THEMES AND HISTORICAL REALITY IN THE WORKS OF FOUR GUINEAN NOVELISTS

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APPROVAL

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the novels of four Guinean writers with reference to how they treat the social, economic and political problems of Africa in general and Guinea under Sekou Toure in particular. It is also part of the objective of the study to explore the extent to which the novels could contribute to the establishment of a free and progressive society. Eight novels which by their internal chronology, span World War II and 1984, when Sekou Toure died, are explored. The work is divided into four chapters, each dr'lirg with a specific aspect of the socio-political and economic problems being surveyed.

The study examines the evolution of Francophone West Africa in general and Guinea under Sekou Toure in particular. It is discovered that the crave of African leaders for political power is a major source of the problems encountered by the generality of Africans in contemporary society.

Two of the novelists, Camara Laye and Alioum Fan toure treat the problems of the colonial era. Laye[1] s picture of the colonialists is too idyllic. Laye also proves to be too antagonistic to the nationalists who replaced the colonialists. Fantoure, on the other hand, offers a more balanced picture of the colonialists and the African politicians who Came to power after independence.

All the four novelists discuss the problem of despotism in the post-independence society. Lack of a solid ideological base is identified by the writers as the bane of true democracy in Africa. Since governments are not established on a firm foundation, the leaders resort to oppressive methods to sustain their rule. The novelists are however optimistic that tyranny will be overthrown and urge the oppressed to fight for their liberation. .

The socio-economic problems of post-independence Africa also come under scrutiny. The writers highlight the corruption of the leaders as a major source of the economic difficulties of the governed, Tierno Monenembo rightly insinuates that some of the citizens who bemoan corruption are themselves corrupt. The novels also stress that the leaders do nothing concrete to fulfil the aspirations of the governed at the level of social infrastructure.

The Sight novels studied are capable of contributing to the progress of post-independence African societies.

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BASIC NOVELS AND ABBREVIATIONS

1. Dramouss - Dramouss (Paris: Plon, 1966).

2. CT - Le Cercle des Tropiques (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1972).

3. RC - Le Récit du cirque (Paris: Buchet/Chastel, 1975).

4. HTS - L'Homme du troupeau du Sahel (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1979).

5. VT - Le Voile ténébreux (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1985).

6. CB - Les Crapauds-brousse (Paris: Seuil, 1979).

7. JHS - Le Jeune homme de sable (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1979).

8. ZIQ - Le Zéhéros n'est pas n'importe qui (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1985).

References are to the above mentioned editions of the novels and will be integrated in the text.

INTRODUCTION

My first contact with the four Guinean novelists whose works are studied in this research came through Laye's L'Enfant noir, which I read as a student in the Secondary School. The simplicity of the style of L'Enfant noir and Laye's passionate reminiscences of his life as a child in Upper Guinea fascinated me. I later read Dramouss and, for a long time, Laye remained the only Guinean writer I knew and one of my preferred authors. As an undergraduate student, I read the three novels of Fantouré, Le Cercle des Tropiques, Le Récit du cirque and L'Homme du troupeau du Sahel. The simple narrative technique of Le Cercle des Tropiques attracted me to Fantoure and later Fantouré's works formed the basis of a paper I presented at a Postgraduate Seminar of the Department of French in 1982. During the same period, the fact that Laye and Fantouré lived in exile, forced me to think about the relationship between the two novelists and the government of the Parti Democratique de Guinée (PDG) led by Sékou Touré. Coincidentally that was the period during which I was exposed to stories of political intolerance and the problems faced by the socialist experiment of the PDG administration. I thought more about the relationship between the works of Laye and Fantouré and the historico-political problems of Guinea in particular a nd Africa in general. I had vague ideas

about the rapport between creative fiction and social reality. Thus, I had reflected somehow on the problem of this research before I started it. I felt however that some aspects of socio-political issues were not thoroughly dealt with by Laye and Fantouré. Consequently, I searched for other Guinean writers and discovered Monénembo and Sassine. Thus, the decision to study the works of the four Guinean novelists is provoked by a long standing interest coupled, perhaps, with a desire to satisfy a personal curiosity.

This research delves into the works of four Guinean writers - Laye, Fantouré, Monénembo and Sassine with particular attention to how the novelists examine the economic, political and social problems of their fictional universe, a universe that is linkable to Guinea (under Sékou Touré) in pa rticular, and Africa in general. It is also part of the aim of this research to examine the extent to which the Guinean novels being studied could contribute to the establishment of a viable social, political and economic system.

The title of the thesis "Themes and Historical Reality in the Works of Four Guinean Novelists" is the best we could find for a study of this nature. Firstly, we intend to break down the novels into topics in order to study the various socio-political

issues raised by the four Guinean novelists. As for "Historical Reality", this term is derived from "History". History here is taken in its loose sense and it means the "déroulement de la vie de l'humanité"[1] within a geographical entity. Historical reality here, specifically deals with the social, political and economic problems of Guinea in particular, and African countries in general since the beginning of the anti-colonialist struggle to the death of Sékou Touré in 1984. We will try to examine three broad issues here. These are the policies of the colonial administration, the struggle for independence, and the predicament of Africans, Guineans in particular, since the attainment of independence.

Eight novels are studied. These are Dramouss by Laye, the four novels of Fantouré: Le Cercle des Tropiques, Le Récit du cirque, L'Homme du troupeau du Sahel and Le Voile ténébreux, Monenembo's Les Crapauds brousse and Sassine's Le Jeune homme de sable and Le Zéhéros n'est pas n'importe qui.

These novels are not the only works published by the four Guinean writers. Apart from L'Enfant noir, Laye's first novel published in 1953, he also wrote Le Regard du roi which appeared in 1954. Laye's last major work, Le Maître de la parole came out in 1978. These novels are not included in our study

because they do not focus on the socio-political problems of the post-independence African society. Monenembo's latest novel, Les Ecailles du ciel, on the other hand appeared in 1986. However, we are yet to lay our hands on this work. In the case of Sassine, apart from his two novels treated in this research, the novelist also wrote Saint Monsieur Baly (1973), Wirriyamu (1976) and a collection of short stories L'Alphabète in 1982. These three works are not included in this study because they are not very relevant to the historico-political problems of post-independence Guinea and the rest of Africa. Saint Monsieur Baly, for instance, tells of the story of an old teacher who tries to establish a school. Wirriyamu, on the other hand, exposes the abuses of the Portuguese colonialists in lusophone Africa, while L'Alphabète is intended for the moral edification of children. Thus, the choice of the novels treated in this study is based on the fact that their fictional universe is linkable to the post-independence socio-political problems of Guinea and the rest of Africa.

The majority of the novels treated in this thesis are not well-known particularly to the Anglophone public. Consequently, we feel compelled to give a synopsis of these works at this stage. Dramouss is Laye's third novel. It is the first to be published of all the Guinean novels being examined in this research. Published in 1966 when Laye was already in

exile in Senegal, Dramouss narrates the story of Fatoman a Guinean student in France, who returns to Guinea on a brief visit. This is at the dawn of independence and the two major political parties in the country, the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (RDA)[2] and the Bloc Africain de Guinée (BAG) are involved in the struggle to gain control of the post-independence government. Fatoman observes that the RDA leaders attempt to mystify Guineans and resort to violence. In the final part of the novel, the RDA comes to power and its leader establishes a tyrannical regime characterised by arbitrariness and summary execution of real and imagined opponents of the President.

All the four novels of Fantouré were written while he was in exile in West European countries. Le Cercle des Tropiques, the first of the novels, published in 1972 features Bohi Di a half-educated youth who leaves his village for the capital of his country, the Marigots du Sud in search of a job. Bohi Di is trapped in the rivalry between the two political parties in the country, the Club des Travailleurs and the Parti Social de l'Espoir led by Baré Koulé. The latter colludes with the Europeans and is installed as President. He is later overthrown in a Coup d'Etat. Le Récit du cirque followed Le Cercle des Tropiques in 1975. The President in this second novel, is Fahati alias Rhinocéros-Tacheté whose

arbitrariness and insensitivity completely alienate the citizens of Ce-pays, the fictional universe in which the novel is set. Fantouré's third and fourth works, L'Homme du Troupeau du Sahel and Le Voile ténébreux which he put out in 1979 and 1985 respectively, address themselves to the excesses of the colonialists and the anti-colonialist struggle embarked upon by African nationalists after the Second World War.

Les Crapauds-brousse (1979) by Monénembo tells of the story of Dioulde, a young man who is drawn into national politics only to be eliminated later as a result of his alleged involvement in a fabricated coup d'Etat. Sassine's Le Jeune homme de sable features Oumarou, a student who withdraws from school to fight oppression and profligacy endemic in the country of Le Guide. Oumarou fails. Tahirou, the opponent of Le Guide also dies in detention. Finally, Le Zéhéros n'est pas n'importe qui, Sassine's latest novel is a satire and a post-mortem study of the government of Sékou Touré.

It is obvious that the novels being treated were provoked by the disillusionment of the four Guinean writers with the leadership of the PDG. This disillusionment recalls African writers such as Malick Fall: La Plaie (1969), Ahmadou Kourouma: Les Soleils des Indépendances (1970), Beti: Perpétue (1985), the playwright N'Debeka: Le Président (1970). On the

anglophone side, on the other hand, works like Achebe's A Man of the People and Armah's The Beautyful Ones are not yet Born easily come to mind. All these francophone and anglophone writers express their disgust at the political demagogy and intolerance characteristic of post-independence politics.

To understand the cause of the disillusionment of the Guinean writers, one needs to have some knowledge of the history of the anti-colonialist struggle and the unfolding of political events since the independence of Guinea in 1958. Towards the end of the 19th century, the Europeans colonised a large part of Africa. Contrary to the declaration of the Whites that they had come to Africa on a "Civilising Mission", they oppressed and plundered the natural and human resources on the continent. Guineans were particularly unfortunate, for while their country was endowed with abundant natural and human resources which the Whites exploited, the colonialists paid only very little attention to Guinea's socio-economic development. Moreover, the manner in which independence was granted to Guinea by France later had adverse consequences on the Guinean people. When de Gaulle came to power in France in 1958, he proposed a Franco-African Community which all French colonies in Tropical Africa were free to accept or reject through a referendum. Through the effort of Sékou Touré, Guineans voted overwhelmingly against the referendum

proposed by de Gaulle and Guinea attained independence in October 1958. The French administration however saw Sékou Touré's action as a rebellion and decided to punish the Guinean President. Consequently, the French government withdrew its investments in Guinea. It also recalled its personnel and withheld aid to Guinea. Sékou Touré, on the other hand, tried to break completely with France. He rejected capitalism and adopted the socialist mode of development. He also introduced one party form of government which he presented as the only system capable of rehabilitating the Guinean economy after several years of colonial pillaging. However, all these options turned out to be strategies through which Sékou Touré tried to consolidate his position and perpetuate his rule. Critics of the policies of the PDG were branded as saboteurs and enemies of the people. They were consequently physically eliminated, imprisoned or had to flee Guinea. Independence which was supposed to usher in an era of political freedom and economic prosperity became a period of poverty, distress and political vindictiveness. It is exactly the failure of the leaders of the PDG to uphold democratic principles and ensure socio-economic growth that the Guinean writers bemoan.

The Guinean writers were, of course, not the only group of Guineans that were adversely affected by the ego-centric policies of those in power. All sections

of the Guinean society: students, civil servants, workers and farmers were all direct or indirect victims of the totalitarian policies and corruption of the leaders of the PDG. By taking it upon themselves to expose the inadequacies of the politicians, the four Guinean novelists appear to conform with Goldmann's view that writers are "individus exceptionnels"[3] with very high political awareness. In writing the novels, the artists are not acting "en tant que moi isolé aux autres hommes et au monde physique", rather they represent the "conscience collective", more precisely the "conscience nationale".[4] This social commitment of the artists, Goldmann puts it succintly when he observes: "Toute grande oeuvre littéraire ou artistique est une expression d'une vision du monde".[5]

From the foregoing, it is clear that the eight Guinean novels being studied are closely linked to the socio-political experience of Guinea. Consequently, in treating the novels, we shall always endeavour to analyse the utterances of the fictional leaders and the government in relationship to the period in which the novels are set. It is only by analysing the conduct of the characters in relationship to such a period that we can identify which characters try to maintain the status quo and which ones struggle to defend the oppressed. It is the necessity to study fictional works in relation to

historical circumstance that Goldmann tries to point out when he observes:

> C'est en replaçant l'oeuvre dans l'ensemble de l'évolution historique et en le rapportant à l'ensemble de la vie sociale que le chercheur peut en dégager la signification objective.[6]

One may be tempted to think that the Guinean novelists address themselves to the historico-political problems of Guinea alone. This is not so. African countries have had, and most still have despotic and incompetent leadership. One party rule, elimination of political opponents by those in power and all sorts of excesses by the powers that be are endemic in contemporary Africa. Poverty, malnutrition, ignorance and disease are a common phenomenon in all African countries. The four Guinean writers, aware of this intolerable state of affairs at the economic, social and political levels, do not limit their presentation to a single geo-political entity. Not even Dramouss and Le Zéhéros n'est pas n'importe qui, with their undisguised allusions to Guinea under Sékou Touré, can be said to be national novels. The Guinean writers all try to internationalise the socio-political issues they raise even if their approaches are different from one another.

Some critical works have been devoted to the novels of the four Guinean writers. However, none of these studies we know of has probed into the

relationship between the eight novels and the "Guinean Problem" when Sékou Touré was in power. Dorothy Blair's African Literature in French explores the writings of Laye and Fantouré. The novels of Monénembo and Sassine examined in this research appeared after the publication of Blair's book. Moreover, Blair generally does not treat political issues with the seriousness they demand. Adele King is another critic who delves into the Guinean novel. Her work: The Writings of Camara Laye is written in a very simple style and the analysis of Laye's works is painstakingly done. However, as the title of King's work indicates, the book is devoted only to Laye's works. The works of Fantouré, Monénembo and Sassine are completely left out of King's study. Similarly, Midiohouan's L'Utopie négative d'Alioum Fantouré, which he published in 1985, is limited to only one Guinean novelist, Fantouré; in fact to only Le Cercle des Tropiques. Moreover, Midiohouan also does not place enough emphasis on the political dimension of Fantouré's novel, specifically the Sékou Touré factor as is reflected in Fantouré's composition. In 1987, the Paris based literary review: Notre Librairie also devoted one of its editions entirely to Guinean literature. The review gives an impressive general picture of all forms of creative writing from Guinea, including the novels surveyed in this research. Notre Librairie also provides

useful information on the policies of Sékou Touré during his twenty-seven-year rule. The review does not, however, attempt to treat the Guinean fictional form in relationship with Guinean social reality. The unpublished M.A theses of Rebecca Uganden and Samuel Gogura also concentrate on Fantouré to the exclusion of the three other writers whose novels are considered in this study. It is our belief that this research is the first attempt to bring together all the Guinean novels which address themselves to the "Guinean Problem" under Sékou Touré, and the social, economic and political problems of post-independence African countries in general.

The research is divided into four chapters. Chapter one dwells on the socio-political background to the Guinean novels. The chapter is divided into two parts: the first concerns itself with the evolution of Francophone West Africa, while the second deals with the socio-political experience of Guinea. Such a division allows us on the one hand, to show that post-independence abuse of power is a general African problem, while on the other hand, it enables us to make a thorough study of the problems of the country of origin of the writers being studied. Chapter two outlines issues relating to the colonial period; these are the oppression and the exploitation of Africans by the European colonialists, the anti-colonialist endeavours of African nationalists, and

the relationship between the nationalists and the other sections of the African society before independence. The third chapter treats political issues per se during the post-independence era. It comprises three sections: the problem of ideology, the strategies adopted by the African leaders to perpetuate their rule and the strategies which in the view of the novelists could lead to the overthrow of tyranny. The fourth chapter of the thesis focuses on socio-economic issues. The emphasis here is on the neglect of the governed by the leaders. The chapter consists of two parts: economic problems and the precarious state of social facilities in post-independence society. These divisions, it is hoped, will help us to present a comprehensive picture of the period covered by the eight Guinean novels, that is, from around World War II to the death of Sékou Touré in 1984.

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

1. Petit Larousse (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1963) p. 512.

2. The PDG was the Guinean branch of the inter-territorial party and RDA.

3. Lucien Goldmann Le Dieu caché (Paris: Gallimard, 1955), p.27.

4. Ibid., p.27.

5. Ibid., p.26.

6. Ibid., p.17.

7. Uganden's thesis: The Evolution of Pessimism in Alioum Fantouré's Novels was presented to the Department of French in 1983, while that of Gogura: Le Pessimisme dans Trois roman ouest africains was presented to the same Department in 1985.

Chapter 1

SOCIO-POLITICAL BACKGROUND

I. SOCIO-POLITICAL EVOLUTION OF FRANCOPHONE WEST AFRICA

Since the beginning of colonialism, Francophone West Africa, like othe r parts of Africa, has passed through three major phases. The actual colonial era, which lasted about fifty years, preceded the Loi Cadre of 1956. Then came independence. The Loi Cadre era, during which Francophone African territories were granted semi-autonomy, was a period of some hope. Africans had experienced the ills of colonialism: "indigénat", prestation, settlement of tax in kind and military conscription. All these came to an end in 1956. During the Loi Cadre period, the nationalists did more to raise the expectation of the people, for, apart from combating the colonial authorities, some had even proceeded to provide social services for their people. A case in point is Houphouet Boigny who opened a dispensary at Yamoussoukro, in the Ivory Coast. In the villages and towns, the people enthusiastically supported their leaders in the anti-colonialist struggle. However, today, about three decades after the attainment of independence, it is clear that the African has not only been unable to improve upon his lot but he has even failed to maintain the level of development attained at the time of independence.

Idrissa Diarra believes that Francophone Africa in particular and Africa in general, have not been able to develop their resources in the post-independence era because of the activities of the colonialists. According to him, the major problems of Africa today are due to: "the historical fact of colonialism."[1] Kwame Nkrumah also believes that it is rather neo-colonialism that is responsible for the post-independence predicament of the African people. Nkrumah writes:

> Africa is a paradox which illustrates and highlights neo-colonialism. Her earth is rich, yet the products that come from above and below her soil continue to enrich not Africans predominantly, but individuals and groups who operate, to Africa's impoverishment.2

In our opinion, however, the African politicians who replaced the colonial authorities are also responsible for the problems of the common man in the new era. The nationalists had their private objectives when they struggled against the colonial administration. When the nationalists (and later the military) came to power they pursued those objectives to the detriment of the welfare of the common man. In our discussion, we shall look at the interests of the leaders and the various strategies they adopted in pursuit of those interests in the colonial and post-independence eras.

The African nationalists, in fighting against the colonial administration had, no doubt, the desire to liberate their compatriots from foreign domination. However, events in the post-independence era have shown that the nationalists had other motives for engaging in the anti-colonialist struggle. Some of the nationalists were attracted by the prestige attached to their position as liberators of their people. This can be seen in the titles such leaders as Kwame Nkrumah, Siaka Stevens and Sékou Touré (Osagyefo, Pa, the Supreme Guide of the Revolution) arrogated to themselves respectively. These exalting titles suggest that the African politicians wanted to be seen as the only saviours of their people.

We also know that the nationalists were ready to accept material rewards that emanated from their struggle. For instance, Maurice Yameogo, Upper Volta's first President was tried and jailed for embezzling f1.2 million from the funds of the Conseil de l'Entente in 1968.[3] In the Ivory Coast, after the elections in 1957, the Assembly established for itself, and for the government, the highest salary scale in French West Africa, with an average annual expenditure of $10,000 for each assemblyman and $12,000 for each minister.[4] The African politicians also use their positions to promote the interest of their families. It is, for instance, known that Mali's government, under Modibo Keita, was dominated by the

President's own relatives. Of course, allegations of nepotism against high government officials are a common event in all African countries.

African politicians knew, right from the beginning of their political career, that the only way they could pursue these and other similar interests was to acquire political power and monopolise it. In this design, the nationalists knew that there were individuals and groups who constituted a threat to their ambitions. They therefore directed their energies to removing or weakening these opponents.

Among the early rivals of the politicians were the traditional rulers. The customary rulers played a colluding role in the colonial era. They collected taxes, recruited labourers and soldiers for the colonial authorities and settled minor disputes. The chiefs constituted a class of their own. In the Ivory Coast, there was the "Syndicat des Chefs" which was represented in the Assembly. The chiefs demanded better salary scales, more favourable conditions of recruitment and promotion than what was in existence. The power of the chiefs and the trouble they were capable of causing for the nationalists became obvious in 1959 when, acting with the approval of the traditional ruler of Sanwi State in Aboisso 'cercle' of the Ivory Coast, a group of

Agni sent a delegation to Paris to demand autonomy for Sanwi State as a French protectorate under a treaty signed in 1843. The politicians knew that, as a link between the people and government, the traditional rulers had a lot of influence and could constitute an obstacle to the nationalists' objectives in future. Therefore, the politicians tried to neutralise the power of the chieftaincy.

The chiefs were presented as irrelevant in the modern era. An Ivorian government official said that the chiefs were "the survivors from a dead past, whose death-sentence has already been passed by history".[5] The leaders of the Parti Démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire (P.D.C.I.) struggled and obtained jurisdiction over the chiefs under the Loi Cadre in 1956. In 1959, the chiefs lost their lone representative in the Assembly because the Bureau Politique of the P.D.C.I. felt that the chiefs had no role to play at the national level. Instead, a few chiefs were elected to the "conseils généraux" in the various regions. The P.D.C.I. assault on the chieftaincy was so effective that by the time of independence, traditional rulers had become mere ceremonial heads and no longer a threat to the party.

The nationalists - chiefs tussle deserves further comments. As it can be seen from the above, before independence, the traditional rulers sided

with the colonial administration. They were an effective instrument for the exploitation of African manpower and natural resources. It can be said that the struggle by the traditional rulers in the Ivory Coast for an autonomous Sanwi State was motivated by personal reasons. They wanted a State in which their power and the privileges they enjoyed under the Europeans would be maintained. And, everywhere in Africa, chiefs fought for their personal interests. From their collusion with the colonial administration, it can be said that the chiefs were not better than African politicians and would perhaps have been more oppressive and more exploitative had they been in power after independence. The elimination or rather weakening of the traditional rulers by the politicians was therefore a laudable action.

The leading African politicians did not find it easy to eliminate their political rivals with whom they fought against the colonial administration. These rivals were usually politicians who had formed opposition parties and had competed with the leader of the majority parties for control of government. The leaders of the majority parties knew that opposition members like Lamine Gueye of Senegal were intelligent, had ethnic loyalties and that if such opposition members decided to remain on their own and challenge the ruling group, these opponents could sustain themselves for a long time. The heads of the

majority parties therefore looked for what appeared to them as the most effective ways of eliminating the opponents.

An attempt by the nationalists to deal with the problem of opposition came initially through verbal attacks. It would appear that Nkrumah of Ghana led the way in this regard and leaders of Francophone West African countries followed. Nkrumah saw the opponents of the Convention People's Party (C.P.P.) as people led astray who incarnated:

> All the forces of darkness, feudalism, and ignorance joined together to stab the revolution in the back and rob our people of the fruits of the struggle on the verge of independence. 6

It is, however, known that the minority parties were not as reactionary as the picture given of them by the leaders of the majority parties.

Leaders of the stronger political movements sought more effective means of dealing with opposition. They tried to weaken it by sapping it of its important personalities. In the Ivory Coast, leading opposition candidates of the January 1956 elections - Kacou Aoulou, Sekou Sanogo and Etienne Djaumont - responded to Houphouet Boigny's call that they should come and join the P.D.C.I. In Senegal, two leaders of a small party were brought into Senghor's government as a result of the merger

with the Union Progressiste Sénégalaise (U.P.S.) in 1963. Such exodus from the smaller political parties to the bigger ones, left the smaller ones still weaker. By independence, most of them had ceased to be a threat to the leading political associations.

The activities of businessmen were of concern to those in power and governments devoted time to woo this group of people. As the European businessmen reduced their activities in the colonies, the indigenous businessmen replaced them. Because of their newly acquired wealth and contacts, these businessmen were quite influential in their countries. The party leaders knew that, if they had the support of the business community, the government would find it relatively easier to deal with the rest of the population. Houphouet Boigny, for instance, tried to secure the support of this group by exempting many of its members from the payment of "patente" or business tax. This measure was quite beneficial to the P.D.C.I. but denied the government of the much needed resources for national development. Such peaceful strategies to eliminate opposition continued after independence.

The dominant feature of politics in the post-independence era is the one-party system. This system of rule is so popular that today, twenty-nine of the fifty-one member countries of the Organisation of African Unity (O.A.U.) have no opposition parties.

The One-party form of government is found not only in Francophone West Africa but in the northern, eastern and southern parts of the continent. This system of government is one of the devices of those in authority in African countries to reinforce their positions.

The common argument advanced by governments to support the single party form of government is that African people have been exploited for too long and that to speed up economic development, there is the need for political unity which only the single party is capable of ensuring. The multiparty system as introduced by the West was viewed with suspicion. Here too, it would appear that Nkrumah led the campaign against multiparty systems and this was taken up by his counter-parts in Francophone West Africa. As Nkrumah put it:

> We believe that a monolithic party is necessary in an ex-colonial state which is inevitably faced with the task of correcting past maladjustment, years of neglect and colonial mental conditioning and of building a new, really independent, happy and proud state. Such a young nation cannot afford to dissipate its national effort through senseless wranglings and obstructive and destructive tactic that organised political opposition encourages. Besides, it is through such opposition parties that colonialism and imperialism seek to perpetuate their hold on the country. 7

The Ghanaian leader gave the impression that opposition

was synonymous with anti-patriotism, that opposition parties were opposed to the progress of Ghana. But in reality, it was Nkrumah who tried to ensure the perpetuity of his rule.

In the French-speaking countries of West Africa, arguments against multi-party system came in a slightly different form. In Senegal, the poet-President Senghor acknowledged the legitimacy of opposition. However, Senghor hastened to add that: "opposition must pursue the same goal as the majority party". He explained that such a measure "is to prevent the crystallisation of social groups into antagonistic classes". In Senghor's opinion, the function of the opposition is very precise, it is "to be the conscience of government and majority parties".[8] In other words, for Senghor, opposition has no right to vie for political power. Perpetually, it is from behind the political scene that the voice of opposition parties should be heard. This was no mere declaration. It is a fact that, despite Senghor's liberal outlook, throughout his tenure of office as the President of Senegal, he created an atmosphere only favourable to the consolidation of the Union Progressiste Sénégalaise.

The one-party system was probably necessary in the colonial era. During the period, the colonial authorities unwilling to grant sovereignty to their territories justified their action by pointing at

ethnic conflicts among the colonised people. A case in point was the Ivory Coast where although the P.D.C.I. scored 89% of the votes cast and obtained all the Territorial Assembly seats in 1957 "some French commentators stressed the fact that only 54 percent of the population had participated and that this indicated the existence of a silent opposition to Houphouet-Boigny's policies".[9] This action on the part of the colonialists provoked a reaction from the colonised who rallied round their leaders. Thus, during the colonial period, Africans needed political unity in order to confront the colonial authorities.

If it is true that political unity was at the beginning necessary for the anti-colonialist struggle, African leaders' persistent preference for the single party needs to be explained further. Yusuf Hassan believes that African leaders prefer the single part system because it enables them to protect their regimes from collapsing. On this point, Hassan has observed:

> Many of the pre-independence nationalist parties were elected to government on their past records and future promises. Unfortunately many of those parties, after winning election, could not deliver the goods. Having reneged on their manifestos, these parties became cogs in the neo-colonial wheel. One party was too tempting to resist. 10

Hassan is partially correct. African leaders' craving for the one party form of government is not just a post-independence phenomenon. It is the continuation of their machination since the colonial era to impose their rule on their countries.

The starting point in the leaders' bid to formalise the one-party regime is through the constitution. In the constitution, prepared by the President's own party men, the government gave the impression that it would respect the principles of democracy and allow the welfare of the people to be its topmost priority. The Malian Constitution adopted in September 1960 states that: "The Republic of Mali is indivisible, democratic and (...) social. (...) Sovereignty rests with the people".[11] However, in the operation of this constitution, one sees a lot of contradictions which reveal the selfish plans of the leaders, precisely their design to rule their countries as long as they lived. That the new leaders used the constitution to consolidate their position can be seen in the loopholes left in the first Ivorian constitution. Article 7 guaranteed freedom of organisation and expression to all groups that respected democratic principles. These principles were not clearly defined and this meant in practice that the activities of almost any opponent of the regime could be restricted. Furthermore, because government felt that the penal

code did not afford sufficient protection against dangers to the new institution, it demanded and obtained additional weapons to wield against dissenters. Zolberg, who in his work One-Party Government in the Ivory Coast, explains at length the workings of the constitution under the P.D.C.I. government, states that a law to reinforce the protection of the public order provided among other things:

> Severe sanctions against persons who were guilty of actions and manoeuvers that might discredit political institutions or their functioning or who received gifts or even promises of gifts in exchange for a commitment to undertake such actions. 12

As Zolberg rightly points out, these measures left little room for legitimate criticism and thereby discouraged any form of political competition.

Sometimes, however, the governments prepared laws which were very explicit in the extensive powers given to the leadership to deal with the rest of the population. For instance, according to Article 2 of the statutes of the Union Soudanaise - R.D.A.[13] the Union Soudanaise was "the guide and organiser of the Sudanese people, in order to lead it as rapidly as possible on the path of liberation and well being".[14] Proceeding from this statute, Modibo Keita, the first President of Mali, re-organised the

administrative structures inherited from the colonial authorities and filled the new government with party-men like Ousmane Ba who were known for their unflinching loyalty to the President. Since these men were hanpicked by the President, it was not surprising that they saw themselves as owing their loyalty primarily to him.

The electoral procedure which the governments of Francophone West Africa developed also enhanced party positions. When the majority parties came to power they abandoned the electoral procedure of the colonial era and reduced the number of constituencies in their various countries. The Ivory Coast moved from 60 assembly seats and a single constituency in 1959 and finally to 70 seats and a single constituency in 1960. There was to be a simple majority and list voting. This method ensured that no matter the distribution of the votes in the towns, districts or regions all the seats would go to the single party. As for the presidential election, it was made clear at the beginning that there was only one possible candidate for that office. Thus, in 1960 the P.D.C.I. newspaper announced that:

> On November 27 next, the Ivory Coast people will unanimously elect M. Felix Houphouet-Boigny President of the Republic and the seventy candidates of the P.D.C.I. deputies to the National Assembly. 15

This type of electoral arrangement limited the chances of the opposition and prevented people from trying alternative politicians even when it was clear that the government was unable to improve upon the socio-economic conditions of the masses. Moreover, during the colonial era, the leading African nationalists were consistent in denouncing the colonial authorities for rigging elections in favour of their preferred candidates. However, when the nationalists themselves came to power, they too stage-managed and rigged elections. It can perhaps be said that African politicians were not really better than the colonial authorities. Like the Europeans, the indigenous politicians also resorted to illegitimate means in order to perpetuate their rule.

Implicit in our analysis above, is the anti-popular role of the news media. The leaders in their attempt to monopolise political power, used the news media to boost their image at both national and international levels. They took over the communication network established during the colonial era. In Senegal, for instance, the old Dakar-Matin became Le Soleil. In other parts of Francophone West Africa, the print media, the radio and television stations were rebaptised in conformity with the aspirations of the new governments. In places where the one-party system prevailed, the media were used

to promote the interest of the party in power. Fraternité Matin of the Ivory Coast, for example, reflects the views of the party in power. The publications of labour movements too had to toe the party line. These news media which became the megaphones of governments ignored the problems of the citizens. While people died of disease and hunger, the information media chanted the praises of the political leaders.

Among the activities of governments which the media emphasised was the political training programme for rural and urban party militants. Post-independence governments in Francophone West Africa spent time and money to give ideological training to rural and urban populations in general. Modibo Keita, in Mali, attached a lot of importance to this exercise. He believed that regimes often collapsed in Africa because they failed to give the people political education which was necessary for economic development. Keita observes:

> The upheavals which certain African states have known which appear as the consequence of the struggle for influence between the great economic powers cannot in any way stop this march forward (of the Malian people). The day is not distant, as a matter of fact when people will recognise that if that struggle was able to take hold of certain strata of the population, ideological training eradicating

> the complexes left by colonisation. Everywhere, the enemy of Africa has exploited the principal error of its leaders, who, insufficiently linked to the people, have courageously committed themselves to a truly national and independent policy, whatever its difficulties may be. 16

What is implied here is that political training should precede economic mobilisation. This argument would arouse some sympathy if African leaders were sincere in the strategic training they tried to give the people. What really happened on the continent was that the political education given by governments was the type which concealed the precarious economic situation and turned the unemployed into political thugs at the service of the leader.

That governments of Francophone West Africa tried to use their programmes to pursue the leaders' personal objectives is clear in the role the PDCI envisaged for voluntary associations in the Ivory Coast. The PDCI leaders saw that country's labour union as one of the potential transmitters of party ideas. Consequently, the government tried to come to agreement with the union. Auguste Denise, one of the founders of the PDCI, was particularly active in the move to use the Union des Travailleurs de Côte d'Ivoire (UTCI) to propagate the party's ideas. He explained that during the struggle against the colonial

authorities, all means to destroy the administration's apparatus of oppression had been legitimate. Once government responsibility was transferred to the PDCI, however, reckless use of power by the labour movement would weaken the nation and would lead to its destruction. Denise explained that:

> Labour must understand that (...) the fonctionnaires (sic) who constitute almost the entire intellectual cadre of the nation, have a privileged status which reveals an enormous gap with that of the other strata of the country. It would be dangerous to aggravate this. Therefore, I ask each of the labour unions to set aside their particular interests for the general interest of the nation. 17

When it became clear that the labour union had refused to be used as an agent of government's propaganda, the PDCI leadership resorted to harrassment and punitive measures against the union. One of the labour leaders was put on a truck and deposited at the Liberia-Côte d'Ivoire border. The government sought to replace the country's labour union with a union of its own and to incorporate it into the party. Eventually, the party drew a "statut de la fonction publique " to control labour activities and also the government organised special committees in its midst for civil servants. These measures strengthened the position of government while hampering the development of an effective labour organisation

capable of defending the rights of workers throughout the Ivory Coast.

In its attempt to control voluntary associations, the PDCI administration was more successful with the "Jeunesse du Rassemblement Démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire (JRDACI). The administration made sure that only loyal youths were made executive members of the JRDACI. These loyal youths were former leaders of the Ivory Coast students associations in France who had come home and were willing to work for the party, the PDCI. The JRDACI was given the responsibility of setting up branches in schools, sports and cultural organisations, and it was mandated to inculcate PDCI ideals in the minds of the youth. These party ideals, to be sure, were favourable only to the leadership of the PDCI. The parent body (PDCI) closely watched the activities of the JRDACI. The party had the right to be represented at all levels of the JRDACI and to send observers to all JRDACI meetings. Whenever the JRDACI refused to toe the party line, it was denied the necessary funds for its activities. In addition, the general secretaries of PDCI were given the right to veto all activities of the youth committees. Ultimately, the PDCI reserved the right to dissolve the youth branch. Through these parochial strategies the government succeeded in brainwashing and mobilising the youth behind the party in power.

The powers-that-be in Francophone West African

countries also used violent methods to further consolidate their position. The starting point of this strategy was to accuse citizens of plots which the government itself had often fabricated. In 1963, several hundreds of people were arrested in the Ivory Coast for allegedly plotting against the security of the State and of Houphouet Boigny. In Senegal, in 1961, an unspecified number of plot suspects were arrested. In Mali, Keita's government also arrested, in mid-1962, nearly one hundred people allegedly involved in a plot to sabotage the country's currency. On each of these occasions, the governments concerned called on their people to rally round the party so that the latter could destroy the "traitors". However, usually, these "traitors" were political rivals whom the leaders tried to get rid of.

The manner in which the trial of suspects was carried out in these cases, demonstrates the extent to which post-independence governments could go in pursuit of their personal objectives. In all these countries, the governments guaranteed the independence of the judiciary. However, in Senegal, a special political court was set up to try the plotters. The same political court was used to try Mamadou Dia in 1962 after a brawl between Dia and Senghor. In the case of the Ivory Coast, the trials of 1963 took place in Boigny's own house

with the Secretary-General of the PDCI as prosecutor, [illegible] other party officials composed the bench. Given the circumstances under which these trials were carried out, there was no way justice could prevail.

The sentences passed on the suspects were themselves indicative of the leaders' intention. In Senegal, heavy sentences of up to 20 years were imposed. In the Ivory Coast, seven people were sentenced to life imprisonment with hard labour, while thirteen were sentenced to death. Such heavy sentences, which in the government's view were to serve as a deterrent to potential plotters, actually created fear in the people and alienated many from the government.

Despite such strict measures, leaders of Francophone West Africa, like their counterparts in other former French colonies, always felt insecure. They sought further protection for their regimes by entering into alliance with France. When Emile Zinsou tried to establish his one-party regime in Dahomey in 1968, he sought French protection by trying to sign a military agreement with the Metropolis. By a similar agreement, France had at one time 2,[illegible]0 troops stationed on Cape Verde Islands West of Senegal.[18] This type of link between the President and the Metropolis helped to keep the leader in power even when it was to the detriment of

the governed. Nkrumah probably had this relationship between African leaders and the former colonial countries in mind when he wrote that: "The rulers of neo-colonial States derive their authority to govern, not from the will of the people, but from the support which they obtain from their neo-colonial masters".[19] The irony here is that Nkrumah too used violent methods and intimidation to perpetuate his rule.

Military cooperation between the Metropolis and the ex-colony was usually accompanied by trade agreements. The ex-colonial State encouraged its citizens to produce crops and products which the Metropolis needed. The Republic of Niger exported 1,322 million CFA worth of live animals in 1971 and her principal trading partner was France. And Upper Volta (Burkina Faso) sold 5,785 million CFA worth of cotton in 1976 with France being her major trading partner. It is significant that, while the Francophone West African governments encouraged citizens to concentrate their efforts on the production of export products, the governments made little or no effort to see to the production of the basic food stuff of the people. For instance, while the Muslim Fraternity, the Mourides alone produced almost 300,000 tons of groundnuts annually, the Senegalese government imported rice (the Senegalese staple food) from Cambodia.[20] Moreover,

France purchased African goods at prices very disadvantageous to African countries. This is part of the price the people had to pay for the protection which France offered their country.

The economies of Francophone West African countries were mismanaged by their leaders. This is particularly noticeable in the debts which the various nations incurred in the post-independence era. Be it a country that practised open capitalism, like the Ivory Coast, or a State that adopted socialism, like Mali, none of these nations was able to overcome the problem of debt and budget deficit. The Ivory Coast's public debt was rising at an annual rate of 30% by 1971,[20] while Senghor's government was spared a general riot in 1971 by the postponement of her debt repayments by her Western creditors.

With such performance at the economic level, leaders of Francophone West Africa knew that they could be removed from power possibly by the army. Consequently they kept an eye on the activities of the national army. Houphouet Boigny, for instance, tried to forestall a coup d'Etat in the Ivory Coast in 1963 by disbursing the army. He also created a people's militia to ensure domestic order.

In spite of the precautionary measures taken by

leaders of African countries, coups d'Etat have been witnessed in several parts of Francophone West Africa. In 1963, the military intervened in Togo and Dahomey. Between January 1963 and the end of February 1966, fourteen coups d'Etat occurred in Africa and by the beginning of 1968, the number had risen to nineteen. Francophone West African countries had their fair share of the number of putsches that took place within this period. Like other parts of Africa, if not the Third World as a whole, coup d'Etat has become a familiar alternative for change of government.

When the army removed the civilians from power, the soldiers presented themselves as saviours whose sole aim was to harness the resources of the land for the benefit of the people. When Mathieu Kérékou took over power in then Dahomey (now République du Bénin) in 1972, he promised to salvage the economy destroyed by years of power tussle by the civilians. He announced that Marxism-Leninism would be the national ideology. He eliminated Captains Assogba and Aikpe and renamed Dahomey, the People's Republic of Benin. Kérékou's next step was to launch the one-party, known as the Parti de la Révolution Populaire du Bénin (PRPB). It soon became clear, however, that Kérékou had come, like those he overthrew, to pursue and monopolise political power. The people once again found themselves involved in a form of

party politics reminiscent of the civilian era. And, once again, the hope of the governed was dashed.

Our discussion on the evolution of Francophone West Africa has been dominated by political matters. This, of course, reflects the emphasis of the governments which were formed after independence. Every policy of the various administrations (civilian or military) was dictated by the desire of the leadership to remain in power. The political mobilisation programmes were not accompanied by pragmatic economic policies aimed at emancipating the masses. In this case, economic stagnation or even decline was inevitable. In Francophone West Africa, as in other parts of Africa, the party may well remain:

> Essentially a political machine capable of neutralizing many threats to its maintenance, capable of absorbing change, but not yet capable of constructing new society.[23]

Snyder is right. African politicians cannot improve on the socio-economic conditions of the governed. We only add that, the military too are as incapable and insensitive to the aspirations of the ordinary citizens, as the civilians they remove from power.

Having examined the socio-political problems as

they relate to Francophone West Africa, we would, in the next part of the chapter, focus on Guinea, the country of origin of the four novelists, Laye, Fantouré, Monénembo and Sassine, whose works we are studying in this thesis.

SOCIO-POLITICAL BACKGROUND

II. SOCIO-POLITICAL EVOLUTION OF GUINEA UNDER SEKOU TOURE

In the first part of this chapter, we examined the socio-historical reality of Francophone African countries. In this part of the chapter, we shall address ourselves specifically to the socio-political problems of Guinea under Sékou Touré. The period covered by this survey spans the colonial era and 1984, that is when Sékou Touré died and the Parti Democratique de Guinee (PDG) administration was overthrown in a coup d'Etat by the current Guinean President, Lansana Conte.

During the era of colonial domination which lasted over half a century, the people of Guinea had not only witnessed the neglect of the development of their vast natural resources, but had also experienced colonial exploitation at its worst. In certain regions in Guinea, the administration went to the extent of making people sell out their belongings in order to meet their tax obligations. The French

historian, Jean Suret-Canale describes the Guinean situation during the colonial era in the following terms:

> C'est pour faire face à l'obligation fiscale que des chefs de famille ont été contraints d'aliéner tout ou une partie de leurs terres (...) Pour payer l'impôt, il faut parfois vendre, au Fouta, les boeufs, la terre, les corans, mettre les enfants en gage (...) Au Sangalan (...) le chef de canton peul imposé par l'administration vend les filles de ses sujets dans les cercles de Mali et Labé. 24

For Guineans therefore, Gaston Deferre's enabling law - the "Loi Cadre" signalled an end to what was considered a long tribulation. The Guinean optimism was particularly heightened by its unique struggles against colonialism - struggles characterised by the early emergence of a dominant and charismatic leader in the person of Ahmed Sékou Touré, the young man from Faranah, who joined a political party - Parti Démocratique de Guinée (PDG) - to fight against French colonialism.

At the dawn of independence, and particularly after Governor Ramadier's government had appointed Sékou Touré, Vice-President of the Council of Government, Sékou Touré did a lot to raise the people's hope. The PDG had obtained the suppression of the chieftaincy institution which had hitherto

been colluding actively with the colonial administration. The PDG had brought about the democratisation of colonial administrative institutions like "cantons" and established village councils which had the power to elect their own chiefs and mayors. In addition, the party secured the raising of the SMIG (minimum salary level) from 21 to 31 francs, the reduction of personal income tax from 825 - 1,080 francs to 700 francs the liberty to engage in trade and the legalisation of the diamond business for all Guineans.[25] Earlier in 1953, the party had endeared itself to the people when it successfully organised a 70 day-strike against the Metropolis and secured a 20% increase in the minimum wage and the introduction of a forty-hour working week throughout French West Africa.

In 1958, Sékou Touré made history when he mobilised his people to vote "NO" in the referendum initiated by General de Gaulle. Sékou Touré had stated the Guinean position on the referendum when he said: "Nous préférons la pauvreté à la richesse dans l'esclavage."[26] And he matched words with action. The results of the referendum demonstrated the determination of Guineans to turn their back on the colonial past and to attain independence.

The Guinean aspirations at the time were summed up in a contemporary Guinean song: "C'est nous les

Guineens qui avons choisi la liberté".[27] Sékou Touré himself foresaw a strong, independent country, which would be a model not only for Francophone West African but for the whole of the continent. Sékou Touré had written:

> The nation we shall construct will be made up of the whole of our populations to which we shall give a collective personality, a personality which is defined in the economic, political and cultural sense. 28

However, twenty-seven years (1957 - 1985) after independence, Guineans not only failed to improve their socio-economic conditions, but also lost some of the liberties they enjoyed under the colonial administration. Sékou Touré attributed the Guinean's condition to the intrigues of colonialists and neo-colonialists. He believed that neo-colonialists must be destroyed before the peoples of the world could progress. The Guinean President wrote:

> To achieve harmony between the living conditions of all peoples on earth, a number of essentials have to be fulfilled. This option implies the liquidation of imperialism, colonialism and their by-product neo-colonialism. 29

In our opinion however, Sékou Touré's manner of rule is also responsible for the deplorable condition of the Guinean people in the post-independence era.

Sékou Touré believed that he was the only person capable of leading his people. In his attempt to perpetuate his rule, Touré resorted to policies which not only denied the Guineans of their rights but also hindered the socio-economic development of Guinea.

In this chapter, we shall look at the various ways in which Sékou Touré tried to perpetuate his rule, how his political ambition hindered socio-economic progress and the socio-economic condition of Guineans.

On the attainment of independence, the PDG government adopted the one-party system. It would appear that Touré's main argument in favour of the one-party system was not substantially different from those advanced by other African leaders. Touré countered the views of those intellectuals who rejected the one-party by presenting them as individuals whose aim "is to retard the evolutionary progress of Africa."[30] In Touré's opinion, the one-party was the solution to the disunity among the people. He asked rhetorically:

> How have the United States managed in less than a century and a half, to make use of all their potentialities and to reach such a high state of economic development (...) This was possible because when they were fighting for independence,

> there was a single thread of opinion (...) coming nearer home, how has the Soviet Union achieved in less than fifty years, the great Socialist Revolution (...) Could such a revolution have been accomplished, if Russia had not achieved political unity. 31

By citing the examples of the two world powers, Sékou Touré gave the impression that he needed political unity in Guinea in order to develop the resources of the country. But the Guinean President did not take after any of the two countries. Touré, in reality, wanted unity through the one-party system so as to enhance his position as leader of the Guinean people.

In developing the one-party ideology it appears that the PDG authorities saw the need to infuse a sense of belonging in the totality of the citizens. Thus, in practically all aspects of the Guinean law, be it on national sovereignty, parliamentary matters or on the fundamental rights and duties of the citizens, one finds, fully entrenched in the Constitution, clauses which suggest that the interest of Guineans was supreme. However, in spite of the assurances and the democratic facade presented by the Guinean government, the contradiction between the one-party system and democracy is like night and day and in the end Sékou Touré used the State apparatus to perpetuate his rule

in Guinea.

Guinea's brand of political orientation was called "democratic centralism". Apparently derived from the Communist organisational model, this political system advocates a clear link between the grassroots and the leadership of the party. In other words, every citizen, be he a minister, a carpenter or a peasant, must accept decisions taken by the party hierarchy. The argument runs that, when the various levels of the party were invited to participate in decision-making, there was a broad participation in the political process. The PDG leadership proceeded from this argument to establish, at every level of the Guinean society, structures and committees which served as an effective forum for propagating party ideas. And these party ideas often ran counter to the aspirations of Guineans.

The structure of the PDG was pyramidal with a large number of committees at the bottom, while there was a single central body at the top. The Congress was the highest authority of the party and its decision was binding on every Guinean. Because of the important position occupied by the Congress in the party hierarchy, Sékou Touré made sure that its 700 members were men of unflinching loyalty to him and to the party. This strategy had a far-reaching implication. Since the Congress was made up

of the President's trusted friends, Sékou Touré could easily get Congress approval for even his anti-popular policies.

The structure of the PDG deserves further comments. At the apex of the PDG hierarchy was Sékou Touré, the Secretary-General of the party. The Secretary-General was considered as the Supreme leader of the Revolution. In his capacity as scribe, Sékou Touré could summon the Congress of the Party. He could award the highest distinctions to any militant whose political behaviour was judged exceptionally remarkable. Furthermore, the Secretary-General could: "exclude from the party any leader or militant whose behaviour was considered prejudicial to the party and to the revolution".[32] Such is the arrangement which enabled Sékou Touré to consolidate his position within the party and remain unchallenged as Guinea's first and only President until his death in 1984.

Another aspect of Guinea's one-party system is the idea of party supremacy. The party was assigned the responsibility of running the affairs of the State. Thus, the party structures took precedence over the country's administrative units. In other words, the village committee, the steering committee of the section and the other party organs were assigned the task of monitoring and controlling the

administrative authorities of the village, of the "arrondissement", of the region and of the nation. Consequently, in the whole country, for every administrative unit, there was a corresponding number of party committees. Sékou Touré explained that if the party structures were not allowed to control the country's administrative units, the power of the party would exist only in the domain of theory.[33] This is not very exact. What this strategy really implied was that no Guinean outside the PDG's orbit could aspire to any leadership position without the approval of the party. The effectiveness of this intrigue has been shown by Adamolekun when he wrote:

> The outstanding characteristic of the Guinean governmental structure is the fact that since independence the leading positions have always been reserved for the members of the party's national executive. In 1967, the party's eighth Congress decided to constitute the party executive, the BPN into the cabinet of the government. 34

The regime also established a number of subordinate organisations. The Jeunesse de la Révolution Démocratique Africaine (JRDA) created in 1959, the Union Révolutionnaire de la Femme Guinéenne (URFG) and the Union Nationale des Travailleurs Guinéens (UNTG) were the most noteworthy. Officially called "parallel institutions", these bodies were

propaganda organs for the ruling class. Sékou Touré always assured Guinean women that he was concerned with their welfare. As he once pointed out:

> We must promote a social policy, that will free our women, who for too long have been subject to degradation and depersonalization (with) a policy which will rehabilitate the social castes which were considered "inferior". 35

However, it was clear that the PDG regime did not really aim at rehabilitating women, rather the government tried to use the URFG to mobilise support for itself. In this the PDG regime succeeded, as the URFG recruited a large number of Guinean women for the party.

The Jeunesse de la Révolution Démocratique Africaine (JRDA) was the national organisation for all Guinean youths under the age of 30. Perceiving the Guinean youth organisation as an important organ of the PDG, Sékou Touré said: "The youth must become earnestly acquainted with, and skilful in, the various spheres of activities of our people". That Sékou Touré used the JRDA to his personal advantage could be seen in the activities of the movement. The JRDA carried out surveillance and organisational duties among the youth. Through the JRDA, the government was able to indoctrinate Guineans and forestall anti-government activities among the

youths. The youths were also used to harrass non-conformists.

The PDG administration exploited the so-called "parallel organisations" to its advantage. This is confirmed by the kind of rapport which existed between the government and the Guinean trade union, la Confédération Nationale des Travailleurs de Guinée (CNTG). Labour organisations tend to be at loggerheads with the government of the day. When Sékou Touré came to power, he sought to turn the labour organisation into a harmless or impotent organ of the party. When Sékou Touré was interviewed on his relationship with the labour movement, he reaffirmed his continued membership of the C.N.T.G. "Je le suis toujours et le serai jusqu'à ma mort".[36] In other words, Sékou Touré was implying that his government and the CNTG could not be rivals since they were pursuing the same goal - to improve upon the lot of the masses. With the integration of the UNTG with the PDG regime, it was the government which appointed leaders of the labour movement. This made it impossible for workers to criticise labour policies. The workers also found it impossible to fight for their rights, since they could be easily disowned by the labour leaders.

The need to integrate the CNTG into the PDG administration became urgent in 1969 after the overthrow

of Modibo Keita in Mali. At a meeting of the National Council of the Revolution in January 1969, the statutes of the CNTG were revised in order to "complete the integration into the revolution and to combat what the rulers considered as the workers' growing disaffection towards their union".[37] To further the interest of the party, Sékou Touré promoted Benghaly Camara (a leading trade unionist) to the post of a labour Minister. When Camara Benghaly became a Minister, a party official, Mamady Kaba was appointed to replace him in the labour organisation. The subservience of Kaba and of subsequent CNTG leaders to the party hierarchy prevented the development of an independent labour movement in Guinea.

The PDG, through campaigns, ensured that all Guineans were registered members of the party. It is stated in Title I Article 3 of the Constitution, that:

> Membership of the Democratic Party of Guinea is the right of every citizen of the Republic of Guinea who is at least seven years old, and who accepts its programme and statutes. 38

In practice, there was no freedom of choice. The PDG was adept at compelling Guineans to become members of the party.

The PDG authorities compelled Guineans to enrol in the party. The manner in which the authorities introduced the membership card confirms this. All Guineans were ordered to carry the card on them. It served as laissez-passer. The PDG card was also used for obtaining scarce but essential commodities which the party distributed periodically. In addition, in Guinea, party dues were considered as part of one's tax obligations.

Sékou Touré's argument on the PDG's method of recruiting its members shows that he used communism when it served his interest and abandoned it when it proved dangerous to him. Sékou Touré saw the situation in Russia in which the membership of the communist party is not extended to every Russian as unjust. He argued that the PDG's method of mass recruitment accorded equal status to all citizens. In reality, however, this strategy adopted by the PDG was meant to ensure that no Guinean remained outside the control of the party.

One of the ways in which the government tried to demonstrate its legitimacy and acceptability was to organise elections from time to time. This exercise which was often preceded by a national census was held in such a manner that it negated the democratic process. Since there was only one party whose organs permeated the whole country, it is clear that all the candidates placed on its list

would win. Apart from this, there was also extensive rigging in the elections to various posts. Charles has described in his work, Atlas des voyages: Guinée his experience of the 1961 elections during which Sékou Touré was elected President for another seven year term. Charles wrote: "Il est bien simple de présenter sa carte d'électeurs et de laisser le bureau de vote se charger du reste".[39]

The use of intimidation and violence to remove dissent from the political scene was a major cause of alienation of some Guineans from the administration of the PDG. Charles, in his work quoted above, and Pierre Biarnes in L'Afrique aux Africains: 20 ans d'indépendance en Afrique noire francophone recall the bloody clashes between the PDG on one side, Barry Diawandou's Bloc Africain de Guinée (BAG) and the Démocratie Socialiste de Guinée (DSG) on the other side. These clashes, principally initiated by the PDG and which occurred successively in 1953, 1956 and 1958 caused serious casualties. Charles recounts that the encounter of 1956 alone left 8 people dead while 263 others sustained serious injuries. Biarnes, on his part, has made the following comment on the Guinean situation in 1958:

> Dans la nuit du 2 au 3 mai, véritable "nuit de longs couteaux" à la guinéenne, tout ce qui dans la capitale ne s'est pas encore rallié au régime (PDG) fait l'objet

> d'un véritable pogrom alors que l'administration française, civile et militaire encore présente mais impuissante, croise les bras. On poignarde, empoisonne, on saccage, on brûle et David Soumah (A Christian trade unionist) (...) ne doit son salut qu'à la fuite. 40

With Guinea's accession to independence, all this changed. Reconciliation quickly replaced street fighting. This was in reality a deliberate application of pacifist means to eliminate the opposition. Conscious of the fact that there would be no future for them in the new order, several of Sékou Touré's former political adversaries abandoned their parties to become members of the PDG. Apart from Benghaly Camara, who had been drawn from the CNTG, other leading personalities like Barry Diawandou, Barry Ibrahima popularly called (Barry III) accepted positions in the new cabinet and their party merged with the ruling PDG. Bangoura Karim, a former councillor to the Union Française, and Femoi Berete, a fierce Sékou Touré antagonist, also joined the PDG.

The PDG administration, however, resumed the use of violence after the absorption of the important rivals of the party. This time it was to implicate people in plots which the government had itself often fabricated. In a new year message delivered to the nation on 1st January, 1971, Sékou Touré

pointed out:

> La révolution guinéenne est née dans le cadre d'un complot permanent, celui de la réaction extérieure, appuyée par l'action paralysante de la réaction intérieure. 41

Those referred to as "reaction intérieure" were Sékou Touré's opponents in Guinea. The opponents of the PDG were neither reactionary nor anti-patriotic as they were portrayed by Sékou Touré. The Guinean leader portrayed them negatively in order to eliminate them.

Since independence the PDG administration in Guinea has acquired the notoriety of announcing a large number of attempted plots against the government. In a rapid succession in 1960, in 1961, in 1965, again in 1969, 1970, 1971 and in 1976, the Guinean revolution was said to have been threatened by abortive coups d'Etat.

While two of these alleged plots have been found to be true, it is well known that most of the alleged plots were prefabricated and calculated to get rid of all forms of opposition to the PDG authorities. The manner in which justice was openly perverted and the persecutions testify to the repressive political situation in post-independence Guinea.

The perversion of justice in Guinea under Sékou Touré can further be seen in the way the trial of alleged plotters was carried out. In Guinea, there was a High Court whose jurisdiction covered political cases. The normal judicial process seemed, however, too slow and cumbersome and, in the opinion of the Guinean leaders, could sometimes lead to perversion of justice. In 1969, therefore, the Conseil National Révolutionnaire (CNR) was constituted into a tribunal to judge suspects for alleged plots. The following year Sékou Touré abolished the legal profession and turned the National Assembly into a Supreme Revolutionary Tribunal to look into the case of the culprits of the Portuguese - backed invasion. Sékou Touré, himself, presided over the trials of the suspects in 1971. And yet one of the provisions of the Constitution states "The President guuarantees the independence of the Judiciary".[42] Contrary to official declarations, the PDG authorities did not uphold the independence of the judiciary.

One of the aspects of the PDG trials is that the trials were usually preceded by interrogations during which suspects were asked to admit their involvement in the plot. These interrogations were supervised by the President's close relations, and in particular, Siaka Touré and Ismael Touré. The method used by these men in obtaining confession

from suspects demonstrates the extent to which the PDG leaders could go in the bid to achieve their objectives. For instance, when Diallo Telli refused to 'confess' while he was being interrogated in 1976, Diaka Touré used a boy to implicate Diallo Telli. According to an exclusive report in the Jeune Afrique of 5th November 1978, the interrogators kept a boy of fourteen years old in a corner of Camp Boiro in Conakry. They gave him a thorough training. His confession that he planned to topple the PDG regime with Diallo Telli was then recorded and relayed to the nation.

When Sékou Touré came to power, he wrote in The Doctrine and Methods of the Democratic Party of Guinea: "For an administration to be effective it must protect people's liberties and rights".[43] Furthermore, Guinea had, as part of its motto, the ideal of "justice". It is in the light of these that one can perceive the gap between the theory and what was actually practised by the Guinean leaders.

The Sékou Touré administration denied many Guineans their liberties. This is confirmed by the large number of persons who were either executed or suffered temporary or permanent imprisonment since the beginning of the Guinean Revolution. According to the Rassemblement des Guinéens de l'Extérieur (RGE) since the Portuguese invasion

attempt in 1970, the number of people jailed for political reasons in Guinea is between 4,000 and 5,000. Another movement - the "Comité de coordination pour la défense des libertés démocratiques en Guinée (CDLG)" put the number of political prisoners at over 9,000. The RGE and the CDLG are opposition movements operating from outside Guinea and it is not impossible that they inflated the figures of the people detained by the PDG regime. One fact however stands clear, and that is, the PDG authorities unlawfully imprisoned a large number of people considered dangerous to the Government.

The calibre of the persons executed or who suffered permanent imprisonment is also noteworthy. Fodeba Keita founder of the famous Ballet Guinéen; who also held various ministerial portfolios, was physically eliminated in 1976. One can also recall the cases of Koumandian, the teacher and famous trade unionist and Diallo Telli, OAU's first Secretary-General whose death in a detention camp was only noticed in 1978. These persons, and many others, were men of intelligence who had played prominent roles in Guinea both before and after independence. By imprisoning or eliminating them, Sékou Touré thus deprived the nation of the services of these important citizens.

The number of concentration camps in Guinea under Sékou Touré is also noteworthy. On the whole, there were 15 officially recorded concentration camps located all over the country. Such a large number of detention camps was unknown in Guinea even in the colonial era. The camps were a source of permanent fear to the Guinean people. Saydou Diallo, a former Guinean ambassador to Cuba expressed the fear about the proliferation of politically motivated camps in Guinea when he stated: "Si, dans vingt ans, la Guinée indépendente devait ressembler à Haiti, alors il aurait mieux valu pour la Guinée qu'elle ne fut pas indépendente".[44] Diallo is one of Sékou Touré's critics residing outside the country. His observation, therefore needs to be considered with some caution. However, it is well known that the P G regime was one of the most repressive in Africa.

In recent years, we have had access to more information about the real predicament of detainnees in Guinean prisons. Such information has come from Jean-Paul Alata a French national who was released from jail in 1975 and Jean-Claude Pomonti. The studies of these scholars show the inhuman treatment to which the PDG administration subjected convicts. This can first be seen in the condition of camp Boiro, Guinea's major prison in Conakry. According to Pomonti:

> The camp (in fact, a huge and dilapidated barrack of the national guard) is still barely 200 metres from the brand new great mosque (...) The so-called "Death-Head" section of the camp (has) four cells, measuring three metres by four, set around a court yeard (...) Up to 60 prisoners were held in each cell (...) A single urinal stands in the middle of the courtyard. Women were imprisoned in two tiny adjoining cells without light or toilet facilities. 45

Unlike Jean-Paul Alata, Pomonti never served any jail term in Guinea. Moreover, since Pomonti undertook his research into the conditions of Boiro after the death of Sékou Touré and the overthrow of the PDG regime, the temptation to be sensational can be said to be minimal. Thus, to a large extent we can believe Pomonti's account on Boiro. And this account is quite revealing. It exposes the sadism of an administration which claimed to respect the sanctity of human lives.

One of the instruments of torture in Guinean prisons is the use of the so-called "diète noire". It consists of denying food to the convict with the intent of starving him to death. Sékou Touré confirmed this in a broadcast in 1971 when he explained the relationship between "diète noire" and public execution: "Il n'y a pas de différence entre les deux sentences. Il ne tient qu'à nous qu'en refusant aux prisonniers toute nourriture, une condamnation à perpétuité se transforme en exécution".[46] A former inmate who saw the "diète

noire" inflicted on a fellow prisoner confirmed its efficacy: "On n'y tient pas plus d'une semaine".[47] This particular form of torture was used to eliminate Diallo Telli in 1977. And yet, Sékou Touré once explained that for the PDG, the human being is sacred.

In a bid to perpetuate his power, Sékou Touré introduced even more sophisticated forms of violence. Apparently seduced by Stalin's re-education camp of the 40's, Touré decided to establish a psychiatric unit in Guinea which was charged specifically with re-educating dissidents. Sékou Touré wanted the unit to indoctrinate dissenters so that they could be used as errand boys of the PDG leaders. He did all within his power to make the re-education effective. Sékou Touré attached the unit to one of the best hospitals in the country. The PDG authorities also recruited Soviet psychiatrists to run the unit.[43] This psychiatric unit shows that what the PDG was not able to obtain through persuasion, the party was ready to pursue it through the use of force.

After silencing his potential rivals, the Guinean leader still felt insecure. He further sought to enhance his power through tribalism. This time Sékou Touré decided to weaken all tribes that constituted a danger to him. In this regard, he

directed his effort to the Fulani ethnic group. Sékou Touré's first step in his war against the Fulani was to accuse them of being proud - for, according to him, the Fulani had refused to recognise themselves as part of the Black race.[49] Sékou Touré, therefore, called on the remaining tribes of Guinea to rise and exterminate the Fulani ethnic group. The next strategy was to accuse the Fulani of a plot to assassinate him. He ordered the arrest of their leaders like Saifoulaye Diallo, Alioune Drame and several others.[50] All these were later physically eliminated.

The Fulani ethnic group constituted about 40% of the Guinean population. Furthermore, the Fulani were cattle rearers who supplied over 90% of Guinea's livestock. The constant harrassment of the Fulani by the Guinean President forced many of them to seek refuge with their kins in the neighbouring countries. Moreover, some of the Fulani along the borders decided to take their livestock across the borders of Guinea to sell them where there was no harrassment.

Sékou Touré's administration thrived on nepotism and his persecution of the Fulani was aimed at weakening this group in favour of his Malinke kinsmen. In a speech he read to the nation on the 1st January 1959, Sékou Touré exhorted his compatriots to eschew nepotism and tribalism. He pointed out:

> En Guinée, il ne doit pas exister ni Soussou, ni Malinke, ni Kissien, ni Ouolof, ni Baoulé, mais seulement des êtres humains qui ne sauraient avoir une responsabilité personnelle quant au lieu de naissance. 51

In spite of this declaration, Sékou Touré embarked on what Johnson terms the Malinkeï-zation of Guinea's political system.[52] Apart from offering key jobs to his close relations, Sékou Touré fostered a political elite consisting essentially of Malinkes even though the Malinkes constituted only a third of the population. Such open favouritism towards the Malinkes proved to the Soussou, the Kissien and the other tribes that Sékou Touré had come to power to promote sectional interest.

Sékou Touré's name created fear in the hearts of many Guineans, as no section of the society was insulated from his wrath. He did not spare even religious leaders. He once had a clash with Mgr Milleville and expelled him, then with Bishop Sarah, while Mgr Raymond Marie Tchidimbo, the Roman Catholic archbishop of Conakry, was sentenced to life imprisonment. He was finally released thanks to André Lewin, France's pleni-potentiary ambassador to Guinea after the resumption of diplomatic ties between the two countries. As for Islam Sékou Touré knew how to manipulate it to serve his personal ends. He sought the support of Muslims by presenting himself

as a strict Muslim. Ali Bakayoko explains that it was common for the Guinean leader to stop, during a journey, to say his prayers. Sékou Touré also sometimes made commentaries on the verses of the Koran (Tafsir) and had it relayed to the nation.[53] However, the determination to suppress anything that ran counter to the realization of his objectives led Sékou Touré to find fault with Islam as was practised in Guinea and he finally decreed the abolution of Koranic schools. At the same time, he ordered the arrest of Imam El Hadj Fofana. As for El Hadj Nabaniou Cherif, former Chairman of the Islamic Council of Guinea, nobody knew his whereabouts until Sékou Touré's death. The only crime of those arrested, detained or executed was to have expressed their views on despotism in Guinea. Neither Christianity nor Islam could stand in the way of Sékou Touré in his attempt to monopolise political power.

The youths also suffered under Sékou Touré's administration. When school children demonstrated in support of their teachers in the so-called Teachers' plot of 1961, many were arrested. Their schools were closed down for several weeks. Guinean students abroad who refused to toe the party line had their scholarships withdrawn in 1962. The administration had some of the students repatriated

to Guinea for trial for their anti-PDG activities. Sékou Touré's government did not change its attitude towards the youths. In 1980, after a demonstration by pupils at Kindia, the Guinean leader ordered their arrest. The pupils were beaten up by soldiers while some were imprisoned at Camp Boiro. It was a clear case of over-reaction on the part of government.

Sékou Touré's administration can be said to be unpopular. This can be seen from the reactions of Guineans towards the PDG government. Since 1958, Guinea's year of independence, there have been constant attempts by individuals and groups to either eliminate the Guinean leader physically or remove him from power. One of such attempts was that of Tidiani Keita. The latter had left Guinea for the Ivory Coast in 1965. He returned to Guinea determined to liberate his people from despotism. He chose the period of President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia's visit to execute his plan. Keita's strategy was to pull the Guinean leader from his limousine as the President passed through the crowd. Keita executed his plan but failed, for the PDG leader was saved by Kwama Nkrumah, then in exile in Guinea.[54] Even though Tidiani Keita failed in his bid to assassinate Sékou Touré and was executed the following day, his effort shows that in Guinea, individuals disagreed with Sékou Touré's regime to the extent that they were prepared to fight it even

at the expense of their lives.

Sékou Touré could not carry the people along with him in his revolution. This was confirmed by the various underground opposition movements that operated in Guinea. These movements had a large number of supporters and carried out activities aimed at removing Sékou Touré from power. They took one of their significant actions in 1980 when they tried to eliminate the Guinean leader through a bomb attack. In this incident, several people were injured while a party militant lost his life.[55] The organisation "Front Patriotique de Guinée", which claimed to be in charge of this operation then called on "Elèves, étudiants, soldats, commerçants, fonctionnaires, debout pour une Guinée démocratique unie et libre".[56]

Opposition organisations within the country often acted in conjunction with dissident Guinean groups abroad in fighting for the restoration of democracy in Guinea. It is estimated that about 2 million Guineans fled the country when Sékou Touré was in power. Most of the intellectuals who fled the country did so because of the infringement of human rights and the threat to their lives. These intellectuals formed in Senegal, the Ivory Coast, Mali and France, resistance movements to inform the world about the political situation in Guinea. The

countries where the Guinean dissidents went deserve attention. The governments of Senghor in Senegal, Boigny in the Ivory Coast and successive French Presidents until Giscard d'Estaing, were in particular antagonistic to Sékou Touré. Guinean dissidents escaped to the above-mentioned countries because they were sure of their governments' protection. It might well be that some of the Guinean intellectuals left the country not as a result of oppression, but simply because they wanted a favourable country for their anti-PDC activities.

Sékou Touré was very conscious of his vulnerability when attempts were made on his life at home and abroad by a united opposition. This nervousness was heightened by the overthrow of Sylvannus Olympio in Togo, Nkrumah in Ghana and by the fall of Modibo Keita in Mali. Sékou Touré's fear emerges in the following remark:

> Although in other countries, unworthy officers have been able to betray the people whose security and sovereign rights they were pledged to defend, it is clear that in the Republic of Guinea such attempts would be immediately put down with the greatest firmness by our people, who, through their Revolutionary Party, exercise permanent control over all organs of the State. 57

This statement marked the beginning of a series of

measures taken by the PDG leader and which in the end hampered the development of a virile Guinean army. The PDG authorities harrassed members of the Armed Forces by resorting to arrests. The alleged plots were used as a pretext to eliminate army officers considered dangerous to the regime.

After the discovery of the 1969 "plot", the PDG leader decided on the politicization of the Guinean army. Party committees were created in the army. Soldiers were also expected to contribute to the economic well-being of the country by embarking on agricultural projects, road construction and other forms of civil activities. This design was not motivated by economic reasons, rather it was intended to weaken the army and discourage it from planning a coup d'Etat. The PDG leadership, however, failed to realise that, by so doing, they were destroying the striking power of the army and its ability to defend Guinea.

Other measures which hindered the development of the Guinean army were the administration's refusal to provide modern equipments for the soldiers. The party leadership believed wrongly that an ill-equipped army could not attempt to topple a government. The government engaged in constant transfer of top military officers in order to avoid familiarity between the officers. The

government also decided to put the country's army under the supervision of foreign military officers. At a time, there were 500 Russian and Cuban military advisers in Guinea.

The PDG administration directed a large part of the funds meant for the development of the Guinean army to the militia. Formed after independence, the militia was considered by the Guinean President as a link between the Guinean army and the population as a whole. The militia grew rapidly to about 30,000 men in 1960.[58] Described as a complementary force by Sékou Touré, the militia was in fact an army conceived to act as a counter force in the event of an insurrection from the conventional army. In a comment on the role of the militia, Sékou Touré observed:

> The defence of the Republic, the security of our regime, the protection of the gains of the Revolution are, we repeat, the duty of the entire people, and for this reason there have been created people's militia (...) Made up of elite elements, the people's militia will be the training schools of our future military cadres. Thanks to their special political, physical and social training, the people's militia will become the indispensable mainspring of our security system of which the conventional armed forces constitute a functional section. 59

Implicitly, the Guinean leader placed the militia above the armed forces. Elsewhere, Sékou Touré gave

further strength to the militia. He stressed that any soldier who opposed a militia was a potential stooge of imperialism. Apart from its unavowed role as a counter force to the army, the militia was charged, together with the JRDA, with the task of maintaining surveillance throughout the Guinean territory. This militia, to which the PDG administration committed so much public funds proved its impotence during the Portuguese invasion of 1970. Even then, Sékou Touré did not change his attitude towards the militia, and continued to commit more funds to its development with the hope that it would protect his regime.

The PDG leadership also resorted to a mass militarization of the populace. The government believed that if the people were armed, it would serve as a deterrent to the armed forces. Civilians were consequently encouraged as from 1970 to arm themselves. This campaign in favour of mass militarisation was summed up in the popular slogan:

> Beside the cutlass, a gun
> Beside the hammer, a gun
> Beside the pen, a gun
> Beside the industrial plant,
> a gun. 60

The authorities were wrong in assuming that, arming the people would serve as a deterrent to the army or that Guineans would defend the powers-that-be in

the event of trouble. The Portuguese led invasion of Conakry in 1970 and the Conteh's coup d'Etat which overthrew the PDG administration in 1984 revealed that Sékou Touré's revolution lacked roots and that the Guinean masses were not prepared to risk their lives for the government.

Touré's ability to rule Guinea for over twenty-six years can perhaps not be attributed to any other action. His survival as a ruler can be ascribed to his skill in employing machiavellian tactics to sustain his rule. In this, the Guinean leader apparently understood the importance of the news media and he used them to mobilize support for his leadership as well as give an air of legitimacy to his regime.

Sékou Touré manipulated the media. His activities between 1958 and 1984 suggest this. The various appelations (Grand Syli, Messiah, the Father of the Nation, the Supreme Guide of the Revolution etc.) he gave himself were taken up and drummed by the media even though the media knew that the PDG regime was oppressive.

Sékou Touré came to be accepted as one of the Third World's radical leaders who had successfully resisted French colonialism. Thus, the Guinean leader emerged in the eyes of the world as a

liberator of his people. He was decorated with Lenin's Medal of Peace and Lambraki's Medal for Peace. However, in Guinea, Sékou Touré's own people lived in a country whose regime was not only dictatorial but repressive.

In spite of the efforts by the PDG administration to conceal the repressive measures of the government the atrocities perpetrated in Guinea by Sékou Touré have attracted world attention. On May 25, 1977, a letter on the human rights question in Guinea was sent to the UNO through the United Nations Secretary-General, Kurt Waldheim, by an organisation called the International Association for Human Rights. This letter was signed by four former U.S. ambassadors to Guinea. The letter commented thus on the contemporary situation in Guinea:

> Nous avons réuni les preuves évidentes de la détention systematique dans ce pays de toute personne présumée être en opposition avec le gouvernment; tortures d'assassinats ou de reduction à la famine des prisonniers politiques, de l'exil forcé de deux million de Guinéens (...) La loi a cessé de prévaloir en Guinée (ou) la terreur est devenue monnaie courante. 61

This letter allegedly sent to the Secretary of the UNO by the four ex-American ambassadors to Guinea needs to be considered with caution. These Americans, who claim to be champions of human rights

pretend to be ignorant of the unprecedented repression and exploitation of Africans by the white minority regime in South Africa. The ex-ambassadors feign ignorance of the massacre of Palestanians in Middle East. They also close their eyes over the activities of America in Vietnam but claim to be concerned about violation of human rights in Guinea. Undoubtedly, there is an element of hypocrisy in the action of the American ambassadors. It is also significant that the above mentioned letter was published in Jeune Afrique by Jean Lacouture, a Frenchman and one of the critics of Sékou Touré. It can be presumed that the letter signed by the American ambassadors is the result of international conspiracy aimed at blowing out of proportion, the political problem in Guinea. The essential point should however not be missed. The secret executions of several prominent Guineans like Diallo Telli and Fodeba Keita are ample evidence of the tyrannical posture of the PDG regime.

The activities of Amnesty International in favour of restoration of human rights in Guinea led to a clash with Sékou Touré. Amnesty International challenged Sékou Touré to open his prisons for independent investigation. The Guinean leader branded Amnesty a "crapule". Sékou Touré's reply to Amnesty is most revealing: "Le système

démocratique guinéen est le plus avancé dans le domaine des libertés".[62] He also claims: "Nous n'avons rien a apprendre dans le domaine des droits de l'homme".[63] Sékou Touré had always maintained that he was ready to open the gates of his prisons for verification if other leaders were prepared to do the same. Sékou Touré believed that his was a revolution and like all other revolutions, political opponents ought to be suppressed. The President's view is to some extent true. The problem here, however, is that even though the PDG leaders suppressed all dissidents, the Revolution did not achieve much materially for the Guinean people.

Guinea was ruled for about 26 years by Sékou Touré. It is therefore pertinent to inquire about the gains of the Guinean revolution for the people Sékou Touré ruled during that period. From the onset, the PDG authorities envisaged an economic strategy considered as the most effective means of harnessing the abundant natural resources of the country.

Sékou Touré's economic and social outlook was influenced by Marxists theoreticians such as Engels, Lenin and Mao Tse Tung. Although Sékou Touré once declared "Je ne suis pas marxiste (...) Je n'ai jamais dit que j'étais marxiste",[64] his pronouncements and writings continued to be filled with statements

like 'Le PDG est révolutionnaire, il doit éduquer les masses laborieuses, la mobilisation doit s'effectuer au service des masses",[65] all of which tends to suggest that Sékou Touré showed Marxist leanings. Later, Sékou Touré was to reveal the connection between his outlook and Marxists when he wrote: 'Le marxisme, nous l'avons amputé de celles de ses caractéristiques qui ne correspondaient pas à la réalité africaine".[66]

Ultimately, Guinea settled for socialism and it was officially proclaimed a state ideology in 1967. Even then, Sékou Touré was not unmindful of the consequence of demonstrating excessive dependence on a particular form of economic development. Thus, he declared that each people had its own peculiar difficulties and that Guinea's problem could only be resolved by taking into consideration Guinean reality. Sékou Touré declared that only the path chosen by Guinea was capable of salvaging a typically African economy which suffered under a colonial rule.

However when Sékou Touré stated his economic policy, it was clear that he placed his own interest above the socio-economic well-being of the people. In Sékou Touré's Guinea, economic policy was closely linked to political beliefs - with the former clearly subordinated to the latter. Sékou Touré once observed:

> The economic action which we wish to carry out cannot separate us from the political orientation which is ours for the economic domain constitutes one of the aspects of our political problem. We shall therefore have the economy of our politics and not the politics of our economy. 67

By claiming that economic problems were only an aspect of political problems, Sékou Touré proceeded to pursue development policies which proved beneficial to the PDG but retarded the socio-economic progress of the people.

In theory, Guinea's development plan envisaged wide State control. This was understandable, considering the circumstances in which Guinea was given her independence. In 1958, the French colonial authorities abruptly severed all links with Guinea. For the newly independent Guinea to succeed, the Guinean authorities felt State intervention was necessary in all aspects of national life. The government, however, later used this argument to embark on programmes which were not only poorly coordinated but also killed the incentives of the people.

This lack of proper coordination can be seen in the manner in which the government executed its socio-economic policies. For instance, without sufficient feasibility studies, the PDG administration

established the Société africaine d'expansion (SAE) to increase trade with socialist countries. This was to be followed a year later by the creation of the Comptoir guinéen du commerce extérieur (CGCE) - an organisation conceived to take over the functions of SAE. The government also announced, in line with Guinea's socialist policies, the number of traders allowed in each region in 1964. Another example of the rash actions of the PDG authorities was the suppression of all private markets and trades in 1975. Also, without educating the rural population on the importance of collective effort, the PDG leaders launched communal projects and cooperatives in the rural areas and asked the people to participate in them. These uncoordinated policies led to waste of resources, killed the initiatives of the people and weakened the national economic base.

In spite of the huge investments made by the government, the Guinean socialist experiment was far from being a success. In trade, the total monopoly granted to State companies which were poorly managed led to serious shortages and membership of the party became necessary for obtaining scarce commodities. Reverses were also recorded in the agricultural sector. The collectivization projects failed and so also did the Collège d'Enseignement Rural. The role of the brigade in promoting agricultural production also

yielded no result and was finally abandoned. The black market thrived as individuals preferred to smuggle their agricultural produce across the border to Liberia for hard currency. The attempt to organise transport companies between 1961 and 1963 also failed while the educational experiment of the PDG also did not achieve the desired goal.

Apart from the dearth of capital which hampered the plans of the government, the Guinean socio-economic experiment failed to achieve the desired results because of the force implied in it. In some regions in Guinea under Sékou Touré, the government sometimes went to the extent of re-introducing some of the taxes characteristic of the colonial era. For example, in 1980, the natives of Kankan were made to settle their tax in kind. There was also the introduction of compulsory public labour - reminiscent of the "corvée" during the colonial period. On this re-introduction of forced labour, Sékou Touré stated:

> Nous ne serons pas le premier gouvernement africain à instaurer le travail obligatoire, je le dis publiquement. Le travail obligatoire sera instauré, nous n'avons aucune honte à le dire.[68]

One of the colonial excesses against which Sékou Touré persistently fought was forced labour. It is therefore an irony that Sékou Touré should re-introduce it after independence.

Official corruption contributed in no small measure to the failure of the Guinean experiment. The Guinean President gave the impression that his government would not condone the activities of all corrupt elements in the country. He warned:

> Il n'y aura plus désormais aucune pitié pour les voleurs (...) Pour nous le voleur est un être néfaste. Qu'il vole plusieurs millions ou qu'il vole une épingle, son comportement provient d'une mentalité que nous voulons détruire. Quel qu'il soit, nous le chatierons avec la plus grande sévérité. 69

And in practice the Guinean leader meted out exemplary punishment to those involved in corruption and other vices. It was, however, observed that Sékou Touré's crusade against corruption was partial as corrupt members of his family and high government officials were exempted from punishment.

Prominent among the corrupt, was Sékou Touré's half brother-Ismael Touré who occupied important posts in the PDG government and used his position to accumulate wealth. Ismael, a confidant of the Guinean leader, was given the responsibility of extracting confessions from suspects and he was also known to be very efficient in using torture techniques to make men admit crimes they had not really committed. Ismael occupied a number of ministries including those of Industries and Finance. In all

these places, despite Ismael's call for probity, he colluded with people to defraud the government. When he was at the Ministry of Industries, Guinea's cigarette factory's entire production was, at one point, routed to Sierra Leone for hard currency for Ismael's personal use.[70] This was at a time when Guinea was in need of foreign exchange to carry out her development programmes. Yet, neither Ismael's wealth nor his prodigal life-style attracted the attention of the relevant State organ - the State Commission for the Verification of Property. Sékou Touré's long silence over the corruption and reckless spending of Ismael and of several high government officials was a sign of double standards on the part of a leader who claimed to make probity his watch word.

In spite of the socialist orientation of the regime and the anti-Western stance of the PDG leadership, Guinea could not really severe her relations with the West. The U.S.A. occupied a dominant position in the economy of Guinea. Guinea under Sékou Touré, also had good trade links with several other Western countries. After 1958, Guinea still continued to maintain some kind of link with France. For example, Guinea's first development plan (1960-62) was drawn up by a team of French experts.[71]

All ... the industrialised countries which were represented in Guinea in the colonial era, continued to do business with independent Guinea. Foreign companies continued to dominate the most important sector of the Guinean economy. In particular, they took over the exploitation of bauxite.

It is well known that in countries in which these multi-national companies operate, they put the interest of their parent bodies, in New York, Paris or London above all other pre-occupations. They take less interest in the socio-economic well-being of the local population. And, in the case of Guinea, not even Sékou Touré's sympathisers agreed with him on the operations of multi-national companies in Guinea's mining industry. Charles Bettelheim has observed that the means chosen by Sékou Touré to develop his country's natural resources were "en contradiction totale avec la fin recherchée".[72] Another enthusiastic supporter of the PDG, Jean Suret-Canale, the French Marxist historian, was even more blunt when he wrote "des immenses ressources de ce pays, le peuple guinéen ne retirait presque rien".[73]

The authorities in Conakry held the view that as long as Guinea got a share of the profits of these foreign companies, the interest of the nation would be protected. The government was able to obtain its

share only in a few cases and in practical terms that did not amount to much. For example, the Fria Company, after several years of operation, merely created an economic enclave in Guinea. With its own port and its own railway, Fria was not really integrated into the structure of the Guinean economy.

Sékou Touré had always asserted that the revolution introduced by the PDG as from 1958, had yielded fruitful results. Sékou Touré made a comparison between 1958 and 1963:

> October 1958 State budget amounted to 5,000,000,000 CFA francs, added to which was a grant from the former FWA community (...) After five years of independence, the national budget exceeds 10,000,000,000 Guinean francs (...) All our budgets balance as a result of our own efforts, at a total of more than 15,000,000,000 Guinean francs (...) In addition, we now employ five times as many public servants as in 1958. 74

However, the so-called successes of the PDG cannot withstand serious verification. Firstly, it is not true that, under the PDG, all the national budgets balanced as a result of the exclusive efforts of Guineans. In reality, Guinea continued to borrow money from several sources till Sékou Touré's death. One of such creditors was the U.S.S.R. Jeune Afrique makes the following revelation on Guinea's debt:

> La dette publique extérieure de Conakry s'élevait en 1975 à pres d'un milliard de dollars, plus de 150 millions de dettes privées et 40 millions de créances soviétiques pour payer de récentes fournitures d'armements. 75

Moreover, Sékou Touré's allusion to the large number of public servants employed by the PDG is not very convincing. For, most of the workers employed were not really needed. They were employed purely for political reasons and contributed in no small way to the budget deficit experienced in subsequent years.

There is evidence that Guineans produced less and enjoyed a low standard of living in spite of the PDG revolution. For example, the production of banana for which Guinea was famous in the colonial era, had fallen drastically by 1984. Coffee production also dropped, for, while the nation exported about 2,000 tons annually in the past, she could hardly export half of that figure by 1983.[75] Even basic food stuffs were not enough to meet the need of Guineans. At a point, a basket of tomatoes was sold at about 20% of the monthly salary of the average worker. Guinea, at the same time, had to rely on USA for grains and rice. Mohammed Selhami comments thus on Guinea's food crisis:

> L'adversaire du Guinéen n'est ni le Français, ni l'Américain, encore moins l'Ivoirien ou le

Sénégalais. L'adversaire est
le bol de riz au poisson devenu
difficile à gagner. 77

The PDG revolution also did not achieve much in terms of infrastructure and other social amenities. The government directed much of the funds meant for these sectors to sustain the militia and other ancillary institutions of the PDG. The number of hospitals in Guinea did not increase significantly in comparison with that of the colonial era. There was almost no development in the railway system as, by 1962, only 28 kilometres of lines had been replaced. Roads linking cities and villages were in poor condition while, in aviation and shipping, almost all facilities were in shambles. If the PDG administration could be excused for the poor socio-economic conditions of Guineans in the early days of independence, the government cannot be exonerated from the lot of the Guinean masses after 26 years of the party's rule.

The actual performance of the PDG administration can properly be ascertained when her achievements are compared with those of other countries in the same region. In this regard, the comparative study of Guinea and the neighbouring Ivory Coast, undertaken by Pierre Biarnes in his work L'Afrique aux Africains: 20 ans d'indépendance en Afrique noire francophone, is revealing. Guinea and the Ivory Coast are both ex-colonies of France. The two

countries are also located in the same climatic and vegetational zones in West Africa. It is noteworthy that when independent Guinea opted for the socialist ideology, the Ivory Coast, under Felix-Houphouet Boigny chose the capitalist mode of development.

At the dawn of independence, the level of development in the Ivory Coast was a bit higher than that in Guinea, but the latter was almost as well equipped as the former. Thanks to the geography of the two States, both possessed a good agricultural potential. However, despite all these trump-cards, Guinea, over the years recorded a comparatively low growth rate compared to the Ivory Coast.

We are not advocating capitalism. For capitalism as is practised in the Ivory Coast as elsewhere, has created serious problems not only for the masses but for the PDCI authorities. On the other hand, we believe, as rightly pointed out by Abiola Irele in his article "The Sékou Touré Phenomenon: A Great Dream for Africa that finally became the cult of the Personality", that socialism is capable of bringing about impressive socio-economic transformation.[78] The failure of socialism in independent Guinea may partly be ascribed to Sékou Touré's own style of government and leadership. His strategy for economic development and his autocratic rule partly accounted for the failure of the

socialist experiment in Guinea.

That the Guinean revolution could not boast of much is obvious when one considers Guinea's debt burden and her poor rating among developing countries. We have already presented, in this chapter, Lacouture's analysis of Guinea's debt.[79] We also read in Lacouture's account that Guinea under Sékou Touré was one of the twelve poorest countries in the world. Guinea also recorded the lowest living standard in the whole of West Africa.[80] Even though, as we have already stated, we have to be wary of the assessment of Guinea by men like Lacouture and Biarnes, the fact that PDG sympathisers like Suret-Canale rated the country lowly, means that there is some truth in the analyses of Lacouture and Biarnes. Moreover, the analyses of Lacouture and Biarnes are backed by figures which can be confirmed or contested.

Faced with the embarrassment caused by the failure of their revolution, the PDG leaders decided to turn back. A Guinean minister observed in 1978 that "For our first 20 years, we have concentrated on developing the mentality of our people; now we are ready to do business with others."[81] This was only an elaboration on what Sékou Touré himself thought and had made known, in his keynote address to the 11th Congress in November 1978.

Sékou Touré had reiterated the PDG's commitment to socialist programme, but said the party now desired "broad cooperation with capitalist as well as socialist States in order to consolidate the freedom of our people and raise the level of their prosperity."[82]

Sékou Touré resumed diplomatic relations with France in 1971, but the search for normal relations with the West began in 1974, when he renewed diplomatic links with West Germany. The desire to put an end to Guinea's isolation reached a climax in 1978 when Sékou Touré made 16 trips abroad and mended fences with the Ivory Coast and Senegal.[83] The Guinean President had realized that totalitarianism and his self-imposed isolation were in no way beneficial to himself and to Guineans. He had realised the hollowness of his style of government and tried to make amends.

Some people believe that Sékou Touré's renewed friendship with the outside world was motivated principally by the search for aid. If this is true, then he succeeded to some extent especially as far as the Arab world was concerned. Apart from a mosque built in Conakry by Morocco and Saudi Arabia, the Saudis were also helping him in erecting 53 OAU villas, each of which was valued at 500 million CFA. Libya had granted a loan worth 58 million dollars

while several aid offers came from the West.

Before Sékou Touré's death, many Guineans came to hate Russia. This is obvious from this type of statement usually made by Guineans: "Nous préférons les Français aux Soviétiques. Ces derniers ne nous ont été d'aucune utilité".[84] If Guineans were scornful of Russia, it was because of the way Sékou Touré practised socialism in Guinea. Sékou Touré promised to liberate Guineans, through socialism from hunger, disease and ignorance. The Guinean leader not only failed to fulfil his promise, Guineans even lost their freedom including even the right to speak their mind. They lived in constant fear of incurring the displeasure of an increasingly repressive regime. Rescued from the yoke of colonialism, the Guineans had found themselves trapped in a country ruled by a tyrant. Such was the fate of Guineans under Sékou Touré's rule. And so also is the lot of Africans everywhere on the continent. Africans rejoiced at the beginning of the independence era but their illusions about what the new era would bring have failed to materialize. Instead, Africans experience bitter disappointment at the turn of events in the new era. This disillusionment explains Siradiou Diallo's cynical question: "Le jeu (i.e. Indépendence) en valait-il vraiment la chandelle".[85]

Africans' disillusionment in the post-colonial era is a recurring theme in the works of many contemporary African writers. This is typical of the works of several Guinean writers. Each of the Guinean novelists studied in the succeeding chapters denounces the abuses of the post-independence governments in Africa, even if the intensity of the denunciation varies from one writer to another. An attempt will be made to examine the individual writer's perception of the Guinean situation particularly under Sékou Touré's rule.

NOTES TO CHAPTER I

1. Frank Gregory Snyder, *One Party Government in Mali: Transition Toward Control* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), p.88.

2. Kwame Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism: The last Stage of Imperialism* (New York: International Publishers, 1980), p.1.

3. *Africa South of the Sahara 1982-83* (London: Europa Publications Ltd., 1982), p.1121.

4. According to Zolberg, because many of the members were civil servants who had lost the government housing to which they were entitled when they resigned after the elections, the Assembly asked for and received interest-free loans, guaranteed by the public treasury, to build homes for the assemblymen. Additional advantages included land grants, substantial credit from the European firms, the use of private automobiles, civil honours and trips to Paris at public expense. See Aristide R. Zolberg, *One Party Government in the Ivory Coast* (Princeton: P.U.P., 1964), p.193.

5. *Ibid*, p.287.

6. Quoted by Aristide Zolberg, *Creating Political Order: The Party States of West Africa* (Rand: Mc Nally & Co., 1969), p.57.

7. Quoted by Zolberg, *Creating Political Order*, p.57.

8. Quoted by Zolberg, *Creating Political Order*, p.51.

9. *Ibid*, p.37.

10. Yusuf Hassan, "One-Party Syndrome" in *Africa Events*, June, 1985, p.21.

11. Africa South of the Sahara (London: Europa Pub. Co., Ltd., 1972), p.495.

12. Zolberg, One-Party Government in the Ivory Coast, p.262.

13. The RDA - Rassemblement Démocratique Africain is an African inter-territorial movement founded at Bamako in 1946. Its manifesto demanded the constitutional confirmation of the rights of all people in the French overseas possessions. It also called for the peaceful, parliamentary elimination of colonialism throughout the world. See Thomas O. O'toole, Historical Dictionary of Guinea (Metuchen, N.J. & London: The Scarecrow Press, 1978), p.60.

14. Snyder, op.cit., p.129.

15. Zolberg, One-Party Government in the Ivory Coast, p.265.

16. Snyder, op.cit., p.111.

17. Zolberg, One-Party Government in the Ivory Coast, p.298.

18. Coquery-Vidrovitch and Henri Miniot, L'Afrique noire: De 1800 à nos jours (Paris: P.U.F., 1974), p.2[illegible].

19. Nkrumah, op.cit., p.IV.

20. Donald B. Cruise O'Brien, The Mourides of Senegal: The Political and Economic Organisation of an Islamic Brotherhood (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p.215.

21. Coquery-Vidrovitch and Moniot, op.cit., p.425.

22. Ibid., p.253.

23. Snyder, op.cit., p.116.

24. Suret-Canale, La République de Guinée (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1970), pp.99 and 104.

25. Ibid., p.169.

26. Bernard Charles, Atlas des voyages: Guinée (Lausanne: Editions Rencontre, 1963), p.53.

27. Ibid., p.53.

28. Quoted by Ladipo Adamolekun, Sékou Touré's Guinea: An Experiment in Nation Building (London: Methuen, 1976), p.6.

29. Ahmed Sékou Touré, The Doctrine and Methods of the Democratic Party of Guinea Tome X, n.d., n.p., p.69.

30. Ibid., p.14.

31. Ibid., p.15.

32. Adamolekun, Sékou Touré's Guinea, p.229.

33. Ibid., p.6.

34. Ibid., pp.22-23.

35. Toure, The Doctrine and Methods, p.269.

36. Charles, Atlas des voyages, p.59.

37. Collin Legum and John Drysdale (eds.), Africa Contemporary Record: Annual Survey and Documents 1969 - 1970 (London: Africa Research Ltd., 1970), p.b.487.

38. Adamolekun, Sékou Touré's Guinea, p.225.

39. Charles, Atlas des voyages, p.94.

40. Pierre Biarnes, L'Afrique aux Africains: 20 ans d'indépendance en Afrique noire francophone (Paris: Armand Colin, 1980), p.162.

41. Ibid., p.159.

42. Africa: South of the Sahara 1982-83, p.487.

43. Toure, The Doctrine and Methods, p.335.

44. Jeune Afrique, No.980, 17 octobre 1979, p.24.

45. The Guardian Weekly: The Washington Post, Le Monde, Vol.131, No.1, 1st July, 1984, p.13.

46. Jeune Afrique, No.927, 11 octobre 1978, p.69.

47. Jeune Afrique, No.980, 17 octobre 1979, p.26.

48. Collin Legum and John Drysdale (eds.) Africa Contemporary Record: Annual Survey and Documents 1978 - 1979 (New York: Africa Pub. Co., 1980), p.b.642.

49. Jeune Afrique, No.927, 11 octobre 1978, p.71.

50. Ibid., p.71.

51. Sékou Touré, La Guinée et l'émancipation africaine: L'Action politique du Parti Démocratique de Guinée (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1959), p.9.

52. R.W. Johnson, "Guinea" in John Dunn (ed.) West African States: Failure and Promise - A Study in Comparative Politics (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1984), p.58.

53. Jeune Afrique, No.1093, 16 décembre 1981, p.88.

54. Jeune Afrique, No.1012, 28 mai 1980, p.37.

55. Ibid., p.37.

56. Ibid., p.37.

57. Touré, The Doctrine and Methods, p.284.

58. Africa: South of the Sahara 1982 - 1983, p.476.

59. Toure, The Doctrine and Methods, pp.283 - 284.

60. Adamolekun, Sékou Touré's Guinea, p.210.

61. Jeune Afrique, No.927, 11 novembre 1978, p.69.

62. Jeune Afrique, No.1213, 4 avril 1984, p.40.

63. Ibid., p.40.

64. Charles, Atlas des voyages, p.59.

65. Ibid., p.59.

66. Ibid., p.64.

67. Quoted by Adamolekun, Sékou Touré's Guinea, p.10.

68. Charles, Atlas des voyages, p.69.

69. Ibid., p.83.

70. R.W. Johnson, "Guinea" in West African States: Failure and Promise, p.48.

71. Adamolekun, Sékou Touré's Guinea, p.48.

72. Jeune Afrique, No.927, 11 octobre 1978, p.70.

73. Ibid., p.70.

74. Touré, The Doctrine and Methods, p.94.

75. Jeune Afrique, No.927, 11 octobre 1978, p.72.

76. See tables on Guinea's exports in Pierre Biarnes, L'Afrique aux Africains, pp.456 - 472.

77. Jeune Afrique, No.937, 20 decembre 1978, p.24.

78. For Abiola Irele's article, see Sunday Sketch No.1058, 22nd April, 1984.

79. See Jeune Afrique, No.927, 11 octobre 1978, p.72.

80. Biarnes, L'Afrique aux Africains, p.32.

81. Collin Legum and John Drysdale (eds.) Africa Contemporary Record: 1978-79, p.b.639.

82. Ibid., p.640.

83. See Jeune Afrique, No.928, 18 octobre 1978, p.30.

84. Jeune Afrique, No.937, 20 decembre 1978, p.27.

85. Jeune Afrique, No,927, 11 octobre 1978, p.67.

Chapter 2

SOCIO-POLITICAL REALITY OF THE COLONIAL SOCIETY

The socio-political problems of the colonial era are too well known to be stated in detail here. Towards the end of the 19th Century, Western European countries, notably France, Great Britain and Germany embarked on the military conquest of Africa. The colonialists justified their action on the grounds that they had come to civilise Africa, to bring the barbaric tribes of Africa up to the superior culture, of which the whiteman was the custodian. However, as the Europeans settled in the colonies, they embarked on racial discrimination, oppression and economic exploitation of Africans. Then, there arose Africans, mainly intellectuals, particularly from around the Second World War, who challenged the colonial status quo and called for independence. Some of the socio-political problems of the colonial period include the rivalry between the African nationalists which usually resulted in bloody conflicts. Also, social groups like the chiefs, the civil servants and the youth, cannot be ignored in any serious study on the period.

Of the four novelists being studied - Laye, Fantouré, Sassine and Monénembo, the first two address themselves to the socio-political problems of the colonial society. It is not accidental that

Laye and Fantouré treat the problems of the colonial environment. The two writers have close association with the period under study in this chapter. Laye was born at Kouroussa in Upper Guinea in 1928. By this time, the whole of Francophone West Africa had come under French rule.[1] Before leaving for France for further studies in 1947, Laye had been a student in Conakry. And as a student in France, Laye returned to Guinea on a visit in 1954. The novelist finally came back to settle in Guinea in 1956 when the country was still under colonial rule.[2] Fantouré's contact with the colonial society is also direct. Born at Forécariah, Southern Guinea in 1938, Fantouré now lives in exile in Western European countries. He left Guinea in 1955 when he was seventeen years old and therefore witnessed some of the socio-political problems of the colonial era. Apart from his personal knowledge of colonial Guinea, Fantouré also came in contact with the colonial environment through his training and profession. He is an Economist and is also employed by international organisations which engage in development activities in Africa. Fantouré researched into Africa's past including the causes of underdevelopment and poverty in the continent.[3] Thus, in setting their novels in the colonial era, Laye and Fantouré are discussing issues with which they are quite familiar.

The novels we treat in this chapter are Dramouss,[4] Le Cercle des Tropiques,[5] L'Homme du troupeau and Le Voile ténébreux. Dramouss is set in 1957 and few years after independence even though a flashback (on the life of Fatoman the protagonist of the novel) dates as far back as 1947, Le Cercle des Tropiques is set essentially at the dawn of independence and the years following the attainment of political independence. The actions of L'Homme du troupeau... and Le Voile tenebreux, on the other hand, span the thirties and a few years after World War II.[6] Implicitly, the period covered by the four novels being studied here starts from pre-World War II and ends at independence. Two broad issues are dealth with in the novels: colonial exploitation and anti-colonialist struggle. To tackle these issues, we have divided the chapter into three parts dealing with a) colonial exploitation, b) the relationship between the African nationalists and the colonialists and c) the nationalists and aspirations to nationhood. In this third part we examine the nationalists' rapport with the rest of their compatriots. Meanwhile, one issue which needs to be clarified immediately is the setting of the novels being studied here.

With the increasing affluence of national literatures in post-independence Africa, one would

be tempted to see the novels being studied here as dealing only with problems of Guinea. The novels are not treating Guinea's socio-political experience exclusively. A close study of the settings of the novels and of the views of eminent critics is quite revealing. A large part of the action in Dramouss takes place in Guinea. When Fatoman, the narrator-protagonist of the novel states poetically: "Je reconnaissais distinctement dans la lune (...) ma Haute Guinée natale", (Dramouss, p.230) Laye is indirectly emphasising the position of Guinea in the narrative. However, statements made by Fatoman elsewhere in the novel show that he does not think only of Guinea. For instance, home sick, during his sojourn in France, Fatoman observes: "J'ai deux patries au monde, l'Afrique et la beauté" (Dramouss, p.96). This statement should be taken in its figurative as well as its literal sense. Fatoman's love for Africa is profound. Earlier in the novel, a "Voix intérieure" which talks to him advises Fatoman to return to Africa (Dramouss, p.85). Furthermore, Laye's own pronouncements show that, in writing Dramouss, the novelist's pre-occupation transcends a single geopolitical entity. It is significant that the novel is dedicated to the "jeunes d'Afrique". This is the youth he expects to do something about the deplorable socio-political condition in Africa. When later in Le Maître de la

parole, Laye asks rhetorically:

> Nos hommes politique d'aujourd'hui, à l'exception de quelques-uns, sont-ils de grands hommes? C'est douteux: ils font de la politique une entreprise sanglante (...) ils ne font pas la politique pour le progrès des peuples africains (...) ils ne servent pas l'Afrique; ils se servent de l'Afrique. 7

We realise that Laye does not take the historico-political problems of Africa lightly. They are issues dear to him. It is perhaps Laye's frequent reference, in Dramouss, to Africa that leads the Nigerian literary critic, Tunji Adebayo, to see the novel as first and foremost a work discussing the African predicament.[8] Tunji Adebayo has perhaps gone a bit too far. Laye's starting point is Guinea in particular and Africa in general.

Like Dramouss, the three novels of Fantouré studied do not deal with a single geo-political entity. Le Cercle des Tropiques provides an example. In spite of efforts by critics like Lilyan Kesteloot to associate the setting of the novel with Guinea, recent studies by Bernard Mouralis and Midiohouan show that the area in which the action takes place does not represent any particular country.[9] Mouralis and Midiohouan convince us. From the name of the setting: "Les Marigots du Sud", and from thetitle of the novel "Le Cercle des Tropiques", it is clear

that Fantouré's aim is to internationalise the socio-political issues examined in his novel. As for the two other novels of Fantouré, set in the colonial era - L'Homme du troupeau... and Le Voile ténébreux, it is remarkable that the actions of the novels occur in more than a single country. The search for cattle smugglers and cattle on which the action of L'Homme du troupeau... is based takes placed around Mount Nimba. This mountain is in reality part of a mountain range that spans three West African countries - the Ivory Coast, Guinea and Liberia. Similarly, the episode in Fantouré's most recent novel, Le Voile ténébreux is sited in the Ivory Coast and Mali while other countries like Senegal and Guinea, feature prominently in the novel. The conclusion that can be drawn from our analysis so far is that the settings of the novels of Laye and Fantouré are characterised by deliberate vagueness. This vagueness can be explained by the global objective of the novels. They aim at examining not only the historico-political reality of Guinea, the country of origin of the novelists, but also of Africa in general. We shall comment more on the implication of the setting of the remaining Guinean novels being studied in this thesis in the next chapter. We shall now treat colonial exploitation, the first of the three parts into which the chapter is divided.

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I. COLONIAL EXPLOITATION

At the beginning of this chapter, we tried to draw attention to the contradiction in what was professed by the colonialists and what they actually practised in their colonies in Africa. This discrepancy between the theory and the reality of colonialism has been a popular theme in African literature right from the times of René Maran's Batouala. René Maran, the colonial administrator depicts in Batouala, which appeared as early as 1921, the debilitating effect of forced labour on the inhabitants of an Oubangui-Chari village. The sordid revelations in this novel were contested by the Metropolis. Maran was persecuted and the novel was banned in Africa.[10] Maran's novel paved the way for such remarkable works as the two journals of Gide Voyage au Congo and Retour au Tchad which were published in 1927 and 1928 respectively and which confirmed the colonial abuses already highlighted by Maran. Some of the important works on the colonial theme published by African writers are Oyono's Une Vie de boy (1956), Le Vieux nègre et la médaille (1956), and Béti's Ville cruelle (1954), Le Pauvre Christ de Bomba (1956) and Mission terminée (1957). All these works contain virulent attacks on the conduct of the Europeans in their colonies in Africa. Moreover, novels like Sembene Ousmane's Les Bouts de bois de Dieu and Voltaïque published after

independence, in 1962 and 1964 respectively, and which comment on colonialism, show the popularity of the colonial theme in African literature. Thus, Laye and Fantouré, on picking on colonialism, are contributing to a popular and topical discussion. Here, we are concerned with the manner in which the two Guinean writers view and present the colonial enterprise, with the sub-title "racism and colonial exploitation" as our starting point.

RACISM AND COLONIAL EXPLOITATION

We are starting the analysis of the four Guinean novels studied here, with Laye's Dramouss. This is not only because Dramouss was published before all Fantouré's works, but especially because of the peculiar manner in which Laye handles the whole problem of imperialism. The problem in Laye's handling of the colonial theme lies in the fact that he apparently distinguishes between two groups of Europeans. These groups comprise, on the one hand, the Whitemen living in Europe and who do not approve of racism and colonial exploitation, and on the other hand, the Whitemen who believe in the supremacy of the White race and who come to Africa to exploit Africans. This classification is implicit in the statement made by Stanislas, Fatoman's French friend. He observes: "Pour les colons, vous autres, vous êtes des nègres cannibales. Du moins c'est ce qu'ils

racontent ici. Pour ces mêmes hommes, nous Français, nous sommes des brigands" (Dramouss, p.68). The French men who oppose racism and colonialism, amply demonstrate their love and respect for Africans. It is Stanislas, the friend of Fatoman in Paris, who carries Fatoman's suitcase and conducts him through the French capital. Stanislas states that his best friend during World War II was a Senegalese and stresses further that the Senegalese is as intelligent as Europeans. Laye is here indirectly drawing attention to the love which exists between the French men in the Metropolis and Africans.

The understanding which exists between the Europeans in Europe and Africans is confirmed by Tante Aline, the old French woman who takes care of Fatoman during the latter's sojourn in France. Tante Aline observes: "Le raciste est celui qui n'a pas atteint la plénitude de son épanouissement intellectuel et moral. Au fond, c'est un animal" (Dramouss, p.108). Clearly, Tante Aline is opposed to the conduct of the colonialists who promote racism and exploit the colonised in Africa. Aline's affection for Africans is not simply verbal. She demonstrates this practically. She provides money for Fatoman's sustenance. She also settles Fatoman's hospital bills during the protagonist's sickness. Her statement: "Docteur, aidez-nous! Aidez-nous! Il faut que ce garçon guérisse. Il n'y aucun parent

ici" (Dramouss, p.180) emanates from a highly concerned person who wants something to be done urgently to cure Fatoman's ailment.

Of course, some White characters in Dramouss are seemingly racial in outlook. Such is the case of the controversial native of Marseille, Pierre who, even though he helps Fatoman, still calls him a "nègre", a pejorative term. Such is also the case of the boisterous French police man who reminds Fatoman of the importance of the support of France to Africa. However, Pierre and the police officer, as characters are not fully developed. Thus, the overall impression one has on reading Dramouss is that French citizens in France are anti-racists and anti-colonialists.

It is quite strange that Dramouss makes such an insinutaion. For, right from the beginning of the Europeans' contact with Africa, the Europeans, be they in the Metropolis or in the colonies, worked hand in hand. The two groups of Whitemen promoted the notion of the superiority of the white race and exploited the manpower and the material resources of Africa. De Gobineau and Le Bon who, in the 19th century, wrote extensively on the inequality of human races were French citizens living in the metropolis.[11] And M. Meyer too once stressed before the French National Assembly that "il ne fallait

pas prostituer la République en y faisant pénétrer le peuple algérien".[12] M. Meyer wanted the Algerians banned from France not only as a result of the conflict between France and Algeria, but especially because he felt that the French, a superior race, would be polluted by the uncultured Arabs. In Europe, there were many scholars, and ordinary citizens like Stanislas and Tante Aline, in Dramouss, who saw Whitemen as superior to Africans and who supported the so-called civilising mission of Europeans in Africa. The harmless image of the Frenchmen in France as presented in Dramouss is therefore highly implausible.

Laye, generally, adopts an uncritical attitude toward colonialism. Even though in Dramouss, Stanislas and Tante Aline denounce the "bande d'exploiteurs" who pillage the human and material resources of Africa, the novel does not treat this exploitation in a thorough and convincing manner as one finds, for instance, in the works of Oyono or Béti. As we shall see later in the thesis, the section of Dramouss on the activities of multi-nationals in Guinea is brief and half-heartedly treated. The laxity with which Laye handles the colonial theme was first noticed in L'Enfant noir, Laye's first work of fiction. This novel is set in the colonial period when Africans had been militarily subdued by Europeans. Exploitation of African

labour and raw materials had started.[13] Yet, L'Enfant noir feigns ignorance of the African predicament. Instead, the novel delightfully describes a harmonious environment characterised by harvest, holidays and in which Laye the protagonist: "jouais près de la case de (son) père".[14]

Laye's rather mild treatment of colonialism has led many critics to see his works as unresponsive to the aspirations of Africans. We recall the numerous attacks launched on Laye for publishing L'Enfant noir. While some of the attacks launched on Laye can be said to be unjustified, many of the criticisms are quite realistic.[15] Laye's handling of the colonial theme is shallow and unappealing. We support this view that:

> Laye resolutely shuts his eyes to the most crucial realities, those which we have always been very careful to reveal to the public here. Has this Guinean, of my own race, who it seems was a very lively boy, really seen nothing but a beautiful, peaceful and maternal Africa? Is it possible that not once has Laye witnessed a single minor extortion by the colonial authorities. 16

Certainly, Laye witnessed extortion by the colonialists but only failed to comment on it. Also, Adele King quotes Abdoulaye Sadji as having observed that:

> While Laye may have had such a temperament that he never saw anything shocking, others have

> seen much in French West Africa
> to attack; writers are needed
> to fight for freedom. 17

While a writer is free to incorporate or leave out of his narrative any aspect of historico-political reality, blatant insensitivity to a topical issue like colonialism, as demonstrated by Laye in Dramouss and in his two other novels L'Enfant noir and Le Regard du roi is however unhealthy. The light-hearted manner in which Laye treats colonialism in Dramouss, impairs the novel and makes it less appealing than the three novels of Fantouré which also deal with the problem of colonialism. We now turn to the novels of Fantouré.

Fantouré's treatment is distinct from Laye's in that Fantouré does not distinguish between racist and anti-racist Europeans. In Le Cercle des Tropiques, L'Homme du Troupeau... and in Fantouré's most recent novel, Le Voile ténébreux, the Whites are presented as one, as people of the same psyche who adopt the same prejudicial attitude towards Africans. Leo Africanus, a sixteenth century philosopher, observes:

> The inhabitants of the black lands
> are bucolic people without reason,
> wit or skill and with no experience
> of anything at all; they live like
> brute beasts without law or order. 18

This condescending manner in which the Europeans

looked at Africans is fully illustrated by the three novels of Fantouré set in the colonial era.

One of the merits of Fantouré's novels lies in the fact that the Whitemen they present all reside in Africa, among the colonised. Thus, through the interaction and transaction between the expatriates and the indigenous people, the novels are able to study fully the mentality of the Europeans. In the three novels, the colonial administrators. perpetrate the notion of the superiority of the Whitemen. Hear Kerke, the colonial police Officer in Le Cercle des Tropiques: "A peine civilises, vous vous croyez Robespierre et César réunis (CT., p.86) Robespierre was a French statesman who tried to establish an egalitarian society but failed. And so was Caesar, the Roman general who was assassinated before he could create a just society.[19] In other words, for Kerke, Africans will fail in their confrontation with the colonial administration. For Kerke, the Europeans, being people endowed with superior wisdom will always triumph over the colonised. A similar arrogance is exhibited by the colonial administrators in Fantouré's third novel, L'Homme du troupeau.... An administrator remarks for instance, "Nous sommes les pionniers civilisateurs dans les pays des nègres" (HTS, p.246). The same official asserts further: "La civilisation, c'est moi!" (HTS, p.281). One sees the word "civilisation" or

terms related to it in almost all statements made by this colonial worker. He tries to emphasise the fact that Europeans are on a civilising mission in Africa, that the Whitemen are making a great sacrifice in coming to the dark continent and that their presence here is entirely beneficial to the colonised. Fanon exposes the hypocrisy of the colonialists when he ascribes to them the following statements: "Cette terre, c'est nous qui l'avons faite (...) Si nous partons, tout est perdu, cette terre retournera au Moyen Age".[20] Like Fanon, Kanbouré shows, in his three novels set in the colonial period that, contrary to official declarations, Europeans come to Africa to promote their personal interests and those of the Metropolis.

It is significant that the European businessmen in the colonies also encourage the idea that Europeans are naturally more intelligent than Africans. The businessmen in L'Homme du Troupeau... and Le Voile ténébreux frequently refer to Africans as "nègres". This word, borrowed from the latin "niger" - "black", assumed a pejorative meaning during the colonial period.[21] We recall the term "nègre émotif" which signified that Africans, being incapable of rational thinking, reacted unreasonably to situations. Thus, the colonisers insinuated that Africans would learn the pragmatism of the Whites.

That the foreign entrepreneurs in the novels should join in this propaganda is not very surprising. The entrepreneurs want to make profits from their investments. It is only by making Africans realise the importance of the presence of Europeans in their midst that they could create a condition conducive to the realisation of their personal objectives.

Fantouré's novels contest the so-called civilising mission of Europeans. This can be seen in the names given to some of the colonial officials in Le Cercle des Tropiques and L'Homme du troupeau... A colonial officer in Le Cercle des Tropiques is named Sept Saint Siss (706). Indeed, with its many"s's", this name sounds strange. The impression one has is that the author is hissing in disapproval of the reactionary role being played by this colonial officer. Also, as rightly pointed out by Uganden, Sept Saint Siss sounds like "706".[22] It suggests that this expatriate worker, like the commandant in Oyono's Une Vie de boy, has no distinct personality. He is only an instrument for the exploitation of Africans. Other colonial officials are presented in a similar unflattering manner. Henry, the Commanding Officer of the Unité Tsétsé in L'Homme du troupeau..., Jim, Matthew, Lancelot in the same novel and the Commanding Officer of Upper Guinea are all subjected to a similar treatment. Like Sept Saint Siss, these officials are mere pawns

serving the interest of their capitalist masters in Europe.

Fantouré's three novels set in the colonial era also show that the Europeans indulge in barbaric behaviours. Mainguai's Mathematics instructor beats him up in L'Homme du troupeau... Mainguai, in the same novel, is also physically assaulted by Henry, the Commanding Officer of the Unité Tsétsé. Similarly, Mainguai Africounah, the protagonist in Le Voile ténébreux is unjustly beaten up by an expatriate worker.[23] The statement made by the European while dealing several blows to Mainguai is quite revealing: "Ouais, ouais, je veux te crever Joe Louis, je veux être champion du monde (...) Je suis Max Schmeling (...) et voilà un crochet suivi d'un direct du gauche, tout, ça arrose d'un joli upper cut (VT, p.130). Yet, this colonial worker, like the other Europeans, claims to be a man of a higher culture. The intention of the novel is to deflate the pride of the Whites, to show that the White race is not better than the Black race and to undermine the so-called civilising mission of the Europeans.

Even though Fantouré's treatment of racism is not as exhaustive, and perhaps not as exciting as one finds in the works of Oyono or Béti, it conveys the point the Guinean novelist desires to make.

The point here is that the Europeans came to Africa in pursuit of their personal interests and those of the Metropolis. Africans benefit in no way by their presence here. In fact, the indigenous people lose out as a result of the advent of the Whites.

The educational policies of the colonial administration, which is the next issue we examine also expose the intrigues of the Europeans in Africa.

COLONIAL EDUCATIONAL POLICIES AND COLONIAL EXPLOITATION

Laye and Fantouré react to the problems faced by education during the colonial era. However, the two novelists have, apparetntly, different preoccupations. While Fantouré's works - Le Cercle des Tropiques, L'Homme du troupeau... and Le Voile ténébreux discuss the condition of education in the period under the total domination by the French, Laye's Dramouss examines academic matters when the African colonies were under the Loi Cadre governments, that is the governments in which indigenous nationalists played prominent roles. The implications of the two approaches are highlighted in our discussion. We start with Dramouss for the peculiar manner in which it handles the educational problems.

The point which Dramouss seems to make is that the French colonial administration encourages the intellectual development of African youth while the indigenous African politicians hamper it. This point is made by Fatoman the hero of the novel, who is also a student and therefore competent to comment on educational matters. When the hero tells of his scholarship award, his exciting journey to France and his fruitful stay in the Metropolis, Fatoman is indirectly lauding the colonial policies, policies benevolent to all and which allow the colonised to develop his intellect. On the other hand, when Fatoman describes how his stay in France is made difficult by the withdrawal of his scholarship by the Territorial Assembly in Guinea, we realise that Fatoman indicts African nationalists for blocking the progress of the youths. According to Fatoman, the Assembly in Guinea withdraws his scholarship "sous prétexte" that his certificate in Mechanical Engineering is enough for Guinea's development. Implicitly, Fatoman is not convinced by the reason given by the authorities in his country. As we have already pointed out, and as we shall see later in this chapter, the group of people indirectly attacked by Fatoman are the African nationalists, and particularly Sékou Touré vaguely called "le Secrétaire du RDA" in Dramouss.[24] However, contrary to the insinuation in Dramouss,

many African nationalists embarked on social developments. For, we know, for instance, that one of the achievements of the PDG during the Loi Cadre era was the expansion of Guinea's educational system.[25] Contrary to the insinuation by Fatoman and his creator, it is rather the colonial authorities who tried to frustrate the intellectual advancement of young Africans. The colonialists' attempt in this direction has been well illustrated by writers like Beti in Mission terminée, Seydou Badian in Sous l'Orage and Dadié in Climbié, and of course, by Fantouré, in his three novels studied in this chapter. Statements made by the colonialists, in fact reveal that the schools built in the colonies by the Europeans were not really intended to cater for the intellectual development of the African youth as Laye seems to suggest in Dramouss. For instance, Governor Camille Guy wrote:

> More air! A good syllabus can only be obtained by pruning, not by addition. Instruction in French, in elementary science, some professional and technical training suitable to the environment. That is all that is required. Otherwise we shall create not French citizens, but arrogant, disorientated, displaced persons who have lost their indigenous virtues only to acquire the vices of their teachers and instructors. 26

What Guy advocates is the form of instruction which will turn African youths into robots, incapable of

independent thinking and who will serve the French unquestioningly. It is therefore strange that Dramouss lauds the French educational system in the colonies. Without doubt, Dramouss has a lot of merits. However, this novel is not very helpful to the reader who looks up to it for information on the policies of the colonial administration on education.

The three novels of Fantouré discussed here are different from Laye's novel in that Fantouré looks at educational matters more critically, bringing out practically all the features of the colonial educational system in Africa. The narratives in Le Cercle des Tropiques and Le Voile ténébreux are enhanced by the first person narrators - Bohi Di and Mainguai Africounah respectively, who reveal the injustice inherent in a system of which they are direct victims. And in L'Homme du troupeau... Fantouré's third novel, in which a third person narrator is used, the description is so tellingly done that one is left in no doubt as to the machiavellian nature of the colonialists' policies on education.

One element highlighted by Fantouré's novels is that only few African children had access to Western education. This situation in the colonial era is succintly described by Mainguai - Africounah

in Le Voile ténébreux:

> En cette époque coloniale, la sélection scolaire était impitoyable. Sur un millier d'enfants qui commençaient l'école en Afrique, dix parvenaient au niveau du brevet élémentaire, trois ou quatre au maximum au niveau du baccalauréat (VT, p.20).

It is the same situation that Bohi Di in Le Cercle des Tropiques tries to draw attention to when he states that his father wants him to possess only the primary school certificate. Bohi Di's father, lucid, knows that, under the colonial dispensation, it will not be easy at all for his son to continue his studies. The hesitation of the colonial authorities to extend educational facilities to all African children can be understood in the context of the overall policy of the colonialists. The Europeans, as we have pointed out, have come to Africa to promote their economic interest and that of the Metropolis. In order to attain this objective, the foreigners find it necessary to train a few Africans to constitute what Fantouré calls the "subalternes". And it is exactly this strategy that the colonial authorities in the three novels studied here try to adopt. This strategy runs counter to the interest of Africans for obvious reasons. Intelligent African children are denied the opportunity to learn and contribute to the

improvement of society.

The unfairness of this system lies in the fact that, while the colonial authorities try to limit the number of African children who receive Western education in Africa, the government embarked on expansion of existing institutions and created new ones in order to accommodate all children of school age in the Metropolis. The quality of instruction in the Metropolis was also significantly improved. The historian, Alfred Cobban, reveals that in 1879, Jules Ferry, then Minister of Education, called for the modernisation of French educational system. Education in the public primary school was also made free and by a subsequent law compulsory, while Ecoles normales for girls for training of women teachers were also established.[27] Thus, while the French failed to expand the existing schools in the colonies, they intensified the provision of instructional facilities in France. This discrepancy lays bare the falseness of the civilising mission of the French in Africa.

That the colonialists are unfair to Africans is confirmed by the structure of the school system. In the colonies, there are two types of schools - one for the children of the colonialists and the other for Africans. The schools attended by the

Whites are few and well equipped in instructional facilities and teaching staff. The schools intended for the African youths are, on the other hand, characterised by filth, lack teaching aids and competent teachers. It is for this reason that in L'Homme du troupeau.., Mainguai is said to be admitted into the Dakar school "par mesure exceptionnelle accordée par le Gouverneur général des territoires d'Afrique Occidentale" (HTS, p.17). Further in the novel, we are told that the few African children who attend the Dakar college are considered "privilégiés". This is because such Africans have access to better training facilities than the rest of their compatriots. Fanon draws attention to the disparity in the colonial educational system when he observes:

> Le monde colonial est un monde compartimenté. Sans doute est-il superflu, sur le plan de la description de rappeler l'existence (...) des écoles pour indigènes et des écoles pour Européens. 28

The irony which Fantouré and Fanon highlight is that Europeans use the resources which belong to Africans to train themselves at the expense of Africans.

During the colonial era, elitist African schools such as Ecole William Ponty were established to train "Assistants" in various professional fields to

help in the "oeuvre coloniale". Fantouré transposes this situation in L'Homme du troupeau... in which a Veterinary Assistant, Sassi is sent to persuade cattle rearers to hand over their cattle to the colonial authorities free of charge. This is exploitation. The exploitative design of the colonialists becomes glaring when it is learnt that the cattle breeders are hit and impoverished by a devastating drought. Drought here also has symbolic significance. The colonialists are the drought. They decimate the resources of the colonised like the drought. To free themselves from the grip of the dryness, Africans must first of all get rid of the European exploiters in their mids.

Fantouré's discussion on the educational system under the colonialists is thorough and takes into full account the plight of Africans who tried to go to school before independence. Laye, on the other hand leaves out of his narrative the negative features of education under the French colonial administration. However, Dramouss is still worth reading. Like Bakary Diallo's Force Bonté, Dramouss shows that contrary to general belief, there are africans who see colonialism as a blessing to the continent. Whether such a feeling is realistic or not is another issue altogether.

We now examine how colonial exploitation per se

is treated in Dramouss and in the three novels of Fantouré set in the colonial era under a) Military conscription b) Forced labour.

MILITARY CONSCRIPTION

We deem it necessary to explain first the policy of the French colonial administration on labour. Colonial labour laws were based on the notion of "indigénat". According to O'toole, the "indigénat" was:

> Established by decree (...) restricted African civil liberties (...) and permitted forced conscript labor or "corvée" to build roads and other public works. 29

This labour policy which provided abundant and free labour for the French colonial administration was in existence from 1924 to 1946. The outbreak of World War II in 1939, however, led to the intensification of the exploitation of African manpower. Most of the thousands of African soldiers recruited to defend France, many of who died on the battle fronts in various European countries, were conscripted under this law. A French colon could also requisition labour for work on his plantation etc., a situation that was akin to slave labour. It is against this background of the misuse of African human resources by the French colonial regime that we examine Dramouss and the three novels of Fantouré set in the

colonial era.

A striking difference between Laye's approach and that of Fantouré is that while Laye is virtually silent over the exploitation of African manpower by the French colonial administration, Fantouré commits himself fully to treating this issue. Nowhere, in Dramouss does one find a serious indictment of the "indigénat" which was based on racial discrimination or the reckless use of able-bodied Africans during World War II. The second chapter of Laye's novel, entitled "Une nuit blanche", symbolises suffering. It is in this chapter that Fatoman, the protagonist, relates his personal misery as a student in France. It is in this chapter that Fatoman denounces capitalism. Yet, Fatoman makes no significant comment on the ruinous effect colonial labour laws have on the colonised. Of course, in this second chapter, the Frenchman, Stanislas calls on Africans to send away "ces colons qui vous exploitent et vous oppriment!" (Dramouss, p.69). However, this attack on the colonialists is not enough when compared to the decimation of African manpower by the French. It can be said that Laye's treatment of the problems faced by African workers during the colonial period is rather shallow and half-hearted. Dramouss fails to reflect sufficiently the decimation of African

manpower particularly during World War II.

We have stated the possible cause of Laye's pro-French attitude. Laye never waivers in his love for the French, whose advent, he apparently sees as a blessing to Africa. King reveals that Laye in fact once wrote a text proposing that the best way to establish the French Union (L'Union Française, the former French colonial empire) on a firm foundation would be to arrange a regular exchange of children between metropolitan France and the colonies.[30] King states further that Laye decided to leave Guinea in 1965 when the country broke diplomatic relations with France.[31] The Franco-African accord which Laye advocates is amply demonstrated in Dramouss. Fatoman, the protagonist observes: "Oui, pour une véritable union franco-africaine, je suis prêt à tous les sacrifices" (Dramouss, p.105). The Franco-African entente pursued by Laye is also symbolised by the friendship between Fatoman and the French citizens - Stanislas, Pierre, Tante Aline and Françoise. It is also represented by the African and European dresses which Fatoman wears interchangeably during his sojourn in France. Little wonder that Laye sees nothing wrong with the compulsory mobilisation of Africans who dies in their thousands in World War II, and also who work under the worst conditions for the French colonial regime free of charge. The manner in

which Laye handles the exploitation of African human resources by the Whites during the colonial era makes one wonder whether he has adequate understanding of the damages caused by the colonialists. Writers committed to the emancipation of Africans from foreign domination such as Mongo Beti seem to disagree with Laye.

Fantouré's approach to the manpower issue during the colonial era is radically different from Laye's and deserves our attention next.

As we pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, Fantouré has been living in Western European countries since 1955. He has also researched into a wide range of subjects relating to poverty and underdevelopment in Africa. The combination of these factors apparently put him in a better position (than Laye) to understand the ruinous effects of colonial labour policies on Africans. In Le Cercle des Tropiques, L'Homme du troupeau... and Le Voile ténébreux, the novelist deals at length with the recruitment and use of African soldiers and forced labour.

Perhaps, one of the reasons why Fantouré sets L'Homme du troupeau..., Le Voile ténébreux and to a lesser extent Le Cercle des Tropiques around World War II is to effectively illustrate the reckless

use of able-bodied Africans by the White colonial regime. With the outbreak of World War II, the French colonial administration demanded for more healthy Africans. This group of people were exempted from forced labour and drafted to the battle fronts where they fought in defence of France. They died in their thousands. The world crisis witnessed exploitation of African human resources at its worst. Correspondingly, Fantouré's novels set around the period emphasise the annihilation of African labour force by the colonialists.

One recurring theme in Fantouré's three novels which depict the colonial environment is that Africans who fight for the Metropolis do not do so out of personal conviction or patriotic fervour. Rather, they are compelled to go to war by the colonial authorities. Thus, when the narrator in L'Homme du troupeau... states that Sassi, a leading nationalist, goes to the battle front: "par la force des choses et non par conviction propre" (HTS, p.220), he is describing the condition of most African soldiers who were victims of forced recruitment during World War II.

To reinforce his treatment, Fantouré gives prominence to the point of view of Africans on the war. Top on the list of the opponents of recruitment of African soldiers are Mainguai and Sassi, the two

leading nationalists in L'Homme du troupeau.... Mainguai would prefer to remain: "un nègre vivant colonisé" to being "un nègre mort honoré sur le champ de bataille métropolitain" (HTS, p.104). Even though Mainguai participates in the encounter on the Ardennes fronts and is also transferred to Equatorial Africa as a soldier, as we have pointed out, he has no option but to obey the colonial authorities. Sassi's opposition to the mobilisation of Africans as soldiers is not only verbal as he takes practical steps to escape recruitment. His "opération contre la santé" during which he denies himself food and lives on hard drugs and which Fantouré describes at length in chapter 5 of L'Homme du troupeau... is an eloquent testimony of the total aversion of Sassi to the war. It is not only enlightened Africans who resist mobilisation. For instance, the old Wali Wali, the professional amputator in Le Cercle des Tropiques, states towards the end of his amputation season: "Au moins quelques milliers de jeunes de ce pays ne se feront pas tuer stupidement" (CT, p.17). All categories of Africans resisted recruitment as soldiers.

The men amputated by Wali Wali compensate him with "la poudre d'or, des peaux de panthère, des vêtements, des chaussures, des montres, des briquets, des radios" (C.T., p.17) that is anything they possess. René Grivot, in Réactions dahoméennes,

sheds more light on similar efforts made by Dahomeans (Béninois) to escape mobilisation. According to Grivot, some Dahomeans who tried to avoid being mobilised fled to the Gold Coast where they worked either in the mines or on cocoa plantations. Disabled relatives often represented their able-bodied brothers before the army recruitment team. Yet, another tactic used by Dahomeans was to secure employment with maritime companies and later retire on grounds of ill-health.[32] These drastic and desperate measures are taken by the colonised because they see World War II as a purely Whitemen's affair from which the French, rather than Africans, will benefit. [illegible] r.

Luadia-Luadia Ntambwe rightly observes that L'Homme du troupeau... "rappelle les pertes en vies humaines sur tous les fronts de la bataille".[33] However, the focus here is on the number of Africans who lose their lives on the fronts and not the overall casualities of the war. Similarly, in Le Cercle des Tropiques and Le Voile ténébreux, the novelist is concerned specifically with Africans who die while fighting for France. The intention here is to show that colonialism and World War II deprive Africa of the healthy citizens it requires for its own socio-economic and political advancement.

Fantouré demonstrates this quite competently. In the last chapter of L'Homme du troupeau... the novelist substitutes, for instance, the third person impersonal narrator with a narrator who says "nous", implying that Fantouré is personally grieved by the massacre of Africans on the battle fronts. That the world conflict robs Africa of its important citizens required for its socio-political take-off, is also demonstrated by the incapacitation of Sassi by bullet wounds and by the ordeal of Mainguai who almost loses both eyes on the front. We also learn that almost all the members of the Unité Tsétsé team "étaient tombés sur le champ de bataille pendant les derniers mois de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale" (HTS, p.295). This havoc, caused by the war or rather the colonialists to Africa, Fantouré sometimes demonstrates it through the use of images of the weather. Mainguai in L'Homme du troupeau... is wounded: "Dans la chaude humidité de la forêt tropicale et en plein hivernage" (HTS, p.293). Mainguai-Africounah's family which in Le Voile ténébreux, loses two brothers to World War II is said to be gripped by "une solitude glaciale". The gloomy conditions of the weather symbolise the difficult times Africans face during the World War II period.

In spite of the colossal sacrifices made by

Africans in the cause of France, they are only decorated with worthless medals like the ones awarded posthumously to Mainguai - Africounah's brothers who fall on the battle front in Le Voile ténébreux. Medals here, recall Meka, the protagonist in Oyono's Le Vieux nègre et la médaille. Meka too loses two children to World War II. However, Le Vieux nègre et la médaille is less tragic than Fantouré's novels set in the colonial society. For, while Meka loses only two sons, it is almost all the able-bodied men in Fantouré's novels studied here, that are wiped out by the War. Moreover, the tone of Oyono's novel is apparently more satirical than tragic. Oyono appears to mock Meka's unrealistic ambition and his failure to win the favours of the colonialists. Fantouré, on the other hand, shows that the advent of Europeans on the shores of Africa is a catastrophe to the Black race.

Having treated military conscription, we now examine the "indigénat" or forced labour as is treated in the works of Laye and Fantouré.

FORCED LABOUR

Dramouss does not treat the "indigénat" or forced labour. We have already explained the possible reason for this omission. Only Fantouré's novels which deal with colonial problems do. Here,

we look at the three novels of Fantouré - Le Cercle des Tropiques, L'Homme du troupeau... and Le Voile ténébreux. It is significant that these novels treat not only forced labour, that is the use of African labour by the French colonial administration, they also deal with the general problems faced by African workers in the colonial environment. Attention is drawn, here, to the differences between military conscription forced labour and the general problems faced by the African worker in the colonial environment.

It can be said that the various researches carried out by Fantouré on Africa have helped him tremendously in understanding the plight of Africans in the colonial society. His discussion on labour is exhaustive as he touches on virtually all important elements of the subject. Of Fantouré's three novels examined here, "corvée" is best treated in L'Homme du troupeau... The writer chooses this novel for this purpose for technical reasons. World War II imposed new demands on the French colonial regime which required more African labourers to solve. The period therefore witnessed intensified recruitment of Africans and the generality of the colonised saw exploitation at its worst. L'Homme du troupeau... whose action covers some years of World War II is thus the most appropriate novel to deal.

with "indigénat" that is the employment of Africans for so-called "public works" by the colonial administration.

The public work in question here is that Africans should assist the colonial administration to re-take from traffickers, cattle required to support the war efforts. L'Homme du troupeau... distinguishes between military conscription and "corvée". The novel shows that, unlike the soldiers, the colonised, recruited for the so-called "public works" by the colonial administration receive no wages. The services of the latter are considered as part of their civic responsibilities by the French colonial administration. The point which Fantouré constantly emphasises is that "corvée" is another form of misuse of indigenous manpower. The denunciation of the colonialists is enhanced by the point of view adopted by Fantouré. Even though the views of the European characters are given some prominence, the story of the novel is told essentially from the point of view of the Africans. The word "réquisitionner" used by the colonial authorities signifies the exploitation of Africans. The White will not pay for the livestock. The cattle which Africans are assigned to secure from traffickers, are to be consumed in Europe, in the process of the struggle of the French for their own freedom. The job assigned the labourers is also risky. The

smugglers are armed to the teeth and prepared for physical confrontation. Also, the operational area spans three countries and the searchers perform their assignment under diverse, harsh climatic and vegetational conditions. Injustice here is moreover demonstrated by the fact that, even though the colonial authorities promise recruits some wages, they fail to fulfil their promise. Thus, in L'Homme du troupeau... the Whites, the custodians of higher culture, are hypocrites, who use unscrupulous methods to attain their selfish objectives.

Noteworthy, is the fact that the indigénat decree does not officially permit Europeans outside government to recruit African workers. However, European entrepreneurs employ workers, pay them ridiculously low wages and deny them other rights. In Le Cercle des Tropiques, a White employer boasts that African workers will be employed "à nos conditions comme d'habitude" (C.T., p.97). Here, there is no bargaining, no collective agreement between employers and employees as the rights of the latter are taken for granted. The workers' protests always end in failure. Being an African labourer here, is synonymous with misery. Similarly, in Le Voile ténébreux there is no working code and employers dismiss their employees on the flimsiest excuse.

One reason why White entrepreneurs treat employees with levity is that they are sure of the support of pseudo-African nationalists who supply them with abundant and cheap labour. Fanon describes the colluding role of this group of nationalists in the following terms "La bourgeoisie nationale (...) ne cesse de dire aux colons: "Nous sommes encore capables d'arrêter le carnage, les masses ont encore confiance en nous".[34] This group of nationalists, in reality did not have the mandate of the masses to speak on their behalf. They stifled the struggle of the proletariat who were fighting for better working conditions. However, a more important reason why European employers treat the colonised disrespectfully is that they enjoy the full backing of the colonial administration. For instance, in Le Cercle des Tropiques, the workers who protest against poor wages are rounded up by the colonial police. This is because the colonial authorities and the White employers pursue the same objective - the promotion of the interest of the Metropolis. Thus, either at the hands of the colonial administration or of the private businessmen, the African labourer is always a victim. He is the sacrificial lamb in the attempt of the Metropolis to pursue its own grandeur.

We now discuss the plundering of the natural

resources of the colonies as presented by Laye and Fantouré.

COLONIALISTS AND THE NATURAL RESOURCES OF THE COLONISED

Here, as in the preceding segments, Laye is silent over the lust of the colonialists for the raw materials from the colonies. Therefore, our discussion here focuses on the three novels of Fantouré which are the object of our study in this chapter. Our objective here is three-fold: to look at (i) the significance of the items exported from the colonies by the Europeans (ii) the methods used by the colonialists for exploiting the material resources and (iii) the effect of the plundering on the socio-economic life of the colonised.

Le Cercle des Tropiques and L'Homme du troupeau... present the raw materials which are exploited by the French colonial authorities. These raw materials are mainly rice in the former novel and cattle in the latter. Rice is the staple food of most communities in Francophone West Africa. While cattle is the only source of livelihood of the Sahelian people in whose territory L'Homme du troupeau... is mainly set. Thus, the choice of these items by Fantouré is technically expedient. It demonstrates the insensitivity of the French colonialists to the socio-economic problems of the

colonised.

Even more revealing are the methods used by the colonialists in procuring the raw materials from Africans. The colonialists in Le Cercle des Tropiques aim at a long term exploitation of Africa's raw materials. [illegible] Sole exporters of raw materials, the Whitemen buy farm produce directly where possible. In inaccessible areas, they set up African intermediaries who do the buying from local farmers. As a result of this effective exploitative network, the colonialists are able to purchase, at prices they choose, raw materials brought by Africans. Such is the fate of Bohi Di, the protagonist of the novel and his friends, who, having tilled land all day to produce high quality rice, are told by a local trader: "Ce riz n'est n'est pas très blanc, mal cultivé! (...). Pour vous rendre service je le prendrai, mais à mon prix" (C.T. p.13). This trader and his friends are at the service of the colonialists. They contribute to the impoverishment and the marginalisation of African peasants. The cattle breeders in L'Homme du troupeau... face a worse form of plundering. They are not even paid for their livestock taken by the colonial administration. Henry, the military officer assigned to procure the animals for the Metropolis uses the word

"réquisitionner" meaning that the cattle constitute the contribution of the breeders to the war efforts and they will receive no compensation for it. However, here, Fantouré exaggerates slightly. For, the colonised, having settled their tax and forced labour obligations were compensated for whatever else they supplied to the colonial government, even if such compensations were ridiculously low compared to the actual value of their produce.[35] Such exaggerations, however, do not mar Fantouré's novel and he succeeds in making the essential point, which is the pillaging of raw materials of the colonised by a government which claims to be committed to their well-being.

We now look at Fantouré's depiction of the effect of colonial exploitation on the continent and its people. First, it is not accidental that Fantouré's three novels studied here Le Cercle des Tropiques, L'Homme du troupeau... and Le Voile ténébreux are set in the Marigots du Sud, Sahel Atlantique and Sahel Maritime respectively. These settings have symbolic significance. In the first novel, "Marigots" means marshes, swamp - a land rendered useless by water, an element that is supposed to make it economically viable. By implication, African countries have been sapped of their resources and potentials by a colonial

government which at the beginning promised to enhance their socio-economic progress. As for Sahel Atlantique and Sahel Maritime, the word "Sahel" in these names says it all. These countries are dry and poor. However, we reiterate that this poverty is the result of the exploitative activities of colonialists rather than natural calamities.

In the three novels, the reader is also constantly shown the ruinous effects of colonialism on the colonised. The masses in the three novels, live in squalid conditions, are emaciated by malnutrition and disease and can no longer participate meaningfully in socio-economic activities. And the colonial administration which extracts so much from the colonised provides no socio-economic relief. The lorry in which Bohi Di, in Le Cercle des Tropiques, travels to the capital of the country is a "vieille guimbarde pétardante d'un autre siècle" (C.T., p.24). The engine of the lorry emits "une telle quantité de gaz toxique que nous ne nous voyions plus entre nous" (C.T., p.24). The vehicle is moreover compared to the cemetery, it symbolises death. Here, it is the colonial administration that is being indicted for its negligence and hypocrisy. It is exactly the failure of the colonial authorities to elevate the living

standard of the people they exploit so much that leads Albert Memmi to write in Portrait du colonisé:

> Les motifs économiques de l'entreprise coloniale sont aujourd'hui mis en lumière par tous les historiens de la colonisation. Personne ne croit plus à la mission culturelle et morale, même originelle, du colonisateur.[36]

It is also the negligence of the colonialists which leads Fanon to observe: "Le colon tire sa vérité, c'est-à-dire ses biens, du système colonial".[37]

We have examined the attitudes of Laye and Fantouré to colonialism. Laye's treatment of the theme is shallow and does not present a true picture of the realities of the colonial period. Fantouré, on the other hand is thorough. However, as we have pointed out, his indictment of colonialism is not very biting, not as biting as in for instance Une Vie de boy or Le Vieux nègre et la médaille. The works of Laye and Fantouré set in the colonial era are however very significant. Laye and Fantouré are two Guineans who lived in the colonial society. Yet, they react differently to colonialism. Certainly, the works of the two writers open a new debate on the whole issue of colonialism.

Having examined colonialists and colonial exploitation, our next task is to look at the

relationship between the nationalists and the colonialists.

II. THE AFRICAN NATIONALISTS AND THE COLONIALISTS

Laye's Dramouss and the three novels of Fantouré studied here, Le Cercle des Tropiques, L'Homme du troupeau and Le Voile ténébreux show that in spite of the obstacles placed in the way of Africans who try to go to school, some young Africans still become politically conscious and lead the struggle for independence. The Vice-President du Conseil du Gouvernement in Dramouss, Baré Koulé and Dr. Malecké in Le Cercle des Tropiques, Mainguai, Sassi and Lamine Derete in L'Homme du troupeau... and Mainguai-Africounah, Lamine Derete and Antoine Behi in Le Voile ténébreux are the young Africans who arise to fight for the emancipation of Africans from foreign domination.

The nationalists may be classified into two groups. There are those who genuinely oppose foreign domination and sincerely want to liberate their territory from French tutelage. On the other hand, there are nationalists who do not really oppose colonialism and are even prepared to collude with the colonialists during the struggle for independence. We shall retain the name "nationalists" for the former group while we shall call the latter "pseudo-nationalists". Here, we

are examining the relationship between the two groups and the colonialists, starting with the pseudo-nationalists.

PSEUDO-NATIONALISTS AND THE COLONIALISTS

Of the four novels studied in this chapter, only Le Cercle des Tropiques, Fantouré's first work, presents a pseudo-nationalist. This false-nationalist is Baré Koulé, leader of the majority party in the Marigots du Sud, the Parti Social de l'Espoir. Consequently, we deal with only this novel in this section.

Midiohouan describes Baré Koulé as "cet infame arriviste, ce fantoche".[38] This is the view the novel holds of Baré Koulé, the future President of the Marigots du Sud. He is a politican who could not have come to power but for the support of the colonial administration and its agents. Baré Koulé is intended to represent the first generation of African Presidents. The incompetence and opportunism of these African leaders are amply demonstrated by Bohi Di the hero and narrator of Le Cercle des Tropiques. Bohi Di, initially forced to become a member of the Parti Social de l'Espoir, and who later joins the opposition party, the Club des Travailleurs, is well placed to comment on what he considers to be Baré Koulé's opportunism. However, some of the masses too express their views on Baré

Koulé's unscrupulous ambition and his collusion with the colonial authorities. In spite of the seeming innocence of Bohi Di and the masses, they are too partial and are obsessed by their desire to attack the contemporary African leaders. For one thing, while it is true that most of the contemporary African leaders came to power with the help of the colonial governments and multi-national firms, these politicians are not, at least, during the struggle for power, as incompetent as Bohi Di and his friends want us to believe. As we have shown in the first chapter of this thesis, most of the leading nationalists, at the dawn of independence, embarked on socio-economic developments in their territories. They also, like the leaders of opposition parties, tried to infiltrate social groups like the intellectuals and other vital sectors of their territories. Clearly, the picture of the powers-that-be in Africa as drawn by Bohi Di and his friends is unrealistic. This, however, does not remove the fact that African leaders eliminated their rivals with the backing of their foreign supporters.

If the portrait of the leaders is not very convincing, Bohi Di's description of the process through which they come to power is quite appealing. The trial of Monchon, Malêkê's father and predecessor as leader of the Club des Travailleurs,

offers a good example of how the French colonial regime installs its puppets in power. In spite of the fact that Baré Koulé is the instigator of the "Folie des marchés" riots, in spite of the fact that several anonymous letters implicate Baré Koulé and moreover, in spite of the convincing argument advanced by Monchon's lawyer Almamy, the colonial court still acquits and discharges Baré Koulé. The choice of Almamy as Monchon's lawyer deserves further comments. Almamy, traditionally, means "the spiritual leader in West African Muslim societies."[39] Samory Touré, the 19th century Manding war leader who resisted French invasion was also called Almamy. Almamy symbolises truth. Thus, by rejecting the evidence of this lawyer, the French colonial government deliberately opts for falsehood.

The disruption of the rally organised by the leaders of the Club des Travailleurs by the colonial security forces in the last days of the election campaigns also provides an example of the determination of the colonial authorities to ensure that their stooge becomes President. The colonial security agents move into the premises of the opposition party, the Club des Travailleurs, arrest the leaders and intimidate members. This action is intended to destroy the chances of the Club des Travailleurs at the Presidential election and pave the way for Baré Koulé. It is this pseudo-nationalists-colonialists collusion that

Malêke, the leader of the Club des Travailleurs, denounces in the following omniscient comment "Vous nous donnez l'indépendence pour mieux pouvoir nous dominer par personnes interposées" (C.T., p.116). This is a genuine observation. For, without the physical, moral and financial support of the colonialists and their agents most African leaders would not be able to defeat their opponents in the pre-independence elections.

Thus, when the representative of the colonial government speaks of the "avenir teinté d'amitié entre (...) la Métropôle et le nouvel Etat du cercle des tropiques" (C.T., p.127) we must note that the novel is making an ironic statement. This is because only Baré Koulé and the Metropolis will benefit from the independence. For the people, real independence will remain a farce. Elsewhere, the novel shows that the people of the Marigots du Sud will reap nothing from the independence. This is how, for instance, Bohi Di decodes "independence".

> In-dé-pen-dance
>
> paon-dance
>
> (...) cha-cha-cha... (C.T. p.129).

Bohi Di and his creator are quite witty. "Paon" means peacock, known to be a bird of vanity. Implicitly, Baré Koulé is a vain person, a stooge who will dance to the tune of his foreign mentors

rather than address himself to the socio-economic problems of the citizens. Independence is also likened to dream and phantasm. While the continued repetition of the word "independant" in a poem in the novel (p.123) enhances Fantouré's satire. On the whole, Fantouré's depiction of the pseudo-nationalists - colonialists rapport is quite fascinating and illuminating. We now consider the relationship between the committed nationalists and the colonial administration.

COMMITTED NATIONALISTS AND THE COLONIALISTS

As stated earlier, the committed nationalists in the Guinean novels studied, are the Vice-President of the Council of Government and General Secretary of the PDG in Dramouss, Malekê in Le Cercle des Tropiques, Mainguai and Lamine-Derete in L'Homme du trouneau... while the real nationalists in Le Voile ténébreux are Mainguai-Africounah, Lamine-Derete and Antoine Behi. We start the discussion here with Dramouss not because it was published before Fantouré's novels, but because of the peculiar manner in which the committed nationalist here is presented.

It is insinuated in Dramouss that but for Houphouet Boigny, Sékou Touré would have been defeated by the opposition party in Guinea, the Bloc Africain de Guinée (BAG). It is through Mamie,

the friend of Fatoman, the protagonist of the novel, that this point is made. The novel also suggests that Sékou Touré was not really anti-colonialist in outlook. In our opinion, these assessments of the RDA leader are inaccurate.

It is true that during the fight for independence, Houphouet Boigny, as a more established politician, helped Sékou Touré. Boigny's support in 1959 was significant. The French government had engineered the electoral defeat of Sékou Touré. The PDG leader was demoralised. But the RDA leaders in West Africa, in an attempt to encourage Sékou Touré chose Conakry for the meeting of their Co-ordinating Committee. Zolberg relates that at the meeting attended by the Minister of Overseas France and the Governor of French West Africa, a parade was held. When Sékou Touré and his wife arrived, there were not enough seats "the Minister and his wife offered their chairs. Soon afterward, people were singing in the street that in Conakry, Sékou Touré is Governor.[40] However, Boigny's actions on this and other occasions are not the factors which led to the success of Sékou Touré. Rather it was Sékou Touré's organising ability and his determination to succeed that led to the defeat of the rival party, the BAG.

The favourable portrayal of Boigny on the one

hand and the negative depiction of Sékou Touré on the other hand can be explained in two ways. Laye's misunderstanding with Sékou Touré might have led him to present the leader of the PDG in an unfavourable manner. The favourable depiction of the PDCI leader can be explained by the cordial relationship between Laye and Boigny. The Ivorian leader and the novelist were friends and Boigny is known to have assisted the writer morally and financially.[41]

Dramouss's apparent objective is to show that Sékou Touré is an incompetent politician set up by a fellow African, Boigny, and who was not really anti-imperialist as he claimed to be. The novel tries to make this point by discarding the anti-imperialist stand of Sékou Touré and, in particular his effort to see to the liberation of Africa. During the colonial period, Sékou Touré fought not only for the independence of Guinea but of other colonised countries. For instance, on the liberation of Algeria, the Guinean President wrote:

> The solidarity shown by the people of Guinea with the gallant people of Algeria is the expression toward this brotherly people, who, for seven years, have opposed with arms in hand the loathsome deeds of French colonialism. Although brutal forces have reached there the height of barbarity, it is clear today that it cannot shake the unwavering determination of the African people to liberate

themselves from subjugation imposed by 150 years of colonial domination.[42]

Sékou Touré did not engage in mere rhetoric but backed up his pronouncement with concrete action. For instance, he mobilised Guineans behind the Algerians. The PDG organised a solidarity demonstration in 1961 in support of the Algerians who were fighting the French. At a time when Houphouet Boigny, as Minister in France voted for "l'écrasement de l'Algérie combattante" (Dramouss, p.185), Sékou Touré's stand on the Algerian war represented a bold contribution to the struggle for independence in Algeria. Sékou Touré's radical policies were among the factors that enabled him to defeat the colonial administration and not Boigny's contribution as insinuated by Dramouss.

Unlike the Vice-President of the Council of Government in Dramouss, the committed nationalists in the three novels of Fantouré studied in this chapter, are presented favourably. Fantouré illustrates the groups who fight the colonial administration, the steps taken by the nationalists in their encounter with the Whites and the ordeal of the African patriots at the hands of the colonial authorities.

One of the merits of Fantouré's treatment is that he gives a large place to the nationalists

identified with marxism. Mainguai and Mainguai-Africounah, the principal characters in L'Homme du troupeau... and Le Voile ténébreux respectively are identified with the left. In Le Cercle des Tropiques, the principal character, Bohi Di, is a member of the Club des Travailleurs, a political association whose affinity with the left is well known. Furthermore, Monchon, founder of the Club des Travailleurs, Malekê, Mallé Houré and a host of characters who play prominent roles, sympathise with Marxism. More importantly, these characters, said to be marxists, are the most vehement in their attack on colonialism and the most determined in the struggle for independence. This uncompromising picture of the fictionalised radical politicians reflects the reality of post-World War II politics. For, historians like Jean Suret-Canale have shown that during this period, African nationalists who had imbibed Marxist and Communist ideas were in the front line of the struggle for independence.[43]

Fantouré's three novels also show that individuals and groups who hold views other than Marxism are also opposed to foreign rule. Sassi in L'Homme du troupeau... and Le Voile ténébreux is one of such committed politicians. Sassi's political belief is not clearly defined and it would appear that Fantouré himself is not sure of which doctrine he should identify Sassi with. In

any case, Sassi is not a Marxist. His confidence in the chiefs and his friendship with them, and his generally modest attitude to the anti-colonialist struggle suggest Sassi to be one of the moderate African politicians of the post-World War II era. Even though he is described by the narrator in L'Homme du troupeau... as "démagogue en herbe" (H.T.S., p.216), even though his own statements sometimes portray him as timid and uncommitted to the liberation of Africa, Sassi's activities contradict this image. We have pointed out how Sassi, even though trained at William Ponty, where the authorities try to brainwash, refuses to be a stooge of the colonial administration. Other examples of Sassi's anti-colonialist activities abound in L'Homme du troupeau... and Le Voile ténébreux. Sassi's opposition to colonialism suggests that the Whites have failed in their attempt to indoctrinate Africans and perpétuate their rule. Even though the presentation of Sassi is incoherent and sometimes contradictory, it shows that Fantouré never loses sight of the role played by the various African patriots during tyy struggle for power in the colonial era.

It is Mainguai in L'Homme du troupeau... who starts the anti-colonialist struggle. While at school at Dakar, he observes: "Le régime colonial est un fait basé sur l'injustice" (HTS., p.19).

Here, Mainguai challenges the moral basis of the colonial entreprise. Further, Mainguai reiterates: "Ils sont tous des exploiteurs (...) il n'y a pas de colonialisme innocent" (HTS, p.22). The culmination of Mainguai's observation is a vow to challenge the colonialists with all the means available to him: "mon destin est de libérer ma terre (...). Avec le futur, tout est possible, même la fin du règne toubab sur l'Afrique" (HTS., p.21). Here is a combination of rhetoric of brackness which could hardly be expected of a form one pupil in a Secondary School. However, Mainguai's statement sheds light on the extent of bitterness of the radical politicians in particular and African patriots generally in the post-World War II period.

Mainguai, in L'Homme du troupeau... does not just express his aversion to colonialism. He takes concrete steps to fight the imperialists. Mainguai plans to study law. He hopes that his legal studies will put him in a better position to understand the laws operating in the colonies and effectively challenge them. Mainguai also intends to study Philosophy in order to "comprendre le sens des idées qui régissent votre monde" (HTS., p.23), that is the world of the Whitemen. Mainguai's plan to enrol for Philosophy recalls Samba Diallo, the protagonist in Cheikh Hamidou

Kane's L'Aventure ambiguë, who is sent to the Whiteman's school to study Philosophy in order to "vaincre sans avoir raison".[44] Samba Diallo and Mainguai are personally convinced of the relevance of Philosophy to the struggle for independence.

Noteworthy, is the fact that many prominent intellectuals and nationalists during the colonial era, studied either Law or Philosophy or both. Lamine Guèye, one of the early Senegalese nationalists studied Law, while in Guinea Fodéba Keita, the founder of the world famous Ballet Guinéen and Diallo Telli, first General Secretary of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) were all students of Law.[45] Thus, in opting for legal studies and Philosophy, Mainguai in L'Homme du troupeau... is following in the footsteps of contemporary liberators.

Mainguai does not read just any Law or Philosophy books. The texts he reads are those directly related to the anti-colonialist struggle. For instance, among the books he chooses is Kant's La Critique de la raison pure. It is known that, apart from the above book, Kant also published La Critique de la raison pratique, La Critique du jugement and Le Fondement de la métaphysique des moeurs.[46] Even though Kant lived

and published his works before the actual beginning of colonialism, his books are seen by the colonialists as a serious threat to the colonialists. One idea that runs through Kant's writings is that moral law presupposes the existence of freedom.[47] The colonial powers militarily imposed themselves on Africans. They also deny Africans their freedom. Thus, in reading La Critique de la raison pure, Mainguai chooses a text which exposes colonialism and encourages him in his anti-colonialist endeavour.

Further in L'Homme du troupeau du Sahel, we are told of how Mainguai also reads Marxist books. Here too, Mainguai lays his hand on specific texts, one of which is Le Manifeste communiste in the Capital series. Since the publication of the Communist Manifesto in 1848, it has posed one of the greatest challenges to the capitalist world and later colonialism. For Marx, his real mission in life was to contribute to the overthrow of capitalist society and the State institutions it has established.[48] This anti-capitalism which pervades Marx's writings is emphasised in the Communist Manifesto reportedly read by Mainguai in L'Homme du troupeau... The reading of Marx's books by Mainguai is a step in the right direction in Mainguai's continuous effort to find inspiration and strategies with which to fight the colonial regime.

All the nationalists, be they radicals, moderates or ordinary workers see trade unionism as the most effective weapon of fighting the French colonial administration. Mainguai in L'Homme du troupeau... declares his confidence in trade union organisation as a fighting tool: "Je suis un héros qui s'ignore, ou un futur syndicaliste qui se fabrique" (HTS, p.124). Sassi also intends to launch a trade union movement. As for Lamine-Derete, the representative of railway workers, he and his friends have already formed the "syndicat clandestin d'Afrique Noire". We witness the consolidation of the activities of these labour organisations in Le Voile ténébreux. Worthy of note is that, in the contemporary society, Doigny launched the Syndicat Africain Agricole (S.A.A.) while in Guinea, Sékou Touré also established the Syndicat des P.T.T. Like the African politicians of the era, the labour leaders in L'Homme du troupeau... and Le Voile ténébreux are lucid. With the state of emergency brought about by the Second World War, with the presence, in the colonies, of ruthless, intolerant and intolerable officials like the Commanding Officer of Upper Guinea and especially, with the superior force at the disposal of the colonial authorities, it would be quite suicidal for any contemporary politician to contemplate an armed confrontation with the government.

True nationalists are constantly in search of factors which impede the anti-colonialist effort with a view to eliminating them. One of such obstacles is social parasitism. Mainguai-Africounah in Le Voile ténébreux explains this phenomenon in the following manner: "pour une seule personne qui travaille à en crever, vingt apparaissent pour lui "avaler" son revenu pendant la première semaine du mois" (VT, p.34). "Avaler", a term too strong to be used here, expresses the extent of Mainguai-Africounah's bitterness with social parasitism. By this statement, Mainguai-Africounah aims at two groups of people - those who refuse to work and who, hiding under the excuse of the extended family system in Africa feed on the sweat of others. The second group identified by Mainguai-Africounah comprises the "marabouts" who parade themselves as custodians of mystical powers and dupe ignorant people. The novel establishes a link between social parasitism and the anti-colonialist struggle in a fascinating manner. Mainguai-Africounah, who is demobilised from the colonial army and who, with his meagre indemnity, plans to liberate Sahel Atlantique from foreign tutelage, is expected to feed a countless number of distant relatives. Thus, this form of exploitation deprives the revolutionary of the money he requires to confront the colonialists. This social ill allows colonialism to persist. This

is why Le Voile ténébreux proposes that social parasitism in whatever form, should be combated by the revolutionary as vigorously as he confronts the colonialists.

Another internal problem which should be combated simultaneously with European domination is religious fanaticism. Maïnguai-Africounah's uncle, Lahan-Fia in Le Voile ténébreux, epitomises this social problem. This patriarch advocates a rejection of everything Western, including the European school. For, he sees them as dangerous to African traditional life. The novelist, in a strong authorial intrusion, indicts Lahan-Fia: "Il oubliait que cette écriture était aussi un moyen de libération et de rénaissance de l'identité culturelle africaine (VT, p.141). Fantourè's position is quite legitimate. Lahan Fia is the "Voile ténébreux" (the title of the novel), that is the myopic patriarch whose retrogressive and extremist views will do the revolutionary and Africa no good.

Fia, however, represents only an aspect of religion. Another aspect comprises religious leaders who help to promote the exploitative policies of the colonial administration in exchange for recognition and material rewards. These collaborationists were powerful and often clashed

with radical politicians during the colonial era. Fantouré is silent over the conduct of these religious leaders. This is an important omission in his novels which deal with the colonial era.

The revolutionaries are not without weaknesses. The manner in which Mainguai-Africounah in Le Voile ténébreux, tries to teach all sorts of revolution, including the Russian Revolution, under the watchful eyes of the colonial authorities, is to say the least reckless. His own quick enumeration of the revolutions he tries to cover at the Railway Institute within a short time suggests a lack of tact. Mainguai-Africounah's dismissal after a few days of appointment shows clearly that his strategy does not pay off. Also, when Lamine-Derete in the same novel, acts against wise counsel, calls for a workers' demonstration which results in several casualities, Fantouré's indirectly showing the weakness of another reputable nationalist. Lamine-Derete's action is politically inexpedient. And in Le Cercle des Tropiques, before independence, the campaigns of the Club des Travailleurs are limited mainly to the urban centres. For a party which claims to belong to the masses, these urban-oriented activities, portray the Club des Travailleurs leaders in bad light. Thus, the true nationalists in Fantouré's works are human beings who are capable of making

mistakes. By refusing to idolize the committed nationalists, Fantouré enhances the plausibility of his works.

Practically, all the true nationalists in Fantouré's works dealt with here, suffer as a result of their anti-colonialist activities. For challenging the colonialists, Monchon, the founder of the Club des Travailleurs in Le Cercle des Tropiques, pays with his life. Mainguai in L'Homme du troupeau... is forced to stop his education because he antagonises the colonial authorities. After his expulsion from the Dakar school, he sets his books on fire. This symbolizes that Mainguai rejects the West and all that the West stands for. However, Mainguai's personal anguish at this trying moment cannot be missed. Here is how the novel interpretes his thought: "Pendant que le feu prenait corps, Mainguai eut un serrement de coeur. Tant d'années d'efforts perdues. Tant d'espoir réduit en fumée. Lavenir devenait incertain" (HTS, p.28). And in Le Voile ténébreux, Mainguai-Africounah's plight is not different. The chapter, "La Silhouette" placed strategically at the end of the novel recounts Mainguai-Africounah's tribulation as a result of his opposition to colonial rule. Mainguai, according to the authorities, is the "silhouette" the faceless plotter behind the demonstration which provokes several casualties in Sahel Maritime. Corporal

punishment is administered on Mainguai-Africounah as a result of false accusation and he is expelled from his fatherland by the colonial authorities.

Yet, the political leaders are never deterred. The more they are harrassed, the more determined they become to liberate their territories from domination. In Le Cercle des Tropiques when Monchon is assassinated by agents of Baré Koulé and the colonial administration, he is quickly succeeded by Malékê and the struggle for independence continues. Similarly Mainguai and Mainguai-Africounah in L'Homme du troupeau... and Le Voile ténébreux respectively never abandon the liberation effort in spite of the repressive measures of the colonial regime. It is this refusal of Malékê and his committed friends in the other novels, to yield to intimidation and to continue to wage war until the edifice of colonialism is completely demolished, that makes these Africans respectable statesmen.

Even though Fantouré's depiction of the nationalists-colonialists rapport has flaws, it is more captivating than Laye's who is apparently interested in attacking an individual politician - Sékou Touré, rather than studying the relationship between African nationalists and the colonial authorities.

We shall next turn our attention to the relationship between African nationalists and their compatriots who formed various social groups in the colonial era.

III. AFRICAN NATIONALISTS AND ASPIRATION TO NATIONHOOD

African politicians before independence strive to bring colonialism to an end in order to replace the European masters. In other words, the indigenous politicians strive for a new nation in which they will be leaders. Inevitably, the nationalists in order to attain this objective, have to relate to all strata of the colonised, either for their support or to outwit them. Here, we look at the relationship between the nationalists and the rest of Africans in the former's pursuit of political power.

NATIONALISTS AND RURAL DWELLERS

Only Fantouré treats the relationship between politicians and peasants. Laye is completely silent on this issue. Yet, Laye had greater opportunity than Fantouré to explore the nationalists - rural dwellers intercourse. This is because, Kouroussa, Laye's hometown is located in a rural area in Upper Guinea where there were many peasants.[49] Also, before Laye's departure for France in 1947, he used to visit his relations who were farmers at Tindican.[50]

political activities in Guinea, it must be stressed, had started by this time and Laye was witness to some of the unfoldings. Moreover, when Laye finally returned to Guinea just before independence, he was an eye-witness to political activities amongst some rural communities in the country.[51] Laye is thus unlike Fantouré who resided permanently in Europe. As a self-appointed chronicler of the colonial society, Laye weakens his work by ignoring a problem as important as the nationalist-peasants rapport.

Fantouré, on the other hand, shows great interest in the condition of the people living in the countryside. Fantouré's interest in this theme might be explained by his training and profession as an economist. Two of his novels which treat the problems of the colonial era - Le Cercle des Tropiques and L'Homme du troupeau... treat the nationalists-peasants rapport. Rural dwellers in the two works include peasants, cattle breeders and the labourers employed by the colonial authorities to track down traffickers. Two sets of contemporary politicians interact with these people the false nationalists and the true liberators of the colonised.

The false political leaders, as we have seen collude with the colonial authorities in their

attempt to gain political power. It is the same anti-popular strategy that this group of politicians adopt in their dealings with the Africans living in the countryside. Le Cercle des Tropiques illustrates this lack of scruples of the politicians. They deliberately misinform the illiterate masses in order to win their support. Feutouré castigates the politicians here, Baré Koulé and his cohorts through the unsophisticated comments of the villagers. A peasant observes: "Baré Koulé et ses partisans nous ont appris que l'Indépendance apportera les richesses aux Marigots du Sud." (C.T., p.112). It is this deceitful political strategy that Fanon denounces when he writes: "Quand les cadres politiques nationalistes bourgeois disent une chose, ils signifient sans ambages qu'ils ne le pensent pas réellement".[52] To tell lies the way Baré Koulé and most African politicians do is illegitimate. This is because they raise unnecessarily the hopes and expectations of the illiterate masses.

The other group of statesmen comprises leaders of the Club des Travailleurs in Le Cercle des Tropiques, Naïnguai and Sassi in L'Homme du Troupeau... Unlike Baré Koulé and his friends, these politicians shun fraudulent methods and sincerely commit themselves to defending the inhabitants of the rural areas. Le Cercle des Tropiques aptly

illustrates the positive values which characterise the patriotic - villagers represent. When Bohi Di, the protagonist of the novel, meets a group of peasants, he does not conceal the reality of the post-independence era. He emphasises: "Indépendance n'est pas une déesse de la prospérité (...) Tu gagneras ton riz à la sueur de ton front" (C.T, p.113). By personnifying "Indépendance", Bohi Di tries to speak to his hosts in a language they understand. Bohi Di's bluntness contrasts with the deceitful strategy of Baré Koulé and his supporters. The aim of the protagonist is to puncture the illusory expectations of the credulous villagers and to prepare them toward the building of a virile nation. However, Bohi Di's view is too blunt, and at the dawn of independence, no African politician was prepared to tell people such a bitter truth. Presumably, Bohi Di's sincerity is an attitude Fantouré expects of the African nationalists at the dawn of independence.

Similarly, Malinguad and Sassi in L'Homme du troupeau... dedicate themselves to the cause of the Africans living in the grazing region of their territory. Malinguai is a "tirailleur africain". We have hinted at the condition of the African soldiers mobilised to defend France during World War II. The low respect accorded the "tirailleurs africains" by the colonial administration is

reflected in Jean Suret-Canale's account. As he puts it, the uniform of some of the recruits: "consisted of a military cap and a red belt but no boots or sandals".[53] In spite of Mainguai's insignificant position in the colonial hierarchy, he relentlessly defends the masses.

The "indigénat" decree, as we have indicated, empowers the colonial administrators to employ African labour free of charge. Mainguai tries to make this exploitative law inapplicable to the Unité Est-Est assignment for which Sahelian labourers are recruited. At the meeting he holds with the authorities, Mainguai does not behave like a recruit in the army, who simply obeys but rather like a trade union leader who forces the authorities to negotiate with workers. As he puts it: "Ne comptez pas réquisitionner les gens (...) les indigènes ne croient plus à l'alibi de l'effort de guerre" (HTS, p.117). Mainguai, here, claims to be only presenting the view of the colonised, however, his subsequent pronouncements show that, more than the masses, he is opposed to forced labour. He states categorically: "Pour une fois, ce ne seront pas des travaux forcés ou les devoirs de "l'effort de guerre". Ils doivent bien être payés (...). Les indigènes en ont assez des travaux forcés" (HTS, p.119). As a result of Mainguai's courage and astuteness he is able to

force the Europeans to sign an agreement with African labourers. Similarly, Mainguai succeeds in rendering null and void, the colonial legislation on the requisition of livestock as the authorities are made to promise to compensate breeders. Even though the authorities renege on their promise, the ability of Mainguai, a recruit in the colonial army, to make the Europeans recognise the right of Africans during World War II, is no means achievement.

L'Homme du troupeau... also shows that the action of another politician, Sassi, who allegedly murders a colonial official, is patriotic. That the novel approves of Sassi is evident in the following authorial comment:

> Au risque de décevoir les adversaires de Sassi, il importe de mettre en garde sur le fait que l'événement de Minder n'avait rien d'un grand scandale susceptible de mettre à tout jamais Sassi hors du chemin des honnêtes gens (HTS, p.224).

The popularity of Sassi's action is also demonstrated by the mass protest against his arrest by the colonial authorities and also by the large number of peasants who testify in his favour during his trial. On the other hand, the colonial official allegedly murdered by Sassi is named "Fumié" a word presumably derived from "fumier" which means, among other things, "trash or dung". Furthermore, Fumié's

African collaborator, Baibakam is described as a "petit tyran sanguinaire".

Having considered the relationship between African nationalists and the rural poor, we now study the politicians-urban dwellers rapport in Dramouss and in the novels of Fantouré dealing with the problems of the colonial period.

POLITICIANS AND URBAN DWELLERS

Laye is interested in the politics of the urban centres. It would appear that Laye's personal experience of Guinean politics, particularly at the dawn of independence accentuated his interest in the political problems of the urban areas. Dramouss focuses on an electioneering campaign of the PDG, thinly disguised as the Guinean RDA. Since the RDA militants who speak at the gathering are addressing an urban and enlightened audience, they use political jargons. However, in spite of this sophistication, it is clear that the speeches lack coherence. Here is part of a speech by one of the RDA orators:

> Demain, camarades, toutes ces écoles, et la masse des esprits qui y sont politiquement orientés et engagés, mais surtout pleinement utilisés, conditionneront le développement et la puissance de la Guinée (Dramouss, p.177).

This rumbling sentence should not portray the

speaker as unintelligent. Rather, it should be seen as a strategy of a party that has no genuine socio-economic programme and seeks to play on people's intelligence. The other party militants also resort to long and confusing statements in an attempt to mystify the audience. If the anti-colonialist stance of the RDA which we have drawn attention to, is laudable, the party's attempt to misinform Guineans in order to gain political power is anti-patriotic and unacceptable.

The novel does not castigate only the political leaders. It also indicts the audience for its uncritical attitude to the empty slogans of the militants. When, after each speech, the crowd shout: "Bravo! Bravo! Bien Parlé , when the crowd react to the speeches with "nouveaux applaudissements enthousiastes" we must note that Laye is satirising the credulity of the audience which yields to the gimmicks of the RDA militants. Thus, neither the politicians nor the townsmen escape Laye's corrosive satire. However, the minority party in pre-independence Guinea, the BAG also resorted to tactics similar to those of the RDA. It is unfair of Laye to criticise the RDA while maintaining silence over the anti-patriotic conduct of the BAG leaders.

Fantouré, on the other hand depicts two types of politicians-city dwellers relations. We have

already highlighted how in Le Cercle des Tropiques, Baré Koulé, obsessed with the quest for political power, collaborates with the colonialists to the detriment of the proletariat. This represents, like the one presented by Laye, a negative form of politicians - masses intercourse. But Fantouré also depicts another relationship - a positive one which exists between the radical nationalists and the proletariat in the urban areas. The latter are a contrast to Baré Koulé. These radicals include the leaders of the Club des Travailleurs in Le Cercle des Tropiques, Mainguai-Africounah and Antoine Bell in Le Voile ténébreux. It is the leaders of the Club des Travailleurs who secure jobs for the unemployed and defend the proletariat from exploitation. The devotion of the Club des Travailleurs leaders to the cause of the workers in the urban centres is most glaring in the song they compose for the workers. The recurring words in this song are: "j'enrage, je tonne, je veux, j'arracherai (CT, pp.98-99). These words are evidence of fury, resistance and rejection of the colonial economic order by Africans. The dedication of this group of politicians to the cause of the proletariat is also well shown in Le Voile ténébreux. The protagonist, Mainguai-Africounah declares: "Je représentais un espoir de survie pour des milliers de désespérés du Sahel Maritime" (VT, p.126). This

is no more pronouncement as Mainguai-Africounah launches the Syndicat de Manoeuvres et Chômeurs Africounah (SYMACAF) through which he secures jobs for Africans.

Here, however, Fantouré appears to exaggerate unduly the achievements of the radical politicians. It is, for instance, unrealistic that the leaders of the Club des Travilleurs in Le Cercle des Tropiques, who have no single factory are able to find jobs for the "foule des chômeurs (qui) ressemblait à une chaine de montagnes" (C.T., p.38). Neither is it possible for Mainguai-Africounah an ex-serviceman, without any qualification or job, to find jobs for the teeming number of unemployed who troop into his SYMACAF office daily. And, this is the trouble with Fantouré's art. He almost always presents the politicians he likes (that is those in opposition) in very favourable light while his enemies (those in power) are always presented in the most unflattering manner. However, in depicting two types of nationalists-townsmen relations, (the positive and the negative) Fantouré, to a greater extent than Laye, produces a work which reflects the historico-political reality of Africa during the colonial era.

We now turn our attention to the nationalists and the youth.

NATIONALISTS AND YOUTH

We have seen how Dramouss accuses the Territorial Assembly in Guinea of withdrawing Fatoman's scholarship unjustly. The implication is that the RDA government impedes the educational advancement of the Guinea youth. This, we have indicated, is not quite true.

Fantouré, on his part, takes a different view of the attitude of African nationalists toward the youth during the colonial era. For Fantouré, the politicians always maintained cordial rapport with the youth. The Maingual-Grand Nègre friendship in L'Homme du troupeau... symbolises this accord. Fantouré struggles hard to prove that Grand-Nègre although young (14 years old), is a reliable patriot who genuinely wants to contribute to the emancipation of Africa. His name "Grand-Nègre" is suggestive of his anti-colonialist stance. Moreover, this youth shuns the comfortable life at a mission and joins a patriotic group that is involved in teaching Sahelian villagers how to read and write. Thus, he prepares the ground for the liberation of Africa. Implicitly, Maingual is prudent in accepting Grand-Nègre into the Unité Tsé-tsé team. In Le Voile ténébreux Maingual Africounah is still a good companion of Grand-Nègre. The friendship gets stronger even, for, Maingual-Africounah marries the sister of Grand-

Nègre. Thus, the two are not only united ideologically but also by marriage. Thus, the joint effort to combat colonialism will continue. This confirms the wisdom in Mainguai's decision to seek a rapprochement with the youth, who Grand-Nègre represents. Fantouré's treatment of the nationalists-youth solidarity is quite alluring. However, such a solidarity between the African statesmen and the youth was rare during the colonial era. Most youth movements in Francophone West Africa were formed after independence. It should appear that Fantoure introduces into his narrative, elements which he expects to be part of African colonial history.

It is also this desire that Fantouré seems to express through Sassi, the Veterinary Assistant in L'Homme du troupeau... Sassi teaches in a private school he establishes himself in Niger for the children of nomads. His aim is obvious: he sees the youth as a force to reckon with in the emancipation process and seeks to equip them intellectually for the task ahead. Moreover, the nomads, by their nature, are one of the most difficult people to educate and one of the backward groups in West Africa. By establishing a school for the children of the nomads, Sassi is, thus, instructing a people who need instruction most. At a time when the

Western schools are used to indoctrinate the African children, Sassi's school is a good alternative, a place where political consciousness can be aroused in the African youth.

We now go over to the transactions between the nationalists and the traditional centres of power.

NATIONALISTS AND TRADITIONAL CENTRES OF POWER

By traditional centres of power, we mean wealthy and powerful clans, secret societies like the Société Poro and traditional rulers. Only Fantouré examines the role of these groups. Laye, apparently pre-occupied by his satire on the RDA leadership in Guinea, does not comment on the contribution or otherwise of the traditional centres of power to the anti-colonialist effort. Fantouré's L'Homme du troupeau... and Le Voile ténébreux are the novels in which traditional power brokers are treated. We look at these traditional power brokers, starting with the Moriah-Forécat.

The Moriah-Forécat clan is one of the groups which Maïnguai in L'Homme du troupeau... tries to get closer to. This clan derives its strength from three sources. It is wealthy. (Its fortune includes "des hameaux d'esclaves"). This may sound unreal as no African is reputed to have owned slaves at the period in question. The Moriah-Forécat

also have scholars well versed in Islamic knowledge, while the family also boasts of intellectuals including lawyers, doctors who occupy prominent positions in the colonial society. Maingual, in deciding to seek a rapprochement with the Moriah-Forécat, is guided by the Marxist principle that a revolutionary should avail himself of all legitimate means in his attempt to bring about social, economic and political changes (HIE, p.202). Maingual's decision to associate with the Moriah-Forécat confirms him as a pragmatic Marxist who has a firm grasp of the intricacies of colonial politics. For, we know that during the colonial era, several influential families, fed up with the colonial order, and which saw a brighter future in the post-independence era, were enthusiastic supporters of radical politicians like Maingual. That the radicals benefit from their association with influential clans is further demonstrated in Le Voile ténébreux. The Moriah-Forécat support Maingual-Africounah during his trial by a colonial court.

The Société Poro is a secret organisation which Sassi, the Veterinary Assistant in L'Homme du tambourin... tries to join. This organisation, whose activities are described at length in the novel, does not emanate entirely from Fantouré's imagination. In a voluminious book entitled The History of Sierra Leone, the author, Christopher Fyfe reveals that

the Poro sprang up from the Mande people of Sierra Leone perhaps in the 18th Century.[54] The fictionalized Poro, like the original one, is said to bestow mystical powers which ensure the success of its members in politics. Sassi who joins this organisation is elected deputy, representing his territory in the Metropolis. Implicitly, the Poro has a lot of influence on the politics of the colonial era. The fact however is that even though the Poro spread to as far as the Cameroon, it did not play any remarkable role in the anti colonialist struggle and the pursuit of political power by African politicians.[55] Fantouré accords this secret organisation a status it never attained during the colonial era.

When Meinguai in L'Homme du troupeau... boycots chiefs, his decision is based on sound judgement. And when later he confers with them, this action is also a judicious one. We saw, in chapter one, how the traditional rulers in the colonial society served as instruments of the White. The novel above denounces the chieftaincy. A vivid description of King Gbéavogui's opportunism is done through incisive authorial comments and also through the remarks of Gbéavogui's own subjects. For instance, a man who is a victim of Gbéavogui's intrigue prays thus: "Que Allah (...) nous protège (...) de Gbéavogui, et que l'enfer lui soit offert comme

récompense" (HTS, p.197). Mainguai is aware of the corrupt activities of Guéavogui. However, he asks him to recommend labourers required for the search for cattle raiders. In approaching Guéavogui, Mainguai is not being naive but rather acting in conformity with the marxist precept according to which a revolutionary could have recourse to all elements that could enhance the revolutionary process. Mainguais ability to watch closely the conduct of Gueavogui, detect his subversive activities and above all force the chief to obey his instructions, confirms Mainguai's shrewdness. The Mainguai-Gueavogui encounter is symbolic. It represents the confrontation between the radical politicians and the chieftaincy in Francophone West Africa during the colonial era. Like Mainguai, the radical politicians in the colonial society were often victorious in such clashes.

The manner in which the nationalists viewed the civil servants before independence is the next theme to attract our attention.

NATIONALISTS AND CIVIL SERVANTS

Mainguai in L'Homme du troupeau... declares in a monologue: "Je m'enfous des fonctionnaires indigènes, ils ont peur pour leurs petits salaires de l'administration coloniale (HTS, p.124). Here is Mainguai's view of the attitude of African civil

servants during the colonial era. Those referred to as "fonctionnaires indigènes" by Maingual are the workers trained mostly at the William Ponty College to perform auxiliary duties. Since this group of workers were trained and employed by the colonial administration, they fail to identify openly with nationalist movements. Some were even hostile to the nationalists. The betrayal, in Le Voile ténébreux, of the President of the Syndicat des Clercs Indigènes, Antoine Kohi, by members of his union, further illustrates the timidness and the reactionary role of the civil servants during the colonial period. Thus, Maingual in L'Homme du troupeau... is right in playing down the contribution of the civil servants to the anti-colonialist struggle. However, the blanket condemnation of this category of workers by Maingual is unjustified. For, as Suret-Canale indicates, there were a few African workers who were prepared to risk transfer, dismissal and imprisonment and who furnished: "les cadres syndicaux et politiques du nouvement anti-colonialiste".[56]

Let us now look at the rivalry among African nationalists during the struggle for power before independence.

RIVALRY AMONG AFRICAN NATIONALISTS

Rivalry among leading African politicians is

a common feature of politics in the colonial era. Rivalry often led to clashes between supporters of the politicians and bloodshed. Laye and Fantouré prove to be familiar with this aspect of the socio-political problems of the colonial society and have depicted it in their novels. Dramouss and Fantouré's three novels discussed here have one thing in common on the above issue. The leaders of the majority parties in these novels are always aggressors who try to eliminate their political opponents through violent methods.

The incident in Dramouss is brief but very effective. Nor, it is through the RDA militants themselves that the sadistic methods of the party are revealed. A speaker at the Koumoussa rally remarks:

> S'ils (PAG) feignent de méconnaître la force de notre Parti, appliquez les consignes: mettez les saboteurs hors d'état de nuire incendiez leurs cases. Et alors justement intimidés, ils ne se mettront plus en travers de l'évolution harmonieuse de notre pays. (Dramouss, p.181).

The implication of this statement cannot be missed. The RDA speaker seeks to brand the leaders of the opposition party (PAG) as enemies of the people and the nation and thus, prepare the ground for their physical elimination. The intolerance of the RDA leaders is further revealed by their use of the

word "intimidés", which implies that the leaders wish to gain political power not through their socio-political programmes but rather by cowing their real and potential opponents. It is this unscrupulous strategy of the RDA that Fatoman denounces in the following diatribe:

> Il faudra dire qu'un régime qui se bâtit dans le sang, par les soins des incendiaires de cases et de saisons n'est qu'un régime d'exercice et de dictature. Un régime fondé sur la violence, et que détruira la violence. (Devoirs, p.165).

Similarly, the leaders of the leading party in Le Cercle des Tropiques are the initiators of coercive methods. The "folie des marchés" riots, described at length by Bohi Di, the narrator, are the practical expression of Baré Koulé's design to become President through the use of force. The stampede, looting, arson and physical combats in the town of the Marigots du Sud recorded in Le Cercle des Tropiques could pass for any of those political thuggeries witnessed in most parts of Africa just before independence. Bohi Di relates a few days to the riots that Baré Koulé wants to eliminate some «boucs émissaires». And truly, Baré Koulé gets Donchon, the founder of the opposition party, the Club des Travailleurs, implicated and subsequently physically eliminated. Implicitly, most of the political violence in Africa toward

independence is premeditated and the handiwork of politicians, here leaders of majority parties, who do not tolerate opposition. Fanon observes that: "La décolonisation est toujours un phénomène violent".[57] What Fanon means is that the decolonisation process involves a clash between the colonised on the one hand and the colonialists on the other hand. Fanon does not mean that Africans should massacre themselves in the course of the struggle for independence. He elaborates: "La violence du régime colonial et la contre violence du colonisé s'équilibrent et se répondent dans une homogénéité réciproque extraordinaire".[58] Thus, the nationalists who assassinate their opponents in order to gain political power undermine the anti-colonialist struggle.

Noteworthy is the fact that in Dramouss and Le Cercle des Tropiques the minority parties are presented as harmless and victims of the stronger parties. It is this point that Aimée in Dramouss tries to make when she states: "La section guinéenne du PDA provoquait le parti adverse". (Dramouss, p.194). Here, the PDA is the aggressor and the BAG only retaliates. Fantouré also presents in Le Cercle des Tropiques an innocent picture of the Club des Travailleurs, at least before independence. Fantouré also shows that at the beginning of the anti-colonialist struggle, the nationalists bury

their differences and unite in challenging the hegemony of the Europeans. The relationship between Mainguai and Sassi, Mainguai and Ansoumani and Mainguai and Lamine Derete in L'Homme du Trompeau... and also the understanding between Mainguai Africounah and Antoine Béhi in Le Voile ténébreux are eloquent testimonies of the spirit of tolerance and cooperation between these nationalists. It is possible that the African nationalists tolerated each other at the beginning of the decolonisation process. However, the image of tolerance given of the opposition particularly at the dawn of independence, as demonstrated in Orphaux and Le Cercle des Tropiques is a point we find it difficult to accept.

These main issues have been discussed in this chapter. These issues are colonial exploitation, the relationship between African nationalists and the colonialists and African nationalists and aspiration to nationhood. Fantouré's treatment of these themes is far more profound and exciting than Laye's. This is not only because Fantouré deploys more novelistic tact Laye to the socio-political problems of the colonial era, but especially because Fantouré is less emotionally involved in the issue he depicts. Of particular note, is his view on the evolution of the African political leadership. The latter start their political career conscientiously but later

abandon the popular role as a result of their crave for political power. This is a view we agree with. Kantouré's words are, however, not the most comprehensive nor the most appealing on the colonial and anti-colonial themes. Contrary to what we read in his novel, exploitation of Africans started at an earlier date and by people other than Whites. This can be shown in Le Devoir de violence by Ouloguem. Furthermore, the decolonisation process dates, as recorded as World War I and not World War II. Kantouré is also slightly over-sympathetic to the radical nationalists who he presents as the most committed and most lucid of all contemporary politicians. This robs non-Marxist nationalists and other Africans of the praise that is their due in the course of the anti-colonialist struggle. Dramouss, Le fanal des Tropiques, L'Homme du trouveau... and Le Voile ténébreux however deserve serious attention. They show that there are Africans who care to trace the evolution of the political, economic and social realities that are in post-independence African societies.

These main issues have been treated in this chapter. They are colonial exploitation, the conflict between the African nationalists and the colonialists and the nationalists-Africans relationships. The interactions between these groups occurred at a period characterised by oppression and violence. The European colonialists

subjected Africans to various forms of brutalities and exploitation. Enlightened Africans who lived at the time fought in order to reverse the contemporary order. Clashes ensued between the European colonialists and the educated Africans and also among the nationalists contending for political power. The society depicted in the novels treated is therefore a society in transition and one in deep crisis. The instability, the tension and above all the violence are adequately highlighted by Fantouré and Laye.

The complex drama which unfolds in the four novels can be seen first of all in the titles of the works. We have already pointed out the close relationship between "Le Voile ténébreux and the political reality of the colonial era. The title, L'Homme du troupeau du Sahel is even more relevant to the colonial saga. Maingui the protagonist is the son of the Mock, the African youth subjected to inhuman treatment by the colonialists because of his anti-colonialist activities. Maingui is the coordinator of the Unité Tse-tse, the organisation which served as a spring board for political activities during the colonial era. Maingui remains one of the intolerance and brutalities of the colonial authorities but also of the tension and clashes in the colonial society. In short, Maingui embodies the political, social and economic

experiences on the continent during the colonial era.

Even the term "Unité Tsé-tsé" is relevant to the complicated reality of the colonial era. Like the dreaded insect from which its name is derived, this organisation is perilous to both Europeans and Africans. While on the one hand, the Unité Tsé-tsé is used to weaken the colonialists' enterprise in Africa, on the other hand, it paves the way for the much desired political power by the Black nationalists.

We have seen that intolerance and violence are important features of the colonial society. These misdeeds are perpetrated by the European colonialists who subject the Blacks to all sorts of indignities in the bid to achieve their objectives. Fantouré highlights the methods of the White men through various literary devices. One of such is the dialogue. For instance, we read this statement in L'Ivrogne du troupeau... "Il n'y a que la chicotte qui marche" (UTS, p.19). Here, it is a European revealing the techniques of his own people. Further in Le Nouveau, Henri, the commandant militaire de la Haute Guinée and the Chief of the Police in Le Voile Bleu Étoilé all make pronouncements which portray them as intolerant and violent.

Fantouré exposes also the psyche of the European child in the colonial environment through the conversational style. One of Mainguai's mates

declares "Oui, tu les collectionnes (...) colonisé, africain, sahelien, nègre, noir, negro etc." (HTS., p.21). Children represent innocence. Their tender minds cannot accommodate the prejudices of the elders. Yet, Dujardin the European child is familiar with all the expressions hurtful to Africans. The "etc" ending his statement shows indeed that he knows more derogatory terms than he has expressed. Dujardin's anti-Black sentiment is evidence of the extent of the Whitemen's hatred for the colonised.

Furthermore, Fantouré frequently boosts his dialogues by inserting in them detailed depiction of the conducts of the White men. For instance, the author inserts this description during Mainguai's argument with his mathematics instructor. "En l'espace de quelques secondes, le professeur avait perdu de son contrôle, s'était abattu sur l'adolescent" (HTS, p.19). The combination of dialogue and thorough description reveals the White men not only as exploiters but as bullies who avail themselves of every available brutal means to achieve their goals.

One other important feature of the strategies of the European colonialists is intimidation through the power of the verb. No where in the novels of Fantouré set in the colonial period does one see a White man address the colonised with kind words. "Avouez que vous prépariez la masse à une insurrection" (CT, p.84). "Ne jouez pas au malin (...)

Donnez votre nom ou décampez!" (CT, p.97). "Vos propos vous coûteront cher" (CT, p.98). In all these cases, it is the White men talking to the colonised. The White men constantly issue orders and threaten in order to create permanent fear in the Africans and facilitate their exploitation.

Our analysis above brings out Africans' traumatic experiences under the colonial arrangements. Fantouré enhances the portrayal of these experiences through a recourse to similes. In Le Voile ténébreux, Mainguai Africounah is warned to beware of the thorny crown "comme celle que ces fumiers de tortionnaires ont fabriquée pour le pauvre Jésus il y a bientot deux mille ans" (VT, p.30). Like Jesus, Mainguai Africounah is a sacrificial lamb who suffers for the emancipation of his people. Elsewhere in the same novel, Mainguai Africounah is helpless "comme un mollusque tiré de l'eau à l'heure de midi sous le soleil" (VT, p.71). Mollusc is an invertebrate and weak water-creature which cannot survive on land for even a few seconds. To take it out of water under a midday sun is directly terminating its life. Fantouré compares the nationalist to a mollusc in order to highlight the enormity of the latter's tribulation. Furthermore, Mainguai Africounah himself compares his condition with that of "un prophète à la vérité faisandée de trop de déceptions" (VT, p.31). Sometimes the

novelist avoids the "comme" simile and simply likens the condition of the African to that of another pitiful being such as in this case "Mais je n'avais pas le coeur à rire, je crêvais de la détresse d'un naufrage solitaire dans une île perdue de l'océan Pacifique" (VT, pp.30-31).

Metaphor, another literary device is generously used by the Guinean writers. Like the simile, metaphors here serve to reinforce the description of Africans' unpleasant experiences during the colonial period. When we read that "Le soleil chauffait à blanc, nous brûlait le corps: persévérants dans leur tyrannie, ses rayons devenaient un calvaire" (CT, p.11), and "La saison des pluies, ravageuse avec ses averses continues s'etait installee" (CT, p.11) we realize immediately that natural phenomena like the sun and the rain contribute to the trauma of the Africans who live under foreign tutelage.

However, for the Africans under domination, there is room for hope. There is the firm belief that the oppressive sun of colonialism will fade away giving way to brighter days. Mainguai Africounah sums up this optimism in the following words "Je ne suis que ma terre natale.
Dont
L'avenir se nomme
Liberté-Espoir" (VT, p.158).

Mairgui and Sassi in L'Homme du troupeau.... Doré Doulé and Malické in Le Cercle des Tropiques, the leaders of the BAC and of the Guinean section of the RDA in Bramouss are also characters who believe in the imminent demise of colonialism. The unalloyed optimism of these characters motivates the anti-colonialist struggles.

The narrators chosen by the writers enhance the depiction of the tension and clashes endemic in the colonial society. In Le Cercle des Tropiques, the narrator Pohi Di uses "je". This, combined with Pohi Di's constant confessions of his ignorance of the game of his society make the novel look like a diary. Thus, one is inclined to accept Pohi Di's pretensions to being objective and to sympathize where he sympathizes and castigate where he castigates. When L'Homme du troupeau... shifts to a third person narrator the intimacy between the narrator and the reader is considerably reduced. The novel however makes up for this loss through the constant recourse to dialogues and interior monologues. These devices bring the reader face to face with the protagonists who provide first hand information on their conducts, aspirations and strategies. When Mairgui declares before his mates that "Mon destin (...) c'est de libérer ma terre" we know he resents oppression. On the other hand, we see another side of Mairgui in a monologue like this

one "Je suis un héros qui s'ignore, ou un futur syndicaliste qui se fabrique (...). Je massacrerai la gueule de ceux qui refuseront de se laisser sauver par moi" (VTS, p.124). It is obvious here that even though Mainguai is a liberator, he is also a potential tyrant. Fantouré seems to appreciate the strength of the first person narrator in works dealing with the themes of oppression and liberation. Thus, even in L'Homme du troupeau (...) in which the third person narrator is used, the writer still inserts a short but important chapter "Le Rapport de l'Unité Psé-toé" in which the narrator says "nous". This pronoun connotes solidarity and underscores the communal suffering of Africans at the hands of the European colonialists. The total return to the "je" narrator, in Le Voile ténébreux confirms Fantouré's belief in the suitability of the first person narrator in works dealing with socio-political themes.

In the works studied, the authors also have recourse to abundant authorial intrusions, maxims and proverbs to reinforce their treatment of socio-political themes. "On ne gagne que le coeur d'un esclave en piétinant sa dignité" (VTS, p.111) is a warning to both the colonial authorities and the budding African politicians. "Si haut que s'élève un crapaud, il retombera toujours sur son ventre" (VTS, p.137) is an admonition against arrogance and

opportunism, two problems common in colonial society. *"Je me demande quel sera l'avenir de ce pays"* (Dramouss, p.195) is Laye's contribution to the fears expressed by Africans at the dawn of independence.

In the next chapter, we examine the leadership problem in post-colonial Africa as presented in the works of four Guinean novelists, Laye, Fantouré, Monénembo and Cissine.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER II

1. According to Adele King, Kouroussa, Laye's hometown was under French rule as far back as 1895. See Adele King, The Writings of Camara Laye (London: Heinemann, Sd), p.1.

2. Notre Librairie: Littérature guinéenne No.88/89, juillet/septembre 1987, p.65.

3. See Guy Ossito Midiohouan, L'Utopie négative d'Ahmadou Kourouma: Essai sur le Cercle des Tropiques (Paris: Editions Silex, 1984), pp.18-19.

4. Dramouss is Laye's third novel after L'Enfant noir and Le Regard du roi. The novel treats two periods. Only the part relating to the colonial era will be examined here. The second part dealing with the post-colonial era will be examined in the next chapter.

5. Le Cercle des Tropiques, Kourouma's first novel published in 1972 deals with the colonial and post-colonial eras. Here, we limit our study to the colonial period.

6. According to Midiohouan, L'Homme du trouneau du Gabel is set between the thirties and World War II. See Midiohouan, L'Utopie negative de Kourouma, p.24. As for Le Voile ténébreux we cannot fix the setting in time of the novel through its internal chronology.

7. Camara Laye, Le Maître de la parole (Paris: Plon, 1978), p.34.

8. Bruji Ashaye, "Disintegration and Restoration: A Reading of Camara Laye's Dramouss" in Literature and Modern West African Culture (Ed.) B.I. Ewega (Benin City: Ethiope Pub. Co., 1979), p.74.

9. Bernard Mouralis, "Le Cercle des Tropiques" in Littérature des peuvres littéraires négro-africaines de langues françaises (Ed.) Ambroise Kom (Sherbrooke: Editions Naaman, 1983), p.91. And Midiohouan, L'Utopie négative de Fantouré, pp.27-32.

10. Jacques Chevrier, Littérature nègre (Paris: Armand Colin, 1984), p.31.

11. See G. Obiechukwu Mezu, The Poetry of L.S. Senghor (London: Heinemann, 1973), p.6 and Petit Larousse (Paris: Larousse, 1963) for information on Arthur de Gobineau and Gustave Le Bon.

12. Quoted in Frantz Fanon, Les Damnés de la terre (Paris: Francois Maspero, 1961), p.10.

13. According to Adele King, during the colonial era, Kouroussa was an administrative centre, with colonial officers and a prison. See Adele King, The Writings of Laye, p.1.

14. Camara Laye, L'Enfant noir (Paris: Plon, 1953), p.9.

15. For instance, Tunji Adebayo's criticism of Dramouss is not very convincing. See his article in Literature and Modern West African Culture (Ed.) O.I. Nwoga, p.61-76.

16. Quoted in Claude Wauthier, trans., The Literature and Thought of Modern Africa, 2nd Ed. (1964; rpt. London: Heinemann, 1966), p.160.

17. See Adele King, The Writings of Laye, p.98.

18. Quoted by Claude Wauthier The Literature and Thought of Modern Africa, p.46.

19. Julius Caesar was a Roman King who lived from 101-44 B.C. Maximilian de Robespierre was a lawyer and a politician. He lived between 1758 and 1794. For more information on the two personalities read Petit Larousse, pp.1254-55 and p.1453.

20. Fanon Les Damnés de la terre, p.17.

21. Petit Larousse, p.695.

22. Rebecca Alu Uganden, The Evolution of Pessimism in Alioum Fantouré's novels. Unpublished M.A. Thesis, A.B.U., Zaria, Sept., 1983, p.169.

23. For the sake of clarity, we shall refer to the principal protagonist in L'Homme du troupeau... Bilingual while we will retain the name Bilingual-Africounah for the protagonist in Le Voile ténébreux.

24. After the Loi-Cadre elections, Sékou Touré and his PDG gained control of this Loi-Cadre government. The Loi-Cadre is an enabling act passed by the French National Assembly on June 23, 1956. This act allowed the establishment in the colonies of local executive councils with their own powers to run the administration of the territories. See Thomas O'toole, Historical Dictionary of Guinea, p.46.

25. Suret-Canale, La République de Guinée, p.147.

26. Quoted in Dorothy S. Blair, African Literature in French (Cambridge: CUP, 1976), p.9.

27. Alfred Cobban, A History of Modern France III 1871-1962 (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1965), p.25.

28. Fanon, Les Damnés de la terre, p.7.

29. O'toole, A Historical Dictionary of Guinea, p.37.

30. Ibid., The Writings of Laye, p.6.

31. Ibid., .11.

32. Jean Lafrique, Réactions dahoméennes (Paris: Les Nouvelles Berger-Levrault, 1954), pp.27-37.

33. Ecbra Librairie: Littérature guinéenne, p.184.

34. Fanon, Les Damnés de la terre, p.26.

35. Jean Suret-Canale French Colonialism in Tropical Africa 1900-1945 trans. Till Gottheiner (London: Heinemann, 1971), p.480.

36. Albert Memmi, Portrait du colonisé (Montreal: Editions Etincelles, 1972), p.29.

37. Fanon, Les Damnés de la terre, p.6.

38. Ndiaye Bouban, L'Utopie négative d'Alioum Fantouré, p.61.

39. O'toole, Historical Dictionary of Guinea, p.4.

40. Aristide R. Zolberg, Creating Political Order, p.17.

41. King, The Writings of Laye, p.13.

42. Sékou Touré, The International Policy of the Democratic Party of Guinea: Extracts from the Report on Doctrine and Orientation submitted to the 3rd National Conference of the PDG, p.129. Translator, place and date of publication not indicated.

43. Jean Suret-Canale, Afrique noire: De la colonisation aux indépendances 1945-1960 (1) (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1972), p.10.

44. Cheikh Hamidou Kane, L'Aventure ambiguë (Paris: Julliard, 1962), p.44.

45. Suret-Canale, French Colonialism in Tropical Africa, p.443 and O'toole, Historical Dictionary of Guinea, pp.41 and 69.

46. Petit larousse, p.1468.

47. Ibid., p.1468.

48. Karl Marx & Frederick Engels, Selected Works: In One Volume (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1968), p.430.

49. King, The Writings of Lave, p.2.

50. Ibid., p.2.

51. Ibid., p.71.

52. Fanon, Les Damnés de la terre, p.24.

53. Suret-Canale, French Colonialism in Tropical Africa, p.340.

54. Christopher Fyfe, The History of Sierra Leone (London: OUP, 1962), p.3.

55. Ibid., p.546.

56. Suret-Canale, La République de Guinée, pp.142-143.

57. Fanon, Les Damnés de la terre, p.6.

58. Ibid., p.47.

Chapter 3

SOCIO-POLITICAL REALITY OF THE POST-INDEPENDENCE SOCIETY

We saw in chapter two how, at the beginning of the anti-colonialist struggle, African nationalist leaders represented hope. We also saw how towards independence, as a result of their obsession with power, most politicians abandoned the ideals of the anti-colonialist struggle. Another fact which was stated in the preceding chapter is that Dramouss and Le Cercle des Tropiques, apart from dealing with the historico-political problems of the colonial era, also treat socio-political problems of the post-independence society. Fantouré published Le Récit du cirque, his second novel, in 1975, and this work also tackles issues relating to the post-colonial era. Both Monénembo and Sassine, two other Guinean novelists, with their works Les Crapauds-brousse, Le Jeune homme de sable and Le Zéhéros... join Laye and Fantouré in exploring the political theme in the new era. These three latter novels, together with Dramouss, Le Cercle des Tropiques and Le Récit du cirque all depict the conduct of the African nationalists on becoming Presidents.

The contemporary socio-political events which provide the raw materials for the novelists are too well known to be treated in detail here. They may be enumerated as follows: the absence of concrete

ideological base of the post-independence governments, the introduction of one party system of government by the leaders with a view to eliminating opposition parties and members. The leaders are known to have violated freedom of expression and also to have established a strong propaganda machinery which is used to brainwash the citizens. The post-independence political drama also includes the incidence of alleged coup d'Etat which served as pretext for the elimination of political opponents. To these, should of course be added the muzzling of the judiciary by those in power and the arbitrary imprisonment of government critics and opponents.

Since the four novelists are Guineans and since they clashed with or criticised the Parti Démocratique de Guinée government one would be tempted to see the novels mentioned above as exposing the excesses of Sékou Touré alone.[1] This could be so, and more. Since Guinea is part of the vast African continent, one can say that the writers also attempt to highlight the abuses of all African leaders since the end of colonial rule.

The settings of the novels prove this. In the preceding chapter, we saw that the settings of the novels were not limited to a single geo-political entity. Such is also the case in the novels treated in this chapter. The action of Le Récit du cirque

occurs in Ce-pays. The relief and vegetation of this fictional country can be found in all West African states situated along the coast. The events in Nonenembo's Les Crapauds brousse also occur in President Sá Matrak's country. No effort is made by the writer to identify this country, over which rules Sá Matrak. The same problem of identity arises in the two novels by Sassine. Le Jeune homme de sable, as Jacques Chevrier observes, is set in a "lieu situé aux confins du symbole "cité vaincue par le soleil" ou désert nu et ridée semblable à une mer figée".[2] Here too, the referential society remains undisclosed. As for Sassine's most recent novel, Le Zéhéros... even though Guinea, the Parti Démocratique de Guinée, the Sylli - the Guinean national currency and Beavogui, Vice-President under the Parti Démocratique de Guinée regime are specifically mentioned, the action of the novel does not take place entirely in Guinea. Of course, Guinea remains the focal point of the novel, but more than half of the events are cited in an unknown country which a critic, Ricault, believes is Mauritania, where Sassine was a Mathematics teacher at the time he published the novel.[3] Moreover, Senegal is prominently depicted in Le Zéhéros... The vivid portrayal of the precarious economic condition in Senegal as reflected in the battered taxis and the squalid hotels in Dakar, suggest that

the appearance of Senegal in the novel is not accidental. This is a country in which Sassine once lived and which he knows very well. But, more importantly, the mention of this nation suggests that, Sassine, like the other Guinean novelists, discusses the problems of all African countries. The Guinean novels are distinct from a work like Socé's Karim or Ousmane's Les Bouts de bois de Dieu which as rightly pointed out by Mouralis, deal with the problems of a single country - Senegal.[4]

One may discover in the Guinean novels that the writers sometimes, directly or indirectly, refer to Guinea under Sékou Touré. This is natural. As they are Guineans, the problems of their country should serve as their point of reference in t heir attempt to treat the wider socio-political problems of the continent. Their novels deal with the historico-political problems of Guinea and Africa, not of Guinea exclusively.

The chapter comprises three parts. The first examines the ideologies of post-independence governments. That is, the theories upon which governments programmes are based. The second part explores the policies of the governments - that is the strategies used by leaders to perpetuate their rule and the effect of these policies on the subjects. In the third section, we discuss the

reaction of the people to tyranny, since all the six novels studied here treat post-independence regimes as tyrannical ones.

I. LEADERSHIP AND PARTY IDEOLOGY

The Guinean novelists, as chroniclers of post-independence African societies, preserve the problem of party ideology in their writings. They are unanimous in expressing disgust at the unspecified political option of the leaders and the calculated attempt made by those in power to deprive the people of the fruits of independence. The ideologies of the Presidents in all the novels studied in this chapter are vague, and, where they seem to be defined, the leaders hardly adhere to them.

The RDA government in Dramouss professes socialism. The leaders, however, allow organisations of Western origin to dominate the mining business in Guinea. The Parti Social de l'Espoir government in Le Cercle des Tropiques is said to be revolutionary and, as its name implies, it claims to be committed to enhancing socio-economic progress. Baré Koulé, however, grants unqualified licence to multi-nationals of Western origin, which not only pillage the wealth of the country, but also perpetuate the subservient disregard for Africans. Similarly, Sâ Matraka's regime in Les Crapauds-brousse is said to be revolutionary, but it does nothing to improve

the structures it inherits from the colonial era. The nation's economy is, on the other hand, dominated by foreigners. And finally, Le Zéhéros, Sassine's most recent novel, satirises the leader's lack of commitment to a single and concrete political course. It is Bernard, a White character in the novel, who comments cynically: "Si de Gaulle avait su s'y prendre, le PDG n'aurait pas vécu à gauche pour mourir à droite" (ZiQ, p.63). Bernard exposes the hypocrisy of a leader who claims to be a radical but who collaborates with capitalist countries.

Two reasons were given by the politicians for this lack of commitment to a single political doctrine. First, new States cannot afford to involve themselves in the ideological conflicts in the contemporary world. Secondly, as new States, African countries need to fraternise with the major ideologies especially - capitalism and socialism, in order to learn from their experiences and also seek their aids for socio-economic development. It is this political strategy that the PDA leader in Wirriyamu seems to adopt when he builds a government based on capitalism, socialism and other political beliefs. It is also, apparently, the same course that Fahati, the President in Le Récit du cirque treads when he promises to rule through "Marx, Jésus (...) Mahomet (...) Bouddha (...) Confuscius" (RC, p.16). The attitude of Fatoma, Laye's alter ego

in Dramouss to this policy is clear cut, the RDA government is: "un régime bâtard en gestation" Le Récit du cirque denounces this policy symbolically. Fahati, the President bears the nickname "Rhinocéros-Tacheté" which, according to the novel, is a hybrid of the rhinoceros and the panther. By implication, Fahati is a bastard - presumably a reference to African leaders tendency to flirt with diametrically opposed ideologies of the world. Furthermore, according to the Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery, rhinoceros represents "short-sighted passion and lack of sensitivity" while panther symbolises fierceness.[5] These negative attributes imply that Fahati's subjects will not benefit from his rule. The political strategy adopted by Fahati and the Presidents in the other Guinean novels, may have some merits. The demerits however outweigh whatever advantages are derived from it. For one thing, such a political option leads to undue adulteration and the leaders, in the end, do not arrive at any solid programme capable of leading to socio-economic progress. We therefore support the novelist's attack on the Presidents.

The Guinean novels show that the reasons given by leaders are in fact only a pretext and that those in power court the friendship of various foreign governments with various ideologies so that they may defend their regimes in the event of internal

political troubles. The ruse of the Presidents is highlighted particularly in the novels of Fantouré and to a lesser extent in Sassine's Le Jeune homme de sable. Baré Koulé, in Le Cercle des Tropiques is decorated with about twenty medals on the first anniversary of the independence of the Marigots du Sud. These medals, we are told, "transformèrent notre Bessie-Koi en constellation" (CT, p.177). Fantouré's satirical treatment of historico-political issues is clear. Among the countries that decorate Baré Koulé are the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. The prizes are also in recognition of Baré Koulé's love of peace. Yet, we know that Baré Koulé is an instigator of violence who has an unprecedented record of violent crimes. The awarding countries are Baré Koulé's friends ready to defend him at all times.

The collusion between powerful nations and despotic African regimes, is further stressed in Le Récit du cirque. The satire in this novel is more biting, for it is the President, Fahati himself who reveals that: "ils (foreign bodies) font tout ce qu'ils peuvent pour aider nos cultes" (RC, p.48). Thus, when Fahati later vows to defend "jusqu'à mon dernier souffle" (RC, p.18) the people of Ce-pays against all forms of despotism and enslavement we realise that he is being hypocritical. Fahati incarnates tyranny and

oppresses the people with the help of his foreign backers. And when Tahirou, the headmaster in Le Jeune homme de sable accuses Le Guide and his agents of colluding with foreigners to exploit the resources of the country, the novel draws attention to the protection given to post-independence regimes by foreign governments. Surely, without the physical backing of powerful countries of the world, most African regimes would crumble before a collective resistance of the people.

Dramouss, Laye's third novel, attempts to propose an ideology. This is capitalism. We can discern this from the option pursued by Fatoman and from Laye's own utterances and actions. Fatoman, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, is attached to France and all that France stands for. We also know that Laye himself advocated Franco-African rapprochement on several occasions. Moreover, Laye is known to have made several occasions. Moreover, Laye is known to have made several trips to North America and felt that the U.S.A. form of government "might eventually provide a model for east Africa".[6] France and America stand for the West and capitalism. By seemingly proposing an ideology, Laye proves not to believe in the view that the artist's role is limited to highlighting social ills. We shall see later the attitude of the three other Guinean novelists to this view. The

pressing question is the viability of Laye's prescription. It is very doubtful if the capitalism which Laye seems to advocate is acceptable to the majority of Africans.

African leaders have no solid ideological base on which to rule. Unavoidably, they have to resort to curious means to achieve their ambition. It is these treacherous tactics that we explore in the next part of the chapter.

II. [illegible] FOR PERPETUATION OF POWER

In the preceding part, we saw that those in power have no concrete socio-political programme capable of improving the lot of the citizens. Since they lack solid theoretical bases, they explore all illegitimate means of preserving their regimes. The Guinean novelists, whose realism springs from their proximatic relations with the post-independence society, present most of the illegitimate methods of those in power in their writings. The writers touch on a wide range of issues. They include one party system of government, intolerance of criticism by those who hold political power, the abuse of the news media and misuse of the people's militia. They also include fabricated coups d'état which serve as pretext for eliminating opponents, abuse of the judiciary and finally, unlawful imprisonment.

The administrative measures taken by the chief

executives in the novels are closely interrelated and are intended to ensure that they remain in power as long as they live. But, more importantly, the ordinary citizens presented in the novels are victims of the actions of the politicians, in the latter's attempt to perpetuate their rule. Consequently, in all the novels examined, it will be shown that the conduct of the politicians and the plight of the citizens are closely inter-woven. Even though the Guinean novelists all show keen interest in the politicians-citizens rapport or precisely the measures adopted by those in power to enhance their position; it should appear that each novelist is more interested in certain aspects of those measures than others. However, these different views by the writers complement and complete the picture of socio-political situation in Guinea and most African countries. Our intention is to look at how the novelists react to some of the government policies, pertaining with the one party system of government.

ONE PARTY SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT

In four of the novels (Le Récit du cirque, Les Grands-brousse, Le Jeune homme de sable and Le Zéhéros), the novelists pay less attention to the process leading to the one party system of government. The Presidents in these works are comfortably seated in power and do not face

opposition as do the PDA leader in Dramouss and Baré Koulé in Le Cercle des Tropiques. The limited attention paid to the development of the one party system of government in the former group of Guinean novels is not a sign of the apathy of the writers to the one party issue. The fact is that Le Récit du cirque, Les Crapauds-brousse, Le Jeune homme de sable and Le Zéhéros... were published between 1975 and 1985, that is when most African countries had been independent for at least fifteen years. One party system of government had long been established in many countries and had lost much of its freshness as a subject. More topical were the accompanying tyrannical policies of most African Presidents. Consequently, the novelists prefer to discuss the effects rather than the process leading to the one party system of government. This, in itself, is a reflection of the novelists' taste for realism, that is their desire to depict the problems of the period in which their works are set.

The one novel in which much attention is focussed on the one party regime is Fantouré's Le Cercle des Tropiques. Fantouré's first novel deals with this system of government even more than Laye's Dramouss which was published at an earlier period. Fantouré's interest might be explained by the fact that, having lived for several years in European countries and seen the workings of democracy in

these places, he cannot but be perturbed by the pseudo-democracies witnessed in post-independence African countries. We now examine how one party rule is presented in Le Cercle des Tropiques.

Kanoute's treatment of the one party system of government is enhanced by the low status and apparent naivety of the narrator chosen by the novelist. Tohi Di, the narrator-protagonist is, to use the word of Chevrier a "Huron".[7] That is, he is like Diop in Le Vieux nègre et la médaille or Ibrahima Diengha in Le Bracelet. Like the two mentioned characters, Tohi Di is naive and does not understand the intricate politics of his society. Constantly, Tohi Di refers to his own ignorance. He is drawn by the current of events and exerts no real influence on them. Tohi Di's innocence is also suggested by his educational background. He is forced by the untimely death of his father to abandon his studies while still in the primary school. The simple manner in which he relates the story, testifies to his level of education. As Dorothy Blair rightly points out, Tohi Di has a "limited vocabulary of an autodidact".[8] while Mohamadou Kane describes this style as "precis et precis jusqu'a la secheresse",[9] Tohi Di is different from Fatoman the narrator in Dramouss, who is a student in France and wields a wider vocabulary. He is also unlike Oumarou, the protagonist in Sassine's Le Jeune homme de sable, who is sure of

himself and sets out to fight the ills of society. The "simple-peasant-come-to-town" manner in which Kantouré handles the narrative in Le Cercle des Tropiques ensures credibility. Furthermore, it reinforces Kantouré's indictment of the one party system of government and of other instruments for the perpetuation of power in post-independence African societies. Of course, Le Cercle des Tropiques also criticises one party system and other forms of abuse of power through other characters, particularly through members of the opposition party, the Club des Travailleurs.

In the Marigots du Sud, the setting of Le Cercle des Tropiques, just as in many African countries, one party rule is adopted by government immediately after independence. Most of the arguments advanced by those in power to justify one party rule are present in Le Cercle des Tropiques. The references made by Heloumа, Baré Koulé's security chief to the territorial integrity of the Marigots du Sud, the dignity of the Marigots du Sud people and their success, recall statements made by such African leaders as Houphouet Boigny, Kwame Nkrumah, Sékou Touré and Tafawa Balewa. Balewa, the first Nigerian Prime Minister, for instance, in trying to make a case for one party rule, stated thus: "A political opposition in the Western accepted sense is a luxury that we cannot afford".[10]

The novel shows, on the contrary that, far from serving the collective interests of the people in a country, the one party regime is intended to promote the interest of the few politicians in power. Fantouré struggles hard to depict the contradictions inherent in this form of government. This is done in four ways: i. the forcible elimination of the opposition party by the party in power, ii. the forcible sale of the membership card of the ruling party, iii. the institution of life-presidency and, iv. election rigging by the party in power.

Machiavelli writes: "La multitude est plus sage et plus constante qu'un prince".[11] Most African leaders do not hold this view. Once they are in power, they believe that the rest of their compatriots, including their opponents are incompetent to rule. Hence, they try all means of eliminating them. Le Cercle des Tropiques effectively satirises this arrogance and egoism on the part of those who hold political power in African countries. Perhaps the starting point of Fantouré's criticism is to expose the contradiction between democracy and one party system of government. Balouma, in the novel, for instance, states that the Marigots du Sud is a "République démocratique" but adds simultaneously that all forms of opposition to Baré Koulé's government will not be tolerated. Democracy and one party rule are antithetical. The very concept of the

one party rule is a ruse and a design by those in power to reinforce their position.

One party system of government grows out of the unwillingness of those in authority to put up with opposition. In Le Cercle des Tropiques immediately after independence, Baré Koulé orders his security agents to dislodge members of the Club des Travailleurs from their camp. According to the spokesman for the Parti Social de l'Espoir, the former engage in anti-government activities. But, as is the practice in most African countries, the allegation is meant to mask the main motive of the action: the elimination of opponents. A police officer reveals it all when he unabashedly states: "Il n'y a qu'un seul parti dans ce pays, tout le monde y adhère de gré ou de force (...) on exécutera tous ceux qui s'opposent au Messie-Roi" (CT, p.146). Elsewhere too, the novel demonstrates Baré Koulé's intolerance of opposition. When, for instance, the leaders of the Club des Travailleurs request for appointment in order to discuss the camp issue, he directs them to his security chief, Hadoumo who has them locked up. Further, the arrest and imprisonment of Nallé Youré and Benn Na, two leaders of the Club des Travailleurs, falsely accused of planning to topple Baré Koulé, among other such actions is a sign of intolerance on the part of the regime.

The masses top the list of the victims of

the intolerance by the governments. Among those ejected from the Club des Travailleurs camp are old men, women and children. The Parti Social de l'Espoir government, in its design to stamp out opposition, does not differentiate between politicians, that is the Club des Travailleurs members and the ordinary residents in the camp. When the Marigots du Sud security forces enter the camp in the night they brutalise all residents, old and young. Bobi Di, the narrator reveals that, with "camions rangés à la queue leu leu," the security agents forcibly convey the people to an unknown destination. Bobi Di uses the words "contenu" and "cargaisons" to describe the people evacuated from the camp. These terms of course underline the undignified manner in which Paré Koulé's government treats the people of the Marigots du Sud. The novel lashes out at the government through a Club des Travailleurs leader in the following terms:

> Vous saignez le peuple de son âme et de ses espoirs, et punissez de mort ou de prison tous ceux qui prétendent au droit d'être. Si vous persévérez dans votre entreprise de négation, un jour viendra où la forêt recouvrira ce pays (CT, p.146).

The humanitarian activities of the Club des Travailleurs are a reproach to government. Hence the government's desire to suppress them. They make the people aware of the inadequacies of government.

An important feature of the Parti Social de l'Espoir government is the membership card of the ruling party. Before Fantouré, Ahmadou Kourouma satirises in Les Soleils des indépendances (1970), the undue emphasis placed on the membership card of the ruling party by those in power. We learn in Kourouma's novel that the only benefit Fama, the protagonist, derives from independence is the "carte d'identité nationale et celle du parti unique".[12] And in Sony Labou Tansi's Perpétue et l'Habitude du malheur, the Congolese novelist presents Essola, the protagonist, who has nothing other than the membership card of Baba Toura's ruling party.[13] Thus, in Le Cercle des Tropiques, Baré Koulé's effort to make the people of the Marigots du Sud obtain his party's membership card must be seen as Fantouré's own contribution to discussion on the significance of the membership card in post-independence politics.

African leaders, particularly those in the one party States, always declare that the purchase of their party's identity card is voluntary, that the citizens join their party as a result of their popular programmes. Kwame Nkrumah, Houphouët-Boigny, Sékou Touré and other leaders of one party States, at one time or another, made such remarks. Sékou Touré once said:

> The Guinean revolution is founded on the voluntary adherence, conscious and consistent participation

> of the people and not on any coercion exerted on the people by a minority. 14

Fantouré contests such a claim usually made by African leaders.

Fantouré scrupulously depicts the importance attached to the membership card of the ruling party by those in power. For the Baré Koulé government, the Parti Social de l'Espoir card is worth more than any other document, including the national identify card. This fact is clearly stated by a militiaman: "Carte d'identité nationale égale zéro, seule la carte du Parti intéresse le gouvernement de la République des Marigots du Sud" (CT, p.212). Indeed, every government worker in the Marigots du Sud is aware of the priority given to the Parti Social de l'Espoir document. Government representatives dub citizens who refuse to purchase the party document as enemies of the country, of the revolution and of the people. Such is the fate of the selfless and patriotic Dr Malékê and other leaders of the Club des Travailleurs who refuse to join the Parti Social de l'Espoir government. By branding Malékê and his friends enemies of the revolution, the government aims at inciting the public against them and preparing the ground for their physical elimination.

Fantouré's attitude to this egocentric pursuit

o those in authority is discernible in Le Cercle des Tropiques. He mocks the one party system of government in general and the party card in particular. When Mariam the wife of Nelle Houre, one of the leaders of the Club des Travailleurs, is asked whether or not she is a "reconvertie", she replies teasingly "Je suis... musulmane, je pourrais être chrétienne ou juive s'il le fallait, mais je ne vois pas comment je pourrais être Messie-Noique" (CT, p.164). The following dialogue between a Parti Social de l'Espoir agent and Tobi Di is also revealing of the novel's stance:

> -Désormais la carte d'identité du Parti est obligatoire pour tous les habitants des Marigots du Sud.
>
> -Alors je prends ma carte tout de suite, si vous voulez bien j'en prends également pour ma femme.
>
> -Et les enfants? Ils n'existent pas eux?
>
> -Si, ils existent, j'en prends également pour mes enfants, des jumeaux, ils ont sept ans à peine, ma femme attend un troisième enfant. Je dévancerai Dieu dans ses projets, je prends aussi une carte du Parti pour le futur-né (CT, p.189).

The aim is to ridicule the card project. The novel, however, appears to go further. For instance, when Tobi Di expresses a desire to get out the Parti Social de l'Espoir paper for his unborn child, we realise that we have left the domain of satire for

that of tragedy. It is as if to say, poor Africans, the independence you yearn for is a farce. However, Bedourré, as we shall soon see, is not a pessimist. He makes it abundantly clear that unpopular leaders like Doré Bouabré, who are out to pursue their parochial interests to the detriment of the legitimate aspiration of the citizens, will be removed from power.

Thus, during his encounter with the agent of the Parti Social de l'Espoir, when Ami Di declares:

> Je ne demande pas grand-chose à la vie, sinon du travail, de la nourriture, la santé et l'instruction pour ma famille. Et croyez moi, c'est le souhait de tous nos compatriotes (CT, p.188),

we note that the novel arouses the consciousness of the oppressed, it calls on them to liberate themselves from misery. As we shall see later, such calls for emancipation are an important feature of Le Cercle des Tropiques.

As far back as 1919, the Panafrican Congress demanded the right of the colonised to participate in the political life of their territories, including the right to be elected into the highest office in the land.[19] Africans are however denied this right after independence by the nationalists who replaced the colonialists. This, the leaders do, by appointing themselves life-Presidents of their respective

countries. Le Cercle des Tropiques discusses life-presidency in one-party States. The Parti Social de l'Espoir organises a referendum in which Caré Koulé is to be made Life-President. Fantoure aptly recalls the fanfare which usually accompanies such referenda. The elaborate census, the elaborate ballot papers and the large number of people mobilised to supervise the votings, have their roots in contemporary African history. But in recalling these events, Fantoure has an axe to grind with the leaders who institutionalise life-presidency. This institution is unhealthy as it keeps corrupt and unpopular leaders in power while it deprive competent politicians of the right to rule. The attack in Le Cercle des Tropiques is indirect as it highlights the contradiction inherent in life-presidency. At the venue of the voting, an agent of the Parti Social de l'Espoir, addresses the voters as follows: "Au nom de la démocratie, de la révolution du Parti, de l'intérêt de peuple et de ses guides et l'avenir du pays, vous allez voter. Vive le Parti et le Messie-Père (CT, p.195). The spokesman for the government is betrayed by his own pronouncement. Like the one-party system, life presidency and democracy are antithetical. Either leaders practice true democracy in which all capable citizens have the opportunity to contest for power or the leaders declare themselves monarchs. An attempt to blend

the two is an attempt to dupe the people. It is significant that, Baré Koulé, who starts off as a modest civil servant during the colonial era, becomes President not too sure of himself at independence, now struggles to be made life President. Baré Koulé even attempts to appoint his "dauphin" as a successor. Historically, "dauphin" signifies the eldest son of a French king.[16] The Marigots du Sud is being run like a monarchic State. Absolute power, indeed corrupts absolutely.

The election in the Marigots du Sud is not free and fair, in spite of claims to the contrary by Baré Koulé and his henchmen. The elections are characterised by open partisanship on the part of election officials, monumental rigging and the use of force. The lapses in the exercise are also evident on the list of papers: the papers in favour of Bare Koule's nomination are fully worded:

> "J'accepte le Messie-Roi à vie et son dauphin. Je renouvelle mon attachement indefectible a notre Messie-Roi à vie et je jure d'élever mes descendants dans l'esprit du destin eternnel du Parti Social de l'Espoir et de ses dirigeants" (CT, p.194),

whereas the papers unfavourable to Baré Koulé are simply painted red. Red has, in modern times come to symbolise communism.[17] Presumably, in the Marigots du Sud, this colour connotes anti-patriotism and a warning to those who attempt to

vote against Baré Koulé. Clearly, this betrays the absence of fairness in the referendum. Moreover, at the voting centre, officials physically force voters to vote for Baré Koulé. A case in point is Bohi Di's experience which he aptly relates thus: "un agent m'enlevait (...) les bulletins, déchirait les rouges et mettait les quatre bulletins blancs favourables au Monsieur-Moi dans l'urne" (CT, p.195). Election malpractices such as are illustrated in Le Cercle des Tropiques are a common event in post-independence African societies.

Irony pervades Le Cercle des Tropiques. Practically every anti-social behaviour in the novel attracts an ironic comment. Such is the case when we are told that the Parti Social de l'Espoir authorities, a day after the election, praise the "civisme, la prise de conscience et l'émancipation incomparable et exceptionnelle de la population des Marigots du Sud" (CT, pp.195-196). The irony lies in the fact that, even though Baré Koulé's government expresses appreciation to the people, the voters do not approve of the government and did not really vote for it. Such also is the case when Bohi Di observes: "Nous étions libres, républicains et indépendants" (CT, p.196). Here, Bohi Di castigates the leaders of the Marigots du Sud for denying them the fruits of real independence.

Another hallmark of Le Cercle des Tropiques

is exaggeration. The presentation of the election results illustrates this. We learn that during the counting "il y avait cent-sept suffrages exprimés pour cent inscrits" (CT, p.196). Baré Koulé's experts vet the figures, discover unregistered citizens who have participated in the voting. Among these unregistered voters are children born on the day preceding the referendum! Then, in order to obtain the correct figures of voters, Baré Koulé's experts "réconcilièrent les cent sept pour cent de suffrage favorable et proposèrent enfin un chiffre juste (...) le peuple approuvait le référendum démocratique et libre à cent pour cent moins une voix" (CT, p.196). By exaggerating the subversion of the democratic process by the leaders, the novel aims at hitting them hard so that they will abandon their unpopular ways.

The treatment of the one party system of government is comprehensive. The novelist however seems to be so pre-occupied with exposing the leaders of one party States that he attributes to them all the political problems of post-independence Africa. Leaders of multi-party States are no better than those of the one party States depicted in Le Cercle des Tropiques.

Equally symptomatic of the abuse of power is the violation of freedom of speech. It is this

socio-political problem which attracts our attention next.

INTOLERANCE OF CRITICISM

Laye, Fantouré, Monénembo and Sassine express, in their novels, their aversion to the unwillingness of African leaders to put up with the criticism of their policies. This feeling, common to the four novelists, might be explained by the fact that they are either direct victims of the intolerance of criticism or follow closely the trend of political events in Africa from wherever they reside.

Laye, who as we know, served under the Sékou Touré administration and later fell out with the regime, wrote the following to his publishers: "In Guinea, censorship prevented me from writing to you".[16] That Laye made this declaration only after his conflict and break with Sékou Touré suggests that he is more interested in attacking the Guinean leader than fighting for the restoration of freedom of speech in Guinea. In the case of Monénembo, while he was a student, he was a non-conformist, who criticised government policies. Monénembo left Guinea in 1969 when he felt that his life was no longer safe in the country. Fantouré and Sassine were less directly affected by censorship. The two writers left Guinea before they published any novel and did not come into conflict with the government of the Parti Démocratique de Guinée. Fantouré, whose

pseudonym implies "tolerance",[19] and Sassine are however fully aware of the wave of intolerance which prevails in Guinea and in other parts of Africa. Fantouré, for instance, looking back at Guinea under the PDG declares:

> Je savais que des hommes mouraient, parce qu'ils s'étaient exprimés comme ils le voulaient. A cause de mon livre, si j'étais rentré dans ce pays on m'aurait assassiné. 20

We are not aware of Sassine making such a direct statement. But his remarks on the subject in his latest novel, Le Zéhéros..., leave one in no doubt that he is aware of, and bothers about, the question of the freedom of expression. In picking on censorship, the novelists deal with a subject with which they are familiar.

Each of the novelists also apparently looks at the problem of censorship as it affects a social group or groups with which he is familiar. This realistic approach to contemporary socio-political issues is found in the works of all the novelists. Konate, the teacher executed by the leader of the Guinean PDA in Dramouss is reminiscent of the President of the Guinean Teachers' Union held by the government of the Parti Démocratique de Guinée in 1961. Laye was at the time in the country and must have known the details of the Sékou Touré/Teachers clash. Fantouré, on the other hand, discusses in

Le Cercle des Tropiques, the suppression of opposing views as it affects the youth and the Church. Fantouré's interest in the youth, for instance, is demonstrated by the fact that when he was awarded the "Grand Prix Littéraire de l'Afrique Noire" in 1973 for his novel Le Cercle des Tropiques, he directed the awarding body to pay the amount of the prize into the account of the UNICEF.[21] The meticulous presentation of Mainguai, the protagonist in L'Homme du troupeau..., of the nomadic children in the same novel, of the courageous Grand-Nègre in the same work, and in Le Voile ténébreux confirm Fantouré's interest in the problem of the youth, their aspirations and ordeal in a society in which the government is intolerant and oppressive. As for Monénembo, it is not surprising that he depicts students who become civil servants and who are executed by Sâ Matrak the President in Les Crapauds-brousse for criticising his government. Monénembo was himself a student in Guinea, before leaving for France where he studied and became a teacher.[22] Finally, Sassine has all along been a Mathematics teacher in African countries and presumably feels at home in presenting the mentality of school children and their ordeals at the hands of Le Guide "the lion" and President in Le Jeune homme de sable.

Since the novelists choose groups with which they are quite familiar, they present the views of

these groups convincingly. Konate, the teacher in Dramouss complains about the careless manner in which the RDA government in Guinea handles educational matters. He also denounces an educational system which favours administrators to the detriment of technicians and technologists. Konate would, furthermore, like to see in Guinea, an educational policy which places less emphasis on material acquisition and focuses more on the essence of existence. It is his right as a Guinean, and duty as a teacher to comment on education in the country. Similarly, the boy who copies and publishes Bertolt Brecht's poem "Le Cercueil de Zinc" in Le Cercle des Tropiques, fulfils a patriotic obligation incumbent on the youth. And, it is also part of the pastoral responsibilities of Archbishop Jean-Jacques Na, in the same novel to denounce the tyranny endemic in post-independence Marigots du Sud. Also, in Le Crapauds-brousse Soriba and his friends, who decry the corruption, venality and mediocrity of Sa Matrak's cabinet members, and also the tyrannical posture of the government, actually express the view of all citizens in the country. Furthermore, the school children in Le Jeune homme de sable who demonstrate against the unlawful detention of their headmaster, represent resistance as opposed to the reactionary and oppressive government of Le Guide. The implication of these narratives is that the action

of each of these groups is legitimate and that the Presidents abuse their power in suppressing their voices.

Only the peasant and ignorant masses in the novels do not incur the wrath of their President. The Tallmelo and Siguiri peasants in Dragouss, the peasants in Alfa Bakar's village in Les Crapauds-brousse, the Kankan farmers in Le Zéhéros..., are neither arrested nor interrogated by the Presidents. The reason for this is that, being in the hinterland, and being mostly illiterates, this group of people have no avenues for expressing their views on the lapses of government. And when they do, their voices carry no weight and in no way constitute a threat to those in authority. Such is the case of the Nakiri peasant in Le Cercle des Tropiques who complains bittely about excessive taxation and the general exploitation of the villagers by the government of the Parti Social de l'Espoir. His grievances even passionately expressed, do not go beyond the village. Not even Bohi Di, the representative of the Club des Travailleurs, and who claims to be the conscience of society, conveys the peasant's complaint to Porte Océane, the capital city of the Marigots du Sud.

The reactions of the Presidents to criticism are harsh, vindictive and portray their obsession with power. But they do not all react in the same

manner. Three of the novelists, Laye, Fantouré and Monénembo are direct in their portrayal of the Presidents reactions to dissenting voices. Sassine is on the other hand more discreet in his formulation. The RDA leader in Dramouss summarily executes Konate, the teacher who comments negatively on Guinea's educational programme. In a lampoon, Fatoman even dubs the government: "un régime qui se bâtit dans le sang" (Dramouss, p.185). Similarly, Baré Koulé ignores the pleadings of the boy who criticises his government in Le Cercle des Tropiques. Not even the confession of the adolescent is enough to move Baré Koulé to pity. The execution of the boy on the "place de la liberté" brings into focus the irony of the Marigots du Sud drama. And, in the case of Soriba and his friends, Les Crapauds-brousse states categorically that they have been physically eliminated by Sa Matrak.

On the other hand, even though in Sassine's Le Jeune homme de sable an assassination of a government critic occurs, we are not told that this is the handiwork of the President, Le Guide. Tahirou the principal antagonist and rival of Le Guide, allegedly dies of heart attack. The murder of Tahirou is brutal, but certainly not as shocking as the scene in Le Cercle des Tropiques for instance where people assemble to watch one of their's, an adolescent being shot.

Of particular note in Sassine's Le Jeune homme de sable is that the children who openly protest against Tahirou's arrest are isolated for three days. The breaking of the children's protest match by soldiers, the detention of the children on the bare and dreaded "montagne de cailloux" without good food and water are by all standard harsh. But no death is recorded. The boys are later released and Oumarou continues to challenge the ills of society. This is in no way comparable to the mass massacre of government critics in Les Crapauds-brousse. Clearly Le Jeune homme de sable presents the violation of freedom of speech and official violence with some restraint. This might be explained by Sassine's temperament. But it might also be attributed to the peculiar nature of his family. Born of a Lebanese father and Guinean mother, Sassine perhaps feels somehow different in his African environment. On his origin, he once stated:

> Je suis un métis, et on me l'a fait sentir très tôt. J'ai donc toujours vécu une certaine forme de solitude, et comme j'avais des problèmes de langage, je bégayais, cela m'isolait encore davantage. 23

Hence, his moderation in commenting on contemporary socio-political affairs. Moreover, the plight of Laye, whose wife was held by Sékou Touré for several years following the publication of Dramouss, perhaps signalled to Sassine that, he too was not completely

out of danger, his living outside Guinea notwithstanding. Regardably, in Le Zéhéros... Sassine's latest novel, published after Sékou Touré's death, the novelist presents intolerance of criticism and official violence more directly. The President in this novel, Sékou, condemns the journalist, Siradiou Diallo, to death for criticising his government. Siradiou Diallo of Jeune Afrique who denounced Sékou Touré in an article: "Ce Mois qui ébranla l'Afrique", suffered such a condemnation at the hands of the Guinean President in reality.[24]

Unlike Le Jeune homme de sable, Le Rècit du cirque is characterised by a bluntness which cannot be found even in his first work, Le Cercle des Tropiques. Midiouhouan comments thus on the style of Le Récit du cirque: "Nous ne connaissons pas de roman négro-africain aussi cru dans la description de la veulerie et la dechéance humaine que Le Récit du cirque".[25] This bluntness is evident in this comment on censorship in post-independence society: "Quelque part dans le monde, il y a toujours des imbéciles qui refusent le droit de s'exprimer et d'être libres aux autres" (RC, p.55). The narrator vituperates against politicians who strive to stifle the freedom of expression in their country.

If Fantouré indulges in this kind of diatribe, it is because the novelist, like Monénembo, lives in Europe, far away from the Presidents of African

countries. But Fantouré's lampoon is not a "jeu gratuit". He wants Heads of State to be more tolerant of opposing views. Fahati, the President in Le Récit du cirque, expresses this legitimate desire: "Je voudrais être le chef des libertés individuelles (...) de la liberté d'opinion" (RC, p.27). Thus, contrary to the impression Midiohouan seems to create, Le Récit du cirque, with its diatribes, is at the service of the society, of the oppressed in particular.

Blair observes that: "The tolerance by the colonial authorities as well as the Metropolitan government of criticism in the form of imaginative literature, has not been enjoyed in all ex-colonies".[26] Implicit here is the ordeal of writers at the hands of African politicians. Blair's revelation, in a way, justifies the attack on post-independence regimes by the Guinean novelists. For, the writers are demanding a right denied them by their former colleagues, the nationalists who replaced the colonialists. More importantly, the Guinean writers, generally, express the yearnings and aspirations of the oppressed. And, an attempt to gag them is an attempt to suppress the voice of the masses. It is tantamount to impeding the progress of society. It is for this reason that we find the anti-government stance of the Guinean novels quite appropriate.

While the leaders try to silence dissenting

voices, they, on the other hand make use of the news media to enhance their position How the information media fulfil this collaborationist mission is the issue we address ourselves to now.

THE COLLABORATIONIST ROLE OF THE NEWS MEDIA

Fantouré, Monénembo and Sassine focus attention on the use of the information media in recent times. Laye too discusses the subject, but, as we shall see in the next chapter, the novelist deals with how radio programmes in Guinea are dominated by foreign ones, rather than the way the PDA leader in Guinea uses the radio to strengthen his position.

By far, the means of communication most referred to in the Guinean novels is the radio. Other organs of information are of course mentioned, such as the newspaper in Le Cercle des Tropiques and Le Récit du cirque and also the television in the latter novel. But the functions of these news organisations are not developed by Fantouré. The prepounderant position occupied by the radio in the Guinean novels reflects the increasing use to which this news organ is put in Africa. Radio programmes can be transmitted in local languages to the remotest part of a country. It is also the quickest, the surest and the cheapest medium for reaching the people. Frank Barton confirms the popularity of the radio when he writes:

> The newspapers of Africa, certainly of Black Africa, are not the true

> mass media. That role, such as it is, belongs to the radio (...) Millions of Africa's people, who live out their lives as illiterates, get their local news from their friends, and what the government wants them to hear of the national and international news from the radio. 27

As a result of this power and popularity of the radio, African leaders have recourse to it for relaying their programmes.

It should appear that the Guinean writers have an urgent pre-occupation - which is to identify whose interest the radio really promotes during the post-independence era. Surprisingly, this is not difficult to identify. Fahati, the President in Le Récit du cirque makes, for instance, this confessional statement: "Je ne rêve que (...) de stations de télévision pour entretenir l'omnipotence de mon culte" (RC, p.18). Fahati's statement is a summation of the use to which the electronic and print media are put in the current society. The radio networks in Le Cercle des Tropiques, Les Crapauds-brousse and Le Jeune homme de sable also express the views of Baré Koulé, Sa Matrak and Le Guide respectively to the detriment of the citizens.

The novels aptly portray the duplicity of the news media. The Marigots du Sud radio in Le Cercle des Tropiques is named "La Voix du Peuple". The variants of this title can also be found in the other

novels. This name is however ironic. It represents an attempt by the rulers to deceive the people. While promoting the personal interests of the Presidents and their henchmen, the radio stations still present themselves as the mouthpieces of the citizens.

Examples of how the radio enhances the position of the Presidents abound in the novels. It is the Marigots du Sud radio in Le Cercle des Tropiques that drums the message of "dignité (...) isme, isme" into the ears of the citizens. We know that this political jargon is the tactic of a government that has nothing to offer by way of socio-economic development but which only tries to misinform the people. Constantly Fantouré satirises the efforts made by leaders to brainwash their subjects. Committees of the Parti Social de l'Espoir are formed in "chaque atelier, bureau, usine, magasin, hameau, village, ville" (CT, p.180). Meetings of various party committees are also held in all places in the Marigots du Sud every hour. At the gatherings, people are told of the numerous projects in the pipeline. However, all ends there. Baré Koulé wants the people to see him as their benefactor and saviour and the Marigots du Sud radio is his principal ally in this design. It is the radio which announces the formation of party committees. It is the radio which announces hours of meetings, and it is the radio which broadcasts again and again Baré Koulé's

demagogic speeches. Nowhere in the programmes are the voices of the people heard; their aspirations are taken for granted. The reactionary role of the radio in Les Crapauds-brousse takes a slightly different form. It consists in idolising Sâ Matrak, the tyrant. Sâ Matrak is described by the broadcaster as "notre illustre président" (CB, p.226). He is also said to be grappling day and night with the progress and freedom of all citizens. But no one is in doubt as to the fact that poverty and starvation are the lots of the people and that as a despot par excellence, Sa Matrak in no way merits any of those praises. Babatunde Jose observes thus:

> A good press is one that is in a constant state of war with government (...). A progressive journalist is one who writes anti-government articles every day, and a leading journalist is one who is in and out of prison for sedition.28

The broadcaster and the radio in the Guinean novels do not assume this popular responsibility. Instead, they are the unflinching megaphones of despots.

The anti-popular role of the news media is further demonstrated by their defence of the tyrannical measures of the politicians. A case in point is that of Soriba, a government official who is falsely accused of plotting to overthrow Sâ Matrak in Les Crapauds-brousse. Over the radio, Soriba, the respectable civil servant with untainted

record, is described as "élève médiocre, and called all manners of derogatory names. It is also the same radio that announces the involvement of Karamoko Lamine, the old, illiterate marabout, in the alleged coup d'Etat. But, as we shall see later in the chapter, Laadine Karamoko is implicated only because of his personal differences with Daouda, Sâ Matrak's principal collaborator. Were it not for the encouragement given Sâ Matrak by the radio, the President would not eliminate such a large number of people. Similarly, it is the radio in Le Jeune homme de sable that justifies the cancellation of free boarding and medical facilities in Le Guide's country. Babatunde Jose sheds light on the position of the media in the colonial society. He observes: "In the name of press freedom and nationalism, we deliberately wrote seditious and criminally libellious articles against colonial governments".[29] During the post-independence era, the media does not antagonise government. It even promotes the activities of tyrants and unpopular leaders. It is this unhealthy role of the news organisations that the Guinean novels bemoan.

The mass media is used by governments in Africa to misinform the public. The politicians adopted more despicable methods of perpetuating their rule. One of such instruments is the people's militia. It is the activities of this organisation that we

venture into now.

THE MILITIA AS AN AGENT OF COERCION

The militia is a sort of paramilitary organisation established by those in authority in some African countries, allegedly for the maintenance of internal security. Two of the novelists, Fantouré and Sassine, show great interest in the role of this organisation and they deal with the subject in Le Cercle des Tropiques by Fantouré and in Sassine's Le Jeune homme de sable and Le Zéhéros... The silence of Laye and Monénembo on the above subject might be explained by the fact that, having highlighted the nefarious functions of collaborationists like the RDA thugs in Dramouss and Daouda and his squad in Les Crapauds-brousse respectively, the two novelists do not deem it necessary to discuss the militia separately. It is, however, known that the militia which plays a prominent role in some African countries has a distinct identity. It is established by decree and asigned specific functions different from those of the police, the regular army and, of course the political thugs. We are examining how Le Cercle des Tropiques, Le Jeune homme de sable and Le Zéhéros... which treat the role of this organisation.

The novels mentioned above all contest the so-called patriotic functions of the militia. The

approaches of Fantouré and Sassine are however different. In Sassine's Le Zéhéros..., the attack on the militia is direct. Take, for instance, this remark by one of the ordinary Guineans in the novel: "Ta tante n'entretenait plus rien à cause des miliciens qui venaient tout cueillir pour l'usine de fruits du pédégé" (ZIQ, p.156). The militia neither request to collect the mango nor pay for them. They are an agent of exploitation and of coercion who help to sustain President Sékou's regime. The anti-social role of the militia is further demonstrated by the fact that Fanta, whose fruits they pick without compensation, is old and helpless. Her passing away shortly after the invasion of her plantation, confirms the militia as agents of death. The tone of Fantouré's Le Cercle des Tropiques, is on the other hand highly ironical. It is Halouma, the leader of the militia corps who sheds light on the function of his group. He declares:

> Nous, Messie-Koi de la République démocratique des Marigots du Sud, conscients de l'intérêt de notre peuple et de son indépendance en accord avec les membres du comité central du Parti, de notre gouvernement et du peuple, avons décidé (...) d'oeuvrer à la réussite de notre Parti Social de l'Espoir dans sa lutte pour la liberté du peuple aimé des Marigots du Sud (CT, p.147).

In spite of the oratory demonstrated by Halouma, the anti-popular role of the militia which he heads is

quite discernible. Contrary to Halouma's insinuation, the militiamen defend Baré Koulé and his henchmen and not the nation or the people of the Marigots du Sud.

The politicians use the militia to suppress opposition and provide additional security for themselves and their regimes. The contradiction in what is professed and what is practised is clearly brought out in Le Cercle des Tropiques and in Sassine's Le Jeune homme de sable and Le Zéhéros... Baré Koulé, Le Guide and Sékou, the Presidents in these works respectively, establish a so-called peoples militia in whose hands they concentrate the most sophisticated weapons. It is Mamy, one of the oppressed in Le Zéhéros... who makes this revelation when she states: "Le PDG malheureusement a confisqué les munitions au profit de sa milice" (ZIQ, p.70). The reason for the action of the PDG government is obvious. Having established a tyrannical regime with no popular base, doubting the loyalty of the regular army and of the people, President Sékou equips the militia to constitute a counter-force in the event of insurrection. Perhaps, there is no better evidence of the President's confidence in the militia than Le Guide's statement in Le Jeune homme de sable. The President declares: "Je foutrai l'armée en l'air pour la faire remplacer par une milice spéciale" (JHS, p.70). The relevance of Le Guide's

remark to the historico-political reality of Africa can be realised when one recalls what African leaders say on the militia. In chapter one, we saw that, in the words of Sékou Touré, "the militia is a permanent link binding the people's army to the population".[30] However, in reality, the militiamen in African countries are indoctrinated and are an effective tool in the leaders' design to perpetuate their rule. It is the hypocritical pronouncements of the nationalist leaders who replaced the colonial administration that Le Jeune homme de sable exposes.

One recurring difference between the works of Fantoure and Sassine's is that whereas Sassine's treatment of socio-political problems is usually sparing, that of the former is very comprehensive and thorough. This difference is particularly remarkable in their handling of the militia. In Le Jeune homme de sable for instance, the paramilitary organisation is discussed in just about a sentence which we have already quoted. And in Le Zéhéros..., statements made by "Gros-Bois " and the other characters on the organisation are disparate and disjointed and the reader can hardly have an overall picture of the point Sassine wants to make. This disjointed narrative technique may be a deliberate attempt by Sassine to show the confused socio-political condition of post-independence African societies and the misery endured by the people.

Fantouré, on the other hand, describes vividly the atrocities of the movement right from independence. The cynical and unscrupulous Halouma, who becomes the chief of the paramilitary movement at independence, is presented in the first part of La Cercle des Tropiques, devoted to the colonial era. We see Halouma during this era colluding with a local policeman to expropriate Dohi Di's gun. Thus, one does not expect any salutary action from an organisation headed by Halouma. And truly, during the post-colonial era, the people of the Marigots du Sud suffer greatly at the hands of the militia. Fantouré scrupulously catalogues the atrocities committed against the people by the militiamen in the second part of the novel. We have already pointed out the militia's disrespect for democratic ethics when they destroy the camp of the Club des Travailleurs. The combat planes, the machine guns, the mortars and other lethal weapons purchased by Baré Koulé seemingly for the use of the militiamen also mark them out as agents of death. Furthermore, the forcible entry of the militiamen into the Porte Oceane cathedral where they massacre unarmed citizens is indicative of their irreverent attitude toward religion. Images of fire, night and darkness, prison and death with which the militia are associated also help to emphasise the nefarious activities of this body. La Cercle des Tropiques leaves virtually

no aspect of the excesses of the militia untouched.

Fantouré even delves into the moral implications of the militia's actions, another area on which Sassine is silent. The militiaman who kills Atan-le-Mammouth is himself instantly lynched by a mob. We are told further that: "Le même médecin qui avait constaté la mort d'Atan-le-Mammouth enregistra celle du bourreau" (CT, p.202). Moreover, the body of Atan-le-Mammouth and that of the late militiaman are conveyed to the mortuary where they lie "cote a cote". Similarly Halouma, the chief of the militia and also the principal exponent of the Parti Social de l'Espoir policies, who brings misery into many homes, is himself finally executed for plotting against Baré Koulé. And toward the end of Le Cercle des Tropiques, we are told of how the people arise, armless, kill and drag some militiamen on the ground. Pohi Di sums up the didactic implication of these episodes as follows: "Il n'y avait plus de frontières entre les victimes et les bourreaux". (CT, p.241). Le Cercle des Tropiques is, by this not pleading with the paramilitary men who perfect the art of violence in some African countries. Rather, the novel warns the militiamen that, unless they abandon their opportunism and vicious role they will end up in an undignified manner. Thus, Le Cercle des Tropiques shares Auerbach's view that "a subject from practical reality could be treated

(...) didactically and moralistically".[31] It can be said that Le Jeune homme de sable and Le Zéhéros... which ignore the moral implications of the militia's conduct, are less powerful and less appealing.

Fantouré's deep interest in the conduct of the militiamen might be attributed to his educational background and profession. As an Economist by profession and training, the novelist is apparently sensitive to any problem that hinders socio-economic advancement. The writer makes it clear that, in the face of stark unemployment, poverty and disease, it is unpatriotic indeed on the part of any leader to form and arm to the teeth, any special movement, for the sake of sustaining his despotic regime. It is this point that Mellé Houré, one of the leaders of the Club des Travailleurs, tries to emphasise when he observes: "Nous avons plutôt besoin de travail" (CT, p.133). It is pragmatic socio-political and economic programmes rather than force and intimidation that can sustain the regime of Daré Koulé and others like him. On this too, Fantouré's novel stands above Sassine's Le Jeune homme de sable and Le Zéhéros.... However, by merely touching on the militia, Sassine proves to be more vigilant of post-colonial, socio-political events than Laye and Monénembo who are completely silent on this issue.

A more despicable device used by political

leaders to enhance their position is alleged coup d'Etat. Fabricated coups d'Etat have deprived Africa of many experienced politicians required for its advancement. Here, we delve into the workings of this device which was introduced into African politics as early as independence.

ALLEGED COUP D'ETAT AS INSTRUMENT FOR THE PERPETUATION OF POWER

The incidence of alleged coup d'Etat has attracted the attention of African novelists. Ahmadou Kourouma, the Ivorian actuary and novelist, describes in Les Soleils des indépendances how Fama Doumbouya, the last legitimate descendant of the princes of Khorodougou is detained by the Cote des Ébènes authorities for not divulging his dream on an imminent plot against the government. Mongo Beti, the Camerounian writer, also tells us in Perpétue that Essola, the protagonist, is released from a concentration camp where he has been detained for planning to overthrow the regime of Baba Toura, the despot. Laye, Fantouré, Monénembo and Sassine, like their colleagues in other countries of Africa, see the incidence of alleged coups d'Etat as worthy of attention. The writers wish to draw attention to the fact that the alleged plots are only ploys by the leaders to divert attention from their corrupt acts and their inability to improve upon the living conditions of the people.

Victims of fabricated coups d'Etat in the Guinean novels may be classified into three main groups. In the first category, are Mellé Houré and Benn Na in Le Cercle des Tropiques and Tahirou, the headmaster and politician in Sassine's Le Jeune homme de sable. These are leading politicians and real opponents of the Presidents. The allegations of plot levelled against these politicians are false and a ploy by those in power to eliminate their principal opponents. The novels illustrate the falseness of the alleged plots. There is no direct or even circumstantial evidence in Le Cercle des Tropiques to show that Mellé Houré and Benn Na plan to topple Baré Koulé. On the other hand, the novel reveals that the accusation is part of Baré Koulé's intrigues aimed at further consolidating his position. Baré Koulé's agents visit Mellé Houré and Benn Na in prison and promise them freedom if they agree to join the Parti Social de l'Espoir. The merciless torture of Mellé Houré and Benn Na and the death of the latter in prison are ample proof of Baré Koulé's sadistic design. Bohi Di aptly states the role of alleged coup d'Etat in the politics of the Marigots du Sud as follows: "moins il y avait de suspects, plus le Messie-Koi se rassurait sur sa destinée" (CT, p.153). Similarly, in Le Jeune homme de sable, the detention of Tahirou, for eight years, is politically motivated. For, in spite of the official allegation, Tahirou is not

involved in any plot. Le Guide's own utterance just before Tahirou's final arrest and incarceration, betrays the President's scheme. He declares: "C'est Tahirou qui nous servira de détonateur, c'est sur que dès sa libération il me critiquera" (ThS, p.70). "Point virgule", the security chief is the man to whom Le Guide reveals his plan. This ridiculous name and the fact that "Point virgule" is one of the principal allies of Le Guide, underline the cynical nature of the President's design and also Sassine's disapproval of it. Le Jeune homme de sable makes it clear that Tahirou is one of the "moutons", that is, one of the sacrificial lambs which must perish in the President's attempt to strengthen the base of his government.

The novelists' grasp of post-independence socio-political issues is further seen in their presentation of the second category of the victims of coup d'Etat. They all prove that a good number of citizens are implicated in putschs simply because they comment unfavourably on the leaders' policies or even because of other personal differences with the leaders or their friends. Perhaps, Fantouré's approach is the most biting. In a confessional statement, Fahati, the President in Le Récit du cirque narrates how he implicates in a coup d'Etat a woman aide who refuses to yield to his amorous advances. This is a direct exposure of the fallacious nature of plots.

It is also an indication of the extent of sadism and irresponsibility of the nationalists who replaced the colonial administration. The message of Monénembo's novel, Les Crapauds-brousse is, on the other hand, less direct but also quite pungent. Take for instance, this description in the first chapter of the novel: "Un de ses amis, arrêté et exécuté lors du dernier complot, l'aurait été à cause d'une altercation qu'il avait eue avec un ministre" (CB, p.15). And, when Monénembo elaborates on his point, his narrative is unambiguous and the reader is left in no doubt as to the fallacious nature of coups d'Etat. It is, for example, a day after Sâ Matrak's closest aide, Daouda discovers that Karamoko Lamine is his love-rival, that the old marabout's involvement in a coup d'Etat plot is announced. Lamine, an illiterate marabout, just arriving from the country-side, has neither the expertise, the desire nor the courage to overthrow a government. Here, as in the other novels, rumours of coups d'Etat are used by those in power to settle scores of all sorts with opponents.

The one word which best describes the Guinean novelists' attitude to historico-political events is meticulousness. For, they not only describe the plight of important people who are victims of imaginary coups d'Etat, but also scrupulously furnish information on ordinary citizens - illiterate

city dwellers and peasants who are eliminated through similar processes. Fatoman's friends executed by the government of the RDA in Dramouss, the woman in her seventies in Les Crapauds-brousse and the anonymous woman executed by President Sékou in Le Zéhéros... fall into this category. This group of people have nothing to do with politics. They criticise neither government policies nor the conduct of those in authority in the country. Yet, they are implicated in fictitious putschs and eliminated on the orders of the Presidents. Two reasons can be adduced to the plight of these victims. By implicating the ordinary citizens, the leaders aim at convincing the public and the international community that their opponents mobilised all sections of the society in their attempt to "create chaos" in the country. Moreover, the false accusation of citizens creates permanent fear in the minds of people. Since the people know that, they could at any time, rightly or wrongly, be accused of complicity, they would never associate with plotters, real or potential. The Presidents think they are thus secure. But, the Guinean novels show that such a ruse does not save the leaders from being overthrown.

Dramouss and Le Cercle des Tropiques however give a fourth category of "plot" victims. This is those who collaborate with leaders but are later eliminated through imaginary plots. As we have

indicated in this chapter, Halouma, Baré Koulé's principal ally in Le Cercle des Tropiques is later purged by the President, having been accused of complicyty in a plot. This aspect of "putsch" is however developed in greater detail in Dramouss. Bilali, the businessman in the novel also epitomises the RDA regime in Guinea. Even Fatoman's father, an old illiterate knows this. Yet, Bilali is finally shot for his alleged collusion with anti-government forces. As was rightly pointed out by Tunji Adebayo, there is a flaw in Laye's formulation here.[32] Fatoman's father, who claims to be ignorant of contemporary Guinean politics, however attacks Bilali for his lip-service to socialism, the RDA ideology. The essential point of the novel should however not be missed. Like Le Cercle des Tropiques, Dramouss stresses that it does not pay to associate with or court murderous regimes. But, such admonition rarely have effect on those who collaborate with African despots.

It is significant that in some of the Guinean novels treated in this chapter, those accused of plotting to overthrow the political leaders are portrayed as innocent victims. Notable among these victims are Konate in Dramouss, Soriba, Dioulde and their friends in Monénembo's Le Crapauds-brousse. All these people are presented as mere critics of government who do not have the courage to plan to

topple a regime. While it is true that many African leaders cry wolf where there is none, it is however a historical fact that, since the overthrow of Sylavanus Olympio in a coup d'Etat in Togo in 1963, almost all African countries have experienced political instability through putsch. Gutteridge reveals that between 1963 and 1970 about thirty coups d'Etat were recorded in Africa.[33] Even though the soldiers are always in the frontline of military takeovers, they more often than not collaborate with civilians who are opposed to the policies of the incumbent leaders. The rather harmless picture given of those accused of plotting in Dramouss and Les Crapauds-brousse is unrealistic. On the other hand, novels like Le Cercle des Tropiques and Sassine's Le Jeune homme de sable which acknowledge the ambition, courage and dynamism of government critics are quite homologous with historical reality. Even though, as pointed out by Olalere Oladitan "Literary imagination is not bound by factual accuracy", African writers have often pointed out that they cannot afford to remain too far from the socio-political reality of the period in which their works are set.[34]

People implicated in coups d'Etat or any other offence are supposed to be tried before they are executed or jailed. At issue here is the role of the legislature in post-independence society. It

is the position of this arm of government that we scrutinise at present.

JUDICIARY IN POST-INDEPENDENCE SOCIETY

Most writers of political novels in Africa have reflected on the role of the judiciary in the post-independence society. Malick Fall, the Senegalese writer in his novel La Plaie, published in 1967, tells of the arrest and incarceration of Magamou Seck among mental patients. In Les Soleils des indépendances we hear of the incarceration of Fama and many others on tramped up changes of insurrection against the authorities of the Côte des Ébenes. In Perpétue, which appeared in 1974, Essola a former Rubenist is released after six years in a concentration camp. Implicit in the above novels is that the role of the judiciary has been unsurped by the executive arm of government.

The four Guinean novelists all comment on the condition of the legal system. The execution, without trial of Soriba and his friends in Les Crapauds-brousse, and the long incarceration of Tahirou without trial in Le Jeune homme de sable are testimonies to Monénembo and Sassine's sensitivity to the crisis in the judicial system. Sassine also looks at the condition of the law courts at great length in Le Zéhéros,... The prominent Guineans including Balde Oumar, Emile Conde and Fofana Sékou

who were made to declare: "Je demande pardon (...) J'avoue. J'avoue. J'avoue (...) Je suis récupérable" (ZIQ, p.212) are, without doubt, being forced to own up crimes they have never really committed. Monénembo and Sassine do not however explore fully the problem of the judiciary. The question of who presides over the courts and what form the trial takes are not really resolved in the works of Monénembo and Sassine.

The two novelists who explore the legal issue at great length are Laye and Fantouré. This is not very surprising. Laye's biography, as we know, reveals that he was once jailed and also kept under house arrest for several weeks by the PDG government of Sékou Touré. And Fantouré, as a high ranking civil servant in many European countries is unavoidably familiar with the workings of the law in these countries. He therefore cannot but be perturbed by the parody of justice which prevails in post-colonial Africa.

The leader of the Guinean RDA in Dramouss and President Fahati in Le Récit du cirque are the exponents of the legal process in their countries. The giant, who represents the President in Dramouss tells Fatoman, the protagonist: "A Coup de marteau (...) je t'enfoncerai dans la tête que la raison du plus fort sielle n'est pas la meilleure chez le bon

Dieu est sur la terre la seule qui compte" (Dramouss, p.198). Call it "la raison du plus fort" or "arbitrariness". It is all the same thing. This is the basis of the law in the giant's kingdom. The capricious nature of the legal process in the giant's kingdom is also testified to by ordinary citizens in the territory. Fatoman observes thus: "nous sommes des oiseaux (...) nous sommes dans la jungle, où prime la loi du plus fort" (Dramouss, p.213). The condition of law in Le Récit du cirque is not different. As Fahati, the President himself puts it: "Je rêve de la loi de la jungle" (RC, p.17). Even though, the giant and Fahati as chief executives of their respective territories, can expound on any aspect of government activities, the tyrannical statements made by the two leaders constitute abuse of power. The giant and Fahati, like the politicians they represent, usurp the power of the judiciary, so that they can eliminate their opponents. Uganden understands the motive of the legal arrangement in Le Récit du cirque when she observes: "The legislature literally seems to seek the genocide of "Ce-peuple" for the interest of the dictator, Fahati".[35] This is also the objective of the law in Dramouss. But, while it is true that tyrannical laws operate in most parts of Africa, no African leader would openly admit it as the giant and Fahati do. The reckless statements attributed to the giant and Fahati are

an expression of the disillusionment of Laye and Fantouré with the state of the law in the post-colonial era.

Even though Dramouss and Le Récit du cirque present ugly pictures of the law, the condition of the law in the latter novel is more deplorable than the one seen in the former. The legal process in Dramouss has, of course, all the ingredients of arbitrariness. The whistle blown by the giant to assemble his victims for "trial" suggests that the judicial system is mechanical and inhuman. The victims are also neither told their offence nor allowed to defend themselves. Moreover, the sentences passed are outrageous. Fatoman, for example, is given capital punishment without having committed any crime. All these harsh treatments are evidence of capriciousness and of Laye's despair. The law in Le Récit du cirque is however more ruthless and more whimsical. A narrator reveals as follows:

> Une fois par an (...) a lieu depuis des années une grande fête rituelle (...) Elle consiste à tirer au sort mille personnes. Seuls le Vénérable, les grands inquisiteurs et les proches en sont épargnés. Parmi ces mille "une" seule personne sera sauvée. On interroge en supposant, à priori, que les neuf cent quatre-vingt-dix-neuf sont coupables et qu'en forçant un peu par la torture ils avoueront quelque chose pour être cette personne à épargner (RC, p.35).

Uganden is right. This is the most sadistic of all the laws in the novel.[36] Furthermore, this description is replete with elements of the unreal, the inhuman and, above all, the absurd. The law here operates like a gambling machine. The President, his close associates and their relatives are exempted from the law. And men are presumed guilty before they are tried. The idea of arbitrariness and absurdity is enhanced by the word "rituelle" - a religious, rather than a legal, term. Its use underlines the fact that the administration of justice is not a factual exercise, rather, it is based on the luck or otherwise of the suspect and on the whimsicalities of those in power.

If the law described in Dramouss can be said to be unreal, the one in Le Récit du cirque must be seen as absurd. Indeed the technique of Le Récit du cirque can best be described as "reductio ad absurdium", that is an attempt to give absurd interpretation to human actions. For example, we learn that a man is sentenced to death for being one of the namesakes of a citizen already given capital punishment. Statements made by Fahati or the commentators in the novel or by Fantouré on the condition of law suggest that, in Ce-pays people are not ruled by law and logic but rather by animalistic instinct.

It is quite paradoxical that Fantouré who has

not been tried by a law court, at least in Africa, appears to be more affected, more disturbed by the legal methods than Laye. It may well be that Laye is more dismayed than Fantouré but that the latter is only able to express his disgust much more profoundly than Laye. For one thing, as a result of Fantouré's prolonged contact with Europe, he is very exposed to varied literary concepts and techniques. With the erudition displayed by Fantouré in Le Récit du cirque, it can be said that he is capable of mastering, for example, the concept of the absurd which he seems to use in treating the crisis of the judiciary.

Another aspect on which Laye is silent but which Fantouré draws attention to is the role of inquisitors. The twin characters - Vice-I-Mille and I-Mille are investigators in Le Récit du cirque. The names of the two government officials are not accidental. I-Mille could mean "Inquisiteur Mille" which stands for the annual ritual during which a thousand people are selected for execution, minus one. I-Mille himself sheds light on the intimate relationships between his name and the job he performs when he declares that, of the six thousand suspects interrogated by him, he spares the lives of only three. And these three, we further learn, are related to Fahoti, the President. Here, Fantouré's absurd interpretation of human existence resurfaces.

We even learn that Vice-I-Mille and I-Mille are aware of the atrocities they commit against the people but still vow to serve faithfully Fahati's despotic regime.

Dramouss and Le Récit du cirque, in spite of their different approaches, have the same objective. They yearn for an orderly society in which justice is supreme. This point is emphasised in Le Récit du cirque by I-Mille who states: "Construisons au lieu de détruire, effaçons la violence, faisons régner la justice dans notre monde pour mieux sauver l'homme, (RC, p.45). I-Mille advises himself and others in authority to be just, a necessary condition for the building and sustenance of a better society. The message of Dramouss is not so direct. For, it is conveyed stylistically. Laye believes that in exaggerating the politicians' abuse of the jidiciary as he does in the novel, those in power would feel exposed and forced to amend their ways. Laye later explained the relationship between his technique and contemporary socio-political reality as follows:

> Si l'art doit agir sur la vie, il faut qu'il soit plus fort que la vie quotidienne. C'est la loi de la balistique, quand on tire, il faut viser au-dessus de la cible, si cette cible est en mouvement. 37

Experience in Africa shows, however, that the independence of the judiciary is still taken for

granted by the executive arm of government.

The last topic in our study of the instruments for the perpetuation of power will be imprisonment and prison conditions. This theme, like the preceding ones unveils the selfishness and callousness of the politicians in authority.

IMPRISONMENT AND CONDITION OF PRISONS

As already stated, of the four Guinean novelists, only Laye has prison experience. But all the writers are concerned about the illegal imprisonment and deplorable prison conditions. The writers unanimously agree that imprisonment is a weapon used to eliminate or silence people considered to be a threat to government. No wonder, practically all those detained in the Guinean novels are leading politicians.

Laye and Mouénembo's analyses of the condition of prisons can be said to be more comprehensive than those of Fantouré and Sassine. This is because the former group of novelists present not only the experiences inside the detention camps but also the outward appearances of the prisons themselves. One striking similarity between the prison in Dramouss and the one in Les Crapauds-brousse is that the two concentration camps are immense and have very high walls rising into the sky. Another striking similarity

is that the prisons are surrounded by or located in the vicinity of oceans. The Ocean, according to Ad de Vries symbolises: "desolation unbounded". It also represents "death and the abysmal abode".[38] Implicitly, the two novelists draw attention to the ordeal of those detained in the prisons in Dramouss and Les Crapauds-brousse. It is not very surprising that Laye and Monénembo depict the outward appearance of prison in the same manner. The two writers had lived in Conakry and other Guinean towns before leaving the country. Perhaps, they saw in their country a prison which they present as a replica of prisons in Africa.

The conditions of the inmates is deplorable. Each of the four novelists tries hard to highlight the barbaric treatment meted out to the prisoners. Fatoman, the protagonist in Dramouss, who is also one of the giant's prisoners, reveals that detainees are kept in check by terrible police dogs: A sadistic guard even slaughters a prisoner for "being a liability to the giant". Another important revelation is that prisoners are denied food and water until they starve to death. This practice, which Laye simply describes, Sassine calls it by its name in Le Zéhéros... This is the "diète noire". The closeness of the representations in the two works mentioned above to socio-political reality is borne out by the statement made by Sékou Touré.

As the Guinean President puts it: "Il ne tient qu'à nous qu'en refusant aux prisonniers toute nourriture, une condamnation à perpétuité se transforme en exécution".[39] Sékou Touré is only an exponent of this inhuman method. Other African leaders resort to it too.

The difference between Dramouss and Le Zéhéros... is that whereas the former features only a narrator who relates prison experience, many characters give account of their experiences in Le Zéhéros.... A character in the latter work complains about the darkness in the Boiro camp which in reality is the principal prison in Guinea under Sékou Touré. Another one complains about the electric shocks used to punish detainees. Yet, another person reports on how he was paralysed as a result of harsh conditions at Boiro. There are still characters who comment on horrors inside Boiro. Sassine apparently tries to incorporate in his novel much of the inhuman treatment meted out to detainees in prisons in various parts of Africa. This leads him to provide bits of information which lack profoundness, a sort of jack of all trades master of none. Moreover, very often, Sassine fails to indicate which of the many characters says what. Thus, the reader is forced to look backward and forward in order to follow the narrative. This makes Le Zéhéros... tedious and confusing. No wonder

Jacques Chevrier accuses Sassine of "une organisation chaotique".[40] Clearly, Dramouss which adopts a simpler method of characterisation is more readable than Le Zéhéros....

Sassine apparently does a better job in Le Jeune homme de sable with regard to the issue of imprisonment and prison conditions. He traces meticulously in this work the slow but sure process through which government critics are eliminated in prison. We have already indicated how Tahirou, the headmaster and critic of Le Guide, is falsely accused and detained. A nurse then naively reveals the horrors to which Tahirou is subjected in his cell. Tahirou's alleged stomach ailment and his isolation are announced in the same chapter. We learn further that Le Guide's personal physician attends to Tahirou! Next, abruptly, the headmaster's death, on the comfortable bed provided for him by Le Guide, is announced. Every aspect of Tahirou's murder is carefully planned by Le Guide and his agents and the reader is in no doubt that it is the President who gets rid of his principal opponent. And, like Le Jeune homme de sable, Le Cercle des Tropiques and Les Crapauds-brousse convince the reader because they focus on specific aspects of prison experience which they treat in depth.

One curious revelation in Le Récit du cirque, Fantoure's second novel, is that construction of

prisons is financed externally. Afrikou, one of the mouthpieces of the downtrodden, makes this revelation. Fahati denies it. While it is known that prisons in African countries are either inherited from the colonial era or constructed through revenues generated by governments themselves it is not impossible that some foreign bodies do assist leaders to build concentration camps. Fantouré is more familiar with the machinations of outsiders in their attempt to exploit the resources of developing countries than his colleagues - Laye, Monénembo and Sassine. Fantouré's awareness of the intrigues of foreigners is confirmed by this diatribe: "Ces salauds d'investisseurs en pays pauvres ont besoin de quelque chose d'immédiatement rentable pour leurs capitaux (...) ils font ce qu'ils peuvent pour aider nos cultes" (RC, p.103). Foreign investors protect despots while the despots protect and promote the interest of the foreigners in Africa.

If Fantouré explores the financing of prisons, Laye, who has a prison experience, probes into the mind of those who imprison their compatriots. This, Laye does, by interrogating the giant seen by Fatoman in his dream. In a dialogue between Fatoman and the giant, the latter proves to hold a pessimistic view of man. The giant prefers trees to men and believes that when a tree and a man are in danger, a tree should be saved rather than the man. The

giant believes that the fruits of a tree and its shade are of public utility. In the view of the giant, the same cannot be said of man. He stresses: "lorsque sur ta route tu rencontreras un homme en difficulté, un homme qui s'enlise, si tu le relèves à peine sera-t-il debout qu'il te donnera un coup de pied, si rude, si barbare, si ingrat qu'il te couchera pour toujours" (Dramouss, p.203). For a misanthrope like the giant, there can be no question of trusting man or cooperating with fellow citizens for the development of society. He sees his dominance over his compatriots as an advantage which he must protect with all the means at his disposal. Thus, we are faced not just with a political problem, of a President trying to impose himself on a people, but also with a biological problem. Some people are innately cynical and are liabilities to their society, no matter their position.

Machiavelli observes thus: "L'expérience nous prouve que les cités n'ont accru leur puissance et leurs richesses que pendant qu'elles ont vécu libres".[41] What Machiavelli implies is that freedom of the people is a pre-condition for social progress. The political leaders depicted in the Guinean novels studied above do not believe in this. In fact they do not believe at all in social advancement. What matters most to them is political power. They are like the President in N'Debeka's Le Président whose

ambition is couched as follows: "Je me sens un besoin d'exister en Chef, en homme gonflé de tous les pouvoirs possibles et impossibles, maître des hommes, maîtres des choses".[42] The Guinean novelists try hard to recall the methods used by the nationalists to stay in power. The official excesses presented in the novels are exhaustive and proof of the vigilance and sensitivity of the writers to socio-political problems of the post-colonial society. The points of emphasis differ from novel to novel depending on each writer's taste, temperament, intellectual and, to some extent, family background. They also depend on the writers' proximity or otherwise to Africa at the time they published their novels. Nevertheless, they all succeed in making the essential point, which is that contemporary African leaders will stop at nothing to ensure the longevity of their rule.

What we have discussed above is essentially the conduct of those in power, that is the way they use State apparatus to enhance their position. We now delve into the reaction of the governed to the conduct of those in power, the manner in which the people liberate themselves from tyranny.

III. TOWARD THE LIBERATION OF THE OPPRESSED

From our discussion in sections one and two, it can be said that the concept of art for art's sake

has no place in the Guinean novels. The works show that the artist must take interest in the problems of his society, he must defend the oppressed. Thus, in bringing together the rulers and the ruled in an atmosphere in which they interact, in which the leaders abuse their power and the ordinary citizens are denied their rights, the desire of the novelists is to create political awareness in the oppressed and show them the way to liberate themselves from misrule.

Much has been written about the so-called pessimism of the Guinean novelists or the "irrelevance" of their works to the historico-political reality of their era. Adebayo, for instance wonders if Laye's novels make any real contribution toward solving the socio-political and economic problems of Africa.[43] Monénembo and Sassine have also been accused of presenting a gloomy picture of the post-independence situation. Fantouré is the greatest victim of such accusations. Blair and Midiohouan have touched on what they consider as Fantouré's profound pessimism.[44] Midiohouan writes thus on Le Cercle des Tropiques "Roman de la désespérance et du désarroi, Le Cercle des Tropiques est aussi et surtout le roman de l'échec".[45] Lesser known critics have also not spared Fantouré. Uganden states thus: "Fantouré's pessimism evolved in a progressive manner".[46] While Gogura also includes

Le Cercle des Tropiques in the novels which he studies under the title Le Pessimisme dans trois romans ouest-africains.[47] But neither Fantouré nor the other Guinean novelists are pessimists or insensitive to the problems of the post-colonial period. Fantouré, for instance, makes it clear in Le Cercle des Tropiques, at the height of Bare Koule's glory that the President could fall. Here is the novelist's a uthorial comment:

> Une divinité vénérée aujourd'hui, peut se réveiller déchue de ses pouvoirs surnaturels demain. Divinité ridicule, grotesque, elle disparaîtra comme tant d'autres pour n'avoir été qu'un vain espoir pour un instant matérialisé (CT, p.127).

In fact, it can be said that this novel is structured to portray the rise and fall of the African President. The first part of the work presents Baré Koulé, the ex-civil servant under the colonial government struggling to become President. Baré Koulé's fortune rises to a summit in part two of the novel, with his election and swearing in as the first executive President of his country. Part three tells of the decline and removal of Baré Koulé from power and his eventual death. From the beginning to the end, the novel leaves one in no doubt that the path chosen by Baré Koulé will lead to a tragic end. In the post-face to Le Cercle des Tropiques, we read that the representatives of the oppressed, who remove

Baré Koulé from power, are all mysteriously assassinated. The implication of this, we shall not discuss here. Suffice it to point out that with Fantouré, just as with the three other Guinean novelists, the despot, be he civilian or soldier, is never spared the crimes he commits against the people. The oppressed survive him. Fantouré, who states that: "L'écriture est une lutte permanente contre le temps et pour le temps"[48] and who calls on the people to liberate themselves, will certainly never give a hopeless picture of the post-independence society.

This belief in the overthrow of tyranny and the triumph of the oppressed is expressed in the other Guinean novels. Dramouss for instance, like Le Cercle des Tropiques, is structured to indicate the downfall of the Guinean RDA leader, represented by the giant, "the brute". Even though in Dramouss, Les Crapauds-brousse, Le Jeune homme de sable and Le Zéhéros... the Presidents are not subjected to the same humiliation as the leaders in Le Cercle des Tropiques and Le Récit du cirque, the former group of novels assure that the Presidents will definitely be overthrown. Oumarou, who, for instance symbolises resistance to tyranny assures in Le Jeune homme de sable that "Le Guide sera renversé" (JHS, p.185). The Guinean novelists cannot be said to be pessimists. Rather, they refuse to create the impression that the problem facing the oppressed is an easy one, to

which they can find an easy solution. Blair grasps, for instance, Fantouré's message when she remarks: "He does not offer any facile solution to the situation".[49] Similarly, Fliet understands Laye's treatment of contemporary socio-political problems when he observes: "Camara Laye (...) prolonge Kafka (...) de l'absurde mais non du désespoir".[50] All the Guinean novels set in the post-independence period and studied here are optimistic novels.

The novels symbolically show that the oppressed will triumph over the autocrats. We learn in Dramouss that Dramouss, the beautiful and mysterious lady, seizes the symbol of authority from the giant, the tyrant, and hands it over to the black lion after which peace returns to Guinea. Similarly, those who engage Sa Mâtrak's security agents in a physical combat in Les Crapauds-brousse include a widow, an old griot, an old painter and a tuberculosis patient. These are the "wretched" of the society. Yet, they root out Sa Matrak's squad. The difference between the approaches of Dramouss and Les Crapauds-brousse is that while in the former, the oppressed are saved by a supernatural power, it is the oppressed who take up arms to defend themselves in Les Crapauds-brousse. The essential point should however not be missed. The two works show that with determination, the people can liberate themselves, no matter how superb the forces of tyranny.

The black lion which overpowers the giant in Dramouss and restores order in Guinea, deserves further attention. The black lion reminds one of the famous Manding leader Soundiata Keita who lived in the 13th Century. Soundiata was popularly known as "lord lion" or "lion king".[51] Soundiata is known to have defeated the bellicose Susu rulers of Kumbi-Saleh and laid the foundations for the Mali Empire. He represents resistance. Dramouss implies that, if Guinean and Africans draw inspiration from Soundiata, they will successfully repel the despots and build a free society. That there is a relationship between Soundiata's feat and the liberation effort in contemporary Africa is borne out by Laye's exhortation: "Puisse l'exemple de Soundiata et des siens nous éclairer dans notre marche sur la route lente et difficile de l'évolution africaine".[52]

Only Laye, of the four Guinean novelists, calls on liberators to draw inspiration from the lives of post-African heroes. Laye's close association with traditional societies, his deep research into traditional African culture as evidenced by his last major work Le Maître de la Parole, undoubtedly led him to see the relevance of Africa's past to the current struggle against misrule.

The lady who, in Dramouss, speaks at the Kouroussa rally is one of the exponents of the RDA policies. But the policies she defends are anti-

popular. She tries to divert, like the government, the attention of the audience from the precarious socio-economic conditions in Guinea. This lady manifestly collaborates with the oppressor and the message of the novel is that such women should not be spared by those who seek to terminate tyranny. It is significant that this lady represents the support the PDG enjoyed among the women in Guinea. But Laye is not an anti-feminist Dramouss, who symbolically saves Fatoman and Guinea is as we have pointed out, a lady. With Laye, women are a force to reckon with in the emancipation process. In the case of the RDA lady militant portrayed unfavourably, the novelist tries to express his disgust with opportunists who collude with the status quo to oppress and exploit the people.

A similar positive image of women is seen in Le Cercle des Tropiques and Les Crapauds-brousse. Salimatou, one of the prominent members of the Club des Travailleurs in Le Cercle des Tropiques and Rahi, the widow of Diouldé, the protagonist in Monénembo's novel symbolise resistance. They join the men and actively contribute to the emancipation efforts. Salimatou's participation spans a longer period than Rahi's. Starting during the colonial era, it ends with her assassination by reprogressive forces during the post-independence era. Before independence, Salimatou bravely denounces the excesses of the

colonial agents, especially their attempt to impose Baré Koulé, the tyrant on the Marigots du Sud. And when Baré Koulé comes to power, Salimatou is still unrelenting in her fight for a cleaner society. She physically knocks down a militiaman, who, as we know collaborates with the status quo. In the post-face to Le Cercle des Tropiques, Salimatou is allegedly murdered together with other committed nationalists. Thus, she defends, with her blood, the cause of the down-trodden. This lady corrects the general belief that the role of the woman is limited to the home and to providing comfort for her husband's bed. She proves that the woman is capable of joining progressive forces in the struggle for a better society. Râhi's emancipatory role is not as elaborate and is described in a few sentences in the last chapter of Les Crapauds-brousse. But this role too is very significant. It is Râhi who fires at and kills Daouda, the leader of Sâ Matrak's squad. Chevrier sees Râhi's action as a "renversement de rôle"[53] that is, Râhi plays the role of men. But Râhi is not competiting with men. Like Salimatou in Le Cercle des Tropiques and Dramouss in Dramouss, Rahi sees herself as men's ally in the liberation process. On the other hand, the women in Sassine's Le Jeune homme de sable and Le Zéhéros... are generally conservative, passive and spend their time quarreling in a polygamous home. Such is the conduct of the wives of the prominent Deputy, Abdou in Le Jeune home de

sable. African women, generally are increasingly expressing their views on public issues and they deserve a better image than the conservative outlook attributed to them by Sassine.

The Guinean novels uniformly present a passive picture of the rural dwellers. Neither the Nakiri villagers in Le Cercle des Tropiques nor the Telimele old men in Dramouss nor Alfa Bakár, the father of the protagonist in Les Crapauds-brousse, participate in the liberation struggle. Similarly, the peasants in Le Jeune homme de sable and in La Zéhéros... do not assemble forces to challenge oppressive laws. But it is remarkable that the novelists treat the conduct of the rural dwellers sympathetically, amusingly even. The Guinean novelists have a firm grasp of the problems of the rural dwellers, of their illiteracy, ignorance and poverty. And they do not assign this category of people any formidable role in the ongoing struggle. Rather, the novels show that the rural dwellers should be led.

The group of people portrayed in an unflattering manner in the novels are the urban dwellers. We have already seen how Dramouss satirises the uncritical attitude of the Kouroussa people to the political demagogy of the RDA authorities. When later Fatoman declares that he and his fellow prisoners are to be blamed for not challenging the giant, we realise that the novel barely conceals its

disdain for the people residing in the urban centres. Tyranny persists in Guinea because urban dwellers have allowed themselves to be brainwashed. The uncritical attitude of city dwellers is also highlighted in Le Jeune homme de sable. But, here, there is a flaw. Ahmedou the guard, who is presented as insensitive to socio-political situation is a stark illiterate. There is very little difference between an illiterate city dweller and a peasant. The illiterate in the town is almost as ignorant of the socio-political reality of his society as the farmer in the countryside. One cannot therefore expect any militant role from Ahmedou who is moreover a beneficiary of thr status quo and would not participate in any protest against Le Guide.

By far the novelist most critical of the people living in the cities, is Fantoure. The inhabitants of Porte Oceane, the capital city of the Marigots du Sud in Le Cercle des Tropiques are aware of Bare Koule's sadistic methods. Daily, they see the atrocities committed by the President's militia against the unarmed and innocent people of Porte Oceane. Yet, their reaction to these crimes is only erratic, spontaneous, and not really aimed at bringing the autocratic to his knees. The people are simply timid as is evidenced in Bo'ni Di's narrative: "La foule figée, continuait, son attente sous le soleil, résignée, elle tenait son regard fixé sur un seule point du stade" (CT, p.145). On another occasion,

the narrator aptly captures the mood of Porte Océane: "Porte Océane malgré sa colère de l'après midi commençait à regretter as révolte, elle reniait son cri par le lourd silence de la nuit (...) Elle se préparait à payer son crime" (CT, p.303). The weakness of the people of Porte Océane, their lack of will to embark on any coordinated action and their resignation is beautifully summarised by Midiohouan. As he puts it:

> En ville, le peuple pouvait, par moment devenir foule (...) Mais elle n'apparaît pas comme l'expression d'une prise de conscience et d'une volonté politique de nature à donner une nouvelle impulsion à l'histoire du pays et à changer l'ordre des choses. 54

Midiohouan's assessment of the people is very accurate. On the other hand, Uganden exaggerates when she talks of the "revolutionary masses in Fantouré's novels".[55] There are no revolutionary masses in Fantouré's novels set in the post-independence period.

The picture of the urban people seen in Le Cercle des Tropiques is not gratuitous. The novel, like N'Debeka's Le Président, aims at giving the townsmen, what Sartre terms: "une conscience malheureuse"[56] of themselves. It aims at provoking them into action.

This attempt to galvanise the people into action is also manifest in Le Récit du cirque. The propaganda in this work is open and characterised by virulent diatribes against the people for their inaction: "Retournez à votre indifference", "Il faut que les choses changent", "Bande de lâches". Much has been written about the literary merits of this novel which, according to Arlette Chemain-Degrange follows the technique of the "nouveau roman".[57] The technique of Le Récit du cirque is indeed appropriate. For African readers who are at the infant stage of reading, only such an unambiguous propaganda can spur them into action against their oppressors.

For a successful resistance, most of the novels recommend collective action. Dramouss is categorical on the need for united effort. Fatoman stresses "Ce qu'il fallait pour nous libérer c'est d'agir tous ensemble" (Dramouss, p.215). This is no mere pronouncement as Fatoman, at no moment, contemplates confronting alone, the leader of the Guinean RDA. In prison, Fatoman calls on other prisoners to resist the giant's excesses. Also, as powerful as the black lion is, it does not confront, alone, the giant. It does so with the assistance of the lady Dramouss. Similarly, Maldoé and Tol Bof, the two leaders of the resistance in Le Cercle des Tropiques enjoy the

backing of a large number of people including Salimatou, Mellé Houré and some senior military officers. And in Les Crapauds-brousse, while it is Rahi who fires at the cynical Daouda, we know that she performs this feat in the midst of men. Sarsan Yero's advice which leads to success is evidence of the need for collective decision. By emphasising the importance of collective effort, Laye, Fantouré and Monénembo propose an effective method of dismantling oppressive regimes. No lone fighter can succeed in this task.

But this is exactly what Le Jeune homme de sable, Sassine's novel, seems to suggest. For, in this novel, Oumarou, the protagonist decides to go about the liberation efforts all alone. He resolves to unite, all alone, old Bandia, the representative of tradition and Wahirou, the failed revolutionary in a bid to confront the oppressors and exploiters. Also, Oumarou believes that alcohol and women could provide the necessary force required by the revolutionary. The protagonist, manifestly, is working on many contradictory theses, which seem to suggest Sassine's own crisis, his own reflection on how to eradicate the ills of society and build a viable one. Oumarou fails not because he is not committed but because his recipe for emancipation is acquired exclusively from books. That Oumarou's option would not lead to success is also suggested

by the title of the novel: Le Jeune homme de sable "Sable" symbolises "fruitless effort". It also represents the "desert".[58] Thus, it connotes "failure". Le Guide will definitely be overthrown and order will be restored in the country, however, this will certainly not be achieved through the one-man-struggle suggested by Oumarou, and perhaps Saesine.

There is also the question of whether to adopt a pacifist approach or armed confrontation with the oppressors. Le Récit du cirque attempts to answer this question. Afrikou, a character in the novel and a representative of the people appeals to Kikée, the wife of Vice-I-Mille, one of Fahati's inquisitors, to shun indifference and identify with the people living under subjugation. Afrikou, in spite of his commitment, is being politically naive. Neither a tyrant nor the beneficiaries of his regime (like Kikée) can be persuaded to change their attitude toward the downtrodden. Only armed confrontation between the forces of oppression and those of liberation can restore sanity in the post-independence society. The question of which strategy to adopt is surprisingly easily resolved in the works of the three other Guinean novelists. Fatoman in Dramouss advocates physical confrontation between rulers and ruled. Ra hi in Les Crapauds-brousse neutralises Daouda with a pistol. And when Le Jeune homme de sable

predicts that Le Guide will be overthrown, it implies direct combat with the security agents of the government. The problem of the form which the liberation struggle should take is even clearly resolved in Le Cercle des Tropiques, Fantouré's first novel. The work makes it clear that only violence can neutralise the forces of violence. That Le Récit du cirque should insinuate that a dialogue between the oppressors and the oppressed will make the former challenge their attitude is quite surprising. It would appear that Fantouré, in Le Récit du cirque, is so preoccupied with denouncing the rulers and the ruled (the latter for their indifference) that he does not allow himself enough time to reflect seriously on effective ways of defeating the politicians in power.

Two of the novels, Le Cercle des Tropiques, and Le Jeune homme de sable are prominent in their reflection on the role of the military in a totalitarian State. Sassine's novel seems to approve of the intervention of the military in political matters. The call on soldiers is indirect. The poem allegedly composed by Oumarou, in which the military are accused of inaction is intended to provoke them into taking over the government of Le Guide. The confidence, which Sassine has in the army as the liberator of the subjugated, is further demonstrated in Le Zeheros... which is essentially a celebration of the putsch

which terminated the government of the PDG in 1984. The military in the novels of Fantouré do not, on the other hand, enjoy such respect. The officers in Le Cercle des Tropiques, in collaboration with the leaders of the Club des Travailleurs, remove Baré Koulé from office as President of the Marigots du Sud. But, in an epilogue, we learn of the assassination of the leaders of the coup d'Etat. This dastardly act is presumably masterminded by General Baba Sanassi, the only surviving leader of the putsch which terminates Baré Koulé's rule. That Fantouré questions the documents of the military as the defenders of the people is manifest in this authorial comment in Le Récit du cirque: "Toute usurpation de pouvoir quelle qu'elle soit, tout coup d'Etat quelle que puisse être sa motivation, porte une part de crime en soi" (RC., p.66). Fantouré is pragmatic in hesitating to endorse the military. For, as Illah rightly points out: "Our armed forces have always intervened, not merely to rescue their civilian counterparts, but to entrench imperialist control".[59] The hypocrisy and opportunism of the soldiers are well known. They declare, on assuming office, just as does Mabutu in Césaire's Une Saison au Congo: "J'accomplis mon devoir de citoyen et de patriote".[60] Their real motive in dislodging the politicians, however, is to enrich themselves. Only the people

are their own saviours. For, the military are as obsessed with power and wealth as the politicians they displace and neglect the oppressed once they are in control of government. Thus, on this issue Fantouré's novels differ from those of Sassine, which apparently give unqualified backing to the army.

The aim of the novelists is to arouse the political consciousness of the oppressed and prepare them for their own liberation. From the ideologies of governments to the strategies for emancipation, the novels prove to be committed to this social objective. At no moment do the works engage in unnecessary narratives unrelated to this goal. But, if the novels diagnose the socio-political problems with almost equal efficiency, their recommendations for curing the ailments are not of equal magnitude. From the pragmatism of Fantouré's novels we see the incoherent and fragile recommendation of Sassine's Le Jeune homme de sable. But one fact stands out. The novels show social concern and prove that literature is not a mere expression of private fantasy but rather an action which should lead to a better understanding of societal problems and the creation of a better society.

We have touched on three main issues in this

chapter. These are the unwillingness of African leaders to launch political parties with sound theoretical bases, the oppressive and dehumanising methods used by those in authority to perpetuate their power and the writers' reflections on how to liberate the oppressed. The conflict in this society is principally internal, it occurs between the leaders who came to power at the end of the colonial rule and the rest of their compatriots.

Those politicians who abuse their positions, (the General Secretary of the RDA in Dramouss, Baré Koulé in Le Cercle des Tropiques, Fahati in Le Récit du cirque and Sékou Touré in Le Zéhéros) are usually assisted by such faithful cohorts as Dauda (Les Crapauds-Brousse) and Abdou in Sassine's Le Jeune homme de sable.

The names of this group of politicians are suggestive of their sadistic conducts and anti-popular activities. We have discussed the negative connotation of Fahati's name. This name, with its /faha/ sound, strains the glottis and reflects the ruthless methods of the politicians who bears it. Indeed, none of the names of the Presidents endears them to the reader. In Dramouss, the General Secretary of the RDA later becomes the "géant", a man of very great height and size who perfects the art of torture in a cynical prison full of

innocent citizens. Baré Koulé in Le Cercle des Tropiques sounds like "barrer couler", two opposing words which presumably underscore the contradiction in official pronouncements and actual practices in the Marigots du Sud. Sá Matrak easily evokes "matraquer", while the appelation "Le Guide" in Le Jeune homme de sable is the opposite of what this character stands for, for he is a bloody tyrant whose cruel tactics put his fellow countrymen in deep misery. As for Sékou Touré in Le Zéhéros..., one sees clearly in this name the traits of the late Guinean President and generally acclaimed tyrant.

The writers ably portray the strategies utilised by these politicians to perpetuate their rule. Since the politicians are unwilling to evolve socio-political and economic programmes which could endear them to the people, they turn to political demagogy and coercive techniques. We have already dealt with some of these impure and opportunistic ways. Suffice it to add here a word or two to our preceding comments. In Dramouss, the RDA militants tirelessly call Guineans "Camarades". Also expressions like "propositions fraternelles" (CT., p.157), "très chers compatriotes" (CD, p.113) give the impression that those in authority are close to the governed, respect their rights and identify with their aspirations. The reality is however far from these deceptive terminologies. The politicians and

their supporters resort to these gimmicks and of course violence in order to stifle the resistance of the people living under oppression.

The image of saviours which these politicians arrogate to themselves is contested by the Guinean writers. This reservation is conveyed symbolically. We read this remark in Le Zéhéros... "Le ciel n'était ni plus beau ni plus triste qu'à l'ordinaire. Pourtant un homme qui avait fait la pluie et le beau temps d'un pays pendant vingt-six ans venait de mourir" (ZH, p.25). Here, Sékou Touré's insignificance is reflected in the indifference of the weather to his death. This technique of deflating the political leaders is found in the other Guinean novels. In one of the last scenes of Le Cercle des Tropiques, Bohi Di gives this account after the overthrow of Baré Koulé. "Il avait suffi d'une minute pour que le règne pour l'éternité, le président à vie, le divin Messie-koi redevienne Baré Koulé, prisonnier de la population des Marigots du Sud" (CT, p.251) Baré Koulé's speech "un gros bloc de papier" is also brushed aside by the wind. The president's worthlessness is quite apparent in this account. And in Le Récit du cirque, the boil and the wound on President Fabati's belly, the many physical deformities, his screams and his decomposition are reflective of his nothingness, of his spiritual

emptiness. As his remains enter the phase of decomposition, "la pluie continue de tomber" to hasten their decay (PC, p.133).

The opponents of the politicians in power are the greatest victims of intolerance. They are found either in organised groups like the members of the Club des Travailleurs in Le Cercle des Tropiques and the members of the BAC in Dramouss or are individuals who voice their resentment of government policies. In the latter group are Fetomen in Dramouss, Tahirou and Oumarou in Le Jeune homme de sable and Camara in Le Zéhéros... These antagonists of government are presented in favourable light. Their names show the glorious positions they occupy in all the novels. In Le Cercle des Tropiques, the name Malédé, as we know means an angel, but specifically the angel who according to Muslim tradition, is charged with bearing God's messages to mankind. Oumarou in Le Jeune homme de sable recalls Umar the second caliph of Islam. This caliph was known for his courage and kindness and died in the service of the people. As for Moulde, the protagonist in Les Crapauds-Brousse and one of Sá Matrah's critics, it must be noted that he is also called Mamadou, that is the name of the Prophet of Islam (CB, p.28). These characters are unbending in the way they stand by their convictions. In spite of the high prices they pay, they do not

show any remorse nor regret and it is precisely this selflessness and courage that endear them to the reader.

No study of the characters in the Guinean novels would be complete without adequate place being reserved for the ordinary citizens. They live in cities like Porte Océane (Le Cercle des Tropiques) or in remote areas like Nakiri in the same novel. Because of their pre-occupation with their means of survival,, but especially because of their low level of political awareness, these people do not pose serious problems to governments. However, in spite of their meekness, they are not insulated from the ruthlessness perpetrated by the politicians in power. The indiscriminate shooting of the citizens of Porte Océane (Le Cercle des Tropiques), the dastardly murder of Kandia (Le Jeune homme de sable) and of the numerous innocent citizens in Le Récit du cirque are living evidences that no one is spared by the blood-thirsty regimes established after independence.

It is remarkable that some of the characters take to alcoholism. Kandia and his friends (Les Crapauds-brousse) and Oumarou (Le Jeune homme de sable) are some of the youths who indulge in such practice. To drunkness, Oumarou adds womanising of which his victim is Hadiza, his father's youngest

wife. These conducts should be viewed within the wider context of the post-independence reality. For the youths, alcohol and women are a refuge from the strangulating reality of the post-independence environment. The drinking place in Les Crapauds-brousse is called "Paradis". It is the opposite of the "Tombeau" presented immediately after it and which is the house of torture and misery. The narrator sheds light on the role of alcohol when he states that at the "Paradis" "La vie coulait sans demander son reste." (CB, p.154). It is the same view that Oumarou expresses when he asserts "Je viens de faire une expérience intéressante: boire pour chasser (...) mes démons" (JHS pp.88-89).

What the novelists seek is the liberation of the down-trodden. The writers themselves try to achieve this emancipation through their rebellious ways of writing, for all violate "literary conventions". This anti-conformism is first evident in the titles of their works. Titles of works by first generation African writers give instant clue to their themes. Such is the case with L'Enfant noir, Une Vie de boy and l'Aventure ambiguë by Cheikh Hamidou Kane. But this practice is shunned by the Guinean writers whose titles (Le Jeune homme de sable, Les Crapauds-brousse, Le Récit du cirque, Le Zéhéros n'est pas n'importe qui are in no way helpful at a glance. Similarly, as part of the

revolt, the authors introduce into their writings exotic words borrowed from the African environment: "hake, cora, Here Sira? Tana Massi (Dramouss), Meye, mafe, hake, karamako (Les Crapauds-brousse) are words which defy the French lexicon. It is through these insurrectional styles that the writers call on the oppressed to rise against the status quo.

NOTES TO CHAPTER III

1. See interviews granted by the novelist in Notre Libraire: la littérature guinéenne, pp.65, 106, 111.

2. Notre Libraire: Cinq ans de littératures africaines 1979 - 1984, p.41.

3. Ghislain Ripault "Notes de lectures: Le Zéhéros n'est pas n'importe qui" in Notre Libraire: La Littérature guinéenne, p.195.

4. Bernard Mouralis, "Pays réels, pays d'utopie" in Notre Libraire: Cinq ans de littératures africaines, p.50.

5. Ad de Vries, Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery (Amsterdam: North Holland Pub. Co., 1974), pp.358 and 385.

6. King, The Writings of Laye, p.12.

7. Chevrier, Littérature nègre, p.130.

8. Blair, African Literature in French, p.314.

9. Midiohouan, L'Utopie négative de Fantoure, p.80.

10. West Africa, 29th January 1966, p.114.

11. Machiavel, Le Prince et autres textes (Paris: Union Generale d'Editions, 1962), p.158.

12. Ahmadou Kourouma, Les Soleils des indépendances (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1970), p.23.

13. Mongo Béti, Perpétue et l'habitude du malheur (Paris: Buchet/Chastel, 1974).

14. Sékou Touré, The Doctrine and Methods of the Democratic Party of Guinea, p.170.

15. Robert Cornevin, Littérature d'Afrique noire de langue française (Paris: PUF, 1976), p.148.

16. Harrap's New Shorter French and English Dictionary (Paris: Bordas, 1977), p.

17. Ibid, p.

18. King, The Writings of Laye, p.11.

19. Notre Librairie, Litterature guinéenne, p.124.

20. Ibid, p.124.

21. Midiohouan L'Utopie négative de Fantoure, p.19.

22. Notre Librairie: Littérature guinéenne, p.106.

23. Ibid, p.111.

24. Siradiou Diallo, "Ce Mois qui ébranla l'Afrique" in Jeune Afrique, No.927, 11 octobre 1978, p.50.

25. Midiohouan, L'Utopie négative de Fantouré, p.91.

26. Blair, African Literature in French, p.313.

27. Frank Barton, The Press of Africa: Persecution and Perseverance (London: Macmillan, 1979), p.4.

28. Ibid, pp.3 - 4.

29. Ibid, p.3.

30. Sékou Touré, The Doctrine and Methods of the Democratic Party of Guinea, p.279.

31. Erich Auerbach, Mimesis (Princeton: PUP, 1974), p.481.

32. Tunji Adebayo, "Reintegration and Restoration: A Reading of Camara Laye's Dramouss" in Literature and Modern West African Culture, ed: D.I. Nwoga, p.63.

33. W.F. Gutteridge, Military Regimes in Africa (London: Methuen, 1975), p.1.

34. Olalere Oladitan, "The Nigerian Crisis in the Nigerian Novel" in New West African Literature ed. Kolawole Ogungbesan (London: Heinemann, 1979), p.10.

35. Alu Rebecca Uganden, The Evolution of Pessimism in Fantouré's novels, p.111.

36. Ibid, p.110.

37. Laye, Le Maître de la parole, p.34.

38. Ad de Vries, Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery, p.348.

39. Jeune Afrique, No.927, 11 octobre 1978, p.69.

40. Notre Librairie: Littérature guinéenne, p.117.

41. Machiavel, Le Prince, p.168.

42. Maxime N'Debeka, Le Président (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1970), p.18.

43. Tunji Adebayo "Reintegration and Restoration: A Reading of Camara Laye's Dramouss" in Literature and Modern West African Culture, ed: D.I. Nwoga, p.73.

44. Blair, African Literature in French, p.314.

45. Midiohouan, L'Utopie négative de Fantouré, p.76.

46. Uganden, The Evolution of Pessimism in Fantouré's novels, p.48.

47. Samuel Moni Gogura, Le Pessimisme dans trois romans ouest-africains. Unpublished M. A. Thesis, A.B.U. Zaria, 1984, p.171.

48. Notre Librairie: Littérature guinéenne, p.124.

49. Blair, African Literature in French, p.315.

50. Edouard Bliet, Panorama de la littérature negro-africaine (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1965), p.198.

51. King, The Writings of Laye, p.73.

52. Laye Le Maître de la parole, p.273.

53. Chevrier, Littérature nègre, p.146.

54. Midiohouan, L'Utopie négative de Fantouré, pp.66.

55. Uganden, The Evolution of Pessimism in Fantouré's novels, p.242.

56. Jean-Paul Sartre, Qu'est-ce que la littérature (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), p.104.

57. Arlette Chemain-Degrange, "Le Récit du cirque de la Vallée des Morts" in Ambroise Kom (ed.), Dictionnaire des oeuvres littéraires négro-africaines de langue française (Sherbrooke (Quebec): Editions Naaman, 1983), p.482.

58. Ad de Vries, Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery, p.399.

59. John Illah, "The Deus ex Machina of the Coup d'Etat in Emergent Nigerian Drama". Paper presented at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, A.B.U., Zaria, Staff Seminar, Saturday, 13th February, 1988.

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Chapter 4

SOCIO-ECONOMIC REALITY OF THE POST-COLONIAL SOCIETY

The South African writer, Lewis Nkosi, while reporting on the proceedings of the Makerere conference in 1962, had written "West African literature tended, at times, to be too idyllic and pastoral, as though it lacked the energy for social criticism."[1] The Nigerian literary critic, B. Ajoge, agrees with this view to some extent.[2] Without doubt, South African writers who, for years, have been grappling with the intractable apartheid system through their literary and polemical writings, have every reason to see West African literature as less socially committed. But this view, it must be noted, is valid only when West African literary works are considered in relation to the South African counterparts. Each African literature is committed in its own way and, as we have already pointed out, the concept of art for art's sake does not have any place in the African novels discussed in this thesis.

The artist we know, has a social responsibility which is spelt out by Priebe in the following terms:

> When we lapse into more degeneracy, let him probe the social crimes and errors then. When we are oppressed, exploited, dehumanised by our oppressive regime, let him stand on the hill tops and shout the message of our suffering. 3

Laye, Kantouré, Konénembo and Sassine assume fully their social responsibility. They meticulously identify Africa's socio-economic malaise, they courageously castigate the culprits, and openly side with the millions of ordinary citizens who are deprived of the fruits of independence.[4] The Guinean novelists pursue the objective outlined by Kosi even at the peril of losing their lives.

The six novels treated in the preceding chapter, that is Laye's Dramouss, Kantouré's Le Cercle des Tropiques and Le Récit du cirque, Les Crapauds-brousse by Konénembo, and Le Jeune homme de sable and Le Méhéros... by Sassine will also be used to illustrate our point in this chapter. Three of the novels, namely Le Récit du cirques, Les Crapauds-brousse and Sassine's most recent work, Le Méhéros..., with their emphasis on political satire contribute less to discussion on socio-economic matters. The chapter is classified into two sections, one dealing with the economic and the other the social problems of the post-independence society.

Economic organisation is distinct from social organisation. The economic denotes the "complex of institutions, the pattern of controls, by which a people uses its resources to attain its ends".[5] In other words, economic programmes are intended to yield profit for national development through State and individual effort. The social, on the other hand,

her a variety of meanings. The definition adopted here is the one referring to the processes of government which aim at catering for the welfare of the people.[6] We start with the economic problems of the post-independence African society as presented in the Guinean novels.

I. La Côte d'Ivoire et la Guinée

The Guinean novels mentioned above all show that African countries are endowed with vast and rich natural resources which if properly harnessed could yield increased revenue and rapid socio-economic progress. They also admit that the continent is blessed with good climate and vegetation favourable to the development of agriculture. The Guinea in Camara is said to be blessed with bauxite. One of the citizens working on the mineral deposit reveals thus: Le bauxite affleure en de nombreux points sur les îles de Loos" (Camara, p.93). Similarly, the setting of Kourouma's Le Récit d'un cirque apart from its very dense climate and luxuriant vegetation is also blessed with the legendary river NIL which allegedly draws to the country most of the great minerals of the world. Sembène in Les Bouts de bois de Dieu also rules a country in which diamonds are found. Finally in Soyinka's La Danse des bois de Dieu it is Le Guide, the President himself who acknowledges the richness of the country:

> Notre pays est trop grand. Il fait si désespérément chaud qu'il est impossible qu'on ne découvre pas un jour quelque part l'or du diamant ou du pétrole (J.S, p.41).

One other blessing of Africa implicit in the novels and which Les Crapauds-brousse particularly highlights is the availability of abundant and viable human resources. Sadio, a little lady of peace and contrasts the people of Africa and those in Europe and clearly holds Africans who, she sees as having been able to preserve their youth. The irony for this statement is that it is an European rather than an African who acknowledges the human potentials of the continent.

Thus, Africa is endowed with human resources. It is one of the most populous continents. Geological reports also have it that Africa is one of the richest continents in terms of mineral deposits. Also, as is rightly pointed out by the novels, the vegetation of the continent is generally good for agriculture. Thus, René Dumont slightly exaggerates when he states that: "Dans la savane le sol n'est généralement pas appauvri".[7] For instance, before the discovery of petroleum, groundnut was Nigeria's major export crop and this was produced almost exclusively in the Savannah belt. Perhaps, contrary to the assertion of some of the novelists, Africa's climate is unpredictable. The central point being

made by the novelists should however not be missed. It is known that with or without climate conducive to agriculture and with or without mineral resources most countries - the Dark Doulés, the Fantis, the Sahtredes and the Grides do not make any serious and sincere effort aimed at putting their national economies on a sound footing. And there lies the cause of Africa's economic predicament. Africa's economic problems are here studied under three headings. These are leadership and foreign exploiters, leadership and internal exploitation and programmes for economic survival.

i. [illegible]

The economic problems of Africa are caused by a leadership that lacks commitment and that colludes with foreigners to exploit the toiling masses on the continent. The Guinean novelists view this problem from two perspectives. On the one hand there are the politicians who, in spite of their anti-capitalist rhetorics still connive with the foreign exploiters, while on the other hand are the powers - that-be who collaborate directly with the multinational organisations. Either way, the portrayals hit directly at the socio-economic reality of the post-colonial African societies.

The nationalist leaders who replaced the colonialists, be they radicals or moderates all fraternise with foreign investors for their mutual benefit to the

detriment of ordinary Africans. The local ruling group, together with their foreign friends constitute the international bourgeoisie which derives its strength and feeds from the sweat of African workers.

Lopez and Couénembo are particularly good at depicting the antics of those politicians who claim to be anti-capitalists but who scheme with European investors. The PDA government in Les Coups claims to be socialist. Similarly, Sékou Touré's regime in Les Crapauds-brousse is said to be revolutionary. Implicitly, the PDA government and Sékou Touré's project the old economic structures created by the colonialists. It is also presupposes a fight against neo-colonialists who seek to destroy the national economies of both African leaders.

In reality however, the revolutions proclaimed by the people in Les Coups and Sékou Touré in Les Crapauds-brousse are only theoretical. The leaders do nothing concrete to curb the activities of the foreigners in their countries. In Les Coups for instance, French and Corsican mining companies which have settled since slavery, exploit in an unrestrained manner, the bauxite deposits in the country, they alone evaluate the mineral and they alone export them. Nowhere does the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain government intervene to join in either the evaluation or exportation. The nonchalant attitude of the authorities to the operations of the mining companies

can be explained by the fact that the leaders personally receive commission in cash and kind from the foreigners. Thus, when Fatoman the narrator - protagonist in Les Gardiens states: les richesses de ce pays seront mises en valeur (Les Gardiens, p.38), Fatoman makes an ironic statement. We all know that, with the uncontrolled exploitation of the mineral resources, and with the corruption and greed of the national leaders, there is no way the average citizen can benefit from the vast natural endowment of the nation. Nonfenbo in a very strongly worded diatribe, in chapter six of Les Crapauds-brousse also castigates administration and foreigners for their anti-popular role. The snag in Lopez and Nonfenbo's treatment however is that while they challenge the activities of Western firms, they leave organisations of Eastern origin untouched as if the latter are completely innocent. Both Eastern and Western multinationals scheme with leaders of the developing world to deprive the governed of the full benefit of their national resources.

In Ekwensi's and Sassine's works however, the political leaders are seen as colluding directly with agents of the ex-colonial countries.[3] We have already seen in Le Cercle des Tropiques how the colonial administration in collaboration with multi-national firms install Doré Doulé, the puppet, as

the first executive President of the Marigots du Sud. The relationship between Baré Koulé and the Whites is symbiotic. After independence, the Whites help Baré Koulé to preserve his tyrannical rule while he ensures that capitalist organisations are allowed to operate freely in the Marigots du Sud. Then, in Fantouré's second novel Le Récit du cirque the President Fahati states:

> Ces salauds d'investisseurs en pays pauvres ont besoin de quelque chose d'immédiatement rentable pour leurs capitaux. Enfin, ils font ce qu'ils peuvent pour aider nos cultes (RC, p.103).

this novel is making a vital point. Elsewhere, Presidents such as Fahati try to make their subjects see the importance of such "investisseurs". However, here Fahati denounces in a plain language the foreign investors. This denunciation is attributable to Fantouré himself rather than to Fahati. Fantouré expresses his disgust at the selfish interests which motivate the activities of Europeans in Africa. While the Fahati-Europeans alliance is favourable to the two parties, it leads to the exploitation and impoverishment of African masses.

After independence, contracts in the Marigots du Sud are awarded to European construction firms which continue to employ African labour at cheap cost and under deplorable conditions. When Malké, the leader of the opposition party, the Club des

Travailleurs, observes: "Vous nous donnez l'indépendance pour mieux pouvoir nous dominer par personnes interposées" (CT, p.116) he denounces, in reality, the colonial government-pseudo nationalists connivance, whose impact is felt particularly in the post-independence era. The first sentence of the second part of Le Cercle des Tropiques reads: "La nuit tombait sur les Marigots du Sud" (CT, p.127) Fantouré's dimi lucionment is here expressed symbolically. For Africans, for the economies of African countries, independence ni allons darker days that will witness intensified exploitation and degradation. Constantly in the second part of the novel, Fantouré contrasts night and day, light and darkness to emphasise that the happier days are gone for good. The fact however is that even though the post-independence era is unfavourable to Africans, the colonial period was no better. Africans, African economies suffered during both periods and Fantoure is less convincing in presenting a glorious picture of the colonial era.

Sassine's treatment of the relationship between some African Presidents and the ex-colonial authorities is brief but biting. Tahirou the headmaster and President of the Teachers Union, who is also the principal antagonist of Le Guide in Le Jeune homme de sable, in a strong tirade challenges the excessive profits made by the "sociétés

etrangères et leurs alliés locaux" (JMS, p.107). These "alliés locaux" are the powers that be in African countries. They are also those who are not but who use their connections in government in government circles to exploit the toiling masses. It is the conduct of these opportunistic politicians that M. Thogo-Mini, the mouthpiece of the African king, satirises when he states: "c'est pour moi qui viennent tous les bateaux du monde. Les traitants ne connaissent que moi, Monsieur Thogo-Mini (...) La fortune, je l'ai acquise honnêtement".[9] Thus in Le Jeune homme de sable the politicians in power not only refuse to protect the economy, they are active agents of its destruction. Furthermore, the friendship between Le Guide and Ulrich, his former European teacher, is evidence of the continued ties between puppet African leaders and ex-colonial countries.

Thus, Tor Koulé in Le Cercle des Tropiques and Le Guide in La Jeune homme de sable are not different from the RDA leader in Gravoues and Sa Natrok in Les Crapauds-brousse. The former group of leaders scheme directly with the expatriates, while the latter enter into indirect alliance with the Europeans. The two groups of leaders help a foreign power to protect her economic interests behind the screen of false independence".[10] Both groups of leaders encourage Europeans to see African economies of their strength. Economies of developing nations

thus remain permanently subservient to those of foreign countries.

Europeans promote their economic interests to the detriment of Africans. This, of course, has been the design of the Europeans right from the beginning of their contact with Africans. Walter Rodney puts this succintly when he writes: "Colonialism was not merely a system of exploitation, but one whose essential purpose was to repatriate the profits to the so-called mother country".[11] This greed of the Europeans, the narrator-protagonist in Ouologuem tries to bring it out by delving into the history of economic relations between France and Africa. When he recounts his stay in France in the late forties and early fifties, he refers specifically to Paris and Marseille. Fatoman only needs to add Bordeaux. These are the ports which had initially received African slaves and later on "tirailleurs sénégalais",[12] and natural resources from Africa for the development of France. It can also be said that African labour and materials contributed to the grandeur of Argenteuil, the Parisien suburb where Fatoman studies automobile engineering, Halles where he works temporarily when he is short of money. When Fatoman asks rhetorically:

> Quand est-ce que l'on va planifer
> la société? (...) Est-il normal,
> que les uns, une minorité, soient
> millionnaires ou milliardaires,

et chez nous, nous pourrions en
bénéficier de faim? (Ironies,
p.91),

Fabre et quarrie individual capitalists who amass wealth over the misfortune of their poor co patriots. But, Fatoren is also exposing capitalist and powerful nations who exploit in an unrestrained manner the resources of poor nations for their own gain. The implication of Fabre en's narrative is that, the ex-colonial powers with which African Presidents collaborate, exploited the continent in the past. Now, they are even more determined to pillage the human and material resources of the continent. Therefore, it is unpatriotic for politicians to cooperate with them.

In all the novels being studied in this chapter, one observes that the Europeans working in Africa enjoy better living standards than Africans. In Ironies, Fatoren underlines this fact when he contrasts the part of Conakry inhabited by the Europeans and the portion of the capital occupied by Africans. The European quarters are a "cité-jardin" with excellent roads and a first class public transport system. When later in the novel, another character indicates that the warehouses and the villas found on the islands surrounding Conakry belong exclusively to the foreign companies, the novel draws attention to the economic strength of the expatriates in Guinea and their high standard of

living. On the other hand, the indigenous quarters of Conakry are slums where la misère était connaie couramment, the buildings n'ont presque (se tenant) debout un peu par miracle (Les ours, p.12). This deviation occurs at the very beginning of the novel also underlines the extent of Lay's dégoût at the imbalance in the economic power and living conditions of European and Africans in Guinea.

Sonna, illustrating the disparity in the living conditions of the whites and the Africans during the post-colonial period writes:

> La ville du colon est une ville en dur, toute de pierre et de fer. C'est une ville asphaltée (...) Le village nègre, la cadina (...) est un lieu malfamé (...) on y vient n'importe où, n'importe comment. 13

Implicitly, the post-independence African governments have failed to reverse the lopsided development started by the colonialists. Constantly Ferdinand reminds us that the inequalities of the colonial era have even been exacerbated by the lack of commitment on the part of African leaders.

Sadji stresses that he prefers a literary work "conforme à la realité"[14] to one which has no relevance to historical reality. Le Jeune homme de sable is proof of Sessine's adherence to this literary philosophy. He picks out a topical issue - the so-called foreign aid granted to developing

countries of powerful nations and artfully unveils the ruse behind this gesture. In a harsh diatribe, Tchicaya, Le Soleil's rival writes the following statement:

> Ce paradis du organiser des stocks (...) au lieu de tendre la main aux puissances impérialistes coupables, qui dans un geste de générosité calculée et tendive, envoient des secours dérisoires, en compensation ridicule du pillage de nos matières premières et de nos ressources humaines. (JAS, p.107).

Foreign aid, as we are told by donor nations, is a purely humanitarian gesture, intended to help African countries get out of their economic predicament. Tchicaya, the fellow leader, who has a firm understanding of international politics contests such a claim. Tchicaya's argument, couched in highly poetic tone, is sound. Foreign aid when compared to the pillaged wealth of developing countries, is negligible and derisory. Fanon exposes the guile of the donor countries when he writes:

> Le tiers monde n'entend pas organiser une immense croisade de la faim contre toute l'Europe. Ce qu'il attend de ceux qui l'ont maintenu en esclavage pendant des siecles c'est qu'ils l'aident à réhabiliter l'homme partout, une fois (...) Pour cela, il faudrait d'abord que les masses européennes décident de se réveiller, secouent leurs cerveaux et cessent de jouer au jeu irresponsable de la belle au bois dormant. 15

Through this combination of rhetoric and bluntness,

Fanon denounces the capitalist countries for their hypocritical attitude and insensitivity to the plight of Africans. The problem with the point of view of Fanon and Tahirou, the spokesperson of the oppressed in Le Jeune homme de sable is that they ignore the exploitative activities of the Eastern bloc. Like the capitalist countries of the West, the Eastern bloc countries also pay "compensation" derisory for the material resources of Africa.

Consequently, Sassine's likewise for socialism explicit in Le Jeune homme de sable, and in his most recent novel Le Zéhéros..., blinds him to the harmful role of the Eastern bloc countries in Africa. Like capitalist countries, foreign aid given by the socialist countries is in no way comparable to at least, the raw materials drawn from Africa by the Eastern Bloc. Moreover, if by "non" Tahirou refers to Le Guide, if Tahirou is calling on the President to take concrete action to revamp the ailing economy then Tahirou is being naive. For one thing, Le Guide, like most African leaders is not really bothered by economic stagnation or backwardness. His pre-occupation is to consolidate his power and rule for as long as he lives. It is therefore futile to call on Le Guide to reject foreign aid and introduce drastic economic measures.

II. LEADERS IN A POLITICAL TRANSITION

African leaders also maintain cordial

relationship with the indigenous businessmen. But this solidarity is not aimed at improving national output, rather it weakens the national economic base. Laye and Lonenembo satirise the unholy alliance between politicians and businessmen. Bilali the boisterous businessman in Dramouss not only has connections in government circles, he is also one of the exponents of the RDA government's policies and openly campaigns for the party. And in Les Crapauds-brousse, Gnawoulata alias "pas de credit" is first seen in the office of a minister - an eloquent testimony of his privileged relationship with Sa Matrak's government. Bilali and Gnawoulata are members of the business comprador bourgeoisie which "replaces" the White enterpreneurs after independence. Like El Hadj Abdou Kader Beye and his friends in Sembene Ousmane's Xala, Bilali and Gnawoulata do not really produce and do not contribute to national progress. They have, like their counterparts in Xala, aided and Chambre de Commerce et d'industrie"[16] through which they exploit the masses. As was pointed out by Fanon, the business bourgeoisie have insatiable taste for profits and would even steal to attain their personal goal[17] Laye and Monenembo provide concrete examples of the unpatriotic activities and opportunism of the indigenous businessmen. Bilali in Dramouss steals both from the people and government. Traficking in diamonds robs government of revenue and thus of money

for financing social and economic programme. The same goes for Gnawoulata who defrauds co-traficker and sells diamonds across the border in Warouya, presumably Sierra-Leon.

The first problem raised by Monenembo's narrative was the activities of Lebanese and Syrian businessmen who buy smuggled diamonds from Gnawoulata. Jean Suret-Canale has already drawn attention to the conduct of these Arabs. When he writes: "Une grande partie du diamant extrait disparait pour etre exporte en fraude",[18] he refers to the Lebano-Syrians who encourage traficking by buying smuggled minerals from Africans. Dramouss and Les Crapauds-brousse are however making the same point, that is, the unpatriotic action of Africans who take smuggling as a profession. The effect of trafficking, particularly in minerals, on the national economy is well-known. It deprives government of the foreign currencies required for the purchase of equipment for technological take-off. Yet, it is these fraudulent and unpatriotic businessmen who enjoy the confidence of the powers that be in African countries.

It is not at all surprising that those in government close their eyes on the conduct of traficker. The powers-that-be and the businessmen have common interest. The term "bourgeoisie nationale used frequently by Fanon in Les Damnes de la terre refers not only to merchants, it also

applies to those who hold political power. Like the traders, the politicians seek to accumulate wealth and contribute actively to the destruction of the economic base of their country.

Fantoure sheds ample light on how those in government use their position to enrich themselves. He decries, in Le Cercle des Tropiques, official corruption through the innocent voice of a Nakiri peasant. Another party agent in the same novel will sell party cards to Bohi Di and members of his family at the following amount:

> Pour ta carte et celle de ta femme, il faut l'equivalent du prix d'une vache et deux chevres. Pour tes enfants reunis (...) l'equivalent du prix d'un velomoteur (CT, p.191).

Bohi Di slightly exaggerates. But behind this exaggeration lies a well-known fact of official corruption, a cankerworm which has done so much damage to post-independence African societies. One virtue of Fantoure's presentation is that official corruption is not limited to a specific area of Marigots du Sud. As shown by the Nakiri peasant and Bohi Di both rural and city dwellers are victims of extortion. With the attainment of independence, every African who ingratiates himself with the administration of his country is given a post where he can corruptly enrich himself. The effect of official corruption is well illustrated in Le Cercle

des Tropiques. The Nakiri villagers, deprived of their meagre resources through extortion are weakened, demoralised and cannot make any significant contribution to agricultural output. The output of urban dwellers is also seriously hampered by the unscrupulous activities of party agents.

Monenembo is more critical of official corruption. He scrutinizes the conduct of high government officials who use their position to accumulate wealth. A case in point is Daouda, the principal exponent of Sa Matrak's policies in Les Crapauds-brousse. Daouda boasts of his landed property as follows:

> Pour visiter l'ensemble (...)
> il vous faudrait une journee
> entiere (il y a) les poulaillers,
> les pocheries, les etables, la
> bananeraie, la goyaverie,
> l'orangerie (CB, p.98).

But Daouda has come by this property through illegitimate means. An eloquent testimony of Daouda's fraudulent methods is his attempt to expropriate a parcel of land of which the old Alkali is the custodian. Daouda's pathological love of material acquisition, particularly his insatiable fondness for land is comparable to that of Mr Howlands, the European in Weep Not, Child. Like Howlands, Daouda is in possession of the majority of the productive land in Sa Matrak's country and holds his compatriots in economic slavery. Thus, Daouda is not different

from the colonialists. Daouda's insatiable taste for material gains and his lack of scruples are an indirect attack on African politicians who claim to have come to power to save the economy of their country but who in reality scheme to exploit their fellow countrymen.

Monenembo seems to be bothered by the activities of small government functionaries who abuse their position as well. The novelist does not take kindly to the behaviour of the border guard who takes bribe from a driver and lets pass all the passengers in his lorry. When the narrator of Les Crapauds-brousse states that, among the passengers are diehard traffickers, Monenembo in effect emphasises the unpatriotic action of the border guard. The guard's conduct is unpatriotic because as we have point out elsewhere, smuggling is one of the surest ways of destroying the economic base of a nation. Dumont observes that: "La principale industrie des pays d'outre-mer est actuellement l'administration (...) l'administration telle qu'elle est conçue, va mener ces pays a la ruine".[19] Dumont's assessment is appropriate. We would only emphasise that it is not only high government officials that annihilate the economic base of their country through corrupt practices, petty civil servants also contribute immensely to the economic doom of post-independence societies.

A vital aspect of the conduct of the leadership is their life-style. Uganden in her thesis The Evolution of Pessimism in Alioum Fantoure's Novels comments thus: "In the post-independence era in Le Cercle, we hear of a new indigenous bourgeoisie with high consumption taste".[20] We agree with Uganden. However the extravagant living of the politicians is brought out more clearly in Dramouss and Les Crapauds-brousse than in Le Cercle des Tropiques. Laye and Monenembo who lived among the politicians and businessmen in Conakry, Abidjan and Dakar before going into exile, meticulously depict the wasteful spending of this group of people.[21]

Let us look at how Laye and Monenembo portray, for instance, the businessmen who have connections in government circles. Bilali the diamond merchant in Dramouss does not believe in building a house, for, in his own words: "une villa ne peut etre vue de tout le monde: elle ne roule pas" (Dramouss, p.117). Bilali would rather buy a car which is "le seul model qui ait ete fabrique en Amerique" (Dramouss, p.116). A typical bourgeois mentality, this is also the life-style of the merchant, Gnawoulata in Les Crapauds-brousse. Like Bilali, Gnawoulata too has a "voiture luxueuse". Furthermore, when Gnawoulata sends some gifts to his friend Dioulde, he loads them on a truck accompanied by a convoy. Bilali and Gnawoulata want every one to know that they are rich

and important personalities in their respeotive communities.

This is not the only time we are seeing characters like Bilali and Gnawoulata. In Ousmane Sembene's Xala, El Hadj Abdou Kader Beye, the dismissed teacher turned successful businessmen, has a big Mercedes Benz car, a "villa Adja Awa Astou",[22] that is a bungalow dedicated to his first wife, another "villa Oumi N'Doye"[23] built for his second wife and another mini bus which conveys his children to and from school. The African novelists, in these portrayals, aim at exposing the extravagant life-style and the life of vanity led by the business bourgeoisie and their collaborators, that is those who directly hold political power. Here, the novelists share the view of Lukacs who writes: "The true bourgeois mentality demands (...) complete concentration on matters which may be trivial and insignificant and offer the soul no nourishment whatsoever."[24] The preoccupation of the bourgeois is trivial because it does not enhance collective progress. It does not even enhance the progress of the bourgeois themselves. In the specific case of the African businessmen, the expensive cars they buy and the magnificent bangalows they construct for spouses only strengthen the economies of European and other powerful nations. The businessmen, by their action, drain African nations of the scarce resources required

for socio-economic development. Only political leaders uncommitted to the well-being of their subjects fraternise with such unscrupulous businessmen.

It is quite normal that the political leaders condone the activities and life-style of the prodigious businessmen. For, those in authority are equally reckless and do not pursue values that nourish the soul. The four Guinean novelists however differ in their attitude to this problem. Fantoure and Laye are somehow reticent and do not really denounce the prodigality of the political leaders. This relative reticence might be explained by the fact that Laye and Fantoure are more interested in exposing the tyranny of post-independence leaders than in revealing their wasteful spending.

Monenembo and Sassine, on the other hand, explore the profligacy theme quite profoundly. Sassine who, apart from Guinea, has lived and taught Mathematics in several African countries, notably Mauritania, documents the manner in which political leaders squander the wealth of their fellow countrymen. In the first part of Le Jeune homme de sable, the President, Le Guide intimates that he will go abroad to "suivre une cure d'amaigrissement". This is a figurative statement. Le Guide, having fed so fat on the sweat of his fellow countrymen, now has to go and purge himself of his grotesque taste.

Le Jeune homme de sable is replete with examples of the greed of Le Guide and his lack of spirit of accountability. He dines and wines more than necessary. The magnificent presidential lodge with its balcony flooded by light from fluorescent bulbs is also an example of profligacy. Similarly, the plane purchased by Le Guide for his personal use is tantamount to reckless spending. A Whiteman also tells of how the President, Le Guide sponsors his journey to Africa. The irony here is that Le Guide not only lavishes the national wealth on himself and members of his family, he even caters for the expenses of an ex-colonial worker. This takes place in a country ravaged by drought and in which the majority live in poverty and misery.

Sassine also frowns at the conduct of other high government officials who, instead of checking the excesses of the Chief Executive, indulge in all forms of wastefulness. Le Jeune homme de sable does not pardon Abdou, the prominent Deputy and the principal exponent of the policies of Le Guide. Abdou's sitting room is adorned with costly chromium fittings. There are also four transistors in the room. Even the Quran, that is supposed to be a symbol of modesty and meekness is decorated with gold by Abdou. Yet, Abdou is the principal advocate of austerity measures. It is the hypocrisy of those in authority, their lip service to patriotism that

Sassine exposes.

Like Sassine, Monenembo is sensitive to wastefulness emanating from government circles. Daouda, the leader of Sa Matrak's squad in Les Crapauds-brousse, does not use his wealth for the pursuit of what Lukacs calls "lasting values".[25] Rather, he deploys his wealth for the pursuit of sensual and ephemeral pleasures. The radio given by Daouda to Rahi, Dioulde's wife, is intended to pave the way for Daouda's amorous escapade with Rahi. Similarly, the bag of kolanuts sent to Dioulde's mother by Daouda is intended to prepare the ground for the same love adventure with Rahi. None of Daouda's spending contributes to the elevation of society. Fanon summarises the life-style of the politicians in the following terms:

> La bourgeoisie nationale, qui prend le pouvoir a la fin du regime colonial, est une bourgeoisie sous developpee, de puissance economique presque nulle (...) pas orientee vers la production, l'invention, la construction, le travail (...). Des sommes importantes sont utilisees en depenses d'apparat, en voitures, en villas. 26

The luxury items purchased by the politicians and their associates and their ostentatious living do not enhance the progress of post-independence African societies. The life pattern of the political leaders is similar to that of the business bourgeoisie. Like

the merchants, the former nationalists do not deploy their wealth for productive purposes. The powers that be and the traders are destroyers of the economy of their countries.

III. PROGRAMME FOR ECONOMIC REVIVAL

The Guinean writers, we saw in the preceding chapter, do not subscribe to the idea that the artist's duty is limited to diagnosing social problems. Here too, they not only diagnose the causes of economic difficulties in post-independence societies, they also propose ways through which governments and subjects can get out of their economic predicament.

It is to the credit of some of the novelists that they admit that some African leaders are perceptive and make some efforts to combat economic problems. This, for instance, seems to be the representation of Sekou Toure's effort to combat drought, a disaster which ravaged the Sahelian region, including Guinea in the early sixties and which Laye transposes in Dramouss. Toure writes:

> Drought is subject to a chain of factors (...) the natural causes linked to lack of rainfall in most countries of the globe constitute a cause of the drought and the people's behaviour facing vegetal cover of the soil is not strange to this lack of rainfall. 27

Clearly, the Guinean President demonstrates a full

understanding of the causes of drought. Laye's contention however is that even though leaders identify economic problems, they do not commit themselves totally to eliminating them. The political leaders leave the execution of their programmes in the hands of incompetent and selfish officials who make nonsense of the whole exercise. A party spokesman in Dramouss observes for instance: "Si nous entretenons les arbres que nous venons de planter le long des rues, ils grandiront bien vite" (Dramouss, 171). Drought is combated through tree-planting in the bush and not in streets. This is afforestation. Clearly, the RDA militant in spite of his enthusiasm, is incompetent and ignorant of the job he is assigned to do. What Dramouss therefore seems to advocate is that leaders should not stop at professing. Speeches should be backed up by action. Leaders should watch closely the execution of their programmes, entrusting them to capable hands for concrete results for the benefit of all.

The emancipatory programme in Sassine's Le Jeune homme is equally appealing. Tahirou, the headmaster and critic of the President, Le Guide, observes that the dryness prevalent in the country is provoked by the development of towns to the detriment of the countryside and the exploitation of the peasantry by those in power and their foreign allies. Tahirou is intelligent and knows that lopsided development and

exploitation of the governed cannot provoke desertification. Here, Sassine's symbolism resurfaces. The drought in Le Jeune homme de sable symbolises poverty and misery which are brought about by the corruption of those in power. Chevrier observes that: "Williams Sassine (...) n'a pas hesite a recourir au surnaturel et au merveilleux pour donner a son roman sa pleine signification symbolique".[28] Implicitly, the novel identifies the politicians and their foreign allies as the source of "drought", that is the misery of the people. To eliminate the drought therefore, the novel seems to suggest the people must get rid of the leaders.

The pragmatism that runs through Sassine's works can also be seen in his most recent novel, Le Zeheros... President Sekou in the novel, discourages private trade. Camara, the protagonist who engages in petty trading is considered "fossoyeur de l'economie" (ZIQ, p.31) and has to run out of the country. The novel apparently derides President Sekou's socialist policy. When Camara looks at Conakry and comments cynically: "Rien n'avait change: un voyage de plus de vingt ans en arriere" (ZIQ, p.130), when Camara declares: "Il (President Sekou) a laisse le pays dans l'etat ou il l'a trouve" (ZIQ, p.131), Camara draws attention to the failure of the socialist programme in Guinea.

Camara, driven out of Guinea by President Sekou, goes to the Cote d'Ivoire where he practises his trade without molestation. What this seems to suggest is that Camara endorses capitalism. If this is true, then this prescription has serious limitations. Capitalism, even though it may be more accommodating, puts the economies of African countries in difficulty and the individual Africans in greater jeopardy. The example of the Cote d'Ivoire, where the "miracle has turned into a "debacle", and where the ordinary Ivorian finds no job and has no manageable shelter, attests to the danger inherent in the protagonist's recommendation. Sassine, who has lived in the Cote d'Ivoire, knows very well the flaws of capitalism and would not recommend it for any African country. Sassine's ultimate ideology is presumably socialism. Not the form practised by the PDG government in Guinea, but rather an unalloyed socialism, capable of achieving visible results in the shortest possible time.

One vital question which Monenembo appears to be the only novelist to ask is: how upright are those who criticise mismanagement of resources. Le Crapauds-brousse provides an answer albeit indirectly. In this novel, Soriba and his friends, who decry the excesses of Sa Matrak and his lieutenants, are themselves outright prodigals. At a party, Soriba and his colleagues eat and drink like "des vicieux de

l'appetit" (CR, p.93). Furthermore, Dioulde, who is so vehement in denouncing economic sabotage, himself yearns for a spacious villa, a posh car, a gardener! The irony is that it is a White lady, Josiane who is first struck by the immoderate taste of these government critics. The statement: "Josiane se demandait s'ils ne s'etaient pas definitivement embourbes" (CR, p.93) is in reality an indictment of these self-appointed critics of government. But as we have shown in the preceding chapter, Les Crapauds-brousse is not a pessimistic novel. Salvation lies in the hands of the real masses, and it is their duty to clear the garbage constituted by the national bourgeoisie, the pseudo-vanguards inclusive. Les Crapauds-brousse is an optimistic novel at the economic level too.

Les Crapauds-brousse emphasises that it is the duty of peasants to fight economic exploitation. While the Nakiri peasants in Le Cercle des Tropiques only complain about the corrupt activities of government officials, and while the farmers in Sassine's Le Jeune homme de sable and in Dramouss resign themselves to fate, the old Alkali in Les Crapauds-brousse courageously opposes Daouda's attempt to deprive him of a family plot of land. The resistance of Alkali, it must be noted, is only symbolic for, whether physically or politically, he is no match for Daouda. Old Alkali does not possess

the strength of the Ekoundoum villagers in Béti's Remember Ruben. Neither is he endowed with even the symbolic force of the beggars in Xala. Old Alkali is murdered in the course of protecting his property. Alkali's action is however significant. Even though he dies, Daouda is unable to take over his land and is also shot by a woman, Rahi. The land still belongs to the Alkali family. Les Crapauds-brousse suggests that if peasants are determined and organised they can root out their exploiters no matter the strength and intrigues of the fraudulent elements.

Kwame Nkrumah stated that political emancipation is just the means, the end is liberation from economic exploitation.[29] Most African leaders have made similar statements.[30] But, political independence in African countries, has not been followed by economic progress. Rather, the rulers have replaced the colonialists and exploit their compatriots. It is this plight of the exploited subjects that the Guinean novels reflect. This has been done with uneq ual depth and unequal success. Le Jeune homme de sable is particularly profound in its treatment of this issue while Le Récit du cirque is rather superficial. Nevertheless, the works have made the essential point. African politicians use their position to amass wealth, they engage in reckless spending and ruin the economies of their

country. The role of foreign bodies is also highlighted by the novelists even though not with the intensity expected. The conclusion here is that political independence has not brought about improvement in the economic condition of the masses. But this plight of the ordinary Africans, it is not only the economic panacea that reveals this, it is also revealed by the appalling condition of social services provided by governments. It is these social services that we examine in the following section.

II. GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL SERVICES IN POST-INDEPENDENCE SOCIETY

The Russian writer, Vassily Novikov writes: "A serious writer is never an on-looker - the whole structure of his work pronounces a "verdict".[31] Laye, Fantouré, Monénembo and Sassine are by any standard very serious writers. Their novels examined in this chapter, are not only a record of the condition of social services provided by governments in post-independence African environment, these works also boldly castigate the regimes where their performance falls short of expectation. In a sense, it can be said that the plots and structures of the Guinean novels are geared towards examining the social services provided by governments. The works touch on a wide range of social services and we study them under the heading welfare programmes of government. The following issues are studied: health, education,

housing, employment and culture.

HEALTH PROBLEMS OF THE POST-INDEPENDENCE SOCIETY

All the Guinean novelists show that those in authority neglect their responsibility towards the people in the area of health care delivery. In Dramouss, the message is implicit. The emaciated Kouroussa craftsmen and the men who attend the RDA rally holding in the town, the haggard looking Telimele men and women, and the miserable Guineans living in the slums of Conakry, the capital, suffer not only from poverty and malnutrition but also from lack of adequate medical care. Dramouss appears to invite us to contrast the health care delivery system in Guinea with that of France. While that of the Metropolis is efficient and saves the ailing Fatoman from the jaw of imminent death, that of Guinea is in a shattered condition and cannot save the lives of even Guineans. However, Laye, overwhelmed by the design to expose tyranny in Sekou Toure's Guinea shows far less interest in medical problems than Fantouré, Monénembo and Sassine. Unlike the three other novelists, Laye's stand on health issues is not well articulated.

The one writer who shows particular interest in the question of health is Fantouré. Fantouré is adept in highlighting the condition of rural dwellers. It can be said that he is to rural dwellers, what Emecheta is to women.[32] In Le Cercle des Tropiques,

Nakiri, a major village in the Marigots du Sud has no health centre. And there is not even a single hospital in the district in which Nakiri is located. We learn that Dr Malaké, whose name, according to Uganden, means "angel" in Malinke, uses the headlights of a lorry to do a surgical operation during his tour of the village.[33] Treatments also take place in huts which Malaké converts into a consulting room.

As a result of lack of modern medical facilities, the villagers rely on traditional healers. It may well be argued that the villagers resort to traditional healing because they have confidence in it and because the herbalists assist the patients. The fact however is that the medicinemen at Nakiri, like many so called "doctors" who comb rural and urban areas are incompetent, rely on ineffective amulets and balms which often create more problems than they solve. Recalling the condition of the old man being treated by the "doctors" at Nakiri, Bohi Di states thus:

> L'homme était couvert de gris-gris et de médicaments. Les guérisseurs et les marabouts avaient préparé des amulettes et des médicaments pour chaque partie du corps. Ce n'était plus un malade, mais une relique (CT, p.139).

The Nakiri patient cannot be cured by the healers

most of whom are victims of superstition. Also, the Nakiri "doctors" are helpless when about ten children die of food poison. They cannot even diagnose the cause of the children's death.

The impression given by Le Cercle des Tropiques is that the villagers patronise traditional doctors only because they are not exposed to modern medical methods. It can be said that the villagers have more confidence in modern medicine than in the traditional one. The respect accorded Dr Malékê and his medical team, in particular, the readiness of the peasants to follow scrupulously Malékê's prescription, suggest that, had modern medicine been made available to them, the villagers might not all patronise traditional healers.

From the foregoing, it can rightly be said that Fantoure is anti-traditional medicine. In Le Cercle des Tropiques the characters who speak on traditional healing cast it in negative light, while the novel generally presents herbalists unfavourably. Fantoure's opposition to native medicine gives itself away in a statement such as: "A défaut de médecin, un charlatan des environs s'acharnait, par des gestes qu'il disait surnaturels, a chasser la maladie du corps de mon pere. En vain, le malade entre dans l'univers de la mort" (CT, p.20). Thus, with Fantouré, the native healer is always an impostor, a failure, while modern medecine is

synonymous with authenticity and success. The reality however is that, in spite of its flaws, traditional medicine plays an important role in the lives of Africans. Before the advent of Western medical techniques, the African "doctor" treated deadly diseases and continues to play a vital role in the contemporary society. It would appear that Fantouré's long sojourn outside Africa has hindered his appreciation of traditional African practices.

Unlike Fantouré, Monénembo shows high regard for indigenous health care techniques. In Les Crapauds-brousse, he passionately describes the useful services rendered to poor patients of Sâ Matrak's country by an old woman, Makhales who is a herbalist. Makhales' treatment is so effective that those who cannot be cured by her, allegedly return to die in their homes. Moreover, Makhales' treatment is free of charge and this contrasts with the exorbitant fees charged in the government hospitals.

Monenembo's confidence in local methods is not accidental. Throughout his work, he demonstrates great respect for African heritage and sees it as one of the means of emancipating the continent from the shackles of colonialism and neo-colonialism. As we shall see later in the chapter, his narrative technique is akin to African traditional oratory while the proverbs and maxims which come so frequently in

his novel, are authentically African, only translated into French. Yet, Monénembo, like Fantouré, lives far away from Africa, in Europe. Monénembo's continued attachment to authentic African practices, specifically healing methods, suggests that, distance from home cannot in any way alienate the individual from home values. The essential point here should however not be missed. It is rather the responsibility of government and not individuals to cater for the medical needs of citizens. Thus, the failure of Baré Koulé and Sâ Matrak in Le Cercle des Tropiques and Les Crapauds-brousse respectively, to provide adequate medical care for their subjects, amounts to dereliction of duty on the part of the two Presidents.

Implicit in the above, is that it is private individuals who take up the responsibility of providing for the medical requirements of the people. It is also this role that Camara assumes in the Guinea of Le Zehéros... Camara, the protagonist just returned after several years in exile, touched by acute shortage of drugs in hospitals and consequent alarming death of compatriots, distributes drugs daily and free of charge to poor Guineans. The selfless gesture and sense of patriotism of Camara, and of course of Malekê in Le Cercle des Tropiques and Makhales in Les Crapauds-brouss constitute an indirect reproach of governments which neglect their

social obligations. Furthermore, the action of the three characters is an indirect appeal to well-to-do citizens to assist the needy where the government has failed the people.

One major problem of the medical sector is inadequacy of facilities in existing hospitals. While this fact is implicit in all the novels studied, it is however Fantouré who articulates this point in Le Cercle des Tropiques. Fantouré, the labour economist, who knows that good health condition enhances industrial output, probes into the causes of drug shortage. Bohi Di, the narrator attributes this problem to drug theft, hoarding and black marketeering by government officials. The novelist also uses various representatives of the exploited to indict those in authority. Bohi Di and the other critics are right; the granting, by government, of licences to those in high places or their relations or friends to import so-called essential commodities, including drugs, is the bane of all social services on the continent. One only needs to add that most doctors, pharmacists, nurses and other medical workers through pilfering of the few drugs in hospitals also contribute to the dearth of drugs.

The problem of the health sector also results from the unwillingness of those in power to really assist the invalid. In Le Jeune homme de sable, Le Guide, the President declares over the national

radio: "C'est la mort dans l'âme que je décide la suppression de la gratuité des (...) soins médicaux dans les hopitaux" (JHS, p.41). This is an appealing broadcast especially when one considers that the nation is struck by a devastating drought. However, subsequent statements by the principal associate of Le Guide, A bdou reveal that the government is not really bothered by the health condition of the people. Abdou intimates that: "Avec cette séchersse, on ne peut plus gaspiller de l'argent à soigner pour rien tout le monde" (JHS, p.95). The operative words here are "gaspiller (...) pour rien" Abdou apparently does not see good physical condition of citizens as of absolute necessity. It can even be insinuated that the drought only provides an excuse for a government which already adopts a lackadaisical attitude towards the health problems of its subjects!

Perhaps, the most shocking comment on health is found in Fantoure's second novel Le Récit du cirque. The President Fahati declares: "Je dis et répète que dans ce pays il n'y aura pas de techniciens (...) ni d'hôpitaux (...) Je ne rêve que d'achat d'armes" (RC, p.18). Fahati's words only need to be contrasted with those of other Presidents in order to realise their full implication. Le Guide in Le Jeune homme de sable is not very enthusiastic to rejuvenate the health sector. Yet, he does not say so bluntly. Baré Koulé in Le Cercle des Tropiques Sâ Matrak in Les Crapauds-brousse and President Sékou in

Sassine's Le Zéhéros..., are also virtually silent on health. This is however not the case with Fahati, who states his refusal categorically. In reality, no President would be as reckless as Fahati in his pronouncement. Much of Le Récit du cirque is grotesque and so is the statement attributed to President Fahati. Clearly, in Le Récit du cirque, Fantouré is at the height of his disillusionment with the medical condition in post-independence African societies. Another major welfare service which we survey is education. To us, education follows health in importance.

GOVERNMENT AND EDUCATION IN POST-INDEPENDENCE SOCIETY

Education may be seen from two perspectives. First, there is the formal, classroom training, geared towards the production of high calibre administrative, technical and technological manpower. There is also the informal instruction given to illiterates to make them capable of reading and writing. Both are given adequate attention by the Guinean novelists.

Practically, all the novelists admit that African politicians established schools when they assumed the mantle of leadership. Whether or not the schools are well equipped to fulfil the functions for which they were established is another issue altogether. In Dramouss, the teacher Konate recognises that the RDA

government built schools. In Le Cercle des Tropiques, the boy executed by the Baré Koulé regime for circulating a subversive poem is a student of a Porte Oceane boarding school. There, Fantouré decries tyranny endemic in contemporary society. However, implicit in the narrative is that Baré Koulé establishes schools. Monénembo and Sassine too, either directly or indirectly admit that the present leadership set up educational institutions. It is to the credit of the Guinean novelists that in spite of their strained relationship with the contemporary African leadership, they still give credit where it is due. For, in reality, African politicians established more schools and expanded existing ones when they came to power.

This is however not to say that the writers do not have reservation about the present state of educational system on the continent. Through a mosaic of characters the artists satirise an educational programme predicated on the pursuit of material acquisition to the detriment of moral edification. Konate, the conscientious teacher in Dramouss is the first to raise an alarm. However, it is the same concern that, in Le Jeune homme de sable, the "bête" in Oumarou expresses when it decries an educational system "centré sur la recherche du bonheur individuel" (JHS, p.84). Educational planning is the responsibility of State. Ethical orientation or re-orientation of the

youths also devolves on government. As the Guinean novelists rightly suggest, post-independence leaders are to be held responsible for the present mad rush for material gains by school leavers. The explanation that contact with the West is responsible for our moral degeneracy is no longer valid. Three decades of independence are enough for leaders to plan and salvage the youths from the present moral decay threatening the very foundation of African societies today.

It is not only the content of what is taught that is faulty. The attitude of some African politicians to the upbringing of the youth is also, in our view, not encouraging. Some high government officials, especially the illiterates and semi-illiterates do not see education as really necessary or at least worthy of the funds committed to it. A case in point is the prominent Deputy, Abdou in Le Jeune homme de sable. Abdou, a stark illiterate, who makes his way to the top through graft, constantly plays down the importance of education. In parliament, he calls for the abrogation of boarding facilities for the reason that the government cannot waste money on every child. People like Abdou, who dominate the present political scene, not only impede the expansion of education but also the attainment of qualitative education.

Fantouré, on the other hand, focuses on non-

formal education, particularly illiteracy among rural dwellers. The reason for Fantoure's deep interest in the condition of the peasantery we have already shown. Here, we examine how he demonstrates the effect of illiteracy on this group of people. The Nakiri villagers whose condition is pathetically described at the beginning of the second part of Le Cercle des Tropiques, are prone to superstition. Illiteracy is the cause of the credulity of the villagers. The peasant who, in this village believes that his father has been poisoned by his enemies whereas his father actually has acute appendicitis, is a stark illiterate. Hear also the statement of a dying villager: "la mort est un présent de Dieu. Le ciel m'attend (...) là-haut. J'y retrouverai les ancêtres" (CT, pp.144-145). Fatalism par excellence, this type of statement can only be associated with ignorant people who believe that man should do nothing to improve upon his lot on earth. The credulity of the villagers, their blind submission to fate and superstition, contrast with the pragmatism and lucidity of Dr Malekê who not only goes to Nakiri to treat the sick but also to teach the people their rights. The failure of the Baré Koulé regime, and of all post-independence governments to embark on mass literacy campaign is indisputably the cause of the myopia and total ignorance among the rural dwellers. Thus, when Malekê observes: "Les vingt-six

lettres de l'alphabet feront beaucoup plus de bien a nos compatriots que toutes les déclarations des révolutionnaires réunis!" (CT, p.152), he appears to speak the mind of the novelist and of all those who bother about the level of illiteracy in Africa. When ignorance is wiped out, what the people require again is good housing so as to carry out their socio-economic activities with some comfort. Our next subject is therefore the condition of housing in post-colonial societies.

POST-INDEPENDENCE GOVERNMENTS AND THE PROBLEM OF HOUSING

Jean Rockwell observes that: "Social facts may be revealed by fiction".[34] The transposition of the socio-economic reality of post-independence African societies is the dominant objective of the Guinean novelists. This is reflected in their presentation of the problem of accommodation in African countries. Here again, the attitude of the powers-that-be is lethargic. It can even be said that the picture here is gloomier than that of education as the leaders not only fail to evolve an adequate housing policy for the masses, some of the politicians use the limited resources to construct edifices for personal or party use.

It would appear that the disillusionment of the Guinean novelists intensifies as years pass by. In

Laye's Dramouss, published in 1966, the African characters, Fatoman and his fiancee, Mimie contrast the part of Conakry inhabited by the expatriates and the portion of the capital where Africans live. We learn that the buildings in the indigenous quarters of Dixinn and Medina are "fort précaires, elles se tenaient debout un peu trop par miracle" (Dramouss, p.12). Elsewhere, in the chapter, we have shown the excellent position of the European quarters in Conakry. The implication is that, in spite of its rhetorics, the PDG administration has not been able to gain control of the Guinean economy and provide manageable accommodation for the citizens. But this indictment of the government is rather mild and can in no way compare with the satires in Le Cercle des Tropiques, Les Crapauds-brousse and the two novels of Sassine, Le Jeune homme de sable and Le Zéhéros....

Equal in the intensity of their denunciation of governments are seemingly Le Cercle des Tropiques and Monénembo's Le Crapauds-brousse. The central argument of the two novels is that housing policies are designed only to suit those in power. One identifies in both works, two types of residential areas - one with modern houses adorned with exotic flowers and the other with "fatras de bicoque. Paille sèche, briques d'argile tôles rouillees" (CB, p.20). The decent bungalows are occupied by top government functionaries, industrialists and businessmen

The filthy area belongs to the ordinary citizens. Thus, now, it is no longer the Whitemen who cheat Africans. Now, Africans are subjugated by their own compatriots. The novels do not appear to call for the same standard of accommodation for the leaders and the subjects. The legitimate demand here is that those in authority should endeavour to provide at least minimum comfort for the ruled. A situation in which those in authority live in grandiose villas while the rest of the population reside in filthy environment is totally unacceptable.

Disillusionment is at its peak in Sassine's works. In Le Jeune homme de sable, Sassine shows through authorial commentaries how Le Guide uses public funds to erect buildings in which his praises are chanted. These structures, we are further told, are regularly converted into prisons with the capacity to hold a large number of innocent citizens. And, in Le Zéhéros..., an old and helpless woman reveals how her only house is seized by President Sékou's government for party use. Two issues stand out of Sassine's narratives. First, it is a misplaced priority on the part of government to construct grandiose party edifices when the people find no place to sleep. Second, by seizing the houses of the poor masses, President Sékou's government proves to be anti-popular. It is the lip service to welfarism - a vogue in the contemporary

Africa, that Sassine debunks here.

Every country, developing or developed nas its ghettos. In the developing countries however, there is a wide gulf between bungalows in Government Reservation Areas (GRA) and the slums occupied by the masses. It is this grossly lopsided development strategy, precisely the leaders' lack of concern for the governed that the four Guinean novelists bemoan.

After men are comfortably housed, they also need employment to provide for their temporary and permanent needs. Thus, next to be discussed are employment and related issues.

GOVERNMENT AND EMPLOYMENT PROBLEMS

Unemployment and employment matters are a very prominent topic in the Anglophone and Francophone novels of West Africa. We read the following comment in the introduction to Cameron Duodu's The Gab Boys: "The Gab Boys (...) though better educated than their fathers, are nonetheless out of work - jobs are only for those who can afford to pay bribes".[35] At issue here is official corruption, which enthrones mediocrity and rejects merit. More important is the question of unemployment. The Convention People's Part (C.P.P.) led by Kwame Nkrumah is unable to create jobs for the teeming number of able-bodied men in post-independence Ghana. On the French speaking side, Sembene Ousmane must come first for his unremitting

war against unemployment and social vices. As far back as 1966, he introduces in Le Mandat, Abdou, a young man, who having been forced out of Senegal by idleness writes to a relation: "A Dakar, il n'y a pas de travail (...). Je ne pouvais pas rester toute la journée, toutes les années assis (...). Je sais que tu ne travailles pas toujours".[36] Also Ousmane gives labour matters adequate attention in his subsequent works such as Les Bouts de bois de Dieu and Xala. Another French speaking writer who makes an indepth study of unemployment issues is the Ivorian actuary, Ahmadou Kourouma. Six years after Le Mandat, Kourouma describes in Les Soleils des indépendances how Fama, the last legitimate descendant of the princes of Horodougou, rendered jobless, is forced to depend on his wife, Salimata for his sustenance. The Guinean novelists being studied are not left out of the discussion on this topical issues.

One merit of the Guinean writers' approach is that they do not present unemployment as purely a creation of African nationalists. Fantouré and Sassine insinuate that this problem started during the period of European domination. In the first part of Le Cercle des Tropiques devoted specifically to the colonial era, we see able-bodied skilled and unskilled Africans willing to work but who find no jobs. The scene, in which a boy is trampled to death

in a stampede by applicants is enough evidence of the dryness of the labour market during the colonial era. Somewhere, Fantouré likens the queue of applicants to a chain of mountains. There is some exaggeration here. The fact remains however that unemployment predates independence. And in Le Jeune homme de sable Sassine uses the unsophisticated view of a peasant turned-servant, Bandia to show how the colonialists ruined African employment market.

African politicians are however not exonerated by the Guinean novelists. On assumption of office, they fail not only to redress the precarious employment situation, they aggravate it. Neither the public nor the private sectors absorb those ready to work. Bohi Di in Le Cercle des Tropiques sheds light on the people's predicament thus: "Il m'a fallu près d'une dizaine d'années de chômage, d'incertitude et de souffrance pour avoir un travail. Après l'avoir obtenu, je m'attends à le perdre à tout moment" (CT, p.137-138). Lack of vacancies for numerous applicants, job insecurity for the few fortunate to secure jobs are the two issues here. Worse, out of victimisation, leaders also terminate the appointments of those who hold views antagonistic to their government. Such is the plight of Melle Houre in Le Cercle des Tropiques. Such is also the plight of Soriba and his friends in Les Crapauds-brousse, Tahirou in Le Jeune homme de sable,

Monseigneur Tchidimbo and his fellow victims in Le Zchéros... and the opponent of Fahati in Le Récit du cirque. These opponents of the Presidents, not only lose their positions, they are also, either imprisoned or outrightly executed.

For the few who retain their placing, there can be no talk of forming a labour union to demand for their rights. Mellé Houré, one of the leaders of the opposition party, Le Club des Travailleurs in Le Cercle des Tropiques observes: "Le Club des Travailleurs a cessé officiellement d'exister, depuis la suppression des syndicats et de tout organisme social non intégré au Parti Social de l'Espoir" (CT, p.150). This is also the fate of labour unions in Dramouss, Les Crapauds-brousse, Le Jeune homme de sable and Le Zchéros..., that is in the novels in which the regimes claim to be revolutionary or socialist. Such regimes explain that since the party in power is a workers' party, since government and workers are pursuing the same objective: national development, and since government and labour movement are committed to defending and promoting workers interest, labour unions must be affiliated to the ruling party. It is for this reason that in Le Cercle des Tropiques in particular, the Parti Social de l'Espoir government bans all independent labour organisations.

Thus, when Bohi Di in Le Cercle des Tropiques recalls nostalgically: "Les temps avaient bien changé. Le temps des grèves, des incidents comme ceux du port contre la corporation fruitière était revolu, bien mort" (CT, p.152), he makes a vital point. In the past, particularly at the dawn of independence, the nationalists were reliable allies in the fight for the emancipation of workers from foreign exploitation. Now, the nationalists or rather pseudo-nationalists the Baré Koulé, Sâ Matrak, Le Guide, President Sékou and Fahati are active collaborators of the foreign exploiters. The glorious days of Mainguai in L'Homme du troupeau... and Mainguai Africounah in Le Voile ténébreux are no more. Contrary to official declaration, African nationalists are no longer guarantors of the interests of the proletariat.

Intimately tied to the problem of labour, is that of the destitute. For, when a society fails to provide jobs for citizens prepared to work, when a society fails to protect workers from foreign and internal exploitation it produces the destitute, that is people who are needy.

Like labour, the destitute is a popular theme in West African novels in French. The topic is for instance, extensively treated by Sembene Ousmane in Le Mandat and Xala. In the former the following picture of the beggar is given:

> Devant la poste, la rangée des mendiants disposés comme des pots de fleurs fanées, tendaient qui la main, qui la sébile, poussant leurs complaintes. 37

The beggars here are presented as miserable members of society. A similar picture emerges in Xala in which El Hadji Abdou Kader Beye, a rich and powerful businessman, expropriates the property of a helpless beggar. Towards the end of the novel we learn that the beggars with the words: "Il veut être soigné",[38] seize Beye and subject him to physical humiliation. This is however only a desperate attempt by the downtrodden to protect themselves from further exploitation by the bourgeoisie. It is a defensive rather than an offensive act. For, no real revolution can be achieved through the spittle poured on Beye by the beggars. The destitute in the novels of two other Senegalese Ly Sangare and Aminata Fall and in Les Soleils des indépendances by the Ivorian, Kourouma, are also presented in the same pathetic manner.[39] The four Guinean novelists are not left out of current discussion.

Like the artists mentioned above, the Guinean novelists struggle hard to present the destitute as pitiful citizens. Statements made by beggars, their residence in gutters, their feeding and clothing and their daily activities show clearly that they are helpless members of society who require

assistance. In Le Cercle des Tropiques, beggars are so numerous that they "manquaient de plus en plus d'espace pour s'aligner sur les trottoirs et tendre la main" (CT, p.218). In Le Jeune homme de sable the beggar who frequents Bandia is almost dying of starvation. Ironically, Bandia who is asked to help, is not better-off and cannot feed even his own child. These touching portrayals constitute an indirect reproach of the politicians in power. For, it is the obligation of government to resettle, through rehabilitation centres, the less fortunate citizens of society. After all, unemployment, almost everytime the cause of destitution, results from the negligence of government.

The Guinean writers also deserve respect for not laying all the blame on government. The societies we are dealing with in all the novels are Islamic ones. Islam makes assistance of the needy incumbent on all its adherents. The Quran commands thus:

> Ce Livre, point de doute, voilà une guidée pour les pieux qui croient à l'invisible et établissent l'Office et font largesses de ce que Nous leur avons attribué. 40

Thus, it is the duty of Bilali in Dramouss to assist the poor craftsmen at Kouroussa, thrown out of job by shoddy imported objects of art. It is the duty of the wealthy merchants of Porte Océane (Le Cercle

des Tropiques), to come to the aid of the numerous beggars dying of starvation in the city. It is also an obligation on Gnawoulata (Les Crapauds-brousse) to give alms to the helpless patients who flood old Makhale's house daily. Yet, the opulent refuse to assist the needy ones amongst them. These wealthy citizens who flaunt their fortune and indulge in all forms of ephemeral and sensual pleasures, are not only unpatriotic, they are also negligent of their religious obligation.

It is however worthy of note that the government and the well-to-do citizens cannot all the time be reproached for the large number of beggars in streets. For, it is a known fact that there are some sane and able-bodied men, who could work and earn a decent living but who choose mendicity for profession. No matter the devotion of government to the cause of the underprivileged, and no matter the generosity of Muslims who are ready to give alms such indolent citizens will continue to prey on society. Islam discourages begging by able-bodied men. And no government should be blamed for neglecting those citizens who, even though healthy, choose to live on alms. The failure of the Guinean novels to pronounce on the misconduct of the indolent is a great lapse in these novels. We now explore cultural problems.

GOVERNMENT AND CULTURE

The relationship between the social and the

cultural is complex and its full study falls outside the scope of this thesis. According to Gould et al, the two terms are closely inter-related. Culture could be part of the social and vice-versa.[41] In our case, we take culture to be a sub-theme of the social. For, we see the preservation and promotion of traditional values as an integral part of the social responsibilities of government.

The Nigerian writer and critic Isidore Okpewho notes that: "A number of African writers have shown a certain Proustian nostalgia for roots"[42] This statement applies generally to the four Guinean writers. They demonstrate profound interest in cultural matters. Laye, from his first novel, L'Enfant noir to Le Maître de la Parole, proves that African inherited values are very dear to him. We have already touched on Monénembo's attachment to Africa, in spite of his sojourn in Europe. Even the title of his novel, Les Crapauds-brousse is drawn from an African legend. He explains thus: "Les Crapauds-brousse est un titre emprunté à une légende peulhe".[43] Furthermore, as observed by Sow and Diallo, Monénembo's style contains a lot of "africanismes".[44] Perhaps, the culmination of Monénembo's affection is evident here: "L'Oralité est le dénominateur commun du fondement culturel guinéen. Dans la société africaine, la parole est bien plus qu'un prosaique outil de communication."[45]

As for Sassine, there is perhaps no better evidence of his respect for authentic African values than the portrayal of Bandia in Le Jeune homme de sable. Even Fantoure, with his apparent disdain for traditional medicine, demonstrates some admiration for certain aspects of African traditional practices. No wonder, therefore, that the Guinean novelists do not take kindly to the lackadaisical attitude of the contemporary African leadership to the issue of culture.

The novelists' contention is that the political leaders fail to protect African heritage from foreign invasion. Dramouss is vehement on this point. Fatoman, desirous of listening to some African music tunes into Radio Conakry. To his dismay, it is the voices of European artists rather than Africans' that fill the air. Fatoman also notes dejectedly that indigenous craftsmen have been sent out of job, as a result of imported shoddy objects of art. Thus, for Laye the favourable days of L'Enfant noir are gone. Yet, the RDA regime in Dramouss does nothing concrete to save the people's traditional way of life. It might be an exaggeration to make an insinuation like the one in Dramouss. African leaders, particularly Sékou Touré, made some attempt at cultural revival. The Guinean President noted right at independence:

> The sum of gains, knowledge and modes of action enabling man to regulate his relationship (...)

> with nature is through culture (...) it is through culture that society creates and develops and expresses itself. 46

To give practical expression to his belief, Sékou Touré showed great interest in culture. He funded the Ballet National Guinéen led by Fodéba Keita in 1959.[47] As a result of the encouragement and assistance given to the Ballet by the PDG government, the organisation shot into prominence and won prizes in competitions in Africa and outside the continent. What one can say with certainty is that efforts at cultural revival on the continent, like most other government projects, are generally not well co-ordinated and usually do not achieve the desired result. As for Sékou Touré, he did something concrete to save the people's culture and it would appear that Laye allows his personal differences with the President to influence his appreciation of the leader's achievements.

The writers also take the politicians to task for consciously destroying the people's heritage. In Le Cercle des Tropiques, we learn that the leaders and their families prefer hi-fi musical instruments to tomtom. This is rather a mild indictment of the leadership. A more serious castigation is found in Les Crapauds-brousse. Sa Matrak's regime, following a cooked up story, eliminates physically all the young men who strive

to preserve and promote authentic African values. The execution of the old Bandia in Le Jeune homme de sable, should also be seen in the same light. From his origin, from the cora he plays, and from his utterances, Bandia epitomises inherited values of Africa. Yet, what Bandia represents does not appeal to the politicians who murder him! The disregard of, and elimination by most African leaders, of custodians of traditional values and practices, is the bane of cultural revival efforts in the contemporary era. Having dealt with the performance of governments with respect to social services, we now turn to transport infrastructure which, as we shall see, presents a peculiar problem.

What is implicit in our discussion is that there are three main groups of people in the post-independence society. These are the Africans who assume the mantle of leadership during the post-independence era, the middle income earners and finally the ordinary citizens. These groupings also reflect the position of the individuals in the socio-economic sphere.

In the first group are the top politicians and businessmen. These are the Presidents, the Chiefs of Security, the Chiefs of the militia, influential deputies like Abdou in Le Jeune homme de sable, the Inquisitors Vice-I-Mille and I-Mille in Le Récit du cirque. These people use State apparatus and their

connections in high places to illegally enrich themselves. We have already touched on some of the strategies evolved by these persons to enrich themselves. It is however necessary to emphasise that the writers bring out these facts through various narrative techniques. Very often the writers have recourse to dialogue. It is during a conversation that Le Guide in Le Jeune homme de sable advises El Hadj Karamo to store some money in foreign banks for his personal use. It is during a conversation that Daouda, the leader of Sa Matrak's bit squad in Les Crapauds-brousse reveals how he attempts to appropriate a parcel of land belonging to a poor family. Le Cercle des Tropiques is another novel in which dialogue is quite widely and effectively used. But here it is the exploited citizens who complain about illegal acquisition of wealth. One of them, talking about corruption, exclaims "Déjà les médicaments sont vendus au marché noir par les dirigeants, les revendications de notre comité du personnel n'ont jamais reçu d'écho favorable de la part des responsables du Parti" (CT, p.198). Whether it is the leaders themselves who reveal their inappropriate methods of accumulating wealth or whether it is the masses who express their disgust, it is all the same thing; the revelations by the groups complement and reinforce each other. The leaders and their friends in the business circles are corrupt and it is the ordinary citizens who bear

the brunt of this anomaly.

We have already treated the profligacy of those who hold political power. These extravagant life styles are brought out throug h contrasting descriptions of the living styles of the citizens in the post-independence society. In Dramouss the living condition of the RDA lady militant with a "cou long et cercle d'anneaux" may be contrasted with that of the Kouroussa artisans thrown out of jobs as a result of the "objets d'art" imported into Guinea by Lebanese businessmen; those of the Nakiri peasants in Le Cercle des Tropiques may be contrasted with those of Baré Koulé, his cabinet members and their families. Of course it is this imbalance that Bohi Di calls attention to in his observation "Il est vrai que de l'autre côté de la barrière, les nouveaux princes s'amusaient (...) par desoeuvrement, par contentement de leur reussite, par les profits tires de la souffrance et des efforts de leurs compatriotes". (CT, p.155). The barrier which Bohi Di talks about is real, it is the new stratification which replaces the White-Black dichotomy during the colonial era. This gross social imbalance is also remarkable in Les Crapauds-brousse as exemplified by the striking dissimilarity in the frivolous tastes of Daouda on the one hand and that of the madman on the other hand. But wealth and wasteful spending are no guarantee to long life and happiness. Frequently, the looters of public treasury

and those who appropriate the properties of the helpless citizens are made to cough out their ill-acquired gains and shun their unedifying preferences under the very eyes of the people. In Le Cercle des Tropiques, the humiliation and execution of Halouma, the Chief of the militia by Baré Koulé are a case in point.

The second category of people are the middle income earners. Whether they are in the urban areas or in the rural areas, this category of people rely on their salaries. They are largely civil servants and it is amongst them that can be found Tahirou, the headteacher in Le Jeune homme de sable, the nurses in the same novel and in Fantouré's Le Cercle des Tropiques and Rahi in Les Crapauds-brousse. While it is very difficult for this group of people to move into the upper social hierarchy, they can easily fall into the group of the ordinary citizens. Their condition is largely determined by fluctuation of prices in the country. The novelists show that, like the ordinary citizens, this category of people are also victims of ineptitude and exploitation by those in power.

Far below on the socio-economic ladder are the ordinary citizens. Whether they live in the urban areas or in the countryside they are poor and include such people as Souley, Dioulde's houseboy in Les

Crapauds-brousse, the jobless youth of Porte Océane in Le Cercle des Tropiques and the Kouroussa artisans in Dramouss. Clearly, it is this category of persons that attracts the sympathy of the novelists, who treat their plight elaborately and convincingly. In all the novels, the protagonists and the narrators belong to this class of people. As direct victims of plundering, the narrators therefore describe the fate of the exploited intimately. Bohi Di's cry "Mais mon Dieu comment allons-nous vivre jusqu'a la fin du mois" (CT, p.192) for instance, is an expression of the communal suffering at the hands of selfish leaders. Furthermore, utterances by other spokesmen of the oppressed are so natural that one cannot but sympathise with them. It is in particular, the courage with which these deprived citizens face the problem of survival that endears them to the reader.

One remarkable fact about these poor citizens is their readiness to identify with and assist one another. While Baré Koulé executes Halouma (Le Cercle des Tropiques), while Vice-I-Mille and I-Mille abandon Fahati in his hour of need (Le Récit du cirque) and while Sâ Matrak stands by and looks at Daouda being fired at by Rahi and her group (Les Crapauds-brousse), the masses always stand solidly behind one another especially in difficult times. The citizens of Porte Oceane in Le Cercle des Tropiques

stand by each other as they are shot, maimed and killed by Baré Koulé's militia in a cathedral; the people who feed the poor madman in Les Crapauds-brousse do not themselves have enough to eat, while in Le Jeune homme de sable Bandia a servant gives porridge to a poorer beggar. This is indeed a solidarity of the poor. Faced with a leadership insensitive to their plight, these so-called "cretins", to use the words of Diouldé, have to evolve means of survival. It is only through mutual cooperation that the underpriviledged citizens can survive the scourge of hunger and problems of existence.

However, in spite of their meekness and devotion to duty, some of the masses die violent deaths. In Le Cercle des Tropiques, a man dies instantly when he falls from a height at a construction site; in Les Crapauds-brousse Alkali meets his death while trying to protect his parcel of land, and in Le Jeune homme de sable, Bandia the old servant draws water and hews wood but is still murdered by Abdou his master. One can also recall the numerous innocent victims of Fahati in Le Récit du cirque. These harmless and innocent people who meet their death can be seen as sacrificial bulls to the maddening frustrations of a dangerously inefficient society.

If the common man suffers that much it is because the leaders fail to fulfil their obligations,

and the writers do not spare them for this negligence. The leaders are denounced in a variety of ways. Irony is one of these and Sassine is well-known for his effective use of irony. In Le Jeune homme de sable Abdou observes thus "Quand Bandia mourra, il sera enterré comme un chien et il ira en enfer, parce qu'il ne veut pas prier" (JHS, p.67). However, Abdou appears to be more of a candidate for hell than Bandia, As the principal exponent of the policies of Le Guide, Abdou defends the abolition of essential social services while he himself wallows in affluence and comfort.

Metaphor is another common tool of Guinean writers. It is significant that in all the novels, the transportation systems are in a terrible condition of disrepair. On landing at Conakry on his way back from France, Fatoman the protagonist in Dramouss is struck by the numerous potholes on the city's roads. He comments rather modestly: "Quant au car (...) partout ou il passait, il y avait toujours quelque endroit ou la chaussée attendait un peu de goudron". (Dramouss, p.13). It is not only the roads in Guinea that need repairs, rather the socio-economic system requires over-hauling. In particular, the national leaders need the moral "goudron" in order to make them more conscientious and efficient. Fatoman's observation is a metaphorical expression of the general state of disrepair in which post-

independence Guinea finds itself. In Le Cercle des Tropiques, both rural and urban dwellers complain of poor roads. Even a villager knows that "La région est dangereuse en hivernage, il n'y a ni routes, ni ponts. Les bacs sont incertains" (CT, p.135) and in Sassine's Le Jeune homme de sable, Tahirou the spokesman of the oppressed vehemently condemns "une politique d'infrastructure routière des zones non 'rentables' en faveur du commerce international" (JHS, p.107). The myopia of the national leaders is reflected in their lopsided development strategy. The provision of reliable transportation facilities is a basic objective of all good leaders. For, without good transportation facilities no meaningful development can take place. Yet, the Presidents in the Guinean novels fail to provide adequate means of conveyance for the people living in the rural and urban areas. This lapse is symbolic of the ineptitude of all post-independence leaders and their inability to harness available resource for socio-economic progress.

Similarly when we read in Le Zéhéros... that during President Sekou's rule "il n'y avait pas de ciment" (ZIQ, p.128) we realise that Sassine is hitting at the post-independence leadership with his corrosive metaphor. Cement is basic to the development of every society. Without it neither the urban nor the rural areas can take off, and surely there cannot

be any industrial break through without this item. The failure of President Sékou to make available cement in abundant quantity signifies a major flaw in his socio-economic programme. Finally, the lameness of El Hadj Karamo, the Chief of Security in Le Jeune homme de sable should be seen through the same metaphorical prism. Maintenance of national security is an arduous task which requires not only mental alertness but also physical fitness. Yet, the man who holds such a vital post is lame. We see through El Hadj Karamo's disability the intellectual and moral unfitness of the politician in authority. The physical incapacitation of El Hadj Karamo is an indirect attack on the incompetence of all the political leaders in post-independence society.

NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

1. See Nwoga (Ed.) Literature and Modern West African Culture, p.vi.

2. Ibid, p.vi.

3. Richard Priebe and Thomas Hale (Ed.), Artist and Audience: African Literature as a Shared Experience (Washington: Three Continents Press, 1979), introduction.

4. Ironically, the role which Lewis Nkosi assigns the artist is exactly what the Guinean novelists assume. Here is his definition of literature: "Like morality, literature needs to be universal. So, that the writer must put himself on the side of the majority, of the two billion starving, if he wishes to be able to speak to all and be read by all. Failing that, he is at the service of a privileged class and, like it, an exploiter". See D.I. Nwoga (Ed.), Literature and Modern West African Culture, p.4.

5. C. Addison, "Economic Organisation", in A Dictionary of the Social Sciences, ed. Julius Gould and William L. Kolb (Toronto: Macmillan, 1964), p.225.

6. Ibid, p.643.

7. René Dumont, L'Afrique noire est mal partie (Paris: Seuil, 1962), p.147.

8. It is perhaps pertinent to state that Fantouré has done some research on the post-independence economies of African countries. Some of his works include La Coopération franco-africaine contemporaine et perspective d'industrialisation.

9. Bernard Dadie, Monsieur Thogô-gnini (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1970), p.51.

10. Mongo Beti Main basse sur le Cameroun quoted by Claude Wauthier in The Literature and Thought of Modern Africa, p.325.

11. Walter Rodney, How Europe Underdeveloped Africa (Washington: Howard Univ. Press, 1974), p.149.

12. African soldiers in the French colonial army.

13. Fanon, Les Damnés de la terre, p.8.

14. Notre Librairie: Littérature guineenne, p.111.

15. Fanon, Les Damnés..., p.62.

16. Sembene Ousmane, Xala (Paris: Presence Africaine, 1973), p.8.

17. Fanon, Les Damnés..., p.62.

18. Jean Suret-Canale, La République de Guinée. p.305.

19. Dumont, L'Afrique noire est mal partie, p.69.

20. Uganden The Evolution of Pessimism..., p.90.

21. Laye studied and worked in Conakry before going into exile in Dakar. See King, The Writings of Laye, p.11. As for Monénembo, he was a student, successively at the Universities of Dakar and Abidjan before leaving for France in 1969. See Notre Librairie: Litterature guinéenne, p.106.

22. Sembene Ousmane, Xala, p.24.

23. Ibid, p.28.

24. George Lukacs, Soul and Form (London: Merlin Press 1974), p.56.

25. Ibid, p.56.

26. Fanon, Les Damnés..., p.80.

27. Sékou Touré, Enhancing the People's Power (Tema: Tema Press, sd.), p.203.

28. Jacques Chevrier, "Le Roman africain dans tous ses états" in Notre Librairie: Cinq ans de littératures africaines, 1979-1984, p.44.

29. See Wauthier, The Literature and Thought of Modern Africa, p.131.

30. Sekou Toure, The Doctrine and Methods, p.70.

31. Vassily Novikov, Artistic Truth and Dialectics of Creative Work (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), p.10.

32. We refer in particular to Buchi Emecheta's portrayal of the feminine condition in The Joy of Motherhood.

33. Uganden, The Evolution of Pessimism..., p.21.

34. Jean Rockwell, Fact in Fiction (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), p.50.

35. Cameroun Duodu, The Gab Boys (Glasgow: Fontana, 1969) back cover.

36. Sembene Ousmane, Le Mandat précédé de Vehi Ciosane (Paris: Presence Africaine, 1966), pp.126-127.

37. Ibid., p.129.

38. Sembene Ousmane Xala, p.168.

39. Ly Sangare is the author of Sourd-muet, je demande la parole while Aminata Fall published La Greve des battus (The Beggars' Strike) in 1979.

40. Le Coran (Qum: Ansariya Publication, sd.), p.5.

41. Manford Kuhu "Social Act" in A Dictionary of the Social Sciences, ed. Gould and Kolb, p.643.

42. Isidore Okpewho, "Myth and Modern Fiction: Armah's Two Thousand Seasons" in African Literature Today, No.13, Eldred Durosimi (London: Heinemann, 1983), p.1.

43. Notre Librairie: Nos.88/89 Paris: Clef, 1987, p.107.

44. Ibid, p.109.

45. Ibid, pp.7-8.

46. Ahmed Sékou Touré, Revolution, Culture, Panafricanism No.88 (Conakry: Press Office - State House, 1978), p.9.

47. Fodéba Keita studied Law at the Sorbonne but earned his living by writing poetry and short stories. He abandoned Law to create the famous Ballet Africain. He was sentenced to death for alleged complicity in the so-called "Labe Plot". See O'toole Historical Dictionary of Guinea, p.41.

CONCLUSION

We have tried to examine how four Guinean novelists - Laye, Fantouré, Monénembo and Sassine react to the historico-political problems of Guinea (under Sékou Touré) in particular, and Africa in general. Eight novels, published between 1966 and 1985 were studied.

Two of the novelists, Laye and Fantouré explore the problems of the colonial era. They delve into the condition of Africans who lived in the colonial society. The two writers do not, however, hold the same view of the difficulties which confronted the generality of Africans during the colonial era. Laye does not see the colonialists as having caused any serious damages to Africa. He even sees the Europe-Africa contact as a blessing to Africans. Consequently, he calls for cooperation between the people of the two continents. Laye makes these points through Fatoman his principal mouthpiece in Dramouss, and through his surrogates like Stanislas and Tante Aline, the two French citizens. Europeans destroyed the social, economic and political structures of African societies. Europeans continue to frustrate the efforts of patriotic Africans who strive to develop their countries. Africans cannot really develop until they have liberated themselves from neo-colonialists and their local allies. Laye seems to ignore the danger which Europeans constitute to

Africans. His view of the Europeans is unrealistic and might even shock Africans who have some knowledge of colonial history or lived during the colonial era. Fantouré does not share Laye's view. For Fantouré every European is an exploiter and a racist. He treats at length the atrocities perpetrated by the colonialists in Africa. Practically, all the Europeans in Le Cercle des Tropiques, L'Homme du troupeau... and Le Voile ténébreux believe that the Whitemen are superior to Africans. The Whitemen in Fantouré's novels are real and they remind the reader of the colonialists who plundered the resources of Africa during the colonial era. Apart from the fact that Fantouré devotes more works to the colonial theme than Laye, Fantouré's handling is more thorough and more useful to those who wish to be informed through fiction, of the intrigues of the Whites and the irreparable damages they have caused and continue to cause Africans.

Laye and Fantouré trace the origin of the struggle for independence. Both writers emphasise the role of the nationalist leaders in the anti-colonialist struggle. The nationalist leaders were the rallying points of the anti-colonialist struggle. It is therefore judicious that the writers concentrate on the contributions of this group of Africans. The two Guinean novelists are however found to be too openly subjective in their presentation of the

politicians. Laye and Fantouré disapprove of the nationalists who assumed the mantle of leadership after independence. The two writers therefore paint this group of politicians in a highly unflattering manner. The leader of the RDA in Dramouss, and Baré Koulé in Le Cercle des Tropiques, are for instance, shown to be highly deceptive politicians who are insensitive to the aspiration of the ordinary citizens. We know however that, before independence, many of the leading African nationalists, who later came to power, including Sékou Touré, symbolised hope. At the political, social and economic levels they achieved a lot for their fellow countrymen. The totally negative outlook of the leading politicians as seen in Dramouss and Le Cercle des Tropiques has no root in colonial history. It must be emphasised that perfect objectivity is not attainable in most human endeavours. Excessive subjectivity by a writer, however, adversely affects the credibility of his work. A fairly balanced interpretation of historico-political events is even more necessary in works such as Dramouss, Le Cercle des Tropiques, L'Homme du troupeau... and Le Voile ténébreux, works which aim at arousing in the reader the urge to arise against the status quo.

Fantouré's handling of the relationship between the nationalists and the rural dwellers, between the nationalists and the youths, between the political

leaders and the civil servants, and between the nationalist leaders and the traditional centres of power, is on the other hand, quite illuminating. Through his minute details, particularly in L'Homme du troupeau..., Fantouré relates to the reader either the cooperation or the uneasy relationship which developed between the social group mentioned above and the leading African statesmen during the colonial era. The portrayal of the naivety and credulity of peasants as seen in Le Cercle des Tropiques is quite natural and commendable while the antagonism between the radical politicians and the civil servants in L'Homme du troupeau... reflects the politics of the colonial era.

Laye is conspicuously silent on the politicians' transactions with the aforementioned groups. Where he treats the subject, his comments are so scanty that they are not worthy of any serious consideration. These social groups, particularly the natural rulers, were a vital factor in the politics of the colonial period. While some chiefs colluded with colonialists and tried to frustrate the efforts of the politicians who were fighting for independence, some however teamed up with the nationalists.

Tyranny was found to be a popular theme in all the novels set in the post-independence era. In all the novels, statements made by those in power and their conducts betray their despotic tendencies.

The lives of all the citizens in the novels are in one way of another affected by the tyrannical policies of the leaders. Tyranny is a prominent feature of post-independence politics and it is not at all surprising that all the four Guinean writers dwell at some length on it.

The novelists strike a vital note when they suggest that African governments are not established on a solid ideological base. African governments, including the PDG regime in Guunea, whether they proclaim their adherence to socialism or declare their adoption of the capitalist system, do not really hold unto any well delineated political doctrine. All the governments, according to the novelists, are guided by one goal: how to secure political power and hold unto it.

Laye, unlike the other Guinean writers, attempts to propose capitalism as an ideology for Guinea and other African countries. Fatoman, the protagonist in Dramouss, is the advocate of this ideology. Laye's effort, however does not seem very plausible. At a time, when the greed of the capitalist West has come to the open and when patriotic Africans are doing their best to weaken the influence of the system, no writer who prescribes capitalism can expect to be taken seriously by the majority of enlightened Africans. The writer who risks proposing a political strategy must, in our view, be very

pragmatic so that the doctrine he suggests is not easily thrown out by his own compatriots.

The novelists meticulously present the devices used by leaders to perpetuate their rule. One party rule, the muzzling of the news media, fabricated plots and unlawful imprisonment among others, are evidence of the writers' vigilance, and their sensitivity to the political unfoldings in Guinea during Sékou Touré's time, and in other parts of Africa. The painstaking depiction of the leaders and strategies they use to perpetrate their rule convinces the reader that African politicians do not rule through their social and economic achievements, but rather through their recourse to coercive methods. The short and simple sentences in Dramouss and Le Cercle des Tropiques allow for easier reading and make one feel the full impact of the atrocities committed by the post-independence African leaders. The limited vocabulary of Bohi Di, the auto-didact and protagonist in Le Cercle des Tropiques, makes this novel's treatment of the tyrannical policies particularly effective.

The novelists call on the oppressed to rise and challenge their oppressors. Most of the Guinean writers emphasise collective struggle against abuse of power. This is evidence of the pragmatism of the writers. Only Sassine appears to advocate one-man struggle. This, he does through Oumarou, the

protagonist in Le Jeune homme de sable, who tries alone, to overthrow Le Guide. One-man fight against totalitarianism cannot yield any positive result . Also, Sassine expresses his confidence in the military, as the saviours of the oppressed. This recommendation should be viewed critically. For, experience in several African countries including Guinea has shown that the military are as oppressive and as corrupt as the civilians they remove from power. Only the combined effort of the oppressed, precisely the form proposed by Dramouss, Le Cercle des Tropiques and Les Crapauds-brousse is capable of emancipating the people from tyranny.

The outlook of the women in Sassine's Le Jeune homme de sable is also quite conservative. The wives of the eminent Deputy, Abdou, who daily engage in petty quarrels, do not represent progress. But this depiction does not adequately reflect the role of women in contemporary African society. Compared to women in the more advanced societies, African women are yet to make a serious impact on the public activities of their societies. Since independence, however, women have been participating increasingly in public life. Dramouss, Le Cercle des Tropiques, Le Récit du cirque and Les Crapauds-brousse acknowledge the contribution of women and the role they are still likely to play in post-

independence politics. Sassine would only be doing justice to African women and history if he depicted the women in more favourable light.

It is found however that in Le Jeune homme de sable, Sassine's attack on oppression is discreet while the novelist openly denounces oppression in Le Zéhéros... which was published after Sékou Touré's death. This is quite a positive development. It shows that Sassine is able to adapt his writings to the political atmosphere of his time. This is moreover an attitude which Sassine shares with Fantouré and Monénembo. By setting their novels in completely fictitious countries and by making discreet references to contemporary socio-political issues, Fantouré and Monénembo were able to avoid possible reprisals from Sékou Touré. The arrest and long incarceration of the wife of Laye, whose husband openly attacks Sékou Touré in Dramouss, shows the need for caution in commenting on socio-political issues during Sékou Touré's time. Moreover, Le Zéhéros... even though published after the demise of Sékou Touré and the overthrow of the PDG regime, makes a very important point. Le Zéhéros... implicitly warns that no leader can achieve positive results if he rules his compatriots through coercive methods and intimidation.

Lewis Nkosi, the South African writer, observes

that West African literature seems to lack the energy for social criticism. The works of the Guinean novelists prove Nkosi's assessment as inaccurate. In all the Guinean novels set in the post-independence era, the writers boldly castigate African leaders for creating economic and social difficulties for their fellow countrymen.

The novelists point out that Africa is blessed with abundant human and natural resources. They also state that the climate and vegetation of most parts of the continent are favourable for agriculture. These are facts which the political leaders in the novels acknowledge. The novelists stress that, in spite of these abundant resources, the generality of Africans live in abject poverty and lack basic social amenities.

The Guinean writers dwell at length on the factors responsible for the economic failures of African countries. Foreign investors are identified by all the novelists as one of the factors frustrating the efforts of toiling Africans. The foreign investors collude with African leaders to pillage the wealth of the continent. Laye and Monénembo criticise the conduct of the so-called radical leaders who connive with Europeans. Fantouré and Sassine, on the other hand, frown at the leaders who openly identify with the capitalist investors and collaborate with them to defraud

Africans. Fantouré, through Fahati, the President in Le Récit du cirque, sheds light on the politics behind African leaders - Europeans solidarity. The foreigners protect the regimes of A frican leaders while the leaders help the Whites to pursue their economic interests in Africa. The novelists show that the generality of Africans lose as a result of the politicians - foreigners alliance. Laye contrasts the part of Conakry inhabited by the Whites and the area of the city in which Guineans live. The writer shows that Europeans live in better houses and far more decent environment than Guineans.

The issue of foreign aid also comes under severe criticism in the Guinean novels. Tahirou, the leading opponent of Le Guide in Le Jeune homme de sable, considers foreign aid as "une compensation ridicule" when compared to the resources pillaged from developing countries by the capitalist nations of the West. This is a genuine observation. Sassine should however not limit his denunciation to only the countries of the West. The countries of the Eastern bloc also exploit Africans and offer ridiculous compensation. The tendency of Sassine, and of course, of Laye, Fantouré and Monénembo to ignore the exploitative activities of socialist countries in Africa is an important weakness on the part of the Guinean writers.

The Guinean novels also shed light on the relationship between those in power and the indigenous businessmen. The leaders and the local businessmen cooperate. This is because they have common interest; the pillaging of the national wealth of their countries. The writers struggle hard to prove that those in authority and the businessmen do not use their wealth to pursue what Lucas calls "lasting values", rather they squander the resources of the nation.

The Guinean writers believe that the political leaders make some efforts aimed at revamping the economy. Laye believes that the economic programmes of the RPA are uncoordinated and cannot be effective. He does not propose any concrete programme to improve the Guinean economy. Sassine, on the other hand, suggests that Europeans represent drought. They ravage the economies of African countries just as the drought does. To free their economies and themselves, Sassine emphasises, Africans must first of all get rid of the European exploiters. Sassine also insinuates that poorly executed socialist programmes cannot achieve any result. Here, Sassine apparently attacks Sékou Touré whose socialist programmes did not yield much result due to poor coordination. Monénembo, on his part, exposes the conduct of those Africans who accuse the leaders of corruption but who are themselves

also corrupt. Monénembo calls on genuine patriots to keep an eye on the activities of such hypocrites. That this call is made through Josiane, an European lady, is what makes Monénembo's treatment particularly remarkable.

Like the economic difficulties, the problem of social services and transport infrastructure is also treated by all the four Guinean novelists. Of course, the areas of emphasis differ from novelist to novelist, the Guinean writers give a fairly accurate picture of the deplorable condition of social facilities in African countries. The writers point out that health, educational and housing programmes are in a shambles, unemployment is prevalent everywhere, while transport facilities are in a terrible state of disrepair. The use, by the novelists of peasants, city dwellers, members of opposition to reveal the suffering of the people enhances credibility.

The Guinean writers' recourse to the novel to express their feeling about contemporary socio-political issues might be explained by the fact that the novel form of creative art is the most convenient medium for reaching their audience. Novel writing is less demanding than poetry and theatrical works and anyone who wishes to try his hand on the art of writing can easily have recourse to it. It is this point that Dorothy Blair tries to emphasise when she

observes: "Because of its treacherous facility (...) a vast number of embryo writers are tempted to use it for their literary apprenticeship".[1] Furthermore, the linear narrative technique adopted in most of the novels makes their messages easier to grasp by most readers.

Whatever the lapses of their works, whatever the differences in their approach, the works of the four Guinean writers form a harmonious whole. The eight novels show that when men find themselves in an oppressive and corrupt system, they are likely to resist through the means they deem most effective. The eight novels expose the ego-centric devices of Sékou Touré and of other African despots. The novels shed ample light on the predicament of the generality of Africans, Guineans in particular, who were and still are trapped in the cobweb of neo-colonial pillaging, oppression and neglect. Above all, the Guinean novelists show that literature is not a futile entertainment but rather an act of immense utilitarian value, a weapon which could contribute to the establishment of a free and progressive society in the present and future.

NOTE TO CONCLUSION

1. Dorothy Blair, *African Literature in French*, p. 181.

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