

SOCIAL ORIGINS OF THE 1984 COUP D'ETAT IN GUINEA

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Introduction

The emergence of the military as a crucial factor in African politics especially during and after the 1960s has become an accepted fact today, as military governments have come to constitute more than half of Africa's existing regimes. Much has correspondingly been theorised at the general plane on the role of the military in African politics in general, with a few studies specific to some states. However, specific studies are yet to be carried out on the role of the military in the politics of and the origins of coups in those countries of "socialist orientation", where, attempts have been made towards political and ideological re-orientation and re-moulding of the military towards the "socialist" objectives of these states. In the particular case of Guinea, hardly any research has been carried out in this area. The 1984 coup d'etat against a transition civilian government by the military and its overt right wing and pro-western political and economic orientation against the background of Sekou Toure's declared socialist path to development and politicization of the military, took some people by surprise. This surprise largely emanates from the fact that the military in Guinea had undergone a process of "politicisation" that nurtured it to become one of the agents in transforming the Guinea society into a socialist state. Surprising however, is the fact that the foundation and social roots for this change was part of the legacy of Sekou Toure's rule. What could explain the fact that in post-colonial Guinea, despite the politicization of the military through the agency of the PDG and the impartation of communocratic ideology amongst the rank and file of the military, a coup of this nature could occur?

The coup is of added interest too because it was the Guinean People who set the pace in the struggle for African Independence right from the onset. They raised the lone rebellious voice against General De-Gaulle's neo-colonial designs in French West Africa by declaring "Non" to the 1958 referendum. Moreover, Guinea went even further by nationalising foreign owned companies and land, then created her own national currency (the Sily) in place of the French Franc. At the level of foreign policy, it was Guinea which provided the most consistent material and moral support to Patrice Lumumba of the Congo against internal and external forces bent on compromising the independence of the people of Congo; it was Guinea which similarly provided material and moral support to the liberation movements in Guinea Bissau and Angola and in 1966 provided homage to Kwame Nkrumah, one of Africa's outstanding Pan-Africanists. How then could a military, politically and ideologically nurtured for twenty-six years by the revolutionary Party (PDG) stage a pro-Western coup in 1984 against the PDG without any popular resistance by the people and their "instrument", the Peoples Militia.

Much of the existing literature on the military and military coups in Africa have tended to be more concerned with the search for explanations and causes of coups, to the exclusion of any concrete understanding of the social and political circumstances in which coups are executed. This tendency has been attributed to the frequency of military coups in the 1960s and early 1970s. Secondly, the phenomenon of military coups has shifted the debate not on whether armies ought to participate in politics *but to what extent and by what means*.¹ In the search for an answer to this dilemma, indigenous dominant forces in the states in Africa, especially those with declared "socialist aims", have sought to deal with the problem any how. But whether this problem has been resolved by the extension of political participation or not, has very much depended on the very character and nature of the state itself, for political participation by the military in civilian controlled regimes pre-supposes that democratic forms of popular participation exist in society. More often than not, this modicum of political participation is but a form of mechanism of political control, rather than participation. This reality has always been turned upside down by the ideological rhetoric of the state and its pronouncements about the existence of democracy. In

certain cases, the orientation of the army to production — basically of those crops that deepen the intergration of these societies in the global division of labour at the expense of food production — has been ideologically dressed under the garb of engaging the military in the social and economic transformation of these societies. All this has been done without a critical look at those social and political forces that determine production and the distribution of social surpluses in these societies.

Existing literature is largely treated from the theoretical plane of modernization theory, and military interventions apart from the conjuctural factors explained to derive from certain characteristics of the military, notably, organisation, centralised command-hierarchy, discipline and superior equipment, the military is then viewed as possessing developmentalist qualities, an intelligentsia in uniform.² This theoretical approach is premised on the military being an autonomous sector not integrated into the rest of the society.

An analysis of the military in Africa requires an understanding not only of internal social and political dynamics of the society in question, but also the manner in which the internal processes are closely bound up with, conditioned, and, in certain cases determined by forces external to these societies.

The republic of Guinea is a country of 5,014,000 people (75% of whom are Moselms) with an area of 245,857 (km²), with roughly 80% of the population rural and 20% urban. It is bordered by six countries; in the North and North-west, by Senegal and Mali respectively, to the East by Ivory Coast and to the South Liberia and Sierra Leone, to the west by the Atlantic Ocean and to the North-west by Guinea Bissau. Guinea's main ethnic groups define the colonial originated administrative units so that the country is administratively divided into four regions corresponding to these ethnic groups. Maritime Guinea, generally inhabited by the Susu and related ethnic groups in the coast and extending to the foot of the Fouta Djallon Mountains, Middle Guinea, covering the Fouta Djallon and neighbouring highlands of the Muslim Peul herders; Upper Guinea, a savanna country inhabited by the Malinke who are related to the great clans that formed the empire of Mali, and lastly, the forest zone in the South inhabited by the Kissi, Toma, Guerze, Manon and Kono.

The country's mineral, agricultural and animal resources

consist of bauxite (the world's largest deposit) iron-ore, diamond, bananas, pineapples, palm kernels, rice, manioc, cereals and stock, raising together with hydroelectric potential. The main export commodity, bauxite, accounts for 97% of total export revenue.

Guinea became the first French West African colony to become politically independent, with an economy closely integrated into the French metropolitan economy as a source of cheap labour and raw materials for French industries and market for finished products. By the time of independence, wild rubber, which prior to World War I accounted for four-fifth of the value of Guinea's exports had lost its importance due to the start in rubber production from *hevea* trees in the Far East while Gold in the Boure province had been exhausted. The colonial economy was dependent on revenue from the exploitation of diamond in Beyla and Kerouane, bauxite and iron; and taxes from the migrant and agricultural labourers involved in the production of Bananas, Coffee, Palm Kernels and Colas for export to France. The only extractive industry in existence was the aluminium plant at the bauxite mine in Kassa owned by the Fria Company. Economic and social infrastructure was negligible, so that by 1953 there were only 6,558 primary students and no secondary school. By 1935 there was one hospital built in Conakry. Rail infrastructure was hardly developed and the existing one was closely linked to the economic enclaves. The repercussions of the colonial economy was the emergence and development of new social classes and strata. In the banana plantations the labor force numbered over 10,000, while a nascent working class evolved in the mines. By 1953 almost half of the urban wage earners in Guinea were employed in the public sector.

It was against this background that the PDG emerged both as the political expression of the peasant masses and the labour movement in particular from which it derived much of its leadership. It was pitted against an alliance of the colonial state and faudal chiefs given birth to by a feudal social formation, especially in Middle Guinea around the Fouta Djallon. This feudal social formation provided the social base for the French policy of "indirect rule"

On September 14, 1958, after years of anti-colonial struggle in which labour played a crucial role under the political guidance of

the PDG, the Guinean people by a vote of 1,134,324 to 56,981 voted "No" in a referendum aimed at retaining the people of the territory within a French Community of Semi-independence.³ On October 2, the Republic of Guinea was proclaimed, and the territorial assembly became the national legislature.

The Origin of the PDG and its Ideological Development

The evolution and influence of socialist thought in Guinea and the subsequent ideological development of the PDG could be traced to two sources. Firstly, the emergence after World War II of formal political parties, movements and groups in French West Africa, and secondly the emergence of trade union movements, all of which were subordinately affiliated to respective metropolitan political and trade union organisation — namely; the French Communist Party and Confederation of Trade Unions (CGT). The PDG as a branch of the RDA was therefore exposed to varying degrees to the political ideology of the PCF (French Communist Party), which was its "mother" Party from its formation in 1947. Sekou Toure, as labour leader and, in 1953 as an elected territorial assembly man emerged as the key individual in the anti-colonial struggle, in merging both the union's economic and political demands in the struggle against the colonial regime. This image, as an ardent champion of the Guinean masses through articulating the demands of both the working class and the peasantry, occurred through his close identification with the Labour movement. Partly through this, the PDG emerged as the main political force in Guinea, and Sekou Toure, the main articulator and ideologue of the Party⁴. Nevertheless, despite his exposure to Marxist thought, Sekou Toure's concept of socialism in the 1950s was largely influenced by African communal life. As he argued in 1959, just after independence;

Africa is essentially communaucratic . . . Collective life, social solidarity, give to African habits a basic humanism which many people would envy. It is . . . because of these human qualities that no individual in Africa can conceive of the organization of his life outside that of the family, village, or clan group.⁵

Consequently, from 1958 the Party's ideology became based on a number of premises: the non-existence of social classes,

the consolidation of a communaucratic society and strengthening of the African revolution and the unity of the Party, People and Nation. Not until 1967 did the Party declare "Scientific Socialism" as its objective.

The colonial question having been partially resolved in 1958, two main tendencies emerged within the Party. Firstly, the pro-mass line elements who advocated a unitary PDG championing the interests of all the Guinean people, and secondly, PDG militants mainly from the Trade Union and Youth Wing of the PDG advocating the transformation of the PDG from a mass party to a vanguard Marxist-Leninist Organisation with Scientific Socialism as its guiding ideology and a committed position on the East-West, Socialist-Capitalist divide. However, it was the advocates of the mass line led by Sekou Toure whose line prevailed, "appropriating" the Marxist-Leninist conception of organizational structures for party and state — which ideally, gave the petty bourgeoisie in the state, total control over all institutions and every sphere of social life in Guinea.

However in 1958, by virtue of the overwhelming victory of the PDG in the referendum as well as in the Assembly elections, Sekou Toure declared the attainment of political independence a permanent "revolution against colonialism in the form of its inherited structures, and opted for the maintenance of the mass popular front character of the PDG arguing that the contradictions amongst indigenous social classes were secondary, apart from that between the people and feudalism. The latter having been used by the colonial regime under the cover of chieftainship which was resolved by the universal suffrage of 1957. The only other contradiction was that of the intellectual elite and the mass of the rural people which was a result of the former's privileged position in the colonial economy. However it was the belief of the Party and Toure as its main ideologue, that, this and other conflicts between the rural masses and other privileged groups especially the educated elite was prompted by egoism, opportunism or by professional critics. Thus, through intense political education and control of the major means of production, the party believed that these minor contradictions could be *suppressed*. The Party went on to add that in a newly independent country, the contrasts between social classes should not be artificially aggravated. Indeed, such differences would disappear in a revolutionary and de-

mocratic state through the action taken by a single party — the party of all the people.⁶ It was only in 1967, during the 8th Congress, when a new class — the lumpen bourgeoisie was put forward by Sekou Toure, a class which he characterised as the “idle and shirking petite bourgeoisie, ready to hire out the nation to the imperialist power which is on hand”⁷. Also in this category was the group of corrupt high-ranking civil servants. These constituted a class of conter-revolutionaries. Thus, the dominant line in the party’s approach to the analysis of the Guinean social situation and of classes in particular, remained fundamenally the same — not based on the analysis of the relations of production, but on political ideological conscience and behaviour.

Supposedly based on the fundamental harmony of interests of the entire Guinean people, the PDG became a party of all the people, and was to give the nation a regime of ‘National Democracy’ and to embark the nation’s action upon the path of popular revolution. National Democracy was to be the means by which *all classes* could be associated with the construction of the state to enhance *Economic development*. Moreover, according to Toure, the inevitable success of the PDG’s economic development lay in the fact that whereas the colonial economy neglected the human factor due to the colonialist’s concern for profits and increasing efficiency, the PDG’s plans would be conceived by the people and realised for the people and the well being of collective humanity. In this context, Sekou Toure found no contradiction in declaring as early as 1958 that; “I say publicly; we shall be the first African government to institute forced labour. We are not ashamed to say that forced labour will be instituted, since this work will not be done for the benefit of Sekou Toure, the government or whoever it may be. This will be done for the benefit of those who are going to work themselves.”⁸ This alleged harmony of interests by all Guineans became the ideological basis for authoritarianism and suppression rather than resolution of emergent contradictory class interests.

Post-independence politics in Guinea can be categorised in three phases — the period between 1958-64; the period between 1964-70 and the post 1970 period. Each of these phases mark important landmarks in the political and ideological developments and in the relationships between the Party, State and the People.

The period between 1958-64 was characterised by mass

enthusiasm in production, labelled, "human investment" that is massive voluntary labour in the implementation of the PDG's political and economic programmes. The period 1964-1970 marked the surfacing of contradictory class interests and the factionalisation of the petty bourgeoisie as a social strata. There is mass opposition to the reorganisation of agricultural production and the use of force by politically inept and technically unskilled party cadres. Consequently, there is a decline in production both in agriculture and industry. The second feature of this period is the struggle for hegemony in the state between the commercial faction of the petty bourgeoisie and the bureaucratic petty bourgeoisie, a struggle in which sections of the army become increasingly involved. The post 1970 period marked an important departure in party, state and people relations, characterised by mass resistance taking various forms, increased state regression, the strengthening of the commercial petty bourgeoisie, liberalisation and the politicisation of a number of factors as new mechanisms in the political survival of the bureaucratic petty bourgeoisie in the state. Having lost much of its social base, the PDG degenerate into a "family club" alienated and suspicious of its coercive apparatuses especially the army in a period in which coercion had become the main form of class rule in Guinea.

Having arisen to state power on a popular platform of anti-colonialism and anti-feudalism, the PDG, with a strong labour and peasant backing constituting part of its history, was faced with the translation of pre-independence promises into concrete political and economic programmes capable of re-structuring Guinean society. This it was to do on the basis of its mass based composition and petty bourgeois (former clerks, trade union leaders, petty traders and teachers) leadership. The Party's task was to transform a backward agricultural economy basically an appendage of France, dependent on primary products of bananas, coffee and bauxite with an illiteracy rate of 99% and poor economic and social infrastructure. Moreover, following the departure of both French investment and skilled personnel, Guinea's most educated consisted of primary school leavers lacking any technical expertise to run a modern economy. This handicap was partially alleviated with the arrival of "progressive sympathisers", especially blacks who, inspired by Guinea's option for total independence rushed to Guinea to help mobilize the people and build an inde-

pendent country.

The populist character of the PDG's ideology was reflected in the PDG's objective of 'a self-maintaining growth' and the adoption of a 'non-capitalist way', to development, a line which eventually rendered the national economy static. Between 1958 and 1964, various policies came into effect; land reform, nationalisation of trade and industry; the creation of a national currency as a means of controlling trade; the institution of vigorous planning; the organisation of collective farms and rural cooperatives as a means of transforming the economy and the development of social and economic infrastructure and consumer industries. Lacking the expertise both within the state bureaucracy and the supreme party, these policies and the institution of a centrally planned economy was the work of French economic experts under the Marxist economist Charles Bettelheim on the basis of aid from the Eastern Block countries and China.

In the initial stages especially the period just after independence, mass enthusiasm and voluntary labour contributed immensely to the implementation of these programmes. In those areas that did not require highly-skilled labour such sectors as construction of roads, bridges, hospitals, schools, hotels, party offices, and in the production of consumer goods, textiles, shoes, automobiles and motor-cycles, targets were achieved and in certain cases even surpassed. *Despite these successes, weighed against the crisis of 1958, a multiplicity of problems emerged from within, ranging from political, technical to ideological.*

However, right from the time of independence, fractures began to emerge within the leadership of the mass party especially between the dominant (moderate) forces in the Party and those on the left calling for more radical changes in the ideology and character of the party and in its foreign relations. The forces mainly concentrated within the trade union, (CNTG) teachers and students advocated for the transformation of the mass party into a vanguard party, espousing scientific socialism, neutral position on the East-West divide. Internationally, they were opposed to the more moderate line pursued by Toure. Their opposition was "baptised" by Toure as "The Teachers Plot of 1961" and was linked to the Eastern Block countries, especially the Soviet Union Ambassador in Conakry. They were accused of being radical syndicalists, Pseudo-Marxists and partisans of an

egalitarianism exaggerated beyond all bounds.⁹

The so-called "Teachers Plot" of 1961 was significant, notably because teachers had been the main disseminators of the PDG ideology to the masses while the youth constituted the most radical wing of the PDG. Their political alienation by the more reformist elements under Toure, to some extent, undermined the PDG's popular base.

The expression of popular support for the PDG in this early period is, however, shown by the manner in which the production in agriculture and other projects prior to and just after 1960 were dependent on voluntary labour albeit at the expense of planning. But precisely because of the absence of ideological clarity by the party, leading to mobilizational problems together with lack of a clear political and economic program, the party having nationalised large tracts of land began to coerce peasants to work in collective farms and cooperatives. Mass resistance of forced labour was partly rooted in the fact that some of the plans were poorly conceived, thus leading to a waste of resources and labour. Enthusiastic party cadres in the countryside, most of whom lacked technical expertise began to coerce peasants to work in collective farms and cooperatives. Whereas the period immediately after independence has been characterised by massive enthusiasm by peasants and voluntary labour, the post 1960 period witnessed a dwindling in the response of the peasants to party calls for greater production. This resistance was reflected in the tonnage decline of cooperative exports in bananas and coffee between 1960 and 1965 from 55,000 tons to 37,000 and 14,000 tons down to 7,000 tons respectively.¹⁰ Similar declines were recorded in other crops.

On the other, hand, the state enterprises on which government hopes for economic development had been based had made only a meagre contribution of 2% to the national revenues four years later (1964) and were operating at quarter of their production capacity. Apart from the additional problem of financial handicap for the projects (largely in the hands of the Eastern block countries and the United States), the other source of problems was the burgeoning bureaucracy. Thus, whereas in 1958 there had been nearly 6,000 government servants including local cadres, out of a total of between 62,000 to 70,000 wage earners, by 1965 civil servants had risen to 25,000, auxiliaries

numbering 17,000 from 7,000. Those in the higher levels of the Civil Service had risen from 965 in 1965 to 4,600 in 1968. Hence, as the economy was declining, the bureaucracy was expanding and causing further strain to any efforts at internal accumulation. In order to maintain this bureaucracy, therefore, the party resorted to increased taxation of the working people.

The second measures arising from the above crisis aimed at increasing state revenue was the increased statification of the economy. Thus, in 1964, whole-sale and retail trade was taken over by the state. The result was that more merchants, who had promoted the rise of the PDG with funds and had loaned their trucks to the party in its pre-independence campaigns became the second victim in the state's frantic efforts to reproduce itself. The 1964 changes were to them a betrayal, and threatened to paralyse private trade which constituted their domain of interest. Consequently, the peasants who formed the mass base of the party, faced with a defective economic system, shortages of consumer goods and deteriorating living standards reacted in a typical peasant fashion. Firstly, they reduced production of export crops; became indifferent to the party, left the country in large numbers, especially to Ivory coast, and sold much of their produce to neighbouring countries in return for basic consumer goods. It was estimated that two-thirds of the 1963 rice and coffee harvest was exported to Liberia and Ivory Coast.¹¹ It is these developments which gave rise to the 1965 "coup plot", baptised by Toure as "The Traders Plot". This plot was more specifically a response to the 1964 and 1965 political measures against that section of the petty-bourgeoisie, outside and within the state involved in trade. The measures sought to limit the number of traders and maintain state monopoly over trade. More fundamentally, the measures sought to exclude traders from posts of political responsibility which had assured them of necessary links and political protection and patronage. The 1965 plot was thus, a result of the emerging contradictory interests and struggle for state power as an important asset in pursuit of these interests between the petty bourgeoisie in the bureaucracy and its commercial section. More specifically, it was a reaction to two main policies of the 1964 commissions, one to regulate and control rents, and the other to check on the property acquired by Party leaders since independence and to confiscate those acquired illegally. The first policy had its fo-

cus on traders and the separation of business and Party roles. The second, and most important, was the banishment from the Party of those individuals associated with theft, embezzlement or subversion. The importance of the latter lies in the fact that it marked a turning point in the conception of the nature of PDG, for de facto, these measures amounted to an acknowledgement of the fact that the PDG would not be and was not a Party of all the people whose membership was voluntary. An important aspect of the 1964-1965 measures was the fact that despite the party's attempts to purge itself of those flouting Party policies, the exposure and punishment of these elements did not go beyond the heads of parastatals, as action against ministers was left to the Secretary General of the Party who merely reshuffled those implicated.¹²

Against a background of economic stagnation, inflation, general rationing and acute shortages of basic commodities, huge foreign debts, Sekou Toure decided to revive Marxism in the vocabulary of the Party and for the first time since independence declared socialism as the goal. But as if this was not enough, Sekou Toure went further to put his leftist critics on the defensive by "bringing home a caricature of the Chinese cultural revolution. This political development was significant for Sekou Toure for the first time, and for objective reasons, recognised the reality of class struggle. In his own words in 1967, "the interests of the labouring masses — demands that the working class, the peasantry, and sincerely progressive elements effectively direct and control all the vital sectors of the national life; and that the reactionary elements of the bourgeoisie, of the bureaucracy and of capitalism, even national capitalism, be thrown from all positions of influence, decision and control. The class struggle is a universal reality and historical necessity.

Yet, this belated ideological advancement did not lead to greater democratic participation of the masses in public affairs, nor to greater advancement of their interests; instead, it became the rationale and laid the basis for reduction in wages, suppression of seniority bonuses and overtime, measures which were aimed at saving the bureaucracy from collapse and were carried out at the expense of the labouring masses, whose centrality in socialist endeavour had just been discovered. Despite these measures, the economic crisis was further heightened by the cancellation of U.S. aid.¹⁴

The inability of the non-coercive apparatus to ensure state control over the masses; and increase production upon which the state bureaucrats owed their material existence led to the militarisation of society. The people's militia (recruited from amongst the urban unemployed) whose initial role was to revive the rural economy and carry out political education amongst the youth, to act as a counter-force to the army and act as praetorian guard, shifted their emphasis from the above tasks to that of repression in the face of popular resistance. This reversion to acts of repression was also precipitated by the overthrow of Nkrumah in 1966 and the October plot of 1965.

In 1968, in response to the decline in agricultural production and peasant resistance against party agricultural policies, the Party declared a "Cultural Revolution" whose aim was to redress the above problems. Revolutionary Education Centres (CERS) were formed to provide basic agricultural education to peasants and to intensify the literacy campaign.¹⁵ The State even went further in reviving the campaign by linking and identifying the ideological significance of the campaigns with the anti-colonial legendary of Samori Toure and Alfa Yaya.¹⁶ As part of the Party's efforts to exercise total control of popular organisations, the workers organisation CGTA was integrated into the Party and a compulsory union membership for workers imposed, while party dues had become part of state tax on all adults in Guinea. Further plots in 1969 and 1970 merely led to the intensification of repression and major structural changes in the military due to the involvement of some of its members in both upheavals. These attempted coups, especially the latter, which involved mercenary forces in alliance with internal opponents of the regime was effectively used by Sekou-Toure to crush both real and imaginary opponents through fake trials and summary executions in the name of the "fifth column". Indeed, the state effectively used the mercenary invasion to keep Guineans mobilised, thus deflecting attention from the economic crisis. By 1970, nearly one-fifth of the population especially a large proportion of intellectuals and the skilled population had fled to Senegal, Ivory Coast and France. In the face of economic failures, mass indifference to PDG policies, corruption and nepotism by the leadership, Sekou Toure reached the conclusion in 1970 that Guinea's hope lay with the younger generation who had come to maturity in the twelve

years of Guinea's Independence. He dismissed those in the bureaucracy as having been irredeemably corrupted by colonialist ideology. *Greater stress was now laid on the revolutionary role of the youth.* It is in this context that the popular militia (Milice populaire) composed largely of urban unemployed youths assumed police function while Sekou Toure made his distrust for the army publicly known. He declared that *"Every soldier who opposes the militia is an immediate or a potential recruit of Imperialism which seeks to establish neo-colonialism within the armed forces everywhere; also, every soldier who opposes the militia is in fact opposing the democratic revolution."*¹⁷ This brief summary of civilian — military and military - militia relations by Sekou Toure in 1970 was the culmination of the failure of the party structure to effectively subordinate the army to party ideology. More significantly, it was an eye opener for the army whose role in Guinean politics was being relegated to the second place compared to that of the militia.

At the economic level, by 1970, there was marked decline in industrial and agricultural production, in the former due to lack of raw materials, machinery and skilled expertise, poor management and rampant corruption, while agricultural production further declined as, a result of significant exodus of the peasant population to neighbouring countries, mobilization for unproductive tasks, shortage of commodities, low prices and more, significantly, resort to subsistence and food crops farming by peasants. Hence between 1964-69, whereas there was an annual population growth of 2.7%, overall production of paddy declined from 360,000 tons to 200,000.¹⁸

The post 1970 period therefore marked a turning point in Guinea both politically and economically. Politically, despite Sekou Toure's theory of "permanent conspiracy" which set the whole nation into permanent military mobilization, the regime sought to come out of its isolation — both in West Africa and with the western countries including France. This change was necessitated by economic factors and the dictum of the supremacy of politics over economics was abandoned and a more pragmatic course adopted. The severity of the economic problems took various forms; acute shortages of medical facilities and drugs in 1972 — dubbed by Sekou Toure as "a plot by the physicians to discredit the revolution", the declaration by the president in

1973 that crops and cattle be accepted for tax per capital and for the fares of the Mecca Pilgrimage. It is against this background that relations with neighbouring states was improved, an agreement with Zaire to provide for the processing of Guinea's bauxite reached, and in 1974, a trip by Premier Lansine Beavogui to the Middle East and oil rich states helped in the country's financial and fuel problems. The State started a process of liberalization which legalised private trade and the importation of goods by traders. The failures of state supervised and imperialist controlled production both in the sectors of agriculture, services and industry led to the institution of a process of liberalization which was significant in that it become a permanent and expanding process which strengthened not only the influence of foreign private capital but more fundamentally, the commercial petty bourgeoisie — which had been struggling for greater local private participation in the economy, thus undermining the material base of the state bureaucracy. This liberalization occurred at a time of declining production in agricultural crops, and subsequent declining importance in the country's foreign trade and the ascendancy of the minerals industry as the main backbone of the country's exports. Thus, by 1977, bauxite and aluminium alone still accounted for 97% of the country's export revenue.¹⁹ At the same time, external debts continued to rise from US\$ 560m in 1973 to US\$ 955m. in 1976. Indeed in Africa, Guinea stood out as one of the countries most dependent on foreign aid.

The liberalization policies of the post 1970s were therefore aimed at checking economic stagnation by providing the climate for increased foreign investment in the mining industries in the face of increase in oil prices and obtaining the foreign, private and multi-lateral financial assistance to rejuvenate the existing industries operating at below 25% of their operation capacities. The Boke Bauxite project jointly owned by the state and Harvey Aluminium Company and by Aluminium Ltd of Canada (HALCO'O) was a major beneficiary of this liberalization which enabled it to receive a long negotiated aid from United States AID and the World Bank whose signing dated back to 1965. The second beneficiary was the Fria mines which constitutes Guinea's richest source of bauxite and in which the state and American capital are jointly involved. Since Guinea's economy, except for the early 1960s was generally sustained by western aid and trade

especially from the common market, the post-1970 liberalization policies were but a continuation of western capitalist monopoly of Guinea's source of aid/trade and both exports and imports. Indeed, from 1975, followed the resumption of relations with France and despite ruptures following the death of Diallo Telli, former Secretary General of the O.A.U., France has become an important trading partner second only to the USA in exports and top in imports.²⁰

In the face of economic failures, decline in production, political repression and corruption, the regime was forced to seek for alternative sources of finance. The 1970s and beyond therefore marked a period of Sekou Toure's moderation and pragmatism, signalled by his move to the right. Materially dependent on foreign private capital, which the Party had attempted to control, Guinea's foreign policy became less militant. The regime's increasing alliance with reactionary African and Arab States who were willing to provide financial assistance to a regime threatened with economic collapse and surviving on a narrow social base, was part of this process of de-radicalisation. Though initially not propounded by the party or Toure as an important political factor, Islam became a constant theme in post 1970s, especially with regard to its progressive element. One would well argue that, ideologically, Islam accidentally "appeared in the Guinea political scene at a time when Guineans economic problems were pushing her closer to oil-rich Arab States especially Saudi Arabia. His mediatory role in the gulf war as the leader of the Islamic Conference Organisation, though not successful, created further sympathy from Arab nations, specially those allied to Iraq. It is these economic necessities in Guinea that explains Sekou Toure's close association with King Hassan II of Morocco and his support for Morocco in its predatory and occupationist War in Western Sahara. The Saudi Arabian monarch and King Hassan became the Intermediary between Sekou Toure and the Arab Sheikhs. This link enabled the regime to become the main recipient of Arab petrol-dollars in Africa. Thus, both at the domestic and international scenes, Sekou Toure's revolutionary myth gradually eroded.²¹ Internally, the liberalisation policies and massive inflow of foreign capital intensified class struggle since the liberalisation policies and strengthening of the commercial petty bourgeoisie and foreign capital went hand in hand with the weak-

ening of the purchasing power of the labouring masses, their greater exploitation and increased inflation. With increased reliance on foreign capital and the sanctioning of favourable repatriation of profits by foreign private investors, the PDG's role became essentially that of disciplining and supervising labour. It is not surprising therefore, that in 1983, the congress of PDG dropped the slogan of "revolution" in favour of that of "production".²²

It is against this background that we attempt to analyse the social basis of the April 1984 direct military intervention in Guinean politics after over two decades of PDG rule. In doing so, we analyse the manner in which the military, as a state institution was an offspring of the political and institutional organisation of the Guinea society.

Contrary to the theoretical models which seek to conceptualise the military as an autonomous institution, the nature and role of the military in Guinea has intimately been shaped by the socio-economic structures of the society. To a large extent, the military role in society has been determined by the attempts of the dominant class forces in the state (bureaucratic petty bourgeoisie) to mediate between foreign capital and the exploited classes in Guinea. Central in this mediatory role has been the Party, the PDG, which formulated the policies which placed the military, its service in reproducing the relations of exploitation in a statist form. Thus, despite the verbal declarations of the party of transforming the military into a revolutionary instrument of social transformation, the military like other state institutions has reflected the cross societal contradictions which has taken the form of attempted coups and covert resistances. Elements within the military allied to civilian forces opposed to PDG rule, had, since 1965 been part of the many "conspiracies" against the regime. Thus, as sections of the petty bourgeoisie opposed to statification of the economy, elements within the military severally attempted to politically intervene in Guinean politics. Correspondingly, as there have been endemic political crises in Guinea, so have these found expression within the military establishment in attempted coups since the 1960s, further de-mystifying the thesis of the autonomy of the military. However, precisely because the politics of social control was extended to the military establishment, and as a result of the contradictions created by the ruling class within the armed forces, in which the army was earmarked for greater control, it was not

surprising that it was this section of the military which evolved as the least reliable. But more significant about the intervention of the army was the fact that no other *organised* political force could survive in the repressive political climate in Guinea over the two decades.

The Guinean military establishment, like other institutions, was inherited from the colonial order and initially consisted of a police force composed of remnants of General De Gaulle's African Army, formed during World War II to liberate France from Fascism. The inherited force had two distinct elements: Firstly part of it acted as a counter-revolutionary against the Algerian peoples war for independence; and secondly, a section of it was opposed to the popular expression of the Guinean people for full independence from France, as exhibited by a protest and the burning of Delaba barracks after the outcome of the referendum in 1958.²³

When Guinea gained independence, African commissioned officers who had served in the French army readily availed themselves to the new government, only to be demoralised by the government's non-respect for professionalism and promotion — factors which were inherent elements in the military ideology of French military establishment. In the aftermath of the "Non" response to De Gaulle's call for the Franco-African Community, and the subsequent rupture of relations, Guinea's urgent military needs were for political, ideological and financial reasons, met by the Eastern bloc countries. Thus, the military assistance from Eastern bloc countries — both in the form of training and hardware, formed the basis for the formation of the three sectors, of the military in 1965, the army, police and the militia.²⁴ Since then, the Guinean military has been basically equipped and trained in the east (notably soviet) apart from some limited west German assistance. By 1969, Guinea had a regular force of 4,800 officers, and a 30,000 popular militia, one out of 133 Guineans was a militia man and one out of 800 was a soldier.²⁵ By 1979, the regular force had shot up to 8,850; with one armoured battalion, four infantry battalions, one Engineer battalion, 30 T-34/54 medium and 10 pt light Tanks. The Navy was 350, with six Shangai Patrol Boats, an Air Force of 500, with Mig 15s and a paramilitary force of 8,000 men.

The interest of the Guinean ruling class on the military, with

regard to internal politics, evolved particularly, with the intervention of the military on the Ghanian political scene in 1966, a development which denied Sekou Toure one of his closest ideological colleagues. Prior to this, the role of the military was directed towards the defence of the nation and Guinea's territorial boundaries against French supported destabilization attempts, Portuguese colonial forces in Guinea Bissau as well as in production. Though coups had been taking place in Africa, the 1966 Coup was crucial in that the military had ousted a relatively progressive government without any popular resistance. Henceforth, Sekou Toure, aware of growing internal opposition to the regime decided to go beyond balancing the regular army with a people's militia. From 1967, the regime began a campaign of politicisation of the army, followed by structural changes in 1969 and the eventual disestablishment of the army. Whereas the first steps in 1967 were largely influenced by external developments, the second was closely tied up to both internal and external factors. Internally, it was preceded by an attempted coup involving, for the first time, sections of the military and civilians. Externally it was both a response to the coup in Mali in 1969, and to the 1970 mercenary invasion by Portuguese recruits in alliance with internal forces within the military establishment and opposition elements in and outside the country.

The 1967 measures were part of the general re-structuring of the various party and state institutions, to facilitate the realisation of the newly stated socialist objective of the party. The changes, notably, the reduction in the number of the BPN members (Party Central Committee) was part of the process that vested immense powers in the person of Sekou Toure and strengthened the political powers of the PDG. Due to the challenge posed by the commercial petty-bourgeoisie to the petty bourgeoisie in the state, this period was marked by constant references to the lumpen bourgeoisie which had emerged from within the bureaucracy and the idle and shirking petit bourgeoisie (undefined); both of which sought to ally with foreign imperialist powers to restore capitalism. In 1969, the PDG therefore, decided to carry out a structural reform of the army with two objectives: increasing the effective control of the party on the army, and secondly, reducing the separation of the military and civilian populations as a means of decentralising the army 2. Henceforth, it

was argued, the military was to play a greater role in economic life and would be granted the same rights of guarantees as civil servants in recruitment, promotion and retirement. Party committees were introduced in each military camp under the most active PDG militants irrespective of rank, to ensure close PDG political supervision of the military. Thus, the PDG found its way in the military establishment as an institution of social control—rather than an instrument of mobilization. At this period, the party had lost much of its mass base which enabled the dominant forces to rule less arbitrarily. The atomisation of the various sections of the military into separate staffs for the army, police, air force, navy and gendermerie with an overall council of defence presided over by the Head of State for coordination between the five staffs, was part of the mechanisms of social control²⁷. The army was immediately integrated into the statutes of the civil service. However, these structural changes did not cushion the top brass of the military (part of the bureaucratic petty bourgeoisie in the state) from contending for political power. Thus, in 1969, a plot in Habé region involving high ranking politicians and military officers, allegedly attempting to proclaim independence for Moyenne Guinée, in the model of Biafra, was discovered. This prompted a purge in the army against “elements whose presence within the army was considered incompatible with Guinée’s wish to radicalise its revolution”. Four measures were taken: 1. Military units previously stationed in the towns were dispersed to the country’s 208 districts to train members of the civil service and to set up production units, not as an initially conceived policy to transform the military into an agent of transformation, but as a reaction and response to the military’s political inclinations 2. Soldiers who wished to leave the army were promised recruitment in the other sectors of the administration 3. The army was to engage in cotton, rice, groundnuts and maize production 4. New wage scales were set corresponding to those in the civil service and 5. The army was disestablished, that is, all workers including the military would in future be regarded as civilians (factor which partly contributed to the partial success of the mercenary invasion in 1970). The President and hence the Party, instead attached emphasis on the running of the peoples militia as a counter-force to the army, in line with his declaration to the army in 1970 that to oppose the militia is to oppose the democratic revolution and to be a reactionary

ally of imperialism.

How then could a coup take place in Guinea by an army ideologically brought up under the PDG and indoctrinated by it on the virtues of obedience to the Party as the supreme organ of the people? On the basis of the Guinean political economy, several factors help explain the social basis of the 1984 coup by the Army, a coup one commentator superficially described as the first coup in history against a corpse-because it was in effect a coup against Sekou Toure.²⁸

In the twenty-six years of Sekou Toure's rule in Guinea, despite the relatively greater role played by women in the political life of Guinean society, and of the quantitative improvement in social infrastructure, the Guinean economy was marked by general economic stagnation, both in agriculture and Industry. Concurrently, the economy remained an appedange of the wider global capitalist system, a system sustained by the infusion of western capital, mainly, American and therefore subject to its crises. Underlying this crisis, have been political, economic, technical and ideological factors manifested in the shortages of commodities, inflation, peasant reversion to subsistence agriculture, exodus to neighbouring countries, and covert and overt political resistance by diverse social classes and groups in the society. Secondly, post independence Guinean politics has been shaped by a political party with a bureacratic petty bourgeois leadership lacking a clear ideological direction. The Ideological foundation upon which the post independence objectives were defined created the very basis for recourse to repression and dictatorial methods in the name of defending the interests of the whole people, and one general will in a social reality in which the evolution of classes and hence class interests had become irreconcilable. Yet it was a faction of the Guinean petty bourgeoisie using the state to develop a socio-economic base through the PDG in the name of "Communacracy" and later, "Socialism" a process necessitated by the general crisis of capitalist social surpluses through state intervention in the economy in the interests of both capital and the reproduction of the state. It is this ideological mask and false start" in the name of the people which led to the swift dismissal of those opposing the policies of the PDG to be labelled "Counter-revolutionary agents of international imperialism." It is this same ideological confusion which led to the

identification of classes at the psychological realm rather than in the realm of relations of production. Faced with a break in the all-front alliance and lacking the ideological basis for a theoretical understanding of the on-going processes, the party resorted to coercion to maintain an all-class front in the name of social progress and later, socialism. Concurrently, the intervention of the state in the economy in the post—1984 period led to the evolution of a colossal bureaucracy. The party, swallowed up by the state, rather than mobilize, was transformed into an institution of coercion and of the consolidation of obedience. Driven into an anti-democratic institution, the PDG under Toure, sank into an extraordinary lethargy. The party's mission became one of delivering instructions which issue from the summit and eventually keep the state to hold the people down. The authoritarianism of the PDG which had its roots in its inability to transform Guinea's underdeveloped economy was heightened by the struggle over the scarce resources whose access was dependent upon strategic location in the party bureaucracy. Mass lethargy which exhausted the energies of anthuastic peasants, was closely related to the ill-conceived economic programmes in the early 1960s in industry and particularly agriculture. The failures were a consequence of poor management, financial handicap, lack of technical expertise and ecological problems, compounded by the ideological basis of the party's objectives and programmes such as the introduction of state farms and cooperatives in which the use of forced labour became one of the most serious sources of peasants resistance. The state, in disorganising peasant production units, failed to provide a viable alternative thus heralding a decline in production in agriculture. The state response was political repression. Subsequent mass lethargy the erosion of the party's social base intensified in the succeeding period and was epitomised by the women's demonstration in 1977.³⁰ At the level of the military establishment, this repression was highlighted by the militarisation of society from 1965, the recruitment into the popular militia of the urban unemployed. Militia's enjoyment of powers of repression over other state coercive instruments. Thirdly, the dependence on one individual as the single ideologue of the party led to the development of a personality cult around Sekou Toure. The concentration of decision — making powers in his hands, the constant re-shuffling of personnel and rampant nepotism led to the identifi-

cation of the party and its failures with Sekou-Toure. Indeed, Sekou Toure became an institution, allegiance to the Party and State became synonymous with allegiance to the secretary General of the Party. The result was the relegation of the other leaders, especially the members of the BPN (central committee of the Party and cabinet) to mere followers of Sekou Toure resulting to the absence of democratic centralism in the party decision-making process. This situation had an undermining influence on the Guinean political and mass institutions, especially the party. Indeed the dominance of Sekou Toure in decision-making and the concentration of powers in his hands can be viewed against the overwhelming preponderance of decreed laws over those legislated by the Assembly. Thus, the failure and success of the PDG was ipse factor, the failure and success of Toure. Thus, having been elevated into an infallible figure, Sekou Toure reacted viscerously to criticism over Party policies, and considered such criticism as an assault on his personality. Sekou Toure's increasing reliance on the popular militia for repressive purposes and his preference of its members for political support, together with a public declaration that they be obeyed by the army was a political bomb. The Secretary General was in effect announcing that he would not preclude the use of the militia to handle any army discontent, that is, to use one apparatus of state coercion to coerce another apparatus. But precisely because the popular militia acted as a 'personal force' in this form of class rule — in a situation of leadership crisis — itself a creation of Toure's legacy, a mass, apathetic, demobilized and indifferent to PDG politics, a section of the army opposed to statism was able to move in unresisted at a convenient time when the top brass of the military and Toure's sycophantic followers were locked up in a succession crisis. It was this section of the army within the military which had not only consistently proved its potential as a contender for political power, but as a well-organised institution that could face Toure's force with force. Thus, twenty-six years of PDG ideological indoctrination had done little to shape their ideological outlook. Making use of all those factors that give the military greater leeway to intervene in politics, the army took over power on April 3rd 1984, denouncing Toure's domestic policies, and stating that, the coup would not have succeeded in Toure's life time. Thus, the myth of the dominance and supremacy of the Party as a political organ

of social control through repression rather than popular will, was rudely shattered by the coup. The indifference of the Guinean masses to the coup was itself proof of their peripheral role in PDG politics.

Lessons and Conclusion

Three lessons can be drawn from the abrupt end brought to Guinea's over two decades of communautaric — cum — socialist experimentation. Firstly, the role of the party in relation to the people. The case of Guinea demonstrates the necessity for a clear, coherent ideology which corresponds to and articulates the objective interests of the labouring masses in Africa, where socialism is viewed as the objective ideology which by virtue of its social content bonds the masses and the party and expresses their aspirations. Closely tied to this is the necessity of popular participation and respect for democracy and democratic participation of the people in public affairs, for there can be no genuine struggle for national liberation nor socialism outside popular democratic participation. The absence of the latter not only leads to apathy but to the adoption and institutionalization of anti-democratic forms of rule. Secondly, one of the causes and consequence of arbitrary rule is the phenomenon of leaderism — the cult of the personality. The guinean experience demonstrates how the elevation of an individual into an institution buttresses individualism and hinders the development of popular initiative and leads to the subordination of the labouring masses to "apolitical spectators". The reliance on the leader whose views, generalised into public outlook, is both a cause and effect of a monolithic conception of politics. Its consequence is the stifling of opposing views and expressions which lead ultimately to the creation of a police-state, where state, orchestrated homogenous thought and expression is but a product of fear. Thirdly, and closely related to the above two, is that the role, and aspirations of the military as an institution and its members as sections of various social classes and groups is not largely determined by legal definitions, but by internal class struggles and the class content of the state, the political culture of the society, and hence the forms of governance. Thus, whether the military is professional or geared towards social transformation, the final determinant of that objective is the form class

struggle takes and the political climate in which it is moulded. Guinea's experience demonstrates, the incompatibility of the military as an *institution of social transformation and of repression not only of the labouring masses but also of itself.*

In conclusion therefore, post-independence Guinea was caught up in a political and economic crisis originating from Guinea's continued integration into the world-wide capitalist system; a crisis compounded by an ideological confusion, and revolutionary rhetoric, based on the revolutionary myth of Ahmed Sekou Toure as an institution synonymous with the party. The concentration of decision-making powers in Sekou Toure and his role as the single theoretician and ideologue of the party allled to the identification of the party with the personality of Sekou Toure. His revolutionary myth dressed under such titles as 'the faithful and supreme servant of the people', our well-beloved Secretary General, the Helsman of our Revolution, 'the Great son of Africa 'the Strategist, the Liberator of oppressed peoples, the Terror of International imperialism, colonialism and Neo-Colonialism, the Doctor of Revolutionary Sciences''⁵⁰ institutionalised the psychophacy that paralysed all other institutions apart from the army. The "popular party", the PDG, for lack of a clear ideological direction of its leaders and the political impudency of its leader gradually developed into a huge bureaucratic and repressive apparatus. From a mobilization oriented party up to early 1960s, the PDG sank into a demobilizing agent, and in the words of Fanon "into an information service." The social basis of the coup was to be found in the Guinean political economy, a mono-culture crop and later mineral oriented stagnating economy characterised by repression and suspicion of the massive institutions of coercion created by the party. Despite some of the positive advancements in the social infrastructure-education, health, the evolution of confidence in the Guinea women, the development of national languages, the popular resistance of the Guinean labouring masses and progressive sections of the petty bourgeoisie against "revolution" from above, underscore the fact that the amancipation of the working peoples must be the task of the working classes themselves.

NOTES

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