 sept. 1959, no. 46; chs. 3 (at n. 165), 5 (n. 166).

¹²² Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 3 au 9 sept. 1959, no. 46, 20 au 26 août 1959, no. 44 and 17 au 23 sept. 1959, no. 47 (‘bakaryste acharné’). See for a 1958 list of Sawaba activists in Agadez, Procès-verbal de la réunion de la “Jeunesse Sawaba” d’Agadez, 8 Aug. 1958; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 52.

CHAPTER EIGHT

REPRESSION, DISSENSION, AND THE ROAD TO ARMS

The oasis town of Bilma, in Niger's far north-east, is one of the most remote localities in the world. Situated on the southern end of the Kaouar escarpment, it was an important stopover on the trans-Saharan caravan trail linking the pre-colonial Borno empire with Libya, providing travellers with water and food in addition to exporting vast amounts of salt, mined in its vicinity, to areas south of the desert. With the French occupation in 1906,¹ the caravan trail fell progressively into disuse, reinforcing Bilma's isolation from the rest of Niger, from which it is separated by the Ténéré, the immense sand dune desert to the west. In the early 1960s the French continued to exercise military control, with a garrison stationed in the area, which was also part of the OCRS-run region. It was the ideal penal colony, not only because it had a jail where detainees could be kept, but also be-



Photo 8.1 Bilma (www.globosapiens.net/nomad/picture-air-mountains-25663.html).

¹ M. Le Coeur, *Les oasis du Kawar: Une route, un pays (Etudes nigériennes, 54, Niamey, 1985)*, 105.

cause the town was a good location for maintaining people under house arrest, or simply under surveillance. The forbidding surroundings made escape impossible.

Siberia

As noted in the previous chapter, two Sawaba activists were deported to Bilma early in 1960. They were among important cadres from Maradi, Zinder and Téra, who during the first quarter of 1960 got deported to the desert town as well as to (the Cercle of) Agadez, where they were forced to live under house arrest or were confined to town.² With Sawaba's influence growing, repression became harsher. During the same period three activists from Soudan were deported to their country of origin (10 February), following on two similar expulsions on 3 February, 16 expulsion orders the day before that, and three the previous month.³ As shown in the preceding chapters, some of these deportations concerned high-ranking leaders. They were brought to the border with Soudan and dumped there, even at night.⁴ The expulsions had come in the wake of the crackdown of November-December 1959, in which some 30 party men were arrested on the excuse that they had participated in a plot against the state involving Sawabists abroad,⁵ an accusation that was to set a precedent.

Thus, these measures heralded a more massive clampdown in May 1960. On the night of the 21st 458 people were arrested in the capital alone.⁶ A month later, on 28 June, the government began targeting Sawaba leaders, organising house searches, seizing documents and detaining more than a dozen activists. On the 30th six were brought to court, most of them top cadres: Adamou Sékou, Issaka Koké, Amadou dit Gabriel, Hima Dembélé and Abdoulaye Mamani, in addition to Garba Hamidou, an unskilled worker or transporter from the Niamey area. The regime claimed that incrimi-

² Synthèse de Renseignements. 1er Trimestre 1960, Période du 1er févr. au 30 avril 1960. No. 1120/G.C.S./ZOM1/2; SHAT, 5 H 95.

³ See previous chapter at n. 87; Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus pour la période du 5 au 11 févr. 1960, no. 67; CAOM, Cart.2252; M. Djibo, *Les transformations politiques au Niger à la veille de l'indépendance* (Paris, 2001), 222.

⁴ Something that was not without risks, as the region was infested with lion. Djibo, *Les transformations*, 222 and interviews with Georges Condat and Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 27-28 Nov. 2003. The expulsions of 3 February may have been part of the previous day's decrees. Other Sawaba leaders deported included Maurice Camara and one Boubakar Touré. C. Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA et la décolonisation du Niger 1946-1960* (Paris, 1995), 286.

⁵ See previous chapter at n. 9 and Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 323.

⁶ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 223.

nating documents had been found at Koké's house. Describing them as 'notorious agitators', it charged the arrested men with plotting against the state with the help of friends abroad in the course of a project code-named 'Plan B'. Then, the former parliamentary chairman, Georges Condat, was arrested, accused of having reconstituted a banned political party. He was given house arrest in Say, south of Niamey. Adamou Assane Mayaki, as noted in the previous chapter, was also detained, in his case because he would have received a telegram from Djibo Bakary (tried *in absentia* together with Dan Galadima). In July, membership lists were seized in house searches and numerous other cadres detained, including Salifou Soumaila, who was charged with theft of confidential documents, and Barmou Batouré, who was incarcerated with eight others—among whom was Baoua Souley—in the prison of Niamey.⁷ Others detained also concerned high-ranking Sawabists, such as Aboubakar dit Kaou and Gandah Djibo, Bakary's former private secretary, in addition to Elhadji Harouda, a prominent inhabitant of Gothèye living in Niamey.⁸

The charges concerning the plot were clearly concocted. As French and British intelligence noted, the accession to independence and Sawaba's demand to participate in the new dispensation incited 'the Reds' in the regime to push for extreme measures in order to close the ranks, using the discovery of documents at Koké's house as a pretext. The very name of the conspiracy, which retrospectively appeared unknown to Sawabists, pointed to a regime signature, as it suggested a ploy to fall back on a plan after another had failed.⁹ On 6 September Abdoulaye Mamani was sentenced to two years in prison and a huge fine (500,000 CFA, i.e. 10,000 FRF, reduced to 100,000 CFA in November), while Batouré also got two years. Numerous others were confronted with different prison terms as well as internal exile

⁷ The others were Mailafa Djibo, Hima Mamadou Malick, Kelessie Moussa, Amadou Ilo, Elhadj Ousmane Diori Gado, Issa Amadou and Elhadji Harouna Tatize (Tatyze). Barmou Batouré, prison civile Niamey, to President Diori, 28 Sept. 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 7.8.

⁸ Marabouts in Maradi, Zinder and Dogondoutchi were also detained or given house arrest (ch. 6, n. 106). Synthèse de Renseignements. 2^{ème} Trimestre 1960, Période du 1er mai au 31 juillet 1960, no. 1814; SHAT, 5 H 95; Stratégie de l'Opposition Sawaba: Ingérences Etrangères. Très Secret. Report by J. Colombani, 33/C/SU, 13 Jan. 1961, to Minister of the Interior; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.2; Note d'information, 29 Sept. 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.7; interviews with Adamou Assane Mayaki & Georges Condat, Niamey, 29 Jan. & 27 Nov. 2003; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 326-7; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 223, 235; Parti Sawaba. Pour l'Indépendance effective du Niger: Les raisons de notre lutte (Bureau du Parti Sawaba: Bamako, 15 Jan. 1961), 66-67 ('agitateurs notoires').

⁹ Synthèse de Renseignements. 2^{ème} Trimestre 1960, no. 1814; British Embassy Dakar to Foreign Office, 6 July 1960; PRO, FO 371/147.583; interview Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 2 Dec. 2003.

orders. Djibo Bakary and Dan Galadima were also sentenced to jail terms, putting up an extra barrier to their return home. In November an appeals court in Niamey sentenced Adamou Sékou and Issaka Koké to two years and a fine of 100,000 CFA, Dembélé to one year and a penalty of 50,000 CFA and Baoua Souley to six months and a similar fine, all on the grounds of having tried to reconstitute a dissolved political party. By then, most had already spent time in detention, some of them, like Mamadou Dori (Diori), in Bilma.¹⁰ Bakary would later reminisce that several of his comrades were shipped off to the Sahara, including Adamou Sékou, Dembélé and Amadou dit Gabriel, although it is not certain at which date this occurred or to which term of detention this referred.¹¹ In any case, Mamadou Diori got out towards the end of the year when 23 Sawabists had their sentences quashed on the occasion of the anniversary of the republic. Aboubakar dit Kaou got out, as did Mayaki, Mamani, Koké, Dembélé and Sékou. Condat had already been released in the summer after spending a fortnight under house arrest.¹²

The circumstances of detention were hard to bear, even in Niamey. Barmou Batouré, who was ill, described them in his letter to the president, pointing out that his group of nine shared a cell eight metres across with no window. They had to stay inside day and night with the exception of one hour in the evening. Sleeping on mats with rough covers on the cement floor, they were barred from using an outside shower and toilet and forced to use two buckets inside, suffering in darkness from the stench, heat and lack of air. Common criminals were treated more leniently.¹³

¹⁰ Sometimes the charge was participation in meetings for which no permission had been asked. Interview with Maman Tchila, Zinder, 9 Febr. 2003. Salifou Soumaila, defended by a French lawyer, got off with a two-month suspended sentence. Note d'information, 8 Nov. & 12 Dec. 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.7/3.5; Synthèse de Renseignements Intérieurs, 3^{ème} trimestre 1960. Période du 1^{er} août au 30 oct. 1960, no. 2619; SHAT, 5 H 95; Alou Himadou, l'Adjoint du Commandant de Cercle, to President Diori, 5 Oct. 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 7.8; C. Maman, *Répertoire biographique des personnalités de la classe politique et des leaders d'opinion du Niger de 1945 à nos jours* (Niamey, 1999), vol. 1, 202, 232-3, 307, 333 and 378; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 327.

¹¹ As were Ibrahim Issa (ch. 5, n. 85), Maï Manga (chief from Nguigmi) and Oumara (Oumarou) Yacoudima (cadre from Tillabéri). D. Bakary, *Silence! On décolonise: Itinéraire politique et syndical d'un militant africain* (Paris, 1992), 259. There is a slight chance that the reference to Issa is an anachronism referring to later imprisonment in Dao Timmi (see Epilogue at n. 36).

¹² Ch. 6 n. 112; Note d'information, 12 Dec. 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.5; Synthèse de Renseignements, 2^{ème} trimestre 1960, no. 1814; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 235; interview with Georges Condat, Niamey, 27 Nov. 2003.

¹³ Barmou Batouré, prison civile Niamey, to President Diori, 28 Sept. 1960. Beds and mosquito nets were denied. The assistant Commandant de Cercle (note 10 above) claimed

Although details are sketchy, conditions in the Sahara were hardly better. With mean maximum temperatures in Bilma exceeding 42 degrees in June and little rainfall to provide succour, it was a harsh place to be, even for people from the Sahel. As Sawabists faced new bouts of confinement, some information got out on their treatment. In September 1961, the regime unleashed the most ferocious wave of repression to date, which drove cadres completely underground. One night, towards the end of the month, Adamou Sékou was taken from his house and, together with Hima Dembélé and nearly two dozen activists, placed in custody.¹⁴ Diamballa Maïga reinforced border controls and ordered the deportation of cadres to Bilma, where they were to live under house arrest or were put in detention. They included Sékou; Dembélé; Mounkeïla Issifi, the former Téra MP who had frequently suffered arrest upon return from journeys to Bamako; Ali Moussa, a 70-year-old chief from the Gaouey district in Niamey; and a Zinderois trader, Elhadj Halilo.¹⁵ The French reported that Maïga also established an internment camp for active opponents, although it remained unclear where.¹⁶ One Sawaba publication spoke of 'fortified camps' in the Ténéré, an allusion, perhaps, to the civilian prison of Bilma, which French intelligence said was holding Sawabists subjected to the regime of common criminals. This, according to Sawaba allegations, included forced labour and 'ignominious treatments' by Captain Le Masson, commander of the Bilma district. On 6 February 1962 Adamou Sékou reiterated these accusations in a letter to the president, complaining about maltreatment by French officers, principal among which was the omission to provide food,

the jail was crammed with 273 detainees and 9 dormitories, the one of the political prisoners measuring 6.85 by 5, with the courtyard 10.95 by 4.80 and the hospital ward, where Batouré was, 6.90 by 6.40.

¹⁴ In her fury Sékou's brave wife wrote Maïga, accusing him of violating the law, claiming he had no evidence against her husband and asserting that Maïga was now responsible for the upkeep of her children. Madame Adamou Sékou to Ministre de l'Intérieur, 28 Sept. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.9. The Sept. 1961 crackdown was preceded by a wave of expulsions in June, especially of Nigerians. See for a list *Gaskya: Organe Officiel du Parti Sawaba*, no. 5, 29 June 1961.

¹⁵ Appel aux organisations démocratiques du monde, Parti Sawaba, Bureau Politique, Bamako, 26 Nov. 1961; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 501, 30 déc. 1961; SHAT, 10 T 717, D.2 (latter refers to 22 Bilma deportees). One Note d'information, 27 Sept. 1961 (ANN, 86 MI 3 F 4.11) cites a Sawaba woman propagandist, Kadi (Kady) Souka, claiming that six cadres were deported to Bilma. One Malam Saley was also deported at a certain moment to Bilma, where he began trading groundnuts. Interview with Oumarou Janba, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003. Another victim of repression also was a woman, Hadiza Issa Alkali.

¹⁶ Synthèse de Renseignements Intérieurs; 3^{ème} Trim. 1961, no. 2355/2/S, no. 925/BS/S; SHAT, 5 H 95.

which the prisoners only survived with outside help.¹⁷ Only a few days before 12 Sawabists in Zinder, arrested in October the previous year, were tried for resurrecting the party. They complained about brutalities by the Sûreté and, according to the French, included several innocent people, who nonetheless were sentenced to heavy terms.¹⁸

In March 1962 the French reported that conditions in Bilma had improved a little, although the Sawabists were kept under close surveillance and had no contact with the outside world.¹⁹ One year later a party organ published a message of Sékou and Dembélé, smuggled out of 'Niger's distant Siberia'. It depicted the internment in Bilma, where 'winds of sand, heat, thirst and desolation' reigned. Adamou Sékou would repeat this in a 'song of the deported' that he composed for his baby son, born during his detention. If melodramatic in style, it drove home the difficulties to which cadres were subjected. It was reported that several became sick.²⁰

I Forgot To Tell

Siberia stood for the constant harassment of Sawaba's cadres. In March 1960 Condat complained in a letter to Bakary that he was being followed by the Sûreté day and night. Surveillance could be conducted by uniformed men, informers or plain-clothes policemen, whose deployment, for example, was recommended in the autumn of 1961 to better control Sawaba agitation in the market of Gaya. Sawabists were even shadowed abroad, where, as will be shown later, the government would send spies, police or regime functionaries to investigate activities of Sawaba's external wing or even interrogate its cadres. Bakary himself, for example, was under surveil-

¹⁷ Adamou Sékou, ancien ministre détenu au camp pénal de Bilma, à Monsieur le Président de la République du Niger à Niamey. Text in Parti Sawaba, Pour Un Front Démocratique de la Patrie (Bureau Politique: Niamey, 1962), 41-42, which also alleged that a regime strongman had threatened to 'starve' them; Ibid., 4, listing other victims of detention (in Bilma?): Elhadj Nakandari (ch.7, n. 63), Sékou Sido, Illiassou Maïga and another old man, Abdoulaye Bougno (see also below n. 113); Recueil des principaux renseignements collectés au cours de la période du 22 au 28 mars 1962, no. 169; SHAT, 5 H 91 ('camps fortifiés'; 'affamer'; 'traitements ignominieux').

¹⁸ Recueil des principaux renseignements collectés au cours de la période du 8 au 14 févr. 1962, no. 164; SHAT, 5 H 92. This included Nakandari, 'Bakaryst' groundnut trader. Sentences were up to 14 months and fines to 100,000 CFA.

¹⁹ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 22 au 28 mars 1962, no. 169.

²⁰ 'Debout jeune de mon pays', in *Sawaba: Organe Central du Parti Sawaba du Niger*, March 1963; Pour Un Front Démocratique de la Patrie, 4 ('lointaine sibérie nigérienne'; 'vents de sables, chaleur, soif et désolation'; 'chant des déportés'); *Gaskya*, no. 15, 18 Oct. 1961.

lance in the course of missions to Dahomey, while he was permanently being watched in his country of exile, Mali.²¹ At home, the freedom of movement was hindered by border closures and the denial or confiscation of identity papers.²² Under these circumstances cadres who dared to agitate openly for the cause were confronted with a lack of public response, or worse, became the object of scorn.²³

Consequently, repression began to take its toll. At Bakary's fall his family in Soudouré became pariahs overnight, shunned by everyone, even in the Nigérien migrant community in Ghana. Ordinary cadres also began to suffer abandonment as people became scared to talk with those identified as state enemy no. 1. Issoufou Danbaro, for example, experienced increasing isolation in his home town of Gaya, where friends did not wish to be seen with him anymore.²⁴ Daily life became intolerable as government officials did everything to create difficulties. Thus, as far as Abdoulaye Mamani was concerned, the minister of the interior already in January 1959 ordered the Commandant de Cercle of Zinder

to put into operation everything, with the help of the Police and Gendarmerie, to incriminate him in a case for which he could be sentenced to a severe prison term.²⁵

One year later, an opportunity presented itself as the bank cheque that Mamani had sent to Condat, worth 10,000 CFA, bounced. The head of the Sûreté, Jean Colombani, informed Minister Maïga of this 'swindle', a criminal offence, and advised that

²¹ Note d'information, 18 March 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 4.4; Sama Alhadji Ibrahim, RDA Gaya, to Ministre de l'Intérieur, Niamey, 15 Sept. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 12.19; documents stored in ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.5 (Sûreté file on Djibo Bakary).

²² See ANN, 86 MI 3 F 12.32 (files Bachir Boukary, Chaibou Souley, Moussa Dan Dje); interrogation report by Jean Colombani, Jean Arrighi and Georges Clément on Hima Dembélé, 14 June 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.10.

²³ Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus pour la période du 8 au 14 janv. 1960, no. 63 and *Ibid.*, ... 18 au 24 mars 1960, no. 73; CAOM, Cart.2252/3690.

²⁴ Bakary's younger half-brother, Adamou Souna (see Photo 8.2), tried to practise as a marabout in Ghana, but failed for this reason. Interview, Soudouré, 27 Febr. 2008. Danbaro's file in ANN, 86 MI 3 F 12.19.

²⁵ Ministre de l'Intérieur to Commandant de Cercle, Zinder, 11 Jan. 1959; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.5 ('de tout mettre en service, avec le concours de la Police et de la Gendarmerie, pour l'inculper dans une affaire où il pourrait être condamné à une peine sévère d'emprisonnement').

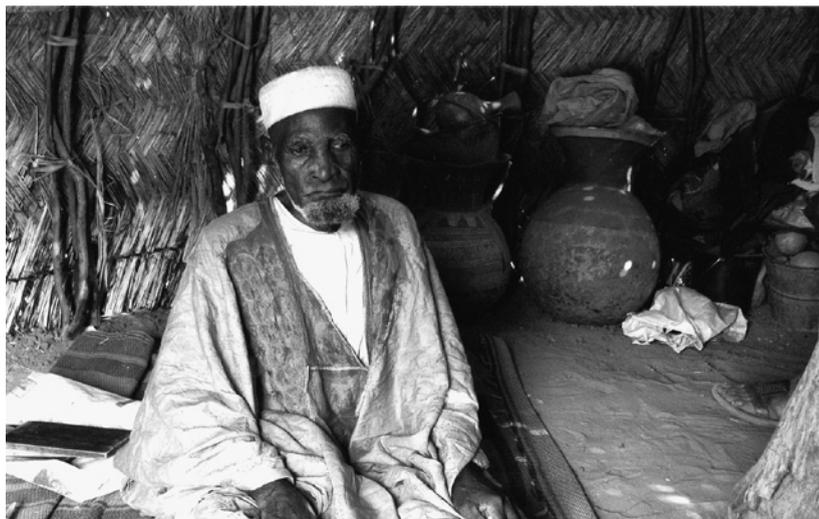


Photo 8.2 Adamou Souna, Djibo Bakary's younger half-brother, Soudouré, February 2008.

[t]he public prosecutor's office could make use of a direct summons to emphasise the psychological shock that the arrest of Abdoulaye Mamani will constitute.²⁶

When Maïga apparently chose not to act on this, police in Zinder informed the Sûreté in Niamey that Mamani could not repay the loan for his car—which he used for his political activities—, as he was now unemployed. Zinder's police commissioner, Roger, informed Diamballa Maïga that he had confiscated Mamani's vehicle, which was in good condition and could therefore be used by the police itself.²⁷ Mamani reacted by writing Maman Tchila, fellow Zinderois, that

[f]or the time being it is still the same news. They talk about harmony and still beat us up ... We also come to learn that Tana has been expelled—which is a pity.²⁸

²⁶ Jean Colombani to Ministre de l'Intérieur, 16 Jan. 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.5 ('escroquerie'; le Parquet pourrait user de la citation directe afin d'accentuer le choc psychologique que constituera l'arrestation de Abdoulaye Mamani'). See Chapter 7 at n. 59.

²⁷ Chef de la Brigade Mobile du Niger-Est, Zinder, to chef des services de police, Niamey, 9 Febr. 1960 and R. Roger, commissioner of police, Zinder, to chef des services de la police, Niamey, 19 March 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.5.

²⁸ Mamani to Mahaman Tchila, n.d. (ca. Apr. 1960); ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.5 ('Pour le moment ce sont toujours les mêmes nouvelles. Ils parlent de l'entente et nous matraquent toujours ... Nous venons d'apprendre aussi que Tana a été expulsé—c'est dommage').

Nor was Mamani the only one, as this letter showed, who suffered harassment. Harouna Téla, a Sawabist tailor who had close ties with Bakary, for which he was incarcerated for a month, had his car and Niamey compound confiscated and was then forced to move back, with his family, to his native Gothèye. Maurice Espitalier, Maradi's police commissioner, suggested to the head of the Sûreté in January 1961 that they should try and wait for a particular raid to frame Dandouna Aboubakar and deport him to Bilma. In the course of these efforts, the government looked for anything, however petty, with which to trap its opponents, ranging from investigations into the bank account of Sallé Dan Koulou—which yielded nothing—to the discovery of Dandouna's 'suspicious use of gasoline tickets' of the government car pool, which led to his arrest.²⁹ Condat, too, became the subject of house searches. He was interrogated and letters and documents were examined (such as the receipt of the car he had purchased to start a taxi service in order to make a living). Mallam Kalla, upon his release from prison in Maradi in March 1962, was immediately put under house arrest.³⁰ Soon this witch-hunt became difficult to bear, as Sallé Dan Koulou made clear in a letter to Dandouna Aboubakar in February 1960 informing him of the pestering of Sawaba youths in a range of cities (Maradi, Tessaoua, Madaoua and Zinder):

I am obliged to cry out to you "SOS". I have been short-circuited by an inhuman minister ... I have not even paid my rent. At this very moment the minister has cut 4/5 of my pay. I have indeed effected repairs to my car, and on the last moment they take the car away from me and cut my livelihood. I cannot speak to Habi who has besides distanced himself from me ... Tazas, himself fired, struggles in conditions as difficult as mine. However, I will adjust to the situation. I only ask you to cover the void left by the others ... In brotherhood, Salle (destroy after reading).³¹

²⁹ Maurice Espitalier, Commissaire de Police, Maradi, to Chef des Services de Police, Niamey, 5 Jan. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.8; Note Direction des services de police to Ministre de l'Intérieur, 15 May 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.7; document dated July 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.8; interview Djibo Harouna (Téla's son), Gothèye, 1 Nov. 2005 ('utilisation suspecte de tickets d'essence').

³⁰ Interview Georges Condat, Niamey, 27 Nov. 2003; file Mallam Kalla; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 12.32.

³¹ Sallé Dan Koulou, Direction du Groupe Postal Niamey, to Dan Dicko, 28 Febr. 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.7 ('je suis obligé de te crier "SOS". Je suis coupe-circuité par un ministre inhumain ... je n'ai même pas payé ma location. Au moment où je te parle le ministre m'a coupé les 4/5 de mes rémunérations. J'ai en effet effectué des réparations sur ma voiture, et au dernier moment on m'enlève la voiture et on me coupe les vivres. Je ne puis m'adresser à Habi qui a d'ailleurs pris des distances vis-à-vis de moi ... Tazas lui-même licencié lutte dans des conditions aussi difficiles que moi. Toutefois je m'accommoderai à la situation. Je

Dandouna, however, had too many problems of his own to be of much help. Between October 1959 and May 1961 he was arrested no less than five times.³² In fact, after the RDA's rise to power this fate would befall innumerable Sawabists at one time or another, whether ordinary party workers or people in the leadership.³³ Getting detained was an intimidating experience, as the above allusions to brutalities, dating to 1962, show. As noted in Chapter 6 interrogation at the Sûreté or BCL, the Bureau de Coordination, was conducted by French officers. Interviews with Sawabists about interrogation practices in the period after 1963 indicate that 'goumiers', Tuareg guards armed with whips, were present or called in and ordered to beat the detainee if he refused to answer questions or no satisfactory response was forthcoming.³⁴ Since many people interviewed have retrospectively spoken about beatings, of which they themselves or others became victim, it is clear that maltreatment was commonplace.³⁵ Archival evidence, moreover, makes clear that such beatings also took place well *before* 1963. According to one testimony Georges Clément, the chief of territorial and frontier surveillance, routinely spoke about 'giving memory' to detainees when he must have meant to have them beaten.³⁶ This comes close to a statement by Diamballa Maïga in October 1961 that 'the head of the Sûreté

ne te demande que de quoi couvrir le vide entre autres ... Bien fraternellement. Salle (à détruire après lecture).

³² See his Sûreté file in ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.8.

³³ The following arrests or forms of harassment were found in only *one* file (ANN, 86 MI 3 F, until late 1963), indicating the comprehensive nature of repression; they pertained to Djibo Issa, Ibrahim Félix, Soumah Maïga, Tiémoko Mahaman Ilo, Katchalla Oumar, Louis Bourgès, Mallam Kalla, Paraiso Ara, Issoufou Moumouni, Yerima Moussa, Amadou Karimou, Kona Mayaki, Soumaila Sekou, Mahamidou Alhassane, Niang Malick, Adamou Moumouni, Oumar Traoré, Issoufou Danbaro (second time, Sept. 1961), Adamou Assane Mayaki (several times), Sekou Soumaila Bery, Mailafa Djibo, Hima Mamadou Malick, Kelessie Moussa, Amadou Ilo, Elhadj Ousmane Diori Gado, Issa Amadou, Elhadji Harouna Tatize (last seven comrades of Barmou Batouré & Baoua Souley), Issa Bakary, Gatakoye (Gayakoye) Sabi (second arrest Febr. 1961), Alhadji Soumaila, Mazou Dan Mazel, Hamidou Moustapha dit Saidou, Maïdanda Djermaakoye (stopped at border, Aug. 1961), Oumarou Habou dit Dankoro, Grema Ari (house arrest), Sallé Dan Koulou (Sept. 1961), Dodo Hamballi (Jan. 1961), and Hima Dembélé (second time, June 1961, third time, Sept. 1961). Another arrest worth mentioning is that of Koussanga Alzouma in Maïné-Soroa, 1960 (Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 17 Oct. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 719, D.2) and arrests in April 1962 concerning Arouna Zada, Sékou Sido, Abdoulaye Bougno, and Illiassou Maïga (Déclaration; Bureau Politique, Accra, 12 Apr. 1962 [Pour Un Front Démocratique de la Patrie, 51]).

³⁴ Interviews with Ali Amadou, Mounkaila Beidari, Mounkaila Albagna, Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 28 Jan., 28-29 Nov. 2003 and 27 Oct. 2005; Soumana Idrissa, Gothèye, 1 Nov. 2005.

³⁵ See note above and interviews cited in chs. 12-14.

³⁶ Interview with Soumana Idrissa, Gothèye, 1 Nov. 2005 ('donner de mémoire').

[had] received an order to wash the brain' of a recalcitrant Sawabist—Sékou Bery Ismaila—and Clément's own admission in September 1960 that he had 'severely called' Bonkoukou's headmaster Jimra Orgao 'to order' during questioning.³⁷

In the course of interrogation detainees would be accused of lying or asked intimidating questions, which, when included in the report, were typed entirely in capitals—something that could indicate that interrogators were shouting.³⁸ In any case, the entire context of questioning breathed the exertion of extreme psychological pressure. Jean Colombani and his colleague Jean Arrighi could, for example, report that they '[had] been able to make' Kona Mayaki, a teacher of Sawaba persuasion, admit that he had been in the Soviet Union and Guinea—which he would later retract.³⁹ Interrogation went hand in hand with making threats, against the detainees themselves or their family, who often became the target of repression as well.⁴⁰ Georges Clément, whose professional experience was highly regarded by Maïga, once warned three Sawabists suspected of trying to leave for Eastern Europe that they were not allowed to go, adding that their parents would be treated as accomplices if they did.⁴¹ While on a mission to the Algerian desert town of Tamanrasset (October 1963) the police commissioner of Agadez cornered Yahaya Silimane, a marabout-Swabist from Ingal, starting his interrogation with '[l]etting him understand that his mother in In-Gall [was] well'. Understanding the 'barely concealed threats against the opponents of the Government', as the police commissioner put it, Silimane cracked, giving away details on Sawaba's northern infiltration network.⁴²

³⁷ Sékou Ismaila Bery to President Diori, 21 Oct. 1961 (with Maïga's order scribbled in the margin); ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.19, and Chapter 7 at n. 101 ('le M. de la Sûreté a reçu ordre de lui laver la cervelle'; 'il a été rappelé sévèrement à l'ordre').

³⁸ See the interrogation report attached to J. Colombani, Directeur de la Sûreté, to Ministre de l'Intérieur, 8 Febr. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.3.

³⁹ File Kona Mayaki, interrogation report by Jean Colombani and Jean Arrighi, 2 Aug. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 12.32 ('avons ... pu lui faire').

⁴⁰ Interviews Tahirou Ayouba Maïga & Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 6 Dec. 2003 & 28 Oct. 2005; Moumouni Daouda, Tillabéri, 3 Nov. 2005; Abdou Ali Tazard, Tessaoua, 9 Febr. 2006.

⁴¹ It concerned Issoufou Moumouni, Amadou Karimou, Yerima Moussa. Their height was taken and they were then released. Note d'information, undated?, ANN, 86 MI 3 F 12.32 (1961-3); Ministre de l'Intérieur to Directeur de la Sûreté, 21 Nov. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 4.11.

⁴² Commissioner of police Agadez to Directeur de la Sûreté Niamey, 6 Nov. 1963; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 18.9 (Direction de la Sûreté Nationale/Commissariat de Police de la Ville d'Agadez: Notes d'information concernant le Sawaba en liaison avec Tamanrasset) ('Lui laissant

Thus, as Sawabists have retrospectively admitted, it was extremely difficult *not* to talk⁴³ and, consequently, it was hard to avoid giving away information. Sometimes detainees tried to withstand their interrogators, such as Jimra Orgao, who denied political activities and complained of conspiracies against him. Gatakoye (Gayakoye) Sabi steadfastly refused to confess to visits to China and Czechoslovakia, which Colombani saw as evidence of bad faith in view of the items found in his luggage.⁴⁴ In September 1961 Sallé Dan Koulou, in the course of his arrest in Gaya—the border town with Dahomey through which many fled the country—, acted amazement and boldly told the Gendarmerie that, had he wished to leave the country, he would have taken another route than by bus. He also demanded proper treatment, including sufficient air in the building where he was kept, because of a heart condition he claimed to have.⁴⁵

These were exceptional acts of bravery, as more often than not duress led cadres to keep talking, (seemingly) obliging interrogators by answering questions or adding details to what they had said.⁴⁶ When Hima Dembélé during his second arrest in June 1961 recounted part of the itinerary he had followed on a trip to Eastern Europe, he stated at one point that he ‘[had] forgotten to specify’ certain details of the stopovers he had made. The in-dominable Dandouna Aboubakar, who during one of his terms in detention was put in solitary confinement and was threatened with transfers to Agadez and Bilma, in May 1961 twice told interrogators that he had ‘forgotten to tell’ something.⁴⁷

entendre que sa mère se porte bien à In-Gall’; ‘menaces à peine déguisées contre les opposants du Gouvernement’).

⁴³ Interviews Mounkaila Beidari & Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 28 Nov. 2003 & 26 Oct. 2005.

⁴⁴ Georges Clément, Chef de Section ST et Frontières, to Directeur des Services, Niamey, 16 Sept. 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 7.10; J. Colombani, Directeur de la Sûreté, to Ministre de l’Intérieur, 8 & 13 Febr. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.3. Sabi probably did visit the Eastern Bloc. Czech and Chinese shirts were found in his luggage, which, however, he claimed to have bought in Bamako.

⁴⁵ Procès-verbal gendarmerie nationale, 9 Sept. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.7.

⁴⁶ See for the question of interpretation the Prologue.

⁴⁷ Interrogation report Hima Dembélé by Jean Colombani, Jean Arrighi & Georges Clément, 14 June 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.10 (also contains his confiscated passport); Direction de la Sûreté Nationale, Procès-Verbal, no. 624/SU, 28 mai 1961; J. Caillard, Commandant de Cercle Niamey to Ministre de l’Intérieur, 17 Febr. 1960; Maurice Espitalier, Commissioner of Police Maradi, to Chef des Services de Police Niamey, 6 Jan. 1961; Ministre de l’Intérieur to Cercle Agadez & Subdivision Bilma, 5 Jan. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.8. After another of Dandouna’s arrests, Bakary accused Arrighi in articles and broadcasts of having beaten Dandouna until he bled. Dandouna would also have been subjected to electric shocks and almost turned deaf as a consequence. These accusations could not be substantiated. J.

Discord

As individual cadres began to pay a price for their activities, it was only a question of time before the party had to face up to tensions and disagreements. In a movement that depended on the commitment of the grass roots, political success was always bound up with individual fortunes. With some faring better than others, this put pressure on internal relationships, which were now complicated by disagreements about a number of issues: should one pursue confrontation with the regime or opt for restraint? Was conventional politics viable or should the party prepare for violent action? Specific issues such as the formation of a new inter-territorial party, the Zinder by-election or steps taken by the government demanded decisions that fuelled disagreements or could be used to settle internal scores. The creation of a party wing in exile, with the problems of co-ordination this entailed, further increased the chances of friction. Attempts, finally, of the regime to entice individual members to defect led to recriminations articulated in an atmosphere of suspicion and resentment.

Already in the spring of 1959 an appeal for calm in the face of repression led to simmering dissension. Bakary had asked for a cautious response to the arrest of Adamou Sékou on the grounds of preventing worse and the calculation that time was on Sawaba's side. This also led him to counsel prudence in establishing sections of the PFA to allow for assessment of the new inter-territorial grouping and avoid reprisals.⁴⁸ Yet, numerous cadres were impatient and opposed moderation vis-à-vis a regime that lashed out against them. That same month there were quarrels in a locality called Tchentechendi, which led to one death, although it is not certain that this involved an intra-party feud, as the French suggested.⁴⁹ The Zinder by-election led to further disagreements. There were arguments about who should stand, centring on a 'very remarkable' personality (the French thought it was Condat). Mahaman Dan Bouzoua, architect of the victory in December 1958, ardently opposed this in favour of the original list that

Colombani à M. le ministre de l'intérieur, Niamey, 1 Febr. 1960 (with an article in the Malian *l'Essor* by Bakary); ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.8; Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 5 au 11 févr. 1960, no. 67 ('oublié de préciser'; 'oublié de dire').

⁴⁸ In May 1959 PFA activity temporarily decreased. Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de Dakar pour la période du 14 au 20 mai 1959, no. 30; CAOM, Cart.3685.

⁴⁹ The name points to a northern or Tuareg locality. Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de Dakar pour la période du 13 au 23 avril 1959, no. 27; CAOM, Cart.3685.

included Mamani. The latter, however, apparently would have preferred Bakary to stand as well. Although in the end the regime foiled Sawaba participation altogether, the refusal of Bakary to stand himself was at least tainted by the suggestion that he was scared—much to the fury of Mamani, who would have threatened to abandon his leader. In August this led to a sharp debate between Bakary and his principal lieutenants, who strongly reproached him for what was seen as ‘his lack of fighting spirit’. Sékou, who hinted at cowardice, complained that Bakary failed to come to the aid of friends while expecting the mobilisation of the entire party when he himself came under fire. At least a few agreed with him.⁵⁰

These differences became more serious, as the development of the external wing made them harder to handle. Bakary’s exile had the potential to create dissent, as cadres at home bore the brunt of repression and the regime used every opportunity to associate his presence abroad with the enjoyment of a life of luxury.⁵¹ At the end of December 1959 Bakary broadcast a message to his followers on Radio Bamako ‘to soothe anxieties born from his prolonged absence’. He appealed for calm and argued that neither a violent response nor cadres’ exile would assist in tackling the party’s predicament. Alluding to internal divisions, Bakary warned against a ‘small minority’ that had rallied to the government.⁵² He kept on broadcasting speeches, denouncing the persecution of his cadres and appealing for sangfroid while flooding his lieutenants with letters and instructions that were read out in meetings of the domestic party. There is no doubt that Bakary’s towering figure, established during the 1950s, continued to be an important source of influence, yet as time went by his absence began to exert a negative effect. Domestic leaders had to reassure militants of his homecoming, but the speeches of their saviour began to sound a bit hollow, calling on his followers to unite ‘more than ever’ and reassuring them that their cause would triumph.⁵³

⁵⁰ Ibid., 20 au 26 août 1959, no. 44, 14 au 20 mai 1959, no. 30; Synthèse politique, no. 1104 CP, Aug. 1959; CAOM, Cart. 3687 & 3684 (‘très marquante’; ‘son manque de combativité’).

⁵¹ See f.e. *Le Niger*, 30 Nov. 1959 and, later, 26 Oct. 1964.

⁵² Text in *Les raisons de notre lutte*, 52-3 (‘pour apaiser les inquiétudes nées de son absence prolongée’; ‘une petite minorité’).

⁵³ Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus pour la période du 10 au 16 & 24 au 31 déc. 1959, 15 au 21 janv. 1960, 1 au 7 janv. 1960, nos. 60-1, 64, 62; CAOM, Cart. 2251-2; Bakary’s file in ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.5 (‘plus que jamais’).

Misgivings about his preference for peaceful action were fed by the use of Condat as go-between.⁵⁴ The former parliamentary chairman continued to perform this role until the beginning of 1961, although as shown above, Maurice Camara—who was much respected by domestic cadres—also acted in this capacity on occasion (and Adamou Sékou, Mamani and Daouda Ardaly, among other people, also embarked on liaison missions to Bamako). But in the context of growing repression Condat was not a popular man, as he was a cautious character who—of BNA provenance—had an inclination for moderate politics. Disadvantaged by his background, he nevertheless played an important role in attempts to keep Sawaba alive by the formation of new political groupings. While he acted on Bakary's orders, much of his work in this area must have stemmed from his own initiative, as it could also help further his career. However, with stakes in a new political party, even if unrecognised by the regime, Condat disliked taking a strong anti-government stance, something that made him suspect in the eyes of hardliners who took the hardest blows. By the beginning of 1960 he was therefore barely in grace. Men such as Sékou Hamidou, Habi Djibo and Adamou Sékou, who by then had become the movement's principal domestic leader, condemned his attitude, and Bakary's go-between began to be abandoned by many.⁵⁵

The establishment of new political parties was one way of keeping the movement afloat, although this also introduced an element of instability. As shown in the previous chapter, when Niger's section of the PFA—the UPN—was denied recognition, its successor 'RPN' suffered a similar fate. In October 1960 activists filed for a new grouping, this time called the 'Parti de l'Unité Nigérienne' (PUN). The government rebuffed this as well and threatened to prosecute the initiators.⁵⁶ Some cadres found solace in the Marxist-oriented 'Parti Africain de l'Indépendance' (PAI), which originated in Senegal.⁵⁷ While some, in their fervour to establish sections, might have

⁵⁴ A remark in an interview, probably made in a moment of weakness, about regretting his stand in the referendum, must also have been damaging. Yet, just before, Bakary had issued a call for relentless struggle for independence. *Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus pour la période du 5 au 11 & 12 au 18 nov. 1959*, nos. 55-6; CAOM, Cart. 2251/3689.

⁵⁵ Note d'information, 1 Febr. and 8 March 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.2.

⁵⁶ Synthèse de Renseignements Intérieurs, 3^{ème} Trimestre 1960, no. 2619; SHAT, 5 H 95. Djibo, *Les transformations*, 229, notes that another party created at one time was the 'Front Démocratique de la Patrie', on which, however, no information could be found. It may refer to the 1962 policy statement (n. 17).

⁵⁷ J.R. de Benoist, *L'Afrique Occidentale Française de la conférence de Brazzaville (1944) à l'indépendance (1960)* (Paris, 1982), 346.

mistaken it for the federal PFA,⁵⁸ others—especially youngsters with a student background—became active on its behalf. Already in 1957 a medical student had founded a PAI section in Zinder, where youths began to agitate for it during the referendum. An attempt was then made to found a section in Maradi, which, even more than in Zinder, attracted local Senegalese and Malians confronted with marginalisation.⁵⁹ By 1959 the PAI, which the French saw as Sawaba's left wing, had built up a strong position in Nguigmi, thanks to Barmou Batouré—who then worked as manager of the local post office—and Koussanga Alzouma, Bakary's cabinet director at the interior ministry who hailed from there. Assisted by Moctar Yaya and El Hadji Oussaini, Sawaba-oriented clerks, PAI influence in Gouré and Zinder began to grow as well. By then the PAI had become very active in Gao, where Sawaba's external wing had found a base. This international dimension extended across West Africa and even beyond. Abdou Moumouni, the leftist teacher at the Lycée National, during a stay in Guinea had agitated for the PAI and, after falling out with Guinea's president, returned to Niger to establish contact with Sawaba. By 1961, Nigérien students abroad were active on the PAI's behalf, including Pierre Inne, secretary-general of the 'Association des Etudiants Nigériens en France' (AENF); Soli Abdourhamane, president of the 'Union des Scolaires Nigériens' in Dakar; and Kane Boukari, AENF president.⁶⁰

With the radically inclined searching for ways to pursue their goals, the latent split between moderates and hardliners—which had reopened during the referendum—came one step closer to a full rupture. Generally, those cadres that fled abroad were among the hardliners, although this distinction was not clear-cut because the hostility of the regime's 'Reds' forced many cadres into exile, including moderates. The hardliners by and

⁵⁸ As argued by Djibo (*Les transformations*, 232) for the PAI sections established in Zinder, Gouré, Nguigmi and Maradi, without, however, giving an argument for this.

⁵⁹ The medical student was Tchelle Leon. The Zinder seat was at the house of Diop Ali, court clerk, allied to Gueye Diumb Djibril and Saadou Galadima. Lo Moustapha, postal clerk, led the PAI in Maradi, supported by 30 people, including Ba Boubakarm (?), a Senegalese and police inspector, a certain 'Aw' (N'Daw?), also Senegalese, one Bakayoko, court clerk, and Dan Dicko Dan Kollodo, a Maradi-born student in Montpellier. Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de l'A.O.F. pour la période du 11 au 17 août, 8 au 14 sept., 14 au 31 oct. 1958, nos. 2, 5, 9; *Ibid.*, 13-9 août 1959, no. 43; CAOM, Cart.2248 & 3687.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 9 au 15 juillet 1959, no. 38; Synthèse politique, no. 627 CP, May 1959; CAOM, Cart.2249 & 3684; ch. 7, n. 81; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 501, 15 May, 13 Sept. & 21 Oct. 1961; SHAT, 10 T 717, D.2.

large had a UDN background⁶¹ and saw their militancy reinforced by repressive measures directed especially at them. What distinguished hardliners from moderates was not only a readiness to consider the option of starting an armed struggle against the regime, but also an unqualified refusal to accept the ‘scandal of 1958’⁶²—which had meant the rise to power of ‘commis’ to the detriment of ‘petit peuple’, who now saw their social advance blocked. Many radicals were archetypal little folk or belonged to kindred strata, like the more sophisticated health workers and vets. By contrast, among the moderates there were several teachers or higher-educated people who stood better chances under the new dispensation. Yet, this distinction, too, was not unambiguous. Idiosyncratic factors such as ethnic background, political conviction (during the Cold War hardly insignificant in a country with a tradition in Marxist agitation), and, finally, the banalities of personal fate—all played their part in affecting the path that individual cadres took.

Domestically the hardliners were led by Adamou Sékou, while Dan Galadima was their spokesman abroad as Bakary was pursuing his dual strategy that did not exclude a rapprochement. In March 1961, the French observed that ‘the hardliners of Sawaba’ still convened at Sékou’s house—a couple of months later recording a long list of people whom they apparently considered to belong to this category, including Dandouna Aboubakar, Sallé Dan Koulou and Amadou dit Gabriel. Since these already propagated violent action in the autumn of 1959, it seems that there was little change in the radical membership. Yet, they were among a much larger group that also included Dodo Hamballi, the veterinary worker; Arouna Zada, Niamey youth leader; Djibo Sékou, Bakary’s friend and unionist from the building industry; Elhadji Harouna Tatyze, fellow inmate of Barmou Batouré; and Alassane Dantata, Bakary’s former keeper at city hall. Moreover, this list undoubtedly represented only a fraction of the radical wing, as not everyone had by then been registered in the intelligence files.⁶³

⁶¹ *Stratégie de l’Opposition Sawaba* (n. 8 above).

⁶² *Sawaba: Organe Central du Parti Sawaba du Niger*, March 1963 refers to ‘the scandalous results of the Gaullist referendum’ (‘les résultats scandaleux du référendum gaulliste’).

⁶³ See for the men mentioned in the text ch. 7 at n. 118; ch. 3 at n. 169/173; ch. 1, at n. 148; note 7 above; ch. 7, at n. 2. Others listed were a health worker called Mounkaila Abdou; a certain Issifi Gaya, Guida Moussa, Ilyassou Alzouma, Seidou Soudoure and Gabou Dandi; a former cook called Mena; one Harouna, former orderly at Niamey city hall; one Sékou, brother of Alpha Sékou; a court clerk, Lawali Henri; Dan Kano, taxi driver. Note d’information, 27 March and 2 June 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3,9 (‘les durs du Sawaba’).

The fissures between moderates and hardliners thus became a permanent feature of the first years of clandestine life. Already in 1960 it was reported that several moderates thought of regrouping in a party less militant than that of Bakary. After having been received by Diori in August 1959, Condat had several other meetings with the president, claiming to speak on behalf of the movement or transmitting reconciliation proposals from Bakary himself (see below), whose double-edged strategy also involved instructions to radicals like Dandouna Aboubakar. In this murky situation cadres continued to manoeuvre for position, affected by the regime's conflicting signals of enticement and repression. This all too easily led to further dissension. In February 1960 a request by Condat to militants to abstain from activities in his absence abroad led to a 'very lively discussion' with Sallé Dan Koulou, who asked the former parliamentary chairman to assist his unemployed comrades, to which Condat replied that they should try and enter or get back into the administration, as was his own professed desire. Dan Koulou rejected this and reproached Condat of having disowned him during the canvassing in Tessaoua. This foretold the rupture between Condat and the hardline faction. Thus, the next month Daouda Ardaly and Issaka Koké, both UDN veterans, brought a letter of Condat to Bakary in which the former BNA man sought to explain his efforts to establish the UPN successor party, something that alluded to internal disagreements.⁶⁴

Condat, however, did not immediately consummate his break with the radicals, possibly because the hostility of the 'Reds' to anyone of Sawaba had the incongruous effect of reinforcing its cohesion. For a while he kept in touch with Hima Dembélé and Koussanga Alzouma, made propaganda for the RPN with Adamou Sékou and Amadou dit Gabriel and was in the know of the whereabouts of Dan Galadima. Ironically, this association led to his arrest in the wake of 'Plan B'. Condat was taken to the BCL, followed by his two weeks of house arrest in Say. This sufficed to make him declare his loyalty to the government. In a radio statement he said that, since independence was about to be attained, there was no more need for agitation, calling on comrades to follow his example, while conditioning his loyalty with a demand for reform and reconciliation. Condat's action was clearly the result of Diori's intervention and led to emotional reactions

⁶⁴ Synthèse de Renseignements. 1er Trimestre 1960, no. 1120; Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 20-6 août 1959, no. 44; 8-14 janv. 1960, no. 63; Note d'information, 19 Febr. 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.2; Note d'information, 18 March 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 4.4 ('une discussion assez vive').

among Sawabists in the capital, even though the movement's leaders refused to disown him as it was felt that he had had little choice.⁶⁵ Thus, for some time Bakary's second-in-command continued to waver, taking part, for example, in a farewell party for Dandouna Aboubakar in December 1960 along with Aboubakar dit Kaou and Diougou Sangaré (like Condat both of BNA provenance and in the 'No' camp in the referendum).⁶⁶ For this reason, the minister of the interior suspected Condat of duplicity, accusing him of contacting the RDA while sending comrades to communist China. In February 1961 Maïga advised the Sûreté to reassess ties with Condat's 'ambiguous' faction. By then, however, Colombani considered Condat and friends as 'sincere' followers of the RDA. Although this overstated the case, in 1962 Condat was to embark on a career in the diplomatic service.⁶⁷

Nobody Can Overthrow the Government

More were to follow his example. In assessing the defection of cadres, however, the archival evidence has to be handled with care. Intelligence reports were sometimes affected by wishful thinking, with observations belied by other accounts. In addition, Sûreté files may have been part of disinformation practices indicating the dissemination of rumour designed to damage, divide and draw in members of Sawaba's community. Coupled with the human factor—fears for safety, suspicion, paranoia and political rivalry—the picture is rendered complex, something that can be straightened out only by reference to what is known about later developments.

Thus, an assessment by French military intelligence of the state of Sawaba during the first quarter of 1960—although a wishful caricature—noted that many cadres had by then left the movement and joined the RDA, out of fear or calculation. While it concluded that the regime could not expect much of these adherents, it triumphantly held that Sawaba had been dealt a blow, leaving it only with the support of the hardline wing.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Note d'information, 22 Apr. 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.2; interview with Georges Condat, Niamey, 27 Nov. 2003; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 343; Synthèse de Renseignements Intérieurs. 2^{ème} Trimestre 1960, no.1814. Text of Condat's radio statement in *Le Niger*, 25 July 1960.

⁶⁶ And postal clerk Moumini. Ch. 7 at n. 31; Note d'information, 21 Dec. 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.8. Ibid., 9 Dec. 1960 (ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.9) claims that by then Condat was already in the RDA.

⁶⁷ Note d'information, 10 Aug. 1960; Message Radio Police, 1 Febr. 1961 (both ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.2); Stratégie de l'Opposition Sawaba; interview Georges Condat, Niamey, 27 Nov. 2003; Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, 224 ('ambiguë'; 'sincèrement gagnés').

⁶⁸ Synthèse de Renseignements. 1er Trimestre 1960, no. 1120.

Although this exaggerated things (contradicting a warning of January 1960 about an *increase* in Sawaba activity),⁶⁹ it is clear that the movement did suffer from defections. As shown in the previous chapters, already in 1959 this was taking its toll in villages in the east, like Gogo and Kellé, as well as among the butchers of Maradi.⁷⁰ In May that year, numerous residents of Niamey who originated from Gao abandoned the party after Tiémoko Coulibaly and Boubakar Touré were deported.⁷¹ While many AOFiens felt attracted to Sawaba's message, they were particularly vulnerable to regime retaliation. Most Senegalese thus avoided politics for fear of expulsion, while the leader of the Senegalese colony in Zinder went over to the government side, followed by two local Dahomeans.⁷² The use that Joseph Akouété made of the Association Daho-Togo led to dissatisfaction among Dahomeans and Togolese who had already opted for the RDA. One leader of the association went so far as to call for the deportation of Akouété, as well as of Adanzonon Bazile, a fellow Sawabist and transporter. In November 1959 René Delanne, RDA moderate, managed to entice another 30 Dahomeans to his side. Even some of Niger's marabouts, who were among the movement's core supporters, had by then abandoned the cause, in their case as a result of administrative harassment.⁷³

The defection of leading cadres, however, was more damaging. When in the summer of 1959 Dan Bouzoua, who had led the party to victory in Zinder the year before, went over to the RDA, Zinderois militants were stunned. Some workers threatened to maltreat him before the local party committee calmed the situation. This could not prevent Bouzoua's col-

⁶⁹ See ch. 7 at note 86.

⁷⁰ One butcher by the name of Ousmane asserted that his activities for Sawaba had not served his interests well. At the same time, a transporter called Bako Sinkao would have defected. *Recueil des principaux renseignements*, ...14-20 mai 1959, no. 30.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* and ch. 6 at n.16 and note 4 above.

⁷² The Senegalese was Amadou Alain N'Diaye, the two Dahomeans Ponou Médard and Baelo Abdul Wahab (= Abdoulmahas, bar owner & Sawaba electoral agent?). N'Diaye Ibrahim Malick, probably the son of deported Malick N'Diaye and earlier involved with Dandouna Aboubakar, expressed his loyalty to the government in July 1960, just before independence. *Le Niger*, 25 July 1960 and *Renseignements*, 6 Nov. 1959; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.8. Senegalese in Niamey who (at least during 1959) remained loyal to Sawaba were Serigne N'Diaye, tailor; N'Daw, court clerk who had delivered Sawaba Niamey's Senegalese vote; El Hadj Niang, jeweller. *Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 14-20 mai 1959*, no. 30 and *ibid.*, 28 mai au 3 juin 1959, no. 32; CAOM, Cart.3686.

⁷³ The French thus noted that one of them, Malam Ibrahim from Dogondoutchi, had quietened down after spending time in jail, following the orders of his chief, Malam Aboubacar of Kiota near Dosso, to cease opposition. At the same time, several people in Niamey were reported to have rallied to the RDA. *Ibid.*, 13-9 août 1959, no. 43; 29 oct. au 4 nov. 1959, no. 54; 26 nov. au 2 déc. 1959, no. 58; CAOM, Cart.3688/2251.

league, former MP Eugène Tégama, who was sick and disillusioned, from deciding to forsake politics altogether.⁷⁴ Similar damage was done in March 1960 when 'Koumbo', Sawaba's magajiya in Niamey's Gamkallé district, crossed the line, taking many locals with her.⁷⁵ Defections were to some extent hindered by the resistance of the 'Reds' to allowing the formation of other parties or welcoming former Sawabists in their midst. Yet, measures both subtle and crude were taken to encourage cadres to leave the movement of Bakary. In October 1960 the government let it be known that incarcerated or exiled activists could get an amnesty, but some were immediately rearrested when, upon release from prison, they were welcomed by Sawabists dressed in green boubous. There is evidence that later, in November 1961, cadres in Zinder were pressed to testify against comrades, something that increased the pressure on the movement's cohesion. Barely a month after that, in December, the RDA organised a meeting in Zinder's cultural centre, where in front of an audience of 200 people a Sawaba cadre, Kaka Koussou dit Double, declared his loyalty to the government. While denying that he had been bought, he called on his comrades to follow suit, arguing that 'nobody [would] be able to topple the government ... in place' and calling on the RDA to abandon its distrust. Contented officials told the audience—rather dubiously—that Koussou had asked for the meeting himself and they expressed the hope that more Sawabists would follow his example.⁷⁶

Several cadres did so, some of them quite soon after the party's fall, others later. Many of these accepted positions in the administration, though few seem to have joined the RDA as a party directly. Some distanced themselves to a limited extent, remaining sympathetic to the movement but rejecting the idea of armed struggle. Others resigned themselves fully to a non-political life. This process took a couple of years to unfold and was complicated not only by the regime's disinformation practices (falsely insinuating that cadres had defected) but also by the wavering on the part of

⁷⁴ Ibid., 28 mai au 3 juin 1959, no. 32 & 4 au 10 juin 1959, no. 33 (last one CAOM, Cart.3686); Hima Dembélé, Niamey, to Daouda Ardaly, Vienna, 1 June 1959; ANN, 3 F 4.11. For subsequent administrative careers, see Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, 228 & 396.

⁷⁵ Arouna Zada wanted to do something about it, against the wish of Condat. Note d'information, 8 March 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.2.

⁷⁶ Synthèse de Renseignements Intérieurs. 3^{ème} Trimestre 1960, no. 2619 and Ibid., 4^{ème} Trimestre 1960, no. 500; SHAT, 5 H 95; Recueil des principaux renseignements collectés au cours de la période du 2 au 8 nov. 1961, no. 150; SHAT, 5 H 95; Ibid., ... 4 au 10 janv. 1962, no. 159; SHAT, 5 H 92 ('personne ne pourra renverser le gouvernement ... en place').

individuals themselves, some of whom considered deserting but were overtaken by repressive measures such as another bout of confinement.

Some of those who abandoned Sawaba had been reluctant supporters of the 'No' campaign or would later say so to justify their action. This was the case with Diougou Sangaré, who, evicted from his parliamentary seat in Tessaoua, refused to follow the hardliners and retrospectively justified his entry into the finance ministry (April 1959) with the argument that he wanted to serve his country.⁷⁷ As he had already made a career in the civil service, he had opportunities closed to others, while his origins as a minority Peul may have encouraged him to take this step. Gonimi Boukar, too, though he had always followed the hardliners and worked with Dan Galadima in the Assembly, took a pragmatic view, assisted by his teacher background. He withdrew into his work and was assigned to different schools from 1958-1959 onwards. Although Adamou Sékou persuaded him to visit Bakary in Bamako, the latter failed to entice him with promises of political positions in Guinea, as Boukar argued that one had to return to Niger and pursue compromise. In addition, he was possibly influenced by the problematic nature of the option of armed struggle.⁷⁸ Alternatively, a bout in prison could provide a stimulus, as in the case of Abdou Ali Tazard, a Sawaba teacher from Tessaoua whose family was almost entirely in the movement. His uncle, a chief, was deposed for this. Tazard himself acted as guardian of a child of Sallé Dan Koulou (family of his) and did time in 1958-1959. Upon his release, however, he saw few options open to him and resumed teaching. The whole process, though, seemed to have caused bad blood between him and his fellow townsman, Sangaré.⁷⁹

For the same reason, numerous people did not have the stomach to continue sharing in the movement's woes and decided to abandon politics. Amadou Bakary Maiga, though family of Sawaba's leader, did not go into exile but continued working as a court clerk in Zinder, declining involvement in politics, as did Illa Salifou, a court clerk of UDN origin who later entered the diplomatic service. Sékou Hamidou, who had so far been involved with the hardliners, at some point devoted himself to his medical

⁷⁷ 'Je sers le pays'. Interview with Diougou Sangaré, Tessaoua, 9 Febr. 2006; Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, 375-376. His wife followed his example. Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de Dakar pour la période du 21 au 27 mai 1959, no. 3; CAOM, Cart.3686.

⁷⁸ Interview Gonimi Boukar, Niamey, 5 Nov. 2005; Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, 266.

⁷⁹ Interview with Abdou Ali Tazard & Diougou Sangaré, Tessaoua, 9 Febr. 2006; ch. 6 at n. 9.



Photo 8.3 Abdou Ali Tazard with author, Tessaoua, 2006 (Ingrid Jäger).

career. Ibrahim Issa, the cadre with a background in journalism, made his peace with the regime and would at some point get an information job at the defence ministry. Others too—like Oumarou Janba and Tahir Moustapha, both from Zinder—, while remaining sympathisers, got on with their lives in public service jobs or the private sector. If self-employed, like Limane Kaoumi, furniture maker from Maïné-Soroa, and Djaouga Idrissa (a Dargol peasant), this worked better. But with the totalitarian penchant of the ‘Reds’ this was no guarantee for an untroubled existence. By 1963 Mossi Salifou, a simple tailor and joiner in Niamey who joined Sawaba in 1957, was daily pestered by police arriving at his compound, while Daouda Hamadou, a fellow tailor from Ayorou and early Sawaba follower, was arrested twice before finally moving abroad—like Salifou.⁸⁰

Cadres that stayed put remained vulnerable to the possibility of caving in, especially the higher-educated, who depended on positions in the public service. As noted in Chapter 4, Maïdanda Djermaakoye, member of the

⁸⁰ Hamidou Abdoulaye, the Maradi teacher and member of the group of young radicals, the Red Cord, was considered a ‘bad element’ and each Sunday had to report to the police. Interviews with Amadou Bakary Maïga, Elhadj Illa Salifou & Hamidou Adamou Abdoulaye, Niamey, 25 Nov. 2003 & 19 Dec. 2009; Oumarou Janba & Tahir Moustapha, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003; Limane Kaoumi, Diffa, 12 Febr. 2006; Djaouga Idrissa (peasant/migrant worker), near Dargol, 31 Oct. 2005; Mossi Salifou, Niamey, 29 Febr. 2008; Daouda Hamadou, Ayorou, 20 Dec. 2009; Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, 378–380; *Seeda: Mensuel nigérien d’informations générales*, No. 5, Aug. 2002 (‘mauvais élément’).

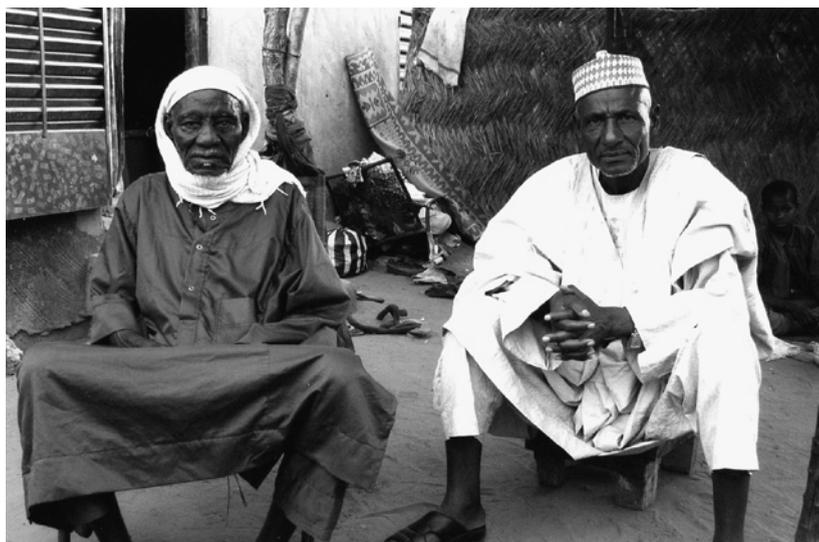


Photo 8.4 Mossi Salifou (l.) in his home compound, with Sawaba companion Ali Issaka, Niamey, 2008.



Photo 8.5 Daouda Hamadou with author, Ayorou, 2009 (Issa Younoussi; also see cover photo).

Djermakoy dynasty, had opted for 'No'. A trained pharmacist who as student in France had joined the Left—to the annoyance of his family—, he was forced to leave Niger in 1959 in search of work. This he found in a hospital in Conakry. Active for Sawaba there, he also assumed a position in Sawaba's office in the Ghanaian capital Accra in 1959-1960. In the spring of 1960, however, he asked for his wife and children to be allowed to go to Niger, while in the summer of 1961 he returned home himself. He would have been detained for a while and one year later became director of the national drugs agency. In 1963 he was admitted to the RDA, reportedly having waited three years for his membership card.⁸¹

It was a matter of time before this process reached the core of Sawaba's leadership. Already in the spring of 1959 the French noted that Abdou Boukary, who took part in Sawaba's victory in Zinder the year before, seemed disoriented, while later on he was transferred to a job in Mauritania 'for political reasons'. His parliamentary colleague, Brah Moustapha, was judged in similar ways, although he seems not to have shared in the mixed blessing of grace and exile. Retrospectively, he would say that he had advised his followers to abandon 'blind obstinacy', as he could not help them anymore. In July 1959 it was reported that he had gone over to the RDA, yet he was still suspected of ties with Abdoulaye Mamani.⁸² Mamani had more influence over these men than Badéri Mahamane, their fellow MP and municipal councillor for Zinder, who also seems to have wavered. Initially, it was reported that Badéri continued with opposition to the RDA, then that he was disillusioned and got a job in the army. As noted in the previous chapter, upon his transfer to Agadez he used his position to continue agitation on Sawaba's behalf, but afterwards he made his peace with the regime, followed by an uninterrupted career in the administration.⁸³ Ousseini Dan-

⁸¹ As noted in ch. 1 n. 5, subordinate members of chiefly families had an ambivalent status. As a student in France, Maïdanda joined the Pan-African union FEANF. Telephone conversation, Niamey, 21 Febr. 2008; Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau de Synthèse pour la période du 15 au 21 oct. 1959, no. 52; CAOM, Cart.2250; Bulletin de renseignements, 12 May 1960 & Note d'information, 9 Aug. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.4; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 501, 3 mars 1964, annex; SHAT, 10 T 719, D. 2; Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, 246-7; *Gaskya*, no. 8, 28 July 1961.

⁸² Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de Dakar pour la période du 24 avril au 5 mai 1959, no. 28 & 30 juillet au 5 août 1959, no. 41; CAOM, Cart.3685/7; Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, 164 & 218; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 236 ('pour des raisons politiques'; 'obstination aveugle').

⁸³ Another example is Ali Diaroumey, Ponty-educated vet who campaigned for 'No' and entered the administration and RDA. Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 24 avril au 5 mai 1959, no. 28; 21 au 27 mai 1959, no. 31; 28 mai au 3 juin 1959, no. 32; 4 au 10 juin 1959,

dagoye, chairman of Sawaba's youth section in Zinder who had actively campaigned for 'No', was also reported to have rallied to the RDA. Retrospectively, however, it became clear that he continued to play a role in the clandestine organisation, while he also tried to go the external headquarters in Bamako, together with Maman Tchila. In 1963, he was arrested and sacked from his job at the post office.⁸⁴ Similarly, the French deemed Issaka Koké 'retrievable' because of his reluctance to engage in anti-French propaganda, but as noted above the former cabinet minister continued to be part of the movement, leading to a bout in prison. After December 1960, however, Koké, who had a Senegalese wife, went to Bamako for a job in the French development service. Later he moved on to Dakar and France and, while having left Sawaba's active service, continued to make some propaganda.⁸⁵

Other members of Bakary's government were also considered redeemable. In October 1960 the minister of the interior recommended that Adamou Assane Mayaki and Aboubakar dit Kaou, as well as Barmou Batouré and even Bakary's private secretary, Gandah Djibo, were sincere men who could be of value. As they were all in prison, Maïga argued that they be set free. Mayaki, indeed, seemed inclined towards a rapprochement, as he made clear in a letter to the president in which he spoke approvingly of Condat's declaration of loyalty. Both he and Aboubakar dit Kaou promised to convert cadres in return for their freedom. Kaou thus wrote a letter to a groundnut trader in Matamey calling on him to forget his hatred and go for an entente. Both Mayaki and Abdoulaye Mamani (see below) early in 1961 counselled their comrades to rally to the RDA. At the same time, however, Kaou continued to maintain relations with Dandouna Aboubakar, while Mayaki at least until the spring of 1962 tried to keep in touch with Sawabists, including Dan Koulou, Mallam Kalla, Abdoulaye Mamani, Maman Tchila and Elhadji Ibro Garba. Yet, by then Mayaki had also established contact with the RDA and—a gentle character—appeared to show little interest in politics, although the Sûreté suspected him of infiltration in the RDA on Sawaba's behalf. Whether Kaou and Mayaki kept their ties

no. 33; report no. 23, 1011/1/61, British Embassy Abidjan to Foreign Office, 13 March 1962; PRO, FO 371/161.689; Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, 181 & 199.

⁸⁴ But later rehired. Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 30 juillet au 5 août 1959, no. 41; interviews Ousseini Dandagoye, Bachir Boukary, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003; ch. 4 at n. 151 & ch. 7 at n. 34.

⁸⁵ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 21-7 mai 1959, no. 31; Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, 306-7; G. Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets de la décolonisation* (Paris, 1967), vol. 2, 310 ('récupérable').

with Sawabists for the purpose of conversion or because their own defection was less than genuine or because of social reasons (not uncommon in a grass-roots movement, especially when cadres were fellow townsmen)—the regime's distrust probably exerted a contrary influence on this process. Consequently, Aboubakar dit Kaou was to remain active in clandestine work, at least at a later date.⁸⁶

This complex game of temptation and rejection was also to engross Sawaba's principal leaders. In the face of harassment Abdoulaye Mamani already in March 1959 talked about exile. Before and after his mission to Ibadan, he was rather weary about the movement and his own role. The defection of Dan Bouzoua, one of his closest disciples, must have had a negative effect. Mamani, in any case, told a go-between that he was willing to meet the president, and Diori himself later admitted that he had tried to contact Mamani. French intelligence reported that Mamani was ready to defect—asserting material needs as the principal reason—and even said that he had joined the RDA. This appraisal was incorrect and unfair in view of the regime's double-hearted actions, as Mamani pointed out in his reaction to the confiscation of his car in April 1960. A couple of months afterwards it was again alleged that he was ready to defect, although the Sûreté noted that he was still communicating with cadres. Yet, early in 1961 Mamani appeared closer to a rapprochement than ever before, as can be gauged from his advice to rally to the RDA. In January Adamou Sékou, who was about to be sacked as a court clerk for refusing a transfer, flew to Zinder to persuade him not to accept a job in the administration. During a meeting in the restaurant of Zinder's airport, they would have discussed whether to continue with politics or apply for a government job, pondering Mamani's chances of a job as a labour inspector and Sékou's opportunities for a judicial training course. However, a few months later both men were still at centre-stage of the radicals. As shown in Chapter 7, Mamani still sent money to a cadre in distress in July—by which time he appears to have joined the leadership abroad.⁸⁷ Sékou was less lucky. Although there were

⁸⁶ CAB Ministre de l'Intérieur to Président Diori/Ministre de la Justice, 10-25 Oct. 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 7.8; Djibo, *Les transformations*, 235; Mayaki's file ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.19; interview Adamou Assane Mayaki, Niamey, 29 Jan. 2003; Amadou Aboubakar Kaou, Niamey, to Mahaman Hameth, Matamey, 3 Dec. 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.11; Jacques Tailleur, Administrateur Commandant le Cercle de Zinder, to Ministre de l'Intérieur, 13 Jan. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.9; Maurice Espitalier, Commissioner of Police, Maradi, to Chef des Services de Police, Niamey, 6 Jan. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.8.

⁸⁷ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 13-23 avril 1959, no. 27; 21-27 mai 1959, no. 31; Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 322; Jacques Tailleur to Ministre de l'Intérieur, 13 Jan. 1961;

already doubts, then, about his dynamism (possibly fuelled by Hima Dembélé), Sawaba's no. 1 hardliner collaborated with Dembélé and Sallé Dan Koulou until August. His arrest in the wave of repression in September 1961, followed by his deportation to Bilma where he reportedly fell ill, would eventually break his resolve.

Hima Dembélé almost followed in the footsteps of Mamani, until fate intervened and forced him along the path of Sékou. In his case there were also rumours of appeals to the RDA, in the spring of 1959, which some interpreted as an attempt to secure material needs. With the dispossession of his parliamentary seat Dembélé faced financial problems, especially as his wife was expecting. Others, however, suspected that his démarches were part of a new tactic by Bakary. In fact, Dembélé remained at the core of the internal leadership and worked closely with numerous hardliners. By 1961 his position appears to have become more important. With his background in the UDN and the unions, he had numerous contacts in the Eastern Bloc and was at the centre of liaison operations. Mamani's departure enhanced his position further and Dembélé began to rival Adamou Sékou—becoming responsible for the drafting of reports to Bakary.⁸⁸

In the process, however, Dembélé became the centre of recriminations between Sawaba's leaders, some of whom he accused of underachieving or worse. These accusations were traded in the wake of Dembélé's arrest in June 1961 discussed above. After his release, Dembélé warned friends against Dandouna Aboubakar, wildly asserting that the radical was an informer of Diamballa Maïga's. He used the same allegation against Adamou Sékou with whom he got embroiled in a dispute in August—it is unknown about what.⁸⁹ While this may have been the result of disinformation, some of it was probably caused by marital problems and the cumulative stress of harassment. These difficulties greatly destabilised him.⁹⁰ However,

Note d'information, 23 June 1960 & 2 Febr. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.5/3.10; Sékou's file: ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.9. After his eviction from the Assembly, it is not known when, Mamani got a job with government information. Chaffard (*Les carnets secrets*, 309) claims he was sacked in May 1961, not in the spring of 1960. See above in this chapter at note 26-27 (which may refer to his unemployment as an MP) and Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, 333.

⁸⁸ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 14 au 20 mai 1959, no. 30. In his absence this was delegated to a certain Mamadou Oumarou. Note d'information, 31 July, 7 & 16 Aug. 1961 ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.10.

⁸⁹ Interrogation report Hima Dembélé by Jean Colombani, Jean Arrighi & Georges Clément, 14 June 1961; Note d'information, 20 June and 7 Aug. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.10.

⁹⁰ His wife, Monique Hadiza, was half Nigérien, half 'pied noir'. A beautiful woman and better educated than him, Dembélé was the envy of Sawabists. Yet, Monique, being of mixed blood, also suffered from their distrust in addition to regime harassment and financial

Dembélé's political ambition got the better of him. During the same period he expressed dissatisfaction—along with Sékou—about the work undertaken by Daouda Ardaly. The latter was by then in Bamako, where he vetted cadres who fled Niger, before sending them to other countries for training (see Chapter 9). As Ardaly rejected many, Dembélé and Sékou asked Bakary to order him to return to Niger. Both were eager to discuss the issue with Bakary, and Dembélé wanted to travel to Bamako for this.⁹¹ As noted, his plan to leave the country by air failed despite using a servant as a decoy. A second attempt in which he intended to travel by road to Upper Volta, while his luggage would be brought by a driver of Vidal's to Gao, was foiled by his arrest in September. A written plea for his release, after spending nine days at the Sûreté, was ignored and Dembélé was deported to Bilma along with Sékou and others.⁹² This experience probably broke the former cinema operator, who, while a committed unionist, would never play a role in the movement again.⁹³

Adamou Sékou and Hima Dembélé constituted the principal losses that Sawaba suffered. From the government's perspective the result was disappointing, the more so as it does not appear that these men became devoted followers of the regime. Although they and others were neutralised, it is clear that the RDA could have taken in many more Sawabists, even of militant persuasion, had it been more forthcoming. Many hardliners who

problems (she was cut off from water and electricity). With Dembélé in prison or abroad she had difficulty raising the children and coping with their illness, reproaching her husband that he gave priority to party work. By contrast, when abroad Dembélé missed his children and both he and his wife complained about the other's lack of reply in letters. Since these ended up at the Sûreté, they probably never arrived—despite precautions by Dembélé, who was aware of surveillance, to send letters and a little money through confidants. Possibly rumours were spread about his wife's behaviour, making him believe that she was pregnant but had aborted the foetus by taking pills. This would have led to bleeding, forcing her to go to hospital, and brought their marriage to breaking point. Yet, Dembélé had already become involved with an East German woman in Leipzig, Elké Zschäbitz, whom he wrote a love letter, expressing his willingness to abandon everything for her, explaining he was separated and complaining bitterly about his wife. The East German was married and possibly involved with the 'Stasi', the East German security service (see ch. 9). Monique Dembélé, Niamey, to Hima Dembélé, Bamako, 30 March 1961; Hima Dembélé, Bamako, to Monique Dembélé, Niamey, 12 June 1961; Hima Dembélé, Niamey, to Elké Zschäbitz, Leipzig, 20 June 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.10; interviews Monique Hadiza & Issa Younoussi, Niamey, 5 Nov. 2005 and 22 Febr. 2008.

⁹¹ Note d'information, 11 Aug. and 13 Sept. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 4.4 & 3.5; and previous note.

⁹² For the servant-decoy, see ch. 7 at n. 44; Jean Colombani, Chef de la Sûreté, to Ministre de l'Intérieur, 13 Sept. 1961; Hima Dembélé to Ministre de l'Intérieur, 21 Sept. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.10. The driver at Vidal was Amadou Ide Niameize.

⁹³ Interview Monique Hadiza, Niamey, 5 Nov. 2005.

stayed in Niger thus kept a low profile and guarded sympathy for Sawaba, if not rendered it clandestine service. The result was that the regime had to content itself with radical cadres who essentially represented the second echelon. The same was true for several of the moderates who, like Condat and Sangaré, had occupied high office but were of lesser consequence in the community of little folk.

Meanwhile, numerous members had embarked on a veritable exodus, leaving Niger in small but steady numbers—a process that, as shown in the next chapter, stretched over several years. The wave of repression unleashed in September 1961 was also the time of the great escape. Numerous lesser cadres went missing,⁹⁴ while several of Sawaba's leaders managed to leave in secret—with their *Sûreté* file simply drying up. Thus, on the night of 31 August Dandouna Aboubakar disappeared from the capital, avoiding another bout of prison. He had warned no one of his departure, which the *Sûreté* linked to his allegedly poor relations with local cadres (possibly a reference to Dembélé), but probably was a normal security precaution. As police could not find him in Maradi, it was presumed that he had gone to Bamako. A fortnight later, it was reported that he had crossed the frontier at Gaya. Understandably, Issoufou Danbaro used the same route, as he hailed from the town. He left about the same time as Dandouna, on the night of 10-11 September, eluding the surveillance imposed after his arrest the week before. As noted above, Sallé Dan Koulou also tried to make his escape. As the third in line following the same itinerary, this pointed to a degree of co-ordination. Dan Koulou, however, ended up in custody, asserting that he had wished to visit his father-in-law in Gaya. Surprisingly, Maïga accepted this and ordered his release a couple of days later. Dan Koulou left Gaya on the night of 16-17 September, supposedly to return to his home town, Tessaoua. Some time later he made his escape, possibly across the border with Nigeria.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ See f.e. ANN, 86 MI 3 F 12.32, discussed further in the next chapter.

⁹⁵ Note d'information, 7 Sept. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.8; Message Radio Commandant Brigade de Gaya to Compagnie de Niamey, 4 Sept. 1961 & Message porte de Capitaine Delavault Commandant la Compagnie Gendarmerie de Niamey au Chef d'Escadron Commandant le Groupement de Gendarmerie du Niger, 12 Sept. 1961 (both ANN, 86 MI 3 F 12.19); Procès-verbal gendarmerie nationale, 9 Sept.; telegram Subdivision Gaya to Présidence, 12 Sept.; Message porte Capitaine Delavault to Chef d'Escadron, 18 Sept. 1961 (all ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.7). Mallam Kalla, too, escaped, but later, jumping house arrest, which began in March 1962. File Mallam Kalla; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 12.32.

The Sole Grounds for My Existence

These developments also meant that any hopes for reconciliation were destroyed. While the option of violent action was already under study, Bakary had not yet given up on a rapprochement that could bring him back to power. This scenario came to naught through a combination of factors. The divisions within the regime and the opposition of RDA cadres to letting Sawabists share in the spoils of government meant that the 'Reds' could easily thwart attempts at reconciliation—which were considered by regime moderates—by unleashing new waves of repression. In this context Boubou Hama's policy of encouraging individuals to change sides while Sawaba as a party continued to be persecuted increased the resentment of the movement's remaining cadres. In addition, the overtures that Bakary was prepared to make towards the government were affected by his bitter realisation of how his fall had been engineered and his self-consciousness as the saviour of the 'petit peuple'. He asked too much.

Early on, according to Mamoudou Djibo, President Diori sent missions to Bamako to persuade Bakary to cease opposition and return home. If true,⁹⁶ this stood in sharp contrast to several bouts of repression unleashed during this period, i.e. Sawaba's dissolution in October 1959 and the crack-down of the following November-December. In any case, in January 1960 Bakary let it be known that he would be prepared to join the government on condition that Niger enter the Mali federation. Also, the National Assembly should be dissolved and new elections held. While he may have been pushed in this by pressure from the Malian government,⁹⁷ his conditioned response fell on deaf ears. All the same, in April 1960 Bakary launched an appeal for national unity on Radio Bamako, urging Nigériens that they should start with a clean slate and follow the example of Mali and go for independence. President Modibo Keita of Mali supported this and wrote a letter to Diori outlining the conditions under which he thought that Bakary could return home, something that greatly annoyed the RDA. With Diori guarding his silence, Hama torpedoed the appeal by declaring that the PFA, as the vehicle of the Mali federation, did not have the right to interfere in Niger's internal affairs. National unity would be realised in

⁹⁶ Djibo (*Les transformations*, 233) gives as source a former minister of Diori. Oddly, French records, usually rather detailed, remain silent on this.

⁹⁷ A pro-government paper in Mali urged Bakary to renounce polemics and strive for national unity. *Ibid.* and *Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus pour la période du 8 au 14 janv. 1960*, no. 63.

the framework of Niger's own objectives, which excluded a party that, as Hama put it, had been reduced to a few implacable elements. Moreover, as Hama saw the RDA as the only constructive force in the country, there was no room for opposition: in an underdeveloped country, democracy could not be allowed to turn into anarchy. Hama pointed out that Bakary's return depended solely on the will of the RDA, making clear that Sawabists should moderate their tone. This uncompromising response, which was accompanied by hostile press comments, was shared by the ruling triumvirate as a whole. The bureau politique of the RDA, too, unanimously opposed Bakary's return.⁹⁸

A few months later Bakary tried again, responding to the negotiations on Niger's independence by offering the RDA a clean slate that would end opposition and lead to the organisation of a round table to achieve national unity. Yet, according to Bakary current developments also showed that the option of autonomy—in the name of which so many crimes had been committed—was historically wrong, while they vindicated the goal of independence that he had pursued all along. If this did not rub salt into RDA wounds, his veiled threat that history would hold the regime responsible if it did not make concessions confirmed regime prejudices—especially as Bakary added that he and his men would then continue to fight for the liberation of the country.⁹⁹

One week later, on 30 June, Bakary and Condat signed a solemn declaration in favour of national unity,¹⁰⁰ but by then the first arrests in the wake of 'Plan B' had intervened. These did not, however, negatively affect Bakary's stance during negotiations with an RDA delegation in the Togolese capital Lomé on 30 July. Surprisingly, this meeting led to a declaration, signed by both sides, in which they agreed that Niger's politics should start with a clean slate. They also undertook, in their own name and that of 'their political friends', 'to support and participate in all the activities of the government ... destined to support the unity of the Nigériens'. While Bakary appeared to have yielded to his enemies, the RDA delegation had probably gone too far as the meeting was followed by silence on the government's part. A few days later—at the time of independence—Bakary reiterated

⁹⁸ Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA*, 324-326; Synthèse de Renseignements. 1er Trimestre 1960, no. 1120. In Zinder the RDA hardliners were led by Issa Ibrahim, whose compound had been attacked in the April 1958 riots. He opposed all reconciliation with local Sawabists. *Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 28 mai au 3 juin 1959*, no. 32.

⁹⁹ *Les raisons de notre lutte*, 57-60 and Synthèse de Renseignements. 2^{ème} Trimestre 1960, no. 1814.

¹⁰⁰ *Les raisons de notre lutte*, 69.

his clean slate offer and proposed the formation of a single party, one trade union federation, and joint youth sections. The government chose to ignore it, even though the Lomé accord was the most concrete effort towards a settlement.¹⁰¹

As noted above, in the autumn of 1960 Bakary was sentenced over 'Plan B', which made his return home doubly difficult. Two months later, however, Adamou Sékou informed him about his chances for an ambassadorship or ministerial post if he rallied to the government. A rumour circulated that Bakary would be offered the vice-presidency, but that the interior minister was opposed. Maïga, indeed, was firmly against it.¹⁰² At the same time, Sawaba's leader issued another appeal for unity, choosing to ignore some of the regime's repressive measures and greeting the release in late November of cadres arrested over 'Plan B'. Remaining faithful to his ideological outlook, he stressed that effective independence could only come about by national unity, dubiously adding that the adversaries of yesterday could become the friends of tomorrow.¹⁰³

Early in 1961 Bakary gave further details of his proposals. In January he sent letters to RDA politicians calling for free elections and a round table of all political parties. This came at a sensitive point in time as the RDA's 'committee of seven' strove for the renewal of the party's central committee. Since the committee of seven included some ex-Sawabists and cadres who still harboured Sawabist sympathies, the effect was that the political atmosphere was poisoned by suspicions about infiltrations of government ranks.¹⁰⁴ The criticisms that accompanied Bakary's appeals during his weekly broadcasts facilitated a negative response. Nevertheless, Sawaba's policy statement of 1961 specified the party's reconciliation proposals, calling for a round table that would involve the leaders of both groupings. They would discuss the organisation of elections on the basis of single (RDA-Sawaba) lists, whose composition would be freely debated and decided by the representatives of the parties. This should lead to the formation of a single party with a joint leadership, along with youth and women sections and a parallel trade union structure. A 'national congress' would be convened to validate the decisions of the round table and provide the country

¹⁰¹ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 234 ('leurs amis politiques'; 'à soutenir et à participer à toutes les activités du gouvernement ... destinées à favoriser l'union des Nigériens').

¹⁰² See the note he scribbled in the margin of a Sûreté report. Note d'information, 9 Dec. 1960.

¹⁰³ Text in *Les raisons de notre lutte*, 62-64.

¹⁰⁴ Synthèse de Renseignements Intérieurs. 1^{er} Trimestre 1961, no. 1/36. Période du 1^{er} févr. au 30 avril 1961; SHAT, 5 H 95. See also ch. 10.

with the policies that would realise and consolidate political and economic independence.¹⁰⁵

With no response from the government side, Modibo Keita came to Bakary's aid a few months later, dispatching a Malian goodwill mission to Niamey in May. It would have proposed that the Sawaba exiles would agree not to carry on with subversive activities if they could return home, function as a recognised political party and participate in elections four or five years hence. A modest proposal, Diori rejected it.¹⁰⁶ Then, during the great repression of the autumn of 1961, Bakary wrote a personal letter to the president. In politely phrased words he called again for unity and reconciliation, pointing out that the recent arrests and deportations to Bilma had caused enormous suffering. It is doubtful, however, whether the letter ever reached Diori, as it landed on the desk of Diamballa Maïga, who scribbled a dismissive comment in the margins.¹⁰⁷ The letter had been written as a follow-up to a press conference in Conakry on 4 October, when Bakary addressed a last appeal to Diori. On this occasion he defended Sawaba's training of young Nigériens in the Eastern Bloc by stating that it was normal to assist in the instruction of Niger's future cadres, adding somewhat hypocritically that it was up to the regime to see this as a revolt of the young. The recent repression had taken its toll, and Bakary's message turned out highly ambiguous, accompanying his plea for reconciliation with threats. He pointed out that he would not accept living abroad for good, as Niger constituted '[his] sole reason of existence'. Sawaba did not target Diori, but Boubou Hama and the government's French advisers, which the latter saw as a divide-and-rule tactic. While they remained silent about the role of the interior minister, Sawabists accused Hama (Bakary's *bête noire*) of wishing to liquidate them physically. These attacks, while understandable in view of what transpired in Niger, reinforced the position of the 'Reds', with the result that on 8 October Diori for the first time publicly supported Maïga's uncompromising stand. Ending the policy of enticing individual Sawabists, Hama—as RDA chairman—categorically rejected Bakary's appeal, while Diori simply stated that anyone breaking the law would be sent to prison.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Les raisons de notre lutte, 74. See on the 1961 policy statement also ch. 6 above.

¹⁰⁶ Confidential/NOFORN. Department of State. Bureau of Intelligence and Research. Research Memorandum RAF-26, 30 March 1962; PRO, FO 371/161689.

¹⁰⁷ Djibo Bakary to President Hamani Diori, 10 Oct. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3-5.

¹⁰⁸ Synthèse de Renseignements Intérieurs; 3^{ème} Trimestre 1961, no. 2355/2/S, no. 925/BS/S; Ibid., no. 590/2/S, no. 185/BS/S, 4^{ème} Trimestre 1961; no. 151, 9-15 Nov. 1961; SHAT, 5 H 95 ('ma seule raison d'existence'). See also the interview Diori gave to a *Jeune Afrique* jour-

If this configuration of factors made a rapprochement difficult, it had nevertheless given rise to concessions on the part of Bakary and his men. Acting from a position of weakness, the proposals in the 1961 policy paper yielded more than Sawaba had ever conceded in the past. Yet, the fact that Niger represented Bakary's very *raison d'être* also made clear that the righter of wrongs would never play second fiddle. Against the impossibility of limiting Bakary's ambition the Franco-RDA combine expressed fears about a movement whose well-trained agitators could, if allowed to join the ruling bloc, simply take over. Also, the sorry state of the RDA meant that it could not be sure it would win an electoral confrontation.

On the contrary. During the whole of 1959-1960 any return to the polls would have been 'suicidal', as Mamoudou Djibo put it.¹⁰⁹ The Sûreté warned in June 1960 that Bakary's presence in Niger was 'undesirable in the current circumstances' as it 'could not but generate troubles'. According to the French the RDA feared being sidelined if Sawaba were allowed to join the government.¹¹⁰ Rumours of Bakary's return towards the end of the year led French intelligence to warn that this would cause problems, as Sawaba's leader had retained a certain popularity. Consequently, when in October 1960 Jean Colombani got word that Bakary was on a mission to Malanville, on the Niger-Dahomey border, the Sûreté chief travelled to the Dahomean town to arrest him. While Sawaba's leader had already gone, French intelligence in January 1961 confirmed that he would be at the mercy of his enemies if he dared to come home. Even after the persecutions of the autumn that year, Bakary sparked off concerns among the French that he would turn out to be a Trojan horse. Amazingly, in June 1962—nearly four years after his overthrow—they reported the prevailing opinion that, if Bakary was permitted to come back, this would lead to Diiori's fall.¹¹¹

nalist (reprinted in *La Voix Libérée*, no. 1, March-Apr. 2011, 25 & 28), where he reiterated the threat of prison.

¹⁰⁹ Djibo, *Les transformations*, 234 ('suicidaire').

¹¹⁰ Note d'information, 16 June 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.5; Synthèse de Renseignements. 2^{ème} Trimestre 1960, no. 1814 ('pas à souhaiter en conjoncture actuelle'; 'ne pourrait être que génératrice de troubles').

¹¹¹ Synthèse de Renseignements Intérieurs. 4^{ème} Trimestre 1960, no. 500 & no. 151, 9-15 Nov. 1961; Jean Colombani to Ministre de l'Intérieur, 4 Oct. 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.5; Premier Minstre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 501, 5 janv. 1961; SHAT, 10 T 717, D.2; Rapport de Fin de Commandement. Situation Politique et Militaire de l'Ex-Afrique Occidentale Française. Délégation pour la Défense de la Z.O.M. no. 1. Etat-Major. 2^{ème} Bureau, Dakar, le 30 juin 1962; SHAT, 5 H 31. See for a similar assessment Recueil des principaux renseignements collecté au cours de la période du 12-18 avril 1962, no. 1; SHAT, 5 H 91.

Thus, by then the option of violent action had pushed itself to the fore, despite an appeal the previous April by Nkrumah to let Bakary come home.¹¹² That same month a dozen Sawabists were arrested, among whom was Arouna Zada, Niamey's youth leader.¹¹³ Sawaba's policy paper of 1962 therefore called for a national front that was closed to 'the traitors of the Nation'. These would be 'neutralised'. No weakness would be shown and 'not dialogue' but tangible results would count with a view to eliminating 'the neo-colonial regime by all means'. If anyone was still uncertain about what this meant, the paper added that 'teams for the protection of the popular masses' should '*respond to violence by violence*', engaging the people to 'recover national sovereignty' and 'cleanse [the] Fatherland of the neo-colonialist stain'.¹¹⁴

This was not an appeal for rapprochement. It was a declaration of war.

¹¹² An unlikely rumour circulated then among lorry drivers coming from Gao that Diori had met Bakary in Bamako and that Sawaba's leader had declined an offer to return, as the rest of Africa was more home to him than Niger. Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 508 & 501, 7 avril and 2 mai 1962; SHAT, 10 T 717, D.2.

¹¹³ Together with Sékou Sido, Abdoulaye Bougno and Illiassou Maiga. Déclaration. Le Bureau Politique, Accra, 12 Apr. 1962 (source: Pour Un Front Démocratique de la Patrie, 51-53); n. 17 above.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. and Pour Un Front Démocratique de la Patrie, 10-11, 27, 43, 46-8 ('traîtres à la Nation'; 'neutralisés'; 'pas de discours'; 'régime néo-colonialiste par tous les moyens'; 'équipes de protection des masses populaires'; 'répondre à la violence par la violence'; 'recouvrer la souveraineté nationale'; 'laver notre Patrie de la souillure néo-colonialiste'). Italics in original.

CHAPTER NINE

TRAINING CADRES AND COMMANDOS, 1958–1969

Quite early after the referendum Sawabists and sympathisers began to leave the country. This was hardly noticeable at first, as travel had always been a feature of West African life, especially in the savanna regions. Niger, in particular, as one of the poorer parts of French West Africa, habitually saw its sons trek in search of better pastures. Peasants in the groundnut-producing areas would go on trips to trade their surplus, while in the west taxation would reinforce the post-harvest hunt for jobs in distant lands. Sawaba's followers blended almost imperceptibly into this larger pattern. They were mostly young and included cadres fleeing persecution; AOFien deportees in search of a new existence; ordinary Nigériens in search of jobs; or teenagers looking for an education—there were few educational opportunities in Niger and, in any case, these were denied to youths associated with Sawaba (others had dropped out of school owing to learning difficulties or clashes with French teachers). The exodus was partly spontaneous, partly encouraged by the leadership and, hence, to a greater or lesser extent co-ordinated. Sawaba's migrants took different routes, which continued older traditions such as from central Niger into Northern Nigeria and from the west to Ghana or eastern Mali, taking advantage of the cultural and economic ties with these regions and following the routes of the infiltration networks that the movement was building up.

The travellers, intent on entering an educational institution, workplace or training camp, made the journey on their own or together. Or they met en route, as the final destination was usually determined later at Sawaba's headquarters in Bamako or Accra, depending on the individual's background, motivation and the movement's needs. Broadly speaking, one group entered one of the educational facilities that the leadership could offer in what were called 'the student countries'¹—generally in Eastern Europe, with which the movement was to develop close ties thanks to its background in the union world. This was part of a larger plan by which the leadership aimed to nurture its own skilled cadres that could help run the

¹ The expression was scribbled in the margin of a Note d'information, no. 80/AERO, Niamey, le 17 août 1963; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.2 ('les pays écoliers').

country once Sawaba had toppled the RDA. Related to this, the party began to dispatch men for guerrilla training in the Far East and friendly states in Africa, for the purpose of infiltration operations and, one day, the overthrow of the regime. These developments were closely interconnected and, hence, will be analysed jointly.

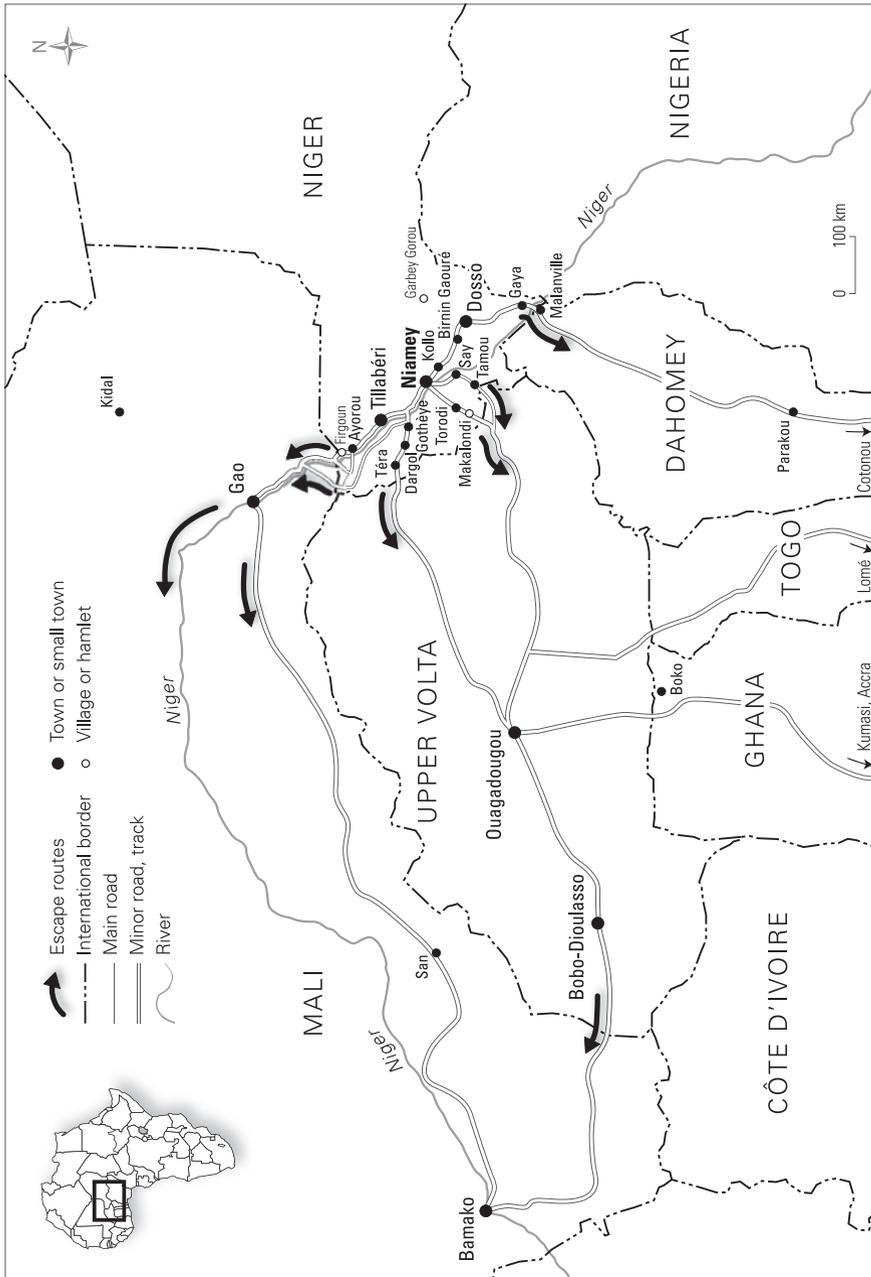
To More Forgiving Heavens²

Initially, those who left the country to join Bakary and his lieutenants headed for Bamako. Numerous young men followed what might be called this 'Mali trail'. It consisted of three routes, two of them fairly direct and one with a complicated detour via Gaya on the border with Dahomey. The direct ones followed the Niger River to Gao or, alternatively, one of several roads leading into Upper Volta, from where the journey could be continued to Bamako via Ouagadougou and the western town of Bobo-Dioulasso (Map 9.1). The Gao route was used by any transportation available. As on the other itineraries, many Sawabists simply went on foot, while others took the bus of Transafricaine or hitched a ride with one of the lorry drivers plying the difficult road that followed the left bank of the river. The fact that Sawaba was well represented among transport workers facilitated the trip by providing cheaper transportation, protection against nosy travellers or a cover with which to leave the country. Thus, a certain Paraiso Ara (Ada), managed to cross the frontier with Upper Volta by giving as excuse that he had to repair a stranded lorry there.³ Canoes, too, were used, either to cross the river to reach a safer road on the opposite embankment or pursue the journey over water. The Sûreté reported in August 1961 that cadres were ferried across the river from a fishing village near Niamey, home of an uncle of Hima Dembélé, who himself played a key role in the evacuation of cadres.⁴ The town of Gothèye also played an important role in this respect, being located on the principal ferry crossing between the capital and the border. In addition, the fact that Gothèye and other Songhay towns had been pro-Sawaba, reinforced by local hostility to Boubou Hama, made the route along the river more attractive. Although the main road to Gao ran on the left bank, cadres occasionally crossed to the right bank to follow the smaller but safer tracks there, some of which led away

² Parti Sawaba. Pour l'Indépendance effective du Niger: Les raisons de notre lutte (Bureau du Parti Sawaba: Bamako, 15 Jan. 1961), 58 ('Vers des cieux plus cléments').

³ See his file in ANN, 86 MI 3 F 12.32.

⁴ Note d'information, 11 Aug. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 4.4.



Map 9.1 The Mali trail.

from the river directly to the frontier with Upper Volta. Further upstream there was another possibility to cross the river at Ayorou, which had an important Sawaba following. It seems that cadres preferred to go to the right bank here, probably to avoid crossing the Malian border by the main road, where customs could more easily intercept them. Dembélé, as noted in Chapter 7, on one of his trips to Bamako left the road at Firgoun, north of Ayorou, and paddled across the frontier midstream. Ali Amadou, the youngster from Téra who confronted de Gaulle on Dakar's Place Prôtet, in 1962 took a car with other comrades right up to the frontier—a boatman then helped them across to the right embankment and they continued on foot along the river into Mali.⁵

Travelling like this was tiring and fraught with danger. Boubakar Djingaré, a Niamey mason, in April 1962 left the capital with four comrades walking all the way to the Voltan border, looking out for snakes and other perils.⁶ Coming from the city, the 'deep bush' had an intimidating quality, certainly the frontier areas where lions and elephants were said to be roaming. Ali Amadou, on his way to Mali, was on his guard for the hippos in the river, and while wild animals could usually be avoided,⁷ many youngsters got caught by the police in spite of the precautions taken. Fatigue and other hardships played their part too. Mounkaila Albagna, a Songhay student from Dargol, went en route on his own, when a friend in Téra declined to come along. At night he left on foot for the Voltan border:

I was alone. I came across seasonal labourers on their way to Ghana. We walked and walked; in the evening we were tired. I had some money with me. A car was to bring us to Ouagadougou, but it broke down. We were in the bush for two days. There are monkeys there.⁸

Endurance was required since it could take a long time before the destination was reached. For example, from the Téra district to Boko on the Volta-Ghana border was said to be a journey of 12 days on foot. As a seasonal worker recounted:

⁵ Chapter 3 at n. 135 and interview with Ali Amadou, Niamey, 28 Jan. 2003.

⁶ Interview with Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 26 Oct. 2005.

⁷ The frontier areas between Burkina Faso, Benin and Niger still had such game by 2006. Interviews Ali Amadou and Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 Jan. and 28 Nov. 2003 ('pleine brousse').

⁸ Paraphrased from interview with Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003.

My feet were swollen but did not prevent me from walking. I was young. The balancing had bloated my hands; but I cheerfully carried my bundle and flasks of water ... I walked; I walked to the rhythm of the great.⁹

This way numerous people travelled one of the itineraries leading directly or indirectly into Mali. For a number of years a steady flow of cadres trickled out of the country, usually going in parties of no more than four or five so as not to attract attention. Often, they first came together to discuss the route and embarked on the journey without papers, equipped with no more than a few possessions and a pseudonym to elude the government's scrutiny.¹⁰ Those who departed early included one of the sons of Ousmane Dan Galadima—Mamadou, who was forced to flee in 1959 at the age of seven. He was accompanied or followed by his mother—Halima—and an older brother, Abdoukarim. Another party leaving that year was that of Gayakoye Sabi, city councillor in Zinder, who after dismissal from his job at the SCOA company travelled (via Gaya?) with Djibo Sékou, the unionist, and Amadou Bajalem, a militant of 23. They were followed by Alhadji (Alazi) Soumaila, a Hausa clerk at the finance ministry, who left Niamey on 13 April 1961 heading for Gao.¹¹

Mashoud Pascal—the postal clerk Pascal Diawara—disguised himself as a Buzu (i.e. Bella) and departed at the end of July. His brother, unionist Mamoudou Pascal, after his release from prison fled to Bamako as well, as did Maïga Ibrahim Moudi, who travelled at an unspecified date, but probably before 1962, straight to Gao. As noted in the previous chapter, in the autumn of 1961 the Mali trail became particularly busy. The Sûreté registered the sudden disappearance of numerous cadres. Among them were Amadou Seydou dit Sangalaly, a clerk at a public transport office, who travelled to Lomé where he planned to board a plane for Bamako. Mounkaila Abdou, a health worker, would also have wished to leave, while Goba

⁹ The reminiscences of a seasonal labourer—not a Sawaba cadre—on his way to Ghana. B.M. Say, *Entretien avec des Nigériens d'Accra* (Cotonou, n.d.), 9 ('Mes pieds étaient enflés mais ne m'empêchaient pas de marcher. Le balancement avait gonflé mes mains; mais je portais allègrement mon baluchon [sic] et mes gourdes d'eau ... Je marchais; je marchais au rythme des grands.').

¹⁰ Interviews Ali Amadou, Niamey, and Ali Mahamane Madaoui, Zinder, 28 Jan./14 Febr. 2003.

¹¹ Interviews Mamadou Ousmane Dan Galadima and Kaïro Alfari, Niamey, 27 Nov. 2003 and 30 Oct. 2005; Surveillance du Territoire no. 732/SN/ST: Interrogatoire de Abdoukarim Ousmane dit Maïga, 6 Sept. 1967; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14; R. Roger, commissioner police Zinder, to Chef Sûreté Niamey, 8 Febr. 1960 and Circulaire no. 605: Minister of the Interior to all Commandants de Cercle, Chefs de Subdivision and Chefs de Poste Administratif; latter two ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.3; Note d'information, 15 Apr. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.2.

Ekwe, a postal clerk in Maradi, simply vanished from his office, as did Amadou Abdoulaye, an assistant teacher. Aissa Salbe, a Sawaba woman from Niamey's Gamkallé district who was sacked from her post at the civil service department, on 23 September travelled to Upper Volta, heading for the Malian capital. A week later she was followed by Iro Addo, a Tessaoua pupil at the Lycée National, and a few weeks after that by Addo's fellow student Hambali Sahabi. A veterinary nurse who left for Mali about this time was Yansambou Boubakar from Birnin Gaouré near Dosso. Mounkaila Beidari, the young party cadre, also departed for Bamako that year.¹²

These are just a few examples of those who travelled the Mali trail before the end of 1961—and got registered by the police. Other attempts ended in arrest. Soumah Maiga, a transporter from Kidal in eastern Mali, was lucky as he was searched on the frontier on 2 June 1961 but let go to continue his journey to Gao. Ibrahim Félix, a clerk who had been sacked from the town hall of Zinder, followed the Gaya detour, but was arrested all the same. Katchalla Oumar from Nguigmi, known for his Sawaba sympathies and fired from his post as a fireman in Niamey, was caught while trying to board a lorry for Bobo-Dioulasso. Those travelling in the company of Paraiso Ara were taken in for questioning but then released.¹³ More tragically, Oumar Traoré, AOFien and a government clerk of relatively high rank, was arrested on 20 May 1962 on board a Vidal lorry heading for Gao. He was completely penniless and had only the clothes on his back.¹⁴

Another wave of attempts began in the spring of 1962. Alhassane Souley Maïga dit Baban Loré, an illiterate boxer employed as a gymnastics coach, made off to Bamako during a two-week holiday in March. A month later Oumarou Seydou (Saïdou) dit Petit Dosso, a Niamey postal clerk, made his move together with Albadé Ismaël Nouhou, a clerk at the department of rural economy. This was the party in which Boubakar Djingaré travelled and included Djibril(la) Dembélé (no family relation of Hima but a part-time boxer without a regular income) and an unidentified Dahomean. Ali

¹² Various files ANN, 86 MI 3 F 12.32; Surveillance du Territoire no.287/BCL: Examen de situation de Yansambou Boubakar, 29 March 1969 & Note de renseignements no. 801/BCL, 25 Sept. 1967; both ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14; Recueil des principaux renseignements collectés au cours de la période 9 au 15 nov. 1961, no. 151; SHAT, 5 H 95; interview Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 Nov. 2003 & 15 Dec. 2009; Surveillance du Territoire no. 667/ST/SN: Examen de situation du nommé Mashoud Hama Pascal Diawara, 9 Aug. 1967; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14.

¹³ Issoufou Moumouni, Yerima Moussa (both teachers) and Amadou Karimou.

¹⁴ Various files in ANN, 86 MI 3 F 12.32. Two unidentified Nigériens were arrested at Makalondi, 26 March 1962. Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 501, 19 Apr. 1962; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2.

Amadou followed in July in a group of three or five that included Souleymane Mamadou Hako, a youngster from Tahoua who had a primary school certificate and an editorial job at the government information service. This pattern continued well into the autumn, and beyond. Abdou Ardaly, brother of Daouda and clerk in Maradi, departed in September, while Tahirou Ayouba Maïga, a 16-year-old Songhay from the Téra region, left at an unspecified date, as did Zoumari Issa Seyni, a cousin of Adamou Sékou who hailed from the same region, and Daouda Hamadou, the pestered tailor from Ayorou.¹⁵

It is difficult to give a figure for those who used the Mali trail and, generally, for all people (party cadres, aspiring students, job seekers, sympathising peasants, petty traders) who left Niger and one way or another got involved with the external wing. Documentary evidence attests to at least several hundreds who became *actively* involved—as guerrillas(-in-training), students, political cadres. It is hard to say whether this was the tip of the iceberg, yet the examples cited of those travelling the Mali trail on the whole concerned people with public sector jobs or positions by which they were known to the authorities. As the movement was stronger among private-sector workers, one may assume that many more made their way abroad, such as traders, artisans and peasants. This is indeed borne out by later figures and records.

Initially, the numbers of people joining Sawaba abroad still fluctuated, as during the first years it was still possible to work more or less in the open. Some activists occasionally returned home after trips to Bamako or the Eastern Bloc. Thus, Gayakoye Sabi actually returned from his 1960 trip, which involved a visit to Bamako and a tour of Eastern Bloc countries including Czechoslovakia and communist China. On his return to Zinder in

¹⁵ Hako claimed one travel companion was Hassane Djibo, agricultural clerk from Kollo near Niamey, who, however, later asserted to have travelled via Gaya. Daouda Hamadou travelled in the company of Kanguèye Boka, likely Kanguèye Boubakar, who hailed from nearby Kokoro. Note d'information, no. 867/BCL, 19 Oct. 1967, no. 959/BCL, 15 Nov. 1967; Surveillance du Territoire no. 778/BCL: Examen de situation de Abdou Ardaly, 12 Sept. 1968; *Ibid.*, no. 630/SN/ST: Examen de situation du nommé Souleymane Hako, 20 July 1967; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14; Curriculum Vitae Zoumari Issa Seyni (possession author); interviews Ali Amadou, Albadé Nouhou, Boubakar Djingaré, Tahirou Ayouba Maïga & Hassane Djibo, Niamey, 28 Jan. 2003, 26-28 Oct. 2005, 22 Febr. 2008; Daouda Hamadou, Ayorou, 20 Dec. 2009; *Le Niger*, 16 Nov. 1964 (text interrogation Djibrilla Dembélé). Baban Loré was also known as Assane Souley Maïga dit Baban Loré or Souley Hassan. Another source, probably mistakenly, reported that Abdou Ardaly left in August 1960. Note d'information, 1 Sept. 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 4.4.

February 1961 he was accompanied by Daouda Ardaly and two others.¹⁶ Alazi Soumaila, the treasury clerk and active for Sawaba's youth wing, had already made a foreign journey before he left for Gao in April 1961.¹⁷ At the beginning of that year he returned from a grand tour that had taken him to Conakry and Peking together with Mazou Dan (Mazari dit) Mazel, a joiner from Tessaoua, and Hamidou Moustapha dit Saidou, the postal clerk from Nguigmi, who had been fired.¹⁸ These links with the Eastern Bloc also meant that there was money around for Sawaba's operations. This can be deduced from the fact that, initially, many of Bakary's lieutenants travelled between Niamey and Bamako by plane. Mazou Dan Mazel got the plane ticket for his tour from Sallé Dan Koulou. Mazel, Alazi Soumaila and Moustapha dit Saidou boarded the Bamako service of 2 August 1960, possibly in the company of Kaïro Alfari, a veterinary nurse from Tillabéri who had clashed with the administration in the east. Hambali Mahamane, an ambitious student of law and letters, left Niger by taking a plane for Dakar but getting off at Bamako.¹⁹

For those travelling the Mali trail overland, the journey became easier once the border had been negotiated. Mali's government sympathised with Sawaba, which had a presence in the Gao region. Consequently, when the party of Ali Amadou ran into a Malian customs post with nothing more than simple identity cards, they were provided with food and water and lent a car with which they drove to Gao.²⁰ Nevertheless, the crossing was difficult and made some decide to take the detour via Gaya. This developed into a major leak as it had a Sawaba presence and was located on the border, in an agricultural zone attracting seasonal labourers. As noted in Chapter 8, leading cadres managed to escape this way. Others followed. Iro Addo, the pupil at the Lycée National, was given the address of a trader in Gaya

¹⁶ Hamadou Oumarou and Bacalami Sadi. J. Colombani, Directeur de la Sûreté, to Ministre de l'Intérieur, 8 Febr. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.3.

¹⁷ A Message Radio Police of 1 Febr. 1961 claims, possibly mistakenly, that Soumaila again left for Mali on 31 January, rather than 13 April, 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.2. C. Maman, *Répertoire biographique des personnalités de la classe politique et des leaders d'opinion du Niger de 1945 à nos jours* (Niamey, 1999) vol. 2, 178-179, claims he left Niger definitively in August 1960.

¹⁸ Note d'information, 10 Aug., 21 Sept. & 18 Oct. 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.2.

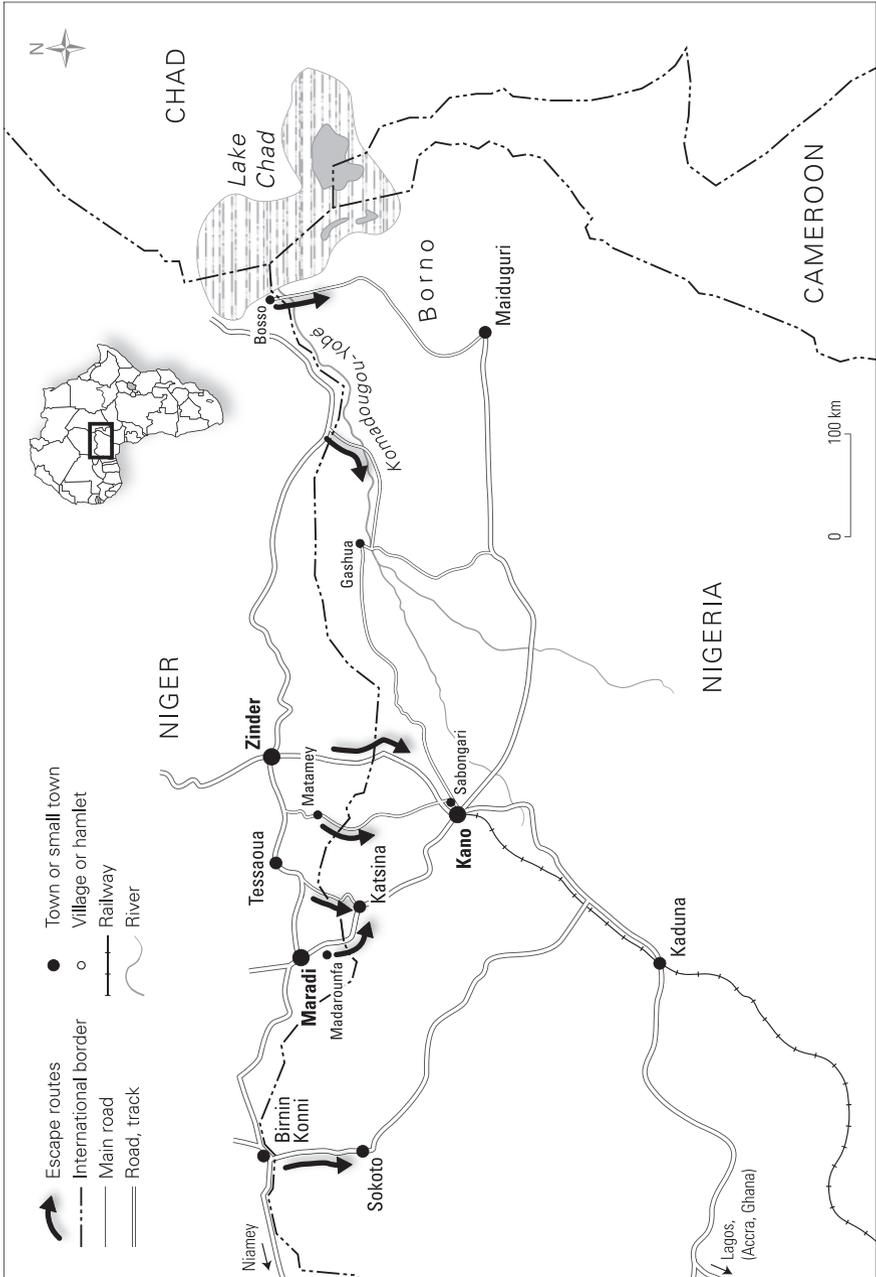
¹⁹ Ibid.; interview Kaïro Alfari, Niamey, 30 Oct. 2005; Note de renseignements, no. 800/BCL, 26 Sept. 1967; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14. Alfari had been dismissed from his post (no reason given). See his file in ANN, 86 MI 1 C 2.5. Sékou Beri Ismaila, the airport's weather service employee (ch 7 at n. 36), failed to leave in this way, as he was arrested in September 1961 when trying to board. He was in detention (still or again) by October. See his file in ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.19.

²⁰ Interview with Ali Amadou, Niamey, 28 Jan. 2003.

by Hambali Mahamane, the law and letters student, who hailed from the region. The trader helped Addo cross the river with a canoe to avoid the bridge to Malanville on the right embankment. Issoufou Assoumane, a civil servant from Tahoua, bluffed his way out when in 1961 the government imposed a disciplinary transfer to Zinder. He got in touch with Adamou Sékou, who wrote on his behalf to the leadership in Bamako, and in August Assoumane travelled to Gaya. Telling customs he had been dispatched to Niger's consulate in Cotonou, Assoumane was allowed across and continued to Ghana and Bamako. The departure of Ali Mahamane dit Ali Dodo, assistant clerk of the agricultural administration and probably secretary-general of Sawaba's executive committee in Birni-Zinder, followed an identical pattern. He contacted Adamou Sékou, who told him to make his way to Bamako—which Dodo did by escaping to Dahomey. Humble cadres did the same, such as Mossi Salifou, the pestered tailor in Niamey who in 1963 slipped through Gaya with the help of a policeman related to his wife, and Hassane Djibo, agricultural clerk from Kollo near Niamey.²¹ As discussed later, the Dahomean government turned a blind eye.

Those departing from Niger's central and eastern regions naturally went through Nigeria. Amadou Ibrahim Diop, a Sawaba lorry driver from Zinder with a Senegalese father, had already travelled to Bamako in 1959, possibly via Kano. Amada Bachard, UDN youth leader in Zinder, also left that year. The poorly demarcated frontier, marked by intensive cross-border trade and a shared Hausa culture, facilitated the exodus. Countless men in the centre and east thus made their way abroad. For example, in 1960 Bachir Boukary, a pupil at secondary school, went on foot to Kano—a journey of three days—, together with six others including Ali Mahamane Madaouki, Moussa Wakily and Nagir Hadji (all from Zinder). Disguised as Qur'an students they were welcomed by NEPU. By the autumn of 1961 the movement had established a permanent presence in Kano's Sabongari quarter, the 'new town' district inhabited by immigrants from all over the region. Here Dan Galadima supervised a 'personnel office' to help cadres on their way. He was assisted by Ali(n) Kote, with whom he lived—a trader and jockey from Zinder's Zengou district, who had a brother in Kano by the name of El Hadji Kote and was a follower of NEPU's leader Aminu

²¹ Surveillance du Territoire no. 605/SN/ST: Examen de situation du nommé Iro Addo, 18 July 1967; *Ibid.*, no. 635/SN/ST: Examen de situation du nommé Issoufou Assoumane, 24 July 1967; *Ibid.*, no. 659/ST/SN: Examen de situation du nommé Ali Mahamane, 8 Aug. 1967; all ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14; file Issoufou Danbaro; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 12.19; Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 9-15 nov. 1961, no. 151; interview Mossi Salifou, Niamey, 29 Febr. 2008.



Map 9.2 Travel patterns to Nigeria.

Kano. He had established himself as a businessman in Kano city and was one of NEPU's funders. By early 1962 Ali Kote was in Lagos, however, working for Aminu Kano and helping Sawaba cadres on their way to Ghana and Bamako. Kote, who had travelled in Europe and had sent Sawaba propaganda material to Zinder, Maradi and Niamey upon Niger's accession to independence, would have been promised Niger's consulship in Kano once Bakary had reconquered power.²²

The infrastructure was thus put in place by which cadres, sympathisers and students could make their way through Nigeria with relative ease, once they had reached Kano. The party of Bachir Boukary left the city by car, which took it all the way to Lagos and Ghana, from where the men travelled to Bamako. Kano also developed into the collection point for other parts of Niger's central and eastern regions (Map 9.2). To give but a few examples: cadres from Tessaoua made their way to the city;²³ Maradi's postal clerk, Goba Ekwe, possibly made his escape through Katsina and Kano; and Aba Kaka, the deposed canton chief of Bosso, travelled via Maiduguri (or Gashua) in north-eastern Nigeria before reaching Sawaba's Nigerian headquarters. In his case, negotiating the frontier was simple as the town of Bosso lay practically on the border, where the Komadougou-Yobé River discharged into Lake Chad.²⁴

The Nigerian travel patterns also continued for several years. André Jean dit Lamarche, public works employee from Zinder who had served in the French navy, travelled to Kano in September 1961. A month before, Aboubakar Abdou Karami, a 23-year-old technician from Gouré, left Zinder, probably following a similar route. Also in September, Chaibou Souley (Sawaba external affairs secretary in Konni?) left Zinder for Kano in a party of six that included one Yacouba Issa, a veterinary nurse. They were received by Dan Galadima and on the 30th left for Lagos on their way to

²² A.k.a. Ali Ta Amadou dit Kote. Interviews Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Bachir Boukary and Ali Mahamane Madaouki, Zinder, 13, 11, 10 Febr. 2003; Amada Bachard (who left Niger in June 1959!), Niamey, 14 Dec. 2009; A. Espitalier, Commissioner of Police Zinder, to Directeur Sûreté, 3 Oct. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.6; Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 9-15 nov. 1961, no. 151; *Ibid.*, 11-17 janv. 1962, no. 160; SHAT, 5 H 92; T. Yakasai, *The Story of a Humble Life: An Autobiography*, vol. 1 (Zaria, 2004) 77, 79 and 209 ('bureau de personnel').

²³ Interview with Bachir Boukary, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003 and files on Abdou Iddi, Laouali (Lawali) Baro and André Kalla; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 12.32.

²⁴ Interview with Aba Kaka, Bosso, 13 Febr. 2006. Cadres in Zinder may have been assisted in leaving by Maman Tchila. Interview Oumarou Janba, Zinder, 19 Febr. 2003. Maï Manga, deposed chief of Nguigmi who after his incarceration fled to Ghana, must have fled along a similar route. Interview Kanembou Malam (then government soldier), Diffa, 12 Febr. 2006.

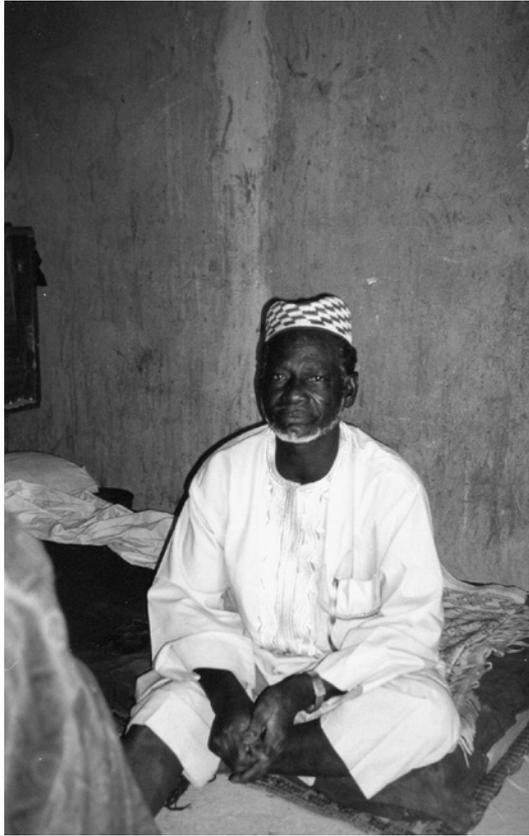


Photo 9.1 Noga Yamba, Zinder, 2003.

Ghana. They were followed by Elhadji Bachir Dangai, a Hausa trader-driver from Zinder, while a Sawaba cadre from Madarounfa called Ouali had also made his way to Kano by then. That such journeys were full of peril was made clear when Noga Yamba, a cadre from Zinder, travelled in a small party to the border town of Matamey (1962). He was stopped by police, whose presence had been reinforced, but managed to talk his way out with a story about trade in Kano. Having crossed the border he and his companions, who included a certain Ibrahim and Mounkaïla Saidou dit Dandodo (an assistant teacher in Zinder), continued to Kano by car, where they found that the Lagos-bound train had left. Having money with them, this was exchanged for Nigerian pounds. Once again, they were stopped by police, as Northern Nigeria's government was hostile to the NEPU opposi-

tion and, by extension, Sawaba. Yamba and his comrades were let go, however, and continued by car to Kaduna and Lagos and on to Ghana.²⁵

As noted above, Mali could also be reached through Upper Volta, whose regime, however, co-operated with Niger and Côte d'Ivoire in the Entente. This itinerary therefore posed problems, also because Niger's authorities established a police post at Makalondi, south of Torodi near the frontier. Several cadres nevertheless tried their luck. The Makalondi route was mentioned in relation to a certain Tiémoko Mahaman Illo, while others skirted its border post by travelling over Say and Tamou, as Hima Dembélé had intended when he tried to escape in the autumn of 1961. In 1960 Dembélé would have tried via Dosso and Togo—a route which was part of the Gaya detour that Adamou Moussa, an agricultural adviser, took when heading for Ghana in April 1962 (see Map 9.1).²⁶ Others followed the example of cadres mentioned above²⁷ and headed straight for Ouagadougou, such as the party of Kona Mayaki, a teacher, who went to Bamako via the Voltan capital.²⁸

Often, however, the destination of those travelling through Upper Volta was Ghana rather than Bamako. This was part of the larger migration patterns linking Niger's impoverished west with the countries on the coast. During the so-called 'dead season', between October and May, peasants

²⁵ The party of Chaibou Souley also changed money in Kano (30,000 CFA). A. Espalier, Commissioner of Police Zinder, to Directeur Sûreté, 3 Oct. 1961 (different letters); ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.6; Bureau de coordination et de liaison, No. 879/BCL: Etudiants et Boursiers du Sawaba de Retour des Pays de l'Est, 18 Oct. 1968; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14; Surveillance du Territoire no. 511/BCL: Examen de situation de Aboubakar Abdou Karami, 11 June 1969; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14; Bulletin Hebdomadaire, semaine du 8 au 14 oct. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 12.16; Surveillance du Territoire (Bureau de Coordination), no. 396/SN/ST: Organisation Terroriste "Sawaba" (Recueil des dirigeants et militants actifs en fuite); ex. no. 000148, dest. le Sous Préfet de Dosso; Procès verbal, jeunesse Sawaba de Birni-N'Konni, 10 Aug. 1958; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 52; interview Noga Yamba, Zinder, 14 Febr. 2003.

²⁶ Note d'information, 14 March 1960, 16 Aug. 1961 & 12 Sept. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.10; file Tiémoko Mahaman Illo; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 12.32; Surveillance du Territoire no. 656/ST/SN: Examen de situation du nommé Adamou Moussa, 7 Aug. 1967; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14. As noted earlier, Iro Addo and Amadou Seydou dit Sangalaly also used the Togolese route. One Souley Salifou would also have had the intention to go to Ouagadougou. The itinerary is unknown. File Souley Salifou; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 12.32.

²⁷ Paraiso Ara; Aissa Albe; the party of Boubakar Djingaré, the mason; Mashoud Pascal and Coulibaly Seydou, a clerk at the presidency (!), who went with Transafricaine to Bobo-Dioulasso and then in a private vehicle to Mali. Examen de situation du nommé Mashoud Hama Pascal Diawara, 9 Aug. 1967.

²⁸ File Kona Mayaki: interrogation report Jean Colombani and Jean Arrighi, 2 Aug. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 12.32. His party included Issoufou Moumouni and Yerima (Moussa?), both teachers, and a certain Boulassane. This was before or after another attempt that ended in failure. See n. 13 above and ch. 8 n. 41. Note d'information, undated?, ANN, 86 MI 3 F 12.32.

went south to engage in trade or take up any kind of job to make some money before embarking on the return journey.²⁹ Niger's regime was worried about the appeal exerted by the south-bound journey,³⁰ which could take on massive proportions. Early in 1965 it was reported that all young men of the Téra district had gone to Ghana, with the remaining population asking for postponement of taxes.³¹ Ghana was the most popular destination and became the object of eulogies that sang the praise of its 'inestimable wealth'.³² With time, numerous migrants decided not to return, also because of the obstacles imposed on the free flow of capital between the two countries, thus giving rise to large communities of Nigériens, especially in Accra.³³

The town of Gothèye, in particular, turned out a steady stream of migrants—something where Sawaba sentiments blended with economic needs. Already in 1954 Soumana Idrissa, a Gothèye adolescent who had finished school, travelled for work to the Gold Coast. His participation in Sawaba union work led him to stay in Ghana after the referendum. The same was true for Yacouba Idrissa dit Gothèye, no family relation of Soumana but an uncle of Bakary himself. A prosperous wood trader and transporter, Yacouba was registered as a loyal lieutenant, who fled to Ghana in 1958. Abdourahmane Bale, a Gothèye cadre, fled to Ghana in 1961, by which time Tini (Abdouramane dit) Malélé was already agitating for the cause among the Nigériens there.³⁴ A certain Maman Alke left Gothèye at an unspecified date, heading for Accra.³⁵ In contrast, Djibo Harouna, son of Sawaba tailor Harouna Téla (whose Niamey home had been seized) and 14 years old in 1960, went to Ghana as he was prevented from finishing school. Intent on revenge, he wanted to join Bakary's guerrilla forces, but an uncle

²⁹ Say, *Entretien avec des Nigériens d'Accra*, 3 ('la morte saison').

³⁰ *Le Niger*, 10 May 1965; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 13 to 19 Apr. 1964, 470, no. 16; SHAT, 5 H 126; *ibid.*, 7 to 13 Jan. 1963, 25.045, no. 2; SHAT, 5 H 128.

³¹ Bulletin Mensuel de Renseignements, 20 Jan.-20 Febr. 1965, Téra; ANN, FONDS DAPA.

³² Typical is Say, *Entretien avec des Nigériens d'Accra*, 3 ('richesses inestimables').

³³ The Ivorian paper *Fraternité-Hebdo* of 2 July 1965 speaks of an estimated 400,000.

³⁴ See ch. 6 at n. 116. Touré Hama, after finishing primary school, left Gothèye in November 1962 and travelled to Ghana hoping to continue his education. See following note.

³⁵ Interviews Soumana Idrissa, Gothèye, and Djibo Foulan, Bandio, 1/4 Nov. 2005; Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes pour la période du 18 au 24 juin 1959, no. 35; CAOM, Cart.2249; Recueil des principaux renseignements collectés au cours de la période 5 au 11 avril 1962, no. 171; SHAT, 5 H 91; *Ibid.*, 16 au 22 nov. 1961, no. 152; SHAT, 5 H 95; Note d'information, 10 Nov. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 4.11; Surveillance du Territoire no. 515/BCL: Examen de situation de Touré Hama, 8 June 1968; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14; *Le Niger*, 26 Oct. 1964. Ibrahim Baro dit Tri Tri, born in Gothèye in 1937, also left Niger. He later did military training. Interview, Niamey, 22 Oct. 2011.

in Ghana forced him to return after his father had fallen ill.³⁶ The result of this steady trickle of migrants was that, by 1961, several dozen Gothèye Sawabists had established themselves in the Ghanaian capital. It was reported that there were villages where all the inhabitants were oriented to Sawaba's cause.³⁷ Naturally, there were also sympathisers from other western towns who left for Ghana, such as Dargol and Tillabéri. The itinerary often included Kumasi, where, as noted in Chapter 7, Sawabists from Gao had opened a party office.³⁸

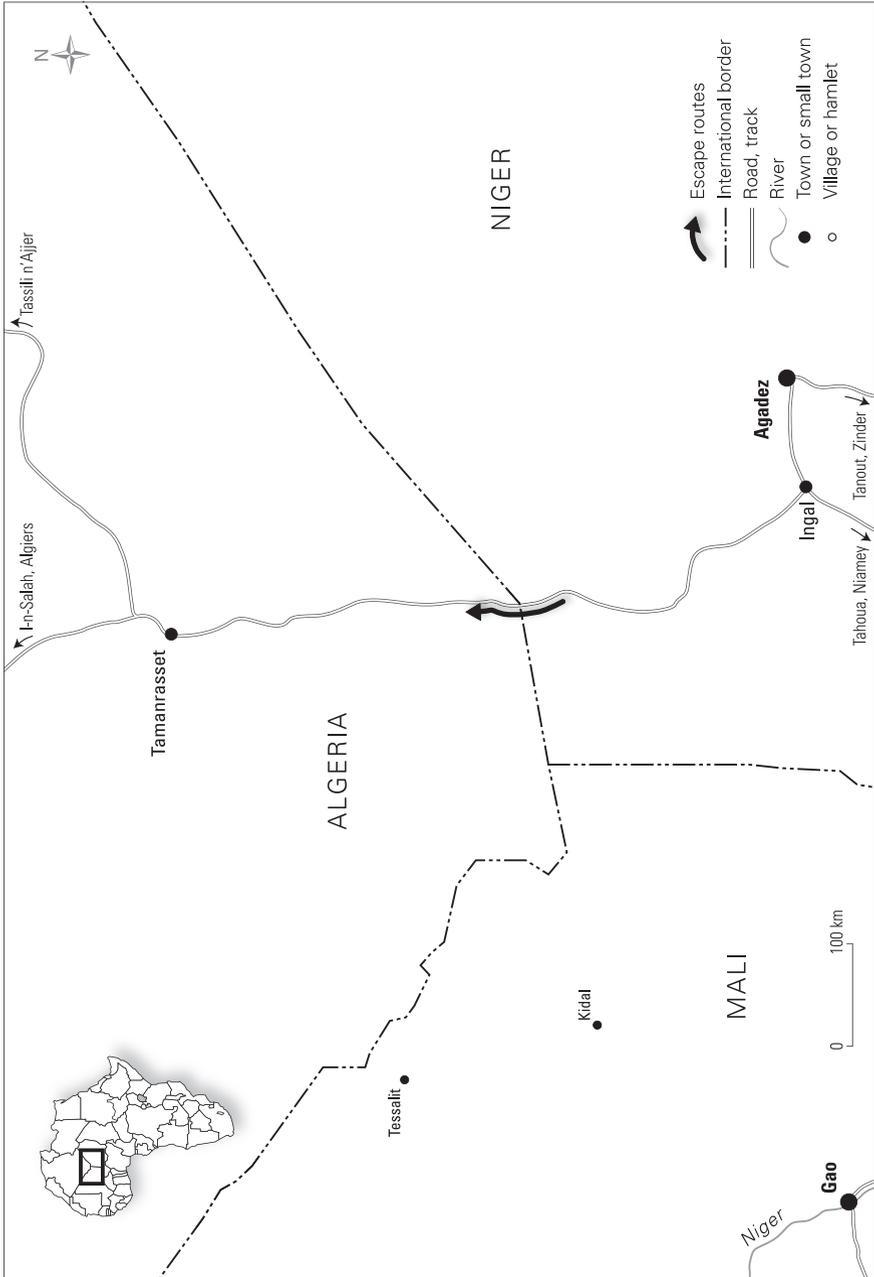
A final route by which one could escape the country was via Agadez to Algeria, travelling the Saharan trail to Tamanrasset and beyond, to Algiers (Map 9.3). As shown in the next chapter, this itinerary was part of the northern network of cells used for intelligence gathering and occasional infiltrations. The northern trail was not followed to any great extent. This, of course, had much to do with the inhospitable environment, where travel parties depended on transportation by camel or motor vehicles and came more easily in view of police or customs. Yet, unemployment in the north was rife and, in the Agadez region, compounded by the RDA's policies. Labour migration northwards was not uncommon. For example, 600 migrant workers were registered in 1961 in the Algerian region of Tassili n'Ajjer, most of whom appear to have come from Niger.³⁹ Although these included many Tuaregs uninvolved in Sawaba's struggle, the malaise in Agadez made labour migration a political issue. This became acute when Algeria became independent (July 1962). The government of Ben Bella was sympathetic to Bakary and thus improved Sawaba's strategic position. As shown later, party offices were opened in Algiers and Tamanrasset, where migrants from Niger may have been helped along—not to be recruited for

³⁶ Interview with Djibo Harouna, Gothèye, 1 Nov. 2005.

³⁷ Kakassi, Ziguissa, Banibargou. One hamlet would have been called 'Sawaba'. *Le Niger*, 28 March 1966. Gothèye Sawabists cited by the Sùreté, in addition to those mentioned above, were: a certain Saadou; Djibo Kader; Agalize Mossi; Tondi Mossi; Mahamoud Issaka; Issoufou Beleri; Douddou (Daudou) Tafa; Dougouli Gomme; Gauto Atikou; Amadou Izenzia; Dare Fonde; Couliafa; Niande; Idrissa; Goutoue Bale (a woman); Salle Karma; Sinca; Saadou Zamacouara (last three transporters); Ousseini Tella Gothey; and Drouhamane Beladjio Gothey (= Abdourahmane Bale?). Two cadres from an unidentified location were Bondiéré Garbekourou (i.e. Garbey Gorou, near Dosso?) and Idrissa Tondigoungou. Note d'information, 16 Febr. 1961 and undated document; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 4.11.

³⁸ Mounkaila Albagna from Dargol travelled with three others to Kumasi and only followed them later to Accra. Moumouni Daouda's brother journeyed via Ouagadougou-Abidjan to Ghana. Interviews Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003 & Moumouni Daouda, Tillabéri, 3 Nov. 2005.

³⁹ M. Gérard, 'Arlit et les retombées économiques de l'uranium sur le Niger', *Planification Habitat Information*, no. 77, July 1974, 35.



Map 9.3 The Saharan trail.

a job in northern Algeria but into Sawaba. Yet, most recruits arrived in the country via Ghana and Morocco.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the minister of the interior tried to ban labour migration to Algeria and in 1963 sent the Agadez police commissioner, the RDA's local secretary and the Commandant de Cercle to Tamanrasset to help repatriate unemployed nationals.⁴¹

Recruitment

For the onward journey party officials assisted in several respects. As shown below, they arranged student grants and places in educational facilities or training camps, procured passports and provided tickets to foreign destinations and travel money. This was part of the recruitment campaign that included a process of vetting candidates on political reliability, motivation and suitability for training (academic or vocational; political schooling; union instruction; guerrilla training). As the exodus was partly encouraged, some vetting already took place inside Niger in the course of recruitment. There is no evidence on how this was done, but often people must have been known to recruiters already. Thus, as noted in Chapter 7, until the autumn of 1961 Mallam Kalla was active as recruiter in the Maradi, Dakoro and Tessaoua regions. Sallé Dan Koulou was similarly active, and so was Hima Dembélé, assisted with money and transport by one of his uncles. This was an outgrowth of his liaison work with the external wing and the contacts he had developed with the Eastern Bloc. As noted above, Adamou Sékou was also in touch with recruits, contacting the external leadership on their behalf and giving his approval for their departure.⁴² There was, in fact, an entire network of recruiters in Niamey run by Arouna Zada, the Gamkallé unionist. He was arrested, however, in April 1962 together with

⁴⁰ There is no evidence that cadres were dispatched to Algeria via the Malian towns of Gao, Kidal and Tessalit, where the FLN already had a presence. Rapport de Fin de Commandement. 1^{ère} partie: Situation Politique et Militaire de l'Ex-Afrique Occidentale Française. Délégation pour la Défense de la ZOM no. 1. Etat-Major. 2^{ème} Bureau. Dakar, le 30 juin 1962; SHAT, 5 H 31. Generally K. van Walraven, 'From Tamanrasset: The Struggle of Sawaba and the Algerian Connection (1957-1966)', *Journal of North African Studies*, 10 (2005), 3-4, 507-527.

⁴¹ M. Aoubakar, le commissaire de police Agadez, to M. le Directeur de la Sûreté Nationale Niamey, 6-7 Nov. 1963 (letter & report); ANN, 86 MI 3 F 18.9 (Direction de la Sûreté Nationale/Commissariat de Police de la Ville d'Agadez: Notes d'information concernant le Sawaba en liaison avec Tamanrasset); Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 26 Aug.-1 Sept. 1963, 1.079, no. 35; SHAT, 5 H 130.

⁴² When Sékou got arrested, he also advised his cousin Zoumari Issa Seyni to go abroad. Interview with Zoumari Issa Seyni, Niamey, 18 Nov. 2002.

other Sawabists, who had been on a mission to recruit students for the Soviet Union.⁴³

Further screening was conducted by the external wing, notably by those stationed in Bamako, who were better informed about needs and the availability of training places. Central to this process was Daouda Ardaly, who between February and September 1961 permanently settled in the Malian capital. He was a logical choice, as he had engaged in liaison duties and possessed extensive contacts in the Eastern Bloc. Usually, recruits were obliged to remain in Bamako, or Accra, for some time. This delay was caused not only by vetting but also by the need to arrange places and grants for those entering educational institutions, the preparation of files and sorting out of documents. Probably it took more time to gain entrance to educational institutions than acceptance for military training or a trade union course, as scholarships were limited. Thus, Touré Hama from Gothèye waited eight months before leaving Ghana for training as a medical assistant in East Germany. Others, however, did not have to wait that long, which probably had more to do with vacancies than quicker screening. Hambali Mahamane, the law and letters student, spent four months in Bamako before leaving for language studies in Cairo. Aboubakar Abdou Karami, the Gouré technician, had to wait five months before going to secondary school in Morocco and later another three before studying engineering in Moscow. As he was already known, the second delay had to do with availability of grants. In the case of Mamoudou Ide, an assistant nurse from Ouallam (western Niger), this happened as well. Upon qualifying as a nurse in East Germany, he stayed seven months in Ghana before travelling to the Soviet Union to continue medical training. In contrast, before going to East Germany he spent just ten days in Bamako, probably because he was already vetted in Gao by one of Sawaba's representatives there—Alazi Soumaila.⁴⁴

Consequently, a four or five weeks' stay in Bamako was the minimum. Oumarou Seydou dit Petit Dosso, the Niamey postal clerk, travelled to Conakry after a month, although the fact that this was for a trade union course may have speeded things up and his stay in Guinea was used to get

⁴³ In their search for candidates in the civil service, they had already enlisted two young clerks and prepared their departure for Bamako. *Recueil des principaux renseignements* ... 5 au 11 avril 1962, no. 171 and Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 501, 19 Apr. 1962.

⁴⁴ Examen de situation de Touré Hama, 8 June 1968; ... Souleymane Hako, 20 July 1967; ... Aboubakar Abdou Karami, 11 June 1969; Note de renseignements, no. 800/BCL, 26 Sept. 1967; Surveillance du Territoire no. 620/BCL: Examen de situation de Mamoudou Ide, 11 July 1968; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14.

clearance for further studies. Upon his return Petit Dosso waited just a few weeks before going to the Soviet Union to study medicine. Abdou Ardaly—Daouda's own brother—, stayed a month in Bamako before going to the USSR to read law. Evidence suggests that by mid-1961 the processing of candidates had become a routine procedure. Ali Mahamane dit Ali Dodo, the clerk whose departure had been encouraged by Adamou Sékou, could continue to the Soviet Union almost immediately after meeting Daouda Ardaly. He was told everything was ready and five days later left for Moscow.⁴⁵

It seems that recruits for political and military instruction also had to stay put before travelling to training sites. For example, Noga Yamba, the cadre from Zinder, stayed a few months in Ghana before continuing to Algeria via Morocco for military drill. Mounkaila Albagna, the student from Dargol, lived in Accra for at least four months, before he finally left for Algeria; and Soumana Idrissa, the union activist from Gothèye, waited half a year in Bamako before entering into a six months 'political seminar' in East Berlin. Obviously, these waiting periods had to do with availability of places.⁴⁶

The vetting of recruits depended on oral information as membership lists had been seized or destroyed. As Sawaba had existed since 1954 and the movement operated in an oral culture, this could still be reasonably effective. Since everyone knew someone else, information could be collected through second or third channels. There is evidence that recruits had to prepare dossiers or complete forms including CVs and mention of preferences. Ghana's 'Bureau of African Affairs' (BAA—see next section), responsible for guerrilla training in that country, did the same all over again, investigating arrivals and compiling personality reports.⁴⁷ Sawaba leaders and their foreign backers had to be careful since, as shown in Chapter 11, Niger's regime engaged in espionage by planting moles in Sawaba circles abroad. The French, too, spied. In the Malian capital their High Commissioner, Jean-Charles Siccurani, sent intelligence on Sawabists to

⁴⁵ Examen de situation de Yansambou Boubakar, 29 March 1969; ... Abdou Ardaly, 12 Sept. 1968; ... Ali Mahamane, 8 Aug. 1967; Note d'information, no. 959/BCL, 15 Nov. 1967.

⁴⁶ Interviews Noga Yamba, Zinder, 14 Febr. 2003; Moukaila Albagna, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003; Soumana Idrissa, Gothèye, 1 Nov. 2005 ('séminaire politique').

⁴⁷ Examen de situation de Yansambou Boubakar, 29 March 1969; *Le Niger*, 16 Nov. 1964. Boubakar was asked for his primary school certificate, date of birth, scholarship application, passport photos and CV. Also see *Nkrumah's Subversion in Africa: Documentary Evidence of Nkrumah's Interference in the Affairs of Other African States* (Ministry of Information: Accra, n.d.), 4.

fellow Corsicans in Niamey.⁴⁸ In Ghana the French did the same, using information that could ultimately be traced to Yacouba Idrissa dit Gothèye, the prosperous trader and Bakary's relative whose complex role is discussed below.⁴⁹

Thus, upon arrival in Bamako Baban Loré, the illiterate boxer, had to ask Daouda Ardaly several times for help before Bakary dispatched him to study mechanics in East Germany. This may have had to do with distrust of his person.⁵⁰ Maïga Ibrahim Moudi also had trouble, but in his case because he tried to arrange a scholarship through an official of the Soviet embassy in Bamako. Ardaly intervened, promising assistance but criticising Moudi for acting on his own. While this had less to do with suspected infiltration than the wish to maintain a monopoly on grants, all those who presented themselves to the leadership in deviant ways could count on careful scrutiny.⁵¹ Some prospective recruits were rejected and returned to Niger. For example, Kona Mayaki went back to Niger together with fellow teacher Issoufou Moumouni because Sawaba would have considered them spies. Mayaki had met Ardaly in Bamako, where he may have been put to the test with questions about Ardaly's sister. Ali Dicko, a Malian fired from his job as accountant in Nguigmi because of his Sawaba sympathies, was nevertheless distrusted by Issoufou Danbaro—the leading Gaya cadre who had established himself in Ghana—because he talked too openly about politics. As noted in the previous chapter, by mid-1961 Ardaly was increasingly rejecting recruits. Half a year later the external wing received new warnings about applicants posing as Sawabists.⁵²

⁴⁸ G. Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets de la décolonisation* (Paris, 1967), vol. 2, 306 and ch. 8 above at n. 21.

⁴⁹ Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus pour la période du 22 au 28 janv. 1960, no. 65; CAOM, Cart.2252; P. Crousset, ambassador of France to Ghana, to Don Jean Colombani, Niamey, 8 June 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 4.11.

⁵⁰ This is shown in the fact that Diamballa Maïga scribbled in the margins of a report that he thought Loré was loyal to the RDA. In view of his comment, however, it is unlikely that Loré was a double agent. Note d'information, no. 867/BCL, 19 Oct. 1967.

⁵¹ Noga Yamba's party checked into an Accra hotel instead of the African Affairs Centre (see next section), which led to delays and questions. Interview Yamba, Zinder, 14 Febr. 2003; Note de renseignements no. 801/BCL, 25 Sept. 1967. The case of law and letters student Hambali may have been similar to Moudi's. Note de renseignements, no. 800/BCL, 26 Sept. 1967.

⁵² On Kona Mayaki, see ch. 8 at n. 39 and interrogation report of Jean Colombani & Jean Arrighi, 2 Aug. 1961; Message Radio Commandant Brigade de Gaya to Commandant Compagnie de Niamey, 4 Sept. 1961 & Rapport du Gendarme Buchillot Commandant la Brigade de Gendarmerie de Gaya sur Issoufou Dan Baro, suspect du point de vue national, Gaya, 4 Sept. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 12.19; text AFP news broadcast, 23 May 1962; ANN, 86 M 3 F 4.4.

On the whole it seems that recruits were more or less free to opt for military training (and ancillary instruction in politics or unionism) or vocational and academic education—and within the latter path the instruction of their preference. Thus, when meeting Aboubakar Abdou Karami, Daouda Ardaly asked the technician what he wanted to study. The student of law and letters, Hambali Mahamane, told Bakary of his desire to study languages, a choice that was put into practice. When he welcomed Ali Amadou in Bamako, Bakary would have asked the young man from Téra whether he wanted to study or fight, adding it was up to Amadou to decide. Ali Mahamane Madaouki from Zinder claimed retrospectively that he and his comrades left Niger to obtain scholarships but that the external wing put the choice of education or politico-military instruction to them, without, however, forcing them to adopt the latter. Boubakar Djingaré, the mason from Niamey, later recounted an identical tale, asserting that most left Niger intent on education but that there was little choice but to fight in view of the persecution, although no one was *forced* to enlist for military service.⁵³

Naturally, this was a sensible policy, as the movement needed motivated men and enlisting the higher-educated as foot soldiers wasted manpower that could be put to better use as the personnel with which to run a government. Yet, Bakary's welcome to Ali Amadou shows that party officials sometimes exerted soft pressure when putting the alternatives to recruits. A policy of free choice had its limits since it could lead to a shortage of military personnel and a glut of educated cadres, some of whom were needed for the officer corps.⁵⁴ Mounkaila Albagna wanted to continue his studies but was more or less pressed to pursue military instruction—not daring to refuse; and upon completion of his drill in Algeria, Noga Yamba expressed interest in mechanics but party leaders said they needed him for military service.⁵⁵ Moreover, selection was affected by the background of recruits, many of whom were poorly educated. Generally, those who had primary schooling continued into higher education.⁵⁶ Those without any

⁵³ Examen de situation de Aboubakar Abdou Karami, 11 June 1969; Note de renseignements, no. 800/BCL, 26 Sept. 1967; interviews Ali Amadou, Niamey, 28 Jan. 2003; Ali Mahamane Madaouki, Zinder, 14 Febr. 2003; Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 27 Oct. 2005.

⁵⁴ Thus, Ali Amadou's trajectory (guerrilla training) was to a degree atypical, since he was already fairly well educated. Interview, Niamey, 28 Jan. 2003. See, however, further below.

⁵⁵ Interviews Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003 & Noga Yamba, Zinder, 14 Febr. 2003.

⁵⁶ Interview with Bachir Boukary, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003.

educational background, such as peasants, unskilled workers, petty traders, artisans and illiterates generally, went into vocational training or were asked to enlist for military drill and would have known this in advance.⁵⁷ Yet, there were exceptions, as there were many with substantial education who joined the guerrillas. Personal motivation, as exemplified by the case of Mounkaila Beidari, played a role. As recruitment inside Niger was difficult and depended on people fleeing the country, coercion had its limits. The existence of student grants as such underlined the voluntary nature of recruitment, and the resources that Sawaba had at its disposal reinforced the degree of free choice. Djibo Foulan, a peasant-marabout from Bandio, was allowed to go on a trip to North Vietnam, not for any training but simply to see for himself that there was an alternative to Niger's neo-colonial dependency.⁵⁸

Another matter to be sorted out was the arrangement of travel documents, including flight or boat tickets and money. Generally, cadres who managed to make their way abroad did not have passports, simply because Nigériens seldom had such documents and Sawabists in particular could not get any, even if they applied for them. Those who possessed a passport, such as Dan Moussa Laouali—a student at the Lycée National who tried to make his way to Ghana—, proved an exception and, like Hima Dembélé, had it confiscated sooner or later.⁵⁹ More rarely still, some activists, like Ali Kote, the trader-jockey from Zinder, and Amadou Diop, the lorry driver from the same town, had French nationality and—at least in the former case—carried a French passport.⁶⁰ In most cases fleeing cadres had simple identity cards, like Ali Amadou mentioned above, or they managed to leave Niger with none at all.⁶¹

The external wing therefore needed IDs and passports and it was here that the Malian government played a role. In August 1961 Dembélé would

⁵⁷ Interviews Sade Elhadji Mahaman, Niamey, 15 Nov. 2002; Sao Marakan, Niamey, 16 Nov. 2002; Ali Amadou, Niamey, 31 Jan. 2003; Ousmane Dan Galadima, Madaoua, 7 Febr. 2003; Djibo Harouna, Gothèye, 1 Nov. 2005; Daouda Hamadou, Ayorou, 20 Dec. 2009.

⁵⁸ Interview with Djibo Foulan, Bandio, 4 Nov. 2005. On Beidari, see ch. 6 at n. 85.

⁵⁹ Ch. 8, n. 47. The son of Abdou Boukary (the former Zinder MP or the Tessaoua road inspector) had his application for an identity card turned down, as it was feared he would go to Bamako. Abdou Boukary, France, to Minister of the Interior, Niamey, 23 Sept. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 12.32. Laouali's passport was confiscated by the Nigérien embassy in Lagos. Note d'information, no. 80/AERO, Niamey, le 17 août 1963.

⁶⁰ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 11-17 janv. 1962, no. 160 and interview with Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003.

⁶¹ Such as Ali Mahamane Madaouki and Moussa Wakily, when they arrived in Kano. Interview with the former, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003.

have asked for false IDs to be printed in Bamako as the departure of cadres was becoming difficult. It was more common for Malian passports to be handed out upon arrival in Bamako. Sometimes these were issued under a false identity (as for one military conscript), but often under the real name—as happened with those accepted for academic or vocational training.⁶² These practices occurred in the context of Mali's political support for Bakary. The immigration of deported AOFien Sawabists was also of help; some of these—such as Diop Issa, Saloum Traoré, Maïga Abdoulaye and Malick N'Diaye—assumed positions in Mali by which they could aid fellow cadres. As shown earlier, Malick N'Diaye used his position as Chef de Subdivision in San to pay for the travel expenses of Dandouna Abouba-kar, who on another occasion was housed in Bamako by the cabinet chief of Madeira Keita, Mali's minister of justice. Mali's ambassador to Ghana, Oumar Sow, assisted Bakary in the representation of his interests with the Nkrumah government.⁶³

In this context it was not difficult to procure travel documents. The party of Alazi Soumaila, Mazou Dan Mazel and Hamidou Moustapha, before heading for the Eastern Bloc, got their passports from the director of Mali's Sûreté. Maïga Ibrahim Moudi, who clashed with Ardaly over his attempt to organise a Soviet scholarship, got a Malian passport with the help of a local MP. Usually, however, it was Sawaba leaders who arranged travel documents and airline tickets and presided over what appears to have been a smoothly organised operation. Thus, Mamoudou Pascal, the unionist who had done time in Niger, provided Mamadou Hako at the Bamako headquarters with a Malian passport and an airline ticket for Bulgaria. Bakary himself arranged an ID for Djibrilla Dembélé—just before the trained guerrilla was sent on an operation—and for this purpose called a photographer to party headquarters to make the necessary pictures.⁶⁴ At an earlier date he arranged for passports for the travelling party of Ali Amadou (students and military recruits).

⁶² Note d'information, 16 Aug. 1961 and *Le Niger*, 16 Nov. 1964 (interrogation Djibrilla Dembélé).

⁶³ Ministre de l'Intérieur to Chef des Services de Police, Niamey, 31 May 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.8; P. Crousset, ambassador of France to Ghana, to Don Jean Colombani, Niamey, 8 June 1961; interrogation report by Jean Colombani, Jean Arrighi and Georges Clément on Hima Dembélé, 14 June 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.10; interview with Ali Mahamane Madaouki, Zinder, 14 Febr. 2003.

⁶⁴ The ID name was Issaka Soumana. *Le Niger*, 16 Nov. 1964 (interrogation Djibrilla); Note d'information, 21 Sept. 1960; Note de renseignements no. 801/BCL, 25 Sept. 1967; Examen de situation ... Souleymane Hako, 20 July 1967.

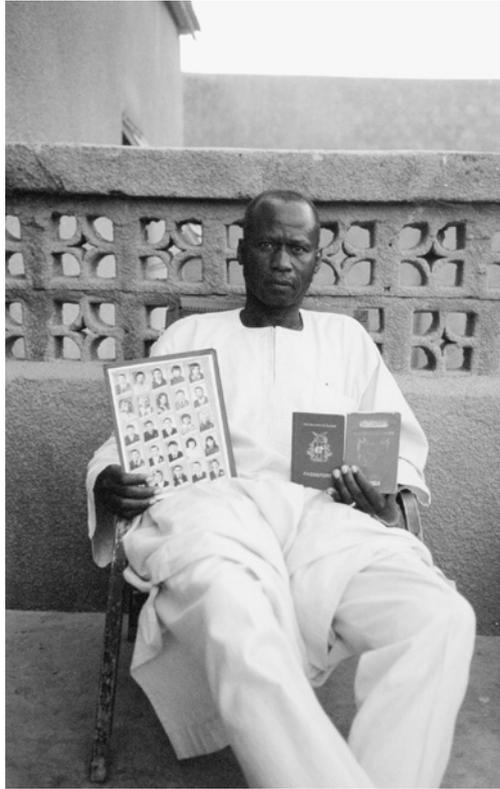


Photo 9.2 Bachir Boukary, Zinder, 2003. In his left hand, he holds different passports provided by the party for his journey to the Eastern Bloc, in his right, photos of his class at Armavir College in Krasnodar, Soviet Union.

However, it was Daouda Ardaly, since 1960 member of the bureau politique representing Niger's youths, who was pivotal at every stage of the operation. Sometimes there were contacts with him before cadres fled Niger.⁶⁵ He had photographs taken⁶⁶ and escorted students and conscripts to the airport where travel documents were finally handed out, probably in order to maintain control over the recruits. Ardaly not only did so in Bamako, but also escorted cadres such as Gayakoye Sabi, Djibo Sékou and Amadou Bajalem to the airport in Accra, where they were provided with

⁶⁵ F.e. the party of Alazi Soumaila *et al.* Note d'information, 21 Sept. 1960; *Sawaba: Organe Central du Parti Sawaba du Niger*, May 1963; interviews with Ali Amadou, Niamey, 28 Jan. 2003 and Ali Mahamane Madaouki, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003.

⁶⁶ As in the case of Gonimi Boukar; interview, Niamey, 5 Nov. 2005.

their Malian IDs. The Accra branch of the operation was mainly handled by Joseph Akouété—now established in Ghana—, who also distributed passports and tickets.⁶⁷ The fact that other countries, too, were willing to help with travel documents made it possible to implement Sawaba's training programme without too many difficulties. Thus, Bachir Boukary, the pupil of Zinder secondary school, could continue his travels with ease, assisted by six passports, including ones from Ghana, Guinea, Mali and Niger.⁶⁸

From Sabongari to Villa Lotus: Building a Pan-African Network

Initially, Bamako was the hub in the movement's international network. With Bakary establishing himself in Mali, activists flocked to Bamako to find a new home.⁶⁹ Bakary took up residence in a large house in the Missira district, paid for by the authorities, which also provided a car and money to cover expenses. Others followed. Dan Galadima lived in Bamako just after his flight from Niger and, as noted, other leading cadres also established themselves there, like Daouda Ardaly, Mamoudou Pascal and, for a while, Issaka Koké. Another of Bakary's lieutenants in the city was Salou Damana, a 'commis' with a military background who developed an important role in the Bamako headquarters when the heart of Sawaba's activities later shifted to Accra. Recruits and students were also housed in the city, before moving on to their foreign destinations. In some cases Daouda Ardaly personally took care of their accommodation.⁷⁰

As noted above, there was also a party office in Gao, where Sawaba's political presence had some antecedents and which now grew in impor-

⁶⁷ See for Ardaly's role Examen de situation de Aboubakar Abdou Karami, 11 June 1969; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 501, 5 Jan. 1961; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; Examen de situation du nommé Issoufou Assoumane, 24 July 1967.

⁶⁸ Interview Bachir Boukary, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003. The case of Baban Loré, the boxer, showed this was not exceptional. Note d'information, 17 Oct. 1967 (no. 168/AERO/SN); ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14.

⁶⁹ Or, at first, they would visit on short trips, such as Hima Dembélé, who went there in February 1959 to take part in a major Pan-African youth festival. Interview with Monique Hadiza (Dembélé's wife with whom he was in Bamako then), Niamey, 5 Nov. 2005; Présidence du Conseil. SDECE, Destinataire no. 562, référence 12015/IV, 21 Oct. 1958; CAOM, Cart.2195/D.5.

⁷⁰ Interrogatoire de Abdoukarim Ousmane dit Maïga, 6 Sept. 1967; Airgram, Department of State, A-259, 28 March 1963; USNARA, II RG 59, POL 30, Niger, 2/1/63, Box 3997; Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 310; Examen de situation de Yansambou Boubakar, 29 March 1969; and *Le Niger*, 16 Nov. 1964.

tance as a result of its role in sending cadres, who had escaped from Niger, on to Bamako. For this purpose party workers used the ferry service on the Niger River between Gao and the capital, which provided one of the communication links with the party's headquarters.⁷¹ As noted earlier, the Gao office also played a role in establishing a presence in Kumasi in central Ghana, while it was to become the hub of one of the three infiltration networks—i.e. the one that targeted Niger's western region. Among the people who manned the Gao centre were some of Bakary's key officials, such as Maïga Abdoulaye, who was based in Ansongo and later worked as a vet in the Gao area, and Saloum Traoré, his former cabinet colleague who established himself in Gao, passing on orders from Bakary and instructing cadres infiltrating in Niger.⁷² By 1961-1962, Alazi Soumaila took on a role in the processing of recruits, although he also made several foreign trips on the movement's behalf and in early 1961, for example, would have been at the party's headquarters in Accra. Much later, by 1968, Soumaila was working from the party's office in Conakry (see below). In Gao, which also had accommodation to lodge recruits, Soumaila was assisted by Farka Maïga, the expelled unionist in Niger's building industry, who facilitated contact between escapees from Niger and the leadership in Bamako.⁷³

Beyond Mali the network extended to Guinea, whose regime had broken with de Gaulle and had close contacts with the Eastern Bloc. Sékou Touré, who knew Bakary from his union days, paid the latter's expenses when he was in the country, and provided resources that could be put to use. Bakary could offer people political positions, while jobs could be arranged for some of his cadres. Maïdanda Djermakoye, who married a Guinean woman, found a position in one of Conakry's hospitals, and in several other cases Sawaba students upon finishing their studies in the Eastern Bloc got jobs through the intercession of Bakary or the government. Thus, Yansambou Boubakar, the veterinary nurse, found a job in Guinea upon

⁷¹ Interview Ali Amadou, Niamey, 28 Jan. 2003 (who also gave details on Bakary's house in Bamako).

⁷² Ministre de l'Intérieur to Chef des Services de Police, Niamey, 31 May 1961; Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de Dakar pour la période du 14 au 20 mai 1959, no. 30; CAOM, Cart.3686. Traoré probably died, however, late 1959-early 1960. See the Malian government paper *l'Essor*, 15 Jan. 1960; J. Colombani, to Ministre de l'Intérieur, 1 Febr. 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.8.

⁷³ Interview Ali Amadou, Niamey, 28 Jan. 2003; Examen de situation de Souleymane Hako, 20 July 1967; ... de Yansambou Boubakar, 29 March 1969; above at n. 45; Chapter 6 at n. 96. In addition, there may have been camp facilities in Mali, which received massive deliveries of arms from the Eastern Bloc. Rapport de Fin de Commandement. 1^{ère} partie, 30 juin 1962. See also Part III.

completion of medical studies in the Soviet Union, as did Amadou Abdoulaye (the assistant teacher?), trained as a surgeon. Bachir Boukary would become a teacher outside Conakry.⁷⁴

Guinea was important for Sawaba's programme in two ways. First, cadres took classes at the 'Université Ouvrière Africaine', a trade union school. Petit Dosso, the Niamey postal clerk, went there for a two-month course with the other men with whom he fled Niger: Boubakar Djingaré, the mason, Djibrilla Dembélé and the unknown Dahomean mentioned earlier, in addition to Mamoudou Pascal and a certain Amadou Boukouli (May 1962). They were lodged at the union facility. Alternatively, people were accommodated at the cadre school of Guinea's ruling party, as happened to Yansambou Boubakar.⁷⁵ Sawaba also had its own office in Conakry, established and led by Djermakoye until his return to Niger in August 1961. In this capacity he welcomed the travelling party of Alazi Soumaila, Mazou Dan Mazel and Moustapha dit Saidou when they embarked on their tour of the Eastern Bloc. Later the Guinea centre was supervised by Alazi Soumaila and Ly Alzouma (Djibo Alzouma), a journalist and former civil servant in Niamey.⁷⁶ Numerous activists thus came to Guinea to build alliances or pursue some kind of training. This had already begun at the time of the party's banning, when Bakary together with Abdoulaye Mamani and Adamou Aboubacar took part in a congress of Guinea's ruling party.⁷⁷ The group of Gayakoye Sabi, Djibo Sékou and Amadou Bajalem also made a stopover in Conakry, spending time with Daouda Ardaly, Kaïro Alfari (the veterinary nurse) and one Adamou Maïga.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Examen de situation de Yansambou Boubakar, 29 March 1969; interview Bachir Boukary, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003; Airgram, Department of State, A-259, 28 March 1963.

⁷⁵ The 'Université Africaine Ouvrière' was also referred to as 'classe ouvrière' or 'école syndicale'. *Le Niger*, 16 Nov. 1964 (interrogation Djibrilla Dembélé); interview with Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 26 Oct. 2005; Direction de la Sûreté Nationale, no. 309/CSN: Déclaration du nommé Oumarou Seydou, 14 Nov. 1967; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14; Examen de situation de Yansambou Boubakar, 29 March 1969.

⁷⁶ Note d'information, 21 Sept. 1960; Bulletin de renseignements, 12 May 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.4; Examen de situation de Yansambou Boubakar, 29 March 1969; Organisation Terroriste "Sawaba".

⁷⁷ Chapter 7 at n. 74. This was preceded, early in 1957, by Bakary's participation in the constitutive conference of the MSA's inter-territorial group. Ch. 1 at n. 202.

⁷⁸ Dandouna Aboubakar visited Conakry in the spring of 1961, as had Dan Galadima done the year before. So did Hima Dembélé, during a two-month trip to the Eastern Bloc in the spring of 1960; Mamani and Amadou Diop, the Zinder lorry driver, both at unspecified times; and Mamoudou Pascal, on the occasion of a Pan-African youth festival in April 1962. Circulaire no. 605; Minister of the Interior to all Commandants de Cercle, Chefs de Subdivision and Chefs de Poste Administratif; Ministre de l'Intérieur to Chef des Services de Police, Niamey, 31 May 1961; Note d'information, 22 Apr. 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.2; Dem-

As some of these trips indicate, the second reason for Guinea's importance was its relay function. Since the country was allied with the communist powers, its airport was a convenient point of departure for flights to Eastern Bloc destinations—possibly more so than Bamako, as travellers had less to worry about French intelligence. While some continued to fly to Dakar and Paris, from where they entered Eastern Europe, others started and ended their journeys in Conakry, as Hima Dembélé did during a journey to and from Eastern Europe. Moreover, flight tickets for Eastern Europe were sometimes arranged in Conakry, as in the case of Gayakoye Sabi's 1960 trip, while in other cases they were issued in Bamako. Guinea was a solid partner. Niger's Sûreté even worried that its government agents were bugging Nigérien police.⁷⁹

Apart from Ghana, on which more below, the other countries in West Africa where the movement opened offices or developed a presence were Dahomey (Porto Novo, Malanville and other northern towns), Nigeria (including Lagos and Kano's Sabongari district) and, to a lesser extent, Togo and Upper Volta (Map 9.4). While Sabongari for some time was a recruitment office—assisted by the permeability of the Niger-Nigeria border—, most of Sawaba's centres in Nigeria and Dahomey seem to have functioned as launch pads for infiltrations, discussed in the next chapter. While Togo's regime did not support the movement, several Togolese harboured Sawaba sympathies. Early in 1960 French intelligence reported that Messan Aithson was in touch with Sawaba, one of whose leading lieutenants, Joseph Akouété, provided a point of contact because of his Togolese background. Aithson was a militant ex-leader of 'Juvento', an opposition party supported by Ghana, which had an anti-French and Pan-Africanist outlook and therefore constituted a potential ally. Yet, while numerous Togolese were recruited into Sawaba's guerrilla forces and the movement had various sympathisers in Togo, this was not translated into a significant presence on the ground.⁸⁰

bélé interrogation report by Jean Colombani, Jean Arrighi & Georges Clément, 14 June 1961; Etudiants et Boursiers du Sawaba; interviews Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003; Gonimi Boukar and Monique Hadiza, Niamey, 5 Nov. 2005.

⁷⁹ It is not known how. Note d'information, 13 Jan. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.9; *ibid.*, 21 Sept. 1960 and 18 Oct. 1960; Stratégie de l'Opposition Sawaba: Ingérences Etrangères. Très Secret. Report by J. Colombani, 33/C/SU, 13 Jan. 1961, to Minister of the Interior; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.2; Etudiants et Boursiers du Sawaba; Examen de situation de Yansambou Boubakar, 29 March 1969; Dembélé interrogation report by Jean Colombani, Jean Arrighi & Georges Clément, 14 June 1961.

⁸⁰ Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de Dakar pour la période du 18 au 24 mars, no. 73; CAOM, Cart.3690; *Le Niger*, 2 Nov. 1964 (interrogation



Map 9.4 Sawaba centres in West Africa. Launch pads for infiltration not shown (see Maps in Chapter Ten).

Upper Volta, as member of the Entente, was no friend of Sawaba. In 1959, however, El Hadj Salifou, a Voltan resident in Ghana, established a Sawaba section in his country of origin, which did not appear to elicit much interest. By 1962 Niger's Sûreté noted that propaganda material began to arrive with postmarks of the central post office in Ouagadougou. This could point to a cell working from the Voltan capital, although it might also have been the responsibility of cadres in Ghana, active in Upper Volta. In 1964 it was rumoured that the former secretary-general of the PAI, Diarra Amadou, was recruiting youths in Ouagadougou and the town of Ouahigouya for guerrilla training in Ghana, presumably as part of Sawaba's forces.⁸¹

Robert Seguinikin); Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 17 Nov. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; S. Decalo, *Historical Dictionary of Togo* (Metuchen, NJ, and London, 1987), 121.

⁸¹ Recueil des principaux renseignements collectés au cours de la période 1 au 7 févr. 1962, no. 163; SHAT, 5 H 92; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 7 Nov. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de Dakar pour la période du 11 au 17 mars 1960, no. 72; CAOM, Cart.3690.

Ghana was thus of crucial importance in Sawaba's West African network and—while the significance of Mali's aid cannot be overrated—Ghanaian assistance soon surpassed the support of other countries in the region. Thanks to Nkrumah's government and the community of Nigériens in Ghana, Sawaba developed a solid presence there. As shown in Part I, Bakary had already got help from the Ghanaians during the referendum. With the first All-African People's Conference held in December 1958, Ghana became a centre for nationalist movements from across the continent. While the AAPC was meant to assist the struggle for independence, the distinction between liberation movements fighting for decolonisation and left-wing groups opposed to the regimes of independent states with a pro-Western outlook ('vestiges of neo-colonialism') was soon lost. In 1959 the Diori regime complained bitterly that Ghana and Mali were funding the travels of Bakary and Maurice Camara, for some time the liaison with Sawaba's domestic wing.⁸² By that time George Padmore, Nkrumah's advisor on African affairs, had died and his office was converted into the Bureau of African Affairs. It was headed by Padmore's assistant A. K. Barden and included Ras Makonnen, the Gyanese activist who had intensive consultations with Bakary over the referendum. The BAA, headquartered in Accra's city centre, was close to Nkrumah and independent of the foreign ministry. It took over what was left of the AAPC structures, including the 'African Affairs Centre' (AAC), a group of buildings near the airport that was a processing point for activists on their way to military training camps, in central Ghana or elsewhere (see final section). It consisted of residential quarters and facilities and could accommodate hundreds of men. Two buildings were baptised the 'Sawaba Houses'. In addition, the BAA controlled an ideological institute in Winneba, where cadres received instruction.⁸³

Besides providing such tangible assistance the Ghanaian government was also ready to aid Bakary politically, in Niger itself and Ghana. The Ghanaian embassy in Niamey became a hotbed of activity. In October 1961 its press official and member of the Ghanaian intelligence service, called Provençal, conferred with embassy staff about the distribution of propaganda material. They decided to target young 'commis' from Niger's eastern region; men and boys in sporting circles; and people active in politics and

⁸² Synthèse politique, no. 1480, Nov. 1959; CAOM, Cart.3684.

⁸³ W.S. Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy 1957-1966: Diplomacy, Ideology, and the New State* (Princeton, 1969), *passim*. Though well funded, the BAA's distribution of tickets led to huge unpaid bills with the national airline and shipping companies. *Nkrumah's Subversion in Africa*, 3-4 and 44 ff.

unions, for which they mobilised Mounkaila Yacouba, an official of the union of petty transporters.⁸⁴ Earlier in the year the chargé d'affaires, Yacubu, made a trip to various towns in Niger. Although he was put under discreet surveillance, by November his political interference became acute as he requested a visit to Bilma in order to review the situation of the Sawaba prisoners.⁸⁵ A month later, a Nigérien living in Ghana, Abdul Mouni Sinifale, travelled all the way to Zinder with the purported objective to purchase camels and ostriches for the private zoo of Nkrumah. Naturally, this provoked suspicions on the part of Diamballa Maïga.⁸⁶ The Ghanaian embassy itself had good connections with Sawaba's domestic network. Some of the cadres occasionally contacted the embassy, whose informants included two women described as notorious Sawabists and working as magajiya in Niamey districts. One of them, Kadi Souka, was a propagandist and provided lodging to the embassy's translator. She also informed the Ghanaians about the Bilma prisoners.⁸⁷

In Ghana itself, Sawaba enjoyed the support of the CPP, the government party, which had established contact with Sawaba through Kousanga Alzouma, Bakary's cabinet chief, ahead of the referendum. In line with Ghana's ambition to become the centre of the liberation struggles, efforts were made to transform Sawaba's Ghanaian wing into a branch of the CPP. Exactly what this meant is unclear, not least because the Nkrumah regime was a chaotic administration made up of various agencies and factions enjoying different levels of autonomy, funding and presidential influence.⁸⁸ Thus, in late 1959 it was said that Sawaba had become a 'section' of the CPP, and two years later there were rumours of a merger of the two parties. Yet, if it is true—as Niger's regime later alleged—that the CPP distributed membership cards to Sawabists, arguing that their movement

⁸⁴ 'Syndicat des petits transporteurs'. Yacouba was expelled from Ghana three years earlier and, since then, was in touch with the embassy about the annulment of his deportation. The chargé d'affaires occupied himself with his case. *Recueil des principaux renseignements ...* 9 au 15 nov. 1961, no. 151.

⁸⁵ Maïga rejected it, but it was said Niger could only prevent Yacubu seeing the detainees. J. Colombani to commissioners of police of Maradi & Zinder, 27 Apr. 1961; Note d'information, 16 Nov. 1961; Ministre de l'Intérieur to Directeur de la Sûreté, 21 Nov. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 4.11.

⁸⁶ Zinder's police commissioner was less concerned. Espitalier, commissioner of police Zinder, to Directeur de la Sûreté, Niamey, 8 Dec. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 4.11.

⁸⁷ She was born in Say. The other was Hadio Zibo (Ziba?) dite Magagia Djibo, active in Gamkallé. Ministre de l'Intérieur to Directeur de la Sûreté, 17 Oct. 1961; Note d'information, 27 Sept. 1961 and 14 Dec. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 4.11. See for Ghanaian background *Nkrumah's Subversion in Africa*, 39.

⁸⁸ Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, *passim*.

was an integral part of the Convention People's Party, in practice Sawaba's Ghana wing was largely autonomous, interacting with Ghanaian institutions and developing its strategy in line with Sawaba offices in other countries, as well as with the domestic wing. While one source claims that Bakary could get along better with Nkrumah than with Sékou Touré,⁸⁹ French intelligence in late 1959 reported that Bakary was reticent towards his Ghanaian hosts and did not want to make his movement subservient to Ghanaian politics. This is confirmed by Thompson's study on Ghana's foreign policy, which noted that Bakary was not one of Nkrumah's close associates.⁹⁰

The Ghanaians tried to boost Sawaba's position with measures that were sometimes counter-productive but were grounded in a strategy of strengthening the various struggles against colonial and African regimes through a unified organisation. This they did in two ways. One was the BAA's attempt in 1962 to organise a common front, bringing together Sawaba and opposition groups and movements from Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) and Basutoland (Lesotho). It never got off the ground.⁹¹ The second attempt was made earlier and focused on Sawaba itself, involving the transformation of the movement into the rallying point of all Nigériens in Ghana and, more absurdly, of the citizens of all francophone states in the country, to whom Bakary was presented as their liberator.⁹² This had the effect of importing the political rift in Niger into Ghana's Nigérien community, as well as triggering a backlash from the nationals of other countries.

Thus, as noted in Chapter 7, in October 1959 Bakary announced the opening of a Sawaba office in Accra at the instigation of the Nkrumah government. The announcement came at a meeting where it was made known that its bureau would be led by Maïdanda Djermakoye, who would have to rally all Nigériens. The Ghanaian government would force them to adhere to Sawaba under threat of confiscation of property and expulsion. The minister of transport even considered the withdrawal of transit

⁸⁹ Interview Ali Talba, Niamey, 4 Febr. 2003. Possibly, this was linked to the rivalry between Bakary and Touré in the international union world.

⁹⁰ Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, 245; Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 22 au 28 janv. 1960, no. 65; Crousset, ambassador of France to Ghana, to Don Jean Colombani, Niamey, 8 June 1961; *Le Niger*, 21 June 1965.

⁹¹ Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, 267-268. There is evidence that Sawaba in Accra in 1960 was in touch with the Kenyan nationalist Mbiyu Koinange, whom the French regarded as a Mau Mau leader. Note d'information, ANN, 86 MI 3 F 4.11; Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus pour la période du 22 au 28 janv. 1960, no. 65.

⁹² Synthèse politique, no. 1480, Nov. 1959; *Nkrumah's Subversion in Africa*, 39-40.

facilities from Nigérien transporters who operated on the route between Niamey and Accra and were politically not forthcoming.⁹³ In December Kwame Nkrumah met the president and vice-president of the association of francophone citizens in Ghana, who were asked to go to their countries of origin on missions that were unclear but probably involved pleading Sawaba's cause or strengthening its presence on the ground. The president of the association was none other than Yacouba Idrissa dit Gothèye, Bakary's uncle and a wood trader, while the vice-president was El Hadj Salifou, the Voltan who established a Sawaba section in his country of origin. Idrissa had a double function since, at the time, he was also confirmed as 'president' of Sawaba in Ghana, an appointment that was probably pushed through by the Ghanaians. Idrissa was a rich man. He owned a large house in Accra as well as a sawmill and had a lot of influence. He had close contacts with the government and acted as an informer for Ghanaian intelligence.⁹⁴ While in Niger he had campaigned for 'No', and, since his flight, he had vigorously worked for Sawaba's cause in Ghana, taking cadres into his care and acting as one of Bakary's principal financiers. Idrissa would have brought Sawaba's leader into contact with Nkrumah. However, as he also had major economic interests to think about, Idrissa's political activities became mixed up with conflicts with commercial rivals, some of whom inclined towards the RDA or preferred to maintain neutrality.⁹⁵

It is against this background that 'Sawaba Ghana', presented in January 1960 as a CPP affiliate, launched appeals to the Nigérien community to close ranks, calling on all francophone citizens to join Bakary. The Ghanaian government tried to force Nigériens and Upper Voltans to do so upon

⁹³ Ibid., no. 1104 CP, Aug. 1959; CAOM, Cart.3684; Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau de Synthèse pour la période du 15 au 21 Oct. 1959, no. 52; CAOM, Cart.2250.

⁹⁴ Idrissa was born in Gothèye in 1914. His complex role vis-à-vis the French is discussed in ch. 11. He was a witness for the prosecution in the trial of Sam Pennie, the trader who liaised between Sawaba and Ghana and facilitated the disbursement of financial aid to Bakary during the referendum. In 1959 Pennie fell out with Nkrumah, ostensibly over the latter's Sawaba policy. Pennie claimed he sent money to Bakary as ordered, but was later charged with embezzlement, possibly over this case. He fled to Cotonou and got in touch with Niger's justice minister, Issoufou Djermakoye. Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 5 au 11 avril 1962, no. 171; Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de Dakar pour la période du 24 avril au 5 mai 1959, no. 28; CAOM, Cart.3685.

⁹⁵ Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de Dakar pour la période du 5 au 11 févr. 1960, no. 67; CAOM, Cart.3690; Ibid., 22 au 28 janv. 1960, no. 65; Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 5 au 11 avril 1962, no. 171; Ibid., 22 au 28 mars 1962, no. 169; SHAT, 5 H 91; *Le Niger*, 17 May 1965; interviews Bachir Boukary, Zinder, and Ibrahim Bawa Souley, Niamey, 11 Febr. & 26 Nov. 2003; Djibo Harouna, Gothèye, and Djibo Foulan, Bandio, 1 & 4 Nov. 2005.

threat of expulsion. In May 1959 Nkrumah told a meeting of Ghanaians and Nigériens that Nigérien citizens not members of Sawaba would be thrown out. After this, excited youths searched the houses of local Nigériens and threatened to expel all who could not produce Sawaba membership cards. Numerous members of the RDA were deported. Niger's government responded by sending envoys to turn around the Nigérien community with the help of France's Accra embassy. By 1961 Ghana was regularly pressing Nigérien migrants to join Sawaba, evicting those who carried RDA cards, taking their money and handing it over to Sawaba's office.⁹⁶

The effect was that the activities of Sawaba's Ghana wing became tainted by coercion and that divisions in the Nigérien community and opposition to Sawaba became sharper, while Niger's regime reaped the benefits from the political fall-out. Among the Sawabists involved in press-ganging Ghanaian Nigériens were Koikou Anni, a transporter in Accra who was a fervent cadre and friend of Bakary. Occasionally he travelled to Gothèye in western Niger, where he made propaganda. In Ghana he reportedly harassed Nigérien transporters and provided lodging to visiting leaders such as Dembélé and Dan Galadima. The main source of pressure on Ghana's Nigériens, however, was Yacouba Idrissa. It was Idrissa who was behind some of the expulsions in May 1959, which involved at least seven influential traders—and rivals of the tycoon. The backlash was not slow in coming. In 1961 the French reported that Ghanaian Nigériens were vigorously opposed to Sawaba.⁹⁷ While this was probably wishful thinking, it seems that Yacouba Idrissa, known then as 'president of the Nigériens of Ghana', tried to have his principal enemies expelled, among whom was El Hadji Nouhoun, his vice-president. Nouhoun was chairman of the association of Nigérien transporters and not opposed to the RDA. He pleaded for inclusion of all Ghanaian Nigériens into one organisation.⁹⁸ Nouhoun and Idrissa quarrelled at a meeting in Accra's Nioma district (July 1961), which

⁹⁶ Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, 245; Note d'information, 2 Jan. 1960; Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 22 au 28 janv. 1960, no. 65, 18 au 24 juin 1959, no. 35, 24 au 31 déc. 1959, no. 61 (last one CAOM, Cart.2251); Minister of the Interior to several Commandants de Cercle, 20 Febr. 1961, & Fiche de renseignements, 25 March 1961; both ANN, 86 MI 3 F 4.11.

⁹⁷ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 5 au 11 avril 1962, no. 171; 18 au 24 juin 1959, no. 35; P. Crousset, ambassador of France to Ghana, to Don Jean Colombani, Niamey, 8 June 1961 and Note d'information, 11 Apr. 1960; latter two ANN, 86 MI 3 F 4.11.

⁹⁸ The others Idrissa targeted were Mamoudou Maïga, Hamadou Laba, Mounkeïla Gueriel, a certain Kauli and someone called Idrissa. Crousset to Don Jean Colombani, 8 June 1961 and A. Bernier, 1^{er} conseiller embassy of France to Ghana, Accra, to President Hamani Diori, Niamey, 2 Aug. 1961 + attached renseignements; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 4.11 ('président des Nigériens du Ghana').

most Nigériens declined to attend. The meeting, encouraged by the BAA to test the political forces, ended in disarray despite Idrissa's efforts to sell Sawaba membership cards and a fiery speech of Tini Malélé, the Gothèye activist, calling for financial contributions.⁹⁹ Worse, Idrissa's actions led one of his commercial rivals, wood trader and chairman of Accra's RDA section Noufou Idrissa, to give away the names of Sawabists to the Nigérien authorities. They were added to the intelligence files.¹⁰⁰ The government had already made a point of giving a warm welcome to traders expelled from Ghana.¹⁰¹

Nevertheless, many cadres who went to Sawaba's office in Accra came from Niger itself, and most recruits joined voluntarily. The office was located in 'Lagos Town', a district to the north of the city centre populated by Muslim immigrants, especially Nigerians.¹⁰² It functioned as headquarters and liaison centre with a pigeon-hole where cadres could find instructions. French intelligence considered it well organised.¹⁰³ Accommodating the party bureau, it was led by different people, though not Yacouba Idrissa, whose activities focused on mobilisation of the Nigérien community, funding, and the lodging of the recruits. As noted above, the first appointee of the bureau was Maïdanda Djermakoye, who combined the function with political work in Guinea and in 1960 shared his responsibilities with one Issa Bakary.¹⁰⁴ Joseph Akouété was probably active in Accra already before that year. Soon becoming one of the principal leaders in Ghana, the Togolese Akouété not only took care of relations with the Juvento movement in his home country but also established contact with Sourou Apithy, one of

⁹⁹ Some 50 people took part in the meeting. P. Crousset, ambassador of France to Ghana, to Don Jean Colombani, Niamey, 6 July 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 4.11; Bernier to Hamani Diori, Niamey, 2 Aug. 1961 + attached renseignements.

¹⁰⁰ For the people involved, who had attended an earlier meeting and included Malélé, see note 37 above.

¹⁰¹ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 18 au 24 juin 1959, no. 35.

¹⁰² Now called New Town. Examen de situation du nommé Adamou Moussa, 7 Aug. 1967. According to one source, the office was located in the unidentified Locossou quarter. *Le Niger*, 2 Nov. 1964.

¹⁰³ Telegram Génédef Dakar to Minarmées Paris, 14 Apr. 1965, no. 8358/CH; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2. One of Sawaba's letter boxes in Accra was PO Box 909, another 2612. A.J. Warren, British Embassy Abidjan, to P.R.A. Mansfield, Foreign Office, 23 Oct. 1964; PRO, FO 371/177.230.

¹⁰⁴ A cousin of Djibo Bakary or an agricultural adviser/UDN militant from Famalé (Ayorou), who, however, was seen at a party meeting in west Niger in September 1960. His file is ANN, 86 MI 3 F 7.9.

Dahomey's opposition leaders.¹⁰⁵ He also worked at the African Affairs Centre, assembling recruits and dispatching them for training to the Eastern Bloc.¹⁰⁶

With Djermakoye returning to Niger in the autumn of 1961, the bureau was taken over by others. Idrissa Arfou, an old UDN hand, was permanent representative by that time. As activities expanded he was joined by others, temporarily or on a permanent basis. Ly Alzouma, the Niamey journalist who later worked at the Conakry office, was bureau secretary.¹⁰⁷ Sadou Amadou, a Peul from the Niamey region known as Sadou Delewa, was active as president of the youth section. He combined this function with that of vice-president of the party's Accra 'committee'—an organ whose composition remains unclear.¹⁰⁸ A certain Tanda, a woman from the Gothèye region, headed a women's section.¹⁰⁹ Better-known cadres such as Boukari Karemî dit Kokino and Abdoulaye Mamani worked in Accra only on a temporary basis. Both men were active in Ghana during 1962, before moving to Algeria.¹¹⁰ Liaison work with the domestic wing was taken care of by cadres travelling between the two countries.¹¹¹ Lodging of recruits was also handled by any party worker able to arrange accommodation. Yacouba

¹⁰⁵ In this he got assistance from a liaison agent called Alex Pio. *Le Niger*, 21 June 1965 and *Recueil des principaux renseignements ...* du 18 au 24 mars, no. 73.

¹⁰⁶ Examen de situation du nommé Adamou Moussa, 7 Aug. 1967, ... de Touré Hama, 8 June 1968.

¹⁰⁷ Examen de situation du nommé Iro Addo, 18 July 1967; C. Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA et la décolonisation du Niger 1946-1960* (Paris, 1995), 384; Organisation Terroriste "Sawaba".

¹⁰⁸ It could refer to the bureau or Sawaba Ghana as a whole, on the line of the 'congress' of Sawaba proper. See ch. 1 at n. 122-3. Sadou Tiegoumo dit Goungo, a wood trader, at an unspecified time was chairman of this committee and Mounkaila Assane dit Kakara, a Gothèye trader and confidant of Bakary, one of its members. *Le Niger*, 16 Nov. 1964 (interrogation Djibrilla); Organisation Terroriste "Sawaba".

¹⁰⁹ She hailed from Sansané. Organisation Terroriste "Sawaba". For other Gothèye cadres, apart from Malélé, see note 37 above, the last four of which were known as Sawaba delegates in Ghana.

¹¹⁰ Examen de situation du nommé Adamou Moussa, 7 Aug. 1967; interview Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003. Other cadres in Accra were Amadou Idrissa dit Kourtey, orderly; Hassane Djerma, boy; Kalla, orderly at Niger's embassy; Mamoudou Gadiaga dit Hondobon, tailor; Mahamadou Souley, port worker; Mamoudou Gothèye; and Seydou Alfa, guard; Organisation Terroriste "Sawaba".

¹¹¹ In 1960, however, special efforts were made to solidify the links between the domestic party and the young Ghana wing. Hassane Sourghia (ch. 4 at n. 83) was sent for talks to Ghana, just after Badio Grégoire, former UGTAN secretary, had returned. A Sawaba youth section made up of Abdou Karamo, Saliou Maiga, Mamadou Daouda and Ibrahim Kolo, travelled to Ghana about the same time. *Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de Dakar pour la période du 4 au 10 & 25 au 31 mars 1960*, nos. 71 & 74; CAOM, Cart.3690.

Idrissa, who must have had a large compound, was active in this way, as were Sadou Delewa and Idrissa Arfou.¹¹² However, after reception at Sababa's office and the necessary vetting, recruits were often lodged at the African Affairs Centre before moving on to guerrilla camps, in Ghana or abroad, or foreign education centres (see below). For example, Mounkaila Albagna, the student from Dargol, stayed at the AAC before moving to Algeria for guerrilla training, as did prospective students Hambali Mahamane, the law and letters student, Touré Hama from Gothèye and Adamou Moussa, the agricultural adviser, before travelling to the Eastern Bloc.¹¹³ Finally, little is known of the activities of the party office in Kumasi. It played a role in welcoming recruits who fled western Niger and travelled to Accra.¹¹⁴

As noted above, besides providing guerrilla training, Ghana served as relay point for those en route to other destinations. Usually, those heading for schools in Morocco or guerrilla camps in Algeria travelled to North Africa via Mali or Ghana. Several cadres travelled by plane,¹¹⁵ but military recruits often went by ship, embarking at the port of Takoradi for Casablanca. Return journeys usually followed the same route, though by 1963 calling at Casablanca created difficulties in view of the country's border war with Algeria. The party of Mounkaila Albagna, freshly trained in Algeria, got stuck in the Moroccan port when the government declined to pay its onward journey to Ghana.¹¹⁶ Some recruits therefore travelled by boat from Algiers to Marseilles and then directly to Ghana, avoiding Moroccan ports. Marseilles was a regular transfer point between Algeria and West Africa, even for cadres of high rank like Dan Galadima. This was risky as they were watched by French intelligence and occasionally searched and

¹¹² *Le Niger*, 16 Nov. 1964 (interrogation Djibrilla); Examen de situation du nommé Issoufou Assoumane, 24 July 1967; interviews Bachir Boukary, Zinder, & Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 11 Febr. & 28 Nov. 2003; Djibo Harouna, Gothèye, & Djibo Foulan, Bandio, 1 & 4 Nov. 2005.

¹¹³ Interview Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003; Note de renseignements, no. 800/BCL, 26 Sept. 1967; *Le Niger*, 16 Nov. 1964 (interrogation Djibrilla); Examen de situation de Touré Hama, 8 June 1968; ... Adamou Moussa, 7 Aug. 1967. Touré Hama was at the AAC with 15 other Nigériens. Adamou Moussa was with four prospective students: Sidibe Ousseini, Hassane Igodowe (Igadoé), Abdoulaye Alarba N'Diaye and one Souna.

¹¹⁴ Interview with Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003.

¹¹⁵ Interrogatoire de Abdoulkarim Ousmane dit Maïga, 6 Sept. 1967 and Examen de situation de Aoubakar Abdou Karami, 11 June 1969.

¹¹⁶ Not allowed to disembark, it was the wife of Dan Galadima, then living in Morocco, who mediated, leading to the Chinese embassy paying for it. Probably Algeria always paid for this, something that could now not be effected. Interviews Ali Amadou & Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 28 Jan. and 29 Nov. 2003.

interrogated.¹¹⁷ Conditions on ships were not always easy. After training in Algeria, Djibrilla Dembélé and comrades sailed back to Takoradi, living all the while in the hold of the ship as they were not allowed on deck.¹¹⁸

Upon arrival from Ghana and Mali, recruits were welcomed in Morocco by a Sawaba representative. The Moroccan authorities provided limited support to the movement, consisting of secondary and professional education, permission to use the country for transit to Algeria and acquiescence in the establishment of a party office in Rabat, the capital. All this fitted in the context of Morocco's foreign policy, which under King Mohammed V (who died in 1961) exhibited a militant profile that included a pact with radical African states and a friendly posture towards the Algerian nationalists. While the aid to Sawaba survived Morocco's border conflict with Algeria, the *quid pro quo* for this alliance—a bit uncharacteristic under Mohammed's conservative successor—was Bakary's support for Morocco's expansionist objectives. The country had laid its eyes on Mauritania, whose territory it claimed as part of Morocco's birthright. Bakary promised Niger's support for the Moroccan stand once Sawaba had reconquered power,¹¹⁹ leading to an embarrassing lip service to Rabat's territorial claim. In doing so Bakary conveniently sided with his allies among militant regimes, which attended a conference in Casablanca in January 1961, lending support to Morocco's stance.¹²⁰

Sawaba thus established an early presence in the country. In May 1961, a cadre spoke at a Pan-African union conference in Casablanca, followed by participation of youngsters in an African youth seminar in July.¹²¹ By the spring of 1962 the movement had an office in Rabat's 'Ocean district', located at the 'Villa Lotus', 39 Avenue de la Résistance. The office was used for meetings and frequented by cadres such as Salifou Soumaila, the pro-

¹¹⁷ Intelligence gathered in this way was transmitted directly to the authorities in Niger. Interviews Ali Amadou, Niamey, 28 Jan. 2003; Ousmane Dan Galadima, Madaoua, 7 Febr. 2003; Fiche de Renseignements, 23-25 Nov. 1963; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 18.9.

¹¹⁸ *Le Niger*, 16 Nov. 1964 (interrogation Djibrilla). This was probably a security measure.

¹¹⁹ Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaires, 2-8 July 1962, no. 10; SHAT, 5 H 121. It is known he also visited Morocco's ministry of African affairs. Airgram, Department of State, A-259, 28 March 1963.

¹²⁰ For lip service to Morocco's claim, see *Gaskya: Organe Officiel du Parti Sawaba*, nos. 8 & 21, 5 July 1961 & 25 March 1962, and for support to the Casablanca bloc *ibid.*, no. 11, 5 Sept. 1961, and Communiqué, Bureau Politique Sawaba, Bamako, 30 Oct. 1961 (source: *Gaskya*, no. 16, same date). For the wider diplomatic intricacies involved, see K. van Walraven, *Dreams of Power: The Role of the Organization of African Unity in the Politics of Africa 1963-1993* (Aldershot, 1999), 107-110.

¹²¹ *Gaskya*, 5 July and 28 July 1961.

pagandist; Issa Yacouba (Yacouba Issa), the veterinary nurse from Zinder;¹²² Daouda Hima, a recruit who trained in Algeria; and Ousmane Dan Galadima, who headed the centre during 1962-1963 before returning to West Africa. Villa Lotus supervised the delegations in North Africa, including a bureau in Cairo and an office in Algiers, which opened after Algeria acceded to independence (July 1962) and which became more important than Rabat when military training started there.¹²³ The Rabat office also played a role in facilitating contact between Bakary and Algeria's provisional government, although they may already have been in touch through the FLN presence in Gao.¹²⁴ Thus, early in 1962 Bakary visited Villa Lotus while on his way to a meeting with Ben Bella in the Moroccan border town of Oujda.¹²⁵ There is evidence that the Rabat headquarters also played a role in relations with East Germany. The general importance of Villa Lotus is illustrated by Sawaba's intention to replace Niger's flag, designed under French rule, by one depicting a green field with a red star in the centre—a mirror image of Morocco's national colours.¹²⁶

Yet, the Moroccan base focused primarily on helping recruits on their way to FLN training camps (besides the occasional students enrolling in Morocco's educational institutions). This was the original reason to establish the Rabat office, since before Algeria's independence recruits trained at an FLN site in Kibdani (Kebdani) in the north-east of Morocco. Then, training moved to Marnia (Maghnia) in Algeria, across the border with Oujda. Dan Galadima played a key role, at times assisted by his wife, in collecting cadres in the port of Casablanca or receiving them at the office in Rabat. From there he directed some, like Yacouba Issa, for military instruction to China and brought others to schools in Casablanca—as he did with Abdou Karami, the technician from Gouré, and his own son,

¹²² = Issa Yacouba dit Kakou? *Le Niger*, 22 Febr. 1971. On Soumaila, see ch. 7 at n. 58, 70, ch. 8 at n. 7, 10.

¹²³ Galadima likely returned to Ghana between spring and November 1963. Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 501, 5 May 1962 & 26 June 1963; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; interviews Bachir Boukary, Zinder & Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 11 Febr./29 Nov. 2003; Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 309.

¹²⁴ Note 40 above.

¹²⁵ Salifou Soumaila, Villa Lotus (Rabat), to 'Wierschke', East Germany, 24 March 1962; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.7; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 508, 7 Apr. 1962; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; J.P. Morillon, 'La tentative insurrectionnelle du SAWABA', *Est et Ouest*, 342 (16-31 May 1965), 22. Galadima and Bachir Boukary met Ben Bella at Casablanca airport. Interview with Boukary, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003.

¹²⁶ Salifou Soumaila, Villa Lotus, to Wierschke, East Germany, 24 March 1962; *Ibid.* to 'Ursula', same date and destination; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.7; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 501, 5 May 1962.

Abdoulkarim. Usually, however, Galadima and his assistant, Daouda Hima, dispatched cadres to military camps, first at Kibdani and then across the border in Algeria. The Algerian embassy facilitated the transfers.¹²⁷ Yet, there was no sharp distinction between students and recruits, as several men travelled together to Morocco before each going their way, or first enrolled in one of the educational facilities and then proceeded to Algeria for guerrilla training.¹²⁸

Apart from access to FLN training sites, on which more in the chapter's last section, Sawaba obtained two offices in Algeria, one in the capital and the other in Tamanrasset, the desert town in the south. The Algiers office, established between July 1962 and March 1963, was run by Abdoulaye Mamani, freshly arrived from Ghana to execute a multitude of tasks. His most important duty was maintaining the movement's external relations, as well as the ties with Algeria's political and military institutions. This included negotiating guerrilla training, arranging the purchase of arms and other material, dispatching arms to Ghana, and co-ordinating policy with Rabat.¹²⁹ Mamani contributed to propaganda, built up a party archive and began editing a new organ called *Sawaba*, produced at one of Algeria's printing presses.¹³⁰ In co-ordinating policy with the office in Tamanrasset, Mamani visited the town at least once, in 1963, while he also relayed intelligence to Bakary, collected through the network of cells in northern Niger. He contributed in limited ways to infiltration efforts.¹³¹

¹²⁷ Galadima and Hima paid the expenses. *Le Niger*, 26 Oct. 1964 (interrogation Yacouba Issa & Maman Alke); *Ibid.*, 16 Nov. 1964 (interrogation Djibrilla); *Ibid.*, 2 Nov. 1964 (interrogation Robert Seguinikin); Examen de situation de Aboubakar Abdou Karami, 11 June 1969; Interrogatoire de Abdoulkarim Ousmane dit Maïga, 6 Sept. 1967; interviews Ali Amdou, Niamey, 28 Jan. 2003; Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003; Noga Yamba, Zinder, 14 Febr. 2003; Ousmane Dan Galadima, Niamey, 23 Febr. 2008.

¹²⁸ Like Mounkaila Beidari, the Niamey airport employee, and Ali Mahaman Madaouki, the cadre from Zinder. Interviews Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003; Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 Nov. 2003; Ali Mahamane Madaouki, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003. Another Sawaba cadre in Morocco was Chaïbou Souley, mentioned earlier. See his file in ANN, 86 MI 3 F 12.32.

¹²⁹ Mamani called Galadima at Villa Lotus during the war between Morocco and Algeria to discuss the implications for Sawaba's training efforts. Interview Ousmane Dan Galadima, Madaoua, 7 Febr. 2003.

¹³⁰ The S.N.E.P., a publishing house at 6 Avenue Pasteur, and the presses of *Le Peuple*, 1 Place Maurice Audin. Interview Ali Talba, Niamey, 4 Febr. 2003; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 501, 18 June 1963; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; Warren to Mansfield, 23 Oct. 1964; *Sawaba*, March 1963.

¹³¹ Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 309; Aboubakar, commissaire de police Agadez, to M. le Directeur de la Sûreté Nationale Niamey, 6 Nov. 1963. See further Chapter 10.

The office in Tamanrasset was run by a duo, Boukary Karemi dit Kokino and Louis Bourgès. By June 1963 Kokino, the activist who knew Mamani from Zinder and their joint editing of the party paper, was the bureau's permanent representative.¹³² Bourgès, from Agadez, of mixed blood and working as a driver and mechanic, fled to the Algerian town after an arrest in the beginning of 1961.¹³³ Together they led numerous party meetings, presumably of local Nigériens, who included Yahaya Silimane, the Sawaba marabout from Ingal who lived with Kokino, and Djibo Issa, the Zarma apprentice driver and assistant mechanic from the Dosso region. The latter worked for Bourgès and on occasion travelled for party business through Algeria.¹³⁴ As shown in the next chapter, they were involved in liaising with cells in the north of Niger and infiltration work. Intelligence gathered this way was relayed to Mamani in Algiers, who passed it on to Dan Galadima in Rabat. In addition, Kokino and Bourgès liaised with Algerian officials, such as Tamanrasset's deputy mayor, the local 'sous-préfet' and his brother, the town's police commissioner. These local authorities assisted the party in every possible way—providing funds, selling Sawaba membership cards, facilitating meetings, warning against espionage by the Nigérien authorities and chasing out Nigériens deemed unreliable. In return, Bourgès provided the police commissioner with a Jeep.¹³⁵ The military training is discussed further below.

The Cairo office was the last component in the North African network. As noted in Chapter 4, Bakary established contact with the Egyptians through their Accra legation ahead of the referendum and may have received help in confronting the Gaullist challenge. Like Nkrumah, President Nasser saw himself as the centre of the struggle against imperialism and therefore assisted nationalist and opposition movements south of the Sahara. Political refugees were given asylum, offices were opened in Cairo to aid their struggle, and Radio Cairo began broadcasting in African lan-

¹³² Chef de Circonscription d'Agadez to M. le Ministre de l'Intérieur, 26 June 1963; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 18.9. On Kokino's editing, see Chapter 1 at n. 160.

¹³³ He was accused of arson, the circumstances of which are unknown. In 1960 he got involved in a fierce quarrel with French doctors over the medical treatment of a child in the Tahoua region, where he then was. File Louis Bourgès; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 12.32; *Le Niger*, 25 July 1960 (letter of Bourgès); Bulletin de Renseignements Particuliers, 18 Oct. 1964, no. 1234/2/S—Note d'information; SHAT, 10 T 717 /D.2.

¹³⁴ Aboubakar, commissaire de police Agadez, to M. le Directeur de la Sûreté Nationale Niamey, 6 Nov. 1963; Fiche de Renseignements, 23-25 Nov. 1963; ch. 7 at n. 54 & ch. 8 at n. 42.

¹³⁵ Aboubakar, commissaire de police Agadez, to M. le Directeur de la Sûreté Nationale Niamey, 6 & 7 Nov. 1963.

guages.¹³⁶ Sawaba was one of many movements to benefit this way. Bakary was introduced to Nasser by Ibrahim Nyass, founder of the Nyassist offshoot of the Tijaniya, probably somewhere at the start of 1961.¹³⁷ During the spring of that year Sawaba's leader was in Egypt to attend the third All-African People's Conference, spending three weeks in the Egyptian capital. Elected to the AAPC steering committee, Bakary was one of three delegation leaders to be received for an audience with Nasser.¹³⁸ He stayed on to attend the Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Conference, organised by the Egyptians, while Hima Dembélé, too, visited Cairo at the time. In January of that year Dan Galadima was asked to send a delegate to the Afro-Asian conference for a session on the Congo. It is possible that he attended himself, besides Daouda Ardaly.¹³⁹

Yet, while Sawaba professed solidarity with Egypt's struggle against Israel, Egyptian assistance was limited, as Nasser focused on his position in the Arab world. Sawaba's office in Cairo, located in the Zamaleck district and opened in 1962, must have concentrated on liaison duties and facilitating reception of the occasional student. While it may have been led from a distance by Abdoulaye Mamani,¹⁴⁰ by June 1963 French intelligence reported that it was in a precarious state, not least because the authorities would have intended to close the office during a visit of President Diiori. The Egyptians became more lukewarm about assisting sub-Saharan strug-

¹³⁶ See f.e. V.B. Thompson, *Africa and Unity: The Evolution of Pan-Africanism* (London, 1969), 67-72. Also J. Brennan, 'Poison and Dope: Radio and the Art of Political Invective in East Africa, 1940-1965'; paper, African Studies Centre, Leiden, 15 May 2008.

¹³⁷ Renseignements, 8 June 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.5. Although Nyassism was well represented among Sawabists, this liaison was somewhat ironical in view of Nyass' pro-Fifth Republic views. A.F. Clark & L.C. Phillips, *Historical Dictionary of Senegal* (Metuchen, NJ, & London, 1994), 206-207.

¹³⁸ This was the same or another visit. Confidential/NOFORN. Department of State. Bureau of Intelligence and Research. Research Memorandum RAF-26, 30 March 1962; PRO, FO 371/161689; Airgram, Department of State, A-259, 28 March 1963.

¹³⁹ Ardaly was in Egypt a year later. Interview Abdou Adam, Niamey, 22 Febr. 2008; Thompson, *Africa and Unity*, 73; Ministre de l'Intérieur to Chef des Services de Police, Niamey, 31 May 1961; Dembélé interrogation report by Jean Colombani, Jean Arrighi & Georges Clément, 14 June 1961; Note d'information, 20 June 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.10; telegram secretariat Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity organisation, Cairo, 9 Jan. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.6 (Galadima file).

¹⁴⁰ Telegram Abdullah (Abdoulaye) Mamani, ex-MP & Sawaba representative, Zamaleck, Cairo, to President Gamal Abdel Nasser, n.d., ca. Nov.-Dec. 1961 (source: *Gaskya*, no. 18, 6 Dec. 1961); *Sahel Dimanche*, 18 Dec. 1992 (interview with Mamani). Possibly, it also facilitated the travel of cadres to the Far East, including China, for which transfers took place in Cairo. See below. Hambali Mahamane, the law and letters student, gained admission in a Cairo institute of Arabic with the help of Bakary. Note de renseignements, no. 800/BCL, 26 Sept. 1967.

gles, and Sawaba's office finally moved to Bamako at an unspecified date.¹⁴¹ The biggest impact the Egyptians made was with the broadcasts of Radio Cairo, known throughout Africa for its inflammatory content. Its daily Hausa service received a lot of attention. In 1962 Zinder's Commandant de Cercle told visiting British diplomats that the majority of his civil servants were keen listeners to Cairo's programmes, both in Hausa and Arabic, which, as the language of the Qur'an, enjoyed prestige.¹⁴²

Finally, the framework of the AAPC as well as Afro-Asian co-operation provided the movement with an audience that could generate still wider support. Sawaba leaders and cadres therefore participated in conferences held in the framework of these initiatives. Although Ghana's AAPC structure was taken over by the Bureau of African Affairs, the All-African People's Conference of December 1958 was followed by a second one in Tunis in 1960 and a third, held in Cairo in 1961. While Bakary was at the heart of the Cairo meeting, the Tunis one was attended by Ousmane Dan Galadima, who gave a speech castigating the referendum and ensuing repression, in addition to professing faith in Pan-African unity.¹⁴³ Cadres participated in the Afro-Asian conferences from the start. One meeting, held in Conakry in April 1960, was attended by Daouda Ardaly, while the Cairo conference saw the participation of Bakary himself and possibly several of his lieutenants. The movement began to pay lip service to ideas of Afro-Asian solidarity and in 1963 cadres took part in a series of conferences organised around these themes. Sawaba's leader kicked off with a speech at a conference in Moshi, Tanzania, in February, lauding the armed struggle that the Vietnamese and Cubans were waging against American imperialism. In April, Abdoulaye Mamani spoke at a conference of journalists in Jakarta. By now he

¹⁴¹ By that time, Sawabists in Cairo were shadowed by Egyptian security personnel. Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 501, 26 June 1963; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 8 to 14 July 1963, 922, no. 28; SHAT, 5 H 124; Airgram, Department of State, A-259, 28 March 1963.

¹⁴² T.C. Ravensdale, British Embassy Abidjan, to M. Wilford, Foreign Office, 10321/62, 28 Febr. 1962; PRO, FO 371/161.693; Recueil des principaux renseignements collectés au cours de la période de 25 au 31 janv. 1962, no. 162; SHAT, 5 H 92; Thompson, *Africa and Unity*, 72 & 376; Brennan, 'Poison and Dope'. Egypt's embassy in Ouagadougou was closed down owing to the political activities of the ambassador. Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 1 au 7 févr. 1962, no. 163.

¹⁴³ The text was found on a British national arriving by boat in Marseilles in the company of two delegates of the Moroccan Istiqlal (independence) party. Note d'information, 4 Febr. 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.6. Text speech as annex of Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de Dakar pour la période du 26 févr. au 3 mars 1960, no. 70; CAOM, Cart.3690. Dembélé, too, was in touch with the AAPC through its secretary, Abdoulaye Diallo of Guinea. ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.18.

had replaced Adamou Sékou as chief ideologue, and the Zinder activist stressed the role that journalism could play as a weapon in the battle for effective independence—the central tenet of Sawaba ideology. This combative attitude was reinforced shortly after when two young Sawabists—Kanguèye Boubacar and Ali Mahamane Madaouki—at an Algiers youth conference paid lip service to the communist youth federation FMJD, assuring delegates of their ‘determined, implacable struggle against the colonialists ... their valets and agents in the service of imperialism’.¹⁴⁴ As will be shown below, both underwent guerrilla training.

Living off the Cold War

Such was the accusation levelled against the movement by its arch enemy, Boubou Hama.¹⁴⁵ But it contained an element of truth and Sawaba was, in fact, quite open about it.¹⁴⁶ For one, it had little choice but to accept help from anyone willing to give it, which in practice meant the communist powers and their satellites.¹⁴⁷ Second, taking recourse to the Eastern Bloc was perfectly natural for a movement of little folk nurtured in the ideology of class struggle. At the time, the assertion of communist countries that they represented the ‘really existing socialism’ had a convincing ring about it. Bakary had been quick to observe that the Cold War led to rivalry in space, seemingly indicating that the East represented a technological challenge to Western supremacy. The potential of Soviet assistance in arms and in kind, if not in funds matching those of the West, appeared to confirm that the Hour of Sputnik was at hand. The fact that the forces that brought about Sawaba’s downfall—the Gaullists—belonged to the Western camp, made rallying to the East only easier, while the Bloc’s apparent expansion under the forces of decolonisation reinforced its legitimacy as the global alternative.

Since the conquest of power in African states depended partly on monopolising the links with the outside world,¹⁴⁸ it was important to mobilise Eastern Bloc assistance—also as a counterweight to the Franco-RDA com-

¹⁴⁴ Texts speeches in *Sawaba*, May 1963; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 501, 19 May 1961, annex; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2. Also see *Sawaba*, March 1963 (‘la lutte résolue, implacable, contre les colonialistes [...] leurs valets et agents au service de l’impérialisme’).

¹⁴⁵ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 9-15 nov. 1961, no. 151.

¹⁴⁶ Telegram Djibo Bakary to Nikita Khrushchev, n.d. (in *Gaskya*, no. 15, 18 Oct. 1961, 4).

¹⁴⁷ Interview with Ousmane Dan Galadima, Madaoua, 7 Febr. 2003.

¹⁴⁸ A phenomenon called ‘extraversion’. See J.F. Bayart, ‘Africa in the World: A History of Extraversion’, *African Affairs*, 99 (2000), 217-267.

bine, itself a pointer to the intricate association between metropolitan forces and Sawaba's domestic enemies. The effect, however, was that the struggle of the 'petit peuple' against the 'commis', dominating the regime, was drawn into the orbit of the Cold War—not least because the movement's allies among France's communists were themselves locked in bitter conflict with the Gaullist establishment. Bakary's proximity to the PCF and CGT dated back to the early 1950s and was symbolised by one of his aliases—'Thorez', the name of the PCF's secretary-general.¹⁴⁹ Both organisations, in addition to the FMJD, helped to introduce Sawaba in Eastern Europe. As noted in Chapter 1, by 1954 Daouda Ardaly, too, was in touch with the PCF through its youth festivals. In May 1957, in his capacity as UGTAN secretary, the 21-year-old went to Prague and visited the CGT in Paris. A few months later, he flew to Paris again, calling on CGT headquarters, possibly attending a union conference in Leipzig and travelling on to Moscow, where he took part in a huge FMJD festival at the invitation of the central council of Soviet trade unions. In 1958 Ardaly was asked by Boris Kranikov, editor of the *Goudok* paper, to write articles on a youth conference in Prague, which was attended by Dandouna Aboubakar and Badou Traoré, UGTAN unionist.¹⁵⁰ A year later he helped organise a youth festival in Vienna—where Dandouna and Dembélé were also present—and probably attended the FMJD assembly in Prague.¹⁵¹ Ardaly remained in Eastern Europe for at least eight months during which he also made trips to Stockholm and Warsaw. Subsequently, he made regular trips to the Soviet Union, Romania, Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia. In 1960 he was part of the FMJD ruling committee in Conakry and that same year was seen in Hungary, where he was on a training course.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ Maurice Thorez. This was duly recorded by Niger's Sûreté. See Organisation Terroriste "Sawaba".

¹⁵⁰ Traoré was also secretary-general of the commercial employees' union. See ch. 3 at n. 149; Bulletin de Renseignements. Origine SDECE, 11 Febr. 1958; *Ibid.*, Origine Haussaire AOF, 29 Apr. 1958; CAOM, Cart.2154/D.3. In May 1958, Ardaly met French communist Raymond Barbe during the latter's visit to Niamey. Présidence du Conseil. SDECE, référence 7894/IV, 2 June 1958; CAOM, Cart.2195/D.5.

¹⁵¹ In Vienna, Ardaly was the companion of Jean Garcias. Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de Dakar pour la période du 25 juin au 1 juillet 1959, no. 36; CAOM, Cart.2249. Additional material on Ardaly's activities in the FMJD can be found in the Austrian state archives (Bmfl/51471-2B/59) and German state archives (BY/1/3878, KPD files). Courtesy Nick Rutter (doctoral research at Yale university on the FMJD youth festivals).

¹⁵² Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 30 juillet au 5 août 1959, 20 au 26 août 1959, 5 au 1 nov. 1959, nos. 41, 44, 55; CAOM, Cart.3687/2251; Premier Ministre. SDECE.

Others, too, managed to access this network—which literally opened up the entire world: the story of how Niger’s little folk and the representatives of related groups made trips that brought them to the four corners of the world and helped them mobilise support, gain pledges of funds, pursue training and extend their horizons, is one of the most fascinating aspects of Sawaba’s history. It is, indeed, essential for understanding one of the key passions of the movement, i.e. the drive to break the confines of past lives and move up on the social ladder. Thus, Dandouna Aboubakar was one of the party’s most energetic travellers. In 1957 he went as delegate to Kiev for the 4th FMJD congress and then to Leipzig to take part in a congress of the FSM, the communist-dominated Fédération Syndicale Mondiale. As noted, in 1958 he attended a conference of young unionists in Prague and the year after that, made another trip to the Soviet Union in addition to a CGT visit to Paris and attendance of the Vienna youth festival. A few months before, the joiner from Maradi even made it to New York City—a gratifying experience thanks to the International Labour Organisation, which dispatched him for a training course through the intercession of the CGT.¹⁵³

Dandouna and Ardaly pointed the way to others. Abdoulaye Mamani visited Moscow during a trip in 1959, arriving from a meeting on disarmament in Stockholm where Ardaly probably went as well. That same year Hima Dembélé was invited by Robert Pinel, responsible for international relations in the PCF, to attend a communist youth gathering in Paris. The former cinema operator also visited Bulgaria, after his attendance of the Vienna youth festival. He also planned to visit Moscow for a seminar organised by an FMJD affiliate and take part in a student conference in Prague. In 1961, before his arrest in Niger, he made another grand tour that took him to Prague, Berlin, Dresden and Moscow. Sallé Dan Koulou attended the FMJD festival in Helsinki (1962).¹⁵⁴ Lesser cadres, men and women, benefited in similar ways. In 1957 Gayakoye Sabi represented

Destinataire no. 501, 19 May 1961, annex; Départ d'Ardaly Daouda pour le Congrès Syndical Mondial en l'U.R.S.S.; message 20 Sept. 1957; CAOM, Cart.2197/D.10.

¹⁵³ He also took part in the Young Adult Council (National Welfare Assembly). Derided by French intelligence for his lack of education, back home he could not help showing off to his friends. Présidence du Conseil. SDECE, Notice de Documentation: L'Action Communiste en Afrique Noire, 17 Dec. 1958, Référence 14005/IV/K; CAOM, Cart.2246; Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 20 au 26 août 1959, no. 44, 5 au 11 nov. 1959, no. 55; Renseignements, 21 Aug. 1959; ANN, 86 3 F 3-5.

¹⁵⁴ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 5 au 11 nov. 1959, no. 55, 20 au 26 août 1959, no. 44; *Ibid.*, ... 12 au 18 nov. 1959, 21 au 27 mai 1959, 11 au 17 juin 1959, nos. 56, 31, 34; CAOM, Cart.3689, 3686; Dembélé interrogation report by Colombani, Arrighi & Clément, 14 June 1961; Note d'information, 20 June 1961; *Le Monde* (Paris), 4 Febr. 1965. In one report, French

Sawaba at the FMJD (the congress in Kiev and/or the Moscow festival) and three years later visited Czechoslovakia. During his 1960 tour Sabi, Djibo Sékou and Amadou Bajalem, members of the same travel party, followed a training course at the FMJD's Czech office and visited Hungary, Austria and Italy before returning to Niger. Adamou Magagi, described as a well-known 'Bakaryst', acted as Sawaba spokesman at a Czechoslovak conference on neo-colonialism in 1961. Hadiza Issa Alkali, chairperson of a party section in Maradi, took part in a youth forum in Moscow—before she was arrested in Niger.¹⁵⁵

Contact with the Eastern Bloc was thus established and developed through various institutional frameworks that became part of the aid structure. It was especially the FMJD, headquartered in Budapest, that helped Sawabists to get acquainted in Eastern Europe. Made up of youth organisations,¹⁵⁶ Niger was represented in the FMJD by the UDN youth wing—the Union de la Jeunesse Nigérienne. Also known as Jeunesse Sawaba, it became an FMJD affiliate under the name 'Union de la Jeunesse Démocratique du Niger' (UJDN). Most correspondence with the federation appears to have gone through Ardaly and Dandouna, but the FMJD was evidently in touch with others as well, such as Dan Koulou, Dembélé and Mounkeïla Issifi, whose arrest in the September 1961 crackdown triggered a telegraphed protest from the FMJD to Diamballa Maïga.¹⁵⁷ Funds, too, were made available through the federation, which paid for the plane tickets to Peking of the travel party of Alazi Soumaila, Mazou Dan Mazel and

intelligence referred to Abdou Moumouni, the teacher at the Lycée National, with whom Mamani was occasionally confused.

¹⁵⁵ Two Sawaba youths visited Yugoslavia for a youth fair in August 1961. They were a certain Djibo Daouda and Amadou Ali (= probably not Ali Amadou mentioned above). Circulaire no. 605; Minister of the Interior to all Commandants de Cercle, Chefs de Subdivision and Chefs de Poste Administratif; J. Colombani, Directeur de la Sûreté, to Ministre de l'Intérieur, 8 Febr. 1961; *Gaskya*, no. 15, 18 Oct. 1961; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 501, 6 Sept. 1961; *Revue Mensuelle des événements du Niger*, July 1961 (3 Aug. 1961); last two SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2.

¹⁵⁶ At first also from the West, whose organisations withdrew when the Cold War started. fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fédération_mondiale_de_la_jeunesse_démocratique, accessed 25 Oct. 2007.

¹⁵⁷ Issifi was at the Moscow youth forum that Hadiza Alkali attended. *Recueil des principaux renseignements* ... 5 au 11 nov. 1959, no. 55; telegram in *Gaskya*, no. 15, 18 Oct. 1961; interview Tahirou Ayouba Maïga, Niamey, 21 Oct. 2011; ch. 8 at n. 15. In October 1959 it also sent a protest telegram about the arrest of Dandouna, who had already been released but was recalled to the Sûreté to explain the telegram. *Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de Dakar pour la période du 22 au 28 oct. 1959*, no. 53; CAOM, Cart.2251; ch. 7 at n. 75.

Moustapha dit Saidou.¹⁵⁸ Through the FMJD, cadres got in touch with the communist youth organisation Komsomol, the Soviet affiliate of the federation that was to play a role in the provision of political instruction, the organisation of cultural events for students and their reception upon arrival from West Africa (see below).

Additional if minor channels to establish contact with Eastern Bloc governments were formed by the international disarmament movement, which sympathised with the struggle for decolonisation; the Italian communist party; and, possibly, some circles in Austria. Mamani and Ardaly got in touch with disarmament groups through a meeting in Stockholm, which took place in May 1959. It was organised by the 'World Peace Council' ('Conseil Mondial de la Paix'), an organisation headquartered in Helsinki that included Westerners favouring peaceful coexistence and nuclear disarmament; in practice it depended on Soviet subsidies. Djibo Bakary also had connections with activists in Nigeria who were in contact with the 'Moral Rearmament Movement', a Christian-inspired group with its own voice in the Cold War but which French intelligence suspected of being in touch with the Kominform—the institution through which Moscow tried to control communist parties in other countries. As some of these examples show, the capitals of neutral European countries like Sweden, Austria, and Finland provided useful points of entry, especially Finland, whose neutrality was Soviet-enforced. Thus, not only Sallé Dan Koulou visited its capital but also one of Bakary's Nigeria contacts in touch with Moral Rearmament. Allegedly, a Sawaba representative called Ahmed or Ahmetou—an acquaintance of Djibo Issa of the Tamanrasset network—assisted cadres arriving in Europe from Germany and then Austria (visited by the travel party of Gayakoye Sabi). The PCI or 'Partito Comunista d'Italia'—one of the largest communist parties in Europe though reliant on Soviet subsidies—may have been of assistance as well. Abdou Moumouni, the former teacher at the Lycée National who became vice-president of the World Peace Council, in September 1960 went to Italy to ask for funds on Sawaba's behalf.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ Note d'information, 10 Aug. 1960; ANN, MI 3 F 8.2. Visits to festivals, the FMJD's key event, were decided by the 'Conseil de la Jeunesse d'Afrique', CJA, presumably a Pan-African body of which the UJDN was part. Plane tickets were sent from Europe, including Paris, such as in the case of Dembélé. Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 25 juin au 1 juillet & 12 au 18 nov. 1959, nos. 36 & 56.

¹⁵⁹ Moumouni then flew to Moscow where he studied. The PCI may have facilitated contact with Moscow, which probably did not use the PCI as a financial channel. Email of Vladimir Shubin, former Soviet official and deputy director Institute for African Studies,

Of course, the Soviets also recruited themselves. If countries were hostile, like the regime in Niger, the Russians established only economic ties or worked through satellites. In other cases they employed the diplomatic legation.¹⁶⁰ It was an official of the Bamako embassy who encouraged Ibrahim Moudi to arrange a scholarship on his own. The fact that they ran into each other at a judo club shows that sporting circles were favoured recruitment spots, since it was here that one could find young, impressionable men—as Ghana’s Niamey embassy knew.¹⁶¹ Alternatively, contacts were made in the course of cultural tours.¹⁶² Radio was in this respect an effective means of propaganda. Mashoud Pascal, the postal clerk, heard about grants on the programmes of Radio Moscow. Ali Mahamane dit Ali Dodo in 1962-1963 broadcast a message singing the praises of academic training and student life in the USSR. Rumour helped spread this further—members of Maradi’s Red Cord at an unspecified date approached Bakary about student grants.¹⁶³ Sékou Beri Ismaila, the unionist working at Niamey airport, began corresponding with Radio Prague, following in the footsteps of Ardaly and Dembélé, who got letters from its French service inviting them to listen to the African programmes (according to French intelligence, Radio Moscow and Radio Peking were more popular).¹⁶⁴ Finally, tracts appeared on Niger’s city streets early after Sawaba’s fall. In 1959 the FSM sent propaganda to Sawaba and UGTAN leaders informing them

Russian Academy of Sciences, to author, 12 Dec. 2007. For Bakary’s Nigerian contacts, see ch. 10, and for Moumouni, see ch. 6 at n. 75. Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 11 au 17 juin 1959, no. 34; *Ibid.*, 4 au 10 juin 1959, no. 33; CAOM, Cart.3686; Fiche de Renseignements, 23-25 Nov. 1963; Message Brigade Gendarmerie Agadez to Gendarmerie Niamey, 26 Nov. 1963; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 18.9; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 501, 21 Oct. 1961; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2. Ahmed = Raphael Ahmed Baraou, cited in note 200 below?

¹⁶⁰ Rapport de Fin de Commandement. 1^{ère} partie, 30 juin 1962.

¹⁶¹ Note de renseignements no. 801/BCL, 25 Sept. 1967. Sawabist Ibrahim Félix (at n. 13 above) carried a membership card of Tahoua’s equestrian club. J. Colombani, Chef de la Sûreté, to Ministre de l’Intérieur, 30 Sept. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 12.32. As shown in ch. 7 (at n. 99), Aljouma Kantana, teacher in Filingué, organised sports activities for the young. Georges Clément of the Sûreté tied this to propaganda work, noting that ‘[t]here [was] never smoke without fire’ (‘Il n’y a jamais de fumée sans feu’).

¹⁶² Adamou Assane Mayaki got in touch with Russian artists on tour in Tahoua. Recueil des principaux renseignements collectés au cours de la période du 18 au 24 janv. 1962, no. 161; SHAT, 5 H 92.

¹⁶³ Examen de situation du nommé Mashoud Hama Pascal Diawara, 9 Aug. 1967 and his file in ANN, 86 MI 3 F 12.32; Examen de situation du nommé Adamou Moussa, 7 Aug. 1967; interview Hamidou Adamou Abdoulaye, Niamey, 19 Dec. 2009. Transcription broadcast in Examen de situation du nommé Ali Mahamane, 8 Aug. 1967.

¹⁶⁴ Note d’information 12 Oct. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.19; ch. 7 at n. 36; Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d’Etudes de Dakar pour la période du 26 nov. au 2 déc. 1959, no. 58; CAOM, Cart.3689. They were informed about hours of transmission.

about the disarmament movement. By then leaflets arrived weekly from Moscow, Prague, Sofia, Vienna—even from North Korea—, usually addressed to leading cadres. The ‘Soviet Association for Friendship with African Peoples’, which dispatched books and information, was in touch with both Dembélé and Dandouna Aboubakar.¹⁶⁵

Reception of cadres was quickly streamlined. In Russia, the ‘Soviet Asian and African Solidarity Committee’ played a key role. It provided scholarships or sent word of their approval, advising prospective students to travel to Guinea or Mali, collecting them at Moscow airport, escorting them to their educational institution and organising politico-cultural events for their entertainment.¹⁶⁶ Alternatively, students were received by teachers or members of Komsomol, which may also have provided grants and which organised political leadership courses.¹⁶⁷ Thus, Mashoud Pascal and his travel party were welcomed by a young Komsomol woman who took them under her wing until they were collected by a member of the Afro-Asian Committee. Yansambou Boubabar was received in a similar manner,¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁵ Or ‘Association Soviétique pour l’Amitié avec les Peuples d’Afrique’, led by P. Chmelkov at 14 Kalinin Road in Moscow. Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 30 juillet au 5 août 1959, no. 41; *Ibid.*, ... 2 au 8 juillet 1959, no. 37; CAOM, Cart.2249; Renseignements, 7 Dec. 1959; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 4.4; Note d’information, 16 May 1959; P. Chmelkov to Dandouna Aboubakar, 19 Oct. 1959; both ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.12. The North Koreans sent information on a conference. Renseignements, 11 July 1959; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.12. This could be counterproductive. As noted in ch. 7, Arouna Zada was put under surveillance when he received Russian magazines. Yet, at times it lifted harassment out of anonymity—as in the case of Dandouna, on whose behalf an East German group sent a telegram to Diamballa Maïga protesting Dandouna’s treatment during a prison term. Maïga angrily scribbled in the margin ‘sabotage’, denying that Dandouna’s treatment was inhumane. Still, his term was cut on appeal. Note d’information, 7 March 1960 + text telegram; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.8; ch. 7 at n. 40 (Arouna Zada) & 117 (Dandouna); text telegram Soviet youth committee to UJDN, Bamako, n.d., in *Gaskya*, no. 18, 6 Dec. 1961; n. 157 above.

¹⁶⁶ Or ‘Comité Soviétique de Solidarité avec les Pays d’Afrique et d’Asie’. Admissions to the Patrice Lumumba (Peoples’ Friendship) University in Moscow were officially decided by the university’s international fund. A. Albert, ‘Les étudiants africains à Moscou’, *La Vie Africaine*, no. 31, Dec. 1962, 38. Examen de situation du nommé Ali Mahamane, 8 Aug. 1967; ... Mashoud Hama Pascal Diawara, 9 Aug. 1967; Aboubakar Abdou Karami, 11 June 1969; ... Adamou Moussa, 7 Aug. 1967.

¹⁶⁷ It played a role in the grant for Ibrahim Moudi’s vocational training. Note de renseignements no. 801/BCL, 25 Sept. 1967; Déclaration du nommé Oumarou Seydou, 14 Nov. 1967; interview Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 26 Oct. 2005; Vladimir Shubin to author, email, 17 Dec. 2007.

¹⁶⁸ Pascal’s comrades were Ousseini Alou Himadou, Kelessi Oumar, Kona Mayaki, Sow Boubakar, Ibrahim Moudi, Maman Farka—a Malian—and Tahirou Ayouba Maïga. Examen de situation du nommé Mashoud Hama Pascal Diawara, 9 Aug. 1967; ... Yansambou Boubakar, 29 March 1969; interviews Tahirou Ayouba Maïga and Kaïro Alfari, Niamey, 28 & 30 Oct. 2005.

while in one case admission to university was facilitated by the Association for Friendship with African Peoples.¹⁶⁹ The East Germans also worked with an Afro-Asian committee, led by an official called Eggebrecht. Its personnel collected the party of Mamoudou Ide, the nurse from Ouallam. When they arrived by ship in Rostock, Ide and friends were brought by train to Dresden.¹⁷⁰ All these cadres were students or trainees for political and union instruction—not military recruits.

*'Sawaba Educated Us'*¹⁷¹

The Eastern Bloc thus set the stage for the comprehensive training of men (and some women) for Sawaba's benefit—and the provision of financial and material assistance, discussed further below. Overall Soviet support was consecrated by a visit of Bakary to Eastern Europe in 1962—his first, before his meeting with Ben Bella in Morocco.¹⁷² He visited Czechoslovakia for a trade union seminar and then continued to East Berlin where he met Eggebrecht, who would have made pledges of light armaments for Sawaba's forces in return for preferential prospecting of Niger's sub-soil resources.¹⁷³ From East Germany Bakary probably went to Moscow to discuss Soviet assistance, returning to West Africa the following month. A year later, in June 1963 he travelled to Cuba.¹⁷⁴

By then the instruction of young Nigériens had already been under way for a couple of years. Around 1960 Sawaba's bureau politique approved a strategy that was referred to as 'operation training of cadres'. As noted, this was the time that Niger's youths began to leave the country in small but steady numbers in order to join, as Dan Galadima put it, the leadership in

¹⁶⁹ Not by the association's secretary-general Chmelkov but its president, Ivan Potekhin (the case of Hambali Mahamane). Note de renseignements, no. 800/BCL, 26 Sept. 1967.

¹⁷⁰ Ide's comrades were Baban Loré; one Hadiza Zomo, Sadi Baba Amadou and Hassane Hama. Examen de situation de Mamoudou Ide, 11 July 1968; Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 307. See for the East German 'Afro-Asiatisches Solidaritätskomitee', G. Liebscher, H. Maiwald & R. Wünsche (eds), *Die afro-asiatische Solidaritätsbewegung* (Berlin, 1968), 23-25.

¹⁷¹ Kaïro Alfari, Niamey, 30 Oct. 2005 ('Le Sawaba nous a éduqué').

¹⁷² French intelligence could not confirm a rumour that he attended the congress of the Soviet communist party in Moscow in November 1961, as Abdou Moumouni did, as Nigérien delegate. Recueil des principaux renseignements collectés au cours de la période du 2 au 8 nov. 1961, no. 150; SHAT, 5 H 95; interview with Vladimir Shubin, Leiden, 13 Febr. 2007.

¹⁷³ See Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 307-308, who, however, did not divulge his sources for this claim.

¹⁷⁴ At the time he planned to visit Moscow a second time. Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 501, 2 May 1962 (SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2) & 18 June 1963.



Photo 9.3 A rare picture of Sawaba students. The caption reads: 'To learn and know how to make use of it: Today students or apprentices, tomorrow leaders of the nation' (*Sawaba*, March 1963).

exile.¹⁷⁵ While the aspirant students were more or less free to choose the training they preferred, according to the party organ the implementation of the operation followed an elaborate plan drawn up by the leadership. Students were supposed to pursue subjects that were 'most useful for the country', such as medicine, agriculture, veterinary studies, geology, and so on. Although exceptions to this rule were possible, the essence of the operation was to tackle Niger's shortage of trained personnel while it remained part and parcel of the wider strategy to take over the state by force of arms.¹⁷⁶ Consequently, while recruitment was largely voluntary, those who managed to flee Niger were, in Dan Galadima's mind, expected to report to Sawaba's headquarters; and some students who arrived in Eastern Europe came at least partly with the idea that they had been *sent*.¹⁷⁷ The fact that it was 'youngsters of the opposition' who were eligible for the scholarships that the party had at its disposal made a statement of Ba-

¹⁷⁵ *Sawaba*, March 1963 ('opération formation des cadres').

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.* ('le domaine le plus utile au pays').

¹⁷⁷ As 'cadre of the party'. Interview Issoufou Assoumane, Niamey, 30 Jan. 2003 ('cadre de parti').

kary—that it was up to the regime to associate their departure with a ‘revolt of the young’—sound less than genuine.¹⁷⁸ Sawaba’s students were intended as part of the manpower with which the movement hoped to run the country upon the fall of the RDA. The education pursued in Eastern Europe was thus at the heart of the struggle against the regime, irrespective of students’ own motivations.

The inspiration for this daring and imaginative plan may have come from various quarters. Bakary had always argued the urgency of trained manpower. Education was, as he emphasised in his interview as government leader in June 1957, one of his ‘principal concerns’. His party, as the movement of aspiring little people, typically was an ‘advocate of grand ideas’.¹⁷⁹ Its 1962 strategy paper listed a detailed series of objectives for education policy in Niger—ranging from the intensification of the struggle against illiteracy, the building of rural primary schools, training of primary school teachers, expansion and improvement of secondary education and development of technical instruction, to the establishment of a university and, tellingly, foreign traineeships or studies for Nigérien students ‘in accordance with the needs of the State’.¹⁸⁰

While the roots for ‘operation training of cadres’ lay therefore in the movement’s own history, part of its inspiration may have come from elsewhere, including, paradoxically, from one of Bakary’s main West African enemies, Houphouët-Boigny. Already in October 1946 the wealthy Ivorian leader, frustrated in his ambitions by colonial interests, sent a group of 150 youngsters for studies to the metropole. They boarded a ship called ‘l’Aventure’, which brought them to France, where they enrolled in educational institutions. This initiative led to the early development of educated cadres, many of whom would later assume positions as state administrator, high-ranking diplomat, even cabinet minister—their shared history as ‘Companions of the Adventure of 46’ becoming the subject of national legend.¹⁸¹ As Bakary met Houphouët early on through the inter-territorial

¹⁷⁸ Examen de situation de Yansambou Boubakar, 29 March 1969; Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 9-15 nov. 1961, no. 151 (‘jeunes gens de l’opposition’; ‘révolte de jeunes’).

¹⁷⁹ D. Bakary, *Silence! On décolonise: Itinéraire politique et syndical d’un militant africain* (Paris, 1992), 194; ch. 2 at n. 47; interview Kaïro Alfari, Niamey, 30 Oct. 2005 (‘principaux soucis’; ‘promoteur des grandes idées’).

¹⁸⁰ Parti Sawaba, *Pour Un Front Démocratique de la Patrie* (Bureau Politique: Niamey, 1962), 34-36 (‘conformément aux besoins de l’Etat’).

¹⁸¹ H.M. Yéré, ‘Zouglou Culture and Youth in Côte d’Ivoire: A Historical Perspective, 1946-1993’; paper for AEGIS Summer School, Cortona, 15-20 Sept. 2004, 5 (‘Compagnons de l’Aventure de 46’).

RDA, there is a possibility that he got to know of the Ivorian's pioneering move. Later, it was also not uncommon for students to go abroad and receive training from regimes hostile to their own government—as the president of Gabon pointed out in a letter to Diori in 1964, referring to Gabonese students being instructed in Algeria.¹⁸² This example was also given closer to home, i.e. by Sawaba's allies in NEPU, who in 1960 obtained Soviet and Chinese scholarships and travelled to the Eastern Bloc with the assistance of Ghana's BAA.¹⁸³

Those that benefited from the Sawaba scholarships were not simply 'pupils without great futures'—as French intelligence dismissed them.¹⁸⁴ As shown in Chapter 6, malaise reigned in the world of education, fed by admission limitations, interfering political factors, unemployment and a student population restive in the face of privilege. The undeniable progress of the 1950s fuelled discontent, as education improvements only went half-way. While the number of primary schools had more than quadrupled, by 1961 the student population in secondary and vocational institutions stagnated at just 1,400.¹⁸⁵ Teenagers were disgruntled about the possibilities of further study, limited, it was said, by budgetary constraints. Nigérien students in France alleged that admission modalities at the Lycée National were skewed in favour of the (educationally more advanced) western region and children of government dignitaries. Moreover, the training of cadres did not keep pace with employment opportunities, also because many posts were still filled by Frenchmen or AOFiens—especially Dahomeans—precisely because of the country's underdeveloped manpower. It was alleged that youngsters who completed technical education remained unemployed and that qualified teachers were forced to look for jobs in other countries.¹⁸⁶

The shortage of facilities in post-primary education coupled with the urgency of job seekers, made the privilege of Europeans an explosive issue—notably in schools, where the superiority complex of French teachers and the sensibilities of students in the decolonisation era put relations under pressure. While Sawaba and its East European students therefore

¹⁸² Léon Mba to Diori Hamani, Libreville, n.d. but July 1964; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 6.3.

¹⁸³ Subversive Activities by Ghanaians in Nigeria 1961; top secret; PRO, DO 177/2.

¹⁸⁴ Recueil des principaux renseignements collectés au cours de la période du 8 au 14 févr. 1962, no. 164; SHAT, 5 H 92 ('apprentis sans grand avenir').

¹⁸⁵ A. Salifou, *Histoire du Niger* (Paris, 1989), 266-267.

¹⁸⁶ Pour Un Front Démocratique de la Patrie, 33-34; FEANF—USN: Association des Etudiants Nigériens en France (AENF), XII^e congrès, 24-26 Dec. 1964, Antony (Paris); ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.2; ch. 6 at n. 39; Ravensdale to Wilford, 28 Febr. 1962.

made a big issue of the Africanisation of cadres,¹⁸⁷ teenagers in Niger clashed with French teachers, who turned into hate figures as incidents got out of control by the overreaction of a regime associating dissent with the movement of Bakary. Thus, the principal of the Lycée National became the object of hostility, just as a teacher in Zinder did, who got involved in a physical fight with a pupil, leading to expulsions and the school's temporary closure (April 1962). Such clashes had already occurred during the 1950s and now led to strike action—such as in Tahoua in April 1960—, triggering the expulsion of pupils. Mounkaila Albagna, who was involved in the Tahoua incident, after his expulsion enrolled in the technical school in Maradi—only to clash again with its European principal and to be snapped at that, if he didn't like it there, 'he could always go to Moscow'.¹⁸⁸

In this way several drop-outs made their way to the East. In the politically charged climate of Niger's education system it is hard to say whether this was due to political problems or plain learning difficulties, and a mixture of both may very well have been possible. For example, while it is unclear why Hambali Sahabi left the Lycée National, his fellow pupil Iro Addo was reported to have failed his A-levels before moving to the USSR. Nevertheless, in due course he graduated in economic science—with distinction—at the University of Leningrad.¹⁸⁹ What is certain is that teenagers who by family were associated with Sawaba faced difficulties, but this was usually a problem of access. Ibrahim Bawa Souley, son of Baoua Souley, the former Maradi MP imprisoned in 1960, was barred entry to the Lycée National, in the same way as Daouda Hamani, whose father was a Sawabist in Tillabéri, could not return to class. Dan Galadima's son Abdoulkarim had little choice but to pursue training in Morocco. Bachir Boukary, who had a Sawaba father, abandoned Zinder's 'Ecole Normale' to finish his secondary education successfully in Bamako.¹⁹⁰ Youngsters thus moved to Eastern Europe as the chance of getting an education or a state-funded scholarship for France was small and for 'Sawabists' practically nil. Ham-

¹⁸⁷ Pour Un Front Démocratique de la Patrie, 27, 34-35; Les étudiants nigériens à Moscou to l'Association des parents d'élèves du Niger, Moscow, 8 Apr. 1962; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 6.7.

¹⁸⁸ Paraphrased. Association des Etudiants Nigériens en France (AENF), XII^e congrès; Pour Un Front Démocratique de la Patrie, 33-34; interviews with Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 6 Dec. 2003 and Gonimi Boukar, Niamey, 5 Nov. 2005.

¹⁸⁹ See file Hambali Sahabi—enrolled in 'ère moderne'—ANN, 86 MI 3 F 12.32; Examen de situation du nommé Iro Addo, 18 July 1967. Copy of Addo's diploma is attached to the latter file.

¹⁹⁰ Interviews Ibrahim Bawa Souley, Niamey, 5 Febr. 2003, Bachir Boukary, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003, Moumouni Daouda (Daouda Hamani's brother), Tillabéri, 3 Nov. 2005; ch. 6, n. 112.

balli Mahamane, the law and letters student, went to the USSR after a request for a scholarship to study English in London was turned down. Punishments also played a role in trying to make it to the East.¹⁹¹ As noted, Issoufou Assoumane became the subject of a disciplinary transfer by the *Sûreté*, and Mashoud Pascal applied for a Sawaba scholarship while his brother Mamoudou was still in prison.

Of course, in all cases applicants were driven by career motives, trying to get better jobs than the ones they had: several men had been assistant nurse or assistant teacher, acted as auxiliary to the higher-placed, or were employed as apprentice.¹⁹² However, others who gained access to Eastern Bloc training worked as a clerk or were employed as teacher or instructor in a variety of occupational spheres. Aspirations to a higher station were shared by all, and job dismissals, too, played a role in decisions to go abroad—the examples of Ibrahim Félix and Katchalla Oumar mentioned in the first section are cases in point. Tensions with an older generation monopolising positions also stimulated the desire to seek foreign training. One Sawaba student in Eastern Europe, who used to be employed as a teacher, sent a triumphalist postcard challenging his former supervisor that, if he needed a replacement, he could always give a job to Diori or Boubou Hama!¹⁹³

For those too young to seek work it was the dream of an education as such that pushed them to embark on the adventure. When Bachir Boukary left it was rumoured that he wanted to go to Moscow to become a technician. The desire for education also pushed Touré Hama to leave, putting his request for education, vocational or otherwise, to Yacouba Idrissa. When he qualified as a medical assistant in East Germany he tried to get a scholarship to become a doctor. The career of Hambali Mahamane also points at studious ambition. After studies in Cairo he enrolled at the Soviet Institute of Oriental Languages to complete a doctoral thesis ahead of schedule. The rumour of scholarships did the rest, enticing others to try their luck—in the case of Mamoudou Ide to qualify as a state nurse, pursue medical studies in the Soviet Union and enter an internship for theatre nurse in West Germany. Yansambou Boubakar, the veterinary nurse from Birnin Gaouré, also left for Mali upon hearing of scholarships, as did Abou-

¹⁹¹ Note de renseignements no. 800/BCL, 26 Sept. 1967.

¹⁹² A useful survey is *Etudiants et Boursiers du Sawaba*. Also see J. Colombani, *Directeur de la Sûreté*, to *Ministre de l'Intérieur*, 5 Sept. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 12.32.

¹⁹³ His identity is unknown. *Recueil des principaux renseignements ...* 16 au 22 nov. 1961, no. 152.

bakar Abdou Karami. Ali Dodo, who later broadcast his praise of Soviet academic life, made it to qualified vet at Moscow's veterinary academy.¹⁹⁴ Adamou Moussa, the agricultural adviser with primary and lower-level vocational qualifications, similarly abandoned his post, making it to qualified agricultural engineer at Moscow's Lumumba University.¹⁹⁵

Exactly how many youngsters benefited in this way from 'operation training of cadres' is unknown. In September 1961 French intelligence reported that Bakary had no less than 180 scholarships in the Eastern Bloc at his disposal. While this would make the operation comparable to the earlier Ivorian initiative, the figure probably represented the totality of places Sawaba was allowed to fill, rather than the actual number of grants. At that moment 40 were already in use, according to the French. One year later, in 1962, the figure had risen to 45,¹⁹⁶ putting it in the range of the estimate by Vladimir Shubin—an official who joined the Soviet Afro-Asian Committee in 1969—that the total number of East European scholarships used by the movement was around 50.¹⁹⁷ To this one could add ten scholarships provided at the time by the government of Guinea.¹⁹⁸ It would confirm a US estimate of 1962 that Sawaba had about 60 students 'in Soviet educational programmes'. Presumably, this referred to the whole of Eastern Europe, as in 1964 Kona Mayaki, who had finally managed to go to the USSR, told Niger's Sûreté that the total number of Nigériens in Moscow was about 40. Since the number of African students in the Soviet capital was estimated at more than 800 in 1962, this does not seem impossible.¹⁹⁹ Indeed, in 1968

¹⁹⁴ Souley Salifouize, a clerk from Nguigmi, went to the USSR dreaming of dental surgery but entered a medical institute, outside university, as he did not have his A-levels. The same was true for Amadou Seydou (Sangalaly?) from Gothèye, who qualified at an institute for railway engineering, Jacques Knoll, Chargé d'Affaires Niger, Bad Godesberg, West Germany, to Président de la République & Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, 29 July 1966; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.9.

¹⁹⁵ 'Patrice Lumumba Peoples' Friendship University' in full. File Bachir Boukary; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 12.32; Examen de situation de Touré Hama, 8 June 1968, Mamoudou Ide, 11 July 1968, Ali Mahamane, 8 Aug. 1967, Yansambou Boubakar, 29 March 1969, Aboubakar Abdou Karami, 11 June 1969, Adamou Moussa, 7 Aug. 1967; Etudiants et Boursiers du Sawaba; Note de renseignements, no. 800/BCL, 26 Sept. 1967.

¹⁹⁶ Note d'information, 4 and 13 Sept. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.10/3.5; Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 8 au 14 févr. 1962, no. 164. Other sources spoke of 52-55 emigrants to 'Moscow' in Oct. 1961. Bulletin Hebdomadaire, semaine du 1^{er} au 7 oct. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 12.16; Ibid., 8 au 14 Oct. 1961.

¹⁹⁷ Interview with Vladimir Shubin, Leiden, 13 Febr. 2007.

¹⁹⁸ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 501, 8 Sept. 1961; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2. The Guinean grants were given by the 'Fonds de solidarité afro-asiatique', run by Sékou Touré's brother Ismael.

¹⁹⁹ Research Memorandum RAF-26, 30 March 1962; Note d'information, no. 401/CSN, 23 July 1964; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 7.13; Albert, 'Les étudiants africains à Moscou', 38.

the Sûreté compiled a list of Sawaba students who had been in Eastern Bloc countries, totalling 49. Of these 27 had been in the Soviet Union and 23 in East Germany—several students, in fact, had attended classes in both—and other—Eastern Bloc countries. However, these were all students who had returned, while the programme was still running at the time, albeit at a lower level. A look at other sources shows that at least four dozen Sawaba students, who during the 1960s pursued training in Eastern Europe (mainly academic education but also vocational and union instruction), were not included in the Sûreté report.²⁰⁰ This would more or less correct the number of students in Moscow or the USSR in line with Mayaki's estimate, but increase the cumulative total to around 80 or 90, excluding those studying outside Europe. Since student populations were unstable, some of the above estimates were probably valid for limited periods or referred to initial intakes or early annual classes, as the programme was intended to grow further—something that would explain the French estimate of 180 scholarships. In 1963, for example, the party itself reported that it had 'more than a hundred students and interns' in training (although this also included North African countries), of whom 'at least half' were in higher education.²⁰¹

The significance of these numbers must not be underestimated. If the grand total of those studying in Eastern Europe by the middle of the 1960s hovered around 90 and the instruction taken together—academic, vocational and other—averaged around three years, the number of graduates could be projected to rise to a couple of hundred in a few years' time. Indeed, Niger's regime mocked defensively that 200 students could not threaten the government. Yet, while Sawaba proudly held that its one hundred trainees in 1963 equalled the entire number of students during French

²⁰⁰ Etudiants et Boursiers du Sawaba. These included: Kaïro Alfari; Biry Kouly Amadou; Daouda Hamani; Inné Pierre; Amadou Seydou; Zoumari Issa; Ari Ouaguini; Hama Abdoulaye; Bonzougou Yaye; Pascal Ouedraogo; Issa Insa; Mamadou Oumarou; Raphael Ahmed Baraou; Hassane Djibo; 'Moussa'; Issaka Samy; Yansambou Boubakar; Coulibaly Seydou; Ada Paraiso; Amadou Abdoulaye; Harouna Saïbou; Sani Koutoubi; Ousseini Alou Diouldé (Himadou?; Alou Seïni?); Amadou Seydou alias Sangaladio (Sangalaly); Sidibe Ousseini; Ali Mai Rona; 'Kangueye'; Albadé Ismael Nouhou; Kelessi Oumarou; Sow Kelessi; (H)oussou Jacques; Abdou Moudi; Mahamadou Souley; Mounkaila Ousseini; Ali Marwa/Maroua; Hassane de Goudel; Ibrahim Himou of Say; Fatima Mazou; Sadi Baba Amadou; Hassane Hama; Ahmed Amadou (dit Maloud?); Zakari Garba; Halima Diallo; Mamoudou Souna dit Sourï (= Souna?); Mahamane Maïga; Aboubakar Abdou Karami; Souleymane Mamadou Hako.

²⁰¹ *Sawaba*, March 1963 ('plus d'une centaine d'étudiants et stagiaires'; 'la moitié au moins'); interview with Tahirou Ayoubou Maïga, Niamey, 28 Oct. 2005.

rule,²⁰² the significance of this figure only comes to light when set against the students that the government managed to enrol in higher education. Having to do without a university, the regime in 1961 had 100 youths studying abroad (excluding the Sawaba ones), of whom only 47 were in higher education.²⁰³ The total figure of those studying abroad rose to 147 by 1967, which also included those in technical training rather than higher education as such. Of that total, only 51 students during the entire decade were granted a government scholarship.²⁰⁴ Thus, the 80 to 90 students that Sawaba had under training in the Eastern Bloc (excluding those outside Europe) represented a strategic challenge, both in terms of the offers that could be made to graduates of Niger's secondary schools (averaging 60 a year)²⁰⁵ and of the manpower they could foster necessary to run a government.

But studying in Eastern Europe was far from easy. The first barrier was the language and, in the USSR and Bulgaria, the use of the Cyrillic script with which those in vocational or university education had to familiarise themselves. In East Germany, there was a school in Dresden that provided a language course to foreigners, attended by 150 people from Africa, Asia and Cuba—the Africans mainly coming from Guinea, Senegal and Congo. Touré Hama went there with three Nigériens, including Ibrahim Himou from Say and Zoumari Issa Seyni, Adamou Sékou's cousin. As noted, the travel party of Mamoudou Ide also went to Dresden straight upon arrival.²⁰⁶ Language training took three to six months, while learning continued on the job for those entering internships. In the Soviet Union students first went to the 'preparatory faculty', often at Moscow State University. Usually, learning Russian took one year, at preparatory faculties across the Soviet Union, such as Kharkov and Kiev in the Ukraine, Moscow State University and Tbilisi Polytechnic in Georgia. Abdou Ardaly, brother of Daouda, exceptionally studied Russian for two years at Moscow State before reading law. The preparatory faculty of Lumumba University provided instruction of variable lengths, from one to three years, not just teaching

²⁰² *Le Niger*, 31 May 1965 and *Sawaba*, March 1963.

²⁰³ 30 in France; 12 in Africa. 12 were in secondary school, 27 vocational. Salifou, *Histoire du Niger*, 267.

²⁰⁴ Names were published in the *Journal Officiel*. See T. Smirnova, 'La dynamique de l'enseignement supérieur au Niger: les illusions d'état ou l'état illusoire?'; mémoire de DEA, Paris, 2004, 21-22.

²⁰⁵ Research Memorandum RAF-26, 30 March 1962.

²⁰⁶ The others were Hassane Hama, Sadi Baba Amadou, Baban Loré, the boxer, and a woman, Hadiza Zomo.



Photo 9.4 Nigérien students learning Russian (*La vie africaine*, no. 31, Dec. 1962).

Russian but all A-level subjects to those who did not yet have a secondary school certificate. Those entering vocational training also appear to have done one year language training, like Maïga Ibrahim Moudi, who went into sports training after first opting for motor mechanics. According to French intelligence, most students had problems learning Russian as they had little intellectual background.²⁰⁷ While it is unclear how it could know this (its reporting was hardly impartial), in some cases it was belied by successful follow-up studies in Western Europe, on which more below. Still, the learning of Russian or German cannot have been easy, certainly not for some who, like Baban Loré, the former boxer, was reported to be illiterate but studied German for a couple of months. Yet, many graduates were later able to speak and write German or Russian, sometimes even fluently, such as Issoufou Assoumane and Ali Dodo. At times the command of language, whether or not to the point of fluency, can be inferred from students' activities, such as the Hausa courses that Hambali Mahamane taught at Moscow's Institute of Oriental Languages or the internship of Mamoudou Pascal at a newspaper in East Berlin.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁷ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 8 au 14 févr. 1962, no. 164.

²⁰⁸ The *Berliner Zeitung*. Etudiants et Boursiers du Sawaba. Zoumari Issa Seyni, who also spoke German, obtained a diploma in French-Russian translation. Curriculum Vitae

While linguistic abilities were perhaps less important in technical education, in the Soviet Union all subjects were taught in Russian.²⁰⁹ Education in East Germany was mainly of a vocational nature—similarly provided in the vernacular—and instruction in the USSR predominantly academic. The institutions of higher learning that played a role were spread across the country. Moscow naturally drew the majority of students, some of whom went to the State University, for example to study biology or law. The majority of the Moscow students enrolled at Lumumba, whose six faculties spread across the scientific spectrum provided a range of specialisations taking four to five years to complete. The subjects that Sawaba's students chose were testimony to the purpose of 'operation training of cadres'. They included various forms of engineering, (civil engineering, mines, hydroelectricity), agronomy, medicine and geology (the latter two attracting several students), but also related subjects such as orthopaedy and metallurgy, in addition to philology, economics and law. Several of Moscow's scientific institutes accepted Sawaba pupils, like the Institute of Medicine, which offered apprenticeships, the (non-university) Institute of Railway Engineers,²¹⁰ the Institute of Oriental Languages and, especially, the Veterinary Academy. Some Nigériens went into vocational education or apprenticeships in an assortment of fields (nursing, co-operatives, automobile engineering, radio communication).²¹¹

Others went to Leningrad to study economics; chemistry; even computer science; and, especially, medicine and agricultural engineering (at the Institute of Agronomy in suburban Pushkin).²¹² Yansambou Boubakar

Zoumari Issa Seyni; interview, Niamey, 18 Nov. 2002; Examen de situation de Touré Hama, 8 June 1968, Mamoudou Ide, 11 July 1968, Abdou Ardaly, 12 Sept. 1968, Adamou Moussa, 7 Aug. 1967, Iro Addo, 18 July 1967, Issoufou Assoumane, 24 July 1967, Yansambou Boubakar, 29 March 1969, Ali Mahamane, 8 Aug. 1967, Mashoud Hama Pascal Diawara, 9 Aug. 1967; Note de renseignements no. 801/BCL, 25 Sept. 1967 & no. 800/BCL, 26 Sept. 1967; Note d'information no. 867/BCL, 19 Oct. 1967; interviews Issoufou Assoumane, Niamey, 30 Jan. 2003, Bachir Boukary, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003, Tahirou Ayouba Maïga, Niamey, 28 Oct. 2005; Albert, 'Les étudiants africains à Moscou', 38.

²⁰⁹ See text message broadcast on Radio Moscow attached to Examen de situation du nommé Ali Mahamane, 8 Aug. 1967; Albert, 'Les étudiants africains à Moscou', 38.

²¹⁰ During the 1960s, there were plans to extend the Cotonou-Parakou railway in Dahomey to Niamey.

²¹¹ Arzika Mahamane dit Lawali from Birnin Konni worked for 3 years as announcer at the Hausa service of Radio Moscow. Files in ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14; Etudiants et Boursiers du Sawaba; Albert, 'Les étudiants africains à Moscou', 38; interviews Kaïro Alfari & dr. Abdoulaye, Niamey, 30 Oct. 2005.

²¹² Details in ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14 & Etudiants et Boursiers du Sawaba. In one case, there was an internship in telecommunications.

was sent to the town of Kalinin to study medicine—almost a loner on the banks of the Volga, for there was only one other Sawaba student there.²¹³ More students went to the capital of the Ukraine, especially for studies in medicine and geology.²¹⁴ Besides Kiev, a few went to Kharkov, which had a zoo-veterinary institute and a school of technical medicine;²¹⁵ and to Simferopol in the Crimea and Kirsanov (central Russia), to study medicine and animal husbandry. The student who went to Simferopol, ex-post office clerk Petit Dosso, undertook most of his medical studies in Krasnodar near the Caucasus, which also taught courses in agronomy and livestock, attended by Adamou Moussa and Bachir Boukary. Internships could be part of the programme, as in the case of geology student Tahirou Maïga, who travelled for this on the Trans-Siberian Railway to Vladivostok.²¹⁶ The majority of students completed their studies in full, graduating in the period 1966 to 1969, having spent on average five years in the Soviet Union.

The vocational training in the GDR focused on technical subjects, especially nursing and engineering taught in provincial towns rather than East Berlin.²¹⁷ Dessau, southeast of Magdenburg, had a school for nurses and medical assistants attended by Mamoudou Ide, Mahamane Abdoulaye and Ahmed Amadou. The medical school in Quedlinburg to the south-west of Magdenburg was visited by Touré Hama, who graduated after two years with average marks, as well as two women—Hadiza Zomo and Fatima Mazou, who was married to Wahabou Maïga. Maïga was one of the rare students that the movement had enrolled at the University of Leipzig, studying agronomy in the company of Issa Insa, a Sawaba cadre and pen pal of Iro Addo in Leningrad. Dresden attracted pupils in engineering and other technical vocations including motor mechanics and printing. Thus, Abdou Amadou from Malanville was apprenticed at a printing school, and Baban Loré after three years obtained his diploma as a car mechanic and locksmith, in spite of his illiteracy. Other forms of engineering were in the fields of agriculture and diesel technology. Both Dresden and the town of

²¹³ Mamadou Souna dit Souri, in addition to Zataou Maman, Nigérien on a government grant (see below). Examen de situation de Yansambou Boubakar, 29 March 1969. Kalinin is the present Tver.

²¹⁴ And in the case of Maïga Ibrahim Moudi, athletics. ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14; Etudiants et Boursiers du Sawaba; interview with Tahirou Ayouba Maïga, Niamey, 28 Oct. 2005.

²¹⁵ Attended by Abdou Tahirou dit Dan Inda from Maradi and Mamoudou Ide (internship) respectively. Etudiants et Boursiers du Sawaba.

²¹⁶ Ibid.; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14; interview Bachir Boukary, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003; Tahirou Ayouba Maïga, Niamey, 21 Oct. 2011.

²¹⁷ Which, however, had a higher school of economic science attended by Hamani Beidari Maïga for an internship. Etudiants et Boursiers du Sawaba.

Wittenberg in the north provided courses in railway engineering or management, attended by a former driver at SCOA, Bara Sani from Tessaoua. Other students received training in agriculture and radio communication. A couple of students including Ibrahim Himou and, possibly, Zoumari Issa Seyni and Hadiza Zomo, were apprenticed in a textile factory in Treuen, a small town to the south of Leipzig.²¹⁸

Several of the GDR students benefited from the fact that West Germany, locked in bitter competition with its eastern neighbour, tried to lure students away from the fruits of communism with apprenticeships and, on occasion, scholarships to continue their studies. Sawaba students tried to make use of this upon completion of training in East Germany, like Baban Loré, who got an internship in a Mannheim firm to familiarise himself with civil engineering. During the second half of the 1960s the government in Niamey began to assist in these efforts by way of its (German) *chargé d'affaires* in Bad Godesberg who, for example, vainly tried to arrange a scholarship for Touré Hama after the latter's graduation in Quedlinburg. As noted above, Mamoudou Ide after his studies in the East trained as a theatre nurse in West Germany (a ten-month internship of the University of Bonn). Others entered apprenticeships or studies in commerce, radio communication, agriculture and livestock or, notably, motor mechanics. Bara Sani graduated with a diploma from the Mercedes factory in Stuttgart, where Soumana Adamou dit Tanda, an ex-Niamey policeman trained in diesel mechanics in the GDR, worked as well. Exceptionally, students continued studying in France—Sow Boubakar, who graduated in agricultural engineering at Leningrad's Institute of Agronomy, studied development economics in Paris for one year.²¹⁹

Sometimes, vocational training in East Germany was followed by academic education in the USSR. Mamoudou Ide, after qualifying as a nurse in Dessau and before his Bonn internship, went to the Soviet Union for further studies (Kiev). Only a few cadres appear to have gone to Cuba, for academic training or political instruction. Mamoudou Pascal visited Havana for the latter, while Soumana Mamadou would also have gone there—the personal physician of Bakary, who himself had some of his children

²¹⁸ ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14; Etudiants et Boursiers du Sawaba; Jacques Knoll to Président de la République & Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, 29 July 1966.

²¹⁹ Ibid. Tahirou Ayouba Maïga studied in Liège, Belgium, in addition to Kiev. Kaïro Alfari studied in Paris (1970-71) and Lausanne, after Moscow, where he had graduated in 1968. Interviews, Niamey, 28-30 Oct. 2005 and 22 Febr. 2008.

educated on the island.²²⁰ Since ‘operation training of cadres’ was at the heart of the struggle, it was not only the military recruits who got political instruction. Yet, those who went into vocational training usually did not enter into separate training courses on politics or union work. In the educational systems of Eastern Europe, however, politics was never far away. Instruction in nursing at the medical school of Quedlinburg was accompanied by lessons in Marxism-Leninism, provided twice a week by the school’s director. While this may not have been compulsory for the Sawaba students since, contrary to others, they were not sent by their government,²²¹ they did of course come into contact with Marxist literature, and in the language training preceding normal coursework these political influences were impossible to avoid. Moreover, Marxism-Leninism was part and parcel of the academic education that students received in the USSR, and as noted in the exceptional case of Petit Dosso, medical studies in Simferopol and Krasnodar were preceded by a course in union work in Guinea.²²²

Nevertheless, politico-union instruction generally formed a separate trajectory for which cadres went specifically to Eastern Europe, usually followed by military training elsewhere rather than vocational-academic education. This instruction was offered in Bulgaria and the GDR as well as in Moscow. In Bulgaria, coursework centred on union training, usually for a period of nine months, which included lessons in Marxism-Leninism, the workers’ movement and industrialisation, given at a trade union school. Hassane Djibo, the Kollo agricultural clerk, enrolled here, as did Assane Bizo—a colleague from the same town—and Abdou Diakite, a clerk from Zinder. Closely related to this political instruction, Mamadou Hako from Tahoua enrolled in Sofia’s department of foreign students for studies in journalism, which he pursued for a period of five years. He was joined by fellow Nigériens Issaka Samy (UDN co-founder) and a certain Moussa, mechanic from Filingué, for unidentified courses. Presumably, the learning of Bulgarian was part of the preparatory stage at the university since Hako

²²⁰ Interviews Ali Talba, Mamoudou Pascal, Mounkaila Albagna & Ahmed Sékou Djibo Bakary, Niamey, 4 & 22 Febr. 2003, 29 Nov. 2003 & 1 March 2008; Ousmane Dan Galadima, Madaoua, 7 Febr. 2003.

²²¹ As asserted by Touré Hama, who had, however, an interest to say so to his Sùreté interrogators.

²²² Examen de situation de Touré Hama, 8 June 1968 & ... Mamoudou Ide, 11 July 1968. Note the Marxist subjects taught as testified on Addo’s diploma, attached to *Ibid.*, Iro Addo, 18 July 1967. Zoumari Issa Seyni also followed a union course in East Berlin. Interview, Niamey, 18 Nov. 2002. See below.

was reported to command the language, although even Hassane Djibo at the union school had some knowledge of Bulgarian.²²³

Abdou Diakite's trajectory demonstrated the opportunities that could be pursued in political instruction. Before his internship in Sofia, he entered Komsomol's school of co-operatives in Moscow (probably the 'Central/Higher Komsomol School'), where he may have stayed for an entire year. The communist youth organisation, which provided courses in French, was a magnet for cadres intent on political instruction. Boubakar Djingaré, the mason from Niamey, followed a training course there, preceded by Issoufou Baleri, a clerk from Gothèye, who went to Moscow in the autumn of 1961. Mamoudou Pascal, the unionist, also entered Komsomol coursework around that time.²²⁴ Others pursuing political or union instruction in or outside the youth organisation were Amada Bachard, the UDN youth leader from Zinder who was in Moscow in 1960 for nine months; Sani Mahamane dit Petit Sani, who hailed from the Maradi region and enrolled in a union course; Hamidou Abdoulaye, the teacher (also from Maradi), who went to Komsomol in 1962; and Abdou Ardaly, Daouda's brother, who during his six years in the Soviet Union (1962-1968) followed union instruction besides reading law at Moscow State—a rare example of combined political and academic instruction.²²⁵

After his training at Komsomol and his union course in Sofia, Abdou Diakite completed his political instruction by studying one year at an institution of higher education in East Berlin, the 'Jugend Hochschule'; so did Adamou Harouna, an assistant teacher, during the same period (1964-1965), and Zoumari Issa Seyni. Abdou Iddi, a teacher who left Niger when subjected to a transfer to the central region, also went to East Berlin—the 'Fritz Heckert school'—to pursue a trade union course. A school teaching

²²³ Djibo stayed in Bulgaria 9, possibly 12 months. Examen de situation de Souleymane Hako, 20 July 1967; *Le Niger*, 2 Nov. 1964 (interrogation report Assane Bizo) & 31 May 1965 (interrogation Hassane Djibo); Etudiants et Boursiers du Sawaba; interview Hassane Djibo, Niamey, 22 Febr. 2008.

²²⁴ Mounkaila Mahamane dit Lamama, mechanic and ex-boxer, failed to do the organisation's programme the following year, possibly because of illiteracy. He entered a school of motor mechanics instead. Etudiants et Boursiers du Sawaba; n. 54 ch. 7; Vladimir Shubin, email to author, 17 Dec. 2007. Pascal travelled to the USSR with Foli Marc (Marc Foly), the Dahomean mechanic from Niamey, and Ibrahim Djibaji, employee of a trading firm. Bulletin Hebdomadaire, semaine du 8 au 14 oct. 1961.

²²⁵ Souley Mallam Mahamane, assistant teacher from Maradi, did a one-year internship at co-operatives in the Soviet capital. Etudiants et Boursiers du Sawaba; interviews with Boubakar Djingaré, Kaïro Alfari, Amada Bachard & Hamidou Adamou Abdoulaye, Niamey, 26 & 30 Oct. 2005 and 14 & 19 Dec. 2009.

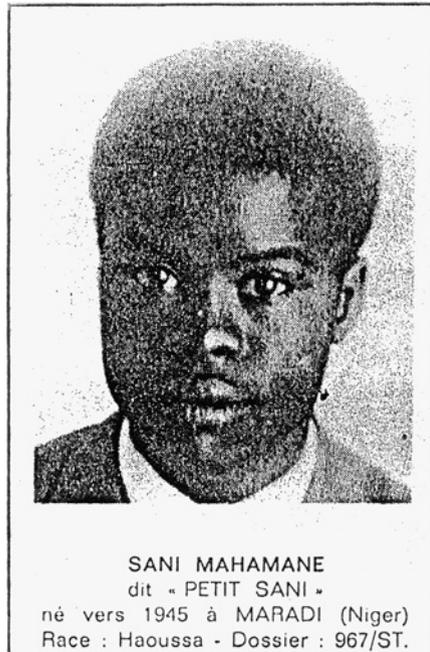


Photo 9.5 Sani Mahamane dit Petit Sani (police files).

Marxism-Leninism in suburban Bernau was attended by Mounkaila Tiné, a clerk from Niamey who attended an FMJD festival in Budapest (1962), came to the GDR the following year for treatment of tuberculosis and made several trips in Eastern Europe, as well as to Brussels. Others who pursued political or union courses in the GDR, whether or not at the same institutions,²²⁶ were Eugène Dejean (ex-employee of Niger's public works department), during much of 1962; Petit Sani, two years after his union course in Moscow; and Soumana Idrissa, the union worker from Gothèye, who attended a six-month political seminar.²²⁷ The contents of these courses consisted of the whole gamut of Marxist-Leninist doctrine, the ins and outs of union work, agitation and possibly political infiltration tactics.

Finally, cadres could also get an education in North Africa, but mainly non-political. Thus, upon completion of coursework at Komsomol, some

²²⁶ Some of the institutions mentioned may have been the same.

²²⁷ Abdou Iddi's file in ANN, 86 MI 3 F 12.32; Etudiants et Boursiers du Sawaba; Examen de situation de Touré Hama, 8 June 1968; interviews with Zoumari Issa Seyni, Niamey, 18 Nov. 2002 and Soumana Idrissa, Gothèye, 1 Nov. 2005.

cadres, like Issoufou Baleri and Mamoudou Pascal, travelled to Morocco, which offered the advantage of instruction in French.²²⁸ Usually, however, those who enrolled in Moroccan institutions came directly from Bamako. The institutions attended included a secondary school in Souk El Arba, between the capital and Tangier, called Sidi Aïssa; the Lycée 'Mohamed V' in Rabat; 'Ibn Al Aouam', an agricultural collège-lycée in Casablanca; a school for O-level students called 'Collège Moulaye Idriss', also in Casablanca; and a school for Qur'anic studies in Fez. By 1963 French intelligence reported that there were around 30 Nigérien students in the kingdom—presumably all studying on Sawaba's account. Several were enrolled in Souk El Arba, either directly or after a preparatory year at institutions like Moulaye Idriss.²²⁹ Yacouba Issa did the 5th and 6th grade at Souk El Arba, in contrast to Abdou Karami who stayed one year, ahead of engineering studies in the USSR. Mounkaila Beidari studied at El Arba as well, while Zoumari Issa Seyni studied in Rabat, from 1966 to 1968, ahead of academic studies in Moscow.²³⁰ Others pursued agriculture, such as Bachir Boukary, who graduated from the agricultural college in Casablanca and then got an internship at a commercial farm in Meknes (between Rabat and Fez), before commencing academic training in Krasnodar.²³¹ Abdoukarim Ousmane dit Maïga, Dan Galadima's son, also studied agriculture in Casablanca, up to the 5th year when Arabic became compulsory and he returned to Bamako. At least eight other Nigériens, probably on a Sawaba grant, attended this school.²³² By contrast, the school for Qur'anic studies in Fez attracted fewer students: Ousseini Sanda from Goudel near Niamey went there from Ghana in 1961 with a Sawaba scholarship financed by the

²²⁸ Etudiants et Boursiers du Sawaba. Aboubakar Abdou Karami, the technician from Gouré, followed the opposite trajectory, travelling to Moscow for academic training upon completion of secondary school in Morocco. Examen de situation de Aboubakar Abdou Karami, 11 June 1969.

²²⁹ *Le Niger*, 26 Oct. 1964 (interrogation Yacouba Issa); Examen de situation de Aboubakar Abdou Karami, 11 June 1969; Curriculum Vitae Zoumari Issa Seyni; Interrogatoire de Abdoukarim Ousmane dit Maïga, 6 Sept. 1967; Note de renseignements, no. 69/Aéro, 24 Febr. 1969; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14; interview Bachir Boukary, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 20 May 1963; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2.

²³⁰ Zoumari's brother was also in Morocco. Interview, Niamey, 18 Nov. 2002; Curriculum Vitae Zoumari Issa Seyni; *Le Niger*, 26 Oct. 1964 (interrogation Yacouba Issa); Examen de situation de Aboubakar Abdou Karami, 11 June 1969; interview Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 Nov. 2003.

²³¹ In between he was a teacher of agronomy in Guinea. Interview Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003.

²³² Including one Oumarou Ba; Moumouni Ousseini; Gamatie Seyni; Gaoh Abarchi; and Ali Mamoudou. Interrogatoire de Abdoukarim Ousmane dit Maïga, 6 Sept. 1967.

Moroccan government.²³³ Exceptionally, cadres studied in Egypt, as did Hambali Mahamane, who studied Arabic for two years at the Alsoun Institute in Cairo before enrolling at the Soviet Institute of Oriental Languages. An unconfirmed report in 1961 claimed that Sawaba's Kano office dispatched cadres to Saudi Arabia.²³⁴

Cut off from Niger: Militants for the Cause

If politics is never far away from student life, this was certainly true for Sawaba's pupils in Eastern Europe. The political significance of these men was more than the sterile radicalism articulated by privileged students in pursuit of utopia. For one, their enrolment in academia was part of a strategy to overthrow Niger's existing order. They served a subversive purpose and knew this. The students had been dispatched to Europe and helped on their way with money, tickets, scholarships—even identities by way of IDs of other nations. This meant that they found themselves to some extent in a relationship of dependence, something that involved a degree of control or at least attempts to exercise influence over their lives, with Sawaba's leadership checking on their attitudes and loyalty. The students in the Soviet Union and those in East Germany were organised politically, also to achieve this purpose. Their organisation in the Soviet Union was referred to as 'Organisation (Union) des Etudiants Sawaba en URSS', which had a bureau presided over, first, by Kaïro Alfari, the veterinary nurse from Tillabéri who studied civil engineering, and later by Pascal Ouedraogo, a student of medicine, both at Lumumba University. In typical student fashion, they considered the 'continuation of the party's struggle' as part of their mission. There is, indeed, some evidence that they engaged in political activities. According to one student, both men corresponded on a regular basis with the party leadership in Accra, and Alfari, in fact, made 'frequent trips' to Ghana until 1964 (when he had to quit the student presidency), indicating involvement in liaison work. In the GDR it was Issa Insa, the agronomy student at Leipzig, who performed these duties, providing students news from Accra and passing on 'instructions and directives of the party'.²³⁵

²³³ Note de renseignements, no. 69/Aéro, 24 Febr. 1969. Chaibou Souley probably also studied in Morocco. See his file in ANN, 86 MI 3 F 12.32.

²³⁴ Note de renseignements, no. 800/BCL, 26 Sept. 1967 and Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 9-15 Nov. 1961, no. 151.

²³⁵ Note de renseignements no. 801/BCL, 25 Sept. 1967; Examen de situation du nommé Mashoud Hama Pascal Diawara, 9 Aug. 1967; ... Adamou Moussa, 7 Aug. 1967; ... Ali

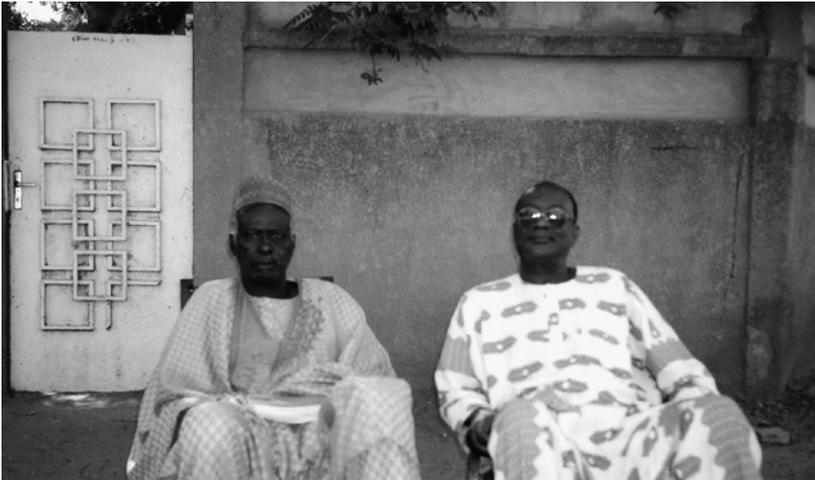


Photo 9.6 Kaïro Alfari. On his right a former fellow Sawaba student, 'dr. Abdoulaye'. Niamey, 2005.

Sawaba's students thus pursued their studies in a political context from which they were not completely free—even if they had wanted to be. Each year Pascal Ouedraogo organised a conference that they were supposed to attend to discuss issues that included political topics. The bureau of the student union comprised, besides Alfari and Ouedraogo (acting first as its secretary-general), a certain Biri Kouli (treasurer) and three 'organisers': Amadou Seydou dit Sangalaly, the former office clerk; one Maïga Mahamane, a Malian; and Sidibe Ousseini, student of agronomy.²³⁶ Students had to contribute to the bureau's upkeep, but payment of dues—one or a couple of roubles—led to problems and was dropped later on.²³⁷ The union held meetings once or twice a month to discuss politics or problems of students—cautioning some about drinking or idleness, discussing the fate of others threatened with return to West Africa (owing to learning difficulties?) and advising the leadership in Accra on their futures. Political issues that were discussed included military coups in Africa, which must have

Mahamane, 8 Aug. 1967; ... Touré Hama, 8 June 1968; interview Kaïro Alfari, Niamey, 30 Oct. 2005 & 22 Febr. 2008 ('continuation of the party's struggle' paraphrased; 'fréquent voyages'; 'instructions et directives du parti').

²³⁶ Examen de situation du nommé Iro Addo, 18 July 1967; ... Mashoud Hama Pascal Diawara, 9 Aug. 1967; ... Adamou Moussa, 7 Aug. 1967 ('organisateurs').

²³⁷ Examen de situation du nommé Iro Addo, 18 July 1967; ... Adamou Moussa, 7 Aug. 1967. Later, former students interrogated by the Sûreté denied payment. Yet, under interrogation, they had an interest in denying involvement in Sawaba student politics as much as possible. See files in ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14.

been seen as a source of inspiration with respect to the situation in Niger. Cultural and scientific issues were also discussed, besides specific events and problems.²³⁸ In 1964, for example, Sawaba's students participated in an event organised by African undergraduates to protest against racial discrimination, while they also sent letters to Niger inciting people against the regime and calling for the opening of schools and Africanisation of jobs. In view of the charged climate in Niger's education system, this was not politically innocuous, more especially because school pupils, notably girls, were known to correspond with the students in Moscow.²³⁹

Their politics was therefore more than symbolic, though its importance must not be exaggerated. Studying held pride of place, certainly among the more ambitious. Yet, undoubtedly, their meetings also had a social function, providing a sense of togetherness to those stuck in the strange environment of Russian cities, far away from home. Thus, Maïga Ibrahim Moudi, who went into sports training, assisted in at least three such gatherings, in Moscow or Kiev. There is evidence, however, of pressure to attend. One former student later attested—though under interrogation—²⁴⁰ that 'like many of his comrades', he took part for fear that 'the persons in charge' would cut his scholarship. This probably referred to Sawaba's central leadership, which may have had the ability to rescind grants through intercession with the Soviet authorities, just as it had been at their source. Thus, Mamoudou Ide upon completion of his studies in Dessau (and before going to the Soviet Union) was ordered by the East Germans to go to Accra and report to Sawaba headquarters; this alludes to some control over the comings and goings of cadres. Yet, Mashoud Pascal, who would have been excluded from the student organisation in 1965 because he had not attended all the gatherings, could finish his studies unhindered. The party naturally had an interest in this and its student representatives probably applied only soft pressure to conform. After all, these were Sawaba's bright-

²³⁸ A meeting was held in Moscow on 22 May 1963 on the first anniversary of Daouda Ardaly's death. See Chapter 11 and Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 501, 1 July 1963; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2.

²³⁹ Examen de situation du nommé Ali Mahamane, 8 Aug. 1967; ... Mashoud Hama Pascal Diawara, 9 Aug. 1967; ... Aboubakar Abdou Karami, 11 June 1969; ... Yansambou Boubakar, 29 March 1969; ... Adamou Moussa, 7 Aug. 1967; Les étudiants nigériens à Moscou to l'Association des parents d'élèves du Niger; Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 22 au 28 mars 1962, no. 169.

²⁴⁰ As noted in n. 237, they then had an interest in minimising their role in Sawaba activities.

est, the leaders of tomorrow, able to engage in argument and not simply to be ordered around.²⁴¹

Moreover, there is evidence that students were influenced by communist ideology—so much part of academic life—, feeding a positive attitude towards Marxism-Leninism and, by extension, the party that represented its embodiment in Niger. Issoufou Assoumane, the Tahoua civil servant, was strongly affected by Marxist doctrines. Mashoud Pascal was caught, on his return to Niger in 1967, carrying 20 Soviet insignia, which the Sûreté, at any rate, saw as evidence of indoctrination although he had not been considered a Sawabist before. On his own admission, Bachir Boukary said that he and his fellow students were strongly influenced by the ideological message of China and the USSR.²⁴²

While student activities in Russia mainly took place in Moscow, information was relayed to students elsewhere. Yansambou Boubakar attended meetings in Moscow, and when transferred to Kalinin acted as contact with the union in the capital. Yet, students in other cities, like Iro Addo in Kiev, later claimed that they hardly got correspondence, either from the party or its Moscow student bureau.²⁴³ Probably most activity took place where there was the largest concentration of students. In contrast, the student leader in the GDR organised meetings every two or three months in a city he designated, either East Berlin, Dresden, Leipzig or Dessau. One meeting took place in Quedlinburg. The GDR students were also obliged to pay dues, but, while 30 to 35 in 1963 still attended the gatherings that Issa Insa organised, a few years later this had declined sharply as a result of graduates' departure and events in Niger.²⁴⁴ In Bulgaria Sawaba cadres participated in a wider African student association for which Mamadou Hako, the journalism student, acted as press secretary.²⁴⁵

²⁴¹ Examen de situation du nommé Iro Addo, 18 July 1967, Mamoudou Ide, 11 July 1968, Ali Mahamane, 8 Aug. 1967; Mashoud Hama Pascal Diawara, 9 Aug. 1967; Note de renseignements no. 801/BCL, 25 Sept. 1967; *Sawaba*, March 1963 ('les responsables'; '[c]omme beaucoup d'autres camarades').

²⁴² Examen de situation du nommé Issoufou Assoumane, 24 July 1967; ... Mashoud Hama Pascal Diawara, 9 Aug. 1967; *Le Niger*, 31 May 1965 (interrogation Hassane Djibo); interviews Issoufou Assoumane, Niamey, 30 Jan. 2003, and Bachir Boukary, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003.

²⁴³ Yet, this was said under interrogation. Examen de situation du nommé Iro Addo, 18 July 1967; ... Yansambou Boubakar, 29 March 1969.

²⁴⁴ See Chapters 12-13. Examen de situation de Touré Hama, 8 June 1968/Mamoudou Ide, 11 July 1968.

²⁴⁵ He also assisted in meetings, paid contributions and worked for an African student magazine. Examen de situation du nommé Souleymane Hako, 20 July 1967.

Three years into the running of 'operation training of cadres' an attempt was made to organise all student groups into an 'Association des Etudiants Sawaba du Niger' (AESN). While it is doubtful whether this ever left the drawing board, this shows what the students' function was considered to be in the movement at large. The statutes of the association, which involved at least some Sawaba students in the East, spoke explicitly of a political-subversive role, i.e. combating corruption, feudalism and neo-colonialism (the RDA regime) and fighting for Niger's 'effective liberation' (Sawaba recapturing power). The AESN would be associated with the UJDN, Sawaba's FMJD affiliate, whose bureau would act as the association's seat. Hence, the association would be a mandatory member of all organisations approved by the UJDN. The AESN would regroup and guard over students' security abroad, guide them in the choice of subjects, facilitate contacts and reinforce their cohesion (including by fighting Niger's east-west regionalist rivalry). It would also organise youth events and co-operate with all progressive youth and student organisations in the world. AESN students were automatically members of the UJDN, banned from joining other organisations, obliged to pay dues and—as 'militants for the national cause'—not allowed to recoil from the dangers menacing Niger. Disloyalty could lead to exclusion.²⁴⁶ The upshot was that the students were considered as a fully integrated and institutionalised part of Sawaba's organisation.

In practice, however, the students enjoyed considerable autonomy, since the leadership had more urgent business to attend to. Mashoud Pascal later told the Sûreté that, to his knowledge, Sawaba's leaders had no influence over the student organisation in the Soviet Union, alleging that the latter's secretary sometimes told members that the Accra leadership 'never wrote', although admitting that there was correspondence the other way around. Whether or not this was said under the force of interrogation, Iro Addo asserted under the same circumstances that, from 1963 onwards, there was no contact with the leaders in Ghana, even though he could not be sure as he did his preparatory year in Kiev and then went to Lenin-grad.²⁴⁷ Yet, if contact was becoming erratic, Niger's government saw the students as a branch of Bakary's movement as well—talking scathingly

²⁴⁶ Statuts Association des Etudiants Sawaba du Niger AESN-UJDN (text *Sawaba*, March 1963), which also includes articles on internal organisation ('libération effective'; 'militants pour la cause nationale').

²⁴⁷ Examen de situation du nommé Mashoud Hama Pascal Diawara, 9 Aug. 1967; ... Iro Addo, 18 July 1967 ('n'écrit jamais' [sic]).

about 'fake students'.²⁴⁸ This, together with students' irregular departure, meant that Sawaba could exercise some control as they could not simply go home. The students worried about this and in 1964 warned a group, which planned a return to Niger for the holidays in response to a declaration of Niger's Paris ambassador, that they would 'fall into a trap'. The men in question—Biry Kouly Amadou, who studied hydroelectric engineering at Lumumba; Daouda Hamani, biology student at Moscow State; and Kaïro Alfari, who was politically active—ignored this and travelled to Niamey. Alfari went because his father had died and he naively thought that, since he was not part of Sawaba's guerrilla forces, nothing would happen. However, he and his comrades were arrested. Since they risked missing the restart of term, they wrote an appeal to Diamballa Maïga from their prison cell, pointing out that they wished to contribute to development; Alfari was due to report for an internship 'in the mines of the Ukraine'.²⁴⁹

In their plea to the minister they also complained that they could not understand why others who came back from the Soviet Union, such as Kona Mayaki, were left undisturbed. As noted, Mayaki failed to get a Sawaba scholarship—possibly because he was a cousin of RDA stalwart Noma Kaka. But he managed to go to the USSR all the same and briefed the Sûreté on Sawaba's students in Moscow. This happened upon his return to Niamey, when he was seen at the airport talking to Sûreté officials. Mayaki, in fact, had gone to Moscow on a grant through Niger's government.²⁵⁰ In 1962 the RDA regime accepted an offer of scholarships from the Soviet Union (which may have wished to balance its bets) and dispatched trustworthy youngsters to Moscow 'to get in touch ... with the Nigérien renegades [Sawaba students] ... and bring them to their senses'. Ten or so scholarships were involved, and the effect was that—just like in Ghana—Niger's politics spilled over into the student diaspora. Mayaki reported that the RDA students had conflicts with Sawaba student leaders.

²⁴⁸ *Le Niger*, 10 May 1965. *Ibid.*, 12 July 1965 ('faux-boursiers').

²⁴⁹ Maïga encouraged students' return but ominously intended that they become 'aware of realities'. Le Directeur de la Sûreté to Ministre de l'Intérieur, CAB no. 319/C/SN, 15 June 1964; Note d'information, no. 401/CSN, 23 July 1964; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 7.13; Kaïro Alfari Maïga, Amadou Biry Kouly & Daouda Hamani to M. Le Ministre de l'Intérieur de la République du Niger (handwritten), 27 July 1964; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 7.13. Hamani was later released, as he found work in Algeria and Congo. On Alfari, see ch. 10. Interviews Moumouni Daouda (Hamani's brother), Tillabéri, 3 Nov. 2005; Tahirou Ayouba Maïga and Kaïro Alfari, Niamey, 28 Oct. 2005/22 Febr. 2008; ('tomber dans un piège'; 'dans les mines de Ukraine'; 'ils viennent se rendre compte des réalités').

²⁵⁰ Maïga, Kouly & Hamani to M. Le Ministre de l'Intérieur, 27 July 1964; Note d'information, 23 July 1964.

Similar problems had already occurred at FMJD festivals in Vienna and Moscow in 1959 and 1961, with opposing delegations disputing the right to represent Niger. Yet, since at the universities the Sawaba undergraduates predominated, rivalry there remained limited. Notably where Nigériens were few, such as in Kalinin,²⁵¹ they got in touch across the political divide, even if this invited possibilities for spying—as Mayaki’s actions demonstrate.²⁵² By the mid-1960s the arrival of RDA students had led to the transformation of Sawaba’s union into a new ‘Union des Etudiants Nigériens en URSS’, which included students of the government but was led by Sawaba undergraduates.²⁵³

This arrangement probably worked well since, as noted earlier, students were generally not sympathetic to the regime. The AENF, the Association des Etudiants Nigériens en France mentioned in Chapter 8, was actually made up of students on government grants but critical of the RDA, complaining about unemployment and the state of education and articulating anti-imperialist rhetoric though maintaining distance from Sawaba. Politically, however, they were close to Sawaba’s ideas. Pierre Inné, the AENF assistant secretary who worked for the Marxist-oriented PAI (home to many Sawabists), agitated against neo-colonialism at a conference in Toulouse in April 1961. In turn, Niger’s government organ mocked the revolutionary fervour of these students, alleging that it centred on culinary improvements and meeting Parisian girls who would crown their diplomas with the status improvement of a mixed marriage. Diamballa Maïga dismissed them as ‘fools’.²⁵⁴

If Sawaba and RDA students were no political strangers, the movement’s cadres in Morocco seem to have suffered from regional sentiments opposing east and west Niger, at least in the ethnic mindset of French intelligence. In the spring of 1962 it reported on fighting at the Sidi Aïssa school

²⁵¹ 2 Sawaba students and 1 RDA one. Note 213 above.

²⁵² In particular, he informed on Hambali Sahabi and Ali Maroua. Note d’information, 23 July 1964.

²⁵³ Ousseini Alou Diouldé, Hambali Mahamane; and Sani Koutoubi. Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 12-18 Nov. 1962, no. 25,909; SHAT, 5 H 122; Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 20 au 26 août 1959, no. 44; Research Memorandum RAF-26, 30 March 1962; Examen de situation du nommé Ali Mahamane, 8 Aug. 1967; ... Adamou Moussa, 7 Aug. 1967; Note de renseignements, no. 800/BCL, 26 Sept. 1967 (‘prendre contact [...] avec les transfuges nigériens [...] et de les ramener à la raison’).

²⁵⁴ Association des Etudiants Nigériens en France (AENF), XII^e congrès + Maïga’s offensive scrawl; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.2; *Le Niger*, 31 May 1965; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 501, 15 May & 13 Sept. 1961; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2 (‘fous’).

in Souk El Arba and one year later on dissatisfaction concerning money.²⁵⁵ The students were plagued by financial troubles. Dan Galadima's son Abdoukarim worked on farms to earn money with which he could return home. Others wrote letters to their families for help. On occasion, it was they themselves who would send money to Niger, but in either case this ignored what Bachir Boukary felt was one of the greatest problems of student life, i.e. that correspondence was unsafe. Letters were intercepted (including money)²⁵⁶ and led to difficulties for the recipient—in his case his own mother, who was subjected to the 'mental torture' of daily reporting to the police because she had corresponded with a 'terrorist'. This aggravated the degree of isolation that the students experienced: as Boukary later recounted, '[w]e were cut off from Niger'.²⁵⁷

Financially, the situation was better in Eastern Europe, because better organised.²⁵⁸ In any case, for youngsters who hailed from one of the poorest countries in West Africa the problems lay elsewhere, in the vicissitudes of daily life. This involved difficulties, but it also offered fantastic opportunities, notably with respect to travel. According to Ali Dodo's pep talk on Radio Moscow, students were housed four in a room, which was furnished with a radio set and enabled them to listen to any programme (provided it was not jammed, of course). Food was good, he said, the university kitchen catering to all cultural palates, though Dodo told his listeners that he

²⁵⁵ Niger's ambassador tried to capitalise on this and contact the students, possibly to lure them back home. Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 501, 5 May 1962 and 541, 20 May 1963.

²⁵⁶ See the files of Boukary, Chaibou Souley and Moussa Dan Dje/Dja in ANN, 86 MI 3 F 12.32.

²⁵⁷ Interrogatoire de Abdoukarim Ousmane dit Maïga, 6 Sept. 1967; interview Bachir Boukary, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003. Zoumari Issa Seyni, then 14, got trouble when he received a letter from his brother in Morocco. Interview, Niamey, 18 Nov. 2002 ('torture mentale'; 'terroriste'; 'coupés du Niger').

²⁵⁸ The Soviet students received 90 roubles a month (reported to be worth 25,000 CFA), of which token sums were deducted for lodging and related expenses, while health care and food were practically free. An annual 150 roubles was paid out as a holiday allowance. Students in Tbilisi, Georgia, received 300 roubles equipment expenses. The East German cadres got 330 marks, of which a larger sum was taken for food and lodging. The journalism student in Bulgaria, Mamadou Hako, received 80 dollars a month. One cadre pursuing political training spoke of 60 lev pocket money (around 7,000 CFA, according to him, i.e. 140 French francs), which sufficed to cover expenses. For his Bonn internship, Mamoudou Ide earned 450 West German marks. *Le Niger*, 31 May 1965 (interrogation Hassane Djibo); Examen de situation du nommé Iro Addo, 18 July 1967, Adamou Moussa, 7 Aug. 1967, Mamoudou Ide, 11 July 1968, Abdou Ardaly, 12 Sept. 1968, Ali Mahamane, 8 Aug. 1967, Mashoud Hama Pascal Diawara, 9 Aug. 1967, Touré Hama, 8 June 1968, Souleymane Hako, 20 July 1967; Albert, 'Les étudiants africains à Moscou', 38; Note de renseignements no. 801/BCL, 25 Sept. 1967.

cooked himself. If his message had considerable propaganda value, it showed that campus provided some solace against loneliness, possibly more than for students in the GDR, some of whom (like Mamoudou Ide) may have lived alone in a room in town. It is difficult to imagine what life must have been like for some of these youths, such as Yansambou Boubacar, who lived for years in the alien environment of a provincial town on the Volga (though he, at least, could share his fate with one other Sawaba student). As Bachir Boukary later explained, they made a sacrifice for their education.²⁵⁹ The yearning for 'sawki' that nurtured much of the life of Sawaba's supporters in their case was expected to end with graduation. Tahirou Maïga, the Téra youth studying geology in Kiev, clearly suffered from a sense of seclusion, being barred by police from leaving for the weekend or accepting invitations from Ukrainian families. The surveillance made his life into a hell. During the early 1960s complaints began to be aired by African students about life in the Eastern Bloc, the imposed isolation at universities such as Lumumba singled out for criticism. Books appeared, lamenting the life of Africans in the workers' paradise.²⁶⁰ Sawaba's cadres seem to have had little contact with Russian officials or students, save for the odd event of Komsomol or the Afro-Asian Committee where they would not have spoken out (one of them, Sani Koutoubi of the Union des Etudiants Nigériens, represented them in a larger body uniting African students in the USSR). Tahirou Maïga later denied that students were the target of racism, arguing that the regime was bad but people were sympathetic.

By 1962, however, Salifou Soumaila at Villa Lotus had reported racist incidents involving African students (including Sawaba ones); these had taken place in Russia, Czechoslovakia and the GDR. He added that some prematurely returned to Sawaba headquarters, while others that he had met in Prague threatened to cut off their studies. Some in the GDR had left for West Germany. Amada Bachard thought Russians were racist 'savages'. For this reason he declined to help them run a Hausa service at Radio Moscow and returned to West Africa.²⁶¹ In Bulgaria one Sawaba cadre, the

²⁵⁹ Transcript broadcast in Examen de situation du nommé Ali Mahamane, 8 Aug. 1967; *Ibid.*, Mamoudou Ide, 11 July 1968 & Yansambou Boubacar, 29 March 1969; interview Boukary, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003.

²⁶⁰ M. Ayih, *Ein Afrikaner in Moskau* (Cologne, 1961); E.J. Hevi, *An African Student in China* (London, 1963); interview Tahirou Ayouba Maïga, Niamey, 28 Oct. 2005; Albert, 'Les étudiants africains à Moscou', 38.

²⁶¹ Examen de situation du nommé Iro Addo, 18 July 1967, Ali Mahamane, 8 Aug. 1967, Adamou Moussa, 7 Aug. 1967; interviews Tahirou Ayouba Maïga & Amada Bachard, Niamey,

journalism student Mamadou Hako, was particularly unlucky, getting involved in a brawl with Bulgarian military (July 1967). Sitting in a Sofia restaurant with his Bulgarian girlfriend, he was confronted by a militia colonel who hurled abuse at the girl and called Hako a 'black monkey'. The Tahoua youth could not contain himself and slapped the Bulgarian, which led to a fight and Hako's arrest. Ten days later he was deported, unable to finish his studies, collect his possessions or bid his farewells.²⁶² Upon arrival in Niamey, Hako was led to the Sûreté.

Such personal tragedies could not conceal the fact that some of the movement's militants did not just take poorly to abuse but—as aspirant social climbers—tried to make the most of the opportunities that Sawaba provided. Several students, most of whom were bachelors when they arrived,²⁶³ engaged in relationships with women, fell in love or got married, trying to arrange for their wives to join them when they moved later to West Africa. Pierre Inné, the AENF's assistant secretary who also studied in Moscow, married a Cuban girl with whom he had at least one daughter. Of the Soviet students, Issoufou Assoumane wed a Russian woman, a fellow engineer in Leningrad, as did Ali Dodo, who married a girl in Moscow, with whom he had a son. Amadou Seydou from Gothèye, who became a railway engineer and wanted to marry a Russian woman, went to the trouble to ask the Nigérien embassy in Bad Godesberg for papers authorising his marriage. The brother of one of the movement's most important leaders, Abdou Ardaly, married upwards by tying the knot with the daughter of Mali's ambassador to the Soviet Union. Having met in the Soviet capital, they travelled to Bamako for the wedding before returning to Moscow. Finally, a special case was that of Sawabists who engaged in relationships with East German women. Like Hima Dembélé, Salifou Soumaila at Villa Lotus visited the GDR and may have had a relationship with a local woman. In view of the GDR's political system and the fact that both men were political organisers rather than students, there is a possibility that the women were associated with the security service, the 'Stasi', keeping an eye on Sawaba's activities.²⁶⁴ Nevertheless, in Niger marriage to a European or someone of

28 Oct. 2005 & 14 Dec. 2009; Salifou Soumaila, Villa Lotus, to Wierschke & Ursula, GDR, 24 March 1962 ('sauvages').

²⁶² Examen de situation du nommé Souleymane Hako, 20 July 1967 ('singe noir').

²⁶³ Exceptionally, Maïga Ibrahim Moudi, who did sports training, was married and had a child. Note de renseignements no. 801/BCL, 25 Sept. 1967.

²⁶⁴ Soumaila's possible friend was called Ursula. He also knew a woman called Wierschke (note 125 above). The fact that Dembélé's love was a married woman increases the likelihood of Stasi involvement (ch. 8 n. 90). The name of Ardaly's wife was Dioumassy

mixed blood could enhance status, as the RDA sarcastically observed. Thus, while some cadres sought a partner in their own community,²⁶⁵ several of Sawaba's brightest also managed to rise on the social ladder by marriage—the factor of affection aside.²⁶⁶

Travel also fitted the agenda of these social climbers. In state-run economies costs were not a problem and it was not hard to save up for travel. In his broadcast Ali Dodo cheered, not entirely correctly, that students were free to go wherever they pleased, including abroad. Summer holidays could be used to meet fellow students, as Iro Addo did during a trip to the GDR where he spent a week with his pen pal Issa Insa, followed by another East German vacation three years later. These trips could be used to discuss the situation in Niger²⁶⁷ or, on a more mundane level, to earn cash—as Addo did as a dish-washer in Helsinki. More adventurously, commercial deals could be made: when in Germany, Abdou Ardaly purchased a car and drove it all the way back to Moscow for transportation to Cotonou.²⁶⁸

Besides that, holidays were an opportunity for trips that helped extend horizons beyond anything possible before. Maïga Ibrahim Moudi spent a summer on the Black Sea and went to a sports camp one year later. Usually, the students travelled by train, making trips to Prague, Moscow, Leipzig or other cities. And holiday destinations were not limited to the austere environment of Eastern Europe. Like Iro Addo, Abdou Ardaly went to Scandinavia, in 1966 spending two months in Stockholm and other Swedish towns. The year after he returned to Stockholm and then went, by sea, to

Pata. That of Assoumane's Nina Vassilievna Kazartcheva and Ali Dodo's Lina Haimouna Knaper (ethnic German? Jewish?). Salifou Soumaila, Villa Lotus, to Ursula, East Germany, 24 March 1962; Examen de situation du nommé Ali Mahamane, 8 Aug. 1967, Abdou Ardaly, 12 Sept. 1968; Note d'information, 23 July 1964; *Ibid.*, no. 597/BCL, 6 July 1968 (ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14); Knoll, Bad Godesberg, to Président de la République & Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, 29 July 1966.

²⁶⁵ Fatima Mazou & Wahabou Maïga, GDR, and Zakari Garba & Halima Diallo, students at Moscow State's preparatory faculty. Examen de situation de Touré Hama/Abdou Ardaly, 8 June/12 Sept. 1968.

²⁶⁶ Sawabists married to women of mixed blood were Hima Dembélé and Adamou Assane Mayaki, whose wife's family partly hailed from Corsica. Interview Adamou Assane Mayaki, Niamey, 29 Jan. 2003. Daouda Hamani married a Russian woman, as did dr. (Abdou?) Moudi, probably ex-USSR medical student. Interviews Kaïro Alfari & Issa Younoussi, Niamey, & Moumouni Daouda, Tillabéri, 30 Oct./3 Nov. 2005.

²⁶⁷ Interview with Tahirou Ayouba Maïga, Niamey, 28 Oct. 2005.

²⁶⁸ Examen de situation du nommé Iro Addo, 18 July 1967, Abdou Ardaly, 12 Sept. 1967, Ali Mahamane, 8 Aug. 1967 (transcription broadcast).

England and France.²⁶⁹ Western Europe was visited regularly, including London, Frankfurt and Brussels, where Bachir Boukary, for example, was invited by a member of the Belgian communist party. European networks, communist or otherwise, opened up doors and destinations. Boukary was thus invited to the Netherlands, where he visited the sights of Amsterdam and worked for several months at the University of Utrecht upon invitation of a Dutch woman. Kaïro Alfari also visited Dutch cities, in addition to Vienna, where he revelled in a Beethoven festival on the banks of the Danube. Most cadres, however, went to Paris, where they were possibly lodged with the help of communist organisations. Ali Dodo benefited this way, always spending two weeks during summer in the French capital, while Adamou Moussa, the agricultural adviser, spent one week there with fellow student Ali Maroua. Both Mashoud Pascal and Ibrahim Moudi took their 1965 holidays in Paris and, again, in 1966, the former combining it with a trip to Frankfurt.²⁷⁰ The tourist sites frequented—from Moscow's Red Square to the City of Lights and, beyond, the Caribbean delights of Cuba—underscored the unprecedented freedom that these social climbers conquered in the course of Sawaba's struggle.²⁷¹

It came at a price. Though undergraduates could travel home every two years at Soviet expense,²⁷² for the Sawaba students this was problematic. Yet, as noted earlier, some took the gamble. Ibrahim Moudi returned to Niger for the holidays of 1964, possibly because his father had died. Amazingly, he was allowed to return to the Soviet Union unhindered (or slipped out again). Amadou Abdoulaye, when a second-year student of medicine in Leningrad, even asked Niger's authorities for assistance to fund his trip home, apparently not seeing his studies in a seditious light. Abdou Ardaly, however, played it safe and spent his holidays with his in-laws in Mali.²⁷³

²⁶⁹ Did he have extra money? From his brother? *Ibid.*, Abdou Ardaly, 12 Sept. 1967.

²⁷⁰ Where he was lodged by a Nigérien, Abdou Yahaya, and taken care of by one Abdoulaye Dembélé. *Ibid.*, Mashoud Hama Pascal Diawara, 9 Aug. 1967.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, Abdou Ardaly, 12 Sept. 1967; Ali Mahamane, 8 Aug. 1967; Adamou Moussa, 7 Aug. 1967; Issoufou Assoumane, 24 July 1967; Note de renseignements no. 801/BCL, 25 Sept. 1967; Note d'information, 23 July 1964; Abdou Ardaly, Stockholm, to Diori Hamani, Niamey, 29 July 1967 (ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14); 2 interviews Bachir Boukary, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003, and Kaïro Alfari, Niamey, 30 Oct. 2005 and 22 Febr. 2008; Etudiants et Boursiers du Sawaba.

²⁷² Albert, 'Les étudiants africains à Moscou', 38.

²⁷³ Note de renseignements no. 801/BCL, 25 Sept. 1967, Abdou Ardaly, 12 Sept. 1967; Amadou Abdoulaye, Leningrad, to René Delanne Niamey, 19 May 1964; ANN, 86 MI (probably) 1 E 7.13.

Dining with Chou En-lai

This was not unwise since the link between the students and the movement's military struggle was too close for comfort. 'Operation training of cadres' being an element in the effort to unseat the RDA, students and military recruits were enlisted and processed by the same agents. They sometimes slipped out of the country together and were jointly lodged at party accommodation—while all were to greater or lesser extents subjected to the rebellious influence of Marxist doctrine. Only a few students went into separate political training, and very few of these, such as Aboubacar Abdou from Zinder, did military instruction besides their academic education. But several men who pursued political or union courses in Eastern Europe later enlisted for military drill in North Africa, as did graduates from Moroccan schools.²⁷⁴ Some, like Yacouba Issa at Villa Lotus, went for similar training to China.

It was there, in addition to North Vietnam, Algeria and Ghana that guerrilla instruction took place. Eastern Europe restricted its aid to help in money and kind, which could limit the fall-out if the overthrow of the RDA failed.²⁷⁵ Thus, the Soviet Union donated limited amounts of money, totalling \$ 15,000 in 1961 and \$ 20,000 the year after. These donations, which probably halted after 1964-1965 and never surpassed the level of the symbolic, may have been made directly or through an international union fund based in Romania, the headquarters of Kominform. 'Kremlin gold' made up half of this, the remainder coming from other countries, including China, which, however, withdrew from the fund in 1962 after the Sino-Soviet split.²⁷⁶

²⁷⁴ Etudiants et Boursiers du Sawaba, *passim*; interview Aboubacar Abdou, Niamey, 22 Oct. 2011.

²⁷⁵ A French report contradicting this caution was probably faulty. Giving an account of military training in Poland, it spoke of a training camp for francophone Africans (some 150!) at a place called Kowszowo (Kovshovo), on the Niemen River, which was actually in Belarus, not far from the Polish border. Led by Soviet officers, it would have had instructors teaching recruits in French or Spanish. The French surmised that the francophones included four Sawaba cadres: Kaïro Alfari, Alazi Soumaila, Mazou Dan Mazel and Hamidou Moustapha, i.e. the travel party that made a tour of the Eastern Bloc, including Peking, autumn 1960. Note d'information, 18 Oct. 1960 (n. 18 above). If true, it was probably no more than a short stay or reconnaissance mission. Poland did not play a role in training Sawabists, even if one or two cadres intended to go there, like Dandouna Aboubakar and Maman Tchila (Ministre de l'Intérieur to Chef des Services de Police, Niamey, 31 May 1961). Interpretation from Vladimir Shubin, email to author, 12 Dec. 2007.

²⁷⁶ Relevant Soviet archives are declassified until 1963, although many files are still

This split encouraged the evolution of the People's Republic as a separate, all-important provider of aid to Third World movements. However, trips to the Far East had already begun earlier in Sawaba's existence. In the year of the UDN's birth Abdoulaye Mamani went to Peking for an FMJD conference,²⁷⁷ and visits to China followed each other in rapid succession after the party was driven underground. Contacts were therefore made early, something that stimulated China's role as a source of revolutionary inspiration. As noted, Sawaba's 1962 strategy paper abandoned the dual policy of non-violent politics and preparing for violent action—threatening outright the neutralisation of its enemies. While this came because of the failed efforts at reconciliation, its inspiration drew partly on Maoist doctrines, which the previous decade had gained global exposure. Thus, the 1962 statement—coming two years before the publication of Mao's 'Little Red Book'—argued dramatically that the 'revolution' would be carried by the peasantry. It would be directed by cadres that originated from its ranks, and although it would get help from urban supporters, it was only the peasants that provided the revolution with the power to defeat the 'forces of regression' (the Franco-RDA combine). While party experience, the statement continued, showed that workers and unions played a decisive role, its cadres were workers and peasants at the same time, possessing the consciousness of workers while maintaining links with the countryside, which consequently represented the 'cornerstone' and 'inexhaustible reservoir' of the revolution. This way, the struggle could be portrayed as falling within the format of Mao's prescriptions on 'people's war', which rendered the atom bomb a paper tiger, made the peasant masses pivotal and put a premium on infiltrating and conquering the rural areas first.²⁷⁸

However, Niger's cultural heterogeneity, traditional institutions, small population and flat, arid geography—which was largely unsuitable for guerrilla warfare, a condition whose importance Mao actually underscored—limited the strategic weight of the countryside. The rural areas could on the whole be controlled or at least intimidated from the cities, and the countryside was more commonly influenced by urban-based politics than it initiated change itself. Yet, for Sawaba's cadres this Maoist-inspired presentation was hardly outlandish since it *was* the urban-based

sealed despite the expiry of 30 years. The above data were derived from Vladimir Shubin. Interview, Leiden, 13 Febr. 2007 and email to author, 27 Sept. 2005 and 12 Dec. 2007.

²⁷⁷ *Annuaire Politique du Niger* (Paris & Dakar, n.d., ca. 1957-58).

²⁷⁸ Pour Un Front Démocratique de la Patrie, 57-58; *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung* (i.e. the 'Little Red Book'; edition Foreign Language Press: Peking, 1966), 94 and 140 ('forces de régression'; 'pierre angulaire'; 'réservoir inépuisable').

little folk that had guided the struggle so far, while the ‘petit people’ and associated strata *did* maintain ties with a countryside that was never far from Niger’s urban world. Moreover, gaining control of the cities also presented a tall order and therefore made rural infiltration, targeting the majority of the population, seem a logical choice. Part III will show that this naturally presented a challenge since the movement’s cell structure centred on the cities. But, then, Mao Tse-Tung himself (cited in the 1962 policy statement) encouraged revolutionaries to aim for the realisation of their ‘illusions’, even if they did not conform to the current practices of the majority—something that appeared to point to the vanguard role that the little folk saw for themselves in the yearning for the relief of the talakawa.²⁷⁹ Sawaba’s struggle was thus partly informed by a Maoist mindset and in this respect fitted in a larger trend of Third World conflicts. These, according to Colburn, all borrowed from strands of socialist thought, which were propounded by the Soviet and Chinese blocs and actually represented different ‘vogues’ of striving for grand societal change.²⁸⁰

Hence, Sawabists great and small paid lip service to the Maoist idea of armed struggle. Bakary visited China several times and in 1963 paid tribute to the assistance of the ‘Far East’, arguing that the movement’s enemies would love to cut it off from ‘militant Asia’. Ousmane Dan Galadima travelled to China at least twice, while rank and file cadres like Ali Mahamane Madaouki, who was to receive his guerrilla training in Algeria, were made aware of the need to avoid the large population centres and sensitise the rural populace, ‘for the Chinese did it that way, too’. Another Algeria trainee, Daouda Hima, when in 1963 returning to Niger’s borders, was reported to be carrying pamphlets on sabotage techniques as well as on Mao Tse-Tung and Karl Marx. Moreover, the Chinese contention that it was possible to overthrow a pro-Western regime by sustained guerrilla struggle—cherished by Sawaba’s leadership and cadres alike—appeared to be confirmed by developments in much smaller countries, albeit endowed with more propitious natural features than Niger. Dan Galadima thus visited North Vietnam, then on the verge of taking on a formidable superpower in what developed into the biggest armed confrontation in the world. As noted, Bakary already extolled the struggle of the Vietnamese at a conference in 1963, together with that waged earlier by the Cubans. The memory was still fresh of how, during the very autumn of Sawaba’s fall, Fidel Castro, with

²⁷⁹ Pour Un Front Démocratique de la Patrie, 11 (‘illusions’).

²⁸⁰ F.D. Colburn, *The Vogue of Revolution in Poor Countries* (Princeton, 1994); Mao Tse Tung on *Revolution and War* (ed. by M Rejai: New York, 1971), 280.

only a couple of hundred men, marched to Havana, defeating an enemy many times larger. According to one Sawaba sympathiser, this proved an important source of inspiration.²⁸¹ One cadre who received guerrilla training, Kali Abdou, took 'Fidel Castro' as his alias.²⁸²

The Cuban inspiration was encouraged by contacts with Che Guevara in Algeria in 1963. Ali Amadou, the Téra lad who confronted de Gaulle on Dakar's Place Prôtet, met the Argentinian, then fast on his way to become a revolutionary icon. Mounkaila Albagna and Mounkaila Beidari also saw him, as did people higher in the party hierarchy. These contacts were repeated in January 1965, when Che visited Nkrumah in Ghana. Dan Galadima, possibly at this time, wrote a letter to Castro requesting Cuban help. Che, however, focused on the Congo, and it was from Algeria that Sawaba received more aid while also getting the inspiration to prepare for armed confrontation. It was here that cadres met guerrilla leaders fighting the Portuguese, like Samora Machel, Amilcar Cabral, Jonas Savimbi, Holden Roberto, and people from São Tomé & Príncipe, in addition to the defeated rebels of the 'Union des Populations du Cameroun' (UPC). Some ran into Nelson Mandela during the latter's visit to Morocco (1962), at Oujda or, more probably, Rabat. The presence of 'all of fighting Africa', as Ali Amadou put it later, underscored the normality of Sawaba's predicament and the strategy it pursued, including the guerrilla tactics that it would learn from China's and the FLN's own experience.²⁸³

Sawaba's cadres were thus taught that the principal aspect of the Chinese revolution was *armed* struggle and that Niger's revolution therefore required that the party develop its own army—all armies being an instrument of class war and revolutionary forces fighting for the general good of the population. Since they would serve the interests of the masses, Sawa-

²⁸¹ Interview with Sao Marakan, Niamey, 16 Nov. 2002.

²⁸² Note de renseignements, no. 800/BCL, 26 Sept. 1967; *Sawaba*, March 1963; interviews Ousmane Dan Galadima, Madaoua, 7-8 Febr. 2003; Ali Mahamane Madaouki, Zinder, 14 Febr. 2003; Oumarou Janba and Bachir Boukary, Zinder, 10-11 Febr. 2003; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 30 July 1963; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; *Le Niger*, 22 Febr. 1971; Rapport Mensuel, Oct. 1969; SHAT, 10 T 715/D.2-3 ('l'Extrême-Orient'; 'l'Asie militante'; 'for the Chinese did it that way, too': paraphrased).

²⁸³ Interviews Ali Amadou, Mounkaila Albagna, Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 Jan. & 29 Nov. 2003, 23 Febr. 2008; Ousmane Dan Galadima, Madaoua, 7 Febr. 2003; W. Gálvez, *Che in Africa: Che Guevara's Congo Diary* (Melbourne and New York, 1999), 32; N.R. Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela* (Boston, 1994), 259-260. For the UPC's period in exile, see M.T. Terretta, 'Cameroonian Nationalists Go Global: From Forest *Maquis* to a Pan-African Accra', *Journal of African History*, 51 (2010), 189-212 ('toute l'Afrique combattante').

ba's guerrillas would wage a just and progressive war, contrary to their reactionary opponents. These arguments, penned by one cadre-in-training, were all derived from Mao's doctrine on 'people's war'.²⁸⁴ Hence, while many Sawabists found justification for their actions in their own persecution at the hands of the Franco-RDA combine, the Chinese and their Third World allies provided important ideological sustenance.

Funding was another dimension in which the Chinese, again, excelled. In fact, their support for Sawaba's struggle in all its manifestations represented the first violent attempt of communist China to gain a foothold in West Africa. Its calculations, in this respect, pointed to a boldness in which it differed from the Soviet Union, which in view of its nuclear rivalry with the United States favoured a peaceful coexistence that, in certain regions at least, led to a more cautious approach to Third World struggles. This 'revisionism' played a role in the consummation of the Sino-Soviet split.²⁸⁵ The Chinese decided to provide Sawaba with what one RDA official later described as substantial financial support.²⁸⁶ As is in the nature of these things, it is difficult to give any precise estimates, but that Bakary had considerable amounts of money at his disposal was later confirmed by both the French and Sawaba activists. A French military study later opined that the movement had 'never seemed to lack in money'.²⁸⁷ A lot of this was disbursed to cadres who distributed it to guerrillas on missions or received it as payment for recruitment. In other cases, it was Ousmane Dan Galadima who travelled to the border region to hand out funds necessary to execute infiltration work.²⁸⁸ That this could involve substantial sums was later asserted by various guerrilla cadres. One, Noga Yamba from Zinder, would have been provided with half a million CFA (10,000 French francs) for an infiltration mission; another, Djibo Foulan, the peasant-marabout

²⁸⁴ *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung*, esp. chs. 6 & 8. It concerned the notebook of Hassane Djibo, the agricultural agent first trained in Bulgaria. Excerpt in *Fraternité-Hebdo*, 14 May 1965 and G. Comte, 'Les carnets de Nankin', *Est & Ouest*, 16-28 Febr. 1966, no. 357, 27-30.

²⁸⁵ *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-Tung*, 16-22, 72 ff & 82 ff and *Mao Tse Tung on Revolution and War*, 405-417.

²⁸⁶ Interview with Abdou Adam, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003.

²⁸⁷ Ambassade de France au Niger. Le conseiller militaire, no. 241/CM/NIG/S: Etude sur le Sawaba, Niamey, 22 June 1966 (Lt-Col. Chabriaïs); SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; interviews Oumarou Janba, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003 and Djibo Foulan, Bandio, 4 Nov. 2005 ('n'a jamais semblé manquer d'argent').

²⁸⁸ Interviews Djibo Foulan, Bandio, 4 Nov. 2005; Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 Nov. 2003, 23 Febr. 2008. Payment could be a few thousand CFA (1,000 CFA = 20 French francs). Alternatively, fresh recruits could swap their Malian money for Ghanaian currency. Warren to Mansfield, 23 Oct. 1964; Note d'information, 15 Jan. 1963; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 18.18.

from Bandio, confirmed the practice of handing out money to cadres of the domestic wing in Dosso, Zinder and Maradi, claiming funds were sufficient to distribute 'millions'.²⁸⁹ Much of this came from Chinese sources. The French in 1964 estimated that the Chinese had donated 1.5 million pounds sterling, while the British in the same period spoke of an amount of up to 1.2 million US dollars.²⁹⁰ The question of armaments, in which the Chinese also played an important role, is discussed in Part III.

The incidental 1954 visit of Mamani apart, it is possible that the earliest contacts between Sawaba and the Chinese copied those made by other rebel groups. In 1958, for example, members of the embattled UPC fled Cameroon with the assistance of Ghana's BAA, which provided them with passports and tickets for China. As noted, two years later members of NEPU benefited from similar support. Six members of this Sawaba ally travelled to China towards the end of 1960, including Mallam Tanko Yakasai, the NEPU National Organiser who opposed the new line of party leader Aminu Kano—involving a constitutional approach to politics and collaboration with Northern Nigeria's conservative forces at federal level—in favour of their violent overthrow. The trip strengthened Yakasai's conviction about the rightness of his approach and led to the reinforcement of ties with the BAA, the Sino-Soviet Bloc and other militant Nigerian organisations.²⁹¹ As shown in the next chapter, the development of this splinter group, though it would lead to NEPU's partial disintegration, was of importance for Sawaba's infiltration operations staged from Nigerian territory.

Yakasai's trip to China was followed (in some cases preceded) by journeys of Sawabists. The early missions did not focus on military training alone but provided some with a broader experience of life in China. A couple of Nigériens, among whom was the Zinder lorry driver Amadou Diop, worked as announcers at the Hausa service of Radio Peking, which began regular broadcasting in June 1963. Some of Diop's colleagues were Amada Bachard, who went to the People's Republic in 1961; Mamoudou

²⁸⁹ Interviews Noga Yamba, Zinder, 14 Febr. 2003; Djibo Foulan, Bandio, 4 Nov. 2005. In 1974 Bakary allegedly still possessed 70 m CFA (1.4 m French francs). Interview Oumarou Janba, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003.

²⁹⁰ Événements survenus en Afrique Francophone pendant la semaine du 19 au 25 oct. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 210; Warren to Mansfield, 23 Oct. 1964.

²⁹¹ Subversive Activities by Ghanaians in Nigeria 1961; Despatch no. 5; H.A. Twist, Kaduna, to Viscount Head, High Commissioner United Kingdom, Lagos, 31 July 1961; Mallam Aminu Kano, M.P.: Leader of the N.E.P.U. and Government Chief Whip in Federal House of Representatives (n.d.); PRO, DO 177/59. Kano was opposed to the trip. Yakasai was accompanied, among other people, by Muhammadu Achimalo Garba, secretary of NEPU's Kano branch. Yakasai, *The Story of a Humble Life*, 158-169.

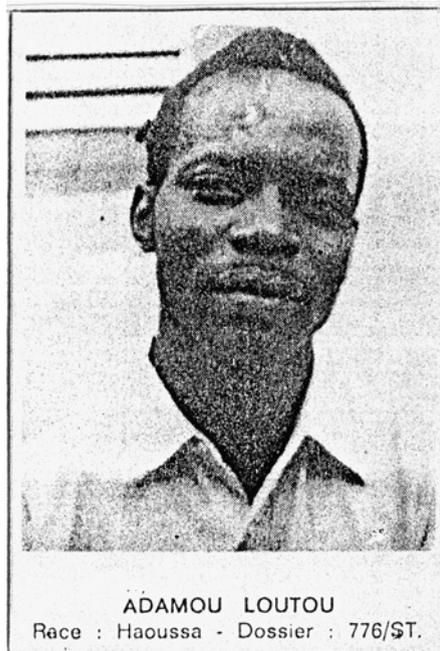


Photo 9.7 Adamou Loutou (police files).

Omar (Oumarou), who also worked at Radio (East) Berlin; Hamidou Abdoulaye, the young teacher from Maradi; and possibly Hamissou Dadi Gao(h), son of an official in the Nigérien regime. Adamou Loutou, ex-employee of a textiles company in Maradi, also worked at Radio Peking, somewhere during 1961-62. Besides their radio work, they were involved in teaching Hausa and liaising between the Chinese government and Bakary. They lived together in a controlled compound called 'the African Fighter'. Though put under strict surveillance, the radio workers could travel more extensively than Sawabists who underwent only military training.²⁹²

All this was part of Chinese attempts to nurture loyalties, which required the extension of hospitality and privilege and the display of China as a model society. Bakary's wife and two Sawaba cadres—Abdoukadi Talata and Rabo Saley—, besides Hambali Mahamane, the law and letters

²⁹² Interviews Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003/15 Febr. 2006; Amada Bachard, Hamidou Adamou Abdoulaye, Niamey, 14 & 19 Dec. 2009; Examen de situation du nommé Iro Addo, 18 July 1967; Etudiants et Boursiers du Sawaba. As a precaution, Hamidou Abdoulaye used the pseudonym Ousmane Silla. Mamoudou Omar (Oumarou) = Mamadou Oumarou mentioned in note 200 above?

student in Moscow, were invited to Peking's May Day celebrations in 1964 and spent three weeks in the Chinese capital. People lower in the party hierarchy were fêted in similar ways. Mazou Dan Mazel later recounted how he and his friends travelled to China during one of the earliest missions there by a Sawaba delegation. After a long plane journey through Siberia and Mongolia they arrived in Peking on 17 August 1960 and were welcomed by a delegation of communist youth. A humble carpenter from Tessaoua, Mazel stayed in the capital for some time, making it to a banquet with Chou En-lai, China's no. 2.²⁹³

Incredible as these social feats were, they could not distract from the main purpose of these journeys—military training. The party of Mazel got intensive paramilitary instruction, while some of the workers at Radio Peking (Adamou Loutou, Hamidou Abdoulaye and probably Dadi Gaoh) attended the military academy in Nanking—in the case of Hamidou Abdoulaye at least before the commencement of his radio work.²⁹⁴ Others were to follow. As noted, early in 1961 Gayakoye Sabi, whether or not in the company of Sékou Djibo and Amadou Bajalem, completed a trip to China. His mission, like that of Mazel, Alazi Soumaila and Hamidou Moustapha (and possibly Kaïro Alfari), may have had a reconnaissance purpose to report back to the leadership on the modalities of training. In any case, it was soon reported that Souley Salifou was on the verge of joining comrades (Ari Ouaguini and Alou Seyni) on their way to China.²⁹⁵ Salifou Soumaila, who later returned to Morocco, was possibly in Peking by July 1961, while a few months after that it was rumoured that Sallé Dan Koulou intended

²⁹³ Note de renseignements, no. 800/BCL, 26 Sept. 1967; Note d'information, 21 Sept. 1960. Chaired by Chou, who spoke on the liberation of peoples, Alazi Soumaila gave a speech at the banquet on behalf of the Nigériens. 27 4/SU interrogation protocol by Jean Colombani concerning Mazou Dan Mazel & Ibid., on Alazi Soumaila, both 12 Jan. 1961. Such honours were often extended to members of foreign movements. See f.e. Yakasai, *The Story of a Humble Life*, 163-164. Amadou Diop would have attended a dinner party of Ho Chi Minh, though this may have been an example of figure of speech customary in African culture; Diop was also no stranger to bragging. Interview Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 15 Febr. 2006. Abdoulaye N'Diaye, brother of Bakary's wife and student in the GDR, went to Peking in 1966 on a student exchange. Note de renseignements, 8 Aug. 1966, no. 298/Sn/ST; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.9; Bulletins de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 27 May to 2 June 1963, 722, no. 22; SHAT, 5 H 123.

²⁹⁴ Note d'information, 21 Sept. 1960; Etudiants et Boursiers du Sawaba. Diop said he did not train in China but Algeria. Others claimed Diop did limited training in China. Interviews Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003; Ali Talba, 4 Febr. 2003; Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 26 Oct. 2005; Hamidou Adamou Abdoulaye, Niamey, 19 Dec. 2009.

²⁹⁵ File Souley Salifou; Note d'information, 18 Oct. 1969; interview Kaïro Alfari, Niamey, 22 Febr. 2008. On the last three men there is no further evidence. Alfari may have done training later, in 1964.

to go. By that time Hima Dembélé was busy preparing Chinese trips.²⁹⁶ Dan Koulou's mission, however, was delayed and the former Tessaoua MP did not travel to China before the autumn of 1962, leading a party of eight to ten men.²⁹⁷ It was then that more cadres began to be dispatched. In November a party of five arrived, made up of Yacouba Issa, sent from Villa Lotus by Dan Galadima; Chaibou Souley, who was also in Morocco; Amadou Chaibou, possibly a relative; a certain Amadou Boube; and Abdou Iddi, the teacher with union training in East Berlin. They were followed by other groups of up to five or ten. One was led by Issoufou Gado, former announcer at Radio Moscow's Hausa service, who among other people travelled with Hassane Djibo, the agricultural clerk with union training in Bulgaria, reaching Peking in September 1963.²⁹⁸

The journey was an adventure in itself. Boubakar Djingaré, the mason, headed for the People's Republic around 1964 and travelled in a small group, or on his own, switching planes in the Burmese capital Rangoon, which served as a relay point on the road to China. This followed a pattern established by his comrades. Hassane Djibo's party travelled first to Cairo and Karachi in planes of different airlines,²⁹⁹ to reach Rangoon and then fly to Peking. There, they were brought to a train bound for Nanking. Usually, cadres going to North Vietnam—on which more below—also travelled by plane, as one party of three did in the autumn of 1962, and Djibo Foulan, the peasant-marabout, at an earlier date.³⁰⁰ Djibo Seyni, the nurse who was active in Maïné-Soroa but escaped to Bamako in 1961 en route for Morocco, took a more fascinating route. He flew with another comrade, probably Soumana Idrissa from Gothèye, to Prague where they stayed for two days before taking the train to Moscow. There they were collected by an official of the North Vietnamese embassy and shown about town by a couple of African students. After a few days, they took the Trans-Siberian Railway to Peking in a company of four that included Siddi Abdou, formerly Tahoua's Sawaba youth secretary. Then they travelled, again by train,

²⁹⁶ Note d'information, 11 July and 1 Sept. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.7 and 3.7; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 501, 13 Sept. 1961; Note d'information, 11 Aug. 1961 (n. 4).

²⁹⁷ Morillon, 'La tentative insurrectionnelle', 20; *Le Monde*, 4 Febr. 1965; G. Comte, 'An Assassination that Failed', *National Review* (New York), 15 June 1965, 510.

²⁹⁸ Morillon, 'La tentative insurrectionnelle', 21; *Le Niger*, 26 Oct. 1964 (interrogation Yacouba Issa) and 31 May 1965 (interrogation Hassane Djibo).

²⁹⁹ Because of connections and/or for security reasons.

³⁰⁰ Speaking of a chartered plane! Interviews Boubakar Djingaré & Djibo Foulan, Niaméy, Bandio, 26 Oct./4 Nov. 2005; *Fraternité-Hebdo*, 21 & 28 May 1965 (latter interrogation Djingaré).

to Hanoi and on, to a training camp at Son Tay (Suntay), located on the Red River some 40 km northwest of the Vietnamese capital.³⁰¹

In this way, several cadres made their way to the Far East. Those who went to China were trained to assume the command of Sawaba's guerrilla units. Thus, the Nanking men comprised many of the movement's principal leaders. Besides Dan Koulou they included Dandouna Aboubakar; Joseph Akouété; Tini Malélé from Gothèye; Salifou Soumaila and Yacouba Issa, both from or later at Villa Lotus; in addition to men like Issaka Samy, UDN founding father; Issoufou Danbaro, leader of the Gaya cell; Sékou Beri (i.e. Ismaila, the airport unionist); Dodo Hamballi, the veterinary worker and associate of Dandouna; Baoua Souley, former Maradi MP, released after a spell in prison; Alazi Soumaila, the Gao representative who became an influential member on the party's comité directeur; and, possibly, Mallam (Abdou?) Kalla, the recruitment officer and associate of Sallé Dan Koulou.³⁰² A 1965 estimate spoke of a total of at least 28 men trained in Nanking and Hanoi, but the French embassy in Ghana gave a figure of 29 who had been drilled in China by October 1964 alone.³⁰³ In fact, if all disparate references to visits to China are taken together, whether or not in combination with mention of military training, one would come to a grand total of over 40 men that were trained in the People's Republic.³⁰⁴ To these

³⁰¹ *Fraternité-Hebdo*, 21 May 1965; email Abdoul-Rahamane Soumana Idrissa to author, 12 Jan. 2008; interview with Soumana Idrissa, Gothèye, 18 Dec. 2009.

³⁰² Morillon, 'La tentative insurrectionnelle', 21; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 5 Nov. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; Warren to Mansfield, 23 Oct. 1964; Ambassade de France au Niger: Etude sur le Sawaba; Note de Renseignements, no. 257/CM/NIG/S, 2 July 1966; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; Rapport Mensuel, Apr. 1968; SHAT, 10 T 715/D.2-3; *Le Niger*, 2 & 23 Nov. 1964 (interrogations Tini Malélé, Assane Bizo & Dodo Hamballi).

³⁰³ Ambassade de France au Niger: Etude sur le Sawaba; *Le Niger*, 31 May 1965 (interrogation Hassane Djibo). Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 310, spoke of 30 training places in Nanking.

³⁰⁴ This figure excludes the travel party of Bakary's wife and those mentioned in n. 292 and Abdoulaye N'Diaye noted in n. 293, but includes others mentioned in text and notes above, as well as the following: Baro Alfari; Harouna Bonkourou (Bonkourou); Souley Gari; Assane Bizo, the Kollo cadre trained in Bulgaria; Boubakar Abdou (= probably Aboubacar Abdou from Zinder [n. 274 above]); Hamissou Dadi Gaoh; Ibrahim Cheffou (= dit Phacochère?); and Arouna Zada (ch. 3 at n. 169). To this one can add Dan Boula Sanda Makamari, who visited China, one S. Moumouni, perhaps one Salifou Aboubakar, and Siddi Abdou from Tahoua, who, however, may have been confused with Abdou Iddi (Abdou Adam, interview, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003; see also n. 336). Soumana Issaka's identification as Nanking trainee by Assane Bizo was confirmed by Boubakar Djingaré, although this was (also) an alias for Djibrilla Dembélé, who confessed to training in Algeria, not China (see below). Morillon, 'La tentative insurrectionnelle', 21; *Le Niger*, 2 & 16 Nov. 1964 (interrogation Bizo & Djibrilla); *Fraternité-Hebdo*, 11 June 1965 (interrogation Djingaré) & 9 July 1965; Note de Renseignements, no. 257/CM/NIG/S, 2 July 1966; Genedef Abidjan to Minarmées Paris,

must be added the men drilled in North Vietnam, about whom less is known. While including Djibo Seyni and Soumana Idrissa, their number probably never surpassed a dozen men and involved several who also trained at Nanking. Thus, Alazi Soumaila also did politico-military instruction in Vietnam, where he was in the company of Soumana Idrissa. It is not known whether Soumaila's original travel companions, Mazou Dan Mazel and Hamidou Moustapha, followed him to Hanoi. Dandouna Aboubakar, Amadou Diop and perhaps Baoua Souley also received Vietnamese training. In addition, Soumana Idrissa later recalled the company of Idrissa Arfou—who had represented Sawaba in Accra—, besides that of Siddi Abdou.³⁰⁵

The training in the People's Republic took place at Nanking, though there are some references to paramilitary instruction in the capital, pertaining to the party of Mazel and a few other men.³⁰⁶ The Nanking site consisted of a camp exclusively made up of Africans—in total numbering around 150—,³⁰⁷ equipped with an exercise ground, accommodation for the contingents of different countries and a building referred to as the 'School of the Chinese Revolution' or 'Political and Military School'—all located some 15 km outside the city. Boubakar Djingaré, while confirming aspects of this, later described the site not as a camp but as a kind of hostel where they were in the company of a Chinese colonel, two lieutenants and a translator. Djingaré shared his room with another trainee, Hassane Djibo. They were taught by different instructors who either spoke French—some were North Vietnamese—or were assisted by translators.³⁰⁸

telegram no. 5448/CH; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; M. Dangkaladima, Secrétaire Général Sawaba, to A.K. Barden, President Bureau of African Affairs, Accra, 31 Oct. 1964; PRO, FO 371/177230; *Nkrumah's Subversion in Africa*, 40; interviews Ali Amadou, Niamey, 28 Jan. 2003, Moutari (?) Dan Boula Sanda, Zinder, 15 Febr. 2006, Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 26 Oct. 2005.

³⁰⁵ Souley's identification derives from Boubakar Djingaré, interview Niamey, 26 Oct. 2005. Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 323, claimed Abdou Iddi, the teacher with union training in East Berlin, also went to Son Tay (rather than Nanking), but this may derive from a confusion with Siddi Abdou (see note 304 above and ch. 12, note 236). Also Rapport Mensuel, Apr. 1968; interviews Soumana Idrissa, Gothèye, 1 Nov. 2005 & 18 Dec. 2009 and Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003 & 15 Febr. 2006.

³⁰⁶ Note d'information, 21 Sept. 1960; Warren to Mansfield, 23 Oct. 1964; interview Kaïro Alfari, Niamey, 22 Febr. 2008.

³⁰⁷ Comte, 'Carnets de Nankin', speaks of at least 100 other Africans, making ca. 150 together with the Nigériens.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.; *Le Niger*, 31 May 1965; *Fraternité-Hebdo*, 14, 21, 28 May 1965 (incl. int. Djibo & Djingaré); Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 311; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 5 Nov. 1964; interview Djingaré, Niamey, 26 Oct. 2005 ('Ecole de la Révolution Chinoise'; 'Ecole Politique et Militaire').

Training focused on the military aspects of guerrilla warfare and their ideological underpinnings. Instruction may not have concentrated so much on physical exercise as the handling of arms and the mastering of strategy and tactics. Sources are silent on drill, and Mounkaila Albagna asserted that training was rather theoretical, with recruits using covers to protect their elbows during shooting practice. While Albagna was not trained in China but Algeria and perhaps wished to emphasise the importance of his Algerian experience, Hassane Djibo confirmed that the Nanking trainees were taught only the theory of arms and were not even allowed to handle them. This, however, contradicts other testimonies,³⁰⁹ even if the lack of drill is consistent with the fact that trainees were destined to become commanders and in many cases did physical training in Algeria or Ghana. Thus, Boubakar Djingaré spoke of shooting practice and was taught about grenades and how to lay mines, although he was not allowed to handle TNT as this was considered too heavy. This is by and large confirmed by other sources. Tini Malélé and Assane Bizo later recounted that they learnt to handle guns as well as how to lay ambushes. Instruction focused on how to draw in and kill enemy forces and capture their arms. The weapons that were handled appear to have included an assortment of arms: rifles, submachine guns, pistols and fully automatic weapons or machine guns. Weapons practice involved learning how to assemble and take apart arms; load and aim and master the recoil;³¹⁰ as well as instruction on the production and use of explosives—in sabotage actions, for example—; the construction of Molotov cocktails (presumably for urban warfare); the production of cartridges; and the use of mortars. Some lessons focused on first-aid practice and even on protection against toxic gases.³¹¹

While that was hardly appropriate, there were also political lessons that were not without importance, such as on the preparation of a coup d'état—although this was not entirely in line with the Maoist conception of 'people's war'. All this was written down in little notebooks put at the trainees' disposal, in addition to extensive teachings on the conduct of guerrilla war.

³⁰⁹ See on the nature of this evidence Chapters 12-13 below.

³¹⁰ See Hassane Djibo's notes on the 'theory of shooting' in *Fraternité-Hebdo*, 14 May 1965 (further below). In an interview (Niamey, 22 Febr. 2008) he spoke only of political instruction ('théorie de tir').

³¹¹ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 5 Nov. 1964; Ambassade de France au Niger: Etude sur le Sawaba; interviews Albagna & Djingaré, Niamey, 26 Oct. 2005 & 6 Dec. 2003, & Ousmane Dan Galadima, Madaoua, 7 Febr. 2003; *Fraternité-Hebdo*, 14 May 1965 (Djibo); *Le Niger*, 2 & 23 Nov. 1964 (Malélé-Bizo & Hamballi); Morillon, 'La tentative insurrectionnelle'; Comte, 'Carnets de Nankin'.

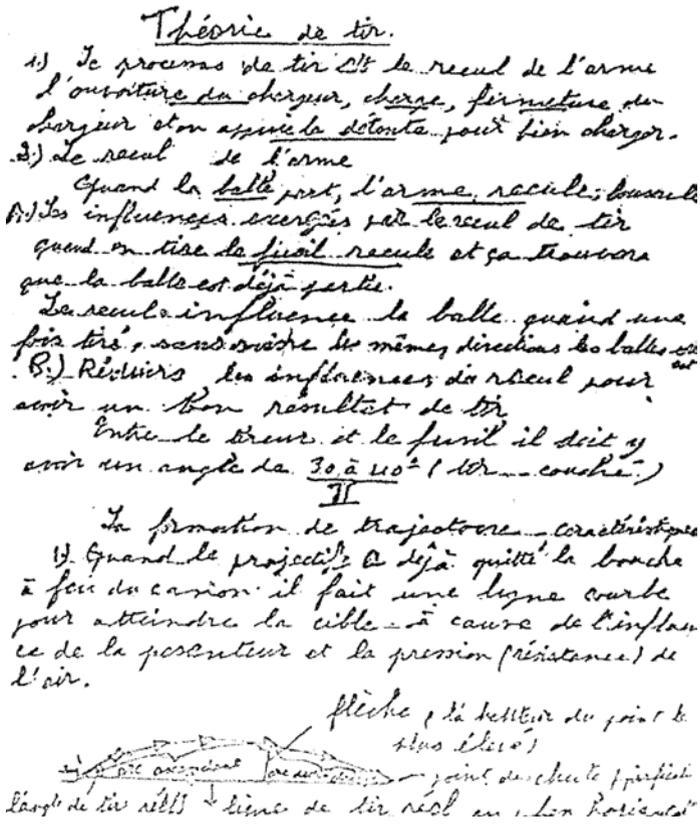


Figure 9.1 A page on shooting practice in a notebook allegedly used by Hassane Djibo in Nanking (*Fraternité Hebdo*, 14 May 1965).

Hassane Djibo, for example, was taught about the co-ordination between clandestine operations and overt activities, as well as about the relationship between the struggle in the rural areas and actions in the cities, including the organisation—when the time was ripe—of a revolt in the urban areas.³¹²

The French and RDA later mocked this training, stressing that the Maoist lessons were inappropriate for the context of Niger and emphasising what they presented as naiveté, credulity and poor education of the Nanking trainees; they would hardly have understood the Chinese lessons and copied them without enthusiasm, written down in a rough and ready

³¹² *Fraternité-Hebdo*, 14 May 1965 and *Le Niger*, 31 May 1965.

hand.³¹³ Yet, there is no reason to assume that Sawaba's recruits did not understand any of the politico-military advice given. In fact, Hassane Djibo was rather influenced by its subversive message, which was part of the revolutionary wisdom of the times. Some of the radio workers in Peking who were to stay on longer—Amada Bachard and Hamidou Abdoulaye—were even more affected. Becoming witness to the Cultural Revolution unleashed by Mao in 1966, they joined a group of foreigners studying the writings of the Great Helmsman, paying daily tributes to his portrait before going to work and waving the Little Red Book in protective gesture against obtrusive Red Guards. For a one-time member of the Red Cord such as Hamidou Abdoulaye, these experiences formed a natural sequel to his political past in Niger.³¹⁴

Generally, it is more than likely that Sawaba's trainees interpreted the Maoist prescriptions against the background of their own experiences. Thus, the Nanking notebooks, bound in red and black covers and adorned with dragons and pagodas, contained lessons on colonialism that cannot have been hard to take in.³¹⁵ Hassane Djibo copied them in detail, noting that in 'a semi-feudal, semi-colonial country' it was necessary to liberate the people and wage a social revolution 'to reverse totally the reactionary domination'—Sawaba's struggle during the 1950s, its problems with the French and the role that the country's chiefs played in its dethronement cannot have been far from mind when these standard phrases were written down. Similarly, the observations of Kollo's agricultural clerk that the goal of communist movements was the creation of an '*independent, democratic and popular republic*' that would nationalise the land at the behest of those who worked it at least alluded to Sawaba's problems since 1958 and the social role it had wished to play. That the proletariat had nothing to lose but 'its chains' and, as the 'most disciplined class', had to assume command of the revolution was not just an insight of Lenin or Mao but also reflected the self-image of little folk who had already waged battle and who would continue to fight 'imperialism' (read the French), 'feudalism' (Niger's chiefs) and 'the comprador bourgeoisie' (the 'commis'-based RDA). In view

³¹³ French journalists such as Comte and Morillon were typical here.

³¹⁴ *Fraternité-Hebdo*, 14 May 1965; *Le Niger*, 31 May 1965; interviews Hassane Djibo, Amada Bachard & Hamidou Adamou Abdoulaye, Niamey, 22 Febr. 2008 & 14 & 19 Dec. 2009.

³¹⁵ These notebooks were of different sizes (the two of Hassane Djibo had 197 and 128 pages, others 120 to 150 pages with notes). It is sure Gilbert Comte and Morillon saw some of them, as they quoted from them. Comte, 'Assassination that Failed'; *Le Monde*, 4 Febr. 1965; *Fraternité-Hebdo*, 28 May 1965; *Rheinischer Merkur*, 30 Apr. 1965.

of the repression that Sawaba's cadres had suffered, the Chinese observation that the 'reactionary power of the state' was 'oppressing the people' had similar persuasive force.³¹⁶

In short, the political lessons that men like Assane Bizo, Tini Malélé or Boubakar Djingaré took in constituted a crash course in Marxism-Leninism, but one that focused less on dialectical materialism than class struggle and its military dimensions. The message that this involved an irreducible conflict between oppressors and oppressed was not hard to understand for a Gothèye activist or a Niamey mason who had run great risks in leaving the country and had travelled half the globe to learn to fight a regime, which, from its inception, had been harassing them. Even outlandish issues such as the Sino-Soviet split may have been attributed with meaning. Hassane Djibo, for example, faithfully copied the Chinese view that the 'revisionists' were mistaken to urge oppressed peoples to pursue their liberation through parliamentary politics—a viewpoint hardly peculiar for a party evicted from Niger's National Assembly.³¹⁷

But as the notebooks of Abdou Iddi and Djibo showed, Nanking concentrated mainly on military matters, providing lessons for what were supposed to become the 'shock troops'. They therefore focused on war doctrine, subversion and the 'principles of strategy and tactics in guerrilla warfare'—these last subjects making up more than 20 pages in Djibo's notebook alone. As Boubakar Djingaré later recounted, classroom tutorials were occasionally followed by the watching of revolutionary films. During the evenings the Nigérien recruits were subjected to sessions of self-criticism, a truly Maoist teaching method, which, according to French intelligence, was not always appreciated. Some lessons were not without practical application, however. They included, besides ideas on a coup d'état, advice on how to do battle in desert-like surroundings, and even recommendations on the use of wetland regions could have more utility than French observers considered possible—in Niger's southeast, for example. Nevertheless, the 42 politico-military tutorials making up the total of Djibo's

³¹⁶ Comte, 'Carnets de Nankin'. Emphasis 'independent' KVV ('un pays semi-féodal, semi-colonial'; 'renverser totalement la domination réactionnaire'; 'république indépendante, démocratique et populaire' 'ses chaînes'; 'la classe la plus ... disciplinée'; 'l'impérialisme'; 'le féodalisme'; 'la bourgeoisie compradore'; 'pouvoir d'Etat réactionnaire'; 'opprimant le peuple').

³¹⁷ *Le Niger*, 2 Nov. 1964 and 31 May 1965; Comte, 'Assassination that Failed' ('révisionnistes').

notes were narrowly grafted on the example of the Chinese revolution.³¹⁸ Hence, the agricultural agent from Kollo wrote down in detail that

[t]he road of the armed struggle ... is the road starting from the countryside to encircle the cities. First, one establishes revolutionary bases in the rural areas using these as support and point of departure in the armed struggle for victory at the national level ... One develops the smaller support bases into bases of great extent ... thus gradually creating ... an encirclement of the cities to finally ... take them. Victory will ... be achieved on the scale of the entire country ... The revolutionary forces that potentially exist in the countryside are extremely powerful and inexhaustible ... The large peasant masses are thirsting to free themselves from domination by imperialism and feudalism.³¹⁹

Thus operating firmly in the Maoist mindset, instruction continued for several months, concluded by some sort of examination. The length of training may have varied according to the objective of the instruction—three months for guerrilla training, six months to include combat drill. Boubakar Djingaré's late arrival may have shortened his stay, since the mason left China after three months while others pursued five or six months of instruction. In some cases this may have doubled, perhaps to assist in the training of fellow recruits—as Dandouna Aboubakar may have done.³²⁰

If there was not much physical exercise (yet, Hamidou Abdoulaye later recalled some mountain trekking), training in North Vietnam may have been tougher. While the instruction was sometimes compared to that given in the People's Republic, the testimony of those who actually pursued it provides a different impression. Soumana Idrissa, a big and strong man, later recalled that he underwent eight months of hard and intensive train-

³¹⁸ *Le Monde*, 4 Febr. 1965; Comte, 'Carnets de Nankin'; Morillon, 'La tentative insurrectionnelle'; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 5 Nov. 1964; interview Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 26 Oct. 2005 ('troupes de choc'; 'principes de stratégie et de tactique dans la guerre de partisans').

³¹⁹ Cited in Comte, 'Carnets de Nankin' ('La voie de la lutte armée ... est la voie partant de la campagne pour encercler les villes. En premier lieu on établit des bases révolutionnaires dans les régions rurales en se servant desquelles comme appui et point de départ dans la lutte armée pour la victoire à l'échelle nationale ... On développe les bases d'appui moins étendues en bases d'appui de grande superficie ... formant graduellement ainsi ... un encerclement des villes ... finalement à les prendre. La victoire sera ... remportée à l'échelle du pays entier ... Les forces révolutionnaires potentielles existantes à la campagne sont extrêmement puissantes et inépuisables ... Les larges masses paysannes sont assoiffées de se libérer de la domination de l'impérialisme et du féodalisme').

³²⁰ *Le Niger*, 2 Nov. 1964 & 31 May 1965; *Fraternité-Hebdo*, 28/31 May 1965; interviews Boubakar Djingaré, Hassane Djibo & Hamidou Adamou Abdoulaye, Niamey, 26 Oct. 2005, 22 Febr. 2008 & 19 Dec. 2009; *Le Monde*, 4 Febr. 1965; Morillon, 'La tentative insurrectionnelle'; Comte, 'Assassination that Failed'.

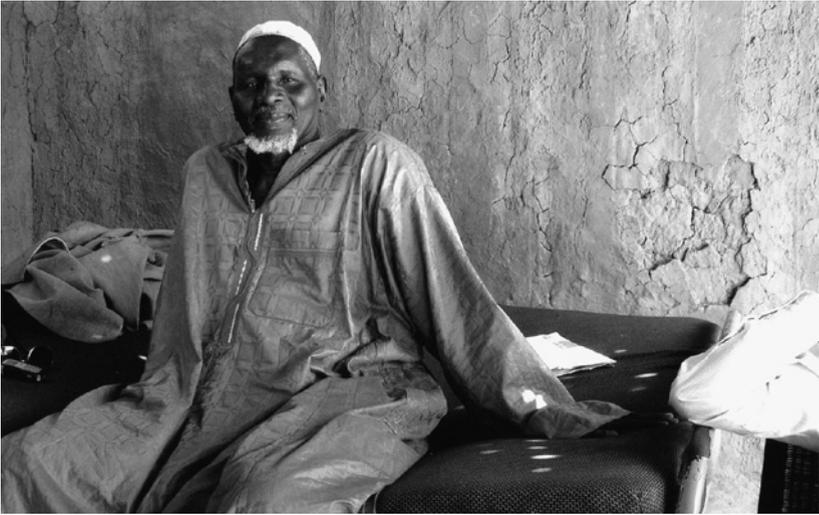


Photo 9.8 Soumana Idrissa, Gothèye, 2009.

ing, although not all subjects were taught. His companion in Vietnam, Djibo Seyni, spoke of a period of nine to ten months during which they got instruction in guerrilla warfare in addition to the doctrines of Maoism and Marxism-Leninism. Training thus took much longer than in Nanking, and that it was for real also becomes clear from the place where it was given, i.e. the military camp near Son Tay. Referred to as the ‘Administrative Academy’ or ‘National Military School’, this was a major training site of the North Vietnamese, which had fortifications, school buildings, thousands of Vietnamese military, Chinese advisers and guerrillas-in-training from all over the Third World.³²¹ The Nigériens, who were few, were thus expected to do serious training—according to Djibo Seyni it included ‘military science’, armaments, hit-and-run tactics, and the art of guerrilla war. Teaching was in French. Soumana Idrissa later recounted how they taught the Nigériens ‘to handle weapons’ and lay mines. The union worker from Gothèye was shown around the battlefield of Dien Bien Phu, where the French empire was ingloriously routed a decade earlier. The Vietnamese also showed him and his comrades a map of Niger (which Idrissa had never seen during his French-inspired education). They explained that Niger was bigger than

³²¹ In 1970 it was attacked by US Special Forces in the mistaken belief that there were still American prisoners-of-war. ehistory.osu.edu/vietnam/essays/sonstay/0005.cfm, accessed 20 Dec. 2011.



Photo 9.9 The North Vietnamese camp of Son Tay (US reconnaissance).

France and pointed out its neighbouring countries—something that helped to inculcate the concept and ideas on the possibilities of infiltration.³²²

Life in the Far East, however, was not always easy. Soumana Idrissa found it ‘an unforgettable experience’, lauding the Vietnamese for the many things he learnt, but he later also recalled how they had to be on their watch. The Vietnamese did not allow them to take pictures, for example, and the determination with which military codes were enforced was not always easy to bear in the face of the isolation they suffered. Once a Sawaba recruit, while on a visit in Hanoi, entered a bookshop in search of books in French and ran into a white man whom he mistook for a Soviet citizen. Timidly approaching him with what he had learned of Russian, he was answered to his astonishment in French by what appeared to be a member of the French embassy. A conversation developed but the Nigérien broke it off when they attracted the attention of bystanders. Exceptionally, fellow

³²² Interviews Mounkaila Albagna & Hamidou Adamou Abdoulaye, Niamey, 6 Dec. 2003 & 19 Dec. 2009; Soumana Idrissa, Gothèye, 1 Nov. 2005; *Le Niger*, 16 May 1966; Rapport Mensuel, Apr. 1968; *Fraternité-Hebdo*, 21 May 1965 (interrogation Djibo Seyni) (‘L’Académie d’Administration’; ‘Ecole Nationale Militaire’; ‘science militaire’; ‘manier les armes’).

countrymen may have enjoyed more freedom, such as the peasant-ma-
rabout from Bandio, Djibo Foulan, who as noted visited North Vietnam
with several cadres at an unspecified date.³²³

The Chinese took more care to entertain recruits, but also enforced a
stricter degree of segregation. For example, Hassane Djibo upon arrival in
Peking was cordially welcomed by a Chinese and Nigérien student (it is
unknown who the latter was) and brought to a hotel. Djibo, his comrade
Issoufou Gado and another recruit took part in festivities on China's Na-
tional Day (1 October), strolled around the city (with guides) and made
organised excursions outside the capital. This lasted for an entire month
before they travelled on to Nanking. It followed a standard pattern that the
Chinese had established with a view to familiarise foreign guests with the
country and included visits to schools, factories and the Peking Opera. At
the end of their training the Nigériens embarked on a three week tour that
included another series of supervised visits.³²⁴

While in Nanking, however, life was more difficult. Boubakar Djingaré
later recalled that he and his comrades had no freedom. The mason from
Niamey felt isolated from the Chinese population and could not go on
walks or get in touch with other Africans—who included Angolans, Cam-
eroonians, Ethiopians and South Africans. In contrast, Sawaba's men at
Radio Peking enjoyed more privileges, though their travels required official
permission. During summer Hamidou Abdoulaye went to the coast at Chi-
nese expense, while he also made journeys to Latin America and East Af-
rica. He visited Europe, but only on a few occasions as he feared the prying
eyes of the RDA. Since relations with Chinese women were prohibited,
Abdoulaye was allowed to travel twice to West Africa to marry a local wom-
an. Amada Bachard could use his travels for party work, attending anti-
Western conferences in Hanoi, Bandung, Cairo and Pyongyang. He twice
went to Japan, besides travelling regularly to Bamako and Accra for party
business. Amadou Diop—who stayed in China for three years (1960-1963)
and then went for (further) military training to Algeria—was allowed to
visit Shanghai, Canton and the Indian border at the time of the Sino-Indi-
an war. During his travels he photographed temples and met with Chinese.
He also went to North Vietnam and once tried to visit the Afghan capital
Kabul. On one occasion Diop, a hard-headed individual, ran into a woman

³²³ Interview Soumana Idrissa, Gothèye, 1 Nov. 2005; Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 311,
who interviewed the unidentified Nigérien ('une expérience inoubliable').

³²⁴ *Le Niger*, 31 May 1965; *Fraternité-Hebdo*, 14 May 1965; Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*,
310.

clairvoyant who told him his fortune—something that made a lasting impression on the lorry driver, who combined socialist convictions with strong Sufi beliefs.³²⁵

To Mount a Rebellion

For most Sawabists the Far Eastern adventure—such a testimony to the broadening horizons of Niger's little folk—ended somewhere in 1963.³²⁶ The journey back to Africa followed the same itinerary and usually ended in Accra, for additional training and to assume the command of the guerrillas drilled in Ghana. Between these two groups, however, there was a third layer of recruits who were destined to fill the intermediate positions, acting as the deputies of the Nanking commanders.³²⁷

Most of these received their training in Algeria. As noted earlier, Sawaba had always sympathised with the cause of the Algerian nationalists, and once these gained the upper hand this meant that the movement's position vis-à-vis the RDA improved substantially. This had already started well before the meeting between Ben Bella and Bakary in Oujda, which merely consecrated the support of the FLN. Thus, in January 1961 Nigérien intelligence warned that Sawaba's leader had left Gao by plane flying in the direction of southern Algeria, where he allegedly wanted to obtain weapons and bases 'to mount a rebellion'. Since the French then still controlled much of Algerian territory this may not be accurate, yet Bamako's recognition of the FLN's provisional government one month later led to an Algerian presence in north-eastern Mali, which must have been helpful to the external wing in view of its base in the Gao area.³²⁸ In October that year Sawaba's bureau politique issued a communiqué lauding Algeria's struggle (then rapidly drawing to a close). It argued that, since the referendum, the fates of the two countries were intimately linked, that Sawaba had been

³²⁵ Interviews Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 26 Oct. 2005; Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003; Hamidou Adamou Abdoulaye, Niamey, 19 Dec. 2009; Amada Bachard, Niamey, 14 Dec. 2009. Diop boasted he boarded planes without requisite visa, relying on his faith. Though left unmentioned, the trips in China were made under escort. 27 4/SU interrogation protocol by Jean Colombani concerning Mazou Dan Mazari & Ibid., on Alazi Soumaila, 12 Jan. 1961. Abdoulaye first married a Ghanaian woman, later one from Guinea.

³²⁶ Morillon, 'La tentative insurrectionnelle'.

³²⁷ Ibid. and Warren to Mansfield, 23 Oct. 1964. On his return from Vietnam, Soumana Idrissa stayed for some time in Peking with Amada Bachard, the radio worker, probably to convalesce in the wake of an operation. Interview, Gothèye, 18 Dec. 2009.

³²⁸ Renseignements, 25 Jan. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.5; Rapport de Fin de Commandement. 1^{ère} partie, le 30 juin 1962 ('pour monter un maquis').

West Africa's earliest supporter of the FLN and that the Algerian revolution constituted an inspiration for its own struggle. In January 1962 it was rumoured that Bakary had concluded an accord with the FLN representative in Bamako entailing financial aid in return for Niger's support of the FLN, once Sawaba had retaken power. Whether true or not, it certainly added to the threat that Sawaba posed in French eyes and those of the RDA,³²⁹ and in July that year Algeria's independence removed the final barriers to the provision of FLN aid.

Training began in Marnia, the birthplace of Ben Bella, in the department of Oran, and was facilitated by the fact that the Algerians spoke French too. By then several men had completed military instruction at Kibdani, across the border in Morocco. One of the earliest parties going there, probably somewhere in 1960, included Salifou Soumaila (who later headed Villa Lotus after possible follow-up training in China) and a certain Abdoukadi, Oumarou Moustapha Bachir, Seidou (Saidou) Djibo, Assane Soumana, Moussa Wakilou and Amadou Abdou, a wood trader from Gothèye. At least the last four did so after first visiting one of Morocco's educational institutions—in the case of Amadou Abdou a school in mechanical engineering. At Kibdani they were trained for three months by a cadre of the FLN, after which they went to Casablanca and boarded the 'Foch', a vessel bound for Takoradi.³³⁰ Oumarou Moustapha Bachir may also have trained in Marnia, some of whose recruits likewise first pursued an education in Morocco. Thus, Ali Mahamane Madaouki studied one year in Morocco before going to Algeria, and it was after attending Souk El Arba's secondary school that Mounkaila Beidari volunteered for guerrilla instruction in Marnia (1962). Usually the Algeria recruits travelled immediately to Marnia upon arrival in Morocco, coming by plane from Bamako or ship from Takoradi.³³¹ On one occasion, early in 1963, it was a party of students from Eastern Europe (Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria) that reportedly made its way to Morocco with the help of the Malian embassy in Paris, to be integrated with Sawaba's

³²⁹ Communiqué, Bureau Politique Sawaba, Bamako, 30 Oct. 1961; Recueil des principaux renseignements collectés au cours de la période 4 au 10 janv. 1962, no. 159; SHAT, 5 H 92.

³³⁰ They came to Morocco via Bamako. *Le Niger*, 23 Nov. 1964 (interrogation Amadou Abdou). Abdoukadi = Abdoukadi Talata, who visited Peking in the company of Bakary's wife? Moussa Wakilou = Moussa Wakily, who fled from Zinder to Kano in 1960 with Ali Mahamane Madaouki?

³³¹ Interviews Ali Mahamane Madaouki, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003; Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 Nov. 2003 and 23 Febr. 2008; Noga Yamba, Zinder, 14 Febr. 2003; Ali Amadou, Niamey, 28 Jan. 2003; Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003.

recruits in Marnia.³³² Exceptionally for Sawabists who had trained in the Far East, that same year Amadou Diop arrived in Algeria—rather than Ghana—in order to join the Marnia men. Boubakar Djingaré made the journey in reverse, being one of the few cadres who trained in Algeria and then went to Nanking.³³³

As noted, Ousmane Dan Galadima played an important role in handling the North Africa recruits—not only collecting them on arrival in Morocco, but directly controlling the Kibdani men and escorting Marnia cadres by train to Algeria or, when he was already there himself, taking them over from his assistant Daouda Hima and bringing them to the camp. Figures about the number of trainees at Marnia or other Algerian sites differ, depending on the sources and—in view of the coming and going of recruits—the time of reporting. While the Kibdani men possibly never amounted to more than a dozen, by December 1962 the Marnia trainees would have totalled 52. In February-March 1963, Mounkaila Albagna arrived with a fresh party of 30 to 35, to which one should add the East European group that arrived a month later. In 1965 one source estimated the total of middle cadres trained in Marnia at 60, a figure that appears too low considering the other sources. In 1966 France's military attaché in Niamey gave a grand total of 132 Nigériens that were trained in a range of camps between the end of 1961 and May 1964.³³⁴ This seems more accurate, also because the Agadez police commissioner in 1963 reported that, in Algiers alone, a group of 250 to 300 young Nigériens had been recruited into Sawaba's forces. While instructed by an Algerian, they were at the command of Abdoulaye Mamani, whom they saluted during drill. The head of Sawaba's Algiers office then controlled all the Algeria trainees and attempted to dissuade other Nigériens, who were unemployed and asked to be drafted,

³³² Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 5 Apr. 1963; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2. The report mistakenly referred to Hassane Djibo and Mamadou Hako: Djibo went to Nanking and Hako studied in Bulgaria until his expulsion in 1967. Others mentioned were Barry Seydou and Moussa Yenikoye from Filingué. Again others were Malian (Fondo Belko, Traoré Mamadou and possibly Keita Ténéman).

³³³ He was informed of his new assignment by letter. Interviews with Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003; Ali Talba & Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 4 Febr. 2003 & 26 Oct. 2005. French intelligence was probably mistaken in reporting that the Nanking commanders all went to Marnia for two months training afterwards. Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 5 Nov. 1964.

³³⁴ Interview Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003; *Le Niger*, 16 Nov. 1964 (interrogation Djibrilla Dembélé); Morillon, 'La tentative insurrectionnelle'; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 21 March 1963; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; *Ibid.*, 5 Apr. 1963; *Le Monde*, 4 Febr. 1965; Ambassade de France au Niger: Etude sur le Sawaba.

from returning to Agadez, telling them to stay put until there were training places available. Evidence for this derives from an eyewitness, Yahaya Sili-mane, who had cracked under interrogation by Agadez's police chief.³³⁵ Though this happened not in Algiers but Tamanrasset and nothing else is known on the Algiers groups, they probably involved Tuaregs or other Ni-gériens who made their way through the desert and were integrated into the rank and file rather than middle cadres. This would explain the importance of the employment motive in their recruitment, something in which they differed from Sawaba's officer corps, where political motivations and histories of persecution appear to have played a more pronounced role.

The majority of the intermediate ranks, of whom at least 35 can be identified,³³⁶ received their North African training in 1962-1963, before going or returning to Ghana.³³⁷ Only a minority got instruction during 1964—

³³⁵ Aboubakar, commissaire de police Agadez, to Directeur de la Sûreté Nationale Niamey, 6 Nov. 1963.

³³⁶ Including some mentioned above, they are: Mounkaila Beidari; Mounkaila Albagna, together with Ali Amadou from Téra, Hassane Igodoé, one Doudou Bondiaré and Kiari/Tchari Mai alias the Photographer, political commissar from Nguigmi; Katchalma/Katchelma Oumar dit Lawal Ousmane dit Paul Maiga dit Oumar, Niamey fireman, also from the Nguigmi area; Amadou Diop; Ali Mahamane Madaouki; Noga Yamba; very likely also Kanguèye Boubacar; the Kibdani men: Salifou Soumaila, Abdoukadi, (Oumarou) Moustapha Bachir, Seidou Djibo, Assane Soumana, Moussa Wakilou, Amadou Abdou; Mounkaila Mahamane dit Lamama; Issa Oumarou alias Sidibe Ousseini (a youngster from the Filingué area [or Niamey or Birnin Gaouré?], not to be confused with the agronomy student mentioned above at n. 236); Issoufou Baleri, the Gothèye clerk who went to Komsomol in Moscow; Petit Sani and Souley Mallam Mahamane, who also visited Moscow for coursework; Aboubakar Oumarou, former chauffeur at Niamey city hall; Yacouba Dari, trader from the Tillabéri area; Boubakar Djingaré; Djibrilla Dembélé from Niamey; Maman Alke from Gothèye; Robert Seguinikin, a Dahomean; Ali Issaka; Daouda Hima; Daouda Hamadou; possibly Siddi Abdou from Tahoua; Ibrahim Baro dit Tri Tri; and Lawal Adia from Bilma, ex-assistant teacher in the oasis town of Fachi, Ténéré, and son of a Bilma woman and French colonial officer Pierre Gentil (Gentil was stationed in Bilma during World War II. By his own account, he was rather taken with the local girls. Though he remained silent about it in his memoirs, he met one Adiza with whom he fathered his child in 1943. Cour de Sûreté de l'Etat. Arrêt de condamnation no. 9, 6 June 1969; ANN, M 27.26, and P. Gentil, *Confins libyens. Lac Tchad. Fleuve Niger* [Paris etc., 1946]). Interviews: Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 29 Nov./6 Dec. 2003; Mounkaila Beidari & Ali Amadou, Niamey, 28 Nov./28 Jan. 2003; Ali Talba, Niamey, 4 Febr. 2003; Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Ali Mahamane Madaouki, Noga Yamba, Zinder, 13, 10 & 14 Febr. 2003; Abdou Adam, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003; Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 26 Oct. 2005; Ali Issaka, Niamey, 29 Febr. 2008; Daouda Hamadou, Ayorou, 20 Dec. 2009; Ibrahim Baro dit Tri Tri, Niamey, 22 Oct. 2011. Also Organisation Terroriste "Sawaba"; Etudiants et Boursiers du Sawaba; *Le Niger*, 26 Oct., 2 & 16 Nov. 1964 (interrogations Alke, Seguinikin, Dembélé); G. Comte, 'Un plan de destruction du Niger', *France-Eurafrique*, no. 161, Apr. 1965, 9-10; Morillon, 'La tentative insurrectionnelle' ('dit le Photographe').

³³⁷ It is not known what happened to the Algiers rank and file. Also Van Walraven, 'From Tamanrasset'.

such as Mounkaila Mahamane dit Lamama, the mechanic-boxer rejected for coursework at Komsomol.³³⁸ The training in Algeria consisted of different activities—military, technical and political—and took place at different locations. Military and political instruction was given mainly at Marnia, a site not just for Sawabists but, as Ali Amadou later remembered, all African revolutionaries—just as at Kibdani, where cadres met MPLA guerrillas from Angola. While most recruits were trained at Marnia, some had instruction in Tiaret (in the Oran department, but further east); at Algerian staff headquarters in the city of Oran itself—such as Mounkaila Beidari; and, as mentioned, at a military training grounds in the capital. Instruction at Marnia, while also focusing on political issues, emphasised military skills, including the handling of TNT, guns and other weapons; the construction of bombs; the use of hand grenades; the laying of mines; and, naturally, classical guerrilla tactics: Robert Seguinikin, a Dahomean and carpenter by profession, went on record as having been taught how to organise ambushes, and Ali Amadou later spoke of various guerrilla strategies taught by instructors of all ranks. Men like Mounkaila Albagna and Boubakar Djingaré quickly found out that training was for real. They were not only subjected to shooting practice but also sent on hiking expeditions in the mountains and the bush. Marnia was actually a military camp of the Algerian army and this meant—as Djibrilla Dembélé, the part-time boxer from Niamey, would later recount—that they were not free to leave; as ‘genuine prisoners’ they had no other preoccupation than learning how to handle weapons and engage in combat training. Political instruction focused on the importance of popular support and Algerian practices in guerrilla warfare, such as the ‘wilaya’ system of self-governing regions, to be introduced in areas infiltrated or liberated from enemy forces and involving the decentralisation of command.³³⁹

While the Marnia cadres included men with some education or skilled work experience, the fact that they also involved people with occupations such as mason or boxer may allude to the physical dimensions of the in-

³³⁸ Etudiants et Boursiers du Sawaba. See n. 224 above.

³³⁹ Beidari, who later went to Marnia, probably first went to Oran, as he travelled to Algeria on his own. Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 309; interviews Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 Nov. 2003; Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 26 Oct. 2005; Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 6 Dec. 2003; Ali Amadou, Niamey, 28 Jan. 2003; Ali Mahamane Madaouki, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003; *Le Niger*, 2 & 16 Nov. 1964 (interrogation Seguinikin & Djibrilla); Djibo Bakary to Sallé Dan Koulou, 22 Sept. 1964; text Bulletin de Renseignements Particuliers, 10 Oct. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; A. Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954-1962* (London and Basingstoke, 1977), 83 (‘véritables prisonniers’).

struction, which took several months to complete. Most were drilled for periods of up to 4 to 6 months, with some considerably longer (9 to 10 or even 11, though some of the men involved, like Diop, may have had a role in training others).³⁴⁰ As in Kibdani, the instructors were members of the Algerian army—officers and lower cadres of the ALN. Boubakar Djingaré, for example, was drilled by a sergeant and a lieutenant, while Dan Galadima was in close touch with ALN captains besides political leaders such as Boumédiène and Bouteflika. On arrival in Marnia recruits were handed out uniforms, as Maman Alke later remembered—uniforms of the ALN itself, indicating their integration in the army. According to Yacouba Dari, a trader from Tillabéri, they not only got the same training and were subjected to the same discipline as that in Algeria's armed forces but also received the same pay. The Algerian military, in fact, played a central role in the training. When, for example, in March 1963 Mounkaila Albagna arrived with a substantial party of recruits in Oran, the region's military commander contacted the minister of defence to inquire about the instruction they had to undergo.³⁴¹

Tiaret was, like Marnia, an army camp where Sawaba recruits were trained, but apart from the fact that Abdoulaye Mamani may have lived there for a while nothing else is known on this.³⁴² In contrast, the facilities that some of them frequented in the capital included a complex of barracks plus exercise grounds, which cannot have been small in view of the several hundred foot soldiers that Mamani had in training there. For example, Djibrilla Dembélé and some of his comrades were sent there after nine months in Marnia to serve as the domestics of the Algerian officer corps. Dressed in civilian clothes and suffering the contempt of race and rank, they were forced to perform various household tasks, a situation that lasted for several months before they boarded a train for Morocco and embarked on the trip back to Takoradi.³⁴³ Most recruits who went to Algiers,

³⁴⁰ Boubakar Djingaré trained for three months; his instruction was to continue in Nanking. *Le Niger*, 26 Oct. & 2 & 16 Nov. 1964 (interrogation Alke, Seguinikin & Djibrilla); Etudiants et Boursiers du Sawaba, nos. 27 & 41; interviews Ali Amadou and Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 28 Jan. 2003 and 26 Oct. 2005; Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003. Mounkaila Albagna stayed at Marnia for one and a half months, but then went to Algiers for specialised training. Interview, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003.

³⁴¹ Interviews Boubakar Djingaré and Ousmane Dan Galadima, Niamey, 26 Oct. 2005/ 23 Febr. 2008; *Le Niger*, 26 Oct. 1964 (interrogation Alke); Morillon, 'La tentative insurrectionnelle'; Comte, 'Assassination that Failed'; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 21 March 1963.

³⁴² Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 309; conversation with ANN staff member, Niamey, 28 Febr. 2008.

³⁴³ *Le Niger*, 16 Nov. 1964 (interrogation Dembélé).

however, were better educated and—as a complement to their instruction in Marnia—received specialised training. This was offered at the ‘Ecole des Transmissions’, a school or camp as Ali Amadou called it, where intermediate ranks learnt the military uses of radio communication, codes and Morse, an instruction that took another five to six months to complete. Amadou studied there in the company of Mounkaila Albagna and some of his travel party (Hassane Igodoé, Doudou Bondiaré & Lawal Adia), most of whom engaged in learning Morse. Others trained there included Mounkaila Beidari—after completing instruction at Marnia and Algerian staff headquarters in Oran—and Ali Mahamane Madaouki and Noga Yamba from Zinder, who learnt radio communications in the company of a dozen others.³⁴⁴

Algeria was thus an important source of assistance, though especially in terms of military training and general political support. The country constituted a safe haven and was in that sense comparable to Ghana, where the intermediate ranks went to engage in follow-up training and assume command of the rank and file. It was here, the original point of departure of many of the commanders and middle cadres, that the different ranks of the guerrilla force finally met. Thus, at the end of 1962 French intelligence reported that cadres began to flock to Accra, some of them having pursued training in Eastern Bloc countries like Czechoslovakia. It was alleged that they were now ready to commence infiltration in Niger. In July 1963 a party of 24 ‘students’ was reported to have arrived in the port of Takoradi, most of whom would have been illiterate and would have received unspecified training abroad lasting nine months—the intelligence officer adding that this allowed one ‘to sense the job for which these recruits [could] be destined’. At least four of them subsequently made their way to Accra.³⁴⁵

Clearly, these students were part of Sawaba’s guerrillas or, to use the term by which they were known inside the movement, ‘commandos’. It was in Ghana that most foot soldiers were drilled,³⁴⁶ recruited from among

³⁴⁴ Interviews Ali Amadou, Mounkaila Albagna & Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 Jan. and 29 & 28 Nov. 2003; Noga Yamba, Zinder, 14 Febr. 2003; Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 309.

³⁴⁵ They were one Daouda Tagady from Karma near Niamey, Abdoulahi, assistant lorry driver from Sansané Haoussa (same region), Kallam from Tillabéri, and Mounkaila from the Niamey area. Exceptionally, Daouda Hamadou, the Sawaba tailor from Ayorou, may first have trained in Ghana and then in Algeria. Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 26 Nov.-2 Dec. 1962, 25,940, no. 31; SHAT, 5 H 122; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 14 Sept. 1963; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; interview Daouda Hamadou, Ayorou, 20 Dec. 2009 (‘de pressentir la besogne à laquelle ces recrues peuvent être destinées’).

³⁴⁶ Warren to Mansfield, 23 Oct. 1964 and Morillon, ‘La tentative insurrectionnelle’.

men who had left Niger since the RDA had assumed power and from Ni-gériens already living there. At the start of 1963 the commandos were estimated at ca. 300, presumably excluding the foot soldiers being trained in Algiers. While it is not easy to identify many by name or give precise figures of force totals, by 1964-1965 they had possibly risen to over 500,³⁴⁷ excluding active domestic cadres and most of Sawaba's student population. After processing at the African Affairs Centre, recruits were brought to a range of camps in central and western Ghana for drill. Thus, Aba Kaka, the deposed canton chief of Bosso, was enrolled for military training in Ghana, lasting a year. So was Zoumari Issa Seyni (Adamou Sékou's cousin) and, probably, Djibo Sékou, the mason-unionist and friend of Bakary—he had heard that two comrades in Niger had been beaten to death while in custody, a clear allusion to the role that revenge played in the motivation of some.³⁴⁸

Higher cadres returning from Algeria or the Far East went to these camps straightaway or were ordered to stay in Accra, usually at Sawaba's accommodation at the AAC. Maman Alke, upon completing his training in Marnia, was collected with comrades in Takoradi by Sadou Delewa and directed to a town called Moko, where they stayed for a month before heading for Accra. Men like Amadou Diop and Mounkaila Albagna appear to have gone there at once, whether or not entering the camps at a later date.³⁴⁹ Assane Bizo, upon completion of his Nanking instruction, also went to Ghana's capital, staying there for two months before being assigned to an infiltration task in Dahomey, while Robert Seguinikin, the Dahomean trainee from Marnia, stayed put in Accra before moving to the movement's cell in Ouagadougou. In contrast, Boubakar Djingaré and Tini Malélé ended their Nanking training by registering in a Ghanaian camp, the latter at Mampong, north-east of Kumasi.

This was the most important site for the commandos. Malélé entered Mampong with 13 others, while Djibrilla Dembélé also went there upon

³⁴⁷ Warren to Mansfield, 23 Oct. 1964; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 21-27 Jan. 1963, 25.145, no. 4; SHAT, 5 H 128; Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 325; interview Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 23 Febr. 2008.

³⁴⁸ The two men killed were one Djimaraou Rabo and Kaka Koussou, the driver (not 'dit Double'). Interviews Aba Kaka, Bosso, 13 Febr. 2006, and Zoumari Issa Seyni, Niamey, 18 Nov. 2002; *Seeda: Mensuel nigérien d'informations générales*, no. 6, Sept. 2002.

³⁴⁹ *Le Niger*, 26 Oct. 1964 (interrogation Alke); interviews Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 13-14 Febr. 2003; Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003.

return from Algeria.³⁵⁰ Dembélé was united with Dodo Hamballi—who had finished his instruction in Nanking and was now platoon leader, equivalent to lieutenant—, and with Djibo Seyni, who had returned from North Vietnam. Upon return from Algeria Noga Yamba also entered this camp, before heading for the AAC. Amadou Abdou, in fact, met a group of leaders in Mampong totalling 23 in all. They included Dandouna Aboubakar, Sallé Dan Koulou, Salifou Soumaila and Issoufou Danbaro—indicating Mampong’s centrality in Sawaba’s operation.³⁵¹ Thus, while Tini Malélé may not have done more than practical bush training there, this was possibly because he was in transit before embarking on an infiltration operation in western Niger. Dembélé later recalled that he did physical exercise and military training while also coping with mundane obligations such as cleaning and kitchen duty.³⁵²

The length of Aba Kaka’s training may be an indication that training was real, though its effectiveness is hard to judge. It included instruction in the handling of weapons, the use of explosives and communication equipment, first-aid practice and the laying of mines and organising of ambushes.³⁵³ Additionally, the commando leaders in Mampong, who went on forced marches, studied seriously on the essentials of infiltration. Dandouna Aboubakar and Dodo Hamballi worked with instruction notebooks in which they put down details on the administrative organisation of regions in Niger, including on their subdivision, the location of markets (ideal for contacting people), the presence of government and customs posts (the latter potential sources of income during operations), and on the movement’s local enemies and allies.³⁵⁴ The drill in Ghanaian camps was initially given by Ghanaians themselves,³⁵⁵ and while some sites after 1961 had Soviet instructors, it does not seem that Sawaba’s men benefited

³⁵⁰ After disembarking in Takoradi, Dembélé was collected by one Daouda Diabaté, who brought him and his companions directly to Mampong—performing the same task as he had done for Amadou Abdou, when the wood trader from Gothèye returned with comrades from Kibdani. *Le Niger*, 2, 16 & 23 Nov. 1964 (interrogations Malélé, Dembélé, Abdou); interview Djingaré, Niamey, 26 Oct. 2005. Djingaré stayed at the AAC (later?). *Rheinischer Merkur*, 30 Apr. 1965.

³⁵¹ They were in the company of Baro Alfari and Harouna Bounkoukou (Bonkourou), both of whom trained in Nanking, and one Hamadou Barikire. Amadou Diop also entered the camp. Note 304; *Le Niger*, 16 & 23 Nov. 1964 (interrogation Dembélé and Abdou); interview Ali Talba, Niamey, 4 Febr. 2003.

³⁵² *Le Niger*, 2 & 16 Nov. 1964 (interrogation Malélé & Dembélé).

³⁵³ Details were gleaned from *Nkrumah’s Subversion in Africa, passim*.

³⁵⁴ Comte, ‘Carnets de Nankin’; Morillon, ‘La tentative insurrectionnelle’; Bulletin de Renseignements Particuliers, 18 Oct. 1964, no. 1234/2/S.

³⁵⁵ Interview with Aba Kaka, Bosso, Lake Chad, 13 Febr. 2006.



Photo 9.10 Guerrilla training camp in Ghana, with Chinese instructors (*Nkrumah's Subversion in Africa*).

from this. The first camp site opened in late 1961 but the majority of recruits went to the camps in 1963 and especially during 1964-1965. The Ghanaian instruction was based on Nkrumah's ideas on guerrilla warfare, which in themselves were inspired by the experiences of the Chinese.³⁵⁶ However, according to Nkrumah's enemies, drill and conditions at one site were poor and the recruits (from unidentified countries) were said to be demoralised. This was at Half-Assini, a camp site on the coast near the Ivorian border, which was also frequented by Sawaba cadres.³⁵⁷ Consequently, in the summer of 1965 the Ghanaians signed an accord with the People's Republic, entailing the dispatch of Chinese instructors.³⁵⁸

³⁵⁶ The BAA printed a booklet called 'Strategy and Tactics of Revolutionary Warfare with Particular Reference to the African Revolution', which included notes of Chinese lessons (see below) and was later published under Nkrumah's name as *Handbook of Revolutionary Warfare: A Guide to the Armed Phase of the African Revolution* (London, 1968), during the latter's exile. *Nkrumah's Subversion in Africa*, 6 & 42.

³⁵⁷ *Nkrumah's Subversion in Africa*, 7; interview Ali Amadou, Niamey, 28 Jan. 2003; *Le Niger*, 21 June 1965.

³⁵⁸ In addition, the East Germans advised the Ghanaians on subversion, intelligence and espionage matters. *Nkrumah's Subversion in Africa*, *passim*.



Photo 9.11 The Obenemasi camp (*Nkrumah's Subversion in Africa*).

At Half-Assini, however, the first Chinese had already arrived the previous October. This camp was located in a forest and harboured groups of 50 to 60 trainees from various African countries. National contingents were probably housed separately for security reasons. By 1964 the camp got a number of new buildings but it was closed down at the end of the year as exercises in the handling of explosives could not be carried out in view of the proximity of the Ivorian border; moreover, transport of men and equipment was too expensive. Training moved to Obenemasi (Odumasi), an abandoned gold mine near the town of Konongo, east of Kumasi. Sawaba recruits trained here as well, involving groups of up to 50 or more, during 1964 and 1965. By that time the camp's population totalled well over 200.³⁵⁹ The camp site had living quarters for recruits and Chinese instructors, storage sheds (including for ammunition), an officers' mess and a medical facility, covering a four-mile area in a region with forests and hills that may have been used for exercises. The facility was surrounded by barbed wire. As Ali Amadou, the Marnia cadre who trained and worked in one of the

³⁵⁹ Ali Amadou spoke of 'Kolongolo' between Kumasi and Accra, which must have been Konongo. Interview, Niamey, 28 Jan. 2003; interview Aba Kaka, Bosso, Lake Chad, 13 Febr. 2006; *Nkrumah's Subversion in Africa*, 7, 18-20 and 60.

Ghanaian camps, later recounted, sites like these were supposed to be secret and hidden ‘deep in the bush’.³⁶⁰

Apart from the Ghanaian and Chinese instructors, the recruits were accountable to one of their own, called ‘chef de camp’. Ali Amadou was one of them, responsible for the processing and command of the rank and file. These were not allowed to leave the camps, with the exception of those who had to go to market for food supplies—as Djibrilla Dembélé later recalled about his days at Mampong. Typically for military life, boredom had an effect on camp routines. The movement’s leadership, however, made arrangements for the maintenance of discipline. Thus, when Dembélé was later sent for political instruction to the AAC and was considered not active enough, he was dispatched to the bush for agricultural work under the command of a Peul.³⁶¹ Conversely, when Siddi Abdou, the unit leader who had been in the Far East, had problems with Abdoulaye Antama, one of the foot soldiers in the field, Dan Galadima ordered Mounkaila Albagna to arrange Antama’s transfer to Accra.³⁶² The external wing probably had its own law enforcement officers, as can be gleaned from the activities of a certain Mahaman Guimba dit ‘Policier’, who investigated a case where Issoufou Danbaro became the victim of theft.³⁶³

The recruits, moreover, had to take an oath. Maman Alke, the Marnia trainee, later recounted how—upon his return to Ghana—Bakary came around, ordering them to put their hand on the party flag, adorned with the five-pointed red star on a green field. The righter of wrongs would put his hand on trainees’ shoulders, giving them his blessing, while the recruits had to swear, by way of a standardised oath, to obey the party’s command and execute its orders, eliminate the enemies of the revolution, observe discipline and accept all punishments in cases of personal failure.³⁶⁴ The

³⁶⁰ *Nkrumah’s Subversion in Africa*, 18–21; interview Ali Amadou, Niamey, 28 Jan. 2003. Another camp location, where Sawabists may or may not have trained, was Axim, on the coast, west of Takoradi. *Le Niger*, 21 June 1965 (‘en pleine brousse’).

³⁶¹ He complained about this to Sadou Delewa, who then took Dembélé under his wing. *Le Niger*, 16 Nov. 1964 (interrogation Dembélé); interviews Ali Amadou and Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 Jan. and 6 Dec. 2003; *Nkrumah’s Subversion in Africa*, 7.

³⁶² This was in 1964. Interview with Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 6 Dec. 2003.

³⁶³ Mahaman Guimba dit Policier, from Dogondoutchi, = Mahamane Guimba dit Mahamane Soudie dit Mahamane dit Sawaba, ‘tablier’ from Filingué? See Message Radio Commandant Brigade de Gaya to Commandant Compagnie de Niamey, 4 Sept. 1961 and Organisation Terroriste “Sawaba”.

³⁶⁴ The practice of taking oaths was confirmed by Mounkaila Beidari, who confirmed the text below read to him in full, and Ali Talba. Interviews, Niamey, 23 Febr. 2008 & 4 Febr. 2003; *Le Niger*, 26 Oct. 1964 (interrogation Alke) & 17 May 1965; Morillon, ‘La tentative insurrectionnelle’; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 5 Nov. 1964; *Fraternité-*

composition of units was arranged at Mampong, possibly also at other sites where commandos were trained. On average they were made up of five to eight men, occasionally ten. Inspired by the revolution in other countries, units had a 'chef militaire', responsible for military operations. A 'political commissar' on occasion substituted for him, but was mainly expected to watch over the loyalty of the troops and supervise the political organisation of infiltrated regions.³⁶⁵

Hebdo, 9 July 1965. Text oath in Comte, 'Un plan de destruction', probably taken from 'Mission Orders and Instructions', found, perhaps, in a guerrilla notebook: 'I swear to obey, under all circumstances, the leadership of the Party, its Secretary-General, and all people called by circumstance to assume its high functions ... I swear to apply, and to have applied, without restriction and without weakness, all directives and orders of my Party, to act without weakness and without hesitation for their concrete realisation ... I swear never to hesitate to punish and have punished the enemies of the Nigérien People, whoever they may be, without any sentimental consideration ... to liquidate the puppet agents reputedly harmful to the population and revolution ... I swear to observe under all circumstances and everywhere the most rigorous discipline with respect to my political and military leaders, to never tolerate the slightest manifestation of indiscipline on anyone's part ... I swear to spare nothing to be worthy of my Nigérien Fatherland, its Sawaba Party, never to betray the confidence of my leaders ... and to accept in advance all punishments that could be inflicted on me in case of failure' ('Je jure d'obéir, en toutes circonstances, à la Direction de mon Parti, à son Secrétaire Général, et à toute personne appelée par les circonstances, à assumer ses hautes fonctions ... Je jure d'appliquer et de faire appliquer, sans restriction et sans faiblesse, toutes les directions et tous les mots d'ordre de mon Parti, d'agir sans faiblesse et sans hésitation pour leur réalisation concrète ... Je jure de ne jamais hésiter à châtier et à faire châtier les ennemis du Peuple Nigérien, quels qu'ils soient, sans aucune considération d'ordre sentimental ... de liquider les agents fantoches réputés nuisibles à la population et à la révolution ... Je jure d'observer en toutes circonstances et en tous lieux la discipline la plus rigoureuse vis-à-vis de mes chefs politiques et militaires, de ne jamais tolérer la moindre manifestation d'indiscipline de la part de qui que ce soit ... Je jure de ne rien épargner pour être digne de ma Patrie Nigérienne, de son Parti Sawaba, de ne jamais trahir la confiance de mes dirigeants ... et d'accepter d'avance les châtiments qui pourraient m'être infligés en cas de défaillance').

³⁶⁵ Morillon, 'La tentative insurrectionnelle'; interviews Mounkaila Beidari and Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 28-29 Nov. 2003, 23 Febr. 2008; *Le Niger*, 16 Nov. 1964 (interrogation Dembélé); n. 336.

PART III

FIGHTING FOR DELIVERANCE

CHAPTER TEN

INFILTRATIONS, 1960–1964

In April 1963 Mallam Isiaku began to make withdrawals from an account at Barclays Bank in Kano. The amounts of money were small (a couple of hundred Nigerian pounds, usually smaller sums) and were cashed with one of two cheque books. Isiaku was an alias for Sallé Dan Koulou, the former MP for Tessaoua, who had recently returned from military training in China. After a brief period in Mampong, Dan Koulou travelled to Northern Nigeria to take command of the party's office in Kano and supervise operations staged from the city—targeting the region between Tessaoua and Maradi. The money that Dan Koulou controlled came from an account at Barclays Bank in Accra. This was fed with funds from communist China, which were put in a bank account in Geneva and then moved to an account in Brussels, from where they were transferred to the Ghanaian capital.¹

The resources that the movement had mobilised abroad had to be brought closer to Niger's borders if they were to be put to use. As noted, by autumn 1961 Sawaba had an office in Kano's Sabongari district, which, while used for recruitment purposes, could also be employed for planning strategy and infiltration operations. With its substantial community of Nigériens, however, Kano already formed a safe haven well before that year. It is possible, for example, that Djibo Bakary travelled to Kano from Accra via Lagos in March 1959 to confer with then Sawaba MP Badéri Mahamane, who was in the city for a couple of days before returning to Zinder. Fellow Zinderois municipal councillor Mani Brimarka (Brimaka?), employee at the telephone company, was also in Kano then, acting as Sawaba representative during a three-month period of leave. It is not known what they did or what plans were discussed.²

¹ The source of this information was a later statement of the Diiori government. The stub numbers of Dan Koulou's cheque books were 64.S.37024 to 64.S.37035 and 64.U.30006 to U.30030 respectively. T.R. Shaw, British Embassy, Abidjan, to C.M. Lequesne, Foreign Office, 22 Oct. 1964; PRO, FO 371/177.230; Bulletin de Renseignements Particuliers, 18 Oct. 1964, no. 1234/2/S - Note d'information; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2.

² Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de Dakar pour la période du 19 au 29 mars 1959, no. 25; CAOM, Cart.3685. Another source disputed that Bakary was in Kano. Badéri Mahamane allegedly was disappointed about his trip and wished

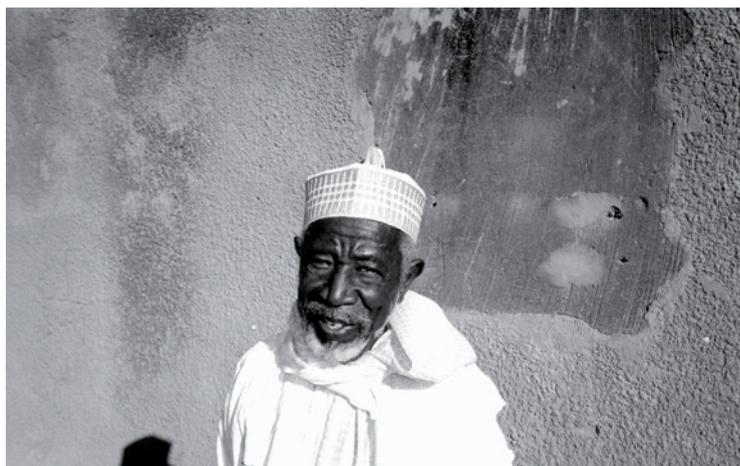


Photo 10.1 Ousmane Dan Galadima, Madaoua, 2003.

The following year numerous men, en route for training abroad, made their way to the ancient city. In 1961, activities increased as Ousmane Dan Galadima organised the 'personnel office' in Sabongari and tried to resolve local financial problems. In October, he called a meeting that was of some importance since it was attended by Bakary himself, as well as several Sawabists from southern Niger, including Lawali Baro and André Kalla, both from Maradi, and unidentified delegates from Tessaoua and Zinder. Bakary, who possibly stayed with NEPU's Aminu Kano, remained for four days,³ and the meeting probably discussed plans for expansion of bases and the building of a communications network, in addition to infiltration missions to Niger. As shown in the previous chapter, Ali Kote, the trader-jockey from Zinder who housed Dan Galadima in Sabongari, early in 1962 established himself in Lagos not only to organise transfers of recruits to and from Accra but also to help in the movement's financial transactions. At the time, or possibly later, the Lagos presence included Mohamed Baba, a currency trafficker who received Sawabists in his house and must have assisted in

to continue to the cities of Jos and Zaria. However, this may be French disinformation. On Badéri, see Chapters 7-8.

³ Recueil des principaux renseignements collectés au cours de la période du 16 au 22 nov. 1961, no. 152; SHAT, 5 H 95; A. Espitalier, commissioner police Zinder, to director Sûreté, 3 Oct. 1961 and Minister of the Interior to President Diori, 12 Oct. 1961; both ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.6; files on Laouali Baro and André Kalla; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 12.32. One Ouali, Sawabist from Madarounfa, may also have been present, but this could refer to Laouali (Lawali) Baro.

funding matters.⁴ More to the north, a bureau was functioning in Ibadan by June 1963 (it is unknown who manned it), and closer to the Middle Belt, in Ilorin, Sawaba benefited from intelligence work by Nigerian sympathisers—Saadou Alanamu (Sa'adu Alanamu), who was in touch with the Moral Rearmament Movement for which he visited Helsinki, and a contact of his at the local authorities, Saidou Kawu, whom the French dubbed a 'notorious communist'. The Ilorin network was already established in 1959, but it seems that it was still in place by 1964. Also in 1959, Sawaba possibly got in touch through Bakary with Ibrahim Imam, a Nigerian building contractor and tireless campaigner who became patron of the 'Bornu Youth Movement' (BYM), a Kanuri political group. From his base in the north-eastern city Maiduguri, Imam would have gone all the way to Maradi, probably to get in touch with local Sawabists.⁵

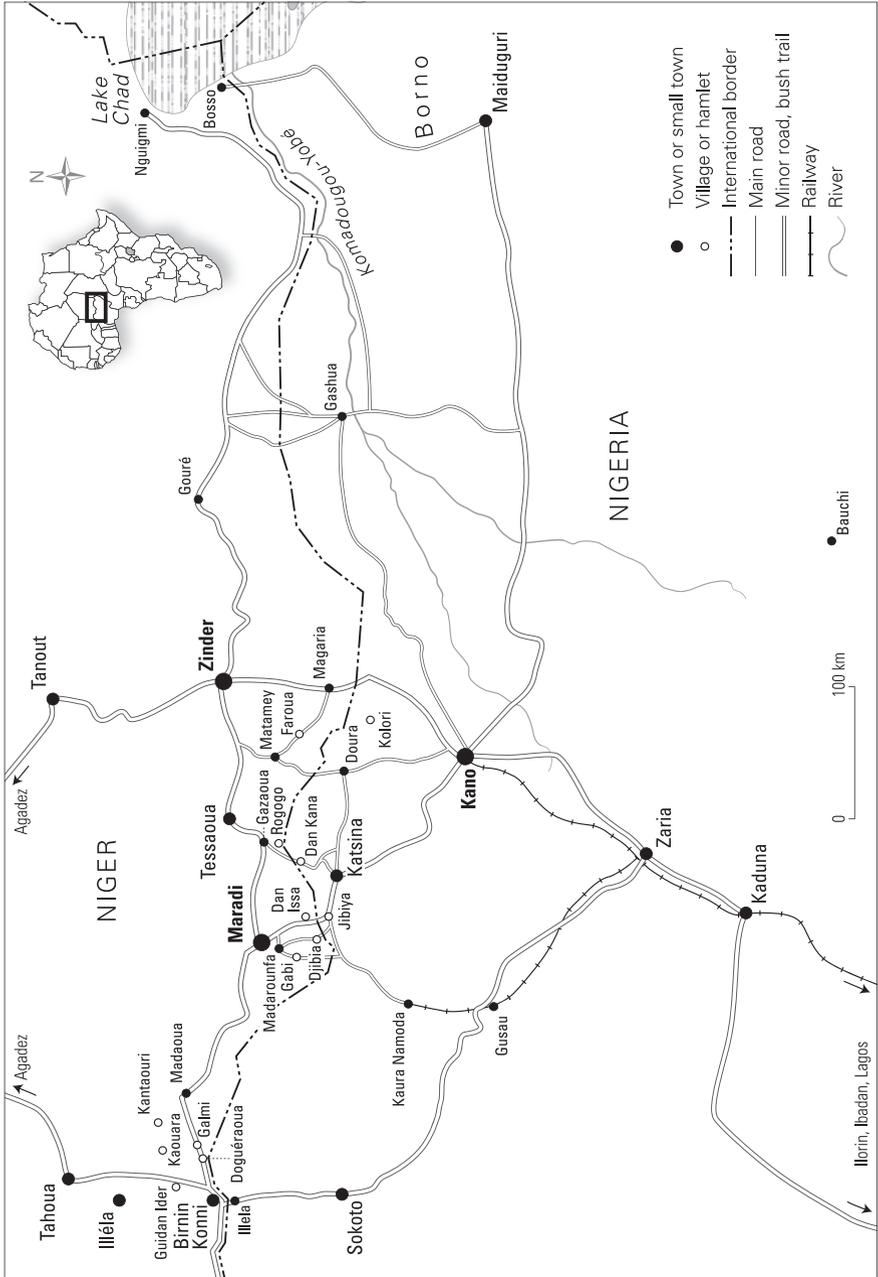
Thus, it was cities in the north of Nigeria, as opposed to more centrally located towns, that were most important for base areas and infiltration operations (Map 10.1). By 1962 a satellite bureau for Kano was functioning in Katsina, a few dozen kilometres from the frontier. The bureau was manned by a certain Kali, an expelled Nigérien, and at first acted as an intelligence relay point, not a base for activists. Later, it developed into an important regrouping centre for commandos on their way to Niger and received its orders from Sawaba headquarters in Accra.⁶ Still closer to Niger and literally on the border, cadres established themselves in the village of Jibiya—which the French may have confused with Djibia to the west, on the Nigérien side of the frontier.⁷ The base was part of a network extending

⁴ Bakary was in Lagos at an ILO conference, Jan. 1961. Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 9 June 1965/7 Sept. 1966; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; Note d'information, 25 Jan. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 4.11.

⁵ Alanamu was also Ilorin's representative of the northern NPC. Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 501, 26 June 1963; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de Dakar pour la période du 4 au 10 juin 1959, no. 33; CAOM, Cart.3686; O.E. Udofia, 'The Kanuri and Interest Group Politics in Borno', *Annals of Borno*, 3 (1986), 31–41; B.J. Dudley, *Parties and Politics in Northern Nigeria* (London, 1968), 82 and 100. See for the Nigerian network and interaction with Nigerian politics also K. van Walraven, 'From Kano: Clandestine Politics in Niger and Nigeria and Sawaba's Cross-Border Ties with NEPU (1958-1966)', in S. Awenengo Dalberto and C. Lefebvre (eds), *Boundaries and Independence 1940-1964* (forthcoming), ch. 3 ('communiste notoire').

⁶ Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 4-10 May 1964, 565, no. 19; SHAT, 5 H 126/7; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 28 Febr. 1966; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2. Kali = Kali Abdou Traoré (a Zarma born in Maradi) = Kali Abdou dit Fidel Castro? Note de Renseignements, Ambassade de France, no.616/CM/NIG/S, Niamey, 15 Dec. 1965; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; ch. 9 at n. 282.

⁷ The centre of which lay further to the west but was obviously part of the same village



Map 10.1 The southern network.

across the border to Madarounfa, some 25 km to the north (a bit shorter via a bush trail running from the Nigérien Djibia further west). As Dan Koulou's associate Mallam Kalla, the peasant-marabout who acted as recruitment officer, had left for Katsina, jumping his house arrest, the Madarounfa cell by spring 1962 was led by one Yero Adama, whose contacts extended the network well into southern Niger, covering the Cercles of Maradi, Konni and Tessaoua.⁸

Still further to the west a base was established in 'Goussao'. French intelligence described this as a small Nigerian village 25 km south-west of Jibiya, but since this information was derived from interrogated guerrillas there is a possibility that the base was actually located near the Nigerian city of Gusau, located more to the west on the railway line connecting that town with Zaria and Kaduna to the south. As shown below, this would fit with the location of an arms depot established later at the town of Kaura Namoda, the terminus of the same railway line some 30 km north of Gusau. The 'Goussao' base was probably not formed before the end of 1962,⁹ but its location underlined the importance of the Sokoto-Konni passage in Nigeria's north-west, which from the summer of 1963 became a principal infiltration route.¹⁰

Launch pads for operations from Nigeria's north-east were already in place by 1959, when 'very frequent contacts' were made by youngsters of the Zikist National Vanguard and envoys of the related NCNC—both Nigerian nationalist groups—with people in Bosso at Lake Chad, in particular circles of the local chieftaincy. The possible route that the deposed canton chief Aba Kaka took to enlist in Sawaba's Ghanaian programme pointed to the importance of the towns of Maiduguri and especially Gashua, which was linked by bush trails to southern Niger, some 30 km to the north. At its northern end this cross-border network connected with the town of Nguigmi, where Koussanga Alzouma, assisted by Barmou Batouré and others, had constituted a cell of the Marxist-oriented PAI.¹¹

system. Many villages in West Africa are marked by dispersed settlement. With the establishment of the Anglo-French frontier, Djibia was probably cut into two. See also below.

⁸ Bulletin de renseignements. Délégation pour la défense de la zone d'outre-mer no. 4—Etat-Major—2^{ème} Bureau, no. 25.553/2/SC, 12 Sept. 1962; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2. On Mallam Kalla, see chs. 7–9.

⁹ Bulletin de renseignements, no. 25.553/2/SC, 12 Sept. 1962 lists Nigerian bases but does not cite this one.

¹⁰ Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 31 Aug.–6 Sept. 1964, 1.054, no. 36; SHAT, 5 H 127; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 14 Sept. 1963; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2.

¹¹ Moctar Yaya and El Hadji Oussaini were part of the Nguigmi network. Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de Dakar pour la période du 9 au 15 juillet 1959, no. 38; CAOM, Cart.2249 ('contacts très fréquents').

While the various points of the Nigerian network must have operated with considerable autonomy, Kano formed the hub in the system. Central planning took place here, as can be gauged, for example, from an important meeting that took place on 22 June 1963, to which several traders-activists from Zinder were invited. Since Dan Galadima left for North Africa some time after October 1961, it is possible that Sallé Dan Koulou, who escaped to Nigeria in or after September 1961, took over the management of Sabongari. It is unclear who ran its affairs during Dan Koulou's journeys to China and Ghana (autumn of 1962 to probably early 1963), but by April 1963 he was back. In July he was joined by Dodo Hamballi, Dandouna Aboubakar's associate who had also returned from Nanking-Mampong and was assigned to supervise operations in the area east of Tessaoua including Matamey, Magaria, Zinder and Tanout.¹²

These naturally had to take account of the fact that Niger's geography did not provide terrain for the hit-and-run tactics of guerrilla warfare. But there were exceptions, such as the frontier region with Nigeria in the far east, formed by the Komadougou-Yobé basin, whose vegetation and streams dotted with islands made for better guerrilla country.¹³ The same was true for the forest region on the border with Dahomey. More generally, Niger's flat, arid savanna (Photo 10.2) did not mean that infiltration as such was impossible. The frontier region of Niger and Nigeria lent itself remarkably well to subversive action. Intensive cross-border trade and the shared Hausa language made communication easy. The poorly demarcated frontier, whose nearly 1,600 km were marked by just 148 beacons, was intersected by thousands of bush trails connecting markets and villages on both sides of the border, intimately known to the local population and unhindered by natural or man-made obstacles. Checkpoints were to be found only on the main roads¹⁴ and in the frontier zones cross-border influ-

¹² Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 1-7 July 1963, 879, no. 27; SHAT, 5 H 124; *Ibid.*, 7 July 1963; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; A.J. Warren, British Embassy, Abidjan, to P.R.A. Mansfield, Foreign Office, 23 Oct. 1964; PRO, FO 371/177.230; Bulletin de Renseignements Particuliers, 18 Oct. 1964, no. 1234/2/S; *Le Niger*, 23 Nov. 1964 (interrogation Dodo Hamballi); interview Ali Mahamane Madaouki, Zinder, 14 Febr. 2003.

¹³ Interviews Abdou Adam, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003; Kanembou Malam, Diffa, 12 Febr. 2006; and Aba Kaka, Bosso, 13 Febr. 2006.

¹⁴ W.S. Bates, British High Commission, Kaduna, to J.A. Pugh, Lagos, 21st Oct. 1964, 121/472/1; PRO, FO 371/177230; I. Brownlie, *African Boundaries: A Legal and Diplomatic Encyclopaedia* (London, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1979), 445-469 (lists beacons); D. Collins, 'Partitioned Culture Areas and Smuggling: The Hausa and the Groundnut Trade across the Nigeria-Niger Border from the Mid-1930s to the Mid-1970s', in A.I. Asiwaju (ed.), *Partitioned Africans: Ethnic Relations across Africa's International Boundaries 1884-1984* (London & Lagos,



Photo 10.2 A landscape between Dogondoutchi and Birnin Konni.

ences were pervasive, ranging from the powerful attraction that Nigerian religious leaders exercised in southern Niger to people's participation in the politics of each other's country. As shown below, this could have repercussions for the stability of the conservative-aristocratic government of Northern Nigeria, as represented by the ruling NPC. However, the risks for the Diori regime were comparatively greater since, in the words of a British diplomat, there was no doubt that

the inherent disaffection between the predominantly Hausa population of the Nigerian border and the Djerma Government offer[ed] opportunities for mischief-making from outside.¹⁵

Consequently, there were various possibilities to mobilise southern Niger's population with the assistance of people in Northern Nigeria. This was one of the principal aims of infiltration in the early years, rather than military confrontation. It was facilitated by the authoritarian nature of Niger's regime, which rendered anything less than complete loyalty subversive. Rather harmless acts, such as the distribution of leaflets, tracts, photos of Sawaba leaders or even drawings of camels, in addition to the spreading of rumour, were politically explosive and in the war of nerves could help af-

1985), 195–221; W.F.S. Miles, *Hausaland Divided: Colonialism and Independence in Nigeria and Niger* (Ithaca, NY, and London, 1994).

¹⁵ Shaw to Lequesne, 22 Oct. 1964.

fect the balance of forces between the regime and the opposition. While much of this was the work of Sawaba's internal wing, commandos coming in from outside were to contribute to this as well. Apart from sensitising the population, infiltration had other goals, such as the delivery of funds (by 1962 it was noted that Sawabists in Zinder lived almost exclusively on money from the external wing); informing or given orders to internal branches; or reconnoitring, in the words of French intelligence, the 'sensitive points' in the country, the control of which would determine the success of armed action. With time, specifically military objectives became more important and included monitoring of government ministries and spying on ministers' movements, relaying intelligence to the external leadership and possibly making preparations for a coup d'état.¹⁶

Infiltrations from Northern Nigeria thus began early and initially betrayed a strategic thinking that contradicted Maoist prescriptions: it did not prioritise between countryside and urban areas. Already in 1959 tracts were distributed by Zikists and NCNC men in Bosso, mobilising people for independence, while slogans against the RDA regime were spread by word of mouth. Activities began to increase from late 1961 (after the regime's autumn repression campaign), when leaflets appeared on the streets of Niamey, speaking out against the annual 18 December celebrations. In January 1962 this was followed by the distribution of photographs of Bakary in Zinder. In July photos, tracts and other propaganda materials were passed around in Konni, and the month afterwards in Maradi. The material had been smuggled into the country from Nigeria, and in reprisal the authorities arrested Yero Adama of the Madarounfa cell and another activist.¹⁷

¹⁶ In 1963 Djibo Bakary boasted that his men had been able to plant letters under the doormats of ministers' offices as a kind of threat. Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 10-16 Sept. 1962, 25.596, no. 2; SHAT, 5 H 121; Ibid., 4-10 May 1964, 565, no. 19; SHAT, 5 H 126; Aboubakar, commissaire de police Agadez, to M. le Directeur de la Sûreté Nationale, Niamey, 6 Nov. 1963; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 18.9 (Direction de la Sûreté Nationale/Commissariat de Police de la Ville d'Agadez: Notes d'information concernant le Sawaba en liaison avec Tamanrasset); Airgram, Department of State, A-259, 28 March 1963; USNARA, II RG 59, POL 30, Niger, 2/1/63, Box 3997; Direction de la Sûreté Nationale, no. 415/CSN, Déclaration Mahaman Leiyi, Niamey, 4 Aug. 1964; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.1; G. Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets de la décolonisation* (Paris, 1967), vol. 2, 324 ('points sensibles').

¹⁷ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 9 au 15 juillet 1959, no. 38; Recueil des principaux renseignements collectés au cours de la période 11-17 & 18-24 janv. 1962, nos. 160-161; SHAT, 5 H 92; Bulletin de renseignements, no. 25.553/2/SC, 12 Sept. 1962. The other activist was one Laoualli Lobo. On the political importance of the 18 December celebrations, see Chapter 6.

Judging from infiltration in the Tessaoua region, rural areas, too, were not forgotten. Probably by the spring of 1962 a series of missions took place that provide some insight into the way that the terrain was prepared for guerrilla action. Sallé Dan Koulou, a certain ‘Madaoua’—groundnut trader-cadre from Maradi—and one Sarkin Nanou, Sawaba propagandist, crossed the border north-east of Katsina. They wanted to visit the village of Rogogo, located near a bush trail to Gazaoua, on the road between Tessaoua and Maradi, a bare ten km from the frontier.¹⁸ In Rogogo they approached villagers to get confirmation of their political loyalties, telling them that the movement’s external wing was planning an armed comeback. A few months later another party, dispatched by Dan Koulou, visited Rogogo asking the village cell to store food for commandos, before moving further north.¹⁹ This was followed shortly by another visit of Sarkin Nanou, who announced plans for an arms cache and promised that the villagers would get shooting practice, before going to a meeting of the cell at Gazaoua further north. Some time later a Rogogo cadre was asked to come to the village of Dan Kana located on the border, just inside Nigeria, where Dan Koulou provided him with ammunition and insignia for storage in his village.²⁰ The Sawaba presence in Magaria, the town south of Zinder located some 15 km from the border, was similarly mobilised. As noted in Part II, this town had several Sawaba supporters, led by former MP Moussa Maharou, and undoubtedly was in touch with the pro-Sawaba marabouts in Kolori, just across the frontier in Nigeria.²¹

Late in 1962 things became more serious as one of the first larger-scale infiltrations took place by small groups of men, this time targeting the cities. Nothing is known about possible armament. On 14 November five commandos who had been to the Eastern Bloc arrived from Accra in a small village near Kano—a possible reference to Jibiya north of Katsina—and established themselves to prepare for infiltrations across the border. The men they joined were part of a reconnaissance mission to study the pos-

¹⁸ Rogogo lies at 13.43 N 7.88 E. There is also a Rogogo village in Nigeria, further east (north from Kano as the crow flies) at 12.55 N 8.32 E, also close to the frontier.

¹⁹ The Rogogo cell consisted of Mahaman Leiyi, a Peul peasant-herdsman, his cousin Hamidou and one Malam Ibrahim, Nouhou and Issaka. Déclaration Mahaman Leiyi, Niamey, 4 Aug. 1964.

²⁰ The cadre was Mahaman Leiyi. Visiting commando parties usually consisted of two men. The Gazaoua cell consisted of one Zakari, Mati, Dan Dogari, Mizinyaoua. The ammunition came in two sacks. *Ibid.*

²¹ Magaria’s role can be inferred from later evidence. Bulletin de Renseignements Particuliers, 18 Oct. 1964, no. 1234/2/S. See for Kolori, which lies at 12.43 N 8.55 E, ch. 6 at n. 104.

sibilities of armed action. From 17 December small groups began to cross the border and dispersed to cover seven urban centres in the south, stretching from Zinder in the east to Niamey in the west. They contacted local cadres, collected intelligence and did some agitation work, spreading the rumour of a rising by the domestic wing, which would be assisted by the commandos—then estimated at 300—and military elements from Algeria. For this purpose, the team assigned to Zinder would have contacted Algerian immigrants in Agadez.²² The following January a high-level meeting was held in Kano, possibly to discuss the December incursions. Rumours circulated that a coup d'état would take place in Niamey in June. However, whether this was due to a Nigerian security warning or simmering unrest in the Nigérien army (see below), or part of a war of nerves, it is unlikely that Sawaba's strategy at the time aimed solely at an armed takeover in the capital, in view of its operations in the countryside as well as the urban areas.²³

There are indications, for example, of several sorties by Dan Koulou in the Maradi region. From the summer of 1963 Dodo Hamballi went on mission more than once in the area south and east of Tessaoua, contacting cadres while seconded by Ali Mahamane Madaouki, the Algeria trainee. Late that year or early in 1964 one Garba, whom the French dubbed a 'Sawabist troublemaker', made use of the Sokoto-Konni passage to confer with the Doguéraoua cell—a canton east of Konni—, some of whose cadres were active as coxeur, important for the movement's communication lines. These are just examples of missions from Nigeria, and associated cells in Niger, that ended up in the archival record. As shown below, several more were by then in the making. Operations in the Sokoto-Konni-Madaoua zone, where some of the above incursions took place, were supervised by Dandouna Aboubakar (at least by 1964): he also collected intelligence on the Cercles of Agadez, Gouré and Nguigmi. The latter two, however, covering the entire far east, were mainly the responsibility of Malam Mustafa (Moustapha), nickname of Moustapha Oumar.²⁴

²² Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 10 Dec. 1962; SHAT 10 T 719/D.2; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 24-30 Dec. 1962, 25.003, no. 35; SHAT, 5 H 122; Ibid., 21-27 Jan. 1963, 25.145, no. 4; SHAT, 5 H 128; Ibid., 27 Jan. 1963, no. ?; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2. The seven urban centres, apart from Zinder and Niamey, must have referred to Tessaoua, Maradi and Konni and possibly Madaoua or Tahoua and Dosso or Dogondoutchi.

²³ Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 27 Jan. 1963, no. ?; 11-17 Febr. 1963, 25.257, no. 7; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Dest. no. 541, 9 Febr. 1963; last 2 SHAT, 5 H 128 & 10 T 719/D.2.

²⁴ *Le Niger*, 23 Nov. 1964 (interrogation Hamballi, referring to 3 or 4 missions); Bulletin Mensuel de Renseignements, 1-31 Oct. 1964, no. 472.3 - Konni; ANN, FONDS DAPA; G. Comte, 'Les carnets de Nankin', *Est & Ouest*, 16-28 févr. 1966, no. 357, 30. Doguéraoua's cell, prob-

Awaken the People: The Southern Network and the Nigerian Hinterland

In May 1964 the French reported that Sawaba's domestic network was well structured, receiving orders from the bases in Kano and Katsina.²⁵ This observation actually referred to the complex of cells in *southern* Niger and shows that it was the more important. While the southern cell structure was just one of three overlapping networks covering the south, the west and the north of the country, this section discusses developments in the southern network, its infiltrations and the links with Northern Nigeria. Subsequent sections focus on the northern and western networks; infiltration ventures targeting the army and administration; and the gradual build-up of infrastructure in surrounding countries (base areas, weaponry, arms caches).

If southern Niger was Sawaba's most important power base, this was especially true for its central-eastern region (the zone Maradi-Zinder). French intelligence in 1962 noticed that the movement was developing infiltration operations and intensifying propaganda. Tracts smuggled from Nigeria to Birnin Konni outlined the views of Bakary and accused the regime of subservience to the French. In Tahoua, members of Sawaba's cell engaged in several meetings but, just like in Zinder, did so under the cover of social visits involving small groups of men. Yet, a 1963 police report referred to the formation of neighbourhood cells made up of five to ten and said that a large part of the population was suspected of loyalty towards the movement.²⁶ As noted in Chapter 7, persecution in Zinder had made political work there more difficult, forcing it deeper underground, with cadres meeting in tiny groups in the streets or at home. Agitation nevertheless increased, amounting to what the French saw as a real resurgence of opposition.²⁷

ably made up of a family network, included Hakimi Moussa from Guidan Ider (between Konni and Illéla); Hakimi Nayoussa from Kantaouri; Hakimi Moussa from Kaoura Alassane (Kaouara, some 50 km north-east of Konni?); one Nouhou from Doguéraoua; and Labo Moussa, from Galmi. The latter two were (former) chef coxeurs; interview Ali Mahamane Madaouki, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003 ('perturbateur Sawabiste').

²⁵ Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 4 to 10 May 1964, 565, no. 19. Generally, Van Walraven, 'From Kano'.

²⁶ Cadres involved in the Tahoua cells included one El Hadji Hima, Abba Moussa Depense, Salifou Dori, Azzahabi Balle, Chaibou Oumarou, ex-prison inmate who had worked in the leather trade, and a certain Abala. Commissariat de Police de Tahoua, Rapport Hebdomadaire, no. 62/C, 6 May 1963; ANN, 86 MI 1E 7.3; Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 18-24 janv. 1962, no. 161.

²⁷ Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 30 July to 5 Aug. & 6-12 Aug. 1962, 25,379 & 25,410, nos. 14-15; 20-26 Aug. 1962, 25,471, no.?.; 27 Aug. to 2 Sept. 1962, 25,520, no. 18; 3-9

Thus, ‘foreign envoys’, involving Upper Voltans, Senegalese and Malians—probably expelled AOFiens—assisted the Zinder branch in the course of what must have been infiltration missions to sensitise the population. In September 1962 Alarba N’Diaye, trader of Senegalese extraction,²⁸ distributed tracts, not to leading Sawabists since this was too risky, but local women, who hid them outside their homes.²⁹ French and Arabic texts called for total independence, while oral propaganda spread the word that Bakary was ready to return, having 3,000 troops in Mali at his disposal and enjoying the support of the FLN. Rumours went around that France and other Western powers wanted to eliminate leaders like Nkrumah, Modibo Keita and Sékou Touré, but that a communist coup d’état was at hand in France that would allow Bakary to liberate Niger. The RDA felt so antagonised that several people in the Zinder area, including a village chief, were arrested; all canton and village chiefs were pressed to denounce the movement.³⁰ Since this came after a previous crackdown in late 1961–early 1962,³¹ these developments indicated that the Zinder wing kept functioning. As was already noted in late 1961, the movement continued to be active despite arrests—at that time being led by a ‘troïka’, as the French put it, of Mal(l)am Saley Madaouki, the marabout already engaged in agitation in 1959, and two cadres, possibly fellow clerics.³² Consequently, by early 1963 French intelligence reported that agitation in Zinder went on unabated, with Sawabists meeting frequently, capitalising on social issues.³³ As shown below, this was partly facilitated by misconduct of RDA cadres.

However, there certainly was an external factor by way of infiltrations from Nigeria. As noted, missions such as undertaken by Dodo Hamballi and Ali Mahamane Madaouki in the Zinder region took place more than once, their object being, in the words of the latter, to ‘awaken the people’,

Sept. 1962, 25.547, no. 19; 10–16 Sept. 1962, 25.596, no. 2; 17–23 Sept. 1962, 25.606, no. 21; all SHAT, 5 H 121.

²⁸ He was also the brother of the woman who became Bakary’s wife and was to go as a student to the GDR and China. See ch. 9 n. 113 & 293.

²⁹ In NEPU, women also played such roles. R.S. Kwewum, *The Story of Gambo Sawaba* (Jos, 1990).

³⁰ Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 20–26 Aug. 1962, 25.471; 27 Aug. to 2 Sept. 1962, 25.510, no. 18; 3–9 Sept. 1962, 25.547, no. 19; 10–16 Sept. 1962, 25.596, no. 2; 17–23 Sept. 1962, 25.606, no. 21 (‘émissaires étrangers’).

³¹ Involving Nakandari, Sawaba groundnut trader. See Chapter 8, note 18.

³² Mallam Boukary and Mahamane Djibo (Djido?). They received help from Habou Bargou, an employee, and an unidentified man who was of mixed Hausa and other origin and was called a ‘notorious Sawabist’ who had recently been released from prison in Gaya. Recueil des principaux renseignements collectés au cours de la période du 2 au 8 & 16 au 22 nov. 1961, no. 150; SHAT, 5 H 95. On Madaouki, see ch. 7 at n. 110.

³³ Bulletin de Rens. Hebdomadaire, 25 Febr.–3 March 1963, 25.337, no. 9; SHAT, 5 H 123.

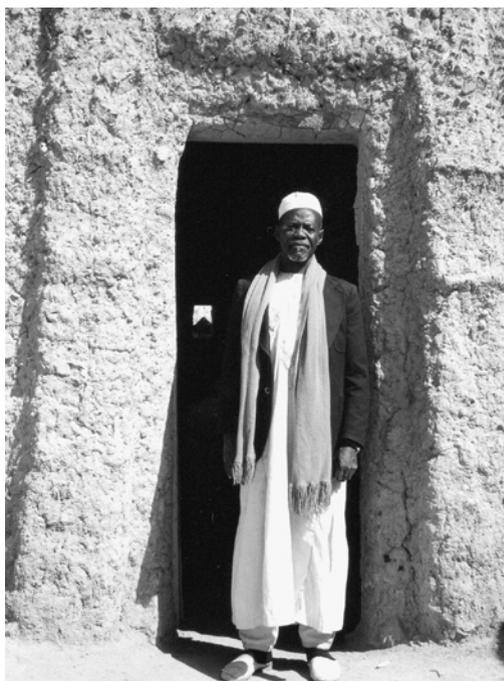


Photo 10.3 Ali Mahamane Madaouki, in 2003.

‘for in an armed struggle this was what was needed’.³⁴ While this usually appears to have worked on existing sympathies, on occasion threats were made—as can be gleaned from evidence in the Rogogo area, where Sallé Dan Koulou allegedly told the village cell that a particular person risked his life if he did not end his hostile propaganda.³⁵ However, contacts between infiltrating missions and people in the central-eastern regions appear to have gone off in a friendly atmosphere—in part because commandos at that stage hardly presented a threat and were intent on earning goodwill. These contacts were usually made during night-time visits, and according to several sources people mostly responded favourably when asked whether they still supported Bakary and his men.³⁶ Reminiscing later about their missions, Ali Mahamane Madaouki provided some insight into their *modus operandi*:

³⁴ Interview Ali M. Madaouki, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003 (‘éveiller le peuple’; latter quote paraphrased).

³⁵ Déclaration Mahaman Leiyi, Niamey, 4 Aug. 1964. The person threatened was one Kane.

³⁶ Interviews Ousseini Dandagoye and Bachir Boukary, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003.

With Dodo [Hamballi] I went to the Zinder region. We always went on foot, never by car. I had a strong body, usually entering in the area between Matamey and Magaria. This was easy, because we were Hausa. If we were in Kano, we said we lived in Katsina, and the other way around. I carried small arms that were easy to hide under my clothes, such as pistols. The government was vigilant. We disguised ourselves and were not recognised, posing as itinerant marabout equipped with a talisman or as a peasant carrying a hoe. When on mission, we had to make notes and carried working documents with us.³⁷

What this involved can be gleaned from the notebook of his comrade, which covered a huge stretch of territory ranging from Niamey, Dogondoutchi and Konni to Madaoua and Maradi. As commandos had to pay attention to government posts and markets, as sources of income and contacts, Hamballi noted of the town of Madarounfa:

This administrative post is made up of two cantons and a Peul group. They are the canton of Madarounfa, the canton of Gabi³⁸ and the Peul group of Serkin Foulani Douban.

IMPORTANT MARKET: The market of Madarounfa, the market of Dankourégaou.

THE POLITICAL SITUATION. On the whole at this administrative post the political situation is favourable to the party. But there are lackey elements made up especially of feudals who act severely towards the masses ... The customs posts of Dan-Issa³⁹ and Madarounfa can be classified among the most important in the country in terms of customs revenue.⁴⁰

Targeting customs posts could enhance Sawaba's popularity. French intelligence observed that customs officers had 'a very poor rating with the population', as they acted excessively towards petty offences and engaged in corrupt practices like confiscating goods and selling them in Nigeria for their own benefit. Occasionally, this led to Wild West scenes with customs

³⁷ Interviews Ali Mahamane Madaouki, Zinder, 10 & 14 Febr. 2003 (paraphrased).

³⁸ This town is located to the south-west of Madarounfa on another bush trail to the Nigerian border, west of the trail between Madarounfa, Djibia and the frontier.

³⁹ Located on the main road between Katsina and Maradi, just north of the Nigerian village of Jibiya.

⁴⁰ Quoted in Comte, 'Carnets de Nankin', 30. Location Dankourégaou is unknown ('Ce poste administratif est composé de deux cantons et d'un groupement Peulh. Ce sont le canton de Madarounfa, le canton de Gabi et le groupement peulh de Serkin Foulani Douban. **MARCHE IMPORTANT:** Le marché de Madarounfa, le marché de Dankourégaou. **LA SITUATION POLITIQUE.** Dans l'ensemble du poste administratif, la situation politique est favorable au parti. Mais il existe des éléments fantoches constitués, notamment des féodaux qui sévissent sur les masses ... Les postes des Douanes de Dan-Issa et Madarounfa se classent parmi les plus importants du pays au point de vue recettes douanières') (upper case in original).

officials shooting ‘smugglers’ or chasing them away and taking their ‘contraband’. In March 1964 a dozen men got involved in a battle with a customs officer at the village of Faroua, south of Zinder,⁴¹ who killed one of them and in retribution was hacked to death. It was reported that the village population had made common cause with the smugglers.⁴²

Clearly, the poor relations between the rural populace and the administration opened up possibilities. Mapping the political situation was, therefore, a standard practice during missions, as Abdou Ali Tazard of the Tessaoua network later recounted, remembering how commandos like Sallé Dan Koulou (a relative of his) would visit the city every now and then to collect intelligence.⁴³ Infiltration in the Maradi area took on a special character as it also targeted members of the administration, something that is discussed in a later section. Generally, missions were facilitated by the fact that commandos were assigned to the region from which they hailed.

The relationship with the Nigerian hinterland, however, was complicated by the intricate nature of Nigeria’s political system and the animosities and fractures marking its domestic situation. British diplomats reported that, throughout these years, President Diiori ‘complained of the ease with which Djibo Bakary’s men seem[ed] to find themselves able to operate from Nigeria’. In fact, according to US sources the righter of wrongs even gained an audience at an unspecified date (1962-1963?) with Nigeria’s federal prime minister, the northerner Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa.⁴⁴ As shown in Part I, relations with Northern Nigeria’s leaders—including members of its conservative, aristocratic government—had existed since the late 1950s. These contacts were shaped both by the politics of imminent independence and the RDA’s rise to power in the context of the *Communauté*. The ideas on cross-border unification that typically circulated in the unstable context of decolonisation were not only entertained by Sawaba and NEPU, but to a limited extent also affected Nigeria’s federal authorities and the NPC government in the north. By mid-1958, for example, a ‘bureau of French affairs’, headed by an Arab from Tanout, was busy looking at the

⁴¹ Located to the west of the main road between Zinder and Kano, on the crossroads of several bush trails.

⁴² *Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire*, 10-16 June 1963, 777, no. 24, 6-12 Apr. 1964, 427, no. 15, 13-19 Apr. 1964, 470, no. 16; SHAT, 5 H 123, 126 (‘une très mauvaise cote auprès de la population’).

⁴³ Interview with Abdou Ali Tazard, Tessaoua, 9 Febr. 2006.

⁴⁴ T.R. Shaw, British Embassy, Abidjan, to C.M. Lequesne, Foreign Office, 2 Oct. 1964; PRO, FO 371/177.230; Airgram, Department of State, A-259, 28 March 1963.

regional government's relations with the Nigériens. In January 1959 Tafawa Balewa said, in a statement that was undoubtedly meant to test the extent of Nigeria's influence as a regional powerhouse, that his country had the right to unite with other states. Northern Nigeria's premier, NPC leader Sir Ahmadu Bello—who was also 'Sardauna', i.e. scion of the royal house of the Sokoto Caliphate and nephew of the Sultan—a month earlier had still expressed reservations about closer ties with Niger in view of the political differences with Sawaba.⁴⁵

Yet, in April 1959 Bello made inquisitive remarks about Niger to Diamballa Maïga's cabinet director, sent to prepare a Nigérien delegation to Northern Nigeria's government in Kaduna. This upset the French and RDA, since the Sardauna, as the spiritual heir to the Sokoto Caliphate, still enjoyed prestige in central-eastern Niger. This was reinforced by his blood ties with the 'Shehu' or ruler of the kingdom of Borno in Nigeria's north-east, who still exercised influence over chiefs in the region between Tessaoua and Nguigmi—their enthronement being valid only if it occurred in the presence of the Shehu's envoys and each of them retaining titles at the latter's court in Borno. The visit to Kaduna of Niger's delegation in May 1959, headed by Maïga and Djibo Yacouba, both Songhay nobles, did little to remove these misgivings, horrified as they were about the prospect of bowing to either Sardauna or Shehu—so closely associated with Niger's Hausa-Kanuri east. The Nigerians' sceptical response to the RDA's support of the Communauté consecrated this emotional distance.⁴⁶

Nevertheless, as noted earlier in social respects Sawaba and Northern Nigeria's leaders were unlikely bed fellows. In practice the problem for the RDA was that the Nigerian authorities were simply indifferent to the political risks of their northern—much poorer and weaker—neighbour, although by the early 1960s they were fairly well disposed towards the Diori regime. Coupled with the fact, noted by British diplomats, that 'with the best will in the world, it [was] impossible to police the border effectively because of the vast areas involved and the lack of communication', this provided Sawaba with room to manoeuvre, which could be used for its commando infrastructure and infiltrations. Yet, while this could be enlarged by working with elements of Northern Nigeria's opposition, this

⁴⁵ Présidence du Conseil. S.D.E.C.E. Destinataire no. 562. Ref. 14335/A, 29 Dec. 1958; Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de Dakar pour la période du 18 au 24 juin 1959, no. 35, Annexe I; CAOM, Cart.2180/D.5 and 2249. See also ch. 2 at n. 67.

⁴⁶ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... du 18 au 24 juin 1959, no. 35 and Chapter 3 at n. 166.

breathing space had its limits. By 1964 the British estimated that support for Djibo Bakary by Nigeria's federal government or the Sardauna was 'highly unlikely'. Ahmadu Bello had by then developed close ties with Diori, corresponding regularly with him in Hausa. If Sir Tafawa Balewa had met Bakary in the past, this was probably in the line of the tenuous link that politicians are accustomed to entertain with any possible future leader. In any case, the Sardauna maintained his distance, and he was excluded from Diori's criticism about the lack of Nigerian co-operation in border control.⁴⁷

In fact, already in the autumn of 1961 the Emir of Kano assured Nigérien police that suspected Sawabists would be sent back to Niger.⁴⁸ Two years later the Nigerians warned Diori of an impending coup. The federal prime minister sent an envoy to Niamey with intelligence collected in Nigeria, and in July 1963, a month after the coup was to have taken place, Kano police seized important Sawaba documents and reinforced border controls with a customs post at Katsina or Daoura, i.e. Doura, east of Katsina, ten km from the frontier on the road to Matamey. Relations between the two countries had received a boost with visits of the Sardauna to the Maradi region in December 1962 and to Agadez in July 1963. During the latter visit Diori discussed issues of economic co-operation with Ahmadu Bello, such as groundnut exports, joint development of the Komadougou-Yobé basin and the construction of a telephone line between Konni and Sokoto to enable direct contact between Niamey and Kaduna.⁴⁹

Sawaba, consequently, had to build up ties with Nigeria's opposition forces, although this could only increase the enmity that its authorities felt for the little folk and have implications for the safety of operations. While Kano formed the hub of Sawaba's network, its presence was not even undisputed there, since the local community of Nigériens was originally oriented towards the RDA and it is difficult to say to what extent they followed NEPU in its shift of allegiance to Bakary's men in 1958 (see Chapter 3). One

⁴⁷ Message Radio Maradi, Note du service, n.d.; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.6; J.A. Pugh, British High Commission, Lagos, to C.M. Lequesne, Foreign Office, 6 Oct. 1964, 1 POL 10/174/1; British Embassy, Abidjan, to J.A. Pugh, British High Commission, Lagos, 30 Oct. 1964; T.R. Shaw, British Embassy, Abidjan, to C.M. Lequesne, Foreign Office, 15 Oct. 1964; PRO, FO 371/177.230; Bates to Pugh, Lagos, 21 Oct. 1964.

⁴⁸ A. Espitalier, commissioner police Zinder, to director Sûreté, 3 Oct. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.6.

⁴⁹ Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 11-17 Febr. 1963, 25.257, no. 7; *Ibid.*, 7-13 Jan. 1963, 25.065, no. 2 & 15-28 July 1963, 926/952, nos. 29-30; SHAT, 5 H 128 & 124; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 14 Sept. 1963.

may presume, however, that with most Nigériens in Kano hailing from the central-eastern regions, there were many who were not favourable to Niger's Songhay/Zarma-dominated government. In any case, in late 1961 the Franco-RDA combine began to develop plans for a propaganda battle among the Nigériens of Sabongari and, as shown in the next chapter, the complexities of Kano's political situation provided plenty of opportunity for counter-moves such as undercover operations.⁵⁰

The contacts that Sawaba developed with Northern Nigeria's opposition provided different levels of support, but these links also bore the risk of getting drawn into the domestic feuds of Nigerian politics. Thus, the links with Ibrahim Imam, patron of the BYM, were not very useful, since this group, established in opposition to the privileges of Borno's Shehu, disintegrated under the persecution of the Northern Nigerian government. The NPC felt antagonised by its agitation for a separate north-eastern state in the federation, detached from Northern Nigeria proper. While young Kanuri radicals shared their resentment of privilege with the little folk of NEPU, they opposed the latter's association with the Hausa community in Maiduguri, with the result that opposition to the north's aristocracy, very powerful under British Indirect Rule, fragmented. The BYM's tactical alignment with the Action Group of south-western Nigeria put further pressure on relations with NEPU, with which it previously engaged in an electoral alliance. Tanko Yakasai, the NEPU radical, forced a breakup of the Kanuri party into a pro-NEPU and a pro-Action Group wing. By 1961 the BYM had gone into steep decline.⁵¹ Still, it may have provided contacts in north-eastern Nigeria useful for infiltrations in the zone east of Gouré, although apart from Imam's possible role nothing else is known.

Similarly, contacts with Zikists diminished as time went by. This was caused by the decline of the Zikist movement itself, whose activism enjoyed its heyday in 1949-1950.⁵² Remnants got involved in the NCNC and NEPU politics and engaged in contact with Bakary's men in the early years of their clandestine existence. As noted in Chapter 7, in 1959 Abdoulaye Mamani met with the Zikist National Vanguard, a Zikist offshoot with

⁵⁰ A. Espitalier, commissioner police Zinder, to director Sûreté, 3 Oct. 1961.

⁵¹ Udofia, 'The Kanuri and Interest Group Politics in Borno' and Dudley, *Parties and Politics in Northern Nigeria*, 88-90, 104-105 and 112 n. 72.

⁵² Imam was forced to leave Borno for security reasons. E.E.G. Iweriebor, *Radical Politics in Nigeria, 1945-1950: The Significance of the Zikist Movement* (Zaria, 1996); C.G. Olusanya, 'The Zikist Movement: A Study in Political Radicalism, 1946-50', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 4 (1966), 3, 323-333.

NCNC connections, while it was rumoured that Issaka Koké, Sawaba's former minister of public works and agriculture, was busy translating Zikist tracts. There were definitely close contacts then with the NCNC, the party of Nnamdi Azikiwe⁵³ that was strong in Nigeria's Eastern Region and at independence entered the first federal government as minority partner with the NPC. The Franco-RDA combine was therefore concerned about contacts with the NCNC, which was influenced by ideas of cross-border unification and whose envoys (Zikists and others), as shown above, made numerous forays into Niger's Bosso region, establishing ties with pro-Sawaba groups.⁵⁴

Association with Zikists and BYM, both radical splinter groups in their twilight era, bore limited fruit and to some extent reflected the degree of Sawaba's own problems. Even links with the NCNC as such, which was preoccupied with Nigerian politics, seem to have declined during the early years of the new decade, although this party had been in a formal alliance with NEPU since 1954, which, in turn, was in close touch with Sawabists.⁵⁵ As shown in Chapter 1, NEPU and the UDN were to a considerable extent each other's social counterpart. NEPU's anti-colonial programme, laid down in the 'Sawaba Declaration' of 1950, took over where Zikists were forced to abandon agitation,⁵⁶ pleading for elimination of the Sarakuna, catering to the dispossessed and, more broadly, agitating for all the talakawa of Northern Nigeria.⁵⁷ Like the UDN, NEPU drew support from malcontent little folk, such as petty traders, artisans, peasants and—in the Gusau and Sokoto regions—Tijani clerics, while many followers were immigrants from other areas of Nigeria confronted with a marginalised status. It was strong in the cities, such as Kano (notably immigrant districts such as Sabongari); Zaria, where a base was established by Gambo Sawaba, a female kola-nut trader and dauntless agitator;⁵⁸ Bauchi; Katsina; and

⁵³ The nationalist politician from whom the Zikists drew their original inspiration. See ch. 7 at n. 65.

⁵⁴ M. Crowder, *The Story of Nigeria* (London, 1973), 299; Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de Dakar pour la période du 13 au 23 avril 1959, no. 27; Présidence du Conseil. S.D.E.C.E. Destinataire no. 562. Ref. 12785/A, 12 Nov. 1958; CAOM, 3685 & 2195/D.5.

⁵⁵ Dudley, *Parties and Politics in Northern Nigeria*, 181.

⁵⁶ Iweriebor, *Radical Politics in Nigeria*, vi. Raji Abdullah, founder of the 'Northern Elements Progressive Association' (NEPA—NEPU's precursor), was a Zikist-NCNC man. See Dudley, *Parties and Politics in Northern Nigeria*, 75; and Kwewum, *The Story of Gambo Sawaba*, 40.

⁵⁷ Dudley, *Parties and Politics in Northern Nigeria*, 169.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 85; email Murray Last to author, 13 Nov. 2003. See her (hagiographic) biography, Kwewum, *The Story of Gambo Sawaba*.

lesser towns, like Kaura Namoda. While NEPU's parliamentary representation became circumscribed by persecution and electoral manipulation, its political support remained fairly stable. Representing a significant element of discontent in Northern Nigeria's society, it constituted the region's principal opposition group.⁵⁹

Nevertheless, there were differences between NEPU and the movement of Bakary. As chief opposition party that never entered government, NEPU's position became complicated when its ally, the NCNC, entered a federal coalition with the NPC. Aminu Kano, NEPU's leader, assumed the federal office of Deputy Government Chief Whip, even though at the regional level his party was locked in pitiless battle with the NPC. The NPC and the region's chiefly Native Authorities were deeply intolerant of NEPU's opposition and relentlessly persecuted the party, making mobilisation and recruitment of competent cadres difficult. Its limited formal representation led to a shortage of funds, complicating competition with the NPC—which had controlled the administration since 1952—and reinforcing dependence on the NCNC. In contrast to the UDN/Sawaba, which had numerous organisers with a proper education, NEPU lacked leadership quality apart from Aminu Kano, whose lone status as party leader with a university (and aristocratic) background was confirmed in 1959 by his election as 'Life President'. While Djibo Bakary was the towering figure in Sawaba, he had to tolerate others besides him and never reached the formal status of Kano (this also did not agree with a movement such as Sawaba, whose union tradition was comparatively more pronounced).⁶⁰

The result was that NEPU suffered from a ramshackle organisation, incessant leadership struggles and splintering, in addition to defections to the NPC and misappropriation of funds.⁶¹ Kano's joining of the federal government led in 1961 to a split in the party executive, with cadres like

⁵⁹ Dudley, *Parties and Politics in Northern Nigeria*, 87, 164-198; Kwewum, *The Story of Gambo Sawaba*, 78 and 111.

⁶⁰ Articulating the language of class struggle, NEPU appealed to an imagined communalism of the pre-Fulani order, juxtaposing the interests of the Habe oppressed with those of their Fulani overlords. See on this below. Dudley, *Parties and Politics in Northern Nigeria, passim*; R.L. Sklar and C.S. Whitaker, 'Nigeria', in J.S. Coleman and C.G. Rosberg (eds), *Political Parties and National Integration in Tropical Africa* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London, 1964), 624.

⁶¹ I found little evidence for this in Sawaba. While Niger was much poorer, which may have influenced this, occasionally there were cases of embezzlement involving party members. It is difficult to say whether this involved individuals simply trying to make do as unpaid party workers and to what extent administrative harassment played a role. Probably there was a degree of corruption, yet not as advanced as in Nigeria or during later periods of Niger's history.

Gambo Sawaba and Tanko Yakasai abandoning NEPU for an alternative group, the 'Nigerian Elements Freedom Organisation' (NEFO). Although support for this party was short-lived, they took hundreds of followers with them, especially in Zaria and Kano.⁶² Tanko Yakasai, who later denied having joined NEFO,⁶³ had already been expelled from NEPU in 1959–1960 but then been accepted back owing to pressure from the youth faction, even though he markedly disagreed with Aminu Kano's policies. Yakasai became a proponent of armed struggle against the northern aristocracy, as he and other 'sons of the wind' felt that the NCNC alliance did not bring NEPU what it needed, and NPC repression made political competition through the ballot box futile. In this he continued a tradition of violence that was established by the Zikists⁶⁴ and received added legitimacy in the course of his visit to China.⁶⁵ Along with others, Yakasai favoured inclusion of Maoist doctrines in NEPU's constitution, thereby building on a militant undercurrent that had, until then, enjoyed free reign in the 'Askianist Movement'. This organisation represented an effort to penetrate the 'Habe' (Hausa) peasantry and was named after the 'Askias', or rulers, of the pre-colonial Songhay empire so as to appeal to a pre-Fulani order.⁶⁶ It had developed into one of the radical youth groups in NEPU and upon recognition in 1954 as its youth wing under the name 'Runduna(r) Samarin Sawaba' (RSS)⁶⁷ been intended as a counterpart of the Zikists—before it disintegrated into different pressure groups agitating inside the party.⁶⁸

⁶² In addition to Katsina, Funtua, Bauchi, Jos and other towns. Mallam Aminu Kano, M.P.: Leader of the N.E.P.U. and Government Chief Whip in Federal House of Representatives; n.d., ca. late 1961; PRO, DO 177/59.

⁶³ J.O. Moreton, Office of the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom, Lagos, to B.J. Greenhill, Commonwealth Relations Office, POL. 72/10/5, 17 Aug. 1961; PRO, DO 177/59.

⁶⁴ Thus, a Zikist tried to assassinate a British colonial officer in 1950. Crowder, *The Story of Nigeria*, 280.

⁶⁵ As noted in ch. 5 (n. 87), Yakasai also attended the All-African People's Conference in Accra in 1958, together with Gambo Sawaba and Aminu Kano.

⁶⁶ Imposed by Fulani (Peul) pastoralists on Hausa states in an Islamist revolution in the early 19th century. Sklar and Whitaker, 'Nigeria', 63; M. Last, 'Reform in West Africa: The Jihād Movements of the Nineteenth Century', in J.F.A. Ajayi and M. Crowder (eds), *History of West Africa* (London, 1974), ch. 1.

⁶⁷ 'Sawaba Youth Association'. 'Runduna(r)', 'crowd', can also mean 'army', thus alluding to the wing's fighting spirit. N. Awde, *Hausa-English-English-Hausa Dictionary* (New York, 1996). See for the violence of political competition, Kwewum, *The Story of Gambo Sawaba, passim*. Also ch. 2 above at n. 12 and M. Last, 'Towards a Political History of Youth in Muslim Northern Nigeria, 1750–2000', in J. Abbink and I. van Kessel (eds), *Vanguard or Vandals: Youth, Politics and Conflict in Africa* (Leiden and Boston, 2005), ch. 2.

⁶⁸ H.A. Twist, Kaduna, to Viscount Head, High Commissioner United Kingdom, Lagos, 31 July 1961; PRO, DO 177/59; Dudley, *Parties and Politics in Northern Nigeria, passim*; T. Yakasai, *The Story of a Humble Life: An Autobiography*, vol. 1 (Zaria, 2004), 94.

The actions of the *yan iska*, the raucous youths of Hausaland, naturally weakened NEPU institutionally, yet as a movement representing structural discontent⁶⁹ it did not simply disappear, whatever the degree of splintering. In the autumn of 1963 it held a demonstration in Kano, parading through the city with banners and song and concluding with a rally at the Emir's palace, which led to heavy retaliation by police.⁷⁰ NEPU's existence meant that several of Northern Nigeria's cities, towns and villages taken together constituted a natural habitat for Sawaba operations. Moral support was provided by NEPU's propaganda, which, at an early stage, included the carrying of portraits of Djibo Bakary in demonstrations alongside those of its own leaders—while, conversely, NEPU 'calendars' were widely distributed in southern Niger.⁷¹ Overall, this offered a cover for Sawaba activities, even if it could draw the attention of NEPU's foes. NEPU's presence meant that lodging could be found, food for cadres and commandos travelling to and from Niger, space for Sawaba's headquarters, safe houses and contacts. The very fact that the party had splintered into various factions increased the possibilities of assistance furnished by the radicals, who were outside the control of the NEPU leadership. Of course, cash constraints meant that Sawabists had to make do with the simplest of facilities, but in a big city like Kano—250,000 inhabitants by 1961—a lot was available since NEPU had a strong local following. Not the least of this was that the Sawabists could find refuge in the community, at any rate in districts that had many NEPU supporters.⁷² Sabongari, while lying outside the walled city, was one of them, with its immigrant population a logical location for Sawaba's headquarters. Besides that there was a run-down ward in the old town (Birni) called Kofar Mata, which also had a Sawaba base, suggesting the presence of several of Bakary's men.⁷³

If in the early days Bakary enjoyed the hospitality of Aminu Kano during his visits to the city, later it was the group around Tanko Yakasai—who also had a house in Kano⁷⁴—that provided assistance. Dismissed by Nigeria's

⁶⁹ Dudley, *Parties and Politics in Northern Nigeria*, 171.

⁷⁰ J.S. Renwick, Office of the Deputy High Commissioner for the United Kingdom, Kaduna, to B.P. Austin, Lagos, 16 Oct. 1963; PRO, DO 186/19.

⁷¹ Synthèse politique, no. 834 CP, June 1959; CAOM, Cart.3684; Synthèse Politique. avril-mai-juin 1958; CAOM, Cart.2233/D.2.

⁷² Surveillance by the Emir's Native Authority police was pervasive. M. Last, 'The Search for Security in Muslim Northern Nigeria', *Africa*, 78 (2008), 1, 43-45.

⁷³ Email Murray Last to author, 13 Nov. 2003.

⁷⁴ 720 Yakasai Quarters, Kano city. He was called so after Yakasai, a Kano district where he was raised (though he was born in Kofar Mata). Mohammed Achimoto Garba, Leningrad,

federal authorities as the ‘wilder members’ of NEPU,⁷⁵ Yakasai’s militants provided aid to Sawaba’s guerrillas and student cadres. For example, in 1967 Iro Addo, upon graduating at the University of Leningrad approached Yakasai through the intercession of a fellow student from Nigeria for help in finding a job. The fact that he was an ‘active member of the Sawaba Party of Niger’ was used to recommend Addo to the NEPU radical, whom Niger’s Sûreté noted was ‘well known with the Service for the material and financial aid that he provided to Sawaba when the commandos established themselves in Kano’. In his memoirs Yakasai later recalled how he had helped in arranging travel documents for Sawabists and assisted in providing lodging—as Ali Kote had done before he moved to Lagos. Yakasai was close to Sallé Dan Koulou, who was introduced to him by Bakary personally, and the NEPU militant also knew Dan Galadima, Gaya cadre Issoufou Danbaro, Amadou Diop from Zinder and ‘Mamman Dandouna’—undoubtedly Dandouna Aboubakar.⁷⁶

Closer to the border with Niger, NEPU people also provided a helping hand. It was local NEPU activists who helped ‘Kali’ to develop the Katsina base by giving lodging to commandos. A certain Mallam Ali, affiliated to NEPU, assisted Sawabists to establish themselves in the border village of Jibiya. Finally, NEPU elements were deeply involved in arms trafficking on behalf of Sawaba—according to the British, making use of ‘a well organised courier system in the border area’. Tanko Yakasai participated in this as well. That the town of Kaura Namoda was selected for one of Sawaba’s arms caches was due not just to the fact that it was the terminus of the north-western railway but also to the presence of a local NEPU cell, established in 1953 with the help of Gambo Sawaba.⁷⁷

to Tanko Yakasai, Kano, 3 July 1967; ANN, 86 MI 1E 8.14; Yakasai, *The Story of a Humble Life*, 2.

⁷⁵ British High Commission, Lagos, to A.J. Warren, British Embassy, Abidjan, 4 Nov. 1964, 1 POL.10/174/1; PRO, FO 371/177230.

⁷⁶ Mohammed Achimoto Garba, Leningrad, to Tanko Yakasai, Kano, 3 July 1967; Surveillance du Territoire no. 605/SN/ST: Examen de situation du nommé Iro Addo, 18 July 1967; ANN, 86 MI 1E 8.14; Yakasai, *The Story of a Humble Life*, 209. Garba (= Muhammadu Achimalo Garba, secretary of NEPU’s Kano branch who went with Yakasai to China [ch. 9, note 291]) was the Nigerian student who mediated for Addo and added, somewhat doubtfully, that Addo belonged to Sawaba’s leadership (‘membre actif du Parti Sawaba du Niger’; ‘très connu du Service pour l’aide matérielle et financière qu’il a apportée au Sawaba lors de l’implantation des commandos à Kano’).

⁷⁷ Bulletin de renseignements, no. 25.553/2/SC, 12 Sept. 1962; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 28 Febr. 1966; Bates to Pugh, Lagos, 21 Oct. 1964; Kwewum, *The Story of Gambo Sawaba*, 77–78; Yakasai, *The Story of a Humble Life*, 209.

He Flew over Agadez: Infiltrations in the North and the Algerian Connection

Malam Oumarou, a Sawaba marabout in Agadez, in June 1963 told a follower that Djibo Bakary ‘had flown’ over the city on his way to Niamey, delivering his adherents the occult message that he knew ‘everything that happen[ed]’.⁷⁸ If the central-eastern region had traditionally been part of the movement’s heartland, the old desert town was fully integrated in Sawaba’s network and the agitation against the regime. As noted, commandos infiltrating from Northern Nigeria via Zinder allegedly contacted the Algerian community of Agadez. Sawabist relations between the two towns dated back to 1959 if not earlier, with agitation reaching new levels as Zinderois activists like Badéri Mahamane and Boubacar Sadeck arrived to take on political work.⁷⁹

The northern and southern complex of cells knew a certain overlap. When Boukari Karemi dit Kokino, who hailed from the oasis town of Bilma but had worked as a shopkeeper in Zinder, left Niger to organise Sawaba’s presence in Algeria, he probably travelled via Zinder rather than Agadez, escaping the country in the company of Elhadji Bachir Dangai (fellow cadre and trader-chauffeur) via Kano and Lagos.⁸⁰ The Sawaba marabout from Ingal, Yahaya Silimane, when cornered in Tamanrasset by Agadez police, revealed the existence of a network of cells that extended from the north to various cities in southern Niger, not just the central-eastern region but also further west. Even if some of these stopped operating when their cover was blown, the data concerned (dating from October 1963) show that a nationwide underground was functioning.

The domestic hub of the northern network naturally centred on Agadez itself (Map 10.2). Its tasks were to pass on letters, orders, propaganda material (photographs especially) and money arriving from the party office in Tamanrasset; to collect intelligence from cells further south; and to transmit information to the Sawabists in the Algerian desert town. Allegedly,

⁷⁸ As noted in Chapter 6, this sort of rumour, even if false, could cause anxiety. In response to the above gossip, the Gendarmerie produced a note saying that people in transit, who stayed in their aeroplane while at Niamey airport, were not checked. Fiche de Renseignements, 23-25 Nov. 1963; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 18.9 (‘avait survolé’; ‘tout ce qui se passe’). Mallam Oumarou = relation of Jimra Orgao (ch. 7 n. 101)?

⁷⁹ See chs. 1 (at n. 68-69) and 7 (at n. 121-122).

⁸⁰ Before taking up temporary residence in Accra. A. Espitalier, commissioner police Zinder, to director Sûreté, 3 Oct. 1961; Surveillance du Territoire (Bureau de Coordination), no. 396/SN/ST: Organisation Terroriste “Sawaba” (Recueil des dirigeants et militants actifs en fuite); ex. no. 000148, dest. le Sous Préfet de Dosso.

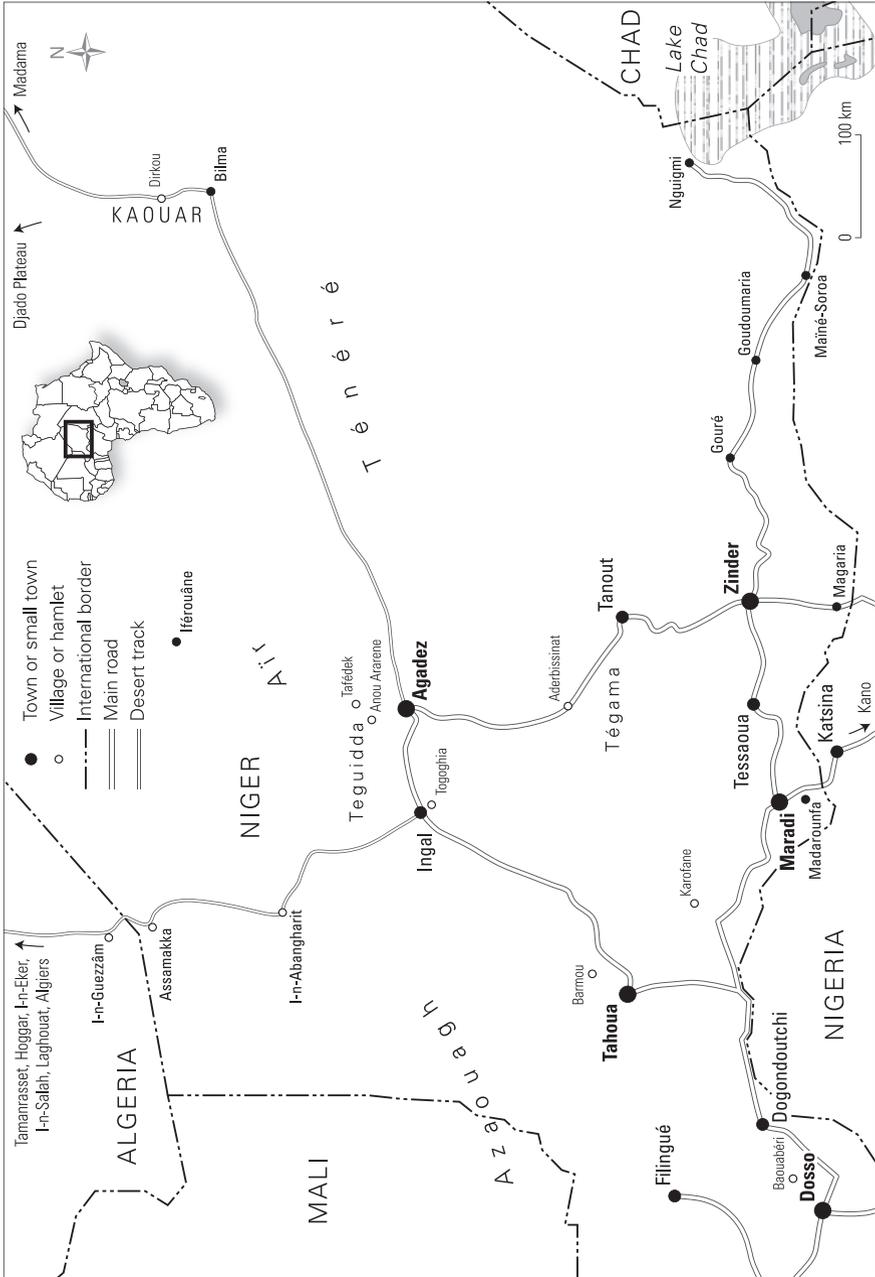
the operation was headed by Tambari Maigari—an RDA district youth leader locked in bitter competition with the party's local secretary—, assisted by a dozen men (i.e. whose cover was blown by Silimane). They included Gonda Kélitigui, the clerk at Transafricaine; Lawan Sidi, possibly a teacher; a trader called Lawali Dan Azoumi; an army veteran named Abdoulaye, who was a fetish specialist; one Wantagui, a trader in spices who practised as a marabout; and a nurse called Akine Atta. Silimane also mentioned others about whom nothing is known,⁸¹ in addition to Kantama Alzouma (Aljouma Kantana), now primary school director in Agadez; Yaye Saley, an employee of the administration regarded as a firebrand and who collected intelligence for Louis Bourguès, one of the leaders of Sawaba's office in Tamanrasset; and, finally, the old Anastafidet, leader of the Kel Ewey Tuaregs.

As the Anastafidet was in exile in Tanout for articulating separatist aspirations at independence together with the Sultan,⁸² it is possible that some Tuareg leaders flirted with Sawaba as a means to get back at the regime. The regime behaved vindictively towards Tuaregs associated with separatist aspirations, and Sawaba, though firmly against ethno-regional separatism, tried to capitalise on this. Silimane therefore probably mentioned some who were not Sawabist but resented the regime, although the inclusion of Kantama Alzouma, who agitated for Sawaba when a secondary school teacher in Filingué, points to the reliability of his confession.⁸³ Agadez police added that his disclosures confirmed suspicions and that the Sawabists mentioned were the 'persons in charge and regular correspondents'—nothing slipped their notice and they informed 'Tamanrasset' about everything. Yet, Silimane's revelations must have left several cadres unaffected, such as Malam Oumarou mentioned above. They did

⁸¹ One Bianou Fataou and Hadia Bacharou. Akine Atta = El Hadji Atta, president of the local RDA section? *Recueil des principaux renseignements collectés au cours de la période du 25-31 janv. 1962*, no. 162; SHAT, 5 H 92.

⁸² The former Sultan, Oumarou Ibrahim, was living under house arrest in Ingal. M. Aboubakar, commissaire de police, Agadez, to M. le Directeur de la Sûreté Nationale, Niamey, 6 Nov. 1963; *Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire*, 20-26 Apr. 1964, 501, no. 17; SHAT, 5 H 126; 11-17 Febr. 1963, 25.257, no. 7; *Synthèse de Renseignements*. 2ème Trimestre 1960, Période du 1er mai au 31 juillet 1960, no. 1814; SHAT, 5 H 95.

⁸³ This can also be deduced from the professions mentioned. Diamballa Maïga doubted whether Yaye Saley was a Sawabist and, oddly, also with regard to Kantana (see ch. 7 at n. 99). Aboubakar, commissaire de police Agadez, to M. le Directeur de la Sûreté Nationale, Niamey, 6 Nov. 1963; Commandant de Cercle Agadez to Ministre de Finance and Ministre de l'Intérieur, both 20 Nov. 1963; Ministre de l'Intérieur to Commandant de Cercle Agadez, 25 Nov. 1963; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 18.9.



Map 10.2 The northern network.

not match, for example, with Sawaba's youth wing as known in August 1958, though this may point to the turnover of cadres as many found it difficult to cope with the hardships of clandestine life.⁸⁴ In any case, the work of the Agadez hub was facilitated by the city's political situation, which, as shown further below, was marked by intense conflict.

From Agadez the network extended to other northern towns and settlements—to the astonishment of the police 'even the remotest spots'. These included Tafédek, a water point some 50 km north of Agadez; Bilma; 'Tiguïda' (Teguïdda, just north/north-west of Agadez);⁸⁵ the Azaouagh region, further to the west and straddling the border with Mali; and, especially, the town of Ingal west of Agadez, on the old road to Tahoua-Niamey. Many of these settlements saw their own political activity, apart from their participation in the communications and infiltration network. In the Azaouagh region, for example, the regime in 1963 considered that Sawaba sympathisers formed such a problem that local RDA sections were mobilised to take action.⁸⁶ Similarly, it was reported that people in Tafédek expressed allegiance to Sawaba and held 'political meetings' in their homes. Political activity here was complicated by nomadic incursions of Tuaregs (Algerian and Nigérien), some of whom made propaganda for the Algerian government, which, recently independent, was testing its influence in the north. Algiers stationed an informer at Tafédek, whose hot springs were popular among Nigériens and Algerians alike—in addition to Malians from the Gao area—and therefore an ideal point to establish contacts. The same was naturally true for Sawaba, which early in 1963 contacted local inhabitants (Nigérien Tuaregs loyal to Algeria as well as Algerian ones). From January meetings were held every Monday but never in the same place. Apart from Tafédek these took place at Anou Ararene (50 km north of Agadez) and Ingal, assembling small numbers of people, some of whom were Algerians. Action by gendarmes and RDA youths, however, led the Sawabists to move the venue to the well of 'Togoghia', a few kilometres south-east of Ingal.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Aboubakar, commissaire de police, Agadez, to M. le Directeur de la Sûreté Nationale, Niamey, 6 Nov. 1963; Procès-verbal de la réunion de la "Jeunesse Sawaba" d'Agadez; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 52 ('responsables et correspondants réguliers').

⁸⁵ There are actually three such places: Teguïdda-n-Adrar, a water point; Teguïdda-n-Tagaït; and further west Teguïdda-n-Tessoumt. It is not known which place was meant though the water point is an obvious possibility in view of the contacts it could provide ('même des coins reculés').

⁸⁶ A huge region, it was not made clear where this occurred. Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 15-21 Apr. 1963, 25.577, no. 16; SHAT, 5 H 129.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 11-17 Febr. 1963, 25.257, no. 7; 18-24 Febr. 1963, 25.307, no. 8; 26 Nov.-2 Dec. 1962, 25.940, no. 31, 10-16 Dec. 1962, 26.045, no. 33; 26 Aug.-1 Sept. 1963, 1.079, no. 35; SHAT, 5 H

Ingal itself was strategically located and harboured an important cell manned by several men, one of whom, a certain Kollo (Kolo)—cattle trader and a 'dogged militant'—handled contacts with the nomads of the region. He sent letters to the party office in Tamanrasset 'almost daily' and received money to make propaganda in exchange.⁸⁸ Traders were similarly active for the party in Teguida.⁸⁹ The cell in Bilma was probably much smaller in view of its geographical isolation, with one individual—unidentified but someone who had been to prison—maintaining funds for propaganda purposes. In February 1963 an old Sawaba militant, also unidentified but deported from Zinder, was arrested in the Kaouar region for anti-government activities. Houses in Bilma were searched as well as the man's office in the town of Dirkou, further north on the escarpment.⁹⁰

Further to the south the network reached to Tahoua and then west to Dogondoutchi. The latter town, not a traditional stronghold, had a cell manned by a butcher by the name of Abdou and a 'dioula' from Tahoua called Saadou, who had done time. Abdou was known to have travelled all the way to Tamanrasset to confer with Louis Bourguès, bringing intelligence collected by his colleague from nearly all regions as well as ministerial departments in the capital. The latter fact confirms rumours about Sawaba espionage in the very corridors of power. However, contacts of the northern network with the central-eastern region were naturally more important since this took its work into the heart of subversive operations. As noted, Tahoua had a cell operating in the northern network but nothing is known about this apart from the names of those involved.⁹¹ The local cadres whose identity Silimane revealed differed from those who managed its

128, 122, 130; 25 Febr.-3 March 1963, 25-337, no. 9; 18-24 March 1963, 25-434, no. 12; SHAT, 5 H 123; Etude concernant le problème nomade au Niger. Très secret. Febr. 1963 and Bulletin de renseignements. Délégation pour la défense de la zone d'outre-mer no. 4 - Etat-Major—2^{ème} Bureau, no. 25-152/2/SC, 30 Jan. 1963; both SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2.

⁸⁸ Aboubakar, commissaire de police Agadez, to M. le Directeur de la Sûreté Nationale, Niamey, 6 Nov. 1963. The others were Chibba Alkassoum, an assistant clerk; one Moulou, translator from Gao; a certain Boutou(kou), 'ex-cadi'; Nassamou, ex-chief of Teguida ('militant acharné'; 'presque toujours').

⁸⁹ A certain Azaou, in addition to one Balogi whose profession is unknown. Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid., and Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 25 Febr.-3 March 1963, 25-337, no. 9. It is not known whether contact was made with Sawabists incarcerated at Bilma.

⁹¹ Four people were mentioned: El Hadji Mahamane, son of Dan Zango (= Nomao Zongo?; see ch. 7 at ns. 103-104); Dan Tawaye Azahabi; Dan Zaki Mahamane 'ex-Barmo' (meaning he hailed from Barmou north-east of Tahoua?); and Saidou Na Algasse. To these should be added one Yacoubou, Salche and Iddi from 'Korafan', i.e. probably Karofane, near Bouza. Aboubakar, commissaire de police Agadez, to M. le Directeur de la Sûreté Nationale, Niamey, 6 Nov. 1963.

youth section a few years earlier, something that may confirm the French observation that they represented the party's second echelon. Silimane's data pertained to the autumn of 1963, a time at which Siddi Abdou, Tahoua's youth secretary in 1958, may have been in Algeria for training.⁹²

In fact, all southern cadres of the northern network, whose names were given away, differed from activists known to be involved in Sawaba's southern network. This may be due to a lack of data or Silimane's limited cooperation with the Agadez authorities. Yet, cadres probably worked in different networks and had limited knowledge of each other's existence. This forms the essence of clandestine movements organised laterally in cells so as to limit penetration, but can also be seen as a continuation of the autonomous tradition of Sawaba's original UDN sections.⁹³ Little is known about coordination between units of the different networks.

In any case, the northern network extended to Maradi, Tessaoua, Madarounfa, Magaria, Zinder and the town of Goudoumaria further east, between Gouré and Maïné-Soroa. The Maradi base was well integrated. One of its cadres, the driver Ramane—who, as noted in Chapter 7, plied the route Maradi-Agadez-Bilma distributing messages along the way—was in Tamanrasset in October 1963, ready to return to Agadez, Bilma and towns further south. Besides, the Maradi cell included nurses working for the veterinary service and two men employed in the police, as part of the infiltration programme that targeted the administration.⁹⁴ In the far east, in Goudoumaria, one of the cadres would have been the local Commandant de Cercle, whose name, however, was never revealed when he participated in meetings (this is discussed further below). South of Maradi a certain 'Issa' was active in intelligence gathering in Madarounfa, something that must have taken the network's agitation firmly into the orbit of cadres working from the Nigerian hinterland. Apart from Tessaoua, where Silimane mentioned one cadre by name,⁹⁵ several men contributed to Sawaba's communication lines from Zinder. A certain Abani, a 'dioula', was reported to have travelled to Tamanrasset and have contacted 'active members' of the party there. A cobbler by the name of Abani Gajamou (apparently not the same person, but possibly family) brought messages to

⁹² See ch. 7 at ns. 103-104 and ch. 9 n. 336; Jeunesse Sawaba de Tahoua, Procès verbal de l'Assemblée Générale du 12 août 1958; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 52.

⁹³ See ch. 1. In fact, Silimane claimed he did not know all cadres by name. Aboubakar, commissaire de police Agadez, to M. le Directeur de la Sécurité Nationale, Niamey, 6 Nov. 1963.

⁹⁴ One policeman was called Sani Banao. Ibid. See further below.

⁹⁵ A certain Sani. Ibid.

Bourgès and Kokino in Tamanrasset and then journeyed to Algiers, where he got in touch with Abdoulaye Mamani. Other Zinderois cadres were also involved in sending messages or letters.⁹⁶ To the south, in Magaria, the leading activist was a certain Gachin Baki, listed as the ‘principal and regular correspondent’, who may have been in touch with the Nigerian hinterland and travelled to Tamanrasset in September–October 1963 ‘to receive orders and instructions for the militants of his region’.⁹⁷

The northern network thus had functioning communication lines and these were also used for infiltrations staged from Algerian territory. Only a few of these took place as they complemented the intelligence gathering of the domestic cells and did not have an offensive purpose. The terrain, part of the Sahara and its transitional zone, made hit-and-run tactics by units on foot impossible, the more so as the commandos, largely raised in the Sahelian region, were unfamiliar with the harsh conditions of the desert. The regime felt nevertheless concerned, also because of the political instability in Agadez and Sawaba’s potential alliance with Tuareg communities and Algeria, which expressed strong interest in Niger’s northern region. In the autumn of 1963 French intelligence worried that the Sawabists in Tamanrasset might get in touch with the nomads of I-n-Abangharit, a water point halfway on a desert track between Ingal and the Algerian border, in Niger’s north-west.⁹⁸ Abdoulaye Mamani himself at an unknown date travelled from Algiers to Tamanrasset, where he conferred with Kokino and Bourgès and possibly visited an unidentified military camp, before continuing all the way to Ingal. Here he stayed for four days in the company of a local cadre named Issa.⁹⁹

That Algeria’s key Sawabist made his way deep into Nigérien territory shows that the northern network was inextricably bound up with the strategic threat that the movement was building up—a threat which, while diminished by the unfeasibility of guerrilla operations there, received added significance through the alliance with the Algerian government.

⁹⁶ Ali Zaroumey, a certain Siddo, & Yarro Mama, who may have been among the more important cadres as they were listed as ‘chief correspondents’ (‘membres actifs’; ‘commandants correspondants’). *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* (‘principal correspondant régulier’; ‘pour recevoir des ordres et directives pour les militants de sa région’).

⁹⁸ Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdo., 28 Oct.–3 Nov. 1963, 2.262, no. 44; SHAT, 5 H 131.

⁹⁹ It is unclear whether the camp was in Tamanrasset and whether it was that of Sawabists (who trained further north, usually at Marnia) or of the Algerian army itself. Mamani stayed there for five days. Aboubakar, commissaire de police Agadez, to M. le Directeur de la Sûreté Nationale, Niamey, 6 Nov. 1963. Issa = Djibo Issa (see on latter below)?

This became clear in the course of an infiltration mission by Djibo Issa, the driver-mechanic who worked for Louis Bourguès. Issa was arrested on 22 November 1963 on the road between I-n-Abangharit and Agadez. He had travelled with an Arab lorry driver from Tamanrasset to I-n-Abangharit, where he tried to steal the Land Rover of a local European. The previous spring Issa had gone by boat from Algiers to Marseilles and purportedly on to West Germany. Here he would have got in touch with Bakary's representative—the Ahmed or Ahmetou mentioned in the previous chapter—, after which he claimed to have returned to Algeria by plane (paid for by the party). He got a mission as 'scout' instructed to 'enquire into the current strength of Niger'. Besides propaganda material (photos, such as of Sékou Touré) he carried letters for people in Agadez¹⁰⁰ as well as lists with addresses. Clearly, he had been ordered to contact Sawabists in the city, more particularly, with the object to disturb the 18 December celebrations. After this, upon his own admission, he should have made off to Mali to render an account to Djibo Bakary personally. Issa was caught wearing brand new combat fatigues and boots, with another pair of military clothes in his luggage. While he asserted that these were routinely distributed by the party's West German representative—who allegedly also provided commandos with instructions—, it is more likely that he received his attire from the Algerian authorities. Documents attested to Issa's long-standing stay in Algeria, as well as a command of Arabic.¹⁰¹

The close alliance with Algeria could only enhance the perceived threat emanating from Sawabist infiltrations. Issa thus boasted to the people of I-n-Abangharit that he was 'a military of Ben Bella' and that his comrades were 'large in number'. An aggressive character with a hatred of Europeans,¹⁰² he challenged French interrogators by suggesting that he was part of Bakary's personal entourage, wildly asserting that his leader possessed aeroplanes at a base in Laghouat in north-central Algeria piloted by

¹⁰⁰ The addressees were one Aliou Onalaker, who ran a bicycle shop, and a certain Mani Ali Zanellou, resident of the Imourdou district. See Djibo Issa's file consisting of various interrogation protocols in ANN, 86 MI 3 F 18.9 ('éclairateur'; 'renseigner sur la force actuelle du Niger').

¹⁰¹ His papers included an entry permit of the prefect in Algiers, a work certificate, driving licences (Algerian and Nigérien) and some official Algerian badge. Native to Baouabéri in the Dosso region, Issa had also lived in the Amaréwat quarter of Agadez. Ibid.

¹⁰² At night armed with a sabre, Issa entered the bedroom of the European in I-n-Abangharit—a mechanic at a government rural service post—and threatened to hit him while calling him a 'shit, filthy European, filthy Frenchman' and insulting his staff for working for a European. Issa tried to make off with the Land Rover but one of the staff pulled out the keys after which Issa escaped. Ibid. ('fumier, sale Européen, sale Français').

some of the 50 Nigérien military he claimed were stationed there. While clearly angered by his arrest, this was part of deliberate scaremongering that was sure to have an effect on a paranoid regime such as Niger's RDA.¹⁰³ Rubbing salt into its wounds, Issa explained that his mission had been 'to get to know in particular whether the country was still as weak as ever', bluffing to his interrogators how he had dealt with Europeans in command positions before.¹⁰⁴ His belligerence¹⁰⁵ only underscored the ultimately offensive nature of the operations in which he was involved.

¹⁰³ As if to convince the authorities with details, Issa added that, in addition to the 50 Nigérien military, there was one Dahomean of mixed blood. A subsequent inquiry reported that the planes in question were stationed more to the south at Ouargla and that they originated from Baghdad. Message Brigade Gendarmerie Agadez to Gendarmerie Niamey, no. 43, 24 Nov. 1963, in *Ibid.* ('un militaire de Ben Bella'; 'nombreux').

¹⁰⁴ He said that, while in Marseilles, he fought a policeman in the Joliette quarter, stabbing the latter in the belly with a dagger. While he claimed not to know whether the policeman died, Issa implausibly added that he was acquitted after 50 (rather than 27) days, having paid 200,000 francs to a lawyer! His assertions should be set against a cultural context emphasising the importance of the supernatural. The specific mention of Joliette, a quarter in the second 'arrondissement' of Marseilles, suggests he *did* visit the city, as also indicated by his boat ticket. *Ibid.* ('savoir en particulier si le pays était toujours aussi faible').

¹⁰⁵ Undaunted, Djibo Issa told Roger Billet, commander of the Agadez Gendarmerie who asked him what his business was in I-n-Abangharit: 'I don't have to answer you', and while allegedly raising his fist to the commander added: 'Your place is not in Niger but in France. Africa is the place of the blacks and not the whites. The Europeans, Italians or others, have nothing to do here' ('Je n'ai pas à vous répondre ... Ta place n'est pas au Niger mais en France. L'Afrique c'est la place des noirs et non des blancs. Les européens Italiens ou autres non rien à faire ici'). *Ibid.* His prison behaviour was even more extreme, bordering on the psychotic, although this had a parallel in the bluff of other activists such as Amadou Diop, the Zinder lorry driver, and NEPU's Gambo Sawaba, underscoring the anger of self-styled revolutionaries. On 29 November 1963, a week after Issa's arrest, the Commandant de Cercle of Agadez sent this telegram to Niamey: 'Djibo Issa has become unbearable -x- He has attempted to escape by hollowing out a window. He has smashed the door and thrown away the padlock of the detainees' cell in which he was put -x- He does nothing but talk politics with the prisoners day and night -x- He does not stop shouting "Sawaba" -x- The doctor who has examined him has declared that he was in perfect health -x- As he forms a bad example among the bandits and the guards of the penal camp are complaining I have the honour to urgently demand his transfer to Niamey in order to maintain the peace of the penal camp'. Maïga refused and ordered the Agadez authorities to keep calm. Commandant Cercle Agadez to Gendarmerie Niamey pour Mininter GR 99, no. 64, 29/11/63; Message no. 61, Ministre de l'intérieur, 23 Nov. 1963; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 18.9 ('Djibo Issa est devenu insupportable -x- Il a tenté de s'évader en creusant une fenêtre. Il a enfoncé la porte et jeté le cadenas de la case des prévenus ou il a été déposé -x- Il ne fait que parler politique de jour comme de nuit avec les prisonniers -x- Il ne cesse de crier "Sawaba" -x- Le médecin qui l'a examiné a déclaré qu'il se trouvait en parfait état de santé -x- Constituant un mauvais exemple parmi les bandits et les gardes du camp pénal se plaignant j'ai l'honneur de demander avec insistance son transfert à Niamey dans le but de maintenir le calme au camp pénal').

As Issa's mission showed, Agadez was a sensitive zone. Many conflicts marked the town where Djibo Bakary had begun his career and marabouts like Papa Sidi Kâ had provided inspiration to oppose the powers that be. Unemployment was structural and made worse by attempts to put obstacles in the way of migration to Algeria for fear of collusion with the Algerians or Sawaba. Social misery was compounded by tax collection. In February 1963 hundreds of unemployed staged a demonstration in the city. Throughout the country there were complaints about tax increases, especially because of government waste and corruption. In Agadez, just as in the capital, taxes were slow in coming, while in Ingal Peuls complained about the local 'Chef de Poste', who was called to Agadez to answer for fiscal abuse. As nomads generally refused to pay up, the minister of nomadic affairs, Mouddour Zakara, went on tour. His threat to confiscate cattle and arms risked creating further trouble, notably in the Agadez region, where animals were rapidly impounded and sold for higher prices than the tax assessments. In addition, Agadez veterans resented the way that pensions were paid, while the local RDA was guilty of various extortionary practices. Every prostitute was forced to pay a monthly 2,000 francs to party coffers.¹⁰⁶ When the Sardauna of Sokoto visited the city the population was forced to contribute sums that according to French intelligence were far from negligible. The same happened in the course of independence celebrations. The people of Agadez openly accused the Commandant de Cercle and RDA officials of embezzlement.¹⁰⁷

Fearing Sawaba agitation, RDA cadres carried out public controls. Others were appointed to command positions, including the management of the local bus station so as to monitor arrivals in the city. The party began to stage regular 'psycho-political' meetings that the youths of Agadez had to attend. The result of these debates, held in Hausa with Tamachek translation, was merely to strengthen popular malaise. In Ingal, too, compulsory participation and fundraising contributed to resentment.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, Agadez RDA leaders, some of whom were strangers to the region, antagonised the population by their involvement in the arrest of local Tuaregs,

¹⁰⁶ 150 were party members. Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 18-24 Febr. 1963, 25,307, no. 8; 11-17 Febr. 1963, 25,257, no. 7; 21-27 Oct. 1963, 2,244, no. 43; 25-31 May 1964, 673, no. 22; 16-22 Sept. 1963, 2,064, no. 38; 6-12 Apr. 1964, 417, no. 15; 20-6 May 1963, 710, no. 21; SHAT, 5 H 131, 126, 124, 123.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 12-8 Aug. 1963, 1,024, no. 33; SHAT, 5 H 124.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 18-24 March 1963, 25,434, no. 12; 25-31 March 1963, 25,463, no. 13; 1-7 Apr. 1963, 25,518, no. 14; 29 July-4 Aug. 1963, 982, no. 31; SHAT, 5 H 128, 124; 20-6 May 1963, 710, no. 21.

including the son of the Anastafidet. The continued exile of the former Sultan and Anastafidet did nothing to placate public opinion.¹⁰⁹

The Tuareg population of the north, more broadly, felt little loyalty towards a state ruled by sedentary southerners and, by contrast, maintained cross-border links with brethren in Algeria, who traditionally migrated to the Air region—laying claim to wells, grazing areas and the loyalty of local groups. Upon Algeria's independence and French troop withdrawals, Tuaregs of the Hoggar (the mountainous region around Tamanrasset) reverted to raiding, penetrating as far south as Tahoua. Some of them asserted that all lands north of the wells of I-n-Abangharit were Algerian territory. A Tuareg chief from Niger would have incited his people to demand Algerian citizenship, while others tried to avoid conscription in Niger's army. Early in 1963 the Amenokal or ruler of the Hoggar Tuaregs visited the western Air and spoke with Nigérien Tuareg chiefs paying allegiance to him. Some of these were allegedly influential in Agadez circles opposed to the RDA.¹¹⁰ The ambivalent position of the Tuareg population thus became conflated, at least in the more nervous assessments of the Franco-RDA combine, with loyalty to Sawaba.

Bakary's movement, however, had always been hesitant about Tuareg chiefs, those former masters of the Bellas—Sawaba's followers—, who had flirted with the OCRS and abandoned the party in the referendum.¹¹¹ Yet, some Tuaregs now expressed sympathy for Sawaba, not because they felt attached to its social ideals but because they saw it as an instrument to fight a regime that they detested. There are indications that Sawaba's leaders were ready to use this, just as they had always mobilised different antagonisms to build up support. Early in 1963 it was rumoured that the movement wanted to help groups 'obedient' to Algeria in their agitation against the RDA—a reference to Tuaregs in the north. The French thought

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 1-7 Apr. 1963, 25.518, no. 14; 13-19 Apr. 1964, 470, no. 16; 20-6 Apr. 1964, 501, no. 17; 11-17 Febr. 1963, 25.257, no. 7.

¹¹⁰ Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 13-19 Apr. 1964, 470, no. 16; 18-24 Febr. 1963, 25.307, no. 8; 10-16 Sept. 1962, 25.596, no. 2; 2-8 July 1962, no. 10; SHAT, 5 H 121; T.C. Ravensdale, British Embassy, Abidjan, to G.E. Millard, Foreign Office, 1191/62, 17 Oct. 1962; PRO, FO 371/161.727. A good introduction to Tuareg communities is A. Bourgeot, *Les sociétés Touarègues: Nomadisme, identité, résistances* (Paris, 1995).

¹¹¹ One issue of *Unité: Organe Hebdomadaire du Parti Sawaba* (no. 4, 14 May, 1959) noted that 'white' nomads could not survive without black men toiling the earth or without trading cattle with them against produce from the south. It emphasised the Tuaregs were a minority and on the verge of disappearing. Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de Dakar pour la période du 21 au 27 mai 1959, no. 31; CAOM, Cart.3686.

that this was risky for Sawaba's nationalist programme but because of the political meetings held in Tafédek concluded that it pursued this strategy all the same. Later that year, it was reported that Sawabists in Algeria incited the population of Iferouâne, a town in the Aïr mountains 300 km north of Agadez, to rebel against the authorities. While French intelligence noted that this kind of action was less appealing to Sawaba's leadership in view of the implications for Niger's territorial integrity, it resolved to follow the matter closely, pointing to a rumour that the former Sultan of Agadez had agreed with Sawaba's leader in Ingal and the chief of the Kel Ewey on a common anti-government strategy.¹¹²

Thus, during the first half of 1963 the French registered a lot of agitation in the Agadez area, as well as frequent meetings of Sawabists. In April Sawaba's local leader, who was identified as Tambari Mahama,¹¹³ was arrested upon his departure for Tillabéri, where he was to meet an unknown Malian from Gao carrying instructions for action in 'Tagama'—which probably referred to the Tégama region around the town of Aderbissinat, halfway between Agadez and Tanout.¹¹⁴ All in all, 18 arrests were made, including seven marabouts, four Malians and several civil servants. Other members of Sawaba's Agadez cell, however, continued with their work. Late September Kantama Alzouma travelled with comrades to the chief of the nomadic population of Aderbissinat, and in October his group—which included one Bilal Hadji, Kardo Hazo, an auxiliary nurse, and Tambari Maigari, the RDA youth leader—travelled to the mountains of 'Tadoubel', ostensibly to meet the minister of nomadic affairs, but this turned out not to be true. Later still, it was reported that Alzouma and a party of school staff that included a certain Lebian, head of the garage of the public works department, went on a hunting trip and engaged in shooting practice. Nothing is known about the potential political dimensions of these trips.¹¹⁵

¹¹² Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 2-8 July 1962, no. 10; Etude concernant le problème nomade au Niger; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 501, 26 June 1963; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 18-24 March 1963, 25.434, no. 12.

¹¹³ = Tambari Mahamadou, tailor and president of the youth wing in 1958? Procès-verbal de la réunion de la "Jeunesse Sawaba" d'Agadez. This was not the same person as Tambari Maigari mentioned above.

¹¹⁴ The French located Tagama in the area around Agadez and Ingal. Yet, it seems unlikely that it referred to 'Tagaza', a water point near the desert track between Ingal and I-n-Abangharit.

¹¹⁵ The shooting was probably for entertainment. Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 25 Febr.-3 March 1963, 25.337, no. 9 & 15-21 Apr. 1963, 25.577, no. 16; Aboubakar, commissaire de police Agadez, to M. le Directeur de la Sûreté Nationale, Niamey, 10 Oct.

In contrast, the French observed that Sawaba had hardly any influence among the Tubu communities in Niger's (north-)east, whose settlements extended across the border covering much of northern Chad and southern Libya. Yet, the Tubu were independently minded pastoralists who freely roamed across international frontiers, engaged in arms smuggling and had a reputation for raiding. It was feared that Sawaba could try and exploit their autonomous inclinations. So far, however, Tubu communities had been considered more an ordinary policing problem, although by 1962 dissatisfaction about taxation was on the rise and arms smuggling increasing, also because of French troop withdrawals. Security in the Nguigmi area deteriorated, in the Kaouar region people complained about government neglect, and while they pretended not to know its name, it was feared that Sawaba would seek to exploit local grievances. Though arms smuggling mainly concerned remnants of German-Italian World War II equipment, the government worried about the number of arms carried by the country's nomadic communities and planned confiscation. Early in 1963 orders were given to combat arms trafficking from Chad and especially Algeria, as it was feared that weapons could be delivered to Sawabists. Security in the Kaouar area was tightened, as well as around Madama, north on the Djado plateau towards the Libyan border.¹¹⁶

There is no evidence and it is unlikely that Sawaba was in this way provided with arms, while the movement can hardly have exerted control over Tuareg or Tubu dissidence. Yet Algeria represented a double security risk. As noted, ties between Sawaba and the FLN dated back some time and resulted in extensive Algerian aid. On top of this, the Algerian government appeared intent on expansion itself, if not through laying claim to Nigérien territory, by *de facto* embarking on incursions and reinforcement of links with Nigérien communities. Different groups of Algerian individuals (Tuareg dignitaries, itinerant traders, FLN propagandists), as well as the Algerian military, were involved in this. On the ground relations between the

1963; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 18.9; various correspondence on Alzouma in this file. Location 'Tadoubel' unknown.

¹¹⁶ Etude concernant le problème nomade au Niger; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 18-24 March 1963, 25.434, no. 12; 22-28 July 1963, 952, no. 30; 26 Aug.-1 Sept. 1963, 1.079, no. 35; 16-22 Sept. 1963, 2.064, no. 38; 21-27 Oct. 1963, 2.244, no. 43; 7 Febr. 1963, no. 25.204; 24-30 June 1963, 861, no. 26; 4-10 March 1963, 25.350, no. 10; 7 Febr. 1963, 25.204/2/SC; SHAT, 5 H 128/123/128; Recueil des principaux renseignements collectés au cours de la période du 26 avril-2 mai 1962, no. 3; SHAT, 5 H 91. On French troop withdrawals, see next chapters and on Tubu culture, see C. Baroin, *Anarchie et cohésion sociale chez les Toubou: Les Daza Késérda (Niger)* (Cambridge and Paris, 1985).

FLN and Nigériens had existed for a long time. In 1959, for example, Tubu people got in touch with a Nigérien Arab called Yattamat Habi, who regularly travelled in the area between Nguigmi, Bosso and Maïné-Soroa collecting money for the FLN. In 1962 the Arabic-speaking community of Tahoua was contacted by FLN envoys, who had been travelling in Niger since 1958 and been tolerated by the Sawaba and RDA governments. A nomadic chief from the Tahoua area upon Algeria's independence allegedly donated 300,000 CFA to the FLN in Mali as a show of support. By this time FLN envoys were getting bolder and more numerous and Algerian traders intensified propaganda and fundraising. Later in 1962, a party of Algerian Tuareg traders set up camp in Tafédek, where, as noted above, they engaged in propaganda and agitation on Algeria's behalf. The assistant of the Amenokal, no less, got himself arrested for inciting Nigérien Tuaregs to adopt Algerian nationality, and his superior, who was also vice-president of Algeria's National Assembly, visited Niger in 1963 travelling as far as I-n-Abangharit. Late in 1962 the Algerians even organised a ceremony for Niger's 18 December celebrations, to the chagrin of Niger's political circles mobilising around this RDA symbol to claim the loyalty of local Tuaregs. All this was backed with generous aid. Algerian inhabitants of I-n-Abangharit received five tonnes in goods from Tamanrasset, while one year later the Algerians sent another five tonnes in food aid for distribution to Niger's sick and needy.¹¹⁷

Worse from the perspective of the RDA, armed groups crossed the border at the end of 1962. They were identified as rival wilayas, i.e. FLN autonomous forces that engaged each other in a shoot-out deep inside Niger, a mere 40 km north of Tahoua. As the French garrison in Tamanrasset had been flown to the Chadian capital, French forces in Niger had withdrawn outlying detachments, such as at Bilma, towards Agadez, avoiding contact with Algerians and Nigérien Tuaregs alike.¹¹⁸ In the power vacuum members of the ALN (the FLN's military wing), based in Algeria's southern Hog-

¹¹⁷ Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de Dakar pour la période du 9 au 15 juillet 1959, no. 38; CAOM, Cart.2249; Recueil des principaux renseignements collectés au cours de la période du 19 au 25 avril 1962, no. 2; SHAT, 5 H 91; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 2-8 July 1962, no. 10; 23-29 July 1962, 25.345, no. 13 and 13-19 Aug. 1962, 25.428, no. 16; latter 2 SHAT, 5 H 121; *Ibid.*, 26 Nov.-2 Dec. 1962, 25.940, no. 31; 10-16 June 1963, 777, no. 24; 24-30 Dec. 1962, 25.003, no. 35; 30 Dec.-5 Jan. 1964, 21, no. 1; SHAT, 5 H 125.

¹¹⁸ Yet, French troops remained at I-n-Eker, a nuclear underground test site north of Tamanrasset, until 1967. For the broader context K. van Walraven, 'From Tamanrasset: The Struggle of Sawaba and the Algerian Connection (1957-1966)', *Journal of North African Studies*, 10 (2005), 3-4, 507-527. Later it was said only bands of one wilaya were in Niger. Ravens-

gar, were said to be contacting Niger's Tuaregs. That these engagements were not wholly peaceful can be gauged from an ALN detachment in Gao, which initially refused to leave Mali, claiming the region was part of the FLN realm. In the autumn of 1962 the ALN established itself at I-n-Guez-zâm, just inside Algeria, 20 km from the frontier with Niger. The settlement was thought to be an intelligence lay-out participating in propaganda missions in the Air, possibly with the help of the Algerian informer stationed at Tafédek and spreading the message that Air's migration routes, used by Hoggar Tuaregs, were by right Algerian territory. In September three vehicles with armed men travelled to I-n-Abangharit to collect an Algerian trader, but a detachment of Niger's army chose to avoid a showdown. One month later, another incursion took place when the ALN ordered NCOs to enter Niger, ostensibly to provide medical aid. Armed Algerians also confiscated cars and petroleum at Assamakka, a settlement opposite I-n-Guez-zâm on the Nigérien side of the border. By 1963 it was reported that border incidents had died down, but in June a chief of the Kel Tadele claimed that he had run into a column of four Land Rovers with armed Algerians asking for information about water points in the Ténéré—nearly 500 km south-east of the Algerian frontier. French intelligence was unsure about the veracity of this report but surmised that it involved a party of Algerians on their way to Cameroon to help remnants of the UPC, some of whom still received military training in Marnia. Finally, at an unspecified date Niger's authorities reported that Sawaba and FLN elements were seen at Tabora, located on the desert trail between Assamakka and I-n-Abangharit.¹¹⁹

It was the association with Bakary's men that made the RDA jumpy, and it protested against Algeria's aid to Sawaba. Yet, while the FLN had few qualms about its incursions as the RDA had expressed no moral support for its war of independence, by 1964 Algiers was pursuing a two-pronged strategy. On the one hand, it gave support to Sawaba, hoping that this would pay back once the movement had defeated the RDA. On the other hand, it began limited economic co-operation with Niamey in order to

dale to Millard, 17 Oct. 1962 & A.J. Warren, British Embassy, Abidjan, to R.J. Stratton, Foreign Office, 6 Nov. 1962; PRO, FO 371/161.727.

¹¹⁹ Rapport de Fin de Commandement du Général de Brigade le Porz; Délégué pour la Défense de la ZOM 4 du 1 avril 1962 au 30 juin 1963, Ière partie; SHAT, 5 H 31; Bull. de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 2-8 July 1962, no. 10; 13-19 Aug. 1962, 25.428, no. 16; 26 Aug.-1 Sept. 1963, 1.079, no. 35; 24-30 June 1963, 861, no. 26; 31 Dec. 1962-6 Jan. 1963, 25.046, no. 1; 31 Oct. 1962, 25.797, E. 254; 1-7 Oct. 1962, 25.668, no. 23; SHAT, 5 H 128, 142 & 121; Information Officer's Visit to Niger, July 12-19, 1963; PRO, FO 371/167615; Message chiffré démarqué, undated; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 18.9.

spread its risks. Its military incursions, typically part of the post-independence phase of testing its clout, had come to a halt and not necessarily expanded Sawabist influence. Moreover, in the autumn of 1963 Algiers expelled Nigérien migrants from Tamanrasset to the benefit of unemployed nationals, especially ex-ALN combatants. Even so, under the revolutionary leadership of Ben Bella, Algeria remained a natural partner of Sawaba rather than the RDA, and if the Algerian hinterland had no use for guerrilla action at least it constituted safe territory for Bakary's men. Nigériens travelling between Tamanrasset, I-n-Salah and Algiers were occasionally stopped and shown photographs of Djibo Bakary. If they did not acknowledge the righter of wrongs, they ran the risk of maltreatment and deportation.¹²⁰

Infiltrations in Western Niger

The relaying of intelligence on government ministries via Dogondoutchi to the party office in Tamanrasset shows that the northern and western networks were in touch with each other. In fact, cadres from these networks tried to maintain contact, as testified by the liaison work of Abouba Yattara, who travelled from Agadez to Mali early in 1961,¹²¹ and the attempt of Tambari Mahama, leader in the Agadez area, to meet a Malian envoy in Tillabéri in April 1963. In both cases their counterparts were stationed in the Gao area, whose inhabitants were also in touch with Tafédek, the pro-Sawaba locality in the Air mountains. As shown in previous chapters, the movement's presence in Gao went back to 1957 and was reinforced by deportees settling in the area, support of the Malian authorities and their hospitality to Sawaba-friendly activities, such as agitation on behalf of the PAI.¹²² Contact with other cells of the western network was facilitated by Bella followers, many of whom hailed from the Gao region, and lorry drivers plying the road connecting it with Niger's capital.

The party's office was established early on. In November 1959 the French reported that Sawaba's archives, in so far as these had not been destroyed, were about to be brought to Gao, while a certain Issaka Genda was coming

¹²⁰ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 20 May 1963; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 1-7 June 1964, 705, no. 23; SHAT, 5 H 127; *Ibid.*, 4-10 March 1963, 25.350, no. 10; 21-27 Oct. 1963, 2.244, no. 43; Aboubakar, commissaire de police Agadez, to M. le Directeur de la Sûreté Nationale, Niamey, 6 Nov. 1963.

¹²¹ Ch. 7 at n. 120.

¹²² See ch. 2 at notes 70-71, ch. 7 after note 77 and ch. 8 after note 59.

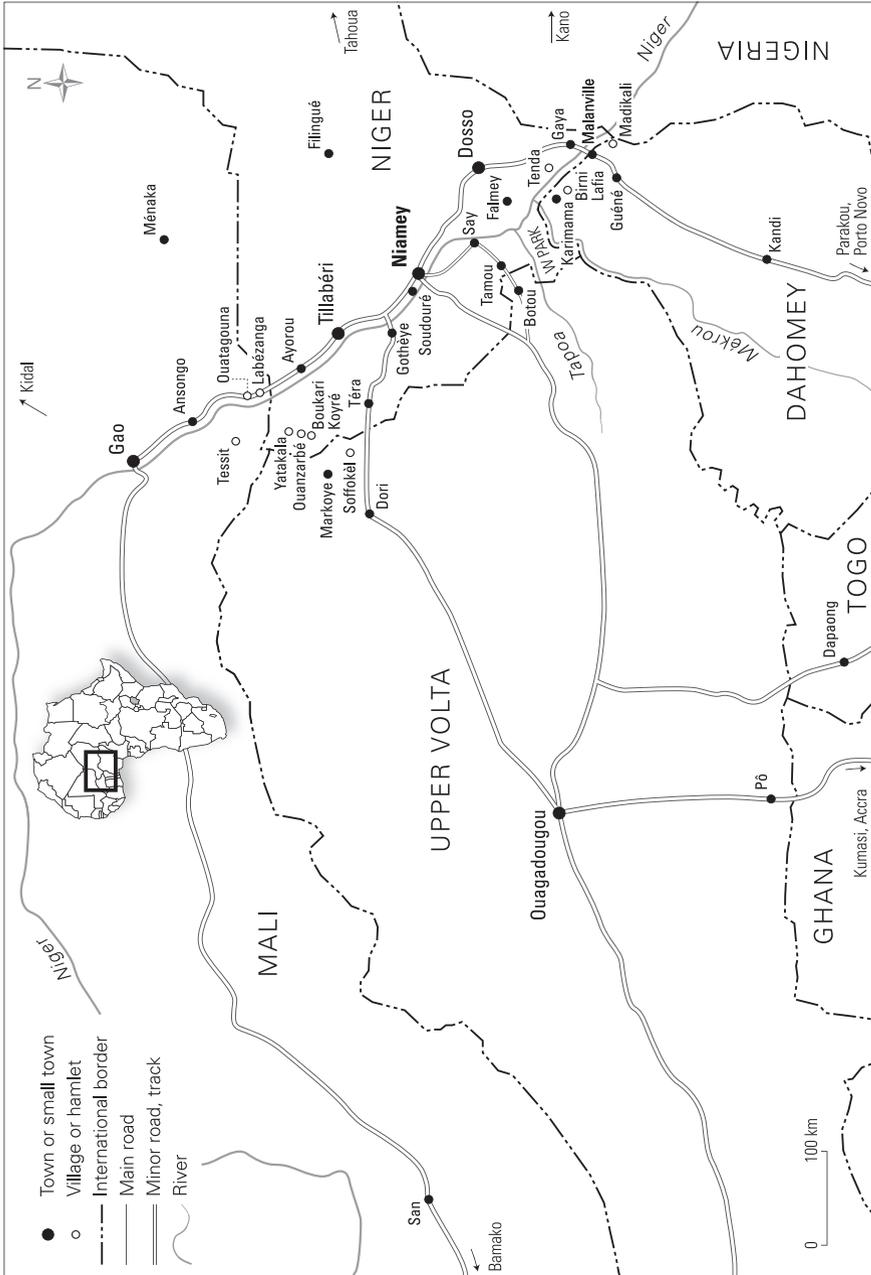
from Niamey to establish an intelligence and propaganda service. In view of Gao's proximity to Niger's western region, including Niamey, the French quickly saw the city's importance, reckoning it was 'susceptible to becoming the command post of Sawaba and the place from where all subversive actions towards Niger [would] be run'.¹²³ While this estimate was made before the Ghanaian footholds and Kano had developed into principal nerve-centres, it showed that for the practicalities of infiltration the Gao office was more important than the presence in Bamako. By June 1963 the French observed that the office in Mali's capital was in a precarious state, though this had much to do with the shift of the party's international activities to Accra.¹²⁴ Manned by Saloum Traoré and, later, Alazi Soumaila and Farka Maiga, Gao also harboured members of Bakary's family and benefited from the help of principal Sawabists in outlying areas such as Ansongo and San, closer to Bamako. Its importance was shown when in 1961 Sawaba's leadership contemplated the appointment of Hima Dembélé as Gao's 'chef de poste', a plan that was only abandoned when Dembélé was needed in Niamey to assist Adamou Sékou and prepare for infiltration of Niger's military.¹²⁵

Gradually, the centre developed further, besides Ansongo establishing a satellite base in Tessit—a village 75 km south of Ansongo, close to the border on the right side of the river—and one at Ménaka, a town much further east, connected by road to Ansongo and useful for missions to the Filingué area and, further afield, Tahoua (Map 10.3). Tessit, where the canton chief possibly agitated for Sawaba, was initially run by Idrissa Arfou, who earlier was representative at Sawaba's office in Accra and became active in Tessit and Gao as liaison. The village, which was also a stone's throw from the Voltan border, was not only useful for infiltrations of the right embankment area of the Niger River but also played a role in connecting Gao with headquarters in Accra, a ten-day journey via Kumasi. By 1963 Arfou was chef militaire of the local guerrilla unit and Mounkaila Beidari Tessit's political commissar, responsible for the Téra region and making incursions into Nigérien territory (Yatakala, Ouanzarbé, Boukari Koyré). By the end of 1963, however, the latter had left to reinforce the party cells

¹²³ Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de Dakar pour la période du 5 au 11 nov. 1959, no. 55 & 1 au 7 janv. 1960, no. 62; CAOM, Cart.2251/2 ('susceptible de devenir le P.C. [poste de commandement] du Sawaba et le lieu d'où seront dirigées toutes les actions subversives en direction du Niger').

¹²⁴ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 501, 26 June 1963.

¹²⁵ Airgram, Department of State, A-259, 28 March 1963; Note d'information, 20 June 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.10; ch. 7 at n. 91.



Map 10.3 The western network.

in Niamey to prepare for a commando assault in the wake of an army mutiny that had exposed the regime's fragility (see next section). Beidari was therefore succeeded in the Téra area by Mounkaila Albagna, who also undertook missions. Ansongo was handled by Maïga Abdoulaye, and although he may have worked for the party from Gao by the spring of 1961, Ansongo continued to function as a satellite base for the commandos. The Ménaka area also had a Sawabist presence and there are indications of propaganda activity there and, possibly, of the existence of an arms depot.¹²⁶

The western region had been divided into three sectors: on the right embankment Téra, on the left Ayorou-Tillabéri, and further east, Tahoua, which, as far as infiltrations were concerned, was also targeted from the Nigerian hinterland. The right embankment could be infiltrated by heading down from Ansongo and the village of Ouatagouna and crossing the river near Labézanga (on the border with Mali) or at Ayorou, and then continuing along the road to Téra and Gothèye. Alternatively, party workers travelled by canoe downstream. Already early in 1960 the French reported that 'rather frequent liaisons [were] carried out by canoe along the river'.¹²⁷ Most of these missions headed for Gothèye, which, benefiting from its Sawaba community and contacts with Ghana through labour migration (a good cover), was the principal cell on the right embankment. The house of Abdourahmane Bale, for example, was part of it and had a store of documents seized by police in June 1961.¹²⁸ Ayorou, with its Sawabist community and market useful for contacts, played a similar role on the left side of the river, probably maintaining contact with cells such as at Tillabéri, whose cadres were in touch with Dembélé.¹²⁹ On the right

¹²⁶ Beidari, who upon his return from Algeria and before he became commissar in Tessit was assistant to Mamoudou Pascal, was sent to Niamey on the orders of Bakary. *Fraternité-Hebdo*, 16 July 1965; Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de Dakar pour la période du 24 au 30 sept. 1959; CAOM, Cart.2250; *Ibid.*, 1 au 7 janv. 1960, no. 62; Ministre de l'Intérieur to Chef des Services de Police, Niamey, 31 May 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.8; interviews Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 Nov. 2003 & 15 Dec. 2009 and Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003.

¹²⁷ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 1 au 7 janv. 1960, no. 62 ('liaisons assez fréquentes s'effectuent par pirogue sur le fleuve'). See also K. van Walraven, 'From Gao: Sawaba and the Politics of Decolonization and Insurrection in the Songhay Zone of Mali and Niger (1957-1964)', in J.B. Gewald, A. Leliveld & I. Pesa (eds), *Transforming Innovations in Africa: Explorative Studies on Appropriation in African Societies* (Brill: Leiden and Boston, 2012), ch. 6.

¹²⁸ Note d'information, 10 Nov. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 4.11. Bale fled to Ghana (ch. 9 at n. 34).

¹²⁹ The Tillabéri cell included a woman called Fody, a certain Mattei whose wife lived

embankment missions may also have targeted Téra, a Sawaba stronghold whose cell was possibly reinforced late in 1963, when Yaye Saley, who collected intelligence in the Agadez region for Louis Bourguès, was transferred there by the government. Parties heading for Téra used Voltan territory to assemble at, among other towns, 'Sokofé' (i.e. Soffokèl, east of Dori and a stone's throw from the Voltan-Nigérien border and a local road to Téra), before penetrating into Niger. At least one commando, Daouda Hamadou, established himself in the town of Markoye, to the north of Soffokèl and also close to the border, building himself a house, doing intelligence work and sensitising Nigérien peasants and liaising with commandos in Tessit. As noted in the previous chapter, there was probably a small propaganda cell in Ouagadougou by 1962, and there are indications that there was still an underground presence of cadres or commandos in the Voltan capital two years later.¹³⁰

Infiltration missions, while more difficult than those undertaken by the southern network in view of the proximity of Niamey and its government presence, had started at least by 1961 and had the same goals as those staged from Nigeria: apart from intelligence gathering and sensitising the populace, contacting cadres of the internal wing and making arms caches, although these were safer across the border in Mali. Thus, in June 1961 a Malian was arrested on the frontier with a list of no less than 150 domestic Sawabists. The French also suspected that arms were being transported along the river. A year later, in October, the Malian Gendarmerie of Labé-zanga seized a dozen rifles that a Nigérien national tried to smuggle across the border, but this may have been an example of ordinary arms trafficking.¹³¹

With initial strategy not prioritising between rural and urban areas, missions often had Niamey as target. If the forces of repression here were nearby, commandos could easily hide in an urban community that still counted numerous sympathisers. As noted in Chapter 7, by 1960 Diam-

in Niamey, and a bus driver of Transafricaine from Gao. Note d'information, 20 July 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.10.

¹³⁰ Interview Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 Nov. 2003; Daouda Hamadou, Niamey, 20 Dec. 2009; *Le Niger*, 21 June 1965 & 2 Nov. 1964 (interrogation Robert Seguinikin); Commandant de Cercle Agadez to Ministre de Finance, 20 Nov. 1963. Those who made mention of 'Sokofé' probably confused the place with Sokodé, a town in northern Togo.

¹³¹ If the smuggler was a Sawabist, the arms may not have been impounded. Yet, see following chapter for Mali's complex role. Note d'information: Activités de la Sawaba au Niger (Le Premier Ministre. Etat-Major Général de la Défense Nationale. Division Renseignement, 29 June 1961, no. 5.211; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 15-21 Oct. 1962, 25.747/2/SC, no. 25; SHAT, 5 H 121.

balla Maïga had failed to put down the party here. In July 1962, for example, five Sawaba agents were reported to be agitating in the capital, though it is not known whether these agents (who were caught and brought to an internment camp) were local cadres or had infiltrated from outside. The same was true for a Malian activist, a certain El Hadj Sangaré, who about that time held a meeting with inhabitants of the Kalley district agitating on Sawaba's behalf, making much of the fact that the movement enjoyed the support of the Soviet Union. As mentioned in Part II, the previous April the arrest of Arouna Zada, youth leader from Gamkallé, unveiled the existence of an entire network of cells, which involved people tied to the Ghanaian embassy and by 1964 also included Mounkaila Beidari, charged with coordination duties. Beidari was a commando, as evidenced in the fact that he held weapons at his home.

The result was that the regime was regularly stricken by infiltration scares, such as in February 1963 when security measures were enacted in response to the discovery of anti-RDA tracts and rumours about Sawaba activity. In November that year, a roadblock was erected near the presidential palace and night-time house searches made as the authorities suspected the presence of a notorious Sawabist.¹³² If this partly pointed to the paranoia that characterised RDA rule, the espionage on government departments and ministers' movements showed that the regime had reason to be concerned. Thus, in July 1963 Voltan police in Pô, a town close to the Ghanaian border, caught up with a party of Malian and Nigérien 'students' trying to make their way across Volta territory to Gao. The men, who included Daouda Hima (an Algeria trainee now described as an Accra 'retailer'), represented a unit of commandos on their way from Ghana, carrying Sawaba membership cards and old boarding passes for the GDR and Soviet Union alongside Marxist and Maoist tracts and notebooks on sabotage techniques. Several of them—including Hima, a certain Ali Daouda and Tiegoumo Moussa—escaped and it was believed that they made their way to Niger.¹³³ Similarly, Issa Oumarou alias Sidibe Ousseini, Marnia trainee from Filingué, undertook at least three missions between

¹³² *Ibid.*, 9-15 July 1962, 25,314, no. 11; SHAT, 5 H 121; 23-29 July 1962, 25,345, no. 13; 4-10 Febr. 1963, 25,225, no. 6; SHAT, 5 H 128; 4-10 Nov. 1963, 2,306, no. 45; SHAT, 5 H 124; interview Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 Nov. 2003. Rumour had it the Sawabist was Bakary.

¹³³ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 30 July 1963; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 29 July-4 Aug. 1963, 982, no. 31; ch. 9 at ns. 122-123. The party's other members were a certain Umaru (Oumarou?) Ali, from Niger; Djibo Garba & Hamani Abdou, students living in Bamako; Mamane Guimba, identified as Malian student living in Bamako (= Mahaman Guimba dit Policier from Dogondoutchi, Sawaba law enforce-

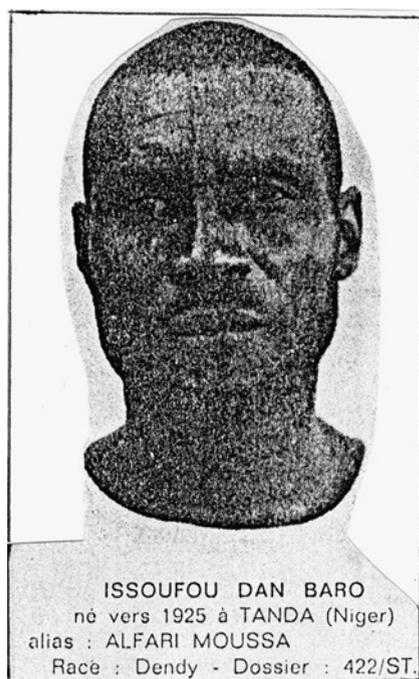


Photo 10.4 Issoufou Danbaro (police files).

1963 and 1965, and since commandos usually infiltrated in their home region it is probable that these took place in the Filingué area.¹³⁴

Besides the Malian-Voltan hinterland, commandos infiltrated across the border from Dahomey. This route profited from the fact that the Gaya region constituted a major leak in regime control, as shown in the Sawabist exodus in the autumn of 1961. The infiltration into Niger in August 1961 by leading cadre Issoufou Danbaro provides data on the routes taken during missions. Danbaro, a Dendi (Songhay) from the Gaya area, went from Ghana to Kano and from there travelled west, hiring a motorised canoe on the Niger River until reaching the point where it forms part of the Nigérien-Dahomean border. From there he continued along the river, but to avoid the bridge between Malanville and Gaya travelled overland south-west to Guéné. He then followed the track north-west to Karimama, halting at the

ment officer in Ghana?; ch. 9 at n. 363). Ali Daouda = Daouda Ali (dit Chang Kai-shek). See for him ch. 12 at n. 145 ('revendeur').

¹³⁴ Bureau de coordination et de liaison, No. 879/BCL: Etudiants et Boursiers du Sawaba de Retour des Pays de l'Est, 18 Oct. 1968; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14; ch. 9, n. 336.

village of Birni Lafia, roughly opposite Tenda on the other side of the river in Niger, where the village chief was a Sawabist. At that point Danbaro crossed the water, staying at the house of a cousin, somewhere between the river and Tenda. The authorities thought that most Sawabists took similar routes to avoid the border post at the Malanville-Gaya bridge. Danbaro's mission, which led to a return trip to Ghana,¹³⁵ points to co-ordination with the southern network, probably Dan Galadima himself, who at the time was in Kano. At a later date the Gaya cadre established himself in the Malanville area, assisted by fellow Nanking trainee Assane Bizo, who did regional intelligence work. Danbaro also got to use the house of a Nigerian marabout near the town of Sobrado, on the road from Malanville to Kandi, a city further south. He occupied himself with organising arms caches and liaison work, receiving commandos on missions and handing out weapons and ammunition. Thus, in October-December 1963 Djibo Seyni, the Son Tay guerrilla, infiltrated Niger possibly by way of the Malanville region. During this period he contacted members of the domestic wing, after which he returned to Ghana to report to the leadership. Other Sawabists stationed as liaison officers in Dahomey were Issaka Samy, who established himself in Porto Novo in the south, and fellow Nanking trainee Baro Alfari, who was possibly based at the village of Madikali, south-east of Malanville.¹³⁶

This infrastructure could be developed, as operations were facilitated by the Dahomean government. In 1963 its ties with Niamey soured as a result of a simmering border dispute, violence against each others' nationals and expulsion of Dahomean immigrants from Niger (see next chapter). This context transformed the cross-border ties of Dendi-Songhay communities and Sawaba's relations with political circles in northern Dahomey—dating back to 1957—into a strategic asset. A regional MP thus lent a helping hand in arranging military training facilities (see below).¹³⁷ Apart from the fact that many Dahomeans living in Niger—politically marginalised—sympathised with Sawaba, the movement benefited from the be-

¹³⁵ Sama Alhadji Ibrahim (RDA secretary in Gaya) to Ministre de l'Intérieur, 15 Sept. 1961; Rapport du Gendarme Buchillot Commandant la Brigade de Gendarmerie de Gaya sur Issoufou Dan Baro, suspect du point de vue national, Gaya, 4 Sept. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 12.19; chs. 7 at n. 103 & ch. 8 at n. 95.

¹³⁶ *Fraternité-Hebdo*, 21 May 1965 (interrogation Djibo Seyni); *Ibid.*, 16 July 1965; *Le Niger*, 2, 16, 23 & 30 Nov. 1964 (interrogations Assane Bizo, Djibo Seyni, Djibrilla Dembélé, Amadou Abdou). Location Sobrado unknown.

¹³⁷ For example, a certain Soumana, a Songhay of Nigérien or Dahomean nationality, actively participated in this. *Le Niger*, 2 Nov. 1964 (interrogation Assane Bizo).

nevolence of numerous Nigérien families established in the Malanville region¹³⁸ and along the common border. At vital stages Dahomey's government therefore turned a blind eye to the preparations on its territory. The movement's freedom of manoeuvre was boosted further by the disorganised character of the country's new administration, which came to power in the wake of union protests during the autumn of 1963 and shared Sawaba's left-leaning profile.¹³⁹

As noted, the whole border region with Dahomey, which in the north-west included a Nigérien-Dahomean-Volta game reserve called the 'W National Park',¹⁴⁰ was forested and thinly populated. Characterised by the malarial wetlands of the Mékrou–Tapoa Rivers, which are part of the three countries' common boundaries and discharge into the Niger, the region was propitious to infiltration, while not far from the Niamey area. The city of Say could be reached from northern Dahomey by crossing the game reserve, as could the town of Falmey, closer to the park and the Niger-Dahomey border. Missions also headed for Say from Upper Volta via the towns of Botou and Tamou, situated on opposite sides of the border, with some reaching this area by starting at Malanville and passing through the W National Park. Finally, northern Dahomey served as a launch pad for infiltrations in the Dosso region, south-east of Niamey.¹⁴¹

If Dahomey proved an increasingly good partner, the Malian government became more equivocal. Initially Bamako was a vital source of support. Mali under Modibo Keita, an impassioned politician,¹⁴² became a centre for militants from other French-speaking states. These were given refuge, money and possibly arms and training camps. Egypt and the Soviet Bloc made arms deliveries to Bamako and though it is unlikely that these weapons ended up in the hands of exiled groups, by 1962 French intelligence considered the country a basis for subversion.¹⁴³ Niamey readily saw it as a security risk, as can be gleaned from the rumour in 1963 that the

¹³⁸ As noted in Chapter 7 (at ns. 88-9), Djibo Bakary may have visited the city in 1960.

¹³⁹ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 16 Oct. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; E.M. Smith, British Embassy Lomé, to P.R.A. Mansfield, Foreign Office, 21 Nov. 1964, 1.061/64; PRO, FO 371/177229; S. Decalo, *Historical Dictionary of Benin* (Metuchen, NJ, and London, 1987), 4-6.

¹⁴⁰ Established in 1954 ('Parc National du W').

¹⁴¹ *Le Niger*, 21 June 1965, 2 and 23 Nov. 1964 (interrogations Assane Bizo and Amadou Abdou); Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 5 Nov. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2.

¹⁴² I. Wallerstein, *Africa: The Politics of Unity. An Analysis of a Contemporary Social Movement* (New York, 1967), 253.

¹⁴³ Rapport de Fin de Commandement. 1^{ère} partie: Situation Politique et Militaire de l'Ex-Afrique Occidentale Française, Z.O.M. no. 1. Dakar, 30 June 1962; SHAT, 5 H 31.



Photo 10.5 The Mékrou River in the W National Park. The opposite embankment is Benin—formerly Dahomey.

planes which Djibo Issa bragged Sawaba had in Algeria wore Malian colours.¹⁴⁴ As noted in Part II, Mali provided the movement a lot of support. Sawaba participation in the inter-territorial PFA—vehicle for the Mali federation of Senegal, Soudan and other future states—was at the origin of this. The proximity to Malian politics, however, also put this aid at risk. Modibo Keita, PFA secretary-general, rivalled Sékou Touré for the leadership of West Africa's unions and criticised Bakary, PFA vice-president, for his closeness to Guinea's leader. This blew over¹⁴⁵ but in August 1960, two months after independence, the federation between Senegal and Soudan collapsed, each country going its way—Soudan under the name of Mali. Amidst the enmity between Keita and Senghor (PFA president), Bakary had to tread carefully. The humiliated Keita, who, when in Dakar, was put under house arrest by the Senegalese authorities, told Bakary to leave Bamako, possibly as Mali now needed better ties with Niger or because Sawaba's leader was associated with Senghor. Yet, this also blew over and Bakary continued to reside in the Malian capital. Moreover, other Malian

¹⁴⁴ Fiche de Renseignements, 23-25 Nov. 1963.

¹⁴⁵ Modibo Keita also quarrelled with Bakary in Dakar in October 1959 (Bakary had a PFA office there) over PFA matters and Bakary's ties with Soudan's justice minister Madeira Keita. Modibo, who at the time distrusted Bakary and had him watched, told Sawaba's leader to stay put, but after a visit by Senghor Bakary left for Accra on 7 November. *Recueil des principaux renseignements ...* 5-11 Nov. 59, no. 55.

politicians, such as justice minister Madeira Keita, may have been closer to Sawaba, while support for the movement in Gao—crucial for infiltrations—may have drawn on regional currents impervious to the vicissitudes of Mali's national politics.¹⁴⁶

By 1961, however, there were signals that the context of Mali's support was changing. Early in the year the French noted that Bakary had stopped writing articles in the government organ *l'Essor*, and they hoped this lower profile would improve relations with Niger.¹⁴⁷ Modibo Keita was seeking ways to mend fences with conservative regimes, especially Côte d'Ivoire, which was important for landlocked Mali after the break with Senegal. Gradually, this intertwined with a wider process of appeasement between conservative and radical states, which in 1963 culminated in the creation of the OAU. The end of Algeria's war of independence (1962) eased Mali's ties with France, and growing economic problems forced it to look for an opening with the Entente. A revolt by its own Tuareg communities early in 1963 necessitated talks with Niamey.¹⁴⁸ The result was that, from 1961 onwards, Sawabists began to air concern about Malian support. In the autumn, ties between Mali and Niger improved in the run-up to a Pan-African conference in Lagos (January 1962), with Madeira Keita even taking part in Niger's 18 December celebrations. Sawaba cadres feared that the Malian government might stop Bakary directing the struggle from its territory. The French speculated that there was a secret accord between Niamey and Bamako that had led to a hardening of attitudes and they interpreted Bakary's journey to Conakry as a definitive departure.¹⁴⁹ However, this was wishful thinking, as Bakary was constantly touring to co-ordinate the struggle and mobilise support.

While Mali was becoming circumspect, Modibo Keita needed to guard his reputation among his followers, and one way that he could bolster his

¹⁴⁶ D. Bakary, *Silence! On décolonise: Itinéraire politique et syndical d'un militant africain* (Paris, 1992), 264-5; J.R. de Benoist, *l'Afrique Occidentale Française de la conférence de Brazzaville (1944) à l'indépendance (1960)* (Paris, 1982), 493; Synthèse de Renseignements Intérieurs. 3^{ème} Trimestre 1960, Période du 1^{er} août au 30 Oct. 1960, no. 2619; SHAT, 5 H 95; ch. 9 at n. 63.

¹⁴⁷ Conférence des représentants dans les états africains et malgaches (31 janv.-7 févr. 1961); CAOM, Cart.2221/D.2.

¹⁴⁸ Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 308; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 25 Nov.-1 Dec. 1963, no. 48; SHAT, 5 H 125.

¹⁴⁹ Recueil des principaux renseignements collectés au cours de la période du 9-15 nov. 1961, no. 151; SHAT, 5 H 95; 16 au 22 nov. 1961, no. 152; Synthèse de Renseignements Intérieurs. 4^{ème} Trimestre 1961, no. 590/2/S, no. 185/BS/S; Note d'information, 2 Nov. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3-5.

militant credentials was by persuading Niamey to accept the righter of wrongs back in its midst. In November 1961 Bamako began pressing Bakary and put out feelers to Niger's triumvirate, but while Diori allegedly agreed to allow the return of his foe—he had rejected similar proposals earlier on¹⁵⁰—Maïga was opposed. Obsessed with security the interior minister in February 1962 met his Malian counterpart in Gao, followed by a meeting at the border of the Commandant de Cercle of Tahoua and his Malian colleagues in Ménaka and Kidal (north of Ménaka) in July. One of the issues discussed was border patrols. French intelligence noted that the Malians toured the frontier region once or twice a month, while the Tahoua authorities could not even do that because of a lack of resources. This proved no stumbling-block to infiltrations, of course, but talks between Maïga and Madeira Keita in Gao on the return of Bakary ended in stalemate.¹⁵¹ When Modibo Keita expressed surprise about this during Diori's visit to Mali in April 1962, the latter rejoined that this was an internal matter. Although Keita wanted to improve ties with the Entente and rumour had it that he had planned to end the activities of Sawaba's refugees, this left him empty-handed.¹⁵²

Consequently, by August 1962 the French noted that official relations were cordial but had an undercurrent of malaise, as Bakary continued to be based in Bamako. A month later the Malian government told Sawaba's leader that he was free to stay although it did not want complications with Niamey. The message was, of course, that it would be better from him to move his headquarters. He ostensibly did so in the autumn—to Accra—, but the office there had already functioned since 1959–1960 and by 1962 was busy processing commandos. Hence, it is not clear what this relocation actually entailed, the more so as the office in Bamako, if reduced in importance, still existed by October 1964 and Bakary continued to enjoy the use

¹⁵⁰ It is unsure Diori agreed. The proposal was aired in the repression of the autumn of 1961 (ch. 8 at n. 107).

¹⁵¹ It was allegedly proposed to give Bakary a government post on condition that he subject himself to Nigérien justice (presumably for the sentences for unlicensed arms possession in the election campaign of December 1958 and his supposed involvement in 'Plan B'). A person in Diori's entourage would get in touch with him. Maïga rejected the plan, although it would have been deeply humiliating for Bakary.

¹⁵² A Sawaba tract published in Bamako agitated against the RDA and ignored Mali's complicated position. *Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire*, 6–12 Aug. 1962, 25.410, no. 15; Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 308; Wallerstein, *Politics of Unity*, 67 n. 2; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 501, 2 Nov. 1961; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; Recueil des principaux renseignements collectés au cours de la période du 12–18 avril 1962, no. 1; SHAT, 5 H 91; *Ibid.*, 26 avril–2 mai 1962, no. 3.

of a house there in addition to a car and expenses. In 1963 he could still visit his family in Gao. Probably the relocation meant that he stayed for longer periods in Accra rather than Bamako in view of the growing importance of the Ghanaian bases and BAA facilities. Bakary asserted, not altogether truthfully, that his move had little to do with Malian wishes but much with the desire to be closer to other exiled groups. Ghana's Nigérien community, a source of funds, must have been an additional attraction.¹⁵³ Thus, with Sawaba infrastructure in the Gao region quietly developing and Bakary travelling back and forth, the RDA could take little pleasure from the change in Bamako's position. In September 1962 the French noted about their ally in Niamey that it was 'first of all Mali, with its armament, its enlisted youths and the formidable exile it lodge[d] that one fear[ed] the most'.¹⁵⁴

Camouflage Your Action

By early 1964 Sawaba commandos had made numerous sorties into Niger from bases in surrounding countries. Their number is impossible to calculate but must have run into several dozen across the country, possibly more. They formed part of a slow, painstaking process of reconnaissance and sensitising the populace. The response to these forays, if hidden, appeared largely favourable, not just because commandos partly tried to mobilise in areas where the movement enjoyed support in the past, but also in view of the simmering discontent that marked RDA rule in different parts of the country.

The military threat emanating from these missions was marginal, but their impact was enhanced by infiltrations that targeted the administration itself. This was in line with the movement's initial strategy, which did not prioritise between the countryside and the cities but approximated the

¹⁵³ Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 6-12 Aug. 1962, 25.410, no. 15; *Ibid.*, 24-30 Sept. 1962, 25.633, no. 22; SHAT, 5 H 121; *Ibid.*, 20-6 Apr. 1964, 501, no. 17; Bulletin de Renseignements, Délégation pour la défense de la ZOM no. 1, 19 sept. 1962, no. 2.304; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 308; Airgram, Department of State, A-259, 28 March 1963; Warren to Mansfield, 23 Oct. 1964; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 14 Oct. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2. Mali's ambassador to Accra, who in 1961 represented Bakary's interests in Ghana, still did so in 1962. Crousset, ambassador of France to Ghana, to Don Jean Colombani, Niamey, 8 June 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 4.11; interview Noga Yamba, Zinder, 14 Febr. 2003.

¹⁵⁴ Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 3-9 Sept. 1962, 25.547, no. 19 ('tout d'abord le Mali, avec son armement, ses jeunesses embrigadées et le redoutable exilé qu'il héberge que l'on craint le plus').

inclusive tactics that characterised the nationalist agitation of the preceding decade. The attempt to infiltrate the government also harked back to communist penetration techniques that many of the UDN had internalised.¹⁵⁵ As noted in Part II, early on its union workers infiltrated the ranks of UGTAN-autonome, and hardliners like Dandouna Aboubakar advised cadres to join the RDA. If others reiterated such counsel because they wavered in political commitment, as an infiltration technique it was a sensible strategy to pursue. The administration with its numerous parastatals formed a large institution but was riven by tensions and rivalries that opposed party stalwarts to government officials, old RDA members to new, the higher-placed to petty civil servants, the young to the old. While many Sawabists, especially petty clerks, became victims of the vengeful sackings of RDA rule, the mass base of the movement's past meant that its followers were present in many quarters. The shortage of trained personnel, moreover, had saved some from summary dismissal. Several of these owed their education to the Sawaba government, possibly resulting in lingering loyalties.¹⁵⁶ The heart of government was thus not completely free from enemies of the RDA, while the fissures that marked the regime gave Bakary and his men every reason to try and win converts among its agents.

These could be placed high in the administrative hierarchy. When Adamou Assane Mayaki in 1961 undertook manoeuvres vis-à-vis the RDA,¹⁵⁷ he began cultivating ties with the secretary-general of its section in Tahoua. Whether he was motivated by strategy or personal expediency, three comrades paid a visit to the Commandant de Cercle, and a rumour went around that the Commandant and Chef de Subdivision harboured Sawaba sympathies. Even if this was a lie, the effect was divisive. Local RDA members began to distrust the Commandant, a Ponty-educated vet who had campaigned for 'No' in 1958 but made his peace with the PPN.¹⁵⁸ According to Yahaya Silimane's confessions, the Commandant de Cercle in the region of

¹⁵⁵ Lessons on preparation of coups at Nanking appeared to match this. Ch. 9 at n. 311-2.

¹⁵⁶ See ch. 6 at n. 42. Many educated Sawabists retained or later got positions in the administration (the labour inspectorate, for example) and the judiciary. Interviews with Amadou Bakary Maiga and Elhadj Illa Salifou (both law court employees—the second an old UDN member, the first a nephew of Djibo Bakary) and Abdou Adam, Niamey, 25 and 29 Nov. 2003; ch. 8 at n. 87.

¹⁵⁷ See ch. 8 at notes 85-86.

¹⁵⁸ Ali Diaroumey. Renseignements, 29 Aug. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.19; Travel report of British Embassy Abidjan, no. 23, to Foreign Office, 13 March 1962; PRO, FO 371/161.689; C. Maman, *Répertoire biographique des personnalités de la classe politique et des leaders d'opinion du Niger de 1945 à nos jours* (Niamey, 1999), vol. 1, 181.

Goudoumaria was also a Sawaba cadre. This, too, may have been malicious rumour—someone who read the file scribbled a question mark behind this observation¹⁵⁹—but it fed French concern about the Africanisation of the administration. In 1961 military intelligence remarked that most of the men leading Subdivisions and Cercles had been selected by Bakary's government for studies at the 'Institut des Hautes Etudes d'Outre-Mer'. Noting their disdain for their less-educated superiors, the French wondered about their loyalty, the more so as Sawaba at the time instructed its followers to rally to Diori's regime in the hope of obtaining posts from which they could mobilise support. Just a year later, in 1962, it was suspected that Bello Ganiou, a treasury official, was harbouring sympathies for the movement, since he received a letter from Djibo Bakary asking him to become more politically active.¹⁶⁰

The problem, in fact, went right through the ranks of the administration down to the lowest level—even touching the security branches. In August 1962 it was reported that Sawaba was making headway among lower civil servants in the capital. That summer an old companion of Bakary called Mai Manga or Maydanda, civil servant at the treasury,¹⁶¹ held a meeting with a dozen clerks to plan agitation—an event that puts the espionage in government ministries into sharper relief. Locally, too, the party was active. As noted above, the firebrand in the Agadez region, Yaye Saley, worked for the administration, and several other bureaucrats there were active in the movement. The nurses of Maradi's veterinary service that Silimane claimed were involved with the northern network totalled six, excluding two policemen, one of whom was identified by name. The French even hypothesised on the possibilities of infiltration among the 'méharistes', the army's camel corps.¹⁶²

That not all of this could be put down to regime hysteria became clear when Kaïro Alfari, the civil engineering student in the USSR who liaised with the leadership in Accra, got arrested when he travelled to Niamey

¹⁵⁹ Aboubakar, commissaire de police Agadez, to M. le Directeur de la Sûreté Nationale, Niamey, 6 Nov. 1963. It may have concerned Fodi Djingarey, who had just recently been appointed head of the 'circonscription administrative' of Maïné-Soroa, of which Goudoumaria was part (a Cercle had not yet been established). Source: List of chefs de poste, ANN.

¹⁶⁰ Synthèse de Renseignements Intérieurs. 3^{ème} Trimestre 1961, no. 2355/2/S, no. 925/BS/S; 1^{er} Trimestre 1961, no. 1/36, Période du 1^{er} févr. au 30 avril 1961; both SHAT, 5 H 95; Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 26 avril-2 mai 1962, no. 3.

¹⁶¹ It is unlikely that this was Maïdanda Djermakoye. Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 6-12 Aug. 1962, 25.410, no. 15.

¹⁶² Ibid., 28 Oct.-3 Nov. 1963, 2.262, no. 44. See M. Carlier, *Méharistes du Niger: Contribution à l'histoire des unités montées à chameau du territoire nigérien 1900 à 1962* (Paris, 2000).

upon the death of his father (1964). Under house arrest and risking deportation to Bilma, he was contacted by an unidentified police commissioner in the capital. According to Alfari, the commissioner sympathised with the movement and ordered him not to talk to his family but get on a lorry that would bring him to the airport. There a Sawabist nurse by the name of Ousmane Kane smuggled Alfari on board a plane bound for Paris.¹⁶³ The police commissioner was not an exceptional case, as can be gauged from reports in the spring of the same year that Maradi-based policemen and Republican Guards—usually pillars of the regime—were suspected of involvement in Sawaba's infiltration ring built up from bases in Northern Nigeria. This led to dozens of arrests, not just in Maradi but also in the Zinder region. Tracts and membership cards were found. Local police were not involved in this action as they were deemed politically unreliable. The same judgment was made for law enforcement officers in Tessaoua. While some of this may point to regional dissatisfaction with the regime rather than Sawaba infiltration, later in 1964 French intelligence reported that Maradi's police commissioner had been involved in pro-Sawaba activities.¹⁶⁴

Maradi, indeed, formed a focus of infiltration efforts. The reasons for this included the presence during the early days of the underground of hardliners such as Dandouna Aboubakar, but also of men like Aboubakar dit Kaou, who followed his unflagging comrade in advising followers to join the ranks of the RDA. In addition, the intensive economic traffic with Nigeria and the unruliness—or sense of independence—that marked Maradi's political climate made government agencies, manned at least in part by local people, into a propitious target for penetration. The regional sentiment that fed on the contradiction between Zarma(-Songhay) control of the political system and the economic preponderance of the centre-east found a natural outlet in Niger's economic capital. Early on, therefore, local administrative personnel were reported to be involved in Sawaba circles. In March 1960 a local educational facility was said to be the object of 'communist' penetration—perhaps a reference to the Red Cord. As noted in Chapter 7, Dandouna got help from Souley Katto, who worked in a government office, and judging from reports the involvement of civil servants—including the police and veterinary service—grew with the years. At least

¹⁶³ Interview with Kaïro Alfari, Niamey, 22 Febr. 2008.

¹⁶⁴ Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 4-10 May 1964, 565, no. 19; Événements survenus en Afrique Francophone pendant la semaine du 18-24 mai & 1-7 juin 1964; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 17 Oct. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 210 & 10 T 719/D.2.

one employee of the administration, a certain Mal(l)am Karégamba (Karangamba), was active as recruitment officer and in touch with Sawabists across the border, who probably included cadres at the Jibiya base.¹⁶⁵

The movement's men also went for the heart of government, which was the RDA rather than the administration. The earliest indications for this stem from May 1959—i.e. well before Sawaba's banning—, when Hima Dembélé made discreet appeals in the direction of the government party. Followed by the infiltration of UGTAN-autonome, there was a flurry of activity in 1961. Mayaki's moves towards the RDA in Tahoua led to rumours that Sawabists were trying to realise their dreams from inside the PPN. In a movement where social aspirations were the driving force of political passion, it was not strange to try and pursue objectives through another political grouping, even if of the enemy. The centrality of these aspirations (rather than the existence of the party vehicle as such), in addition to the organisational counsels of Marxism-Leninism, legitimised this deceit. Dandouna Aboubakar in January 1961 therefore advised cadres in Maradi to preach prudence and say 'that joining the RDA [was] to better camouflage oneself.' In the RDA they should criticise policies but not the leaders. He made it clear, however, that Djibo Bakary was 'the only one capable of saving the country', pointing out that Niger's independence was illusory and unemployment was rife.¹⁶⁶

In view of the totalitarian penchant of the 'Reds', this was a daring scheme, yet a couple of months later Sawabists replicated it in the RDA's committee of seven. As mentioned in Chapter 8, members of this group were working towards the renewal of the party's central committee. Having gained entry into the committee of seven, the French thought that the Sawaba cadres were trying to further the collapse of the government. One year later, there were reports that the movement focused infiltration on

¹⁶⁵ Diamballa Y.M. to M. le chef des services de police du Niger, Niamey, 25 March 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 6.7; Bulletin de Renseignements Particuliers, 18 Oct. 1964, no. 1234/2/S; Rapport Annuel 1964, 436.8: Maradi; ANN, FONDS DAPA; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 4-10 May 1964, 565, no. 19; Événements survenus en Afrique Francophone pendant la semaine du 18-24 mai. More generally for infiltration of the administration, see Confidential/NOFORN. Department of State. Bureau of Intelligence and Research. Research Memorandum RAF-26, 30 March 1962; PRO, FO 371/161689.

¹⁶⁶ Dandouna was perhaps aided by Henri Georget. Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Études de Dakar pour la période du 14 au 20 mai 1959, no. 30; CAOM, Cart.3686; Renseignements, 29 Aug. 1961; ch. 4 at n. 90; Maurice Espitalier, commissioner of police, Maradi, to chef des services de police, Niamey, 5 Jan. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.8; interview Daouda Hamadou, Ayorou, 20 Dec. 2009 ('qu'adhérer au R.D.A. est pour mieux se camoufler'; 'le seul capable de sauver le pays').

local party sections, whose chairmen were locked in conflict with the heads of the territorial administration, opposed to RDA interference in government affairs. Thus, there was an uproar in Maradi when those elected to an RDA women's committee turned out to be Sawabists. Sawaba activists likewise had contacts with RDA cadres in Zinder, where an influential member, Ali Keita, helped in the collection of money for imprisoned Sawabists.¹⁶⁷ Tambari Maigari, the district youth leader in Agadez, was thus not the only RDA member reported to be active on Sawaba's behalf.

Finally, if the méharistes were unlikely candidates for infiltration, the same could not be said about the army's infantry corps. Hima Dembélé's attempt to contact members of the military was probably the earliest instance of such association. In June 1961 he visited Tondibia, an officers training facility at a stone's throw from Soudouré, where he wanted to speak with two cousins of his. Nothing is known about what transpired.¹⁶⁸ Two years later, however, in June 1963, the French secret service reported the astonishing news that Madougou Noumana (i.e. Namaro, the Niamey trader who chaired the union of transporters) was holding secret meetings with Captain Diallo—a Peul from Téra and company commander of a heavy weapons unit with service records in Indo-China and Algeria. Together they spoke with Zodi Ikhia, the Filingué Tuareg who had represented the FDN in Sawaba's government coalition. Ikhia had defected during the referendum and was now minister of state in charge of defence. Namaro had no army record but was a Sawabist. He was already active for the party in the 1950s and possibly led a cell in Niamey, transmitting a letter of friendship from Bakary to Ikhia and providing him and Diallo with tracts from Accra. Their meetings were held at Ikhia's house.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ Synthèse de Renseignements Intérieurs. 1^{er} Trimestre 1961, no. 1/36, Période du 1^{er} févr. au 30 avril 1961; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 6-12 Aug. 1962, 25.410, no. 15; Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 16 au 22 nov. 1961, no. 152.

¹⁶⁸ Note d'information, 20 June 1961.

¹⁶⁹ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 8 June 1963; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; Note de Renseignements, no. 4.570/EMFTOM/2/SC, 6 Dec. 1963; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 2-8 Dec. 1963, 2.473, no. 49; SHAT, 5 H 125; S. Decalo, *Historical Dictionary of Niger* (Metuchen, NJ, & London, 1979), 87 & 242; République du Niger—Présidence: Décret no. 65-066/Bis/PRN, 5 mai 1965 portant mise en accusation devant la Cour de Sécurité de l'Etat; courtesy & interview Amadou Madougou (Namaro's son), Niamey, 24 Febr. 2006 & telephone conversation from Leiden, 9 March 2006; Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, vol. 1, 414; Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 312; ch. 4 at n. 68-9 (Ministre Délégué à la Présidence').

Ikhia risked replacement in a cabinet reshuffle, also because the eternal political traveller had allegedly planned the foundation of his own party to represent nomadic interests. Weeks after the meetings with Namaro and Diallo, he was demoted to the position of minister of African affairs. Continuing his protection of Diallo, he met the army captain regularly and sided with his criticism of government conduct in the relations with Dahomey.¹⁷⁰ Several months later, in November–December 1963, Diallo himself got in trouble with the authorities. In meetings at the National Assembly at which Boubou Hama and Diori were present, the captain slated the government for inefficiency, extortion and the luxury style of its bureaucrats. He was driven by complaints over army pay, pensions and austerity cuts, and while the social critique accompanying his move was typical of army men seeking to justify rebellion, it allowed Sawaba to associate with the unrest. In early December Diallo was relieved of his command but withdrew into an army camp, taking government negotiators hostage. As Diori could mobilise only gendarmes and police against Diallo's control of the army troops in Niamey, a compromise was agreed allowing Diallo to retain command. Fearing a coup d'état, however, Diori asked for intervention by the French military, who took up positions in the capital. The next day, 5 December, the National Assembly warned the captain that indiscipline could be exploited by Sawaba. Although Diallo and his men then declared their loyalty to the government, both he and Ikhia were arrested shortly after.¹⁷¹

As shown in the next chapters, the regime responded with a ferocity that was in part fed by suspicions of the captain's—and Ikhia's—collusion with Sawaba. Allegations that they were involved with Bakary's men centred on the notion that Diallo's mutiny was the beginning of an attempted coup, in which the army would take power with the help of a popular revolt incited by Sawaba's domestic cadres. Initially, French intelligence put this down to improbable rumour and dismissed it as a 'so-called plot' whose authenticity was questionable. It was pointed out that any link between

¹⁷⁰ Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 25 Febr.-3 March 1963, 25:337, no. 9; 23-29 July 1962, 25:345, no. 13; 2-8 Dec. 1963, 2:473, no. 49; 24-30 June 1963, 861, no. 26; 9-15 Dec. 1963, 2:501, no. 50; SHAT, 5 H 125.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 16-22 Sept. 1963, 2:064, no. 38; 2-8 & 9-15 Dec. 1963, 2:473/2:501, nos. 49-50; Rapport de Fin de Commandement du Général de Division Revol. Délégué pour la Défense de la Z.O.M. du 28 juin 1963 au 28 févr. 1965, part I; SHAT, 5 H 35; Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 316-8 for a slightly different version. Two brothers of Diallo—Ousseini Hassane Diallo, 'juge de paix' in Maradi, and Abdoulaye Hassane Diallo, army sergeant—were also taken in. *La Voix Libérée*, no. 1, March-Apr. 2011, 20.

Diallo and Sawaba remained unproven, that ‘facts’ like Bakary’s rumoured presence in the northern Dahomean town of Parakou were imprecise, and that many of the accusations could be set aside as regime hysteria.¹⁷²

Yet, while denying involvement in a conspiracy, Zodi Ikhia admitted that he *had* received friends who were followers of Bakary. His contacts with the army captain were also an established fact—as was Diallo’s participation in the meetings with Madougou Namaro. One French report of early December thus asserted that there probably *was* a Sawaba cell in the armed forces, organised or tolerated by the captain. While there is no proof for this last point save allegations of spendthrift on the part of Diallo (alluding to Sawaba funds?), the French did report that some Niamey Sawabists put their heads together during the mutiny—believing that their moment had come—, but that they were arrested. The regime claimed that their plan had been to organise a demonstration at the new hippodrome in the east of the city on 18 December—always a delicate time—, with the crowds then to be led to nearby army barracks. Arms would be distributed and the people would march to the presidential palace, situated in the Plateau district in the north-west. However, the plan failed owing to the precipitate action of Diallo, who feared a transfer, at the start of that month. If the French thought this an unlikely scenario, later the authorities mentioned that there had been a demonstration in the vicinity of the water tower.¹⁷³ They did not give details, but a French secret service note said that on the evening of 4 December 1963 police intercepted a hundred RDA youths, who—together with Sawaba militants—were on their way to the army camp where Diallo was holding out. One of the captain’s demands was that the authorities release Madougou Namaro, who had meanwhile been arrested, thus in French eyes confirming Diallo’s Sawaba sympathies.¹⁷⁴

The note showed that Sawabists were associated with the mutiny’s leader and that, if they were not the instigators of the army uprising, at one

¹⁷² Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 2-8 Dec. 1963, 2.473, no. 49; 9-15 Dec. 1963, 2.501, no. 50; 16-22 Dec. 1963, 2.541, no. 51; SHAT, 5 H 125; Général de Division Revol, Abidjan, to Ministre des Armées, Paris, no. 2.520/2/S; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2 (‘prétendu complot’).

¹⁷³ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 17 Dec. 1963; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; W.J.A. Wilberforce, British Embassy, Abidjan, to R.W. Renwick, Foreign Office, 1 June 1965; PRO, FO 371/182.198; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 2-8 & 9-15 Dec. 1963, 2.473/2.501, nos. 49-50; Note de Renseignements, no. 4.570/EMFTOM/2/SC, 6 Dec. 1963; *Le Niger*, 31 May 1965.

¹⁷⁴ Someone scribbled in the margin of this note that ‘the general’ should read this. Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 6 Dec. 1963; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; interview Amadou Madougou, Niamey, 17 Oct. 2011.

point they threatened to transform it into something approaching a popularly driven coup. Worse from the regime's perspective, the events suggest that Sawaba was able to mobilise or associate with young cadres of the government party—a testimony to the social cleavages that marked RDA rule. Exactly how far Sawaba involvement in the army's action went is difficult to say, but of the people who got arrested almost half were civilians, indicating that it was more than a mutiny inspired by corporate issues. Several of these people, moreover, were Sawabists. It is not sure, however, whether these men—apart from Madougou Namaro—were genuinely involved, as most were arrested or charged at later dates when new rounds of repression were unleashed. According to the regime, Baoua Souley, the former Maradi MP who did military training in the Far East, was part of the conspiracy, offering his house for the planning of action. Apparently, he had been on a mission to Niamey but could not be apprehended. In contrast, Maïdanda Djermakoye, who by then was director of the national drugs agency and an RDA member, did get arrested and was transferred to Tillabéri (February 1964). Others with stronger Sawaba links and taken into custody were Arouna Zada, the Gamkallé youth leader, Sodjé Namaro (Madougou's brother) and Sanda Hima, described as a peasant from Soudouré but probably the brother of Djibo Bakary (and involved in the fist-fight with Diamballa Maïga during the riots of April 1958). Garba Sangara, a reserve NCO, would have been the liaison between the mutineers and the Sawabists stationed abroad, promising Sawaba's support if the military would come into action.¹⁷⁵

Infrastructure

Though the mutiny failed, it showed how vulnerable the regime was and how important was the role of its French protectors. It added to the threat of infiltration, and not only at the level of perception. Yet, mobilising military malcontents was a dangerous game to play, as the seizure of power

¹⁷⁵ Hima was arrested in or before July 1964. The regime claimed Sangara knew Amadou Diop, the Zinder cadre, but this may be an anachronism (see ch. 13). It asserted Zodi Ikha co-ordinated the work of Sangara and Namaro, but this may be tied to a desire to frame the ex-minister. Décret no. 65-066/Bis/PRN, 5 mai 1965 portant mise en accusation devant la Cour de Sûreté de l'Etat; *Le Niger*, 31 May 1965 (prosecutor's indictment); Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 17-23 Febr. 1964, 215, no. 8; SHAT, 5 H 125; interview & telephone conversation Maïdanda Djermakoye, Dosso, 17 Febr. 2006 & Niamey, 21 Febr. 2008; interview Boubacar Sanda (Sanda Hima's son), Soudouré, 27 Febr. 2008; *La Voix Libérée*, no. 1, March-Apr. 2011, 20; Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 314.

by army officers could also block Sawaba's return at the helm of the state. From the movement's perspective more was required.

As for infrastructure, this was in preparation. Since the commandos had to travel to Niger unarmed from their base camps, the leadership had to arrange arms caches all along Niger's western and southern borders. This process started in 1961, possibly earlier, fed by weapons that appear to have been furnished predominantly through Ghanaian sources.¹⁷⁶ Evidence on location and distribution of these depots is scanty but gives a rough impression of their organisation. It seems that most caches were made just across the frontier in Mali, Dahomey and Nigeria (Maps 10.1 and 10.3). A few were located further afield, such as in Northern Nigeria's capital, Kaduna, and perhaps in Porto Novo, which may have served as a collection point for the arms transported from Ghana to the infiltration zones. Probably later, caches were located inside Niger. Starting in the west, there was at least one cache in Ayorou, which was described as large and containing rifles, pistols and ammunition. The number and type of weaponry that commandos carried is discussed in Chapter 12 but included pistols (automatic and other), semi-automatic weapons (submachine guns), rifles and grenades. While the Ayorou depot was prematurely discovered, there were certainly other caches in eastern Mali. There are indications, for example, of caches in the Gao region and at Ménaka. In the Dahomean frontier zone there was a depot in the house used by Issoufou Danbaro, just behind a customs post (in Malanville or further south at Sobrado). Facilities here included a training site for shooting practice, for which a field provided by local people was used in the vicinity of Karimama. The Dahomean MP mentioned earlier lent 16 mm rifles for the purpose. Another arms cache was later made near Tenda across the river inside Niger, in an area described as hilly. By the autumn of 1964 the Malanville region allegedly had around 20 'boxes' (caches) with arms.¹⁷⁷

Several depots were created in Nigeria. There was one near Illela, a Nigerian border town opposite Birnin Konni.¹⁷⁸ What was described by the

¹⁷⁶ *Le Niger*, 21 June 1965.

¹⁷⁷ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 28 Oct. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; Fiche de Renseignements, 13 Sept. 1961; ANN, MI 86 3 F 3.5; Shaw to Lequesne, 2/15 Oct. 1964; Bates to Pugh, 21 Oct. 1964; interview Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 23 Febr. 2008; *Le Niger*, 26 Oct., 2 & 23 Nov. 1964 (interrogations Assane Bizo & Amadou Abdou); Telegram Génédef Dakar to Minarmées Paris, 23 Oct. 1964; 10 T 717/D.2 ('caisses').

¹⁷⁸ Not Illéla in Niger between Konni and Tahoua. *Le Niger*, 26 Oct. 1964 (interrogation Maman Alke).

British as the ‘Sawaba arms-dump at Kaura Namoda’ included a training and resting camp for commandos. This ‘Goussao’ base became quite substantial as by 1964 it had a population of around 150. It appears that these were domestic followers of Sawaba who had fled persecution and were given drill by unidentified commandos trained in North Africa and Ghana. While much of this should be seen as political mobilisation rather than combat instruction (the men practised with shotguns, spears and coupe-coupes), French intelligence spoke of ‘very advanced military training’. Shooting practice and the handling of arms did take place at bases on Nigerian soil, as can be gauged from reports on Malam Karégamba. The Maradi civil servant and marabout not only recruited cadres but was said to direct a training camp just two km inside Nigeria, which must have referred to Jibiya. Ammunition and weapons (including automatic pistols and semi-automatic rifles) were available, in part thanks to NEPU associates. By mid-1964 there was also what was termed a training camp on the Nigérien side of the border in an area somewhere between Madaoua and Maradi. Weapons were present, though it is not certain whether there was a real arms cache. There was another arms depot in the Maradi region, however, but sources do not give an exact location. As noted above, an arms cache was organised at the village of Rogogo, which contained ammunition. Another report spoke of an important arms depot in Tessaoua, and several caches must have been organised in the Zinder region.¹⁷⁹ In the far east there was an arms cache at Boula Kari, a village in north-eastern Nigeria, which served operations in the Lake Chad region. The same was true for an arms cache on an island in Lake Chad itself. As noted above, Sawaba cadres based in cities simply hid weapons in their homes.¹⁸⁰

Other locations are unknown, but caches were made in all regions where the commandos planned to infiltrate. This can be inferred from subsequent developments. In most if not all cases the depots were small, usually containing a handful of guns, as they only served the needs of local units—but possibly also to prevent discovery. Sometimes the weapons were buried in the ground, as, for example, in Mali, where the authorities

¹⁷⁹ Some may never have been discovered, according to Ali Mahamane Madaouki. Interview, Zinder, 14 Febr. 2003.

¹⁸⁰ Warren to Mansfield, 23 Oct. 1964; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 17 Oct. 1964, 18 Jan. and 21 Sept. 1965; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; two untitled documents; SHAT, 10 717/D.2; Bulletin de Renseignements Particuliers, 18 Oct. 1964, no. 1234/2/S; Rapport Annuel 1964, 436.8: Maradi; *Le Niger*, 26 Oct. 1964; Déclaration Mahaman Leiyi, Niamey, 4 Aug. 1964. Location B[o]jula Kari not traced (‘entraînement militaire très poussé’).

did not allow commandos to carry arms. The weaponry in the Tenda depot near northern Dahomey was first wrapped in cloth and then rolled into mats that were put in metal boxes, which were buried. Bags and sacks were used for cartridges. Alternatively, weapons were hidden in millet stocks or grain reserves or concealed in bushes—as in Rogogo, where the cache was put in the woods along a local stream.¹⁸¹

¹⁸¹ Bates to Pugh, 21 Oct. 1964; interview Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 6 Dec. 2003; *Le Niger*, 16 and 23 Nov. 1964 (interrogations Amadou Abdou and Djibrilla Dembélé); Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 18 Jan. 1965; Déclaration Mahaman Leiyi, Niamey, 4 Aug. 1964. The Tenda boxes were called 'touques', metal reservoirs used in shipping.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

REGIME RESPONSES, 1962–1964

In November 1962 French intelligence reported that Madame Diori had provided the sum of 120 million CFA francs towards the construction of a hotel in the capital. The president himself would complement the extraordinary amount of money, equivalent to 2.4 million French francs, with the purchase of the surrounding land necessary for realising the project.¹ It concerned what would become the 'Grand Hôtel', laid out on the banks of the Niger in the Terminus quarter and fitted out with beautiful gardens, a bar and a swimming pool, with a breathtaking view of the river.



Photo 11.1 Grand Hôtel, Niamey (www.grandhotelniger.com).

The personal wealth that the rumoured involvement of 'l'Autrichienne' and her husband pointed to was emblematic of the department of the country's ruling class. Diori already owned an apartment in Paris at 39, Rue Scheffer in the prestigious 16th 'arrondissement', purchased by his ambassador for 170,000 French francs. In 1968 a house on the isle of Villenne in the River Seine, bought for 1.2 m francs (60 million CFA francs),

¹ Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 26 Nov.-2 Dec. 1962, 25,940, no. 31; SHAT, 5 H 122.

was added.² The US State Department thus concluded that the regime was less concerned with ideology than the perks of office; rather than tackling the problems of government, ministers 'frequently traveled abroad on extended, costly, and often unproductive trips'. As the French noted, this involved not the least of persons—meticulously recording that Diori's own 'passion for travel' led him to spend 175 days abroad during 1961 and 96 days up to September 1962.³

The Bedroom of the Ambassador

The regime represented the narrow expression of 'commis' interests, and as it was poorly embedded socially, it depended on the protection of the French. The posture of its functionaries was marked by a parasitical demeanour mixed with a general sense of anxiety. This simmering insecurity, fed by internal fissures marking an administration that had an all-embracing, national ambition, was exacerbated by the regime's ideological immaturity. As paraphrased by French intelligence, its doctrines boiled down to the assertion that the RDA was omnipotent, guiding the people and having primacy over the administration; that Sawaba could not threaten it as the party possessed militias; and that France 'remain[ed] the great friend', being the only country to provide it 'considerable assistance without recompense'. At the same time, this also proved the RDA's psychological weakness, suffering as it did (in the words of the US State Department) from 'the embarrassing impression that Diori's government [was] a creature of the French'.⁴

In view of his government's origin the president, in particular, was sensitive about this charge, complaining that the control that the French exercised over metropolitan aid was incompatible with the status of a sovereign nation. Hamani Diori, however, was a double-hearted man, warmly congratulating France for its generosity, keen on his foreign travel but also fearful about the security of his reign. A French-Nigérien defence accord was signed in 1961. Modalities of intervention were detailed by a

² The source is Diori's own former adviser J. Baulin, *Conseiller du Président Diori* (Paris, 1986), 129.

³ Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 3-9 Sept. 1962, 25.547, no. 19; SHAT, 5 H 121; Confidential/NOFORN. Department of State. Bureau of Intelligence and Research. Research Memorandum RAF-26, 30 March 1962; PRO, FO 371/161689 ('l'humeur voyageuse').

⁴ Bulletin de Rens. Hebdomadaire, 3-9 Aug. 1964, 959, no. 32; SHAT, 5 H 127; Research Memorandum RAF-26, 30 March 1962 ('reste la grande amie'; 'aide importante sans contrepartie').

protocol one year later (while unwritten assurances were given as well), and although the Corsicans tried to spare Diori sleepless nights, after an aborted coup in Gabon in February 1964 the French installed a telephone link between the presidential palace and the bedroom of their ambassador. Additionally, Diori had a concrete wall built around his residence and care was taken to select the members of the Presidential Guard—according to French intelligence all ‘Zarmas of good stock’.⁵ It earned him the derision of Sawaba propagandists, who mocked Boubou Hama as ‘Mr Scared’, whose ‘crown prince’ was Diori and whose house, like other ministerial villas, was surrounded by barbed wire and security lights.⁶

Western observers, too, had little esteem for Diori’s government, which was marked by more than a touch of paranoia. The Americans reported that cabinet ministers ‘relied heavily on French advisers’, and people in the French intelligence community expressed muted disdain about many aspects of RDA rule, not least Diori’s prolonged absences from the country. They often called the fears of the regime ‘rather vague’, noting a ‘sickly fear of plots and assassination’ that found regular expression among leading personalities, notably the interior minister. The French regarded many of these anxieties, focusing on the general risk posed by countries supporting the opposition, as exaggerated. Even so, Diori’s regime was frequently confronted by events that shook its confidence. The murder of Togo’s head of state in January 1963 led to strict orders to combat arms trafficking, and developments in Congo-Brazzaville in August that year triggered a whole range of measures. As a result of a popular insurrection, Congo’s government had been toppled in a matter of days and replaced by a Marxist-inspired regime. Diamballa Maïga therefore arranged a meeting with the head of the Sûreté and representatives of the army to study matters of defence, while police officials as well as Maïga himself went on secret missions to co-ordinate government action vis-à-vis scenarios that the French considered indistinct but in ‘the domain of the possible’.⁷

⁵ Research Memorandum RAF-26, 30 March 1962; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 13-19 Aug. & 17-23 Dec. 1962, 25.428/26.081, nos. 16/34; 20-6 Apr. 1964, 501, no. 17; SHAT, 5 H 122/121/126; *Foccart parle*. vol. 1: *Entretiens avec Philippe Gaillard* (Paris, 1995), 275 (in vol. 2, 130-1 it is suggested the telephone link was installed later); Z.O.M. no. 4, Accord de défense passé par la France avec le Niger (1961); SHAT, 6 T 852; text accord (without 1962 protocol) also in *Journal Officiel de la République du Niger*, 23 Sept. 1961, no. 38, 649-666. The 1961 accord followed on what had already been agreed under the Entente (‘Djermas de bonne souche’).

⁶ *Gaskya: Organe Officiel du Parti Sawaba*, no. 5, 29 June 1961 & no. 16, 30 Oct. 1961 (‘Monsieur La Trouille’; ‘dauphin’).

⁷ Research Memorandum RAF-26, 30 March 1962; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 3-9 Sept. 1962, 25.547, no. 19; 23-9 Sept. 1963, 2.089, no. 39; SHAT, 5 H 124; 18-24

If French intelligence disapproved of Diiori's fondness for foreign excursions and admired Maïga's resolve while registering his psychotic touch, the third man of the triumvirate, Boubou Hama, was noted for his impetuous behaviour, his vanity and lack of balance. This involved sporadic anti-French outbursts and a propensity for mud-slinging that gave Sawaba free publicity in the government's columns—to the chagrin of the French, who considered the conduct of the RDA chairman disorganised, maladroit and sometimes plainly stupid. Maïga, whose paranoia at times led him to overreact, occasionally shared in this negative appraisal, though Diiori's brother-in-law and interim head of state clearly formed the bedrock of the regime. The president himself, whose nerve the French cannot have rated highly, was liked the best, especially for the moderating influence on his colleagues but undoubtedly also for what British diplomats saw as a weak personality that allowed for the continuation of metropolitan control. The French showed no willingness, for example, to reduce their sway over the aid programme.⁸

If fear still formed the regime's distinguishing feature, not much had changed since the first years of RDA rule. To meet the obsession with security, more was required than access to an ambassador's sleeping quarters. The Presidential Guard was established in the wake of the army mutiny and its 'good Zarmas' were mainly ex-military or Republican Guards. Totalling 60, they were responsible for the protection of the president and fell directly under Diiori's authority. They were equipped with radio and heavy weaponry including machine guns and a 60 mm mortar. Force totals were projected to grow to 150 by 1966.⁹ The Bureau de Coordination formed another dependency of the presidential palace—as noted in Part II, manned by French officers who worked in the capacity of 'technical adviser' and in close co-ordination with the Sûreté. The Africanisation of the latter's cadres, which began in earnest when Diiori's half-

March 1963, 25-434, no. 12; SHAT, 5 H 123; 2-8 Sept. 1963, 2.008, no. 36; SHAT, 5 H 124 ('assez vagues'; 'peur malade du complot et de l'assassinat'; 'du domaine du possible').

⁸ Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 23-9 Dec. 1963, 2.576, no. 52; 30 Dec. 1963-5 Jan. 1964, 21, no. 1, SHAT, 5 H 125; 3-9 Sept. 1962, 25.547, no. 19; 15-21 June 1964, 768, no. 25; SHAT, 5 H 127; Rapport de Fin de Commandement du Général de Division Revol. Délégué pour la Défense de la Z.O.M. du 28 juin 1963 au 28 févr. 1965, part I; SHAT, 5 H 35; Minutes R.W. Renwick, 19 Oct. 1964; PRO, FO 371/177218; Research Memorandum RAF-26, 30 March 1962.

⁹ Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 9-15 March 1964, 307, no. 11; SHAT, 5 H 126; 9-15 Dec. 1963, 2.501, no. 50; 19 Dec. 1963, 2.511/2/SC; both SHAT, 5 H 125; Telegram MISMIL Niamey to Génédef ZOM 4 Abidjan, no. 3553/4/, before 12 Oct. 1964; Dévolution. Cession de matériels. SMB Niger; SHAT, 5 H 67.

brother took over the command from Jean Colombani, led to French concern about surveillance capacities, which in turn became a source of anxiety to Diori.¹⁰ However, apprehension was unwarranted or part of the triumvirate's internal rivalries since the Sûreté was thoroughly supervised by the minister of the interior and actively continued persecution of Sawaba sympathisers. Its personnel grew to 464 in 1964, of whom 147 worked in the capital in addition to 58 men at headquarters.¹¹ A so-called 'Cour de Sûreté de l'Etat', a separate institution, was established that same year to judge the participants of the mutiny, as both the French and RDA thought that the judges of the High and Supreme Courts were too independent. It was presided over by Boubacar Diallo, minister of justice until 1963 (when he was demoted to the department of the civil service and labour as he was suspected of insufficient loyalty to the government).¹²

With different aspects of security handled by a host of institutions, French personnel could help in co-ordinating responses, as they were present in several government organs and often more level-headed than their counterparts¹³—even if many shared in the RDA's enduring hostility towards the Sawaba movement. The lines of communication ultimately came together at the embassy, if not the ambassador's bedroom at least at his desk and that of the embassy's military mission. They, in turn, formed the link with Paris, the last line of defence. Facilitated by Corsican camaraderie and French reluctance to openly criticise the regime, security cooperation with the Nigériens functioned smoothly. When, for example, Colonel Germain, an inspector of French Gendarmerie forces stationed overseas, visited Niamey in the autumn of 1963, he reported that 'relations between the cadres of technical assistance [i.e. French advisers] and the Nigérien authorities [were] excellent and the French military advisers appear[ed] to be listened to'. Germain, who was received by Diamballa

¹⁰ Assistant director was, by the mid-1960s, Boubé Idrissa. *Le Niger*, 31 May 1965.

¹¹ Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 25-31 March 1963, 25.463, no. 13; SHAT, 5 H 128; Bulletin de Renseignements Particuliers, 20 Apr. 1964, no. 464/2/SC; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2

¹² Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 9-15 March 1964, 307, no. 11; *Ibid.*, 16-22 March 1964, 319, no. 12 and 1-7 July 1963, 879, no. 27; SHAT, 5 H 126/124; S. Decalo, *Historical Dictionary of Niger* (Metuchen, NJ, & London, 1979), 87; C. Maman, *Répertoire biographique des personnalités de la classe politique et des leaders d'opinion du Niger de 1945 à nos jours* (Niamey, 1999), vol. 1, 235.

¹³ They found f.e. that Zarma recruitment to the Presidential Guard showed that the regime's fears about Sawaba were exaggerated. Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 20-6 Apr. 1964, 501, no. 17.

Maïga, as Diiori was absent, was deeply impressed with the Songhay noble, whose knowledge of the Gendarmerie he considered exceptional.¹⁴

At the time, France's ambassador was Paul Fouchet, who took over from Don Jean Colombani in October 1962.¹⁵ The military mission was led by Col. Aillerie and the bureau of military assistance by Col. Feraud. It was Fouchet who ordered French troops to ward off the potential coup of Captain Diallo. While he was succeeded by Albert Tréca in May 1964, diplomatic relations also benefited from direct ties at the highest level.¹⁶ As noted in Chapter 6, de Gaulle liked Diiori, and Foccart had, in his own words, not only 'excellent relations' with Boubou Hama but also with Issoufou Djermaakoye. Four years into the regime, 'the man in the shadow', as the Elysée's Africa adviser was nicknamed, travelled to Niamey to offer Diiori a gift on the occasion of the 18 December celebrations.¹⁷

The mutiny of Diallo showed that the presence of the French army was not unimportant to the survival of the RDA. French troops, however, were reorganised in 1962, when they became subject to progressive force reductions. In April that year they were included in the newly established 'Zone d'Outre-Mer no. 4', a collection of forces in Entente countries with headquarters in Abidjan. The 4th brigade, commanded by a general, comprised the units stationed in Dahomey and Niger. The Nigérien contingent totalled around 2,200 men including a logistics unit, an armoured squadron, a reconnaissance & combat unit and an infantry company. At the same time, Algeria's independence gave rise to troop withdrawals from outlying areas (Nguigmi and, temporarily, Bilma) that led to concern in the triumvirate and among RDA stalwarts, especially those in the Zinder area, who were in hostile territory. Meetings had to be called of the city's district chiefs and marabouts to soothe anxieties, and officials said that they would call in French or foreign troops to guard the frontiers—an allusion to infiltrations by Sawaba, whose local cadres, the French noted, were contented about the withdrawal. Amidst security concerns that centred mainly on

¹⁴ Rapport du Colonel Germain Adjoint Gendarmerie au Chef d'Etat-Major des Forces Terrestres Stationnées Outre-Mer, Paris, 17 Oct. 1963, no. 00054/I.G.O.M.S./S: SHAT, 5 H 35 ('relations entre les cadres d'assistance technique et les autorités nigériennes sont excellentes et les conseillers militaires français paraissent écoutés').

¹⁵ Colombani left Niger in August 1962.

¹⁶ Rapport du Colonel Germain; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 30 July-5 Aug. 1962, 25,379, no. 14 and 15-21 Oct. 1962, 25,740, no. 25; SHAT, 5 H 121; 2-8 Dec. 1963, 2,473, no. 49; SHAT, 5 H 125; 25-31 May 1964, 673, no. 22; SHAT, 5 H 126.

¹⁷ *Foccart parle*, 95 and 156 and Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 17-23 Dec. 1962, 26,081, no. 34 ('excellentes relations'; 'l'homme de l'ombre').

Algerian infiltrations and Tuareg-Tubu dissidence, Diori was said to have flown to Paris to halt the pull-out, which was announced rather abruptly. He also contemplated a request for French air bases in Niamey and Agadez. The withdrawal of forces, however, was executed as intended, first at Madama near the Libyan border and later at Nguigmi. The removal of troops from the Kaouar escarpment was a more chequered process, with forces finally leaving the isolated region in September-October 1964. Agadez was abandoned in December that year, by which time French forces stationed in Zinder had left as well. Zone d'Outre-Mer no. 4 was dissolved in March 1965. Yet, a French garrison detachment stayed put in Niamey with a total of 205 men, depending on Dakar for provisioning. The capital's airport facility was also maintained, as was the military mission at the embassy. In fact, around 1,000 troops remained in Niger, forming part of the 4th RIAOM regiment, with bases in Niamey, Zinder, Agadez and Bilma.¹⁸

The withdrawal of French troops was therefore limited.¹⁹ At the time, Niger's armed forces were in the stage of formation, at first by a simple transfer of units from French to Nigérien command. Officially, the country's army—'Forces Armées Nigériennes', FAN—was formed on 1 August 1961, almost a year after independence. In April that year it had five Nigérien officers and 53 NCOs, but according to the French the value of the troops (forcibly recruited from an unwilling population) depended entirely on metropolitan staff. At the same time the presence of French advisers, many in command positions, caused problems as relations with Nigérien officers were notoriously poor.²⁰ Coupled with the shortage of

¹⁸ C. Lefebvre (*Territoires et frontières: Du Soudan central à la république du Niger 1800-1964* [Ph.D. Paris, 2008], annex XLIII) actually suggests a rise in the overall French presence, though this was esp. caused by its civilian component. Rapport de Fin de Commandement du Général de Division Revol, parts I, III, VI; Ibid., Le Porz, Délégué pour la Défense de la ZOM 4 du 1 avril 1962 au 30 juin 1963, part VI; SHAT, 5 H 31; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 24-30 Sept. 1962, 25.633, no. 22 & 2-8 July 1962, no. 10; SHAT, 5 H 121; *Le Niger*, 28 Sept. 1964; Decalo, *Historical Dictionary*, 33; T.C. Ravensdale, British Embassy, Abidjan, to G.E. Millard, Foreign Office, 191/62, 17 Oct. 1962; A.J. Warren, British Embassy, Abidjan, to R.J. Stratton, Foreign Office, 6 Nov. 1962; PRO, FO 371/161.727; Form-at-Glance, Niger, MI 4 (a)/0706, War Office, 16 Sept. 1963; PRO, FO 371/167.615.

¹⁹ Moreover, French troops also stayed put at I-n-Eker, the nuclear testing site north of Tamanrasset, until 1967. K. van Walraven, 'From Tamanrasset: The Struggle of Sawaba and the Algerian Connection (1957-1966)', *Journal of North African Studies*, 10 (2005), 3-4, 524, n. 43. Reinforcements could easily be flown in from other countries, such as Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal and Congo-Brazzaville.

²⁰ Decalo, *Historical Dictionary*, 34. Broader context in A. Mahamane, 'La naissance de l'armée nationale du Niger: 1961-1974', in K. Idrissa (ed.), *Armée et politique au Niger* (Dakar, 2008), 45-92.

funds, inhibiting the development of the forces, this resulted in chronic frustration in the officer corps. Having expanded to 800 troops by June 1962, manpower grew slowly, climbing to 900 men in March 1963.²¹ Shortage of funds hindered the creation of two new combat units, to be stationed in Niamey and Tahoua, and the army lacked personnel and reserves necessary to guard sensitive points.²²

Even so, the regime did its best to protect the frontiers against the more blatant forms of incursion, stationing troops, for example, at Assamakka to guard against Algerian and Sawaba infiltration, and at Madama. Administrative posts had already been established in a variety of border towns (apart from Ayorou and Madarounfa, at Gaya, Bosso, Matamey and Bankilaré, north of Téra). The government intended to expand FAN forces to 1,300 men in 1964 and 1,900 by 1968. They included one long-range desert group in Agadez equipped with Dodge lorries and two so-called 'groupements nomades', based in Agadez and Tahoua. However, mostly made up of Zarma and Hausa men, FAN forces resented duty in the north and deserted regularly.²³

Indiscipline was a general problem, although the French in 1963 observed that the army at least concentrated on military duties, which officially concerned external defence. Just how poor army discipline was, however, became clear during quarrels between soldiers and civilians in Niamey in November 1962. Ethnic sentiment opposing Hausa soldiers to the Zarma population was said to be at the source of scuffles that broke out twice and led Maïga to intervene with police and Gendarmerie. There were also tensions between veterans of the colonial army and FAN recruits threatening to replace them.²⁴ As noted in the previous chapter, at the end of 1963 the peace was completely shattered with the outbreak of the Di-allo mutiny. The uprising left FAN forces disorganised and made the government decide to try and reduce the army to around 800 men and recruit more Zarmas, as these were considered politically more reliable. In May

²¹ See for the structure of the 'état-major' in December 1962, the plan in SHAT, 5 H 142.

²² The French provided the uniforms and weapons of the reserves. Rapport de Fin de Commandement du Général de Brigade Le Porz, part VI.

²³ Ibid.; Rapport de Fin de Commandement. 1^{ère} partie: Situation Politique et Militaire de l'Ex-Afrique Occidentale Française, Z.O.M. no. 1. Dakar, 30 June 1962; SHAT, 5 H 31; Dévolution. Cession de matériels. SMB Niger; Ravensdale to Millard, 17 Oct. 1962; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 19-25 Nov. 1962, 25.914, no. 30; SHAT, 5 H 122; M. Djibo, *Les transformations politiques au Niger à la veille de l'indépendance* (Paris, 2001), 227.

²⁴ Ravensdale to Millard, 17 Oct. 1962; Rapport de Fin de Commandement du Général de Brigade Le Porz, part VI; Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, vol. II, 273; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 26 Nov.-2 Dec. 1962, 25.940, no. 31.

1964 new appointments were made to the chiefs of staff, yet a French assessment one year later concluded that, while discipline had been restored, the FAN lacked dynamism and 'only had value by the presence in the background of the French army'.²⁵

Niger's armed forces thus lacked not only the structure and mandate, but also the manpower and loyalty to be relied upon in defending the regime against domestic enemies. This task was essentially delegated to two public services, the Republican Guard and Gendarmerie. The Guards were a military force placed under the command of a French Gendarmerie officer and closely supervised by Diamballa Maïga himself. By 1963 they were divided in 45 'brigades de cercle' and three nomadic platoons, totalling 960 men at the end of the year, thus outnumbering FAN forces. One year later they had grown to 1,200, and the Guards were projected to expand to 1,420 by 1966. Yet, in spite of its protective function, the French military considered the Republican Guard (many of whose men came from the former Gardes de Cercle) 'poorly instructed, badly armed [and] of little use'.²⁶

In contrast, they regarded the Gendarmerie—that typically French police force organised as a military body—as 'certainly the most solid corps of Niger's Forces'. As in other countries, the gendarmes were formally part of the army (with which they were, however, locked in bitter competition) and placed under the authority of the minister of defence. In practice, they were permanently put at the disposal of the interior ministry, which politicised their mandate and character. They got their orders directly from Maïga, without the minister of defence being informed. Maïga tried to have the Gendarmerie transferred formally to his own department but, fearful of his powerful minister, Diiori opted for a half measure by which the Gendarmerie continued to belong to the armed forces and retained its military character, yet *de facto* was attached to the interior ministry. In the course of metropolitan troop withdrawals, part of French matériel was transferred to the Gendarmerie, which used it to fit out two new 'groupements' to be stationed in Tahoua and Agadez. West Germany was to equip the gendarmes further. The Africanisation of the command began in earnest in

²⁵ Baulin, *Conseiller du Président Diiori*, 49; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 11-17 May 1964, 599, no. 20; SHAT, 5 H 127; 28 May 1964, no. 647/2/DR; SHAT, 5 H 126; Rapport de Fin de Commandement du Général de Division Revol, part VI ('n'avait de valeur que par la présence à l'arrière plan de l'Armée Française').

²⁶ Rapport Annuel 1962, part VII: Armées Nationales. Niger; SHAT, 5 H 35; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 9-15 Dec. 1963, 2,501, no. 50; Dévolution. Cession de matériels. SMB Niger; Rapport de Fin de Commandement du Général de Division Revol, part VI ('mal instruite, mal armée [...] de peu d'utilité').

1962, when the French commanders assumed functions as technical advisers and three Nigériens were promoted to head the territorial groups into which the Gendarmerie was divided (Niamey, Maradi, Zinder). The overall force was led by Captain Garba Badié, a determined if ferocious character.²⁷

Allocation of funds remained in the hands of the defence ministry, something that hindered the development of the Gendarmerie's manpower and professionalism—to the chagrin of Maïga. The gendarmes were therefore not great in number, but they constituted a police institution unwavering in loyalty to the regime and hostile to anything smacking of opposition. Starting with 210 cadres in 1962, the Gendarmerie expanded to 280 in 1964 and 350 in 1965, and was expected to grow to a total of 445-500 men in 1967. Forces were spread across the national territory. In 1964 alone, for example, several new brigades were formed. Six of them were established early in the year, including at Ayorou, the Sawabist town near the border with Mali; Ouallam; Bouza, north of Madaoua; and the Air town of Iferouâne, where the community had been stirred by Sawaba propagandists from Algeria. Other brigades followed, stationed at Bankilaré; Aderbissinat; Matamey; Dargol; and Tillia and Tchín-Tabaradene, in the Azouagh region. A mobile brigade was put in place in Agadez, while territorial brigades in Bilma and Ingal were already functioning, responsible to company command in Zinder and benefiting from advice by a French officer in Agadez. Mobile brigades were also projected for Tahoua and Dakoro, and a mobile platoon of up to 30 men equipped with Dodge four-wheel-drives was sent to Bilma.²⁸

Just how vicious gendarmes could be to anyone in opposition to the government became clear during conflicts in the Tahoua region in May-June 1964. An allocation to Hausa peasants of land traditionally reserved

²⁷ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 544, 5 June 1965; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; Rapport de Fin de Commandement ... Le Porz, part VII, Revol, part VI; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 22-8 July 1963, 952, no. 30; SHAT, 5 H 124; 5-11 Aug. 1963, 1.007, no. 32; SHAT, 5 H 130; 17-23 Dec. 1962, 25.428, no. 16; Directive Générale pour le Lieutenant-Col. Seurat, Conseiller Mil. de l'Ambassadeur de France à Niamey, Min. des Armées. Division Rens., no. 4344 EMA/REN/2/S, 10 June 1965; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2 ('certainement le corps le plus solide des Forces Nigériennes').

²⁸ Rapport du Colonel Germain; Rapport de Fin de Commandement du Général de Division Revol, part VI; Dévolution. Cession de matériels. SMB Niger; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 13-9 Jan. 1964, no. 78; SHAT, 5 H 125; 13-6 March 1964, 470, no. 16 & 10 July 1964, no. 848/2/SC; both SHAT, 5 H 126; 31 Aug.-6 Sept. 1964, 1.054, no. 36 & 1 Sept. 1964, no. 1.069/2/SC; both SHAT, 5 H 127.

for Buzu nomads (i.e. Bellas) led to fighting, leaving several people dead and wounded. Gendarmes arrived and unleashed a wave of repression that drove numerous people into the desert without provisions, causing many deaths and compelling the Commandant de Cercle to intervene and prevent further accidents.²⁹

Even more dangerous, for outside any professional chain of command, was the development of party militias. It was the Israelis who were at the source of this. In the autumn of 1962 Niger inquired with the Israeli Dartex company about the price of arms and equipment. The following January an expert flew to Niger to discuss instruction of RDA youths, and in April 1963 Issoufou Djermakoye visited Israel to negotiate assistance in a range of fields, including militia drill. While the initiative thus began before the Diallo mutiny, it received added impetus when it became clear that the regime could not rely on the armed forces. A captain was sent from Tel Aviv to instruct party youths and an Israeli mission was established to supervise training, which continued for several years.³⁰

The 'Jeunesse Pionnière Nigérienne' (or 'Jeunesse Pionnière du RDA') was given physical drill, political indoctrination and shooting practice. Later the Israelis included counter-guerrilla warfare and interrogation techniques. Projections in 1965 spoke of 700 RDA Pioneers trained by Israeli officers. Girls, too, were involved, as shown by the young women armed with submachine guns who formed the guard of honour for Modibo Keita during a state visit in March 1964. Pioneers helped to protect regime stalwarts. Thus, in September 1963—while Diori was spending his summer holidays in France—Diamballa Maïga formed a militia unit of 60 to act as his personal body-guard, armed with automatic pistols. Generally, RDA militias were meant to help guarantee political security across the country. Hundreds of instructors were given courses in Niamey and then sent to the villages to train local youths. In December 1963 the French donated 100 MAS 36s, a French rifle fitted with a bayonet, though it is unclear whether these were meant for the militias.³¹ In addition, Diori contacted Israel's

²⁹ Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 11-7 May 1964, 599, no. 20 & 1-7 June 1964, 705, no. 23; SHAT, 5 H 126.

³⁰ The captain was Michael Mounhayt and the mission was led by Commander Almagor. Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 7 Aug. 1963; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; *Le Niger*, 23 Nov. 1964. Already early in 1962 a Nigérien delegation in Israel made clear its desire for assistance in the training of party youths. See protocol, 2 Febr. 1962, Missions en Israël; ANN, PRN (Préclassement) 1958-1974, no. 644.

³¹ Bulletin de Renseignements, 12 Aug. 1964, no. 969; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2.

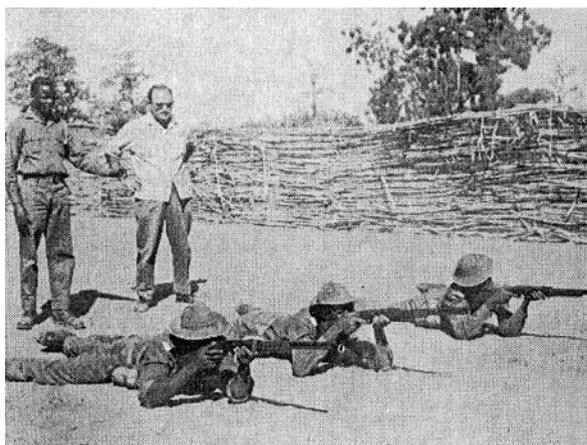


Photo 11.2 RDA youths engaged in shooting practice (*Le Niger*, 23 Nov. 1964).

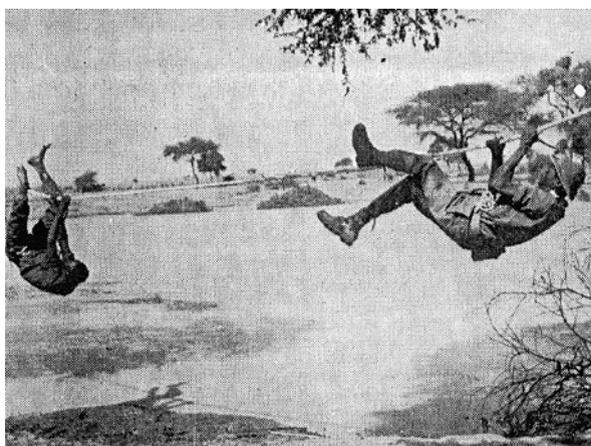


Photo 11.3 RDA youths engaged in physical drill (*Le Niger*, 23 Nov. 1964).

chargé d'affaires, who set out to arm the Pioneers with Uzis. By June 1964 militia units in Niamey had at least 150 of these weapons.³²

³² They were provided with 9 mm ammunition. Bulletin de Renseignements, Commandement Supérieur du point d'appui de Dakar, 19 July 1965; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 30 July-5 Aug. 1962, 25.379, no. 14; 14-20 Jan. 1963, 25.141, no. 3; SHAT, 5 H 128; 15-21 Apr. 1963, 25.577, no. 16; SHAT, 5 H 129; 16-23 Sept. 1963, 2.064, no. 38; SHAT, 5 H 124; 23-9 Sept. 1963, 2.089, no. 39; 16-22 March 1964, 319, no. 12; 24 July 1964, no. 892/2/SC; SHAT, 5 H 127; 8-14 June 1964, 747, no. 24; SHAT, 5 H 126; untitled document (n.d.) in SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; Baulin, *Conseiller du Président Diouri*, 49.

The State of the Regime

The obsession with security blended with other duties imposed on rural and urban communities. In the autumn of 1962 the government began developing plans for 'collective fields' to be established in every village and funded by local RDA sections. Their purpose was to stock food reserves, but party involvement provided an opportunity for the exertion of patronage. More dubiously, the minister of rural economy, Djibo Yacouba, visited South Vietnam where he was much impressed with the 'strategic hamlets' into which rural communities had been coerced. Even though Sawaba infiltration did not, by then, amount to any serious threat, he called the South Vietnamese measures a good way of establishing village democracy and helping peasants to defend against the communists. Early in 1963 the government announced its intention to introduce 'civic service' for youngsters, something the Americans had also advised on. A measure against youth unemployment, it could also boost party influence since these projects were run under the umbrella of the RDA.³³

As noted in previous chapters, early on party organisation suffered from poorly rooted structures, stymied mobilisation and internal strife, particularly in Agadez and Zinder—key areas in the competition with Sawaba. That there were still serious problems a couple of years later became clear when Boubou Hama in June 1962 announced plans to reorganise the party. This, he hoped, would allow the diffusion of orders without the possibility of debate, while also boosting his personal hold over the government. The French worried about this, as it did nothing to lessen conflicts between RDA and administration, which by this time erupted especially at district level. Here the regime planned elections that would boost the legitimacy of local RDA chairs, who now frequently interfered in the work of the Chefs de Circonscription. The regime wanted to resolve these conflicts by reorganising the administration, rather than reining in its political representatives.³⁴ The results were counter-productive. The RDA secretary of Agadez,

³³ Bulletin de Renseignements, 15-21 Oct. 1962, 25.740, no. 25; 25 Febr.-3 March 1963, 25.337, no. 9; SHAT, 5 H 123; A.H. Morgan, British Embassy Saigon, to Foreign Office, 29 Nov. 1962; PRO, FO 371/161.706; Bulletin de Rens., 19 July 1965; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 23-9 July 1962, 25.345, no. 13; SHAT, 5 H 121 ('champs collectives' [sic]).

³⁴ At the UN, for example, Niger was represented by a party man, not the ambassador to the US. Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 24-30 Sept. 1962, 25.633, no. 22. Administrative reorganisation centred on transforming Cercles into 'Départements', led by prefects. The heads of Circonscriptions became sub-prefects. 'Arrondissements' were

Issoufou Ghaly, had to be called to order as he subjugated the Commandant de Cercle to his control, made anti-French remarks (including about nuclear tests in the Sahara) and uttered criticism about Diori's rule. His brutalisation of the population was replicated in several other towns, and not just in the north. The RDA man of Nguigmi, locked in a bitter feud with the local Commandant de Cercle, profited to the maximum from his position. In April 1963 Diori contemplated a tour of the Zinder region to repair relations between the population and party stalwarts, whose 'muddled' behaviour had caused considerable strain. People complained about 'abusive expenditures of rulers and high officials'. Here it was Issa Ibrahim, Sawaba's arch enemy whose politics stood for scandal and uproar, who managed to damage the RDA's relations with Dahomean immigrants and French interests alike—threatening sanctions against those critical of the regime and calling for Africanisation of private firms. Local RDA youths hoped he would further their careers. Exceptionally, the Kaouar region was one of the few areas where the Chef de Circonscription kept RDA leaders and youths under control.³⁵

With corruption beginning at the highest level of state, it spread right across the country affecting national institutions and the regional administration. The distance from the capital encouraged impunity and extortion, which according to the French was a 'very extensive' phenomenon. Corruption at the local level had a profound effect on peasant attitudes. Nationally, workers criticised crooked officials in the union confederation and students protested against self-enrichment by dignitaries and the president's entourage, writing scathingly about the taxis, bars and houses rented out by ministers. 'L'Autrichienne', in particular, was attacked for the numerous villas she owned and the extraction of popular contributions for a personal palace in the Dogondoutchi area.³⁶ It could be expected that

introduced with a 'conseil général', and 'communes' led by a mayor and with a 'conseil municipal' elected by universal suffrage. The bill was passed in July 1964.

³⁵ Ibid., 15-21 Oct. 1962, 25,740, no. 25; 6-12 Aug. 1962, 25,410, no. 15; SHAT, 5 H 121; 25 Febr.-3 March 1963, 25,337; 1-7 Apr., 25,518, no. 14 & 20-6 May 1963, 710, no. 21; both SHAT, 5 H 123; 29 July-4 Aug. 1963, 982, no. 31 & 12-8 Aug. 1963, 1,024, no. 33; both SHAT, 5 H 124; 26 Aug.-1 Sept. 1963, 1,079, no. 35; SHAT, 5 H 130; 15-21 Apr. 1963, 25,577, no. 16; 11-17 Febr. 1963, 25,257, no. 7; SHAT, 5 H 128; 15-21 June 1964, 768, no. 25; 22-8 June 1964, 808, no. 26; SHAT, 5 H 127; 13-19 July 1964, 882, no. 29; SHAT, 5 H 127; Recueil des principaux renseignements collectés au cours de la période du 25-31 janv. 1962, no. 162; SHAT, 5 H 92; Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau d'Etudes de Dakar pour la période du 28 mai au 3 juin 1959, no. 32; CAOM, Cart.3686 ('brouillon'; 'dépenses abusives des gouvernants et des hauts fonctionnaires').

³⁶ Maïga denied forced labour was used for the palace. Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 12-8 Aug. 1963, 1,024, no. 33; 3-9 Sept. 1962, 25,547, no. 19; 13-19 July 1964, 882,

Sawabists would try to make the most of it, as they had already tackled the regime's fraudulent practices at an earlier date. Regime corruption became a theme in Sawaba propaganda and its agitators did their best to feed peasant rancour.³⁷

The regionalist sentiment in which the centre and east expressed their anger was countered by appointing Commandants de Cercle who did not hail from the area. But usually this had a counter-productive effect on relations with the population. In turn, police in the capital were ordered to round up young idlers (April 1963), many of whom had left the countryside in search of a better life but were now deported back home, ostensibly to help in harvesting work. Overall, ties between youths and government were poor, prejudiced as these were by unemployment, limited educational opportunities and competition for government posts. There were complaints that the administration was more closed than ever, barring peaceful paths to privilege. A meeting between youth representatives and Diori in June 1963 passed off in a restive atmosphere. The US State Department in 1962 reported that the president risked losing the support of the educated, urban elite, especially young intellectuals who, like the labour movement, leaned towards Sawaba. While these represented a small section of the population and the Americans thought it unlikely that Sawaba could topple the regime in the next couple of years, they noted that it remained 'a major factor in Niger politics' and that Diori could be forced to establish closer ties with the Soviet Bloc to satisfy militant youths. Though the government lacked the means to meet all the demands made on it, it proceeded to appoint a few anti-Western radicals to important posts to defuse social tension.³⁸

The regime's press thus congratulated itself with what it presented as political stability, ignoring the simmering unrest. During 1963-1964, how-

no. 29; 26 Aug.-1 Sept. 1963, 1.079, no. 35; FEANF—USN: Association des Etudiants Nigériens en France (AENF), XII^e congrès, 24-26 Dec. 1964, Antony (Paris); ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.2; Rapport Mensuel, Aug. 1969; SHAT, 10 T 715/D.2-3. On Madame Diori's exploits, see R. Higgott and F. Fuglestad, 'The 1974 Coup d'État in Niger: Towards an Explanation', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 13 (1975), 3, 390; A. Salifou, *Le Niger* (Paris, 2002), 220; Baulin, *Conseiller du Président Diori*, 129-130 ('très répandue').

³⁷ Mémoire sur la situation politique du Niger, Parti Sawaba, Bamako, 13 Nov. 1961; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 13-19 July 1964, 882, no. 29.

³⁸ The information service and security forces. Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 29 July-4 Aug. 1963, 982, no. 31; 11-17 May 1964, 599, no. 20; 22-8 Apr. 1963, 25,600, no. 17 & 24-30 June 1963, 861, no. 26; both SHAT, 5 H 123; 1-7 July 1963, 879, no. 27; UK Mission to United Nations, New York, to Foreign Office, Cypher/CTP, 15 Jan. 1962; PRO, 371/161.689; Research Memorandum RAF-26, 30 March 1962.

ever, life in the rural areas got some reprieve as a result of abundant rains, which led to good harvests. Diori, whose moral stature had just been enhanced by undertaking the Hadj to Mecca, must have felt gratified by the 1963 report of the Cercle of Tessaoua, which concluded that the year had been one of work and optimism.³⁹ However, this took no notice of the tensions that afflicted the body politic. Just how grim regime action could turn out to be in response to a security challenge became clear when the government decided to stage executions of Tubu raiders, who had harassed areas in the far east and were sentenced to death for murder and cattle theft. Diori turned down an appeal for grace, and in order to make an example of them, it was resolved that one would be shot in Nguigmi, one in Maïné-Soroa and one in Tahoua. Maïga wrote to the minister of defence that it had to be done by army personnel. Republican Guards were too exposed, as they patrolled in the rural zones. The government gave a lot of publicity to the executions, which took place on 9 September. In acting like this, the RDA was prepared to face up to the possibility of nomads' revenge—just as when it arrested only Buzu people in the conflict with Hausa peasants in Tahoua the following year.⁴⁰

Foreign Relations

The conduct of foreign affairs also stood in the light of government security, besides encouraging much needed development projects. Gaullist France naturally formed the RDA's principal foreign friend, but other Western countries also acted as important partners in the defence of the regime. Ties with Israel were established early on. In October 1959, at the time that Sawaba was outlawed, Tel Aviv invited two members of the government to visit Israel at its expense. In 1962, the Israelis sent a chargé d'affaires, who developed close ties with Diori personally and cultivated a good intelligence source inside the administration. Development and commercial projects began, something that worried the Gaullists, who saw Niger as the quintessential component of the 'pré carré'—France's sphere of influence

³⁹ Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 1-7 July 1963, 879, no. 27; 23-9 Sept. 1963, 2.089, no. 39; 31 Aug.-6 Sept. 1964, 1.054, no. 36; Rapport Annuel 1963, Cercle de Tessaoua; ANN, 86 MI D 9.38; R.S. Faber, British Embassy, Abidjan, to Foreign Office, 10314/62, 22 May 1962; PRO, FO 371/161.693.

⁴⁰ Buzu nomads swore that they would not forget this. Several death sentences had already been passed in Zinder the year before. Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 26 Aug.-1 Sept. 1963, 1.079, no. 35; 16-23 Sept. 1963, 2.064, no. 38; 24-30 June 1963, 861, no. 26; 10-6 Dec. 1962; 26.045, no. 33; SHAT, 5 H 122; 6-12 July 1964, 852, no. 28; SHAT, 5 H 126.

in sub-Saharan Africa. Technical co-operation allowed Niger to profit from Israeli know-how in agriculture and water management, and young Nigériens were sent to the Jewish state for studies.⁴¹ The Americans, too, developed ties, engaging in mild competition with the French by dispatching Peace Corps volunteers and USAID advisors. They became the biggest donor after Paris. Other Western(-oriented) powers with which the regime established ties included Belgium, West Germany and Taiwan, whose ambassador to France visited Niger in 1962. Diplomatic ties with Taiwan began a year later and also led to agricultural co-operation, including a rice project in Tillabéri. Niger's foreign minister visited nationalist China in 1965.⁴²

That the RDA preferred Taipei to Peking had much to do with the financial and military support that China's communists gave Sawaba. As can be gauged from a remark by Diiori in February 1964, the regime became fully aware of the revolutionary plans that the Chinese had in store for it. At the time Niger did not react to France's recognition of the People's Republic and even allowed a North Korean delegation to visit the country. The French, however, considered the ties that emerged between China and Nigeria as dangerous to Niger.⁴³

Though politically not its natural partners, the RDA tried to develop limited relations with governments in Eastern Europe, in a half-hearted attempt to balance its dependence on the West. As noted in Chapter 9, there were some contacts in the cultural sphere, and the government accepted scholarships from the Soviet Union to counter the significance of Sawaba recruits there, an idea that came from the West German ambassador. However, the regime was lukewarm about engaging in official diplomatic relations (as the Soviets desired in an effort to balance the bets on their proxies). A cultural agreement was signed with the Russians and in

⁴¹ Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus par le Bureau de Synthèse pour la période du 8 au 14 oct. 1959, no. 51; CAOM, Cart.2250; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 3-9 Sept. 1962, 25.547, no. 19; 10-6 Sept. 962, 25.596, no. 2; SHAT, 5 H 121; 5-11 Nov. 1962, 25.842, no. 28 & 7-13 Jan. 1963, 25.065, no. 2; both SHAT, 5 H 122; Baulin, *Conseiller du Président Diiori*, 49 and 52 n. 1; T.R. Shaw, British Embassy, Abidjan, to C.M. Lequesne, Foreign Office, 2 Oct. 1964; PRO, FO 371/177.230.

⁴² Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 3-9 Sept. 1962, 25.547, no. 19; 15-21 Oct. 1962, 25.740, no. 25; 12-8 Nov. 1962, 25.909, no. 29; SHAT, 5 H 122; 17-23 Dec. 1962, 26.081, no. 34; 22-8 July 1963, 952, no. 30; 21-7 Oct. 1963, 2.244, no. 43; SHAT, 5 H 131; 18-24 May 1964, 636, no. 21; SHAT, 5 H 127; Synthèse de Renseignements Intérieurs. 4^{ème} Trimestre 1961, no. 590/2/S, no. 185/BS/S; SHAT, 5 H 95; *Le Niger*, 8 March and 22 Nov. 1965.

⁴³ Recueil des principaux renseignements collectés au cours de la période du 4 au 10 janv. 1962, no. 152; SHAT, 5 H 92; Synthèse de Renseignements Intérieurs. 4^{ème} Trimestre 1961; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 17-23 Febr. 1964, 215, no. 8, 10-6 Febr. 1964, 172, no. 7, 13-9 Apr. 1964, 470, no. 16 & 7-13 Sept. 1964, 1.078, no. 37; all SHAT, 5 H 127.

1962 Nigérien ministers visited Prague, Warsaw and Moscow to discuss economic co-operation. They entered into commercial agreements, but declined to follow this up with full diplomatic ties. The results of this tour, though mediocre, were assessed as positive, not just for the technical aid it might bring but also as it disputed Sawaba's monopoly of relations with Eastern Europe. Yet, the triumvirate allegedly reassured the French that it had not given the Soviet Union the right of overflight across its national territory. While Diiori sent a congratulatory telegram to Moscow on the 45th anniversary of the Russian Revolution and Russian diplomats in Bamako visited Niamey in December 1962, two years later the Soviets had still not realised normal diplomatic ties. In June 1964 a Yugoslav delegation visited Niger, as did another commercial delegation from Moscow, leading to an accord of little value. The previous year Niger had commenced technical and cultural ties with Bulgaria and a Czech mission visited Niamey. Many of these agreements acted as sops for the militants in and outside the regime. Thus, earlier on, in 1961, there had even been missions from communist China and North Vietnam, talking about goodwill and teachers' exchange.⁴⁴

Relations with neighbouring countries were to a greater or lesser extent also affected by the Sawaba threat. As noted, ties with Northern Nigeria's authorities were fairly good. While the Sardauna of Sokoto visited Niger a couple of times, Diiori toured Nigeria in 1961, having Sawaba's potential subversion already on his mind. The limited co-operation that was the result expanded slowly to include various issues, also judicial ones—to the chagrin of the Malians, who worried that Niger would be pulled into the orbit of Nigeria's economic powerhouse.⁴⁵ Relations with the Algerians were poor from the very start, since the RDA refused to recognise the FLN before the French were prepared to leave and Algeria became independent. Subsequently, ties were dominated not only by Algerian aid to Sawaba but also by the incursions of the Algerian military. Yet, as shown in

⁴⁴ Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 24-30 Sept. 1962, 25.633, no. 22; 1-7 Oct. 1962, 25.668, no. 23; SHAT, 5 H 121; 22-8 Oct. 1962, 25.781, no. 26; SHAT, 5 H 122; 18-24 March 1963, 25.434, no. 12; 12-8 Nov. 1962, 25.909, no. 29; 17-23 Dec. 1962, 26.081, no. 34; 1-7 June 1964, 705, no. 23; 15-21 June 1964, 768, no. 25; 15-21 Apr. 1963, 25.577, no. 16; Information Officer's Visit to Niger, July 12-19, 1963; PRO, FO 371/167.615; British Embassy, Abidjan, to Foreign Office, no. 23, 1.011/1/61, 13 March 1962; PRO, FO 371/161.689. Research Memorandum RAF-26, 30 March 1962 contains an overview of Soviet Bloc missions during 1961. Niger goodwill missions at the time visited, beside the above-mentioned countries, Hungary and Romania.

⁴⁵ Synthèse de Renseignements Intérieurs. 4^{ème} Trimestre 1961 and Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 1-7 Oct. 1962, 25.668, no. 23.

the previous chapter, by 1964 the Algerians were pursuing a different strategy. While still supporting Sawaba in various ways they had halted their own infiltrations and begun some economic co-operation with Niamey. For this purpose Boubou Hama visited Algiers and signed three accords, whose value, however, was symbolic and could not hide Niger's disappointment that economic co-operation, such as in transport, did not go further.⁴⁶

Other North African contacts included Egypt, whose limited support to the Sawabists did not preclude an invitation to Diori to come to Cairo. Niger's president visited the Egyptian capital in the summer of 1963, signing accords on trade and technical co-operation that the French, in turn, saw as a threat since they could encourage Egyptian influence. Similarly, Diori visited Guinea as part of a West African tour that also took him to Ghana and Mali, hoping to isolate the Sawaba enemy. Sékou Touré, while giving solid support to Sawaba, decided to provide Niger's regime with a number of scholarships. Although this showed just how strategic education was in the war with the RDA, Diori's visit created some détente in Guinea's relations with Niamey but not to the extent that its support for Sawaba was put in jeopardy.⁴⁷

Likewise, relations with Ghana remained problematic, despite Diori's high-level visit to Accra (March 1962). His entourage included Diamballa Maïga, indicating that security concerns were uppermost in Diori's mind. Significantly, the president was welcomed at the airport by Yacouba Idrissa, representative of the Nigérien community. As noted, Bakary's wealthy uncle was central to Sawaba's Ghanaian activities. At Accra's airport he talked with Diori, ministers and other members of his entourage and together with his followers took part in the receptions offered at the arrival and departure of Niger's president. Journalists and sources close to the RDA alleged that Idrissa had said that he would stop his activities for Sawaba and rally to the government, explaining that he wished to visit his family in Gothèye and that, if Diori and Nkrumah would engage in co-operation, he would abide by their decisions. This may have been encouraged by the businessman's desire to protect his economic interests. However, while the RDA was obviously keen on winning over one of Sa-

⁴⁶ R.S. Faber, British Embassy, Abidjan, to Foreign Office, 1.024/62, 21 Apr. 1962; PRO, FO 371/161693; Bulletin de Rens. Hebdomadaire, 1-7 June 1964, 705, no. 23; 15-21 June 1964, 768, no. 25.

⁴⁷ Bulletin de Rens. Hebdomadaire, 2-8 July 1962, no. 10; 29 Oct.-4 Nov. 1962, 25.808, no. 27; SHAT, 5 H 122; 8-14 July 1963, 922, no. 28; SHAT, 5 H 124; *Gaskya*, no. 20, 18 March 1962.

waba's key financiers (a Nigérien spokesman claimed the issue was raised in discussions between Nkrumah and Diori), Idrissa's statement was probably disingenuous; his Sawaba activities were to continue unabated.⁴⁸

Thus, Diori's visit produced few results. The two countries undertook to engage in economic co-operation but while the Nigériens made preparations to receive a Ghanaian trade delegation, the Ghanaians subsequently showed little interest—although commercial accords were signed in 1963. While the head of Ghana's mission to Niger pleaded for his government to come out in favour of the RDA and stop supporting Sawaba, his own embassy constituted a hotbed of Sawabist activity. Relations therefore remained difficult. Ghana had sent only a chargé d'affaires to Niamey, whereas the Nigériens dispatched a full ambassador; both countries denied each other's representatives tax-free alcohol privileges; and the Ghanaians showed stronger interest in Sawaba than the RDA. Promises that Sawaba's Accra offices would be closed were broken, and its military training continued unhindered.⁴⁹

Much the same could be said about the ties with Mali. As shown in the previous chapter, the RDA's hostility towards Bakary gave Modibo Keita little room for manoeuvre. Moreover, the impetuous style of his regime did not improve ties with Niger's unconfident president, who reacted sharply when Bamako's representative began to lecture him on the importance of inter-state co-operation. After Diori's visit to Mali in April 1962 co-operation evolved slowly, also leading to talks to combat currency trafficking. A second trip in November 1963 resulted in a meeting with Modibo Keita in Gao where Diori discussed economic issues and the revolt of Mali's Tuaregs. It took until the spring of 1964, however, before Mali's head of state came on a state visit to Niger. Keita toured the country, visiting several cities and making moderate speeches on co-operation, while Diori issued an appeal to Sawabists that contrasted with another wave of arrests a fortnight later. The main aim of Keita's tour, from the RDA's perspective, was to neutralise the effect of Bakary's presence in Mali, rather than restart the failed démarches for a rapprochement.⁵⁰ As noted, all this had little tan-

⁴⁸ See also next section. Recueil des principaux renseignements collectés au cours de la période du 8-14 & 22-8 mars 1962, nos. 167 & 169; SHAT, 5 H 91.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 29 mars-4 avril 1962, no. 170; SHAT, 5 H 91; *Le Niger*, 21 June 1965; W.S. Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy 1957-1966: Diplomacy, Ideology, and the New State* (Princeton, 1969), 246; I. Wallerstein, *Africa: The Politics of Unity. An Analysis of a Contemporary Social Movement* (New York, 1967), 60.

⁵⁰ Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 6-12 Aug. 1962, 25-410, no. 15; 17-23 Dec. 1962, 26.081, no. 34; 25 Nov.-1 Dec. 1963, 2.415, no. 48; SHAT, 5 H 125; 16-22 March 1964, 319,

gible effect on Sawaba's position in Mali, though it underlined that the men in the Gao hinterland had to manoeuvre with caution.

Espionage

A less tortuous way of tackling the Sawaba threat abroad was by directly getting at members of the external wing, or by striking at its foreign interests. This involved some sort of action to be staged on the territory of neighbouring states, such as the dispatch of agents or the execution of missions. These could be charged with collecting information, interrogating Sawaba cadres or attacking or kidnapping the movement's activists. Another course of action was infiltration of the external wing by the planting of spies. Many of these activities started early after the RDA came to power, benefiting from the careful grooming of the security apparatus by the French. The visit of Djibo Yacouba and Diamballa Maïga to Northern Nigeria's government in Kaduna in May 1959 was preceded by a preparatory mission, which used the occasion to get in touch with the headquarters of NEPU. While its purpose was to torpedo its alliance with Sawaba rather than an assault on the latter's cadres, it showed that the regime was ready to take the struggle beyond the country's borders. That same year, Niger dispatched a mission to Sam Pennie, Sawaba's early liaison with the Nkrumah government, from whom the RDA hoped to acquire intelligence files. In 1962 the regime took this work further. Abdou Adam, an RDA secretary in Zinder known for his discretion, was sent to Cairo, officially to take part in a table tennis tournament but in reality to investigate Sawaba's relations in Egypt. Mixing intelligence work with attending conferences, Adam contacted Nigériens studying on Egyptian scholarships, in addition to meeting President Nasser (presumably as part of a delegation) and collecting information on Egypt's German-trained police and propaganda efforts. Daouda Ardaly was also in the Egyptian capital, but Adam did not meet the head of Sawaba's recruitment programme.⁵¹

For Sawaba the security risks became more acute when the Sûreté began to dispatch men to try and capture its leaders. As noted, in 1960 Jean Colombani travelled to Malanville and, in disregard of Dahomey's sovereign-

no. 12; 20-6 Apr. 1964, 501, no. 17; 23-9 March 1964, 345, no. 13; SHAT, 5 H 126. In July 1964 Boubou Hama repaid Keita's visit by travelling to Mali. *Le Niger*, 13 July 1964.

⁵¹ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 25-31 janv. 1962, no. 162; *Ibid.*, 4 au 10 juin 1959, no. 33; 24 avril au 5 mai 1959, no. 28; CAOM, Cart.3686/3685; interview with Abdou Adam, Niamey, 28 Nov. 2003 and 22 Febr. 2008.

ty, tried to seize Bakary when the country's authorities refused to co-operate in his arrest. One year later, Zinder's police commissioner, Espitalier, sent a mission to Kano to investigate Sawaba's local headquarters and capture Ousmane Dan Galadima, though he apparently planned to do this the official way by getting in touch with the Emir. The Nigériens failed to trace Galadima but decided to dispatch a consular representative, one Amirou Issa, who had many contacts in Kano and could relay intelligence.⁵²

By contrast, a mission of four Nigériens, who travelled to Accra in July 1963, was potentially more dangerous as they gained access to Djibo Bakary, who organised a meeting and presented them to party cadres. The four men, all engineers by profession, possibly constituted a surveillance mission since French intelligence reported that they were sent to Ghana to test the strength of Sawaba's presence. They returned to Niger within a fortnight.⁵³ The mission of Agadez's police commissioner to Tamanrasset, just a couple of months later, also represented a menace—as Yahaya Silimane found out when cornered by the commissioner (he had actually been tricked to come to the latter's hotel). The commissioner worked under cover of a mission to repatriate unemployed nationals, and a second mission to the Algerian town—this time undertaken by envoys of the Commandant de Cercle of Agadez—took place the year after, although it is unknown what its purpose was.⁵⁴

Consequently, suspicions about espionage were rife and Sawaba's external wing tried to maintain tight security, notably with respect to the leadership. As noted, men like Issoufou Danbaro and Daouda Ardaly were regularly confronted with individuals whom they did not trust or suspected of being moles. Spies were said to be present in all the principal market towns of Northern Nigeria or even to be travelling on the routes that Sawaba's cadres used between Nigeria and Ghana, keeping an eye on their movements. The situation in Ghana was complicated by the chaotic nature

⁵² Jean Colombani to Ministre de l'Intérieur, 4 Oct. 1960; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.5; A. Espitalier, Commissioner of Police Zinder, to Directeur Sûreté, 3 Oct. 1961 (2 letters); ANN, 86 MI 3 F 8.6; Bulletin Hebdomadaire semaine du 1^{er}-7 oct. 1961, no. 1.342/MI/CAB/Ct.cf; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 12.16.

⁵³ The four, all from Zinder except one, were Banda Zakari; one Rahimoune; Serkin Dan Ali from Dakoro; and Kassimou Sandiko. Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 14 Sept. 1963; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2.

⁵⁴ Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 4-10 May 1964, 565, no. 19; SHAT, 5 H 126; M. Aboubakar, commissaire de police Agadez, to M. le Directeur de la Sûreté Nationale, Niamey, 6 Nov. 1963; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 18.9 (Direction de la Sûreté Nationale/Commissariat de Police de la Ville d'Agadez: Notes d'information concernant le Sawaba en liaison avec Tamanrasset).

of Nkrumah's administration, whose officials found it hard to maintain a degree of discretion—something that led to numerous leaks about the assistance to liberation movements. However, most governments and opposition groups in West Africa, in addition to foreign legations, were busy gathering intelligence on each other. As noted, the Guineans eavesdropped on Niger's police, and the Ghanaians, trained by East German agents, engaged in intelligence gathering in Niamey. Sawaba itself may have expanded its infiltration of Niger's administration to foreign parts, since it possibly had a mole by the name of Kalla working as an orderly at the embassy in Accra.⁵⁵

Nevertheless, both the French and Nigériens managed to build up a good spy network that provided them with valuable intelligence, particularly in Ghana. The Nigériens even managed to plant spies in the camps where the commandos were trained. Abdoulaye Antama, the foot soldier who got into trouble with his unit leader Siddi Abdou, allegedly was one of them, or became an informer later. As noted in Chapter 9, Noufou Idrissa, Accra's RDA chairman and a wood trader, reported on local Sawabists when visiting the government in Niamey.⁵⁶ The French exploited their own infrastructure—as they did elsewhere in the region—and must have used many local sources.⁵⁷ It is possible that these included Noufou's commercial rival, Yacouba Idrissa, who besides his activities for Sawaba worked as an informer for Ghanaian intelligence. His name occasionally surfaced as a source in French intelligence reports, and in November 1959 French officers, while noting that Idrissa had relations with the Ghanaian government, said he was also in touch with their embassy in Accra. Since he remained engaged on Sawaba's behalf, it may simply be that he was a loose-tongued character or that he was trying to make money out of his French contacts. There is just the intriguing possibility, however, that he

⁵⁵ Interview with Kanembou Malam (former government soldier), Diffa, 12 Febr. 2006; *Surveillance du Territoire* (Bureau de Coordination), no. 396/SN/ST: Organisation Terroriste "Sawaba" (Recueil des dirigeants et militants actifs en fuite); ex. no. 000148, dest. le Sous Préfet de Dosso; and Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, 376; ch. 9 n. 358. A Nigérien mission to Eastern Europe allegedly tried to persuade governments there to deport Sawaba students. *Gaskya*, no. 12, 12 Sept. 1961.

⁵⁶ Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, 376; interviews Ali Amadou, Niamey, 28 Jan. 2003; Oumarou Janba, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003; Abdou Adam, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003; Limane Kaoumi, Diffa, 12 Febr. 2006; Aba Kaka, Bosso, 13 Febr. 2006. See also the cases of Kona Mayaki, Issoufou Moumouni, Baban Loré, Ali Dicko and Abdoulaye Antama, discussed in Chapter 9.

⁵⁷ Sawaba suspected a French journalist (possibly Georges Chaffard or Philippe Decraene) of working as a secret agent. D. Bakary, *Silence! On décolonise: Itinéraire politique et syndical d'un militant africain* (Paris, 1992), 260 and ch. 9 at ns. 48-9.

acted as a double agent, feeding the French with false information. In the report of November 1959 the French warned against the duplicity of the businessman, calling him a dangerous person. Two years later, Niger's ambassador to Ghana was rumoured to have demanded Idrissa's arrest.⁵⁸

Death in the Courtyard

At midday on 22 May 1962, Daouda Ardaly was lying down, taking a rest at his Bamako house, just after lunch. Sawaba's recruitment officer was dozing off as the sun's heat began to make itself felt, when all of a sudden a man barged into the room, holding a dagger and throwing himself on the slumbering activist. Although he tried to defend himself,⁵⁹ Ardaly was stabbed in the heart and liver before he could escape the assailant by pulling himself through the window. Staggering along the inner courtyard, the victim tried to reach the street before he collapsed in the doorway; Daouda Ardaly was dead.⁶⁰ The attacker fled the murder scene but police caught up with him and he was killed resisting arrest. His name was Alkassoum Alboro (Aiboro?), an old Sawaba militant. Not much is known about him, except that he may have served as a soldier in the French army in Algeria. He actually had lunch with his victim right before he invaded his sleeping quarters. Evidence suggests that Ardaly did not distrust him.⁶¹

The murder, marked by a film-like scenario, sent a shockwave through Sawaba circles. Sawaba's recruitment officer was responsible for one of the most important tasks in the movement, i.e. processing recruits and, especially, channelling prospective students to their educational destinations in Eastern Europe. Djibo Bakary instantly published a tract in which he attributed the murder to the Diori regime,⁶² and on the first anniversary of the activist's death the party published a ringing tribute in which the

⁵⁸ Recueil des principaux renseignements reçus pour la période du 22 au 28 janv. 1960, no. 65; CAOM, Cart.2252; P. Crousset, ambassador of France to Ghana, to Don Jean Colombani, Niamey, 8 June 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 4.11; Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 8-14 mars 1962, no. 167; 16-22 nov. 1961, no. 152; SHAT, 5 H 95.

⁵⁹ As deduced from the pattern of blood stains. Bulletin de Renseignements, 23 May 1962; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2.

⁶⁰ Details in the text of an AFP news broadcast, 23 May 1962; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 4.4. *Sawaba. Organe Central du Parti Sawaba du Niger*, May 1963, claimed Ardaly died almost instantly.

⁶¹ Ibid.; Confidential Inward Saving telegram, Bamako, to Foreign Office, 5 June 1962; PRO, FO 371/161.689; *Le Niger*, 26 Oct. 1964.

⁶² Confidential Inward Saving telegram, Bamako, to Foreign Office, 5 June 1962; Appel à la Jeunesse (Union de la Jeunesse Démocratique du Niger: Bamako, 25 May 1962).



Photo 11.4 Daouda Ardaly (*Sawaba*, May 1963).

accusation was repeated and Ardaly portrayed as a 'martyr of the African cause'. His demise was compared to that of such towering figures as Patrice Lumumba and Félix Moumié, leader of Cameroon's UPC, who was poisoned by French intelligence in Switzerland (October 1960).⁶³

Several years later, however, French journalist Georges Chaffard came with an altogether different story. In his book chapter on *Sawaba's* recent political fortunes he claimed that a few months after the murder a home-sick *Sawaba* renegade returned to Niger and told the authorities that the assassination had been arranged by Djibo Bakary. *Sawaba's* leader and Ardaly would have had a dispute about money and women, with Bakary having cast his eye on the mistress of Ardaly, a social assistant of Malian nationality. Ardaly would have complained that he received insufficient funds from his superior and have bickered about this regularly, especially since he would have wished to improve his status by marrying a woman of Austrian extraction. This would have made Bakary decide to order the as-

⁶³ *Sawaba*, May 1963. On 22 May 1963 *Sawaba* students in Moscow also held a protest meeting to commemorate Ardaly's death. Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 501, 1 July 1963; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2. See for France's 'dirty tricks' programmes at the time, R. Faligot and P. Krop, *La piscine: Les services secrets français 1944-1984* (Paris, 1985) ('martyr de la cause africaine').

sassination of Sawaba's recruitment officer. The renegade did not provide any evidence, but Chaffard pointed out—without divulging his own sources—that, when Ardaly's body was found, Djibo Bakary immediately departed for Ghana and did not attend the funeral, remaining in Accra for one and a half months and only returning to Mali to arrange for the relocation of his headquarters to Ghana.⁶⁴

In addition, the Malian government according to British sources in Bamako, also doubted whether the RDA regime was responsible for Ardaly's murder. It asserted that the assassination was probably the result of a personal dispute inside the movement, arguing that there had been reports of a quarrel over money between Ardaly and Alboro, his murderer. In response to Bakary's charge of a contract killing by Niger's government, moreover, Diamballa Maïga received a diplomat of the British embassy in Côte d'Ivoire several weeks later, being 'very eager' to disclaim Sawaba's allegation with an alternative explanation for the killing. According to the diplomat, Maïga asserted that 'the assumed murderer' was not known personally to any minister in the government, although they had information that 'he was a poor type, who was always getting into debt'. The interior minister argued that Daouda Ardaly 'had no standing whatever inside Niger', and the diplomat observed that Maïga 'clearly emphasised this point in order to drive home that the Niger Government had no interest in getting rid of him'. The RDA's strongman admitted, however, that Ardaly 'enjoyed a certain reputation abroad', even calling him more serious than Bakary. Realising that his standing with the governments of Mali, Ghana and Guinea was falling (as alleged by Maïga), Sawaba's leader would have wished to raise his stock and discredit Niger's regime by arranging the murder of Ardaly, of whom Bakary would have been jealous.⁶⁵

However, numerous aspects of these alternative explanations, which to a certain extent contradict each other, do not easily fit. Some appear rather improbable and others are plainly outlandish. Before discussing these aspects something must be said about the sources that Chaffard used. It is quite likely that the journalist, who leaned on government information (written and oral),⁶⁶ was influenced by Niger's presentation of the event.

⁶⁴ G. Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets de la décolonisation* (Paris, 1967), vol. 2, 308-9. The name of the renegade is not known.

⁶⁵ Confidential Inward Saving telegram, Bamako, to Foreign Office, 5 June 1962; R.S. Faber, British Embassy, Abidjan, to K.M. Wilford, Foreign Office, London, 6 July 1962; PRO, FO 371/161.689.

⁶⁶ Because of this, Sawabists have occasionally regarded him as pro-regime. Interview with Ali Amadou, Niamey, 31 Jan. 2003. See on Chaffard's sources also following chapters.

The source of one of his arguments that Bakary ordered the murder—his absence from the funeral—is unknown, but that of his second clue—the departure of Sawaba's leader to Ghana followed by the relocation of the headquarters to Accra—was probably the government paper, *Le Niger*; in October 1964 it argued this as proof of Bakary's guilt. The relevant article, full of innuendo,⁶⁷ repeated the essence of Maïga's allegation by arguing that, thanks to his contacts in the Eastern Bloc, Daouda Ardaly began to eclipse Djibo Bakary. The latter ordered Alkassoum Alboro, identified in the article by name and presented as an 'active Sawaba militant', to get even with his rival. According to the article the relocation of Sawaba's headquarters was in this respect 'very significant'. The link between Bakary's supposed execution order and his subsequent withdrawal to Accra was repeated in an article of the same paper one year later. By 1967, when Chaffard visited Niger, the allegation of Bakary's involvement in the Ardaly assassination had become a commonplace.⁶⁸

However, Chaffard's reference to a defector as source only increases doubts about its veracity, since the renegade would have had an interest in complying with the regime's needs. It is possible, of course, that Sawaba's leader and Daouda Ardaly disagreed about money. Yet, thanks to Sawaba's backers, funds were not really in short supply, and as both Bakary and Ardaly had numerous contacts in Eastern Europe it is not immediately evident that money should have formed a problem. The recruitment officer had huge responsibilities, deciding scholarships, arranging and distributing travel documents and tickets, and escorting students and conscripts to the airport. Ardaly must have had cash at his disposal. If women formed a source of tension, Chaffard gave a paradoxical account of this, with Bakary coveting Ardaly's mistress but his lieutenant desiring another woman, someone from Austria. This last point should not be discounted outright,⁶⁹ but that these liaisons made the two men fall out smacks too much of smear. It would, in any case, have constituted a frivolous reason for assassinating a personage as Ardaly. Dan Galadima, who occupied a top post in the party hierarchy, though he was then in North Africa was unaware about

⁶⁷ This was clearly related to the extremely tense situation then obtaining in Niger. See next chapter.

⁶⁸ *Le Niger*, 26 Oct. 1964 and 26 July 1965 ('militant actif sawaba'; 'très significatif').

⁶⁹ As noted in Part II, Ardaly attended a youth festival in Vienna in 1959, where he may have met someone. His own brother improved his status by marrying the daughter of the Malian ambassador to the USSR, while Hima Dembélé had a love in East Germany.

internal squabbles. Others, too, were oblivious to this.⁷⁰ Even if Chaffard's theory were accurate, replacement of Ardaly would have sufficed, the more so as the murder of a cadre with such a network was very damaging to the movement and did not bring Bakary's prime objective—the recapture of power—closer. The same is true if, as Diamballa Maïga pointed out, a contract killing on behalf of Bakary had been inspired by Ardaly's growing importance.⁷¹ Finally, the Malian authorities, while implying that the murder was not ordered by Niger's regime but the result of strife inside Sawaba, referred to a dispute over money between Ardaly and Alboro, his killer—not Djibo Bakary.⁷²

Modibo Keita's government had an interest in playing down involvement by Niamey. It is, in this respect, certainly possible that Bakary was in Bamako at the time and did not attend the funeral but immediately left for Ghana. Yet, it may be doubted that this could corroborate suspicions of connivance. Sawaba's leader was constantly travelling, while the assassination may have led to a security scare forcing him to leave for Accra—politically a safer environment. Moreover, a meeting of the bureau politique was about to take place there (Ardaly had been on the verge of departure himself) and barely a month later Bakary was back in town, speaking on Radio Bamako.⁷³ As noted in Chapter 10, rumour about an end to Sawaba's presence in Mali already dated from November 1961—long before Ardaly's assassination—and had more to do with Mali's fraught attempts to improve ties with Niamey than a supposed contract killing by Bakary. The latter was asked only in the autumn of 1962 to move his headquarters, i.e. long *after* the murder. Thus, since the Ghanaian base had begun to grow in importance and Sawaba infrastructure in Gao (and, in a limited way, in Bamako) remained intact, with Bakary continuing to travel back and forth, the murder of Ardaly did not form a watershed for the relocation to Accra—even though it must have convinced the Malians to push for it.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Interview, Madaoua, 7 Febr. 2003. Boubakar Djingaré, who at the time visited Bamako en route for Conakry, also denied that Ardaly and Bakary had a dispute. Interview, Niamey, 27 Oct. 2005.

⁷¹ Faber to Wilford, 6 July 1962. Alluding to Ardaly's importance, Galadima pointed out that he had been with the movement for very long. To eliminate him would thus have required a real cause. Interview, Madaoua, 7 Febr. 2003.

⁷² Confidential Inward Saving telegram, Bamako, to Foreign Office, 5 June 1962.

⁷³ Text AFP news broadcast, 23 May 1962; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 2-8 July 1962, no. 10.

⁷⁴ As the supposed link between murder and relocation was expressed for the first time more than two years later, it is probably evidence of an anachronism, which compressed the preceding developments to a singular point in time. Bachir Boukary, however, later

A final objection to Chaffard's surmise about Bakary's involvement is that, in such a case, it would have been logical to have sent a loyal commando from Ghana. The murderer, however, came from Niger⁷⁵ and this brings us to the circumstances surrounding the assassination. The identification of the killer as Alkassoum Alboro stems from a British diplomatic cable, which clearly had consultations with the Malian authorities at its source, and it is confirmed by a reference, two years later, in Niger's government paper.⁷⁶ He was a Nigérien⁷⁷ and, according to Niger's interior minister, poor and indebted. Apart from a background in the movement and possibly the French colonial army, Sawaba sources added that he may have been mentally unstable and had criminal experience, though the source for this could lie in the possibility that Alboro and Ardaly quarrelled—which subsequently led to their deadly struggle—and a desire to tarnish his background.⁷⁸ That the men got possibly involved in an argument also militates against the suggestion that Alboro acted as Bakary's henchman. It is therefore possible that the killer acted on his own initiative.⁷⁹ Since he had lunch with Daouda Ardaly, it is clear that they had some common business, with Alboro perhaps seeking access to a foreign education. The 1963 tribute to Sawaba's recruitment officer pointed out that his work had forced him to make difficult choices as far as applicants were concerned.⁸⁰ The Malian government, however, referred to a dispute about money, yet there is no information that money was stolen, leaving unclear what interest Alboro could have had to kill Ardaly (apart from revenge), since this would not bring a scholarship one step closer. The fact that Bakary's lieutenant was not suspicious of his visitor and went to bed after sharing a meal with him perhaps argues against the possibility of a prior dispute, the only

posited such a link, but there are indications that he read Chaffard, thus contaminating his testimony. Interview, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003.

⁷⁵ Interview with Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 2 Dec. 2003, who suggested Alboro travelled in four days from Niger to Bamako. This was partly confirmed by another source, the Moroccan ambassador to Bamako, who was silent about where the assassin came from, but claimed he arrived from outside the Malian capital. C.M. Le Quesne, British Embassy, Bamako, to K.M. Wilford, Foreign Office, 7 June 1962; PRO, FO 371/161.689.

⁷⁶ Confidential Inward Saving telegram, Bamako, to Foreign Office, 5 June 1962; *Le Niger*, 26 Oct. 1964. This also found its way into French sources. Bulletin de Renseignements Particuliers, 18 Oct. 1964, no. 1234/2/S—Note d'information; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2.

⁷⁷ Interview with Ali Amadou, Niamey, 31 Jan. 2003 and *Sawaba*, May 1963.

⁷⁸ Interview with Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 2 Dec. 2003 and *Sawaba*, May 1963.

⁷⁹ Interview with Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 2 Dec. 2003.

⁸⁰ *Sawaba*, May 1963. Nothing is known about Alboro's educational background.

source for which is an assertion by the Malian authorities, which had an interest in defusing tension with Niamey.

There is, then, the possibility of a third scenario that could shed light on Ardaly's murder, i.e. that it was indeed Niger's regime that sent out a killing order. An AFP report broadcast the day after the assassination said that it probably was a politically motivated murder, adding that in the preceding months Sawaba's leaders had been warned about suspect travellers presenting themselves as sympathisers. In view of the efforts in infiltration and abduction undertaken by the regime so far, this alert had nothing peculiar. As Sawaba recruitment agent, Ardaly was responsible for the decisive task of helping build a guerrilla army and nurture the administrative cadres with whom to take over the state—a crucial and therefore risky undertaking that left him exposed. As noted, Daouda Ardaly was usually cautious with regard to the acceptance of recruits and frequently rejected applicants, so much so that it caused irritation among leaders of the domestic wing.⁸¹

The fact that the murderer arrived in Bamako from Niger suggests, *prima facie*, that the assassination may have been ordered by the government in Niamey.⁸² The eagerness with which Diamballa Maïga sought to convince his British visitor of the regime's innocence, some six weeks after the act, made him say several things that point in that direction. First, the power behind Diori's throne, while denying that he knew the murderer personally, managed to give several details of Alboro's life, claiming, for example, that he was in debt—something that at least intimates the possibility that he could have been hired for the regime's dirty work. Second, the British diplomat observed that Maïga strongly emphasised Ardaly's insignificance in Niger so as to make clear that the government had no reason to go after him. By this the minister showed what his regime was capable of. Finally, he contradicted himself by alluding to the important position that Daouda Ardaly had in Sawaba's external wing. Some Sawabists later suggested that he was significant enough for the RDA to have him eliminated.⁸³

⁸¹ See ch. 8 at n. 91 and ch. 9 at ns. 47-52.

⁸² As Sawaba suggested all along. Nothing supports the idea that it might have been ordered by members of Sawaba's internal wing. As noted, Hima Dembélé's occasionally erratic behaviour stemmed from marital problems.

⁸³ Interview with Ali Amadou, Niamey, 31 Jan. 2003. Mounkaila Beidari, though more cautious, did not discount the possibility. Interview, Niamey, 2 Dec. 2003.

However, while Maïga's British interlocutor appeared impressed by the alternative explanation that blamed Bakary for the murder,⁸⁴ he reported that the activities and domestic influence of Sawaba's leader were worrying the government 'a great deal'. If this, at best, only alludes to the possibility that the regime—through Alkassoum Alboro—had not targeted Sawaba's recruitment officer but Djibo Bakary himself (whom it had tried to kidnap before), there is other evidence that this was indeed the case. A fortnight after the murder, a British diplomat in Bamako sent a report to London recounting a conversation that he had had with the Moroccan ambassador to Mali. This North African diplomat, who was 'well informed on these matters and who knew Ardali [sic] well', told his British colleague that the assassin arrived in Bamako two weeks before the murder, hoping to see Bakary himself. At that moment Sawaba's leader was out of the country (possibly in Guinea), forcing the murderer to stay put:

Having hung around in Bamako for ten or twelve days waiting for him the murderer eventually broke into Ardali's house one afternoon and stabbed the latter in the course of his siesta. The Moroccan Ambassador considers that he was sent (or came) to Bamako for the purpose of assassinating Bakary, but that the process of waiting for him to return got on his nerves so that he killed his secretary instead.⁸⁵

This unequivocal explanation naturally raises the question how the Moroccan diplomat knew all this. Clearly, he was acquainted with Daouda Ardaly personally, something that must be tied to the implementation of 'operation training of cadres'—which led Sawaba students to be sent to Morocco—, as well as the dispatch of recruits to Kibdani for military training. While it cannot be discounted that the ambassador was affected by anger when he made his comments, there are two other sources that confirm that Alboro's target had been Djibo Bakary, rather than his lieutenant.⁸⁶ The AFP report about Ardaly's death pointed out that the warning about hostile agents trying to gain access to Sawabists in Mali had been

⁸⁴ The diplomat added that Maïga suggested all this, rather than stating it definitely, and was unable to give direct proof. Noting that it would probably not be possible to 'get to the bottom of this affair', he thought that the minister made out 'quite a convincing case', although he ended his report by arguing that he could not say whether Maïga's version was more credible than that of Sawaba. Faber to Wilford, 6 July 1962.

⁸⁵ Le Quesne to Wilford, 7 June 1962.

⁸⁶ The British diplomat based in Abidjan who spoke with Diamballa Maïga considered it unlikely that the latter would 'resort to assassination to get rid of him [i.e. Bakary]', but he gave no argument why. Faber to Wilford, 6 July 1962 ('opération formation des cadres').

directed especially at Bakary himself.⁸⁷ Moreover, many years later Boubakar Djingaré, the Niamey mason and commando, volunteered that Ardaly was stabbed by an ex-Sawabist who had actually been looking for Bakary. Although he could have heard about this explanation from fellow guerrillas later on, at the time of the assassination Djingaré was not in Bamako but at the trade union school of Conakry (it is thus unlikely that he knew the Moroccan ambassador in Mali).⁸⁸

In his reminiscences Djingaré added that he did not know whether it was Niger's government that had ordered Bakary's murder. But if Alkassoum Alboro was looking for another person before he went to kill Ardaly, there is a strong hint that he was not acting on his own initiative but working under orders, particularly when set against the warnings about infiltrators.⁸⁹ Consequently, in view of the regime's obsession with Bakary, as well as the emphatic testimony of Morocco's ambassador, it may be concluded that the contract put out on Sawaba's leader came from Niamey. If his lieutenant was a good secondary target in view of his importance for the movement—as acknowledged by Diamballa Maïga and Sawabists alike—, it cannot be proven that the regime gave advance orders for this as well, although considering what we know about the RDA regime it cannot be discounted out of hand.⁹⁰

The People of the Coast

The bloody end, then, of Daouda Ardaly—who was succeeded as recruitment officer by fellow unionist Mamoudou Pascal⁹¹—was symbolic of the deteriorating exchanges between government and opposition, as well as the increasing violence of RDA rule. As noted earlier, in the month before Ardaly's death there was another wave of arrests in the capital, while Sa-

⁸⁷ Text AFP news broadcast, 23 May 1962; interviews Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 26-7 Oct. 2005.

⁸⁸ As noted in Chapter 9, Djingaré left Niamey in April 1962 and by May was in Conakry. From there he went to Ghana, then to Moscow and subsequently to Marnia. Then he went to China via Casablanca, but this does not make it probable that he knew the diplomat.

⁸⁹ Interview with Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 27 Oct. 2005.

⁹⁰ The Sûreté file on Daouda Ardaly in Niger's national archives (86 MI 3 F 4.4) contains a huge number of copies of the text of the AFP broadcast about the murder, but without making any comment. If British diplomatic circles had at least something to say about the assassination, the French authorities, judging from the archives, similarly refrained from any comment, at least in writing.

⁹¹ Bureau de coordination et de liaison, No. 879/BCL: Etudiants et Boursiers du Sawaba de Retour des Pays de l'Est, 18 Oct. 1968; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14.

waba published its 1962 policy paper calling openly for the violent downfall of the regime.⁹² As the leadership swore to avenge the murder of its recruitment officer, fresh volunteers were trickling out of Niger to enlist in the ranks.⁹³ Repression continued, exemplified by a bout of arbitrary arrests in February 1963 that began in Niamey but swept across the country to include other regions such as Agadez, Kaouar and Zinder.⁹⁴

That it was not just Sawabists who could become the victim of the regime's responses was shown by the brutality of gendarmes towards the Buzu nomads of Tahoua. Yet, the regime's chronic sense of insecurity coupled with its precarious social basis could lead to far worse. The union protest that rocked the political fabric of neighbouring Dahomey in 1963 not only caused the collapse of that country's first republic but also led to serious problems in Niger. Massive demonstrations in Cotonou against corruption and austerity measures, during the latter days of October, were marred by rioting in which at least three Nigérien immigrants were killed and several wounded.⁹⁵ This made the Dahomean army decide to topple the government of Hubert Maga—a good friend of Diori, who clearly favoured Maga over the left-wing administration that followed the interlude of army rule (January 1964).⁹⁶

The events of October led to sharp reactions in Niger, both at the top of the political system and among ordinary citizens. Maga was rumoured to have asked the Entente for military intervention to quell the protests, and Diori's government apparently contemplated such action but faced opposition from Captain Diallo and Zodi Ikhia to the dispatch of the necessary troops. News of the dead and wounded in Cotonou, however, reached Niamey quickly. It is possible that the casualties were accidental, with the victims caught up in the disturbances, yet the deaths incensed public opin-

⁹² Parti Sawaba, *Pour Un Front Démocratique de la Patrie* (Bureau Politique: Niamey, 1962) was published between mid-April and Ardaly's death, which was not mentioned. Could the assassination have been a reaction to Sawaba's declaration of war, as formulated in its policy statement?

⁹³ See ch. 9 at n. 14; Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 308.

⁹⁴ Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 11-7 Febr. 1963, 25.257, no. 7; 25 Febr.-3 March 1963, 25.337, no. 9; A.J. Warren, British Embassy, Abidjan, to B. Miller, Foreign Office, 15 Febr. 1963; PRO, FO 371/167.615.

⁹⁵ Another report said that many Nigériens were murdered, implying more than three. Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 1-7 June 1964, 705, no. 23.

⁹⁶ Maga resigned in end November and was put under house arrest. Two ministers who helped to inflame passions were replaced by northerners. *Ibid.*, 2-8 Dec. 1963, 2.473, no. 49; 23-9 Dec. 1963, 2.576, no. 52; Rapport de Fin de Commandement du Général de Division Revol, part I; press release Niger embassy, Washington, 5 Jan. 1964; PRO, FO 371/177229; Decalo, *Historical Dictionary*, 78.

ion and fed on old xenophobic reflexes about AOFien immigrants, in particular the ‘people of the coast’.⁹⁷ Since Dahomeans and Togolese were generally better educated, they had been largely retained in the administration—to the frustration of job seekers. On top of this Dahomeans dominated part of the private sector, especially the trade in fruit and staple products such as peanut oil.⁹⁸ Politically marginalised, many felt attracted to Sawaba’s message, although this made them additionally vulnerable. As noted, in 1962 firebrand Issa Ibrahim stoked up hatred against the Dahomeans of Zinder, many of whom had ties with Sawaba. He threatened them with deportation, adding that they were ‘the last of the Africans’, who awaited only poverty and unemployment.⁹⁹ That such hate speech tapped into undercurrents that were never far from the surface had become clear the previous year, when a scuffle broke out in Niamey involving Dahomean residents and resulting in a number of injuries (January 1961). Diamballa Maïga blamed the incident on unrepentant Sawabists.¹⁰⁰ Under Djibo Bakary, whose federal orientation had been strong from the beginning, the government had frowned upon xenophobia¹⁰¹ and, with AOFiens in its midst, defended the rights of immigrants. At least on the ideological plane such intolerance fitted badly with a party that saw itself as part of the international workers’ movement. Thus, in April 1958 before a 3000-strong audience, Bakary appealed to people to see AOFiens as their ‘true brothers’, and a few months later reacted sharply to attempts of some rank and file to have AOFien cabinet members replaced.¹⁰² Consequently, upon its eviction from government Sawaba had continued to cater for these immigrants—now political marginals.¹⁰³

⁹⁷ Rapport de Fin de Commandement du Général de Division Revol, part I; press release Niger embassy, Washington, 5 Jan. 1964 (‘gens de la côte’).

⁹⁸ Decalo, *Historical Dictionary*, 78.

⁹⁹ Recueil des principaux renseignements ... 25-31 janv. 1962, no. 162 (‘Les derniers des Africains’).

¹⁰⁰ Chancery, British Embassy, Abidjan, to Foreign Office, 21 Jan. 1961, 1.011/3/61; PRO, FO 371/154.706.

¹⁰¹ Decalo, *Historical Dictionary*, 78. This contrasted somewhat with the PPN-RDA, where anti-AOFien sentiment had been present from the beginning. See Chapter 1.

¹⁰² He also let Abangla Félix, PRA secretary, speak on behalf of the Togolese and Dahomeans. *Azalai*, 7 June 1958 (CAOM, Cart.2154/D.3); Decalo, *Historical Dictionary*, 78; ch. 4 at n. 69. For Bakary’s attitude to xenophobia and AOFien condescension to Nigériens, see *Silence!*, 76 (‘frères véritables’).

¹⁰³ There is an allusion to anti-foreigner sentiment in a report on Henri Georget, European entrepreneur who opted for Sawaba and in 1961 sowed unrest among Europeans and foreign Africans by calling for nationalisation of companies and expulsions. Jean Colombani, Chef des Services de Police, to Ministre de l’Intérieur, 28 Jan. 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.2.

For the Dahomeans this Sawabist association now became a liability. At the height of the disturbances in Cotonou the RDA took measures to protect immigrants in Niamey. Yet, at the same time it felt annoyed by allegations by Cotonou unionists of Nigérien interference in Dahomean affairs. When the outcome of the riots became clear, with Diori's friend evicted and Nigériens counting their dead, Niamey tried to calm tempers and prevent disorder by confiscating shotguns and suspending a few policemen of Dahomean origin (5 November 1963). Subsequently, two of them were deported, then another three, but this encouraged Nigériens to ask for more on the pretext that the administration could not count on the loyalty of foreigners. The government caved in and decided to sack all 51 foreign Africans in the police force (48 Dahomeans and 3 Togolese), though with indemnities of one month wages and maintenance of retirement pay.¹⁰⁴ This whetted appetites further and rumours spread that the measure would be extended to all Dahomean civil servants. Then, on the night of 21-22 November, disturbances broke out upon the news that a Dahomean in Niamey, who was fired and about to return to his country, had killed his Nigérien wife when she refused to join him. The man was then killed himself and incidents spread, with Dahomeans getting molested, houses destroyed and Dahomean liquor shops looted while police stood by. The following day there was a rumour that someone had killed another Dahomean with a coupe-coupe. Panic spread and the Dahomeans took measures that formed the beginning of an exodus.¹⁰⁵

Predictably, this led to sharp reactions in Dahomey, which sent an army company to Malanville to assist deportees but which the government in Niamey interpreted as a hostile act because of the inflammatory declarations of Dahomean unionists. The revolutionary climate in Cotonou led the Dahomean press to respond with characteristic passion, calling on Niger's trade unions to rebel against their government and warning Niamey that Dahomeans would appeal to Djibo Bakary if the expulsions were not

¹⁰⁴ Repatriation costs would be covered by the government. The policemen had served in Niamey, Zinder, Maradi, Tessaoua, Madaoua, Agadez and Nguigmi. Rapport de Fin de Commandement du Général de Division Revol, part I; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 4-10 Nov. 1963, 2.306, no. 45; 18-24 Nov. 1963, 2.382, no. 47; SHAT, 5 H 125.

¹⁰⁵ Transafricaine provided a bus for those wishing to leave. Others formed district committees to protect themselves, and Dahomean domestics employed by the military asked to be allowed to sleep in barracks, as they did not dare to leave. Rapport de Fin de Commandement ... Revol; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 18-24 Nov. 1963, 2.382, no. 47; 4-10 Nov. 1963, 2.306, no. 45; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire, no. 541, 27 Nov. 1963; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2.

halted. This naturally infuriated the RDA. Moreover, Mounkaila Beidari, Sawaba's political commissar for the Téra region but now stationed in Niamey, wrote a letter to Justin Ahomadegbé, Dahomey's new vice-president, warning him of Nigérien army manoeuvres and calling on the Dahomeans to attack the RDA regime. It was also rumoured that Bakary was spotted in Parakou in early December. If true, it is not known what his mission was (it may have been related to the Diallo mutiny then unfolding), but Sawaba had had relations with northern Dahomey for a long time and was in the process of building up its local infrastructure. Thus, in late November Niamey sent soldiers to Gaya as a reaction to the deployment of Dahomean military.¹⁰⁶

While Boubou Hama and Diamballa Maïga appeared to try and calm tempers, issuing assurances that immigrants would be protected, during the second week of December the regime escalated tensions by widening the expulsion order to all Dahomean civil servants and asking the private sector to follow suit. Dahomey's authorities then ordered their nationals to return and appointed a minister resident in Malanville to oversee the evacuation.¹⁰⁷

A flow of refugees began to develop, made up of retrenched civil servants (750 to 800) plus dependents, trying to reach a safe haven. At the end of 1963, 3,000 had passed through Parakou. By now Boubou Hama, supported by Maïga, had succumbed to an anti-Dahomean stance, using René Delanne, RDA union leader, as mouthpiece and making alarmist speeches in the media. Diori tried to appease the situation but the climate was further poisoned when Niger resurrected a border dispute that had been simmering since independence. The focus of this conflict was on Lété, an island in the Niger River used by Dahomean peasants and Nigérien Peuls, something that occasionally led to difficulties. The Nigérien minister of defence, intent on demonstrating Dahomey's expansionist designs, published a white paper on disturbances which had occurred on Lété Island three years earlier, which had led to the destruction of numerous huts and

¹⁰⁶ A Dahomean mission to Niamey meanwhile admitted the army presence in Malanville. *Rapport de Fin de Commandement ... Revol*; *Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire*, 23-9 Dec. 1963, 2.576, no. 52; *Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire*, no. 541, 17 Dec. 1963; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2. Beidari, then working at Niamey airport, sent his letter with a plane to Cotonou. He had an argument with a comrade, who questioned whether his move was patriotic, but he pointed out that one should employ all measures to weaken the RDA. Interview, Niamey, 15 Dec. 2009.

¹⁰⁷ *Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire*, 18-24 Nov. 1963, 2.382, no. 47; 23-9 Dec. 1963, 2.576, no. 52; 9-15 Dec. 1963, 2.501, no. 50; *Rapport de Fin de Commandement ... Revol*.

the death of four Nigérien nationals. While he claimed that there were foreign troops on the island, Dahomey's military leader complained that it was the Nigériens who were there¹⁰⁸ and in response stationed a reinforced combat company along the frontier. In addition, Dahomean military and Gendarmerie, armed with mortar and canon, began exercises in the north.¹⁰⁹ Hama denounced this 'act of aggression' and issued a call-up for volunteers, pressing for the donation of money and the arming of civilians. In his typical bombast the RDA chair told youngsters to produce Molotov cocktails and blacksmiths to forge rifles and prepare poison. More spectacularly, the regime airlifted troops stationed in Agadez and Zinder to Niamey for deployment on the border. As Dahomey's unions and students mobilised in return, Dahomeans in Niger tried to flee *en masse*. Yet, when the Dahomean leadership decreed a blockade halting Niger's imports and—to its fury—transport of the groundnut crop, Niamey banned all movement of Dahomeans on its territory. Trapped in Gaya and unable to cross the border, the pool of refugees grew, reaching 3,000-4,000 by the end of the year and suffering from lack of food and water and bad sanitary conditions.¹¹⁰

The Dahomeans, not seeking to hide the difficulties that the refugees created for their economy, complained that Niger was trying to compromise their revolution. They accused Diiori of backing the deposed Maga. Niger meanwhile negotiated with Nigeria to transport the groundnut crop to its ports, but faced growing economic and organisational problems as lorries importing food and medicine were held up—setting off a spiral of price rises—and the departure of trained personnel plunged the country into administrative chaos. Government posts were filled with cadres or provincial staff without qualifications, while hospitals and other services

¹⁰⁸ Other reports spoke of one Nigérien policeman of Dahomean descent. Confidential Inward Saving telegram, Abidjan, to Foreign Office, 13 Jan. 1964, no. 2; PRO, FO 371/177.229.

¹⁰⁹ Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 23-9 Dec. 1963, 2.576, no. 52; Confidential Inward Saving telegram, Abidjan, to Foreign Office, 13 Jan. 1964, no. 2; A. Silkin, British Embassy, Dakar, to R.S. Faber, British Embassy, Abidjan, 8 Jan. 1964; PRO, FO 371/177.229; Rapport de Fin de Commandement ... Revol; press release Niger embassy, Washington, 5 Jan. 1964.

¹¹⁰ Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 23-9 Dec. 1963, 2.576, no. 52; 30 Dec. 1963-5 Jan. 1964, 21, no. 1; Rapport de Fin de Commandement ... Revol; Confidential Inward Saving telegram, Abidjan, to Foreign Office, 7 Jan. 1964, no. 1; PRO, FO 371/177.229; Ibid., 13 Jan. 1964 ('tentative d'agression').

were confronted with serious problems. The situation in the countryside became alarming.¹¹¹

The looming humanitarian tragedy in Gaya triggered international intervention, as Dahomey's leader appealed to the Security Council and Diiori rejected a plan for French assistance to evacuate the refugees. A flurry of diplomatic activity ensued with several countries offering mediation, resulting in a low-level meeting between the two sides on the frontier, early in January 1964. Tensions eased and by the middle of the month the expelled Dahomeans could cross the bridge to Malanville. As Niger shrank back from expelling more people employed in the private sector, the exodus died down but not before several thousand had fled the country—estimates ranged between 7,500 and 20,000.¹¹² Many of these people had lived in Niger all their lives. Subsequent negotiations centred on reciprocal troop withdrawals, which finally materialised in March-April.¹¹³ Talks on economic issues dragged on until summer, leading to a meeting in Dosso where trade ties were re-established and speeches given on how the Niger River constituted a link between the two countries, instead of a border of discord. A minute of silence for the victims of the crisis could not prevent it sounding rather hollow, not least because the dispute about Lété Island was not resolved nor the issue of compensation of the Dahomean immigrants, many of whom had had to flee without indemnities.¹¹⁴

Niamey's mishandling of the crisis resulted in the establishment on its southern fringe of a hostile, left-leaning government that harboured sympathies for Sawaba, based on long-standing contacts such as between

¹¹¹ Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 23-9 Dec. 1963, 2.576, no. 52; 30 Dec. 1963-5 Jan. 1964, 21, no. 1; 13-9 Jan. 1964, 75, no. 3; SHAT, 5 H 125; Confidential Inward Saving telegram, Abidjan, to Foreign Office, 13 Jan. 1964; Rapport de Fin de Commandement ... Revol; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire, no. 501, 26 March 1964; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; Decalo, *Historical Dictionary*, 78.

¹¹² The French reported 7,500. Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 13-19 Jan. 1964, 75, no. 3. Decalo, *Historical Dictionary*, 78, refers to 6,000 to 20,000. British sources spoke of 16,000, but thought this inflated, though it probably included dependents and hangers-on. Silkin to Faber, 8 Jan. 1964; Confidential Inward Saving telegram, Abidjan, to Foreign Office, 13 Jan. 1964.

¹¹³ Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 23-29 Dec. 1963, 2.576, no. 52; 13-9 Jan. 1964, 75, no. 3; 10-16 Febr. 1964, 172, no. 7; 24 Febr.-1 March & 13-9 Apr. 1964, 245/470, nos. 9/16; SHAT, 5 H 127/126; Confidential Inward Saving telegram, Abidjan, to Foreign Office, 7 & 13 Jan. 1964; Rapport de Fin de Commandement ... Revol.

¹¹⁴ This was especially true for private-sector workers, some of whom returned to Niger in February. Rapport de Fin de Commandement ... Revol.; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 24 Febr.-1 March, 245, no. 9; 1-7 June 1964, 705, no. 23; *Le Niger*, 8 June and 4 July 1964.

Joseph Akouété, Bakary's Togolese lieutenant, and Sourou Apithy, first a leader of the opposition but now Dahomey's president. If Dahomean circles also overreacted, the ramshackle nature of their new administration, marked by disputes between Apithy and his vice-president, formed little solace for Niamey as it complicated Dahomey's political landscape. The new regime was not favoured in the north, as shown by clashes in Parakou between northerners and residents from the south in March 1964, leading to several casualties. Niamey was accused of having had a hand in the conflict.¹¹⁵

1964

The heartless treatment of the Dahomeans demonstrated that RDA rule was increasingly marked by lack of sang-froid and a readiness for brutalities. The mutinous Captain Diallo, who was now in prison, early in 1964 was subjected to a first interrogation. French intelligence reported that the questioning of those arrested for the army uprising the previous December was conducted 'harshly', explaining that the methods were at times 'brutal' and leading to 'spontaneous confessions' with 'insufficient proof', something that spread fears in the capital about getting denounced. In late January the French spoke of the 'lamentable physical state of the prisoners charged in this case', referring to 'especially pessimistic rumours ... on the specific case of Captain Diallo'.¹¹⁶

Never before did they report in such undisguised terms about maltreatment or torture, but they were worried about the regime's excesses.¹¹⁷ Coupled with the Dahomean crisis and Sawaba involvement, the mutiny had led to a climate of hysteria, in which overreaction was rife. As noted in the previous chapter, Sawabists suspected of involvement in Diallo's plans

¹¹⁵ Ch. 9 at n. 105; E.M. Smith, British Embassy, Lomé, to P.R.A. Mansfield, Foreign Office, 21 Nov. 1964, 1.061/64; PRO, FO 371/177.229; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 24 Febr.-1 March, 245, no. 9; 9-15 March 1964, 307, no. 11.

¹¹⁶ Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 30 Dec. 1963-5 Jan. 1964, 21, no. 1; 13-9 Jan. 1964, 75, no. 3; 20-26 Jan. 1964, 95, no. 4; SHAT, 5 H 125 ('durement'; 'brutales'; 'aveux spontanés'; 'preuves insuffisantes'; 'l'état physique lamentable des prisonniers inculpés dans cette affaire'; 'bruits particulièrement pessimistes [...] sur le cas particulier du Capitaine Diallo').

¹¹⁷ Forced collection of money, meant for arming civilians, continued, with people getting restive, as it was unclear to what use the considerable sums were to be put. Ibid., 13-9 Jan. 1964, 75, no. 3.

were arrested, even if they were no longer active in the movement. The treatment meted out to them was rough. Maïdanda Djermakoye, when transferred to Tillabéri, was allegedly transported in a sack.¹¹⁸ Sanda Hima, the brother of Djibo Bakary, would have been beaten up at the police station.¹¹⁹ Under these circumstances accidents were waiting to happen. On 29 January the French secret service reported to Paris that the regime had confirmed the death of Mody (Moddy) of Gankallé, Diallo's warrant officer 1st class, who would have committed suicide. However, the French noted that a 'doctor called to treat the rebel captain ... declared that he had found him in a very bad physical state'. The man who was probably responsible for this was the head of the Gendarmerie, Captain Garba Badié. Thus, the French warned that Badié's power, which under Maïga's protection had increased in the course of the mutiny, could become a problem. Whether they thought about Mody's death is not certain, but Sawabists later accused Badié in explicit terms, asserting that he had 'assassinated' the officer (though giving the wrong date of 9 February, i.e. ten days after his death was announced).¹²⁰ Sawabists who were killed, allegedly beaten to death, included Djimaraou Rabo and Kaka Koussou (the driver), although it is not known whether these deaths occurred during this period or later—but probably before the summer-autumn of 1964.¹²¹

The wave of arrests was meanwhile spreading out, without proof of guilt being advanced. If several people were, indeed, implicated in the coup attempt, many others, such as Djermakoye, were not. Besides the mutiny's ringleaders (Diallo, Zodi Ikhia, Garba Sangara) and Sawabists like Arouna Zada, Sanda Hima and Madougou Namaro, those arrested included Al-assane Abba, Ikhia's cabinet director, plus two of his aides; three guards of Captain Diallo; his brother—a sergeant—, who was alleged to have compromising documents on him; and Issa Ibrahim, i.e. Ibrahim Issa, the Sawaba cadre and journalist, who had compromised and become information director at the defence ministry. In early January the French counted some 50 detainees, and if their number did not rise to the more than 2,000

¹¹⁸ Interview Harou Kouka (former RDA minister), Niamey, 26 Nov. 2003.

¹¹⁹ Interview Boubacar Sanda, Soudouré, 27 Febr. 2008.

¹²⁰ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 29 Jan. 1964, Dest. No. 501, 4 Febr. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; UDN/Sawaba, Liste des responsables et militants du Sawaba tombés sous le régime PPN/RDA, n.d.; courtesy Mamoudou Pascal ('docteur appelé à soigner le capitaine rebelle déclarait [...] qu'il avait trouvé celui-ci en très mauvais état physique; 'assassiné').

¹²¹ *Seeda: Mensuel nigérien d'informations générales*, no. 6, Sept. 2002; ch. 9 n. 348.

claimed by a Sawaba statement in Accra, Maïga personally told a diplomat that some 80 people had been arrested including 24 military.¹²²

Worse, he also told the diplomat that 15 Frenchmen of leftist persuasion were involved, some of them close to Diori. The silly accusation, for which no evidence was advanced, was testimony to the frenzy and paranoia that were taking control. In the French view this was especially the result of the growing influence of Boubou Hama—whose immoderation they deplored—and that of Maïga, whose power was boosted by the mutiny. Nevertheless, Diori himself also went on record for desiring exemplary sanctions to discourage further coup attempts, and the pending trial of the mutineers, which was postponed several times, triggered extraordinary security measures.¹²³

Under the circumstances, a belated attempt at rapprochement between Sawaba and the RDA came to nothing. Adamou Sékou, who had been released from Bilma, was asked to go to Bamako to talk with Bakary in the wake of Modibo Keita's visit to Niamey. His effort failed, as Bakary rejected a merger under the RDA's name, repeating a call for fresh elections instead—a demand characteristic of a movement whose dynamism allowed it to face an electoral confrontation with some confidence.¹²⁴ Since, as noted further above, this was followed by another wave of arrests, the attempt went the same way as mediation initiatives the previous year. In March 1963 Bakary, approached by two Nigérien officials, had demanded an amnesty, Sawaba's inclusion in the government and removal of French personnel. The following November he travelled to Lomé asking Togo's president to plead for his return with Diori. The latter sent Georges Condat for talks in which Niger insisted that Sawaba's leader make amends and Bakary retorted by demanding participation in the government. An intercepted letter to Adamou Sékou, in which Bakary suggested that the RDA

¹²² Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 13-9 Jan. 1964, 75, no. 3; 9-15 Dec. 1963, 2,501, no. 50; 27 Jan.-2 Febr. 1964, 116, no. 5; 6-12 Jan. 1964, 60, no. 2; both SHAT, 5 H 125; telegram Ambassade de France, Niamey, to Ministère des affaires étrangères, Paris, 18 Jan. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; interview Amadou Madougou (Namaro's son), Niamey, 24 Febr. 2006; Appel. Front démocratique de la patrie, Accra, 2 Febr. 1964 (source: *Sawaba*, Dec. 1964), which also asserted 'several militants' were murdered ('plusieurs militants').

¹²³ Night-time traffic in the capital was regularly halted. Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 15-21 June 1964, 768, no. 25; 16-22 March 1964, 319, no. 12; 6-12 Apr., 427, no. 15; SHAT, 5 H 126; 11-17 May 1964, 599, no. 20.

¹²⁴ Ch. 8 at ns. 105-106.

was desperate and Condat a traitor, allowed Boubou Hama to torpedo the talks.¹²⁵

Thus, with the 'Reds' more than ever in a position of supremacy, the regime was set on a collision course. As noted in Chapter 10, in May 1964 dozens of people were arrested in Maradi and Zinder—including members of the police and Republican Guards—suspected of involvement in Sawaba's infiltration operations staged from Northern Nigeria. French intelligence, however, did not think that stability was threatened and believed that the authorities overreacted, with some of its stalwarts being guilty of spreading disinformation. The growing propensity to overreact was not limited to this region, as the Buzu nomads in Tahoua found out shortly after.¹²⁶ This incident may have been fed by an impending visit of Diamballa Maïga and Boubou Hama, who in late May embarked on a tour of central Niger, the purpose of which was to shore up flagging support for the RDA. While others visited the west and Niger's far east, the triumvirate's hardliners (Diori was at a conference in Chad) took on the central heartland, travelling from Birnin Konni to Keïta, east of Tahoua, and on to Dakoro, Tahoua itself, Bouza, Madaoua and Maradi. The goal of the tour, remarkable for its high-level delegates, was—in the words of the RDA chairman—to educate the masses. Their presence in what for the RDA constituted the most sensitive region was certain to heighten tensions. Shortly before the trip Hama warned that there were troublemakers in certain parts of the country—he clearly meant central-eastern Niger—but that these would be found out and punished to set an example.¹²⁷

What this could mean under the circumstances became clear in Djirataoua, a village on the outskirts of Maradi, on the road to the Nigerian border (and whose canton chief was denounced as a Sawabist by one of his own relatives, a local RDA man).¹²⁸ Always an unruly area, French intelligence reported that people did not take kindly to the passage of Hama and Maïga. Just as Messmer and Diori had experienced during their visit of Tahoua

¹²⁵ Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 318-20; Airgram, Department of State, A-259, 28 March 1963; USNARA, II RG 59, POL 30, Niger, 2/1/63, Box 3997; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 18-24 Nov. 1963, 2.382, no. 47.

¹²⁶ Chaffard (*Les carnets secrets*, 320) alluded to a Sawaba factor. He did not give evidence, but since Buzu people (Bellas) were among core Sawaba supporters and Tahoua was an old Bakary fief this may have been possible.

¹²⁷ Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 4-10 May 1964, 565, no. 19; 11-17 May 1964, 599, no. 20; 18-24 May 1964, 636, no. 21; 25-31 May 1964, 673, no. 22.

¹²⁸ Interview with Ibrahim Bawa Souley, Niamey, 26 Nov. 2003 and A. Salifou, *Biographie politique de Diori Hamani: Premier président de la république du Niger* (Paris, 2010), 131-132.

and Maradi (1959), the crowds, allegedly Sawaba sympathisers, heckled the 'Reds' at a public meeting—another source suggests that the 'Reds' felt insulted when people left the scene to attend to their prayers. Once the regime hardliners had departed, police proceeded to make arrests, on the orders of Maïga and Hama themselves. Most of those detained would not have been Sawaba followers, but 35 people were locked into the local prison on the night of 27-28 May, crammed together in a cell without water or sufficient air. According to the later testimony of an RDA minister, during the night inmates cried out for help.¹²⁹

The following morning a horrifying discovery was made as guards found 21 people dead.¹³⁰ According to one source, police had panicked, yet the French tied the arrests to the previous discovery of a local infiltration network, more particularly the one that had penetrated Maradi's administration.¹³¹ A British source identified the victims as anti-government suspects, some of whose comrades had managed to avoid arrest and flee across the border into Nigeria, 'doubtless with arms'.¹³² In any case, the horror was unprecedented, even in the harsh context of Nigérien politics, and pointed

¹²⁹ Interview with Harou Kouka, Niamey, 26 Nov. 2003 and Salifou, *Biographique politique*, 131-132.

¹³⁰ Some sources speak of 40 incarcerated, with ca. 30 to 35 people killed. Mamoudou Pascal later reported 22 deaths. UDN/Sawaba, *Liste des responsables et militants du Sawaba tombés sous le régime PPN/RDA; Événement survenues en Afrique Francophone pendant la semaine du 25 au 31 mai 1964*; SHAT, 10 T 210; W.S. Bates, British High Commission, Kaduna, to J.A. Pugh, Lagos, 21st Oct. 1964, 121/472/1; PRO, FO 371/177230. A Sawaba document based on a list drawn up at the time by an anonymous person identified 21 people by name, together with the number of children they left behind: Mallam Garba Chékarao; Mallam Kane Kalima (Katima?); Mahamane Gounde Dan Hilo; Balla Dan Boy; Dan Gado Boy; Garba Gagara Galadima; Mati Kadao; Sani Dan Sadaka; Garba dit Bako Sani; Rouggim Dan Gou(r)gou; Fadi Mahaman Dan Boussa; Dan Firi Mahaman Dan Boussa; Iro Harouna, Boussa's brother; Djefao Dan Zaroumey; Na Gonda Sarkin Hako Kané; Garbou Dan Balla; Boukou, veteran; Iro Dan Boukou; Fadi Abarchi; Bakassa Aska; and Mantao Badi. See *Liste des Nigériens militants ou sympathisants du Sawaba morts dans les prisons du régime de Diori Hamani (UDFP-Sawaba, Niamey, n.d.; courtesy Ousmane Dan Galadima)*; *Haske: Bimensuel nigérien d'information et de réflexion*, no. 004, 15 Aug. 1990. The bodies would have been hurried away to the village cemetery, where guards ordered immediate burial. K. Alfari, *Mémorandum sur les fraternelles relations franco-nigériennes (Union de la Jeunesse Patriotique du Niger: Niamey, 2003)*, 49.

¹³¹ *Événements survenus en Afrique Francophone pendant la semaine du 18-24 mai*; SHAT, 10 T 210.

¹³² A.J. Warren, British Embassy, Abidjan, to B. Miller, Foreign Office, 11 June 1964; PRO, FO 371/177.218; Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 320; *Le Niger*, 26 Oct. 1964; *Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire*, 15-21 June 1964, 768, no. 25; 25-31 May 1964, 673, no. 22; 4-10 May 1964, 565, no. 19; *Rapport de Fin de Commandement du Général de Division Revol*, part I; Bates to Pugh, 21 Oct. 1964.

to an escalation of violence in the relations between government and opposition. On the other hand, the presence in the region of Diamballa Maïga at the time of the incident bears an uncanny resemblance to the role that the RDA stalwart played in the violent events of April 1958.¹³³ The Sawaba association of the arrests at least suggests a wilful callousness on the part of the authorities, which first tried to keep the lid on the incident.

On 30 May, however, Diori decided to come out in the open about the deaths. Across the country people were stunned. Shaken by the affair and fearful for his prestige, the president ordered an inquiry, promised to punish those responsible and in early June embarked on a tour of the region—without Hama or Maïga—to calm popular outrage and repair his image. The French worried that the Djirataoua deaths would strengthen Sawaba's position.¹³⁴

Yet, while orders were given not to engage in arbitrary arrests, the deaths were followed by a massive clampdown. Gendarmes were sent to Maradi to reinforce security and with the discovery of an arms depot near the Nigerian border, not far from Tessaoua,¹³⁵ the wave of arrests spread out right up to Zinder. Worse, the arrests were made by RDA militias (as noted in the previous chapter, neither local police nor Republican Guards were trusted) and according to some sources they detained several hundred people. Party officials conducted on-the-spot interrogations—'without gentleness' as the French added ominously—and some detainees were flown to Niamey, probably ending up in the Sûreté headquarters or at the BCL. Grain reserves were systematically searched for weapons, houses ransacked and Sawaba propaganda confiscated. People did not dare to express discontent but it was reported that they strongly disapproved of police methods. French intelligence told Paris that fear reigned in the Maradi region and that, while most people remained passive, dissatisfaction was growing. In fact, many people fled across the border to Nigeria, and although several returned home later, those who were associated with the

¹³³ Yet, the French, who admired the interior minister for his security work, were more ready to tie the incident to Boubou Hama, whose impulsiveness (and occasional anti-French outbursts) were disliked. *Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire*, 15-21 June 1964, 768, no. 25.

¹³⁴ Note 136 below. According to one RDA minister, the local prefect and assistant were fired and arrested. All those responsible for what was presented as a blunder of overzealous officials would have been prosecuted. L. Kaziendé, *Souvenirs d'un enfant de la colonisation* (Porto Novo, 1998), vol. 5, 234-5.

¹³⁵ It included 650 rounds of ammunition of Czech provenance. *Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire*, 1-7 June 1964, 705, no. 23; *Le Niger*, 26 Oct. 1964.

opposition chose to stay on the Nigerian side rather than risk imprisonment or harassment by RDA youths.¹³⁶ Rural discontent was not limited to the centre and (far) east either. In the west, peasants in the Téra region felt dissatisfied about the prices of crops and the government was still unable to halt youths from migrating to Ghana in search of work. Despite a visit of Diori to the region earlier in the year, the population of nearby Dargol was lukewarm in its support for the government. These were all areas where Sawaba had enjoyed support in the past.¹³⁷

In central Niger Sawaba activists meanwhile continued with meetings. The French reported that the movement's agents remained active. The regime even asserted that Sawabists had planned to assassinate Maïga and Hama, though this allegation was made later when the situation had deteriorated further and a vicious propaganda campaign sought to justify the Djirataoua deaths.¹³⁸ In July it was claimed that the previous month a Sawaba commando, allegedly trained in Morocco, was dispatched from Accra, carrying a gun and 50 bullets; his objective would have been to kill Diori during his visit to Maïné-Soroa in the course of his tour of the region—apparently to avenge the prison horror. The alleged assassin was intercepted and detained. The veracity of this story, however, is difficult to ascertain.¹³⁹

In early July Diori ordered the release of the 14 inmates who had survived Djirataoua, while Hama launched the initiative for a 'national seminar' to be held at the end of the month. That this meeting was of some importance can be gauged from the all-embracing attendance. Numerous government officials were invited, in addition to the members of the RDA's bureau politique—the key decision-making body—, secretaries of local RDA sections, women and youth organisations, MPs, Chefs de Circonscription and union representatives, as well as officers of the army and Gendarmerie. Instead of de-escalating political tension, the conference seemed

¹³⁶ Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 25-31 May 1964, 673, no. 22; 1-7 June 1964, 705, no. 23; 8-14 June 1964, 747, no. 24; 15-21 June 1964, 768, no. 25; Événement survenues en Afrique Francophone pendant la semaine du 25 au 31 mai 1964; 1 au 7, 8 au 14 & 22 au 28 juin 1964; SHAT, 10 T 210 ('sans douceur').

¹³⁷ Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 13-9 Apr. 1964, 470, no. 16; Bulletin Mensuel de Renseignements, 0.473.6, 20 Oct.-Nov. 1964, Téra; ANN, FONDS DAPA.

¹³⁸ *Le Niger*, 26 Oct. 1964.

¹³⁹ This, too, may have been malicious propaganda. There is no evidence that Sawaba was planning assassinations at this moment in time. The identity of the would-be assassin, short of being native to the region, is unknown. *Ibid.* and Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 13-19 July 1964, 882, no. 29.

meant to shore up self-confidence among party cadres, partly in response to new military developments (see next chapter).

As delegates were allowed to discuss issues openly, so as to neutralise criticism of the regime's authoritarian tendencies, Diori came out of the conference with his position strengthened, also with regard to his colleagues in the triumvirate. Culminating in the annual independence celebrations (3 August), RDA militias took part in a parade meant to scare off the opposition. The role of the militias in safeguarding the regime was one of the issues discussed at the seminar—as undoubtedly was that of the Gendarmerie and armed forces. Upon the conference's conclusion, delegates went back to the villages to enlist new recruits in the party's structures, whip up support and mobilise the populace. For this Hama had already proposed another reorganisation of the party, whose purpose was to strengthen the village level of representation, leading to a duplicate political infrastructure that would copy each administrative echelon and, naturally, reinforce Hama's own position. The duplicate structure was to be divided in six sectors, covering the whole of Niger, each headed by a member of the bureau politique.¹⁴⁰

All this showed that there was no willingness to accommodate the opposition. Rural areas suffered considerably from the RDA's agitation, whose top-down practices added to the intimidation of the security forces.¹⁴¹ In the wake of Djirataoua the administration also engaged in a major effort to reinforce armaments. If Paris had at first been reluctant to arm militias operating outside professional command structures,¹⁴² by the summer of 1964 it had dropped its reservations. In early June ammunition totalling 150 crates arrived from Abidjan, which Diori's presidency had ordered in France. Though the purchase must have been made ahead of Djirataoua—and, thus, was the outcome of efforts to strengthen paramilitary forces following the army mutiny—, in July an army plane made two trips to Côte d'Ivoire fetching 56 crates of arms and accessories in addition to 63 crates of ammunition, all destined for RDA Pioneers. In August Israel sent 64 crates with ammunition and 23 crates with Uzis, to be delivered to the

¹⁴⁰ Événement survenues en Afrique Francophone pendant la semaine du 1 au 7 juin 1964; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 1-7 June 1964, 705, no. 23; 6-12 July 1964, 852, no. 28; 13-19 July 1964, 882, no. 29; 3-9 Aug. 1964, 959, no. 32; 22-8 June 1964, 808, no. 26; 27 July to 2 Aug. 1964, 927, no. 31; SHAT, 5 H 127; Rapport de Fin de Commandement du Général de Division Revol, part I. See also note 34 above.

¹⁴¹ For an impression, see Association des Etudiants Nigériens en France (AENF), XIII^e congrès.

¹⁴² As asserted by Baulin, *Conseiller du Président Diori*, 49.

militias through the presidency. By then they were reported to have, besides the 100 MAS 36 rifles that France had donated in 1963, 400 Uzis and 1,000 automatic rifles ('Herstal', NATO type) bought in Belgium with money collected during the Dahomean crisis. In addition, the French Delmas company in Bordeaux was authorised to deliver automatic pistols plus thousands of rounds of ammunition for use by the Sûreté. State police in Zinder and Agadez, too, were equipped with Uzis. In mid-July it was even decided to expand the army by another 130 recruits. The security budget was meanwhile boosted, covered by cuts in other expenditure and tax increases.¹⁴³

Finally, on the 14th of August a security exercise took place in the capital. Army troops, Gendarmerie and militias took up positions; security forces patrolled the roads; and mock combat exercises were staged with blanks being fired—according to French intelligence, to make clear 'to possible troublemakers that the government was in a position to ward off all agitation'.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 8-14 June 1964, 747, no. 24; 13-19 July 1964, 882, no. 29; 24 July 1964, no. 892/2/SC; 24-30 Aug. 1964, 1.025, no. 35 & 12 Aug. 1964, 976/2/SC; both SHAT, 5 H 127; Bulletin de Renseignements, 12 Aug. 1964, no. 969.

¹⁴⁴ Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 19-23 Aug. 1964, 1.000, no. 34; SHAT, 5 H 127; Association des Etudiants Nigériens en France (AENF), XII^e congrès. Some students on leave in Niamey at the time were witness to these events ('à d'éventuels fauteurs de trouble que le gouvernement était en mesure de parer à toute agitation').

CHAPTER TWELVE

GUERRILLA WAR, JULY–DECEMBER 1964

One aerial clattered to the ground as the pylons supporting the antennas of Niamey's telecommunications station came loose. It was the night of 5-6 July 1964. Niger's radio links with Dakar, Zinder and Ft Lamy had been severed. The following morning the authorities discovered that the other pylons had also been dislodged. If they, too, had come down, the country would have been cut off completely from the outside world. The pylons were apparently dislodged by the removal of connecting bolts. No mention was made of any blast or the use of explosives.¹

French intelligence reported the event with some priority. Interpreting the incident against the background of the 'subversive activities' that threatened the government, it wondered whether the act was part of a 'concerted sabotage plan' or meant as a warning. It reported, however, that it was sure to lead to a hardening of security measures at a time when public opinion was already jumpy as a result of conspiracy rumours. It did not mention Sawaba by name, but it was clear that it referred to the movement of Bakary. The incident, the French feared, could have serious repercussions for the climate in the capital, leading to renewed tension. While the Sûreté began investigations, the government kept the lid on the affair. Diamballa Maïga deliberately played down the incident and proscribed any particular response by the police in order to prevent panic spreading among the people.²

In later testimonies two commandos could not confirm a connection between the incident and Sawaba. Though it would seem spectacular enough to be recalled, Mounkaila Albagna—by July 1964 outside the capital, engaged in missions in western Niger—did not know of an attack on the telecommunications tower. Mounkaila Beidari, then part of a Niamey cell, thought that it was probably not linked to the movement's opera-

¹ It was reported that the pylons were 'débouloonnés', i.e. 'unscrewed'. See following note.

² Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 29 June-5 July 1964, 840, no. 27 & 6-12 July 1964, 852, no. 28; SHAT, 5 H 126/7 ('activités subversives'; 'plan concerté de sabotages').

tions.³ Moreover, usually the regime was ready to play out any negative development against Bakary and his men. Of course, since no explosives were involved, it could have been thieves looking for scrap metal who caused the pylons to dislodge, but against the background of regime repression this seems unlikely.⁴ It should be noted that the government did not deny that Sawabists were involved in damaging the tower, but that it merely minimised its significance, probably out of embarrassment for the radio silence that was the result. In doing so, it clumsily added a denial that the recent incidents with Buzu nomads in Tahoua, and even the prison outrage in Djirataoua, had a connection with the opposition, while warning that it was ready for foreign-backed agitators.⁵

The French, by contrast, saw the destroyed antenna as an act of sabotage and associated it with Sawabist operations. Moreover, if the destruction of the radio tower was the work of commandos—or cadres of the domestic wing⁶—it would not be the last attack of its kind. This can be gauged from an attempt the following year on the facilities of Radio Niger, on the road to Ouallam, though this time with the help of explosives (see next chapter).⁷ As shown below, the cutting of communication lines was part of Sawaba's strategy. The July 1964 attack came rather early, but if the regime's accusation that a commando had planned to assassinate Diori the previous month was true (he allegedly had received his orders from Djibo Bakary), it was probably part of a more offensive pattern on the part of the movement's strategists—Mounkaila Beidari had, after all, been sent for this to the capital in the wake of the previous year's army mutiny.⁸ Since the attack on the telecommunications station took place some five weeks after Djirataoua, it was possibly a retaliation for the prison horror and the wave of

³ Beidari's response, however, may have been affected by a preceding discussion of the 'Plan B' conspiracy in 1960, the charges involved having been fabricated by the regime. In discussing the telecommunications affair, he subsequently emphasised the regime's role in psychological warfare. If Beidari played a less central role in the Niamey cell, this could also account for his ignorance of the attack. Interviews Mounkaila Albagna and Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003 and 2 Dec. 2003.

⁴ There is also no report that metal was removed or of continuation of destruction of the facility.

⁵ Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 13-19 July 1964, 882, no. 29; SHAT, 5 H 127.

⁶ This could account for the fact that no explosives were used.

⁷ It is unclear whether it was the same installation. Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 13-19 July 1964, 882, no. 29; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 17 Apr. 1965; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2.

⁸ Ch. 11 at n. 139. The alleged assassin had a pistol—not a weapon traditionally born in the Tubu region.

arrests following it, or served as a warning for what the movement was capable of.

The Battle Begins

The sabotage was not immediately followed by other action. The French in June 1964 had asserted that Sawaba's guerrillas were unlikely to represent a genuine threat in the near future.⁹ This perception, however, constituted wishful thinking¹⁰ rather than an accurate assessment of the political-military situation. Just the previous month intelligence officers had reported that the movement's domestic network was well structured, receiving instructions from the base areas in Kano and Katsina.¹¹ The simultaneous infiltration of seven urban centres in December 1962 already pointed to the organisational capacities on the part of the external wing. If some cells or arms caches got exposed, this was part of the painstaking process of building up an infiltration network, which by the spring of 1964 had nationwide coverage and was functioning, particularly in the south. Across the border in Nigeria, as noted earlier, the 'Goussao' base by then had a camp population of 150, and in several cities (but especially Kano) NEPU cadres provided the movement with practical assistance. The frontier with Dahomey was even more exposed as a result of the recent conflict with Dahomean immigrants and a new government in Cotonou inimical to the RDA. The infiltration of government ranks—locally in Maradi, for example, and nationally in ministries, the military and police—showed that the regime was vulnerable, if not to instant defeat at least to serious challenges to its security.

This was amplified by the inherent instability of RDA rule. The government's poor relations with the central and eastern regions; peasant discontent over party agitation, corruption and crop prices—not just in the east; and dissatisfaction of Buzu nomads (and Bellas generally)—all these added potential to Sawaba's endeavour. In the towns, private sector workers, students and youngsters were upset about corruption and the RDA's monopoly of privilege. With idlers in the capital just as immigrants liable to deportation, the regime antagonised marginal groups, though the eviction of the Dahomeans may have boosted its standing with part of the popula-

⁹ Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 8-14 June 1964, 747, no. 24; SHAT, 5 H 127.

¹⁰ Informed, no doubt, by the regime's repressive capacities in the course of the Djirataoua massacre.

¹¹ See Chapter 10 at n. 25.

tion. Harassment by local politicians soured relations in cities like Zinder and Agadez, and if Sawaba could exploit discontent among Tuaregs and Tubus in only limited ways, it still added to the government's precarious state. With the army in disarray, permanent tension between party and administration, and the government suffering from a narrow social basis, it was essentially fear and brutality that kept the regime in place.

That the security situation was a lot worse than the French fathomed became clear in the course of August–September. In the first week of August Diori postponed a trip to Abidjan owing to rumours that, in the course of the month, Sawabists would arrive from Ghana to commit 'terrorist' acts.¹² On the 4th the Sûreté compiled an interrogation report on Mahaman Leiyi, who had been arrested some time earlier by Republican Guards in the Tessaoua region. Leiyi, a Peul peasant/herdsman and member of the Rogogo cell, south of Tessaoua, was connected with Sallé Dan Koulou's group.¹³ His cell had planned to occupy the administrative post and telegraph station of Tessaoua and cut the telephone lines. This would be done with the help of guerrillas infiltrating into Niger and, according to Leiyi, take place all over the country on the same day. Members of the local RDA committee would be killed. Leiyi, who had received expenses from Dan Koulou and been promised the chieftaincy of Rogogo, failed to disclose the site of the local arms cache—simply denying that it had ever been created—and did not yet know the day of the attack.¹⁴

Towards the end of August 1964, however, it became clear that infiltration activities were increasing. Six Sawabists were arrested in Maradi. Some of them were possibly members of the domestic wing and were betrayed, while others had just crossed the border from Nigeria. They were carrying weapons that included a submachine gun (a MAT 49, commonly used by the French in Indo-China and Algeria) and two automatic pistols, in addition to documents detailing installations to be attacked and regime personalities to be liquidated. They were caught on or shortly after the 29th, when the head of the Gendarmerie, Badié, arrived in the city. Interrogation revealed that infiltration of Maradi's administration went much further than what the wave of detentions the previous spring had already shown. This triggered new arrests, some 30 in all, including people working in the

¹² Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 10–16 Aug. 1964, 982, no. 33; Événements survenus en Afrique Francophone pendant la semaine du 10 au 16 août 1964; SHAT, 5 H 127 & 10 T 210.

¹³ See ch. 10 at notes 18–20.

¹⁴ Déclaration Mahaman Leiyi, Niamey, 4 Aug. 1964; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.1.

police. On 2 September Maïga ordered the detention of the police commissioner, suspected of pro-Sawaba activities. Several civil servants, too, were taken into custody, including Malam Karégamba (Sawaba's recruitment officer); the local director of the development bank; Djimaraou Arga, a school director; and, possibly, Aboubakar dit Kaou, Sawaba's former economics minister who was arrested at an unspecified date. He was in possession of copies of letters written to the external leadership, in which he advised to commence offensive operations, asserting that the country was ready for an armed takeover. Thus, Malam Karégamba was caught with two automatic pistols, a submachine gun and ammunition. As shown earlier, he had supervised training and shooting practice at the Jibiya base.¹⁵

The revelations about the extraordinary extent of infiltration and the level of Sawaba's military preparations were quickly followed by new developments. More or less at the same time a squad led by Dodo Hamballi infiltrated the Zinder region. Coming from Kano,¹⁶ it included Chéfou Mahaman/Dan Malam, his aide and inhabitant of Zinder, and Chaibou Rouangao dit Mani, who was also from the Zinder region and part of the unit that included Ali Mahamane Madaouki, Hamballi's companion in this zone.¹⁷ Separating from the larger group, their immediate goal was the transportation of a consignment of arms consisting of automatic pistols, a sub-machine gun and ammunition.¹⁸ The objectives of these commandos

¹⁵ Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 31 Aug. to 6 Sept. 1964, 1.054, no. 36; 7-13 Sept. 1964, 1.078, no. 37; SHAT, 5 H 127; untitled document, n.d., SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 17 Oct. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; T.R. Shaw, British Embassy Abidjan, to C.M. Lequesne, Foreign Office, 2 Oct. 1964; PRO, FO 371/177.230; Rapport Annuel 1964, 436.8: Maradi; ANN, FONDS DAPA; Bulletin de Renseignements Particuliers, 18 Oct. 1964, no. 1234/2/S—Note d'information; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; Koussanga Alzouma martyr de la cause africaine; undated Sawaba pamphlet (ca. 1964); interviews Harou Kouka and Georges Condat, Niamey, 26-27 Nov. 2003. Automatic pistols are usually semi-automatic in design.

¹⁶ One RDA source later claimed Hamballi came from Nguigmi, suggesting he got in touch there with Diougou Sangaré, who, as noted, had made his peace with the regime and now was sub-prefect in the far east. Interview Harou Kouka, Niamey, 26 Nov. 2003. If true, there is a possibility that Hamballi contacted the network of Koussanga Alzouma, who was in Maradi but hailed from Nguigmi.

¹⁷ This unit also included Chaibou Souley, who went to Morocco and China; Ibrahim Keita; Ado Dodo (a Buzu); and Amadou Roufaï Malam Garba, who was with Madaouki in Morocco. Interviews with Ali Mahamane Madaouki, Zinder, 10 and 14 Febr. 2003.

¹⁸ The submachine gun was German-made ('model 43') and the pistols were a Mauser and a Beretta, one of them of Czech origin. Ammunition consisted of 100 rounds (9 and 8 mm calibre). Bulletin de Renseignements Particuliers, 18 Oct. 1964, no. 1234/2/S and Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 17 Oct. 1964; untitled document, n.d., SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2.

were to kill—at some date—certain political leaders and attack the principal civilian and military points in Zinder, including the French military mission. That Sawaba's guerrillas were preparing for serious action also became clear from their equipment, which besides arms and ammunition included a guerrilla instruction manual (Che's *Guerrilla Warfare*), a radio receiver and documents listing installations and contacts. Thus, the overall picture belied France's optimistic security assessments. The movement of little folk was heading for the commencement of hostilities.¹⁹

Then, on the evening of 31 August 1964, disaster struck. Dodo Hamballi and his men had reached Zinder and found shelter with members of the domestic wing—marabouts, some of them of Nyassist persuasion and living in the Birni district. RDA vigilantes besieged the houses of some—Mallam Tataagui and Mallam Hamissou—and discovered Hamballi and Chéfou Mahaman there. Chaibou Rouangao could escape, but Hamballi and his aide were arrested. They were possibly betrayed, perhaps by a member of their own entourage (a certain Bonou), or someone else.²⁰ In itself their capture was already a huge blow. Hamballi, former cabinet chief to Tiémoko Coulibaly, was high in the party hierarchy and, as Nanking trainee and associate of Dandouna Aboubakar, a key military figure. His appointment by Sallé Dan Koulou, head of the Kano base, as supervisor of infiltrations in the region north and south(-west) of Zinder made him privy to the movement's secrets in one of the most important operational zones. What made his arrest even worse was that he and Chéfou were caught red-handed, not just with the weapons they had transported but also with documents such as diaries, lists with domestic cadres, notebooks detailing targets and attack plans—also concerning police and customs posts—and intelligence on the movements of Diiori and his ministers.²¹

¹⁹ Ibid.; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 7-13 Sept. 1964, 1.078, no. 37; 31 Aug. to 6 Sept. 1964, 1.054, no. 36; Événements survenus en Afrique Francophone pendant la semaine du 31 août au 6 sept., 7-13 sept. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 210; Shaw to Lequesne, 2 Oct. 1964. Che's *La Guerra de Guerrillas* was published in 1961. Probably by 1964 there was a French version available from Algeria.

²⁰ Interviews with Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 Nov. and 2 Dec. 2003. If Hamballi saw Diougou Sangaré in Nguigmi before coming to Zinder, could the latter have played a role? On his own admission, Sangaré was by then ready to fight Sawaba and its infiltrations. Interview, Tessaoua, 9 Febr. 2006. However, there is no evidence to support such an accusation.

²¹ Bulletin de Renseignements Particuliers, 18 Oct. 1964, no. 1234/2/S; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 17 Oct. 1964; Rapport Annuel Année 1964, no. 436.12; ANN, FONDS DAPA; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 7-13 Sept. 1964, 1.078, no. 37; A.J. Warren, British Embassy, Abidjan, to P.R.A. Mansfield, Foreign Office, 23 Oct. 1964; PRO, FO 371/177-230; *Le Niger*, 23 Nov. 1964 (interrogation Hamballi); Ibid., 19 Oct. 1964 (this

In conjunction with the Maradi arrests this was simply catastrophic. While the actions of the commando units in both regions showed that Sawaba had proceeded much further on the road to confronting the regime by force of arms—having detailed plans on strategy and the tactics to be employed—the capture of what appeared to be advance units revealed everything the movement had been working on, including its military targets and the domestic cells that could help in the assault. The regime lost no time in reacting. Besides Hamballi and his aide, it detained the marabouts that were part of the Zinder cells—Tataagui; Hamissou; the latter's brother, Mallam Bram; and the rest of their family. Interrogations began at the same time as those in Maradi were continuing, conducted 'harshly' as the French noted, to allow the regime 'to better understand the organisation of the Sawaba movement and find out ... its partisans'. In the words of French intelligence, 'the battle [had] begun', and if some of the new arrests were 'a bit arbitrary', a spiralling wave of detentions quickly produced results. On 1 and 2 September the authorities arrested Akoula Souleymane, a domestic cadre working as a telephone operator at Zinder's post office; Amoudou Dan Gagare, a former orderly of the Cercle; one Amailou Mahaman; a Bella mason called Haman Dougouzourou, working at the Ford company; and Noga Yamba, the Algeria-trained guerrilla who had infiltrated his home region and been ordered to stay put, in preparation for the incoming units.²²

They were all thrown in Zinder prison, and more were to follow, including Maman Tchila, Sawaba's former municipal councillor; Limane Kaoumi, the Sawabist furniture maker, arrested in Maïné-Soroa; and Malam Bawada, brother of Dodo Hamballi, detained in Kellé (north-east of Zinder).²³ The wave of arrests began to spread out as interrogations yielded new intel-

claimed the arrest occurred on 29 August, which is probably a mistake) & 21 Oct. 1964; interviews with Ibrahim Bawa Souley, Niamey, 26 Nov. 2003, Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 6 Dec. 2003, Limane Kaoumi, Diffa, 12 Febr. 2006, Aba Kaka, Bosso, 13 Febr. 2006 & Moukaila Beidari, Niamey, 2 Dec. 2003, who mistakenly thought it took place in Gaya. Beidari claimed Hamballi was with Issoufou Danbaro, both hailing from the Gaya region. It is true Hamballi came from Dioundiou (north of Gaya), but the veterinary nurse later lived in Zinder. *Le Niger*, 23 Nov. 1964.

²² Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 17 Oct. 1964; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 7-13 Sept. 1964, 1.078, no. 37; interview Ali Mahamane Madaouki & Noga Yamba, Zinder, 10 & 14 Febr. 2003. Yamba put his arrest on 30 August ('durement'; 'de mieux connaître l'organisation du mouvement Sawaba et de découvrir [...] ses partisans'; 'la lutte est engagée'; 'un peu arbitrairement').

²³ Interview Maman Tchila, Zinder, 9 Febr. 2003; Limane Kaoumi, Diffa, 12 Febr. 2006; a 1966 report by MP Sabo Seydoo attached to a letter of RDA MP Amadou Kountié (Kountché) to Diori, 16 Nov. 1964; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 5.5.

ligence.²⁴ On the afternoon of 2 September gendarmes detained Kousanga Alzouma, the cadre from Nguigmi who had served as cabinet chief in the interior ministry under Bakary and now headed Maradi's poultry centre. Politically, this was a coup since Alzouma was close to Bakary personally (he was or had been a member of Sawaba's bureau politique). He was also one of Niger's highest qualified vets. It is difficult to say whether he was part of the Maradi ring or simply the victim of zealous gendarmes. Two women and a teacher were allegedly arrested at the same time, but these may have been arbitrary arrests or cases unrelated to Alzouma. Later it was suggested that his arrest was linked to the discovery in July of a training camp in an area between Madaoua and Maradi.²⁵ In any case, the gendarmes searched Alzouma's house (where only few documents were found) and led him to face Captain Badié. The head of Niger's Gendarmerie, according to the French, conducted Alzouma's interrogation personally and 'with such a brutality' that the veterinary doctor died 'a couple of hours later' as a result of 'the treatment that they made him endure'. A later testimony of an RDA official confirmed that it was Badié who was responsible for the death of the 35-year old Sawabist. British diplomats visiting Niger six weeks after his murder corroborated it as well, merely calling the manner of his demise 'regrettable' and reporting that they felt assured that there was full proof for Alzouma's complicity in Sawaba's operations. There are no details on the manner of his torture. As shown in Chapter 8, goumiers were usually present to beat detainees with whips, but Bakary's confidant must have suffered much worse.²⁶

The ferocity of the RDA's response cannot come as a surprise in view of its previous actions. Although Diori was concerned about the repercussions of the murder—so short after Djirataoua—and an RDA official later

²⁴ One group of people, arrested on 1 September and accused of connivance in the Diallo mutiny, included Souley Sala and Salifou Mareitou, peasants from the Filingué region; Tahirou Ousseini, peasant at Soudouré; Bondiéré Daouda, peasant from Garbey Gorou (= Bondiéré Garbekourou?; see ch. 9 n. 37); Younoussa Attikou, peasant at Tomaré, Niger's west; and Saley Koda, peasant at Gabagoura, near Niamey. République du Niger—Présidence: Décret no. 65-066/Bis/PRN, 5 mai 1965 portant mise en accusation devant la Cour de Sécurité de l'Etat.

²⁵ *Le Niger*, 26 Oct. 1964. See ch. 10, last section. One of the women detained at the time of Alzouma's arrest was a certain Jimra. *Afrique Nouvelles*, no. 895, 2-8 Oct. 1964.

²⁶ *Sawaba: Organe Central du Parti Sawaba du Niger*, Dec. 1964; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 17 Oct. 1964; G. Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets de la décolonisation* (Paris, 1967), vol. 2, 320; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 7-13 Sept. 1964, 1.078, no. 37; Événements survenus ... 7-13 sept. 1964; Warren to Mansfield, 23 Oct. 1964; interviews Abdou Adam, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003; Amadou Bakary Maiga, Niamey, 25 Nov. 2003 ('avec une brutalité telle'; 'quelques heures plus tard'; 'traitements qu'on lui fit subir').

asserted that it involved only the personal excess of the chief of the Gendarmerie,²⁷ it should be noted that Badié was dispatched to Maradi by Diamballa Maïga himself. Also, the regime showed no regret. On the contrary, Alzouma's widow was dealt with in a cavalier manner and the press proceeded to slander her deceased husband's reputation.²⁸ While the Sawaba community was shocked about the murder of such a significant cadre,²⁹ the government continued its offensive. The French reported that the school director detained in Maradi was brought to Zinder for treatment in hospital 'following his interrogation' by Badié. This was probably to no avail, as a Sawaba pamphlet later asserted that Djimaraou Arga had died. As Maradi's police commissioner was transferred to Niamey, in addition to the director of the city's development bank and Zinder commandos like Noga Yamba, the surge of arrests spread to the capital. Mounkaila Beidari, too, was taken in for questioning, somewhere in September. In view of the burgeoning number of arrests, he was locked up at an alternative location—in his case the school of the French mission. While a member of a Sawabist cell in Niamey, he was released after four days, although it was clear that the authorities suspected him since they told him that he would be watched.³⁰

Diori, who on 5 September cut short his visit to Abidjan, held a meeting with officials on the 12th, showing them confiscated arms and documents

²⁷ Interview Abdou Adam (who claimed he saw Diori cry over the murder), Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 17 Oct. 1964; Événements survenus ... 7-13 sept. 1964.

²⁸ While Alzouma was being tortured, the Gendarmerie brought his wife to Niamey, telling her Alzouma had been brought to the capital. Three or four days later, she was told that he was dead and that he had been buried in Maradi. She travelled back and was shown a heap of sand with the statement that her husband was buried there. See also *Afrique Nouvelles*, no. 895, 2-8 Oct. 1964 & *Jeune Afrique*, Oct. 1964, no. 20.218, which wrote that Alzouma died the evening of 3 September, i.e. not just a few hours after his interrogation began. *Le Niger*, 26 Oct. 1964, insinuated that Alzouma had drunk alcohol while in custody (and possibly died as a result), which in Niger's cultural context was a terrible accusation. Admittedly, this smear campaign occurred when the military confrontation with Sawaba's commandos had reached its high point. See below.

²⁹ Issaka Koké, former Sawaba minister of public works and agriculture and by then in exile, wrote an obituary in *Jeune Afrique*, Oct. 1964, no. 20.218.

³⁰ At the same time, it showed that some of the cadres in the capital went deep underground when doing clandestine work. Some of the arrests involved people accused of connivance in the Diallo mutiny: Mamadou Camara and Issoufou Ofel, drivers; Mamane Ali, guard; Alassane Alfa Mohamane, trader; Moussa Hareibane, transporter. Koussanga Alzouma martyr de la cause africaine; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 7-13 Sept. 1964, 1.078, no. 37; interviews Noga Yamba, Zinder, 14 Febr. 2003 and Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 15 Dec. 2009; Décret no. 65-066/Bis/PRN, 5 mai 1965 portant mise en accusation devant la Cour de Sûreté de l'Etat.



Photo 12.1 Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 2003.

and warning that new arrests would follow, including those of highly placed people. The equipment of Dodo Hamballi's squad was put on display in the National Assembly. What was worse is that the Maradi detainees, as well as the Hamballi unit, yielded important intelligence on the movement's bases in Nigeria. Malam Karégamba cracked under questioning, leading the regime on to the forward base in Jibiya, south of Madaounfa, just a few kilometres inside Nigeria. Hamballi and his men gave away the 'Goussao' base further to the south-west, in addition to the arms cache in Kaduna. Another arms depot was also disclosed, probably the one constructed at Kaura Namoda, north of the 'Goussao' base. Hamballi's interrogation, moreover, revealed that much of the guerrilla planning was taking place in Kano, putting the leadership there at risk.³¹

Thus, on 8 September Badié and Diori's air commander went to Kano and returned with an important Sawaba leader arrested there. He was transferred to Niamey, obviously for questioning by the BCL, though it is

³¹ Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 7-13 Sept. 1964, 1.078, no. 37; Evénements survenus en Afrique Francophone pendant la semaine du 14 au 20 sept. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 210; *Ibid.*, 31 août au 6 sept. 1964; *Le Niger*, 19 Oct. & 7 Dec. 1964; Rapport Annuel 1964, 436.8: Maradi; Bulletin de Renseignements Particuliers, 18 Oct. 1964, no. 1234/2/S; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 31 Aug. to 6 Sept. 1964, 1.054, no. 36; untitled document, n.d., SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 17 Oct. 1964; Shaw to Lequesne, 2 Oct. 1964 and Warren to Mansfield, 23 Oct. 1964 ('à la suite de son interrogatoire').

unknown who it was—in any case, it was not Dan Koulou. Just five days before, Maradi's Commandant de Cercle drove with police to Katsina for a meeting with the Emir, followed by a joint force of Native Authority police and Nigériens visiting the Jibiya base. It, however, was found deserted. The Nigerians began to co-ordinate action with the government in Niamey (two British officers working in Kano's police force travelled to Maradi on the 5th to see the results of recent investigations). Many Sawabists fled. Around 50 people, probably cadres of the domestic wing, made their way to Malanville fleeing anti-Sawaba repression. They told the Dahomean authorities that a revolution was under way in Niger. An indeterminate number of cadres escaped across the border to Nigeria, hiding at various localities—no doubt with the help of NEPU friends. Many of these, however, were fleeing the other way, as impending elections in Northern Nigeria began to heighten political tensions there. NEPU had struck an alliance in 1963 with the 'Union Middle Belt Congress'—with NEPU the only significant opposition group in the Northern Region, catering to the dispossessed of the region's southern areas.³² Militants of both parties became the target of persecution. Worried about NEPU's activities, the Northern Nigerian authorities contacted Niamey, which used this to encourage co-ordinated action against the common Sawaba-NEPU enemy. Diori got in touch with Kaduna to take control of Sawaba's arms caches whose location had been disclosed.³³

Attack—If Need Be With Sticks!

The events of August-September had done serious damage to the movement's plans and infrastructure. The full consequences were not yet clear, but they were potentially disastrous as the leaks had exposed much of the strategy and tactics that the commandos were supposed to pursue. Some of their forward operating bases in Northern Nigeria—the key hinterland—had to be abandoned, while their Nigerian allies were coming under growing pressure. Domestic cells were endangered, the guerrillas risked losing the weaponry of the arms caches whose location had been blown,

³² B.J. Dudley, *Parties and Politics in Northern Nigeria* (London, 1968), 164, 170 and 185.

³³ Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 7-13 Sept. 1964, 1.078, no. 37; Evénements survenus ... 7-13 & 14 au 20 sept. 1964; W.S. Bates, British High Commission, Kaduna, to J.A. Pugh, Lagos, 21st Oct. 1964, 121/472/1; PRO, FO 371/177230; Rapport de Fin de Commandement du Général de Division Revol. Délégué pour la Défense de la Z.O.M. du 28 juin 1963 au 28 févr. 1965, part 1; SHAT, 5 H 35; Shaw to Lequesne, 2 Oct. 1964.

and the arrest of a Sawaba leader in Kano showed that even the security of the Nigerian headquarters (and that of its commander, Sallé Dan Koulou) could no longer be guaranteed. In short, everything that had been painstakingly built up in the previous years risked getting destroyed. In the euphoric words of the RDA, the arrests of the previous months provided the government with precise intelligence on the movement's intentions and enabled it to prepare the required counter-measures. It knew that the guerrillas were coming.³⁴

These developments led to intensive talks. Commando leaders, including Dan Koulou, Dandouna Aboubakar and Idrissa Arfou,³⁵ went to Accra, where Djibo Bakary and Dan Galadima deliberated on the action to be taken. Of course, if the surprise element had been lost, this had only limited relevance. The regime knew for years that Sawaba was preparing for armed struggle—having planted spies in the movement's Ghanaian camps and benefiting from French intelligence. The confrontation had been in the offing all along, as can be gauged from the attack on Niamey's telecommunications tower and an earlier top-level meeting in Porto Novo in May, bringing together Bakary, Galadima and Abdoulaye Mamani for a review of operational planning.³⁶

Discussions now turned on the question how to respond to the recent losses and this debate was fed by intelligence from domestic cadres and commando units, which were stationed close to Niger's frontiers and reported back to headquarters. Most of this information emphasised that the country was ripe for a takeover. It was not just Aboubakar dit Kaou in Maradi who, as noted above, tried to persuade the leadership that the time for offensive action had come. According to Mounkaila Albagna, the political commissar active in the Téra region, 'everyone' in the interior wanted the commandos to invade.³⁷ People supported the movement, according to Ousseini Dandagoye, the cadre manning the cell in Zinder's post office, and confirmed their loyalty to cadres when asked.³⁸ In fact, the majority of Sawaba's regional chiefs reported that the people were waiting.³⁹ Consequently, as Sawaba sympathiser Sao Marakan remarked later, the commandos had reason to feel strong—thinking, as Mounkaila Albagna did,

³⁴ *Le Niger*, 7 Dec. 1964.

³⁵ Interviews with Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003 and 15 Dec. 2009.

³⁶ Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 321. Chaffard's source is unknown.

³⁷ Interview with Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 6 Dec. 2003.

³⁸ Interviews with Ousseini Dandagoye and Bachir Boukary, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003.

³⁹ Interview with Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 27 Oct. 2005.

that their assault could meet with success. Moreover, hatred of the regime and a desire to get even also played a role for many of the younger men.⁴⁰

Nevertheless, some unit chiefs were cautious. While most of the commando leaders assigned to Niger's central-eastern region (who were also more numerous) would have defended the option to go on the attack, asserting the population was ready to receive them, others claimed that more organisation was necessary. Idrissa Arfou, for example, chef militaire in the Téra region, would have argued that the commandos were not ready yet, and Tillabéri's regional chief (presumably not the same person) allegedly advised against the attack option as well.⁴¹ Possibly, this disagreement reflected different assessments of Sawaba's power base, which was potentially strongest in the Maradi-Zinder zone.

However, there was strong concern that Sawaba would lose support if it did not launch its long-awaited assault. Ali Mahamane Madaouki, the commando active in the Kano-Magaria zone, was well aware that people were muttering that the Sawabists were not coming and that he and his comrades were blamed for doing nothing.⁴² This reproach was becoming acute, as the movement was already out of power for six years, and the population, particularly in the rural areas, was suffering more than ever from RDA harassment. The pressure emanating from this was the greater as a result of the damage caused by the arrest of Hamballi, which threatened to make it impossible for the movement to act. Consequently, in a letter dated 22 September and written to Sallé Dan Koulou after the Accra meeting, Bakary warned that they could 'not wait any longer without risking the loss of everything'.⁴³ This clearly alluded to the havoc created by the arrest of Hamballi's squad and the units active in the Maradi area and showed that the leadership felt pushed to accelerate its attack plan. The events of August-September thus jump-started the command (while preparations were ongoing) to go on the offensive. Although it is not exactly known how the decision-making came about, in the end a majority of

⁴⁰ Interviews Sao Marakan, Adamou Assane Mayaki and Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 16 Nov. 2002 and 29 Jan. & 6 Dec. 2003.

⁴¹ The sources for this are Mounkaila Albagna (who, however, was absent from the Accra meeting) and Boubakar Djingaré. Interviews, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003/15 Dec. 2009 and 27 Oct. 2005.

⁴² Interview with Ali Mahamane Madaouki, Zinder, 14 Febr. 2003.

⁴³ Djibo Bakary to Sallé Dan Koulou, 22 Sept. 1964. Source: Bulletin de Renseignements Particuliers, 10 Oct. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2. The letter was later published in *Le Niger*, 21 June 1965, but was undated and the recipient was unidentified (but see for this *Ibid.*, 26 Oct. & 23 Nov. 1964 and Bulletin de Renseignements Particuliers, 18 Oct. 1964, no. 1234/2/S) ('plus attendre sans risquer de tout perdre').

commanders sided with the leadership⁴⁴—Sawaba had reached the most momentous decision in its history.

All units would soon get the go-ahead. Ali Mahamane Madaouki's unit, for example, at an unspecified date got a letter from the Kano headquarters to cross the border into Niger,⁴⁵ and Mounkaila Albagna later reminisced about how a liaison officer travelling from Bamako to Gao delivered the order of battle from Djibo Bakary, adding dramatically that they were instructed to attack, if need be with sticks! Whether or not apocryphal,⁴⁶ this drove home the point that the movement was in haste. There is some evidence, however, that Bakary did not reach his verdict casually.⁴⁷ With several commando leaders involved in these deliberations, it was not an emotional decision, according to Ali Amadou, one of Bakary's chefs de camp in Ghana, who noted that the Sawabists were ready for battle.⁴⁸ This conclusion must have been reached in early September, as the dates for attack were scheduled for the end of the month and most commandos were still in Ghana and needed time to reach their respective operational zones. In his letter of 22 September to Sallé Dan Koulou, Bakary ordered that operations should start 'in principle during the night of 26 to 27 [September] or that of 3 to 4 [October]'. Whatever happened, the units stationed in the western zones should attack before those in the central-eastern regions. This involved the guerrillas assigned to areas bordering on Dahomey and Upper Volta-Mali and extending to Dogondoutchi and, possibly, Tahoua (the latter town also bordered the central zone). That Bakary felt urged to take action also becomes clear from the remark that it would be unwise to organise 'a general assembly of all the brothers as such a gathering [could] have as consequence the liquidation of all the missions of the South'. Thus, he would not be able to see 'Kanguye' (Kanguèye Boubacar) before the commencement of operations, since they would lose precious time if the leader of Madaouki's unit—who had replaced Dodo Hamballi—had to come to Ghana.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Interview with Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 6 Dec. 2003.

⁴⁵ Interviews, Zinder, 10 and 14 Febr. 2003.

⁴⁶ Interview, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003. It was probably true since Albagna repeated the same story in a second interview, Niamey, 15 Dec. 2009.

⁴⁷ Interview with Ali Talba (a journalist who interviewed Bakary in the 1990s), Niamey, 4 Febr. 2003. Regrettably, Bakary remained silent about this in his memoirs. See *Silence! On décolonise: Itinéraire politique et syndical d'un militant africain* (Paris, 1992).

⁴⁸ Interview, Niamey, 31 Jan. 2003.

⁴⁹ Djibo Bakary to Sallé Dan Koulou, 22 Sept. 1964; Bulletin de Renseignements Particuliers, 18 Oct. 1964, no. 1234/2/S. The date of 17 August given for the commencement of his unit's operations by Boubakar Djingaré is clearly mistaken because too early. Interview,

A train of operations was thus set in motion. In a memorandum to the Bureau of African Affairs, undated but dispatched before the end of September, Dan Galadima informed its chairman that ‘some’ of the guerrilla units had arrived at Niger’s borders—including at Jibiya—and that the leadership was on the verge of sending those who had trained in China and Cuba⁵⁰ to assume the command for ‘a guerrilla operation inside Niger’. Sawaba’s ‘project of a military revolt’ ‘on the way to being realised’, the BAA was reminded of its past promises, and Galadima made detailed requests for logistical assistance (see below). Having assumed the overall command of the movement’s forces upon his return from North Africa, he made the urgency of the situation clear, noting that ‘[b]etween comrades, it [was] not the moment to hold forth, the time [had] come to act’.⁵¹ Sawaba’s bureau politique then issued an historic communiqué, dated 27 September, in which the leadership announced that armed action was imminent, giving a detailed justification for its moves and calling on the people to join Sawaba’s ranks. As in Galadima’s letter to the BAA, the bureau politique alluded to how recent events had accelerated its decision-making, referring to its ‘meticulous examination and study of reports emanating from the regional officials’. Then in seven paragraphs it provided the justification for an armed struggle, arguing that since 1958 the properly constituted branches of government had been dissolved; that since that year all democratic political and union organisations had been banned and liberties suppressed, including the right of the people to freely elect its own representatives; and that, for six years now, Niger’s people was suffering from repression, exploitation, torture and political assassination (this last point an obvious allusion to Daouda Ardaly). In view of this, Niger’s citizens were convinced that ‘armed rebellion [was] not only an inalienable right but also a sacred duty for every patriot’. Sawaba had therefore resolved

Niamey, 26 Oct. 2005 and see further below (‘en principe la nuit du 26 au 27 ou bien celle du 3 au 4’; ‘une assemblée générale de tous les frères car un tel rassemblement peut avoir pour conséquence la liquidation de toutes les missions du Sud’).

⁵⁰ Few cadres went to Cuba for political instruction and, as far as is known, none for military training, but this reference may point to the inspiration drawn from the Cuban revolution. See below (‘quelques’).

⁵¹ Mémorandum pour l’opération révolution du parti Sawaba du Niger; Commandant A. Dangaladima to President of African Affairs [sic], Bremeu, PO Box M.41, Accra, Ghana; PRO, FO 371/177230 (‘une opération de guérilla à l’intérieur du Niger’; ‘projet d’une révolte militaire’; ‘en voie d’être réalisé’; ‘[e]ntre camarades, ce n’est pas le moment de discourir, le temps est venu d’agir’).

to assume its responsibilities before history by calling on the Nigérien people to take up arms [and] ... join the ranks of the Nigérien freedom fighters united in the democratic Front of the fatherland ...⁵²

The declaration was a daring if not astonishing move, not just because it openly announced that the armed struggle was at hand, but especially as it referred in less than oblique terms to the role of the commandos—the communiqué ending with the battle cry ‘Forward for the liberation of the Nigérien Fatherland.’⁵³ With most units—but certainly not all—by that time in place, the communiqué risked disclosing that the movement was about to carry out its plan of attack, announcing to the regime the imminent arrival of Sawaba’s forces. Yet, although the communiqué is dated 27 September 1964, it is not certain when exactly it was published, or how and where. It may therefore not have done any damage to the tactical position of the guerrillas—many of whom must by that time have been on their way. Similarly, the party headquarters in Ghana would have issued a written warning already on 20 September that it would impose its will on the traitors ruling Niger, but the declaration to this effect was published in the Ghanaian *l’Étincelle* (the French language organ published by *The Spark*, mouthpiece of Ghana’s radicals) on 15 October.⁵⁴ By then hostilities had already broken out. In contrast, the 27 September communiqué was, according to Chaffard, also broadcast on Radio Accra and Radio Conakry, but it is not known when.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, these noises undoubtedly gave the regime some forewarning—even if at very short notice—and French intelligence can hardly have missed them.

The 27 September communiqué, however, served an important mobilising purpose vis-à-vis the population and commandos. For years it had been planned that the latter would engage the enemy on the specific orders of the external leadership. The way in which this was organised points to the formidable degree of coordination that marked Sawaba’s military prepara-

⁵² Communiqué, Bureau Politique, 27 Sept. 1964 (source: *Le Niger*, 21 June 1965) (‘examen et étude minutieux des rapports émanant des responsables régionaux; l’insurrection armée est non seulement un droit inaliénable mais également un devoir sacré pour tout patriote; ‘de prendre ses responsabilités devant l’histoire en appelant le peuple nigérien à prendre les armes; ‘à rejoindre les rangs des combattants nigériens de la liberté groupés au sein du Front démocratique de la patrie’).

⁵³ Ibid. (‘En avant pour la libération de la patrie nigérienne’).

⁵⁴ W.S. Thompson, *Ghana’s Foreign Policy 1957-1966: Diplomacy, Ideology, and the New State* (Princeton, 1969), 365-66.

⁵⁵ Chaffard (*Les carnets secrets*, 324) suggests on the 27th itself, but as he never gave sources this remains unsure. The communiqué would also have been published in Algiers, possibly ahead of 27 September, i.e. the 21st. *Marchés Tropicaux*, 7 Nov. 1964.

tions. But it also betrays the quasi-millenarian dimension that underlay its existence as a social movement. As noted above, Mahaman Leiyi, the member of the Rogogo cell, had been instructed that the attacks would all take place on the same day (Bakary's last instructions to Dan Koulou, staggering the attacks in the west and east, were thus a refinement). This had, in fact, already been planned much earlier, as can be gauged from the instructions that the party official in Tamanrasset, Kokino, had given to Yahaya Sili-mane, the cadre from Ingal, explaining that

one day at midnight by a singular order to move forward known to all the militants all will be in the hands of Djibo who will then take up the conduct of government.⁵⁶

The idea to commence operations during the night was a practical tactic that found its way into the order of battle that Bakary sent to Dan Koulou, while the secrecy surrounding the command arrangement was also an obvious necessity. Yet, that the battle order was imagined to be executed amid secrecy and swiftness also points to the *mentalité* of a movement whose struggle had been nurtured by a yearning for relief and whose cadres expected to see an abrupt end to their suffering when, 'one good day', the people would overthrow the government.⁵⁷ The communiqué of 27 September thus served as a signal to its cadres that deliverance was imminent.

Many commandos, however, may not have heard it.⁵⁸ Yet, above all, the statement had to arouse the people. In justifying the armed struggle it put the population at centre stage, emphasising that it was the people who had become the victim of the events in the autumn of 1958; that the population suffered the violation of its liberties; and that it had to endure repression and exploitation. In launching the armed struggle Sawaba claimed it was executing the 'unwavering will of the popular masses' to defeat the regime, and this 'in full accord with the unanimous opinion of the popular organisations of the country'. Seeing its commandos as the vanguard of the struggle of the talakawa, the leadership appealed to 'all the Nigériens (peasants, workers, intellectuals, urban people, soldiers, gendarmes, policemen

⁵⁶ M. Aboubakar, commissaire de police Agadez, to M. le Directeur de la Sûreté Nationale, Niamey, 6 Nov. 1963; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 18.9 (Direction de la Sûreté Nationale/Commissariat de Police de la Ville d'Agadez: Notes d'information concernant le Sawaba en liaison avec Tamanrasset ('un jour à minuit par un seul mot d'ordre d'avance su par tous les militants que tout sera à la main de Djibo qui prendra alors la direction du Gouvernement').

⁵⁷ Interview, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003 ('un beau jour').

⁵⁸ Mounkaila Albagna was unaware of it. Interview, Niamey, 6 Dec. 2003.

etc...)' to join them, emphasising that the democratic front of the fatherland was open to 'all sincere patriots'.⁵⁹ In fact, the entire strategy underlying military planning was grafted onto the idea that the people would stand up along with the guerrillas, who would be welcomed and find the doors open. As can be gleaned from the December 1962 incursions, domestic cadres would play a role in establishing the necessary liaison (though as a precaution, it was decided not to involve high profile members in the assault). The arrival of the commandos would thus widen into a 'popular insurrection'. The situation was considered 'ripe', so the communiqué had to make clear that the moment had come and incite the population to take action.⁶⁰

And this was not a frivolous idea, since, as noted, the RDA regime was marked by various strains and fractures. The worsening harassment of the rural areas had deepened its unpopularity, and the combination of an army weakened by mutiny and chronic conflict between the RDA and a state administration vulnerable to political infiltration gave the movement reasons to believe that a popular uprising would stand a chance. This was confirmed by the regime itself, which in the person of the Commandant de Cercle of Zinder told visiting British diplomats of his 'uncertainty of which way the population would go'. These doubts were not limited to the Zinder region (admittedly a Sawaba fief), because the French themselves only two years previously had predicted that, if Djibo Bakary were allowed to return, this would lead to the instant collapse of the regime. While that assessment was made in June 1962, the events of the following year had further demonstrated the brittleness of RDA power, and the partial French troop withdrawals in September–October 1964 may have encouraged Sawaba in the idea that it had become a realistic threat.⁶¹

With the people behind it, the numerical balance of forces would, indeed, shift in favour of Sawaba's cadres and commandos. This was a crucial part of the leadership's calculations, for—as chief of staff Dan Galadima

⁵⁹ Communiqué, 27 Sept. 1964 ('volonté inébranlable des masses populaires'; 'en plein accord avec l'avis unanime des organisations populaires du pays'; 'tous les Nigériens [payans, ouvriers, intellectuels, populations urbaines, soldats, gendarmes, policiers, etc...]; 'tous les patriotes sincères').

⁶⁰ Interviews Tahirou Ayouba Maïga, Niamey, 28 Oct. 2005; Abdou Adam, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003; Elhadj Illa Salifou, Niamey, 25 Nov. 2003; Bachir Boukary, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003; Sao Marakan, Niamey, 16 Nov. 2002; Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 15 Dec. 2009 ('soulèvement populaire'; 'mûre'). See ch. 10 at n. 22.

⁶¹ Warren to Mansfield, 23 Oct. 1964; ch. 8 at n. 111; T.R. Shaw, British Embassy Abidjan, to C.M. Lequesne, Foreign Office, 15 Oct. 1964; PRO, FO 371/177.230.

reminisced later—the guerrillas were with several hundred, but with the population included thousands!⁶² The relevance of this sort of estimates was not simply confined to the realm of the imagination, as had been proved in Cuba, where Castro had led a march on Havana with—at first—just a couple of hundred men, but who were swollen by the strength of growing popular support.⁶³ The Cuban revolution formed an important source of inspiration for Sawaba's leadership, as testified to by its contacts with the Cuban government and Che Guevara personally. This was also true for the rank and file, some of whom met Che, carried his literature with them or took their alias from the leader of the revolution himself (like Kali Abdou dit Fidel Castro). These men were prepared to engage the enemy on foot at least in part because this was the way it had been done in Cuba too!⁶⁴

Calculations of strength and the relevance of numbers blended into the ideological inspiration for the assault. Marxist prescriptions drawn from the Russian and Chinese revolution, as well as the Vietnamese struggle against French and American imperialism (as noted in Chapter 9), provided explanations for the little folk's predicament and clarity of focus for their strategy and tactics. Political commissar Mounkaila Albagna infiltrated the Téra region having learned from Lenin that a revolution required the people to rebel, who would then receive assistance and guidance from the party.⁶⁵ Most commandos, however, were impregnated by the Maoist example,⁶⁶ even those who, like Daouda Hima and Ali Mahamane Madaouki, received their training in Algeria rather than the People's Republic. Sawaba's 1962 strategy paper, which abandoned the pursuit of non-violent change, drew on Maoist doctrines, while the expectation that Niger's population would stand up alongside the Sawabists was at least akin to Mao's notion of 'people's war'. Nanking's training, however, focused more on military matters, and its influence on the strategy and tactics employed by the commandos in the field are discussed further below. The influence of Algerian instruction similarly made itself felt in battle tactics, while its underlying political lesson corroborated the importance of popular sup-

⁶² Interview, Madaoua, 7 Febr. 2003.

⁶³ See for recent analyses T.M. Leonard, *Castro and the Cuban Revolution* (Westport, CT, 1999) and J.E. Sweig, *Inside the Cuban Revolution: Fidel Castro and the Urban Underground* (Cambridge, MA, 2002).

⁶⁴ Interview Sao Marakan, Niamey, 16 Nov. 2002. Also Bachir Boukary, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003.

⁶⁵ Interview, Niamey, 6 Dec. 2003.

⁶⁶ Interview with Bachir Boukary, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003.

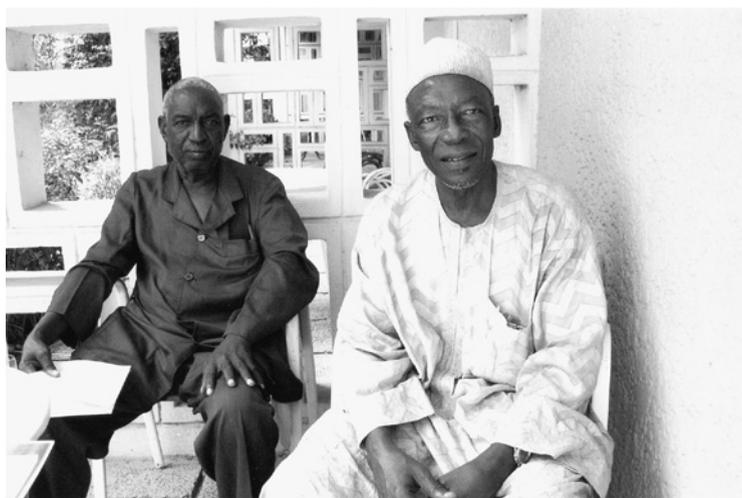


Photo 12.2 Mounkaila Albagna (l.), with Sawaba companion Ali Amadou, Niamey, 2009.

port. The Algerian experience also drove home the point that fighting the French was a practical possibility. Both these aspects were, perhaps, also the decisive elements of the training in Vietnam. With the battle training of the Red River behind him, Soumana Idrissa was assigned to a unit active in Niger's west, having been taught about frontier infiltration and shown at Dien Bien Phu that the RDA's protectors were not invincible.

In view of the movement's experiences it is not surprising that the September communiqué expressed hostility towards the French. It observed that 'the Nigérien people [had] become the victim ... of a usurpation of power perpetrated by French occupation forces, which in lieu of the lawful Sawaba government [had] installed a reactionary coalition in the pay of foreigners'. In recalling his actions later, Sawaba's chief of staff defined the goal of his men as 'to free the people from the French yoke'.⁶⁷ Bakary himself would have told Maman Alke, the Algeria-trained commando from Gothèye, of his intention 'to march on Niger in order to chase the French army'. This sentiment was markedly sharper than the party's posture before

⁶⁷ Communiqué, 27 Sept. 1964; interview Ousmane Dan Galadima, Madaoua, 7 Febr. 2003 ('le peuple nigérien a été victime [...] d'une usurpation de pouvoir perpétré par les forces françaises d'occupation qui ont installé au lieu et place du gouvernement légal Sawaba, une coalition réactionnaire à la solde de l'étranger'; 'pour libérer le peuple du joug français').

the referendum and was the result of the gradual evolution of political attitudes. That the presence of French troops was considered unacceptable also had consequences for the commando strategy, which, as shown above, also targeted Zinder's French mission. This, as well as the leadership's definition of its objective, betrayed an awareness that the French represented the lifeline of the RDA and, hence, constituted the ultimate enemy. In the lower ranks this found expression in less refined, anti-Gallic sentiments, as evidenced by cadres like Djibo Issa, the scout from Tamanrasset; Mounkaila Albagna, the commando from Dargol; Boubakar Djingaré, the Niamey mason; and Amadou Diop, the Zinder lorry driver turned revolutionary. Their attitudes had formed in a myriad of experiences ranging from rows with French teachers and clashing ideological outlooks to the misery of harassment and flight.⁶⁸

Yet, if Sawaba's objective betrayed hostility towards France, it was not anti-French for the sake of it—in the past the movement had, after all, built up close ties with the metropolitan union world. Any opposition to France was linked to Gaullist support for the RDA, as shown in the September communiqué's reference to 'foreign forces' working with 'Nigérien agents'. Ideologically, this was bound up with the struggle against 'neo-colonialism'. But in view of the representation in the regime of the country's chiefs—key enemies of the 'petit peuple'—Dan Galadima's memorandum also made it clear that his goal was 'to defeat the ... feudal army of Diori'. This had to be done 'with a view to establish a Popular Republic of Niger and to realise a Government of African Union', a point that, while in line with Bakary's pan-territorial sentiments, was included to appease the obsessions of his Ghanaian allies.⁶⁹ The justification for an armed assault put heavy emphasis on what the September communiqué presented as the lack of the regime's nationalist character, something which Sawaba associated with its imposition 'by ... foreign forces' and which had prevented the assumption of *effective* independence. Since the French usurpation of power had been masked by a series of electoral travesties, the RDA regime was also deemed 'anti-democratic', a sentiment articulated by commandos

⁶⁸ *Le Niger*, 26 Oct. 1964 (interrogation Maman Alke); interviews Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 29 Nov. and 6 Dec. 2003; Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003; Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 27 Oct. 2005. On Djibo Issa, ch. 10 at n. 100 ('marcher sur le Niger afin d'y chasser l'armée française').

⁶⁹ Communiqué, 27 Sept. 1964; Mémoire pour l'opération révolution ('forces étrangères'; 'agents nigériens'; 'vaincre l'armée ... féodaliste de Diori'; 'en vue d'établir une République Populaire du Niger et de réaliser un Gouvernement Africain d'Union').

like Yacouba Issa, the veterinary nurse from Zinder, who on his infiltration missions pointed out to people ‘that there were no elections in Niger’.⁷⁰

The mention of ‘feudalism’ showed, more than other elements, the desire to justify the resort to arms with an argument about an aspect of Niger’s political system. The tendency to do so was typical for a political party that had grown out of a movement which stood for broad societal change, as laid down in its programme of the 1950s and elaborated in the policy doctrines of 1961–1962. As one Sawaba student put it later, the movement’s ideology did not aim for power through a coup d’état but the ‘capture of power for and by the people’.⁷¹ This was not empty rhetoric but an indication of a preparedness to use violence in the furtherance of social and political objectives—a readiness that had established itself in the course of canvassing during the 1950s. Underlying it was anger. Activists like Amadou Diop, Dandouna Aboubakar and Djibo Issa—just as NEPU women organiser Gambo Sawaba in Nigeria—represented a generation of youngsters who were incensed about the world around them and who thought it possible, even likely, that the social and political changes that they strove for (and from which they expected gain for themselves and their class) could be brought about, but who were rudely awakened when hostile forces thwarted their ambition. Their disappointment and the persecution to which they were subjected fuelled this rage. In Diop’s own words, they were ‘fanatics’, treated and hounded like dogs.⁷² Their yearning for ‘sawki’ could at least gain satisfaction from the proclamation of attack, which betrayed a confidence that all was about to change.

Organisation, Strategy and Tactics

In his order of battle of 22 September Bakary told Sallé Dan Koulou that Porto Novo would be the ‘assembly centre’ from where ‘Adam’ (or ‘Adama’—*nom de guerre* of Ousmane Dan Galadima) would organise the op-

⁷⁰ Communiqué, 27 Sept. 1964; Pour l’Indépendance effective du Niger: Les raisons de notre lutte (Bureau du Parti Sawaba: Bamako, 15 Jan. 1961); *Le Niger*, 26 Oct. 1964 (interrogation Yacouba Issa) (‘par ... forces étrangères’; ‘anti-démocratique’; ‘qu’il n’y aurait pas d’élection au Niger’).

⁷¹ Interview with Bachir Boukary, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003 (‘prise du pouvoir pour et par le peuple’).

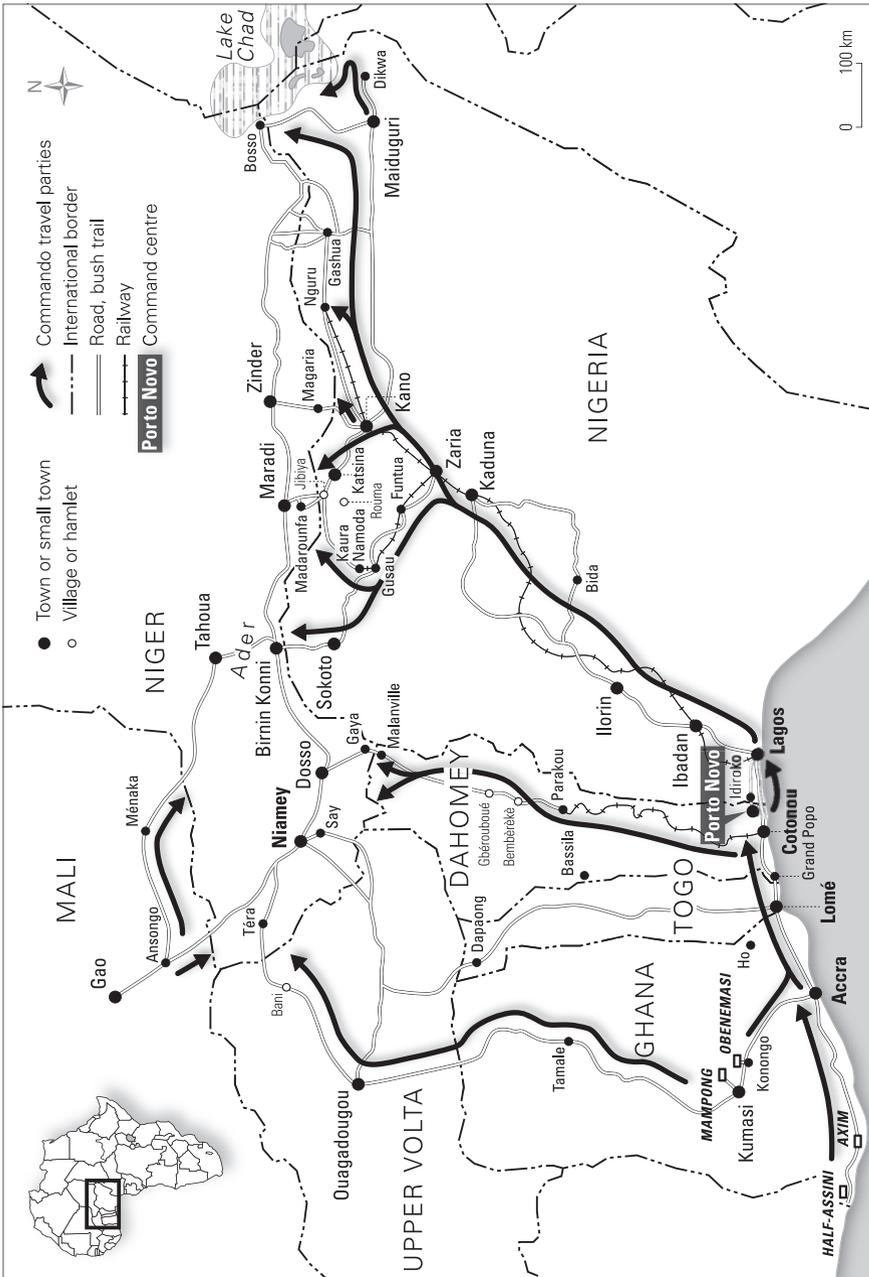
⁷² Interview with Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003 (‘fanatiques’). For the role of anger in violence, see K. van Walraven, ‘Sawaba, Niger and the Revolution of a Social Movement (1954–1966)’; paper ‘Lutter dans les Afriques’; Université de Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne, 22–23 January 2010.

erations. The same letter made clear that the chief of staff had ‘already been sent to all the comrades’ and that if unit leaders needed to discuss matters with the leadership, they should refer to him in the Dahomean capital. Bakary added that he would certainly be there himself, and French intelligence, while in early September reporting a rumour that he was in northern Dahomey, confirmed that Sawaba’s leader had recently been in Porto Novo several times.⁷³ It is, however, doubtful that Bakary actually stayed in the Dahomean capital during the attacks—one Sawaba sympathiser later claimed that he remained in Accra.⁷⁴ Since Dan Galadima was responsible for military matters and Bakary bore overall political responsibility, this would seem the most logical thing to do, also in view of the leader’s safety.

Porto Novo’s role was to serve as a collection point for most of the commandos, providing them with instructions and dispatching them to Niger’s borderlands, while receiving intelligence and feedback from the operational zones and, if need be, giving new orders. The city was ideally located for these purposes (Map 12.1). Hardly a dozen kilometres from the Nigerian border, it was not only closer to the war zones and could therefore receive intelligence more quickly than the headquarters in Ghana, but it could easily facilitate the transfer of the guerrillas, many of whom had to cross Nigeria on their way to the infiltration areas. In addition, from Porto Novo units could travel to northern Dahomey—and this unhindered by the Dahomean authorities, which were inimical to the RDA since the expulsion of their citizens. As Justin Ahomadegbé, the vice-president and head of government, was profoundly hostile to Boubou Hama and Diamballa Maïga, he was prepared to allow the passage of commandos across the national territory, though in small numbers in order not to attract attention (but this was also in Sawaba’s interest). Besides, as noted in previous chapters, Dahomey’s president, Sourou Apithy, had long-standing ties with Joseph Akouété, one of Sawaba’s key officers. The result was that Dahomey helped in several ways. First, its Sûreté assisted in the transit of the guerrillas to Porto Novo, as the commando unit of Amadou Abdou, the Gothèye wood trader trained at Kibdani, found out when travelling by car to Grand Popo, a town on the Togolese-Dahomean border: Joseph Akouété inter-

⁷³ Djibo Bakary to Sallé Dan Koulou, 22 Sept. 1964; Bulletin de Renseignements Particuliers, 10 Oct. 1964; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 7-13 Sept. 1964, 1.078, no. 37; (‘centre de ralliement’; ‘été envoyé auprès de tous les camarades’).

⁷⁴ Interview with Sao Marakan, Niamey, 16 Nov. 2002. Mounkaila Albagna alluded to this as well. Interview, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003.



Map 12.1 Commando itineraries to Niger.

vened with police and the commandos were simply waved through. With the exception of those units that were to infiltrate from Mali and Upper Volta, most guerrillas travelled through Cotonou and Porto Novo or stayed there for some time. Some of them later boarded the train for the north under escort of Issaka Samy, who had established himself in the Dahomean capital and mediated, for example, the transfer of Amadou Abdou's unit by bribing gendarmes in Bembèrèkè, north of Parakou.⁷⁵

Dahomean assistance went further, however, than turning a blind eye. While the commandos stayed indoors during their stopover at Porto Novo and Cotonou, it is impossible that the authorities were unaware of their presence—Amadou Abdou and comrades stayed in Cotonou for one month. Cotonou was the seat of government and foreign embassies, including that of Ghana, which was to play a role in the guerrillas' onward journey. The capital itself housed the head office of the Gendarmerie, and Dan Galadima lived right behind the camp of the Republican Guards, in the west of the city. In other words, the Dahomean authorities gave conscious protection to the commandos. Porto Novo, in fact, became a full-blown 'command centre', manned by Issaka Samy and a certain Maman, besides the chief of staff himself. In view of the total number of guerrillas transferred to the infiltration zones (on which more below) it must have been busy with the comings and goings of men. French intelligence spoke of it as a safe haven. Galadima had three cars with Dahomean chauffeurs, and in lodging the commandos obtained help from the Dahomeans, including the director of Cotonou's chamber of commerce. Yet, whether Porto Novo also served as distribution centre for weapons is doubtful, although Chaffard suggested that these were distributed on Dahomean territory.⁷⁶ Having armed men around not under its control would have been risky for the government, while much of the weaponry was lying waiting in the arms caches in Niger's frontier zones.

In the transfer of the commandos from the Ghanaian camps to the Dahomean capital, a crucial role was played by Joseph Akouété. This was due to his Togolese background, useful for negotiating the passage through Togo. For this, Bakary's old ally could mobilise his contacts with Togolese opposition forces, although there are indications that he was not without

⁷⁵ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 16 Oct. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; interview Mounkaila Beidari, 15 Dec. 2009; Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 321-322; *Le Niger*, 23 Nov. 1964 (including interrogation Amadou Abdou).

⁷⁶ *Le Niger*, 23 Nov. 1964 (+ interrogation Amadou Abdou); Telegram Génédéf Dakar to Minarmées Paris, 9 Oct. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 321 ('poste de commandement').

contacts at the presidency—he actually had a house close to the presidential palace. He was assisted in his work by a Nigérien union worker (a certain Tiana), active in Lomé's transport sector. The former secretary-general of Niger's 'Association Dahome-Togo' thus drove the men making up Amadou Abdou's unit from the Togolese capital in a party car to Porto Novo, where he was seen regularly, most likely bringing in fresh groups of commandos.⁷⁷ Of course, numerous men must have made the journey to the Dahomean capital without Akouété's escort—on their own or with the help of other liaison officers. For example, Djibrilla Dembélé, the boxer from Niamey and Marnia trainee, together with comrades made his way to the Ghana-Togo border with an unidentified guide, who left them after arranging their passage. Travelling in small groups to Porto Novo, the section of the journey from Ghana to the Nigerian border was, in any case, quite secure, although the Togolese stretch bore risks as shown by the units of Amadou Abdou and Djibrilla Dembélé, which were both detained in Lomé before they could move on to Dahomey.⁷⁸

Upon arrival in Porto Novo, the composition of the units took further shape, in so far as these had not yet fully formed in Ghana. Unit members had sometimes trained in different camps—like those under the command of Aba Kaka, the deposed canton chief of Bosso—and therefore came together once they arrived in Dahomey. Alternatively, they made their way there on an individual basis, as did the commandos that would form the squad in the Madarounfa region. Others, such as Maman Alke and a companion, made the journey to Porto Novo, only to be told by Dan Galadima that they should move on to Northern Nigeria to join the members and leader of a unit already in place. Generally, the definitive composition followed in Niger's frontier zones. In Porto Novo, the commandos also got their instructions, or part of them. The chief of staff thus gave Maman Alke a sealed message to be handed over to his 'chef de groupe' (i.e. chef militaire), Dandouna Aboubakar. The procedure suggests that efforts were made to maintain the necessary secrecy.⁷⁹

The Ghanaians provided help for the onward journey. While Sawaba could expect assistance from its network of cells in Nigeria, Ousmane Dan Galadima asked that the attachés of the Ghanaian embassies in Cotonou

⁷⁷ *Le Niger*, 23 Nov. 1964 (interrogation Amadou Abdou); Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 7 Apr. 1965; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2.

⁷⁸ Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 321; *Le Niger*, 23 Nov. 1964 (interrogation Amadou Abdou); *Ibid.*, 16 Nov. 1964 (interrogation Djibrilla Dembélé).

⁷⁹ Interview Aba Kaka, Bosso, 13 Febr. 2006; *Le Niger*, 21 June 1965 & 26 Oct. 1964 (interrogation Maman Alke).

and Lagos help in 'the passage without delay' of his men. They were to travel through Dahomey to Say and Gaya and to Northern Nigeria via Ilorin and Bida, the former town having had a cell of sympathisers since 1959 and the latter midway between Ilorin and Kaduna, the region's capital. From there, the commandos were expected to disperse towards their various destinations: in this respect Dan Galadima mentioned the Kano headquarters; Katsina, the regrouping centre; Rouma (Ruma), a town some 25 km south of Jibiya (this base had been temporarily evacuated after Malam Karégamba's arrest); Funtua, halfway between Zaria and the 'Goussao' base, on the railway link to the arms depot at Kaura Namoda ('Goussao' and Kaura had been betrayed); Magaria, the infiltration area for units such as that of Kanguèye Boubacar; and Dikwa, which lay some 75 km east of Maiduguri and was connected by a bush trail along the western shore of Lake Chad to Bosso (Map 12.1). This was obviously of importance for the men commanded by Aba Kaka.⁸⁰

As noted, several of the guerrillas were already in the infiltration areas as part of the advance columns. Ali Mahamane Madaouki and Kanguèye Boubacar were in Northern Nigeria, as Hamballi's arrest had made clear. The same was true for Assane Bizo—the Nanking trainee who did intelligence work in the Malanville region—and Boubakar Djingaré, who was in the Sokoto area with Dandouna Aboubakar contacting peasants and providing drill to local youngsters. Likewise, fellow Nanking trainee Baro Alfari was already stationed in northern Dahomey together with Issoufou Danbaro. Salifou Soumaila, the propagandist at Villa Lotus who went to China early on, and Harouna Bonkourou, former corporal in the French army and hardened by service in Indo-China, had also gone to their operational zones. Siddi Abdou, the unit leader trained in the Far East, was deployed to the Ader region, between Birnin Konni and Tahoua. Later it was recalled by Soumana Idrissa, in whose company Siddi stayed in Ansongo, how his comrade left in the direction of Ménaka, where he probably collected his arms from the local weapons cache; a certain Kanko was his liaison in the Ader.

Many of these men were leading officers, though as the Algerian training of some indicates, several were of intermediate rank. Two additional commanders, Tini Malélé and Robert Seguinikin, came to join them, the first departing Accra already on 2 September and the latter leaving Ouagadougou for his zone on the 5th. These unit leaders were acting under existing

⁸⁰ Mémorandum pour l'opération révolution ('l'acheminement sans délai').



Photo 12.3 Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 2005.

instructions, which were refined by Bakary's letter to Dan Koulou of 22 September, primarily to cope with Hamballi's arrest. Chaibou Souley, who was active in the central zone under Dan Koulou's command, was seconded to 'the brothers of Zinder', i.e. the unit of Kanguèye Boubacar. Bakary told Dan Koulou that if this transfer complicated his work, he could move 'Ibrahim' (Ibrahim Keita Moussa, a former teacher) to Zinder, appoint him as Kanguèye's commissar and explain to the men that Bakary had 'taken this decision as a last resort'. This suggestion was acted upon. One Boubé (perhaps Amadou Boube, who also trained at Nanking) had to reinforce Siddi Abdou's column as political commissar.⁸¹

⁸¹ Ibrahim Baro dit Tri Tri was also part of Siddi Abdou's unit. Interviews Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 26 Oct. 2005; Ali Mahamane Madaouki, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003; Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 15 Dec. 2009; Soumana Idrissa, Gothèye, 18 Dec. 2009; Ibrahim Baro dit Tri Tri, Niamey, 22 Oct. 2011; *Le Niger*, 23 Nov. 1964 (interrogation Amadou Abdou), 2 Nov. 1964

With the command structure in place, foot soldiers could move to their units. Several of the men were handed IDs before they set off, as happened to Djibrilla Dembélé's unit, while others travelled without papers,⁸² simply blending into the migration routines of the West African region. Although several men may have travelled under supervision of one of their comrades, perhaps most of the foot soldiers reached Niger's frontiers in the company of their unit leader or political commissar (if these were not yet in the infiltration zones). A certain Gouji, for example, a foot soldier probably trained in Ghana, and his comrade, a man called Niandou, travelled with Djibrilla Dembélé and their commissar, Dioumassi Albarka dit Waou, to the Ghana-Togo border and on, to Porto Novo, from where they proceeded to Malanville, unescorted during this last stretch as Issoufou Danbaro was already in the north. Exceptionally, the head of the Bosso command, Aba Kaka, travelled the first part of his journey—to Lagos—by plane. Most commandos covered sections of the itinerary by car, hired or provided for by the party. Thus, Amadou Abdou and his men⁸³ made their trip to Grand Popo in a hired vehicle (to continue their journey in a party car), while Dioumassi Albarka hired a taxi to bring his unit from Lomé to Cotonou.⁸⁴ Others, like the men of Tini Malélé, travelled by car to Upper Volta, picking up instructions from Doudou Bondiaré⁸⁵ at a town called Boussiella and proceeding to Kougou, Ouagadougou and the town of Bani, where they halted to discuss the infiltration routes with a cadre stationed there.⁸⁶

In fact, the logistics of the operation were highly organised, as can be gleaned from the journey of Gouji, Niandou and Djibrilla Dembélé, who

(interrogations Malélé and Seguinikin) and 16 May 1966; Djibo Bakary to Sallé Dan Koulou, 22 Sept. 1964; ch. 9 n. 304 and at n. 298 ('les frères de Zinder'; 'pris cette décision en dernier ressort').

⁸² *Le Niger*, 16 & 23 Nov. 1964 (interrogations Djibrilla Dembélé & Amadou Abdou); 21 June 1965.

⁸³ Saley Karma (= Salle Karma?; see ch. 9 n. 37), Halidou Ouallam, Issaka Hamidou, Yaro Goudel and Halidou Adamou. *Le Niger*, 23 Nov. 1964 (interrogation Amadou Abdou).

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* + 16 Nov. 1964 (interrogation Djibrilla Dembélé); interview Aba Kaka, Bosso, 13 Febr. 2006.

⁸⁵ The Algeria trainee who learnt morse codes with Ali Amadou and Mounkaila Albagna. Ch. 9 at n. 344.

⁸⁶ A man called Ballagué. It is unclear how far they travelled by car and from where they continued on foot. See Map 12.3. Location of Boussiella and Kougou unknown. The above confirms in outline the route from Ghana to the infiltration zones, which according to British diplomats, took the commandos from Kumasi to Tamale and Ouagadougou, then eastwards. *Le Niger*, 2 Nov. 1964 (interrogation Malélé); British High Commission Accra to A.J. Warren, British Embassy Abidjan, 14 Nov. 1964; PRO, FO 371/177.230.

travelled under escort of Dioumassi Albarka by train to northern Dahomey, to get into a car at a railway station (probably Parakou, at the end of the line) that took them to Hassane Djibo, the Nanking trainee already in Malanville. Aba Kaka, too, continued his journey from Lagos by train, all the way to Nguru, north-east of Kano, from where he continued by car.⁸⁷ If the trips from Ghana to northern Dahomey and Upper Volta took a couple of days, or a week at most, the journeys to Northern Nigeria must have taken longer, possibly up to ten days or a fortnight, before the men got to the frontier regions. Generally, once the commandos reached these zones, they continued on foot. Aba Kaka left the town of Gashua, east of Nguru, on foot before taking another car to Maiduguri. These trips could take considerable time, as Mounkaila Albagna's men found out, having to walk five days before they reached the area around Téra.⁸⁸ It is impossible to give hard figures on the total number of men who got to the frontier areas in this way. As noted in Chapter 9, French intelligence at the beginning of 1963 estimated the number of trained guerrillas at 300. Chaffard gave a total of 240 combatants who went to the infiltration zones, a figure that was probably based on regime estimates, while adding that another 250 to 300 were still in the Ghanaian camps. This would fit in with the 'several hundred' men that the chief of staff later claimed were involved in the operations.⁸⁹

The train of operations that had been set in motion was accompanied by a flurry of correspondence, as can be seen from Bakary's order of battle to Sallé Dan Koulou. Sawaba's leader thanked his commander for a letter he had just received from him and gave instructions for the late changes in the composition of the units mentioned above, while promising 'to write more later on'. Bakary also referred to instructions already given and to the possibility of unit leaders getting in touch by 'messenger' with Porto Novo, if it was urgent. He added that, as far as reinforcement of the Ader unit was concerned, instructions had been dispatched to Kanko, who would pass them on to Boubé and Siddi Abdou. All this suggested the existence of considerable traffic between headquarters, the command centre and the infiltration zones, including cadres appointed as couriers.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ *Le Niger*, 16 Nov. 1964 (interrogation Dembélé); interview Aba Kaka, Bosso, 13 Febr. 2006.

⁸⁸ Interviews Aba Kaka, Bosso, 13 Febr. 2006; Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003.

⁸⁹ Excluding the foot soldiers trained in Algiers, of whom it is unclear whether they became operational. Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 325; ch. 9 at n. 347.

⁹⁰ Djibo Bakary to Sallé Dan Koulou, 22 Sept. 1964 ('d'écrire plus beaucoup plus tard'; 'messenger').

According to the memorandum that Dan Galadima sent to the BAA the overall command was in the hands of a 'select committee of the revolutionary chiefs of staff of Niger'. This terminology, however, suggested a bit too much since, having been jump-started by Hamballi's capture, the organisation of the command was not yet complete. It was not marked by an intricate structure but consisted of a few top-ranking cadres—certainly Dan Galadima himself and possibly Issaka Samy and Joseph Akouété. In practice, it was Galadima who stood at the helm of the commando units, which, taken together, were presented in a communiqué as the 'Armée Nigérienne de Libération' (ANL).⁹¹

As shown above, the overall strategy that Sawaba's forces were supposed to pursue was based on a plan that operations would start in the west first. It is not clear whether this idea had existed all along, but Bakary considered it crucial, perhaps because in Niger's western region—more arid than the centre and east—it was more difficult for guerrillas to find cover.⁹² But it may also have been a last-minute refinement to cope with the fall-out of the arrests in the central and eastern zones, which needed time (also in terms of travel) to change and reinforce the composition of the units there. Moreover, if Sawaba attacked first in the western region, where the RDA had its political base and the bulk of its resources were concentrated, this could prevent the regime from sending reinforcements to the east and possibly more quickly paralyse its command centre.

While Sawaba's leadership allowed the commando units some scope in deciding when to strike—obviously to take into account local circumstances—, all initial attacks should take place within the time span of one week, and this across the entire length of Niger's western and southern borders. (Obviously, no assaults were intended from bases in Algeria, as the geography of the desert made this impossible).⁹³ This naturally demanded substantial planning. First, it was inevitable that units operated largely independently of each other. The guerrillas stationed in the Malian-Nigérien frontier zone were not in touch with the units in the Dahomean sector,⁹⁴ let alone those active in the Nigerian border zones. Second, all units had

⁹¹ Mémorandum pour l'opération révolution; Communiqué: Bureau Politique, 17 Oct. 1964 (*Le Niger*, 26 Oct. 1964). Bakary was probably not part of the committee, as he travelled much of the time, representing the movement politically, or was in Accra. Interviews Ali Amadou & Mounkaila Albagna, and Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, both 15 Dec. 2009 ('comité restreint de l'Etat-Major révolutionnaire du Niger').

⁹² Interview with Soumana Idrissa, Gothèye, 18 Dec. 2009.

⁹³ *Le Niger*, 21 June 1965.

⁹⁴ Interview with Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 23 Febr. 2008.

to engage during the night of 26-27 September or that of 3-4 October, the following week. These were Saturday nights and were possibly chosen because it would catch the regime off guard in view of the closure of government offices.

As was done earlier, the commandos were assigned to their region of origin. The logic of dispatching the men, in the words of Dan Galadima, to the field in which they were settled,⁹⁵ was sound as it would facilitate contact with the population. Yet, one of the consequences was the dispersal of units right along Niger's extended frontiers, and in order to cope with this Bakary ordered Sallé Dan Koulou 'to apply strictly the system of *willaya* [sic] for [he] would not be able to take charge of the others'.⁹⁶ The capture of Niger's regions, risen in revolt under commando supervision, naturally had to be consolidated even as the RDA's collapse was unfolding. Hence, the idea to organise the risen regions in self-governing areas under a decentralised command, which would also cope with the lack of contact between units in different sectors. The Algerian inspiration, so pervasive in the training of the intermediate ranks, was obvious.⁹⁷

The dispersion of the commando units also showed that Sawaba aimed at conquering Niger's rural areas. As noted, guerrilla instruction in China was geared towards winning the peasantry first. This Maoist inspiration may have played a role, although the Algeria trainees had also been made aware of the importance of the countryside. However, in an overwhelmingly rural country like Niger, where urban areas were still underdeveloped, the conquest of the countryside was an objective necessity on the road to victory. Thus, Dan Galadima informed the BAA that the advance units in the Jibiyi area were heading for the Maradi and Dosso regions 'to recruit peasants in support of [the] cause'.⁹⁸

But this does not mean that the leadership's strategy did not aim at the cities. The centres of power were located there and, as shown below, were made targets of commando attack, but in order to get there the guerrillas necessarily had to pass through rural zones first. The destruction of Niamey's radio tower and the targeting of military points in Zinder, in addition to the earlier contacts with Niger's army, indicate that plans for an armed

⁹⁵ Interview with Ousmane Dan Galadima, Madaoua, 7 Febr. 2003.

⁹⁶ Djibo Bakary to Sallé Dan Koulou, 22 Sept. 1964 ('appliquer strictement le système des *willaya* car tu ne pourras plus t'occuper des autres').

⁹⁷ The acronym 'ANL', under which Sawaba's forces were known, may also point to this, bearing some resemblance to the name of Algeria's liberation army, the ALN.

⁹⁸ *Mémoire pour l'opération révolution* ('pour recruter des paysans à l'appui de notre cause').

takeover at the heart of government had been part of strategy all along. Preparations for a coup d'état had also been part of the training at Nanking. Such type of action necessarily focused on the capital and, hence, reinforced the urban dimensions of the movement's strategy.

The idea of near-synchronised attacks on town and country alike, right across the land and all within the time span of one week, shows that the leadership hoped to quickly overwhelm the regime and capture the centre of power, possibly hastened by the commencement of operations in the west. Niamey was thus made into a special operational zone, separate from the three others into which Sawaba's planners had divided the country.⁹⁹ However, true to their state of mind, they did not aim for an ordinary coup d'état, but one that would take place as part of a popular insurrection against the Franco-RDA combine. This meant that military action in or against the capital would have to take place in the last stages of the struggle. As a result, Niamey was made the final objective of the commandos,¹⁰⁰ who would march on the capital aided by the spontaneous rising of the people.¹⁰¹ Consequently, as in the first years of infiltration when Sawaba did not prioritise between rural and urban areas, the overall strategy of its forces was directed at taking the cities and countryside in a more or less simultaneous move, culminating in the later (but very rapid) seizure of the capital. This strategy married the rural focus of the commandos' instruction—the combined result of Maoist, Algerian and Cuban inspiration and the requirements of a predominantly rural theatre—with the semi-urban background of many of the cadres. Its built-in speed, while fitting into the movement's mindset, was the response to necessities created by the premature arrest of cells and, perhaps, the difficulties of the terrain; with some exceptions, this provided few possibilities for cover.

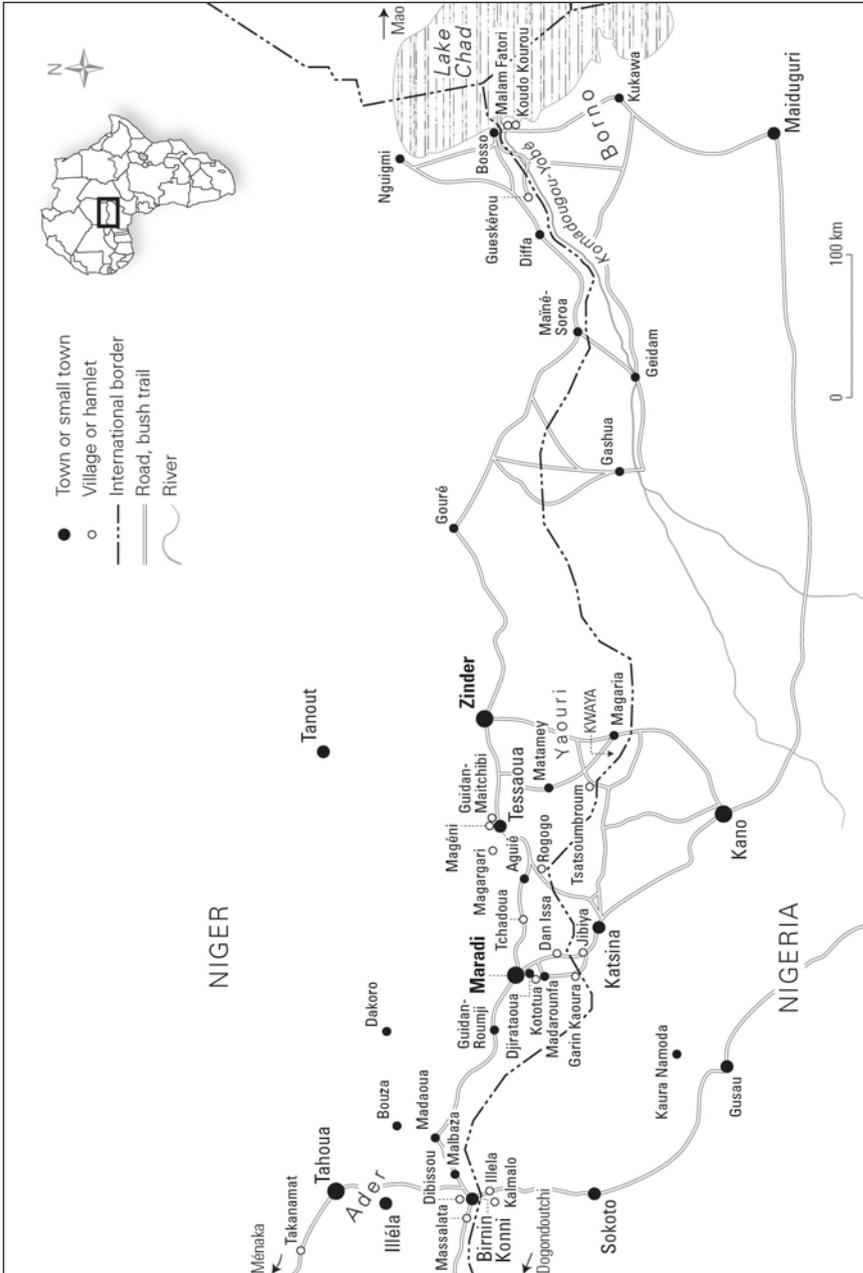
In order to implement this strategy, Sawaba's leadership by this time had divided Niger into four sectors, which were apparently called 'zones'. Besides the one covering Niamey, which depended directly on the leadership in Accra (possibly sidetracking Porto Novo),¹⁰² there was a zone for the 'South', the 'West' and the 'North'. Covering the three infiltration

⁹⁹ Ambassade de France au Niger. Le conseiller militaire, no. 241/CM/NIG/S: Etude sur le Sawaba, Niamey, 22 June 1966 (Lt-Col. Chabriaux); SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2. The source was a detained Sawabist.

¹⁰⁰ Bulletin de Renseignements Particuliers, 18 Oct. 1964, no. 1234/2/S.

¹⁰¹ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 28 Oct. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; *Le Niger*, 19 Apr. 1965.

¹⁰² Possibly this reflected the fact that the capital's capture would essentially be the outcome of military activity in the rest of the country. There was, indeed, direct correspon-



Map 12.2 'Zone South'.

networks built up in the past, the zones were subdivided in what a French study called ‘regions’.¹⁰³ Thus, Zone South (Map 12.2), extending from Konni to Nguigmi, now consisted of four regions: 1. Konni-Tahoua-Madaoua, with Sokoto as its hinterland and supervised by Dandouna Aboubakar; 2. Maradi-Tessaoua, commanded by Sallé Dan Koulou; 3. Zinder-Magaria-Matamey-Tanout, now led by Kanguèye Boubacar; and 4. Gouré-Mainé-Soroa-Nguigmi, headed by Moustapha Oumar.¹⁰⁴ This subdivision was more refined than in earlier years. Dandouna Aboubabar, for example, had been active in a much larger area before, while the Madarounfa region reconnoitred by Hamballi now fell under the separate Maradi-Tessaoua sector under the control of the overall commander of Zone South, Dan Koulou. This regional division, while it must partially have overlapped in the case of the Zinder-Magaria and Maradi-Tessaoua sectors, reflected the urban targets that lay at the heart of each of these regions.

Zone West (Map 12.3) still consisted of three regions, but the French study gave another subdivision, excluding Tahoua, though the latter could be more easily reached from Ménaka in Mali than the Sokoto hinterland in Nigeria. According to the French, the most easterly region of Zone West had Dosso and Gaya as its limit. This accords with the ‘plan of attack’ that Dan Galadima attached to his memorandum to the BAA in September, mentioning ‘Doutchi’ as eastern parameter,¹⁰⁵ i.e. making Nigeria’s north-western frontier region with Niger (just west of Sokoto-Birmin Konni) the boundary of operations in this zone. The eastern region of Zone West not only covered Gaya and Dosso, but according to the French also Say—in other words, including all areas that fell within the remit of the Dahomean (but also some Voltan) units. The other two regions of the zone were still the same as before: on the right embankment Téra and on the left Tillabéri-Ayorou-Méhana (although this last town actually lay on the opposite side of the Niger River). The overall command of Zone West was in the hands of Tini Malélé and Idrissa Arfou.¹⁰⁶

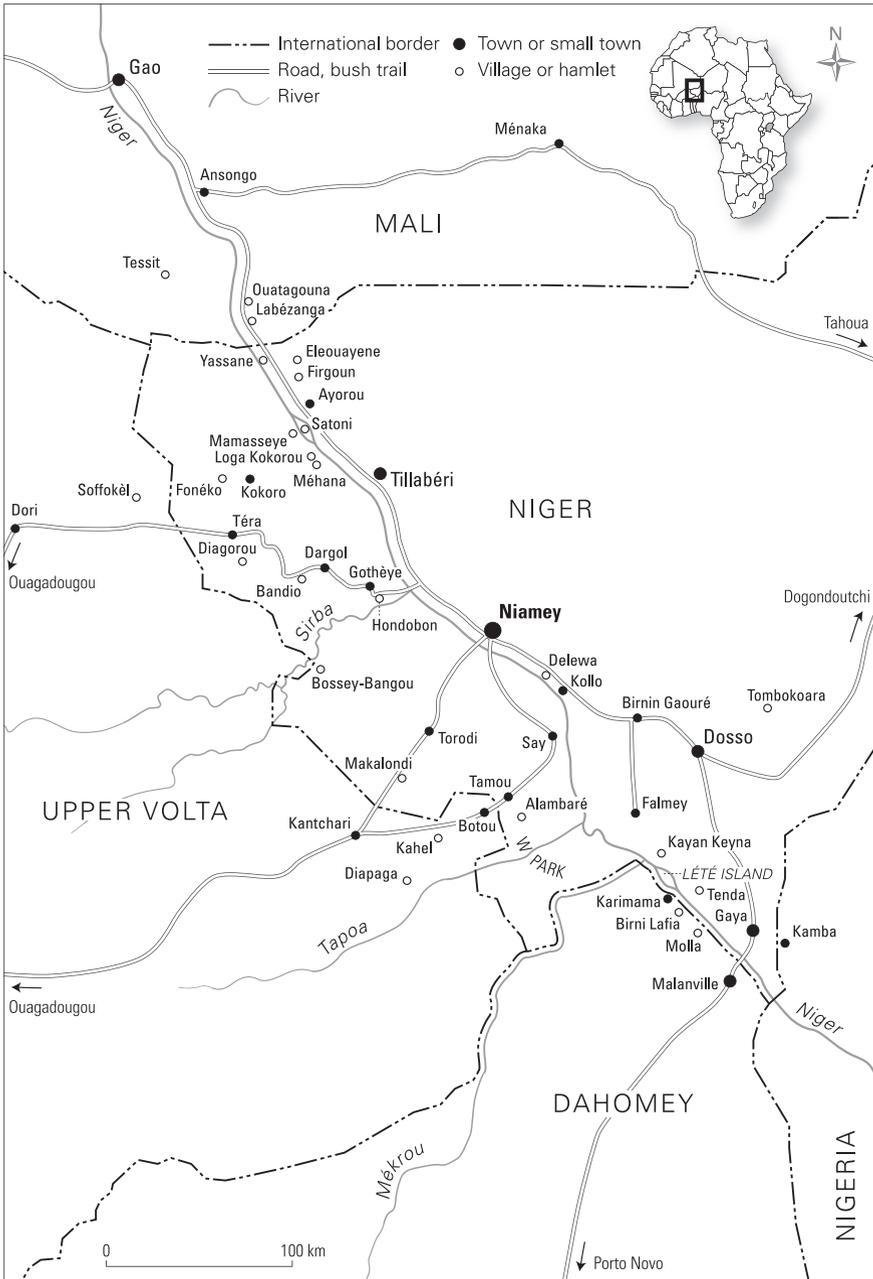
denche between the Niamey cells and Accra—perhaps avoiding Porto Novo? Interview Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 Nov. 2003.

¹⁰³ Ambassade de France au Niger: Etude sur le Sawaba.

¹⁰⁴ See ch. 10 at n. 24; Ambassade de France au Niger: Etude sur le Sawaba; Bulletin de Renseignements Particuliers, 18 Oct. 1964, no. 1234/2/S.

¹⁰⁵ Mémorandum pour l’opération révolution. While the memorandum is stored at PRO (note 51 above), the plan of attack is missing but it is extensively discussed in *Le Niger*, 21 June 1965 (‘plan d’attaque’).

¹⁰⁶ Zone North, though to remain inactive, was said to be the responsibility of Abdoulaye Mamani and, oddly, Issoufou Danbaro, who was actually based in the Malanville area. Ambassade de France au Niger: Etude sur le Sawaba; *Le Niger*, 21 June 1965; interviews



Map 12.3 'Zone West'.

The commandos had to implement their strategy by staging numerous attacks of short duration across the length and breadth of the land ‘with a view to impress the masses’ and impart a picture of total anarchy¹⁰⁷—clearly, so that the population would see that the RDA was losing control and it could safely rally to Sawaba’s combatants. The plan of attack therefore encompassed an extensive list of targets, including administrative and customs posts, but also arms depots, post and telecommunication stations, other buildings holding public funds and even airfields and fuel depots. ‘Certain personalities known for their pro-government views’ were to be liquidated,¹⁰⁸ something that was part of commando strategy from the beginning, as can be gauged from the oath of loyalty taken in Ghana¹⁰⁹ and the earlier arrest of Mahaman Leiyi and members of a Maradi unit. The ‘mission orders and instructions’,¹¹⁰ which commandos carried with them and which cast the plan of attack into instructions for individual units, listed people to be targeted in this way. These included local officials, chiefs and other notables. Mission orders also included summaries of the attack plan and lists (in code or not) of pro-Sawaba people to be contacted during the infiltrations. While the short duration that was to mark the assaults suggests that they were to be staged in the form of hit-and-run operations, the plan of attack also aimed at the ‘establishment of subversive elements everywhere at once’, i.e. soon after the invasion had begun.¹¹¹

During the initial stages, however, the units had to secure ‘routes of retreat’ and places where they could hide (such as peasant dwellings). At this juncture, customs posts were obvious targets as they were located in remote areas and customs officials were unpopular. Their posts were likely to hold sums of cash that could come in useful. Other remote townships were to follow. At all targets the guerrillas had to establish the number of government personnel and means of defence, routes of approach and points of interception. Arms depots were logical targets as they could reinforce commando weaponry and furnish the arms for those joining

Mounkaila Beidari & Issa Younoussi, Niamey, 15 Dec. 2009; Soumana Idrissa, Gothèye, 19 Dec. 2009.

¹⁰⁷ Bulletin de Renseignements Particuliers, 18 Oct. 1964, no. 1234/2/S and *Le Niger*, 21 June 1965, which both must have had the plan of attack as source (‘en vue d’impressionner les masses’).

¹⁰⁸ *Le Niger*, 21 June 1965 (‘Certaines personnalités connues pour leurs opinions pro-gouvernementales’).

¹⁰⁹ Ch. 9 n. 364.

¹¹⁰ ‘instructions et directives aux missions’. See n. 112 below.

¹¹¹ *Le Niger*, 21 June 1965; Bulletin de Renseignements Particuliers, 18 Oct. 1964, no. 1234/2/S (‘implantation d’éléments subversifs partout à la fois’).

Sawaba's men. Besides overrunning government posts holding funds, the guerrillas should confiscate the resources of large traders or groundnut oil producers—'assets of enemies of the revolution', often French-owned and the target of little folk resentment. They were also advised to identify 'persons susceptible to be held for ransom'.¹¹²

Sabotaging oil dumps was obviously meant to paralyse regime mobility. The mission orders and instructions added the severing of telegraph and telephone lines, a tactic to which Leiyi, the Rogogo cadre, had already admitted in the Tessaoua region. Roads had to be booby-trapped, bridges and ferries destroyed and—perhaps¹¹³—wells poisoned. Coming closer, during the second stage, to larger urban centres, the targeting of administrative posts could involve the residences of Chefs de Circonscription and Commandants de Cercle and the barracks housing Gardes de Cercles. The commandos would also have to break into jails to free political inmates (and possibly others) and reinforce the ranks. The occupation of airfields was also meant for this stage and constituted an important goal, also to halt foreign supplies to the regime. Arriving, finally, at the capital the guerrillas had to start by blowing up three water towers and sabotaging the power supply, the telephone exchange and the fuel depots of Shell and Mobil Oil. Again, they would attempt to silence Radio Niger. Then, units would take control of the airport, the central ammunition supply, the headquarters of the Gendarmerie and the central police station.¹¹⁴

Actual deployment of units covered, among other regions, the north-east of Nigeria bordering the Bosso region (one unit or more), while others were dispatched to the region of Matamey-Magaria and a larger group to the Madarounfa area south of Maradi. Units were also deployed to the region of Konni and, further to the north, the Ader, and several to the Gaya

¹¹² *Le Niger*, 26 Oct. 1964 (interrogation Maman Alke); Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 321; G. Comte, 'Un plan de destruction du Niger', *France-Eurafrique*, no. 161, Apr. 1965, 9; J.P. Morillon, 'La tentative insurrectionnelle du SAWABA', *Est et Ouest*, 342 (16–31 May 1965). Comte, a pro-government journalist, and Morillon quote from the mission orders and instructions ('voies de retraite'; 'biens des ennemis de la révolution'; 'personnes susceptibles d'être rançonnées').

¹¹³ This was confessed by an interrogated commando, who may have acted under duress. *Le Niger*, 2 Nov. 1964 (interrogation Assane Bizo). It could be malicious propaganda, as it would not endear the guerrillas to the population, but see the discussion of guerrilla tactics below. For discussion of the possible sabotage of Zinder's water supply in 1959, see ch. 6 at n. 88.

¹¹⁴ Morillon, 'La tentative insurrectionnelle'; G. Comte, 'An Assassination that Failed', *National Review* (New York), 15 June 1965, 509; *Le Niger*, 26 Oct. 1964 (interrogation Maman Alke); 2 Nov. 1964 (interrogation Assane Bizo); Bulletin de Renseignements Particuliers, 18 Oct. 1964, no. 1234/2/S; Comte, 'Un plan de destruction'; *Le Niger*, 21 June 1965.

sector and, further northwards, the Dosso area. Commandos, in several groups, were sent from Dahomean-Voltan territory to head for Say and two or three units were deployed to the Téra region and an unspecified number to Gothèye-Dargol, Ayorou and Tahoua: this was reflected in the stationing of troops in at least three Malian towns (Tessit and Ménaka, both Gao satellite bases, and Ouatagouna). Guerrillas heading for Tahoua were possibly made up of more than one unit and came, despite the difficulties involved, from both the Nigerian and Ménaka hinterlands.¹¹⁵ This deployment more or less matched the division into zones and regions, but if the average size of units lay around seven and the number of men dispatched at this juncture totalled at least 250, perhaps more, the entire number of commando units added up to 35. Hence, the above list, drawn from a Ni-gérien government source and confirmed by several others,¹¹⁶ is not exhaustive although it gives an impression of the geographical spread of units and their location, which, as shown below, changed over time and with the vicissitudes of operations. As noted in Chapter 9, the average size of units was small, usually not totalling more than five to ten men, probably in order to go undetected for as long as possible. However, some squadrons were larger or increased in size by combining units just before an attack, or crossed Niger's frontiers as one group before splitting up into smaller detachments.

An important tactical requirement that the commandos had to comply with was that they were not allowed to shoot at 'the people'. Thus, Son Tay-trained Soumana Idrissa, assigned to the Ayorou sector, had been given orders not to fire on the local peasants. According to Djibo Foulan, the Sawaba peasant-marabout from nearby Bandio, this instruction had been given by Bakary personally. The same instruction operated in the Téra sector, where Daouda Hamadou, the tailor from Ayorou, infiltrated.¹¹⁷ That this was, indeed, a general order becomes clear from interviews in central-eastern Niger, where, for example, Ali Mahamane Madaouki later reminisced that he and his men were forbidden to shoot at the population, not even when it had been roused against them. Domestic Sawabists from Zinder like Oumarou Janba and Tahir Moustapha corroborated this (though overstating the matter by arguing that commandos were not even

¹¹⁵ *Le Niger*, 21 June 1965 and interview with Daouda Hamadou, Ayorou, 20 Dec. 2009

¹¹⁶ See the various sources (French archival ones, interviews etc.) used in this and the next chapter.

¹¹⁷ Interviews Soumana Idrissa, Gothèye, 1 Nov. 2005 & 18 Dec. 2009; Djibo Foulan, Bandio, 4 Nov. 2005; Daouda Hamadou, Niamey, 20 Dec. 2009.

allowed to fire on administrative cadres and that armament was meant for personal protection: administrators, however, were part of the regime and the commandos also bore offensive weapons). As noted by Sawaba student Bachir Boukary, also from Zinder, they were allowed to fire on people in uniform, and authorised targets clearly extended to all those who in essence were representative of the regime. Nevertheless, the instruction not to harm the population was explicit and its practice confirmed not only by Amadou Diop (one of the more determined commandos),¹¹⁸ but also by French intelligence, which on two occasions remarked on the guerrillas' lack of bellicosity or aggression. While this must have been partly the result of military fortunes,¹¹⁹ in itself this tactical posture was unsurprising since the population played an important part in the calculations to rout the RDA.

Yet, as the attack plan and mission orders made clear, the change of regime was not going to be peaceful. The commandos were a military force, whose men the British reported to be well trained (confirming French intelligence)¹²⁰ and whose obedience was maintained by strict discipline if not occasional coercion.¹²¹ As Sallé Dan Koulou had made clear in the Rogogo area before, people who displayed hostility towards the guerrillas could expect to be at the receiving end of commando violence. Weaponry confirmed their offensive objectives. The standard equipment consisted of pistols of various types (German, Czech or Russian,¹²² of different calibre: sometimes normal guns but often semi-automatic ones, for defensive purposes) and grenades, French-made or other, meant for assaults. Cartridges and hundreds of rounds of personal ammunition, Belgian-made or other, completed this armament, to which were added all manner of rifles of various provenance: Mausers, carbines, 20 mm rifles, muskets and other weapons of small calibre, locally made arms and shotguns. On top of this, most units were fitted with one or a couple of submachine guns as opposed

¹¹⁸ Interviews, Zinder: Ali Mahamane Madaouki, Oumarou Janba, Tahir Moustapha, (separately) 10 Febr. 2003; Bachir Boukary, 11 Febr. 2003; Amadou Ibrahim Diop, 13 Febr. 2003; Ayorou: Daouda Hamadou, 20 Dec. 2009).

¹¹⁹ Certainly in the second instance. *Ambassade de France au Niger: Etude sur le Sawaba; Événements survenus en Afrique Francophone pendant la semaine du 16 au 22 nov. 1964*; SHAT, 10 T 210; interview Ousseini Dandagoye, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003.

¹²⁰ Shaw to Lequesne, 2 Oct. 1964 and ch. 10 at ns. 178-179, referring to training at 'Goussao'.

¹²¹ Maman Alke claimed he was beaten once by unit chief Dandouna Aboubakar. Yet, this was said under interrogation. Alke was a middle cadre trained in Algeria. *Le Niger*, 26 Oct. 1964 (interrogation Alke).

¹²² Such as the MAC/50/9 or the Tokarev.

to semi-automatic weapons (like the MAT 49, AK 47—Chinese or other—, and the German MP 43 from World War II). Thus, if armament was disparate, the proverbial sticks recommended to the Téra units were unnecessary. The rest of the weaponry and ammunition would have to be obtained through attacks on government posts.¹²³

The commandos were, in fact, fully fitted out, which pointed to the seriousness of the threat that they posed. Most units, according to the regime itself,¹²⁴ possessed a pair of binoculars, a medical kit and a compass, while some had transistor radios or radio receivers.¹²⁵ However, this may have exaggerated the situation somewhat (although the regime had an interest in painting a picture of amateurism and lack of preparedness on the part of the commandos): other testimonies stress the simple nature of the equipment although the use of compasses, and perhaps binoculars, may not have been that exceptional. The guerrillas embarked on their journeys to the frontier taking some food, of course, for the first few days,¹²⁶ water in flasks, a little money. Some brought blankets, a cap, or sometimes a pair of extra clothes (trousers, some shirts).¹²⁷ In addition, most units carried fetishes with them, such as cowries, monkey skins, snippets of paper with Qur'anic texts, signs of mystics or amulets assuring invulnerability. Though drilled in the Marxist lessons of guerrilla warfare, Sawaba's commandos had been raised in traditions of Sufi Islam and therefore had to tender to their religious needs, or soothe their anxieties with particular means (do-

¹²³ Événements survenus en Afrique Francophone pendant la semaine du 17 au 23 mai 1965; SHAT, 10 T 210; Warren to Mansfield & Bates to Pugh, 23/21 Oct. 1964; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 28 Oct. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; Ambassade de France au Niger: Etude sur le Sawaba; Note de Renseignements. Ambassade de France, Le Conseiller Militaire, Niamey, 15 mai 1965; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; interview Bachir Boukary, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003; *Le Niger*, 21 June 1965. In addition to the above weaponry, one commando carried a Molotov cocktail, an arm more useful in urban rioting. Interview Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 15 Dec. 2009. No other references to this have been found, however.

¹²⁴ *Le Niger*, 21 June 1965.

¹²⁵ According to a government source and confirming French intelligence. *Le Niger*, 21 June 1965 and Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 7-13 Sept. 1964, 1.078, no. 37.

¹²⁶ They would soon have to ask for or buy their meal from peasant sympathisers, but in principle this should not be difficult as there was generally enough food since it was harvesting time. Foodstuffs that could be easily preserved, like manioc flour, wheat, bread or cakes made from groundnuts were of interest. Interviews Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 6 Dec. 2003 & 15 Dec. 2009; Soumana Idrissa, Gothèye, 18 Dec. 2009, who confirmed carrying a compass; Ali Amadou, Niamey, 15 Dec. 2009; Procès-verbal de la réunion du 7 nov. 1964 à M. le Secrétaire Général du Comité Régional de Zinder, in Issa Ibrahim, Secrétaire Général Section PPN/RDA Zinder, to M. le Secrétaire Général du PPN/RDA Niamey, 17 Nov. 1964; ANN, 86 MI 1E 5-5 ('bidons'; 'farine de manioc', 'blé'; 'tourteau d'arachide').

¹²⁷ Événements survenus ... 17 au 23 mai 1965.

mestic cadres did the same, such as Hima Dembélé, the unionist, who always kept a bag with amulets in his room). These possessions could also be used as part of a disguise, with men like Ali Mahamane Madaouki posing as a travelling marabout. Alternatively, Madaouki would dress as a peasant—carrying a hoe to make the cover convincing—, while other comrades posed as itinerant traders, migrant labourers, beggars. False IDs, pseudonyms and nicknames for men and units completed things.¹²⁸

Ammunition was carried in bags, small calibre weapons hidden in cans, then sealed, or put in travelling bags, even suitcases.¹²⁹ Many units actually had porters,¹³⁰ who carried the heavy equipment, while some transported their arms and ammunition with the help of donkeys or that symbol of the 'petit peuple'—the camel.¹³¹ While increasing the units' size and transforming them into little convoys, this also helped to carry the documents they were bringing along: their mission orders and instructions; correspondence and propaganda, such as tracts and photographs of the righter of wrongs; the instruction notebooks used in Nanking; and lists of domestic cadres to be contacted, in code—or just plain text:¹³² they were a social movement going home.

October

The men in Soumana Idrissa's unit, ordered to move into western Niger, slowly made their way across the borderland, having collected their weapons from a cache close to the frontier. As with most commandos, the guerrillas (a dozen or so) must have travelled during the night, and coming from the village of Ouatagouna they made their way through the bush towards Ayorou along the left bank of the river. Heading for the village of Firgoun,

¹²⁸ *Le Niger*, 26 Oct. & 23 Nov. 1964; Événements survenus ... 7 au 13 sept. 1964; Shaw to Lequesne, 2 Oct. 1964; Procès-verbal de la réunion du 7 nov. 1964; interviews Ali Mahamane Madaouki, Zinder, 14 Febr. 2003, Soumana Idrissa, Gothèye, 1 Nov. 2005; Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 6 Dec. 2003; Monique Hadiza, Niamey, 5 Nov. 2005; on the combination of Islamic or Sufi and socialist beliefs, Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003 & Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 27 Oct. 2005.

¹²⁹ Déclaration Mahaman Leiyi, Niamey, 4 Aug. 1964; Note de Renseignements. Ambassade de France, Le Conseiller Militaire, Niamey, 15 mai 1965.

¹³⁰ To the disbelief of French officers at the BCL. Interview Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 26 Oct. 2005. *Le Niger*, 26 Oct. 1964 & 21 June 1965; Bulletin de Renseignements Particuliers, 18 Oct. 1964, no. 1234/2/S.

¹³¹ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 14 Oct. and 7 Nov. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; *Le Niger*, 21 June 1965; interview with Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003.

¹³² *Le Niger*, 21 June 1965; interview with Ali Mahamane Madaouki, Zinder, 14 Febr. 2003.

just north of Ayorou, they took up position at a hamlet called Yassane, between the frontier and the village of Eleouayene. ‘El Mali’, as they called their unit to indicate the area from which they operated, was going to attack Ayorou’s administrative post. Some of the men were scared. It was a while after the summer rains, the bush was drying up and the grass had turned yellow, so it was difficult to find places to hide.¹³³

To their surprise, they came under attack soon after they had crossed the border. The regime had mobilised inhabitants, and ‘peasants’ (RDA militias) engaged the unit before it could attack the government post.¹³⁴ Soumana Idrissa tried to return fire but his weapon jammed. The second time his arm functioned, but in the face of so much opposition (principally shepherds mobilised by the RDA), the men got scared and decided to withdraw. Idrissa and two companions, a certain Souley Gonni and Mohamadou Ayoubou, moved back into a forest in the direction of the border at Labézanga. The other commandos would already have fled. The infiltration on Nigérien territory had lasted two days. On either side there had been no casualties.¹³⁵

It is not known at what date this engagement took place but it seems that some of the western commandos did, indeed, attack first—exactly as Bakary had ordered. According to Chaffard, the first hostilities erupted near Gothèye, not on the Saturday night of 26-27 September or that of 3-4 October but on Friday the 2nd. It appears that a commando unit had been prematurely detected, leading to violent exchanges in which several RDA militia men were killed. This success, however, was followed by the near total arrest of the commandos involved.¹³⁶ Probably the next day the unit of a certain Hassane Moussa got involved in a shoot-out at Botou, a Voltan village on the border with Niger, in the sector of Say. The four or five men were part of a reconnaissance squad that had to contact a person who

¹³³ Interviews Soumana Idrissa, Gothèye, 1 Nov. 2005 & 18 Dec. 2009; Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 15 Dec. 2009. ‘El Mali’ is Hausa for ‘daughter, she who comes from Mali’. Courtesy Issa Younoussi, who also provided information on conditions of vegetation in October, in email to author, 3 Sept. 2009.

¹³⁴ Interview Soumana Idrissa, 1 Nov. 2005; *Le Niger*, 23 Nov. 1964 & 21 June 1965. Idrissa’s leadership of the unit was confirmed by Mounkaila Albagna. Interview, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003.

¹³⁵ Interview Soumana Idrissa, Gothèye, 1 Nov. 2005, who claimed one of his comrades during the attack was Daouda Hamadou, who, however, was not at Ayorou but at Téra (interview, Ayorou, 20 Dec. 2009). A second interview with Soumana Idrissa was held in Gothèye on 18 Dec. 2009.

¹³⁶ Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 324, which used regime sources that usually denied its own casualties.

would provide shelter and arms. From Botou they had to move, together with a group of five guerrillas coming from northern Dahomey, into Niger, where they had to capture the local government post, attack the prison and incite the populace to join in the rising. The reconnaissance group, however, stumbled upon an armed patrol and Moussa and a companion were wounded—Moussa succumbing to his injuries after he had tried to flee.¹³⁷ The others were arrested. As shown further below, other western units also became engaged during the first days of October, including that of Nanking trainee Assane Bizo, which departed Malanville on 3 October for the Say region. The group headed by Tini Malélé and the one that included Robert Seguinikin also became active early that month.

In Zone South, a commando unit struck at the town of Madarounfa at the very dawn of Sunday the 4th—as a testimony to Sawaba's military planning. The fact that it was led by the zonal commander himself, Sallé Dan Koulou, must have played its part. Dan Koulou had assembled a group of commandos in Kano in late September, who made their way to the frontier on an individual basis. They totalled 16 men, of whom four were unarmed porters. The guerrillas, all armed with rifles, semi-automatic pistols and some submachine guns, included important cadres such as Abdou Iddi, the teacher who had trained in the Far East; Yacouba Issa, who had been at Villa Lotus and was responsible for the transport of equipment; Mallam Kalla, who had recruited men in the Madarounfa area; and Hamissou Dadi Gaoh, who had been to China for training and radio work and was in charge of reconnaissance.¹³⁸

The group was so large because Madarounfa, located south of Maradi—the economic capital and old Sawaba fief—was of some importance (Map 12.2). The capture of the customs post could send an important signal to Maradi's population and, with the latter's rallying, help shift the balance of forces in a key region. Madarounfa had had a Sawaba cell since the party was driven underground, and many townspeople hated the regional

¹³⁷ Bulletin de Renseignements Particuliers, 18 Oct. 1964, no. 1234/2/S; Morillon, 'La tentative insurrectionnelle'; *Le Monde* (Paris), 4 Febr. 1965. Could this have been the Moussa Hassane forcibly transferred to Maradi in the autumn of 1958? See ch. 5 n. 94.

¹³⁸ Abdou Iddi also stands on record as member of the 'commissariat politique' in the 'Etat-Major' of the guerrilla forces. *Sawaba*, December 1964. Others in the Madarounfa unit were one Sahabi dit Salle Robo, in charge of camp sites; one Garba Katkoré; Nano Abouba-kar; Sani Namadina dit Sani Madarounfa; Garba Sami; Ibrahim Tchigui; Amadou dit Souley Malam; Barao Balla; and Garba Madarounfa. Some may have been porters. Bulletin de Renseignements Particuliers, 18 Oct. 1964, no. 1234/2/S; *Afrique Nouvelles*, no. 898, 23-29 Oct. 1964; *Le Niger*, 21 June 1965.



Photo 12.4 Abdou Iddi (*Sawaba*, Dec. 1964).

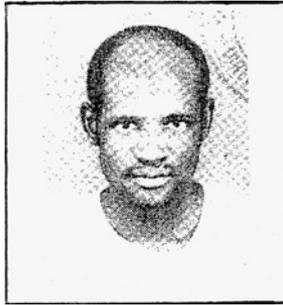


Photo 12.5 Mallam Kalla (*Sawaba*, Dec. 1964).

chief, Maradi's Sarkin Katsina (who had done much to destroy Sawaba in 1958). Travelling to Koutoua and Kaoura—Nigerian villages?—, the commandos put up camp in the bush and were handed their weapons.¹³⁹ Dan Koulou intended to capture the customs post, take its funds and liquidate the head of the local government station. The men crossed the border and, upon arrival in the Madarounfa area, hid some of the armament and split into two. Before 5 o'clock in the morning they attacked the customs house with rifles and submachine guns, possibly grenades, capturing a German submachine gun and three MAS 36s, while killing one official and wounding another. They managed to take the station.¹⁴⁰ If a partial success, by

¹³⁹ Bulletin de Renseignements Particuliers, 18 Oct. 1964, no. 1234/2/S; *Le Niger*, 26 Oct. 1964 (interrogation Yacouba Issa). There is a possibility that these two localities were on the Nigérien side of the border. In that case they might refer to Garin Kaoura, on the border due south from Madarounfa, and Kototua, north of Madarounfa.

¹⁴⁰ Government casualties in Fiche sur les événements qui se déroulent au Niger depuis le début du mois d'octobre 1964; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2. That the commandos took the station can be gleaned from *Le Niger*, 26 Oct. 1964 (interrogation Yacouba Issa).

early morning the remaining personnel of the post sounded the alarm and, while reinforcements were expected from Maradi, engaged the commandos in fierce exchanges, some apparently at close range. A barrage of fire erupted which the guerrillas tried to return. One would have kept firing till he ran out of bullets. Some weapons jammed and the two groups of commandos were forced to withdraw, led by Dan Koulou and leaving one of their comrades, Garba Madarounfa, dead.¹⁴¹ Two were taken prisoner, with their submachine guns (and documents): Mallam Kalla and Abdou Iddi, whose respective backgrounds as recruiter and Nanking trainee showed that they were not the least important.

As at Ayorou, the engagement pointed to a problem with the weaponry, some of which was old and used and therefore unreliable. Moreover, as in the western region, the assault showed that the regime's forces, consisting principally of party militias, were already on a high state of alert as a result of the events of the previous months. Still on Sunday 4 October, Madarounfa's village chief and the head of the local RDA section mobilised the party militia. The guerrillas were now in considerable danger, since the arid savanna provided little shelter and the enemy had horses enabling them to move fast. That same evening, Hamissou Dadi Gaoh and Barao Balla were caught in the bush, some kilometres from Madarounfa. Two of their comrades, Malam Souley (Amadou dit Souley Malam) and Maman (Ibrahim) Tchigui, were killed by peasants of a village nearby.¹⁴²

Nevertheless, although the regime was on the alert, the surprise element was not entirely lacking. While there was intelligence on Sawaba's impending attack, the government had no idea where the guerrillas would engage.¹⁴³ With swiftness built into their strategy the movement's forces still posed a serious threat. The following night, 4-5 October, they struck at

¹⁴¹ Bulletin de Renseignements Particuliers, 18 Oct. 1964, no. 1234/2/S; T.R. Shaw, British Embassy Abidjan, to C.M. Lequesne, Foreign Office, 15 Oct. 1964; PRO, FO 371/177.230; handwritten letter by an unidentified sympathising eyewitness professing to be a gendarme (in *Sawaba*, Dec. 1964). *Le Niger*, 26 Oct. 1964 (interrogation Yacouba Issa, who spoke under duress) asserted that he was accidentally killed by commando fire, but this may be propaganda—it was not reported by the French. It was taken over by J.P. Morillon, 'La tentative insurrectionnelle du SAWABA', 20.

¹⁴² Événements survenus en Afrique Francophone pendant la semaine du 28 sept. au 4 oct. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 210; Fiche ... le mois d'oct. 1964; Bulletin de Renseignements Particuliers, 18 Oct. 1964, no. 1234/2/S; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 14 Oct. 1964; *Le Niger*, 26 Oct. 1964.

¹⁴³ Interviews Mounkaila Beidari & Harou Kouka (RDA minister), Niamey, 2 Dec./26 Nov. 2003, contradicting claims by Abdou Adam (then an RDA official), interview, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003. Oumarou Janba (interview, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003) disputed this, pointing

Konni, a stone's throw from the Nigerian border. Here they got support from peasants (on both sides of the frontier) and World War II veterans, who had been at the origin of the local cell. Shots were fired, but it is not known what happened. The men involved may have been part of the unit led by Dandouna Aboubakar, which consisted of several commandos, including Boubakar Djingaré, Maman Alke, Amadou Diop, Balkara Abdou,¹⁴⁴ a certain Amadou Dioffo and Daouda Ali dit Chang Kai-shek, who had earlier undertaken a mission in western Niger (1963) and owed his alias to the fact that his comrades considered him a mean character. It is certain that this group, several of whose members did not hail from the region, was already present in the area.¹⁴⁵

While events now succeeded each other in rapid succession, the outcome of the Madarounfa assault was disastrous, and worse was to come. The hunt-down of commandos was producing new results. On 5 October, another guerrilla was killed (it is unknown who). Yacouba Issa and some of the porters meanwhile headed to the north-east, retrieving the equipment they had left behind before the attack. Food, however, was becoming a problem, leading the men to split up. Yacouba and others¹⁴⁶ turned towards the south, trying to reach Nigeria. Four men made it and escaped across the border. Yacouba was not so lucky as he and his comrades were caught up with near the village of Dan Issa, between Madarounfa and the frontier. Gunshots alerted them and they dispersed, but being on foot they were no match for the cavalry pursuing them—Yacouba collapsing from fatigue and being seized (ca. 9 October).¹⁴⁷ The area was becoming unsafe,

to regime espionage. Yet, as shown below, intelligence did not go so far that the regime knew where guerrillas would turn up.

¹⁴⁴ Or Bouakara Abdou. *Fraternité*, 11 June 1965 (interrogation Boubakar Djingaré). = Boubakar Abdou (ch. 9 n. 304)? Djingaré referred in an interview (Niamey, 26 Oct. 2005) to Aba(?) Abdou.

¹⁴⁵ Bulletin Mensuel de Renseignements, 1-31 Oct. 1964, no. 472.3—Konni; ANN, FONDS DAPA; Shaw to Lequesne, 15 Oct. 1964; interview Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 26 Oct. 2005; *Le Niger*, 26 Oct. 1964 (interrogation Alke); *Fraternité*, 11 June 1965 (interrogation Djingaré); ch. 10 at n. 133. Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 14 Oct. 1964 asserts nine commandos and their leader were arrested, but this report is full of mistakes and probably represents faulty intelligence. Konni Sawabists (and army veterans) accused of connivance were one Chantalli and one Korao. Rapport Politique Mensuel, période du 20 sept. au 20 oct. 1964, Birnin Konni, no. 19; ANN, FONDS DAPA. Also ch. 7 at n. 104.

¹⁴⁶ One of whom was called Saadi (= Sani Namadina?). One of the men who helped Yacouba retrieve equipment was called Garba (= Garba Katkoré or Garba Sami?). See note 147.

¹⁴⁷ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 14 Oct. 1964, which mistook him for Yacouba Idrissa dit Gothèye, Bakary's relative and financier in Accra.

not just because RDA militias were now on full alert but also because harvest time had brought out many people to work in the fields. On 7 October, Sani Namadina and, worse, Sallé Dan Koulou himself were caught by militias, the presence of the exhausted commandos having been detected by women from the village of 'Wakili Dogondawa'. In total, eight or nine of the 16-strong squad were now in custody, with important documents, arms and ammunition confiscated.¹⁴⁸

The arrest of the commander of Zone South was a huge blow and the RDA exploited its propaganda value by asserting that he had been arrested by women. Chaffard, working with regime sources, later added that these had beaten him with pestles,¹⁴⁹ something that is unlikely in view of his armament, but in the cultural context of Niger this story was an obvious attempt to humiliate the enemy.¹⁵⁰ Since Dan Koulou was caught in an area not very far from Tessaoua, he may have been heading for home ground and been seen by peasant women, who alerted the authorities.¹⁵¹ Sawaba's leadership tried to put on a brave face, wildly claiming that its Madarounfa squad had killed more than 30 of the government's forces.¹⁵²

With units acting on their own, Dan Koulou's arrest had no immediate effect on operations elsewhere. Soon after his capture, on the night of 7-8 or 8-9 October,¹⁵³ a spectacular attack took place on the western shore of Lake Chad, at the town of Bosso. So far removed from the central sectors of Zone South, this and other assaults (on 8-9 October another attack took place at Konni) showed that Sawaba's forces were able to respect the agreed

¹⁴⁸ Shaw to Lequesne, 15 Oct. 1964; *Le Niger*, 26 Oct. 1964; Fiche ... le mois d'oct. 1964; Telegrams Gédéf Abidjan to Minarmées Paris, 7 & 9 Oct. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 717/D2; Bulletin de Renseignements Particuliers, 18 Oct. 1964, no. 1234/2/S.

¹⁴⁹ Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 325. Working on this source, I reported this story in my 'Sawaba's Rebellion in Niger (1964-1965): Narrative and Meaning' (in J. Abbink, M. de Bruijn & K. van Walraven [eds], *Rethinking Resistance: Revolt and Violence in African History*, Leiden & Boston, 2003, 238), mistakingly adding that he was shot. Visiting British diplomats, who talked with officials, also reported the story of women playing a role in the arrest. Warren to Mansfield, 23 Oct. 1964. Morillon, 'La tentative insurrectionnelle', 20, probably more correctly reported that Dan Koulou was arrested by guards.

¹⁵⁰ Interviews Amadou Ibrahim Diop & Ali Mahamane Madaouki, Zinder, 13-14 Febr. 2003.

¹⁵¹ Abdou Adam, RDA official, later said that Dan Koulou asked for water in a village where a woman alerted the chief, as the regime had instructed when meeting strangers. Interview, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003. The woman would have been one Habsou. Interview Oumarou Janba, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003. 'Wakili Dogondawa' are 2 villages, south-west of Tessaoua at 13.3 N 7.7 E and to the north at 13.8 N 7.9 E.

¹⁵² Communiqué: Bureau Politique, 17 Oct. 1964.

¹⁵³ There is some confusion about the date. See archival references below.

time schedule and engage within one and a half weeks across the entire length of Niger's frontiers—an amazing feat in itself.

Guerrillas commanded by Aba Kaka, who had assembled in Kano and already left for the Lake Chad region around 14 September (probably travelling on an individual basis), had regrouped at the waters of the Komadougou-Yobé.¹⁵⁴ Here they benefited, as the regime's informers reported, from the 'complicity ... of the inhabitants of the villages' along the river as well as of the population of Bosso itself.¹⁵⁵ The regime's relations with the region, so distant from the capital and marked by the spirited independence of its communities (Tubu and other), had worsened over taxation and been poisoned by chieftaincy politics—with the fall of Sawaba and Kaka's dismissal, Bosso's canton chieftaincy was suppressed to the advantage of Gueskérou, a village on the Komadougou further west, which in the 1950s had opted for the RDA. The town's population had not taken kindly to this and the effect was that Sawaba-RDA rivalry had been imported into the area's politics. As a result, the chief of the Komadougou canton was lukewarm about aiding the authorities, who also suspected a local Bosso councillor of Sawaba involvement. Boulama Boukar, Bosso's town chief imposed by the regime, actually helped to prepare the commando assault. As noted earlier, launch pads for political infiltration from Nigeria had existed since 1959.¹⁵⁶

Kaka's unit totalled around ten and included Malam Oumarou Moustapha (Moustapha Oumar 'the marabout'), who was born in Nigeria, had worked at Radio Niger and had been responsible for infiltrations in the far east; Katchalma Oumar dit Paul (Maiga), a local, who had worked as a fireman in the capital; Bachir Moustapha dit Moutti (Oumarou Moustapha Bachir or Moustapha 'the gendarme'), a North Africa trainee and originally an auxiliary gendarme at Nguigmi; and Kiari Mai dit le Photographe, the unit's political commissar, who had also trained in Algeria.¹⁵⁷ Besides

¹⁵⁴ *Le Niger*, 21 June 1965.

¹⁵⁵ Rapport Politique, 20 Oct.-20 Nov. 1964 (Bulletin Mensuel de Renseignements, no. 417; also as Rapport Politique, same period, no. 444.5 in no. 418), Nguigmi; ANN, FONDS DAPA ('complicité ... des habitants des villages').

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*; Interview Ibrahim Bawa Souley, Niamey, 26 Nov. 2003; Katiella Ari Gaptia, Bosso, 13 Febr. 2006; Rapport Politique, 20 Sept.-20 Oct. 1964 (Bulletin Mensuel de Renseignements, no. 417; also as Rapport Politique, same period, no. 444.4 in no. 418), Nguigmi; ANN, FONDS DAPA.

¹⁵⁷ It is unknown why Kiari Mai had this nickname—did he have a passion for photography? Others were Tchegam Mahamadou dit Lawal Mamah, unskilled worker in Fachi; Lawal Adia, the Algeria trainee of mixed blood; Maman Koyorambe (Mamadou Koyoraindé), Chadian peasant from Mao, at the other side of the lake; Abdoul Kadri (= Abdoukadi,



Photo 12.6 Boulama Boukar (l.) and Aba Kaka (r.), Bosso, Lake Chad, 2006.

his commandos, Kaka could rely on inhabitants to provide food and shelter. Others, including Bosso's town chief, stood ready to join in the fighting or had taken part in weapons training (also with semi-automatic rifles) in the run-up to the attack. At least some 30 people were thus involved.¹⁵⁸

trained at Kibdani; ch. 9 n. 330); and one Mounkouta. See *Surveillance du Territoire* (Bureau de Coordination), no. 396/SN/ST: Organisation Terroriste "Sawaba" (Recueil des dirigeants et militants actifs en fuite); ex. no. 000148, dest. le Sous Préfet de Dosso; interviews Aba Kaka, Bosso, 13 Febr. 2006; Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 6 Dec. 2003; Mounkaila Beidari, 28 Nov./2 Dec. 2003 & 23 Febr. 2008; Cour de Sûreté de l'Etat. Arrêt de condamnation no. 9, 6 June 1969; ANN, M 27.26.

¹⁵⁸ Mai Manga, Nguigmi's deposed chief who fled to Ghana, provided arms for training, as did members of Kaka's unit. See for lists of people involved in these ways Arrêt de condamnation no. 9, 6 June 1969; Rapport Politique, Nguigmi, 20 Sept.-20 Oct. 1964.



Photo 12.7 The Komadougou-Yobé (east of Diffa), with a view towards Nigeria.

Near the border and situated in a watery environment rich in vegetation, the guerrillas had no problem in coming within reach of the town, where, contrary to warnings, no radio or Gendarmerie post had been established and the head of the government station had not taken the precaution to remove weapons and ammunition. Armed with submachine guns and handguns, Kaka's men engaged at 11 o'clock in the evening, first attacking the customs post, where they overwhelmed the guard. They penetrated the station and took 13 rifles—including several MAS 36s—, pistols and, according to French intelligence, more than 12,000 rounds of ammunition. Several of the inhabitants, possibly including Boulama Boukar (the chief), participated in the plundering of the arms depot and munitions stock. One customs officer was killed; some were injured and locked up. A couple of commandos then went to the local health clinic and killed the nurse, as he would have charged at them with a stick (though he may have been seen as a government representative). Possibly a third person was killed as well. While both the French and the regime reported two casualties, Sawaba's leadership claimed four deaths on the government side besides several wounded. With a total of 47 people who would have taken part, the assault was a textbook example of how the movement had planned its attacks with anticipated popular support.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁹ Interviews Diougou Sangaré, Tessaoua, 9 Febr. 2006; Abdou Adam; Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 29 Nov./6 Dec. 2003; Kanembou Malam, Diffa, 12 Febr. 2006; Aba Kaka,

The guerrillas now controlled the town, where no one dared to go outdoors, as Aba Kaka paraded through Bosso's streets, shouting that he was the chief and challenging anyone to defy him.¹⁶⁰ If true, it may have bordered on the burlesque but after years of exile Kaka was victorious at last—having taken back what the deposed chief considered to be his by right. That same night, his men confronted a Frenchman, a trader in crocodile skins present in Bosso, threatening to kill him if he did not hand over his car and money (50,000 CFA francs). The trader escaped, however, and drove to Nguigmi, where he warned the authorities. Kaka positioned his men on the road connecting the two towns and the next day, expecting the arrival of government troops, released the detained customs officials and crossed the Komadougou, returning with his men to Nigeria. Others, probably townspeople who had taken part in the fighting, made off in the direction of Nguigmi.¹⁶¹

For the moment Sawaba's forces had been victorious, although Kaka's unit had to swallow the loss of one of its members, Kiari Mai alias the Photographer, in a particularly bad way: Mai allegedly fled soon after the fighting started, heading in the direction of the lake to reach Nigeria, more likely Chad—never to be seen again. While probably a banal form of cowardice rather than treachery, it was remarkable for the fact that the Photographer was a political commissar, i.e. someone responsible for the loyalty of the troops. He may have been of Chadian origin, however,¹⁶² and become involved through the more localised politics of chieftaincy but grown hesitant when the titanic struggle with the RDA reached boiling point. Yet, the personal motives of some commandos aside, it is clear that Sawaba's forces had dealt the regime a painful blow. In Nguigmi, where the population had voted 'No' in the referendum, the commandos' success was

Bosso, 13 Febr. 2006; Bulletin de Renseignements Particuliers, 18 Oct. 1964, no. 1234/2/S; *Le Niger*, 19 Oct. 1964 & 21 June 1965; Communiqué no. 6 undated, ca. mid-November 1964; PRO, FO 371/177218; Événements survenus en Afrique Francophone pendant la semaine du 5 au 11 oct. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 210; Fiche ... le mois d'oct. 1964; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 14 Oct. 1964; Arrêt de condamnation no. 9, 6 June 1969; Rapport Politique, Nguigmi, 20 Sept.-20 Oct. 1964.

¹⁶⁰ The source for this is an ex-government soldier, who, however, was not in Bosso that night. Interview with Kanembou Malam, Diffa, 12 Febr. 2006.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*; Arrêt de condamnation no. 9, 6 June 1969; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 14 Oct. 1964.

¹⁶² 'Mai' suggests a background in a chiefly family, maybe in Kanem, on the other side of Lake Chad. Still, he must have lived in Niger for some time since the Sûreté had a photo of him. See Organisation Terroriste "Sawaba", 6, which possibly also suggested a chiefly background. Interviews Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 2 Dec. 2003 & 23 Febr. 2008; S. Decalo, *Historical Dictionary of Chad* (Metuchen, NJ, and London, 1987), 207-208.



Photo 12.8 Kiari Mai dit le Photographe. This is the only known picture of him (police files).

the subject of much gossip. President Diiori, who cancelled a trip to Germany, asked Côte d'Ivoire for equipment including a DC 3 plane to airlift troops. Reserves were recalled, 400 of them, and plans made for training of new gendarmes and Republican Guards. Before long, Boubou Hama and Maïga visited Bosso to take in the damage to the regime's prestige.¹⁶³

Meanwhile, further to the west, insecurity spread—exactly as had been intended. At 10 o'clock in the evening of 8 October Dandoua Aboubakar's men struck at Birnin Konni. They had first assembled in Sokoto and possibly on 14 September left by lorry for the town of Illela (due north of Sokoto on the road to Konni, just south of the border).¹⁶⁴ Here they were handed their weapons. They moved to the village of Kalmalo, still inside Nigeria, where a farmer gave shelter. Made up of just six or seven men, they crossed the frontier in two groups in an attempt to capture Konni's customs post, the residence of the Commandant de Cercle and the camp of the

¹⁶³ Rapport Politique, Nguigmi, 20 Sept.-20 Oct. 1964; Fiche ... le mois d'oct. 1964; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 14 Oct. 1964; Événements survenus ... 5 au 11 oct. 1964; interview Kanembou Malam, Diffa, 12 Febr. 2006.

¹⁶⁴ Not to be confused with Illéla, the bigger town in Niger between Konni and Tahoua.

Gardes de Cercles. Approaching the town, however, the commandos ran into a Land Rover that they thought carried gendarmes or government officials. They fired on it, possibly wounding the driver, who managed to continue to Konni, thus alerting the authorities and forcing the unit to withdraw and take shelter at a nearby peasant's house.¹⁶⁵ Similarly, two days later guerrillas who were probably not part of the remainder of Dan Koulou's group but operated independently, ambushed a bus on the road between Aguié and Tchadoua, east of Maradi. Three groups of commandos attacked the bus with automatic fire, shattering its windows, though miraculously no one would have got hurt. On the night of 12–13 October guerrillas were seen at Takanamat, north-west of Tahoua, a region that—with its Buzu nomads—was already restive and where part of the population supported incoming commandos.¹⁶⁶ These were members of the unit that headed for the Ader and had reached its operational area via a trail linking Tahoua with Ménaka in Mali. That same night, the commandos, led by Kanguèye Boubacar, armed with submachine guns, grenades, handguns and more than a thousand rounds of ammunition, arrived near Magaria, south of Zinder. They would have left Kano only on the 10th.¹⁶⁷

By now, a good ten days into the operations, however, the effects of regime mobilisation began to make themselves felt, notably in areas where Sawaba had strongholds and the government had taken measures. The town of Matamey, north-west of Magaria, had an administrative post and a presence of Gendarmerie, and already in late September the regime had taken the precaution to arrest 17 village chiefs in the Yaouri region, close to Magaria town. This must have reduced opportunities to find shelter in an area where Hamballi's arrest had already created havoc. Diamballa Maïga ordered party militias and Zinder police to assist the Commandant de Cercle of Matamey. Ali Mahamane Madaouki later recalled that there were militias on patrol and that they were being watched by women in the fields and people in town—all asking questions. Everyone entering or leav-

¹⁶⁵ Telegram Génédéf Abidjan to Minarmées Paris, 10 Oct. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; interviews Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 26 Oct. 2005 and Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003; *Le Niger*, 26 Oct. 1964 (interrogation Alke) & 21 June 1965; *Fraternité*, 4 June 1965 (interrogation Djingaré).

¹⁶⁶ Interviews with Abdou Adam & Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003 & 15 Dec. 2009.

¹⁶⁷ Bulletin de Renseignements Particuliers, 18 Oct. 1964, no. 1234/2/S; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 14 Oct. 1964; Fiche ... le mois d'oct. 1964; Evénements survenus en Afrique Francophone pendant la semaine du 12 au 18 oct. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 210; Telegram Génédéf Abidjan to Minarmées Paris, no. 5321/CH; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2.

ing a village in the Magaria cercle was searched. This made finding food and water hazardous. After the successful missions of past years, and the careful preparations made, this came as a huge surprise. Occasionally, though, locals helped, giving warning about patrols or advising on routes. In the vicinity of Magaria, Madaouki and some of his comrades found refuge with domestic cadres, but not for long. On 12 October, possibly later, Kanguèye's men—seven of them—made their move towards the Matamey post, armed with rifles, submachine guns and grenades. However, towards five o'clock in the afternoon they were surprised by militias in the Kwaya valley, between Magaria and the village of Tsatsoumbroum, due south of Matamey on the Nigerian border. Madaouki plus three others (Chaibou Souley, Amadou Roufaï Malam Garba and Kanguèye himself) were arrested. Three of the men were able to escape, as they had moved across the terrain at some distance from the others. French intelligence reported that one (unidentified) commando was killed. The shock among the men must have been great: Madaouki, for one, had never thought that he would get caught.¹⁶⁸

But the real drama occurred in the Konni region. The peasants who provided Dandouna's men with shelter became nervous, as arrests had been made. The commandos abandoned their hideout and started roaming the countryside. In the reminiscences of Boubakar Djingaré, they walked for a day and a night, always in a line one behind the other, staying in the fields and as much as possible avoiding hamlets until they reached a village called Guidan-Bawa. From Massalata, on the road between Konni and Dogondoutchi, they headed north towards the town of Dibissou, 5 km from Konni, where they arrived on the night of 12-13 October (or one or two days earlier). Dandouna, who was feared for the discipline he maintained, ordered some to stay behind while together with Djingaré, Maman Alke and one other commando he intended to take the village. If the self-styled defender of the people's interests expected to be welcomed, the shock of the reception must have been big, for the inhabitants were up in arms,

¹⁶⁸ The men who escaped and must have gone back to Nigeria were Chaibou Rouangao, who had been in Dodo Hamballi's unit and already escaped capture once before; Ado Dodo (n. 17 above); and Ibrahim Keita (above at n. 81). Ali Mahamane Madaouki, Zinder, email to author, Leiden, 5 Jan. 2010, claiming the encounter took place in the first week of December, which seems too late; *Le Niger*, 21 June 1965; Annexe. Incidents survenus au Niger; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 14 Oct. 1964; Telegram Génédef Abidjan to Minarmées Paris, no. 5321/CH; interview Ali Mahamane Madaouki, Zinder, 10 & 14 Febr. 2003; Bulletin Mensuel de Renseignements, no. 417, 21 Sept.-20 Oct. 1964, Magaria; ANN, FONDS DAPA; *Le Monde* (Paris), 4 Febr. 1965.

carrying sticks, coupe-coupes and spears. They cornered Dandouna's men, demanding to inspect their luggage. Since Dandouna, who carried a sub-machine gun (or pistol) and had grenades on him, refused, the village chief called for the local teacher to identify the men. The teacher immediately recognised Dandouna, who had been, after all, a high-profile canvasser. Dandouna then shot and killed him, also wounding two villagers. One RDA source asserted that he was nervous, but Boubakar Djingaré, who was at the scene, later denied that it was an accident, claiming that the indomitable tribune deliberately shot the teacher—by his profession seen as a representative of the state and likely an RDA member.

Mayhem broke out and the commandos fled. Djingaré and one Momon (possibly a Marnia trainee) may have tried to flee south but were arrested soon, and though Djingaré laid down his weapon, the Niamey mason got badly worked over. Maman Alke, who received a blow with a stick, was caught in a neighbouring village and Dandouna Aboubakar himself was captured to face the terrible anger of the villagers, who attacked him with hatchets. The carpenter-revolutionary was then turned over to police, interrogated and transported to Konni. He died on arrival, his guerrilla notebook still on him.¹⁶⁹ Amadou Diop, the Zinder lorry driver, was arrested but miraculously escaped, making his way back to Sokoto, while Daouda Ali—'Chang Kai-shek'—also managed to make it safely across the border.¹⁷⁰

How could things have gone so terribly wrong? Even in the Bosso region not everything was going according to plan. Five unidentified commandos were reportedly arrested shortly after the attack, and the assault had reper-

¹⁶⁹ The teacher's name was Mossi Alassane, aged 22. He would have shone with a light in Dandouna's face. Location Guidan-Bawa is unknown (there are villages by that name in the Mayahi and Tchadoua areas, and 7 km south-west of Konni there is a village called Gamdawa). Interviews Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 26 Oct. 2005; Abdou Adam, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003; *Le Niger*, 26 Oct. 1964 (interrogation Alke); *Le Temps du Niger: Quotidien républicain d'information*, 16 Oct. 1964; Fiche ... le mois d'oct. 1964; Bulletin de Renseignements Particuliers, 18 Oct. 1964, no. 1234/2/S; G. Comte, 'Les carnets de Nankin', *Est & Ouest*, 16-28 Febr. 1966, no. 357, 29; Comte, 'Assassination that Failed'; *Fraternité*, 4 June 1965 (interrogation Djingaré). Other sources put the event on 9 and 11 October.

¹⁷⁰ Interviews Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003; Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 27 Oct. 2005; B.L. Placca, Ghana Embassy Niamey, to M.F. Dei-Anang, African Affairs Secretariat Accra, 14 Apr. 1965; GNA, SC/BAA/460, no. NIA/05/1 (Niger Political Reports to Osagyefo 3/1/64—23/4/65). Diop escaped from Konni prison. Telegram Génédef Dakar to Minarmées Paris, no. 8358/CH, 14 Apr. 1965; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; *Africa Research Bulletin* (Political Series), 1965, 279. Aboubacar Abdou, trained in China, was also active in the Dibissou region (at this point in time?), and later in the Diffa sector. Interview, Niamey, 22 Oct. 2011.

cussions for the town's population. Those who did not flee risked retribution: in mid-October at least six people were detained, including Maï Manga, Nguigmi's former chief, who, deposed for his Sawabist loyalties, had also gone to Ghana. The authorities were also eyeing the chief of Bosso himself, Boulama Boukar, whom they suspected of having masterminded the assault.¹⁷¹

But at least in Bosso, Sawaba's attack had on the whole been successful and new attacks were in the making. In all other cases, with the exception of the Tahoua region, the commandos had not received any support from the population beyond occasional shelter, food or information. There was no mass rallying to the guerrillas' side—although this played such a key role in the planning—, no spontaneous rising against the government's presence, no joining of the commandos by the people. Where *were* 'the people'? And in so far as the populace had mobilised, why had inhabitants turned against the guerrillas? So many reports on the domestic political situation had pointed to widespread discontent, the unpopularity of the regime and affirmation of people's loyalty to the movement's cause. Indeed, the signs of the regime's fragility and the permanent tensions that marked RDA rule were there for all to see.

Yet, the one thing that had not gone into the calculations of Sawaba's leaders was the factor of *fear*—that constant of all guerrilla wars, where populations are sandwiched between the forces on both sides. In Niger the population ran serious risks of government reprisals, and the level of regime mobilisation had only increased anxieties. Villages were being pressed into militia service one by one, especially in the Hausa-speaking central and eastern regions where the regime distrusted the population the most but could rely on the co-operation of the Sarakuna. The chief of Madaoua, for example, raised an army of no less than 1,000 men, including 200 cavalry, which searched the forests and patrolled the border with Nigeria. Later in October, this was repeated with an expedition totalling 1,600, of which 300 were cavalry. North of Madaoua, in the Bouza region, Republican Guards and Gendarmerie participated every night in what was openly described as 'raids' on hamlets, with vigilantes led by army veterans controlling all access roads. Strangers, as well as inhabitants housing guests without reporting them, were taken to the authorities, while in the course

¹⁷¹ *Le Temps du Niger*, 16 Oct. 1964. Others arrested were one Ari; Wali Ari; Abba Mallam (Mamadou Bai); Maina Bay (Abdou Boulou); Guirema (Laouan?) Fougou, most of them peasants. Rapport Politique, Nguigmi, 20 Sept.-20 Oct. 1964; Arrêt de condamnation no. 9, 6 June 1969.

of one operation all the inhabitants of the town of Dakoro got searched. The result was that the French and RDA reported that the people were in a 'very good state of mind' (buttressed, it is true, by an abundant harvest). People were reported to disapprove of the guerrillas' invasion and to have responded in a 'healthy' manner, 'especially in Hausa country which one would have thought less inclined to enlist against the opponents of the government in Niamey'.¹⁷²

This statement revealed inadvertently what was happening. The population, notably in the Hausa areas, was far from approving of the regime's actions—quite the contrary. The mass sacking of chiefs in the Yaouri region showed where loyalties lay, but in the absence of village leaders capable of protecting them against the RDA or Sarakuna, people were in the grip of fear. This is confirmed by numerous testimonies. As Ousseini Dandagoye, the Zinder cadre, later recalled, people sympathised with the Sawabists but in the circumstances simply did not know how to help.¹⁷³ They had naturally confirmed their faith in the party when asked, but now that the moment for action had come they could do little to assist the guerrillas in a decisive way.¹⁷⁴ Though people were deeply opposed to the regime, they were very frightened¹⁷⁵—constantly terrorised by militias whose vigilance vis-à-vis the slightest political deviance (including indifference about politics) helped to intimidate local populations, even in such a Sawaba fief as Tessaoua.¹⁷⁶

This meant that the military situation was suddenly much more complicated than expected. Commandos risked getting turned in by a population that hated the regime but felt constrained to do what the authorities demanded.¹⁷⁷ A shock wave went through the movement's ranks when it

¹⁷² Bulletin Mensuel de Renseignements, no. 417/444.4, 20/21 Sept.-20 Oct. 1964, Zinder, Madaoua, Bouza, Magaria; *Ibid.*, 37/CAZ/CF; *Ibid.*, 21 Oct.-20 Nov. 1964, Madaoua, Dakoro; ANN, FONDS DAPA; Rapport de Fin de Commandement du Général de Division Revol, part I; Événements survenus ... du 12 au 18 oct. 1964. Posses involving hundreds of cavalrymen were later mobilised in the Dosso region. Bulletin Mensuel de Renseignements, no. 417, 20 Oct.-20 Nov. 1964, Dosso; ANN, FONDS DAPA ('raids'; 'très bon état d'esprit'; 'sain'; 'notamment en pays haoussa que l'on aurait cru moins porté à s'engager contre les opposants au gouvernement de Niamey').

¹⁷³ Interview Ousseini Dandagoye, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003.

¹⁷⁴ Interview Bachir Boukary, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003.

¹⁷⁵ Interviews with Elhadj Illa Salifou and Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 25 Nov. 2003.

¹⁷⁶ Interviews Ali Amadou, Niamey, 28 and 31 Jan. 2003 and Bulletin Mensuel de Renseignements, no. 417, 21 Sept.-20 Oct. 1964, Tessaoua; ANN, FONDS DAPA, a report breathing regime fanaticism. Nameoua Nassamou, a nurse caught earlier with a Sawaba publication, was called back to Tessaoua for questioning.

¹⁷⁷ Interviews Elhadj Illa Salifou, Niamey, 25 Nov. 2003; Djibo Foulan, Bandio, 4 Nov. 2005.

was heard that the regime had executed four comrades captured at Madarounfa at a public rally in Niamey on 13 October. It appears to have impelled the units operating directly under the command of Idrissa Arfou, in the west of the country, to get engaged.¹⁷⁸ For some reason, these had been slower to move in, contrary to what the leadership had ordered. This may have had to do with Arfou's doubts about the state of preparedness. Now that he had been overtaken by developments in the central-eastern sectors, he felt constrained to act.¹⁷⁹ Arfou thus ordered his commandos 'to attack like the people in the east'.¹⁸⁰ The order of battle would have been issued on 13 October, the very day of the executions in the capital.¹⁸¹

The group led by Arfou was actually one of three guerrilla units heading for the Téra region, the other two penetrating directly from Soffokèl in Upper Volta. Coming from Tessit, the Gao satellite base, they probably made their way first to Soffokèl and from there entered Niger around the 15th, perhaps a couple of days later. Besides Arfou and Mounkaila Albagna, they included Souleymane Dahani (Dahanou, a Mossi); a certain Hamani Moussa; Yacouba Djiro; Idrissa Tondi Gounga; Daouda Hamadou; Ali Issaka, trained in Marnia; and Doudou Bondiaré, who may have been picked up at the Voltan town of Boussiella. They and one other unit had to isolate Téra by sabotaging roads and bridges and cutting communication lines; incite the region's population to revolt, in particular marginalised groups like Peuls and Bellas; harass the entire zone, including areas around Dargol and Kokoro (with the aid of units from the left bank of the Niger); and, if possible, take Téra itself and then Dargol, or at least seize the local arms depots. Téra, however, had been mobilised and local Sawabists arrested. The commando attack failed to take place as the convoy, comprising two camels, came up to 6 or 7 km from Téra itself. Probably in the vicinity of Fonéko (birthplace of Boubou Hama), it was surprised by government troops. The camels were abandoned and the men dispersed in time. One of them, Daouda Hamadou, barely avoided capture by gendarmes and returned to Tessit, attributing his luck to the fetishes he carried. Arfou and a couple of others that included Ali Issaka also headed back to Mali, while

¹⁷⁸ Interviews Elhadj Illa Salifou, Niamey, 25 Nov. 2003; Ibrahim Bawa Souley, 29 Febr. 2008; Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 29 Nov. & 6 Dec. 2003.

¹⁷⁹ Anger about the events of the preceding weeks may also have played a role, as was the case in the subsequent actions of Amadou Diop. Interview Ali Talba, Niamey, 4 Febr. 2003.

¹⁸⁰ Interview with Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003 ('attaquer comme les gens de l'est').

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

Mounkaila Albagna, the unit's guide and others withdrew to Voltan territory to regroup.¹⁸²

Yet, the Voltan hinterland was by now very unsafe, which added to the problem of regime mobilisation. On 9 or 10 October, another group of guerrillas, which had penetrated Niger from Dahomey, was caught, with numerous documents, thanks to the co-operation of the Voltan authorities. The men had entered Niger via Voltan territory (Map 12.3), heading to the region south of Niamey and transporting arms, including two submachine guns and thousands of rounds of ammunition. Intent on regrouping at the frontier post of Makalondi, they were discovered only 90 km south/south-west of the capital and several commandos were taken prisoner.¹⁸³ Other units, too, ran into problems with the Voltan government, which as a loyal member of the Entente sided with the RDA. The situation was so serious that Bakary took the extraordinary step of writing a letter to Volta's President Yaméogo, asking for undisturbed passage of his men. While he alluded to benefits that would accrue to Upper Volta from its assistance or neutrality, once Sawaba had toppled the Niamey regime, Bakary also warned the Voltans not to attack the guerrillas.¹⁸⁴ This was unhelpful since it raised awareness about the commando presence and led to co-ordinated action between Niamey and Ouagadougou to intensify patrols. On 11 October the Voltan minister of defence and chief of staff flew to Niamey to confer with Diori on the measures to be taken.¹⁸⁵

Thus, the commando group headed by Tini Malélé, who shared the command of Zone West with Arfou, got into difficulties even before it had infiltrated Niger from Upper Volta. As noted, Malélé's intention was to link up with guerrillas penetrating Niger from Mali and together head for Téra and, possibly, move against the Dargol-Gothèye area, the latter the home ground of the militant activist trained in Nanking. At Bani, the town southwest of Soffokèl, Sawaba's local agent urged Malélé not to take the road

¹⁸² Ibid. & interviews with Daouda Hamadou, Ayorou, 20 Dec. 2009 and Ali Issaka, Niamey, 29 Febr. 2008; *Le Niger*, 21 June 1965; Morillon, 'La tentative insurrectionnelle', quoting the mission orders. Tondi Gounga was Idrissa Tondigoungou (ch. 9, note 37), a.k.a. Idrissa Sambé dit Tondigoungou(u).

¹⁸³ Telegram Gédénef Abidjan to Minarmées Paris, 23 Oct. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; Evénements survenus ... 5 au 11 oct. 1964; untitled document, n.d., 1964-1965; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2.

¹⁸⁴ Djibo Bakary to H.E. Maurice Yaméogo, President of the Republic of Upper Volta, 10 Oct. 1964 (text in *Le Niger*, 21 June 1965 and *Fraternité*, 9 July 1965).

¹⁸⁵ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 28 Oct. 1964; British High Commission Accra to A.J. Warren, British Embassy Abidjan, POL 23/1, 14 Nov. 1964; PRO, FO 371/177230; interview Harou Kouka, Niamey, 26 Nov. 2003.

northwards to Dori since this would certainly lead to the arrest of his squad. Instead, he advised them to take a south-easterly direction, i.e. the road to Sebha and Macina, which would allow them to cross the frontier undetected. He accompanied Malélé and his men, who put up camp at a village where they consulted a local marabout, who 'would open the road' for them, i.e. provide intelligence on where to negotiate the border. However, a few days later Malélé and companions got intercepted by Republican Guards, probably Voltan ones, and inhabitants of the village of Macina. Though Doudou Bondiaré was not one of them, as he had already moved over to the group of Albagna,¹⁸⁶ Malélé's squad may have been quite large, possibly 14 men strong, which must have facilitated discovery. Nigérien soldiers, who had apparently crossed the border, brought them to Dori, from where gendarmes took them to Ouagadougou for deportation to Niamey. All this happened before 13 October, as the Malélé group was already in Niger's capital on the day of the executions. Barely a fortnight into the operations, Sawaba had lost its second zonal commander.¹⁸⁷ The same fate befell Robert Seguinikin, who had moved from Ouagadougou to Volta's east, i.e. the town of Kantchari, a few dozen kilometres from the border and the post of Makalondi. Replacing a companion, Amadou Macounda, who had to escort several men to Accra, he was probably captured in this zone—it is not known on which side of the border.¹⁸⁸ As shown by the group caught 90 km south of Niamey, those who infiltrated from Dahomey but first made a detour across Voltan territory before attempting to enter Niger in the Say sector did not fare any better.

By contrast, the units that infiltrated the country directly from Dahomey could take advantage of the protection afforded by the W National Park, the game reserve whose rivers and vegetation made for better guerilla country. Officially, the Dahomean government closed the border on 13 October to prevent commandos from invading Niger, but in practice these benefited from a safe hinterland. Numerous guerrillas had assembled in the Malanville region—one report spoke of 40 men who were provided with the required weaponry before crossing the border.¹⁸⁹ The unit of Assane Bizo, which had left Malanville on 3 October, instead of first crossing

¹⁸⁶ With whom he had studied morse in Algiers. See ch. 9 at 344.

¹⁸⁷ *Le Niger*, 2 Nov. 1964 (interrogation Malélé); Comte, 'Assassination that Failed'; interview with Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003. Location Macina is unknown ('ouvrirait la voie').

¹⁸⁸ *Le Niger*, 2 Nov. 1964 (interrogation Seguinikin).

¹⁸⁹ Untitled document, SDECE, 22 Sept. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 16 Oct. 1964.

the Niger River moved north-west (Bizo had trained at Karimama), in the direction of Botou. This group, too, had to head for Say. Bizo himself was native to the nearby town of Kollo, as was one of his companions, fellow Nanking trainee Hassane Djibo. The city of Say had strategic value, as it was close to Niamey and its capture, or any other spectacular action there, would send a strong signal to the population of the capital that change was at hand. It was, moreover, an important religious centre and its marabouts could be of support to the movement.¹⁹⁰

In order to reach the Say area the guerrillas had to move in a north-western direction and this could be done more safely on the Dahomean side of the frontier. Bizo, Djibo and a couple of others (including Djibrilla Dembélé, Niandou, a certain Mounkaila and Dioumassi Albarka, the political commissar) departed armed with submachine guns, automatic pistols and ammunition. They hired a canoe that took them along the Niger River but stopped short of Lété Island as their boatman got cold feet. Proceeding on foot, they passed through the bush and arrived at the Tapoa River after crossing another waterway—probably the Mékrou, part of the Niger-Dahomey frontier—with the help of a tree trunk. At a village inhabited by Gourmantché, an ethnic group stretching along the common borderland with Upper Volta and Dahomey, they were well received and got two guides who brought them to Alambaré, just inside Niger (the Gourmantché village may also have been on Nigérien territory). Alambaré lay south-east of Tamou in a game reserve adjacent to the W Park. From there, the commandos reached the road linking Tamou with Botou in Upper Volta, probably at a hamlet called 'Karel'. As in the Gourmantché village, they expected to be welcomed, but to their surprise they ran into an ambush of Nigérien army troops. Shots were exchanged, injuring men on both sides, and the commandos dispersed. An injured guerrilla was arrested together with two others. Djibrilla and an unidentified companion headed back for Alambaré, where Djibrilla was caught and his comrade shot dead (Djibrilla suffered a blow with a lance that made him faint). This clash possibly took place during the night of 9-10 October, perhaps later that month.¹⁹¹ Assane Bizo had meanwhile fled to Voltan territory and the eve-

¹⁹⁰ S. Decalo, *Historical Dictionary of Niger* (Metuchen, NJ, & London, 1979), 201-202.

¹⁹¹ The distinction between incidents is sometimes tentative. The other clash around 9-10 October, south of Niamey, took place possibly further west at Makalondi on the road between Kantchari and Torodi. This involved a squad from Volta, transporting arms and documents. No mention was made of a shoot-out or escapees. Bizo's men arrived at Alambaré across Dahomean and Niger territory; no mention was made of documents. There is a hard date for the clash at Alambaré, a locality the guerrillas also mentioned. Gilbert Comte

ning after the encounter with the army troops was arrested in Botou. 'Mounkaila', who arrived there the following day looking for his unit leader, was also apprehended, as was Hassane Djibo. Caught with arms, ammunition and a Sawaba flag, the shock was huge, particularly for Djibo: quite influenced by the revolutionary lessons that he had followed in China and Bulgaria, the Nanking trainee felt the hostile reception as a 'terrible blow'.¹⁹²

Other units went from northern Dahomey due north, i.e. the Gaya region. Djibo Seyni, Soumana Idrissa's companion in Vietnam, left Malanville at an unspecified date, crossing the Niger River by canoe. As noted in Chapter 10, he had been active in the region before (he was the local political commissar), and together with a large group of men—more than a dozen—had to attack a local border post. Hiding for a couple of days in the bush, they made their way to a village where, however, the inhabitants had also been mobilised. They were spotted and a chase began; Seyni and two of his comrades were caught by the local militia, who proceeded to beat them terribly before delivering them to government troops.¹⁹³

The ignominious end of the Son Tay trainee was only marginally compensated by the fact that 11 of his comrades managed to escape. This possibly reflected the fact that the area, where vegetation is denser than elsewhere, made for better terrain. Thus, the unit of Amadou Abdou crossed the Niger River at Molo (Molla?), between Malanville and Karimama and took refuge in the hills of the Nigérien village of Tenda, where there was an arms cache. The group included Baro Alfari, also a Nanking trainee, and a certain Sani (Sami), Moussa Soumana and Adamou, equipped with automatic pistols and a submachine gun. They were provided with water by peasants, who also warned them about patrols. They intended to attack the administrative or customs post at Falmey, further to the north-west. This town was connected by a road leading northwards to the main road between Dosso and Niamey. It is not known whether the

('Carnets de Nankin') claimed Hassane Djibo was captured on 31 October. An interview with the latter in 2008 could not resolve this, also because by then his faculty of speech had become difficult as a result of a stroke. See next note.

¹⁹² *Le Niger*, 2 & 16 Nov. 1964 & 31 May 1965 (interrogation Bizo/Djibrilla/Djibo); interview Hassane Djibo, Niamey, 22 Febr. 2008; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 28 Oct. 1964; Bulletin de Renseignements Particuliers, 18 Oct. 1964, no. 1234/2/S. Location Karel is unknown. Could Karel refer to Kahel (south of the main road, ca. 40 km from Kantchari at 12.31 N 1.52 E)? ('un coup terrible').

¹⁹³ *Fraternité*, 21 May 1965 (interrogation Seyni) and interview with Ali Amadou & Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 15 Dec. 2009.

operation took place, but the guerrillas were pursued and Amadou Abdou and a companion, Moussa Soumana, were arrested, apparently after they had become separated from the main body. They were caught roughly north-west of Tenda in the vicinity of Karimama but on the opposite, Ni-gérien, side of the river. Baro Alfari was also apprehended. Issoufou Danbaro, who probably joined the unit during their infiltration since he was a local and chef militaire, was able to escape, though allegedly with an arrowhead in his back.¹⁹⁴

It is not known when these skirmishes took place but probably in the course of the month. There was also a rumour that Gaya itself would be attacked, namely during the night of 11-12 October, so the local garrison was reinforced. There was an encounter but one of the unit leaders, who was reportedly high in Sawaba's hierarchy, was able to escape his pursuers. This must have been Baoua Souley, the nurse and Sawaba MP who had trained in Nanking and engaged in operations with Baro Alfari.¹⁹⁵ Although commando action here had no success either, the escape of such a leading cadre also reflected the marginally better circumstances for guerrilla infiltration, both in terms of the natural terrain and the response of the population. As noted above, not all people in the W National Park and Gaya regions allowed themselves to be pressed in militia service, and occasionally peasants gave the guerrillas some assistance. Apart from the regime's unpopularity, this had to do with persistent political loyalties—since 1959 Sawaba had enjoyed support in Gaya, both town and country, and the region had developed into a major escape and infiltration route. Also further north, in the Dosso region, the regime reported lingering support for the movement, including by village chiefs, who must have taken along part of their subjects.¹⁹⁶

This was even more true for the Téra and Dargol region, areas where Sawaba had built up a support base early on and the RDA had clashed with

¹⁹⁴ *Le Niger*, 23 Nov. 1964 (interrogation Abdou) & 30 Nov. 1964 (appeal Baro Alfari). Moussa Soumana = Soumana, the Songhay (ch. 10 n. 137)? Mounkaila Albagna suggested Danbaro was chef militaire of the unit of Djibo Seyni (interview, Niamey, 15 Dec. 2009), but it is possible that they operated as part of one group, at least initially. The ambiguity has to do with the distinction between incidents. See note 191.

¹⁹⁵ Telegrams Génédef Abidjan to Minarmées Paris, 23 Oct. 1964 & no. 7950/CH, 13 Nov. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; L. Kaziendé, *Souvenirs d'un enfant de la colonisation* (Porto Novo, 1998), vol. 5, 237, vol. 6, 236; C. Maman, *Répertoire biographique des personnalités de la classe politique et des leaders d'opinion du Niger de 1945 à nos jours* (Niamey, 1999), vol. 1, 202.

¹⁹⁶ As was the case for the village of Tombokoara I' (40 km north-east of Dosso at 13.14 N 3.30 E). Bulletin Mensuel de Renseignements, no. 417, 20 Oct.-20 Nov. 1964, Dosso. See note 203 below.

Songhay chiefs. A forester in the Dargol area was suspected of having misled patrols searching for guerrillas. For the rest, the French reported that the population remained passive vis-à-vis regime mobilisation and that commando units were therefore hard to catch, such as those operating in the Diapaga region in Upper Volta, south-east of Kantchari. The problem, however, was wider than the Songhay community alone, since the French in their ethnicised perspective were surprised to note that the population in the Tera region ‘although of the Zarma race, only reluctantly gave their support to the forces of order’, and this ‘in contrast to what had happened on the southern frontiers’. In fact, not only the population of Téra and environs, but also that in the Say and Makalondi areas—again of Zarma stock—was reluctant to provide information on Sawaba infiltrations. In the Téra region French intelligence linked this to the hostility towards the person of Boubou Hama, though Diamballa Maïga, too, was hated here.¹⁹⁷ In any case, around 26 October another commando unit, which may have been quite large, infiltrated into the Téra district and made its way to an area north of the town. This operation, however, also went wrong as it ran into a patrol of army troops and militias. Transporting arms and ammunition as well as food supplies with the help of donkeys, the guerrillas got engaged in a shoot-out, leading to one death on the side of the commandos and one taken prisoner, the others managing to escape. The confiscated ammunition and weaponry, including automatic pistols, were in poor condition as a result of storage.¹⁹⁸ The government side did not report any casualties. Around the same time, on 25 October, a clash would have taken place in the ‘north-west’ (Tahoua or further west). Sawaba’s headquarters in Accra reported one casualty while claiming to have killed ten of the enemy. There is no way of verifying this as the government did not report it, but in view of what went before, regime casualties were probably exaggerated.¹⁹⁹ Finally, on the 31st a guerrilla unit moved on the government

¹⁹⁷ Untitled document, n.d., SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; Événements survenus en Afrique Francophone pendant la semaine du 2 au 8 nov. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 210; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 24 Nov. & 8 Dec. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; Bulletin Mensuel de Renseignements, 20 Nov.-20 Dec. 1964, Téra (no. 444.6 in no. 418); ANN, FONDS DAPA; interview with Mamoudou Béchir, Dargol, 31 Oct. 2005 (‘pourtant de race djerma, ne prêtent qu’avec réticence leur concours aux forces de l’ordre’; ‘contrairement à ce qui s’était passée sur les frontières Sud’).

¹⁹⁸ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 7 Nov. 1964; Kaziendé, *Souvenirs d’un enfant*, vol. 5, 235-236; British Embassy Abidjan to J.A. Pugh, British High Commission Lagos, 30 Oct. 1964; PRO, FO 371/177230. *Le Monde* (Paris), 4 Febr. 1965 and Morillon, ‘La tentative insurrectionnelle’ put the engagement on 24 October.

¹⁹⁹ Communiqué no. 6.

post in Dosso. The commandos cut the telephone lines and then penetrated the house of the manager of COPRO-Niger, a state trading company, before being driven off.²⁰⁰

The Presidential Gardens

For Sawaba the bewildering sequence of events during this month proved grim. Most of its assaults had ended in failure, though in some the men achieved their goal—at least temporarily. In a communiqué dated 17 October the bureau politique boasted that its forces had inflicted ‘severe losses’ on the enemy in the course of several encounters.²⁰¹ To be sure, guerrillas had taken the customs house in Bosso, even that in Madarounfa; they had cut the telephone lines in Dosso; and in several areas they had sown insecurity by laying ambushes and attacking vehicles. They managed to come close to several towns, even getting within 100 km of the capital. And the most amazing feat of all: they had engaged as planned within the time span of ten days across the length and breadth of the land. Their operations demonstrated that they could count on communities in widely different areas (Bosso, Tahoua, the west) and that peasants occasionally provided food, shelter or warnings about patrols.

Yet, overall things had gone terribly wrong. In nearly all cases assaults could not take place as the commandos were prematurely discovered, and in most encounters they were beaten or driven off. Worst of all, instead of rallying to their side the population had been whipped up against them. With militias and government forces mobilised, the guerrillas were vulnerable to detection and easily hunted down. The most painful loss that they had to sustain was the capture of cadres high in the party hierarchy, including two zonal commanders, together with the most sensitive of documents. While the guerrillas inflicted some casualties on the government side, they lost at least a dozen of their own—the French in late October reported that around 40 commandos had been killed. By the middle of that month the RDA claimed that Sawaba’s internal organisation had been completely thrown out of order.²⁰²

Although this overstated the situation since the fighting was by no means over, by the beginning of November it was clear that the movement

²⁰⁰ Bulletin Mensuel de Renseignements, no. 417, 20 Oct.–20 Nov. 1964, Dosso.

²⁰¹ Communiqué: Bureau Politique, 17 Oct. 1964 (‘des pertes sévères’).

²⁰² Événements survenus en Afrique Francophone pendant la semaine du 19 au 25 oct. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 210; Shaw to Lequesne, 15 Oct. 1964.

had taken a beating from which it would be hard to recover. True to its routines, the RDA had started to strike out against its enemy once the infiltrations had begun, but now on a more massive scale than ever before. The events of October corroborated the paranoia that had taken hold since the beginning of the year and led the regime to lash out wildly and indiscriminately. Innumerable arrests took place. During the night of 11-12 October 400 arrests were made in Niamey alone in a mass inspection of identity cards, and the following evening police, Republican Guards and militias picked up another 190 people. In Zinder, domestics and other personnel working for Europeans, perhaps seen as archetypal 'petit peuple', were taken in for questioning. Arrests spread to other cities, such as Torodi, Gaya and—later—the Dosso region, where Sawaba sympathisers in touch with Gandah Djibo (formerly Bakary's private secretary) had expressed support for the invasion. Dozens of detainees were transferred to the Gendarmerie in the capital. Later in October the French reported that several hundred Sawaba sympathisers had been taken in. This included the assistant of the Commandant de Cercle of Niamey, as well as two policemen. As noted earlier, it was not unknown for such people to harbour Sawabist sympathies, although the French reported that party militias and other forces were behaving arbitrarily—so much so that they advised their nationals to stay indoors at night as several French citizens had been molested. All RDA district leaders had to provide lists of suspected residents and these were compiled by the bureau politique and forwarded to the Sûreté and the militias. Arrests were followed by interrogations and these led to new detentions, also of high officials and Sawaba cadres who had earlier made their peace with the regime.²⁰³

Thus, the past caught up with Georges Condat, who was Niger's representative in Brussels but already in September was recalled to answer unsubstantiated criticism by an embassy official. More likely, it was his former sympathies that made Diori distrustful and forced Condat to accept a lesser position at the foreign ministry. Similarly, Illa Salifou, former UDN

²⁰³ Événements survenus ... 19 au 25 oct. 1964; Fiche ... le mois d'oct. 1964; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 14 & 28 Oct. 1964; Bulletin Mensuel de Renseignements, 20 sept.-20 Oct. 1964, Zinder, no. 417, 20 Oct.-20 Nov. 1964, Dosso. Sawaba possibly exaggerated the number of arrests, alleging more than 2,000 people were picked up in the capital just before the executions in Niamey. *Sawaba*, Dec. 1964. Among those put under surveillance in the Dosso region were one Sandagou, leather worker of the village of Kayan (Kayan Keyna, near the Dahomey border?) and friend of Gandah Djibo; Elhadji Torso, also of Kayan; and Souley, the chief of Tombokoara I, who also knew Gandah Djibo and was active as a leather worker. He had housed a foreigner later arrested in Dogondoutchi.

cadre but now a diplomat in the US and on leave in Niamey, was brought to an internment camp, where he had to stay for a week together with hundreds of detainees.²⁰⁴ More spectacularly, the Commandant de Cercle of Maradi, Djibrilla Maïga, was dismissed from his post. Although a career official with an RDA background, he was accused of Sawaba activities, and the fact that he had a couple of weapons in his possession was used to transfer him to Niamey and put him under house arrest. The discovery of Sawabist infiltration in the Maradi administration may have been to blame for the end to his career. Moreover, he was disappointed in his political ambitions, something that may have stimulated suspicions about involvement in anti-government plots (while the fact that he had written a report on the Djirataoua deaths cannot have endeared him to the 'Reds'). Maïga was joined by Boubacar Diallo, civil service minister and head of the Cour de Sûreté, a position that he was rumoured to have used to try and judge the Djirataoua case. Diallo was sacked from his positions on 30 September on the charge of having held back intelligence about the army mutiny the previous year. Both he and his wife were allegedly beaten at the Gendarmerie and interrogated at the BCL.²⁰⁵

That they could expect terrible retribution was made clear by the leader of the mutiny himself, Captain Diallo. On 4 October, having heard about the start of Sawaba's infiltrations, he would have simulated an epileptic fit, causing Tillabéri's Commandant de Cercle to have him brought over for talks. Driven from his prison cell to the administrator's residence, bystanders saw the captain

emaciated, a veritable skeleton, shaggy, blinded by daylight and screaming what he endured in his cell, which he had not left for over four months.²⁰⁶

The regime's treatment of Sawaba was going to be dreadful and the orders for this came from the very top. The French reported that Diori had signed instructions that 'all the terrorists who [would] be captured with arms

²⁰⁴ He was then summarily dumped at his home and advised to go back to his job in the US. Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 7-13 Sept. 1964, 1.078, no. 37; interview Georges Condat and Illa Salifou, Niamey, 27 & 25 Nov. 2003; Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, 224.

²⁰⁵ Événements survenus ... 28 sept. au 4 oct. 1964; Fiche ... le mois d'oct. 1964; Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, 235, 252; Decalo, *Historical Dictionary of Niger*, 87; *Le Niger*, 21 Oct. 1964; Warren to Mansfield, 23 Oct. 1964; untitled memoirs Issoufou Djermakoye (courtesy Elodie Aparé).

²⁰⁶ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 28 Oct. 1964 ('décharné, véritable squelette, hirsute, aveuglé par la lumière du jour, hurlant ce qu'il endurait dans son cachot qu'il n'avait pas quitté depuis plus de quatre mois').

[would] be executed without mercy'.²⁰⁷ This opened the door to counter-measures—and abuse. In Bosso orders were given to apprehend Sawaba's local commando leader, Aba Kaka, dead or alive, and inhabitants who declined to take part in the posse were denounced as Sawabists, arrested and led away. In the course of this manhunt (it is not known exactly when), the people of Bosso were shown the body of a commando, who had been fatally injured. They were forced to celebrate and dance in its presence on pain of denunciation, after which the corpse was buried.²⁰⁸

The central government, too, did not shun acts of desecration. The body of Dandouna Aboubakar had been brought to Niamey and put on display in the gardens of the presidential palace, where it could be seen by the public. Meanwhile, in the late afternoon of 12 October six men of the Madarounfa unit—Abdou Iddi, Hamissou Dadi Gaoh, Mallam Kalla, Barao Balla, Sani Namadina and their leader, Sallé Dan Koulou—appeared before the Cour de Sûreté, convened in emergency session and presided over by Noma Kaka, RDA MP. Before midnight Dan Koulou, Abdou Iddi, Mallam Kalla and even Dadi Gaoh (whose father then was commandant of the Circonscription of Illéla) had been sentenced to death. Sani Namadina got 15 years, Balla ten.

The following afternoon a loudspeaker van toured the city, urging the public to come to the place of execution near Niamey's Great Mosque, at the outskirts of the capital.²⁰⁹ Some ten thousand people flocked to the site, forming a semi-circle behind a cordon of militias. At the centre were four execution posts.²¹⁰ Former UDN cadre Illa Salifou declined to go, while Baoua Souley's son, who lived in Dosso, listened in nervous discomfort to a broadcast that announced the impending execution with musical accompaniment. Others could not make this choice. Commandos like Ali Mahamane Madaouki, arrested in the Magaria area, and Tini Malélé, the zonal commander detained in Upper Volta, were brought to watch—as were Boubacar Diallo and Djibrilla Maïga, dismissed from the cabinet and Maradi's administration a fortnight earlier. By contrast, Mounkaila Beidari,

²⁰⁷ Bulletin de Renseignements Particuliers, 18 Oct. 1964, no. 1234/2/S ('tous les terroristes qui seront pris armes à la main seront exécutés sans pitié').

²⁰⁸ Interview with Kanembou Malam, former government soldier, Diffa, 12 Febr. 2006. The identity of the dead guerrilla is not known.

²⁰⁹ Near 'Cinéma Sonni'. *La Voix Libérée*, no. 1, March-Apr. 2011, 41; Placca to Dei-Anang, 14 Apr. 1965. There was apparently no right of appeal or question of a pardon.

²¹⁰ Telegram Génédef Abidjan to Minarmées Paris, no. 5448/CH; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; Fiche ... le mois d'oct. 1964; *Le Niger*, 19 & 26 Oct. 1964; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 14 Oct. 1964.



Photo 12.9 Ibrahim Bawa Souley (Baoua Souley's son), in the office of his firm, Niamey, 2005.

the cadre of one of the Niamey cells, deliberately went to see, consumed by a hatred of the RDA that went back to the time that his father had died. Tam-tams sounded, women were merry: at 18.30 the condemned were made to face a firing squad of army personnel—Dadi Gaoh allegedly defiant until the end.²¹¹ They fell, riddled with bullets.²¹² Women clapped after the last volley, men were more reserved. Dandouna Aboubakar's body had meanwhile been dragged from the presidential gardens to be exhibited at the new police headquarters. Beidari went there, too, and saw how people put sand in the mouth of his comrade and a rock under his head, so that

²¹¹ Interviews Illa Salifou, Niamey, 25 Nov. 2003; Ibrahim Bawa Souley, Niamey, 29 Febr. 2008; Ali Mahamane Madaouki, Zinder, 14 Febr. 2003; Ali Talba, Niamey, 4 Febr. 2003; *Le Niger*, 2 Nov. 1964 (interrogation Malélé); Telegram Génédéf Abidjan to Minarmées Paris, no. 5448/CH.

²¹² *Le Monde* (Paris), 4 Febr. 1965.



Photo 12.10 Hamissou Dadi Gaoh (*Sawaba*, Dec. 1964).

the face could be clearly seen; they said he deserved it. The corpse of the impassioned carpenter was left to rot for days.²¹³

With these acts the regime crossed a threshold. The putting to death of Sawaba's men (including a former MP) and the desecration of the renowned union worker caused a stir,²¹⁴ feeding the anger of the movement's cadres.²¹⁵ This was particularly true for Amadou Diop, who had escaped after the drama in Dibissou and would have thought that all members of his unit were dead.²¹⁶ From his base area in Sokoto he made a reconnaissance mission to the Maradi region and then travelled to Accra for consultations.²¹⁷ Guerrilla warfare is intractable in part because belligerents refuse to accept their opponents as legitimate interlocutors, and usually they will not regard the military stalemate—if it exists—as unbearable: for guerrilla forces prospects for victory depend, in any case, less on decisive battles than an ability to bide one's time and wear regime forces down. With Niger's population failing to rally to the commando side and jointly overwhelm the RDA, Sawaba's war proved no exception.

²¹³ The location of Dandouna's grave is unknown. According to Beidari, it must be in a poor spot. Interview Mounkaila Beidari & Adamou Assane Mayaki, Niamey, 15 Dec. 2009 & 29 Jan. 2003; *Le Niger*, 19 Oct. 1964; Telegram Gédédef Abidjan to Minarmées Paris, no. 5448/CH; *Le Monde* (Paris), 15 Oct. 1964; UDN/Sawaba, Liste des responsables et militants du Sawaba tombés sous le régime PPN/RDA, n.d.; B.L. Placca, Ghana Embassy Niamey, to M.F. Dei-Anang, African Affairs Secretariat Accra, 14 Apr. 1965; GNA, SC/BAA/460, no. NIA/05/1 (Niger Political Reports to Osagyefo 3/1/64—23/4/65), who claimed Dandouna's body lay at the National Assembly (i.e. close to the police headquarters) for three days.

²¹⁴ Interview Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003. That this hit a nerve is shown in *Sawaba*, Dec. 1964, which spoke of the RDA's 'baseness up to dragging through the dust the mutilated bodies of our comrades' ('bassesse jusqu'à trainer dans la poussière les corps mutilés de nos camarades').

²¹⁵ *Le Monde* (Paris), 16 Oct. 1964.

²¹⁶ Interview with Ali Talba, Niamey, 4 Febr. 2003.

²¹⁷ Interview with Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003.

New Assaults, Fresh Reprisals

Clashes therefore continued. During the night of 1–2 November an assault took place in the Téra region. According to French intelligence four guerrillas armed with pistols and submachine guns were involved in the attack.²¹⁸ It is not clear whether they were part of the unit of Idrissa Arfou, who had withdrawn to Mali after the first engagement at Téra, but at the start of the new month a commando group infiltrated the region from Malian territory.²¹⁹ On the night of the Téra attack a commando unit of ten (probably part of Mounkaila Albagna's unit) got engaged in a fight with government forces in the Torodi area, south-west of Niamey. According to the French, two men on the government side were injured and one Sawabist was killed, perhaps two.²²⁰ At the same time there were clashes at Dosso and Birnin Gaouré, between Dosso and the capital, although these may have involved exchanges of 'friendly' fire between government troops. On the 4th commandos were spotted between Alambaré and the Tapoa River, near the W Park, but they dispersed when challenged by army troops.²²¹ On 6 November a guerrilla unit left Malanville for Gaya, where it encountered a militia force equipped with dogs. One commando, possibly four, surrendered. That same day, according to Sawaba, a clash took place somewhere in the north-west, in which its forces would have killed two opponents and wounded another, while capturing a couple of rifles.²²²

These units were clearly part of a second wave of infiltrations. On 9 November a more serious engagement took place at Dargol, possibly near

²¹⁸ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 24 Nov. 1964. It was added that they killed the canton chief of Téra, but this must be flawed intelligence, as he was reluctant towards the regime and a Nigérien intelligence file of the same period reported plans for his dismissal. Bulletin Mensuel de Renseignements, 20 Oct.–20 Nov. 1964, no. 473.6—Téra; ANN, FONDS DAPA. At least two Sawaba commandos then present in the region later denied that the chief was killed, while the head of the national archives, native to the Téra region, could not remember anything either. Interviews Daouda Hamadou, Ayorou, 20 Dec. 2009 and Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 15 Dec. 2009; Idrissa Maïga Yansambou, Niamey, 19 Oct. 2011.

²¹⁹ Evénements survenus ... 2 au 8 & 16 au 22 nov. 1964.

²²⁰ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 5 Nov. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; Ibid., 24 Nov. 1964. Identity of commando casualties is unknown.

²²¹ Ibid. This was definitely not the first engagement at Alambaré, involving Assane Bizo's men, as there is a date of 9–10 October for that clash, and an interrogation report on Bizo, who left Malanville on 3 October, was already published on 2 November. See above at notes 191–192.

²²² Evénements survenus en Afrique Francophone pendant la semaine du 9 au 16 nov. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 210; *Le Niger*, 21 June 1965; Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 325; Communiqué no. 6.

Bandio as well. This involved a dozen guerrillas who were the product of the regrouping of the Malian and Voltan units that had infiltrated the Téra region in mid-October. During the night the commandos—who included Albagna but not Idrissa Arfou—attacked the post of the Gendarmerie head-on, with grenades and rifles. Albagna's weapon, an automatic pistol, jammed but others functioned and a guard of the Circonscription was injured by a grenade. There were no other casualties and the attack was inconclusive. As the regime sent gendarmes to reinforce the post, the commandos were compelled to withdraw. Albagna—or 'Yayé', as was his *nom de guerre*—wanted to go to Say, 150 km to the south-east. He and his comrades crossed the Sirba, a tributary of the Niger River, and headed to the village of Bossey Bangou, on the Voltan frontier. But the population here was scared and did not provide information on patrols. The guerrillas shot and injured a guard and disarmed him, but in view of the cool reception decided to turn back to try and reach Malian territory via Dargol and Kakourou (Loga Kokorou).²²³

Dargol was safer territory, as the population, Sawabist in orientation since the 1950s, refused to help the authorities in any way. The regime not only complained about indifference but also accused the town's inhabitants of a 'nefarious attitude' and complicity in the assault on the Gendarmerie. It noted that no one had come to the aid of the embattled gendarmes or bothered to warn the authorities of the impending attack, of which many had been 'well aware'. As shown below, the connivance extended to the canton chief, whose second-in-command happened to be the father of Mounkaila Albagna. The guerrillas in this region therefore managed to elude government forces for several weeks. This, in combination with rumours of imminent assaults—such as in the Ayorou-Téra zone, by the middle of the month—gave them an 'aura of ubiquity', in the words of a government minister. With only an estimated 30 commandos active in the region, by the first week of December government patrols had still not produced results.²²⁴

²²³ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 24 Nov. 1964; Kaziendé, *Souvenirs d'un enfant*, vol. 5, 235-236; interviews Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 29 Nov. & 6 Dec. 2003 & 15 Dec. 2009 & Mamane Boureïma, Bandio, 4 Nov. 2005. Gueydou was another *nom de guerre* of Albagna.

²²⁴ Interviews Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003 & 19 Oct. 2011; Bulletin Mensuel de Renseignements, 20 Oct.-20 Nov. 1964 & 20 Nov.-20 Dec. 1964, Téra; Événements survenus ... 9 au 16 nov. 1964; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 24 Nov. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; Kaziendé, *Souvenirs d'un enfant*, vol. 5, 235-236; Premier Ministre. SDECE.

While in the Bosso area the guerrillas also benefited from the regime's unpopularity, here the tactical advantage lay in the region's remoteness and propitious environment. The guerrillas of Aba Kaka returned from Nigeria at an unspecified date and prepared an ambush for a convoy of tax collectors transporting funds to Nguigmi. An exchange of fire followed, in which a commando was killed. The guerrillas must have overcome the convoy as they were able to take the money, which would have been distributed. They withdrew to an island called 'Chassa Koura'—a hideout marked by dense vegetation. An arms cache was made and provisions arranged through night-time visits to a Nigerian market town.²²⁵

The success of the Bosso command, however, hardly compensated for the long-term effect of the mobilisation of the regime's forces. Now in its second month, this began to make operations increasingly difficult, if not impossible. In the third week of November, a guerrilla squad was discovered in the Cercle of Tillabéri. Though with significant Sawaba following in the past this was never undisputed territory, and the commandos were consequently met by militias of the Satoni and Semo region. In early December a shoot-out left four of them dead and two arrested, together with weaponry (a MAS 36, five grenades, three handguns and a submachine gun). But the militias lost two of their own and counted five wounded, indicating the growing intensity of the fighting if not the anger and despair on the part of Sawaba's men. The French reported that the militia action was prompted by the promise of substantial rewards for those who killed or captured guerrillas and recovered weapons—bounties immediately getting paid out by the Commandant de Cercle.²²⁶

The mobilisation even began to have an effect in the far east. A certain Ousseïni, a Kaka companion, was betrayed by a Bosso woman when he attempted to visit his wife. He was arrested and forced to disclose the place where he had hidden money. His house was burnt down.²²⁷ Three other

Destinataire no. 541, 8 Dec. 1964; Événements survenus ... 16 au 22 nov. 1964 ('l'attitude néfaste'; 'bien au courant'; 'aura d'ubiquité').

²²⁵ Interviews Kanembou Malam, Diffa, 12 Febr. 2006; Aba Kaka, Bosso, 13 Febr. 2006. Identity of the commando casualty is unknown. The source on the distribution of the money is Kanembou. Location Chassa Koura not found.

²²⁶ 50,000 CFA for a killed commando, 25,000 CFA for someone arrested, 10,000 CFA for a weapon. The injured villagers were brought to hospital in Niamey, 160 km to the south-east. Location Semo not known. Événements survenus en Afrique Francophone pendant la semaine du 23 au 29 nov. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 210; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 8 Dec. 1964.

²²⁷ The culprit (a customs official) would have been arrested. Interview Kanembou Malam, Diffa, 12 Febr. 2006. After the attack on Bosso, the chief of the Komadouyou canton

members of Kaka's unit, who had separated from the main group and established themselves in a fishing village called Woulo, on the Chadian frontier, were found out in similar circumstances. After they were reported to the authorities in Nguigmi, plain-clothes police from Bosso captured two of them, the third managing to swim across the Komadougou and get away.²²⁸ The Nigerian authorities and Nigérien army troops had meanwhile started joint operations. An unidentified guerrilla was apprehended with three rifles at a market in north-eastern Nigeria—possibly Kukawa, where four commandos were caught on 12 November. The Nigerians brought them to Maiduguri for transportation to Niamey, and interrogation led to information about 'Chassa Koura'. The two commandos arrested at Woulo were forced to lead around 40 Nigérien soldiers to the hideout, for which they first had to cross the Komadougou. Inhabitants of the village of Boulayi assisted in the posse. A small number of soldiers made it across the river, forced their guerrilla-guides to lead them to the sanctuary and together with Nigerian army troops closed in on the island, where Kaka was now holding out with half a dozen men (15 November). A violent exchange followed, leading to one getting injured and three guerrillas arrested, including Marnia trainee Bachir Moustapha dit Moutti, according to Niger a 'redoubtable' fighter. The rest of the guerrillas, including one Mounkouta and Kaka himself, escaped. On the island the posse found evidence of a commando presence of up to 20 men.²²⁹

Intensive patrols thus made action by the guerrillas practically impossible. Reports began to come in about the spotting of commandos who were 'little combative'.²³⁰ Having been instructed not to shoot at the people, guerrillas would often have known nothing else to do but to shoot in the air, bewildered as they were about their reception.²³¹ With so many of their comrades now in detention, they had trouble finding a safe haven in between a hinterland that was becoming increasingly dangerous and a

sent his wives to their family as a precautionary measure and had his valuables brought across the border to Nigeria. Rapport Politique, 20 Oct.-20 Nov. 1964.

²²⁸ Ibid. Kanembou Malam, ex-government soldier, suggested the three had deserted Kaka's group. The man who got away was one Moustapha (possibly Moustapha Oumar, 'the marabout', for long responsible for infiltrations in the east). The two arrested men were Hassane (Ousmane dit Kaou?) and one Ary, responsible for provisioning.

²²⁹ Ibid.; interview Aba Kaka, Bosso, 13 Febr. 2006; untitled doc., n.d., SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; Rapport Politique, 20 Oct.-20 Nov. 1964, Nguigmi; Événements survenus ... 16 au 22 nov. 1964. Location Boulayi and Woulo unknown (but there is an island called Ouolloua in Lake Chad, in the Chadian sector) ('redoubtable').

²³⁰ Événements survenus ... 2 au 8 & 16 au 22 nov. 1964 ('peu combatifs').

²³¹ Interviews with Oumarou Janba and Tahir Moustapha, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003.

battlefield where they ran an immediate risk of being hunted down. As it was becoming hard to pursue the logic of guerrilla warfare (undertaking repeated hit-and-run operations), many commandos started roaming the countryside, at a loss what to do. In this unfolding tragedy the regime's forces did not find it hard to detect them. At a meeting in Zinder the RDA passed on Diori's shoot-to-kill instructions, authorising its cadres to 'kill on the spot every unknown person secretly carrying arms or ammunition'. It advised them that this should not be too difficult since

the SAWABA rebels are easy to notice despite their way of disguising themselves ... for they are generally starving, thirsty.²³²

Dehydration, hunger and fatigue²³³ were increasingly marking a popular insurrection that until now had failed to materialise, and although one should distrust regime sources on this point since the RDA had an interest in mocking its opponent, fear was said to have the guerrillas in its grip.²³⁴

This growing despair did not, however, preclude the occasional act of heroism. Benefiting from support in the Tahoua region,²³⁵ Siddi Abdou, the leader of the unit that had infiltrated the Ader, was unwilling to surrender. By the end of November he had been in the area for several weeks and all his men had been captured. Siddi then went to his in-laws for food, but these had fallen out with him over his relations with his wife (whom he had divorced but had still been seeing, leading her to become pregnant). Denied shelter, Siddi—a tall, imposing figure—got involved in a fierce altercation with one of his in-laws. He shot and wounded him and fled on horseback. The Commandant de Cercle organised an operation to track him down and on the 28th Siddi was cornered. The guerrilla commander refused to leave a makeshift hideout and started firing and throwing grenades, while in the meantime burning the documents he had on him. At least one NCO was wounded, but then Siddi's submachine gun jammed and he announced that he was prepared to surrender. Just before they could capture him, he shot himself in the mouth.²³⁶

²³² Procès-verbal de la réunion du 7 nov. 1964 ('abattre sur le champ toute personne inconnue portant en cachète des armes ou des munitions'; 'Les insurgés SAWABA sont faciles à remarquer malgré leur façon de se déguiser [...] car ils sont généralement affamés, assoiffés').

²³³ This was confirmed in interviews with Sao Marakan, Niamey, 16 Nov. 2002; Oumarou Janba & Ali Mahamane Madaouki, Zinder, 10 & 14 Febr. 2003; Abdou Adam, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003.

²³⁴ Bulletin de Renseignements Particuliers, 18 Oct. 1964, no. 1234/2/S.

²³⁵ Interview Abdou Adam & Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003 & 15 Dec. 2009.

²³⁶ Siddi had four pistols, probably from his comrades, in addition to a submachine gun. The above is based on a written and an oral source, confirming each other: untitled

The developments in Tahoua and Bosso showed that, with much of the population by now petrified, the risk of betrayal was becoming steadily greater. Another member of Aba Kaka's command was captured in unclarified circumstances after his wife, the daughter of a regime official, refused to follow him to Nigeria. Under threat he led government forces to a hideout of Kaka, who had already fled again, delivering them an important arms cache.²³⁷

Even in the broader Téra-Dargol region, betrayal or, rather, denunciations encouraged by the regime, began to take a toll. In taking action to force the population to be more forthcoming, the mobilisation of the Tillabéri region provided a useful example, and while plans were considered to expand the payment of bounties to the western villages, sterner measures were not eschewed. The militias together with the head of the Gendarmerie, Captain Badié, were dispatched to the Say and Téra regions in order 'to give back to those populations "a more developed civic sense"'—French intelligence clarifying this by adding that 'numerous arrests [were] carried out in these regions'. Hence, after the attack on the Gendarmerie of Dargol, government forces detained several people denounced as accomplices by a nine-year-old boy living in the compound of the canton chief. Although some were released a few days later, it helped to create a climate of fear in which the commandos could not be sure that the population would continue to give them support. Everywhere cavalry groups were formed to track down guerrillas.²³⁸

Thus, on their way to the Malian frontier Mounkaila Albagna and his comrades travelled through the Dargol area but got lost and, a day or so after they had returned from Bossey Bangou on the Voltan frontier, reached a village near the Niger River called Mamasseye, north of Satoni. As shown

document, n.d., 1964-1965; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2 (which unusually claims Siddi fired three shots in his mouth!) and interview with Soumana Idrissa, Gothèye, 18 Dec. 2009. Also *Événements survenus ... 23 au 29 nov. 1964*; interview Ousmane Dan Galadima, Madaoua, 7 Febr. 2003; Moukaila Beidari, Niamey, 2 Dec. 2003. Abdou Adam (interview, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003) also gave an account of Siddi shooting himself in the mouth. Chaffard (*Les carnets secrets*, 325) mistook Siddi Abdou for Abdou Iddi (ch. 9, notes 304-5) of the Madarounfa squad executed in Niamey, and claimed he was political commissar instead of chef militaire.

²³⁷ Interview Kanembou Malam, Diffa, 12 Febr. 2006.

²³⁸ The suspected forester, Karimou Farimonzon, also became the subject of investigations. Telegram Gédédef Abidjan to Minarmées Paris, no. 7950/CH, 13 Nov. 1964; Bulletin Mensuel de Renseignements, 20 Oct.-20 Nov. & 20 Nov.-20 Dec. 1964, Téra; *Ibid.*, no. 417, 20 Sept.-20 Oct. 1964, Tillabéri, no. 92; ANN, FONDS DAPA; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 24 Nov. & 8 Dec. 1964 ('pour redonner à ces populations "un sens civique plus développé"; 'nombreuses arrestations ont été effectuées dans ces régions').

above, this was politically unsafe territory, but they were getting exhausted. One of them, Souleymane Dahani, could go no further, and they were forced to halt at the village and stay the night. The inhabitants alerted the authorities and when the commandos—now six—continued their journey the following morning, they stumbled on militias and fighting broke out. Albagna still had three grenades, but the last failed to explode and the men tried to flee to the river where they had a canoe. Pursued by militias, Doudou Bondiaré was killed together with Daouda Hima, the Marnia trainee of Villa Lotus, and Hama Altiné, who had acted as guide. The others tried to get away with the canoe but were overcome—Souleymane Dahani being killed by a harpoon or spear in the neck. Another narrowly missed ‘Yayé’, who was arrested with the remaining cadre, one Hanakoye Saley.²³⁹

Albagna had been saved, probably for questioning, and he and Saley were transported to Niamey, together with the corpses of their dead comrades. It was the signal for a wave of terror in the region.²⁴⁰ People in Dargol tried to hide but were forced to denounce each other and compelled to watch as their neighbours were beaten, such as Saïbou Abdouramane, a peasant and son of a Gothèye Sawabist who admitted to the same loyalties. He would have been completely covered in blood after gendarmes had had their way with him. Others were forced to search for commandos or disclose arms caches and when this failed, maltreated (some were compelled to look at the sun) and obliged to pay heavy fines. Some Dargol residents, such as a local Zarma man by the name of Kimba, one Younoussi, the town’s RDA chair, and Katkoré Amadou, RDA MP for Téra, denounced many to the authorities. Dargol’s canton chief, Sorka Idrissa, was sacked for his passivity during the infiltrations (similar measures were planned for the canton chiefs of Téra and Diagorou, south of Téra). Sawabists in Téra, probably domestic cadres, were incarcerated and beaten up, some to the extent that they would have become deaf.²⁴¹ Inhabitants of hamlets

²³⁹ Interviews Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003 & 15 Dec. 2009; Mamoudou Béchir (Albagna relative), Dargol, 31 Oct. 2005; Djaouga Idrissa, vicinity Dargol, 31 Oct. 2005; Mamane Bourèïma & Djibo Foulan (Altiné’s brother), Bandio, 4 Nov. 2005; Daouda Hamadou, Ayorou, 20 Dec. 2009; *Le Niger*, 30 Nov. 1964.

²⁴⁰ Interview Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003. His brother Mamoudou Béchir (interview, Dargol, 31 Oct. 2005), who at the time was in Ghana, claimed Albagna was beaten up.

²⁴¹ Sorka Idrissa was dubbed ‘a real dead weight’. Bulletin Mensuel de Renseignements, 20 Oct.–Nov. 1964, Téra; interviews Mamoudou Béchir & Saïbou Abdouramane, Dargol, 31 Oct. 2005; Djibo Harouna, Gothèye, 1 Nov. 2005; Djaouga Idrissa, (vicinity Dargol, 31 Oct. 2005), who claimed people had to pay up to 4,000 CFA. According to Abdouramane, his father was sentenced to ten years in Bilma (‘un véritable poids mort’).



Photo 12.11 Saïbou Abdouramane, Dargol, 2005.

around Bandio were forced to move to the main village for surveillance purposes. The chief of Bandio—widely seen as a Sawaba fief—was arrested, as were other residents known for their Sawabist past. Those who dared to pay their respects to the family of Hama Altiné, the commando killed in Mamasseye who hailed from a hamlet nearby, were imprisoned in Agadez, Téra, Tillabéri or Dosso.²⁴²

But worse was to come. On 11-12 November the Cour de Sûreté, which had been transformed into a military tribunal operating without instructions,²⁴³ passed judgment on 30 guerrillas. Seven were sentenced to death, 16 got prison terms of more than nine years, several got 20 and

²⁴² Interview Mamane Boureïma, Bandio, 4 Nov. 2005.

²⁴³ 'Cour Martiale'. This meant it could meet without delay. The accused had the right to defence counsel but no appeal. Death sentences were executed after a decision about a pardon. *Le Niger*, 9 Nov. 1964.

some life. Those who had been given the death penalty included Tini Malélé, the zonal commander from Gothèye, and Altiné Gnogolo (Atti Gnogolo or Seybou Djibo Gnogolo dit ATL), who hailed from the same town. The next day Malélé, who had had to witness the executions in Niamey, was brought to Gothèye and shot at a public ceremony. Copying the execution of Tubu raiders the previous year, when the condemned were shot in different towns for maximum effect, the regime now intended to do the same with the commandos in western towns with Sawaba communities, including Dargol, Bandio and Téra. French intelligence reported that ‘the population [was] rounded up by the blows of the militia [and] forced to be present.’ On the day of Malélé’s execution Gnogolo was brought to Dargol, where his fiancée lived.²⁴⁴ He was made to stand near a building at the main road that ran through the town. His hands were tied behind his back, he asked for a cigarette—which was given to him—and people were forced to watch, including his fiancée.²⁴⁵ After the execution, undertaken by Republican Guards or military, people were obliged to applaud.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁴ *Le Niger*, 16 Nov. 1964; Événements survenus ... 9 au 16 nov. 1964; Génédef Abidjan to Minarmées Paris, no. 7950/CH, 13 Nov. 1964; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 8 Dec. 1964; UDN/Sawaba, Liste des responsables; interviews Mamoudou Béchir & Djaouga Idrissa, (vicinity of) Dargol, 31 Oct. 2005; Djibo Harouna, Gothèye, 1 Nov. 2005. The Liste des Nigériens militants ou sympathisants du Sawaba morts dans les prisons du régime de Diori Hamani (UDFP-Sawaba, Niamey, n.d.) refers to Gnogolo as ‘C. Atti’. Mamoudou Béchir and Djaouga Idrissa claimed he hailed from Bandio (‘la population [...] rassemblée à coups de bâtons par la milice, a été obligée d’y assister’).

²⁴⁵ They would have wanted to make her cry, which she would not have done. See next note. The 30 men tried before the Cour de Sûreté were: Kanguèye Boubacar; Amadou Roufai Malam Garba; Ali Maman (i.e. Mahamane Madaouki); Souley Seybou (i.e. Chaibou Souley); Altiné Gnogolo; Mounkaila Djibo, peasant from the Gothèye region; Tini Malélé; Amadou Salou, wood trader from Téra (= Amadou Sallé; ch.5 n. 94?); one Seidou Doule from the Téra region; Maliki Niandou from Hondobon (Téra); Bombou Mazou, labourer, also from the Téra area; Niandou Ousseini, vendor of paints in Accra; Inoussa (Younoussa) Garantché, a Téra peasant; Boubakar Seydou, trader from Gothèye; Yacouba Dari, the Tillabéri trader (n. 336, ch. 9); Soumana Issaka (here an alias for Djibrilla Dembélé), then in Niamey hospital, as he had been injured in the fighting at Karel (see above at n. 191); Albarka Oumarou dit Waou (i.e. Dioumassi Albarka dit Waou, Dembélé’s commissar); Matchiodo Palgou, peasant from the Tamou area; Amadou Aboubakar, labourer from the same region; Yacouba Issa, the Villa Lotus man with Nanking training; Hamidou Mahamane dit Dangagé and El Hadji Mahamoudou, peasants; Malam Karégamba, Maradi civil servant; Oumarou Malam Bala, peasant from the Maradi region; Abdou Ido, from the same area; Hassane Djibo, the arrested Nanking trainee; Mounkaila Halidou, peasant from the Tillabéri region; Robert Seguinikin, arrested in the Kantchari area of Upper Volta; Moundio Diawara, tailor from the Say region; and Oumarou Kif Amadou, Malian peasant in Botou, the Voltan border village.

²⁴⁶ Interview Saïbou Abdouramane, Dargol, 31 Oct. 2005; Telegram Génédef Abidjan to Minarmées Paris, no. 7950/CH, 13 Nov. 1964. K. Alfari (Mémorandum sur les fraternelles

Another Sawabist reportedly executed in Dargol, perhaps that same day, was Boubacar Amirou (Boubacar Mossi), an uncle of Mounkaila Albagna, whose entire family was detained. Amirou was not shot, however, but beaten to death by gendarmes when he refused to inform on the commandos.²⁴⁷ The body of Hama Altiné had meanwhile been brought from Mamasseye to Bandio and put on display. In the past Altiné had introduced the party in the area, campaigning actively on Sawaba's behalf. From Bandio his corpse was dragged to Dargol, as he had participated in the attack on the town.²⁴⁸ Possibly also on the 12th a certain Issifi, a Sawabist (marabout?) from Téra, was brought to Bandio. He was forced to stand in front of a wooden board, put against the wall of a house, and shot.²⁴⁹ A hole was dug and the body summarily thrown in.²⁵⁰ The French, as well as the regime, also reported an execution in Téra, possibly that of a certain Abdoukadi. A commando by the name of Souley Mossi was killed there by police captain Seydou Salifouze (Salifouize), who allegedly shot the Sawabist in the head.²⁵¹

relations franco-nigériennes [Union de la Jeunesse Patriotique du Niger]: Niamey, 2003, 48 & 50) confirms people were forced to clap at executions.

²⁴⁷ Contemporary written sources mention four executions. Alfari, *Mémorandum*, speaks of nine. Telegram Génédef Abidjan to Minarmées Paris, no. 7950/CH, 13 Nov. 1964; *Le Niger*, 16 Nov. 1964; Bulletin Mensuel de Renseignements, 20 Oct.-Nov. 1964, Téra; interviews Mamoudou Béchir, Saïbou Abdouramane, Djaouga Idrissa, (vicinity) Dargol, 31 Oct. 2005; Liste des Nigériens. The manner of Amirou's execution was reported by Mamoudou Béchir and Mounkaila Albagna (the latter in an interview at Niamey, 6 Dec. 2003). If arms jammed (in the popular belief by the influence of fetishes), people would have been beaten to death. 'Amirou' means member of the chief's family. Interview Djibo Foulan, Bandio, 4 Nov. 2005; Issa Younoussi, email to author, 19 Nov. 2005.

²⁴⁸ Interview Mamane Boureïma, Bandio, 4 Nov. 2005, UDN/Sawaba, Liste des responsables mistakenly says 'Alpha Altiné' was executed in Bandio. Liste des Nigériens also refers to 'Hama Tinni' as executed.

²⁴⁹ His intestines would have come out. See next note. Alternative names for this person are Issoufou and Youssoufou.

²⁵⁰ Interview Mamane Boureïma, Bandio, 4 Nov. 2005, UDN/Sawaba, Liste des responsables reports an Issoufou executed at Téra. Mounkaila Albagna (interview, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003) claimed this was Issoufou Soumaila and that he was shot at Bandio. He was arrested in the region when returning to his wife. Bulletin Mensuel de Renseignements, 20 Oct.-Nov. 1964, Téra. Could this be the Issoufou/Issifi mentioned above at n. 249? Liste des Nigériens claims Issoufou Soumaila later died in the prison of Agadez. Albagna also claimed an Alfa Kadi (?) was shot in Téra and one Chebou Djibo (?) in Dargol.

²⁵¹ Telegram Génédef Abidjan to Minarmées Paris, no. 7950/CH, 13 Nov. 1964; *Le Niger*, 16 Nov. 1964; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 8 Dec. 1964; Liste des responsables. One report suggests the police captain exceeded his powers. Bulletin Mensuel de Renseignements, 20 Oct.-Nov. 1964, Téra.



Photo 12.12 Mamane Bouréïma from Bandio at the unmarked grave of 'Issifi' from Téra.

Though French intelligence noted that the executions were 'hardly appreciated' by the population,²⁵² the practice was repeated in other regions. Two Sawabists were shot on 10 December in the towns where they had been captured. One was Yacouba Issa, member of Dan Koulou's squad, who met his end in Madarounfa. The other was possibly one 'Yacouba', who was executed in Maradi. There may also have been executions in Nguigmi and Tahoua, at unspecified dates.²⁵³ On 11 December, at five o'clock in the afternoon, an execution took place in the religious centre of Say.²⁵⁴ This was not Hassane Djibo, however, the Nanking trainee from nearby Kollo who had been captured in the vicinity of the W Park. He had also been sentenced to death, accused of having killed one of his pursuers. The regime intended to have him shot in Say but local marabouts opposed another

²⁵² Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 8 Dec. 1964 ('guère appréciée').

²⁵³ Interviews Zoumari Issa Seyni & Abdou Adam (ex-RDA official), Niamey, 30 Jan. & 29 Nov. 2003.

²⁵⁴ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 21 Dec. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; Événements survenus en Afrique Francophone pendant la semaine du 7 au 13 déc. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 210; Liste des Nigériens, nos. 17 & 44. The Liste des responsables refers also to another man executed in Madarounfa, i.e. 'Adamou Boube', probably Amadou Boube, the Nanking trainee whom Bakary had sent to Siddi Abdou's men. The Liste des Nigériens claims he was shot in Niamey, which may be a mistake: see also ch. 14 n. 195. The person executed in Say on 11 December cannot be identified.

execution—probably for religious reasons—and urged Diori to desist, after which Djibo was left in his cell.²⁵⁵ The authorities nevertheless proceeded with the execution of Kanguèye Boubacar, the commando leader in the Zinder sector. He was shot in Magaria, an execution that led to unrest, with Kanguèye braving his tormenters and proclaiming that, one day, the truth would triumph.²⁵⁶

In mid-December some remaining commandos managed to penetrate an area close to the capital, where tracts and leaflets were left behind in an apparent attempt to disturb the 18 December celebrations. As noted, propaganda efforts had accompanied the infiltrations from the start, even to the extent that, in October, notices were sent to Diori and other personalities asserting that their regime was illegitimate.²⁵⁷ The government responded with renewed searches, and several arrests were made in Niamey. A small unit of guerrillas was meanwhile reported to be present in the Tillabéri region. These, however, were no more than token activities or remnants of forces roaming the countryside. A monthly report for the Téra district noted that the attacks, which had so shaken the region, had stopped and that while vigilance was still required, life had returned to normal.²⁵⁸

Not only had Sawaba's invasion failed, but the waves of infiltrations had thrown its military organisation into disarray, with many men killed or arrested—including key members of the command. Weaponry and sensitive documents had been seized. Offensive capability had been reduced to zero, compelling the remainder of the guerrillas to withdraw to the western and southern hinterlands. Already on 20 November a British diplomat reported that Diori was full of confidence, adding that there was no doubt

²⁵⁵ Mounkaila Albagna (Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003) explained Djibo's survival by claiming the regime balanced its executions ethnically, an explanation that does not convince. Chafard, *Les carnets secrets*, 326, alleged Djibo was forgotten in his cell, as was also intimated in an interview by Hassane Djibo himself (Niamey, 22 Febr. 2008). The explanation of marabout intervention was independently given by two interviewees: Ali Amadou and Soumana Idrissa. See next note.

²⁵⁶ *Le Niger*, 16 Nov. 1964; interviews Ali Amadou & Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 31 Jan. & 29 Nov. 2003; Soumana Idrissa, 1 Nov. 2005; Ali Mahamane Madaouki, Zinder, 10 & 14 Febr. 2003; Oumarou Janba, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003; Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003; Liste des responsables; Liste des Nigériens. The total number of executions remains unclear. Kanguèye's increases it to at least nine, probably more.

²⁵⁷ These had been posted from Accra, Côte d'Ivoire and Europe, including Annemasse in the French Savoy and Lausanne, Switzerland. The latter two may have originated from Sawaba students. Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 28 Oct. 1964 & 7 Nov. 1964.

²⁵⁸ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 22 Dec. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; Événements survenus en Afrique Francophone pendant la semaine du 14 au 20 déc. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 210; Bulletin Mensuel de Renseignements, 20 Nov.-20 Dec. 1964, Téra.

that ‘for the present he [had] completely mastered the threat posed by Bakary’s activities.’ There is no way of providing an accurate estimate of Sawaba’s losses, but Chaffard, who worked with regime sources, claimed that 136 men had been arrested, i.e. more than half of an initial force total that he estimated at around 250. He reported around a dozen killed, but the French, as noted above, by mid-October already came with a casualty figure of 40. An article in a Swiss newspaper that also worked with regime sources similarly reported that around a hundred commandos had been put out of action, of whom some 60 had ended up in prison.²⁵⁹

The movement’s external leadership had no other choice but to tone down the bravado of its 17 October communiqué, admitting in a statement published in mid-November that its forces had suffered losses in the west and had been ‘treacherously attacked in the back’, i.e. in Northern Nigeria and Upper Volta. It reviled members of the regime and reported with indignation the execution of its commandos in the western region. While absurdly claiming that the guerrillas were holding their own, the statement could not avoid the impression that the deliverance that Sawabists had expected from the invasion was a long way off.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁹ T.R. Shaw, British Embassy Abidjan, to C.M. Lequesne, Foreign Office, 1.015/20/11, 20 Nov. 1964; PRO, FO 371/177229; Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 325. The Swiss article was reprinted in *Le Niger*, 31 May 1965.

²⁶⁰ Communiqué no. 6; Front démocratique de la patrie (Parti Sawaba): Déclaration, 13 Nov. 1964 & Communiqué de presse, 22 Nov. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; *Sawaba*, Dec. 1964 (‘traiteusement attaqués par derrière’).

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

GUERRILLA WAR, 1965–1966

Until now, the struggle between Sawaba and the RDA had not amounted to more than what in modern parlance would be called a ‘low-intensity conflict’, including the autumn invasion. However, while such a concept has value for the analysis of chronic violence, it inadequately describes the magnitude of the human tragedies involved. The bungled offensive had, in the understatement of a government official, consequences,¹ the most immediate of which was that the commandos found themselves at the receiving end of militia brutality. Visiting British diplomats reported that captured guerrillas were handed over to the authorities ‘often in a rather battered state’. In their racist opinion of Nigérien culture, they saw this as inevitable.² But the commandos, sent in after years of preparations with the weighty mission to bring relief to the little folk and the talakawa at large, underwent the discrepancy between their anticipated march on the capital and their cold reception with surprise and mounting despair—even if not every guerrilla had taken part in the invasion without anxiety. The regime, through its own sense of insecurity, had always lashed out at the slightest provocation and now that it had ‘clearly had a fright’,³ it unleashed the full force of its wrath. The government organ, *Le Niger*, noted that Bakary had added fresh blood to that spilled on ‘28 and 29 April 1958’—a reference to the Niamey riots—and said that since Bakary’s was the ‘language of the submachine gun’, he could expect the same response. It warned that ‘the revenge of blood ... [would] arrive irresistibly’, adding callously that ‘[the] lynching of the miserable adventurer Dandouna [was] but the prologue of a lesson that [would] be terrible’.⁴

¹ As mentioned in his reminiscences by Abdou Adam. Interview, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003.

² They said that ‘[h]owever ugly some of these government actions appear to our eyes, they are the sort of thing that the fairly rough and primitive people of Niger seem to expect and understand’. A.J. Warren, British Embassy Abidjan, to P.R.A. Mansfield, Foreign Office, 23 Oct. 1964; PRO, FO 371/177.230.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Le Niger*, 19 Oct. & 30 Nov. 1964 (‘28 et 29 avril 1958’; ‘le langage de la mitrailleuse’; ‘la vengeance du sang ... arrive irrésistiblement’; ‘Le lynchage du misérable Dan Douna n’est que le prologue d’une leçon qui sera terrible’).

Such retribution was guaranteed as it was party militias and the politicised forces of Gendarmerie and Republican Guards that were responsible for reprisals. The militias were in the forefront of patrols, which took place day and night and combed the countryside for guerrilla remnants. They were issued with ammunition for shotguns, while the RDA district committees, which oversaw the militias, whipped up people against the commandos and Sawabists in general, applauded the execution of guerrillas and appealed to central headquarters for the execution of others.⁵ Many commandos were initially detained by the party militia, which in the words of one Sawabist had the right of life and death and severely manhandled captured guerrillas—as happened to Boubakar Djingaré in the Konni region. They also regularly loaded detained commandos in lorries to drive them around in the bush where they were forced to point out arms caches. Naturally, if they did not know any or these had been emptied by their comrades (as happened in the case of Djingaré), they could expect punishment. Upon his capture Djingaré was beaten so badly that he swelled up all over his body.⁶ The correspondence of the visiting British diplomats suggests that such maltreatment was general. Usually, the guerrillas were subjected to two phases of interrogation, the first of which was conducted by the Gendarmerie or Republican Guards, who like the militias were guilty of maltreatment. Especially the gendarmes systematically abused commando detainees and Sawaba sympathisers.

Executions were discontinued after December 1964 (though there is a report of an unidentified woman shot in Say at an unspecified date). Diori was advised by Houphouët-Boigny that new death sentences were unwise, and the French probably counselled him in a similar manner, since some executions had caused unrest and by the end of the year the regime had reasserted its control sufficiently to make new ones unnecessary.⁷ But this did not stop abuses, especially when these were hidden from view. The road between capture on the battlefield and incarceration in one of the

⁵ Untitled document, n.d., SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; Bulletin Mensuel de Renseignements, 473.6, 20 Oct.-20 Nov. 1964, Téra & 417/444.4, 20/21 Sept.-20 Oct. 1964, Magaria; Diamballa Y.M. to M. le Commandant de Cercle de Zinder, 1.442/AI/cf., 7 Nov. 1964; all ANN, FONDS DAPA; J. Baulin, *Conseiller du Président Diori* (Paris, 1986), 49; *Le Temps du Niger: Quotidien républicain d'information*, 17 & 21 Oct. 1964.

⁶ Interviews Ali Amadou & Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 28 Jan. & 26 Oct. 2005; Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 Nov. 2003 and 15 Dec. 2009.

⁷ Interviews Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003; Amadou Bakary Maiga, Niamey, 25 Nov. 2003; Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 15 Dec. 2009.

prison cells in Niamey was marked by maltreatment.⁸ One list of Sawaba casualties, published decades later, mentions more than 50 names of commandos or cadres who died during the struggle against the RDA. In some cases these were the victims of executions; in many they were casualties of prison life—which is discussed in the next chapter. In several other instances it is not clear how men met their end. Rabo Saley, the cadre who visited China and entered Niger during the infiltrations as ‘chef de groupe’, was allegedly killed by a Garde de Cercle at Dan Issa, south of Madarounfa. It is unclear whether this took place in the course of the hostilities or subsequent to his arrest.⁹ Siddi Abdou, who braved his pursuers till the bitter end, had miraculously survived his suicide attempt and was brought to the capital—he must have suffered agonising pain. In the end, the Tahoua commando would have died on the operating table of Niamey’s hospital (2 December 1964).¹⁰

Those who survived and were subjected to questioning were forced to make confessions. As noted in Part II, interrogation routines made it hard to maintain silence. The Nigériens used this for political purposes and let captured commandos say particular things, which they had to repeat in front of journalists and were published *in extenso* in the government organ. In some cases this was repeated for visiting Western correspondents. The guerrillas had to say that they had been fooled by their own leadership—which would have lured them abroad with promises of scholarships—and that they found out the true nature of their instruction only once they had entered training camps in Ghana, Algeria and the Far East; at that stage, it was too late to protest since they were dependent on Sawaba’s leaders for their return to West Africa.¹¹

This story line deliberately confused the reality of ‘operation training of cadres’, whose objective was the development of a counter-administration

⁸ As admitted by regime official Abdou Adam, interview, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003.

⁹ *Le Niger*, 16 Nov. 1964 (interrogation Djibrilla Dembélé); Liste des Nigériens militants ou sympathisants du Sawaba morts dans les prisons du régime de Diori Hamani (UDFP-Sawaba, Niamey, n.d.). UDN/Sawaba, Liste des responsables et militants du Sawaba tombés sous le régime PPN/RDA, n.d., suggests Saley fell on the battlefield. This is also suggested by *La Voix Libérée*, no. 1, March–Apr. 2011, 28.

¹⁰ As reported by French intelligence. Untitled document, n.d., SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2. Liste des Nigériens alleged he died in Niamey from torture. Since French intelligence was up front about regime abuse, this may be untrue. UDN/Sawaba, Liste des responsables, claims he died in Tahoua, presumably directly following his attempted suicide. If death was not instant, his captors possibly tried to resuscitate him.

¹¹ Interview Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 6 Dec. 2003 and various articles in *Le Niger*, Oct.–Nov. 1964.

of educated personnel, with the routines established for the creation of the guerrilla force.¹² While the desire for personal advancement had played an important part in the motivations of recruits, they had been more or less free to choose their training, depending on background, availability of training places and the movement's requirements. Moreover, set against RDA persecution and the perilous escape abroad, it had been clear all along that Sawaba's overall objective was to return at the helm of the state. It was ludicrous to pretend that the rank and file had no idea of the purpose of their journeys and training, and this also flatly contradicted the hatred that many harboured towards the regime and the resolve to get even. In their public testimonies some even said that they had had no idea what the purpose of their return trip was until they had reached the infiltration zones and were handed their weapons, or that they did not agree with the orders of their unit leaders.¹³ Many, however, risked long prison terms or the death penalty and must have tried to save their skin or that of their comrades or family—as was admitted in the 'confessions' of Dodo Hamballi. Thus, retrospectively, Sawabists claimed that captured commandos said these things under duress or that interrogators simply wrote down the opposite of what they said during questioning.¹⁴

These testimonies allowed the regime to paint a picture of lone adventurers who had not only been fooled by their leaders but also lacked support and, hence, did not represent a broader trend of popular dissatisfaction. The role of the militias in tracking them down enabled the RDA to suggest that they were arrested at the initiative of 'the people', without the intervention of the authorities.¹⁵ It is this image that appeared in the articles of Western journalists.¹⁶ Detained commandos meekly repeated the allegation of having been tricked. Some, like Djibo Seyni, publicly called on comrades still on the run to give themselves up, while Yacouba Issa vainly tried to escape his execution by calling Bakary a traitor.¹⁷

¹² As emphasised by Ousseini Dandagoye. Interview, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003.

¹³ See f.e. *Le Niger*, 26 Oct. & 2 Nov. 1964 (interrogations Maman Alke, Tini Malélé, Robert Seguinikin).

¹⁴ *Le Niger*, 23 Nov. 1964 (interrogation Hamballi); interviews Sade Elhadji Mahaman, Ali Amadou, Mounkaila Albagna & Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 15 Nov. 2002, 31 Jan. & 6 Dec. 2003 & 27 Oct. 2005, and Ousmane Dan Galadima, Madaoua, 7 Febr. 2003. Many were also made to say they were not maltreated. See *Le Niger*, Oct.-Dec. 1964.

¹⁵ *Le Niger*, 7 Dec. 1964; interview with Abdou Adam, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003.

¹⁶ See the discussion in the Prologue.

¹⁷ *Le Niger*, 26 Oct. & 30 Nov. 1964 (interrogation Yacouba Issa & appeal Djibo Seyni).

The humiliation of the detainees did not end with this self-denial, as the regime proceeded to heap ridicule on them—which was easy now that the autumn invasion, marked by the capture of several members of the command, had ended in failure: paraded with handcuffs before journalists, the government organ referred to Sawaba's hopeful as 'terrorists', of course, but also as 'a handful of imbeciles', whose professionalism should be doubted. While these 'fake students' and 'hallucinating youths' had let themselves be fooled and turned into 'hesitant warriors', the 'tonnes of fetishes' that they had carried along (signs of their primitive superstitions) failed to prevent their capture by women or protect these 'idiots' at the execution post.¹⁸

The Counteroffensive of the Franco-RDA Combine

The tragedy of these individual fates apart, the regime also embarked on a variety of offensive operations. The primary element here was the arrest of domestic cadres, something that now developed massive proportions. As noted in the previous chapter, during the invasion already hundreds of people got rounded up and dumped in makeshift internment camps. Illa Salifou spent some time at a site in the industrial zone of the capital, where he slept on the ground, in the open air. Food had to be brought in from outside. Limane Kaoumi, the furniture maker who ended up in a prison in Zinder after Hamballi's capture, was in the company of around 800 men, an estimate confirmed by Zinderois cadre Oumarou Janba, who was arrested about the same time.¹⁹ By February 1965 Joseph Akouété, responsible for the transfer of guerrillas to Dahomey, was worrying that the organisation could get completely dislocated, as many of the domestic Sawabists had by then abandoned their 'post'.²⁰

It was a rude awakening for internal cadres, especially because many had been unaware of the commandos' impending arrival. Maman Tchila, who was detained in the course of the invasion, was astonished to hear that armed guerrillas had crossed the frontiers. His third arrest, Zinder's former

¹⁸ Ibid., 19 & 26 Oct. 1964; 2, 16 & 23 Nov. 1964; 10 May & 21 June 1965 ('terroristes'; 'une poignée d'imbéciles'; 'tonnes de gris-gris'; 'idiots'; 'faux-boursiers'; 'jeunes hallucinés'; 'guerriers hésitants'). Bakary was slandered for the life of luxury he was said to live in Ghana, with limousines and women, while the uncle who raised him would have committed suicide after an incest case. Ibid., 2 Nov. 1964.

¹⁹ Interview Illa Salifou, Niamey, 25 Nov. 2003 and Limane Kaoumi, Diffa, 12 Febr. 2006. Janba mentioned a figure of 700. Interview, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003.

²⁰ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 3 Febr. 1965; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2.



Photo 13.1 Limane Kaoumi, Diffa, 2006.

municipal councillor was brought to Niamey, then Say, and then again to the capital, all the time bound hand and foot. Detention took place on the charge of being a Sawabist, and legal counsel was withheld. Other cadres, such as Tahir Moustapha and Ousseini Dandagoye from Zinder, suffered a similar fate.²¹ In December 1964 former Sawaba minister Adamou Assane Mayaki was detained, even though he had been in France for an apprenticeship during the invasion. Baoua Souley's son in Dosso avoided arrest by sleeping at different safe houses. Abdou Ali Tazard, the Sawabist teacher from Tessaoua who had made his peace with the regime, avoided renewed bouts in prison but at the cost of continual transfers to new

²¹ Like Janba, Dandagoye put his arrest in 1963 (9 Nov.), but this was probably a year later. See note 22.

teaching posts (nine in one 3-month period alone). Likewise, Monique Hadiza, the wife of Hima Dembélé, was transferred from a government ministry to a post in Tahoua.²²

Surveillance of Sawaba communities was becoming extreme—the French referred to ‘severe measures’.²³ Already during the autumn of 1964 Magaria officials were touring the villages on the border with Nigeria, checking on the vigilance of the canton chief and party committee. Peasants in the Doguéraoua region near Konni were arrested, which wiped out a cell that had helped in the infiltrations of commando units. In Tessaoua, Malam Amadou Sanoussi, a Nyassist marabout, and three followers were thrown in jail, as was Zakari Bila, a local mason. Later, in February 1965, the authorities caught a suspect (possibly a commando) in the border region with Upper Volta and responded by installing a ‘curtain’ of forces along the frontier. A few months after that a man in Matamey was detained just for carrying a Sawaba document, and police were ordered to be on the lookout for people wearing boubous or caps in blue, the colour of the enemy.²⁴ Paranoia took hold. Earlier the alarm had been sounded in the Madaoua and Dakoro regions about potential dangers, which then appeared to have nothing to do with Sawaba infiltrations.²⁵ Purges had been suggested of Konni’s provincial administration. Now migrant workers travelling between Niger and the coast were detained and questioned at length, heads of families known to have Sawabists in their midst arrested and tortured,²⁶ and in Maradi a burglar was caught by alerting the public to a ‘Sawabist’ at

²² Interviews Sao Marakan, Niamey, 16 Nov. 2002; Maman Tchila, Zinder, 9 Febr. 2003; Ibrahim Bawa Souley, Niamey, 5 Febr. 2003; Tahir Moustapha & Oumarou Janba, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003; Ousseini Dandagoye, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003; Abdou Ali Tazard, Tessaoua, 9 Febr. 2006; Monique Hadiza, Niamey, 5 Nov. 2005; Adamou Assane Mayaki, Niamey, 29 Jan. 2003. Also see I.A. Mayaki (son of Adamou Assane), *La caravane passe* (Paris, 1999), 7.

²³ Rapport de Fin de Commandement du Général de Division Revol. Délégué pour la Défense de la Z.O.M. du 28 juin 1963 au 28 févr. 1965, part I; SHAT, 5 H 35 (‘mesures sévères’).

²⁴ *Le Niger*, 16 Nov. 1964; Bulletin Mensuel de Renseignements, 1-31 Oct. 1964, no. 472.3—Konni; 21 Sept.-20 Oct. & 21 Oct.-20 Nov. 1964, Tessaoua; all ANN, FONDS DAPA; Événements survenus en Afrique Francophone pendant la semaine du 8 au ? févr. 1965; SHAT, 10 T 210; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 12 May 1965; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; K. Alfari, Mémorandum sur les fraternelles relations franco-nigériennes (Union de la Jeunesse Patriotique du Niger: Niamey, 2003), 48. Zakari Bila = Zakari of the Gazaoua cell (ch. 10, n. 20)?

²⁵ An unlucky soul hunted down in the Dakoro area turned out to be a deaf-mute looking for water. Bulletin Mensuel de Renseignements, no. 417, 20 Oct.-20 Nov. 1964—Madaoua & Dakoro; both ANN, FONDS DAPA.

²⁶ Déclaration Amadou Darey, no. 232/CSN, 25 March 1965, Garba Bourahima dit Bazabarimi Gariba, no. 216/CSN, 19 March 1965 & Rakoumy Souley, no. 215/CSN, 19 March 1965; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.1; A. Salifou, *Le Niger* (Paris, 2002), 183.



Photo 13.2 Djibo Harouna, Gothève, 2005.

large—the unlucky criminal admitting his thievery in order to escape the worst.²⁷ Eavesdroppers overheard a remark about resentment in Mainé-Soroa from a delegate at a function in the presidential palace, and in Dosso a contender for a government post tried to eliminate a rival by insinuating links with Sawaba, a practice that became widespread.²⁸

In the countryside, this surveillance took on a much cruder form. The Gendarmerie undertook raids in which whole villages were reportedly wiped out—emptied of inhabitants, who were accused of Sawaba sympathies and were killed or fled persecution (often crossing into Nigeria). Since this occurred in the context of secret operations, it is difficult to find evidence for this,²⁹ but the terror in the western region in the course of the invasion points to the violent nature of such actions. The inhabitants of Soudouré, and in particular the family of Djibo Bakary there, were terrified.

²⁷ Interview with Abdou Adam (RDA official), Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003. Confirmed in interviews with Bachir Boukary, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003 and Monique Hadiza, Niamey, 5 Nov. 2005. Maïga cautioned against administrative purges in Konni. Rapport Politique Mensuel, période du 20 sept. au 20 oct. 1964, Birnin Konni, no. 19; ANN, FONDS DAPA.

²⁸ This last incident already took place in August 1964. Note d'information, nos. 417-418/CSN, 4 Aug. 1964; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.1. Salifou, *Le Niger*, 183.

²⁹ It is reported by J. Ibrahim, 'Political Exclusion, Democratization and Dynamics of Ethnicity in Niger', *Africa Today*, 3, 1994, 24, without, however, citing the sources (probably oral ones) for this.



Photo 13.3 Djibo Foulan, Bandio, 2005.

They were abandoned by people scared to be associated with them and subjected to weapons searches. The women folk—all the men had fled—were beaten by police, their huts ransacked and possessions destroyed.³⁰ In Gothèye and Bandio, too, gendarmes appeared on the scene, forcing, for example, Djibo Harouna (whose father was a Sawabist) and Djibo Foulan, the peasant-marabout who had gone to North Vietnam, to reveal arms caches. Harouna could not oblige them and the compound of his family was kept under surveillance.³¹

³⁰ Interviews Adamou Souna (younger brother of Bakary) and Zongo Hima (Bakary's only surviving sister—see Photo 13.4), Soudouré, 27 Febr. 2008.

³¹ Interview with Djibo Harouna, Gothèye, 1 Nov. 2005, and Djibo Foulan, Bandio, 4 Nov. 2005.



Photo 13.4 Zongo Hima, younger sister of Djibo Bakary, Soudouré, 2008.

The authorities also took their offensive beyond the country's borders. At the height of the infiltrations, Diamballa Maïga sent Captain Badié on a mission to Dahomey and Ghana, without informing Diori. The ruthless Gendarmerie chief travelled on false papers to Porto Novo, where he had to locate Sawaba's headquarters. From there he proceeded to Cotonou, where he was stopped by police, forcing him to abandon his car, driver and the documents he had collected (including on the Dahomean army). Badié travelled on to Ghana, where he located the camp of Half-Assini, possibly with the help of Nigériens, one of whom served in the Ghanaian army. Alerted about his presence by Dahomey's president, Bakary and the Ghanaian authorities alleged that Badié had been sent to assassinate Sawaba leaders, an accusation that, against the background of the invasion and the earlier killing of Daouda Ardaly, cannot be dismissed outright. Badié was hunted down but was able to make it to the Voltan embassy in Accra, where they arranged his escape to Ouagadougou.³²

In its counteroffensive the regime got a lot of help from the French, the Ivorians and a couple of other countries—diplomatic, military and by way

³² Événements survenus en Afrique Francophone pendant la semaine du 12 au 18 oct. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 210; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 7, 17 & 24 Nov. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; British High Commission Accra to A.J. Warren, British Embassy Abidjan, POL 23/1, 14 Nov. 1964; PRO, FO 371/177230.

of intelligence gathering. In the spring of 1965, responding to new developments, Abidjan sent intelligence specialists to help in the interrogation of guerrillas.³³ Police officials from Upper Volta also took part in this, and commissioners of police were dispatched for this purpose.³⁴ The support of both countries was singled out for praise.³⁵ In December 1964 Sawaba's leadership also asserted that Israelis participated in the interrogation of commandos, referring to goumiers being supervised by officers who had arrived for this from Tel Aviv. While Djibo Sékou, the Sawaba union worker, in his recollections later reiterated the same allegations, Israeli participation cannot be confirmed beyond the instruction in interrogation techniques to militias—not state police forces.³⁶

As noted in Chapter 11, just before the invasion the regime obtained substantial matériel from France, Belgium and Israel, and as the infiltrations expanded, the French stepped up their arms' deliveries. Tréca, the ambassador in Niamey, in a letter to France's development minister supported Diori's request for the reinforcement of the Gendarmerie, adding that 'the recent events of the Sawaba subversion also [argued] in favour of an increase of Niger's armed forces and police'. The embassy's military mission and France's military headquarters in Abidjan approved a Nigérien request for 250 new arms and 12 'power wagons'.³⁷ At the end of 1964, a Nigérien government plane flew to Liège in Belgium, returning with six tonnes of freight, most of which consisted of NATO 7.65 mm calibre ammunition, shotguns and Herstal automatic pistols.³⁸ Besides the planned increase in Republican Guards and Gendarmerie, it was decided to expand the army. The French noted that the invasion had had a negative effect on FAN forces. These had been compelled to take over from French units—

³³ Telegram Génédef Dakar to Minarmées Paris, no. 8358/CH, 14 Apr. 1965; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; interview Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 Nov. 2003 and 23 Febr. 2008.

³⁴ *Seeda: Mensuel nigérien d'informations générales*, no. 6, Sept. 2002. Also interview Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 Nov. 2003 & 23 Febr. 2008.

³⁵ *Le Niger*, 23 Nov. 1964.

³⁶ *Sawaba: Organe Central du Parti Sawaba du Niger*, Dec. 1964; *Seeda*, no. 6, Sept. 2002; Bulletin de Renseignements, Commandement Supérieur du point d'appui de Dakar, 19 July 1965; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; ch. 11 at ns. 30-32; *Le Niger*, 23 Nov. 1964.

³⁷ The power wagon probably referred to the Dodge power wagon, a car based on a military transport vehicle. Albert Tréca, Ambassadeur de France au Niger, à M. le Ministre de la Coopération, Niamey, 31 oct. 1964; Telegram MISMIL Niamey to Génédef ZOM 4 Abidjan, no. 3553/4, before 12 Oct. 1964 & Telegram 271/4/2/S Diplomatie Paris à Ambafrance, 14 oct. 1964; Dévolution. Cession de matériels. SMB Niger; SHAT, 5 H 67 ('les récentes manifestations de la subversion Sawaba plaident également en faveur d'un accroissement des forces armées nigériennes et des forces de police').

³⁸ Bulletin de Renseignements, no. 1370/2/SC, Abidjan, 16 dec. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2.

just withdrawn from Saharan outposts—at the very time that they had to cope with Sawaba's infiltrations in the south and west. Although this led to the dislocation of army units, French General Revol, commanding Zone d'Outre-Mer no. 4, considered that, overall, they had acquitted themselves well in their task.³⁹

Nevertheless, the French made it crystal clear that they would not let the Nigériens confront their security threats alone. Moral support was crucial for a regime as psychologically insecure as the RDA. In mid-November 1964 an envoy already came down from Paris for 'a very friendly discussion' with Diori. In December, after French forces had completed their withdrawal from Agadez, Tréca reassured the government that the accords on military assistance would remain in place, adding that 'France, whatever the new location of its military means, [would] remain on [Niger's] side to render aid and assistance for the defence of the Republic ...'. For this purpose it would establish an office for military assistance inside the Niamey embassy.⁴⁰ Metropolitan support came, in fact, from the highest level, as can be gauged from the attendance by Jacques Foccart of the 18 December celebrations, where General Revol was awarded the 'Grand Croix de l'Ordre National Nigérien', besides a man and a woman credited with the capture of Sallé Dan Koulou.⁴¹

Tellingly, five French civilians working for Niger's administration resigned in protest against the measures taken against Sawabists,⁴² but this did not deter the French government from helping in the persecution of the movement's cadres. As described in Part II, with the Africanisation of the Sûreté several of its French employees had gone over to the BCL. Colombani, Clément, Cousin and Fromant still worked there, while they were assisted by Péraldi at the Sûreté. In early December four officers of the

³⁹ Rapport de Fin de Commandement du Général de Division Revol, parts I & VI; Cession de matériels. SMB Niger.

⁴⁰ *Le Niger*, 16 Nov. & 7 Dec. 1964 ('un entretien très amical'; 'La France, quelle que soit la nouvelle implantation de son dispositif militaire, demeure à vos côtés pour prêter aide et assistance à la défense de la République...').

⁴¹ Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire de la ZOM 4, no. 51, 14-20 Dec. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; L. Kaziendé, *Souvenirs d'un enfant de la colonisation* (Porto Novo, 1998), vol. 5, 237.

⁴² These were Roland Martin and Prof. Destanne de Bernis, both government advisers; and William Hirsch, Poulain Daudard and a certain Ms Blanc, experts at the planning agency. French intelligence claimed De Bernis was known for his leftist views and that Diori was happy to see him and others go. The head of the planning agency, Robert Bayle, sided with the regime. Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 5 Nov. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; *Ibid.*, 7 Nov. 1964.

'French auxiliary police' were flown in to act as 'technical advisers' of the Sûreté director, Diori's half-brother Boubakar Moussa. They were immediately put at the disposal of the BCL, where they assisted in the questioning of Sawabists and the drafting of interrogation reports.⁴³ The BCL was responsible to the presidential palace. In fact, it was located inside the presidential complex, which consisted of several buildings on either side of a road. On one side was the office of Diori; on the other was an entrance that gave access to a complex of buildings: the presidential residence to the left and, separated by a car park, Diori's family's lodgings to the right and, closer to the road, a building for the BCL. This consisted of different rooms (not genuine cells) and office space, separated by a corridor. The commandos were incarcerated in several of these halls or rooms, where they stayed and slept for as long as the questioning would take. Interrogation took place in rooms—seven or eight—to the left, on the side of Diori's residence.⁴⁴

Questioning by the Sûreté-BCL constituted the second phase of interrogation, following that of Gendarmerie or Republican Guards. It focused on perfecting the intelligence picture. Interrogations were geared towards establishing the tiniest details (names of companions, infiltrations, existence of cells, networks, arms caches, their location etc.).⁴⁵ Goumiers, part of paramilitary units, were present to administer beatings or told to come down for this by Jean Colombani or his colleagues. The French officers did not administer beatings themselves but gave orders for this purpose, depending on whether they judged a detainee forthcoming. Alternatively, prisoners were beaten with whips before the interrogation would start, so as to 'soften' them up. Sometimes the French officer in charge would leave the room while the beatings, by one goumier or several, took place. At other times, Colombani and his men remained present, sitting at a round

⁴³ Interviews Ali Amadou & Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 31 Jan. & 6 Dec. 2003. The French auxiliary police (who remained unidentified) are referred to in *Bulletin de Renseignements*, no. 1368/2/S.C, Abidjan, 16 Dec. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2 ('conseillers techniques'; 'police française supplémentaire').

⁴⁴ Interviews Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 15 Dec. 2009 & Ali Amadou, Niamey, 28 Jan. 2003. Incarceration and interrogation inside the palace complex was also attested to by former regime official Abdou Adam (interview, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003) and numerous interviews with other Sawaba cadres. Also J.P. Ruttimann, in *Afrique Nouvelle*, 8-13 June 1967, no. 1.035.

⁴⁵ Interview with Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 26 Oct. 2005.

table while the ‘recalcitrants’ were being lashed. Detainees in the cells could hear their comrades screaming.⁴⁶

While beatings seem to have been commonplace, the simple threat of mistreatment or the withholding of medical care encouraged many to accommodate their interrogators. Boubakar Djingaré, for example, though suffering from his swellings, was refused hospital care (though later he may have been given some medication). He provided information on his personal history to his interrogators—Georges Clément and Colombani himself—who claimed that he knew something, pressing him to talk. The Niamey mason, whose later testimony betrayed that he may have been beaten all the same, would not have provided details on the infiltrations of the Konni unit. If true, he may have followed the pattern of alleged ignorance and evasive answers marking many interrogation reports published in the government organ.⁴⁷ Similarly, fearing that he might be put into a sack and thrown into the Niger River, Ali Mahamane Madaouki, the commando in the Magaria sector, hid from Colombani that he had been entrusted with intelligence gathering (which had included taking notes), claiming that he had not attended school but was a humble cobbler by profession.⁴⁸

Experienced in these matters, the French, of course, were aware of evasive tactics and would press on until satisfied. The officers of the BCL seem to have been sufficiently well informed to make it hard for detainees to advance complete nonsense. Thus, it was inevitable that the detainees talked, mentioning cadres known to them.⁴⁹ Threats, implicit or explicit, could always be made to push the men further. For example, ‘Yayé’, the Dargol commando, did not receive any blows, but the fact that his entire family was in detention and an uncle of his had been beaten to death made maltreatment superfluous; the French officers made notes as he responded to questions.⁵⁰ The member of the ‘El Mali’ unit, Soumana Idrissa, was softened up in a more explicit way. In the early days of his detention, there was a high-level meeting of RDA officials in the presidential complex, de-

⁴⁶ Oral testimonies confirm each other and derive from interviews held with different people and at different times: interviews (all held in Niamey) with Ali Amadou, 28 Jan. 2003; Mounkaila Beidari, 28 Nov. 2003 and esp. 15 Dec. 2009; and Boubakar Djingaré, 27 Oct. 2005 (‘recalcitrants’).

⁴⁷ Interviews with Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 26–27 Oct. 2005. On the report on Djingaré, see the Ivorian *Fraternité*, 4 June 1965 and *Rheinischer Merkur*, 30 Apr. 1965.

⁴⁸ Interview with Ali Mahamane Madaouki, Zinder, 14 Febr. 2003.

⁴⁹ Interview with Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 Nov. 2003.

⁵⁰ Interview with Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 6 Dec. 2003.

bating whether to organise new executions. Questioning was halted so as not to disturb the leadership with the screams of interrogated Sawabists.⁵¹ There was disagreement on the issue of new death sentences but Diori, about to embark on a visit to Abidjan, concluded the meeting with a ban on new killings. With the meeting over, Clément told Soumana Idrissa in a bout of cynicism that he was lucky in his misery. He held up sheets of paper and told the guerrilla that each one of them symbolised five years of imprisonment, which he could expect for every wrong answer. Like Daouda Hamadou, Idrissa was not physically abused, possibly because he, too, had not been caught on Nigérien territory but was later extradited by the Malian authorities to Niamey (see below). Still, Idrissa's interrogation would have lasted for four days and nights, which must have been an ordeal.⁵²

If Idrissa himself was not beaten, comrades of his were—on the orders of Clément. Some would have been beaten to death, though it is doubtful that this occurred at this stage (see further below). It is, in any case, difficult to ascertain,⁵³ and it would have signified a fault in intelligence gathering, certainly in the professional context of the BCL. There is a testimony on the torture of Dan Boula Sanda Makamari, and although it is not known when this happened, it probably involved the BCL as Makamari must have been interrogated about his training in China. His torture would have left permanent scars.⁵⁴ By contrast, Jean Colombani himself occasionally acted in a magnanimous manner to try and persuade detainees to accommodate him of their own accord.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, even regime officials have retrospectively not wished to dispute that interrogations were accompanied by maltreatment.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Interviews with Soumana Idrissa, Gothèye, 1 Nov. 2005 & Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 15 Dec. 2009.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ There are no additional data beyond Soumana Idrissa's claim. Yet, he repeated this four years later, illustrating it with the torture to death of a Sawabist in 1966, when interrogation practices, however, had hardened further. Interviews, Gothèye, 1 Nov. 2005 and 18 Dec. 2009. See for the 1966 casualty (whose name was Garba Sakouara) next chapter.

⁵⁴ Interview with Soumana Idrissa, Gothèye, 18 Dec. 2009 and conversation with Moutari (?) Dan Boula Sanda, Zinder, 15 Febr. 2006. Sanda is the son of Makamari, who died in 1988.

⁵⁵ Interviews Ousmane Dan Galadima, Madaoua, 7 Febr. 2003 & Maman Tchila, Zinder, 9 Febr. 2003. When the latter was brought to him in handcuffs, Colombani, who knew Tchila, asked who had given the orders for this.

⁵⁶ Interview Abdou Adam, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003, who suggested that it was possible that this happened in other places, but not in Niamey!

As noted, it was not only commandos who ended up at the presidency but also domestic cadres like Maman Tchila and Gonimi Boukar—the latter had made his peace with the RDA but was interrogated all the same. Similarly, Sawaba students in the Eastern Bloc got to know the BCL. Tahirou Maïga, the geology student in the Soviet Union, upon his return home spent two weeks in a room in the presidential complex.⁵⁷ After passing through the offices of the BCL-Sûreté, the guerrillas were detained on a more permanent basis in one of the capital's prisons, including the prison civile in the Terminus quarter. But as these could not cope with the inflow of detainees, the regime also used schools and military camps, such as 'Camp Bano' on the eastern outskirts of the capital. Here many of Sawaba's domestic cadres, who had not been involved in commando operations, were brought, although some commandos, like Mounkaila Albagna, later recalled being taken there as well. Often, however, the commandos were immediately locked up in the new police headquarters (where judicial police officials held office), near the National Assembly. An indefinite period of detention began.⁵⁸

*Enemy Territory*⁵⁹

As Badié's mission showed, the failed invasion had an effect on the situation in the hinterland. In Northern Nigeria, for example, Sawaba's freedom of action had always depended considerably on the complexities of Nigeria's political system, whose competing authorities at the federal and regional levels—coupled with their lack of interest in the affairs of Niger—had provided room for manoeuvre. However, as shown in the previous chapter, the events in 1964 had pushed the Nigerians into action against the Sawabists on their territory. Politically this was not difficult since Bakary's men were in alliance with their own opposition, NEPU,

⁵⁷ Interviews Gonimi Boukar, Niamey, 5 Nov. 2005 and Tahirou Ayouba Maïga, Niamey, 28 Oct. 2005.

⁵⁸ *Le Niger*, 31 May 1965 (interrogation Hassane Djibo). Noga Yamba (interview, Zinder, 14 Febr. 2003) said he was locked up in 'maison banco', a possible reference to a building of traditional sun-baked earthen bricks. Yet, it may well have referred to Camp Bano, as suggested by others. Interviews Mounkaila Beidari & Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 15 Dec. 2009; Adamou Assane Mayaki, Niamey, 29 Jan. 2003; Daouda Hamadou, Ayorou, 20 Dec. 2009; Soumana Idrissa, Gothèye, 18 Dec. 2009.

⁵⁹ Djibo Bakary to Sallé Dan Koulou, 22 Sept. 1964. Source: Bulletin de Renseignements Particuliers, 10 Oct. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2 ('pays ennemi').

whose existence the Northern Nigerians barely tolerated.⁶⁰ Hence, even before the commandos began their invasion, several Sawabists in Northern Nigeria were arrested, as the capture of Dodo Hamballi and Malam Karé-gamba had led to the disclosure of bases and cells.

Initially, Diiori had expressed anger about what he saw as Nigeria's responsibility with regard to the existence on its territory of cells and arms depots, and the ease with which commandos could cross the border. He threatened the federal authorities with action in the OAU ('pretty strong stuff', according to British diplomats). Even Northern Nigeria's premier, the Sardauna of Sokoto, was apparently not spared criticism.⁶¹ This way Niger brought pressure to bear, and Diiori, who then deftly excluded the Sardauna from further criticism (he actually maintained warm ties with him), dispatched a senior executive and Niger's Kano consul to Ahmadu Bello for talks.⁶² Diamballa Maïga was well aware that Nigeria's involvement was essentially due to the nature of its political system—something that officials lower in the RDA hierarchy had difficulty in understanding—and he considered a Nigérien mission to Northern Nigeria as an effective ploy to deal with the issue.⁶³ Consequently, in December 1964 Diiori himself travelled to Northern Nigeria, visiting the north-eastern city of Maiduguri for the opening of the Borno railway extension and going to Kaduna for talks with the Sardauna. The latter did his best to accommodate the Nigériens, and few efforts were spared to demonstrate Nigeria's willingness to cooperate. The British embassy in Abidjan helped by asking London about Sawaba's money flows in relation to the discovery of Sallé Dan Koulou's bank account in Kano, and the CIA was said to have engaged along this line as well.⁶⁴

More directly, the Nigerians hit at Sawabist cells in the Northern Region, arresting cadres, deporting them to Niger—even those who had Nigerian citizenship—and more generally driving out Nigériens with a Sawabist background. In this way Dan Kané, a Sawabist from 'Tibir' (in the Dogondoutchi area or from Tibiri near Maradi), saw no other choice than to

⁶⁰ Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, 12-18 Oct. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 722/D.2.

⁶¹ W.S. Bates, British High Commission Kaduna, to J.A. Pugh, Lagos, 21 Oct. 1964; PRO, FO 371/177230.

⁶² T.R. Shaw, British Embassy Abidjan, to C.M. Lequesne, Foreign Office, 2 & 15 Oct. 1964; PRO, FO 371/177.230.

⁶³ Bulletin Mensuel de Renseignements, no. 417, 21 Sept.-20 Oct. 1964, Magaria.

⁶⁴ J.A. Pugh, British High Commission, Lagos, to A.J. Warren, British Embassy Abidjan, 11 & 12 Dec. 1964; PRO, FO 371/177.230; T.R. Shaw, British Embassy Abidjan, to C.M. Lequesne, Foreign Office, 22 Oct. 1964; PRO, FO 371/177.230; *Le Niger*, 7 Dec. 1964.

return and give himself up. He had fled Niger in the course of Malam Karégamba's arrest. Karégamba himself may have left Nigeria before his capture, as intimated by a Sawaba communiqué which claimed that he was born a Nigerian, even though he worked in the administration of Maradi. Clearly, for the Nigerians it was also a means to get even with NEPU. There is no way of knowing how many of its cadres were affected, since party propaganda was marked by hyperbole, yet harassment of members was always serious in election years. NEPU spoke of 'thousands' of people who got caught up in Sokoto, Katsina, Kano, Zaria and Gusau, i.e. typical NEPU/Sawaba strongholds.⁶⁵ French intelligence in November 1964 reported that the authorities in Kano and Sokoto had arrested numerous people suspected of aiding Sawaba (including a runaway gendarme). They were handed over to the Nigérien regime, whose own intelligence structures stepped up activities inside Nigeria, signalling, for example, the possible presence in Kano of Boukari Karemi dit Kokino, Sawaba's man in Tamanrasset, along with that of several others.⁶⁶

By the end of 1964 the Sardauna personally ordered an operation to suppress arms trafficking in the Borno region (as shown above, NEPU cadres were deeply involved in this on Sawaba's behalf), and troops made several thrusts in an attempt to capture suspects who had been hidden by Nigerian villagers and escaped across the border. Police reinforcements were sent to the frontier and Nigerian security forces stepped up patrols. In November the French reported that 'cleaning operations' in Niger's east were continuing;⁶⁷ this euphemism also referred to the joint operations that Nigérien and Nigerian forces were now beginning to carry out. As shown in the previous chapter, the assaults by Aba Kaka's units led Nigérien army troops to cross the border. Usually, they did so with the knowledge of the Nigerian authorities, but the actions of the Nigériens could be

⁶⁵ A letter of a Nigerian specifically mentioned three Nigerians deported to Niger: a Mallam Chefu Abdou from Sokoto; Mallam Isiaku Yoruba; and one 'Mr. Philip'. Bulletin Mensuel de Renseignements, no. 417, 21 Oct.-20 Nov. 1964, Maradi; ANN, FONDS DAPA. *Sawaba*, Dec. 1964; T. Yakasai, *The Story of a Humble Life: An Autobiography*, vol. 1 (Zaria, 2004), 203-205.

⁶⁶ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 24 Nov. 1964; Bulletin Mensuel de Renseignements, no. 417, 21 Oct.-20 Nov. 1964, Maradi; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 8 Dec. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2. The desertion of the gendarme—exceptional in such a loyal regime force—probably concerned the eyewitness (and local?) of the encounters at Madarounfa. See ch. 12, note 141.

⁶⁷ Ibid.; Pugh to Warren, 11 Dec. 1964; British High Commission Lagos, to A.J. Warren, British Embassy Abidjan, 1 POL.10/174/1, 4 Nov. 1964; PRO, FO 371/177230; Événements survenus en Afrique Francophone pendant la semaine du 16 au 22 nov. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 210 ('opérations de nettoyage').

particularly rough, leading to tension among the Nigerian population.⁶⁸ In the course of their manhunts they sometimes set the grassland alight and during one operation they descended on a Nigerian hamlet where they suspected Kaka himself was hiding.⁶⁹ They threatened the chief that they would burn down the village if he did not provide help. The villagers warned the authorities in Maiduguri and Nigerian soldiers hurried to the scene. The inhabitants were ordered to assemble outside their huts and the Nigériens then searched the dwellings, together with the Nigerians.⁷⁰ The Nigerians also reinforced their own intelligence capacity, stationing spies in cities such as Maiduguri and Gashua to remain on the lookout for commandos and offering bounties to those who could deliver them to the authorities. In this way several members of a commando unit were arrested in February 1965 after another attack in the Bosso region (see below).⁷¹

The arrest that same month of a Sawaba suspect at the border with Upper Volta showed that the hinterland there had become insecure as well. Having been threatened by Bakary with military action, the Voltan government had co-operated with the RDA in every respect. Sawaba alleged that Voltan forces operated on Nigérien territory and that at least two dozen Nigériens had been extradited to Niamey, including Oumarou Kif Amadou, its Malian contact man in Botou tried by the Cour de Sûreté in November 1964.⁷² Thus, already towards the end of that year British diplomats reported that the Voltan frontier region had been effectively closed for future infiltrations.⁷³ Voltan co-operation also widened to the diplomatic sphere, for which the Entente network provided a forum. Yaméogo saw Diiori and Houphouët at a meeting in Abidjan in mid-November, where they discussed the commando invasion, the connivance of the Dahomean and Ghanaian governments and the role of Chinese funding in Sawaba's

⁶⁸ One Alhaji Mahamadu Wada from Katsina, presumably a NEPU cadre, wrote an angry letter, published in *Sawaba*, Dec. 1964, denouncing the 'convoy of a foreign army' being allowed to 'comb our national territory of Nigeria', suggesting complaints about this had come in from all over the region.

⁶⁹ They had found blood, presumably of an injured commando, under a bale of sorghum. See next note.

⁷⁰ Interviews with Kanembou Malam (ex-government soldier), Diffa, 12 Febr. 2006 and Aba Kaka, Bosso, 13 Febr. 2006. This operation probably took place in the autumn of 1965.

⁷¹ *Sawaba*, Dec. 1964; Événements survenus ... 8 au ? févr. 1965.

⁷² Communiqué no. 6 undated, ca. mid-November 1964; PRO, FO 371/177218; Front démocratique de la patrie (Parti Sawaba): Déclaration, 13 Nov. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; *Le Niger*, 2 & 16 Nov. 1964.

⁷³ *Le Niger*, 16 Nov. 1964; n. 245 ch. 12.

operations. They expressed concern about Dahomey's decision to enter into diplomatic ties with the People's Republic and discussed whether to file a complaint against Dahomey and Ghana at the OAU. The Entente allies decided to co-ordinate their action vis-à-vis Ghana, and Abidjan began an initiative to try and bring the Dahomeans closer to the Entente.⁷⁴

The allies saw each other again at a meeting in Ouagadougou in December. In mid-January 1965 they met once more in Abidjan, where Diori paid homage to his allies. For the first time, Justin Ahomadegbé, Dahomey's vice-president, was present as well. The Togolese had meanwhile also expressed interest in the Entente. As noted, Togo's government had never supported Sawaba, although President Grunitzky had vainly mediated a rapprochement between Niger's arch enemies, and Joseph Akouété maintained ties with the presidency: he was actually received by Grunitzky shortly before the invasion (in September 1964) and then in November met with the latter's director of cabinet. If the Togolese therefore wavered in their attitudes—the French, possibly in an attempt to isolate the regime in Dahomey, tried to dissuade them from mediating in the chronically bad relations between the Dahomean head of state and his vice-president—, in the end they came down on the side of the RDA. The fact that Togolese opposition figures, at least in the past, had flirted with Bakary's cadres may have played a role. During the second month of the infiltrations, Togolese police seized ammunition and documents from Sawaba sympathisers, and about the same time Grunitzky, en route for West Germany, made a short stopover in Niamey. In an attempt to wean him away from his enemies, Bakary had earlier informed Grunitzky that Captain Badié had been sent to Togo on a mission to kill Sawaba cadres, bolstering his allegation with photos of the head of the Gendarmerie in uniform and civilian attire. In response, Togo's leader let it be known that he supported Niger's government but would not allow any action on Togolese territory. In December 1964 Bakary contacted Togo's interior minister, pleading for unhindered passage of fresh commandos. The following January, however, he had still not obtained permission and by February 1965 he was expressing concern about the concerted surveillance by the embassies of the Entente.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Sawaba had some contact with clandestine opposition forces in Côte d'Ivoire, as can be gauged from letters of support for its cause, published in *Sawaba*, Dec. 1964.

⁷⁵ Rapport de Fin de Commandement du Général de Division Revol, part I; T.R. Shaw, British Embassy Abidjan, to C.M. Lequesne, Foreign Office, 20 Nov. 1964; E.M. Smith, British Embassy Lomé, to P.R.A. Mansfield, Foreign Office, 21 Nov. 1964; both PRO, FO 371/177.229; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 7 & 17 Nov. & 8 Dec. 1964 and 21 Jan. & 3 Febr. 1965; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; *Le Niger*, 9 Nov. 1964 and 25 Jan. 1965.

Worse, the movement was about to lose its base areas in Mali. As noted in previous chapters, *realpolitik* had made the Malian government more circumspect in its support for Bakary, steering a course between aiding a movement whose militant parentage it shared and pursuing an improvement in ties with neighbouring states. While distinguishing itself from their pro-French posture, economic and security issues required better relations with them, but Niamey's intransigence vis-à-vis Bakary had made betrayal of the militant comrades from Niger impossible. These conflicting interests had led to a situation in which the Malians had made their assistance more covert, tolerating a low-key commando presence in the Gao area—which meant that arms had to remain in their caches for the duration of the stay on Malian territory. With the failure of the invasion, however, abandonment of Sawaba became easier, and this had also become more urgent as a result of famine conditions, which forced Bamako to ask for food imports from Niger.⁷⁶

If the *quid pro quo* stipulated by Niamey formed no surprise, it was a rude awakening for Sawaba's men. Those commandos that had withdrawn to Malian territory found that the hinterland had become unsafe. Already in late October 1964 two cadres in the Ménaka area were picked up by the authorities and transferred to the Gendarmerie in Gao.⁷⁷ Soumana Idrissa and his companions Souley Gonni and Mohamadou Ayouba, having made it back to Malian territory after the encounter near Ayorou, were caught by Peul nomads and brought to the police of Labézanga-Ouatagouna. Nigérien police in pursuit of them had meanwhile crossed the frontier but were asked by the Malians to return, while the Sawaba commandos were transferred to Ansongo and finally to the Gendarmerie in Gao. After spending around three or four months in detention (it must have been early 1965), they were brought to the frontier post of Labézanga. Niger had provided the Malians with a list of commandos and cadres that it wanted in exchange for the food aid, and Idrissa and friends were handed over to Nigérien police.⁷⁸

Similarly, one week before the new year, ten Sawabists were arrested by Mali's security services, and it was made known that they would be handed over to Niger. A fortnight later, in January 1965, the Malians were about to extradite seven Sawabists (in exchange for 70 tonnes of millet), among

⁷⁶ Interviews with Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 6 Dec. 2003 & Soumana Idrissa, Gothèye, 1 Nov. 2005.

⁷⁷ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 5 Nov. 1964.

⁷⁸ Interviews with Soumana Idrissa, Gothèye, 1 Nov. 2005 and 18 Dec. 2009.

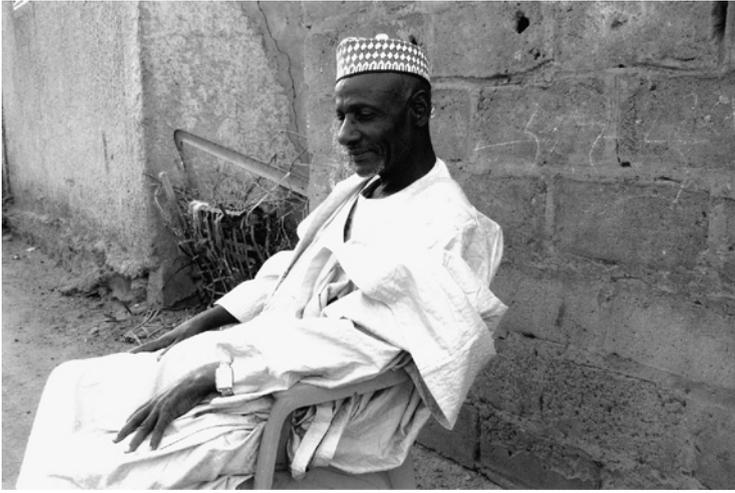


Photo 13.5 Ali Issaka, Niamey, 2008.

whom was an unidentified commando who was described as the commander of Zone North.⁷⁹ Since Sawaba's northern infiltration network did not play a role in the invasion, the French report on this may have referred to Idrissa Arfou, one of the commanders of Zone West who had withdrawn to Mali after the failed attack in the Téra region. Thus, in another missive French intelligence reported that the 'illegal Nigériens' locked up just before the new year probably represented the remainder of the unit that had operated in the Téra area.⁸⁰ Daouda Hamadou, who had been part of the unit of Arfou and Albagna, must have been one of them. The tailor and Algeria-trained guerrilla had made it back to Tessit but was warned that Mali had been bought off by the RDA, whereupon he fled to Ansongo—he knew a local official there, who asked him and his comrades to stay put. After a while they were arrested. Their detention in Ansongo lasted a week, after which they were brought to Labézanga and transferred to the Nigériens, possibly on 24 January. Ali Issaka, Hamadou's fellow fighter at Téra and also trained in Marnia, was more lucky. He was freed by the Malians after a brief period in jail and then made it to Ghana.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 22 Dec. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; & 21 Jan. 1965.

⁸⁰ Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire ... 14-20 Dec. 1964, no. 51.

⁸¹ Interviews with Daouda Hamadou, Ayorou, 20 Dec. 2009 and Ali Issaka, Niamey, 29 Febr. 2008.

For the others, the transfer to Niger was the start of a long ordeal. Soumana Idrissa later recalled how he and eight others were handcuffed and thrown in lorries that brought them back to the capital; en route the prisoner from Gothèye asked to be allowed to relieve himself, but police told him that he could wet his pants as far as they were concerned. Upon arrival in the presidential palace, Idrissa encountered Idrissa Arfou, the commander of Zone West who was already in custody.⁸² It is doubtful whether the Malians cared much about the fate of their political friends since in their new approach they were even prepared to confront the Chinese about the assistance that they had given to Sawaba. Thus, the Malian ambassador to Abidjan reported the links of the movement with the People's Republic to Bamako. It is unlikely that Mali had no knowledge of this, but possibly it was now more aware of the risks involved in having a guerrilla force on its territory: Modibo Keita summoned the Chinese ambassador and warned that relations would be severed if an armed attack such as in Niger ever occurred in Mali. In January 1965 he dispatched representatives to Upper Volta, and while it is unknown what the subject of their discussions were, the move clearly worried Djibo Bakary, who decided to stay in Ghana for the time being and not travel to Bamako as he had intended.⁸³ In March Mali went one step further by sending a delegation to Niamey, assuring the RDA that it would never again countenance subversion being staged from its territory.⁸⁴

This left only the Dahomean hinterland intact. Although the Dahomeans, too, were beginning to send out critical signals, the chaotic nature of the country's administration (marked not only by quarrels inside the leadership but also by tensions between the north and south) meant that Sawaba could retain its base areas. Documents found on a guerrilla in the course of the autumn invasion, however, had alerted Niamey to the existence of the command centre in Porto Novo, something that led to a telephone conversation between Diori and Ahomadegbé that only helped to sharpen the tone of the exchanges. Tréca warned Diori not to break off relations, but in mid-October Niger sent a protest note to Cotonou and troops were sent to the borderland—in imitation of the tensions the previous year. The media began another round of recriminations. Ahomadegbé

⁸² Interview with Soumana Idrissa, Gothèye, 18 Dec. 2009.

⁸³ Warren to Mansfield, 23 Oct. 1964; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 21 Jan. 1965.

⁸⁴ Événements survenus en Afrique Francophone pendant la semaine du 22 au 28 mars 1965; SHAT, 10 T 210.

about that time offered to close the border as a gesture of co-operation, but not much came of this, as new developments led to fresh tensions. Chabi Mama, a Dahomean politician who had been imprisoned after ethnic troubles in Parakou in the spring, was reported to have escaped and joined Sawaba's men. In November French intelligence reported the arrival in Dahomey of Salle Karma, a Gothèye Sawabist who came as envoy of Bakary with new instructions, probably for Ousmane Dan Galadima.⁸⁵

At that time the Paris emissary who had visited Niamey travelled on to Cotonou for talks. It was rumoured that the Dahomean Sûreté was about to arrest the brother of Diamballa Maïga, who was in the country trading cattle, while the Nigérien authorities reported the infiltration of a guerrilla unit in the Gaya sector. They asserted that it had penetrated the country from Dahomey, just as units in the Say, Dogondoutchi and (oddly) the Konni regions would have done. President Apithy denied any complicity. Diori, however, demanded formal assurances to this effect. At the Entente meeting in Abidjan he told his allies that he was not impressed by a declaration by Vice-President Ahomadegbé about the recent troubles and openly questioned the sincerity of his denials.⁸⁶

Yet, towards the end of 1964 Niger's finance minister visited Cotonou for talks, and Houphouët's overtures to Dahomey led to a meeting with the leader of the country's military, who began to plead for a return to the Entente. French intelligence reported that the Dahomeans were prepared to neutralise the guerrillas on their territory, admitting that certain officials had been conniving in their operations but still denying prior knowledge of this. Nevertheless, if by February 1965 Bakary was worrying about Dahomey's rapprochement with the Entente, it was also reported that the government was prepared to allow the passage of new commando units, provided this was arranged in a discreet way (they were to disguise themselves as traders). As noted in Chapter 10, the movement benefited from the presence of numerous Nigériens living in the Malanville area.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 17 Nov. 1964. He may, however, also have been a member of the guerrilla unit of Amadou Abdou. See ch. 12 n. 83 and ch. 9 n. 37.

⁸⁶ Warren to Mansfield, 23 Oct. 1964; Rapport de Fin de Commandement du Général de Division Revol; Evénements survenus ... 12 au 18 oct. 1964; Ibid., 9 au 16 nov. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 210; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 16 Oct. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; Ibid., 24 Nov. 1964; Fiche sur les événements qui se déroulent au Niger depuis le début du mois d'octobre 1964; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; *Le Niger*, 16 & 23 Nov. 1964.

⁸⁷ Rapport de Fin de Commandement du Général de Division Revol; Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire ... 14–20 Dec. 1964; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 21 Jan. & 3 Febr. 1965.

The Scorpion

Bakary had been aware all along about the insecurity of the hinterland, as his letter with the order of battle to Dan Koulou had shown.⁸⁸ Yet, the invasion had turned into a suicide mission and this had repercussions for the relations inside the leadership and the latter's ties with the middle cadres—if not the rank and file, who had borne the brunt of the violence. Inevitably, their defeat led to internal dissent. Many cadres were deeply upset about what had happened, and while some of this anger must have been of a later date, affected by hindsight,⁸⁹ there is evidence that some quarrelled with the leadership immediately after the invasion. Thus, Daouda Ali dit Chang Kai-shek wanted to call Djibo Bakary to account. 'Chang Kai-shek' was one of the commandos of Dandouna Aboubakar's unit, who had escaped the lynching party at Dibissou and made it back to Ghana. A tough character, he challenged Sawaba's leader in a meeting to return with him to Niger. Bakary naturally rejected this, brushing off the disillusioned guerrilla.⁹⁰

The exchange showed that the grass roots could have their say, though this was limited by the military discipline imposed since the confrontation with the RDA had begun. There were, nevertheless, several issues with which members disagreed or which were said (retrospectively or not) to have been responsible for the bungled offensive. It appears that many domestic cadres were upset about having been taken by surprise, as the operations endangered their position. Yet, the leadership had ordered not to involve high-profile domestic members, and it is difficult to see how internal cadres could have been warned without jeopardising the attack. Also, there would have been pressure for commandos on reconnaissance to report positively on the chances of success. Having been captured and paraded before a Western correspondent, Djibo Seyni claimed that he had counselled against an invasion after his 1963 intelligence mission, warning that the people did not show revolutionary fervour and that an armed

⁸⁸ In it he warned they should never forget they were in enemy territory (note 59 above). For this reason, he also counselled against a 'general assembly' of all commandos before the invasion (ch. 12 at n. 49).

⁸⁹ Many examples of this were encountered in interviews. Oumarou Janba, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003; Saïbou Abdouramane, Dargol, 31 Oct. 2005; Ali Amadou, in 1964 chef de camp in Ghana; and Mounkaila Albagna, who, by contrast, before the invasion thought it could be successful. Niamey, 28 Jan. & 29 Nov. 2003.

⁹⁰ Interview with Boubakar Djingaré (who was in the same unit, but was arrested), Niamey, 27 Oct. 2005.

attack was bound to fail. He would have been treated as a defeatist and reminded of his oath.⁹¹

While this smacks too much of self-interested hindsight—the Son Tay trainee risked terrible punishment—other witnesses, too, have pointed at partial reporting and dissatisfaction about this among cadres. However, it is possible that these were retrospectively influenced by Chaffard's observations about this, which were based on the subjective output of the regime.⁹² Still, one Sawaba student later also recalled the issue of faulty intelligence, but claimed that this had not been provided on purpose.⁹³ Obviously, eagerness for liberation must have played its role in mission reports, yet the disciplinary pressures in a politico-military structure may also have affected the objectivity of reporting. The issue here, however, is not the reality of partial intelligence and whether this contributed to defeat (more about this is said towards the end of the chapter), but whether it formed a bone of contention after the invasion. Thus, Ali Amadou, chef de camp at one of the training sites in Ghana, later asserted that the invasion plans were never debated.⁹⁴ If he referred to the middle cadres this may be true, and in a military organisation this would be quite normal. Yet, both he and others later also recalled that prior to the invasion, commando leaders went to Accra for talks, in which some disagreement surfaced (notably involving unit leaders from western Niger), but in the end everyone went along with the decision to go. While it cannot have been easy to confront the towering figure of Djibo Bakary⁹⁵ and the military logic steering the movement made obedience to his verdict only natural,⁹⁶ the fatal decision—jump-started by the catastrophic arrests of August-September—can probably not be attributed to Bakary alone.

Nevertheless, this and many of the above issues must have come up for discussion, and since he was the political leader, it is inevitable that they were blamed especially on Bakary. The poor quality of the weaponry was naturally an important element, but as far as attributing responsibility was concerned, middle cadres generally distinguished between Ousmane Dan Galadima on the one hand, and Bakary and Abdoulaye Mamani on the

⁹¹ *Fraternité-Hebdo*, 21 May 1965.

⁹² Interview with Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 Nov. 2003. Chaffard travelled to Niger at least once, in 1967. G. Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets de la décolonisation* (Paris, 1967), vol. 2, 332.

⁹³ Interview with Bachir Boukary, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003.

⁹⁴ Interview with Ali Amadou, Niamey, 28 Jan. 2003.

⁹⁵ There is evidence that cadres were afraid of him. Interview with Ali Talba, Niamey, 4 Febr. 2003.

⁹⁶ As evidenced in an interview with Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 6 Dec. 2003.

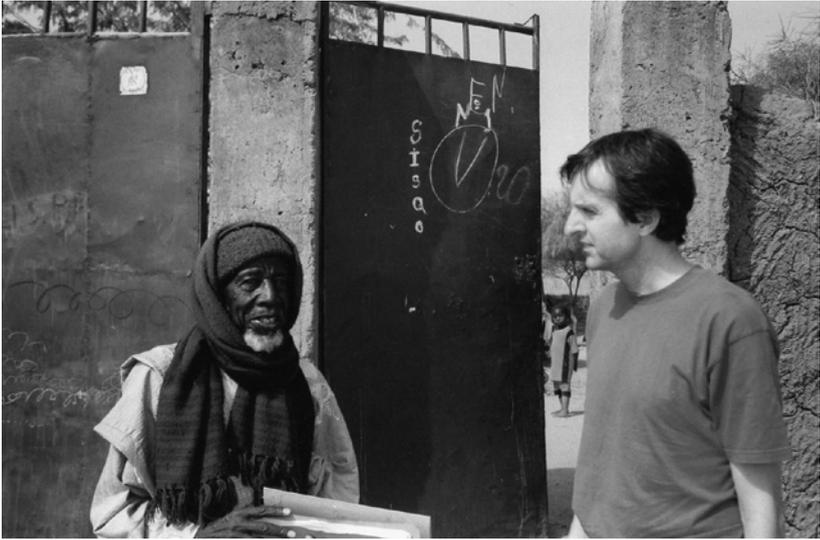


Photo 13.6 Ousmane Dan Galadima with author, Madaoua, 2006 (Ingrid Jäger).

other. They resented the fact that Sawaba's leader and Mamani, the movement's ideologue, never visited the troops in the base areas. Bakary was said not to know the terrain and was accused (many years later?) of having attributed too much value to the reports of poorly trained commandos. By contrast, chief of staff Dan Galadima went to the 'filthy places', where he saw the guerrillas, gave money and showed understanding of military issues. Galadima, who was nicknamed 'the scorpion' in admiration of his courage, was seen to be the one with the 'revolutionary spirit', whereas Mamani and Bakary were considered 'bourgeois'.⁹⁷

Part of this may have been the natural tension between political leaders and those with a military esprit de corps. Not all of the above was fair criticism. Djibo Bakary occasionally *did* travel to Dahomey and the north of Nigeria and as leader had to represent the movement politically and avoid unnecessary risks. Dan Galadima and Mamani, on the basis of their past duties, were equally responsible for the guerrillas' armament. The former in his reminiscences would claim that mistakes were made in the

⁹⁷ Interviews Mounkaila Albagna & Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 6 Dec. & 28 Nov. 2003, 23 Febr. 2008 and 15 Dec. 2009; Soumana Idrissa, Gothèye, 1 Nov. 2005 & 18 Dec. 2009; Ali Amadou, Niamey, 28 Jan. 2003; *Afrique Nouvelles*, 8-13 June 1967, no. 1.035 ('endroits sales'; 'esprit révolutionnaire').

execution of the struggle, though this was not further explicated.⁹⁸ Before the invasion Dan Galadima had had difficulties with the provisioning of arms (such as submachine guns), which had been provided by the People's Republic and shipped to Guinea. Sékou Touré had refused to release them (in part or in their totality)⁹⁹ and the result was that many of the arms had to be furnished by the Ghanaians. In this respect there is a strong possibility that Eastern Bloc allies did not keep all their promises.¹⁰⁰ This would explain the disparate nature of the weaponry, whose quality had sometimes deteriorated further as a result of storage conditions.¹⁰¹

Still, in the wake of the invasion, disagreements between Bakary and the other leaders were all too real. They cannot be reduced to the differing perceptions about the leadership among the middle cadres. By now Dan Galadima (and possibly Mamani) no longer got along very well with Bakary, something that formed a serious handicap.¹⁰² In his recollections Sawaba's chief of staff would rationalise this as part of the inevitable differences between the 'man on the ground' and the political leader,¹⁰³ but his and Mamani's criticism of Bakary was more serious. Apart from the unexpected power with which the RDA had been able to crush the invasion, they would have reproached him for not having trained sufficient numbers of men. The equipment and morale of the troops would not have been effectively addressed. As the movement had considerable funds at its disposal, this turned into a damaging discussion about the way that money had been spent. Chaffard, with his regime sources, later spoke about misappropriation of funds by Bakary personally, as did a government witness (who, however, gave no details).¹⁰⁴

While the RDA had a track record of slandering Sawaba's leader, Oumarou Janba, a Sawabist from Zinder, later recalled having discussed the issue with Dan Galadima,¹⁰⁵ which confirmed the accusations in part. According to Chaffard, Bakary spent much time and money on amorous liaisons. Like

⁹⁸ Possibly this referred to the issue of the sensitive documents guerrillas took with them during the invasion. Interview, Madaoua, 7 Febr. 2003.

⁹⁹ Interview with Ousmane Dan Galadima, Madaoua, 8 Febr. 2003.

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Tahir Moustapha, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003.

¹⁰¹ It seems that in the Malian hinterland this was in part caused by the necessity to bury them, as the Malians did not allow the men to carry weapons. Interview Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 6 Dec. 2003.

¹⁰² Interviews with Ali Amadou, Niamey, 28 Jan. 2003, and Oumarou Janba, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003.

¹⁰³ Interview with Ousmane Dan Galadima, Madaoua, 7 Febr. 2003 ('homme de terrain').

¹⁰⁴ Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 326 and interview with Abdou Adam, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Oumarou Janba, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003.

many Sawabists, Bakary paid for his political ambitions with an unstable private life. He actually married his second wife, Aissata N'Diaye, in Ghana in 1963 (his first wife and children remaining in Gao for the time being).¹⁰⁶ But Chaffard reported rumours that he also gave monthly cheques of 50,000 CFA francs to a woman from Ouagadougou and had given cars to two others.¹⁰⁷ Oumarou Janba also asserted that there were problems with women but that Bakary bought a car for his own wife, with the result that Dan Galadima went short of funds. Dan Galadima would later have told the Zinderois cadre that there was no problem with women but that, indeed, it had concerned the purchase of a car.¹⁰⁸

If there are several witnesses who have claimed that Bakary was in the habit of handing money to cadres or people in need,¹⁰⁹ his general record suggests that he was more interested in politics than a life of luxury. According to Chaffard, Bakary's colleagues did not question his devotion to the cause but disapproved of his administrative methods. Whatever the truth about the matter, the upshot of the discussions between Bakary, Abdoulaye Mamani and Ousmane Dan Galadima would have been that financial management was now entrusted to Issaka Koké, Sawaba's former minister of public works and agriculture living in Bamako. Bakary would send him a monthly budget estimate in return for a cheque to be cashed at a bank in Accra.¹¹⁰ If this is true, 'the scorpion' possibly used the failure of the autumn invasion to take more full control of Sawaba's operations.

One Has to Strike

The shifts inside the leadership, however, should not be exaggerated. Djibo Bakary, while the political leader, continued to play a role in certain of the decisions with military implications. Dan Galadima, moreover, had all along had responsibility for the execution of strategy.

Although his attack plan had failed to yield the deliverance that the little folk were aiming for, the alternative to continuation of the struggle was not appealing. Acceptance of defeat meant that they would remain in the wilderness, certainly members of the external wing, who were so deep-

¹⁰⁶ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 501, 1 July 1963; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2.

¹⁰⁷ A coupé Floride (Renault) and a Peugeot 403. Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 326.

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Oumarou Janba, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003.

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Noga Yamba, Zinder, 14 Febr. 2003 and with inhabitants of Soudouré, 27 Febr. 2008.

¹¹⁰ Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 326.

ly implicated in the subversive designs. To some extent this was even true for domestic cadres, as these now had to bear a heavier burden of repression, although many of more moderate persuasion may have wished to abandon the struggle. Radical cadres, however, with political records that barred a return to a normal life, saw no choice but to fight on,¹¹¹ apart from the hatred that many of them felt for a regime responsible for the death and persecution of their comrades. The same must have been true for those who had participated in the autumn attacks. Sawaba's chief of staff therefore aimed to revise his plans. In fact, already after the first month of the infiltrations had Dan Galadima begun to think of a new approach. On 31 October 1964 'the scorpion' wrote a letter to A.K. Barden, the head of Ghana's Bureau of African Affairs, for new assistance. He was clearly upset about recent developments:

It is with great indignation that we submit our new plan and memorandum for your approval and swift action in view of an armed revolt in the Republic of Niger. As you know, in the few months that have gone by, some revolutionaries of our group have penetrated Niger but the reactionary Government of Hamani Diori, with the help of the French imperialists, has thwarted our plan and captured our men with some of their arms. But one thing is certain: the fact of gaining political power through the revolution in Niger will accomplish and lead to a social and economic reform that will give complete revolutionary victory to our party.¹¹²

The understatement about the military losses was followed by an announcement that Sawaba would now 'completely' change tack. Dan Galadima informed Barden that new recruits had returned from training in China and Cuba under escort of one Salifou Aboubakar¹¹³ and that they would soon continue to Cotonou. Barden was asked to arrange their journey by air to Dahomey through Ghana Airways 'with all their arms and ammunition' and sort out the commandos' financial needs.¹¹⁴ That Dan

¹¹¹ Interview with Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 15 Dec. 2009.

¹¹² M. Dangaladima to A.K. Barden, Bureau of African Affairs, 31 Oct. 1964; PRO, FO 371/177230 ('C'est avec une grande indignation que nous soumettons notre nouveau plan et mémorandum à votre approbation et action rapide en vue d'une révolte militaire dans la République du Niger. Comme vous le savez, pendant les quelques mois qui ont passé, quelques révolutionnaires de notre groupe ont pénétré dans le Niger mais le Gouvernement réactionnaire de Hamani Diori, avec l'aide des impérialistes français, a détourné notre plan et capturé nos hommes avec quelques-unes de leurs armes. Mais une chose est certaine, que le fait de gagner la force politique par la révolution au Niger accomplira et mènera à une réforme sociale et économique qui donnera la victoire complète révolutionnaire à notre parti').

¹¹³ As noted in ch. 9, the instruction in Cuba was probably political ('complètement').

¹¹⁴ In addition, Dan Galadima thanked the BAA for its last imbursement of 25,000 pounds. Dangaladima to Barden, 31 Oct. 1964 ('avec toutes leurs armes et munitions').

Galadima asked for approval of his new plan shows that the Ghanaians tried to exert more control. This was logical in view of the efforts and expense that they had invested in the Nigérien project, not to mention the diplomatic fall-out that the bungled invasion had created. Although their embassies in Cotonou and Lagos had assisted in the journeys to the infiltration zones in the past, now the Ghanaians were asked to play a direct role in the transportation of arms and men. While implicating them further, this also gave them greater influence.¹¹⁵

The change of plan, however, not only involved a greater role for the Ghanaians. Bearing in mind the lack of belligerence with which some commandos had invaded Niger, expecting to be received with open arms, Sawaba's planners¹¹⁶ intended to toughen their approach. The aim now was to hit directly at the regime. Reminiscing later about the mistakes in the autumn invasion, 'the scorpion' argued that in order to topple the regime, 'one [had] to strike'.¹¹⁷ This may have echoed Sawabist sentiments about the bungled invasion, which to many underlined the need for robust action.¹¹⁸ It meant, among other things, that the commandos would have to converge on the capital (and perhaps other urban centres) rather than try and take control of the countryside, as it was in the cities that the regime's power was concentrated.¹¹⁹ Abdoulaye Mamani may by then also have drawn this conclusion,¹²⁰ which came down to a return to urban-based actions such as the destruction of Niamey's radio tower and establishing contact with the military. Since the population was incapable of providing help, the guerrillas needed support from other quarters. Dan Galadima informed Barden that it was his intention 'to buy a part of the dissident army' deployed at the Niger-Dahomean frontier since the expulsion of Dahomean citizens the previous year. This referred to sections of FAN forces that the Diallo mutiny had shown had become disgruntled—

¹¹⁵ Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 326-327. As Aba Kaka's journey from Ghana to Nigeria showed, however, Ghana Airways must have played a supportive role for some before.

¹¹⁶ The letter to Barden was also sent on behalf of Bakary and Yacouba Idrissa dit Gotherye, the representative of Sawaba and the Nigérien community in Ghana. Dangaladima to Barden, 31 Oct. 1964.

¹¹⁷ Interview with Ousmane Dan Galadima, Madaoua, 7 February 2003 ('Il faut frapper').

¹¹⁸ Interview with Ousseini Dandagoye, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003.

¹¹⁹ Interview with Ousmane Dan Galadima, Madaoua, 7 February 2003.

¹²⁰ In 1974 he gave an interview in which he argued that a more urban approach, involving protests of unions and students along the lines of developments in Congo-Brazzaville in August 1963 (which as shown in ch. 11 had given a fright to the RDA regime), would have worked better. R. Buijtenhuijs, *Revolutie in Zwart Afrika?* (Assen and Amsterdam, 1975), 111.

although the idea of mobilising the army, which was also shared by others,¹²¹ went back to 1961, when Hima Dembélé contacted officers at Tondibia.¹²² Dan Galadima wrote Barden that he had sent a representative to negotiate with FAN officers (perhaps Salle Karma, who went as envoy of Bakary to Dahomey in November with new instructions). The chief of staff assured the head of the BAA that some officers had agreed to join in an assault on the regime the moment fresh commando units would cross the frontier at Gaya.¹²³

He also claimed that he had nearly finalised an arrangement with the Dahomean government, through its Accra embassy, involving a daring transaction: as soon as the revolution had succeeded and Sawaba had recaptured power, Niger would hand over to Dahomey the territory disputed by the two countries (i.e. Lété and some other islands in the Niger River). It would also rehire some of the Dahomean civil servants.¹²⁴ Obviously, the proposed trade-off would be a propaganda coup for the RDA,¹²⁵ but it pointed perhaps at the degree of desperation on the part of Sawaba's chief of staff. Yet, as noted earlier, Mounkaila Beidari, the cadre of one of the Niamey cells, had already tried to persuade the Dahomean army to attack the regime in the course of the expulsion of Dahomean citizens. The discussion with a comrade about this showed that Sawabists saw themselves engaged in a relentless struggle that had priority over qualms about Niger's territorial sovereignty. Moreover, Dan Galadima's letter to Barden, even if it tried to tap into the militant register of the Nkrumah regime,¹²⁶ clearly demonstrated that 'the scorpion' was a Marxist revolutionary besides a militant nationalist—in his mind, the reconquest of political power had to lead to socio-economic reforms that would complete the victory of the little folk.

Yet, his correspondence with Barden also shows how important the Dahomean hinterland had become, and the letter suggests that the government in Cotonou had agreed on the reception of fresh commando units

¹²¹ Such as Abdoulaye Mamani, at least retrospectively: he hoped urban protests would trigger army intervention. Buijtenhuijs, *Revolutie in Zwart Afrika?*, 111.

¹²² Dangkaladima to Barden, 31 Oct. 1964.

¹²³ There would be Sawaba cadres (internal members, commandos?) in the Gaya region ready to join. Dangkaladima to Barden, 31 Oct. 1964 ('d'acheter une partie de l'Armée dissidente').

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Boubou Hama later criticised the Lété island deal. Front démocratique de la patrie (Parti Sawaba): Communiqué de presse, 22 Nov. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2.

¹²⁶ His letter concluded with a valedictory 'For the African Revolution'. Dangkaladima to Barden, 31 Oct. 1964 ('Pour la Révolution Africaine').

immediately after the autumn invasion. Nothing is known about the state of the command centre in Porto Novo, but the request to the BAA to airlift commandos to Cotonou implies that the Sawaba presence in southern Dahomey continued more or less as before. If Dan Galadima adopted a lower profile (his letter to Barden suggests that he now stayed in Ghana, at least for some time), the chaotic context of Dahomean politics still gave Sawaba room for manoeuvre. This was even more the case in the country's northern region, where Nigérien immigrants in addition to regional sentiments and cross-border loyalties among the Dendi-Songhay population created a murky context ideal for operations. Local politicians continued to lend a helping hand. Upon his arrest in the Gaya region Son Tay commando Djibo Seyni alleged that Dendi members of the Dahomean military, deployed on and off in the frontier zone, had been ready to take part in infiltrations, besides expelled Dahomeans. A Dahomean lieutenant would have assured Sawaba commandos that soldiers dressed in civilian clothes would join them once they had crossed into Niger.¹²⁷

Even if these Dahomeans were less enthusiastic since the autumn disaster, Sawaba's base in Ghana was still intact, which meant that its capacity to continue with operations was untouched.¹²⁸ Perhaps this also explains why the leadership had used only half the force potential,¹²⁹ although instruction of the guerrillas staying on in Ghana may not have been complete when Bakary gave the precipitate order to attack. If up to a hundred men had survived the autumn infiltrations and been able to escape, this meant that the movement possibly had a maximum of 350 to 400 men still at its disposal, assuming that the remainder of the initial army could make it back to Ghana and was able—and willing—to engage in new action. Dan Galadima's idea to airlift commandos to Dahomey may have been encouraged by a desire to quickly rebuild fighting power. This had naturally suffered from the capture of armaments,¹³⁰ and the Ghanaians presumably had to make up for what had been lost. In any case, training of guerrillas continued unabated. As shown in Chapter 9, Chinese instruc-

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*; *Le Niger*, 30 Nov. 1964 (appeal Djibo Seyni). Seyni assured this was not a lie. The Dahomean promise would have been given in a meeting with Issoufou Danbaro before the autumn invasion.

¹²⁸ The fundamental importance of the Ghanaian base was underlined by Soumana Idrissa. Interview, Gothèye, 1 Oct. 2005.

¹²⁹ See ch. 9 at n. 347.

¹³⁰ *Le Niger*, 21 June 1965, listed the capture in the autumn of 48 automatic pistols, 25 submachine guns, various rifles, 45 grenades; 8,000 rounds of ammunition. Assuming there were at least 35 units made up of an average of seven men (ch. 12 at n. 116), this must have been a fraction of the armaments.

tors (several with the rank of colonel or lieutenant) began to arrive as the autumn invasion unfolded. This may have improved the drill, which had suffered from the low quality of Ghanaian instructors.¹³¹

As noted, Che Guevara in January 1965 paid a visit to Ghana during his African tour. This enabled Sawaba to renew its Cuban contacts, but it also heralded a stream of technical specialists advising the Ghanaians in areas of collaboration. One of these was increased assistance to liberation movements. Upon conclusion of his Ghanaian visit, Che continued to Dahomey to see the country's new leaders in Cotonou, but nothing is known of what transpired in the course of this.¹³²

In much the same vein military training continued in China (in March and April 1965 an unknown number of Sawabists left Ghana for the People's Republic).¹³³ The same was true for 'operation training of cadres', which had its own dynamics and time schedules. For example, it was at the beginning of the new year that Mamoudou Ide, who had completed training in East Germany, was told to go back to Accra and report to Sawaba headquarters. Ide rendered a report of his experiences to Bakary and Alazi Soumaila (the recruitment officer formerly at Gao), before continuing to the Soviet Union for further studies. Bachir Boukary, the secondary school pupil from Zinder, at this time stayed in Morocco pursuing agricultural training, while the military instruction of Zoumari Issa Seyni, Adamou Sékou's cousin, possibly took place during this period.¹³⁴

If a second offensive had been foreseen by Sawaba's strategists for June–July 1965,¹³⁵ ground operations had their dynamics quite apart from the plans pursued by the leadership. Commandos that had survived the autumn encounters cannot easily have kept in touch with Accra or Porto Novo. In January a unit of seven guerrillas possibly penetrated the Konni

¹³¹ *Nkrumah's Subversion in Africa: Documentary Evidence of Nkrumah's Interference in the Affairs of Other African States* (Ministry of Information: Accra, n.d.), 7–17; interview with Ali Amadou, Niamey, 28 Jan. 2003; and W.S. Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy 1957–1966: Diplomacy, Ideology, and the New State* (Princeton, 1969), 375. *La Voix Libérée*, no. 1, March–Apr. 2011, 28 suggests that, by 1966, Sawaba still had around 200–300 men at its disposal.

¹³² Interview Ousmane Dan Galadima, Madaoua, 7 Febr. 2003; D. Laumann, 'Che Guevara's Visit to Ghana', *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, new series, 9 (2005), 61–74; W. Gálvez, *Che in Africa: Che Guevara's Congo Diary* (Melbourne and New York, 1999), 32.

¹³³ Note de Renseignements, Ambassade de France, Niamey, 15 Dec. 1965; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2.

¹³⁴ In any case before 1966. Interviews Zoumari Issa Seyni, Niamey, 18 Nov. 2002; Bachir Boukary, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003; Surveillance du Territoire no. 620/BCL: Examen de situation de Mamoudou Ide, 11 July 1968; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14.

¹³⁵ Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 326.

region from Nigeria and subsequently got away.¹³⁶ As noted, that same month an operation took place in the Bosso region. Six commandos attacked two (unidentified) villages and then made off with a sum of 450,000 CFA francs—a considerable amount of money, presumably from a government post. They were confronted by militia forces but several escaped across the border.¹³⁷ They probably involved remainders of Aba Kaka's unit(s), some of whom had earlier escaped the encounter with Nigérien and Nigerian military at the island of Chassa Koura. As noted in Chapter 12, these included Kaka himself and several of his companions.¹³⁸ While some of those involved in the January operation got arrested the following month, it showed how the region's remoteness complicated efforts to end the infiltrations. Politics in Bosso, moreover, continued to be unruly. The town's chief, Boulama Boukar, had been sacked for his dubious loyalties and replaced by a more pliant character. Like Kaka many years before, the dismissed chief had crossed the border into Nigeria, intent on getting even. The fact that town notables had recently settled some of their differences was unlikely to be of much help to the regime since Boukar was said to enjoy a lot of sympathy in the region. French intelligence reported that he had promised his support to Sawaba, which undoubtedly would 'not fail to take advantage of the resentment of this customary chief'.¹³⁹

According to the French the events showed that, while Nigeria's authorities had done their best to improve co-operation with the Nigériens, the population in the Northern Region, especially in the Hausa areas,

remain[ed] resistant to all collaboration [with the government]. In fact, the great majority of the Hausas of the North and more especially those of the

¹³⁶ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 18 Jan. 1965; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2. That same month, Issoufou Baleri, the Gothèye clerk with North African training and known to Soumana Idrissa, went on a mission to Niamey. Later, he was detained but it is unknown when. No. 879/BCL: Etudiants et Boursiers du Sawaba de Retour des Pays de l'Est, 18 Oct. 1968; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14; interview Soumana Idrissa, Gothèye, 18 Dec. 2009.

¹³⁷ Événements survenus en Afrique Francophone pendant la semaine du 11 au 17 janv. 1965; SHAT, 10 T 210; *Ibid.*, 8 au ? févr. 1965. This does not seem to have been the same attack as the one discussed in ch. 12 at notes 224-225, since that one appears to have taken place before the arrest of guerrillas on the island of Chassa Koura, for which there is a hard date of 15 November 1964 (ch. 12, at n. 229).

¹³⁸ Such as Mounkouta; Lawal Adia, who had trained in Algeria and went back to Accra; a certain Madou Koutta; and Oumarou Falwa. Interviews with Kanembou Malam, Diffa, 12 Febr. 2006; Aba Kaka, Bosso, 13 Febr. 2006; Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 6 Dec. 2003.

¹³⁹ Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire, no. 4, 18-24 Jan. 1965; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2 ('pas manquer de mettre à profit la rancœur de ce chef coutumier').

frontier regions provide aid without restrictions to the elements of Sawaba established on their territory.¹⁴⁰

As shown by the developments in Bosso, the problem also extended into the Kanuri sector. In the central Hausa region the result was that NEPU cadres managed to continue providing help to Sawaba. As noted in Chapter 10, Tanko Yakasai assisted commandos in Kano with money, papers, accommodation and weaponry, while much later the early China traveller was still solicited by Sawaba students to find jobs and positions.¹⁴¹ Eskor Toyo, NEPU secretary and member of a Marxist group in Lagos known to Yakasai, in May 1965 informed the BAA that his second-in-command, Dr. Kolagbodi (Kolabode—from the same Marxist circle that included Yakasai), would come to Ghana for a meeting with Bakary. Toyo asked Barden to take the necessary measures to fund Sawaba's coming operations through the Ghana High Commission in Lagos. The Ghanaians responded that an envoy would come with advice on infiltration routes.¹⁴²

Besides the ones offered by the Nigerian and Dahomean hinterland, these included a route that commandos could follow due north of Lomé, from where they should travel to the town of Dapaong, all the while staying on Togolese territory.¹⁴³ Obviously these guerrillas had to embark on incursions in the dangerous Voltan zone, but perhaps the movement still had a cell at its disposal in northern Togo that made this a worthwhile option. Nevertheless, new infiltrations were going to be harder, not only because the hinterland was now even less safe than in the past but also because much of the infrastructure in Niger had been destroyed. Just a week before the start of the new year the movement lost a major arms depot in the Maradi region, uncovered by Gendarmerie alerted by the population.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁰ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 24 Nov. 1964 ('reste réfractaire à toute collaboration. En effet, la grande majorité des Haoussas du Nord et plus particulièrement ceux des régions frontalières apportent une aide sans restrictions aux éléments du Sawaba implantés sur leur territoire').

¹⁴¹ Benefiting from the fact that, in the wake of Nigeria's first military coup, Yakasai had obtained a government post. Yakasai, *The Story of a Humble Life*, ch. 17.

¹⁴² Mohammed Achimoto Garba, Leningrad, to Tanko Yakasai, Kano, 3 July 1967; ANN, 86 MI 1E 8.14; ch. 10, note 76; Yakasai, *The Story of a Humble Life*, 154; T. Abdurraheem and A. Olukoshi, 'The Left in Nigerian Politics and the Struggle for Socialism: 1945-1985', *Review of African Political Economy*, 37 (Dec. 1986), 69-70; Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 327.

¹⁴³ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 21 Jan. 1965.

¹⁴⁴ The cache, hidden in a millet stock, consisted of six MAS 36s, four German submachine guns, several pistols of Czech origin and a case of 100 rounds of ammunition. Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 18 Jan. 1965.

During the spring the number of incursions was therefore substantially lower and infiltrations stood more or less on their own, in sharp contrast to the co-ordinated attacks the previous autumn. The bungled invasion, having led to the mobilisation of RDA-friendly governments, made it risky to dispatch commandos in massive numbers. New ways also had to be found for the transport of arms. If in the past they were smuggled into the country in baskets, sacks of flour or the spare wheels of cars, in May 1965 the paranoid Maïga warned Commandants de Cercle to be on the look-out for cans, suitcases, travel bags and even children's toys (like dolls) in which guerrillas could hide their arms. The difficulties that the commandos now encountered were illustrated by the problems of Aba Kaka. The Bosso guerrilla at an unspecified date sent one of his men across the Komadougou to check whether the area was safe. Alerted by locals, soldiers moved to the scene and a shoot-out followed in which an unknown number of guerrillas, who were already in the area, got wounded. The reconnaissance man fled back to Nigeria to report to Kaka, who now used different hideouts, including at the village of Boula Kari and, further from the frontier, Maiduguri.¹⁴⁵

*The Man of 13 April*¹⁴⁶

In February the commando from the Konni sector, Amadou Diop, was sent back to the infiltration zones, apparently on the orders of Bakary himself. He had had coffee with Sawaba's leader in Accra during a debriefing of his reconnaissance mission to the Maradi region,¹⁴⁷ undertaken after his escape to Sokoto in the wake of the fateful confrontation at Dibissou. Bakary ordered him to recuperate a weapons cache that he had made when fleeing his pursuers. He had to transport the arms to Lagos, where they were stored by Sarkin Nanou, the propagandist who earlier had been active at Rogogo. The mission demonstrated the lorry driver's resolve, and upon its completion, Diop returned to Accra.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ At Boula Kari, Kaka was lodged by a man named Gaptia. *Le Niger*, 23 Nov. 1964; Note de Renseignements, Ambassade de France, Niamey, 15 May 1965; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; interview Kanembou Malam, Diffa, 12 Febr. 2006.

¹⁴⁶ This is the way Amadou Diop proudly introduced himself to the author. Interview, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003.

¹⁴⁷ Interview with Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003.

¹⁴⁸ The weapons recuperated were two automatic pistols, two submachine guns, a Mauser rifle and four grenades. Génédéf Dakar to Minarmées Paris, no. 8358/CH, 14 Apr. 1965; ch. 10 at note 18.

Several testimonies suggest that he became involved in discussions with Bakary and, probably, other cadres about plans to assassinate President Diori. Diop, of his own accord, later recalled that he discussed the issue with Sawaba's leader, but in asserting his own centrality in the scheme suggested that the idea came from him, rather than Bakary, who would have given him 'the green light' and 'carte blanche'.¹⁴⁹ The Zinder Sawabist was a tough man—as shown by his breaking out of jail in Konni the previous autumn¹⁵⁰—and a radical militant, who was also upset about what had happened to Dandouna Aboubakar. He was intent on revenge.¹⁵¹ Hence, his importance in the plan cannot be disputed. Several Sawabists including Ousmane Dan Galadima later claimed that it involved an individual initiative, for which the party had not given orders:¹⁵² there was no programme to kill the head of state—the essence of the movement's strategy had, after all, been a struggle of long duration (at least before the arrests of August–September 1964).¹⁵³ Yet, the testimonies of Diop and the chief of staff imply that such a plan *was* the subject of discussion. Dan Galadima later denied that the leadership had convened to decide on the death of the president, adding the typically Marxist argument that revolutions are not concerned with individual persons. He admitted, however, that he was on a mission to Algiers at the time, suggesting that he had nothing to do with it, but that he had received a letter of cadres or commandos asking for explosives.¹⁵⁴ Another testimony alluded to a murder plan entertained by Diop as representative of the radical wing,¹⁵⁵ and this would accord with an older rumour about an attempt on the life of Diori—on the orders of Bakary—by a commando dispatched from Accra (June 1964).¹⁵⁶

In view of the assassination of Daouda Ardaly (and failed attempt on the righter of wrongs himself), it was not an outlandish plan, but in line with the hardening of strategy that aimed at the heart of government. Thus, several other testimonies of Sawabists insinuate or assert that Diop's pro-

¹⁴⁹ Interview with Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003 ('feu vert'; 'carte blanche').

¹⁵⁰ See ch. 12 at note 170.

¹⁵¹ *Le Niger*, 16 May 1966.

¹⁵² Interviews Ousmane Dan Galadima, Madaoua, 7 Febr. 2003; Oumarou Janba, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003.

¹⁵³ Interview with Amada Bachard, Niamey, 14 Dec. 2009.

¹⁵⁴ He would have counselled against it. Interview Ousmane Dan Galadima, Madaoua, 7 Febr. 2003.

¹⁵⁵ Interview with Amada Bachard, Niamey, 14 Dec. 2009.

¹⁵⁶ At Maïné-Soroa. See ch. 11 at note 139 and ch. 12 at n. 7–8.

jected action was ordered by the party.¹⁵⁷ Mounkaila Beidari, who was then operating in the capital, later recalled that the lorry driver told him that he 'had to' make an attempt on the life of the president, adding that Diop had been encouraged to do so by Djibo Bakary personally—something that corresponds with Diop's own account—and that he had been sent by the leadership in Ghana. Retrospectively, however, Sawaba's leader would have been reluctant to admit his role in view of his family ties with Diori.¹⁵⁸ Moreover, even in a movement where the grass roots played a role and guerrilla units acted with a degree of autonomy, it is unlikely that a commando would pursue such action without consultations or explicit orders, especially given the imposition of military discipline since the start of the hostilities. The fact that Diop considered the idea while in Accra also suggests that it was not a one-man initiative but a plan that came from, or was sanctioned by, the party leadership¹⁵⁹—while his previous mission to the infiltration zones also shows that he was acting under orders.

In fact, the implementation of the plan involved numerous people, which indicates that it emanated from higher up. According to one testimony, the aim was to throw several grenades at a gathering where Diori would be present, in order to create panic and confusion, whereupon commandos would finish the job by shooting the president. The projected location would be the airport of Niamey.¹⁶⁰ Amadou Diop left the Ghanaian capital on 19 March, passing through Togo and then travelling, by taxi, to Cotonou. From there he continued to Nigeria. He picked up weaponry including grenades, perhaps stored with Sarkin Nanou in Lagos, and passed through Ibadan and Kaduna before arriving in Kano. He crossed the border possibly on 8 April and proceeded to Maradi, where he had family.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷ Bachir Boukary was explicit about this (interview Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003), while Ibrahim Bawa Souley (interview Niamey, 26 Nov. 2003) suggested Diop was ordered to do something 'big'. Harou Kouka, regime acolyte, also claimed Diop acted under orders (interview, Niamey, 26 Nov. 2003). *La Voix Libérée*, no. 1, March-Apr. 2011, 29 claims that in 1965 Diop himself said that it was a party order.

¹⁵⁸ Interviews Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 Nov. 2003 and Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003. This was indirectly confirmed by Ahmed Sékou Djibo Bakary (Bakary's youngest son, born in 1966), who asserted that Diop acted on his own initiative and that Bakary had expressly forbidden Diop to kill Diori—which showed that they talked about it—, as such an act was not in the party line and Diori was, moreover, family (interview, Niamey, 1 March 2008).

¹⁵⁹ Interview with Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 15 Dec. 2009.

¹⁶⁰ Interview Bachir Boukary, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003; Ibrahim Bawa Souley, Niamey, 26 Nov. 2003.

¹⁶¹ Génédéf Dakar to Minarmées Paris, no. 8358/CH, 14 Apr. 1965; interview Ousmane Dan Galadima, Madaoua, 7 Febr. 2003; Ghana Embassy Niamey to Foreign Accra, 15 Apr.

If Diop travelled on his own, other commandos had meanwhile also left Ghana. According to French intelligence they included Issoufou Danbaro, who during the infiltrations in the Falmey region had got away with his life; Katchalma Oumar dit Paul, Aba Kaka's companion at Bosso, who knew the capital as he had worked there as a fireman; Ado Dodo, part of the units in the Magaria sector; and Garba Katkoré, member of Dan Koulou's squad at Madarounfa. While leaving Accra at the same time, they were under orders to operate individually,¹⁶² although they may have been part of a unit totalling more than a dozen, some of whom reached Niger's borders by crossing through Mali. Upon arrival 'they would have dispersed across the whole of the Nigérien territory'. At least two commandos, but most likely several more, entered the Niamey area between 5 and 11 April.¹⁶³

On 9 April Diop took the 18.30 bus of Transafricaine in Maradi, arriving in Niamey the following morning.¹⁶⁴ He established contact with 'his unit', which he later recalled was 'large in numbers'—other reports say two groups of commandos made up of four men each, who among other things carried grenades. They were all 'determined, capable people', according to the hard-headed Diop,¹⁶⁵ an observation that may have had some truth in it since, if French intelligence was correct, several commandos came from units that had played key roles in the invasion. However, the total number of men in the Niamey group was much larger, up to 40 people, many of whom were apparently contacted by Diop. Half of these were probably part of domestic cells, the other half was reported to have undergone training in China and other countries and must therefore have consisted of commandos.¹⁶⁶ According to one source, the Niamey group also involved a policeman, a claim that can be read against past infiltration of the administration although it cannot be confirmed in this instance.¹⁶⁷

1965; GNA, SC/BAA/460, no. NIA/05/1 (Niger Political Reports to Osagyefo 3/1/64—23/4/65).

¹⁶² Gédédef Dakar to Minarmées Paris, no. 8358/CH, 14 Apr. 1965.

¹⁶³ Événements survenus en Afrique Francophone pendant la semaine du 12 au 18 avril 1965; SHAT, 10 T 210 ('ils se seraient éparpillés sur l'ensemble du territoire nigérien').

¹⁶⁴ Gédédef Dakar to Minarmées Paris, no. 8358/CH, 14 Apr. 1965; *Le Niger*, 21 June 1965.

¹⁶⁵ Gédédef Dakar to Minarmées Paris, no. 8358/CH, 14 Apr. 1965; interview Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 29 Apr. 1965; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2. Two reports claim every commando had up to eight or 12 grenades. Ghana Embassy Niamey to Foreign Accra, 15 Apr. 1965; B.L. Placca, Ghana Embassy Niamey, to M.F. Dei-Anang, African Affairs Secretariat Accra, 14 Apr. 1965; GNA, SC/BAA/460, no. NIA/05/1 ('son équipe'; 'nombreux'; 'des gens décidés; capables').

¹⁶⁶ Gédédef Dakar to Minarmées Paris, no. 8358/CH, 14 Apr. 1965. Could it have included Issoufou Baleri (see note 136 above)?

¹⁶⁷ Interview with Sao Marakan, Niamey, 29 Jan. 2003; ch. 10 at ns. 163-164 & ch. 12 at ns. 14-15.

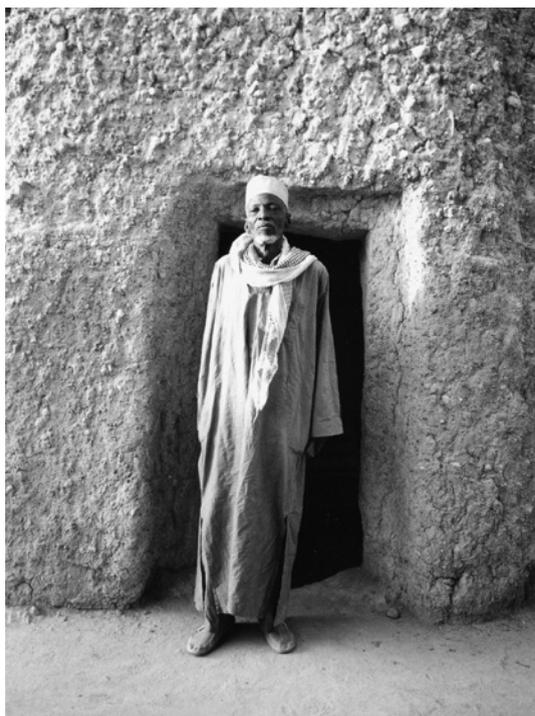


Photo 13.7 Amadou Diop, Zinder, 2003.

Part of the plan was to complement the assassination of Diiori with other action. Commandos were intending to plant explosives at the installations of Radio Niger, on the road to Ouallam, repeating the action of the previous year but now with more aggressive means (it is unknown whether this was related to the request for explosives to the chief of staff).¹⁶⁸ In addition, guerrillas were on the verge of infiltrating Niger in the Gouré sector.¹⁶⁹ Although the action in this region could not be confirmed by a later testimony,¹⁷⁰ there were different reports on armed activities in other parts of the country.¹⁷¹ One report on the far east spoke about the impending penetration by a unit from Nigeria and another referred to a plan to have commandos accompany the attack on the president with the throwing of grenades at public gatherings 'at all the district capitals' on the oc-

¹⁶⁸ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 17 Apr. 1965; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. and confirmed by Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 29 Apr. 1965.

¹⁷⁰ Interview Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 15 Dec. 2009.

¹⁷¹ *Africa Research Bulletin* (political series), Apr. 1965, 279.

casation of Tabaski (Eid al-Adha, the Muslim festival of sacrifice).¹⁷² Clearly, the effort to kill Diop was part of a wider set-up that was aiming at a coup d'état. While there are no indications of contact with the military apart from the alleged dealings of 'the scorpion' with FAN officers in the Dahomean frontier zone, the whole plan breathed the urban focus required for a putsch. If one report of French intelligence about a back-up plan to poison the president, in case the first attempt failed, could be dismissed as regime paranoia, sources suggest that the strike at the heart of government was to be supplemented by considerable propaganda efforts. Orders had been given for the printing in West Germany of no less than 95,000 copies of *Sawaba*, the movement's organ, and cadres were openly threatening the regime that 'their number [was] great' and that it could expect further action—something that was to be borne out by subsequent events.¹⁷³

If Amadou Diop had, indeed, been central to the scheme all along, he was confronted with hesitations on the part of several cadres, who knew the situation in Niamey and counselled against the attempt, warning that the terrain was not favourable.¹⁷⁴ Presumably these objections were entertained by domestic cadres and not the incoming commandos and concerned fears that the attempt could fail or not be followed up by action to take control of the capital. Mounkaila Beidari, for example, was worried that it could endanger the existence of the Niamey cells, many of whose members were still free. Beidari himself, for example, was still active for the party and had weapons at his disposal, although he had been arrested once the previous autumn.¹⁷⁵

Yet, Diop and at least several other commandos decided to go ahead. The Zinder cadre, who was known by few people in Niamey and thus could move freely, went to see Beidari.¹⁷⁶ The reason Diop contacted him—a fact confirmed by two other witnesses¹⁷⁷—is not entirely clear as they did not

¹⁷² Événements survenus en Afrique Francophone pendant la semaine du 19 au 25 avril 1965; SHAT, 10 T 210; Placca to Dei-Anang, 14 Apr. 1965; Ghana Embassy (Ghanaemb) Niamey to Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Foreign) Accra, 14 Apr. 1965, NC/47; GNA, SC/BAA/460, no. NIA/05/1.

¹⁷³ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 17/29 Apr. 1965; *Ibid.*, 7 Apr. 1965; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; Placca to Dei-Anang, 14 Apr. 1965.

¹⁷⁴ Interview Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003.

¹⁷⁵ Interviews Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 Nov. 2003 and 15 Dec 2009.

¹⁷⁶ Yet, some higher-placed officials at the interior ministry would have known Diop. *Afrique Nouvelles*, 22–28 Apr. 1965, no. 924; interviews Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003; Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003; Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 Nov. 2003 and 15 Dec 2009.

¹⁷⁷ Interviews Gonimi Boukar, Niamey, 5 Nov. 2005 and Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003.

know each other. It is possible that Diop went to Beidari as a last resort, having learnt that the Niamey cadre hated the RDA and was determined to continue the struggle. Moreover, since Beidari worked at the airport, the projected location for the murder, he could be crucial for the success of the operation. They discussed the plan and Beidari suggested that Diori's return from a projected visit to Abidjan would be a good occasion and the airport's 'presidential lounge' the ideal spot. He telephoned the control tower for Diori's return schedule, using his job at Air Afrique as cover (it could possibly also help Diop with the necessary access). The day scheduled for the attempt was Monday the 12th, two days after Diop's arrival in the capital and the day that Diori was expected back in Niger around nine o'clock in the evening. In the meantime, Beidari arranged lodging for the commando.¹⁷⁸ On the evening of 12 April Diop took a taxi to the airport, in possession of several grenades.¹⁷⁹ It is not known whether he was followed by accomplices, as the original plan would have suggested, but the attempt came to naught as Diori arrived earlier than expected and had left for the palace by the time Sawaba's commando arrived. One source claims that Diop was prematurely spotted by security and had to disappear.¹⁸⁰

He and several of his comrades decided to try again the following day, when the president and dignitaries would be present at a public prayer for Tabaski. Hence, the idea to murder the president during a religious holiday appears to have been a last-minute improvisation.¹⁸¹ It was, in any case, an audacious step with potentially negative effects on public opinion. However, as one Sawabist later reminisced, if the plan was not advisable in religious respects, with comrades dead or in prison and all reconciliation

¹⁷⁸ At or near the Hotel du Ténééré. Interviews Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 Nov. 2003/15 Dec 2009. Gonimi Boukar (Niamey, 5 Nov. 2005) claimed Beidari lodged Diop with the keeper of his compound. Perhaps the keeper lived close to the hotel? Further details below at n. 186 ('salon présidentiel').

¹⁷⁹ Diop also made reference to a 'mine'—some kind of explosive? Interview, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003.

¹⁸⁰ Interviews Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003; Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 Nov. 2003; Génédéf Dakar to Minarmées Paris, no. 8358/CH, 14 Apr. 1965; Ghana Embassy Niamey to Foreign Accra, 15 Apr. 1965.

¹⁸¹ Interview Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003. Possibly, there was an anachronism in reports speaking of grenade attacks at district capitals on the day of Tabaski (at note 172 above), though it may have been strategy to follow up the projected murder at the airport the previous evening with attacks on Tabaski the next day. Mounkaila Beidari later suggested that the idea to kill Diori at a prayer meeting had been entertained as an alternative to the airport scenario, but this may also be an anachronism, induced by a desire to dissociate himself from it. Beidari would originally have rejected an attack at a mosque as this would cost the lives of too many people. When the airport attack fell through, however, he would have agreed. Interview, Niamey, 28 Nov. 2003.

failed, there were no alternatives left.¹⁸² It was the more extraordinary since Diop harboured profound religious beliefs himself, but these were especially Sufi in conception and helped him muster the necessary courage. He had sown fetishes under the skin of his chest and shoulder, and before entering Niger, had procured a magical hat or cap from a ‘Hausa sorcerer’ in Kano that he was convinced would render him invisible (or change him into a cat) after his attack on the president.¹⁸³ In addition, Diop’s prayer was scheduled to take place at the Great Mosque. This was the very spot of the autumn executions, something that can only have encouraged Diop’s desire to avenge his comrades, in particular the desecration of his unit leader Dandouna Aboubakar—he later presented himself as his second-in-command.¹⁸⁴

On the night of 12–13 April Diop and companions reconnoitred the area, trying to find out where regime informers had been stationed and how they were dressed and behaved. Mounkaila Beidari was there too, inspecting the place. He and Diop were armed and stopped by presidential guards, who questioned them. They were not searched, however, and, maintaining their sang-froid, were able to leave the area. Beidari escorted Diop back to his lodgings.¹⁸⁵ Diop took the precaution to dress the same way as the informers that they had identified, wearing a large boubou meant for prayer occasions and ideal for hiding his weapons. It had been given to him by the man who had lodged him and who worked as a guard at a construction company,¹⁸⁶ possibly a Bella Sawabist. His arms included a pistol and two grenades, one of US origin and an ‘offensive’ type, i.e. a grenade with a high explosive potential, the other an ‘MK-2’, a defensive fragmentation grenade characterised by the familiar pineapple grid.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸² Interview with Adamou Assane Mayaki, Niamey, 29 Jan. 2003.

¹⁸³ Later he again emphasised his confidence in the magical cap. *Le Niger*, 16 May 1966. During one interview, he showed the author markings where he had had the fetishes under his skin and in the course of another interview he exchanged views with Ingrid Jäger, the author’s wife, about the different rings he wore, which allegedly protected him when travelling in aeroplanes. His house in Zinder was littered with tablets with Qur’anic texts. Interviews with Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003 & 15 Febr. 2006. See also ch. 9 n. 325 (‘sorcier Haoussa’).

¹⁸⁴ Interview with Ali Talba, Niamey, 4 Febr. 2003. Diop claimed he had had close links with Dandouna as well as Sallé Dan Koulou. Interview, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003.

¹⁸⁵ Interview Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003 & Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 Nov. 2003. The night-time reconnaissance was also reported in *Génédef Dakar to Minar-mées Paris*, no. 8358/CH, 14 Apr. 1965.

¹⁸⁶ Interview Amadou Ibrahim Diop, 13 Febr. 2003; *Le Niger*, 19 Apr. 1965. This could confirm Gonimi Boukar’s claim mentioned in note 178.

¹⁸⁷ *Le Niger*, 16 May 1966 spoke of a submachine gun, not a pistol. Yet, this would seem difficult to hide due to its length. A MAT 49, for example, has a length of 46 to 72 cm. See

Early the following morning several cadres did not turn up, undoubtedly too scared to take part although they had helped in the preparations. However, Diop did not go alone. One later testimony claims that he was led to the place of prayer by a policeman,¹⁸⁸ but this cannot be confirmed. In any case, when Diop arrived at the Great Mosque around 7.30, two accomplices were already in position. Perhaps four or five guerrillas in total came to the area, including the man who had lodged Diop; at least three were armed with pistols and grenades.¹⁸⁹ They were part of a crowd totalling 15,000 to 20,000 worshippers, who included numerous dignitaries such as MPs and ministers. With Boubou Hama and Diamballa Maïga also attending, Niger's triumvirate was present in its entirety, thus making the regime's momentary vulnerability particularly acute.¹⁹⁰ The dignitaries, including President Diiori, were inside an official enclosure separating them from the populace. Yet, as Niamey's police did not know Diop and few people in the interior ministry could have recognised him, he could make his way to a position 30 metres to the right of where Diiori was standing (the enclosure consisted of openwork crush barriers).¹⁹¹

Prayer began. The faithful rose and the imam started reciting the appropriate verses. As worshippers kneeled, Sawaba's commando took the offensive grenade from his boubou and flung it into the enclosure, where it landed three rows behind the president, perhaps because Diop was too far away or could not fully stretch his arm—or because he would have been nervous. An explosion followed while he threw himself to the ground.¹⁹² The grenade missed Diiori, killing a four-year-old boy instead and wounding

Événements survenus en Afrique Francophone pendant la semaine du 12 au 18 avril 1965; *Le Niger*, 19 Apr. 1965; interview Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003; Génédef Dakar to Minarmées Paris, no. 8358/CH, 14 Apr. 1965; Ghanaemb Niamey to Foreign Accra, 14 Apr. 1965.

¹⁸⁸ Interview Sao Marakan, Niamey, 29 Jan. 2003.

¹⁸⁹ Interview Bachir Boukary, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003; Génédef Dakar to Minarmées Paris, no. 8358/CH, 14 Apr. 1965; Événements survenus en Afrique Francophone pendant la semaine du 12 au 18 avril 1965; Ghanaemb to Foreign Accra, 14 Apr. 1965; *Le Niger*, 19 Apr. 1965. Ibrahim Bawa Souley wrongly claimed Diop was alone. Souley was young then and lived in Dosso. Interview, Niamey, 26 Nov. 2003.

¹⁹⁰ *Africa Research Bulletin*, Apr. 1965, 279; *Le Niger*, 19 Apr. & 21 June 1965; Ghanaemb Niamey to Foreign Accra, 14 Apr. 1965.

¹⁹¹ Génédef Dakar to Minarmées Paris, no. 8358/CH, 14 Apr. 1965; *Le Niger*, 19 Apr. 1965, which has a photo of the enclosure and crush barrier; *Afrique Nouvelles*, 22-28 Apr. 1965, no. 924; *Africa Research Bulletin*, Apr. 1965, 279; interview with Ousmane Dan Galadima, Madaoua, 7 Febr. 2003.

¹⁹² *Le Temps du Niger*, 14 Apr. 1965; *Le Niger*, 19 Apr. 1965 & 16 May 1966; interviews Harou Kouka, Niamey, 26 Nov. 2003 & Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003; Placca to Dei-Anang, 14 Apr. 1965.

several people, including Madi Mayaki, MP for Filingué, and three members of a Malian basketball team on tour in Niamey.¹⁹³ Diop got up, and according to Ghana's ambassador to Niamey, bit his finger in disappointment when he saw that he had missed his target. The Ghanaian claimed that Diop then threw his MK-2 'as he identified another member of gang'—perhaps a reference to Diop trying to signal comrades to come into action; however, the second grenade remained 'ineffective'. A British report, on the other hand, suggests that bystanders were already near the commando, preventing him from throwing the second explosive, something that accords with Diop's later testimony.¹⁹⁴ Yet, a Nigérien report states that the guerrilla could still pull his pistol from his boubou and fire it, but that members of the congregation promptly deflected the barrel to the ground.¹⁹⁵

Diop was assailed by a dozen people, assisted by presidential guards. According to his own account, he was shot at. He would have been lynched but for the intervention of Diamballa Maïga, who no doubt was eager for the intelligence that could be procured from interrogation.¹⁹⁶ Further shooting was avoided, something that would have created the confusion for other commandos to finish off the presidential party—while it could also have facilitated Diop's escape.¹⁹⁷ Whether or not the absence of panic was the reason for the inaction of the other guerrillas (not all of them may have been close enough), the crowds were quickly controlled over the mi-

¹⁹³ Placca to Dei-Anang, 14 Apr. 1965; Niger. West & Central African Department, Foreign Office, 20 Apr. 1965 & Abidjan to Foreign Office. En clair, FO/CRO/WHI, no. 26, 14 Apr. 1965; PRO, FO 371/182.198; *Le Niger*, 21 June 1965; *Le Temps du Niger*, 14 Apr. 1965; Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, 375. The boy's name was Hassane Garba, son of Garba Sounakoye, a civil servant. The number of wounded reported was five to seven. The captain of the Malian sportsmen, Alioune Diouf, was badly injured, with grenade fragments in legs, lungs and liver. Another Malian, Mohamedine Sylla, was slightly injured in the face. Mali's ambassador was also present but was not hurt. *Le Niger*, 19 Apr. & 8 Nov. 1965; *Afrique Nouvelles*, 22–28 Apr. 1965, no. 924; interview Abdou Adam, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003.

¹⁹⁴ Ghanaemb Niamey to Foreign Accra, 14 Apr. 1965; Placca to Dei-Anang, 14 Apr. 1965; B.L. Placca, Ghana Embassy Niamey, to M.F. Dei-Anang, African Affairs Secretariat Accra, 16 Apr. 1965; GNA, SC/BAA/460, no. NIA/05/1; Abidjan to Foreign Office, 14 Apr. 1965; interview Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003. Événements survenus en Afrique Francophone pendant la semaine du 12 au 18 avril 1965 says he still had the defensive grenade upon capture.

¹⁹⁵ *Le Niger*, 19 Apr. 1965.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*; *Le Temps du Niger*, 14 Apr. 1965; Placca to Dei-Anang, 14 Apr. 1965; interview Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003.

¹⁹⁷ Hence the suggestion that Diop was suicidal or a 'robot' endangering his own life—which ignores the role of his anger and desire for revenge—has to be set aside. Placca to Dei-Anang, 14 & 16 Apr. 1965 and *Le Niger*, 19 Apr. 1965.

crophone, the imam continuing with prayer as if nothing had happened. While Diop was hurried away to the palace, the area was cordoned off. The commandos must have lost their sang-froid and the momentum, for now, had been lost. As 'every single person was searched' upon leaving the prayer ground, one by one they were caught with their pistols and grenades, probably four in total.¹⁹⁸

However, guerrillas charged with some of the accompanying action went ahead with operations all the same. That same day customs officers, warned by the Gendarmerie of Gouré, spotted a party of guerrillas that had apparently crossed the border from Nigeria and was reported to total 40 men! If the intelligence was flawed (it spoke of commandos disguised as 'Yarouba' [sic], a 'tribe established on the Nigeria-Niger border'), the size of the group was again conveyed in a report two weeks later.¹⁹⁹ It is not known what happened during its infiltration on 13 April, but it may be presumed that the guerrillas made their way back across the frontier. (Would they have heard that Diop's attempt had failed?). That not all was well in the eastern sector can be gauged from the reinforcement of the garrison in Nguigmi, after reports came in that a Sawaba unit was about to infiltrate the country south-west of the city. As this group was estimated to be even larger—50 men—,²⁰⁰ the intelligence might be put aside as faulty,²⁰¹ brought into being by a climate in which overreaction was rife. Yet, the far east was also the zone for the Bosso commandos, and while most of its units appear to have been neutralised by this time, it is clear that the area continued to be unruly. The Ghanaian ambassador to Niamey reported that a battalion of 500 soldiers, gendarmes and militias was dispatched for combing operations to 'suspected points of entry' in the eastern region.²⁰² The large number of guerrillas fielded may have been linked to the plan to strike swiftly at urban centres. In Niamey, the night following Diop's attack, two commandos were caught red-handed as they were about to blow up the installations of Radio Niger.²⁰³

¹⁹⁸ Placca to Dei-Anang, 14 Apr. 1965; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 29 Apr. 1965; *Le Niger*, 19 Apr. 1965; Ghanaemb Niamey to Foreign Accra, 14 Apr. 1965; Événements survenus en Afrique Francophone pendant la semaine du 12 au 18 avril 1965. Identity of the commandos is unknown.

¹⁹⁹ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 17 & 29 Apr. 1965 ('tribu implantée à la frontière Nigéria-Niger').

²⁰⁰ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 17 Apr. 1965; Événements survenus en Afrique Francophone pendant la semaine du 19 au 25 avril 1965; SHAT, 10 T 210.

²⁰¹ As emphasised by Mounkaila Beidari. Interview, Niamey, 15 Dec. 2009.

²⁰² Placca to Dei-Anang, 14 Apr. 1965.

²⁰³ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 17 Apr. 1965. Their identity is not known.

The Last Military Operations

Sawaba had almost wiped out the core of the regime. As the 13th of April came to a close and the RDA got ready to unleash a wave of repression, infiltrations into Niger continued. This was the more remarkable since the assassination attempt had not brought the intended putsch one step closer towards fulfilment. On the contrary, it had put the regime on a total war footing and, as a consequence, made new infiltrations more difficult than ever. But as noted above, guerrilla activity obeyed its own dynamics, fuelled by the commitment of remaining cadres, whose lack of an appealing alternative continued to represent a danger to the regime. President Diori put on a brave face by appearing on radio an hour after the attempt on his life, reassuring his supporters that all was well. However, that evening he called off his projected attendance of a gala performance at the French cultural centre. If this hardly drove home a picture of personal courage, the French, too, were shocked by the attempt on their client's life. Military intelligence observed that Djibo Bakary was far from neutralised and that new assassinations remained possible, as these now appeared the new tactic.²⁰⁴ Yet, the consequences of the failed murder and coup meant that further urban-based action was difficult.

Commando activity therefore continued, but in the rural areas. A fortnight after Diop's attempt on the president—early in May—20 people, among whom were several guerrillas, were arrested at an unknown location. Diori protested to Dahomey over Sawaba infiltrations. Two commando units, one made up of seven men, the other of 12, penetrated Niger from its territory with the help of guides who were probably Dahomean. Dahomey's Vice-President, Ahomadegbé, gave orders for security operations in the Bassila and Gbérouboué regions, the former close to the Togo border and both considerably to the south of the Malanville area.²⁰⁵ By the middle of the month, the French reported on Niger's concern about infiltrations and the existence of domestic arms caches.²⁰⁶ On the 18th, government forces clashed with a guerrilla unit of five in the Say region, 30 km from Tamou. The Sawabists, who infiltrated from Voltan territory, were surprised at a water point and a shoot-out followed in which one commando was

²⁰⁴ Placca to Dei-Anang, 14 Apr. 1965; *Le Niger*, 19 Apr. 1965; *Le Monde* (Paris), 16 Apr. 1965; Génédef Dakar to Minarmées Paris, no. 8358/CH, 14 Apr. 1965.

²⁰⁵ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 3 May & 9 June 1965; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 12 May 1965.

killed but the others managed to escape.²⁰⁷ Just a few days previously, Diori had cancelled a visit to Malanville—where he was to meet Ahomadegbé—, as Nigérien security considered Dahomean measures insufficient against the continued presence of Sawaba elements in the villages of the region.²⁰⁸ The day after the confrontation near Tamou, another engagement took place, but now at Malbaza, between Konni and Madaoua, in the central sector. Here an army patrol killed a guerrilla (it is unknown if there were more), who was fully fitted out, carrying two automatic pistols, 50 rounds of ammunition, four separate cartridges and a transistor radio. His body was transported to Niamey.²⁰⁹ It is not known who he was. In fact, it is difficult to establish the identity of many of the casualties that were recorded after the autumn invasion.

The fact that the incursions in May took place in areas more than 400 km apart suggests a wider pattern, while there is a good possibility that some infiltrations went unrecorded. Thus, if guerrilla operations to some extent concentrated on the Niger-Dahomean border to make use of the safer hinterland there, they were part of a comprehensive attempt to continue with attacks on the regime. This was probably done on the orders of Sawaba's leadership, although some infiltrations may have taken place at the initiative of guerrilla units themselves, used to an autonomy that formed their only guarantee of survival. What were they thinking by this time? Did they not fear embarking on incursions, knowing what had happened the previous autumn and aware that the regime had mobilised the omnipresent militias? Even if the full extent of the autumn drama was not known to those in the Ghanaian camps, something must have filtered through. Did they expect that they could still bring the Franco-RDA combine to its knees? It is impossible to give definitive answers to this, but the picture of Sawabists established through interviews and archival sources suggests that many were driven by bitterness if not renewed anger over the fate of comrades and family (see next chapter). Raised in a political tradition that harboured a belief that violence could help defeat the enemy and bring the relief they had so long been yearning for, the commandos con-

²⁰⁷ The killed commando carried a Soviet pistol (a MAC/50/9/m). *Ibid.*, 9 June 1965; Événements survenus en Afrique Francophone pendant la semaine du 17 au 23 mai 1965; SHAT, 10 T 210.

²⁰⁸ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 3 May 1965.

²⁰⁹ He also had blankets, clothes, water bottles and some money (4,000 CFA) with him. *Ibid.*; Ambassade de France, Note de renseignements, no. 304/CM/NIG/SC, 22 May 1965; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2. The clashes at Tamou and Malbaza were confirmed in *Le Niger*, 7 June 1965, and the latter also by Mounkaila Albagna, interview, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003.

tinued with their actions. However, the imposition of military discipline in the camps must also go some way to explaining why they went ahead with projected infiltrations.

Their activity may in part have been pushed by measures of neighbouring countries to wind up Sawaba's presence on their territory (see below). However, this was probably not true for one infiltration, which took place in the far east at the end of May 1965 and which, while confirming the wider pattern of incursions, fitted in with the record of violence that the remote region had seen. Around 30 guerrillas, who possibly tried to build on the tactic of fielding larger numbers of men, crossed the frontier from Nigeria and penetrated the region between Diffa and Bosso. They included Mamadou Ali, a shop assistant who had aided Aba Kaka's first attack in the autumn. They attacked government vehicles (one army lorry was the object of a raid on the Diffa-Bosso road on 30 May), but the outcome is unclear. The government launched an operation to intercept the commandos, possibly with gendarmes and militias since the garrison in Diffa was rocked by a mutiny on the night of the 28th–29th. Several of the guerrillas must have withdrawn across the border, as shown by the example of Mamadou Ali, who fled to Kano.²¹⁰

Early in June French intelligence reported that 'the infiltrations of Sawabists in Niger continue[d], in spite of the surveillance of the frontiers'. As if to make sense of the latest attack, a rumour circulated that Bakary himself had been in Kano on 10 June, en route for the north-eastern province of Borno to organise infiltrations in this sector.²¹¹ If it is unlikely that Sawaba's leader would take the risk of going to Northern Nigeria at this juncture, there is evidence that the guerrillas in the Bosso region stayed in touch with the leadership in Accra. Mamadou Ali had gone to Kano carrying a letter from Aba Kaka's 'secretary' (a reference perhaps to his assistant, then Idrissa Choua) on the tactics to be pursued in attacking Bosso town.²¹² The men who had attacked the Diffa-Bosso sector at the end of May probably constituted at least in part a fresh group of guerrillas. As noted above, training in Ghana continued—at the beginning of the month a new 'guer-

²¹⁰ It is unlikely that the infiltrators were Tubu. They came from Nigeria, i.e. the south and not part of the Tubu zone, and were described as commandos. Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 9 June 1965; *Ibid.*, 8 Sept. 1965; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; Cour de Sûreté de l'Etat. Arrêt de condamnation no. 9, 6 June 1969; ANN, M 27.26.

²¹¹ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 9 & 30 June 1965; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2 ('Les infiltrations de Sawabistes au Niger se poursuivent, en dépit de la surveillance des frontières').

²¹² *Ibid.*, 21 Sept. 1965; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2.

rilla warfare course' had begun for 50 'Niger students'.²¹³ Those who took part in the attacks in the far east must have come to reinforce the commando presence in the area, severely depleted in strength since the assault in the autumn. Among them, however, were some old hands such as Lawal Adia, who had returned from Accra, and Maman Koyorambe. Both had participated in Kaka's first assault on Bosso and, on 6 June, took part in another attack. It is not clear what exactly happened, nor how many guerrillas were involved, but Koyorambe in any case made it back to Nigerian territory.²¹⁴

The Bosso units still benefited from help by Nigerians. At Boula Kari, one of Kaka's hideouts, they had an arms cache, and at least one NEPU member, possibly in the same village, had weapons that could be used for operations in Niger.²¹⁵ By the end of June, NEPU was reported to be assisting in new infiltrations. Thus, despite the weakening in the NEPU-Sawaba position in Nigeria in the wake of the invasion, cadres could still make use of it as a hinterland and transit zone. On 25 May, for example, Sawabists in Lagos came together on the occasion of Africa Day. They met at the house of Mohamed Baba, whose role (he was a currency trafficker) indicates that some financial transactions were possibly still being done on the movement's behalf. Towards the end of July, one Hami Mohamed dit Buzu, a peasant from the Téra region and a commando, travelled with a cheque of more than 1,200 Ghanaian pounds from Accra to the Nigerian border, en route for a comrade in Lagos called Alhadji Seidou.²¹⁶ At the diplomatic level, moreover, Sawaba's leadership tried to foster the cause by sending a delegate to the 4th Afro-Asian Peoples' Solidarity Conference held in Accra in May. He not only appealed for moral support but also emphasised that his comrades 'above all needed weapons and solid equipment'.²¹⁷

If Ghana and Nigeria, the latter essentially through the complexity and size of the country, still provided Sawabists room for manoeuvre, infiltrations were nevertheless extremely risky. During the second half of May

²¹³ *Nkrumah's Subversion in Africa*, 20.

²¹⁴ Koyorambe established himself at a village called Malfateri (= Malam Fatori?). Cour de Sûreté de l'Etat. Arrêt de condamnation no. 9, 6 June 1969; interview with Aba Kaka, Bosso, 13 Febr. 2006.

²¹⁵ The first arms cache consisted of four MAS 36s, one submachine gun and an automatic pistol. The NEPU member held a pistol, two grenades and military uniforms. Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 21 Sept. 1965.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 17 Aug. 1965; 10 T 719/D.2; 9 June 1965.

²¹⁷ His identity is unknown, but it was probably someone high in the party hierarchy. Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 30 June 1965 ('surtout besoin d'armes et de matériel solide').

around 15 commandos got caught, with armaments, right across Niger.²¹⁸ The French in July 1965 opined that Bakary was finding it harder to find volunteers for incursions. On 30 June military intelligence reported that, while infiltrations still took place, many were ‘thwarted’ by gendarmes and militias.²¹⁹ Arrests, moreover, were taking place of Sawabists in both Nigeria and neighbouring countries (on which more in Chapter 14) and this began to hamper operations. In August, a certain Mamadou Maiga, a cadre from Tahoua but living in Gao, was visited by an envoy from Bakary. It is not known what transpired, save that Maiga immediately became the object of Malian attention. In any case, the only military activity that apparently took place that month was in the northern region of Dahomey, where a commando group headed by Issoufou Danbaro had set up camp at the village of ‘Birni Lahiya’—probably Birni Lafia, where Danbaro had been before, opposite Tenda in Niger. His presence was confirmed by peasants and gendarmes were alerted, presumably on the Nigérien side of the river. It was reported that Danbaro and his comrades got aid from the Dahomean military.²²⁰ At the end of the month a unit of guerrillas would have taken up position at Kirogobou, a Dahomean village close to the frontier and probably near or in the W National Park, where Niger’s authorities ordered an operation. Nevertheless, the French in mid-September reported that ‘rebels’ were still present in the park, roughly between Say and Gaya, maintaining themselves in the Dahomean hinterland.²²¹

The risks that the guerrillas now faced, however, also led to tensions in some of the units. Aba Kaka had a dispute with his second-in-command Idrissa Choua over the tactics to be pursued in attacking the Bosso region, for which they asked advice from the leadership in Accra.²²² One of Kaka’s companions, Madou Koutah, was killed in an engagement. Kaka himself sustained a leg injury during his withdrawal across the Komadougou after an exchange in which another guerrilla, Mounkouta, was wounded. Kaka tried to carry him on his back but was forced to leave him behind, while he

²¹⁸ W.J.A. Wilberforce, British Embassy Abidjan, to R.W. Renwick, Foreign Office, 29 July 1965; PRO, FO 371/182.198. Confirmed in *Le Niger*, 21 June 1965.

²¹⁹ Wilberforce to Renwick, 29 July 1965; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 30 June 1965 (‘contrecarrées’).

²²⁰ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 17 Aug. 1965 & 4 Aug. 1965; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2. Had Danbaro escaped Niamey after Diop’s attempt on Diori or had he never reached the capital?

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 21 Sept. 1965; Note de Renseignements, Ambassade de France, no. 498/CM/NIG/S, 17 Sept. 1965; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2. Location Kirogobou not known (‘rebelles’).

²²² Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 21 Sept. 1965.

sought medical care in a hamlet called Koudo Kourou, three km from the frontier village of Malam Fatori. Later he returned and found the body of Mounkouta, who had died in the meantime. Constantly looking for food and using a traditional medicine to take care of his leg wound, Kaka went back to the Nigérien side of the river (the Nigerians had begun another mopping-up operation). He remained in the area for about a month, after which he went to Maiduguri, where there were people willing to provide help.²²³

It is not known how many were still part of the Bosso units by then, but more generally these developments show that guerrilla groups were getting depleted. In September, Sawaba let it be known that it had ordered its guerrillas to observe a ceasefire for the duration of the OAU summit in Accra. The reason for doing so was that Niger's francophone allies were planning a boycott in retaliation for Nkrumah's support to the opposition in their countries, notably Niger.²²⁴ While it was in the interest of the Ghanaians that Sawaba did not, for the moment, create additional cause to damage their diplomatic interests, the situation on the ground, of course, hardly gave the movement a real alternative.²²⁵ Still, Niger's regime was always in the grip of paranoia, which was now fuelled by the presidential 'elections' planned for 30 September. These were the first to be held in Niger and sole candidate Diiori obtained a totalitarian 99.8 per cent of the votes, to be followed by single-party legislative polls in October that produced similar results.²²⁶

If Sawabists were scapegoats for all things amiss (the regime reported on 'Sawaba' gangs plundering the Tillia region close to the Malian border—which clearly referred to pillaging Tuaregs),²²⁷ their commandos nonethe-

²²³ Interviews with Kanembou Malam, Diffa, 12 Febr. 2006; Aba Kaka, Bosso, 13 Febr. 2006; Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 6 Dec. 2003.

²²⁴ Front Démocratique de la Patrie: Déclaration, n.d.; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2. This declaration repeated that Sawaba preferred a peaceful solution to a violent one, pointing out, however, that the RDA had not left any alternative in view of the constant repression and defending the foreign support that Sawaba received by pointing to the support of Israelis and others to the regime in Niamey. On the wider diplomatic scene in West Africa, see K. van Walraven, *Dreams of Power: The Role of the Organization of African Unity in the Politics of Africa 1963–1993* (Aldershot, 1999), 191 and 285.

²²⁵ Ambassade de France au Niger. Le conseiller militaire, no. 241/CM/NIG/S: Etude sur le Sawaba, Niamey, 22 June 1966 (Lt-Col. Chabriaux); SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2.

²²⁶ As the only party to stand in the parliamentary polls on 21 October, the RDA gained 99.2 per cent of the votes. F. Martin, *Le Niger du Président Diiori: Chronologie 1960–1974* (Paris, 1991), 140–142.

²²⁷ Note de Renseignements, 17 Sept. 1965; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 21 Sept. 1965.

less managed to make a statement. On 20 October, the day before the National Assembly elections (and the start of the OAU summit), guerrillas attacked a government lorry on the road between Diffa and Bosso. According to French intelligence, it had transported election material to be used in Bosso and it was on its way back when three commandos assaulted the vehicle and an exchange of fire ensued. The guerrillas, two of whom would have got wounded, fled back to Nigeria, leaving behind several weapons (pistols, submachine guns, grenades). Interviews later confirmed this withdrawal, adding that Aba Kaka himself took part in the attack but that it took place on the vehicle's way out and that the commandos captured the ballot box in addition to money.²²⁸

It showed that, ceasefire or no ceasefire, guerrilla action followed its own dynamics, certainly in the east. Aba Kaka later recalled how he penetrated Niger once more—after the raid on the eve of the polls—, coming across a unit of FAN forces that had halted for a meal. He would have fired at them, whereupon he withdrew to Nigeria and went to Maiduguri. According to his own account, he was by now the last man of his unit.²²⁹ However, by the end of 1965, French intelligence warned about the possibility of new guerrilla action, as the new batch of recruits who had gone to communist China were expected back in Ghana.²³⁰ Thus, in February 1966 a number of well-equipped commandos were said to have left Ghana for southern Nigeria. They were expected to travel to Katsina, where they would regroup and be lodged by NEPU members. Sawaba elements, who had been freed from Kaduna prison by the local military commander, could possibly join them. Twenty cadres and guerrillas in four groups of five would infiltrate Niger and try and reconstitute dismantled cells. As a result, throughout that month 'Sawabist elements [were] spotted' on several occasions. On the 8th a unit of 15 men was reported to be active in the 'Gamba' region in Nigeria (probably Kamba, in the north-west and a stone's throw from Gaya). Although five of them were arrested by Nigerian forces, the Nigériens were worried and ordered a patrol to the border zone. On 17 February the French reported that 30 well-armed commandos would have

²²⁸ Premier Ministre. SDECE, 12 Nov. 1965; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; interviews Kanembou Malam, Diffa, 12 Febr. 2006 & Aba Kaka, Bosso, 13 Febr. 2006. The claim of the capture was made by Kaka himself. Kanembou Malam (ex-government soldier) confirmed Kaka's participation in the raid.

²²⁹ Interview with Aba Kaka, Bosso, 13 Febr. 2006.

²³⁰ Note de Renseignements, Ambassade de France, Niamey, 15 Dec. 1965 and above at n. 133.

left Accra for Niger. Issoufou Danbaro would have been in the Ghanaian capital on the 21st at the head of 55 newly trained recruits.²³¹

If these numbers are correct, it shows that Sawaba's leadership was still determined to launch operations against the enemy. On 20 February armed men were seen in the Madarounfa region—the area of Dan Koulou's attack in the opening stages of the rebellion almost one and a half years earlier.²³² The RDA was clearly concerned, also because events in neighbouring countries pointed to the vulnerability of allied regimes. At the start of the year the Voltan army toppled the government of President Yaméogo. A fortnight later, Nigeria was rocked by a violent coup in which the federal prime minister, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, and Northern Nigeria's premier, NPC leader Ahmadu Bello, were assassinated.²³³

That these events brought no strategic improvements, however, was shown by the arrest of two Sawabists, Mounkaila Albeidou and Amadou Albeidou, who on 22 February tried to enter Niger by lorry. Possibly, they simply wanted to return home (there was no report about arms), but they were stopped in Gaya by gendarmes alerted about their impending arrival.²³⁴ Two days later, a dramatic event took place that was to spell the end of the movement's guerrilla campaigns altogether. On 24 February, as Kwame Nkrumah was on a state visit to North Vietnam, the Ghanaian army took power in Accra, among other things abruptly ending the provision of assistance to Sawaba. From then on, as the movement's headquarters and camps were dismantled (see next chapter), infiltrations began to decline markedly, even when compared with the lower frequency of units' actions in the wake of the attempt on Diori the previous spring. In June 1966—nearly two years since the start of the attacks—French intelligence reported that

From time to time the population spots the presence of small groups of terrorists in the Téra region that are armed but lack in belligerence. These are certainly the remainders of the commandos who have operated in this

²³¹ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 28 Febr. 1966; Note de Renseignements, Ambassade de France au Niger. Le conseiller militaire, no. 83/CM/NIG/S, Niamey, 24 Febr. 1966; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2 & 717/D.2 ('des éléments sawabistes ont été signalés').

²³² Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 28 Febr. 1966.

²³³ Note de Renseignements, Ambassade de France au Niger. Le conseiller militaire, no. 89/CM/NIG/S, 2 March 1966; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 24 Febr. 1966. Mounkaila Albeidou (kin of Amadou Albeidou?) could later escape. Surveillance du Territoire (Bureau de Coordination), no. 396/SN/ST: Organisation Terroriste "Sawaba" (Recueil des dirigeants et militants actifs en fuite); ex. no. 000148, dest. le Sous Préfet de Dosso.

region and who, straddling the frontiers, wander between Mali, Upper Volta and Niger.²³⁵

The tragedy of Sawaba's guerrillas was total. Defeated, killed, imprisoned or chased across Niger's borders, they could neither return home nor find refuge in neighbouring countries. Many must have been at a loss what to do. As shown in the next chapter, innumerable cadres and commandos had to fend for themselves and find a place of exile somewhere in the West African region.

In this context it was reported in October 1966 that Djibo Bakary took part in a meeting with Kwame Nkrumah in the town of Kankan in Guinea (they were to share the country as their home in exile) to plan new action against the RDA. They discussed sending a Sawaba envoy with 50 million CFA francs on a mission to Niamey to buy four members of the military. If true, it was almost a re-run of past plans (Tondibia 1961, Diallo 1963 and Dan Galadima's alleged contacts with officers in 1964), although nothing tangible had materialised from this. The French surmised, concerning the officers that Bakary had in view, that one could be Bayéré Moussa, a lieutenant from Filingué who had become discredited and was under surveillance. They also suggested that Sawaba might wish to liberate Captain Diallo, who had at least had some association with the movement's cadres.²³⁶ Nkrumah would have written a letter to Modibo Keita, implausibly asserting that 500 Nigériens were being trained in a camp near Kayes in western Mali, who would assist in the projected coup before 10 November, together with FAN officers and two cabinet ministers (Léopold Kaziendé and Harou Kouka). The French pointed out that this part of the intelligence was flawed—probably an example of rumour-mongering that could unnerve the RDA—, although they thought it possible that Sékou Touré, Nkrumah and even Keita could contemplate sending a hitman against Diori or attempt to take power during the latter's trips abroad.²³⁷

In any case, nothing was heard of this again. The camel had finally been neutralised. If Sawaba remnants in the Bosso region three years later—in

²³⁵ Ambassade de France au Niger: Etude sur le Sawaba ('De temps à autre la population signale dans la région la présence de petites groupes de terroristes armés mais manquant d'agressivité. Ce sont certainement les restes des commandos ayant opéré dans cette région et qui à cheval sur les frontières errent entre le Mali, la Haute-Volta et le Niger').

²³⁶ Note de Renseignements, Ambassade de France au Niger, no. 430/CM/NIG/S, 21 Oct. 1966; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; S. Decalo, *Historical Dictionary of Niger* (Metuchen, NJ, & London, 1979), 47. They also suggested, rather wildly, that it could have involved Gendarmerie Captain Badié, who then lived under house arrest in Bilma (see next chapter).

²³⁷ Note de Renseignements, 21 Oct. 1966.

August 1969—took up opposition again, this merely reaffirmed their past doggedness. Their action was more an indication of the spirited independence of the local community than an initiative of Sawaba's leadership (by then no longer functioning). Five men were allegedly involved, two of whom would be pursuing sabotage training in Am Dam, eastern Chad, where they would have found lodging with a sub-prefect called Aboubakar Korey. They were said to have received instruction from 'a certain Brahim Abatcha dit Robert'—i.e. Ibrahima Abatcha, founder of the FROLINAT movement. Abatcha had spent considerable time in Accra, where he may have established contact with Bosso Sawabists, as he did with members of UPC rebels from Cameroon.²³⁸ Alternatively, contact with FROLINAT may have been facilitated by Sawabists in Morocco. Bachir Boukary from Zinder later recalled how he met Abba Sidick while pursuing his agricultural training. Sidick succeeded Abatcha as FROLINAT's secretary-general upon the latter's death in February 1968,²³⁹ though Boukary must have met him earlier, as the Zinder student left that year for a job in Guinea.²⁴⁰ If the two Sawabists in Chad were therefore trained by Abatcha, they must have received their instruction from subordinates or before 1968. In any case, they would have promised compatriots in Niger weaponry (rifles, pistols, a sub-machine gun). The RDA asked FAN officers to be vigilant, but no armed action by Sawabists was registered.²⁴¹

While it seems that it was grass-roots forces that were at the origin of these developments, Sawaba's leader himself also tried to link up with Chad's formidable rebels a few months later. In October 1969 it was reported that he had travelled to Libya, where Col. Kadhafi had taken power and was already providing support to FROLINAT. Bakary met Sidick, and French intelligence warned that they might decide on common action, including restarting operations in Niger.²⁴² Kadhafi was reported to have

²³⁸ Rapport Mensuel, Aug. 1969; SHAT, 10 T 715/D.2-3; R. Buijtenhuijs, *Le Frolinat et les révoltes populaires du Tchad, 1965-1976* (The Hague, 1978), 35 & 117 ('un certain Brahim Abatcha dit Robert').

²³⁹ Buijtenhuijs, *Le Frolinat*, 130 and 144.

²⁴⁰ Interview Bachir Boukary, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003.

²⁴¹ Rapport Mensuel, Aug. 1969. Tellingly, in the Bilma region youths grouped in a militia called 'Jeunesse Libre du Kaouar' were in touch with FROLINAT leader Goukouni Weddeye. M.A. Djermakoye *15 avril 1974: Mémoires d'un compagnon de Seyni Kountché* (www. Editions-Nathan-adamou.com, accessed 5 Aug. 2010). Kanembou Malam, ex-government soldier, could not confirm a FROLINAT link, suggesting one with Chadian banditry instead. Interview, Diffa, 12 Febr. 2006.

²⁴² Rapport Mensuel, Oct. 1969; SHAT, 10 T 715/D.2-3.

promised Sawaba's leader his support, though the nature of this assistance was not specified.²⁴³

These were but the last flare-ups of Sawaba resistance. The Franco-RDA combine had finally managed to consolidate itself, but at the price of an oppressive rule that had smothered all undercurrents of discontent—almost. Underscoring the significance of Tessaoua as one of the cradles of the little folk, a local activist there called Koundédé and described as an 'extremist of Sawaba', in June 1969 openly agitated against the RDA. Challenging its local secretary, mocking party and government and foretelling the demise of Diori's presidency, he shared his views with people in Tessaoua and surrounding villages.²⁴⁴ The regional MP was much concerned, not least because of the deplorable condition of the local party section. He wrote a letter about the audacity to the capital, while police took care of the incorrigible culprit.²⁴⁵

Concluding Observations

While completely defeated on the battlefield, what stands out is the tenacity with which Sawabists persevered with infiltrations. Starting around 1960, these incursions—initially peaceful, geared towards mobilising the populace and building up infrastructure—continued right up to the moment that the guerrillas lost their base area in Ghana (1966).²⁴⁶ The disastrous invasion of 1964 did not alter their conduct, even if operations decreased substantially because the bungled attack precluded a co-ordinated dispatch of large numbers across the borders. An explanation for this at the level of the rank and file lies in personal motivation and the situation in which they found themselves. Enmity towards the regime; the constraints of the military structure in which they operated; and the lack of an alternative, especially after the 1964 attacks—these drove them to continue. In addition, a political culture in which violence was never far from political canvassing, coupled with a global ideological setting in which the

²⁴³ E. Grégoire, *Touaregs du Niger: Le destin d'un mythe* (Paris, 1999), 37.

²⁴⁴ The villages concerned were Magéni (= Majéni, 2 km north of Tessaoua); Guidan-Maitchibi (= Guidan May Chibi, also 2 km north of Tessaoua, east of Magéni); Takagi (location unknown); and Magargari, further to the north-west. See next note.

²⁴⁵ Sani Malam Abdou, député du Niger à Tessaoua, à M. le Secrétaire administratif du Comité national du PPN-RDA à Niamey, 25 June 1969; ANN, AN 1 E 3,20 ('extrémiste du Sawaba').

²⁴⁶ This link was also clearly perceived by some Sawaba commandos. Interview Soumana Idrissa, Gothèye, 1 Nov. 2005.

message of Marxism-Leninism advanced force as an established, legitimate and successful instrument to pursue change,²⁴⁷ made it difficult to see that armed engagement could be counter-productive. Sawabists thus developed a blind spot, which made it hard to see an alternative, the more so as the opponent engaged them in similar vein.

If many of the educated cadres were aware of the risks of an assault, most of the commandos did not realise the consequences.²⁴⁸ Reminiscing later about Sawaba's history, peasant supporters in Bandio argued that, under the circumstances, the rebellion was a normal act because it could have worked, and if it *had* worked, there would have been no problem.²⁴⁹ This circular argument, while betraying the blind spot in their political universe, nevertheless comes closer to the historical truth than the testimonies of educated cadres, whose views on Sawaba's past were affected by retrospection on the movement's defeat.²⁵⁰ Statements by some of them, however, that before the invasion, they thought that they could win since otherwise they would not have started it, are probably the more candid confessions in the dynamic context of interviews.²⁵¹ In fact, even among educated Sawabists there were many who were intensely dedicated to the confrontation with the RDA. The biographies of men like Mounkaila Beidari, Mounkaila Albagna and Siddi Abdou reveal the depth of that commitment, fuelled by a family bereavement, school frustrations or political persecution—sometimes to the point of suicide. Moreover, while the rebellion was not limited to a specific region, Niger's vast geographical theatre also allowed for purely local issues to provide motivation to engage the regime. The best example of this is Bosso's chieftaincy dispute and the importance of the additional energies this helped to mobilise.

At the level of the leadership, the struggle's continuance after 1964 raises other issues. Bakary, and in all probability Dan Galadima too, were aware of the hinterland's insecurity even before the invasion. As they had allowed themselves to be jump-started into the attack, they bore heavy responsibility for the losses that the movement suffered. The tensions inside the lead-

²⁴⁷ In this vein, see F.D. Colburn, *The Vogue of Revolution in Poor Countries* (Princeton, 1994).

²⁴⁸ As pointed out by Djibo Harouna. Interview, Gothèye, 1 Nov. 2005.

²⁴⁹ Interviews Mamane Boureïma & Djibo Foulan, Bandio, 4 Nov. 2005; Limane Kaoumi, Diffa, 12 Febr. 2006.

²⁵⁰ F.e. interviews Tahirou Ayouba Maïga and Amada Bachard, Niamey, 28 Oct. 2005 and 14 Dec. 2009.

²⁵¹ Interviews Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 6 Dec. 2003; Ibrahim Bawa Souley, Niamey, 26 Nov. 2003.

ership after the autumn invasion show that they were aware of this. The magnitude of their responsibility only increased with the decision to continue, even if they had no real alternative. Yet, the search by ‘the scorpion’ for a hard-hitting strategy that would topple the regime by a (partly army-driven) putsch can also be read as an attempt to limit further unnecessary casualties. In practice, however, the attempted coup d’état and related urban-based action were stymied at the prayer ground of the Great Mosque. Whatever dealings ‘the scorpion’ had with FAN officers, the army did not get engaged. Commando units in the Gouré sector and the far east could do nothing but withdraw. More generally, Sawaba’s guerrillas staged a few further attacks after the autumn invasion, but the element of surprise was now long gone and they therefore constituted no real threat to the regime. When the president’s assassination cum putsch failed, Sawaba had been definitively defeated. The attacks after Diop’s action had nuisance value only, although the fact that they took place right across the country is testimony to the energies that drove the movement and its men.

Through Diop and his companions Sawaba came close to wiping out the regime’s core.²⁵² But would this have helped to unseat the RDA? As the military—essentially spurred on by corporate issues—did not move, there is a good chance that others in the party would have taken over and that the regime would have survived (quite apart from any action by the French). Moreover, Sawaba’s military operations, though in the spring of 1965 more focused on the urban centres of power, were never singularly oriented towards either the urban or rural theatres. With its semi-urban origins and the country’s overwhelmingly rural character this was, perhaps, inevitable, but it weakened its clout. Thus, during the six years that Sawaba staged infiltrations, rural incursions alternated with action in the urban areas according to the needs and opportunities of the moment. The infiltrations in the countryside cannot simply be reduced to Algerian or Maoist inspiration (as important as this was), nor can they be seen as a salvaging tactic employed in the face of the difficulties encountered in the centres of power—the cities. In practice, rural infiltrations were important because it was only through the countryside that the commandos could reach the urban areas. However, as they never truly managed to get there, the rural features of the guerrilla action remained more pronounced.

²⁵² The photo of RDA leaders at the prayer ground, possibly taken before Diop threw the grenade, shows Diori, Boubou Hama and possibly Maiga in the front row. *Le Niger*, 19 Apr. 1965.

In retrospect it was said that the armed struggle was badly organised.²⁵³ This seems to some extent the product of hindsight and the regime's efforts to ridicule the guerrillas after their defeat. However, the commandos acted according to a detailed attack plan that betrayed considerable preparation. Their ability to get engaged within a fortnight across the length of Niger's western and southern frontiers is testimony to the professionalism involved. Nor were the commandos simply passive victims who, once they had crossed into Niger, could be taken out one by one. Many had had hardened military training and, as shown by guerrillas like Siddi Abdou in the Tahoua region, Mounkaila Albagna at Dargol, and Aba Kaka and Bachir Moustapha dit Moutti in the far east, were capable of confronting the enemy. Many others were able to infiltrate across the borders with impunity, stage attacks and withdraw to their rear base. The personal histories of Baoua Souley, Amadou Diop, Aba Kaka, and undoubtedly that of numerous anonymous commandos are cases in point. The fetishes that many carried as part of their equipment, rather than a sign of amateurism put the guerrillas firmly in the cultural context of the society in which they fought.

Yet, it is clear, of course, that things went terribly wrong and that serious mistakes were made. The worst was the precipitate decision, in September 1964, to start with the attacks as such. The arrests of the previous months put the regime on a war footing but did not lead to a revision of Sawaba's strategy and tactics, even though valuable intelligence had leaked in the wake of Hamballi's capture. Other than its attempt to move in as quickly as possible, the leadership took no account of the mobilisation of the militias nor of the fear among the populace and the consequences that this could have for the commandos. Even if the surprise element was not entirely gone as the regime did not know where the guerrillas would emerge, this seriously jeopardised the commandos' security. Several Sawabists therefore said—at the time but, above all, retrospectively—that the situation was not ready yet for an attack, both in terms of the preparations of the guerrillas and the mood of the general population.²⁵⁴ It would have been better to wait and repair cells and make new arms caches to compensate for lost infrastructure.

However, it is doubtful whether, at this moment in time, this would have increased Sawaba's chances to defeat the regime, certainly if the army

²⁵³ F.e. interviews Tahir Moustapha and Oumarou Janba, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003.

²⁵⁴ Interviews with Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 6 Dec. 2003; Ali Amadou, Niamey, 28 Jan. 2003; Adamou Assane Mayaki, Niamey, 29 Jan. 2003; Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 27 Oct. 2005.

would not have come to its aid. The movement had been busy preparing for an uprising for five years and the regime was aware of this. In fact, part of the reasons for Sawaba's defeat lies in the regime's intelligence gathering. In trying to make sense of their defeat, Sawabists later put a lot of emphasis on the damage done by spies, moles and informers. To some extent this may be part of the fifth column syndrome—an obsession with 'the enemy within', real or imaginary, which helps to make sense of a catastrophic turn of events. However, the Franco-RDA combine developed a spy network that stretched from towns in Northern Nigeria to Ghana and penetrated right into the guerrillas' training camps. Reminiscing about his time in Ghana, chef de camp Ali Amadou later complained that there were many informers in the country, who betrayed the movement's cadres not only in the course of the struggle in Niger but also in Ghana, upon the fall of Nkrumah. Oumarou Janba, too (though he never left Niger himself), stressed there were traitors, spies and 'saboteurs' in Sawaba's exile community and that, as a result, the regime knew where the commandos would emerge. Although this last part was clearly untrue, many other cadres confirmed the generality of these observations. Sawaba sympathiser Sao Marakan claimed that people based in Accra, who had been bought by the RDA, wrote letters to Niamey informing the authorities about the commandos' impending arrival. Alternatively, Nigérien migrants returning from work in Ghana informed on Sawabists there. Commando units in Northern Nigeria had to cope with a well-established spy network in the cities of the region.²⁵⁵

Mounkaila Beidari even drew attention to treason *inside* units, including in Dodo Hamballi's squad. As some of the examples may not be convincing, however, this does not seem to have been widespread.²⁵⁶ The claims made by cadres that biased reporting by domestic cells was to blame for the defeat²⁵⁷ also misses the point. The leadership decided to attack, not because intelligence suggested that the time was ripe but to prevent worse. The movement had managed to build up an intelligence network that covered the entire country and even provided information on govern-

²⁵⁵ Interviews Ali Amadou, Niamey, 28 & 31 Jan. 2003; Oumarou Janba, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003; Sao Marakan, Niamey, 16 Nov. 2002; Saïbou Abdouramane, Dargol, 31 Oct. 2005; Limane Kaoumi, Diffa, 12 Febr. 2006; Aba Kaka, Bosso, 13 Febr. 2006.

²⁵⁶ Beidari saw the flight of Kiari Mai—the Photographer—during Aba Kaka's attack on Bosso as treachery, rather than cowardice, and also explained Sidi Abdou's capture as the result of betrayal. Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 Nov. & 2 Dec. 2003. See on Sidi Abdou's capture ch. 12 at n. 236.

²⁵⁷ Interview Bachir Boukary, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003.

ment ministers, while Dan Galadima personally visited the infiltration zones.²⁵⁸ Intelligence cannot have been that poor. Assertions by Sawabists that they knew that the invasion would fail were probably much affected by hindsight.²⁵⁹ Moreover, Aboubakar dit Kaou, a highly placed internal cadre, of his own accord pressed the leadership to get engaged, claiming the situation was ready. While biased reporting, also as a result of the pressures in a military hierarchy, definitely took place,²⁶⁰ some claims to this effect were the result of regime pressure on arrested commandos.²⁶¹ As Mounkaila Beidari emphasised on several occasions, the regime certainly did not know everything.²⁶²

A factor that naturally militated against success was the question of geography. If the Komadougou and the W Park provided opportunities for the tactics of guerrilla war, overall this did not suffice. This was the more true as the commandos had dispersed across the territory (the decision to do so, while carrying its own logic, contributed to a weakening of clout). They also got engaged late in the season, when vegetation was becoming sparse and harvest time brought out people to work in the fields. Coupled with a hinterland where natural conditions were the same and the authorities often unreliable, this made for a dangerous environment. In addition, the weaponry was a hodge-podge of arms whose quality was often below standard. Much of this must have been due to the reluctance of Eastern Bloc countries to go the full length in supporting Sawaba's war, while Sékou Touré's hold-up of Chinese arms deliveries complicated things further. Western intelligence at some points reported that the training of commandos was poor.²⁶³ To some extent this may have been true for the Ghanaian instruction—which Nkrumah's enemies later said was mediocre—and the training in Nanking, which may have focused more on ideology than exercise. Yet, much of this was written later and affected by knowledge of the defeat. Drill in North Vietnam and Algeria was fairly seri-

²⁵⁸ That only one man of the leadership was present in the field (occasionally) could be interpreted as an important strategic weakness, as was also pointed out for the FROLINAT rebellion in Chad, and, in contrast, for example, with the situation in Portuguese Guinea (see Buijtenhuijs, *Le Frolinat*, 449-450). However, since the hinterland was unsafe, there was a tactical reason for this, even if this at the same time pointed to Sawaba's military problems.

²⁵⁹ Interview Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 2 Dec. 2003.

²⁶⁰ Interview Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 27 Oct. 2005.

²⁶¹ See the interrogation report on Baro Alfari in *Le Niger*, 30 Nov. 1964.

²⁶² Interviews, Niamey, 2 Dec. 2003 and 15 Dec. 2009

²⁶³ Bulletin de Renseignement Particuliers, 10 Oct. 1964; Rapport de Fin de Commandement du Général de Division Revol, part I.

ous, and both the French and British on a number of occasions claimed that the state of the commandos' training was good. Niger's regime itself did not fail to point out the professional character of their outfit.

Nevertheless, scattered across Niger, without arms for the peasantry²⁶⁴ and the people not rallying to its side, the number of men that Sawaba fielded was woefully inadequate. The same was true for the type of weaponry—the standard arms were pistols and grenades, not submachine guns, of which there were usually just a couple per unit. This made the commandos vulnerable, especially since they were not allowed to terrorise the populace. This, in turn, touches on a deeper reason for the defeat. In explaining why Sawaba failed where FROLINAT succeeded, Zinder cadre Bachir Boukary claimed that Chad's rebels not only got more support from other countries but also plundered from the population (though in fact this was true only for the period from the late 1970s).²⁶⁵ This turned them into a force that could muster equal strength when challenging the enemy.²⁶⁶ That Bakary's men exhibited a relative lack of aggression,²⁶⁷ by contrast, had much to do with the instruction not to shoot at the populace, which was tied to the view that the movement was the defender of that same people—state representatives such as customs officers, teachers and RDA agents aside.

Thus, led by the top echelons of the military hierarchy, the guerrillas marched into the country with everything they had, including documents required for the execution of orders and contacting cadres. This suggests not only that they never thought that they would get caught but also that they constituted the social movement of old, rather than a straightforward military force: its agitators were returning to the people and lead it, as the vanguard, in the march on the capital. With the people playing a key role in strategy, the guerrillas dispersed across the country, ready as during the 1950s to reach out and mobilise the populace for the rapid victory over the regime. Coming home to their region of origin, even though armed, large-scale military force did not seem necessary—or intended. Dandouna

²⁶⁴ Interview Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 26 Oct. 2005.

²⁶⁵ Interview Bachir Boukary, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003; R. Buijtenhuijs, 'Peasant Wars in Africa: Gone with the Wind?', in D. Bryceson, C. Kay and J. Mooij (eds), *Disappearing Peasants? Rural Labour in Africa, Asia and Latin America* (London, 2000), 116–117.

²⁶⁶ R. Buijtenhuijs stressed the importance of Libyan support, in addition to the spirited attitude of Tubu people accustomed to their desert surroundings. 'Le Frolinat à l'épreuve du pouvoir: L'échec d'une révolution africaine', *Politique Africaine*, no. 16, Dec. 1984, 16–19.

²⁶⁷ Also confirmed by Rapport de Fin de Commandement du Général de Division Revol, part I.

Aboubakar, Sawaba's formidable tribune, entered Dibissou armed to the teeth but allowed himself to be cornered by the inhabitants, only to shoot the regime representative once he was betrayed. Data on coercion or violence, in and outside the movement, are too incidental to warrant a more violent picture of Sawaba's military practice, even though the commandos had procedures for the maintenance of discipline.²⁶⁸ If weapons for street fighting, like Molotov cocktails, were exceptional in the guerrillas' armour²⁶⁹ and shooting in the air occurred in the desperate last stages of the invasion, they show that, beneath the Maoist prescriptions on armed struggle, strategy was as much inspired by Sawaba's experience as a social movement in the 1950s, geared towards political agitation and canvassing rather than military engagement. The swiftness with which the order of battle was executed fitted in the millenarian aspirations that had always motivated its struggle. So did the announcement of attack, although this can only have helped in the movement's undoing. Forewarning the regime, defeat became almost preordained.

Yet, the uncanny historical continuities between the clashes of 1964 and the canvassing of the 1950s should not be pushed too far. Commandos *did* engage regime forces, in the process killing people and attacking buildings and installations. Moreover, they kept acting according to the logic of guerrilla warfare (trying to wear down regime forces with hit-and-run operations): they continued with infiltrations and attacks after the invasion had failed. Finally, to contact cadres of a nationwide movement, it was inevitable that guerrillas took some papers with them. Not all members and cells can have been part of their own network.

If an exclusive coup-based strategy, rather than one based on guerrilla war, went against Sawaba's *mentalité*, it could perhaps have worked if it had been implemented right away and not after the failed invasion, which put the regime on full alert. More assaults on regime stalwarts, as one Zinderois cadre later surmised,²⁷⁰ could possibly have brought the movement's goal

²⁶⁸ The threat by Sallé Dan Koulou that a man in Rogogo risked his life, if he did not quit his anti-Sawaba action, springs to mind (ch. 10 at n. 35). Yet, a regime report that commandos planned to poison wells during the invasion was never confirmed (ch. 12 at n. 113). The Algeria-trained commando from Gothèye, Maman Alke, claimed he had been beaten once by his unit leader Dandouna Aboubakar and that he was scared of him and therefore obeyed his orders although he would not have agreed with them. While Dandouna was undoubtedly a tough character, Alke did not give a reason for his alleged beating. The allegation was part of the report of his interrogation, however, which contained several signs of duress. *Le Niger*, 26 Oct. 1964.

²⁶⁹ See ch. 12, note 123.

²⁷⁰ Interview Ousseini Dandagoye, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003.

closer when the regime had not yet mobilised its forces. Still, for the successful implementation of such a strategy, the guerrillas also needed the help of domestic cells, and although these were still operating by the time of the invasion, they had had to move very deep underground, thus severely limiting their capacity.

However, it should be emphasised that the movement had reason to think that it stood a chance against the RDA. Niger's regime was fragile, being marked by numerous strains and fractures that opposed party to state and army to paramilitaries. Its leadership was unstable, made up of a triumvirate of rivals, some of whom were unbalanced and paranoid. The 'Reds' did not have a penchant for moderation. Western intelligence reported on the regime's psychological insecurity, suffering as it did from its creation by the French, who themselves found it hard to hide their contempt for its volatile and frightened representatives. As the expression of 'commis' interests, it was poorly embedded in society, notwithstanding its mobilisation of the chiefs. Vulnerable in the face of generational tension and regional sentiment, the French regularly reported on its weaknesses, estimating that Bakary and his men continued to be dangerous, capable of bringing the regime down very quickly. If the French would never voluntarily abandon the regime that they had established, the attack plans betray that Sawaba knew them to be the final enemy. It is, of course, unlikely that the movement would ever have been able to engage them, but a swiftly executed coup plot, taking them by surprise, could perhaps have worked.

With the failure of the insurrection, it was reported that Nigériens condemned Sawaba's actions. Although it is hard to assess how trustworthy some of these reports were,²⁷¹ it seems that popular reaction was indeed negative, at least in part. With its defeat, the movement stood accused of having attacked its own country, not to mention having assaulted a religious gathering.²⁷² There was widespread discontent with the RDA, but the mobilisation of its militias prevented the people's rallying. To be sure, certain regions openly resisted the government, but this was not enough to tip the balance. Thus, the regime's unpopularity did not mean that the situation was ripe for attack. Good harvests, at least in some eastern districts, and the RDA's efforts to bring marabouts under control,²⁷³ subdued

²⁷¹ Bulletin Mensuel de Renseignements, 20 Sept.-20 Oct. 1964, Zinder; ANN, FONDS DAPA. This seems to be confirmed in *La Voix Libérée*, no. 1, March-Apr. 2011, 28.

²⁷² Interviews Ousseini Dandagoye, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003 and Elhadj Illa Salifou, Niamey, 25 Nov. 2003; Djermakoye, 15 avril 1974.

²⁷³ Interviews Ousseini Dandagoye and Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 11 & 13 Febr. 2003.

the response of a frightened people. Nevertheless, the persecution that they underwent meant that Sawabists had few alternatives but to engage the regime by force of arms.²⁷⁴ Not objectivity but a yearning for relief drove the camel's men.

²⁷⁴ As emphasised by several cadres and commandos. Interviews with Adamou Assane Mayaki, Niamey, 29 Jan. 2003; Ali Amadou, Niamey, 31 Jan. 2003; Ali Mahamane Madaouki, Zinder, 14 Febr. 2003; Soumana Idrissa, Gothèye, 1 Nov. 2005; Limane Kaoumi, Diffa, 12 Febr. 2006.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE ROAD OF HONOUR: THE DESTRUCTION OF A SOCIAL MOVEMENT, 1965–1974

‘The prisons overflow with Sawabists’, reported the French embassy in Niamey to Paris in the summer of 1966.¹ They were not just filled with the movement’s commandos, captured on the battlefield the previous years, since the report added that there were no signs anymore of domestic cells. Inadvertently, this pointed to the extent of repression that the Franco-RDA combine had unleashed since the 1964 invasion and, again, in the wake of the attempt on Diori in the spring of the following year. As noted in previous chapters, despite many years of harassment, internal cells had continued operating, but the above account—besides a British report in the same period²—shows that a couple of years later most if not all had been dismantled. Exact numbers of cadres that were arrested are impossible to give, as archival sources are silent about this. But at least several hundred guerrillas ended up in detention in the course of the war against the RDA, and if more than 500 people were picked up in Niamey in October 1964 alone (even though not everyone detained in these operations was a Sawabist) and the prison of Zinder harboured some 800 of the movement’s inmates in the wake of the invasion, it is likely that in the course of the years several thousand cadres ended up in detention, permanently or for shorter periods.³ The observation by the French embassy that Niger’s jails were packed beyond capacity appears to confirm this. The effect was that Sawaba was completely wiped out, both as a social movement and as a political force.

¹ Ambassade de France au Niger. Le conseiller militaire, no. 241/CM/NIG/S: Etude sur le Sawaba, Niamey, 22 June 1966 (Lt-Col. Chabriaux); SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2 (‘les prisons regorgent de Sawabistes’).

² T.R. Shaw, British Embassy Abidjan, to C.M. Lequesne, Foreign Office, 24 Febr. 1966; PRO, FO 371/188.175.

³ This was also suggested in an interview by Ali Amadou, Niamey, 28 Jan. 2003.

Torture

A first step in the process of its destruction was the arrest of cadres implicated in the attempt on Diop and related acts. In view of the regime's past reprisals, especially in the wake of the 1964 attacks, it could be expected that treatment of those responsible would be terrible. As Amadou Diop was overpowered on the grounds of the Great Mosque, he was stripped naked—apparently on the spot before being led away, probably to make sure that he was not hiding weapons in his boubou. He was brought to a detention centre for interrogation, most likely the BCL building in the presidential complex, although its head, Jean Colombani, was on leave at the time.⁴ Diop later recalled having met Captain Badié, which means that he may have been brought to the Gendarmerie, but as it is unknown at which stage this confrontation occurred, this is not certain. Badié, in an attempt to intimidate the Sawabist, would have fired his weapon at him, which, however, jammed.⁵ If true, this incident may also have taken place at another stage, as it is known that Diop was at the time interrogated by—among other people—four Ivorian intelligence men put at the disposal of the regime.⁶

The treatment meted out to Diop was appalling by any standards, and since it is known from another source what the Ivorian agents were capable of, there is a possibility that this took place in their presence (in any case, in that of agents of Niger's *Sûreté*).⁷ In his nudity it was noticed that Diop had fetishes under the skin of his chest and shoulder. Undoubtedly because of the universal fear of 'gris-gris'⁸ and as a means of torture, his tormenters had them pulled out—without anaesthetics, as Diop would later remark. It caused terrible disfigurement⁹ and he must have suffered intense pain, but French intelligence reported that Diop first resisted his Nigérien interrogators and that the Ivorian agents were hardly more effec-

⁴ B.L. Placca, Ghana Embassy Niamey, to M.F. Dei-Anang, African Affairs Secretariat Accra, 14 Apr. 1965; GNA, SC/BAA/460, no. NIA/05/1; Telegram Gédédef Dakar to Minarmées Paris, no. 8358/CH, 14 Apr. 1965; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2.

⁵ Interview with Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003.

⁶ Gédédef Dakar to Minarmées Paris, no. 8358/CH, 14 Apr. 1965.

⁷ *Afrique Nouvelles*, 22-28 Apr. 1965, no. 924.

⁸ As noted in ch. 6, Maïga had fetishes of marabouts destroyed. It is unclear whether Diop was confronted with Badié at this stage, but they shared a deep-seated belief in the supernatural. Badié later wrote a book on the fortune-telling properties of cowry shells (B. Garba, *Langage des cauris* [Niamey, 1990]).

⁹ In the course of one interview, Diop took off his garments to show his mutilation. Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003.

tive. While the French therefore awaited the return of Colombani, questioning continued.¹⁰ All the time, Diop was kept naked (he was lent the shirt of a policeman when a photograph was taken of him).¹¹ While his courage was exceptional, it was inevitable that the lorry driver would crack, not least because the removal of his fetishes must have got to his self-confidence. Sooner or later Diop gave details about the operations in which he had been involved, including names of comrades, some of whom were immediately arrested.¹²

As asserted in the testimony of Mounkaila Albagna, the Dargol commando, maltreatment was part of interrogation.¹³ According to Mounkaila Beidari, who worked with Diop in preparing the assassination attempt, the cadre from Zinder was beaten terribly—a standard practice for which goumiers were present. Beidari also claimed that Diop received electric shocks.¹⁴ One does not find references to this form of torture before the middle of the 1960s, with the exception of the unsubstantiated case of Dandouna Aboubakar early in the decade.¹⁵ The testimonies of Amadou Diop himself were too erratic to clarify this,¹⁶ but if true, it may point to French involvement, as this form of torture required equipment and expertise, also to avoid killing the victim (France's paratroopers routinely used electric shocks in the 'battle' of Algiers in 1957).¹⁷ In all probability the attempt on Diop made regime behaviour worse; Beidari's accusation finds parallels in assertions about electric shocks meted out to others. Most of these claims, as shown below, pertain to the period after 1964.¹⁸

¹⁰ Génédef Dakar to Minarmées Paris, no. 8358/CH, 14 Apr. 1965 and *Le Monde* (Paris), 16 April 1964.

¹¹ Interview Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003. See Photo 14.1. The *Rheinischer Merkur* presented the man in the picture as the would-be assassin. In 2003 Diop, whose eyesight had deteriorated, identified himself on the photo. Ali Mahamane Madaouki disputed this (a statement confirmed by two Sawabists present during the interview, Zinder, 14 Febr. 2003), but did not advance another name. The shirt the man is wearing in the photograph seems to confirm Diop's self-identification, however.

¹² Génédef Dakar to Minarmées Paris, no. 8358/CH, 14 Apr. 1965 and Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 17 Apr. 1965; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2..

¹³ Interview, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003.

¹⁴ Interview, Niamey, 28 Nov. 2003.

¹⁵ Ch. 8 n. 47.

¹⁶ Interviews, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003 and 15 Febr. 2006.

¹⁷ For a penetrating testimony, see M. Lebjaoui, *Bataille d'Alger ou bataille d'Algérie?* (Paris, 1972), 100 ff.

¹⁸ K. Alfari, *Mémoire sur les fraternelles relations franco-nigériennes* (Union de la Jeunesse Patriotique du Niger: Niamey, 2003), 50 and below at notes 25, 32 & 84.



Photo 14.1 Probably Amadou Diop in detention (*Rheinischer Merkur*, 18, 30 April 1965).

Claims by regime officials that Diop was not maltreated were therefore untrue,¹⁹ even if other assertions about his ordeal may be false.²⁰ And while Diop survived his interrogation, there were others to share his fate. Beidari himself was rearrested after the attempt on the president, as were other members of Niamey cells. Since the attack on Diiori was part of a coup

¹⁹ Interview with Abdou Adam, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003.

²⁰ Abdou Ali Tazard said that the acronym 'RDA' was burned on Diop's back. Perhaps this is a rumour that had Diop's disfigurement on chest and shoulder at its origin. Interview, Tessaoua, 9 Febr. 2006.

plan and the regime, in its paranoia, was convinced that the capital was coming under attack,²¹ the Niamey cadre—so closely involved in the attempt cum putsch—was subjected to the harshest treatment. While the sources for this are the interviews with Mounkaila Beidari himself, the three testimonies involved were consistent in their narrative (though registered over a six-year period) and characterised by such precise detail that they must point to the truth. Some of the features involved, moreover, exactly reflect the practices that the French employed when interrogating FLN suspects in Algeria's war of independence.

First, Beidari experienced the broad range of repressive institutions the regime had at its disposal. He not only recalled being driven by militias to the bush, where he and comrades had to reveal arms caches, but also a confrontation with officials from Entente countries. These must have included the Ivorian intelligence specialists whose arrival was reported by the French. More specifically, as Beidari later reminisced, one was a police chief from Upper Volta and another an Ivorian commissioner, who was small in stature and whose name possibly was 'Maurice Tchéba'. The confrontation may have taken place at the Sûreté or in the buildings of the BCL, as Colombani was close at hand. The Ivorian ordered the purchase of razor blades to brush across the arms of prisoners in an attempt to make them speak. It is not certain whether Beidari himself was subjected to this (he recounted the story three times), but he remembered that Colombani was opposed to the practice.²²

This, however, hardly improved the cadre's lot, as he was brought to face the officials of the BCL. Three *goumiers* softened him up, while new beatings followed when Beidari's answers did not satisfy the interrogators. Beidari later remembered the presence of Colombani, Georges Clément and Fromant—besides Péraldi of the Sûreté—and that they did all sorts of things to intimidate him. Fromant boasted that he had worked as an interrogator in Madagascar, Vietnam and Algeria, assuring the Sawabist that he would break,²³ while Péraldi had the handcuffs behind Beidari's

²¹ Interview with Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 Nov. 2003. As shown below, other measures taken immediately after the attempt on Diori confirmed the regime's panic.

²² Interviews with Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 Nov. 2003, 23 Febr. 2008 and 15 Dec. 2009. The latter two interviews were conducted together with Issa Younoussi, researcher at Niamey's LASDEL institute.

²³ This followed a classical pattern of intimidation as established in Algeria, where French torture practices in Indo-China were pointed out to frighten detainees. H. Alleg, *La question* (Paris, 1958), 35-36.

back severely tightened; this caused permanent scars.²⁴ The BCL men would also have subjected him to electric shocks.²⁵ For days the Sawabist went without food and water, though the interrogation took place during the spring heat. When going to the toilet, the door was left open to prevent him from drinking from the water closet, and occasionally water was thrown on the tile floor of the room in which he and his comrades were kept, with guards telling them to drink it. During one interrogation session, Beidari asked for water and Jean Colombani would have poured out a glass over the table and forced him to lick it up, 'like a dog'.²⁶ But the BCL men must have thought that he continued to withhold intelligence, as a certain 'Dr. Kaba' was asked to come and give him an injection. Beidari resisted, protesting he was not ill, but was injected with a 'truth serum',²⁷ after which he passed out.²⁸ Waking up later, he found himself on the floor of the interrogation room, capable only of burbling when trying to speak. They had broken his resistance, and whatever he managed to tell his tormenters,²⁹ they finally concluded that he had nothing more to divulge. Beidari, in contrast to Diop (who continued to be held in the presidential complex for a considerable time), was transferred to the new police headquarters.³⁰ The pattern of his ordeal bore an uncanny resemblance to French torture routines in Algeria.³¹

If the treatment of the Niamey cadre was exceptional, brutality was a permanent feature of BCL questioning. Ahmed Amadou, a Sawaba student who had pursued medical training in the GDR, dared to return home a month after Diop's assassination attempt. Although he came back with the help of the Nigérien embassy in West Germany, he was roughly inter-

²⁴ They were shown during the interviews cited in the following note.

²⁵ Interviews Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 Nov. 2003, 23 Febr. 2008, 15 Dec. 2009. Electric shocks were only mentioned in the 2003 interview.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 28 Nov. 2003/23 Febr. 2008.

²⁷ Here Beidari's testimony is convincing: victims of the 'battle' of Algiers also recounted such injections. Alleg, *La question*, 74 ff. A truth serum is a psychoactive form of medication altering cognitive functions. Substances include ethanol; scopolamine; 3-quinuclidinyl benzilate; temazepam; barbiturates as sodium thiopental (sodium pentathol); and sodium amytal (amobarbital). Ingredients as amobarbital increase talking. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Truth_drug, accessed 14 Sept. 2010.

²⁸ Interview with Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 Nov. 2003 ('sérum de vérité').

²⁹ While the serum should have made him talkative (see the sources of note 27), Beidari's difficulty to speak may have had to do with dehydration.

³⁰ Interviews Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 Nov. 2003 and Abdou Adam, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003.

³¹ I.e. verbal threats and beatings followed by electric shocks and, for those deemed not forthcoming, a serum injection. Alleg, *La question*, *passim*.

rogated—a BCL list of October 1968 mentions that he was still in Niamey prison, adding that he had sustained ‘blows and injuries’. Mounkeïla Issifi, Sawaba MP for Téra who was hated by Boubou Hama and had been arrested several times before, was detained at the BCL in or around 1967. According to the testimonies of his family, he was subjected to electric shocks; its long-term consequences were to prove disastrous. Tahirou Ayoubou Maïga (the geology student and his nephew) later claimed that many others also suffered this treatment, but names are not known.³² At the same time, the cruelty of the French security men was more than matched by that of the regime’s other organs, notably the Gendarmerie, whose hunt for government opponents carried on unabated, though in a rough and ready manner. A certain Amadou Gambo, described as a Cameroon citizen, was arrested in Nguigmi and transferred to Niamey where he would have died in hospital, most probably after maltreatment (it is not known, however, by which regime organ). Apparently, he was a Sawaba sympathiser or cadre, as his name was later inscribed on a list of party casualties.³³ Torture was not the monopoly of the central authorities either, as shown by the case of one Koulouma Ona, who was allegedly arrested at a location called Adama and then transferred to Bosso, where he succumbed to maltreatment.³⁴ The Sawaba casualty list mentions 14 other names without explanatory details such as execution, death on the battlefield or demise in the course of prison life—which could suggest that these people met their end under maltreatment.³⁵ Thus, in their reminiscences Sawabists have also made reference to rumours that comrades were put in sacks and thrown into the Niger River.³⁶

³² Bureau de coordination et de liaison, No. 879/BCL: Etudiants et Boursiers du Sawaba de Retour des Pays de l’Est, 18 Oct. 1968; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14. On Issifi: Issa Younoussi (family of Tahirou Ayoubou Maïga) to author; emails, 5 Aug., 6 Sept. & 26 Oct. 2010; and interview by author & Issa Younoussi with Tahirou Ayoubou Maïga, Niamey, 21 Oct. 2011 (‘coups et blessures’).

³³ Liste des Nigériens militants ou sympathisants du Sawaba morts dans les prisons du régime de Diori Hamani (UDFP-Sawaba, Niamey, n.d.). This also mentions Amadou Gambo from the Bosso region, who died in Tahoua during detention. The same person? Also see note 195 below.

³⁴ Ibid. It is not known when this took place.

³⁵ Yet, in some cases the list explicitly mentions torture, and some persons mentioned without details possibly died during their detention. The unclarified deaths concerned: Magagi Zinder; Oumarou Attikou; Sido Kodo; ‘Sikié’; Hassane Halidou; Souley Abdoulaye; Garaba Gueléa; Daouda Hama (not Hima, who died at Mamasseye [ch. 12 at n. 239]?); Moumouni Mossi; Abdoukader Tchota; Ibrahim Boulama; Ibrahim Sigui; Zakari Bila (?); the Sawaba mason [ch. 13 at n. 24]?); Beidari Touré. See Ibid.

³⁶ Interview with Tahir Moustapha, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003; Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003; Ali Mahamane Madaoui, Zinder, 14 Febr. 2003.

Whether this was true or not, the attempt on Diori healed the rifts in the triumvirate, at least for the time being. This increased the power of Diamballa Maïga and, in his wake, that of the Gendarmerie. Captain Badié thus got more room for manoeuvre and began to target people who were not necessarily associated with Sawaba but became the victim of an hysterical backlash. The source for this ultimately was Diori himself, whom French intelligence noted ‘live[d] in the psychosis of the assassination attempt’ and suspected people in his entourage of plotting his downfall. The rumour that Sawaba had had a back-up plan to poison the president in case Diop’s attack failed, led to all the cooks of the palace being arrested. Cabinet ministers, too, were targeted as the ‘Reds’ mistrusted moderate members, especially Minister of Justice Issoufou Djermakoye, who had clashed with Maïga in 1959, and the foreign minister, Adamou Mayaki, who had been part of Bakary’s governing coalition. That regime distrust was general, however, was shown immediately after Diop’s attack on Diori: all ministers (though presumably not Diamballa Maïga or the RDA chair, Boubou Hama) were searched before leaving the prayer ground. According to the memoirs of Djermakoye, ministers’ offices were bugged, while their villas were inspected with metal detectors. As Maïga and the bureau politique did not want to disclose which cabinet members they suspected the most, they simply had all of them checked, including that of the finance minister, a confidant of Diori.³⁷

In this context the ferocious Badié could operate at will, in spite of the risks involved—he had been responsible for the death of Koussanga Alzouma and Mody of Gamkallé, Captain Diallo’s companion. One of his first victims was Boubacar Diallo, former minister of the civil service and president of the Cour de Sûreté, who was sacked just before Sawaba’s invasion on grounds related to the 1963 mutiny. After a confrontation at the Gendarmerie and the BCL, he had been placed under house arrest. Then, in December 1964, he was locked up.³⁸ Roughly a month after the attempt on Diori (May 1965), Diallo was again brought to the Gendarmerie in Niamey. Badié, usually accompanied by a certain Naroua, an aide de camp of intimidating stature, personally conducted Diallo’s interrogation. He was assisted by Sidi Mohamed, an NCO. They pressed Diallo for information on

³⁷ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 17 Apr. 1965 and *Ibid.*, 12 May 1965; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; B.L. Placca, Ghana Embassy Niamey, to M.F. Dei-Anang, African Affairs Secretariat Accra, 14 & 16 Apr. 1965; GNA, SC/BAA/460, no. NIA/05/1; unpublished memoirs Issoufou Djermakoye (‘vit dans la psychose de l’attentat’).

³⁸ Note de Renseignements, Ambassade de France, Niamey, 15 May 1965; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; memoirs Issoufou Djermakoye.

Sawaba arms caches. Yet, it is unlikely that he had links with Sawaba. He was a former UNIS member, had been active in the Association des Chefs and in 1958 reconquered a parliamentary seat on the UCFA list.³⁹ But as there was a Sawabist dimension to the 1963 mutiny, the earlier charge of withholding intelligence on the revolt of Captain Diallo, a fellow Peul, may have tainted him by association (apart from established distrust of the 'Reds' towards his person).⁴⁰ Badié and Mohamed maltreated Boubacar Diallo terribly, while they allegedly beat up his wife as well, who was also detained. After this Diallo was brought to hospital, where on the evening of 11 May the former cabinet minister died of his wounds. It was immediately clear that the circumstances of his death were suspicious. Diori, who according to French intelligence '[was] not unaware of the brutal methods of his police', felt forced to order an inquiry. Adding insult to injury, however, his government gave 'fever' as the official cause of death.⁴¹ If a later Sawaba allegation that Diallo died after being injected with a serum cannot be proved, the testimony of Mounkaila Beidari's ordeal stands in the way of its summary dismissal.⁴²

French intelligence made clear that Diallo's 'fatal interrogation' must have led to desperate confessions. In a political system dominated by the bureau politique, the circle of suspects widened to include other cabinet ministers. The French reported that Issoufou Djermakoye and Mouddour Zakara (minister of nomadic affairs) were vulnerable, as they had 'already been implicated in the course of the interrogations of members of Sawaba arrested at the end of 1964' and were again mentioned during the torture of Boubacar Diallo. Djermakoye's wife was taken in for questioning and, as

³⁹ C. Fluchard, *Le PPN-RDA et la décolonisation du Niger 1946-1960* (Paris, 1995), 271; M.A. Djermakoye, *15 avril 1974: Mémoires d'un compagnon de Seyni Kountché* (www.Editions-Nathan-adamou.com, accessed 15 Sept. 2010).

⁴⁰ Ch. 11 at n. 12 and 12 at n. 205.

⁴¹ This is how Diallo's demise ended up in the literature. S. Decalo, *Historical Dictionary of Niger* (Metuchen, NJ, & London, 1979), 87. Sources for the above are Fiche de Renseignements, no. 043/FR, 18 May 1965; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; Evénements survenus en Afrique Francophone pendant la semaine du 10 au 16 mai 1965; SHAT, 10 T 210; Note de Renseignements, Ambassade de France, Niamey, 15 May 1965; memoirs Issoufou Djermakoye ('ne méconnaît pas les méthodes brutales de sa police').

⁴² UDN/Sawaba, Liste des responsables et militants du Sawaba tombés sous le régime PPN/RDA, n.d. (but somewhere in the 1990s).). Public works minister Léopold Kaziendé (*Souvenirs d'un enfant de la colonisation* [Porto Novo, 1998], vol. 5, 206) later wrote that Diallo died of blood poisoning, caused when maltreatment by a 'brute' resulted in a rupture of his skin. The brute would have acted on his own account. Also C. Maman, *Répertoire biographique des personnalités de la classe politique et des leaders d'opinion du Niger de 1945 à nos jours* (Niamey, 1999) vol. 1, 235.

French intelligence reported, 'interrogated in the same conditions and for the same motives' as Diallo; as a result, she would have fallen into a coma.⁴³

In his despair the former minister of the civil service would also have mentioned Mayaki, the foreign minister. However, it is unlikely that all these figures were implicated in Sawaba's designs, not to mention the attempt on Diori, although the fact that Boubacar Diallo was an uncle of Issoufou Djermaakoye cannot have helped. Moreover, the justice minister's brother was Maïdanda Djermaakoye, who had been active for Sawaba in Ghana and despite his later adherence to the RDA was detained after the 1963 mutiny. Issoufou had dared to write a letter to Diori to protest his brother's innocence.⁴⁴ He had also been in touch (according to him, over a purely private matter) with Zodi Ikhia, who had indeed colluded with Captain Diallo and the Sawabist community. This was enough to seal Djermaakoye's fate. He was evicted from the cabinet and moved to a diplomatic post in the US. Mayaki suffered a similar fate, as did Defence Minister Djibo Yacouba, who was sent to replace Georges Condat as Niger's representative in Belgium. Yacouba was the brother-in-law of Captain Diallo and, against the background of the rivalry between the army and Gendarmerie, had criticised Maïga for the abuses by Badié.⁴⁵

Persecution and the Loss of Asylum

Thus, if the violence of the Franco-RDA combine was carefully planned, methodically applied and specifically targeted, it could at the same time be arbitrary and employed in a rough and ready manner. This was a sign of the regime's fragmented nature, while the random violence was especially a function of its hysteria and the speciality of its paramilitary institutions (the more methodical violence took place at the French-led BCL): with time, the random violence decreased but not before the Gendarmer-

⁴³ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 544, 5 June 1965; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; Fiche de Renseignements, no. 043/FR, 18 May 1965. Djermaakoye's memoirs are silent here, just recounting that his wife went to France ('interrogatoire fatal'; 'déjà mis en cause au cours des interrogatoires des membres du Sawaba arrêtés à la fin de 1964'; 'interrogée dans les mêmes conditions et pour les mêmes motifs').

⁴⁴ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 544, 5 June 1965. Ch. 10 at n. 175 and 11 at n. 118; memoirs Issoufou Djermaakoye, 126, who later denied knowledge of Ikhia's and Captain Diallo's plans.

⁴⁵ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 544, 5 June 1965; memoirs Issoufou Djermaakoye, 137; Decalo, *Historical Dictionary*, 94, 161 & 203; Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, vol. 1, 246, 337 & 408.

ie had caused considerable havoc. To detain most Sawaba cadres-sympathisers necessitated massive combing operations, not only in the countryside but also in the cities: after the attempt on Diori simply everyone in the Niamey area that gendarmes came across was searched, with identities checked, vehicles inspected, houses of Europeans investigated⁴⁶—their African domestics maltreated. People began to leave the capital to dodge the controls, and the French ambassador contacted Diamballa Maïga in an attempt to have the abuses stopped. A month later, however, these operations were still taking place, led by Captain Badié, whose second-in-command Sidi Mohamed insulted Europeans and Africans alike. The Europeans were not assaulted, but African foreigners were less privileged. Because of Mali's past support for Bakary and the fact that the victims of Diop's grenade included several of its citizens, rumours spread about Malian involvement in the attack. One Malian was dragged out of bed at the dead of night and held at a police station till morning before he was let go. The Malian ambassador protested and a loudspeaker van toured Niamey to prevent further xenophobic attacks.⁴⁷

The regime's frenzy, however, persisted all through 1965. In Niamey the presidential palace continued to be guarded by militia youths armed with submachine guns.⁴⁸ In Tahoua, in December, a man wrongly handled a flare, which exploded, and in their panic people thought the prefect was coming under attack. The culprit was assaulted and beaten to death. Maïga took action to prevent further incidents, while the regime reported in characteristic hypocrisy that the victim had committed suicide. Admittedly, the Tahoua area—never an easy region for the RDA—had been restive, with a man the previous month throwing a grenade into the residence of the Commandant de Cercle. He was arrested, and though a standard weapon for Sawaba commandos, French intelligence made no mention of guerrillas but set the incident in the context of Tubu banditry.⁴⁹ By that

⁴⁶ There was also a wild rumour that Pierre Vidal, the French businessman who had served in Bakary's cabinet, but who had abandoned him during the referendum, was involved in the attempt on Diori. Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 17 Apr. 1965.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*; Génédef Dakar to Minarmées Paris, no. 8358/CH, 14 Apr. 1965; Fiche de Renseignements, no. 042, 18 May 1965; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; Placca to Dei-Anang, 14 & 16 Apr. 1965; Ghana Embassy Niamey to Ministry of Foreign Affairs Accra, 16 Apr. 1965, NC/50; GNA, SC/BAA/460, no. NIA/05/1.

⁴⁸ Bulletin de Renseignements, no. 2.056/ZOM.1/2/DR, Dakar, 24 June 1965; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2.

⁴⁹ Note de Renseignements, Ambassade de France, Niamey, 15 Dec. 1965 and Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. ?, 8 Dec. 1965; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2 & 719/D.2.

time, Badié had been relieved of his duties as he had so discredited the Gendarmerie that Diori felt forced to send him on a training course to France. The cabinet reshuffle in which moderates lost their posts had strengthened the president's position in the triumvirate. The result was that the Gendarmerie was more closely put under the control of the defence ministry, still its supervisory department and now led by Noma Kaka, the man who had sent Sallé Dan Koulou to his death. Maïga conveniently shifted the blame for the excesses to the leaders of the Gendarmerie and considered the dismissal of Sidi Mohamed on grounds of racism. Badié himself fell from grace early in 1966 and was put under house arrest—ironically in Bilma, where several Sawabists had done time.⁵⁰

These moves could not hide the fact that the interior minister's position had weakened. Diori's removal of control of the Gendarmerie led to tension with Maïga, who also lost his influence over the provincial administration. 'Tough as ever', as British diplomats opined, Maïga's health was nevertheless ailing. Diori for the first time took firm control of the cabinet, where more people of Hausa extraction were appointed, although the bureau politique remained the major decision-making body. The party itself was reorganised, and while not a single congress was ever held, care was taken to associate more notables, including chiefs. The party's position was especially reinforced in the west of the country—its old stronghold, where resistance to its excesses had impaired its image more than elsewhere. Diori also took command of the security apparatus. While seldom travelling more than 10 km from his palace and always under heavy guard, this made the fearful president now directly accountable for the regime's repression, even if he could not avoid responsibility for its past crimes either:⁵¹ the methodical violence—the monopoly of the BCL and its French

⁵⁰ He was forcibly retired in August 1968. Fiche de Renseignements, no. 042, 18 May 1965; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 544, 5 June 1965; Rapport Annuel 1965 (conseiller militaire à Niamey), no. 592/CM/NIG/S, 30 Nov. 1965; SHAT, 10 T 715/D.1; Note de Renseignements, Ambassade de France, Niamey, 21 Oct. 1966; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; Rapport Mensuel, Nov. 1968; SHAT, 10 T 715; interviews Abdou Adam and Idrissa Maïga Yansambou, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003 and 21 Dec. 2009; A. Mahamane, 'La naissance de l'armée nationale au Niger: 1961-1974', in K. Idrissa (ed.), *Armée et politique au Niger* (Dakar, 2008), 63.

⁵¹ Shaw to Lequesne, 24 Febr. 1966; W.J.A. Wilberforce, British Embassy Abidjan, to M. Brown, Foreign Office, 24 June 1966; Annual Review of the Ivory Coast, Upper Volta and Niger, JV ½ (23.196); PRO, FO 371/188.175 & FCO 25/745; R. Higgot and F. Fuglestad, 'The 1974 Coup d'Etat in Niger: Towards an Explanation', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 13 (1975), 385; A. Salifou, *Le Niger* (Paris, 2002), 185.

overseers—was there to stay, ready to be employed at a moment's notice in the pursuit of Sawaba's destruction.

Diori used his newly found power to embark on a diplomatic offensive against the pro-Sawaba regimes in neighbouring states, while he also undertook efforts to get all remaining cadres extradited to Niger, wherever they were. In this he was helped by political upheavals in some of the countries concerned, besides the intelligence work of the BCL, which compiled long and meticulous lists of Sawabists-on-the-run.⁵² As shown in the previous chapter, the failed invasion had impaired their security in the various hinterlands, as governments felt forced to deport the guerrillas and demolish their infrastructure. While Malian support for Bakary's men had become lukewarm years earlier, the bungled invasion and Mali's dependence on food aid from Niger gave them the *coup de grace*. Mali was now even unsafe for ordinary Sawaba sympathisers: when Mamadou Maiga, the Tahoua cadre living in Gao, was contacted by an envoy of Djibo Bakary, the local governor asked the authorities in Bamako whether he should extradite Maiga to Niger—as he wanted to do with all those carrying Sawaba membership cards or known to be sympathetic towards the movement.⁵³ However, as noted, some managed to escape that fate and not everyone was bothered by the Malian authorities. Ali Issaka, who saw guerrilla action in the Téra region, could make his way back to Ghana via Mali, while Mossi Salifou, the Sawabist tailor from Niamey, went the other way after the coup against Nkrumah; he lived in Mali undisturbed, possibly because his wife was a national. Even so, he was in touch with Issaka Samy, who had manned the command centre in Porto Novo together with Dan Galadima. Samy, too, was apparently left alone. Yet, as shown below, the Malian authorities were to cause considerable problems for Sawaba's students in the Eastern Bloc, and after the coup d'état against Modibo Keita in November 1968, Diori tried to intensify co-operation with the new authorities so as to get his hands on remaining Sawabists.⁵⁴

Predictably, co-operation with the Dahomean government was more difficult. Already in December 1964 the Dahomean finance minister, on a visit to Niamey, had been confronted with arrested commandos, who had transited through Dahomey; he had denied any knowledge of this.

⁵² Surveillance du Territoire (Bureau de Coordination), no. 396/SN/ST: Organisation Terroriste "Sawaba" (Recueil des dirigeants et militants actifs en fuite); ex. no. 000148, dest. le Sous Préfet de Dosso.

⁵³ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 17 Aug. 1965; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2.

⁵⁴ Interview Mossi Salifou, Niamey, 29 Febr. 2008; Organisation Terroriste "Sawaba"; Rapport Mensuel, Poste de Niamey, 1 Jan. 1969; SHAT, 10 T 715.

Nevertheless, occasional efforts were now made to impose security measures that struck some of the guerrillas passing through or living in the northern region. During the summer of 1965, British diplomats reported that four commandos were arrested on Dahomean territory, besides another nine in neighbouring Togo. If a marginal guerrilla presence in Dahomey's north continued until the autumn of that year, a meeting between Diori and Justin Ahomadegbé on the frontier bridge between Malanville and Gaya in June helped to heal the rift between the governments in the longer term. Undoubtedly, individual members of the movement must have stayed put on Dahomean territory, but life in exile now required a low-key posture. It was reported that the new relationship between the two countries allowed Niamey to demand the extradition of suspects through a telegram or a simple telephone call. After meeting Ahomadegbé, Diori optimistically reported that the whole of Dahomey was now mobilised to track down commandos the moment his government signalled their presence to Cotonou.⁵⁵

Even relations with Algeria improved, but the Algerians at least allowed their past preference for Bakary to influence their new ties with Niamey. In the same month that Diori met Ahomadegbé, he travelled to Algeria for talks with Ben Bella in Tamanrasset, home to one of Sawaba's cells. While upon his return Diori claimed to be 'very happy', the trip (the first ever of Niger's president to Algeria) was only a partial success. A communiqué pointedly emphasised the commitment of both countries to the OAU Charter, in particular its principle of non-interference in internal affairs,⁵⁶ but Ben Bella responded with some irritation to a Nigérien memorandum outlining Algeria's assistance to Sawaba. Diori's request for the extradition of cadres, especially of Louis Bourguès, who ran the Tamanrasset office, was cold-shouldered. Niger's president had unwisely called for inter-state cooperation through a resurrected OCRS, the vehicle that the French had introduced to maintain their influence in the region. A cool Ben Bella agreed only to halt military aid to Sawaba, while at the same time maintaining a policy of asylum. After the meeting his foreign minister, Bouteflika, called in Abdoulaye Mamani, who was still based in Algiers. The latter was shown the Diori memorandum and told that the training of commandos would be discontinued, but that this did not impair Algeria's sympathy for

⁵⁵ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 4 Dec. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; W.J.A. Wilberforce, British Embassy Abidjan, to R.W. Renwick, Foreign Office, 1.011/N, 29 July 1965; PRO, FO 371/182.198; *Africa Research Bulletin* (political series), June 1965.

⁵⁶ Text communiqué in *Le Niger*, 14 June 1965.

the movement; this still allowed Sawaba to engage in political activities. Barely a week later, however, Ben Bella was ousted in a coup d'état. The new leader, Houari Boumédiène, was less ideologically oriented and ordered Sawaba to stop its political activities in return for the right of abode. Hence, Sawabists in Algeria remained safe. It is not known what happened to Bourguès, but by the autumn of 1966 Boukari Karemi dit Kokino, his colleague in Tamanrasset, was still free, though it is unclear where he was. Mamani continued to live in Algiers, where he worked as a journalist. In the summer of 1966 Bakary himself was staying in Algeria. The authorities confirmed his presence but told Niamey that he was not engaging in subversive action. Diori was unimpressed and French intelligence reported that he planned to do everything to have his arch enemy extradited.⁵⁷

As shown in the previous chapters, in their drive against NEPU Nigeria's authorities had been more forthcoming in hunting down Sawabists, and this pattern continued though not without some twists and turns that were part of the complexities of the country's political and legal system. Towards the end of May 1965, Baoua Souley, the guerrilla who had avoided capture several times and now lived in Lagos, was arrested, caught red-handed with ammunition and submachine guns. He got a two-year jail sentence for illegal arms possession.⁵⁸ Niamey had made his capture possible by providing intelligence, and the Nigerians also detained two accomplices—Ibrahim Cheffou, who had trained at Nanking, and one unidentified cadre, who had pursued political instruction in Bulgaria.⁵⁹ On 8 June, another three Sawabists were arrested in the Lagos area, while two others managed to avoid arrest owing to delays in legal procedures. By that time, commandos in the Komadougou region (from where another attack had just been launched on Nigérien territory),⁶⁰ were caught by the Nigerian authorities, although

⁵⁷ Note de Renseignements, Ambassade de France, Niamey, 12 June 1965 and telegram Consmil Niamey to Minarmées Paris, 21 June 1966; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; G. Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets de la décolonisation* (Paris, 1967), vol. 2, 328–330; Organisation Terroriste “Sawaba”; *West Africa*, 28 June to 4 July 1993. See also K. van Walraven, ‘From Tamanrasset: The Struggle of Sawaba and the Algerian Connection (1957–1966)’, *Journal of North African Studies*, 10 (2005), 3–4, 507–527 (‘très heureux’). Kokino was to die in Conakry; the year is unknown. D. Bakary, *Silence! On décolonise: Itinéraire politique et syndical d'un militant africain* (Paris, 1992), 159.

⁵⁸ See Note de Renseignements, Ambassade de France, Niamey, 2 July 1966; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; *Ibid.*, 12 June 1965, which mistakenly claimed that Souley led commando units in the Komadougou-Yobé region, implying he was arrested there; Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, vol. 1, 202, which wrongly reports he was arrested in 1969; interviews Ibrahim Bawa Souley (his son), Niamey, 5 Febr. 2003 & 29 Febr. 2008.

⁵⁹ Note de Renseignements, Ambassade de France, Niamey, 12 June 1965 & 2 July 1966.

⁶⁰ See previous chapter at note 214.

they resisted arrest by force of arms. Sawabists in the Lagos region also put up a fight, forcing police to use their firearms. In Kano, too, a violent incident took place. On 21 July a house of a NEPU cadre in the Kofar Mata ward burnt down, exposing an important quantity of arms, ammunition and Sawaba propaganda that prompted the authorities to launch a raid on the district. An exchange of fire took place and while there were no casualties, a number of commandos got arrested. In Ikare, in south-western Nigeria, police recovered another quantity of arms and ammunition, possibly part of an arms cache.⁶¹

If some commandos put up a last-ditch fight, this heroism did not end the desperate predicament in which Sawabists now found themselves. On 23 July Nigerian police in Idiroko, on the border with Dahomey not far from Porto Novo, detained Hami Mohamed dit Buzu, the commando from the Téra region who was on his way to Lagos.⁶² The armed exchanges in Kano led to the introduction of stringent measures, one of which was Sawaba's proscription as a political party across the federal territory (12 August). Twenty-eight people, of whom six were Nigerian citizens but all considered Sawaba members, were arrested on 3 August, with another quantity of arms and ammunition seized.⁶³ A week later, three Sawabists detained in Kano were summarily handed over to the Sûreté in Zinder. One of these was Mamadou Ali, the shop assistant who had facilitated Aba Kaka's attack on Bosso and who had taken part in a raid on government vehicles on the Bosso-Diffa road the previous May. His arrest broke communication lines between Kaka's units and Accra. One of the others detained was Idrissa Choua,⁶⁴ one of Kaka's lieutenants, who led Nigerian police to the arms depot at the village of Boula Kari in the north-east. In the course of his interrogation, he gave away a local NEPU cadre, who also got arrested, together with some weaponry.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Wilberforce to Renwick, 29 July 1965; Note de Renseignements, Ambassade de France, Niamey, 12 June 1965; Bulletin de Renseignements, Commandement supérieur du point d'appui de Dakar, 20 Aug. 1965 and *Ibid.*, Ambassade de France au Cameroun, 25 Aug. 1965; both SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; emails Murray Last to author, 13 & 19 Nov. 2003; and *Africa Research Bulletin* (pol. series), July 1965. Weaponry seized in Lagos/Kano and the north-east included five submachine guns, five semi-automatic rifles, nine pistols and gunpowder.

⁶² Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 17 Aug. 1965. See ch. 13 at n. 216.

⁶³ *Africa Research Bulletin* (pol. series), Aug. 1965; Bulletin de Renseignements, Dakar, 20 Aug. 1965; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 24 Sept. 1965; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2.

⁶⁴ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 8 & 21 Sept. 1965; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; ch. 13 at n. 210 & 212.

⁶⁵ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 21 Sept. 1965; ch. 13 (at) notes 145 & 215.

Officials began to investigate the links between Sawabists and NEPU members more thoroughly, being particularly interested in Nigerian traders plying the road between Kano and Zinder.⁶⁶ The torture of Amadou Diop had given the Nigérien authorities information on Tanko Yakasai, the NEPU radical in Kano who had provided key assistance to Bakary's men, as well as on Ali Kote, who had housed Dan Galadima in Sabongari and had engaged in financial transactions for the party in Lagos. Niamey contacted the Nigerian authorities, lodging complaints against Yakasai and asking for Kote's extradition. The latter, with his French nationality, was in Paris at the time and could not be arrested, so the Nigerians turned on Yakasai and some of his comrades: a certain Amadi Yahaya and Hajiya Fatima Maituwo from Kano's Fagge district, in addition to two adolescents (all Nigériens), were detained together with Yakasai. While Yakasai was charged with managing an unlawful society, he was freed after a fortnight owing to lack of evidence and the fact that, until his arrest, Sawaba had not been an illegal organisation in Nigeria.⁶⁷ Niamey faced a new setback when the Nigerians refused to hand over the other Sawabists that had engaged them in the Kano shoot-out, on the grounds that there was no extradition treaty. Apparently, someone had exerted pressure at the behest of the Sawabist community, since such legal technicalities had not hindered the deportation of cadres before. A Nigérien cabinet minister flew to Nigeria to persuade the Nigerians to change their mind.⁶⁸

Towards the end of the year, the hunt for Sawabists yielded another major result, as the Nigerians finally closed in on Aba Kaka. As discussed in the previous chapter, the tenacious guerrilla was by now hiding in Maiduguri, where, however, the authorities had put a price on his head and people were on the lookout. While trying to change from one safe house to another, Kaka was betrayed and arrested. However, the federal authorities and Northern Nigeria's government would have disagreed on his extradition, Lagos resisting his deportation. Kaka was sentenced to six months for illegal arms possession, despite the fact that Niger's consul in Kano was allegedly willing to pay millions of francs for his handover. The same consul was central in the arrest of what was described as one of Bakary's prin-

⁶⁶ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 24 Sept. 1965.

⁶⁷ Yakasai later absurdly alleged that Amadou Diop had fallen out with Sawaba and had blamed Diop for his arrest. T. Yakasai, *The Story of a Humble Life: An Autobiography*, vol. 1 (Zaria, 2004), 209–210.

⁶⁸ *Africa Research Bulletin* (pol. series), July & Aug. 1965.

cial lieutenants, i.e. Kali Abdou Traoré, who hailed from Maradi but was of Zarma extraction.⁶⁹

Soon after, however, political upheavals in Nigeria halted all progress from the perspective of Niamey, which was deeply concerned about the putsch and murder in January 1966 of Abubakar Tafewa Balewa and Ahmadu Bello, the northern premier. This set off a chain of events that led to a counter-coup by northern army officers in July. Diori was badly shaken by the assassination of his Nigerian colleagues, fearing that if the situation deteriorated further, this would allow for new Sawabist incursions.⁷⁰ As noted in the previous chapter, barely a month after the first coup a military commander in Kaduna had freed Sawaba commandos, but this was no more than a temporary setback. In the fifth month of his prison term, the head of Sawaba's Bosso command was deported to Niger, together with a fellow cadre, Malam Kadey, a peasant who had helped in Kaka's first attack. However, the Shehu of Borno (or some other Nigerian authority) would have imposed the condition that Kaka not be maltreated. In any case, the Bosso guerrilla was driven to Geidam, east of Gashua, and then handed over to the Nigériens in Maïné-Soroa. Bound hand and foot, Kaka and his comrade were transported by plane via Zinder to Niamey. This highlighted the importance that Colombani attributed to his capture.⁷¹ Detained in the palace, Kaka and Malam Kadey were held in solitary confinement and interrogated daily. The guerrilla commander was not tortured, however, in contrast to other key figures, something that must have been related to the conditions imposed by the Nigerians. Two weeks into their ordeal, the Bosso guerrillas were transferred to the 'Sûreté',⁷² i.e. the police headquarters.

In late June-early July Baoua Souley followed them, having been transferred from Lagos prison to Niamey, together with the Bulgaria-trained cadre and Ibrahim Cheffou. Souley's prospects were bleak, since he had already been sentenced to death the previous year (see next section).⁷³

⁶⁹ Note de Renseignements, Ambassade de France, Niamey, 15 Dec. 1965 and interview with Aba Kaka, Bosso, 13 Febr. 2006. Could this be Kali Abdou dit Fidel Castro, who was to face severe punishment (see below) or possibly Badou Traoré, the unionist who had known Dandouna Aboubakar (ch. 9 at n. 150)?

⁷⁰ Note de Renseignements, Ambassade de France, Niamey, 2 March 1966; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; Annual Review ... Niger, JV ½ (23196); Shaw to Lequesne, 24 Febr. 1966.

⁷¹ As suggested by Kaka himself. Interview, Bosso, 13 Febr. 2003.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Note de Renseignements, Ambassade de France, Niamey, 2 July 1966 and Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, vol. 1, 202.

Two months later, Ali Kote, who had returned to Nigeria, was also arrested. The Zinder cadre was extradited in early September,⁷⁴ and since he had played an important role in logistical and financial arrangements, his capture may have considerably expanded the regime's intelligence files.

If this unrelenting manhunt caused many leading personalities to go deeper underground,⁷⁵ the Franco-RDA combine was intent on tracking down even the smallest figures, not just those tainted by guerrilla action but also mere sympathisers and hangers-on—pawns in the titanic clash between Niger's political forces, who did not pose a security threat: an intelligence survey compiled by the Bureau de Coordination in September 1966, listing more than 200 suspects still being sought (Nigériens and other West African nationals), included such lowly personages as 'Falke', a journeyman from Hondobon in the western region, and 'Elhadj', mason from Malanville whose crime, it seems, was having served as Baoua Souley's 'boy'. 'Gothewaye' was also listed—a prostitute who had sold cigarettes at the market of Gothèye—and 'Gnili', her comrade in vice from the same town, both of whom must have been involved somehow in Sawaba politics or sympathised at some stage, for they had ended up in the intelligence files. So had Bodo Foulani, of whom nothing more was registered than that he was a seller of wood from Delewa (near Kollo), not be confused, of course, with Sékou Tall dit Foulani from the same town and with the same profession, but with a more detailed political record.⁷⁶ Though the only thing the authorities knew about Mahamane Danja was that he hailed from Guidan-Roumji, apparently he had fallen under suspicion, as had 'Saley' from Tessaoua and Nazir Elhadji Dado dit Nazirou—just noted to be from Zinder (but now thought to live in Ouagadougou). About another lady of easy virtue it was duly listed that she had married a Ghanaian, and the several prostitutes like 'Kon-Ho Haoussa' from Ayorou apart, the survey included 'Alhassane' from Gothèye, registered as a griot (had he sung Sawaba's praise?); Harouna Nikki, a humble 'tablier' from Dosso; and Abdou Dan Iya, unskilled worker from Guidan-Bawa near Konni. The authorities still remained on the lookout for Moussa Kalla, registered as a tailor and of Hausa origin; 'Massaki', a coxeur from Tahoua; Malam Moustapha, marabout from Gouré; 'Mounkaila', trader in Ayorou; Mounkaila

⁷⁴ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 7 Sept. 1966; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; Yakasai, *The Story of a Humble Life*, 210.

⁷⁵ Note de Renseignements, Ambassade de France, Niamey, 24 Febr. 1966; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2.

⁷⁶ I.e. being a Malian Sawabist and nephew of Sadou Delewa, active for Sawaba in Ghana (see ch. 9).

Saidou dit Dandodo, the assistant teacher from Zinder; Seydou Alfa, a keeper, probably living in Accra; Marc Foly, the Dahomean mechanic; Mounkaila Yelouani dit Kadama, 'planter' from Téra; Djibo Garba dit Maga, driver; Mamoudou Ide, the Ouallam assistant nurse; Abdou Aboubakar, ex-teacher; Oudou Ide dit Yaro, peasant from Soudouré; Karimou Idrissa and 'Soumana'—both salesmen, one of shoes, the other of 'empty bags'; and 'Ibrahim' from Maradi and Issa Chadakori from Guidan-Roumji, both noted to be 'without profession'—all on the run, all intent on avoiding arrest and having fled Niger in search of better fortunes.⁷⁷ It goes without saying that details on political activity were faithfully recorded, branding the people involved. In addition, physical features were mentioned (one Sawabist was reported as having a scar on his foot from a bullet wound); photographs, if available, were included; and ethnic background was registered, besides profession, pseudonyms and (if known) whereabouts in West Africa or beyond, in Europe.⁷⁸

In its totalitarian ambition, the intelligence record showed that the regime—so narrowly constituted around 'commis' interests—purposely tried to destroy not just a political community but also a social movement representative of different echelons of Nigérien society but with its core among the lower semi-urban strata of 'petit peuple'. Yet, the survey naturally also included all the higher political figures. Sawaba's chief of staff was listed as representative in Morocco, but Dan Galadima may not have been there since 1965. In fact, in June that year 'the scorpion' narrowly avoided being kidnapped by Nigérien agents in Ghana, and he would have taken refuge in Koulikoro, near Bamako in Mali, where he was allegedly joined by other Sawabists.⁷⁹ Apparently, he did not feel safe enough, since he moved to Nigeria some time after, establishing himself in the south-west, probably Lagos. By January 1967, however, the intelligence services had got word of his whereabouts (some say Dan Galadima was noticed near the Lagos embassy)⁸⁰ and Niger's ambassador asked the Nigerian authorities for help in tracking him down. Perhaps he was betrayed by one his com-

⁷⁷ Organisation Terroriste "Sawaba" ('planteur'; 'sacs vides'; 'sans profession').

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Surveillance du Territoire no. 732/SN/ST: Interrogatoire de Abdoulkarim Ousmane dit Maïga, 6 Sept. 1967; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 30 June 1965; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2. The other Sawabists would have been one Maigari dit Marouna and Amadou Coudey—French intelligence mistakenly adding Dandouna Aboubakar, who was long dead by then.

⁸⁰ Interview with Oumarou Janba, Zinder, 100 Febr. 2003.

rades, as has been suggested, but this accusation remains dubious.⁸¹ In any case, in a joint operation of Nigérien and Nigerian police, Dan Galadima was caught, and the Nigerians provided a plane for his transportation to Niamey.⁸²

The capture of the chief of staff was the biggest coup the regime achieved. His intelligence value naturally landed ‘the scorpion’ in the palace, where a long period of detention began and the most severe interrogation routines. The thin, small Sawabist, one of the RDA’s worst enemies and hated by the French, was badly tortured. Exactly what was done to him is unclear, but he was probably beaten horribly. According to Adamou Assane Mayaki,⁸³ Dan Galadima was almost beaten to death—a testimony that confirms Galadima’s own assertion that after a long session, he was brought to hospital, where he would have lain unconscious for several days. In his testimony Dan Galadima remained rather vague about his ordeal. While asserting that he was tortured and referring in general terms to the practice of electric shocks, it is not certain—but very well possible—that he was subjected to this himself.⁸⁴ Miraculously, in the hospital he came to, according to Galadima himself on the fifth day, most likely as doctors tried to resuscitate him. Oumarou Janba, the Zinder cadre, in his reminiscences later referred to a French woman, who did everything possible to bring Sawaba’s chief of staff back to life.⁸⁵ A regime-friendly source confirmed that Dan Galadima became the object of sustained medical attention, suggesting that he had become emaciated.⁸⁶

It is quite certain that Dan Galadima was then brought back to the palace—he was still there by June 1967.⁸⁷ But ‘the scorpion’ continued to resist

⁸¹ Ibid. Janba linked Galadima’s arrest to his disagreement with Bakary since the failure of the 1964 invasion, suggesting ‘the scorpion’ was betrayed by the righter of wrongs himself. Since Bakary was himself on the run, trying to avoid capture, he hardly had any interest in doing so.

⁸² *Afrique Nouvelles*, 8-13 June 1967, no. 1.035; *West Africa*, 22 July 1967; Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, vol. 1, 231; interviews Abdou Adam (RDA official), Niamey, 4 Febr. & 29 Nov. 2003; Ousmane Dan Galadima, Madaoua, 7 Febr. 2003.

⁸³ Interview, Niamey, 29 Jan. 2003.

⁸⁴ A true Marxist, he typically preferred to focus on the movement as a whole, rather than individuals (like himself). Interview with Ousmane Dan Galadima, Madaoua, 7 Febr. 2003.

⁸⁵ Ibid. and interview with Oumarou Janba, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003.

⁸⁶ *Afrique Nouvelles*, 8-13 June 1967, no. 1.035. The journalist writing the article claimed Dan Galadima weighed only 38 kg, but that this was the case by the time he was arrested. He also suggested, rather dubiously, that Galadima, and his wife, who was still free, were treated well by regime officials.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

his tormenters and remained unbroken. At one point in his ordeal, Jean Colombani allegedly tried to get his way by approaching him with sympathy, pleading that Galadima make his peace with the RDA. He would have poured a glass of wine with it. However, 'the scorpion' refused to budge and disputed that the regime had any legitimacy. Certain things, the Marxist cadre would have argued, were unacceptable (referring to the way the RDA had come to power), and he would have said that he would accept it if he was to be executed. As will be shown below, even the written records demonstrate that, in his case, not all of this was tall talk.⁸⁸

The political offensive that Diiori embarked upon after the assassination attempt also zoomed in on countries further afield. Guinea was targeted with a negative propaganda campaign,⁸⁹ since several Sawabists were known to be enjoying Sékou Touré's hospitality. Some of these, moreover, were high up in the movement's hierarchy, such as Alazi Soumaila, the recruitment officer and member of the comité directeur, and Ly Alzouma, the journalist. Both worked, at different times, at Sawaba's Conakry office and were still there by the summer of 1968, besides students who had returned from the Eastern Bloc.⁹⁰ Niamey-friendly regimes did not, of course, extend such hospitality, as Côte d'Ivoire made clear when in July 1965 it acted on an extradition request and arrested one 'Doche Ivan Pierre', a man with French nationality who was accused of close relations with Sawaba. He was put in the care of Niger's representative for transfer to Niamey.⁹¹ More importantly, Issaka Koké was hunted down in a joint effort by Malian and Senegalese authorities. Although the old UDN hand and cabinet minister had embarked on a professional career long before the showdown with the RDA, he had assumed a role in Sawaba's financial arrangements after the invasion. He had also had the nerve to write an obituary for Kousanga Alzouma, his fellow vet murdered in prison. Bamako therefore demanded his extradition from Senegal (Koké was married to a woman from the Casamance region). Koké, who had left Mali for France but then

⁸⁸ Interview with Ousmane Dan Galadima, Madaoua, 7 Febr. 2003.

⁸⁹ *Le Niger*, 7 June 1965.

⁹⁰ The students included Ali Mahamane dit Ali Dodo, trained as a vet, and possibly Issoufou Assoumane. Zoumari Issa Seyni had by then moved on to Morocco. Surveillance du Territoire no.287/BCL: Examen de situation de Yansambou Boubakar, 29 March 1969 & Surveillance du Territoire no. 515/BCL: Examen de situation de Touré Hama, 8 June 1968; both ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14; Organisation Terroriste "Sawaba"; Etudiants et Boursiers du Sawaba; Curriculum Vitae Zoumari Issa Seyni; interview Issoufou Assoumane, Niamey, 30 Jan. 2003.

⁹¹ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 25 Aug. 1965; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2.

returned to Senegal, was detained by police in September 1965. It is not known what happened then, but Senegal considered his extradition to Niger, which naturally also wanted him. However, he apparently regained his freedom and settled permanently in France, having applied for French nationality.⁹²

Finally, if the destruction of the Nigerian hinterland had followed a chequered pattern, taking a couple of years before key personalities there had been apprehended, the face-off between Ghana and its Sawabists was to materialise with unexpected rapidity. As noted in the previous chapter, in February 1966 President Nkrumah was overthrown, abruptly ending all assistance to the movement. Ghana had, of course, already come under political attack in the wake of the 1964 invasion, with Niger continuing to put the heat on the Ghanaians the following year.⁹³ After Diop's action it embarked on an aggressive anti-Ghanaian campaign. However, while Nkrumah's government was deeply implicated in the preparation of Sawaba's war, it is not self-evident that the Ghanaians were involved in the attack on Diori.⁹⁴ Diop had embarked on his dangerous mission in Accra, but this does not mean that he was a Ghanaian agent (he clearly was not). Moreover, Djibo Bakary himself was not close to Nkrumah. The attempted assassination cum putsch probably was an initiative of Sawaba's self-acting leadership, with security demanding that Ghana's administration—so bad at keeping secrets—be left in the dark. Even if some Ghanaian quarters were aware of what the Sawabists were planning, the country was diplomatically vulnerable in view of the OAU summit it intended to host. Ghana's embassy in Niamey, though a centre of intelligence gathering, was caught unawares by the assassination attempt. The diplomatic representative, now a full ambassador, went to pay his respects to Diori⁹⁵ and wrote a report to his superiors in Accra in which he condemned the action as tactless and detrimental, pointing out the repercussions for the summit.⁹⁶

⁹² Bulletin de Renseignements, Commandement supérieur du point d'appui de Dakar, 11 Oct. 1965; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 331; Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, vol. 1, 307.

⁹³ *Africa Research Bulletin* (pol. series), Jan. 1965.

⁹⁴ As pointed out by W.S. Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy 1957-1966: Diplomacy, Ideology, and the New State* (Princeton, 1969), 375-376.

⁹⁵ *Afrique Nouvelles*, 22-28 Apr. 1965, no. 924.

⁹⁶ Placca to Dei-Anang, 16 Apr. 1965. Some Ghanaian correspondence suggests Ghana's representatives in Niger knew about their government's complicity, but this dates to the autumn of 1964 and Sawaba's invasion, not the Diop attack. *West Africa*, 22 July 1967.

Nkrumah sent Diori a congratulatory telegram on his lucky escape, but notwithstanding his rejection of alleged involvement (a ‘monstrous fabrication’), the Nigériens accused him of complicity and kept the pressure on Accra, together with the Entente allies.⁹⁷ The government organ published articles on Ghana’s assistance to Bakary—Boubou Hama particularly excelling himself—and issued a threat to boycott the OAU summit.⁹⁸ While Diori and his Voltan colleague tried to involve Cameroon in these designs,⁹⁹ their francophone allies managed to have the issue discussed at a session of the OAU Council of Ministers in Lagos in June 1965. Adamou Mayaki, then still foreign minister, rendered a detailed account of the guerrilla attacks.¹⁰⁰

The Council meeting adopted a resolution calling on Ghana to expel all persons deemed undesirable by other member states and ban political groups on its territory that targeted other OAU countries.¹⁰¹ Diori added in a radio message that, if Ghana failed to act on this, he and his allies would not attend the summit. In response, the Ghanaians embarked on a double-hearted game, promising to respect the resolution, denying point-blank that they had camps for guerrillas and asserting that the elements sought out by Niamey were refugees enjoying the right of asylum.¹⁰² This emptied the promise to expel Sawabists of any meaning, and Nkrumah’s regime, indeed, was not prepared to betray its political allies. In August Niger’s ambassador to Nigeria lodged a complaint that Ghana had not removed the ‘rebels’ from its territory. The OAU’s secretary-general and Kenya’s foreign minister became involved as mediators. They first claimed that Djibo Bakary would move to Kenya and confirmed that all political refugees had left Ghana as required by the OAU. Sawaba itself, as noted above, went out of its way to announce a temporary ceasefire. However, in early September the OAU envoys visited Niamey and were confronted at the palace with cadres and commandos, possibly in the presence of Diori. According to French intelligence the mediators were shocked by the evidence about the

⁹⁷ *Africa Research Bulletin* (pol. series), Apr. 1965; various documents in ANN, 86 MI 3 E 6.3; Thompson, *Ghana’s Foreign Policy*, 375; *Le Monde* (Paris), 18-19, 22 & 24 Apr. 1965.

⁹⁸ *Le Niger*, 10 & 17 May and 7 June 1965.

⁹⁹ E.R. Warner, British Embassy Yaoundé, to M. Brown, Foreign Office, 26 Apr. 1965; PRO, FO 371/181.840.

¹⁰⁰ Text of the speech in *Le Niger*, 21 June 1965, which was also published in the Ivorian government organ *Fraternité*, 2 & 9 July 1965.

¹⁰¹ Background discussed in K. van Walraven, *Dreams of Power: The Role of the Organization of African Unity in the Politics of Africa 1963–1993* (Aldershot, 1999), 285.

¹⁰² *Africa Research Bulletin* (pol. series), June 1965.

guerrilla struggle.¹⁰³ Yet, the Ghanaians did not abandon their political allies. The African Affairs Centre, which lodged so many of Sawaba's men, told nearly 300 Nigériens to register for work at Accra's labour exchange, where they would be issued with Ghanaian identity papers. They were also advised to obtain evidence of employment or become member of a trade union, as this could help avoid expulsion.¹⁰⁴

Niger, however, sent Accra a list of 273 Sawabists, possibly a dozen more, and insisted that Ghana drive them out—a testimony to the quality of Niamey's intelligence apparatus. Since its manhunt was uncompromising, it meant that even the smallest fry in Ghana's Sawaba community had cause for concern. The Bureau of African Affairs transmitted the list to Sawaba's leaders, who discussed what to do next. In mid-October Nkrumah appeared to give in to pressure at a meeting with francophone leaders in Bamako, promising to expel opposition figures from their countries. It was even agreed that their families would follow—for good. Bakary, indeed, left Ghana, but only for the duration of the summit; he first travelled to Algiers and later to Cairo, then possibly to Nairobi. The Ghanaians, however, refused to allow the Entente's intelligence services to assist in tracing Sawabists, and when it came out that the better-known representatives of the movement had merely moved out of view and gone to the Kumasi region (the Mampong camp?), several francophone governments decided to boycott the Accra summit.¹⁰⁵

Bakary's followers were relieved—but not for long. The takeover the following February by the Ghanaian army, hostile to Nkrumah's revolutionary politics, meant that they were no longer safe. As the junta immediately set to work (including chasing out the Chinese guerrilla instructors), the Sawabist community was engulfed by panic. The righter of wrongs himself had returned from Cairo the previous month and was in imminent danger of arrest. While he managed to reach the Bulgarian embassy, which

¹⁰³ Ibid., Aug. 1965; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 8 Sept. 1965; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; Note de Renseignements, Ambassade de France, no. 447, 14 Aug. 1965; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; interviews Mounkaila Albagna and Abdou Adam, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003; Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, 366 & 374-382.

¹⁰⁴ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 25 Aug. 1965; Note de Renseignements, 14 Aug. 1965; Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, 382.

¹⁰⁵ Note de Renseignements, 14 Aug. 1965; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 8 & 21 Sept. 1965; *Africa Research Bulletin* (pol. series), Oct. 1965; Wilberforce to Renwick, 29 July 1965; Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 330; and Thompson, *Ghana's Foreign Policy*, 384-385. After Diop's attempt on Diiori, Bakary himself reportedly went to Kumasi so as not to compromise the Ghanaians. Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 12 May 1965.

provided him asylum,¹⁰⁶ many others were not so lucky. A day after the coup, several Sawabists were picked up, handcuffed and transported to the airport, where a plane was ready to take them back to Niamey.¹⁰⁷ French intelligence reported that, all over Ghana, cadres were being arrested. A total of 34 was immediately turned over to the Nigérien authorities.¹⁰⁸ Many of the commandos were trapped in the training camps, which were situated in remote areas, surrounded by barbed wire. Those staying in urban areas ran the risk of betrayal by local residents, such as Ibrahim Baro dit Tri Tri, who vainly tried to hide from the police. Ali Issaka, the guerrilla who had made his way to Ghana after having been freed from a Malian jail, was also deported to Niamey, together with several of his comrades.¹⁰⁹ Numerous commandos tried to escape the country, travelling in small groups, but several were caught.¹¹⁰ Twenty-one of them, who had taken part in the 1964 infiltrations, arrived in Niger on 16 March. Although they did not include known unit leaders, they were immediately taken to the 'police' (i.e. the BCL at the palace).¹¹¹

The fate of Amadou Diop, Boubakar Djingaré and Mounkaila Beidari shows that many awaited a harrowing ordeal: one list of casualties, dating from the 1990s, relates how Garba Sakouara, a cadre from a village near Tillabéri, was deported upon the fall of Nkrumah. He died on the day of his arrival in Niamey, after his interrogators subjected him to torture. This was confirmed in interviews with Ali Amadou—who was also deported at the time and volunteered several details—and Soumana Idrissa, the Vietnam-trained guerrilla. If this case was special,¹¹² it highlighted that the hardening of regime practices had become semi-permanent.

¹⁰⁶ Note de Renseignements, Ambassade de France, Niamey, 24 Febr. 1966; Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 331; *Le Niger*, 28 March 1966.

¹⁰⁷ Interviews with Ali Amadou, Niamey, 28 & 31 Jan. 2003.

¹⁰⁸ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 6 Apr. 1966; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2

¹⁰⁹ Interviews Ali Issaka, Niamey, 29 Febr. 2008; Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 18 Oct. 2011.

¹¹⁰ Ali Amadou asserted that the junta first did not know where the camps were, but this may have had to do with the fact that he was arrested later. Interview, Niamey, 28 Jan. 2003. A certain Himou Amadou alias Himou Ibrahim, born in Malanville, was transferred via Abidjan to Niamey on 4 March. His father, called Dourouwalize, was known as a Sawaba liaison agent. *Etudiants et Boursiers du Sawaba*.

¹¹¹ Note de Renseignements, Ambassade de France, Niamey, 17 March 1966; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2.

¹¹² Sakouara had a relative, Mounkaila Sakouira, a rich trader from the same village who was a member of the RDA and well connected, with a high function in the militia. Mounkaila probably felt threatened by the arrest of his Sawaba relative. According to Ali Amadou, who was categorical in his statement, Mounkaila denounced Garba in front of Colombani at the

About the same time that the party of 21 commandos was returned to Niamey, another six were transported back to Niger. As they were said to have lived in an area close to the Ivorian frontier, they were probably guerillas from the camp at Half-Assini, for whom escape across the border was not an option in view of the hostility of the Ivorians.¹¹³ Early in April French intelligence reported that another five Sawabists were waiting in Ghanaian prisons for their deportation, while a dozen commandos were located at a training camp near the town of Konongo, which must have been Obenemasi, south-east of Kumasi.¹¹⁴

These are just the cases of deportees that ended up in the archival record, showing how the Sawabist community was gradually dismantled. Ali Amadou, for his part, later asserted that he was betrayed by a defector, Abdoulaye Antama, the foot soldier who had been in trouble with his superiors. Antama, described as a 'leading informer' (which in view of his previous difficulties may have been true), was said to have been paid by Niamey and have betrayed numerous comrades.¹¹⁵ This should also be set against the climate in Ghana's Nigérien community, which had been poisoned by the actions of the government, Sawabists and RDA people, in addition to the espionage on either side.

Transportation to Niger took place by plane or car. The air trip could be an unpleasant experience—one plane had been used for exporting slaughtered cattle, the sight of blood alarming the detainees. Other cadres, however, were brought to Niger in motorised convoys. Ali Amadou later recalled how he travelled, tied up and accompanied by Nigérien police and military, via Lomé and Cotonou all the way to Niamey.¹¹⁶

BCL, who had Garba beaten and perhaps subjected to other torture, until he was dead. The same source suggests that, in doing so, Colombani simply followed RDA orders. The date is unknown, but it happened at the presidential complex in broad daylight, according to Amadou. Interviews Ali Amadou, Niamey, 25 Oct. 2011 & Soumana Idrissa, Gothèye, 18 Dec. 2009. The *Liste des Nigériens* (note 33 above) refers to the 'affaires of Mounkeila Sakouara'. If the case represented a lapse in BCL standards (where interrogation stood, above all, in the light of intelligence gathering), it shows that French- and RDA-led institutions, and their violence, were not entirely separated ('affaires Mounkeila Sakouara').

¹¹³ Perhaps owing to eagerness, French intelligence mistakenly added that they included Ousmane Dan Galadima, still living in freedom in Nigeria. Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 6 Apr. 1966.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Interview with Ali Amadou, Niamey, 28 Jan. 2003 and ch. 9 at n. 362 ('principal dénonciateur').

¹¹⁶ Interviews with Boubakar Djingaré and Ali Amadou, Niamey, 27 Oct. 2005 & 28 & 31 Jan. 2003.

By contrast, in so large a community of activists, migrant workers and guerrillas, there were many who managed to make their way to safer territory (one source suggests that, in total, around 60 Sawabists were deported, which would mean that several hundred people associated with the movement escaped arrest).¹¹⁷ As noted, Mossi Salifou, the tailor, was able to travel to Mali. Zoumari Issa Seyni, the cousin of Adamou Sékou, escaped, possibly with the help of a disguise. He travelled to Guinea, where he obtained a scholarship for his secondary education. From there he was to journey to Morocco, where he enrolled in the Lycée Mohamed V, and on to Moscow, for his academic training.¹¹⁸ As noted, Ly Alzouma, the Niamey journalist, also ended up in Conakry, having fled Accra where he had been Sawaba's bureau secretary.¹¹⁹ Some cadres were reported to have asked for asylum in the Sudanese capital Khartoum.¹²⁰ About many others it remains unclear where they went,¹²¹ although some smaller fry continued to live in Ghana, apparently undisturbed.¹²² French intelligence in April 1966 expressed frustration that Yacouba Idrissa dit Gothèye—Bakary's financier—had so far escaped arrest, reporting a rumour that he was hiding in Ghana's eastern region, where Togolese police were on the lookout. Undoubtedly, his personal wealth helped him to avoid capture, though the whereabouts of Bakary's uncle were confirmed by the BCL later in the year, reporting that Idrissa had been hiding in the town of Ho, close to the Togo border. The timber trader allegedly left the country in August and would

¹¹⁷ F. Martin, *Le Niger du Président Diouri: Chronologie 1960-1974* (Paris, 1991), 174.

¹¹⁸ Interviews Zoumari Issa Seyni, Niamey, 18 Nov. 2002 & 28 Jan. 2003; CV Zoumari Issa Seyni.

¹¹⁹ Organisation Terroriste "Sawaba" and ch. 9 at n. 107.

¹²⁰ Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 331.

¹²¹ F.e. Djibo Garba dit Maga dit Ganibaba, driver (possibly for Bakary); Amadou Idrissa (Kourtey), the orderly at Sawaba's Accra office; 'Kalla', former orderly at Niger's own embassy in Accra; Mounkaila Assane dit Kakara, Bakary's confidant from Gothèye; Sadou Tiegoumo dit Goungo, the wood trader and president of a party committee in Accra; Sadou Delewa, vice-president of the same committee; and Tanda, who had led a Sawaba women's section in Accra (see ch. 9 n. 108-110). Organisation Terroriste "Sawaba".

¹²² The BCL's intelligence survey of September 1966 mentions Amadou Wonkoye dit Zigli, a Téra cattle trader perhaps living in Kumasi; Assane Ousseini, ex-soldier in the Ghanaian army from Gothèye, then possibly working as a guard at a cinema in the town of Tamale; Hassane Djerma, 'boy', possibly hiding in Mali's Accra legation; Mamoudou Gadiaga from Hondobon, western Niger, then living close to cinema 'Opera', Accra; Mahamadou Souley, worker in Accra's port; Mamoudou Gothèye, tailor in Accra's Kaloé district; and Seydou Alfa, keeper at a sawmill in the same area. Organisation Terroriste "Sawaba" and n. 110 ch. 9.

have managed to travel to Switzerland. However, there is a possibility that he later fell into the hands of the Nigérien authorities.¹²³

This demonstrated that Djibo Bakary had to be careful—the Franco-RDA combine tried to keep a watch on him and enjoyed the cooperation of the Ghanaian junta in the effort to nail its arch enemy. At first, it was not clear where he was hiding, with French intelligence reporting that he might be in the Cuban embassy or that of the Chinese.¹²⁴ When it was found that he was staying in the Bulgarian legation, agents of Niger's Sûreté took up position in the vicinity, but Bakary managed to leave his hideout and escape abroad. A couple of months later the Ivorian ambassador spotted him in Algiers, where he arrived after a visit to the OAU Liberation Committee in Dar es Salaam. As noted in the previous chapter, in the autumn he was in Guinea, where he settled permanently, enjoying the protection of Sékou Touré. From time to time, he was to be seen at public functions, such as a reception at the North Vietnamese embassy, a Touré press conference or a congress of Guinea's ruling party. In the course of such events he would meet some of his followers, like Yansambou Boubakar and Amadou Abdoulaye, whom he helped to find jobs on completion of their studies in the Eastern Bloc.¹²⁵

With the birth of his youngest son, Ahmed Sékou Djibo Bakary, named after his benefactor (September 1966), Sawaba's leader tried to start a new life, without, however, giving up on his objectives. Ahmed Sékou later recalled how his father used to work until late in the evening—busy with his correspondence and following developments in Niger, apart from engaging in schemes to further his comeback. His wife was paranoid about his security, especially after the Portuguese attack on Conakry from Guinea-Bissau in 1970—then still a Portuguese colony. During the shooting the family hid in a makeshift bunker. Three years later, it witnessed another violent incident when Portuguese agents arranged the murder of Amílcar Cabral, leader of Guinea-Bissau's liberation movement, with whom Bakary maintained ties.¹²⁶

¹²³ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 6 Apr. 1966; Organisation Terroriste "Sawaba", 9 & 11. On the latter page someone later scribbled 'arrested' under his picture.

¹²⁴ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 6 Apr. 1966. Martin, *Le Niger du Président Diouri*, 174 referred to the Albanian embassy.

¹²⁵ Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 331; telegram Consmil Niamey to Minarmées Paris, 16 June 1966; SHAT, 10 T 717/D.2; Bakary, *Silence!*, photos 7 & 8; Examen de situation de Yansambou Boubakar, 29 March 1969.

¹²⁶ Interview with Ahmed Sékou Djibo Bakary, Niamey, 1 March 2008.



Photo 14.2 Ahmed Sékou Djibo Bakary, beside his father's portrait (Niamey, 2008).

The Years of Darkness

Scattered to the wind, external cadres who avoided capture were luckier than their brethren in Niger. On 18 May 1965, a week after the death of Boubacar Diallo, the regime began the first trial of political detainees. It was held in Tillabéri. French intelligence pointed out that in the capital it could lead to unrest. Sawaba had always had a substantial following there, whereas Tillabéri was to a considerable extent RDA territory, boasting the party's first militia. Sixty-six people had been charged, all but one—Baoua Souley, who was still on the run by then—appearing in court.¹²⁷ They were accused of participation in the 1963 mutiny, and the fact that Captain Diallo's actions had preceded the Sawabist attacks of 1964-1965 affected the government's view of the event, stiffening the sentences demanded. Thus, while there certainly was a Sawaba dimension to the mutiny,¹²⁸ the charges referred not only to an uprising by army officers, but also to 'collusion

¹²⁷ Événements survenus en Afrique Francophone pendant la semaine du 17 au 23 mai 1965; SHAT, 10 T 210; République du Niger—Présidence: Décret no. 65-066/Bis/PRN, 5 mai 1965 portant mise en accusation devant la Cour de Sûreté de l'Etat; *Africa Research Bulletin* (pol. series), May 1965.

¹²⁸ See ch. 10 at notes 168-175.

of the military and some civilians' to the purpose of organising 'an insurrectionary movement'.¹²⁹ In his closing speech the prosecutor inserted elements postdating the mutiny, alleging that three 'cells making up the seditious organisation' (among which was Madougou Namaro, the Sawabist trader & transporter) had been involved; one of them had been assisted by a 'team of adventurers trained abroad in the art of killing.' Mentioning several Sawabists by name, the prosecution recounted how the collusion between the 'internal revolt' and the 'terrorist organisation in foreign pay' had led to the 'killer expeditions' of 'October 1964'. It cited the oath of loyalty that the commandos had taken and referred to 'Nanking' and 'Accra' when coming to those who, according to Niamey, bore final responsibility for the guerrilla infiltrations.¹³⁰

These anachronistic elements enhanced the political character of what amounted to a show trial:¹³¹ as noted, the Cour de Sûreté was now a military tribunal operating without instruction, which could hand down sentences without the right of appeal. While the accused had the right to defence council—imposed or of their choice—, it is hard to see how they could have acted on this: having already been jailed in late 1963-early 1964, people like Sanda Hima had been beaten up by the police, Mody of Gamkallé murdered in detention and others, such as Maïdanda Djermakoye, lugged to Tillabéri to languish in prison like the starving Diallo. Recalling his experiences at a later date, Djermakoye claimed that his lawyer demanded the death penalty for him, doubtless wishing to please what the scion of the Djermakoy dynasty remembered as a 'fascist regime'.¹³² At the trial, Zodi Ikhia, the ex-cabinet minister and political traveller who had been in touch with the rebel captain, protested his innocence, asserting that all he had done was to receive friends who were followers of Sawaba.¹³³ In the grim atmosphere so soon after Diop's assassination attempt, this was enough to condemn him. Sitting in Tillabéri's court house, it took the

¹²⁹ Décret no. 65-066/Bis/PRN, 5 mai 1965 portant mise en accusation devant la Cour de Sûreté de l'Etat ('collusion des militaires et de quelques civils'; 'un mouvement insurrectionnel').

¹³⁰ Text in *Le Niger*, 31 May 1965 ('trois cellules composant l'organisation séditionneuse'; 'équipe d'aventuriers entraînés par l'Étranger à l'art de tuer'; 'soulèvement intérieur'; 'l'organisation terroriste à la solde de l'Étranger'; 'expéditions de tueurs'; 'octobre 1964').

¹³¹ French intelligence openly called it a political trial. Événements survenus ... 17 au 23 mai 1965.

¹³² Interview, Dosso, 17 Febr. 2006.

¹³³ W.J.A. Wilberforce, British Embassy Abidjan, to R.W. Renwick, Foreign Office, 1.011/N, 1 June 1965; PRO, FO 371/182.198.

judges one week to reach their verdicts, the severity of which—in the absence of any bloodshed in the mutiny—was widely noted.¹³⁴

Five men were sentenced to death: apart from Baoua Souley (*in absentia*), Captain Diallo, of course, who admitted responsibility for the mutiny; Zodi Ikhia; Madougou Namaro; and Garba Sangara, the NCO accused of liaising between Sawaba's external wing and the mutineers. Of these, Souley and Namaro were definitely at the heart of Sawaba's activities, and they were found guilty of having tried to create the civil disturbances that accompanied the army revolt (even though Namaro was then already in detention). Arouna Zada, the Niamey youth activist, was also one of the known cadres, but—miraculously—he was acquitted.¹³⁵ The court passed no less than 14 life sentences, seven on members of the military, the other half on civilians.¹³⁶ One soldier got 15 years, as did six civilians, among whom were Sanda Hima, Bakary's brother, and Alassane Abba, nurse and Zodi Ikhia's cabinet director, already active for Sawaba in 1959.¹³⁷ Six civilians heard a sentence of ten years against them, 11 people (of whom seven were civilians) went down with five, among whom were Maïdanda Djermakoye and Ibrahim Issa, information chief at the defence ministry.¹³⁸ Four, of whom one was a civilian, got two years in prison,¹³⁹ while besides Zada, 17 others were acquitted.¹⁴⁰ Many of the civilians did not seem to

¹³⁴ Wilberforce to Renwick, 1 June 1965; Événements survenus en Afrique Francophone pendant la semaine du 24 au 30 mai 1965; SHAT, 10 T 210.

¹³⁵ Zada was involved in recruiting students for the Eastern Bloc. He had been under surveillance and had done time before. Had he made his peace with the RDA, as a few others did by then (see next section)?

¹³⁶ The civilians were: Yahaya Assane & Yahaya Alassane, (assistant) clerks; Mousa Kadri(e) Sodjie (Sadje; = Madougou Namaro's brother?; see ch. 10 above at n. 175), escort ('convoyeur'); Diallo Ousseini, court clerk (= Ousseini Hassane Diallo, Captain Diallo's brother); Gourouza Maina, employee at the airport's meteorological service; Kangaye Bonkougou, veterinary nurse; and Yayé Madougou, translator. One of the soldiers was another brother of Captain Diallo, Abdoulaye Hassane Diallo. *La Voix Libérée*, no. 1, March-Apr. 2011, 20.

¹³⁷ Ch. 7 n. 8 and ch. 11 at notes 121-122. The other civilians were Harouna Hamani, civil servant; Adamou Hima dit Alfa Kimba, peasant; Hina Sylla/Silla, escort ('convoyeur'); and Dobi Abdou, trader.

¹³⁸ Ten years: Souna Djerma, ex-sergeant, 67 years old; Amadou Maisadie (Ta Waye) & Idé Talibo Kouré, both peasants; Saidou Issa, cook; Boucar Waziri (Boukary Ouaziri), tailor; and Habi Diori, profession unknown. The seven civilians with five years (in addition to Djermakoye and Ibrahim): Tahirou Ousseini, peasant (ch. 12 n. 24); Ibrahim Adam, teacher; Wankoye Hamado, coxeur; Adamou Elhadji Koffo, trader; and Diallo Mamadou, mechanic.

¹³⁹ The civilian was Waly (Walli) Karingama dit Mamadou Adji, trader.

¹⁴⁰ All civilians: Abdoul Moumouni Djermakoye, marabout; Moussa Elhadji Ousmane, butcher from Tessaoua (= Ousmane, butcher from Maradi who made his peace with the RDA earlier?; see ch. 7, n. 92 & ch. 8 n. 70); Kadai Waziri (Ouaziri) & Kiari Malam Abba

have been active for Sawaba, but as their professional backgrounds ranged from petty clerks, nurses, mechanics, drivers, traders, transporters and coxeurs to cooks, tailors, butchers, marabouts and peasants, the regime struck the community of little folk at its core. This also squares with the contention by Mounkaila Beidari, the Niamey cadre, that ‘Tillabéri’ took care of the lesser militants.¹⁴¹ Several possibly stayed in the western town to serve their sentence in the local prison.¹⁴²

With the conclusion of the trial, the way was open for prosecuting the guerrillas. The regime planned proceedings for September 1965,¹⁴³ but these were delayed. The fact that infiltrations had, by then, not yet come to a complete halt may have played a role, while many cadres were still abroad, eluding the authorities. Niger’s rulers were still in the grip of paranoia, preoccupied with consolidating control and eliminating the enemy from within. Besides, the French and Ivorians were pressuring the regime not to escalate its response (their calculation must have been that, with Sawaba defeated and its organisation dismantled, any intensification of violence would be counter-productive): British diplomats at the time expected Diori to commute the death sentences handed down in Tillabéri.¹⁴⁴

This meant that the numerous detainees, who had not yet been tried, languished in captivity, most of them in the capital, others in Zinder. Those arrested in the western villages and incarcerated in Téra and Dosso (besides Tillabéri and Agadez) may have been brought to Niamey later. Noga Yamba, the Zinder commando, later recalled having met people from Tillabéri in Camp Bano,¹⁴⁵ the barracks now used to process incoming captives before they were sent on their way through the penitentiary system. As noted in the previous chapter, many of the Niamey men, especially those who had been involved in guerrilla action, stayed in the cells of the

(peasants); Baba Mahamane, tailor; Sala/Salla Bako dit Madougou, trader; Yahaya Souley, peasant; Salifou Issaka, marabout; Souley Sala, peasant (ch. 12 n. 24); Mamadou Camara, driver (ch. 12 n. 30); Mahaman (Mamane) Ali, escort (‘convoyeur’); Alassane Alfa (Mohamane), Malian trader, Moussa Hareibane, transporter & Issoufou Ofel, driver (ch. 12 n. 30); Salifou Mareitou, peasant (ch. 12 n. 24); and Bondiéré Daouda & Younoussa Attikou, peasants (ch. 12 n. 24). In the case of one civilian, Saley Koda (peasant from the Niamey area), it is unknown whether sentence was passed. He was 66: had he died already? Sources for the above *Le Niger*, 31 May 1965; Décret no. 65-066/Bis/PRN, 5 mai 1965 portant mise en accusation devant la Cour de Sûreté de l’Etat; Wilberforce to Renwick, 1 June 1965; Evénements survenus ... 24 au 30 mai 1965.

¹⁴¹ Or that its prison served as their place of detention. Interview, Niamey, 15 Dec. 2009.

¹⁴² Interview with Ali Amadou, Niamey, 28 Jan. 2003.

¹⁴³ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 3 Sept. 1965; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2.

¹⁴⁴ Wilberforce to Renwick, 1 June 1965.

¹⁴⁵ Interview, Zinder, 14 Febr. 2003 (see ch. 13 n. 58).



Photo 14.3 Hassane Djibo, Niamey, 2008.

police headquarters. Ali Amadou ended up there after a period in Camp Bano, as did Aba Kaka after his interrogation at the palace. Some, like Ali Issaka, apparently spent their days in the prison civile, as did Hassane Djibo—whose execution had been prevented by Say's religious leaders—and Amadou Diop, in due course transferred from the BCL's facilities.¹⁴⁶

The Sawabists in Niamey quickly found that the conditions of captivity were hard to bear. At the police headquarters, the detainees were crammed together in cells permanently plunged in darkness. For three whole years, Boubakar Djingaré, the guerrilla in Dandouna Aboubakar's unit, did not see the light of day; for some reason, the tint of the detainees' skin began to discolour, possibly also because of undernourishment (see below).¹⁴⁷ Conditions in Camp Bano were not better, with rooms no bigger than five by six metres that were overpopulated: reminiscing later about their ordeal, Sawabists spoke of 40, 70, even 90 people—whatever the numbers, it must have been worse than what cadres in the early 1960s had endured, such as Barmou Batouré, the propagandist in Nguigni.¹⁴⁸ His successors, too, were forced to sleep on the floor, but apparently without mats, and as

¹⁴⁶ Interview with Ali Amadou, Niamey, 31 Jan. 2003 & 15 Dec. 2009; Aba Kaka, Bosso, 13 Febr. 2006; Ali Issaka, Niamey, 29 Febr. 2008.

¹⁴⁷ Interview with Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 27 Oct. 2005.

¹⁴⁸ See ch. 8 at note 13.



Photo 14.4 Tahir Moustapha (l.) with fellow domestic cadre Oumarou Janba, Zinder, 2003.

several people later recalled, permanently tied up or manacled.¹⁴⁹ There were no toilets, forcing detainees to defecate in buckets at the cell door, while comrades were asked to cover their heads so that, as Muslims, they did not see the others relieve themselves.¹⁵⁰ As Amadou Diop later suggested, sometimes the younger detainees (lower in status) had the task to bring the buckets with urine to the cell door, where, at a certain time, they would be removed.¹⁵¹ These conditions also obtained in Zinder. Here it was domestic cadres like Tahir Moustapha who suffered in cells that were equally cramped,¹⁵² with heat and stench feeding the prisoners' despair.

The detainees were not subjected to forced labour. They were not allowed to talk; if they did, they were accused of agitation and separated. Contact with the outside world (i.e. family: in these circumstances crucial for survival) was disallowed. Hence, they depended for sustenance on 'the RDA', as Djingaré put it later.¹⁵³ A woman prepared the food, consisting of

¹⁴⁹ Interview with Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 Nov. 2003 (in an interview on 2 Dec. 2003 he said they did not have handcuffs in Niamey); Daouda Hamadou, Ayrou, 20 Dec. 2009; Ali Mahamane Madaouki, Zinder, 14 Febr. 2003; Aba Kaka, Bosso, 13 Febr. 2006.

¹⁵⁰ Interview with Ousseini Dandagoye, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003.

¹⁵¹ Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 15 Febr. 2006.

¹⁵² Interview Tahir Moustapha, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003.

¹⁵³ Interview with Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 27 Oct. 2005.

three little balls of flour for the entire day, made of simple grains or red sorghum, accompanied by a meagre sauce—neither rice nor meat being available.¹⁵⁴ According to Soumana Idrissa, the prisoners sometimes got milk, but this was discontinued later.¹⁵⁵ In any case, the overall diet was lacking in vitamins and grossly insufficient to sustain them, a state of affairs that also characterised conditions in Zinder and was confirmed in detainees' complaints, some of which ended up in the government organ.¹⁵⁶ Food was very poor in quality:¹⁵⁷ beans, if available, were unwashed, and as the guards enjoyed a separate diet, the habitual filth in rations led to rumours that warders were mixing ground glass in the food. If this is a universal horror tale that must be approached with caution,¹⁵⁸ several detainees later volunteered assertions about this with regard to the situation in Camp Bano¹⁵⁹ and the prison of Agadez (on which more below). The allegation resurfaced in the 1970s and, again, much later, in 2003.¹⁶⁰ Conditions of internment at the BCL were hardly better. As shown, Dan Galadima became progressively emaciated while detained in the palace.

Thus, Sawabists have been unanimous about the insupportable conditions of prison life, in which malnutrition formed a central problem, even for domestic cadres.¹⁶¹ It was, in the words of Ali Amadou, 'forbidden to

¹⁵⁴ Interviews Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 27 Oct. 2005 and Soumana Idrissa, Gothèye, 1 Nov. 2005. Djibo Sékou confirmed the general pattern of feeding routines, although he spoke of three balls of millet in the morning and three made of flour in the evening—food from family being banned. *Seeda: Mensuel nigérien d'informations générales*, no. 6, Sept. 2002.

¹⁵⁵ Interview with Soumana Idrissa, Gothèye, 1 Nov. 2005.

¹⁵⁶ Interview Limane Kaoumi, Diffa, 12 Febr. 2006; *Le Niger*, 16 May 1966, referring to lack of meat and onions and absence of contact with family. Insufficient rations confirmed by second source in n. 160.

¹⁵⁷ Interviews Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 27 Oct. 2005; Ali Amadou, Niamey, 28 Jan. 2003; Ali Mahamane Madaouki & Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 14 Febr. 2003; Aba Kaka, Bosso, 13 Febr. 2006; Daouda Hamadou, Ayorou, 20 Dec. 2009; Maman Tchila, Zinder, 9 Febr. 2003; Tahir Moustapha, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003; *Afrique Nouvelles*, 8-13 June 1967, no. 1.035.

¹⁵⁸ Glass would have to be ground, otherwise gritty fragments would be noticed. See for myths on this f.e. <http://www.snopes.com/horrors/poison/glass.asp> (accessed 9 Sept. 2010). The rumour could, however, refer to sand. One Sawabist later alleged that guards mixed DDT powder in prisoners' food. Interview Noga Yamba, Zinder, 14 Febr. 2003. Others asserted that sadistic guards mixed sand, needles or excrement in food to make it inedible. See second source in note 160.

¹⁵⁹ Interviews with Maman Tchila and Noga Yamba, Zinder, 9 & 14 Febr. 2003.

¹⁶⁰ Interview with Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003 (on Agadez); Martin, *Le Niger du Président Diouri*, 375, citing a new opposition movement in the early 1970s, probably students-inspired; Alfari, *Mémoire*, 50, also stressing the sadism of zealous warders.

¹⁶¹ Interviews with Maman Tchila and Ousseini Dandagoye, Zinder, 9 & 10 Febr. 2003.

eat'¹⁶² and the authorities dismissed complaints by stating that most Ni-gériens did not have enough to eat either and that the food was required for 'the people'.¹⁶³ That the political detainees, in contrast to common criminals, had no access to family made the situation life-threatening. In fact, according to Sawaba cadres, the regime behaved this way with the intention to hasten their demise.¹⁶⁴ In view of their merciless confrontation there must be more than a grain of truth in this charge: a policy of neglect constituted a convenient ploy to rid itself of its arch enemies, without having to resort to executions that could cause unrest.

Consequently, even if detainees were prepared to share their rations, like Adamou Assane Mayaki, the former cabinet minister,¹⁶⁵ the prisoners began to waste away. It became difficult, as Soumana Idrissa later recalled, to lie on one's side, the lack of flesh on their hips forcing detainees to sleep on their back.¹⁶⁶ It was inevitable that they became sick. A Western journalist confronted with prisoners at the BCL in the spring of 1967 reported that nine of the Niamey detainees had fallen ill.¹⁶⁷ Being tied up and unable to move sufficiently, some developed problems with walking, such as Ali Amadou. Others, like Mayaki, appear to have developed problems from this at a later stage. A non-Sawabist source of the early 1970s mentions paralysis as a specific affliction, in addition to chronic diseases, tuberculosis especially, and blindness;¹⁶⁸ problems with eyesight, a common illness in the Sahel, were to beset Maman Tchila, the municipal councillor from Zinder.¹⁶⁹ The penitentiary regime, however, knew little pity, as Boubakar Djingaré later explained. In his recollection, medical treatment was withheld; in other cases, medication was provided days after someone had fallen ill, as Ousseini Dandagoye, the Zinder cadre, later recalled.¹⁷⁰ As was to be expected, in due course this began to take its toll. Sawabists later recalled that several people died while in detention, both in Niamey and

¹⁶² Interview, Niamey, 28 Jan. 2003 ('interdit de manger').

¹⁶³ Interviews Ousmane Dan Galadima, Madaoua, 7 Febr. 2003; Soumana Idrissa, Gothèye, 1 Nov. 2005; Limane Kaoumi, Diffa, 12 Febr. 2006.

¹⁶⁴ Interview with Ali Amadou, Niamey, 28 Jan. 2003.

¹⁶⁵ *Seeda*, no. 6, Sept. 2002.

¹⁶⁶ Interview with Soumana Idrissa, Gothèye, 1 Nov. 2005.

¹⁶⁷ *Afrique Nouvelles*, 8-13 June 1967, no. 1.035.

¹⁶⁸ Interviews Ali Amadou & Adamou Assane Mayaki, Niamey, 28-29 Jan. 2003; Martin, *Le Niger du Président Diori*, 375.

¹⁶⁹ Interview Maman Tchila, Zinder, 9 Febr. 2003, by which time these problems had not been resolved.

¹⁷⁰ Interviews Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 27 Oct. 2005 & Ousseini Dandagoye, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003.



Photo 14.5 Ousseini Dandagoye, Zinder, 2003.

Zinder.¹⁷¹ Numbers are impossible to come by. A casualty list compiled by the party in the 1990s mentions some cadres who died in the capital,¹⁷² but no details are available on the situation in Zinder, nor, of course, on any anonymous victims.

More detainees would die in other jails, as many of the Niamey men were soon to be transferred. In the early 1960s Bakary had boasted that the 'road of honour pass[ed] through prison',¹⁷³ but for his followers this motto now acquired a painful meaning as the authorities dragged Sawabists in and out of jail or moved them from one detention centre to the next. While some had already been released, such as cadres of the Maradi network detained ahead of the invasion,¹⁷⁴ the fall of Nkrumah emboldened the 'Reds' to renew their witch-hunt. Several cadres got rearrested,¹⁷⁵ while

¹⁷¹ Interviews Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 27 Oct. 2005; Soumana Idrissa, Gothèye, 1 Nov. 2005; Oumarou Janba, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003; Aba Kaka, Bosso, 13 Febr. 2006.

¹⁷² These were one Maï Aya Dari from Konni; Ari Djanimi (Bosso region); Boulama Ari Tchoukoudjani; Hondo Maori; and Inoussa Komi. See above at n. 35, but also below at n. 194. *Liste des Nigériens* (n. 33).

¹⁷³ Parti Sawaba. *Pour l'Indépendance effective du Niger: Les raisons de notre lutte* (Bureau du Parti Sawaba: Bamako, 15 Jan. 1961), 2nd page ('le chemin de l'honneur passe par la prison').

¹⁷⁴ Interview with Noga Yamba, Zinder 14 Febr. 2003; ch. 12 at note 15.

¹⁷⁵ Interviews Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003; Soumana Idrissa, Gothèye, 1 Nov. 2005; Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 18 Oct. 2011.

many of the Zinderis detainees were at some point shipped off to the police headquarters in Niamey.¹⁷⁶ By contrast, when in November 1966 President Diiori planned to go on a tour of the Middle East, the regime feared that the opposition (Sawaba as well as army officers) might become restive again. The officers were put under surveillance, while planes flew groups of Sawabists (though nowhere capable of waging opposition) to distant Agadez.¹⁷⁷ French intelligence spoke of 81 detainees (another source of 110), who ended up in the local prison civile.¹⁷⁸ Many of these men had seen guerrilla action. They included members of the Bosso units besides their local supporters, totalling at least 40 people; commandos from the Zinder region, such as Noga Yamba and friends; and guerrillas who had been active in the west, like Mounkaila Albagna, Soumana Idrissa and Daouda Hamadou, in addition to Hassane Djibo, Amadou Diop and Mounkaila Beidari.¹⁷⁹

In late in 1967- early 1968, a large group totalling perhaps 200 was moved to Tahoua, ahead of an international conference in Niamey (January 1968); the regime feared that they might attract foreign attention.¹⁸⁰ Including commandos and political cadres, they were headed by the former chief of staff, Ousmane Dan Galadima, and comprised different people, such as chef de camp Ali Amadou; Adamou Assane Mayaki; Maman Tchila; Boubakar Djingaré; Baoua Souley; Dodo Hamballi, whose arrest had precipitated the invasion; perhaps Maïdanda Djermakoye; and Ali Issaka, who was later transferred once again, to Agadez.¹⁸¹ Conditions in Tahoua prison were as poor as in the capital. Ali Amadou later remembered that he was bound hand and foot and that he and his comrades were not allowed into the inner courtyard, consigned to the darkness of their cells for months on end.¹⁸² In Agadez, too, detainees were manacled, also at night,¹⁸³ and in

¹⁷⁶ Interview with Noga Yamba, Zinder 14 Febr. 2003.

¹⁷⁷ Interview Aba Kaka, Bosso, 13 Febr. 2006.

¹⁷⁸ Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 18 Nov. 1966; SHAT, 10 T 719/D.2; interview with Noga Yamba, Zinder 14 Febr. 2003.

¹⁷⁹ Interviews; Cour de Sûreté de l'Etat. Arrêt de condamnation no. 9, 6 June 1969; ANN, M 27.26. On the way to Agadez some or possibly all of this party were incarcerated a couple of days in the prison of Tahoua before being flown to Agadez. Interview with Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 18 Oct. 2011.

¹⁸⁰ Interview Ali Amadou, Niamey, 28 Jan. 2003. Around this time, Tunisia's President Bourguiba visited Niger, which may also have encouraged the regime to get the Sawabists out of view. Interview Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 26 Oct. 2005.

¹⁸¹ Various interviews.

¹⁸² Interview with Ali Amadou, Niamey, 28 Jan. 2003. This is confirmed by the opposition source cited by Martin, *Le Niger du Président Diiori*, 375.

¹⁸³ Interview with Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 Nov. & 2 Dec. 2003.

both prisons the food situation was as bad as it had been in Niamey.¹⁸⁴ Sources are unclear about whether the detainees, who lived separate from the common criminals,¹⁸⁵ were subjected to physical maltreatment. In their recollections Sawabists later spoke about prisoners getting beaten¹⁸⁶ (the case of Dodo Hamballi was given as an example),¹⁸⁷ but it is not clear when or where this occurred. It is likely that beatings took place earlier, in the course of initial interrogation or during incarceration in Niamey or Zinder.¹⁸⁸

The main form of maltreatment in Agadez and Tahoua was the withholding of food and medical care. According to Mounkaila Beidari, they were not beaten. As noted, in Niamey detainees were sometimes separated if they talked about politics. Sources suggest that in Tahoua and Agadez recalcitrants were also put in isolation—which they feared not least because of the scorpions they found in the hole where they were put. Some developed mental problems,¹⁸⁹ and prisoners suffered from boredom, finding it hard to kill the hours.¹⁹⁰ While their relations were marked by camaraderie reinforced by a shared fate,¹⁹¹ inevitably tensions arose, fed by personal animosities or political disagreements. Some may have considered Amadou Diop a bully, who scared inmates. In one case two of the Tahoua detainees—Issa Oumarou dit Sidibe Ousseini and Issaka Saydou dit Nierre Foulani, the first a Marnia trainee and the second probably also a commando—got into a political argument with radical cadres, who would have considered them traitors. Aba Kaka, the Bosso guerrilla leader,

¹⁸⁴ Interview with Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003; Daouda Hamadou, Ayorou, 20 Dec. 2009; Ousmane Dan Galadima, Madaoua, 7 Febr. 2003.

¹⁸⁵ Interview with Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 27 Oct. 2005.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.; interviews Ousmane Dan Galadima, 7 Febr. 2003; Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003.

¹⁸⁷ Interview with Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 15 Dec. 2009.

¹⁸⁸ Interview Oumarou Janba, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003. One Sawabist later asserted that some people were castrated, but this is probably a rumour. Interview Tahir Moustapha, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003.

¹⁸⁹ Interview Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 Nov. 2003; Martin, *Le Niger du Président Diouri*, 375. At the start of his interrogation in Agadez, Beidari was pestered by prison staff telling him his pregnant wife had no need for him and would divorce him. Interview, Niamey, 18 Oct. 2011. See on isolation cells in Niger, F. Bernault, 'The Politics of Enclosure in Colonial and Post-Colonial Africa', in Ibid. (ed.), *A History of Prison and Confinement in Africa* (Portsmouth, NH, 2003), 20.

¹⁹⁰ Interview Noga Yamba, Zinder, 14 Febr. 2003.

¹⁹¹ Interviews Bachir Boukary, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003; Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 27 Oct. 2005.

later recounted that in one instance in Agadez, a quarrel led to a fatal casualty.¹⁹²

The prison regime in both places, however, meant that people usually succumbed to sickness and malnutrition. Persons of Kanuri extraction were for some reason particularly vulnerable, according to Mounkaila Beidari.¹⁹³ Describing his life history, Noga Yamba later recalled how an inmate in Agadez had died in his arms. Bodies were not immediately removed, as they were taken away only at night, or after dawn, with the corpse lying—manacled—in the cell with the other detainees, in spite of the heat. Banging on the cell door was ignored.¹⁹⁴ The 1990s party list mentions only four fatalities in Agadez by name and seven in Tahoua,¹⁹⁵ but in oral testimonies Sawabists have asserted that ‘many’ comrades died. The party list, however, provides aggregate data on people who fell victim to the clashes between Sawaba and the RDA over a longer period—thus, it includes the Djirataoua casualties—, and while it is unknown whether it was drawn up in haste, there is the possibility that it omits names. As several hundred people were incarcerated at Tahoua and Agadez, the casualty rate was probably higher.¹⁹⁶ Mounkaila Beidari later claimed that in Agadez alone, 30 inmates died,¹⁹⁷ a figure that probably gives a fuller picture of what occurred in the remote detention centres. A political source of the 1970s cited a doctor who claimed that 57 people (not necessarily all

¹⁹² Interviews Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003; Aba Kaka, Bosso, 13 Febr. 2006; Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 18 Oct. 2011; Barkire Alidou, Garde des Sceaux, Ministre de la Justice, to M. le Président de la République, Niamey, 16 Jan. 1973; ANN, M 27.38. For Issa Oumarou, also see ch. 9 n. 336; ch. 10 at note 134.

¹⁹³ Interview, Niamey, 28 Nov. 2003. Central in the Kanuri diet is a dish of millet flour with a sauce of sorrel. Issa Younoussi, email to author, 16 Sept. 2010. Yet, several of the men from the Bosso region were local peasant supporters, some of whom were older than the average commando.

¹⁹⁴ Interviews Noga Yamba, Zinder, 14 Febr. 2003 and Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 Nov. 2003.

¹⁹⁵ Liste des Nigériens, which mentions for Agadez: Issoufou Soumaïla (but see ch. 12 n. 250); Issaka Hamidou (of the guerrilla unit of Amadou Abdou; ch. 12 n. 83) and Kouafou (Kafou) Arimi from the Bosso region (the latter two may also have died in Niamey); and Moussa Wakili (from Zinder, known to Ali Mahamane Madaouki and trained as guerrilla). For Tahoua: Amadou Gambo from Bosso (see note 33 above and main text); Gréma Ari, Bosso (n. 33 ch. 8); Amadou Mountar and Dari Beydou (both from Téra); Oumara Kanclé, Bosso; Ibrahim Cheffou (the Nanking trainee who had been extradited by Nigeria, together with Baoua Souley and a Bulgaria-trained cadre); and one Hassane Dhilo. One other casualty was Adamou Boubé (Amadou Boubé, Nanking trainee; ch. 12 n. 254), who died in Konni (prison?).

¹⁹⁶ The party list rate was already higher than the ordinary average mortality rate for Niger, standing at around a dozen per one thousand people by 2010.

¹⁹⁷ Interview, Niamey, 28 Nov. 2003.

Sawabists) had died from food-induced illnesses.¹⁹⁸ The impressions afforded by the testimonies can therefore not be reduced to the hyperbole that develops in the context of interviews¹⁹⁹ (although they are also evidence of the traumatic experience of the survivors).

Those who stayed alive were finally dragged before the regime's judges; ironically, some of those who had perished still had an indictment read out against them.²⁰⁰ Early in 1966 and again, one year later, several Sawabists were sentenced. These were probably domestic cadres, but they also included commandos like Issa Oumarou and Issaka Saydou dit Nierre Foulani (the latter two got life).²⁰¹ In the summer of 1969 the Cour de Sûreté, presided over by Noma Kaka MP, travelled to Tahoua, where numerous cadres were tried, including Ousmane Dan Galadima, Maman Tchila and Dodo Hamballi.²⁰² On 3 June the court sentenced Sawaba's chief of staff and Dodo Hamballi to death—despite the fact that four years had passed since the death penalties of Tillabéri. In addition, numerous life sentences were handed down, besides extended prison terms.²⁰³ Such verdicts were also read out in Agadez, where the judges were subsequently flown in the company of several detainees who were to be sentenced there.²⁰⁴ The men in Agadez were possibly tried in two groups, both sentenced on 6 June. They included Aba Kaka and around 40 members of the Bosso units; guerrillas like Mounkaila Albagna, Noga Yamba and Soumana Idrissa; and Di-ori's would-be assassin, Amadou Diop. The revolutionary from Zinder got the death penalty, just as Sawaba's most elusive guerrilla, Aba Kaka, and

¹⁹⁸ The latter source mentioned stomach ulcers and cancer of the liver and bladder. Martin, *Le Niger du Président Diori*, 375. It may explain something about the unclarified deaths mentioned in note 35 above.

¹⁹⁹ In one case, after a one and half hours' interview, 'thousands' of casualties were advanced. Ali Amadou, Niamey, 28 Jan. 2003.

²⁰⁰ Amadou Madou, a Bosso peasant; Amadou Gambo (notes 33 & 195), born in Northern Nigeria, with Nigérien nationality and tailor; Oumarou (Oumara) Kantouami, also a peasant from the Bosso region; Boulama Ari Dibi, born in Chad but with Nigérien citizenship and a fisherman—all charged in Agadez in 1969. Cour de Sûreté de l'Etat. Arrêt de condamnation no. 9, 6 June 1969.

²⁰¹ Alidou to Président de la République, 16 Jan. 1973. Unfortunately, the texts of these trials, dated to 28 Febr. 1966 and 21 Jan. 1967, could not be traced in Niger's national archives.

²⁰² Interview Ousmane Dan Galadima, Madaoua, 7 Febr. 2003. Possibly, the accused did not have a lawyer provided to them (interview Maman Tchila, Zinder, 9 Febr. 2003), but this is not certain.

²⁰³ *Le Monde*, 21-22 Febr. 1971; *Le Niger*, 22 Febr. 1971; interviews; entries to Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, vol. 1.

²⁰⁴ This may have happened to Beidari, Djingaré & Ali Issaka, among other people. Interviews, Niamey, 28 Nov. 2003, 27 Oct. 2005, 29 Febr. 2008. *Ibid.*, Soumana Idrissa, Gohèye, 1 Nov. 2005.

four of the latter's comrades: Oumarou Moustapha ('the marabout'), who was finally captured at an unknown date; Katchalma Oumar dit Paul Maïga, the fireman from the Nguigmi region, who may have been arrested in 1965; Bachir Moustapha dit Moutti, the Marnia trainee captured in November 1964; and Tchegam Mahamadou dit Lawal Mamah, the labourer from Fachi in the Ténéré. Idrissa Arfou, commander of the western infiltration zone, was also sentenced to death.²⁰⁵ In addition, the Tahoua-Agadez trials led to a record number of life sentences with hard labour (more than 80)—generally for those who had taken part in infiltrations and attacks.²⁰⁶ Besides, at least 44 extended prison terms were read out, often concerning domestic cadres.²⁰⁷ In total, well over 140 Sawabists were

²⁰⁵ However, it is unclear whether he was tried in Tahoua or Agadez. Only the text of the judgment of the Bosso unit could be retrieved, not that of the other men condemned in Agadez and Tahoua. Cour de Sûreté de l'Etat. Arrêt de condamnation no. 9, 6 June 1969.

²⁰⁶ Mounkaila Beidari; Idrissa Sambo dit Tondigoungo (Idrissa Tondi Gounga of Idrissa Arfou's unit); Ali Issa (i.e. Issaka); Magawata Issaka; Souleye Mahamane Maltam; Moussa Wakili dit Chéfou (probably the guerrilla who died in Agadez); Lawal Idia; Hamani Moussa dit Kindo (of the Téra units?); Daouda Amadou (i.e. Hamadou); one Amadou Barkiré; Mounkaila Bello; Idé (H)arouna (dit) Baradié (Baradjji, also a guerrilla: interview, Niamey, 22 Oct. 2011); Amadou Abdoulaye dit Mabrouka; Issaka Soumana; Adamou Amadou; Harouna Boubakar; Amadou Moussa; Mamane Mounkaila; Aboubacar Anza dit Boukari Assane; Oumarou Adamou; Hamani Dari dit Doudou; Boukari Hamani Maroi; Abdou Dimgavzé dit Doula; Mamane Ousmane; Noga Yamba; Souna Seni; Souleye Zakou; Soumana Idrissa; Mounkaila Albagna; Abdoukader Inoussa; Mal(l)am Hamissou & Malam Tatagui (Tatagui), who had sheltered Dodo Hamballi; Mamane Gado Falké; Boubakar Djingaré; Kali Abdou dit Fidel Castro; Daouda Ali (dit Chang Kai-shek?); Mounkaila Abdouramane; Idé Dan Mayaki; Issoufou Doudou; Samba Balé Baba; Souleye Yacouba; Moussa Soumana (of Baro Alfari's unit); Amadou Hima dit Boy Kalam; Halidou Tini dit Boubacar Séni; Dangandi Gouzaye; Tankari Koukou; Hassane Soumana dit Philosophe; Adamou Zingui; Ibrahim Baro dit Tri Tri; Issa Oumarou (dit Sidibe Ousseini?); Malam Nomaou Zongo (= Nomaou Zongo, Tahoua cadre; ch. 7 at ns. 103-104); Ibrahim Chéfou dit Phacochère; Issa Yacouba dit Kakou; Goumaré Garba dit Gouwaré; Amadou Alfari dit Maï; Amadou Younoussa dit Goteyzé; Amadou Sanda dit Talibo Gamkallé; Hassane Boureïma dit Waza; Oumarou Hamidou dit Koua; Hassane Souleye (= Maïga dit Baban Loré, the boxer turned mechanic [see ch. 9]?); Hamidou Moussa; Soumana Tahirou dit Moumouni Guizo; Kadri Tahirou dit Gouma; Amadou Sina; Amadou Yarga dit Diapa; Souleye Djibo dit Kila; Larabo Amadou dit Fondé; Soumana Oumarou dit Sounai; Moustapha Ali dit Almoustapha; Kindo Yayé; Adamou Mossi; Hassane Mossi dit Waza; Boureïma Idrissa; Soumana Djirmey dit Niandou; Mounkaila Faroukou Kodia; Mounkaila Abdoulaye; Amadou Ali dit Mamoud; Aboubakar dit Kaou. Some of these and those mentioned in the next note may have been sentenced at earlier trials. See next note for sources.

²⁰⁷ Abdou Mamane dit Gogé; Sani Namadina; Baraou Balla; Amadou Demba; Ganda Idé; Boureïma Barkiré Touré Ibrahim; Doudou Moussa; Djibo Sékou (Bakary's friend and unionist); Chéfou Mahamane; Koussa Ouma; Mounkaila Abdou dit Kailou; Louche Djibo; Loulou Oumarou; Malam Abdou Kagere; Ibro Kada; Zakari Abdou dit Dodo; Amadou Garba dit Chado; Malam Manzo; Chaïbou Amadou Samba Kanayé; Ousseïni Boureïma dit Séni Djerma; Abdourahamane Ali dit Bello; Alou Alhassane Maïga; Chetima Yaganami; Fou Ari;

sentenced²⁰⁸—most of whom had been active in the guerrilla campaigns, although a fair number of those charged in Agadez involved inhabitants of the Bosso region, who had provided support to incoming guerrillas.

Agadez detainees on death row may have been locked up in the same cell,²⁰⁹ together with Hassane Djibo, already sentenced to death at the end of 1964. Theoretically, they all awaited execution. However, the regime postponed or decided against carrying out the sentences, even in the case of Diop, who may have been saved through the intercession of the French.²¹⁰ Finally, it appears that many of the Zinderois prisoners (such as Tahir Moustapha, Ousseini Dandagoye and, perhaps, Limane Kaoumi, the furniture maker, and Oumarou Janba) were never tried at all. This was possibly also the case with detainees elsewhere, like Adamou Assane Mayaki in Tahoua and—perhaps—Ali Kote, captured in Nigeria.²¹¹ They languished in prison, held *incommunicado*.

The Voice of a Woman

Walking the road of honour, however, meant that Sawabists on occasion resisted their tormenters. Several representatives of the little folk, true to their self-image as the talakawa's vanguard, refused to make amends. As shown above, Ousmane Dan Galadima rejected all compromise, even when treated more leniently. He also did not allow himself to be used for propaganda stunts. When still held at the palace, he was paraded before a Western journalist, together with Diop and three unidentified commandos. In the presence of Jean Colombani he was asked to answer the reporter's questions but refused to do so, arguing that he would not explain

Ali Daboua Lanrai; Kadri Bana; Abdoulaye Yendo; Doula Albarka; Ali Oumarou; Issoufou Babéri; Adamou Hamidou (Hamidou Adamou Abdoulaye?); Saleye Soumaila dit Karma; Adamou Soumana dit Tallé; Mamadou Dogari; Malam Oumarou Hamissou; Kadaye Boukar dit Malam Kadeye; Mamadou Gambo; Hassane Ousmane dit Kaou; Ousseini Ousmane dit Kaou; Abari Ousseini Aissami dit Chiaï; Aba Gana Fanami; Issoufou Gado; Moulaye Sabour dit Séno; Abdou Sabo dit Sabo Riga. *Le Niger*, 22 Febr. 1971; *Le Monde*, 21-22 Febr. 1971; Cour de Sûreté de l'Etat. Arrêt de condamnation no. 9, 6 June 1969; numerous interviews. Ibro Garba, ex-Sawaba MP for Konni, was sentenced to a term in jail in 1970. He had already served a term in 1961. Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, vol. 1, 283 & ch. 7 at n. 53 & 104.

²⁰⁸ This was calculated by comparing different sources and checking for those who were already sentenced in November 1964 and May 1965.

²⁰⁹ Interviews Aba Kaka, Bosso, 13 Febr. 2006 and Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 15 Febr. 2006.

²¹⁰ As suggested by Oumarou Janba. Interview, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003.

²¹¹ Various interviews; Yakasai, *The Story of a Humble Life*, 210.

Sawaba's actions in the presence of the police. He would only talk with Diori himself. Though he had nearly been tortured to death, it showed an unbroken spirit. In fact, 'the scorpion' was convinced that, while the movement had lost a battle, the struggle would continue. As ever the activist, he made himself on the spot the spokesman of detainee interests and reiterated complaints about food, pointing out that improvements after earlier protests had only lasted a couple of days.²¹² Amadou Diop also proved undaunted. He showed no regret about his attempt on the president, stating that he was a militant and that he would have betrayed the party if he had not tried to fulfil his mission.²¹³

Earlier Dan Galadima had refused to sign his interrogation protocol, accusing officials of having twisted his words (just as many cadres would later claim).²¹⁴ Then, at his trial in Tahoua he took out a declaration and told his judges that the court case amounted to a trial of patriots by a couple of traitors. He chanted anti-imperialist slogans to drive home his point, as did fellow inmate Dodo Hamballi.²¹⁵ The rage that had driven Sawabists still formed the bedrock of an amazing courage. It also led many to reject suggestions by the regime that they ask for clemency.²¹⁶ The RDA's posture vis-à-vis its enemy was marked by twists and turns, but Diori must have realised that, with so many persecuted and suffering in detention, there was potential for new trouble. Thus, the triumvirate began to search for ways to defuse the situation. At one point Boubou Hama called a gathering of civil servants and stressed that the time had come to lay the past to rest and start afresh. More tangible steps, however, were necessary and at some unspecified date Diamballa Maïga had a letter brought to detainees urging them to ask for a pardon. Yet, the hardliners (such as former

²¹² *Afrique Nouvelles*, 8-13 June 1967, no. 1.035. As noted, commandos were often forced to say things to suit regime goals. On this occasion, the unidentified detainees said that they had been fooled to enlist, but when Dan Galadima was brought in, they withdrew this (sign of internal coercion?). On the point of the weaponry, the chief of staff argued that he had bought what was available. In the context of a little 'debate' (hardly genuine in these conditions), he dismissed a complaint about lack of consultation inside the movement by pointing to security needs, rejoicing that he had always informed and listened to cadres.

²¹³ *Ibid.* He also showed no regret of his action when interviewed in 2003 (Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003).

²¹⁴ Having worked as a court clerk, he knew the significance of such a signature. *Afrique Nouvelles*, 8-13 June 1967, no. 1.035 and ch. 13 at note 14.

²¹⁵ On this, or another, occasion. It was for this that Hamballi would have been beaten. Interview Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 15 Dec. 2009 and above at note 187.

²¹⁶ Interviews Ousmane Dan Galadima, Madaoua, 7 Febr. 2003 & Noga Yamba, Zinder, 14 Febr. 2003.

commandos) rejected this,²¹⁷ undoubtedly also because it was part of attempts to divide cadres and disengage more moderate members.

The detainees also fought for better conditions in prison. Driven to despair by the lack of food, Sawabists in the prison civile of Tahoua decided to go on a hunger strike. Involving cadres such as Ali Amadou and Dan Galadima, inmates rejected their meagre portions in the hope of forcing the authorities to increase the rations. Detainees in Agadez asked the local prefect to do the same.²¹⁸ A hunger strike was a heroic step to take since detainees had already become emaciated—tragically, Ibrahim Cheffou, the Nanking trainee captured together with Baoua Souley, was later said to have died, four days into the strike.²¹⁹ But the protest unnerved the authorities and conditions improved, at least temporarily. Medicine came and when at one stage detainees in Tahoua refused to return to their cell after disinfection measures, their circumstances got better: guerrillas were twice a day allowed into the prison courtyard.²²⁰ Inmates in Agadez discovered that they could undo their handcuffs with matches, and they also got hold of a transistor radio (probably a sign of corruption among prison warders) so that they could listen to the news at night, while hiding the set during the day.²²¹

The regime's attempts to defuse the potential for protest also led to efforts to separate moderate followers from Sawaba's core. Old stalwarts such as Adamou Sékou and Hima Dembélé, radicals in their own day but broken in Bilma, were used to lure cadres to the regime. Sékou, who had been in prison since September 1961, was released later but re-arrested in the course of 1964. By 1965 he stressed that he was still loyal to Djibo Bakary, but also went on record as rejecting the armed struggle.²²² French intelligence alleged that he had written a letter to Bakary renouncing Sawaba altogether and that he had admitted his 'past mistakes' and expressed allegiance to the RDA. Whatever the truth of the matter, it was clear that

²¹⁷ *Afrique Nouvelles*, 8-13 June 1967, no. 1.035; interviews Ousseini Dandagoye and Noga Yamba, Zinder, 11 & 14 Febr. 2003.

²¹⁸ Interviews Ali Amadou, Niamey, 28 Jan. 2003; Ousmane Dan Galadima, 7 Febr. 2003; Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 Nov. 2003; Soumana Idrissa, Gothèye, 1 Nov. 2005.

²¹⁹ See *Liste des Nigériens*, no. 36.

²²⁰ Interviews Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 27 Oct. 2005; Ali Amadou, Niamey, 28 Jan. 2003.

²²¹ Interviews Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 2 Dec. 2003; Soumana Idrissa, Gothèye, 1 Nov. 2005; Daouda Hamadou, Ayorou, 20 Dec. 2009.

²²² Interviews Abdou Adam (RDA official) and Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 29 Nov. & 2 Dec. 2003; Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 328; A. Salifou, *Biographie politique de Diiori Hamani: Premier président de la république du Niger* (Paris, 2010), 132.

the president might grant him a pardon and this put him in a vulnerable position. The Téra militant, by now possibly in detention in Tahoua together with Dembélé, was brought to the BCL to persuade comrades to make peace with the regime. The confrontation, which also involved Mounkaila Albagna, the Dargol commando, probably took place in August–September 1965. It was followed by Sékou’s meeting with the OAU envoys, who had come to discuss Niger’s attendance of the summit in Accra and were allegedly given a message from Sékou for Bakary.²²³ If nothing came of this initiative because the fall of Nkrumah made RDA hardliners tighten the screws again, Adamou Sékou was released at some point. The former judicial clerk was assigned to the public prosecutor’s office in Zinder, commencing a career in the magistrature.²²⁴ Hima Dembélé, too, was released, but was allowed little time to enjoy his freedom, being forced to pick up the pieces of a marriage destroyed in the course of party work. He got divorced in 1966 and became embroiled in a legal wrangle over his children’s custody. Two years later he was badly injured when his moped was struck by a car on a Niamey roundabout. The former cinema operator died at home, amid characteristic rumours that the regime had arranged his death by faking a traffic accident.²²⁵

Naturally, more cadres were to seek some sort of rapprochement in an effort to regain a degree of normality in their lives. The regime used this to break up the movement further. In the summer of 1967 Diiori felt secure enough to reduce or remit the sentences of those tried in Tillabéri. In June 11 people who still had two and half years to go were released from jail. In August the president at last commuted the death penalties of Captain Diallo, Madougou Namaro, Zodi Ikhia, Garba Sangara, and probably Baoua Souley as well—now all confronted with life imprisonment. Eleven of the

²²³ Albagna dated it to August 1966 (a mistake?). Interview, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003; Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 541, 8 Sept. 1965; Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets*, 328 (‘fautes passées’).

²²⁴ Interviews Abdou Adam and Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 29 Nov. & 2 Dec. 2003; Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, vol. 1, 378.

²²⁵ Interviews Monique Hadiza and Sao Marakan, Niamey; 5 Nov. 2005 and 16 Nov. 2002; ch. 8 at n. 90; <http://portail.droit.francophonie.org/df-web/publication.do?publicationId=1160> (accessed 21 June 2007). The person causing the accident allegedly was a reckless driver with an RDA party card. Many people carried such cards, which protected against harassment. The culprit would not have spent time in jail and have boasted about his immunity. Martin, *Le Niger du Président Diiori*, 374. Similarly, at some date Maïdanda Djer-makoye’s wife was killed in a traffic accident. Her husband later asserted it had been arranged. Interview/telephone conversation, Dosso, 17 Febr. 2006/Niamey, 21 Febr. 2008 and Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 2 Dec. 2003. Such accusations have to be set against the background of beliefs emphasising the forces of the supernatural.

14 life sentences were commuted to 20 years;²²⁶ six 15-year prison terms were reduced to five (including those of civilians like Alassane Abba, but with the apparent exception of Sanda Hima, Bakary's brother); and five 10-year terms were lowered to three.²²⁷ That same month 128 detainees in the east of the country left jail,²²⁸ probably domestic cadres in Zinder. Tahir Moustapha later reminisced how he was released that year and Oumarou Janba could later recall, if perhaps not the correct date ('1965'), that he was freed with 78 others, all being forced to swear on the Qur'an that they refrain from political activity.²²⁹ Limane Kaoumi was probably part of the same wave of releases, though he later put his liberation in 1968.²³⁰

In that year, Ali Kote probably got free,²³¹ while in April 1968 five unidentified Sawabists, who had been involved in guerrilla attacks, were pardoned. They benefited from a new law that enabled the president to free political detainees with a delay of 12 months. In response to this, Alazi Soumaila sent several letters from Conakry to Niamey, asking to be allowed to return home, as did a dozen militants who presented themselves at Niger's embassies in Lagos and Accra.²³² However, Diamballa Maïga occasionally put releases on hold, the hardliner being as distrustful as ever. After the liberation of the Zinder detainees, he resisted the freeing of 140 Sawabists, as he doubted whether they had truly repented, and their liberation would coincide with the return of students from the Eastern Bloc (see next section). He warned against what he saw as a potential danger, particularly against the background of the Nigerian civil war and, according to him, the relaxation of controls in Niger.²³³ It therefore seemed

²²⁶ These included the civilians Yahaya Assane, Yahaya Alassane, Moussa Kadri Sodjje and Kangaye Bonkoukou. See note 136 above.

²²⁷ Annual Review for 1967 on the Ivory Coast, Niger and Upper Volta; PRO, FCO 25/745; *Le Niger*, 14 Aug. 1967. The civilians, whose sentence was reduced to three years, were Amadou Maisadie, Idé Talibo Kouré, Saidou Issa, Boucar Waziri and Habi Diori (note 138 above). In total, 38 of the more than 60 sentences were reduced or quashed. Abdoulaye Hassane Diallo, army sergeant and brother of Captain Diallo, also regained his freedom. Captain Diallo's other brother, Ousseini Hassane Diallo (the 'juge de paix'), died, or had already died, in prison. *La Voix Libérée*, no. 1, March-Apr. 2011, 20.

²²⁸ Diamballa Y. Maïga to M. le Président de la République, Niamey, 12 Aug. 1967; ANN, 86 MI 1E 8.14; interview Maman Tchila, Zinder, 9 Febr. 2003.

²²⁹ Interviews Tahir Moustapha and Oumarou Janba, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003.

²³⁰ Interview, Diffa, 12 Febr. 2006.

²³¹ Yakasai, *The Story of a Humble Life*, 210.

²³² Rapport Mensuel, Poste de Niamey, Febr., March & Apr. 1968; SHAT, 10 T 715. One of these was a marabout in Ghana, who made a lot of propaganda for Bakary: one Alfa Djibrilla Kolonida.

²³³ Maïga to M. le Président de la République, 12 Aug. 1967.

doubtful that Alazi Soumaila would get a pardon since French intelligence noted that he had done training in Nanking and Son Tay. The regime mistrusted him, but in an effort to lure him home provided a passport. At some time in or after August 1968 Soumaila travelled to Niamey (his adoptive parents had died); he was incarcerated for five months. The former treasury clerk then rallied to the government and was given a job at the finance ministry. That he had probably not been involved in guerrilla action himself worked in his favour, but his defection was also a political coup, since he was a member of Sawaba's comité directeur; he promised the regime that others would follow his example.²³⁴

At that stage Diiori resolved that a decision had to be taken about 300 men who still languished in captivity. The French expected that many would be set free, although the mass convictions of the Tahoua and Agadez trials still had to take place. Still, at the time of these proceedings Adamou Assane Mayaki, at least, regained his freedom, having been in jail since December 1964. He was probably already sick upon release and would have to seek treatment in hospital several times.²³⁵ Maïdanda Djermakoye, upon his own recollection, was also set free by this time.²³⁶ If Tahir Moustapha, after his release two years earlier, was quickly reintegrated into society, others struggled to get by, finding it difficult to establish a normal life as they were kept under surveillance or continued to be the target of pestering. Oumarou Janba, with help of a friend with an RDA card, managed to find a job, but was then fired. He found a new job, but was laid off again as a result of his Sawabist past.²³⁷

For those who stayed in prison—at least several hundred, principally commandos and political hardliners—, life continued much as before, marked by malnutrition, chronic illness and despair. Generally, improvements in conditions were temporary. For example, Soumana Idrissa later recalled how a visit to Niger by Tunisia's president encouraged the authorities to provide more food. Also, when the Commandant de Cercle of Agadez, Yansambou Amadou, decided to ameliorate the prisoners' lot, the food improved, and detainees got dates to eat and soap on Sunday to wash

²³⁴ Rapport Mensuel, Poste de Niamey, Apr. 1968; Ibid. Aug. 1968; SHAT, 10 T 715; Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, vol. 1, 178 & vol. 2 (Niamey, 2003), 498.

²³⁵ Rapport Mensuel, Poste de Niamey, Aug. 1968; interview Adamou Assane Mayaki, Niamey, 29 Jan. 2003; I.A. Mayaki, *La caravane passe* (Paris, 1999), 7.

²³⁶ He twice said he spent five years in jail. Interview & telephone conversation Maïdanda Djermakoye, Dosso, 17 Febr. 2006 & Niamey, 21 Febr. 2008. He had been arrested in February 1964 (ch. 10 above).

²³⁷ Interviews Tahir Moustapha and Oumarou Janba, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003.

themselves. Ousseini Dandagoye, detained in Zinder, later had similar recollections, recounting that he was transferred to another building where they could wash as of six o'clock in the morning—in religious respects also a mental boost. In Agadez, however, these improvements were transitory, as Yansambou Amadou was transferred to another post, after which conditions deteriorated. In a similar vein, the detainees there hoped to see the justice minister when on a visit in Agadez, but he refused to speak to them.²³⁸ According to Boubakar Djingaré, however, the situation in Tahoua permanently improved after the disinfection incident, which took place around 1970. Sawabists seeking consolation were allowed to read the Qur'an.²³⁹ While earlier no contact could be made with family (relatives also feared arrest), later, detainees in Agadez occasionally received letters from home.²⁴⁰ These must have been moments of great emotion, just as one day when Mounkaila Beidari and his companions, locked in their cell, became aware of the sound of grain being crushed and then, suddenly, heard the voice of a woman—the first time in four years of detention.²⁴¹

It affirmed their humanity, but any hope that they harboured received only half-hearted encouragement. Two years later, in 1971, Diori decided to commute the death sentences of Dodo Hamballi, Dan Galadima, Amadou Diop, Idrissa Arfou, Hassane Djibo, and Aba Kaka and his comrades—they now faced life imprisonment. Around 80 of those sentenced to life in 1969 or earlier, at Tillabéri, saw this reduced to 20 years, including guerrillas like Mounkaila Albagna, Baoua Souley, Soumana Idrissa, Noga Yamba, Boubakar Djingaré, Daouda Hamadou and Kali Abdou dit Fidel Castro, besides Aboubakar dit Kaou, Sawaba's economic affairs minister.²⁴² Seventy-five inmates who already served fixed terms were freed, including Bakary's brother Sanda Hima and several others sentenced for the 1963 mutiny, in addition to Captain Diallo, Madougou Namaro and Zodi Ikhia, whose death sentences had been commuted earlier. Namaro, however, could not enjoy his freedom for long, as his health had become very poor; the Sa-

²³⁸ Interviews Soumana Idrissa, Gothèye, 1 Nov. 2005 and Ousseini Dandagoye, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003.

²³⁹ Interview Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 27 Oct. 2005.

²⁴⁰ Interviews Mamoudou Béchir, Dargol, 31 Oct. 2005 and Hassane Djibo, Niamey, 22 Febr. 2008; Martin, *Le Niger du Président Diori*, 375.

²⁴¹ Interview Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 23 Febr. 2008.

²⁴² These concerned the people listed in note 206 above, in addition to (Dioumassi) Albarka Oumarou dit Waou. *Le Niger*, 22 Febr. 1971; *Le Monde* (Paris), 21-22 Febr. 1971. These sources omit Mounkaila Beidari and Ali Mahamane Madaouki. The latter had also been sentenced to life, in November 1964.

wabist transporter died two years later. Commandos such as Robert Seguinikin and others sentenced in November 1964 were also released, as was Djibo Sékou, the old-time unionist, and numerous lesser known figures.²⁴³

This meant that hundreds remained in jail,²⁴⁴ and if the difference between a life sentence and 20 years was not a trivial one, another two decades on the road of honour seemed unbearable. Issa Oumarou and Issaka Saydou dit Nierre Foulani had benefited from a reduction in sentence, but two years later still felt their situation to be intolerable. Getting into arguments with more militant cadres, they decided to apply for a pardon. The prefect of Tahoua was favourable to this and even Diamballa Maïga, but in January 1973 Diori put it on hold, requesting further information.²⁴⁵ Worse, like Madougou Namaro, numerous detainees began to get seriously ill as a result of the years in detention. The situation became so grave that the regime decided to transfer several to the prison civile in Niamey (the RDA was getting nervous as a serious economic crisis, coupled with drought and corruption, was feeding discontent). Thus, in 1972 Ali Amadou developed such serious medical problems that he was brought to the capital, where he was first committed to hospital before joining his comrades in jail. These included Amadou Diop, who had also been brought back to Niamey,²⁴⁶ possibly as a control measure. Aba Kaka, too, had been transferred there and was brought to a hospital for treatment.²⁴⁷ Ali Issaka, the guerrilla from the Téra region, also became sick and was moved from Agadez to the capital, together with fellow patients. One of these was Mounkaila Beidari, who by 1973 was feeling increasingly desperate.²⁴⁸

The relocation to Niamey, however, brought some improvements, as the conditions in the prison civile were better. The detainees were not manacled and during the day had access to a courtyard. They even had a camera smuggled inside and secretly took pictures—the only photographs ever

²⁴³ Ibid. See those mentioned in note 207 above; interview Amadou Madougou (Namaro's son), Niamey, 24 Febr. 2006.

²⁴⁴ Martin, *Le Niger du Président Diori*, 374.

²⁴⁵ It is unclear what happened then. Barkire Alidou to Président de la République, 16 Jan. 1973.

²⁴⁶ Interviews Ali Amadou, Niamey, 28 Jan. 2003; Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003.

²⁴⁷ Interview Aba Kaka, Bosso, 13 Febr. 2006.

²⁴⁸ Another was a certain 'Kano'. Interviews Ali Issaka and Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 29 Febr. 2008 and 28 Nov. 2003.



Photo 14.6 Mounkaila Beidari (standing, second from left) with fellow detainees, prison civile, Niamey, 1973 (M. Beidari).

taken of Sawabists in detention.²⁴⁹ Beidari, nevertheless, remained ill and was brought to hospital. With the experience of torture and years of detention behind him, he was determined not to return to prison. He managed to have a confidant bring some money and clothes, consisting of a boubou and turban. Putting on what was an effective disguise, the militant then simply walked out of hospital. He contacted a taxi-man and paid him to drive to the Voltan border, from where Beidari made his way to Bamako—becoming one of the few detainees to escape.²⁵⁰

The Niamey cadre went to the Guinean embassy to contact Bakary, who had him brought to Conakry for consultations. Yet, years of exile or detention, if both painful, had heightened the different paths that lives had taken and had broken up what remained of the movement's cohesion. The angry man from Niamey, with a sense of guilt over the comrades he had

²⁴⁹ Barring the photo taken by the authorities of Amadou Diop in custody. See n. 11 above.

²⁵⁰ Beidari was aware of the feat of his escape: in Bamako he went to a studio to have pictures taken of himself, one in his disguise and one without. See Photos 14.7 and 14.8. Interviews Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 Nov. & 2 Dec. 2003. As noted, Amadou Diop also escaped after being arrested in the course of the 1964 invasion. Ch. 12 note 170.



Photo 14.7 Mounkaila Beidari, in the disguise he used to escape Niger. Bamako, 1973 (M. Beidari).

left behind, urged the righter of wrongs that the struggle be continued. Bakary, however, had lost hope of a comeback; he would have replied that he had dissolved the party. Beidari was furious and criticised him for his mistakes. Sawaba's leader made him an offer to go to East Germany but Beidari's political zeal got the better of him, at least for a while. He travelled to Guinea-Bissau, then fast on its way to evict the Portuguese, and got in touch with personalities of the PAIGC, the country's liberation movement. Soon after he was flown to East Berlin, where he was provided medical treatment. Beidari stayed for a while in a hotel of the communist party, but then refused to fly back to Conakry. Instead, he packed his bag and one day crossed the Wall into West Berlin, where he knew someone and got a job.²⁵¹

²⁵¹ Beidari suggested that he had wished to take part in Guinea-Bissau's struggle but that Bakary hastened his departure to East Germany. Interview Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 Nov. 2003.

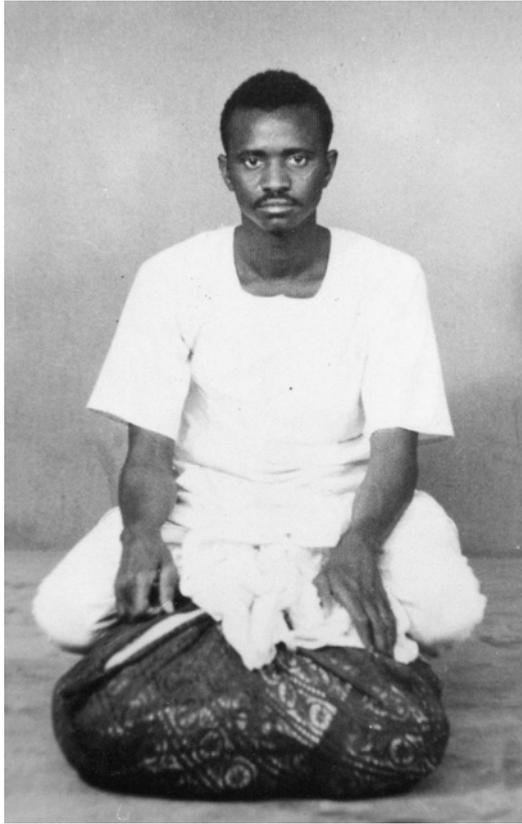


Photo 14.8 Mounkaila Beidari, with the bundle of clothes he used to disguise himself. Bamako, 1973 (M. Beidari).

The Tears of Our Mothers and Sisters

Beidari's itinerary stood in remarkable contrast to the fate of the students in the Eastern Bloc. As shown in Chapter 9, the training of the higher cadres obeyed its own timetables, with most of them still absorbed in their studies when the commandos embarked on the road of honour. With Sawaba's defeat, however, the students, too, faced a problem as a normal return home was blocked. The Franco-RDA combine was aware of the presence of these 'renegades' in Eastern Europe and the long-term purpose that they were supposed to serve.

The students had to some extent been subject to Sawaba's political control, but they were freed from this upon the failure of the military opera-

tions: as shown above, meetings of the student bodies began to decline, and as contact with the leadership in Accra became erratic, the students' focus must have turned to their own lives and pursuits. The East Europeans did not rescind the scholarships, but the students may have lost some of their political value in Soviet eyes. At any rate, they would have to leave once they had finished their studies.²⁵² For most, this moment came somewhere between 1966 and 1969.

Already before the invasion there had been concerns about this in the student corps, and the vicissitudes of Kaïro Alfari—the civil engineering student who got arrested in Niamey in 1964 but made a miraculous escape²⁵³—served as a warning of what could happen. Fears about the looming return persisted throughout the students' stays in Eastern Europe.²⁵⁴ They could try and take up residence elsewhere in West Africa, but their studies had heightened expectations, and in other countries job openings for foreigners were, of course, rare. Issoufou Assoumane, who had studied electrical engineering in Leningrad, travelled to Niger with a detour that took him to Bamako and Abidjan, perhaps to try his luck there—in vain. Similarly, Iro Addo, who tried to find a job in Northern Nigeria, did so 'because of the security measures in Niger' and had his books sent to Kano. Then the civil war intervened and Addo felt forced to make his way back to Niger all the same.²⁵⁵ Homesickness, after so many years abroad, may have given some the final push.²⁵⁶

Hence, many students began to try and 'sort out their situation',²⁵⁷ especially as Mali—which had provided their travel documents but had mended fences with Niamey—decided not to extend their passports. Worse, it began to withdraw them. This meant that many students sooner or later got stuck. For example, when Ali Mahamane (dit Ali Dodo), the student who had sung the praises of the USSR on Radio Moscow, visited the Malian embassy for an extension of his papers, he was told that this was no longer possible. The ambassador refused to give back his passport,

²⁵² Surveillance du Territoire no. 635/SN/ST: Examen de situation du nommé Issoufou Assoumane, 24 July 1967; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14 ('transfuges').

²⁵³ See ch. 9 at note 249 and 10 at note 163.

²⁵⁴ Examen de situation du nommé Issoufou Assoumane, 24 July 1967.

²⁵⁵ Ibid. and Surveillance du Territoire no. 605/SN/ST: Examen de situation du nommé Iro Addo, 18 July 1967; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14 ('pour les mesures de sécurité au Niger').

²⁵⁶ Returning home in a clandestine way would not work in view of the surveillance since the invasion.

²⁵⁷ René Delanne to Diamballa Maïga, Niamey, 8 June 1964; document interior ministry/National Assembly files, ANN ('régulariser leur situation').

forcing Dodo to write to his father with the request to arrange Nigérien documents. This, of course, made him dependent on the regime's benevolence. Mashoud Pascal, the brother of Sawaba unionist Mamoudou Pascal, had the same experience, being told at the Malian embassy that the foreign minister had prohibited all extensions.²⁵⁸ Relations with the Malians deteriorated rapidly²⁵⁹ and the students began to try and get rid of their passports, also to destroy evidence of travel in Eastern Europe.²⁶⁰ Like Ali Dodo, they had no choice but to apply for Nigérien papers. However, Niger's embassy in Paris told Adamou Moussa, who in 1965 spent his holidays in France, that they needed his Malian ID in exchange (he would have travelled on a Soviet *laisser-passer*). The embassy in Bad Godesberg possibly imposed similar conditions.²⁶¹ As noted in Chapter 9, West Germany tried to entice African students in the Eastern Bloc with its own grants, and Niger helped through its local *chargé d'affaires* by issuing passports and facilitating applications to the occasional West German scholarship.²⁶² The object was, of course, to lure them back to Niamey (as Niger's ambassador in Paris had done with Kaïro Alfari), where they could be processed by the intelligence apparatus.

Under the circumstances, this did not prove difficult. If Sawaba's brightest, or the more daring cadres, were not easily taken aback by bureaucratic obstacles (some, like Baban Loré, the former boxer, travelled with as many as four IDs from different countries, apparently beaten only by Bachir Boukary, the Krasnodar graduate, who carried six),²⁶³ many contacted the Nigérien authorities of their own accord, in Niamey or Europe. They approached travelling members of the regime or its representatives in Bonn, Paris or Stockholm, among other cities, for assistance to return

²⁵⁸ Surveillance du Territoire no. 659/ST/SN: Examen de situation du nommé Ali Mahamane, 8 Aug. 1967; no. 667/ST/SN ... Mashoud Hama Pascal Diawara, 9 Aug. 1967; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14.

²⁵⁹ Delanne to Maïga, 8 June 1964.

²⁶⁰ Examen de situation du nommé Iro Addo, 18 July 1967; Surveillance du Territoire no. 778/BCL: Examen de situation de Abdou Ardaly, 12 Sept. 1968; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14.

²⁶¹ Surveillance du Territoire no. 656/ST/SN: Examen de situation du nommé Adamou Moussa, 7 Aug. 1967; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14; *Ibid.*, Issoufou Assoumane, 24 July 1967.

²⁶² Jacques Knoll, *Chargé d'Affaires, Ambassade de la République du Niger, Bad Godesberg-Mehlem*, to M. le Président de la République, Niamey, 29 July 1966; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.9; Examen de situation de Touré Hama, 8 June 1968; Surveillance du Territoire no. 620/BCL: Examen de situation de Mamoudou Ide, 11 July 1968; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14.

²⁶³ Note d'information, 17 Oct. 1967 (no. 168/AERO/SN); ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14; ch. 9 at n. 68. When Loré returned home he had a new Nigérien passport, an old AOFien ID, an East German passport and a French one.

home or to request help in finding a job or even new scholarships²⁶⁴—the costs for the inter-continental flight upon graduation were naturally borne by the East Europeans, as a logical conclusion to the students' stay.²⁶⁵

Though left with few alternatives but to come home, some of the returnees were apparently not free from naiveté, carrying in their luggage, for example, all manner of Soviet insignia or photos of themselves in Red Square—Ali Dodo would travel to Niger with the text of his propaganda broadcast on studying in the Eastern Bloc among his papers.²⁶⁶ If some of the graduates were rather trusting about the reception they could expect (most, after all, had not been involved in the military operations), in post-invasion Niger such possessions were enough to incriminate them. It was therefore not the 'sawki' they had been yearning for during the lonely years of study that awaited them: most if not all arrived by air and, as shown by the case of Mamadou Hako, who was deported from Sofia after a racial incident, were immediately taken into custody.²⁶⁷ Although the journalism student was particularly unlucky, having been unable to complete his studies and separated from his Bulgarian love, *all* returnees were brought to the presidential complex. Here they remained in detention (for ten days or a fortnight) in order to be squeezed for intelligence.²⁶⁸

While it does not seem that graduates were tortured (by this time tensions had lessened markedly), they were pressed for the minutest detail and forced to tell when and how they had travelled to the Eastern Bloc and with whom, where they had ended up and what they had studied, and, especially, whom they had met during their time abroad. The result was that almost all felt forced to give away names of fellow students, marking those who were still in Eastern Europe.²⁶⁹ In this way the BCL, probably still supervised by French officers,²⁷⁰ could perfect the intelligence record.

²⁶⁴ Abdou Ardaly, brother of the murdered Daouda, approached Harou Kouka, the education minister, when the latter was in Moscow. Examen de situation de Abdou Ardaly, 12 Sept. 1968.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.; Examen de situation de Ali Mahamane, 8 Aug. 1967; Surveillance du Territoire no. 511/BCL: Examen de situation de Aboubakar Abdou Karami, 11 June 1969; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14.

²⁶⁶ Examen de situation du nommé Issoufou Assoumane, 24 July 1967; Mashoud Hama Pascal Diawara, 9 Aug. 1967; Ali Mahamane, 8 Aug. 1967; ch. 9 at n. 242.

²⁶⁷ Either directly via Paris (or Cologne/Brussels or Budapest), or with a stopover in a West African capital (Conakry, Bamako, Ouagadougou, Abidjan). ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14. On Hako ch. 9 at n. 262.

²⁶⁸ Interview with Tahirou Ayouba Maïga and Kaïro Alfari, Niamey, 28 Oct. 2005 & 22 Febr. 2008.

²⁶⁹ See f.e. Note de renseignements, no. 800/BCL, 26 Sept. 1967; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14.

²⁷⁰ Interview with Tahirou Ayouba Maïga, Niamey, 28 Oct. 2005.

Thus, Sawaba's graduates suddenly found themselves treated as political criminals, a dramatic twist in fortunes that found expression in the appeal that Kaïro Alfari, with his fellow students, wrote from Niamey's police station to Diamballa Maïga in the summer of 1964—a pitiful letter that betrayed incredulity about the fact that, rather than being the hope of their families, they were now confronted with 'the tears of [their] mothers and sisters'.²⁷¹ They met with deep distrust. Several, after all, had been affected by the Marxist indoctrination that was part of their education, something that could not be undone by Ali Dodo's clumsy denial of any knowledge about the text of his broadcast on Radio Moscow (it had his name written on it!).²⁷² While some graduates, like Yansambou Boubakar during his working days in a Conakry hospital, had avoided contact with Sawaba leaders in order not to compromise themselves further, others were not so easily intimidated and told their interrogators that, if they were refused a proper job in Niger because of their educational past, they would leave and try their luck elsewhere.²⁷³

If the regime therefore felt that it had reason to make an effort at their 'retraining',²⁷⁴ as it was put, its scrutiny of the educated cadres went far beyond the risk they posed, partly because it was supervised by Maïga personally. As usual, his interest was obsessive, and it did not end with the graduates' release. In the margin of Iro Addo's interrogation protocol describing contacts with NEPU radical Tanko Yakasai, Maïga scribbled that the economics graduate 'merit[ed] being watched particularly', even though a day earlier he had written that he saw no grounds for Addo's continued detention. As regards Hako, the unlucky deportee, the interior minister also ordered that he be released from his cell 'while keeping an eye on him'—Maïga reiterating his 'previous recommendations for the totality of Sawabists returned from abroad'. A notice of the Sûreté in July 1967 discussed the policy to be adopted vis-à-vis the graduates, pointing out that some could speak and write Russian and that, while they did not perhaps talk about Sawaba, they could try and form communist cells; the problem that these youths posed should therefore be studied carefully and the RDA should take action across the country with regard to their control

²⁷¹ Kaïro Alfari Maïga, Amadou Biry Kouly & Daouda Hamani to M. Le Ministre de l'Intérieur de la République du Niger, 27 July 1964; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 7.13 and ch. 9 at notes 249 & 250 ('larmes de nos mères et soeurs').

²⁷² Examen de situation de Ali Mahamane, 8 Aug. 1967.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, Yansambou Boubakar, 29 March 1969 & Issoufou Assoumane, 24 July 1967; interview Tahirou Ayouba Maïga, Niamey, 28 Oct. 2005.

²⁷⁴ Delanne to Diamballa Maïga, 8 June 1964 ('reconversion').

and rehabilitation. In response to this the interior minister scribbled that surveillance fell under the jurisdiction of the Sûreté and the administration's staff in whose area the Sawaba cadres resided, and in order to alert his subordinates to the importance of the issue, Maïga dispatched a telegram to all prefects and sub-prefects:

Our students have come back or will come back to Niger for the holidays. Stop. Most of them have till now shown hostility towards our government. Stop. Also, it is advisable to submit their behaviour to a discreet but scrupulous surveillance. Stop. The meetings in which they will take part, their movements, their associates must be painstakingly checked. Stop. You will inform me on their state of mind and you will alert me at the slightest suspicious intrigues on their part. Stop. The Sawaba scholarship students in the USSR or other communist countries must of course be made the object of a most exceptional surveillance. Stop. Be vigilant.²⁷⁵

Consequently, life for the ex-students became hard. Police had to watch Ali Dodo, released after 12 days in detention, as closely as 'all the Sawaba scholarship students returned from abroad'. Adamou Moussa, after his interrogation, was let go but Maïga wrote to the Sûreté that his behaviour had to be scrutinised and that he would write to the prefect of Niamey if the agronomist returned to his native village. Mashoud Pascal was allowed to go and live with his father, while subjected to the same degree of surveillance. A son of Ousmane Dan Galadima, Abdoukarim (who had studied agriculture in Casablanca and was just 18 years old) was made the object of 'discreet surveillance', and several months later, when Maïga Ibrahim Moudi—who had done sports training in the Soviet Union—got an invitation from Moscow to take part in a wrestling championship, the interior minister wrote that this showed the 'lively interest that the leaders of that State continue[d] to take in Africans that [had] frequented their universities or schools'. He instructed the Sûreté to 'watch more closely than ever

²⁷⁵ Note de Renseignements, no. 603/BCL, 19 July 1967; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14; Examen de situation du nommé Iro Addo, 18 July 1967; Ibid., Hako, 20 July 1967 & Note d'Information, no. 194/CSN, 21 July 1967; both ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14 ('mérite d'être surveillé spécialement'; 'tout en le surveillant'; 'précédentes recommandations pour l'ensemble des Sawabistes de retour de l'étranger'; 'Nos étudiants sont revenus ou vont revenir au Niger pour les vacances. Stop. La plupart d'entre eux ont fait preuve jusqu'ici d'hostilité envers notre gouvernement. Stop. Aussi convient-il de soumettre leur comportement à une discrète mais attentive surveillance. Stop. Les réunions auxquelles ils participeront, leurs déplacements leurs fréquentations devront être soigneusement contrôlés. Stop. Vous me renseignerez sur leur état d'esprit et vous m'alerterez au moindre agissement suspect de leur part. Stop. Les étudiants boursiers Sawaba en U.R.S.S. ou autres pays communistes devront naturellement faire l'objet d'une surveillance toute particulière. Stop. Soyez vigilants.')

the intrigues of the former Sawaba students returned from the USSR or other countries in the East', and as if it was necessary to drive home his point, he scribbled in the margin of another instruction that the

USSR [did] not lose sight of its old lodgers—have SN [Sûreté Nationale] act to redouble vigilance.

Moudi would have inquired about an air ticket being put at his disposal through the Soviet embassy in Bamako. The BCL, however, had already confiscated his passport.²⁷⁶ Sawaba's graduates were thus continuously shadowed, a state of affairs that amounted to a semi-permanent witch-hunt. By 1969, when Yansambou Boubakar finally returned home after his interlude in Guinea, nothing had changed in the regime's responses. Léopold Kaziendé, cabinet minister, wrote to the director of the Sûreté that Boubakar could be released but that his conduct ought to be scrutinised.

Under these conditions the search for suitable employment became difficult, also because many of the positions for which the graduates had been trained were in the state and parastatal sectors, where entrance required regime support. The interior minister scribbled in the margins of the protocol on Adamou Moussa that nothing was left to him but to go home and wait until the government had decided on his lot—more than a year later the agronomist was still living in Kollo, apparently unemployed. Similarly, Abdou Ardaly, the brother of the murdered Daouda who had studied law at Moscow State, expressed the desire to make himself useful, hoping to find a job through the intercession of his uncle, who was president of the Supreme Court. While his life in the USSR had betrayed high expectations about his future (as noted, he had married the daughter of Mali's ambassador), at least one month after his release he was simply reported to be without a job.²⁷⁷

Painfully, graduates like Mamoudou Ide were also made aware of the negative appraisals of their East European diplomas. They were claimed to

²⁷⁶ Examen de situation de Ali Mahamane, 8 Aug. 1967; Diamballa Y. Maïga to M. le Directeur de la Sûreté Nationale, Niamey, 12 & 23 Aug. and 18 Nov. 1967; Note d'Information no. 946/BCL, 14 Nov. 1967; all ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14; ('comme tous les boursiers du Sawaba de retour de l'étranger'; 'surveillance discrète'; 'vif intérêt que continuent de porter les dirigeants de cet Etat aux Africains qui ont fréquenté leurs universités ou leurs écoles'; 'surveiller plus étroitement que jamais les agissements des ex-boursiers Sawaba de retour d'U.R.S.S. et des autres pays de l'Est'; 'L'URSS ne perd pas de vue ses anciens pensionnaires—saisir SN [Sûreté Nationale] pour redoubler de vigilance').

²⁷⁷ It is, however, not known what happened to him subsequently. Examen de situation de Yansambou Boubakar, 29 March 1969; Adamou Moussa, 7 Aug. 1967; Abdou Ardaly, 12 Sept. 1968; Etudiants et Boursiers du Sawaba.

be of lesser value than Western (French) papers, an assessment that, even if based on objective grounds, must have been affected by the partisan context of the regime (while in reality there must have been qualitative differences across the spectrum of subjects studied). Ide had followed up his medical studies with an internship for theatre nurse in West Germany and humbly told his interrogators that he hoped to find a job in the country's health service; he, too, was still unemployed three months after his return from Europe. Mamadou Hako, who had his journalism studies cut short through deportation, had to make do without a diploma altogether and more than a year after his return was living jobless in Tahoua. Some were confronted with the loss of their books, such as Iro Addo, part of whose library ended up in Kano. Kaïro Alfari was worse off, as 13 parcels that he had sent to a relative were confiscated by the authorities, the civil engineering student losing 130 Russian books and 41 French ones on subjects including maths, geology, sociology and Marxism-Leninism. Alfari, who was still in the Soviet Union, was not in the position to reclaim them, especially as the parcels included the emblem of a camel and documents in Chinese (as noted, he had done military training in the People's Republic).²⁷⁸

These were tragic ends to years of study in conditions that had not always been easy. By the same token, it was a disaster for the families, who were tainted by association and now saw little if anything materialise from the hope invested in their children. Predictably, it led to frustration on the part of the graduates. Issoufou Assoumane, who had returned to Niger in July 1967 and was branded for his Marxist convictions, one year later was reported to be 'disappointed and embittered'. The electrical engineer had taken numerous steps to find employment but nothing had led to a job, and though by then he had regained the company of his Russian wife, who had been allowed to join him in Niger, in 1969 they moved to Guinea, where he found a position in line with his professional competence.²⁷⁹ He followed in the footsteps of others. Mahamane Abdoulaye, who had attended a school for nurses in the GDR, reportedly left for Chad two years after his return. Mamadou (Maman?) Farka, trained as a mechanic in East Germany and son of Farka Maiga, may have gone to Mali. Sani Mahamane dit

²⁷⁸ Examen de situation de Mamoudou Ide, 11 July 1968; Iro Addo, 18 July 1967; Hako, 20 July 1967; Rapport Mensuel, Oct. 1968; SHAT, 10 T 715./D.2-3; Etudiants et Boursiers du Sawaba.

²⁷⁹ In 1973 he was employed in a similar capacity in Algeria. Note de Renseignements, 6 July 1968 (file Assoumane); ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14; Etudiants et Boursiers du Sawaba; interview Issoufou Assoumane, Niamey, 30 Jan. 2003 ('décu et aigri').

Petit Sani, who had pursued political and union instruction in Eastern Europe, allegedly left Niger to work in a hotel in Spain. Touré Hama, who graduated from a school in nursing in Quedlinburg, East Germany, stayed only a couple of months in Niamey before moving to his father in Ghana.²⁸⁰ Like Issoufou Assoumane, Ali Dodo also travelled to Conakry, where he was given a job in the country's livestock service (May 1968). If Guinea was a kinder environment for those suspected of being 'impregnated by Marxist culture', it is unclear whether Dodo was reunited with his wife (also a Soviet citizen), from whom he got separated when moving back to Niger.²⁸¹ Others, like Abdou Ardaly, suffered the same problem—the brother of Daouda leaving his wife in Bamako when returning to Niamey in search of a position in line with his training.²⁸²

Numerous graduates had no choice but to face unemployment at home. It is unclear how many suffered this fate and for how long, but Diamballa Maïga was aware of the problem, warning Diori in November 1967 that it could hinder graduates' rallying to the government. While he concluded that the employment issue should be resolved, six months later the BCL reported in response to the frustrations of Issoufou Assoumane that 'the majority of his comrades ... [were] in an identical situation and thus experienced the same sentiment'. Maïga scribbled in the margin that he had already drawn the attention of the RDA to the matter.²⁸³ However, the dearth of employment opportunities, coupled with the party's monopolisation of posts, meant that hardliners and those desirous of positions themselves (or of defending privileges) resisted a solution—doubtless calling attention to the graduates' past to prevent them from gaining positions. Thus, an overview compiled by the BCL in October 1968 reported that of 49 students that had returned, at least 15 were unemployed, seven had gone abroad and six were in detention or the object of prosecution. The remain-

²⁸⁰ Another ex-student who left Niger again was Kona Mayaki, who, however, had studied in the USSR on an RDA grant. *Etudiants et Boursiers du Sawaba* and ch. 9 above, *passim*.

²⁸¹ *Etudiants et Boursiers du Sawaba*; Examen de situation de Ali Mahamane, 8 Aug. 1967. Contrary to the wishes of his wife (who had given birth to a boy), he had returned to Niger before her visa application had been sorted out. If she was Jewish or an ethnic German, this may have been a problem (ch. 9 n. 264) ('impregné de la culture marxiste').

²⁸² Examen de situation de Abdou Ardaly, 12 Sept. 1968; *Etudiants et Boursiers du Sawaba*.

²⁸³ Diamballa Y. Maïga to M. le Président de la République, Niamey, 28 Nov. 1967; ANN, 86 MI 1 E 8.14; Note de Renseignements, 597/BCL, 6 July 1968 (file Assoumane) ('la plupart de ses camarades [...] sont dans une situation identique et éprouvent de la sorte le même sentiment').

ing 21 had been provided with jobs in the parastatal sector, half of them more or less in line with their professional competence. Of others this remained unclear—some had just been given a job, worked as a volunteer or were possibly jobless.²⁸⁴

If just one fifth managed to enter into suitable employment, the BCL remained silent about another 50 cadres, who were still studying in the Eastern Bloc at the time. Hence, it is difficult to establish a comprehensive picture of the fate of Sawaba's students, although testimonies taken at a later date provide a bleak impression of lives upon the return home, suggesting that difficulties persisted for the duration of RDA rule. Yet, if the student population in Eastern Europe had dropped significantly by the end of the 1960s, individual lives were subject to personal time schedules that made for different trajectories. Cadres like Zoumari Issa Seyni began their student career only after the fall of Nkrumah, while someone like Bachir Boukary started his academic studies in the Soviet Union even later—in his case in 1970, graduating successfully in livestock studies in 1975. Others simply decided to stay away from Niger as long as the RDA remained in power. Kaïro Alfari was in France during 1970-1971; the regime would have asked him to return home but he refused. Amada Bachard, who had already gone to China in 1961, left the People's Republic in 1970 for Conakry, where he got in touch with remaining Sawabists and wisely stayed put. Similarly, the member of Maradi's Red Cord, Hamidou Abdoulaye, continued his life in the Far East, safely observing his home country from the announcer's desk at Radio Peking.²⁸⁵

²⁸⁴ Etudiants et Boursiers du Sawaba.

²⁸⁵ Interviews with Bachir Boukary, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003; Kaïro Alfari, Niamey, 22 Febr. 2008; Amada Bachard, Niamey, 14 Dec. 2009; Hamidou Adamou Abdoulaye, Niamey, 19 Dec. 2009.

EPILOGUE

AFTERMATH AND MEMORY

On the night of 14-15 April 1974, nine years almost to the day since Amadou Diop flung his grenade at the dignitaries of the regime (and a good decade after Captain Diallo's mutiny), the RDA's reign came to an end. In a well-planned move, FAN forces from Agadez, Zinder and Tahoua converged on the capital in the course of the Easter weekend. The Zinder detachment had taken to the road on Saturday afternoon, the 13th, intending to capture the airport,¹ while others headed for Radio Niger, the Tondibia camp, ammunition depots and the presidential palace.² Aba Kaka, Sawaba's Bosso commander who had been committed to hospital, had just been brought back to the prison civile, as military detachments moved in.³ By one o'clock in the morning of 15 April they had occupied the airport, detaining Bouba-kar Moussa—Diori's half-brother and head of the Sûreté, who had returned from a trip abroad—, after which a squadron drove to the headquarters of the Sûreté itself, which were taken with little difficulty. An hour later FAN forces controlled key buildings in the city and began to arrest cabinet ministers (including Diamballa Maïga). They also detained Boubou Hama and several RDA officials. However, at the presidential complex they encountered resistance. Diori—typically perhaps—gave himself up almost immediately and was marched out in his pyjamas, but Tuareg members of his Presidential Guards, perhaps incited by his wife, resolved to resist.⁴ For a couple of hours fighting took place, in which 'L'Autrichienne' may or may not have taken up a weapon herself; she was killed along with a dozen others, perhaps more.⁵ Whether or not accidental,⁶ with the death of Diori's wife—the hated icon of a corrupt regime—opposition caved in. RDA militias were quickly overcome and by five o'clock in the morning the chief

¹ Moumouni Adamou Djermakoye (one of the coup plotters), *15 avril 1974: Mémoires d'un compagnon de Seyni Kountché* (www.Editions-Nathan-adamou.com, n.d., accessed 1 Nov. 2010).

² *Ibid.* and *Africa Contemporary Record*, 1974-75, B 722 ff and Djermakoye, *15 avril 1974*.

³ As recalled by Aba Kaka. Interview, Bosso, 13 Febr. 2006.

⁴ E. Jouve, 'Du Niger de Diori Hamani au gouvernement des militaires (1974-1977)', *Revue française d'études politiques africaines*, 13 (1978), no. 149, 21-22.

⁵ *Ibid.*; Djermakoye, *15 avril 1974*; *Africa Contemporary Record*, 1974-75, B 722 ff.

⁶ Djermakoye (*15 avril 1974*) asserted it was accidental. Pierre Messmer (*Les blancs s'en vont: Récits de décolonisation* [Paris, 1998], 247) disputed this. Discussion in A. Salifou, *Le Niger* (Paris, 2002), 204.

of staff, Lt.-Col. Seyni Kountché, announced on radio that the army was in control. Soon, the military issued orders for the return of arms and ammunition supplied to the militias and Gendarmerie, key defenders of the *ancien régime*.⁷

Niger's second coup d'état—following on the 'Corsican' one of September 1958—was the result, among other reasons, of inaction by the French. In contrast to 1963, the defence accord that allowed for their intervention was not put into operation, and as Diori was surprised in his sleep, he could not call the ambassador's bedroom. The French had a contingency plan, 'Opération Cheval Noir', to evacuate the Dioris to their Niamey base in the case of danger, but this, too, was left inoperative.⁸ Nigérien scholars have suggested that the French must have known about the army plans, and considering the overall quality of their intelligence structures it is difficult to believe that their representatives in the field were unaware of signs of trouble, such as the inevitable troop movements.⁹ Authors have pointed out that relations with France had cooled over a range of issues, including the Nigerian civil war, the rupture of ties with Israel and especially the attempt of Diori to negotiate better terms for Niger's uranium, whose production had begun a few years earlier. While it has therefore been intimated that it was the French who were behind the coup, by active encouragement or benevolent neutrality,¹⁰ short of research of unexplored archival sources this contention remains contextual speculation. If Niger's ambassador to Paris pleaded for French intervention, it must be realised that the coup took place during the Easter weekend and that metropolitan politics was marked by a vacuum as a result of the death of President Pompidou on 2 April. The French officer responsible for 'Cheval Noir' had left Niamey for a trip to the W Park, having neglected to delegate operational responsibility, while FAN forces executed their scheme with speedy efficiency. Jacques Foccart called African heads of state on the morning of the coup but it was then too late to change the outcome: his meeting in the afternoon with

⁷ Djermakoye, 15 avril 1974; *Africa Contemporary Record*, 1974-75, B 722 ff. Against the background of the hostility between the army and Gendarmerie, there is little evidence that the latter supported the coup, as asserted by R. Higgott & F. Fuglestad, 'The 1974 Coup d'État in Niger: Towards an Explanation', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 13 (1975), 3, 397.

⁸ Higgott and Fuglestad, 'The 1974 Coup', 396; *Le Monde* (Paris), 26 April 1974.

⁹ M.M. Issa, 'Le régime militaire de Seyni Kountché (1974-1987)', in K. Idrissa (ed.), *Armée et politique au Niger* (Dakar, 2008), 135-136; K. Idrissa, 'Les régimes militaires entre 1974 et 1999 au Niger', in *Ibid.*, 167; Salifou, *Le Niger*, 205; *Le Monde* (Paris), 26 April 1974.

¹⁰ Issa, 'Le régime militaire de Seyni Kountché', 135-136; Salifou, *Le Niger*, 205; C. Raynaud, 'Trente ans d'indépendance: repères et tendances', *Politique Africaine*, 38 (June 1990), 11-13.

France's prime minister, none other than Pierre Messmer—who had done so much to topple Djibo Bakary 16 years earlier—was confronted with a *fait accompli*. Thus, Paris was probably caught off-guard.¹¹ If Sawaba's exploits and Captain Diallo had shown that a coup could only be successful if it took the RDA's benefactors by surprise, FAN forces hated the French troops still stationed in the country, especially the officers in adviser positions to Niger's military; they must have kept their plans from the French, also after witnessing metropolitan intervention in Gabon (1964). Kountché and one of his fellow plotters, Moumouni Adamou Djermakoye, later went on record denying French involvement, the latter stating that they had been aware of the telephone link between the palace and the French ambassador and that they had deliberately chosen the Easter weekend for the element of surprise, feeling further encouraged by the sudden demise of Pompidou. Moreover, during the night of the coup they would have told the ambassador that they would retaliate against French citizens if metropolitan forces intervened.¹²

By 1974 the army had developed considerable resentment about a range of issues. Never fully trusted, especially since the Diallo mutiny, the RDA had tried to keep the military under strict control, accusing it in 1969 of again plotting against the government. This and renewed controls increased frustration over the pampering of the militias, limited promotion prospects and the army's forced role in tax collection (one which allowed it to discover the catastrophe unfolding in the drought-stricken countryside). Besides the continued irritant of the French military presence, the army leadership was upset about a defence accord that had been signed with Libya without consulting the officer corps. An announced reorganisation of the armed forces, compounded by an impending RDA congress, triggered the officers into action.¹³ Their resentment combined with unrest in society at large, which, as noted in the last chapter, had become increasingly acute. Student discontent over corruption and the monopolisation

¹¹ *Le Monde* (Paris), 26 April 1974 clearly points to this. See also Jouve, 'Du Niger de Diori Hamani au gouvernement des militaires', 21 & 24; Higgot and Fuglestad, 'The 1974 Coup', 395-396; *Africa Contemporary Record*, 1974-75, B 725.

¹² Issa, 'Le régime militaire de Seyni Kountché', 136; Djermakoye, *15 avril 1974*; *Africa Contemporary Record*, 1974-75, B 722 ff; Jouve, 'Du Niger de Diori Hamani au gouvernement des militaires', 23-24. Differently A. Salifou, *Biographie politique de Diori Hamani: Premier président de la république du Niger* (Paris, 2010), 247 ff.

¹³ Issa, 'Le régime militaire de Seyni Kountché', 132-134; A. Mahamane, 'La naissance de l'armée nationale du Niger: 1961-1974', in Idrissa, *Armée et politique au Niger*, 82-84; Higgot and Fuglestad, 'The 1974 Coup', 394-395; Djermakoye, *15 avril 1974*.

of privilege led to regular outbursts marked by the booing of Pompidou during a state visit, violent repression—in which the army was forced to take part—and draconian measures against teachers and civil servants. Falling groundnut prices contributed to the social and economic disaster of the worst drought in decades, and as if this were not enough, the food aid crucial to the survival of rural communities became part of speculative embezzlement schemes in which ‘L’Autrichienne’ herself was said to play a role. The resultant dissension in the party left the leadership inert, leading to the removal of an exhausted regime. The day after the coup, the military were met by jubilant crowds, and the following month Kountché announced that the French troop presence would be brought to an end (in itself, perhaps, an indication that the regime change did not enjoy metropolitan backing).¹⁴

If these events were also momentous for Sawabists—Amadou Diop would later reminisce that his Chinese medium had told him that all his desires would materialise in the month of April¹⁵—, the old spokesmen of the little folk had no active part in them. The camel’s moment had passed, as can be gleaned from the chagrin in the memoirs of Kaïro Alfari, who claimed that those welcoming the coup the loudest had been among the most zealous supporters of the RDA.¹⁶ Desirous, however, of starting with a clean slate, the Kountché government ordered the release of the hundreds of Sawabists still languishing in prison. At one ceremony, on 17 April, the movement’s survivors were spoken to by one of the officers responsible for the coup, Moumouni Djermakoye. Aboubakar dit Kaou, who had been in jail now for a decade and spoke on behalf of fellow inmates, expressed his appreciation for the army’s action.¹⁷ Ali Amadou, then in Niamey’s prison civile, later remembered how he was freed a day after the coup, while Aba Kaka, in his own recollection, got out two days after the takeover, on the 17th. In Tahoua, Ousmane Dan Galadima and Boubakar Djingaré, among other people, were set free, but in the latter case the release was

¹⁴ J. Baulin, *Conseiller du Président Diouri* (Paris, 1986), 84; Idrissa, ‘Les régimes militaires’, 166-167; F. Martin, *Le Niger du Président Diouri: Chronologie 1960-1974* (Paris, 1991), 375 ff; Issa, ‘Le régime militaire de Seyni Kountché’, 126; M. Tidjani Alou, ‘Les militaires politiciens’, in Idrissa, *Armée et politique au Niger*, 98; Messmer, *Les blancs s’en vont*, 247; *Africa Contemporary Record*, 1974-75, B 724; Salifou, *Le Niger*, 216-217; Jouve, ‘Du Niger de Diouri Hamani au gouvernement des militaires’, 25.

¹⁵ Interview, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003.

¹⁶ K. Alfari, *Mémoire sur les fraternelles relations franco-nigériennes* (Union de la Jeunesse Patriotique du Niger, Niamey, 2003), 58 (courtesy Kaïro Alfari).

¹⁷ Djermakoye, *15 avril 1974*.

marred by sickness—some of those who were not ill developed problems due to the sudden availability of greater quantities of food. In Agadez, too, all remaining Sawabists were freed, but Daouda Hamadou later remembered that when FAN forces arrived to open the gates, they were asked to stay put until transport had been arranged. As Soumana Idrissa recalled, lorries arrived that brought the inmates back to Niamey, where some were reunited with their families. Others quickly made their way back to their regions of origin; Aba Kaka, for example, managed to travel back to Diffa and on, to Bosso. This return home could be a happy one: Ali Mahamane Madaouki had his photograph taken for the occasion together with other inmates—another testimony to Sawabists' historical self-consciousness. Soumana Idrissa's homecoming, however, was less fortunate, as he found the family compound in Gothèye destroyed, a reprisal customary under the RDA.¹⁸

At first the military took only symbolic steps to redress such misery. In November they issued a decree providing an amnesty to 'political convicts', i.e. those Sawabists who had been sentenced by the Cour de Sûreté on 12 October 1964 and 11-12 November 1964 and on 25 May the following year. Among those 'benefiting' from the measure were Sallé Dan Koulou and comrades. Victims of the executions in the western region also received a posthumous pardon, such as Tini Malélé, the zonal commander, and Altiné Gnogolo, the Gothèye guerrilla who had been shot before his fiancée's eyes. The same gesture was extended to the memory of Yacouba Issa, a member of Dan Koulou's squad and shot in Madarounfa, and Kanguèye Boubacar, the Algeria-trained coxeur whose execution in Magaria had caused unrest. Madougou Namaro, as shown in the last chapter, did not live to enjoy the symbolism of the measure either. Almost 70 people, however, benefited in this way, both domestic cadres and guerrillas like Ali Mahamane Madaouki, Amadou Roufaï Malam Garba, Malam Karégamba and Baoua Souley, to name but a few. In addition, people implicated in the 1963 mutiny benefited—army soldiers as well as Sawabists such as Djibo Bakary's brother, Sanda Hima.¹⁹

¹⁸ Interviews Ali Amadou, Niamey, 28 Jan. 2003; Amadou Diop, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003; Aba Kaka, Bosso, 13 Febr. 2006; Ousmane Dan Galadima, Madaoua, 7 Febr. 2003; Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 27 Oct. 2005; Soumana Idrissa, Gothèye, 1 Oct. 2005; Daouda Hamadou, Ayorou, 20 Dec. 2009. Ibrahim Baro dit Tri Tri was also set free that year. Interview, Niamey, 22 Oct. 2011.

¹⁹ République du Niger—Conseil Militaire Suprême: Décret no. 74-291/PCMS/MJ du 22 novembre 1974 portant amnistie des condamnés politiques. Apart from those mentioned above and excluding military men involved in the 1963 mutiny, the decree pertained to

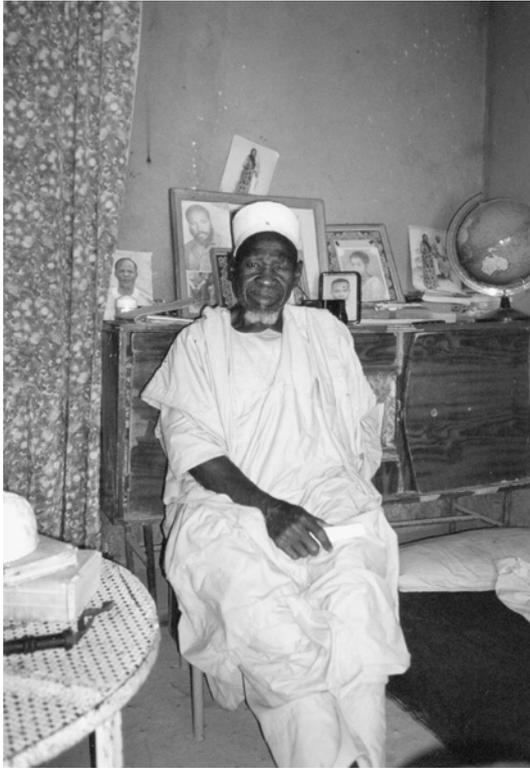


Photo E.1 Amadou Roufaï Malam Garba, Zinder, 2003.

Some victims of the executions in the western region, such as Boubacar Amirou and Souley Mossi, were left unmentioned, undoubtedly because they had fallen under extrajudicial terror. The decree, moreover, did not cover the sentences handed down in 1966-1967 or the verdicts of the Tah-

Barao Balla; Mounkaila Djibo; Amadou Salou; Seidou Doule; Maliki Niandou; Boubou (Bombou) Mazou; Amadou Demba; Ganda Idé; Touré Ibrahim dit Boureima Barkire; Oumarou Malam Bala; Issoufou Soumaila dit Banakoye; Abdoukadi Talata dit Boulassane; Souley Seibou (Chaibou Souley); Hamidou Mahamane dit Daagage; Elhadji Mahamadou; Niandou Ousseini; Inoussa (Younoussa) Garantché; Boubakar Seydou; Yacouba Dari; (Dioumassi) Albarka Oumarou dit Waou; Soumana Issaka (Djibrilla Dembélé); Hassane Djibo; Mounkaila Halidou; Robert Seguinikin; Moundio Diawara; Oumarou Kif Amadou; Diallo Amadou; Zodi Ikhia; Yahaya Assane; Yahaya Alhassane; Liman Abdou; Walli Karingama; Souna Djerma; Moussa Kadri dit Sodjie; Adamou Elhadji Koffo; Yayé Madougou; Gourouza Maina; Hima (Hina) Sylla; Adamou Hima dit Alpha Kimba; Saidou Issa; Dobi Abdou; Habi Diori; Amadou Maisadie Ta Waye; Idé Talibo Kouré; Wankoye Hamado; Harouna Hamani; Diallo Mamadou; Kangaye Bonkoukou (deceased); Tahirou Ousseini.

oua and Agadez trials (1969). Worse, although so many Sawabists had been victim of politically motivated sackings, the new government resolved that the amnesty did not constitute an automatic entitlement to former public-sector jobs.²⁰ Other people had, of course, taken their place, profiting from the difficulties that had confronted the vanguard of the little folk, and this could not be undone, save by creating new problems. Reintegration of Sawabists in the public sector would be decided by the minister of the civil service (i.e. on a case-by-case basis), and while the amnesty measure made mention of the recovery of pension rights, not everyone benefited from this. Thus, Ousseini Dandagoye, the Zinder cadre, was confronted with a problem that many Sawabists must have faced. Since he had never been tried and sentenced, he did not receive any back pay for his work at the post office; he later recalled how a judge had told him that ‘politics had decided not to pay him’, with the result that he had to make do with an insufficient pension.²¹

Hence, in the perception of leading Sawabists (who had lost nothing of their drive), much remained to be done in politics, although most ex-cadres, the majority of whom had been employed in the private sector or ‘informal’ economy, were struggling to resume their lives. Djibo Bakary let it be known from Conakry that he wanted to return home, stating that conditions in Niger had to be improved to provide new perspectives to the people. Similarly, Ousmane Dan Galadima, when received by Kountché (who allegedly also went out of his way to welcome Amadou Diop), would have told the military leader that Sawaba would monitor the government’s actions. He declined an ambassadorship to East Germany as this was, according to him, a way to sideline people, preferring to stay in Niger instead.²² Of course, this attitude did not take into account that, to all intents and purposes, the movement had ceased to exist, and while Kountché had provided Sawabists some moral redress, he was determined to prevent a return to the party politics that had kept the country locked in fruitless battle for so long. In fact, Kountché swore to fight, besides corruption and administrative inefficiency (which had been used to justify the takeover), all ‘ideological clans’.²³ Undoubtedly, this also referred to the RDA, but as

²⁰ Décret no. 74-291/PCMS/MJ du 22 novembre 1974 portant amnistie des condamnés politiques.

²¹ Interview, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003 (paraphrased).

²² *Africa Contemporary Record*, 1974-75, B 724; interviews Ousmane Dan Galadima, Niamey, 7 Febr. 2003 and Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003.

²³ Salifou, *Le Niger*, 214; Higgot and Fuglestad, ‘The 1974 Coup’, 398 (‘les clans idéologiques’).

the military leader knew what the little people's agitators had been capable of, Sawabists had been warned.

In view of the Sawaba-RDA rivalry, Kountché can perhaps not be blamed for his hatred of political parties, though his preference to rule through the country's chiefs (besides women's groups and the resurrected samariya)²⁴ was one way to perpetuate his reign. An ascetic, if harsh and abrasive figure, it was perhaps inevitable that he began to cling on to power. It was only a matter of time before Kountché's regime began to institutionalise itself, partly by the mobilisation of technocrats and intellectuals and the progressive dismissal of military officers from the central government council.²⁵ While the government inscribed itself in a register of regimes that came to power during the 1970s through military takeovers, Kountché's control was accompanied by a structural paranoia. The first ones to fall victim to this were fellow officers, who joined RDA leaders in prison.

Nevertheless, Kountché's plea to Sawabists abroad to contribute to the country's good was genuine. Among external cadres there was a feeling that, with the fall of the Franco-RDA combine and the emergence of a more nationalist-oriented government, things were going to change for the better. Sawabists, great and small, therefore decided to return, hoping to finally get the 'sawki' they had been yearning for. Mossi Salifou, the pestered tailor from Niamey, made his way back from Bamako, bringing along his Malian wife, and while there is no way of knowing how many of the hundreds of little suspects that the BCL had been searching for responded to Kountché's call, it may be assumed that many made it back to Niger: if they had struggled to set themselves up in other countries, the families beckoned.²⁶ Of the better-placed cadres, Amada Bachard, formerly announcer at Radio Peking, returned that same year from Conakry, while Sawaba student Bachir Boukary, upon his graduation in the USSR, returned in 1975, settling in Maradi. Zoumari Issa Seyni also returned that year and set himself up in the capital. Tahirou Maïga, the geologist who had already come back under the RDA, later remembered how the government sent a plane to bring back the graduates—clearly more valuable to the regime—and integrate some of them in the civil service. This made Daouda Hamani, who had studied at Moscow State, married a Russian girl and taken up residence in Algeria, also decide to come back. Kaïro Alfari, too, responded,

²⁴ Idrissa, 'Les régimes militaires', 169-170.

²⁵ Tidjani Alou, 'Les militaires politiciens', 99; Issa, 'Le régime militaire de Seyni Kountché', 143-147.

²⁶ Interview Mossi Salifou, Niamey, 29 Febr. 2008 and ch. 14 at notes 75-78.



Photo E.2 Zoumari Issa Seyni, Niamey, 2011.

proud of his education (including in advanced mechanics in France); the Sawabist in him clearly felt the appeal to ‘the sons of the land’, now called real nationalists whom Niger needed badly. Even Issoufou Assoumane, who had left Niger again in 1969, embittered over his unemployment, returned—in his case in 1977, having worked as an engineer in Algeria since 1973.²⁷ The graduates were followed, or preceded, by the righter of wrongs himself. According to his son, Ahmed Sékou, a delegation was sent to Conakry to persuade Bakary to come back, and while Sékou Touré would have warned him that it was early days, Bakary felt homesick and returned to

²⁷ Interviews Bachir Boukary, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003; Tahirou Ayouba Maïga, Niamey, 28 Oct. 2005; Issoufou Assoumane, Niamey, 30 Jan. 2003; Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 27 Oct. 2005; Moumouni Daouda (Daouda Hamani’s brother), Tillabéri, 3 Nov. 2005; Zoumari Issa Seyni, Niamey, 18 Nov. 2002 (+ CV); Kaïro Alfari, Niamey, 22 Febr. 2008; Amada Bachard, Niamey, 14 Dec. 2009; Hamidou Adamou Abdoulaye, Niamey, 19 Dec. 2009.

Niger in October 1974, 15 years after his departure. Abdoulaye Mamani, too, came back, ending more than a decade of exile in Algiers.²⁸

However, if Bakary had gone on record that he supported the coup d'état, Kountché would have been warned that he was a special person²⁹—something that may have referred to Bakary's political passions as well as an inability to play second fiddle. From early on Kountché's paranoia was part of an obsessive desire to ward off rivals, for which he pursued a policy of divide and rule, trying to instil fear to safeguard his control. Cabinet reshuffles and anti-corruption campaigns became part of this, while a developing uranium boom (itself leading to renewed corruption) allowed him to build up a clientèle. Under these circumstances new crises erupted with disturbing regularity. In February 1975 an anti-corruption campaign led to the arrest of the officer who had led the assault on Diiori's residence. Roughly one year later the regime was rocked by its first genuine coup attempt, undertaken by some of Kountché's fellow putschists. The uprising was quelled amidst numerous casualties, followed by a range of arrests, a court-martial that handed down prison sentences and death penalties, and several executions.³⁰

The regime's psychosis also reached the Sawabist community. Kountché had quickly developed difficult relations with his no. 2, Sani Souna Sido, who as a consequence got rapidly demoted. In August 1975 he was arrested on a coup charge, for which he would have plotted with civilians, including Djibo Bakary and a former Diiori cabinet chief (also an important business leader). The charges said that they had tried to form the ideological clans forbidden by Kountché and re-establish 'dissolved political parties'—an accusation that painfully echoed the years of RDA despotism. While Bakary would have had to promise to refrain from political activity upon his return home, it is not impossible (though rather early after the RDA's fall) that he would have talked with an ex-Diiori acolyte,³¹ besides the military officer, though there is no way of knowing whether this involved discus-

²⁸ Interview Ahmed Sékou Djibo Bakary, Niamey, 1 March 2008; Jouve, 'Du Niger de Diiori Hamani au gouvernement des militaires', 37.

²⁹ Interview Ahmed Sékou Djibo Bakary, Niamey, 1 March 2008; Jouve, 'Du Niger de Diiori Hamani au gouvernement des militaires', 21.

³⁰ Another aborted coup was to follow in 1983. Raynaut, 'Trente ans d'indépendance', 14-15; Issa, 'Le régime militaire de Seyni Kountché', *passim*; Idrissa, 'Les régimes militaires', 172-173; Jouve, 'Du Niger de Diiori Hamani au gouvernement des militaires', 36-38.

³¹ Whose importance was enhanced by the fact that he was a businessman. See also D. Diallo, *Seyni Kountché* (Niamey, 2000), 46 and *Africa Research Bulletin* (political series), Aug. 1975.

sions of a coup plan. What is more relevant is that the Sawabists who remained interested in politics may have found it hard to keep their opinions to themselves. The following year a pamphlet from a group calling itself the 'Association des Amis de Djibo Bakary' would call on Kountché to step down and not repeat the RDA's mistakes by executing those sentenced in another coup attempt.³² In reporting the charges brought against Bakary, Radio Niger spoke of night-time meetings with Sawabists and, indeed, Dan Galadima later recalled how he and a comrade had attempted to meet the righter of wrongs. Set against the background of the camel's past, it would come as no surprise if some of the little folk exchanged political views during visits, though this probably occurred in the context of a camaraderie nurtured by decades of action and the collective experience of persecution: many continued to see each other and sought each other's help (their social life had been obliterated)—for example, asking Bakary to put in a word for them at the government for their employment.³³

Whatever the truth of the matter, Bakary was detained, without formal charges or precise accusations, but with his reputation wilfully slandered with rumours that millions of francs had been found on him.³⁴ It was the signal for a wave of arrests that targeted several of Bakary's lieutenants. Dan Galadima and Idrissa Arfou, ex-guerrilla commander in the west, were picked up, barely one and a half years after they had regained their freedom. As Sawaba's chief of staff later recalled, they were joined by Jimra Orgao, the former Sawabist teacher in Bonkougou manhandled by French interrogators;³⁵ Ibrahim Issa (the ex-information chief at the defence ministry sentenced for the 1963 mutiny); Hamed Garba, a unionist;³⁶ and, sadly, Adamou Sékou: Sawaba's first ideologue, broken long ago in Bilma and having made his peace with the RDA, was again taken in. Abdoulaye Mamani, too, was picked up and—just like the righter of wrongs himself—

³² Raynaut, 'Trente ans d'indépendance', 14; Jouve, 'Du Niger de Diori Hamani au gouvernement des militaires', 37; S. Decalo, *Historical Dictionary of Niger* (Metuchen, NJ, & London, 1979), 44; Salifou, *Le Niger*, 221; L. Kaziendé, *Souvenirs d'un enfant de la colonisation* (Porto Novo, 1998), vol. 6, 223; Baulin, *Conseiller du Président Diori*, 157-158 ('des partis dissous').

³³ Interviews Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 27 Oct. 2005; Ousmane Dan Galadima, Madaoua, 7 Febr. 2003 (who claimed the French had warned Kountché against Sawabists); Amada Bachard, Niamey, 14 Dec. 2009.

³⁴ D. Bakary, *Silence! On décolonise: Itinéraire politique et syndical d'un militant africain* (Paris, 1992), 283; interview Oumarou Janba, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003.

³⁵ Interview Ousmane Dan Galadima, Madaoua, 7 Febr. 2003; ch. 7 at n. 101.

³⁶ Hamidou Garba, who in 1960 was accused of involvement in 'Plan B'? See ch. 8 at notes 6-7.

finally forced to walk the road of honour. Adamou Assane Mayaki, Bakary's cabinet minister, was also detained, but later, the following January—his third arrest since independence. In 1977 the regime arrested Mounkaila Albagna, the Dargol commando, ostensibly on suspicion of political activities. After two months he was let go. In Maradi police detained Bachir Boukary, questioning him over Sawaba meetings. While Boukary was released, the misfortunes of Albagna were not over. Having taken up union activities, he was again questioned in 1983. He was let go but later taken in for a second time, spending several days in jail. The Sawabist was finally numbed. Upon his release, Albagna decided that he had had enough and stopped his union work—gagged if not disheartened.³⁷

When arrested, Bakary was brought to the garrison in Nguigmi, where, ironically, several of his former RDA opponents were being held.³⁸ Prison conditions, judging from those that obtained among RDA men in Agadez, were considerably better than under the Diori regime³⁹ (although Sani Souna Sido, the officer arrested together with Sawabists, was to die in circumstances reminiscent of the *ancien régime*).⁴⁰ In any case, self-conscious of his historical role Bakary began to work on his memoirs, although he was constricted by the lack of documents.⁴¹ In this way, Sawaba's leader spent several years until the authorities transferred him to a penal camp in Agadez, before putting him under house arrest in Niamey, first in a government villa in the Terminus quarter, then his own home. He was not allowed to go out or visit family in Soudouré.⁴²

³⁷ Interview Ousmane Dan Galadima, Madaoua, 7 Febr. 2003; Adamou Assane Mayaki, Niamey, 29 Jan. 2003; Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003 & 19 Oct. 2011; Bachir Boukary, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003; I.A. Mayaki, *La caravane passe* (Paris, 1999), 7; C. Maman, *Répertoire biographique des personnalités de la classe politique et des leaders d'opinion du Niger de 1945 à nos jours* (Niamey, 1999) vol. 1, *passim*.

³⁸ Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, vol. 1, 249; Bakary, *Silence!*, 283; Kaziendé, *Souvenirs d'un enfant*, vol. 6, 222-223; Decalo, *Historical Dictionary*, 43.

³⁹ See Kaziendé, *Souvenirs d'un enfant*, vol. 6, 226-227.

⁴⁰ Thus, he was said to have died of epilepsy, but later it was alleged it was because of torture. Issa, 'Le régime militaire de Seyni Kountché', 139 & 158 n. 28.

⁴¹ *Silence!*, 283 (this was the first volume of the three, which were planned).

⁴² *Ibid.*; *Africa Research Bulletin* (pol. series), Apr. 1980. His son wrongly recalled that Bakary was brought to Agadez and then 'Diffa', where he would have lived under house arrest. Interview Ahmed Sékou Djibo Bakary, Niamey, 1 March 2008. Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, vol. 1, 249 says Bakary stayed in jail until 1984 and was then placed under house arrest. This, too, is wrong, as there is a photo of Bakary in the courtyard of his house in 1983 (photo section in Bakary, *Silence!*). See below. Under house arrest in the Terminus quarter, Bakary gave an interview to a journalist saying he had been mistaken in his socialist beliefs, but its controlled conditions render this dubious. *La Voix Libérée*, no. 1, March-Apr. 2011, 29.

Thus, if the righter of wrongs paid a price for his political work belatedly, the length of his detention, after 15 years of exile, was to make it far from negligible. His lieutenants, however, were made to face terrible punishment as well. In 1976 they were taken to a camp in Dao Timmi, in the extreme north-east, deep in the Sahara on the Djado plateau. Its conditions resembled those in Bilma but were probably worse—a tiny settlement in the rugged terrain of the Totomaï mountains, it was also unpopular among the military,⁴³ and escape was out of the question. Dan Galadima and comrades spent four or five difficult years there. As Abdoulaye Mamani later recalled, he was locked up—on his own—in near total darkness in an underground cell. As no charges had been brought, no one knew where they were. It took a year before the regime let it be known where they had been incarcerated, allowing them to receive correspondence.⁴⁴ Heroically, Mamani, who during his Algerian years had refined his literary skills, tried to cope with the solitary confinement by preparing a novel called *Sarraounia*. By his own account he used toilet paper and notebooks smuggled in by friendly warders, making use of cracks of light seeping through an air vent. Sometimes he was forced to destroy what he had written to avoid discovery—constraining him to start all over again. Like this, fellow inmate Ibrahim Issa, who had also published in earlier days, seems to have prepared new writing as well.⁴⁵

The Return to the World

While Adamou Assane Mayaki was released in 1977, Ibrahim Issa probably came out two years later.⁴⁶ Most of the others were freed around 1980 (in some cases, perhaps, a little later). Dan Galadima, for example, came out in that year, while Mamani had already been moved in 1979 to a hospital in Agadez. He had begun to suffer from glaucoma, no doubt caused by the time he had spent in the dungeon of Dao Timmi. He was released the fol-

⁴³ Djermakoye, 15 avril 1974.

⁴⁴ Interview Ousmane Dan Galadima, Madaoua, 7 Febr. 2003; *West Africa*, 28 June-4 July 1993; Kaziendé, *Souvenirs d'un enfant*, vol. 6, 223; introduction by J.D. Pénel to A. Mamani, *Oeuvres poétiques*, (Paris, 1993), 9; Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, vol. 1, 378.

⁴⁵ *West Africa*, 28 June-4 July 1993; J.D. Pénel, 'Abdoulaye Mamani, Another Strange Destiny', *Tydskrif vir Letterkunde*, 42 (2005), 2, 143 (special issue edited by Antoinette Tidjani Alou).

⁴⁶ Interview Adamou Assane Mayaki, Niamey, 29 Jan. 2003; Mayaki, *La caravane passe*, 7. Perhaps Mayaki had been locked up elsewhere.



Photo E.3 Ibrahim Issa in 1979 (I. Issa, *La vie et ses facéties*, 1982).

lowing year.⁴⁷ Adamou Sékou was probably freed at the same time—by 1983 he was reported to be a member of Zinder’s magistrature; he retired from the legal profession in 1984.⁴⁸ Bakary continued under the confining arrangements of house arrest. The brutality suffered by his lieutenants had been out of all proportion and, while RDA people, too, were the target of Kountché’s cruelty, the Sawabists were men—many approaching 50 years of age—who had already developed health problems as a result of their detention under Diori. The effect was that what remained of their critical posture was totally cowed. The Association des Amis de Djibo Bakary dissolved itself in the summer of 1976 and no collective activity of Sawabists, political or social, was registered thereafter.⁴⁹

Generally, however, the onset of the Kountché regime brought an end to the repression of Sawaba’s cadres. The problems of Oumarou Janba, the

⁴⁷ Interviews with Ousmane Dan Galadima, Madaoua, 7 Febr. 2003 and Mrs Mamani Abdoulaye (Mamani’s widow), Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003; *West Africa*, 28 June–4 July 1993. While in Agadez, Mamani continued to write (though the cell in the military camp of Agadez he spoke about in an interview may have referred to Dao Timmi). See *Sahel Dimanche*, 11 Dec. 1992.

⁴⁸ Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, vol. 1, 378.

⁴⁹ Baulin, *Conseiller du Président Diori*, 158 n. 4.

Zinderois who had been pestered since his release from jail in the 1960s, stopped when the RDA was toppled. The same was true for Djibo Harouna, who had been barred entrance to school because of his father's politics and then began work as a tailor. The family of Moumouni Daouda (brother of Daouda Hamani, the student at Moscow State), was finally freed from surveillance. Similarly, for Abdou Ali Tazard, the teacher who had long since stayed away from politics, harassment stopped completely only upon arrival of the military. Also, the family of Madougou Namaro, whose death in 1973 had forced one of the sons to quit studies and start working, was finally left alone.⁵⁰

Sawaba's people (domestic cadres, guerrilleros, students, leaders) thus began to try and find their way back into society. In general, former commandos, if they did well, managed to find one of the humble jobs that had always been the hallmark of the little folk. Limited education, of course, played a role in this. Many simply returned to the trade they had pursued before entering the movement's army. Daouda Hamadou, for example, who had begun work as a 'tablier' and then turned to tailoring, resumed his place behind the sewing wheel. Others made for a modest career change, such as Amadou Diop, who apparently could not restart as a lorry driver and found employment in the building industry—as did Noga Yamba, who was employed as a concrete worker. People like Ali Mahamane Madaouki, clearly more educated, did better; after spending a year recovering from prison, he worked as clerk for a trader and then entered a bank in Zinder, where he stayed for the rest of his career and obtained a certificate in accountancy. Former chef de camp Ali Amadou, who was educated in Niger and Senegal, got work at a government agency for price controls before shifting, by the end of the 1980s, to the private sector. Idrissa Arfou, through his son, was also lucky, his offspring making it to membership of the Presidential Guards. Yet, others struggled on. Mounkaila Albagna, who had wished to continue his education when he joined Sawaba but ended up in military training, had difficulties finding a job. At some point he travelled to Lomé to do work for a French trader. Similarly, Soumana Idrissa experienced his release as if he 'had returned to the world', but the ruined family compound forced him to go back to Ghana in search of work—as did Ali Issaka, who travelled to the coast to trade. Boubakar Djingaré, having

⁵⁰ Interviews Oumarou Janba, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003; Tahir Moustapha, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003; Djibo Harouna, Gothèye, 1 Nov. 2005 & 18 Dec. 2009; Moumouni Daouda, Tillabéri, 3 Nov. 2005; Abdou Ali Tazard, Tessaoua, 9 Febr. 2006; Amadou Madougou, Niamey, 24 Febr. 2006.

worked as a mason but sick upon his release, found a job at the government food stock agency, as did fellow Nanking trainee Hassane Djibo. Djingaré was to work at the agency for nine years, ending up, however, with a deficient pension.⁵¹

Some of the domestic cadres, who had neither been involved in guerrilla action nor studied abroad, did better, as exemplified by Tahir Moustapha, who managed to commence a career in a commercial firm and travelled abroad, visiting the Netherlands, among other countries. Later he was to become director of a company in the construction business. Likewise, Maman Tchila, the Sawabist from Zinder with a lifetime of harassment behind him, turned to trade. Adamou Sékou, upon retirement from the magistrature began work for the Shell company,⁵² something that must be set against the background of inadequate pensions and the privatisation of economic activity in the 1980s.

If with the arrival of Kountché the grass roots benefited from an end to pestering but not a significant improvement in status, Sawaba's students, by contrast, profited more. Many were incorporated into the bureaucracy—ironically strengthening a regime that hardly formed an expression of the popular will, even if Kountché developed a reputation as lover of the poor. Thus, Sao Marakan, not a Sawaba student but someone who had sympathised with the movement, managed to become a judge. Daouda Hamani, thanks to his study of biology in the Soviet Union, was to rise to an important position in the scientific-medical establishment. Bachir Boukary moved to Filingué, where he got a job in the livestock sector. Later he was to become assistant sub-prefect in Dosso. Others who had pursued technical training also did well. Tahirou Maïga, for example, saw his years as geology student in Kiev rewarded with a well-paid job at UNDP, after which he was to become director of a tin mine in the Aïr.⁵³ Kaïro Alfari assumed a career in civil engineering, becoming director of the Tahoua-Arlit road building programme as well as other infrastructural projects.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Interviews Ali Mahamane Madaouki, Zinder, 14 Febr. 2003; Daouda Hamadou, Ayorou, 20 Dec. 2009; Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003; Ali Amadou, Niamey, 28 Jan. 2003; Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003 & 19 Oct. 2011; Soumana Idrissa, Gothèye, 1 Nov. 2005; Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 27 Oct. 2005; Hassane Djibo, Niamey, 22 Febr. 2008; & email Ali Mahamane Madaouki to author, 6 July 2011 ('revenue au monde').

⁵² Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, vol. 1, 378; interviews Tahir Moustapha, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003; Maman Tchila, Zinder, 9 Febr. 2003.

⁵³ Interviews Sao Marakan, Niamey, 16 Nov. 2002; Moumouni Daouda, Tillabéri, 3 Nov. 2005; Bachir Boukary, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003; Tahirou Ayoubou Maïga, Niamey, 28 Oct. 2005.

⁵⁴ Issoufou Assoumane finally obtained his engineering job in Niger, at the state electricity company, NIGELEC, making it to a directorship. Interviews Kaïro Alfari, Niamey,

Finally, Zoumari Issa Seyni began a career in education, teaching at different schools; an historian trained in the oral traditions of western Niger, he would get a teaching position at the university (1986).⁵⁵

More exceptional was the trajectory of Mounkaila Beidari. Disillusioned over Bakary's decision to abandon the struggle, the Sawaba escapee had decided to stay in Europe. It was in West Berlin that he heard of the putsch. He wrote to Niamey and applied for a scholarship—one of the few Sawabists to study on a government grant, he would later recall with a smile. Upon his graduation in 1978 Beidari returned home and entered the diplomatic service, getting postings to Addis Ababa, Cameroon and the UN, besides the foreign ministry in Niamey.⁵⁶ Thus, in one way, the angry young man from the capital symbolised Sawabists who prospered under the Kountché years, compensating for the suffering that they had endured under the *ancien régime*. Beidari's biography found a parallel in that of Hassane Igodoé, who had done guerrilla training in Algeria and Ghana. Igodoé had apparently avoided capture (at least until 1966-67) and later entered the diplomatic service.⁵⁷

A special category was formed by Sawabists who had worked for Radio Peking, including Amada Bachard, who returned in the year of the coup, and Hamidou Adamou Abdoulaye, who stayed on in the People's Republic.⁵⁸ Bachard obtained a job at Radio Niger, and while reporting the news from the government's perspective (as he had been trained to do), was left in peace, also during the arrests of 1975. He was to continue working as a journalist until his retirement (1997). Hamidou Abdoulaye returned to Niger only in 1982, witnessing first the upheavals surrounding the 'Gang of Four' before Kountché asked him to come home. He, too, joined national radio, since 1974 called 'La Voix du Sahel', providing it with the benefit of

30 Oct. 2005 & 22 Febr. 2008; Issoufou Assoumane, Niamey, 30 Jan. 2003. Aboubacar Abdou, who had been active as a guerrilla but had also pursued academic training in the Soviet Union, became a diplomat stationed in Ghana. Interview, Niamey, 22 Oct. 2011.

⁵⁵ CV Zoumari Issa Seyni.

⁵⁶ Interview Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 November 2003.

⁵⁷ Interviews Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003; Ibid. & Ali Amadou, Niamey, 15 Dec. 2009; Surveillance du Territoire (Bureau de Coordination), no. 396/SN/ST: Organisation Terroriste "Sawaba" (Recueil des dirigeants et militants actifs en fuite); ex. no. 000148, dest. le Sous Préfet de Dosso.

⁵⁸ Another ex-announcer at Radio Peking, Adamou Loutou, had already returned in 1967 and found a job at the cement factory in Malbaza, east of Konni. Bureau de coordination et de liaison, No. 879/BCL: Etudiants et Boursiers du Sawaba de Retour des Pays de l'Est, 18 Oct. 1968; ANN, 86 MI 1 E.8.14.

his experience and language skills.⁵⁹ In this way many of the professional abilities nurtured in Sawaba's years underground were now inserted into the heart of the political system. Conversely, some of the movement's cadres continued to maintain the international contacts that they had built up during their visits to the Eastern Bloc; Mamoudou Pascal, for example, would travel to union conferences in Eastern Europe at least three times before his retirement in 1990.⁶⁰

The trajectories of Sawabists after 1974 were, thus, varied but influenced by previous experience: when Aba Kaka, who became involved in Sawaba through the Bosso chieftaincy dispute in the 1950s, returned home, he was confronted with another person in the position of canton chief. Two years later the latter died and the dogged commando at last avenged the insult inflicted on him by getting elected to the chieftaincy.⁶¹ This continuation, or renewal, of past occupations was more explicit in the case of cadres (of BNA provenance), who had already made up with the RDA before Sawaba's guerrilla war. Men like Diougou Sangaré and Gonimi Boukar, who obtained jobs before independence and had not been harassed since, not even in the wake of the armed hostilities, continued their careers uninterrupted until statutory retirement.⁶² They exemplified the moderates and pragmatists who had backed out of the struggle in time.⁶³ Mahaman Dan Bouzoua, Sawaba's electoral mastermind in Zinder whose defection in 1959 had shocked cadres, pursued a successful career as a labour inspector (he was to make the Hadj to Mecca), while Sékou Hamidou, who had sustained a bullet wound during the referendum, enjoyed an distinguished career as a medical specialist.⁶⁴ Other cadres, who had not been so quick to abandon

⁵⁹ Interviews Amada Bachard and Hamidou Adamou Abdoulaye, Niamey, 14 & 19 Dec. 2009.

⁶⁰ Syndicat National de l'Administration Générale (S.N.A.G.): Itinéraire Syndicale de Mamoudou Pascal (in possession author) and interview Mamoudou Pascal, Niamey, 22 Febr. 2003.

⁶¹ Interview Aba Kaka, Bosso, 13 Febr. 2006. There is a partial parallel with Maïdanda Djermakoye, the pharmacist whose Sawabist affiliation had never pleased his family—the Djermakoy dynasty in Dosso. He was to rise to the prestigious position of provincial chief in 2000. Interview Maïdanda Djermakoye, Dosso, 17 Febr. 2006 & email Issa Younoussi to author, 2 Dec. 2010.

⁶² In education, state administration, the diplomatic service. Sangaré engaged in international trade afterwards. Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, vol. 1, 266 & 376; interviews Gonimi Boukar, Niamey, 5 Nov. 2005 and Diougou Sangaré, Tessaoua, 9 Febr. 2006.

⁶³ As noted in ch. 8 (at n. 83), the same was true for Badéri Mahamane, who rose to the prefecture of Tahoua. Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, vol. 1, 199.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 228, 378-380. Bouzoua for a brief while was mayor of Zinder, between 1974 and Sept. 1975.

the movement, nevertheless managed to hold on to their careers. Georges Condat, like UDN cadre Illa Salifou, continued in the diplomatic service, obtaining an ambassadorship to the US before retiring in 1976.⁶⁵ More modestly, Alazi Soumaila, who had made up with the RDA after Sawaba's defeat, left the finance ministry for a job at SONARA, the groundnut export agency, and then worked as an accountant in the uranium sector. He retired in 1992. Aboubakar dit Kaou, already 54 at the time of the putsch, obtained his pension in 1976 accumulated from past jobs. Several of these people (though not Kaou) would see their careers crowned with inclusion on Niger's honours' list.⁶⁶

In effect, these differentiated paths were to seal the break-up of the movement and sap any force it could still potentially muster, though as shown below, this would not wipe out its importance in terms of memory, historical awareness and the enduring loyalties between 'comrades'. This was even true for several of the second generation, i.e. the sons of cadres who had witnessed the persecution of parents and suffered the different forms of RDA harassment (exclusion from education and jobs, surveillance of compounds, the trauma of fathers in prison). Distinct individuals now, instead of members of a movement, they, too, had to struggle to make up for a lost decade. Some were to do well, such as Ibrahim Bawa Souley, son of Baoua Souley, the Nanking trainee who had escaped execution. While the father would retire in 1987, the son (popularly known as 'IBS') worked his way up, paying for his own education and after the coup d'état obtaining posts in different companies before becoming a self-made businessman, boasting, among other things, a trade & transport firm.⁶⁷ By contrast, Mamadou Ousmane, one of the sons of Ousmane Dan Galadima who had been forced to flee Niger when he was seven, pursued a modest calling. With some years in secondary school in Mali, he had returned in 1972. He got a job at SONARA and, from the 1990s, was to engage in petty trade. Later, Amadou Madougou, one of the sons of Madougou Namaro, was to make it to a good position in the state telecommunications company. Ahmed Sékou, finally, Bakary's youngest son, was left unharmed under

⁶⁵ Ibid., 224-225; interview Georges Condat, Niamey, 27 Nov. 2003; ch. 12 n. 204.

⁶⁶ Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, vol. 1, 178-179 & 185, 380. Alazi was awarded the order of merit of Niger in 1978, Illa Salifou received the 'Grand Croix de l'Ordre National du Niger'. Sékou Hamidou obtained numerous honours, including in France and other countries.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 202 & 281; interviews Ibrahim Bawa Souley, Niamey, 5 Febr. 2003 and 29 Febr. 2008.

Kountché and could complete his secondary education before going for medical studies to Cuba.⁶⁸

His father's house arrest was lifted in 1984, ending nine years of confinement.⁶⁹ However, even then Bakary remained subject to surveillance. Continuing with the writing of his memoirs, he was warned that publication might stir up old tensions. Forced to communicate the contents of his writing, he decided to postpone completion of his memoirs until later.⁷⁰ Abdoulaye Mamani fared better—he was to mature rapidly into a distinguished writer. Upon release from jail in 1980 he got married and finalised his novel *Sarraounia*, which was published in Paris the same year.⁷¹ During his life in Algiers he had already taken to poetry, writing on themes such as 'freedom', 'blood'—first published in the movement's organ *Sawaba*—, 'revolt', 'hope' and 'exile', themes that clearly bore the imprint of his experience.⁷² *Sarraounia* figured the queen of a pre-colonial polity, who, equipped with magical powers, resisted encroachment by the French coloniser. It was modelled on the queen of the Azna people in the Mawri region, east of Dosso, and inspired by the mission of Voulet-Chanoine, the expedition in 1899 that cost the lives of many people, tainted France's reputation and became the epitome of colonial aggression.⁷³ In the end the woman warrior could not, of course, defeat the French but, tellingly, this did not prevent her from standing up against them:⁷⁴ if the novel was set in pre-colonial times, its Sawabist author must have been as much inspired by his experience of metropolitan action in the decolonisation era, including *Sawaba's* vain employment of guerrilla tactics to resist the Franco-RDA combine. Mamani was to write another story, *Une nuit au Ténééré*,⁷⁵ which

⁶⁸ Interviews Mamadou Ousmane Dan Galadima, Niamey, 27 Nov. 2003; Amadou Madougou, Niamey, 24 Febr. 2006 & 17 Oct. 2011. Madougou became director of SONITEL's legal department.

⁶⁹ It was lifted in the course of an amnesty, which affected around 40 people. *Africa Research Bulletin* (pol. series), Apr. 1984.

⁷⁰ Bakary, *Silence!*, 283-284.

⁷¹ Interview Mrs Mamani Abdoulaye, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003.

⁷² Mamani, *Oeuvres poétiques, passim*.

⁷³ Its full title was *Sarraounia: Le drame de la reine magicienne* (Paris, 1980). See A. Salifou, *Histoire du Niger* (Paris, 1989), 158-160 & E. Séré de Rivières, *Histoire du Niger* (Paris, 1965), 206. For *Sarraounia* O. Tandina, 'Sarraounia, an Epic?', *Research in African Literatures*, 24 (1993), 2, 23-32. *Sarraounia* was rewritten into a film script (with Mamani's help) and, though Kountché stopped its shooting in Niger, the film came out in 1986, winning the first prize at the Pan-African Film Festival in Ouagadougou in 1987. Pénel, 'Introduction', 12.

⁷⁴ Pénel, 'Introduction', 33.

⁷⁵ See B. Magnier (ed.), *Paris-Dakar et autres nouvelles* (Paris, 1987), 57-64; Pénel, 'Abdoulaye Mamani', 146.

also drew on personal experience, depicting thirst, incarceration and the absolute silence of the desert. In the same vein, Ibrahim Issa was to publish a collection of poems after his release from jail. Some of these, like 'Sahara', can be read as a tale of the years in Dao Timmi, drawing in vivid terms a world marked by a relentless sun, scorched earth and terrifying desolation.⁷⁶

The Rebellion in the History of Niger

The revolt of the little folk has gone down in history as foolish and an enterprise that was bound to fail. Much of this established view—created by the Franco-RDA combine, intent on underscoring its seemingly self-evident legitimacy, and copied by uncritical reporters—can be dismissed as a form of hindsight involving anachronisms about what the historical actors knew and could have known before and during the struggle. It also ignored the motivations of men, which, in whatever historical context, can have as much impact on the course of events as any objective, material condition.⁷⁷ The result was the creation of a teleological misrepresentation: reading history backwards, the revolt inescapably culminated in defeat.

This picture is essentially unhistorical and ignores several facts. First, the invasion was carefully prepared, based on a strategy that betrayed considerable thinking and involved a degree of coordination that enabled the guerrillas to get engaged simultaneously across the length and breadth of the land. Second, many of the commandos were not passive victims led astray by Sawaba's leadership, as the regime liked to suggest, but dogged fighters who had undergone hardened training in Algeria or Vietnam and confronted the regime's targets, sometimes more than once. Third, the guerrillas, who in cultural respects were firmly embedded in the society in which they fought, over a considerable number of years (1960-1966) showed a tenacity contradicting the picture that reduced their actions to a whim pursued during a few autumn months and concluded by a lone attempt on the president. The prolonged period during which they were active with

⁷⁶ I. Issa, *La vie et ses facéties: Poèmes* (Niamey, ca. 1982). Issa also wrote on the city of Gao and the Hoggar mountains in Algeria—had he been there in the course of the struggle? Like Mamani, he wrote on Pan-Africanist themes. He was also a perceptive observer of everyday life, which influenced his themes.

⁷⁷ The above points have also been made in studies on the Polish rising in Warsaw. See f.e. N. Davies, *Rising '44: The Battle for Warsaw* (London, 2005).

infiltrations was grounded in the knowledge that the regime was, in fact, weak: a divided administration marked by numerous fissures opposing state to party and militias to armed forces, the First Republic was headed by a leadership that was unbalanced, fractured and paranoid. Lacking self-control and weakly embedded in society, it was exposed to the generational and regional tensions running freely during the RDA's reign, and its French benefactors frequently expressed concern about its fragile state. Hence, Sawabists had reason to think that the regime could be brought down. Peasant arguments in the western region that repression had made the rebellion a necessary act that could satisfy the yearning for relief thus betrays a deeper wisdom than the retrospective dismissals of educated observers.

The reasons for Sawaba's defeat lie in a complexity of factors that were missed by those who all too easily wrote off the movement's enterprise. Jump-started into attacking in September 1964, without revising strategy in the wake of the uncovering of cells, the advantage that could have been reaped from the element of surprise was seriously reduced. This reinforced the other factors that impaired the attack: a geography militating against guerrilla warfare (especially in that season, in most areas marked by poor vegetation and too many people in the fields harvesting); a hinterland that was often unsafe as a result of similar conditions and unreliable authorities; and the wide dispersal of the units, for which they were insufficiently equipped, also because—crucially—most communities were inadequately mobilised themselves, cowed as they had been by the militias of the RDA. If Niger's overwhelmingly rural character and the semi-urban origins of the little people made it inevitable that infiltration focused on the cities and countryside alike, the rural population's vulnerability to intimidation by the powers that be made its mobilisation difficult. Against this background, the manpower put into the field proved woefully deficient and the movement's calculation that the people would rally to its call, fatally flawed.

The leadership understood this and subsequently searched for a hard-hitting, urban strategy based on an assassination and partially army-driven coup that focused on speed—and, as Sawaba had always shown that it thought the regime's benefactors to be the ultimate enemy (France), it is clear whom it hoped to take by surprise. If there is no evidence that the army had these vicissitudes in mind when it prepared the 1974 putsch and tried to catch the metropole off-guard (though Diallo's mutiny, with its

Sawabist dimension, was part of its institutional heritage),⁷⁸ this gave the Sawaba rebellion a deeper significance. The expulsion of metropolitan troops and Kountché's renunciation of the defence treaty with France after the coup cannot be explained only by the hatred that FAN forces felt for their French advisers.⁷⁹ This dislike must also be set in the wider ideological context of post-colonial Niger, in which the unionised movement of 'petit peuple' opposed the RDA over a more self-conscious, nationalist posture to the point of standing up to the metropole. Kountché's recognition of the People's Republic of China after the coup d'état formed the historical culmination of older struggles, even if his regime rejected any revolutionary transformation of society.⁸⁰

If Sawaba's revolt was the necessary precursor to the Kountché era,⁸¹ another aspect that enhanced its importance—if by default—was the progressive consolidation of the state and its repressive apparatus. It is deeply ironic that Niger, through the destruction of a modern movement that aimed at reform, economic upliftment and societal transformation, managed to avoid the post-colonial trials and tribulations of neighbouring Chad. Conversely, the fact that FROLINAT was to achieve the defeat of the central government had much to do with the different course of mobilisation pursued by its leaders. Whereas Sawaba acted in accordance with the background of the little folk and sought nationwide support, not confined to a specific region but with the semi-urbanised marginals spread across the national territory as its base, in Chad the strength of rebel forces rested squarely on the pull of ethno-regional sentiment. If the state in Niger, too, never managed to subdue the geographical periphery, its persecution of the Sawabist community was to provide its core with substantial repressive means.⁸² At the centre stood the intelligence institutions (the BCL, the Sûreté and their community of spies and agents), carefully nurtured by the French and gradually devolved into the hands of Nigériens selected and trained to maintain the highest degree of vigilance. The French also

⁷⁸ One of the 1974 putschists in 1964 was suspected of Sawabist sympathies. Djerma-koye, *15 avril 1974*. See also Issa, 'Le régime militaire de Seyni Kountché', 133.

⁷⁹ Salifou, *Le Niger*, 216-117; *Africa Research Bulletin* (pol. series), May 1974. A small French force was to return to Niger in 1979.

⁸⁰ Jouve, 'Du Niger de Diiori Hamani au gouvernement des militaires', 40.

⁸¹ As proudly asserted by some cadres. Interviews with Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 Nov. 2003 and Kaïro Alfari, Niamey, 30 Oct. 2005.

⁸² Robert Buijtenhuijs clearly underestimated the political brutality of the Diiori regime and its role in avoiding the Chadian trajectory. See his *Le Frolinat et les révoltes populaires du Tchad, 1965-1976* (The Hague, 1978), 438.

designed the security practices underpinning this, even their hideous features such as interrogation routines and torture, which sometimes were a carbon copy of the Algerian war (though not perhaps the deaths in custody, which signified a breakdown of professionalism and usually involved the more random brutality of the paramilitaries).

The origins of the regime—so blatantly manufactured and lifted into the saddle by the French—gave rise to a form of governance that was contrived and insecure, thus necessitating its office-bearers to pursue totalitarian control in order to feel safe. This was symbolised by the very location of the BCL inside the presidential complex. The manhunt for Sawabists under the First Republic taught the people to fear its rulers and the Kountché regime in essence built on the repressive routines established under the Franco-RDA combine. Enriched by the proceeds of uranium mining, the military devoted untold resources to the extension of the repressive architecture they inherited, leading, among other things, to the recruitment of thousands of additional informers.⁸³ The BCL remained at the heart of this web and became the symbol of popular fear.⁸⁴ Though completely run now by Nigériens, it even physically continued in the same place, near the presidential residence. In addition, it obtained another building opposite the foreign ministry at the ‘Boulevard de la République’, known as the BCL’s ‘brigade’, where Amnesty International reported that torture was carried out, according to routines that to some extent differed from those under the French and RDA.⁸⁵ The new brutality was symbolised by the BCL’s head, Amadou Oumarou dit Bonkano, whose crude personality represented, in a way, the merger of the strands of violence that had characterised the First Republic: one supervised by the French and applied at the BCL, methodical and targeted though cruel if necessary, the other random and occasionally uncontrolled, as represented by the Gendarmerie and its chief.⁸⁶ More generally, the transition to military rule was marked by striking if sad continuities—ranging from the pivotal role that paranoia played in the political system (symbolised first by Diamballa Maïga, then Seyni Kountché) to the persistence of terrible prison conditions, marked

⁸³ Issa, ‘Le régime militaire de Seyni Kountché’, 142.

⁸⁴ Salifou, *Le Niger*, 270.

⁸⁵ One Amnesty report (author’s possession) recounts victims being strung up by their feet and beaten.

⁸⁶ The beliefs in the supernatural by its one-time head, Garba Badié, bore an uncanny resemblance to the personality of Bonkano, who hailed from a family of marabouts. P. Chilson, *Riding the Demon: On the Road in West Africa* (Athens, GA, and London, 1999), 69–71.

by poor and insufficient food, lack of medical care, deaths in custody (many victims being military themselves). Thus, the seeds of repression sown by the Franco-RDA combine flowered.

The destruction of the 'petit peuple' as a political force had in social respects been grounded in the hegemony of the 'commis', as represented by the RDA and distinguished by economic practices punishing marginals to the advantage of large interests, French or other.⁸⁷ The markers of this hegemony included Western-inspired lifestyles, comfortable positions in the bureaucracy and greater or lesser stakes in the country's corruption rackets—'l'Autrichienne' towering at the top of the pyramid. This narrow social basis, if ideologically seeking legitimacy in an unashamed acquiescence in Niger's neo-colonial *encadrement* (until late in the RDA's reign), betrayed itself in a psychological insecurity that had its roots in the regime's rise to pre-eminence. Of course, the unforgiving nature of its rule also had a local ancestry,⁸⁸ and the violent competition for power during the 1950s—with its near-territorial conception, or 'ownership', of electoral strongholds—pointed to an uncompromising notion of power that the camel's people, too, shared. Yet, the French might that undergirded the RDA's hegemony unquestionably exacerbated the tyranny of the First Republic.

The regime's anxiety was personified by its president, who, viewed from Sawaba's rebellion, had much of a profiteering coward who at key moments exhibited a callousness not surpassed by that of the other figures of state. Of course, one may object that this is too harsh an assessment, especially since the history of the First Republic is interwoven with the notion of a triumvirate in which Diori, as the more 'gentle' character, represented the human face and was said not to be responsible for the horrors committed in his name; and the regime's excesses should be blamed on its more disagreeable characters, i.e. the intemperate RDA chair and the obsessed interior minister.⁸⁹

However, if the personal eccentricities of Hama, Maïga and Diori are historical facts, this smacks of a desire to shift the culpability of a political figure to his entourage, an inclination that is universal in political systems

⁸⁷ See ch. 7 above at n. 45.

⁸⁸ As argued by F. Fuglestad, 'UNIS and BNA: The Rôle of 'Traditionalist' Parties in Niger, 1948-1960', *Journal of African History*, 16 (1975), 113-135, but see in this regard for a subtle treatment of the concept of culture J.P. Olivier de Sardan, 'Le culturalisme traditionaliste africaniste: Analyse d'une idéologie scientifique', *Cahiers d'études africaines*, 50 (2010), 419-453.

⁸⁹ See, typically, Salifou, *Le Niger*, 152 and Higgot and Fuglestad, 'The 1974 Coup', 387.

when in need of upholding minimal illusions of legitimacy. While it is true that Boubou Hama and Maïga wielded considerable power and Diori occasionally adopted a softer approach towards his enemies, several facts stand in the way of a benign assessment of his role. The ugliest manifestations of his supremacy—the beating and torture of detainees—took place at a stone’s throw from his residence, inside the presidential complex. It is impossible that Diori was unaware of this, and any such claim is not only belied by the testimonies about screaming victims but also by the French, who reported that he was conscious of the methods of the police. For a long time Diori did nothing to rein in the ferocious Gendarmerie or the supervising Maïga, even though he was too close to the principal figures in the repressive machinery (by blood ties and marriage) to avoid responsibility for its atrocities. The reason for his inaction lay, simply, in the benefit he derived from the abuses that took place, and if Diori shed tears over the death of Koussanga Alzouma, he went along with the lie with which the tortured demise of Boubacar Diallo—one of his own cabinet ministers—was covered up. Even if it was the president who halted the executions after the initial danger had passed, at key moments he showed little mercy towards defeated foes. He also played a central part in the uncompromising hunt for Sawabists, great and small, long after the crisis had subsided.

Through signing the shoot-to-kill instructions, Diori made himself responsible for the excesses that accompanied the government’s measures. It was in his own garden that the body of Dandouna Aboubakar was laid to rot in desecration and it was inside the presidential complex that Sawabists spent their first time in detention, getting paraded before the press in his very presence. There is a testimony about how Diori played a role in such humiliations. In the spring of 1966 four detainees, including Djibo Seyni and the badly tortured Diop, were dragged out of their cells to face a Western journalist. Dressed in shaggy clothes, they were brought to the presidential garden, where soldiers forced them to stand and watch the president going for a stroll, reportedly with fear in their eyes (they had not yet been sentenced).⁹⁰ Thus, if it is true that Diori gave his pair of glasses to his would-be assassin,⁹¹ this was a sign of his hypocrisy. In many ways his double-hearted personality reflected the nature of the regime: Diori’s apprehension and his fondness of foreign travel, with its attendant luxuries, mirrored the neo-colonial dependence of privileged Nigériens and echoed the fears of a ruling class and its immersion in graft—the presi-

⁹⁰ *Le Niger*, 16 May 1966.

⁹¹ Interview Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003.

dent's Parisian properties underlining that corruption was not the monopoly of a hated wife, the more so as Diori, through misguided loyalty, refused to act against embezzling acolytes.⁹² When he finally began to argue for better terms in the uranium negotiations, it was too late to alter his reputation—his ignominious departure highlighting how his historical role contrasted with the refusal of the little people to bow to greater forces.⁹³

A Social Movement on the Battlefield

Guinea and Niger were in the front of the forces resisting the Gaullist efforts to retain some control over France's African possessions, many of which by 1958 were intent on distancing themselves politically more than the Fifth Republic then wished to tolerate. While Sékou Touré managed to disentangle his territory from the French embrace, especially because he was pushed to do so by the grass roots in the Guinean nationalist movement,⁹⁴ it is tempting to speculate what would have happened if Sawaba had succeeded in doing the same. The rivalry between Sawaba and the RDA betrayed a 'zero-sum' conception of power, which, even before the Gaullist intervention, did not augur well for the democratic process. The riots orchestrated by Bakary's government in April 1958 and the RDA's actions in the run-up to the confrontations that month show that compromise was difficult. Sawaba's reign had already illustrated how the victory of a political formation could set free the antagonism of social groups—the boisterous little folk trying to consolidate their progress by chipping away at the position of a chiefly class dependent on the status quo. Hence, it is conceivable that a Sawaba victory in the referendum could have unleashed a similar animosity between 'petit peuple' and 'commis' (as actually happened under RDA rule, but in inverse fashion). Their relationship was, in social respects, antagonistic, though the interests of 'commis' and little folk alike—both belonging to the lowly ranks of the talakawa—stood out against those of the chiefs. What would have happened to the RDA under these circumstances? Would it have been banned by a Bakary-run government as Sawaba was outlawed by the Franco-RDA combine? The

⁹² *Le Monde* (Paris), 25 Apr. 1974.

⁹³ One source claims Diori had tried to protect his family against the soldiers who entered the palace. Jouve, 'Du Niger de Diori Hamani au gouvernement des militaires', 22.

⁹⁴ See E. Schmidt, *Mobilizing the Masses: Gender, Ethnicity, and Class in the Nationalist Movement in Guinea, 1939-1958* (Portsmouth, NH, 2005).

immediate aftermath of the April riots shows that the party became the object of measures restricting its parliamentary prerogatives.

Would a Sawaba government, then, have ended in mob rule? The historical record of Niger in the 1950s leaves little room for optimism. The authoritarianism to which Guinea succumbed under Sékou Touré is a reminder that popular victory in the plebiscite was not a guarantee of democratic government. Yet, most countries, including those opting for the French Community, after independence reduced the scope of political pluralism—if it had survived the onslaught of the referendum.⁹⁵ Moreover, as Schmidt has noted, there was no inevitability in Guinea's authoritarian development, which was the result, rather, of historical contingencies.⁹⁶ To suggest an inescapable descent into dictatorship on the basis of the rejection of the French Community is tantamount to reading backwards the post-independence failures of Guinea's ruling party: a teleological narrative similar to the misrepresentation of Sawaba's rising. In any case, a comparison with the history of Guinea would never yield an identical picture. It should be noted, for example, that in order to create a majority government Bakary had been prepared to compromise with the chiefly class, the very enemy of the little folk.

In any case, when excluding the counterfactual, one is left with a *real* history, i.e. one of the purposive annihilation of Niger's only modern social movement at the hands of a trans-national alliance of metropolitan and 'commis' interests. If historically Sawabists were saved by the grace of defeat, theirs is a fascinating story, not so much of large-scale violent conflict as one of political agitation and activists believing in a cause, existing side by side with the uglier aspects of canvassing. The casualties in the course of the guerrilla operations cannot have totalled more than a couple of hundred men,⁹⁷ excluding the civilian victims of regime reprisals (deaths and

⁹⁵ See T. Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa: France's Successful Decolonization?* (New York, 2002); A. Zolberg, *Creating Political Order: The Party-States of West Africa* (Chicago, 1966); F. Cooper, 'Possibility and Constraint: African Independence in Historical Perspective', *Journal of African History*, 49 (2008), 167-196.

⁹⁶ E. Schmidt, 'Anticolonial Nationalism in French West Africa: What Made Guinea Unique?', *African Studies Review*, 52 (2009), no. 2, 23-24.

⁹⁷ One Sawaba sympathiser twice claimed that a total of 140 commandos were killed, perhaps in one interview suggesting that they fell in the Tahoua district alone. If this last aspect is clearly exaggerated, does the fact that he was a judge and had access to court files explain this number? Yet, he may have had access to the book of Georges Chaffard (*Les carnets secrets de la décolonisation* [Paris, 1967], vol. 2, 325), who gave a casualty figure of 136 in the 1964 autumn operations, based on regime sources. Interviews Sao Marakan, Niamey, 16 Nov. 2002 and 29 Jan. 2003.

especially refugees, whose number cannot be reconstructed), executed commandos and the casualties of prison life. As traumatic as these experiences were for individuals, the deeper significance of the camel's rebellion lies elsewhere. Sawabists were the product of an historically specific political culture that had formed in an era of socio-economic transition, which, while having advanced more cautiously than elsewhere in AOF, by the 1950s had produced changes that were to prove significant in the longer term. For the first time social groups were developing that were primarily horizontally structured. The 'petit people' were one of them and together with modestly better-placed, technologically more sophisticated strata had taken root in the semi-urban worlds emerging across the colonial territory.

By definition their position was ambivalent and marked by a social mobility that was real, yet limited—thus breeding malcontents who had an interest in more thorough change. Having an axe to grind not just with the racially grounded colonial order but all bearers of ascribed status, the little people, gradually immersed in the prescriptive enlightenment of Marx and Lenin and the guidance of the union world, broadened their horizon and developed an eye for the painful aspects of society, notably its socio-cultural inequalities but also its poverty and skewed *encadrement* in the metropolitan sphere of influence: Ali Amadou, the cadre from Téra, thus woke up in Dakar when confronted with the haughtiness of de Gaulle, while in his later reminiscences the Dargol commando, Mounkaila Albagna, would lament 'why people still had to live like in 1900'⁹⁸ Young, in age and behaviour, Sawaba's cadres were driven by political passions, at the bottom of which lay anger as well as local cultural notions, in which the messianic promise of deliverance and a new age held pride of place and informed the party's action—political and military. Its language was a Marxist-inspired nationalism and was accompanied by a readiness to resort to force. Violence was thus never far away from political agitation, grounded in cultural repertoires that were also shared by other politico-social formations but in the case of the little folk enjoyed the added legitimacy of Marxism's revolutionary message.

Driven further onto this road by systematic persecution,⁹⁹ which meant that few or no alternatives were left, an attempt was made to transform agitators into guerrillas with the help of the Algerians, the Cuban example, and the Great Helmsman. The result was an intriguing blend of political activist/guerrilla combatant, who, rather than coercing the populace,

⁹⁸ Interview with Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003.

⁹⁹ Interview with Ali Mahamane Madaouki, Zinder, 14 Febr. 2003.

walked into battle as the agitator of old—if armed, still hoping to please his electorate and lead it in the march on Havana and force the end to suffering; millenarian rather than military, in this *mentalité* lies the tragedy of the commandos, who, as a Vietnam trainee later recalled, ‘fought with courage, not weapons’. Yet, the uncanny historical continuities between ‘petit peuple’ agitating in the 1950s and guerrilleros invading Niger in 1964 leave no room for belittlement. Several aspects of the insurgency, such as the swiftness built into Sawaba’s strategy, were also informed by straightforward military principles, and the fact that operations carried on after the first defeat on the battlefield shows that the transformation into commandos had advanced far. The same Vietnam trainee would later questionably contend that, had the coup against Nkrumah not intervened, the movement could have persevered and defeated the RDA.¹⁰⁰

This confidence was fed by the conviction that violence could help effect change. In certain cases it can, of course, but in many others the employment of violence can easily be counter-productive. That Sawabists developed a blind spot for this had not only much to do with the experience of canvassing in the streets of Gothèye, Maradi or Tessaoua, but also with ideologies of revolutionary liberation, which, in the Hour of Sputnik, had attained such a global prevalence that the really existing socialism did, indeed, pose a political alternative—especially to unionised little people persecuted by ‘commis’ and French alike.¹⁰¹ Established and legitimate, the different strands of Marxist ideology pointed out the goal that Sawaba’s agitators had to pursue and which violent instruments they should employ. At the same time, if the training and weaponry of the Eastern Bloc made the RDA’s overthrow seem a viable option, the nature of Marxist ideology and its discursive off-shoots (Leninism, Maoism, the prescriptions of the FLN, the writings of Che and the advice of Uncle Ho) all harboured one specific element that made them particularly appealing to the little folk: as pointed out by Colburn,¹⁰² these dogmas all shared a romantic narrative arguing the wisdom of a Herculean transformation of society through a world-shattering struggle to destroy the old order. In doing so they often provided little precise guidance as to how to effect the rupture with the past, let alone a coherent plan on the governance to replace it—in other

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Soumana Idrissa, Gothèye, 18 Dec. 2009.

¹⁰¹ K. van Walraven, ‘Sawaba, Niger and the Revolution of a Social Movement (1954-1966)’; paper ‘Lutter dans les Afriques’; Université de Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne, 22-23 January 2010.

¹⁰² F.D. Colburn, *The Vogue of Revolution in Poor Countries* (Princeton, 1994).

words, a romanticised conception of revolutionary change that fitted well in the millenarian mindset of the Sawabists.¹⁰³ The painstaking way in which guerrillas like Hassane Djibo, the agricultural clerk from Kollo, and the commando in the Zinder sector, Dodo Hamballi, worked on their notebooks, copying out the lessons of the Great Helmsman or reporting on the representatives of feudalism in their region, bears at least a suggestion of confidence in alien formulas working miracles. Thus, if it blurred the view on reality, this romantic narrative was not just a personal trait of Djibo Bakary, advising his cohorts to attack their adversaries with sticks, but it was also shared by the rank and file—many years later the Algeria-trained commando Ali Mahamane Madaouki, in considering Niger's predicament in the new millennium, would contemplate that, one day, the people would rise again.¹⁰⁴

Still, as discussed in the conclusions of Chapter 13, Bakary himself (and Sawaba's leadership) bore a heavy responsibility for what, in this context, went militarily amiss, such as the precipitous decision to attack *without* a revision of strategy put in jeopardy by the premature discovery of cells, the guerrillas' inadequate weaponry and the insufficient number of men sent effectively to their deaths. Set against their educated background, the leaders' blind spot for the counter-productive side of violence is less pardonable, and if Djibo Bakary's recommended resort to sticks was real, this was not just evidence of an emotional state of mind but frivolous—especially when set against his personal fear of physical violence (see Chapter 6 above).

Madaouki's profession of faith mentioned above points to one of the most fascinating aspects of the history of the Sawaba movement, i.e. that a great many of its cadres were, quite simply, extraordinary personalities. A history about political struggles is perforce also a history about the agitators, and it is for this reason that this book has placed emphasis on the characters, ideas and passions as well as personal backgrounds of Sawaba's men and women; it shows that their revolt involved not only a political narrative but also a *social history*. In this respect there is little that could be considered as part of private lives and therefore irrelevant, as Sawabists approached a type of activists that could be characterised as 'uncommon commoners': talakawa from the lower social strata or exercising the more

¹⁰³ See also K. van Walraven and J. Abbink, 'Rethinking Resistance in African History: An Introduction', in J. Abbink, M. de Bruijn and K. van Walraven (eds), *Rethinking Resistance: Revolt and Violence in African History* (Leiden and Boston, 2003), 33-34.

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Ali Mahamane Madaouki, Zinder, 14 Febr. 2003.

humble professions, who developed roles or profiles not associated with the day-to-day activities of their trade, or which were well beyond their station.¹⁰⁵

Illiterate carpenters such as Dandouna Aboubakar could thus become popular tribunes; a cinema technician could rise to the status of union spokesman (Hima Dembélé); and a lorry driver could turn into a revolutionary, spurred on by a world view that the autodidact assembled from bits and pieces of socialist doctrine and a cultural immersion in Sufism (Diop). Shopkeepers such as Boukary Karemi dit Kokino developed into ardent social activists, while company clerks became poets (Abdoulaye Mamani), postmen professional campaigners (Sallé Dan Koulou) and court clerks and interpreters political thinkers (Adamou Sékou, Ousmane Dan Galadima)—a little along the line of the agitation and philosophising by cobblers and other artisans in early modern Europe.¹⁰⁶ This was facilitated by the fact that Sawaba's little folk, having crossed the village boundary, had developed their *imagination*—through their travels,¹⁰⁷ their connection to the airwaves (several, such as Joseph Akouété and Oumarou Moustapha, worked as radio operators)¹⁰⁸ or through their exposure to the film screen (as in the case of Dembélé and, perhaps, Kokino). New thoughts stimulated new activities.

In so doing, Sawabists developed a broad range of roles. Some became the perennial critic, like Dan Galadima, whose tongue was so resented by the French but whose asceticism coupled with physical features reminding some of Ho Chi Minh also met with fascination,¹⁰⁹ not least because he firmly believed in the righteousness of views in which social justice held centre stage.¹¹⁰ His role approached that of Bakary himself, who provided a passionate vision, which, coupled with his charisma, won the movement so many adherents. At the other end of the scale cadres engaged in wheel-

¹⁰⁵ Inspiration here was drawn from E. Hobsbawm, *Uncommon People: Resistance, Rebellion, and Jazz* (New York, 1998).

¹⁰⁶ E. Hobsbawm and J.W. Scott, 'Political Shoemakers', in Hobsbawm, *Uncommon People*, 18-43.

¹⁰⁷ As noted, veterinary nurses, representative of the better-placed strata allied to the 'petit peuple', were important because of the itinerant nature of their profession, and their position as rural intellectuals. There is an unexpected parallel here with the role of vets in the rise of the Dutch fascist movement in the 1930s.

¹⁰⁸ Radio operators have been prominent in other rebel movements, too, such as Foday Sankoh of Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front and Pol Pot of the Khmer Rouge.

¹⁰⁹ *Afrique Nouvelles*, 8-13 June 1967, no. 1.035.

¹¹⁰ Interviews Ousmane Dan Galadima, Madaoua, 8 Febr. 2003; 16 Febr. 2006; Niamey, 23 Febr. 2008.

ing and dealing to further the cause, including financially (then, too, politics required money), as a consequence of which they could get saddled with embezzlement charges by—it is true—vindictive authorities. Men like Joseph Akouété, Saloum Traoré and Sallé Dan Koulou all did time or got accused of involvement in shady schemes—were they hucksters, scroungers or just the social climbers at the other end of the spectrum? Again others assumed the role of the incorrigible culprit: Dandouna Aboubakar, not afraid of picking a fight with an RDA MP and lodging a complaint at the Sûreté; Djibo Issa, the mechanic/intelligence scout, making the life of prison staff unbearable with incessant racketing; or Koundédé, the Tessaoua activist, seeking out the local RDA for his biting mockery. They came close to the role of the street fighter: Djibo Issa loved to insult Europeans—civilians and men in authority alike; Amadou Diop, no stranger to bragging himself, was endowed with a courage rooted in the Sufist comfort of immunity; and Gambo Sawaba, that quintessential woman agitator, got assaulted in fights with NEPU's enemies, but like her sister rioters in Niamey had few qualms over molesting herself. Yet, if anger lay at the basis of this, there were also many level-headed cadres, such as Aba Kaka, excelling in the hit-and-run tactics of his guerrilla training, and Siddi Abdou, pushing his heroism to the highest sacrifice.

Our Problem was a Problem with France

The high point of Niger's decolonisation (in the sense of disentanglement from the French empire) was reached in the spring of 1958, rather than at independence two and a half years later. The anonymous photographer taking pictures of French-led police in pursuit of the armed marginals in the streets of the capital, at the end of April, exemplifies how the Fourth Republic had let developments slip out of control. It was people high up in Sawaba's hierarchy (many close to or even part of Bakary's cabinet) that had unleashed the Bella forces on the RDA. Both the police and Territorial Guards, as well as the intelligence apparatus, had by now been infiltrated by the representatives of the little folk, who caught the French completely off-guard. Together with Sawaba's efforts to capitalise on the showdown by reinforcing its control of the Assembly and increase its influence over the administration, these events amounted to a creeping coup d'état aimed at a revolutionary takeover of the state. It formed the epitome of the processes set in train by the Loi Cadre two years earlier, which allowed Africans growing control of territorial affairs but which was also a sign of how

the Fourth Republic had begun to falter. Soon after Niger had fallen into the grip of violence, Guinea, too, witnessed serious rioting.¹¹¹

This evolution was cut short by the Fifth Republic—also the result of a coup d'état, but then in the metropole—, and it was not until Kountché that Niger was again to regain a greater degree of control over its affairs than the French were willing to surrender. This is not to say that the RDA had no problems with them (it had misgivings over the latitude of its autonomy from the beginning), but the origins of its regime seriously constrained the room for manoeuvre. As Diori's embarrassing eulogy of France in his maiden speech as prime minister made clear, the formation of his government and the establishment of the so-called republic in December 1958 could not have taken place save for a complete submission to the French idea of what Niger was politically supposed to be: this notion included acceptance of the continued and very large French presence to the point of falsifying the country's history (the republic was anything but independent) and transforming Diori into a quisling: as one Sawaba sympathiser later observed, the RDA had 'betrayed Africa'.¹¹² This was, indeed, a widely held view among radical forces in the West African region.¹¹³ As Chafer has noted, the Gaullist intervention in 1958, followed by the doctored form of decolonisation two years later, came at a loss, i.e. the sidelining of militant forces almost everywhere (students, unions, youth movements) and their destruction or absorption in single ruling parties, usually with the metropole and its moderate allies working together to achieve this end.¹¹⁴

Certainly, it was the RDA's base that pushed the leadership on the course to independence, but the 'Yes' in the watershed referendum of 1958¹¹⁵ meant that the most it could achieve was the creation of a neo-colony—as the playing of the Marseillaise on independence night demonstrated. That the difference between colonial rule and the era following it was so unre-

¹¹¹ I/E: Incidents au Niger et en Guinée—Exécution de mes instructions no. 944/DC du 13 mai 1958 confirmées par T.O. chiffré du 22 mai 1958; CAOM, Cart.1041 & 2255/D.2; C. Rivière, *Guinea: The Mobilization of a People* (Ithaca, NY, and London, 1977), 72-73.

¹¹² Interview Sao Marakan, Niamey, 29 Jan. 2003.

¹¹³ See f.e. Ousmane Sembene's *L'Harmattan: référendum* (Paris, 1980 [1st ed. 1964]); Ahmadou Dicko's diary *Journal d'une défaite autour du référendum du 28 septembre 1958 en Afrique Noire* (posthumously published Paris, 1992).

¹¹⁴ T. Chafer, *The End of Empire in French West Africa: France's Successful Decolonization?* (Oxford and New York, 2002). Also K. van Walraven, 'Decolonization by Referendum: The Anomaly of Niger and the Fall of Sawaba, 1958-1959', *Journal of African History*, 50 (2009), 269-292.

¹¹⁵ See for its importance Van Walraven, 'Decolonization by Referendum'.

markable, at least for the little people (in Niger, but also in Northern Nigeria),¹¹⁶ was perhaps an omen. Fifty years of independence were to deliver extremely little in terms of development. While Diouri had promised to give priority to economic independence,¹¹⁷ its pursuit inside the *pré carré* formed a contradiction, and the dismal failure to achieve any meaningful improvement in the country's condition and a degree of macroeconomic stability vis-à-vis the outside world turned into a further indictment of the Franco-RDA combine. This is not to say that an alignment with the Eastern Bloc would have worked (let alone autarky), but the road pursued by the RDA can retrospectively be interpreted as a counterfactual argument in favour of the prior political rupture with the metropole that Bakary's government had pleaded. Even if the Kountché era and following years were sooner or later also confronted with the forbidding constraints of Niger's political economy, the brutality with which the First Republic was put in place cannot be justified on the basis of claims about the necessity of metropolitan aid. Thus, Kaïro Alfari, the Sawaba-educated civil engineer, later remarked bitterly that the French had broken their economic promises.¹¹⁸

Moreover, history cannot be reduced to macroeconomic development alone: it leaves traces in the consciousness of historical actors. If there is one area where the country's political formations differed, it was in the fact that Sawaba was the promoter of 'grand ideas for Niger'.¹¹⁹ As this involved the possibility of breaking out of the *pré carré*, it generated the hostility of the Gaullists, intent on maintaining France as a world power and, therefore, the metropolitan sphere of influence—especially in its Nigérien domain. The referendum stance therefore mattered, as can be gauged from de Gaulle's tour of Africa (it was also important for him personally, as it had to legitimise his coup). But the disagreement between Frenchmen and Sawabists actually involved two points. First, it developed over Sawaba's wish to shape external relations in a more modern form and one that would work to the best possible interest of Niger. Bakary's 'love for all peoples' meant that ties would also be established with other countries and that France's relative influence could decline—not that it would be eclipsed. This non-conflictual, co-operative vision of international rela-

¹¹⁶ R.S. Kwewum, *The Story of Gambo Sawaba* (Jos, 1990), 93.

¹¹⁷ Synthèse de Renseignements Intérieurs. 3^{ème} Trimestre 1960, Période du 1^{er} août au 30 oct. 1960, no. 2619; SHAT, 5 H 95.

¹¹⁸ Interview, Niamey, 30 Oct. 2005.

¹¹⁹ Interview with Kaïro Alfari, Niamey, 30 Oct. 2005 ('grandes idées pour le Niger').

tions (a more mature posture on the political economy of foreign affairs than the metropole's) amounted to a revisionist stance conciliatory of metropolitan interests; French influence would not really have to suffer. However, this love for all peoples meant that ties with Paris would have to be shaped *after* the attainment of independence, while the Gaullists wished to mould them completely in their own (neo-colonial) image—hence, before formal decolonisation. Sawaba's argument with the RDA was therefore not that it rejected co-operation with France or wished to break with the metropole (it did not), but that it desired ties with several developed countries. As Zinderois cadre Maman Tchila later stressed, this was a 'very big difference' from the Diori regime.¹²⁰ Its total dependence on France was to preclude manoeuvring in international relations and, thus, an increase in the country's leverage, something that would have formed a potential source of influence during the global competition of the Cold War. By the same token, RDA rule was marked by stultified political thought.

Second, the little folk objected to the Gaullists' demand for complete concurrence in their bid for power up to the point that African nationalists had to be *seen* to submit to their constitutional scenarios. Such total submission not only offended the nationalist notion of dignity but also went against cultural sensibilities: one submits totally only to Allah—hence, the importance of the right to say 'No' or, as Mounkaila Albagna later put it, 'our problem was a problem with France'.¹²¹ With time Sawaba began to take an obsessive pride in this stance (not least because it had led to its undoing), as the RDA aptly noted when it dubbed this the movement's 'talisman'. Ideologically, it was translated as a rejection of the neo-colony in favour of the capture of 'effective independence'.¹²²

Thus, the annihilation of Niger's little people as a political movement, though hardly a threat to the Gaullist might, formed the first step in the consolidation of the Fifth Republic. The long-term consequences for Niger were terrible, as the repression that the intervention of 1958 entailed introduced a political blockade that was to endure until the end of the Kountché era (1987).¹²³ France bears a heavy responsibility for this, symbolised by the pivotal role of its intelligence personnel in the interrogation of Sawabists.

¹²⁰ Interviews with Maman Tchila, Zinder, 9 Febr. 2003 and Abdou Ali Tazard, Tessaoua, 9 Febr. 2006 ('très grande différence').

¹²¹ Interview, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003.

¹²² *Le Niger*, 26 July 1965; Parti Sawaba, *Pour Un Front Démocratique de la Patrie* (Bureau Politique: Niamey, 1962), 48; interview with Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003.

¹²³ M. Djibo, *Les transformations politiques au Niger à la veille de l'indépendance* (Paris, 2001), 271.

If these officials did not personally torment their victims, they gave orders to this effect. They were present during torture sessions, oversaw the practice of maltreating detainees and were the sole ones to decide when victims' answers sufficed and the abuse should stop. As noted in this book, the names of these officials are known. Not only did they figure, time and again, in the oral testimonies of Sawabists, but the same names can be found in Niger's national archives. These, together with French military archives and secret service files, at times contain explicit mention of or allusion to maltreatment—by these French officials or their Nigérien underlings. With the onset of the Kountché era, these men returned to the metropole. Here they sometimes assumed administrative positions, which, even if rather humble, sheds an incongruous light on the French polity itself.

The dehumanising language in which the French approached Sawaba (they habitually likened it to a disease to be eradicated) typified their implacable hostility to the point of greeting the lynching of guerrillas as a 'healthy response' of the populace.¹²⁴ This hatred could run its course freely, also because the French set it in the context of the Cold War—interlocking with the abuses of this era—and of their hostility to Algeria and other rebel movements, such as Cameroon's UPC, with which Sawaba's struggle was willy-nilly associated. Yet, the destruction of the movement of little folk was not only wanton, it was frivolous: the significance of the French Community was quickly to prove transitory, in spite of Foccart's cynical suggestion that the circumstances of 1960, in which France was led to accept Niger's formal independence, represented a difference of 'centuries' compared with 1958. Despite their disagreements, the French could probably also have had their way with a Sawaba-run government, or their interests at least sufficiently secured: even if they had allowed the 'No' vote to pass, there is no reason to think—not from the perspective of Sawaba's world view—that France and Niger would not have hammered out a new mode of co-operation that would have paid attention to the metropole's interests.

Instead, the Gaullists needlessly forced electorates that wished to vote in tune with the times on a deliberately bumpy road in international affairs. As in Guinea, the initiative for the break with Bakary came from the

¹²⁴ Événements survenus en Afrique Francophone pendant la semaine du 12 au 18 oct. 1964; SHAT, 10 T 210; Renseignements, 8 June 1961; ANN, 86 MI 3 F 3.5. This showed that Bakary's followers represented, not just another political party, but a movement with potentially significant influence ('réaction saine').

metropole, leading it to stage Africa's first modern coup d'état. Its manoeuvring was, perhaps, typical of French attitudes to power, characteristically marked by a cynicism that allowed little room for principles. This was the more prevalent among the acolytes of de Gaulle, whose ruthless postures formed a break with the trepidations of the Fourth Republic. In the pursuit of victory they trampled upon others without any qualms—Messmer later thoughtlessly mentioned that, after he had helped to topple Bakary, the latter '[would] sink into the mediocre intrigues of exiles and hopeless terrorist attempts'.¹²⁵ Yet, such attitudes are not, of course, uniquely French but typical of all wielders of power who act as if the end justifies the means. It betrays a shallowness of thought,¹²⁶ which conceals what power does to the dominated and which goes some way to explain its cavalier exercise by the French. Sawaba's destruction is not unique in French Africa, as demonstrated by the far more bloody annihilation of Cameroon's UPC.¹²⁷ In Niger's context it went hand in hand with the dehumanising language of racism, as British diplomats reporting on the treatment of Sawabists exemplified.¹²⁸

Those responsible for Niger's tragedy went their different ways. Don Jean Colombani was rewarded with the 'Légion d'Honneur', while Pierre Messmer was to reach the pinnacle of metropolitan status by becoming one of the 40 'immortals' of the 'Académie Française' (1999).¹²⁹ Perhaps worse was the revisionist apology by the historian Fuglestad, which, by suggesting that Sawaba's defeat was self-inflicted and not the result of fraud and intimidation, attempted to take away the last thing that those at the receiving end of French brutality had retained—the truth.¹³⁰ This touches on the question what actually is *history*, the notion of which is bound up with the self-conception of the historian. This book was written on the premise that historians, as observers of the behaviour of their fellow men, cannot stand outside fundamental questions of morality. It was therefore

¹²⁵ P. Messmer, *Après tant de batailles: Mémoires* (Paris, 1992), 244 ('sombreira dans de médiocres intrigues d'exilés et des tentatives terroristes sans espoir').

¹²⁶ The importance of thoughtlessness of the wielder of power as an explanatory tool in acts of repression was stressed (in an admittedly very different context) by Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (London, 2006; 1st ed. 1963).

¹²⁷ See f.e. M. Terretta, 'Cameroonian Nationalists Go Global: From Forest *Maquis* to a Pan-African Accra', *Journal of African History*, 51 (2010), 189–212.

¹²⁸ See above ch. 13 at note 2.

¹²⁹ <http://www.academie-francaise.fr/immortels/index.html>, accessed 21 Dec. 2010.

¹³⁰ See ch. 4 above. F. Fuglestad, 'Djibo Bakary, the French, and the Referendum of 1958 in Niger', *Journal of African History*, 14 (1973), 2, 313–30. This matter was dealt with at length in Van Walraven, 'Decolonization by Referendum'.

primarily conceived, not as an abstraction useful for the development of historical theory, but as an attempt to rescue a generation from oblivion and reinsert it into the mainstream of history, from which it was removed for political reasons. This is the necessary first step in a process of rendering justice to those who became victims of a tyrannical age (though this does not whitewash their own actions). The history of Sawaba also shows that the ruthlessness of the French, amounting to what could be called an amoral *esprit bureaucratique*, lay at the origins of the Fifth Republic itself—thus raising questions about the nature of the French polity in the second half of the 20th century. In that sense, too, it is relevant to encourage awareness of what the French did in Niger, even if this is not the metropole's worst secret. Those who worked in Niger in 1964 in development posts and resigned in protest against the repression did so to France's honour; this cannot be said for its securocrats. Yet, the progressive opening of metropolitan archives and the approval to allow access to the intelligence files, vital for the writing of this book, are perhaps signs that times have changed.

Sawaba in the Era of Democratisation

The death of Seyni Kountché, who died of a brain tumor in a Paris hospital in November 1987, heralded a process that led to profound changes in Niger's political system. Kountché was succeeded by a fellow officer, Ali Saibou, who announced his intention to break with the military's tyranny by introducing a general amnesty and calling for national reconciliation and 'détente'. This was no empty talk. The new leaders abolished the symbol of political terror—the BCL—and daily life became markedly more relaxed, as Nigériens rediscovered a freedom of expression that had not existed since the end of the 1950s.¹³¹ One of the first Sawabists to benefit from this was Djibo Bakary, who, as shown above, had continued to suffer from surveillance since the end of his house arrest. He was even received by Ali Saibou (as was Diori),¹³² as a sign of genuine change. In 1990 he used the new political freedom to speak at a public gathering, and thousands of people flocked to the building of the USTN, finding a place to sit on rooftops, on cars and in trees to hear the legendary righter of wrongs, whom

¹³¹ Salifou, *Le Niger*, 255-256; A. Niandou Souley, 'La démocratisation au Niger: bilan critique', in K. Idrissa (ed.), *Le Niger: Etat et démocratie* (Paris, 2001), 292; Idrissa, 'Les régimes militaires', 177 (détente: 'décrispation').

¹³² J.G. Maignan, *La difficile démocratisation du Niger* (Paris, 2000), 52.

most had never seen.¹³³ His old comrades Adamou Sékou and Diop Issa, his former finance minister long since expelled from the country, encouraged him to take up his memoirs again. Bakary did so with the help of a Sawaba-sympathetic journalist, Ali Talba, and completed the first volume (three were intended), which described his political trajectory up to independence and which was published in Paris in 1992.¹³⁴

Yet, the regime's reforms were limited, as it intended to remain at the helm of the state with the help of a new single ruling party, the 'Mouvement National pour la Société du Développement' (MNSD), founded in May 1989.¹³⁵ By then, however, the approaching end of the Cold War began to make itself felt across Africa, and Niger, too, became engulfed in social unrest and a rising tide of agitation. This was spearheaded by university students, teachers and the trade unions. Their demands centred, among other things, on a return to multi-partyism and culminated in violent clashes that left several people dead (February 1990). This—together with the changes in the international context, including a new French attitude to undemocratic regimes—led to the government's undoing. With a Tuareg rebellion in the north challenging the supremacy of Niger's sedentary communities, the regime felt constrained to give up the hegemony of its party vehicle and revise the constitution to allow political pluralism. This set off a chain of events that rapidly led to the government's subordination to a National Conference, which limited the government's role to that of a caretaker administration for the duration of its proceedings (July–November 1991).¹³⁶

The Conference, modelled on a similar meeting held in Benin, constituted a nationwide effort in stocktaking. Gathering no less than 1,200 people, who represented a plethora of groups, associations, unions and political parties now mushrooming, it began to discuss not only the outlines of a new constitutional order but also the country's political experiences since independence. Delegates were confronted with a host of issues, including past political crimes, corruption, repression, and abuse of power.

¹³³ This derives from an obituary of unknown date and provenance, probably *Ma'aykaci: Le Travailleur. Organe Officiel d'Information de l'Union des Syndicats des Travailleurs du Niger*.

¹³⁴ Bakary, *Silence!*, 5 & 283.

¹³⁵ Salifou, *Le Niger*, 256–257.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 264–265; Raynaut, 'Trente ans d'indépendance', 27–28; Idrissa, 'Les régimes militaires', 179–180; Maignan, *La difficile démocratisation du Niger*, 59–60; J.J. Raynal, *Les institutions politiques du Niger* (Saint-Maur, 1993), 62.

A commission was established to report on these matters.¹³⁷ Sawabists could also take part in this national catharsis, although they had to make room for numerous other delegates. The Conference's preparatory committee was composed of more than 60 members. It included Ibrahim Mayaki (son of Adamou Assane Mayaki), who represented a union federation, as well as Ali Talba and Sao Marakan, as delegates of the resurrected party, now officially known as the 'Union des Forces Populaires pour la Démocratie et le Progrès' (UDFP-Sawaba). Talba and Marakan had not been actively involved in the movement before, although they had sympathised with it. However, Alazi Soumaila, one-time member of Sawaba's comité directeur, became the first vice-president of the Conference's presidium, even if in a capacity as union representative. Sao Marakan also managed to gain the vice-presidency of the political crimes commission, a key organ of the convention. The party was also officially represented at the Conference as such: Bachir Boukary, for example, represented the UDFP section for Zinder and Ousmane Dan Galadima, too, travelled to Niamey to contribute to the proceedings. He later recalled how he walked each day to the Conference venue, participating in the deliberations and delivering a speech about the repression to which the movement's cadres had been subjected. For the first time since 1958 party cadres were able to tell Nigériens openly about their fate; a casualty list was compiled to draw attention to many of the victims in the Sawabist community.¹³⁸

However, the horrors that had befallen them were among the many outrages discussed at the Conference, which was dominated by the reckonings over the Kountché era.¹³⁹ Worse, the movement was now divided, as outside the UDFP (headed by Bakary), Mamoudou Pascal led another group of cadres, gathered in what was called the 'Union Démocratique Nigérienne, UDN-Sawaba'. At the Conference Pascal distributed a communiqué accusing Bakary, Abdoulaye Mamani and even Dan Galadima of

¹³⁷ K. Idrissa, 'La dynamique de la gouvernance: administration, politique et ethnicité au Niger', in *Ibid.*, *Le Niger: Etat et démocratie*, 68-69; Niandou Souley, 'La démocratisation au Niger', 302 & 307-308; Raynal, *Les institutions politiques du Niger*, 64; Salifou, *Le Niger*, 264-275; Maignan, *La difficile démocratisation du Niger*, 59-67.

¹³⁸ Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, vol. 2 (Niamey, 2003), 480-494; Contribution de la délégation de l'UDFP-Sawaba au succès de la conférence nationale des forces vives du Niger, Niamey, 29 July 1991; Liste des Nigériens militants ou sympathisants du Sawaba morts dans les prisons du régime de Diori Hamani (UDFP-Sawaba, Niamey, n.d.); interviews Sao Marakan, Niamey, 16 Nov. 2002; Ousmane Dan Galadima & Bachir Boukary, Madaoua & Zinder, 7 & 11 Febr. 2003. During the National Conference, Kaïro Alfari, the Sawaba-educated civil engineer, pleaded the cause of the impoverished western region.

¹³⁹ Salifou, *Le Niger*, 266-273 and Maignan, *La difficile démocratisation du Niger*, 65-66.

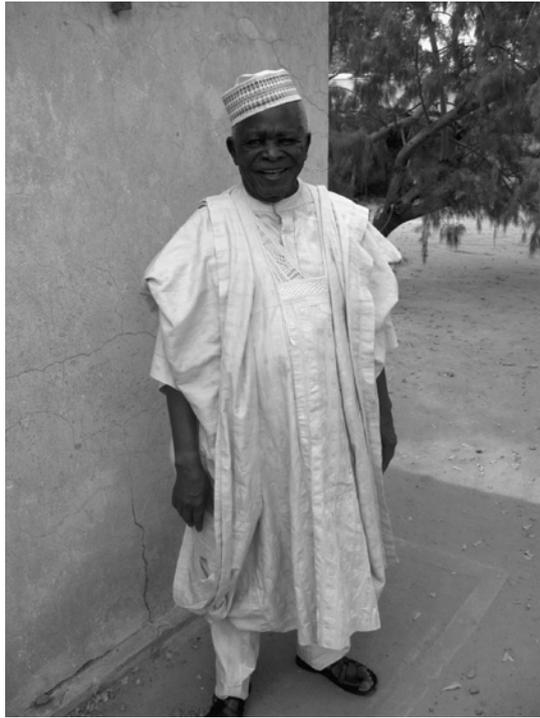


Photo E.4 Sao Marakan, Niamey, 2011.

having behaved as ‘monarchs’ instead of revolutionaries.¹⁴⁰ The experience, therefore, did little to compensate for Sawabists’ suffering or dampen their frustration. As Ali Amadou later reminisced, pleas for rehabilitation of the movement’s cadres (undoubtedly fed by hopes of financial compensation) were rejected. The camel’s men had to content themselves with the decision, later, by which one of the capital’s squares was renamed in honour of Bakary, Niamey’s first mayor—appropriately near the Petit Marché, home to many of his erstwhile toiling supporters.¹⁴¹ Still, some Sawabists

¹⁴⁰ Pascal accused Bakary of grave errors and insinuated that the other two had lived a life of luxury in Morocco and Algeria. Another (and unlikely) accusation was that Dan Galadima—a devoted Marxist—had encouraged regionalist sentiments in the party. Communiqué no. ? : Ils se sont comportés tous mal en exil. UDN/Sawaba, n.d., but 1991. Signed Mamoudou Pascal; Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, vol. 2, 486; A.K. Koudizé, *Chronologie politique du Niger de 1900 à nos jours* (Niamey, 1991), 66. This party was stillborn, just as a later political vehicle Pascal established.

¹⁴¹ Interviews Ali Amadou, Niamey, 31 Jan. 2003 and 15 Dec. 2009.



Photo E.5 Place Djibo Bakary, near the Petit Marché, Niamey, 2005.

participated in the preparatory work that had to guide the country towards a new constitutional order. Alazi Soumaila and Ali Madougou (son of Madougou Namaro) were elected to the 15-member 'Haut Conseil de la République',¹⁴² which had to control the executive during a transitional period ending in multi-party elections. Sao Marakan and Abdoulaye Mamani were appointed members of a commission that had to draw up a new constitution.¹⁴³

The party (UDFP-Sawaba) hopefully put together a list of candidates for the parliamentary elections—74 aspirants for a total of 83 seats. Alazi Soumaila stood in Niamey and Abdou Ali Tazard, the teacher, was up for a seat in the Maradi constituency (of which Tessaoua was part). For the Zinder district several people put forward their candidature, including Mahaman Dan Bouzoua, who had gained a seat in the difficult elections of December 1958, Bachir Boukary, and Amada Bachard, the Radio Peking announcer.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, vol. 2, 494; interview Amadou Madougou, Niamey, 17 Oct. 2011.

¹⁴³ The commission had 47 members. Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, vol. 1, 94-95.

¹⁴⁴ The others for Zinder were Abdou Salam Tari; Moussa Mamadou; Saley Issoufou; Maï Moussa Moussa; Mamane Moussa; Issoufou Moungaye; Mrs Bachard Amina Halilo; Maman Lawan Bachir; Ab[?] Mamadou; Amadou Tidjani Tangam; Ousmane Gagara. *Ibid.*, 102 & 104; vol. 2, 499; leaflet 'Votez vos candidats U.D.F.P. Sawaba; Département de Zinder' (author's possession). See photo E.6.

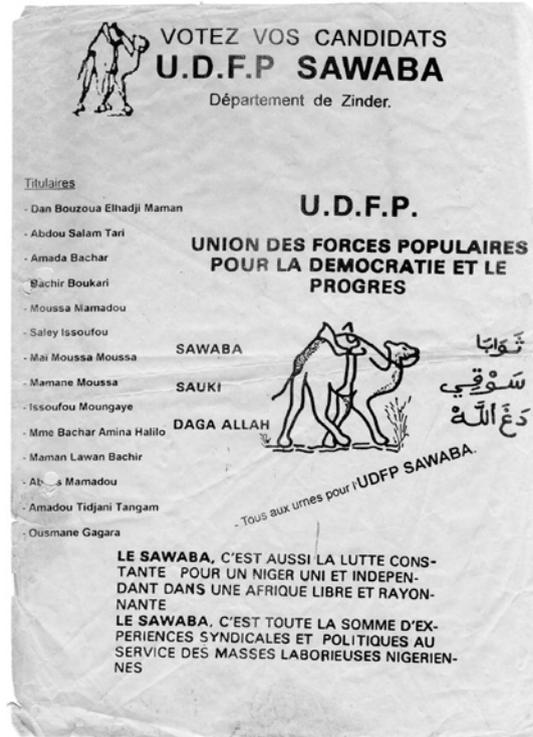


Photo E.6 Campaign leaflet of UDFP-Sawaba.

The campaign was fought with old slogans about 'sawki', while the party advertised itself with the historical argument that it formed the sum of all union and political experience at the service of the working masses. However, if former commandos like Amadou Diop and Ali Mahamane Madaouki decorated the walls of their homes with UDFP pamphlets, for Sawaba's faithful the elections (held in February 1993) turned into a rude awakening. Only Ali Tazard and Dan Bouzoua managed to win seats—typically in the old strongholds of Zinder and Tessaoua. Sawaba got the support of a dismal 3.13 per cent of voters (some 39,000 of them), and although this was slightly higher than that of its old rival, the PPN-RDA, the outcome of the following presidential contest proved for good that Sawabists no longer added up to a political movement in a meaningful sense. Bakary gained 1.68 per cent of the votes (just a little less than the RDA man), most of which went to the MNSD candidate (Mamadou Tandja),

demonstrating the enduring importance of those who had climbed the political ladder in the course of military careers under Kountché.¹⁴⁵

With the arrival of new generations of voters, the rivalry between Sawaba and the RDA had simply lost its relevance. The political debate was monopolised by younger people (unionists, youth and student representatives, former military), who could pretend to be more in tune with the challenges of the present. Yet, for the rest of the decade, the political climate, while much freer than during the first 30 years of independence, was highly unstable, marked by a splintered political field and two military coups, which—even if followed by a return to barracks—did nothing to lessen the importance of army men in the political equation.¹⁴⁶ At bottom, this had much to do with the lack of democratic experience, which had never managed to internalise itself; in the long run this was at least in part a consequence of the stymied efforts for political and social emancipation at the end of the 1950s.

In these circumstances the UDFP lost its two Assembly seats in the course of new elections (1995) and it failed to win them back in the polls of 1996, organised under renewed military rule.¹⁴⁷ In a political landscape skewed by regime incumbency and the growing importance of money, it became impossible to make a comeback (granted that voters still felt attracted to the party message). Without MPs, the lack of funds became a debilitating obstacle, especially in the face of the election campaigns of the 1990s, characterised by a greater distribution of largesse than ever before.

Consequently, Sawabists went their different ways in the pursuit of political survival. Already in 1993 the party's MPs joined the parliamentary group led by the dominant MNSD. Bakary admitted in an interview in 1990 that he carried an MNSD membership card and that he sympathised with Ali Saibou, although he '[did] not think MNSD'.¹⁴⁸ If this was a form of survival tactics, for some Sawabists this political formation was simply less unacceptable—being an outgrowth of the Kountché era that, compared with the First Republic, formed the lesser of two evils. Thus, in the second

¹⁴⁵ His scores were highest again in the Maradi and Zinder regions. Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, vol. 1, 98-104; Raynal, *Les institutions politiques du Niger*, 287-313.

¹⁴⁶ Tidjani Alou, 'Les militaires politiciens', *passim*.

¹⁴⁷ The PPN-RDA retained one seat in 1995 but apparently did not put forward a candidate the year after. Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, vol. 1, 111-119.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 107. The interview appeared in Haske: *Bimensuel nigérien d'information et de réflexion*, no. 2, 15 July 1990 and was reprinted in Bakary, *Silence!*, 289-296 ('ne pense pas MNSD').

round of the 1993 presidential elections the UDFP vainly supported the candidature of Mamadou Tandja, and the party's new secretary-general, Issoufou Assoumane, subsequently began to work for closer links with the MNSD. This position was also favoured by Bakary; several cadres, in fact, followed this approach.¹⁴⁹ After the 1995 elections, in which the MNSD shortly gained government power, Assoumane served as minister of mines and energy. Initially, Ibrahim Mayaki, the son of Sawaba cabinet minister Adamou Assane Mayaki, also allied himself with the MNSD, but when the army returned at the helm of the state (1996), he shifted his support to the military and began a short-lived political career crowned by a prime ministership (1996-1999).¹⁵⁰ Other cadres, too, were sympathetic to or even joined the MNSD, such as Gonimi Boukar and Diougou Sangaré (in the past these men had already compromised with the RDA), as well as Moumouni Daouda's family in Tillabéri, which shifted its allegiance to the MNSD before turning to the leftist-oriented 'Parti Nigérien pour la Démocratie et le Socialisme' (PNDS): from an ideological point of view, perhaps, this vibrant party with an appeal to the young, the unemployed and white collar workers, formed a natural successor to Sawaba. For example, Saïbou Abdouramane, the Sawaba peasant from Dargol so manhandled by the RDA's gendarmes, came into the habit of voting PNDS if no UDFP candidate was available. By contrast, in the parliamentary elections of 1996 'IBS', Baoua Souley's son who had joined the UDFP, managed to get elected as member of a group of independents—as did Katchalma Oumar dit Paul, former member of Aba Kaka's guerrilla unit. They represented Niamey and Diffa respectively and retained their seats until the second coup d'état of the decade (1999).¹⁵¹

Over and above these different trajectories, however, it is remarkable how many people exhibited a continuity in political loyalties compared with the distant past—at least initially. With the onset of political liberalisation several children of first-generation Sawabists followed in the footsteps of their fathers by joining the UDFP, whilst parents also joined the resurrected party rather than any of the dominant formations. Bitter

¹⁴⁹ Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, vol. 2, 148; Comité de réflexion UDFP-Sawaba: le coordinateur Ibrahim Bawa to Monsieur Djibo Bakary, Président de l'UDFP/Sawaba, Niamey, 14 June 1994.

¹⁵⁰ Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, vol. 2, 256-257; Mayaki, *La caravane passe, passim*.

¹⁵¹ Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, vol. 1, 126-131, 282, 305-306, 376; oral information Issa Younoussi to author, Niamey, 5 Nov. 2005; interviews Diougou Sangaré, Tessaoua, 9 Febr. 2006; Moumouni Daouda, Tillabéri, 3 Nov. 2005; Saïbou Abdouramane, Dargol, 31 Oct. 2005.

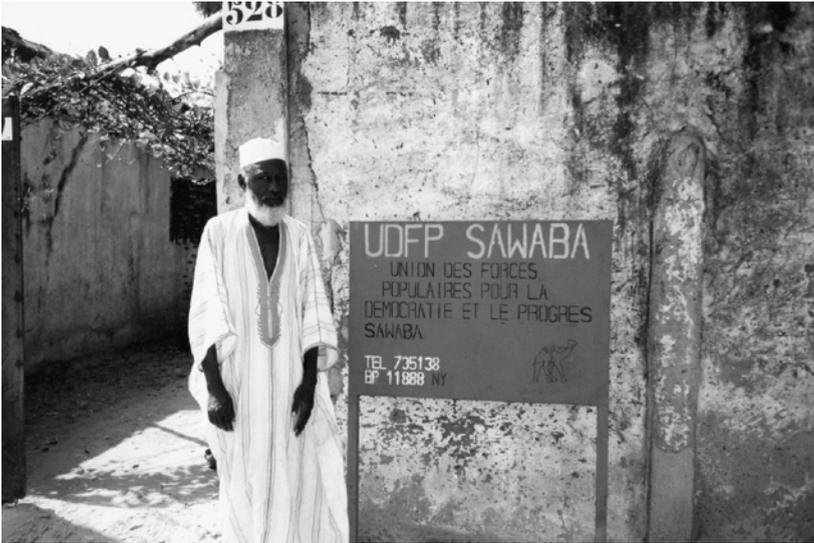


Photo E.7 Mamadou Ousmane Dan Galadima, Niamey, 2003.

memories about the family past surely played a role or, as in the case of Mamadou Ousmane, Dan Galadima's son, the economic problems of the 1990s: this pushed Ousmane towards the party with the clearest Marxist message (he became UDFP office representative).¹⁵²

Yet, inevitably, the tragedies of the past and the disappointments of the 1990s led to internal party wrangling. Following the 1993 elections the movement suffered its second split, with some cadres moving to a left-of-centre position in a new group ('Union Démocratique des Forces Révolutionnaires'; UDFR-Sawaba), which, until 1996, allied itself with the then majority group in the Assembly (painfully, side by side with the PPN-RDA).¹⁵³ The pro-MNSD line of the UDFP leadership led to resentment among more militant cadres, such as Ousmane Dan Galadima and Mounkaila Beidari. Led by 'IBS', they pleaded with the righter of wrongs to change course (1994), pointing out that the MNSD represented people, i.e. the military, who had not treated Sawabists kindly. Association with the MNSD, indeed, was not free from opportunism—its members more than any other group represented access to power and privilege. But the result

¹⁵² Interview Mamadou Ousmane Dan Galadima, Niamey, 27 Nov. 2003.

¹⁵³ S. Decalo, *Historical Dictionary of Niger* (Lanham, MD, and London, 1997), 317; Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, vol. 1, 98.

of the opposition to the MNSD line was that several cadres (Dan Galadima and 'IBS', together with at least a dozen others) were excluded from the party's leadership. Moreover, Bakary's health was ailing, and his forced absences as a result of medical treatment abroad led to a loss of direction and a power vacuum in which the UDFP's leadership became the object of bickering. A successful attempt by Issoufou Assoumane to conquer the presidency in 1998 (upon Bakary's death), worsened by a domineering character and self-willed manoeuvring, bred hostility. Before long, things came to a head at a gathering in Tahoua (2001), where the anti-MNSD men made a comeback and 'IBS' defeated Assoumane in an election for the party chair—the disgruntled engineer leaving Sawaba altogether to establish his own vehicle, taking along a couple of cohorts.¹⁵⁴

If quiet returned to the diminished ranks, by the early years of the new millennium tensions resurfaced over alignment with the MNSD, then in a position of supremacy after Mamadou Tandja had won the presidential elections (1999). Sanda Mounkaila favoured UDFP association with the MNSD. He was a Tillabéri cadre from the second generation. A relative of Djibo Bakary, he had risen to a leadership position in the party and Tandja rewarded him with a ministerial post in his first administration.¹⁵⁵ Along with the six municipal councillors that the UDFP had, this helped in the perennial struggle for funds, yet it also led to new disagreement. Mounkaila stressed that the growth of the party was impossible without an alliance with more powerful forces, accusing 'IBS', the party chair, of failing to understand the essence of politics. By contrast, some eastern cadres were lukewarm about the role of Mounkaila, seen as a representative from the western region (such east-west rivalry, possibly fed by ethnic factors, had been a rare phenomenon in the movement's history, as far as the sources suggest); other problems were to beset relations among cadres in the capital.¹⁵⁶ But this did not lead to new splits or expulsions. As Sanda Mounkaila put it, Sawaba had enough martyrs already—although the fact that the

¹⁵⁴ Ibrahim Bawa to Bakary, 14 June 1994; interviews (in Niamey): Ibrahim Bawa Souley, 5 Febr. 2003; Issoufou Assoumane, 30 Jan. 2003; Ali Amadou, 31 Jan. 2003; Mamadou Ousmane Dan Galadima, 27 Nov. 2003; Mounkaila Beidari, 23 Febr. 2008 & 18 Oct. 2011; Sanda Mounkaila, 28 Oct. 2005.

¹⁵⁵ He became minister of youth affairs. Issoufou Assoumane at the start of Tandja's reign, served a short term as environment minister. Interview Sanda Mounkaila, Niamey, 28 Oct. 2005.

¹⁵⁶ In 2008 there were some problems between 'IBS' and Mounkaila Beidari, who represented the Niamey section.

party was now essentially a dead political structure would have made any official sanctions inconsequential.¹⁵⁷

Underneath these recriminations there were old resentments about the early days of the UDFP, while scores about the more distant past also needed to be settled. With the reintroduction of political pluralism, Djibo Bakary had tried to reclaim the party leadership. If an old man by now, he could not content himself with an honorary role, and some people later recalled how Bakary, with Ali Talba and Sao Marakan at his side, presented himself at meetings and spoke to UDFP cadres, explaining his views in characteristic self-confidence and giving orders that many did not accept, especially not those who had borne the worst of the repression. Bakary's behaviour was divisive, driving scores of people away. During the 1990s, therefore, militant members like Dan Galadima and Beidari moved closer to 'IBS' (whose position on MNSD association felt more comfortable). They also engaged Bakary on the choice of the secretary-general, supporting Issoufou Assoumane's candidature to challenge contenders like Marakan and Talba, while Beidari also snatched away a position in the capital from one of Bakary's acolytes.¹⁵⁸

Sawaba's history, of course, hung as a dark cloud over the present. As noted, Mounkaila Beidari had been appalled when, in 1973, he found that Bakary had abandoned the struggle while his followers were languishing in jail. Bakary's move, in November 1987, to reconcile himself with Hamani Diori—a relative of his—may not have improved matters. Sawaba's leader, who was photographed together with Diori for the occasion, would have apologised for the attempt on Diori's life, according to an RDA source.¹⁵⁹ This occurred at a time when Sawabists could finally start a frank discussion about the fateful turn that the camel's history had taken. In 1974-1975, with the shared hatred of the RDA still fresh and Kountché's paranoia manifesting itself, there was no opportunity to confront the leadership with the consequences of its precipitate decision, in 1964, to dispatch the commandos. By now these old ghosts had acquired a greater acuteness, as Sawabists were turning into old men; many had had a less than successful

¹⁵⁷ Sanda Mounkaila was by then supported in his pro-Tandja line by Mounkaila Beidari, who as shown above, had earlier opposed it. Interviews Ali Amadou, Niamey, 31 Jan. 2003; Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003; Boubakar Djingaré, Niamey, 26 Oct. 2005; Oumarou Janba, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003; Sanda Mounkaila, Niamey, 28 Jan. 2003 & 28 Oct. 2005; Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 18 Oct. 2011.

¹⁵⁸ Interviews (all in Niamey) with Ibrahim Bawa Souley, 26 Nov. 2003 and Mounkaila Beidari, 28 Nov. 2003 & 23 Febr. 2008.

¹⁵⁹ Interview Abdou Adam, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003; Bakary, *Silence!*, photo 11.

professional life and faced retirement in modest conditions but with time aplenty, thus feeling inclined to rethink their lives and compare it with that of others.

In this context the absence of political cohesion could only invite a settling of scores. Hence, former commandos like Ali Amadou, in their recollections, asserted that the guerrillas had simply been sent in, without discussion of strategy, and if cadres like Maman Tchila appear to have talked matters out with Bakary in a normal way, others grimly confronted the righter of wrongs with his mistakes. Mounkaila Albagna, when meeting Bakary in the 1990s, called him an adventurer who deserved the punishment that he had got. These reproaches were not all totally fair—the war against the RDA was, after all, the undertaking of a social movement as a whole, while Sawaba's leader, too, paid a penalty in terms of exile and imprisonment. Yet, such rebuke was fed by an awareness of the different paths that members' lives had taken (guerrilleros vs students, domestic cadres vs leadership) and of the differences in suffering they had endured: Albagna, who had missed out on education by recruitment in the commando forces, would subsequently reminisce how Djibo Bakary had sent his own children for schooling to Cuba.¹⁶⁰ While the party quarrels after 1990 rendered these resentments more acute (if not created some of the bitterness),¹⁶¹ they also had much to do with the natural tension between the leadership and rank and file, which admired Ousmane Dan Galadima for getting his feet dirty (although he clearly shared in the responsibility for the military failure), but not Bakary or Abdoulaye Mamani—the latter, it was noted, wrote books and wore a tie!¹⁶²

In these conditions the UDFP remained leaderless, as too many people claimed it as their legacy, while the lack of money or its occasional availability did nothing to ameliorate the situation.¹⁶³ Nevertheless, as the pros-

¹⁶⁰ Interviews with Ali Amadou, Niamey, 28 Jan. 2003; Maman Tchila, Zinder, 9 Febr. 2003; Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003 and 19 Oct. 2011.

¹⁶¹ This is typically part of the dynamic context of oral history. See also Schmidt, *Mobilizing the Masses*.

¹⁶² Interview Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 6 Dec. 2003. This parallels Mamoudou Pascal's accusations. See his Communiqué no. ? : Ils se sont comportés tous mal en exil. UDN/Sawaba, n.d., but 1991.

¹⁶³ Interview Ibrahim Bawa Souley, Niamey, 29 Febr. 2008. The party presidency continued to be the object of bickering. While it was first held by Bakary (until 1998), then Issoufou Assoumane (1998-2001) and since 2001 by 'IBS', no new party congress was called after 2001. Many claimed 'IBS' did not want to. In December 2009 he finally called a congress for March 2010, but a few days before the 60 or so delegates (on a total of 80) assembled in Zinder, he called it off. Sanda Mounkaila and cohorts, however, convened the meeting,

pect of political power receded, Sawabists more than ever began to use their networks for the maintenance of friendships, unhindered by political jealousies and buttressed not only by a shared agony but also an awareness of the special place that their movement occupied in the history of Niger—some, indeed, were not free from a superiority complex vis-à-vis their countrymen. If the UDFP hardly functioned politically, meetings still continued at the party office,¹⁶⁴ but more along the lines of an old men's society, a club of friends, where comrades could reminisce about the past, exchange the latest gossip, find the warmth of a social life. This was not unimportant for people who, in several cases, had not been able to create a family of their own: Soumana Idrissa, for example, was to marry late in life, fathering children when he was already advanced in age, while fellow guerrilla Boubakar Djingaré was never to get married at all and to die childless.¹⁶⁵ The notion of being part of a family was profound¹⁶⁶—an attempt was made to launch a 'Club des Amis du Sawaba' (CLAS), which prided itself on the road of honour its members had walked and which presented Sawaba as a 'school of solidarity'.¹⁶⁷

In fact, doing fieldwork among Sawabists early in the new millennium yielded a picture of a closely knit community, where people continued to keep in touch. Fellow townsmen saw each other regularly, sitting together to exchange views on the politics of the day. This could also include younger people, who had bonded with the old guard as a result of the political

whilst the party sections of Maradi, Tahoua, Tillabéri, Zinder, Niamey and Agadez later protested that they had not been informed about the deferment. Sanda Mounkaila was duly elected chairman along with members of the new national 'bureau exécutif'. 'IBS' sued Sanda Mounkaila but lost, with the resolutions of the congress being upheld. It was said he appealed, though it is clear he had become increasingly isolated, concentrating mostly on his business operations (phone call with 'IBS', Niamey, 18 Oct. 2011). With the return of political pluralism, the function of secretary-general was first held by Assoumane (1993-1998) and then Sanda Mounkaila (1998-2004), while after 2004 an *ad hoc* committee, in which Mounkaila Beidari played a role, came into being. Ousmane Dan Galadima was vice-president for a while in the 1990s. Interviews Mounkaila Beidari & Sanda Mounkaila, Niamey, 18 & 22 Oct. 2011 and Jugement civil no. 348, 22/11/2010, confirmed on appeal (email Sanda Mounkaila to author, 22 June 2012).

¹⁶⁴ Interview Ali Amadou, Niamey, 31 Jan. 2003.

¹⁶⁵ Interviews Soumana Idrissa, Gothèye, 1 Nov. 2005; Hamidou Adamou Abdoulaye, Niamey, 19 Dec. 2009. This mirrored the unstable marital life of others, such as Hima Dembélé and Gambo Sawaba. See ch. 8 at note 90 and Kwewum, *The Story of Gambo Sawaba*, 116-117.

¹⁶⁶ Interview Bachir Boukary, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003.

¹⁶⁷ Leaflet 'Création du "Club des Amis du Sawaba" (CLAS)'; Niamey, no date (author's possession) ('école de solidarité'). By 2011 Sanda Mounkaila was toying with the idea of relaunching the initiative. Interview, Niamey, 22 Oct. 2001.



Photo E.8 Sanda Mounkaila (front row, middle) with young & old cadres at Niamey party compound, 2011. Standing in middle and right former guerrillas Aboubacar Abdou and Idé Harouna dit Baradji. To Mounkaila's left, former guerrilla Ibrahim Baro dit Tri Tri.

background of their family. Sawabists also kept in touch with ex-cadres elsewhere or knew of their whereabouts, or expected that they (or their children) be put up at their houses when travelling. Ties were solidified in the course of family affairs (Bosso's chief, Aba Kaka, directing the marriage ceremony of Dan Galadima's grandson),¹⁶⁸ while knowledge of a comrade's demise travelled fast through the community. The same was true for news about the fieldwork done for this book—people quickly becoming aware of interviews, others walking in during the conversation, the phone ringing, the author taken along to see friends.¹⁶⁹

Sawabists' lives during the 1990s and later, into the new millennium, were marked by the fluctuating hallmarks that accompany old age: the difficulties of retirement, economic as well as mental; growing health problems; and, for an increasing number of them, death. Mounkaila Albagna struggled on, spending retirement in modest circumstances, as did Ali

¹⁶⁸ Interview with Ousmane Dan Galadima, Madaoua, 16 Febr. 2006.

¹⁶⁹ Personal observations in the course of various interviews.



Photo E.9 Amadou Diop and family, Zinder, 2003.

Amadou, who around 2008 lived for a while in Lomé—Albadé Nouhou, a comrade of his and former Sawaba student, had died by then. Mamoudou Pascal, who had travelled the four corners of the earth for the party, practically lived in a slum.¹⁷⁰ Sao Marakan, the judge, had also retired, better off though living in a modest Niamey compound, while Zoumari Issa Seyni, the historian trained thanks to the movement, continued to work at the national university (upon retirement he began working for an educational agency/publishing house). Issoufou Assoumane, by 2003, was still living in the capital—in comfortable circumstances, if irritated over the falling-out with his comrades. Hassane Djibo, the Nanking-trained guerrilla who had been saved from execution by the marabouts of Say, by then had suffered a stroke that hindered his speech, a problem he was still struggling with in 2008. Maman Tchila, by 2003, was living in Zinder as a pensioner, battling with deteriorating eyesight (he had travelled to France for medical treatment).¹⁷¹ Fellow townsman Ali Mahamane Madaouki lived in a mud-brick house in an old city district, as did Amadou Diop, who, with his large family, occupied a multi-storied house with thread-needle passages dating

¹⁷⁰ Telephone conversation Zoumari Issa Seyni, Niamey, 23 Febr. 2008 and interview Mamoudou Pascal, Niamey, 23 Oct. 2011.

¹⁷¹ Interview Maman Tchila, Zinder, 9 Febr. 2003 and Zoumari Issa Seyni, Niamey, 26 Oct. 2011.

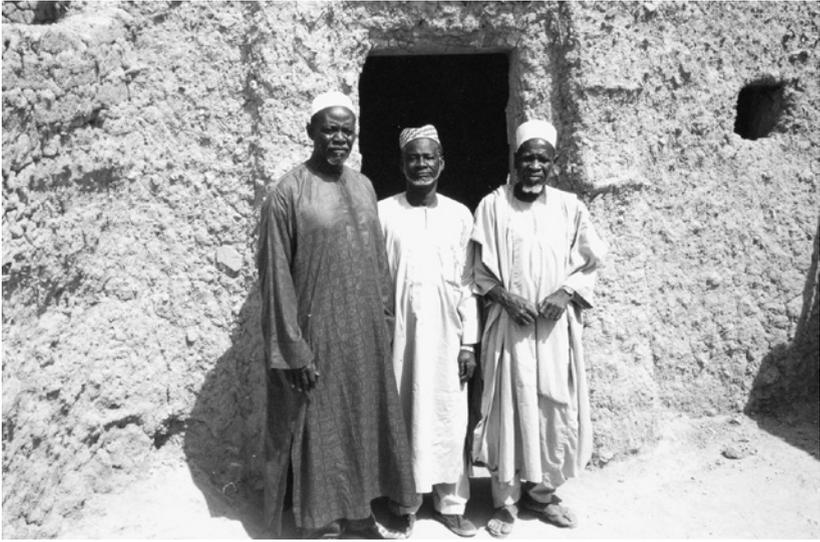


Photo E.10 I. to r.: Ali Mahamane Madaouki, Noga Yamba and Amadou Roufaï Malam Garba, in Friday attire, Zinder, 2003.

from before the French era (as he did not fail to point out). Madaouki's place had become a meeting point for comrades, who critically followed the US invasion of Iraq, having a globe within reach (Photo E.1)—as Madaouki explained, they might be poor but they lived in dignity.¹⁷² Some of the domestic cadres/Sawaba students from the city lived in more affluent circumstances, such as Bachir Boukary, who, in his own words, had been 'successful';¹⁷³ Oumarou Janba; and Tahir Moustapha (if not Ousseini Dandagoye, then still working for the Red Cross).

Aba Kaka, in 2006, was still engaged in his chiefly functions.¹⁷⁴ In February that year he had just returned from a tour of his district when he agreed to an interview about his guerrilla exploits in the shady green of his court. One of his old allies, Boulama Boukar, Bosso's town chief who had helped in Kaka's assault, was also still alive, as was Moustapha Hamidou, the

¹⁷² See also photo E.1. Interview, Zinder, 14 Febr. 2003. He still lived there early in 2010. Ali Mahamane Madaouki to author, 5 Jan. 2010.

¹⁷³ One of his companions in exile, Nagir Hadji, by now had an important post in the country's judiciary. Interview Bachir Boukary, Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003.

¹⁷⁴ Similarly, by this time (2006-2008) Maïdanda Djermakoye was still 'chef de province' of Dosso, busy with representative functions and adjudicating cases in family law. Interview, Dosso, 17 Febr. 2006 and telephone conversation from Niamey, 21 Febr. 2008.



Photo E.11 Aba Kaka (standing, third from the right) with family and chiefly court, Bosso, Lake Chad, 2006.

Nguigmi Sawabist who had done training in the Far East and now lived in his home town, running a bookshop. Members of the Bosso command, such as Marnia trainee Bachir Moustapha dit Moutti and Katchalma Oumar dit Paul, had died.¹⁷⁵ Another cadre in the region, Limane Kaoumi, the furniture maker, lived in Diffa, still acutely aware of his movement's history. Abdou Ali Tazard, after losing his parliamentary seat for Tessaoua, joined fellow townsman Diougou Sangaré in retirement.¹⁷⁶ Now an octogenarian, the latter continued working on his private papers, which included material on the town's Sawabists.¹⁷⁷

In the capital numerous former cadres came to live through the era of Mamadou Tandja's reign (2000-2010), each in circumstances that roughly mirrored the role they had played in the movement's history. Thus, Sawaba

¹⁷⁵ Katchalma Oumar died in a road accident in 1999. Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, vol. 1, 306. The year of Moutti's death is unknown but it was before 2004. Interviews Mounkaila Beidari, Niamey, 28 Nov. 2003; Kanembou Malam, Diffa, 12 Febr. 2006. See photo 12.6.

¹⁷⁶ The other UDFP MP, Dan Bouzoua, after losing his Assembly seat, worked for a year as prefect of Tillabéri; he died one year after that (1997). Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, vol. 1, 228.

¹⁷⁷ He died in or before 2011. His papers, containing government documents, ought to go to the ANN.



Photo E.12 Monique Hadiza, Niamey, 2005. The boy in front is the grandson of the late Hima Dembélé.

graduates such as Tahirou Ayouba Maïga and Kaïro Alfari were better off than most, if still living modestly when compared with the living standards of the age, so inflated by worsening self-enrichment. Towards the end of the decade Alfari had grown milder (he had suffered the amputation of a leg as a result of diabetes). Georges Condat, still at his house in the Lakouroussou district and increasingly frail, lived to see the 50th anniversary of independence.¹⁷⁸ Mounkaila Beidari, despite the political disappointments of the 1990s, had continued to prosper—he was to make it to the national honours' list and by 2009 had moved to a more comfortable house.¹⁷⁹ Monique Hadiza continued to live in a modest compound in the

¹⁷⁸ *Le Sahel*, 2 Aug. 2010 (via www.tamtaminfo.com, accessed 24 Jan. 2011). Gonimi Boukar, by 2005, was also living comfortably at his Niamey compound, unperturbed about the movement's destruction, having long since abandoned it.

¹⁷⁹ Beidari was made 'commandeur de l'ordre national du Niger' and upon retirement was 'ministre plénipotentiaire des affaires étrangères'.

fashionable Terminus quarter, despite her divorce still cherishing Demebele's picture over the mantelpiece. Many of Sawaba's truly little folk, however, struggled on in the humble conditions of their previous existence, in Niamey or elsewhere. Mossi Salifou, the tailor, by 2008 could be found in a simple compound in the capital's Banifandou district; a man of modest appearance, he spent his time reading the Qur'an in spite of his bad eyes and old age (he was born around 1922).¹⁸⁰ Ali Issaka, a neighbourhood comrade and much younger still, was doing better. A petty trader at independence, he had pursued his old profession and managed to expand his business (there were now commercial contacts with Cotonou). Focusing on his professional life, he had lost interest in the past. However, if the memories of prison were unpleasant and an association with politics bad for business, the children of Banifandou did not allow Issaka to forget—they openly called him 'Ali Sawaba', a nickname by which he became known throughout the neighbourhood.¹⁸¹ History would not go away either for Boubakar Djingaré, the Nanking guerrilla who continued to make do and by 2005 appeared a frail man for his age (68).¹⁸²

For Sawaba's erstwhile supporters in the Niger River valley, life remained largely unchanged, swinging between labour migration and the constraints of agriculture. By 2009 Djibo Harouna, the Gothèye tailor of Sawabist parentage, was still engaged in his old trade and, though not extremely poor, lived in a compound typical for the town, i.e. simple by the standards of the capital. The city's commando, Soumana Idrissa, struggled with his health and was visibly shaken to hear of the demise, a few months earlier, of Amadou Diop, who had outlived many of his comrades (autumn 2009). By then, Daouda Hamadou, the guerrilla from Ayorou, had grown old, but this did nothing to prevent a vivid testimony in front of his modest dwelling.

Generally, Sawabists of the second generation did better than their parents, such as the sons of Madougou Namaro and 'IBS', the son of Baoua Souley.¹⁸³ Yet, this was also true for Sawaba's radio workers (with the exception of Diop). Amada Bachard had retired at the end of the 1990s, but over the next decade still did the occasional odd job. Living in a comfortable

¹⁸⁰ See photo 8.4.

¹⁸¹ Interview with Ali Issaka, Niamey, 29 Febr. 2008.

¹⁸² Photo 12.3.

¹⁸³ Bakary's youngest son, Ahmed Sékou, by 2009 seemed to have problems to make the most of his medical training. By 2011 Amadou Madougou still worked at SONITEL. His brother Ali worked in the management of Gaweye, an expensive hotel. Interview Amadou Madougou, Niamey, 17 Oct. 2011.

compound on the eastern outskirts of Niamey, he was contented despite his failed bid for a parliamentary seat in 1993. Hamidou Abdoulaye, too, appeared satisfied, enjoying the advantages of retirement.¹⁸⁴ The one-time member of the Red Cord had become a Tandja supporter to the point of defending the president's constitutional coup of 2009, undertaken to secure his continuation in office. Abdoulaye deemed Tandja a nationalist with the spirit of Djibo Bakary and Seyni Kountché, and if the tragedy of Niger's trajectory is, indeed, that the only successful self-conscious rulers have been members of the military, this attitude constituted a far cry from the revolutionary militancy of Sawaba's erstwhile agitators. However, Bachard and Abdoulaye had been profoundly affected by their years in communist China. Abdoulaye, especially, having stayed in Peking until the 1980s, admired the Chinese, asserting that ministers in China tilled the land and rode bicycles rather than driving around in 'bourgeois' vehicles; 'counter-revolutionaries' and 'demagogues' were kept in check. According to him, this contrasted with present-day Niger, where there was much waste and nothing could be accomplished 'without the whip'.¹⁸⁵ The tough example of Kountché also met with his (and Bachard's) approval. Undoubtedly, the fact that both had been hardened in the Far East had to do something with this, but, in fact, it was a sentiment shared more broadly by Sawabists, both the educated cadres and archetypal little folk.¹⁸⁶ If these attitudes were part of the blind spot that had prevented understanding of what political violence could lead to, the retrospective approval of Kountché was strongly affected by the tempestuous 1990s (and the galloping corruption that became a hallmark of the multi-party era).¹⁸⁷

Still, it contrasted sharply with the opinions of that larger-than-life figure, Ousmane Dan Galadima. Encounters with the unswerving Marxist (in 2003, 2006 and 2008) showed that, in old age, he had lost nothing of his fighting spirit. Having survived the worst that a human being can go through, he was without fear. 'The scorpion' continued to criticise govern-

¹⁸⁴ He was a passionate angler. By 2009 a one-time colleague of theirs in Peking, Mamoudu Omar, was very old and still living in Germany (perhaps Berlin), where he had settled at an earlier stage of his life. Interviews Amada Bachard and Hamidou Adamou Abdoulaye, Niamey, 14 & 19 Dec. 2009. It is unknown what happened to Adamou Loutou, who upon return to Niger went to work for the Malbaza cement factory (n. 58 above).

¹⁸⁵ Interview Hamidou Adamou Abdoulaye, Niamey, 19 Dec. 2009 ('contre-révolutionnaires'; 'démagogues'; 'bourgeois'; 'sans cravache').

¹⁸⁶ Who, however, supported Tandja's authoritarian behaviour, too. Interviews Amada Bachard, Niamey, 14 Dec. 2009; Tahirou Ayouba Maïga, Niamey, 28 Oct. 2005; Daouda Hamadou, Ayorou, 20 Dec. 2009.

¹⁸⁷ This was true for Nigériens generally.



Photo E.13 Ousmane Dan Galadima, Niamey, 2008.

ment policy (to the point of telling President Tandja to his face what he did wrong); the popular admiration for his courage and simplicity of life made him untouchable. In 2006, before another interview, he had just been to see Madaoua's prefect to discuss the famine of the previous year, a file still in his hand. Two years later, at the age of 81, Dan Galadima stayed for a while with family in Niamey to receive medical care.¹⁸⁸ Sitting on a mattress in an austere dwelling and surrounded by his papers, a transistor radio within reach, Sawaba's thinker was as informed about current affairs as ever, arguing against globalisation—a synonym for imperialism—, criticising France and the self-enrichment by Niger's politicians (who were having meals twice aday!) and agitating against the justice minister; the frail little man could have captivated a crowd.¹⁸⁹

The difference from that other leading Sawabist, Abdoulaye Mamani, could not have been greater. As noted, after Dao Timmi the Zinder unionist had taken to writing, managing to gain the respect of the world of literature for a poetic talent that had developed thanks in part to his work for Sawaba.¹⁹⁰ While Mamani was said to be able to draw an audience with

¹⁸⁸ He had neurological problems. One of his sons had been committed to hospital because of diabetic problems. See next note.

¹⁸⁹ Interviews, Madaoua, 7-8 Febr. 2003 & 16 Febr. 2006; Niamey, 23 Febr. 2008.

¹⁹⁰ Pénel, 'Introduction', 13.

his oratory skills and for a while became involved in broader political work, according to some he felt old and appeared less drawn to the UDFP than his comrades.¹⁹¹ A reserved man by now, his interests had shifted to cultural matters, including a plan to establish a museum in his home town. It was in the literary field that Mamani became one of the few Sawabists to gain full rehabilitation. In 1993, when the glaucoma sufferer had turned almost blind, he was awarded Niger's highest literary prize, which had been refused to him before and was ironically named after Boubou Hama—'the man without a heart'. Dejected by the delay in recognition of his work, Mamani refused to accept the award. He then changed his mind, but in a twist of fate was killed in a traffic accident while en route to Niamey to collect the honours.¹⁹²

If it was too easily suggested that Niger's literature had reconciled old enemies,¹⁹³ it is difficult to escape the symbolism of this cruel turn of events. Similarly, the righter of wrongs himself, after his failed bid for the presidency, struggled on with his health—he had stomach problems, according to his youngest son the result of the years in exile and detention, which had weakened him. In 1993-1994 Bakary was in Cuba for medical treatment (he also travelled to France for this). Regrettably, the second and third volumes of his memoirs never saw the light of day, so he never came to account for his decision to send in the commandos. It may have been too painful; moreover, Bakary typically had a tendency to view his life from the perspective of his union work.¹⁹⁴ It is the more regrettable that he never got around to completing his autobiographical work (and, indeed, that no one, so far, has contemplated writing a biography of him) as Djibo Bakary appears to have been a fascinating, if very complex personality, not only full of contradictions but also endowed with a conscious ideological

¹⁹¹ Interview Oumarou Janba, Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003.

¹⁹² As in the case of Ibrahim Issa, that other Sawaba poet who received the prize in 1989—after his death—, Mamani was awarded the prize posthumously in a ceremony in Niamey, the money going to his family. Pénel, 'Abdoulaye Mamani', 144; *Projet de restitution et de diffusion des oeuvres des hommes de lettres et de culture nigériens du 20^{ème} siècle*, n.d.; the obituary by P. Chilson in *West Africa*, 28 June-4 July 1993. See also *Sahel Dimanche*, 11 Aug. 1985 and 11, 18 & 25 Dec. 1992 for interviews with Mamani speaking on *Sarraounia* (the book & film) and his work on the history of Kanem-Borno. In that published on 11 Dec. 1992 he suggested he had first refused the prize as he thought it should go to Ibrahim Issa.

¹⁹³ Pénel, 'Introduction', 9.

¹⁹⁴ Interview Ahmed Sékou Djibo Bakary, Niamey, 1 March 2008 (who claimed he kept an archive of his father's papers but which were not shown to the author); Bawa to Bakary, 14 June 1994. In a radio interview with Radio France Internationale called 'Mémoire d'un continent: Le syndicalisme en Afrique', Bakary, stressing his union work, also failed to address the rebellion.



Photo E.14 The grave of Djibo Bakary. To the right is the grave of his brother.

world view that existed side by side with less intelligible idiosyncrasies. Thus, it is not known how he felt at this stage of his life, although a testimony of his son suggests that he was dissatisfied—if not disappointed—about what he had achieved.¹⁹⁵ Whatever the case, Djibo Bakary, the most charismatic politician of Niger in the modern era, died on 16 April 1998, aged 76. Participants at a USTN meeting observed a minute of silence.¹⁹⁶ The country's military rulers organised a funeral in Soudouré, where they had a burial chamber constructed. In the presence of dignitaries, the leader of the struggle for relief was laid to rest, appropriately side by side with Sanda Hima—his persecuted brother. The grave was a stone's throw from the residence that Bakary had built in the 1950s, now lying in ruins.¹⁹⁷ The house where he was born had also vanished, and while the leader of the little folk had bequeathed a well to the inhabitants, constructed during his reign, Soudouré never really benefited from Sawaba's short-lived supremacy: the bleak aspect of it all rendered a powerful image of the ultimate futility of the camel's struggle.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁵ Interview Ahmed Sékou Djibo Bakary, Niamey, 1 March 2008.

¹⁹⁶ See the obituary cited in note 133.

¹⁹⁷ Photo 7.2.

¹⁹⁸ By 2008 one of Djibo Bakary's brothers—Adamou Souana—still lived, as did his sister Zongo Hima and family of the next generation. One of his nephews, Amadou Bakary

Increasingly, other cadres began to pass away as well. Diop Issa, Bakary's comrade in the 1950s, had died one year earlier (he was buried at Montparnasse in Paris),¹⁹⁹ and Adamou Sékou and Aboubakar dit Kaou passed on around the turn of the millennium.²⁰⁰ In 2005 Baoua Souley, the commando arrested in Nigeria and father of 'IBS', died. Idrissa Arfou, one of the commanders in the western zone, had passed away earlier (before 2003) and the frail Boubakar Djingaré followed in 2008-2009.²⁰¹ Djibo Sékou (dit Soumari Goudel), the old unionist and Bakary confidant, possibly died in March 2003. By then Jimra Orgao, the Bonkougou teacher, was still alive (he now lived in the east, in Mayahi).²⁰² Of several members of the movement, such as Alazi Soumaila and commandos like Djibo Seyni, Hassane Igodoé, Issaka Samy and Issoufou Danbaro, no details are available—by 2003 Dodo Hamballi, whose arrest had such fateful consequences, was probably long dead, as was Dan Boula Sanda Makamari (1988), who had been tortured upon capture; Mounkeïla Issifi (the Sawaba MP for Téra and also a torture victim, who had died in 1983); and Ibro Garba, the MP for Konni who had spent several terms in prison and passed on in 1997.²⁰³ Issaka Koké still lived in Montauban, France, by 1994 (a year of death is not known). Finally, his predecessor as minister of agriculture in Bakary's ad-

Maiga, who had been a court clerk in Zinder and now lived in Gamkallé, died at the end of 2007. Interview Idrissa Yansambou, ANN, Niamey, 20 Febr. 2008. Bakary's personal physician, Souna Mamadou, had died two years earlier.

¹⁹⁹ Malick N'Diaye, that other Sawabist of Senegalese origin, had already passed away in 1968 and was buried in Gao. Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, vol. 1, 239 & 353.

²⁰⁰ The latter died in Maradi. Interviews with Sao Marakan, Niamey, 16 Nov. 2002 and Adamou Assane Mayaki, Niamey, 29 Jan. 2003. Henri Georget, born in Agadez and one of the few Europeans choosing Sawaba's side in the 1958 referendum, died in 2001. The businessman had become a member of an international federation of employers. Bureau international du travail, Conseil d'administration, Geneva, June 2001. Mashoud Pascal (see ch. 9 above) also died that year. Interview Mamoudou Pascal (his brother), Niamey, 23 Oct. 2011.

²⁰¹ Interview Ibrahim Bawa Souley, Niamey, 29 Jan. 2008; Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003. Noga Yamba, the Zinder guerrilla and construction worker, died on 22 Dec. 2010. Email Ali Mahamane Madaouki to author, 6 July 2011.

²⁰² *Seeda: Mensuel nigérien d'informations générales*, no. 6, Sept. 2002; interview Ibrahim Bawa Souley, Niamey, 5 Febr. 2003.

²⁰³ Hamballi had a son who was sub-prefect in Madaoua, and a relative who by 2009 was a retired professor from Sokoto university in Nigeria. Labo Bouché, MP for Maradi and with a UNIS background, died in 1981 and Eugène Tégama, who had won a parliamentary seat in Zinder in December 1958, in 1996. Interviews Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 6 Dec. 2003; Limane Kaoumi, Diffa, 12 Febr. 2006; Hamidou Adamou Abdoulaye, Niamey, 19 Dec. 2009; Moutari (?) Dan Boula Sanda, Zinder, 15 Febr. 2006; Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, vol. 1, 283, 310, 348 & 397.

ministration, Adamou Assane Mayaki, died in the summer of 2003, just a couple of months after an interview—he was already very sick by then, with a leg infection threatening to develop into gangrene.²⁰⁴

Trauma

I had met Mayaki in January of that year. One late afternoon, as I entered a modest compound in central Niamey, I saw him, at the far end of the courtyard, seated in a simple garden chair—an old man with a badly swollen leg, the foot in bandages and laid to rest on a chair opposite him. He was in the company of his ‘métis’ wife (half Corsican, half Nigérien) and a younger son—not the former prime minister but a smart young doctor in political philosophy. As the interview had been arranged through an intermediary, Mayaki came prepared with a hand-written exposé about the 1958 referendum,²⁰⁵ which, even now, remained a veritable obsession among Sawabists. Its meaning was, after all, no harmless matter as it stood for a lifetime of persecution, failure, destroyed ideals.²⁰⁶ In recounting his life story Mayaki especially emphasised the *constancy* of the repression to which they had been subjected. He had been imprisoned three times himself and this (together with the health problems it had led to) had left an indelible imprint of being permanently hounded and of never having had any time—time to act, time to live, time to tell one’s story. Although a passive depiction of the movement’s history, it exactly echoed the memory of Maman Tchila in Zinder: ‘we have never had the time’, he said, trying to give expression to the sense of permanent persecution and explaining that, whatever move cadres made, it always ended in arrest.²⁰⁷ This paranoia formed the mirror image of the RDA’s totalitarian ambition, and the memory of helplessness translated into a perception that cadres had never had any breathing space. If, in Mayaki’s interview, his son and wife assisted with angry clarifications, Sawaba’s former minister made a resigned impression, all the while struggling to maintain a dignified appearance threatened by

²⁰⁴ Interview Adamou Assane Mayaki, Niamey, 29 Jan. 2003; email Ibrahim Bawa Souley to author, 6 Aug. 2003.

²⁰⁵ Survol sur le Sawaba de mars 1957 à septembre 1958, signed Assane Adamou Mayaki, n.d.

²⁰⁶ See Van Walraven, ‘Decolonization by Referendum’, 290.

²⁰⁷ Interviews Adamou Assane Mayaki, Niamey, 29 Jan. 2003 and Maman Tchila, Zinder, 9 Febr. 2003 (paraphrased).

his approaching end. I came away sad from the interview. The meeting had made a profound impression, as it compellingly underscored the obliterating power of historical forces. If one needed a reminder, it showed that, in the final analysis, history is concerned with people of flesh and blood and cannot be reduced to a theoretical issue that only exists for the intellectual gratification of the scholar.

The notion that they had never had the time to recount their history meant that, even upon my arrival in Niger (2002–2003), many Sawabists seemed not to have come to terms with the past. The catharsis that cadres had undergone early the previous decade was incomplete. Short of the limited platform of the National Conference, only the death of Abdoulaye Mamani (1993) appears to have had some effect in this respect: a great many cadres attended the funeral, some came walking with sticks, and many comrades saw each other for the first time in decades, embraces giving way to conversation and soon, tears following—it was a pitiful scene, according to eyewitnesses.²⁰⁸ With the start of the new millennium many were still busy with the past. As Dembélé's picture over the mantelpiece showed, some did not *want* to forget, others, such as 'Ali Sawaba', were not allowed to by their environment, and my own search for surviving witnesses also had the effect of raking up memories.

Yet, it seems that the time was exactly right for starting to record testimonies about the rebellion. For so many years the cadres and commandos had maintained their silence—a silence that had been imposed by the forces that had defeated them. Silence enforced from outside is oppressive, as it denies victims the truth. As argued by Milan Kundera, it may be considered one of the key facets in the exercise of power. However, the silence of Sawabists was also self-maintained, since aspects of the past were unspeakable. In due course, such stillness may or may not heal wounds, but in any case, time needs to lapse to allow for remembrance without too much hurt—and for trauma to become manageable.²⁰⁹ In the near totality of cases those actors of the past who could be traced responded positively to requests to recount their histories. In fact, their enthusiasm was overwhelming and willingness to talk unreserved, often leading to an unstoppable cascade of words, accounts and stories—the author asked not

²⁰⁸ Interview with an ANN staff member (who knew a son of Mamani), Niamey, 28 Febr. 2008.

²⁰⁹ See (also on Kundera's views) D.W. Cohen, *The Combining of History* (Chicago and London, 1994).

to forget to write down this name, register that event or record such clarification. This interest was also shared by second generation Sawabists. In 2006 Amadou Madougou, a younger son of Madougou Namaro, deliberately sought me out when he heard of my presence in Niamey to tell me about the unhappy fate of his father. In no more than two or three cases did I meet reluctance, which even then did not prevent registration of an account. Indeed, while trying to maintain my scholarly autonomy,²¹⁰ I have to admit that I felt deeply touched by the passion with which my interlocutors responded to my quest. It is also the reason why this book has been dedicated to them.

In the course of these interviews delicate moments could crop up. In 2005 the villagers in the western river valley still vividly recalled the RDA reprisals—onlookers guarding a respectful silence while their spokesmen provided accounts of outrages. For some, these memories could be too much. In Soudouré, three years later, Djibo Bakary's youngest surviving brother, Adamou Souna (now well into his eighties) began to sob quietly when asked what had happened to his brother's movement. He then composed himself, but only to break into tears again a little later, excusing himself that his recollections constituted a 'moral torture'.²¹¹ This was not the first time I had been witness to an emotional breakdown. When I first met Djibo Harouna, in 2005, I found him behind the sewing wheel in his Gothèye workshop, where he began to cry when recounting how his family had lost the compound in Niamey—his sick father forced to leave the capital and his son's prospects (he had been in school until then) taking a sharp turn for the worse. Such bad recollections easily passed on to the next generation. Madougou Namaro in 2006 showed that the family saga, with his father's health irreparably damaged in detention, had made a deep impression on him.

Unhappy memories, some reminiscences were clearly more traumatic. In 2009 I met Soumana Idrissa again. The Vietnam trainee had grown older, but his memory seemed sharper than during the first interview, when it took time to recall names, events, experiences (then it was the first time he recounted them in the presence of an outsider). During the second interview, he recalled how he had shared the company of Sidi Abdou, the unit leader who was to commit suicide in the Tahoua region, and how he

²¹⁰ Not being French or Nigérien helped to enhance my role as outsider.

²¹¹ Interview, Soudouré, 27 Febr. 2008 ('torture morale').

had witnessed his comrade leave Ansongo by camel—never to see him again. Having said this, Idrissa broke down.²¹²

If the weaknesses of old age may have had an effect here, the horrors that some experienced during the 1960s were enough to put their stamp on testimonies, which again drove home that my book project was not a simple academic exercise. In 2008 I had another interview with Mounkaila Beidari, the angry Niamey Sawabist, this time in his new home: the beautifully laid-out property in a new city district, with a lovely garden, underlined the success he had made of his life, showing that he was one of the best examples of cadres who had managed to overcome the difficulties of the RDA era. Yet, the amenities of his home only touched the surface of his existence, as became clear when Beidari began to recount, for a second time and of his own accord, the torture sessions to which the French subjected him at the BCL. Revisiting the ordeal, he repeated his account of 2003 and added new details, before bursting into tears. I tried to calm him down but as the Sawabist wiped his eyes and tried to control himself, muttering that the ‘Corsicans were animals’, it is clear that the scars on his wrists, caused by the tightening of handcuffs, pointed to a serious trauma underneath.²¹³

And Beidari was not alone in this, as suggested by testimonies about Mounkeïla Issifi, Sawaba’s MP for Téra who had been rapporteur in the National Assembly and was sent to the penal colony of Bilma (1961). As shown above, later, he was subjected to electric shocks at the BCL. The ordeal destroyed him, both physically and mentally—upon his release from prison Issifi was brought to hospital for medical treatment. After his discharge he went home and stayed most of the time in his compound, never to work again; he was 38 years old. He suffered a nervous breakdown and became tense and aggressive, unable to tolerate noise—family had to be quiet and the children were warned to be on their best behaviour. By now a withdrawn and pensive man, Issifi locked himself in his room, where he read and prayed, usually coming out only to visit the mosque next to his house. In 1983 he suffered a new crisis and fell ill, passing away two days later. He was 54.²¹⁴

²¹² Interviews Soumana Idrissa, Gothèye, 1 Nov. 2005 and 18 Dec. 2009. Idrissa died in a Niamey hospital on 6 February 2012, after a short illness. Email Abdoul-Rahamane Soumana Idrissa (his son) to author, 3 September 2012.

²¹³ Interview, Niamey, 23 Febr. 2008 (‘les Corsés étaient des animaux’).

²¹⁴ Interview by author and Issa Younoussi with Tahiroou Ayouba Maïga, Niamey, 21 Oct. 2011; email Issa Younoussi (with personal recollections about Issifi) to author, 5 Aug. 2010; Maman, *Répertoire biographique*, vol. 1, 347-348.

Of course, not all participants in Sawaba's revolution became traumatised. Some managed to absorb the strain in ways that made it controllable. Ousmane Dan Galadima, for example, having been through the same ordeals, found solace in the security of his convictions. If he was clearly touched when I revisited him in 2006, pressing his head to my chest in recognition of our renewed acquaintance, the resolve of the little Marxist remained impressive. From our first rendezvous in 2003 I remember how, after a long interview, the slim septuagenarian briskly walked away, to his onion field, several kilometres out of town. By way of a goodbye I had politely asked about this year's crop—to which I was treated with an avalanche of production figures, prices and onion exports.

Such outstanding personalities apart, for many cadres the past remained painful, undoubtedly worsened by the difficulties of the present. In many interviews, one of the last issues to be discussed was the views of Sawabists about Niger's record as an independent state. This proved a delicate matter, as it revealed a sense of disappointment that was not just acute but deeply personal. Criticism of French domination of Niger showed that neo-colonialism was not a barren ideological concept but a hugely private drama, accompanied by lamentations over 'living in 1900'. A man like Ali Amadou came near to tears when comparing Niger's economic achievements with that of its neighbours, while more ardent characters such as Kaïro Alfari, Amadou Diop and Mounkaila Albagna expressed bitterness about the self-enrichment they saw around them and the role of the French in their country's economy. Naturally, their anger was also fed by an awareness that other Nigériens (younger generations, especially) had managed to gain vastly more under this dispensation than they had. But it was clearly more than that: it was a mixture of exasperation and disillusionment, whose sharpness also stemmed from the idealism with which they had lived through the stymied decolonisation era, when they were driven on by the importance of 'effective' nationhood²¹⁵ and the notion of being 'someone who [was] out to redeem ... to lessen the hardship of people.'²¹⁶

²¹⁵ Interviews Ali Amadou, Niamey, 31 Jan. 2003; Amadou Ibrahim Diop, Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003; Mounkaila Albagna, Niamey, 29 Nov. 2003 & 19 Oct. 2011; Kaïro Alfari, Niamey, 30 Oct. 2005; Ali Issaka, Niamey, 29 Febr. 2008; *Seeda*, no. 6, Sept. 2002 (interview Djibo Sékou dit Soumari Goudel).

²¹⁶ Kwewum, *The Story of Gambo Sawaba*, 121, citing an interview with her.

Thus, if in these circumstances some showed a sense of detachment that, if it did not preclude perseverance,²¹⁷ pointed to an acceptance of fate fed by a greater spiritual awareness (several became more religious in jail),²¹⁸ others appear to have continued with this mental struggle—yearning for a relief that would never come. I was regularly confronted with expressions of frustration about the lack of credit given to the Sawaba community and its role as a forerunner of the self-conscious Kountché era, as well as about being ignored by the younger generations. Some would proudly show me their diplomas; others, painfully, argued the equality between Frenchmen and Nigériens. But this could not conceal that there was a sense of humiliation running through these people, conscious of being a community of old men, summarily set aside by history. While Sawabists had not been without their faults, I found it impossible not to sympathise. One may wonder what it actually *means* to live a failed life, to live with destroyed ambition. History punishes failure without pity and confronts historians with the limitations of their scholarship: how far can one reach into the depths of personal trauma and construct a history that comes as close as possible to how the actors concerned lived it, but without becoming that memory itself?²¹⁹

This book shows that a history of the vanquished differs radically from a history conceived from a victor's vantage point. For Niger, specifically, it serves as a grim corrective to the historiography of the First Republic, which continues with appraisals that fail to gauge the extent of its despotism.²²⁰ One can only marvel at the sacrifice Niger grew to expect from its citizens. The fate suffered by Mounkeïla Issifi—who, after all, never joined the guerrilla forces—²²¹ shows that even those once invested with the most honourable functions in a polity were not safe from the basest cruelties. Revisiting the history of Niger in the 1950s-1960s, then, can yield important insights into the nature of the early post-colonial order, especially at a time when the interest of Nigériens in that period has been growing: if Nanking trainee Hassane Djibo, at the time of his release from prison, just wanted

²¹⁷ See, here, Pénel, 'Abdoulaye Mamani', 146-147.

²¹⁸ Interviews Ousseini Dandagoye & Mahaman Tidjani Alou, Zinder & Niamey, 11 & 24 Febr. 2003.

²¹⁹ See, generally, Cohen, *The Combing of History*.

²²⁰ See, for example, Salifou's biography of Diouri (*Biographie politique de Diouri Hamani*), which completely sidesteps Diouri's responsibility for the regime's cruelty.

²²¹ Email Issa Younoussi to author, 26 Oct. 2010, reporting an interview with Tahirou Ayouba Maïga.

to forget,²²² into the new millennium the curiosity about the past only grew. Mamoudou Pascal dreamt of writing a history of the movement, while by 2010 journalists began filming for a documentary on Sawaba.²²³

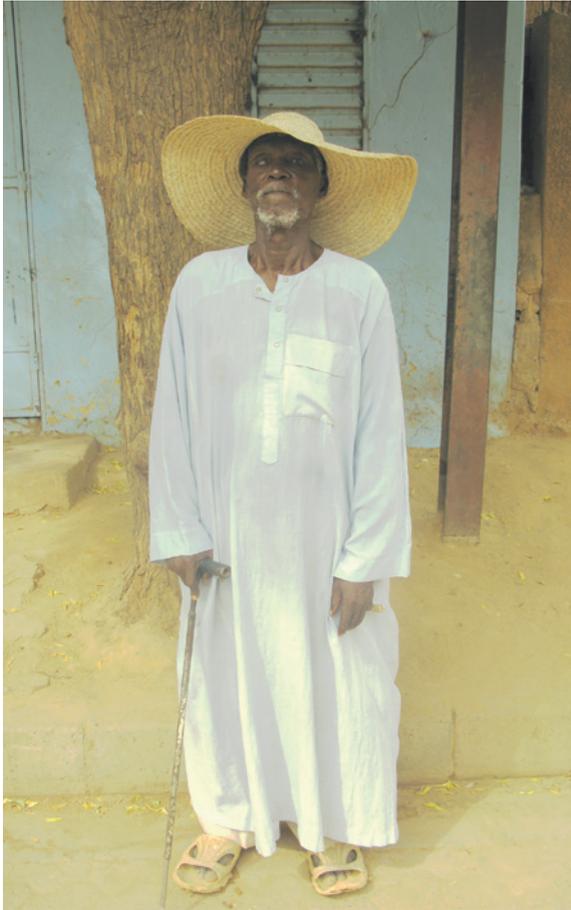


Photo E.15 Mamoudou Pascal, Niamey, 2011.

²²² Interview, Niamey, 22 Febr. 2008.

²²³ Pascal's plan was entitled 'Histoire du parti Sawaba 1954-1990' and was supposed to be published by the publishing house of 'IBS' ('Imprimerie Ibrahim Bawa Souley'). By 2011, in old age (77) and half-blind, the project had apparently not yet come to fruition. Interviews Mamoudou Pascal, Niamey, 23 Oct. 2011, and Moussa Tchangari, Niamey, 22-23 Oct. 2011. The memoirs of political figures such as Issoufou Djermakoye and Moumouni Adamou Djermakoye also point to a greater interest of Nigériens in their country's post-colonial history.

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1

SAWABA DOCUMENTS

This list includes party papers, documents, publications, policy doctrines, declarations, resolutions, telegrams and correspondence (private and other) and statements traced in the course of research. They were issued or published by—or in the name of—the Sawaba movement, whether the party as such (under the name ‘Sawaba’, UDN, MSA, PRA or successor vehicles in the 1990s like UDFP) or related union organisations, youth groups or individual adherents. These documents come from a large range of sources (including official archives, private individuals and certain secondary sources). Some bear no title and have been given a working description. The documents are listed in chronological order. See also the Bibliography, where some publications of Sawabists are listed.

1. Union Démocratique Nigérienne: Lettre ouverte aux Nigériens; Paris, 30 Apr. 1954.
2. Statuts de l’Union Démocrate Nigérienne.
3. *Le Démocrate: Organe bimensuel de l’Union Démocratique Nigérienne*, no. 4, 31 juillet 1954; no. 47, 4 févr. 1956; no. 54, 5 mai 1956; no. 57, 30 juin 1956; no. 65, 17 nov. 1956.
4. Circulaire, Bureau provisoire, MSA, 9 Dec. 1956.
5. Programme d’action de la section nigérienne du M.S.A., Niamey, 8 Febr. 1957.
6. Rapport moral présenté par le secrétaire général du mouvement socialiste africain (M.S.A.), n.d. (after 31 March 1957).
7. Letter Secrétaire Administratif, Sangaré Diougou, and Secrétaire aux Affaires Intérieures, Ousmane Dangaladima, Bureau exécutif, Parti Sawaba, to Governor Rollet, 1 May 1958.
8. Regroupement Africain: Organisation et statuts du parti, 27 July 1958.
9. Declaration of Djibo Bakary, ca. 11 Aug. 1958.
10. Le Secrétaire général du Sawaba Agadez to M. Le Chef du Territoire du Niger, Niamey, 14 Aug. 1958.
11. Congrès constitutif de la section nigérienne du P.R.A.: Rapport de politique générale par Adamou Sekou (29-31 Aug. 1958).
12. Procès-verbal. Comité Sawaba Birni-Zinder, 31 Aug. 1958.
13. Procès-verbal de la réunion de la “Jeunesse Sawaba” d’Agadez, 8 Aug. 1958.

14. Membres de Jeunesse Sawaba de Birni N’Konni, Procès verbal, 10 Aug. 1958.
15. Jeunesse Sawaba du Tahoua, Procès verbal de l’assemblée général du 12 août 1958.
16. Communiqué, Bureau politique du Sawaba, 9 Sept. 1958.
17. Comité directeur du PRA, Motion de politique générale, 14 Sept. 1958.
18. Communiqué, Bureau politique du Sawaba, 15 Sept. 1958.
19. Sawaba communiqué, 4 Oct. 1958.
20. Maurice Camara, Bureau politique Sawaba, to Chef du Territoire du Niger, 5 Oct. 1958.
21. Sawaba communiqué, ? Oct. 1958.
22. Communiqué députés Sawaba, 6 Oct. 1958.
23. Résolution section nigérienne de l’U.G.T.A.N., Niamey, 7 Oct. 1958.
24. Communiqué, Parti Sawaba, 8 Oct. 1958.
25. Déclaration, Bureau politique Sawaba, 26 Oct. 1958.
26. Conférence de presse. Parti du regroupement africain, 19 nov. 1958.
27. Telegram Bureau politique Sawaba to General de Gaulle and the High Commissioner of A.O.F., 21 Nov. 1958.
28. Telegram Malick N’Diaye, Maradi, to Secrétaire Général Sawaba Niamey, 22 Nov. 1958.
29. Letter no. 3/E, Djibo Bakary, Secretary-General Sawaba, to Chef du Territoire, Niamey, 22 Nov. 1958.
30. Letters (two—both numbered “5/E”) Djibo Bakary, Secretary-General Sawaba, to Chef du Territoire, Niamey, 24 Nov. 1958.
31. Telegram Sawaba Tessaoua to Sawaba Niamey, 25 Nov. 1958.
32. Letters no. 6 & no. 7, Djibo Bakary, Secretary-General Sawaba, to Chef du Territoire, Niamey, 25 Nov. 1958.
33. Letter Comité P.R.A. Tahoua to l’Administrateur en chef commandant le cercle de Tahoua and others, Tahoua, 25 Nov. 1958.
34. Telegram Sawaba Tahoua to Bureau politique Sawaba, Niamey, 26 Nov. 1958.
35. Letter no. 8/E, Djibo Bakary, Secretary-General Sawaba, to Chef du Territoire, Niamey, 26 Nov. 1958.
36. Letter no. 4/CST, Amadou Aboubakar, Sangaré Djougou, Sallé Dan Koulou, Comité Sawaba Tessaoua, to Chef du Territoire, 27 Nov. 1958.
37. Letter no. 3/CE, Malick N’Diaye, Comité Sawaba Maradi, to Chef du Territoire, 27 Nov. 1958.
38. Letter no. 10/E, Bureau Politique Sawaba (mandataire Abdoulaye Maiga) to Chef du Territoire, 27 Nov. 1958.

39. Telegram Sawaba candidates Maradi to Sawaba committee Niamey, 27 Nov. 1958.
40. Letter no. 9/E, Djibo Bakary, Secretary-General Sawaba, to Chef du Territoire, Niamey, 27 Nov. 1958.
41. Lettre ouverte, no. 4/C, de la section Sawaba de Maradi à Monsieur le Commandant de Cercle de Maradi, 28 Nov. 1958.
42. Letter no. 11/E, Bureau politique Sawaba (mandataire Abdoulaye Maiga) to Chef du Territoire, 28 Nov. 1958.
43. Letter, uncoded, Bureau politique Sawaba (mandataire Abdoulaye Maiga) to Chef du Territoire, 28 Nov. 1958.
44. Letter Bureau politique Sawaba (mandataire Abdoulaye Maiga) to Chef du Territoire, 28 Nov. 1958.
45. Letter Bureau politique Sawaba (mandataire Abdoulaye Maiga) to Chef du Territoire, 29 Nov. 1958.
46. Telegram Abdoulaye Mamani, for Sawaba committee Zinder, to Sawaba Niamey, 29 Nov. 1958.
47. Telegram Sawaba Maine to Senghor Niamey, 29 Nov. 1958.
48. Telegram Sawaba Maïné-Soroa to Chef du Territoire, 29 Nov. 1958.
49. Telegram Sawaba committee Zinder to Chef du Territoire, 29 Nov. 1958.
50. Telegram Sawaba committee Zinder to Chef du Territoire (?), 29 Nov. 1958.
51. Telegram Sawaba candidates Maradi to ?, 29 Nov. 1958.
52. Letter no. 13/E, Bureau politique Sawaba (mandataire Abdoulaye Maiga) to Chef du Territoire, 30 Nov. 1958.
53. Telegram Mustapha, Madaoua, to Sawaba Niamey, 30 Nov. 1958.
54. Telegram Abdoulaye Mamani, Zinder, to Sawaba Niamey, 30 Nov. 1958.
55. Letter, no. 14/E, Bureau politique Sawaba (mandataire Abdoulaye Maiga) to Chef du Territoire, 1 Dec. 1958.
56. Sawaba Maine to Direction Sawaba Niamey, 1 Dec. 1958.
57. Telegram Sawaba Gouré to Sawaba Niamey, 1 Dec. 1958.
58. Telegram Adame Zaroumeye, candidate Sawaba Dosso, to ?, 1 Dec. 1958.
59. Telegram Sawaba Magaria, Diop to ?, 2 Dec. 1958.
60. Telegram Sawaba Dosso to Sawaba Niamey, 2 Dec. 1958.
61. Telegram Sawaba Zinder to Chef du Territoire, 3 Dec. 1958.
62. Telegram Sawaba Tanout to Chef du Territoire, 3 Dec. 1958.
63. Telegram Abdoulaye Mamane, Zinder, to Sawaba Niamey, 3 Dec. 1958.

64. Telegram Sawaba Tessaoua to Chef du Territoire, 3 Dec. 1958.
65. Telegram Sawaba Maradi to Chef du Territoire, 4 Dec. 1958.
66. Telegram of Sawaba Tessaoua to Chef du Territoire, 4 Dec. 1958.
67. Letter no. 17/E, Bureau politique Sawaba (mandataire Abdoulaye Maiga) to Chef du Territoire, 4 Dec. 1958.
68. Letter no. 18/E, Bureau politique Sawaba (mandataire Abdoulaye Maiga) to Chef du Territoire, 4 Dec. 1958.
69. Letter no. 12/CST, Sangaré Diougou, for comité local Sawaba Tessaoua, to Monsieur l'Administrateur en Chef de la FOM Commandant le Cercle de Tessaoua, 5 Dec. 1958.
70. Letter no. 13/CST, Sangaré Diougou, for comité local Sawaba Tessaoua, to Monsieur l'Administrateur en Chef de la FOM Commandant le Cercle de Tessaoua, 5 Dec. 1958.
71. Letters (two, uncoded) by I. Diop, Magaria, to Monsieur l'Administrateur en Chef de la FOM Commandant le Cercle de Magaria, 5 Dec. 1958.
72. Letter no. 19/E, Bureau politique Sawaba (mandataire Abdoulaye Maiga) to Chef du Territoire, 6 Dec. 1958.
73. Letter no. 20/E, Bureau politique Sawaba (mandataire Abdoulaye Maiga) to Chef du Territoire, 6 Dec. 1958.
74. Letter no. 21/E, Bureau politique Sawaba (mandataire Abdoulaye Maiga) to Chef du Territoire, 8 Dec. 1958.
75. Telegram Mamani, Zinder, to Sawaba Niamey, 8 Dec. 1958.
76. Telegram Committee Sawaba Zinder to Chef du Territoire, 8 Dec. 1958.
77. Letter Issa Bakary Maiga, Candidat à la Circonscription de Tillabéry aux élections du 14.12.58 à l'Assemblée Territoriale, à Monsieur le Chef de la Subdivision de Ouallam, 8 Dec. 1958.
78. Letter Bureau politique Sawaba (mandataire Abdoulaye Maiga) to Chef du Territoire, 9 Dec. 1958.
79. Telegram Sawaba Maradi to Sawaba Niamey, 9 Dec. 1958.
80. Telegram Condat, Tessaoua, to Chef du Territoire, 9 Dec. 1958.
81. Telegram Sawaba Zinder to Chef du Territoire, 9 Dec. 1958.
82. Letter Djibo Bakary to Commandant de Cercle Madaoua, 9 Dec. 1958.
83. Letter no. 23/E, Bureau politique Sawaba (mandataire Abdoulaye Maiga) to Chef du Territoire, 10 Dec. 1958.
84. Letter Sawaba Maradi to Commandant de Cercle of Maradi, 10 Dec. 1958.

85. Telegram Committee Sawaba Tanout to Chef du Territoire, 10 Dec. 1958.
86. Telegram Sawaba Maradi to Chef du Territoire, 11 Dec. 1958.
87. Letter with telegrams mandataire Abdoulaye Maiga to Chef du Territoire, n.d. (Dec. 1958)
88. Telegram Sawaba Maradi to Sawaba Niamey, n.d. (Dec. 1958).
89. Telegram Mamani, Zinder, to Sawaba Niamey, n.d. (Dec. 1958).
90. Letter Sawaba Maradi to Commandant de Cercle Maradi, 11 Dec. 1958.
91. Telegram Djibo Bakary to Senghor, Dia and Lamine Gueye, Maradi, 11 Dec. 1958.
92. Letter Sawaba Maradi to Commandant de Cercle Maradi, 12 Dec. 1958.
93. Telegram Sawaba Zinder to Chef du Territoire, 13 Dec. 1958.
94. Telegram Sawaba Dosso to Chef du Territoire, 14 Dec. 1958.
95. Telegram Taambari Tchiloko, Sawaba Dakoro, to Chef du Territoire, 14 Dec. 1958.
96. *Unité. Organe Hebdomadaire du Parti Sawaba*: no. 1, 30 Apr. 1959; no. 8, 8 June 1959; no. 9, June 1959; no. 18, special, 28 Aug. 1959; no. 19, 3 Sept. 1959; no. 21, 24 Sept. 1959.
97. 'Nous disons NON à l'O.C.R.S.'; article *Unité*, 14 May 1959.
98. Aux comités locaux du Sawaba; circular; Sawaba: Bureau politique, Niamey, 31 May 1959.
99. Letter Hima Dembélé, Niamey, to Daouda Ardaly, Vienna, 1 June 1959.
100. Communiqué, Bureau politique Sawaba, 6 June 1959.
101. Letter by Sallé Dan Koulou, PTT Niamey, to Mallam Abdou, 27 June 1959.
102. Letter by Sallé Dan Koulou, PTT Niamey, to Ounié, ca. June 1959.
103. Letter by Sallé Dan Koulou, PTT Niamey, to Nano, ca. June 1959.
104. Resolution UGTAN congress in Bamako, 25-7 July 1959.
105. Declaration of Djibo Bakary on Radio-Soudan, 16 Oct. 1959.
106. Telegram, Bureau politique Sawaba to Président Conseil Gouvernement Paris/Haut Commissaire Dakar, Dec. 1959.
107. Declaration by Djibo Bakary on Radio Soudan, 4 Dec. 1959.
108. New Year Message by Djibo Bakary, broadcast on Radio Soudan, 29 Dec. 1959.
109. Speech by Ousmane Dan Galadima, 2nd All-African People's Conference, Tunis, 25-29 Jan. 1960.
110. Letter by Lawali Baro, Maradi, to Sallé Dan Koulou Niamey, 27 Jan. 1960.

111. Letter by Sallé Dan Koulou, Direction du groupe postal Niamey, to Dan Dicko (Dandouna Aboubakar), 28 Febr. 1960.
112. Letter by Abdoulaye Mamani to Mahaman Tchilla, n.d. (ca. Apr. 1960).
113. Press declaration by Secretary-General Djibo Bakary on the occasion of the independence of the Federation of Mali, 8 Apr. 1960.
114. Response of Secretary-General Djibo Bakary to a declaration of Bou-bou Hama, 28 May 1960.
115. Press comment by Secretary-General Djibo Bakary, 24 June 1960.
116. Appeal by Secretary-General Djibo Bakary to the people of Niger, n.d. (after 28 June 1960).
117. Communiqué 9, Parti Sawaba—Section nigérienne du P.F.A., Bureau politique, July 1960.
118. Letter by Adamou Assane Mayaki, Dosso, to President Diori, 6 Aug. 1960.
119. Letter by Barmou Batouré, prison civile Niamey, to President Diori, 28 Sept. 1960.
120. Press declaration by Secretary-General Djibo Bakary, 8 Dec. 1960.
121. Declaration by Secretary-General Djibo Bakary, n.d. (a few months before Jan. 1961).
122. List of political conditions of Sawaba vis-à-vis Niger, 1961.
123. Proposals for reconciliation Sawaba-PPN, 1961.
124. List of reform proposals for Niger, 1961.
125. Letter Monique Dembélé, Niamey, to Hima Dembélé, Bamako, 30 March 1961.
126. Mamani Abdoulaye, attaché au Commissariat à l'information to Monsieur le Ministre de la Fonction Publique, Niamey 28 May 1961.
127. Lettre ouverte au gouvernement de la république du Niger; Union des Scolaires Nigériens, n.d. (ca. May-June 1961).
128. Speech delegate Union des travailleurs du Niger at Conférence pan-africaine des syndicats at Casablanca, 25-29 May 1961.
129. Telegram Ferhat Abbas, FLN Algeria, to Sawaba Tunis, n.d. (ca. spring 1961).
130. Message au peuple nigérien, Président Bakary Djibo, June 1961.
131. Letter Hima Dembélé, Bamako, to Monique Dembélé, Niamey, 12 June 1961.
132. *Gaskya. Organe Officiel du Parti Sawaba*, no. 3, 1 June 1961; no. 4, 22 June 1961; no. 5, 29 June 1961; no. ?, special, 5 July 1961; no. 7, n.d.; no. 8, 28 July 1961; no. 9, 7 Aug. 1961; no. 10, 15 Aug. 1961; no. 11, 5 Sept. 1961; no. 12, 12 Sept. 1961; no. 13, 26 Sept. 1961; no. 15, 18 Oct. 1961;

- no. 16, 30 Oct. 1961; no. 18, 6 Dec. 1961; no. 20, 18 March 1962; no. 21, 25 March 1962.
133. Letter Hima Dembélé, Niamey, to Elké Zschäbitz [sic], Leipzig, 20 June 1961.
 134. Communiqué, Bureau politique du Parti Sawaba, Bamako, 21 June 1961.
 135. Mise au Point, Bureau politique Sawaba, Bamako, 21 June 1961.
 136. Telegram of Djibo Bakary to Ferhat Abbas, president of the provisional government of Algeria, 5 July 1961.
 137. Résolution sur la coopération de la jeunesse et des syndicats dans la lutte pour les libertés démocratiques, Séminaire africaine de la jeunesse, Casablanca, 10-14 July 1961.
 138. Motion de solidarité avec les étudiants d'Afrique Noire en France F.E.A.N.F., Casablanca, 10-14 July 1961.
 139. Telegram of Djibo Bakary to President Bourguiba, Tunis, 27 Aug. 1961.
 140. Telegram of Djibo Bakary to Quaison Sackey, President of Afro-Asian Group, United Nations, 28 Aug. 1961.
 141. Telegram of Djibo Bakary, Secretary of Sawaba and former president government Niger, to Nikita Khrushchev, First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, n.d. (ca. Sept. 1961).
 142. Telegram Ardaly Daouda to Budapest (communist youth organisations allied to UJDN), n.d. (ca. Sept. 1961).
 143. Letter by Abdou Boukar, France, to Minister of the Interior Niamey, 23 Sept. 1961.
 144. Letter by Madame Adamou Sékou to Ministre de l'Intérieur, 28 Sept. 1961.
 145. Letter by Amadou Aboubakar Kaou to El Hadj Mahaman Hameth, n.d. (1961).
 146. Telegram by Djibo Bakary to Ben Khedda, president provisional government of Algeria, n.d. (ca. Oct. 1961).
 147. Telegram by Djibo Bakary to Hassan II, Morocco, n.d. (ca. Oct. 1961).
 148. Telegram by Djibo Bakary to Ould Omeir, minister of state Morocco, n.d. (ca. Oct. 1961).
 149. Letter by Djibo Bakary to President Diori, 10 Oct. 1961.
 150. Letter by Sékou Ismaila Bery to President Diori, 21 Oct. 1961.
 151. Communiqué, Bureau politique, Sawaba, Bamako, 30 Oct. 1961.
 152. Mémoire sur la situation politique du Niger, Parti Sawaba, Bureau politique, Bamako, 13 Nov. 1961.
 153. Appel aux Organisations Démocratiques du Monde, Bamako, le 26 Nov. 1961, pour le Bureau politique, Bakary Djibo.

154. Communiqué, Bureau politique, Parti Sawaba, Bamako, 1 Dec. 1961.
155. Déclaration, Bureau politique, Parti Sawaba, Bamako, 1 Dec. 1961.
156. Telegram Abdullah [sic] Mamani, representative Sawaba, Zamaleck, Cairo, to President Gamal Abdel Nasser, n.d. (ca. Nov.-Dec. 1961).
157. *Parti Sawaba. Pour l'Indépendance effective du Niger: Les raisons de notre lutte* (Bureau du Parti SAWABA: Bamako, 15 Jan. 1961), 76 p.
158. Telegram Union Démocratique de la Jeunesse du Niger to "UGEMA", 37 rue Jean Le Vachet, Tunis, n.d. (ca. 1962).
159. Lettre au Sawaba et à son Secrétaire-Général le Président Djibo Bakary (student letter from France, n.d., not later than 1962).
160. Adamou Sékou, ancien ministre détenu au camp penal de Bilma à Monsieur le Président de la République du Niger à Niamey, Bilma, 6 Febr. 1962.
161. Telegram of Djibo Bakary to Ben Khedda, president provisional government of Algeria, Tunis, n.d. (ca. early spring 1962).
162. Letter by Salifou Soumaila, Villa Lotus, Rabat, to 'Wierschke', German Democratic Republic, 24 March 1962.
163. Letter by Salifou Soumaila, Villa Lotus, Rabat, to 'Ursula', German Democratic Republic, 24 March 1962.
164. Les Etudiants Nigériens à Moscou to l'Association des parents d'élèves du Niger, 8 Apr. 1962.
165. Déclaration, Bureau politique Sawaba, Accra, 12 Apr. 1962.
166. Appel à la Jeunesse; Union de la Jeunesse Démocratique du Niger, Bamako, 25 May 1962.
167. *Parti Sawaba du Niger: Pour Un Front Démocratique de la Patrie* (Bureau politique: Niamey, 1962), 53 p.
168. Speech Djibo Bakary at Conference of Afro-Asian Solidarity, Moshi, Tanzania, Febr. 1963 (excerpts).
169. Statutes Association des Etudiants Sawaba du Niger AESN-UJDN, ca. 1963 (excerpts).
170. Message B. Kanguèye and Ali Mahaman [sic] at séminaire international des jeunes contre le colonialisme et le néocolonialisme, Algiers, Apr. 1963.
171. Lettre aux lecteurs, Bureau politique du Sawaba, ca. May 1963.
172. Speech Abdoulaye Mamani at Conference of Afro-Asian Journalists, Djakarta, Indonesia, 1963.
173. *Sawaba. Organe Central du Parti Sawaba du Niger*: no. 15, 5 Oct. 1957; March 1963; May 1963; Dec. 1964.
174. Appel. Front démocratique de la patrie; Accra, 2 Febr. 1964.

175. Koussanga Alzouma martyr de la cause africaine; undated Sawaba pamphlet (ca. 1964).
176. Letter Djibo Bakary to commando leader (probably Sallé Dan Koulou), n.d. (ca. 22 Sept. 1964).
177. Communiqué, Bureau politique, 27 Sept. 1964.
178. Mémoire pour l'opération révolution du parti Sawaba du Niger; Commandant A. Dangaladima to Président Bremu des Affaires Africaine; P.O. Box M. 41, Accra, Ghana, n.d. (probably end Sept. 1964).
179. Issaka Koké, 'l'Afrique doit dire NON à l'arbitraire policier', Oct. 1964.
180. Djibo Bakary to President Yaméogo, Ouagadougou, Upper Volta, 10 Oct. 1964.
181. Communiqué, Bureau politique, Accra, 17 Oct. 1964.
182. Letter M. Dangaladima, Secrétaire Général Sawaba, to A.K. Barden, President Bureau of African Affairs, Accra, 31 Oct. 1964.
183. UDN-MSN-Union Démocratique Nigérienne: Djibo Bakary, M. Dangaladima and Yakubu Goté [sic] to A.K. Barden, president Bureau of African Affairs, 31 Oct. 1964.
184. Déclaration, Front démocratique de la patrie (Parti Sawaba), 13 Nov. 1964.
185. Communiqué Parti—Sawaba, no. 6, Accra, n.d. (mid-Nov. 1964).
186. Communiqué de Presse; Front démocratique de la patrie (Parti Sawaba), Bureau politique, 22 Nov. 1964.
187. Communiqué à la presse; Front démocratique de la patrie. Parti Sawaba, n.d. (ca. Dec. 1964).
188. Communiqué no. 6, n.d. (ca. Dec. 1964).
189. Déclaration, Front Démocratique de la Patrie, n.d. (ca. Sept. 1965).
190. Projet de restitution et de diffusion des oeuvres des hommes de lettres et de culture nigériens du 20ème siècle, présenté par M. Abdoulaye Mamani, n.d. (late 1980s, early 1990s).
191. Syndicat national de l'administration générale S.N.A.G.: Itinéraire syndical de Mamoudou Pascal, n.d. (after 1990).
192. Liste des Nigériens militants ou sympathisants du Sawaba morts dans les prisons du régime de Diori Hamani (UDFP-Sawaba. Direction Provisoire. Secrétariat Permanent): Niamey, n.d. (ca. Aug. 1990).
193. Liste des Responsables et Militants du Sawaba Tombés sous le Régime PPN/RDA. UDN/Sawaba, n.d. (1990s). Signed Mamoudou Pascal.
194. Contribution de la délégation de l'UDFP-Sawaba au succès de la conférence nationale des forces vives du Niger, Niamey, 29 juillet 1991 (République du Niger. Union des forces populaires pour la démocratie et le progrès, Niamey).

195. Communiqué no. ?: Ils se sont comportés tous mal en exil. UDN/Sawaba, n.d., but 1991. Signed Mamoudou Pascal.
196. Survol sur le Sawaba de Mars 1957 à Septembre 1958, signed Assane Adamou Mayaki, n.d. (1990s).
197. Votez vos candidates U.D.F.P. SAWABA Département de Zinder, n.d. (1990s).
198. Création de "Club des Amis du Sawaba", CLAS, Niamey, n.d. (1990s).
199. Comité de réflexion UDFP-Sawaba, le coordinateur Ibrahim Bawa, to Monsieur Djibo Bakary, Président de l'UDFP/Sawaba, Niamey, le 14 juin 1994.
200. Curriculum vitae Zoumari Issa Seyni, n.d. (after 2000).
201. Kaïro Alfari, Mémoire sur les fraternelles relations franco-nigériennes (Union de la Jeunesse Patriotique du Niger: Niamey, 2003).

ANNEX 2

NIGER

a. ANN (*Archives Nationales du Niger*)

The following list only concerns files of Niger's national government archives, stored in the capital Niamey. These archives are well organised.¹ Listed codes contain relevant archival data on Sawaba. For important files, stored under these codes, a short description of content is given. Important reports are indicated.

1 E 45.34: on RDA electioneering vis-à-vis Sawaba.

Ministère de l'Intérieur

86 MI 1 PO 22.14: République du Niger Assemblée constituante. Procès verbaux.
Session extraordinaire du 17-12-58 au 22-12-58; session ordinaire du 29-12-58 au 20-1-59, 27-30.

– JC/CG République du Niger; Ministère de l'intérieur: Bulletin Hebdomadaire semaine du 1^{er} au 7 octobre 1961, no. 1342/MI/CAB/Ct.cf.

– JC/CG République du Niger; Ministère de l'intérieur: Bulletin Hebdomadaire semaine du 8 au 14 octobre 1961, no. 1358/MI/CAB/Ct.cf.

86 MI 1 E 7.12: P.P.N.-R.D.A. Rapport de tournée effectué par la mission du bureau politique dans le cercle de Tahoua du 17 au 22 mai 1964, télégramme confidentiel – Maradi I 4 9 55A. Message chiffre demarque—nr 117/4 du 14/5/64.

86 MI 1 C 1.2: Joseph Akouété.

86 MI 1 C 2.5

86 MI D 9.38: Rapport Annuel 1963, Cercle de Tessaoua.

¹ See for some information C. Lefebvre, 'Archives et centres documentaires au Niger', *Afrique et Histoire*, 2006, no. 5, 177-183.

- 86 MI 1 E 5.2: P.R.A. "SAWABA": Correspondance diverse: 1958-1964 (see also 86 MI 1 E 1.18 PRA—Sawaba. Correspondance diverse 1958-1964).
- 86 MI 1 E 5.5: Political reports.
- 86 MI 1 E 6.3: Political reports.
- 86 MI 1 E 7.3: Political reports.
- 86 MI 1 E 7.13: Students jailed upon return from Eastern Europe (Kaïro Alfari Maïga, Amadou Biry Kouly and Daouda Hamani).
- 86 MI 1 E 8.1: Rogogo cell.
- 86 MI 1 E 8.2: Political reports.
- 86 MI 1 E 8.4: Political reports.
- 86 MI 1 E 8.9: Sawaba students.
- 86 MI 1 E 8.11: Political reports.
- 86 MI 1 E 8.14: Sawaba students interrogated upon return from the Eastern Bloc; includes: Etudiants et Boursiers du Sawaba de Retour des Pays de l'Est, No. 879/BCL, 18 Oct. 1968.
- 86 MI 3 F 3.2: Georges Condat.
- 86 MI 3 F 3.5: Djibo Bakary.
- 86 MI 3 F 3.7: Sallé Dan Koulou; early repression Sawaba.
- 86 MI 3 F 3.8: Dandouna Aboubakar; Maradi cell; nature of interrogation.
- 86 MI 3 F 3.9: Adamou Sékou.
- 86 MI 3 F 3.10: Hima Dembélé.
- 86 MI 3 F 3.11: Amadou Aboubakar dit Kaou.
- 86 MI 3 F 3.12: Communist propaganda (Eastern Bloc).
- 86 MI 3 F 3.14: Sawaba cell Gaya region.
- 86 MI 3 F 4.4: Daouda Ardaly, assassination report.
- 86 MI 3 F 4.11: Sawaba cells Gothèye and Ghana; various reports on Yacouba Idrissa dit Gothèye; Sawaba cell Ghana embassy Niamey.
- 86 MI 3 F 6.7: Barmou Batouré (prison conditions).
- 86 MI 3 F 7.8: Issa Bakary.
- 86 MI 3 F 7.9: Kantama Alzouma/Jimra Orgao; nature of interrogation.
- 86 MI 3 F 7.11: Mamadou Ary.

- 86 MI 3 F 8.2: Early trips to China; contains also an intelligence report by J. Colombani to Ministre de l'Intérieur: Stratégie de l'Opposition Sawaba: Ingérences Etrangères. Très Secret. 33/C/SU, 13 January 1961.
- 86 MI 3 F 8.3: Gatakoye Sabi and others; FMJD & Eastern Bloc contacts.
- 86 MI 3 F 8.4: Maïdanda Djermakoye.
- 86 MI 3 F 8.5: Abdoulaye Mamani (including contact with Adamou Sékou).
- 86 MI 3 F 8.6: Ousmane Dan Galadima, Kano cell, Boukary Karemi dit Kokino.
- 86 MI 3 F 8.7: Salifou Soumaila, Moroccan cell, contacts GDR.
- 86 MI 3 F 8.18: AAPC Accra—contact with Sawabists.
- 86 MI 3 F 8.19: Adamou Assane Mayaki; Sékou Ismaila Bery.
- 86 MI 3 F 12.19: Issoufou Danbaro; Dahomean infiltration routes.
- 86 MI 3 F 12.32: Escape routes Sawabists; interrogation reports; files numerous cadres (including Louis Bourguès, Bachir Boukary, Chaibou Souley, Mallam Kalla).
- 86 MI 3 F 18.9: Direction de la Sûreté Nationale/Commissariat de Police de la Ville d'Agadez: Notes d'Information concernant le Sawaba en liaison avec Tamanrasset (intelligence & interrogation reports, Algerian cells; cells northern network; letters; files/reports on Kantama Alzouma, Djibo Issa, Abdoulaye Mamani, Boukary Karemi dit Kokino and others).
- 86 MI 3 F 18.18

FONDS DAPA—Direction des affaires politiques et administratives (guerrilla attacks 1964-1965, different zones):

- Bulletin Mensuel de Renseignements, no. 417: 20 Sept.–20 Oct. 1964, Cercle du Tillabéry, no. 92.
- Rapport Politique, 20 Sept.–20 Oct. 1964 (Bulletins Mensuels de Renseignements, no. 417; also as Rapport Politique, same period, no. 444.4 in no. 418), Nguigmi.
- Rapport Politique, 20 Oct.–20 Nov. 1964 (Bulletins Mensuels de Renseignements, no. 417; also as Rapport Politique, same period, no. 444.5 in no. 418), Nguigmi.

- Bulletins Mensuel de Renseignements, no. 417, 21 Sept.–20 Oct. 1964, Tessaoua.
- Bulletins Mensuel de Renseignements, no. 417, 21 Sept.–20 Oct. 1964, Magaria.
- Bulletins Mensuel de Renseignements, no. 417, 21 Sept.–20 Oct. 1964, Cercle de Niamey, circonscription Boboye (between Niamey and Dosso).
- Bulletins Mensuel de Renseignements, no. 417, 21 Sept.–20 Oct. 1964, Zinder.
- Letter by Minister of the Interior to Commandant de Cercle Zinder, 7 Nov. 1964.
- Bulletins Mensuel de Renseignements, no. 417, 21 Sept.–20 Oct. 1964, 37/CAZ/CF.
- Bulletins Mensuel de Renseignements, no. 417, 21 Sept.–20 Oct. 1964, Circonscription Bouza.
- Bulletins Mensuel de Renseignements, no. 417, 21 Sept.–20 Oct. 1964, Cercle de Madaoua.
- Bulletin Mensuel de Renseignements, no. 417, 20 Oct.–20 Nov. 1964, Madaoua
- Bulletin Mensuel de Renseignements, no. 417, 20 Oct.–20 Nov. 1964, Dosso.
- Bulletin Mensuel de Renseignements, no. 417, 20 Oct.–20 Nov. 1964, Maradi.
- Rapports Annuels Année 1964—no. 436; 436.8: Maradi; 436.12: Zinder.
- Bulletin Mensuel de Renseignements, no. 472.3, 1–31 Oct. 1964, Konni.
- Bulletin Mensuel de Renseignements, no. 473.6, 20 Oct.–20 Nov. 1964, Téra.
- Bulletin Mensuel de Renseignements, no. 444.6 (in no. 418), 20 Nov.–20 Dec. 1964, Téra.
- Bulletin Mensuel de Renseignements, no. ?, 20 Jan.–20 Febr. 1965, Téra.
- Bulletin Mensuel de Renseignements, 445.3 (Diffa): 21 Dec. 1968–20 Jan. 1969, 21 Febr.–20 March 1969, 21 July–20 Aug. 1969; 21 May–20 June 1970; 21 June–20 July 1970.

Ministère de la Justice

- M 27.26: Ministère de la Justice: République du Niger. Cour de Sûreté de l'Etat. Arrêt de Condamnation No. 9 du 6 Juin 1969 (Agadez trial—Bosso units)

M 27.38: Clemency plea 2 Sawabists (Issa Oumarou dit Sidibe Ousseini and Issaka Saydou dit Nierre Foulani), 1973.

Assemblée Nationale

AN 1 E 3.20 1969 P.P.N.-RDA./Sous-Section de Tessaoua: Affaire Koundédé extrémiste du Sawaba et Issa Tela.

b. *From Private Sources*

– *Annuaire Politique du Niger*, Paris and Dakar, n.d. (ca. 1957-8).

– No. 396/SN/ST. SECRET ORGANISATION TERRORISTE “SAWABA” (Recueil des dirigeants et militants actifs en fuite). Exemplaire No. 000148; destinataire: Monsieur le Sous Préfet de Dosso, 29 Sept. 1966 (list of 219 Sawaba suspects). This document is also present in the archives of the Gendarmerie Nationale.

– République du Niger—Présidence: Décret no. 65-066/Bis/PRN, 5 mai 1965 portant mise en accusation devant la Cour de Sûreté de l’Etat (Til-labéri trial).

c. *Main Nigérien Periodicals Used* (non-Sawaba publications)²

Le Niger.

Le Temps du Niger: Quotidien républicain d’information.

Seeda: Mensuel nigérien d’informations générales.

Haske: Bimensuel nigérien d’information et de réflexion.

² Periodicals outside Niger, which were of use, include *Afrique Nouvelles* (Dakar); *Fraternité-Hebdo* (Côte d’Ivoire); *Le Monde* (Paris).

ANNEX 3

FRANCE

Intelligence files derive from various organs and institutions—military and political. The political ones principally involved an inter-territorial organ in AOF's capital Dakar and, less frequently, an office at the colonial ministry in Paris. More often (especially after independence), intelligence files were drafted by members of the military responsible either for the whole of French West Africa, its 'zone d'outre-mer no. 1' (with base in Dakar), or 'zone d'outre-mer no. 4' (based in Abidjan):

- Haut Commissariat Général à Dakar. Conseiller Politique—Bureau de Synthèse, Bureau d'Etudes de Dakar.
- Ministère de la F.O.M. Cabinet du Ministre. Bureau d'Etudes.
- Commandement supérieur des forces armées de la zone de défense A.O.F.-Togo. Etat-Major—2^{ème} Bureau.
- Commandement supérieur de la Zone d'outre-mer no. 1. (ZOM) 1. Etat-Major. 2^{ème} Bureau. Dakar (a later name is Commandement Supérieur du point d'appui de Dakar).
- Délégation pour la défense de la zone d'outre-mer no. 4—Etat-Major—2^{ème}, 3^{ème} and 4^{ème} Bureau. Abidjan.

Sources for intelligence reports are occasionally Haussaire AOF (i.e. Haut Commissariat in Dakar), but more often the SDECE. Names of intelligence bulletins change regularly. All reports were by definition confidential or secret, occasionally classified 'very secret' or 'urgent'. Intelligence reports up to independence are stored at CAOM, Aix-en-Provence, afterwards at SHAT, Vincennes.

a. CAOM (*Centre des archives d'outre-mer, Aix-en-Provence*)

These contain the files of the 'Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer', ANOM. Sources usually concern those from the Fond Ministériel (FM), Affaires Politiques. Those for which a dispensation ('dérogação') procedure was required are indicated by 'd'. Crucial documents stored in these files are indicated, as is important content.

FM Direction du Contrôle Cart. 1037

- FM Direction du Contrôle Cart. 1040: Mission Pinassaud—
telegrams & other
correspondence
during Dec. 1958
legislative elections.
- FM Direction du Contrôle Cart. 1041: Mission Boyer—Nia-
mey riots April 1958
(also see 2255/D.2).
- FM Direction du Contrôle Cart. 1042
- FM Direction du Contrôle Cart. 1053
- FM Affaires Politiques Cart. 2154/Dos.3: Political situation
1957.
- FM Affaires Politiques Cart. 2174/Dos.1 d
- FM Affaires Politiques Cart. 2180/Dos.5: d; NEPU, Northern
Nigeria.
- FM Affaires Politiques Cart. 2181/Dos.1 Bis: Political situation
1958-1959.
- FM Affaires Politiques Cart. 2185/Dos.4: Political situation
1956.
- FM Affaires Politiques Cart. 2187/Dos.3: Sept. 1958 referen-
dum.
- FM Affaires Politiques Cart. 2187/Dos.7: Political situation
1957.
- FM Affaires Politiques Cart. 2189/Dos.3: UGTAN; Dandouna
Aboubakar.
- FM Affaires Politiques Cart. 2189/Dos.12: Political situation
1958; violence
election campaign
December.
- FM Affaires Politiques Cart. 2195/Dos.1: Pol. situation autumn
1958.
- FM Affaires Politiques Cart. 2195/Dos.5: d; Daouda Ardaly &
French communists;
NCNC.
- FM Affaires Politiques Cart. 2195/Dos.7: d; NEPU; Sept. 1958
referendum.
- FM Affaires Politiques Cart. 2197/Dos.10: Daouda Ardaly
Eastern Europe 1957;
Nigerian contacts;
MSA Congress 5-7
Apr. 1958.

- FM Affaires Politiques Cart. 2198/Dos.2: Political situation
1957.
- FM Affaires Politiques Cart. 2198/Dos.15
- FM Affaires Politiques Cart. 2199/Dos.14
- FM Affaires Politiques Cart. 2199/Dos.15
- FM Administration Cart. 2211/Dos.1: Report referendum
Sept. 1958.
- FM Affaires Politiques Cart. 2221/Dos.1: Intervention Don Jean
Colombani, Sept. 1958
(decrees).
- FM Affaires Politiques Cart. 2221/Dos.2: d; Georges Condat,
Adamou Sékou.
- FM Affaires Politiques Cart. 2230/Dos.4: 1953 strikes.
- FM Affaires Politiques Cart. 2233/Dos.2: Pol. situation summer
1958.
- FM Affaires Politiques Cart. 2246: Contacts Sawabists
with Eastern Europe;
FMJD; UJN; UGTAN.
- FM Affaires Politiques Cart. 2246/B.3
- FM Affaires Politiques Cart. 2248
- FM Affaires Politiques Cart. 2249: Pol. situation early
1959; Abdoulaye
Mamani in Nigeria;
Nigerian influence in
south-east Niger;
FMJD; UGTAN;
Zinder (election); PAI.
- FM Affaires Politiques Cart. 2250: Banning of UGTAN;
banning Sawaba.
- FM Affaires Politiques Cart. 2251: Exile Djibo Bakary;
travels Daouda Ardaly
& Dandouna Aboubakar;
PFA; UPN.
- FM Affaires Politiques Cart. 2252: 1959 New Year
message Bakary;
underground activity
Sawaba early 1960.
- FM Affaires Politiques Cart. 2255/Dos.2: d; see under 1041.
- FM Affaires Politiques Cart. 2257/Dos.2: *Le Démocrate*, 1956.

- FM Affaires Politiques Cart. 2257/Dos.3/4: d; PRA press conference 19 Nov. 1958 (Senghor indictment referendum, Colom-bani coup)³
- FM Affaires Politiques Cart. 2266/Dos.6: d; early contacts with Ghana.
- FM Administration Cart. 2289/Dos.7: Debate Territorial Assembly Sept. 1958.
- FM Affaires Politiques Cart. 3684: Sawaba activity 1959, political persecution, PFA, relations with NEPU.
- FM Affaires Politiques Cart. 3685: Sawaba activity 1959; expulsions & repression.
- FM Affaires Politiques Cart. 3686: Sawaba agitation 1959; AOFiens; Maradi butchers; Gao immigrants; slavery; Nigerian contacts; situation in Zinder.
- FM Affaires Politiques Cart. 3687: Sawaba activity 1959; Bakary trial; Togolese & Dahomeans; PFA; Sawabist employees Entreprises Vidal; info. principal leaders; USTN.
- FM Affaires Politiques Cart. 3688: Sawaba activity late 1959.
- FM Affaires Politiques Cart. 3689: *ibid.*; Maurice Camara; Hima Dembélé.
- FM Affaires Politiques Cart. 3690: Sawaba activity early 1960; Adamou Sékou;

³ Senghor's undated statement at the press conference does not contain his name, which is scribbled on the first page including an incorrect date of 19 Oct. 1958. There is also a press statement, with correct name and date, by Lamine Guèye.

Georges Condat;
Ousmane Dan
Galadima; early
Sawaba presence
Ghana.

b. *SHAT (Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre), Vincennes*

Since 2005 SHAT is part of the 'Service Historique de la Défense' (SHD) and called 'Département de l'Armée de terre', located at the Château de Vincennes. Useful sources fall under the 5 H series ('Outre-Mer') and the 10 T series (for some of the latter authorisation was required and obtained, indicated by 'd').⁴ Some indication is given of relevant content.

5 H 31

– Rapport de Fin de Commandement. 1^{ère}/6^{ème} Partie: Situation Politique et Militaire de l'Ex-Afrique Occidentale Française. Délégation pour la Défense de la Zone d'Outre-Mer no. 1. Etat Major. 2^{ème} Bureau. Dakar, le 30 juin 1962.

– Rapport de Fin de Commandement du Général de Brigade Le Porz. Délégué pour la Défense de la Z.O.M. 4. du 1 avril 1962 au 30 juin 1963. Délégation pour la Défense de la Zone d'Outre-Mer no. 4. Etat Major.

– Rapport de Fin de Commandement du Général de Division Revol. Délégué pour la Défense de la Z.O.M. du 28 juin 1963 au 28 février 1965. 6^{ème} Partie: Armées Nationales. Délégation pour la défense de la Zone d'Outre-Mer no. 4. Etat-Major. 3^{ème} Bureau. 4^{ème} Bureau.

Consequences of Sawaba invasion for army; strength Gendarmerie.

5 H 35

– Rapport Annuel 1962. 7^{ème} Partie: Armées Nationales. Niger. Chapitre 1er. Généralités. Délégation pour la défense de la Zone d'Outre-Mer no. 4. 3^{ème} Bureau.

⁴ On the latter, see J. Nicot (Conservateur en chef au Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre), *Inventaire de la Série T. Etat Major de l'Armée de Terre (1945-1972)* (Ministère de la Défense. Etat-Major de l'Armée de Terre. Service Historique, Château de Vincennes: Paris, 1994), four vols.

Republican Guards.

– Directive pour la Création de la Zone d'Outre Mer no.4. Ministère des Armées Etat Major des Forces Terrestres Stationnées Outre Mer. No. 0960 EMFTOM/I/EG. Paris, le 13 mars 1962.

– Rapport de Colonel Germain Adjoint Gendarmerie au Chef d'Etat-Major des Forces Terrestres Stationnées Outre-Mer Inspecteur de la Gendarmerie d'Outre-Mer sur l'Inspection du Bureau Gendarmerie de l'Etat-Major du Général Délégué pour la Défense de la Zone d'Outre-Mer No. 4, de la Section Prévôtale d'Outre-Mer No. 4, des personnels français mis à la disposition des Gouvernements du Dahomey—du Togo—du Niger—de la Haute Volta et de la Côte d'Ivoire. Ministère des Armées. Inspection de la Gendarmerie d'Outre-Mer. Paris, le 17 octobre 1963, no. 00054/I.G.O.M./S.

Role of Diamballa Maïga; Gendarmerie.

– Comte rendu d'un voyage d'inspection en Afrique centrale du 17 septembre au 7 octobre 1960. Etat Major Général de la Défense Nationale. Commandement en Chef en Afrique Centrale. 27, rue Oudinot, Paris 7ème. No. 135/CAB/S, Paris, le 19 octobre 1960.

– Rapport de Fin de Commandement du Général de Division Revol. Délégué pour la Défense de la Z.O.M. du 28 juin 1963 au 28 février 1965. 1ère Partie: Situation Politique et Militaire de la Z.O.M. No. 4. Délégation pour la Defense de la Zone d'Outre-Mer no. 4. Etat-Major. 2ème Bureau. 2ème Partie: Mission des Forces françaises de la Zone 4; Problèmes de defense et de maintien de l'ordre. Délégation pour la Defense de la Zone d'Outre-Mer no. 4. Etat-Major. 3ème Bureau. 3ème Partie. Chapitre I: Organisation. Délégation pour la Defense de la Zone d'Outre-Mer no. 4. Etat-Major. 3ème Bureau. 1er Bureau.

1963 army mutiny; dispute with Dahomey.

5 H 67

– Dévolution. Cession de matériels. SMB Niger.

French involvement in thwarting Sawaba invasion; French arms deliveries; paramilitary forces.

5 H 89

– Bulletin de renseignements Hebdomadaire no. 50 (période du 9 au 15 décembre 1963). Dakar, le 18 décembre 1963. Délégation pour la défense de la Zone d'outre-mer no.: Etat-Major-2ème Bureau. C.R.A. No.–Bureau de Synthèse. No. 2964/2CRA/BS/S, p. 15.

Mali; Cuba.

5 H 91

– Z.O.M. no. 1. Recueil des principaux renseignements collectés au cours de la période ... (1962). Secret, nos. 167, exempl. no. 9, 8 to 14 March 1962: NIG. 7, 9, no. 169, exempl. no. 8, 22 to 28 March 1962: NIG. 2-3, no. 170, exempl. no. 9, 29 March to 4 April 1962: NIG. 1-2, no. 171, exempl. no. 9/43, 5 to 11 April 1962: NIG. 11-12, no. 1, exempl. no. 8, 12-18 April 1962: NIG. 5-6, no. 2, exempl. no. 8, 19 to 25 April 1962: NIG. 2-6, no. 3, exempl. no. 9, 26 April to 2 May 1962: NIG. 5-6.

Sawaba cell Ghana; Yacouba Idrissa dit Gothèye; Djibo Bakary; position of Mali; Sawaba tracts & pamphlets.

5 H 92

– Z.O.M. no. 1. Bureau de synthèse de l'Afrique Occidentale. Recueil des principaux renseignements collectés au cours de la période ... (1962). Secret-no. 159, exempl. no. 2, 4 to 10 January 1962: NIG. 2, 4, 9-no. 160, exempl. no. 2, 11 to 17 January 1962: NIG. 5, no. 161, exempl. no. 1, 18 to 24 January 1962: NIG. 1, no. 162, exempl. no. 8, 25 to 31 January 1962: NIG. 4-6, SYN. 4, no. 163, exempl. no. 9, 1 to 7 February 1962: H.V. 5, no. 164, exempl. no. 9, 8 to 14 February 1962: NIG. 1-5.

Sawaba's Nigerian cells; Ali Kote; political situation and repression Zinder; Sawaba cell Ouagadougou.

5 95

– Commandement supérieur de la Zone d'outre-mer no. 1. État-Major. 2è Bureau. Synthèse de Renseignements. 1er Trimestre 1960. Période du 1er Février au 30 Avril 1960. No. 1120/G.C.S./ZOM1/2.

Political situation Maradi, Zinder; Ousmane Dan Galadima; Sawabists Mali.

– Commandement supérieur de la Zone d'outre-mer no. 1. État-Major. Bureau de Synthèse. Secret. Synthèse de Renseignements Intérieurs, 2ème Trimestre 1960. Période du 1er Mai au 31 Juillet 1960. No. 1814, 3ème Trimestre 1960. Période du 1er Août au 30 Octobre 1960. No. 2619, 4ème Trimestre 1960. No. 500, exempl. no. 6/65, 1er Trimestre 1961. No. 1/36. Période du 1er Février au 30 avril 1961.

Arrest Sawabists; Georges Condat; Issaka Koké; 'Plan B'; Djibo Bakary in Ghana.

– Délégation pour la défense de la Zone d'outre-mer no. 1. Etat Major 2ème Bureau. Bureau de Synthèse: Synthèse des Renseignements Intérieurs, no. 2355/2/S, no. 925/BS/S, exempl. no. 5/65; 3ème Trimestre 1961: 12-14, no. 590/2/S, no. 185/BS/S, exempl. no. 9/65; 4ème Trimestre 1961: 13-15.

Nyassism; repression Sawaba; Hima Dembélé; Adamou Sékou; reconciliation efforts Bakary; Bakary in Guinea; role Diamballa Maïga.

– Z.O.M. no. 1. Bureau de synthèse de l'Afrique Occidentale. Recueil des principaux renseignements collectés au cours de la période ... (1961), no. 150, exempl. no. 1/50, 2 to 8 November 1961: NIG. 8, no. 151, exempl. no. 1/50, 9 to 15 November 1961: NIG. 2-4, 8-10, no. 152, exempl. no. 1/50, 16 to 22 November 1961: NIG. 3-4, 7-11.

Sawaba activity Zinder; Bakary in Guinea; Sawaba cell Ghana embassy Niamey; Ousmane Dan Galadima and Kano headquarters.

5 H 121—5 H 131

Bulletin de Renseignements Hebdomadaire. Première Partie: Physionomie générale; Deuxième Partie: Recueil de renseignements politiques et économiques; Troisième Partie: Recueil de renseignements militaires. Délégation pour la défense de la Zone d'outre-mer no. 4. 2ème Bureau—C.R.A. no. 4. Bureau synthèse. Abidjan.

– 5 H 121: Bull. de Renseign. Hebd., from no. 10. (2 to 8 July 1962) to 25.747, no. 25. (15 to 21 October 1962).

Tuareg sympathy Sawaba; Sawabists in internment camp; Sawaba activity Tahoua; consequences Algeria's independence; Sawaba propaganda Konni; Mali; Zinder.

– 5 H 122: Bull. de Renseign. Hebd., from 25.781, no. 26 (22 to 28 October 1962) to 25.065, no. 2. (7 to 13 January 1963).

Sawabists' escape abroad; training Eastern Bloc; Nigérien regime corruption; Sawaba military plans.

– 5 H 123: Bull. de Renseign. Hebd., from 25.337, no. 9. (25 February to 3 March 1963) to 861, no. 26 (24 to 30 June 1963).

Sawaba clandestine meetings; situation Agadez region; Bilma; Algerians.

– 5 H 124: Bull. de Renseign. Hebd., from 879, no. 27 (1 to 7 July 1963) to 2306, no. 45 (4 to 10 November 1963).

Kano cell; Nigerian influence in east Niger; regime paranoia vis-à-vis Sawaba.

– 5 H 125: Bull. de Renseign. Hebd., from 2382, no. 47 (18 to 24 November 1963) to 215, no. 8 (17 to 23 February 1964).

Dahomean immigrants; Captain Diallo, army mutiny and role Sawabists; French confirmation torture of detainees; return Maïdanda Djermakoye.

– 5 H 126: Bull. de Renseign. Hebd., from 307, no. 11 (9 to 15 March 1964) to 852, no. 28 (6 to 12 July 1964).

Arrests Sawaba cadres Maradi and Zinder; Sawaba cells Kano, Katsina; RDA militia torture Sawaba detainees; Sawaba arms depot Tessaoua; Djirataoua massacre; Nigériens fleeing to Nigeria; sabotage telecommunication tower Niamey.

– 5 H 127: Bull. de Renseign. Hebd., from 21, no. 1 (30 December 1963 to 5 January 1964) to 1078, no. 37 (7 to 13 September 1964).

Captain Diallo, torture; regime relations Mali; Sawaba penetration civil service, police and Republican Guards; sabotage telecommunication tower Niamey; Sawaba activity eastern Niger; arms deliveries regime; RDA mobilisation, militias; arrest Dodo Hamballi; Jibiya and Gusau bases; Maradi and Zinder cells; NEPU; Dahomey.

– 5 H 128: Bull. de Renseign. Hebd., from 25.046, no. 1 (31 December 1962 to 6 January) to 25.463, no. 13 (25 to 31 March 1963).

Infiltrations from Kano; rumour Sawaba coup; Agadez region and Sawaba influence.

– 5 H 129: Bull. de Renseign. Hebd., from 25.518, no. 14 (1 to 7 April 1963) to 648, no. 19 (6 to 12 May 1963).

Sawaba sympathisers Azaouagh region; RDA harassment Zinder population.

– 5 H 130: Bull. de Renseign. Hebd., from 922, no. 28 (8-14 July 1963) to 2089, no. 39 (23 to 29 September 1963).

Nigerian influence Niger; Tubus; regime relations with Algeria.

– 5 H 131: Bull. de Renseign. Hebd., from 2128, no. 40 (30 September to 6 October 1963) to 2306, no. 45 (4 to 10 November 1963).

Tamanrasset cell; conflict with Dahomey.

5 H 142

– Organisation chart army Niger (December 1962).

– Bulletin de Renseignements, no. 25.797/2/SC, 31 October 1962, E.254.

Algerian infiltration.

5 H 239

– Le Niger vis-à-vis du Nigeria 1960 ou fin 1959 (n.d.).

Sarkin Katsina of Maradi; Nyassism, Tijaniya; French obsession with Nigeria.

– Rapport sur le moral. Le Colonel Barbotu (?), délégué du commandant militaire pour le Niger Est à Monsieur le Général commandant la 4ème Brigade, Niamey. Elections Territoriales, Zinder, 3 avril 1957.

10 T 210: Fiches du 2ème bureau de l'E.M.A.T. donnant les principaux événements survenues en Afrique Noire francophone (from 20 April 1964 to 30 May 1965). d

Guerrilla clashes various regions; arrests Sawabists Maradi-Zinder; government officials implicated in Sawaba; RDA militias; arrest Dodo Hamballi; seizure documents, arms; torture and interrogation; arrest and murder Boubacar Diallo; mass arrest domestic Sawaba cadres; lack regime support Téra region; Siddi Abdou's actions in Tahoua region; Tillabéri trial; Sawabists northern Dahomey.

10 T 715/Dos.1-3: Rapports Annuels (conseiller militaire, Niamey), 1965, 1968; Rapports Mensuels, Febr. 1968, March 1968, Apr. 1968, Aug. 1968, Oct. 1968, Aug. 1969, Sept. 1969, Oct. 1969, Dec. 1969. d

Dismissal chief Gendarmerie because of brutalities; clemency appeals; Alazi Soumaila; Kaïro Alfari; Sawabist contacts FROLINAT in Bosso region; contact Djibo Bakary with FROLINAT; partial amnesty 1969.

10 T 717/Dos.2: Complôt contre la sûreté de l'Etat: affaire Diallo (3-5 décembre 1963); subversion au Niger, parti Sawaba, attaques contre le Président Diiori; organisation des forces de police, sûreté nationale, milices populaires (1959-66). d

This file provides very detailed reports, often of SDECE origin, about Sawaba's guerrilla exploits. It includes telegrams of the French military base in Abidjan to Paris; intelligence reports, including from the military attaché at the French embassy in Niamey; various untitled documents; and Sawaba declarations and communiqués. They provide details on guerrilla clashes in various regions; arrest Dodo Hamballi and Sallé Dan Koulou; Sawaba's Nigerian bases; Sawaba attack plans; attacks Konni; infiltrations from Upper Volta; guerrillas Tahoua and Magaria areas; arms depot Malanville; execution Sawabists Niamey, Oct. 1964; assassination attempt by Amadou Diop; French confirmation of regime brutality; arrests Baoua Souley and Aba Kaka; BAA role; arrest village chiefs Matamey area; Bosso attack; Sawaba guerrillas clashing with Nigerian police; arms depot Kano; new infiltrations 1965-1966; arrest and deportation Ghana Sawabists upon Nkrumah's fall; guerrilla training Algeria and Far East; role French intelligence officers; weaponry RDA militias and Israeli training; Siddi Abdou; Captain Diallo and Sawaba; Boubacar Diallo: interrogation and murder; Sawabists and political activity 1961; contacts with Eastern Europe; Sawaba cell Rabat; data on leading Sawabists; Nigerian cells, 1962; list foreign Sawaba offices; Sawaba students in USSR; Sawaba cadres and travels Eastern Bloc.

10 T 719/Dos. 2: activités du parti Sawaba d'opposition, enquête au sujet de l'attentat manqué en 1963 [sic] contre le président Diori (1962-1966); affaire Diallo, décembre 1963 (1962-1966). d

This file contains numerous SDECE intelligence reports to the Matignon, entitled 'Premier Ministre. SDECE. Destinataire no. 501/541, Secret', 1962-1966. Relevant for Maïdanda Djermakoye; executions Sawaba guerrillas Dec. 1964; brutality Gendarmerie chief; murder Koussanga Alzouma; Kano cell; Gusau base and military training inside Nigeria; Sawabist training in Algeria; students in Morocco; travel routes Niger-Ghana; guerrilla clashes various regions autumn 1964; Dahomean bases; evidence maltreatment Captain Diallo and his assistant; Nanking training; protest French civilians against treatment Sawabists; Sawaba's relations with Togo (including details on Joseph Akouété, Djibo Bakary); planned attack on installations Radio Niger, 1965; the 1965 attempt on President Diori, new infiltrations and attacks in east, Dahomean frontier zone and Upper Volta region, 1964-1965; Issoufou Danbaro; Adamou Sékou; Sawaba commandos regrouping in Nigeria, 1966; arrest and deportation Sawabists from Ghana after fall Nkrumah; Ali Kote; transfer Sawaba detainees to Agadez; Sawabist involvement in Diallo mutiny; guerrilla training Algeria.

10 T 720/Dos.1: Organisation des forces armées et des forces publiques (Niger), nominations, vie du poste, relèves (1961-1972). d

10 T 722/Dos.2: Renseignements sur la situation politique intérieure, la situation économique, les relations extérieures. Extraits des BRH de la zone Outre-Mer no. 4 (1964-1965). d

10 T 539/Dos.1: Bulletins de renseignements du S.D.E.C.E.: Notes et rapports (1957-1961). d

c. Archives Diplomatiques. Série D.A.M. (Direction des Affaires Africaines et Malgaches), sous-série Niger, 1959-1969, Paris.

The following files could not be consulted because of an internal reorganisation. They could, however, be of additional interest.

2801 Synthèse mensuelles et semi-mensuelles: Haut Commissariat de la Communauté au Niger janvier-juillet 1960; Représentation de la République française et de la Communauté, septembre-novembre 1960.

- 2802 Synthèse de l'Ambassade de France: mensuelles juillet-décembre 1961; hebdomadaires juillet-décembre 1961.
- 2803 Synthèse de l'Ambassade de France janvier 1962-juin 1963.
- 2804 Synthèse de l'Ambassade de France juillet-décembre 1963; hebdomadaires et semi-mensuelles janvier 1964-juin 1965.
- 2805 Synthèse de l'Ambassade de France juillet 1965-1966.
- 2811 Sécurité, maintien de l'ordre septembre 1960-juin 1965; Coopération avec la France en matière de police et de sécurité août 1961-juin 1966.
- 2813 Relations politiques, économiques et culturelles avec les autres pays d'Afrique (Ghana: novembre 1960-décembre 1969; Mali: janvier 1961-juin 1969).
- 2814 Relations politiques, économiques et culturelles avec les autres pays d'Afrique (Israël), mars 1961-août 1969.
- 2816 Relations avec la France.
- 2822 Questions syndicales. Dossier d'ensemble; union nationale des travailleurs nigériens; fêtes du 1^{er} mai 1961-septembre 1969; questions militaires; domaines militaires français; transfert au Niger août 1961-juin 1965; armée nigérienne: organisation, aide française, équipement août 1960-novembre 1969.
- 2823 armée française (accords de participation au maintien de l'ordre) septembre 1961-septembre 1969; documentation: compte rendu d'activité de l'ambassade de France 1963, 1968.

ANNEX 4

GHANA

GNA (Ghana National Archives)

These concern documents on Sawaba's Ghanaian connections. Only the collection at the national archives was searched, not the one in the George Padmore Research Library on African Affairs, Bureau of African Affairs Collection, which contains files entitled BAA/RLAA/920, "Niger": Newspaper Clippings, Wire Reports (Niger). Additionally, a document of use (and published by the post-Nkrumah Ghanaian authorities) was Ministry of Information, *Subversion in Africa: Documentary Evidence of Nkrumah's Interference in the Affairs of Other African States* (Accra, n.d.).

GNA, SC/BAA/460, no. NIA/05/1 (Niger Political Reports to Osagyefo 3/1/64—23/4/65). Documents stored under this code concern the attempt on the life of President Diori and details on Amadou Diop:

- Letter B.L. Placca, ambassador of Ghana to Niger, to President Diori, Niamey, 13 Apr. 1965.
- Letter, B.L. Placca, Ghana Embassy Niamey, to M.F. Dei-Anang, African Affairs Secretariat Accra, 14 Apr. 1965.
- Letter, B.L. Placca, Ghana Embassy Niamey, to M.F. Dei-Anang, African Affairs Secretariat Accra, 16 Apr. 1965.
- Telegrams Ghana Embassy Niamey to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Accra (Placca to Dei-Anang), 14, 15, 16, 17, 22 Apr. 1965.
- Telegram Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Ghana Embassy Niamey, Dei-Anang to Placca, 23 Apr. 1965.

ANNEX 5

UNITED KINGDOM

PRO (Public Record Office)

These are the British National Archives, Kew Gardens, London, which are referred to as 'PRO' to avoid confusion with the abbreviation for the Bloc Nigérien d'Action, a Nigérien political faction in the 1950s. The following files are especially important for NEPU in Northern Nigeria and its relations with Sawaba. Some documents provide details on the guerrilla clashes in 1964; Sawaba cells and arms caches in Northern Nigeria; Sawaba's foreign funding, money flows, banking arrangements; its Ghanaian and Dahomean connections; Nigeria's relations with Niger's regime; the murder of Boubaacar Diallo; infiltrations in 1965; important details on the murder of Daouda Ardaly. Some important documents are indicated.

FO 371/147.586: Internal Political Situation: Niger 1960.

FO 371/147.583: Internal Political Situation in Ivory Coast, Dahomey, Niger and Upper Volta 1960.

– Confidential Inward Saving Telegram from Dakar to Foreign Office, no. 71, 29 June 1960.

– British Embassy Dakar to African Department, Foreign Office, ?16/60, Restricted, 6 July 1960.

DO 186/19: Political Parties. Northern Elements Progressive Union, N.E.P.U. 1960-1963.

– R.A.R. Barltrop, Office of the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom, Lagos, to S. Fryer, Kaduna, 9 December 1960.

– S. Fryer, Office of the Deputy High Commissioner for the United Kingdom, Kaduna, to J.T. Fearnley, Lagos, 154/54/1, 19 January 1961.

– Kaduna Summary, Sav 93, 17 to 30 July 1962.

– J.S. Renwick, Office of the Deputy High Commissioner for the United Kingdom, Kaduna, to B.P. Austin, Lagos, 16 October 1963.

DO 177/2: Subversive Activities by Ghanaians in Nigeria 1961. Top Secret.

DO 177/59: Northern Elements Progressive Union (N.E.P.U.); Nigerian Elements Freedom Organisation (N.E.F.O.). SECRET 1961.

– Mallam Aminu Kano, M.P.: Leader of the N.E.P.U. and Government Chief Whip in Federal House of Representatives. Secret. Undated (ca. late 1961).

– J.O. Moreton, Office of the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom, Lagos, to B.J. Greenhill, Commonwealth Relations Office, POL. 72/10/5, Secret, 17 August 1961.

– Despatch no. 5 (by H.A. Twist, Office of the Deputy High Commissioner for the United Kingdom, Kaduna) to Viscount Head, High Commissioner for the United Kingdom, Lagos, Secret, 31 July 1961.

FO 371/154.706: Political Relations between Ivory Coast, Dahomey, Niger and Upper Volta, 'Entente States' of former French West Africa 1961.

FO 371/161.689: Internal Political Situation: Niger 1962.

– From New York to Foreign Office (United Kingdom Mission to the United Nations). Confidential, Cypher/CTP, 15 January 1962.

– From Abidjan to Foreign Office. Confidential, Cypher/CTP, no. 12, 18 January 1962.

– British Embassy Abidjan to Foreign Office, no. 23, 1011/1/61, 13 March 1962.

– Confidential/NOFORN. Department of State. Bureau of Intelligence and Research. Research Memorandum RAF-26, 30 March 1962.

– Confidential Inward Saving Telegram from Bamako to Foreign Office, 5 June 1962.

– C.M. Le Quesne, British Embassy, Bamako, to K.M. Wilford, West and Central African Department, 7 June 1962, 1037/14, Confidential.

– R.S. Faber, British Embassy Abidjan, to K.M. Wilford, West and Central African Department, Foreign Office, 1011/1/62, 6 July 1962.

(the last three important for Daouda Ardaly's murder).

FO 371/161.706: Political Relations: Niger and Vietnam 1962.

FO 371/161.693: Foreign Relations: Niger 1962.

FO 371/161.727: Possible Threat to Niger's Control of its Saharan Areas 1962.

FO 371/167.615: Internal Political Situation: Niger 1963.

- A.J. Warren, British Embassy Abidjan, 15 February 1963, 101?/N, Confidential, to B. Miller, West and Central African Department, Foreign Office, London.
- T.C. Ravensdale, British Embassy Abidjan, 1011/N/27/6, Confidential, to R.J. Stratton, West and Central African Department, Foreign Office, London, 27 June 1963.
- Confidential. Information Officer's Visit to Niger. July 12-19, 1963. Some Political Developments, undated (ca. late July 1963).
- Form-at-a-Glance Niger, Secret, Copy no. 22 of 65, MI 4 (a)/0706, The War Office, Whitehall, London, 16 September 1963.

FO 371/177.229: Political relations: Niger/Dahomey border dispute.

- T.R. Shaw, British Embassy Abidjan, to C.M. Le Quesne, Foreign Office, 1015/20/11. Confidential, 20 November 1964.
- E.M. Smith, British Embassy Lomé, to P.R.A. Mansfield, West and Central African Department, Foreign Office, 1061/64. Confidential, 21 November 1964.
- Inward Saving Telegram from Abidjan to Foreign Office, no. 1, 7 January 1964.
- A. Silkin, British Embassy Dakar, to R.S. Faber, British Embassy Abidjan, 2189/64, Confidential, 8 January 1964.
- Confidential. Inward Saving Telegram from Abidjan to Foreign Office, no. 2, 13 January 1964.
- Press Release, Embassy of the Republic of Niger, Washington, 5 January 1964.
- R.S. Faber, British Embassy Abidjan, to West and Central African Department, Foreign Office, London, 1013/11/3. Confidential, 11 March 1964.

FO 371/177.218: Internal political situation: Niger 1964.

- A.J. Warren, British Embassy Abidjan, to B.E. Miller, West and Central African Department, Foreign Office. 1011/N/11/6. Confidential, 11/6/64.
- Minutes. Confidential, Signed R.W. Renwick, 19/10/64.
- Communiqué Parti-Sawaba, Accra, no. 6 (n.d. ca. mid-November 1964).

FO 371/177.230: Political Relations: Rebel Troubles in Niger: Allegations of Chinese and Ghanaian Involvement 1964.

- Mémorandum pour l'opération révolution du parti Sawaba du Niger; Commandant A. Dangkaladima to Président Bremu des Affaires Africaine; P.O. Box M. 41, Accra, Ghana, n.d. (probably end September 1964).
- T.R. Shaw, British Embassy Abidjan, to C.M. Lequesne, Foreign Office London, 2 October 1964. Confidential.
- Confidential. British High Commission, Lagos. 6th October 1964. 1 POL 10/174/1: J.A. Pugh to C.M. Lequesne, FO.
- T.R. Shaw, British Embassy Abidjan, to C.M. Lequesne, Foreign Office London, 15 October 1964. Confidential.
- Secret. British High Commission Kaduna Office, 21st October 1964, 121/472/1 (W.S. Bates) to J.A. Pugh, Lagos.
- T.R. Shaw, British Embassy Abidjan, to C.M. Lequesne, Foreign Office London, 22 October 1964. Confidential.
- A.J. Warren, British Embassy Abidjan, to P.R.A. Mansfield, West & Central Africa Department Foreign Office London, 23 October 1964. Confidential.
- British Embassy Abidjan, 30/10/64 to J.A. Pugh, British High Commission, Lagos. Confidential. ?11/N/30/10.
- M. Dangkaladima, Secrétaire Général Sawaba, to A.K. Barden, President Bureau of African Affairs, Accra, 31 October 1964.
- British High Commission Lagos, 4/11/64, 1 POL.10/174/1 Confidential to A.J. Warren, British Embassy Abidjan.
- British High Commission Accra, 14/11/64, POL 23/1, Confidential, to A.J. Warren, British Embassy Abidjan.
- J.A. Pugh, British High Commission Lagos, to A.J. Warren, British Embassy Abidjan, 11 December 1964. Secret.
- British High Commission Lagos (J.A. Pugh), 12/12/64, 1 POL.174/1. Confidential, to A.J. Warren, British Embassy Abidjan.

FO 371/182.198: Niger dissidents 1965.

- Confidential. Niger. West and Central African Department, 20 April 1965.
- From Abidjan to Foreign Office. En Clair. F.O./C.R.O./WHI Distribution, no. 26, 14 April 1965.
- W.J.A. Wilberforce, British Embassy, Abidjan, to R.W. Renwick, West and Central African Department, Foreign Office, unclassified, 1 June 1965.
- W.J.A. Wilberforce, British Embassy, Abidjan, to R.W. Renwick, West and Central African Department, Foreign Office, Confidential, 1011/N, 29 July 1965.

FO 371/181.840: Visits by Presidents of Upper Volta and Niger 1965.

– E.R. Warner, British Embassy Yaoundé, to Mervyn Brown, West and Central African Department, Foreign Office, 1022/65, Confidential, 26 April 1965.

FO 371/188.175: Regime in Niger 1966.

– T.R. Shaw, British Embassy Abidjan, 24 February 1966, 1011/N, Confidential, to C.M. Lequesne, West and Central African Department, Foreign Office.

– W.J.A. Wilberforce, British Embassy Abidjan, to Mervyn Brown, West and Central African Dept., Foreign Office, London, 1011/N. Confidential, 24 June 1966.

FCO 25/745: Ivory Coast, Niger, Upper Volta. Annual Reviews 1966-1967.

– Annual Review for 1967 on the Ivory Coast, Niger and Upper Volta. Confidential.

– Annual Review of the Ivory Coast, Upper Volta and Niger. Confidential, JV ½ (23196).

ANNEX 6

UNITED STATES

National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)

- Airgram, Department of State, A-222, 26 March 1963; USNARA, II, RG 59, POL 24-1, Niger, 2/1/63, Box 3997.
- Airgram, Department of State, A-259, 28 March 1963; USNARA, II, RG 59, POL 30, Niger, 2/1/63, Box 3997.

Some data on Bakary's reconciliation proposals; Sawaba-French hostility.

ANNEX 7

INTERVIEWS

The following lists Sawaba cadres, in addition to a few representatives of the former RDA government and some other people. Sawabists included former domestic cadres, Sawaba sympathisers, union workers, guerrillas (trained in Ghana, Algeria, North Vietnam and China), unit leaders, political commissars, Eastern Bloc students, Radio Peking workers, chefs de camp, and representatives of the second generation. Interviews were predominantly held in French, occasionally in Kanuri or Sonrhäi—in those latter cases with the help of an interpreter. Interviews were held mostly with individual persons, sometimes a small group of people. The interviews (sometimes more than once with the same person) are presented separately, in chronological order. Interviews were conducted without a specific format, although usually place and date of birth and profession in the 1950s-1960s were recorded. These are given below, if known, plus a rough indication of significance for or former role in the movement. Ethnic background varied widely, depending on fieldwork location. Phone calls and written correspondence have been omitted.

- | | | | |
|----|-------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| 1. | Sade Elhadji
Mahaman | Niamey, 15 Nov.
2002 | ANN. |
| 2. | Sao Marakan | Niamey, 16 Nov.
2002 | Sawaba sympathiser;
UDFP. |
| 3. | Zoumari Issa Seyni | Niamey, 18 Nov.
2002 | born ca. 1946 Saya (Téra);
Sawaba student. |
| 4. | Ali Amadou | Niamey, 28 Jan.
2003 | born ca. 1941 Méhana,
Téra; chef de camp Ghana. |
| 5. | Sanda Mounkaila | Niamey, 28 Jan.
2003 | 2nd generation; UDFP. |
| 6. | Albadé Nouhou | Niamey, 28 Jan.
2003 | born 1942; Sawaba student. |
| 7. | Sao Marakan | Niamey, 29 Jan.
2003 | Sawaba sympathiser;
UDFP. |
| 8. | Adamou Assane
Mayaki | Niamey, 29 Jan.
2003 | Sawaba cabinet minister. |
| 9. | Issoufou Assoumane | Niamey, 30 Jan.
2003 | born 1936 Tahoua;
Sawaba student. |

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|-----|-----------------------|-----------------------|--|
| 10. | Zoumari Issa Seyni | Niamey, 31 Jan. 2003 | born ca. 1946, Saya (Téra);
Sawaba student. |
| 11. | Ali Amadou | Niamey, 31 Jan. 2003 | born ca. 1941 Méhana, Téra; chef de camp Ghana. |
| 12. | Ali Talba | Niamey, 4 Febr. 2003 | journalist (interviewed Bakary);
Sawaba sympathies; UDFP. |
| 13. | Abdou Adam | Niamey, 4 Febr. 2003 | RDA government (prefect). |
| 14. | Ibrahim Bawa Souley | Niamey, 5 Febr. 2003 | born ca. 1953; 2nd generation; son Baoua Souley; UDFP. |
| 15. | Ousmane Dan Galadima | Madaoua, 7 Febr. 2003 | born 1927 Madaoua; Sawaba chief of staff. |
| 16. | Ousmane Dan Galadima | Madaoua, 8 Febr. 2003 | born 1927 Madaoua; Sawaba chief of staff. |
| 17. | Maman Tchila | Zinder, 9 Febr. 2003 | born Zinder 1932; Zinder cadre. |
| 18. | Mrs Mamani Abdoulaye | Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003 | widow Abdoulaye Mamani. |
| 19. | Ali Mahamane Madaouki | Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003 | born 1940; guerrilla (Algeria-trained). |
| 20. | Noga Yamba | Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003 | born 1940; guerrilla (Algeria-tr.). |
| 21. | Oumarou Janba | Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003 | born 1943 Zinder; domestic cadre. |
| 22. | Tahir Moustapha | Zinder, 10 Febr. 2003 | born 1937 Zinder; dom. cadre. |
| 23. | Ousseini Dandagoye | Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003 | born 1934 Zinder; domestic cadre; Sawaba youth leader. |
| 24. | Bachir Boukary | Zinder, 11 Febr. 2003 | born ca. 1946 Zinder; Sawaba student; UDFP Zinder. |
| 25. | Amadou Ibrahim Diop | Zinder, 13 Febr. 2003 | born 1929 Zinder; guerrilla (Algeria-, Vietnam-trained); Radio Peking announcer. |
| 26. | Ali Mahamane Madaouki | Zinder, 14 Febr. 2003 | born 1940; guerrilla (Algeria.-tr.). |

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|-----|---------------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| 27. | Noga Yamba | Zinder, 14 Febr.
2003 | born 1940; guerrilla
(Algeria.-tr). |
| 28. | Amadou Roufaï
Malam Garba | Zinder, 14 Febr.
2003 | born ca. 1937-38 Zinder;
guerrilla. |
| 29. | Sao Marakan | Niamey, 21 Febr.
2003 | Sawaba sympathiser;
UDFP. |
| 30. | Mamoudou Pascal | Niamey, 22 Febr.
2003 | born 1934; Sawaba
unionist. |
| 31. | Amadou Bakary
Maiga | Niamey, 25 Nov.
2003 | born 1930 Soudouré;
relative Bakary; not
politically active. |
| 32. | Elhadj Illa Salifou | Niamey, 25 Nov.
2003 | born ca. 1932 Madaoua;
UDN cadre. |
| 33. | Harou Kouka | Niamey, 26 Nov.
2003 | RDA cabinet minister. |
| 34. | Ibrahim Bawa Souley | Niamey, 26 Nov.
2003 | born ca. 1953; 2nd
generation; son Baoua
Souley; UDFP. |
| 35. | Mamadou Ousmane
Dan Galadima | Niamey, 27 Nov.
2003 | born 1952 Magaria; 2nd
generation; son Ousmane
Dan Galadima; UDFP. |
| 36. | Georges Condat | Niamey, 27 Nov.
2003 | born ca. 1922 Maradi;
domestic Sawabist &
leader; chairman
Assembly (UNIS origin). |
| 37. | Mounkaila Beidari | Niamey, 28 Nov.
2003 | born 1946 Niamey;
guerrilla training Algeria;
commissaire politique
Téra reg.; Niamey cell. |
| 38. | Mounkaila Albagna | Niamey, 29 Nov.
2003 | born 1943 Dargol; guerrilla
(training Algeria);
commissaire politique
Téra region. |
| 39. | Abdou Adam | Niamey, 29 Nov.
2003 | RDA government
(prefect). |
| 40. | Mounkaila Beidari | Niamey, 2 Dec.
2003 | born 1946 Niamey;
guerrilla training Algeria;
commissaire politique
Téra reg.; Niamey cell. |

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|-----|------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| 41. | Mounkaila Albagna | Niamey, 6 Dec.
2003 | born 1943 Dargol; guerrilla (training Algeria); commissaire politique Téra region. |
| 42. | Boubakar Djingaré | Niamey, 26 Oct.
2005 | born 1937 Niamey; mason, commis, guerrilla (training China). |
| 43. | Boubakar Djingaré | Niamey, 27 Oct.
2005 | born 1937 Niamey; mason, commis, guerrilla (tr. China). |
| 44. | Tahirou Ayouba
Maïga | Niamey, 28 Oct.
2005 | born 1943; Sawaba student. |
| 45. | Sanda Mounkaïla | Niamey, 28 Oct.
2005 | 2nd generation; UDFP. |
| 46. | Kaïro Alfari | Niamey, 30 Oct.
2005 | Sawaba student. |
| 47. | 'dr. Abdoulaye' | Niamey, 30 Oct.
2005 | born ca. 1942; Sawaba student; medical doctor. |
| 48. | Mamoudou Béchir | Dargol, 31 Oct.
2005 | ca. 1928; dom. Sawabist, trader. |
| 49. | Djaouga Idrissa | vicinity Dargol,
31 Oct. 2005 | born ca. 1944; peasant; domestic Sawabist. |
| 50. | Saïbou | Dargol, 31 Oct.
2005 | born ca. 1937; peasant; domestic Sawabist. |
| 51. | Abdouramane
Djibo Harouna | Gothèye, 1 Nov.
2005 | born ca. 1944-46 Niamey; tailor; domestic Sawabist. |
| 52. | Soumana Idrissa | Gothèye, 1 Nov.
2005 | born ca. 1939; peasant; guerrilla (training Vietnam). |
| 53. | Moumouni Daouda | Tillabéri, 3 Nov.
2005 | born ca. 1948; peasant, petty trader; domestic Sawabist. |
| 54. | Mamane Boureïma | Bandio, 4 Nov.
2005 | born ca. 1930; peasant, petty trader; local Sawaba cadre. |
| 55. | Djibo Foulan | Bandio, 4 Nov.
2005 | born ca. 1934 Bandio; peasant & marabout; active domestic cadre. |
| 56. | Monique Hadiza | Niamey, 5 Nov.
2005 | former wife Hima
Dembélé. |
| 57. | Gonimi Boukar | Niamey, 5 Nov.
2005 | born 1932; domestic cadre, made peace with regime. |

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|-----|---------------------------------|---------------------------|--|
| 58. | Abdou Ali Tazard | Tessaoua, 9 Febr.
2006 | born ca. 1928 Tessaoua;
teacher; domestic cadre;
UDFP MP. |
| 59. | Diougou Sangaré | Tessaoua, 9 Febr.
2006 | born ca. 1923 Aderbissinat;
domestic cadre (UPN
roots), made peace with
regime. |
| 60. | Kanembou Malam | Diffa, 12 Febr.
2006 | born 1931; soldier
government army. |
| 61. | Limane Kaoumi | Diffa, 12 Febr.
2006 | born ca. 1932 Maïné-Soroa;
furniture maker; domestic
cadre. |
| 62. | Katiella Ari Wami (?)
Gaptia | Bosso, 13 Febr.
2006 | Sawaba youth cadre. |
| 63. | Aba Kaka | Bosso, 13 Febr.
2006 | guerrilla unit leader
(Ghana training). |
| 64. | Amadou Ibrahim
Diop | Zinder, 15 Febr.
2006 | born 1929 Zinder; guerrilla
(training Algeria,
Vietnam); Radio Peking
announcer. |
| 65. | Ali Mahamane
Madaouki | Zinder, 15 Febr.
2006 | born 1940; guerrilla (tr.
Algeria). |
| 66. | Moutari (?) Dan
Boula Sanda | Zinder, 15 Febr.
2006 | 2nd generation. |
| 67. | Ousmane Dan
Galadima | Madaoua, 16
Febr. 2006 | born 1927 Madaoua;
Sawaba chief of staff. |
| 68. | Maïdanda
Djermakoye | Dosso, 17 Febr.
2006 | Sawaba cadre Ghana cell. |
| 69. | Mounkaila Albagna | Niamey, 23 Febr.
2006 | born 1943 Dargol; guerrilla
(training in Algeria);
commissaire politique
Téra region. |
| 70. | Amadou Madougou | Niamey, 24 Febr.
2006 | 2nd gen. Sawabist. |
| 71. | Hassane Djibo | Niamey, 22 Febr.
2008 | born 1940 Kollo;
agricultural clerk; guerrilla
(training China) |
| 72. | Monique Hadiza | Niamey, 22 Febr.
2008 | former wife Hima
Dembélé. |
| 73. | Kaïro Alfari | Niamey, 22 Febr.
2008 | Sawaba student. |

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| 74. | Abdou Adam | Niamey, 22 Febr. 2008 | RDA government (prefect). |
| 75. | Moukaila Beidari | Niamey, 23 Febr. 2008 | born 1946 Niamey; guerrilla training Algeria; commissaire politique Téra reg.; Niamey cell. |
| 76. | Ousmane Dan Galadima | Niamey, 23 Febr. 2008 | born 1927 Madaoua; Sawaba chief of staff. |
| 77. | Adamou Souna | Soudouré, 27 Febr. 2008 | brother Djibo Bakary. |
| 78. | Zongo Hima | Soudouré, 27 Febr. 2008 | sister Djibo Bakary. |
| 79. | Ibrahim Bawa Souley | Niamey, 29 Febr. 2008 | born ca. 1953; 2nd generation; son Baoua Souley; UDFP. |
| 80. | Ali Issaka (dit Ali Sawaba) | Niamey, 29 Febr. 2008 | born 1942 Gothèye; petty trader; guerrilla (Algeria-trained). |
| 81. | Mossi Salifou | Niamey, 29 Febr. 2008 | born 1922 Bangou Kouarey, Ouallam; tailor, joiner; domestic Sawabist. |
| 82. | Ahmed Sékou Djibo Bakary | Niamey, 1 March 2008 | born Conakry; son Djibo Bakary. |
| 83. | Kane Boukari (interviewed by Issa Younoussi) | Niamey, 7 Aug. 2008 | born ca. 1937 Zinder; leftist student. |
| 84. | Amada Bachard | Niamey, 14 Dec. 2009 | born 1934 Zinder; Zinder cadre; Radio Peking announcer. |
| 85. | Moukaila Beidari | Niamey, 15 Dec. 2009 | born 1946 Niamey; guerrilla training Algeria; commissaire politique Téra reg.; Niamey cell. |
| 86. | Moukaila Albagna | Niamey, 15 Dec. 2009 | born 1943 Dargol; guerrilla (Algeria-trained); commissaire politique Téra region. |
| 87. | Ali Amadou | Niamey, 15 Dec. 2009 | born ca. 1941 Méhana, Téra; chef de camp Ghana. |
| 88. | Djibo Harouna | Gothèye, 18 Dec. 2009 | born ca. 1944-46 Niamey; tailor; domestic Sawabist. |

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| 89. | Soumana Idrissa | Gothèye, 18 Dec.
2009 | born ca. 1939; peasant;
guerrilla (Vietnam-
trained). |
| 90. | Hamidou Adamou
Abdoulaye | Niamey, 19 Dec.
2009 | born ca. 1939 Maradi;
Radio Peking announcer. |
| 91. | Ahmed Sékou Djibo
Bakary | Niamey, 22 Dec.
2009 | born Conakry; son Djibo
Bakary. |
| 92. | Daouda Hamadou | Ayorou, 22 Dec.
2009 | born 1939 Koutougou;
'tablier' & tailor; guerrilla
(Algeria-trained). |
| 93. | Amadou Madougou | Niamey, 17 Oct.
2011 | 2nd gen. Sawabist. |
| 94. | Mounkaila Beidari | Niamey, 18 Oct.
2011 | born 1946 Niamey;
guerrilla training Algeria;
commissaire politique
Téra reg.; Niamey cell. |
| 95. | Mounkaila Albagna | Niamey, 19 Oct.
2011 | born 1943 Dargol; guerrilla
(Algeria-trained);
commissaire politique
Téra region. |
| 96. | Tahirou Ayouba
Maïga | Niamey, 21 Oct.
2011 | born 1943; Sawaba student. |
| 97. | Ibrahim Baro dit Tri
Tri | Niamey, 22 Oct.
2011 | born 1937 Gothèye;
guerrilla (a.o. Algeria-
trained). |
| 98. | Sidibe Ousseini | Niamey, 22 Oct.
2011 | Sawaba student. |
| 99. | Sanda Mounkaïla | Niamey, 22 Oct.
2011 | 2nd generation; UDFP. |
| 100. | Hamsa Issa | Niamey, 22 Oct.
2011 | 2nd generation; UDFP. |
| 101. | Aboubacar Abdou | Niamey, 22 Oct.
2011 | Sawaba student; guerrilla
(Dibissou & Diffa sectors). |
| 102. | Aissa Amadou | Niamey, 22 Oct.
2011 | 2nd generation; UDFP. |
| 103. | Idé Harouna dit
Baradji | Niamey, 22 Oct.
2011 | guerrilla. |
| 104. | Harouna Alzouma
dit Nouna | Niamey, 22 Oct.
2011 | domestic cadre. |
| 105. | Hansakoye Saley | Niamey, 22 Oct.
2011 | domestic cadre. |

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| 106. | Sao Marakan | Niamey, 23 Oct.
2011 | Sawaba sympathiser;
UDFP. |
| 107. | Mamoudou Pascal | Niamey, 23 Oct.
2011 | born 1934; Sawaba
unionist. |
| 108. | Ali Amadou | Niamey, 25 Oct.
2011 | born ca. 1941 Méhana,
Téra; chef de camp Ghana. |
| 109. | Zoumari Issa Seyni | Niamey, 26 Oct.
2011 | born ca. 1946 Saya (Téra);
Sawaba student. |

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INDEX

In line with the focus of this book, this index consists exclusively of members of the Sawaba movement and those who were in one way or another associated with it, at a specific juncture or on a more permanent basis. Some of those listed originated from other political formations or later abandoned the movement. Mostly, only principal members are listed, since this index would otherwise become too long. Persons only known by a single name and who therefore remain difficult to identify, have been omitted, as have those who were mentioned only once or twice (but exceptions to these rules were allowed). There remains an element of ambiguity in view of the difficulties of identification and different spellings of names, variations in the order of personal names, and the use of pseudonyms and nicknames (see also note 105 in the Prologue). Yet, taken as a whole, this index provides a good overview of the known personalities of the Sawaba movement. Names are listed alphabetically and in the most commonly used order of the patrilineal and matrilineal family names involved. References generally pertain to the lives of the persons concerned and the roles they played in the movement, ignoring their role in interviews and as sources for information on other topics. Subentries have not been inserted, as sequence of referencing roughly reflects the diachronic itineraries of the persons concerned.

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