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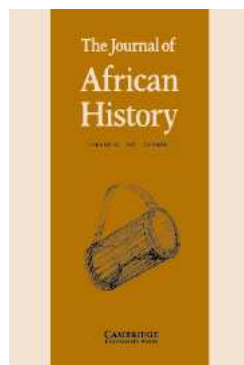
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## COLD WAR IN GUINEA: THE RASSEMBLEMENT DÉMOCRATIQUE AFRICAÏN AND THE STRUGGLE OVER COMMUNISM, 1950–1958

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## COLD WAR IN GUINEA: THE RASSEMBLEMENT DÉMOCRATIQUE AFRICAÏN AND THE STRUGGLE OVER COMMUNISM, 1950–1958

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**ABSTRACT:** When the Cold War broke out in Western Europe at the end of the Second World War, France was a key battleground. Its Cold War choices played out in the empire as well as in the *métropole*. After communist party ministers were ousted from the tripartite government in 1947, repression against communists and their associates intensified – both in the Republic and overseas. In French sub-Saharan Africa, the primary victims of this repression were members of the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (RDA), an interterritorial alliance of political parties with affiliates in most of the 14 territories of French West and Equatorial Africa, and in the United Nations trusts of Togo and Cameroon. When, under duress, RDA parliamentarians severed their ties with the Parti Communiste Français (PCF) in 1950, grassroots activists in Guinea opposed the break. Their voices muted throughout most of the decade, Leftist militants regained preeminence in 1958, when trade unionists, students, the party's women's and youth wings, and other grassroots actors pushed the Guinean RDA to reject a constitution that would have relegated the country to junior partnership in the French Community, and to proclaim Guinea's independence instead. Guinea's vote for independence, and its break with the interterritorial RDA in this regard, were the culmination of a decade-long struggle between grassroots activists on the political Left and the party's territorial and interterritorial leadership for control of the political agenda.

**KEY WORDS:** West Africa, Guinea-Conakry, decolonization, nationalism, protest.

### INTRODUCTION

IN September 1958, Guinea was the sole territory in the vast French empire to reject a constitution that would have relegated it to junior partnership in a new French Community. Guinea alone proclaimed immediate independence. Although Guinea's response to the constitutional referendum has been recognized as unique, little has been written about the historical roots of the phenomenon. Even less attention has been paid to the dynamics of the grassroots politics that shaped the nationalist movement.

Most works on nationalism in French West Africa have focused on elite politics, with some reference to the key role played by the mass base.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, Ernest Milcent, *L'AOF entre en scène* (Paris, 1958); André Blanchet, *L'itinéraire des partis africains depuis Bamako* (Paris, 1958); Ruth Schachter Morgenthau, *Political Parties in French-Speaking West Africa* (Oxford, 1964); Georges Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets de la décolonisation*, vol. II (Paris, 1967); Virginia Thompson and Richard Adloff, *French West Africa* (New York, 1969); Edward Mortimer, *France and the Africans 1944–1960: A Political History* (New York, 1969); Tony Chafer, *The*



Map of French Guinea. Cartographer: Malcolm Swanston. Reprinted by permission from *Mobilizing the Masses: Gender, Ethnicity, and Class in the Nationalist Movement in Guinea, 1939–1958* by Elizabeth Schmidt. Copyright © 2005 by Elizabeth Schmidt. Published by Heinemann, a division of Reed Elsevier, Inc., Portsmouth NH. All rights reserved.

Implicit in the majority of assessments is the erroneous assumption that the leaders called the shots and that the political positions taken by high-level nationalist leaders were mirrored in the views of their constituents. In the case of the RDA, many scholars have presumed that the accommodationist line promoted by Ivory Coast parliamentarian and interterritorial RDA president, Félix Houphouët-Boigny, was embraced by territorial branches and local sections – with the notable exception of Guinea in 1958.<sup>2</sup> These scholars generally have not recognized that the party line was the product of struggle, representing the domination of one point of view over others, accompanied by the silencing of opposing voices. Exceptions to this generalization are scholars who have noted the 1955 rift, when the Union Démocratique Nigérienne, Union Démocratique Sénégalaise and Union

*End of Empire in French West Africa: France's Successful Decolonization?* (New York, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Road to Independence: Ghana and the Ivory Coast* (Paris, 1964); Virginia Thompson, 'The Ivory Coast', in Gwendolen M. Carter (ed.), *African One-Party States* (Ithaca NY, 1962), 237–324; Aristide R. Zolberg, 'The Ivory Coast', in James S. Coleman and Carl G. Rosberg, Jr. (eds.), *Political Parties and National Integration in Tropical Africa* (Berkeley, 1964), 65–89; Frank Gregory Snyder, *One-Party Government in Mali: Transition Toward Control* (New Haven, 1965).

des Populations du Cameroun were expelled from the RDA for refusing to sanction the RDA's break from the PCF – in a coup engineered by Houphouët-Boigny.<sup>3</sup> While these scholars comment on disagreements within the highest echelons of the party, they fail to carry the discussion down to the grassroots – where the positions taken by territorial leaders were in dispute. Nor do they elaborate upon the broader implications: by the time the 1958 constitutional referendum occurred, many of the RDA's most radical constituents had already been expelled.

In the case of Guinea, many scholars have assumed that the Guinean RDA was radical from the outset, shaped by its charismatic secretary-general, Sékou Touré, who was supposed to have wielded absolute power over the party. For the most part, they have not understood that Sékou Touré was pushed to the Left by grassroots militants, particularly trade unionists, students, women and youth – not the other way around. Yves Person, Victor Du Bois and Claude Rivière, for instance, conflate the Guinean RDA with the person of Sékou Touré, wrongly presupposing that he had autocratic power in the pre-independence period and that he imposed his will on the party. They also view Sékou Touré as a longstanding and unwavering Leftist, rather than a pragmatic politician who was forced to the Left by grassroots militants.<sup>4</sup>

A number of scholars acknowledge that there was strife between rival RDA leaders – most notably, Sékou Touré and Félix Houphouët-Boigny. However, they do not explore tensions between Guinean party leaders and the rank and file.<sup>5</sup> Other authors allude to strains between the party base and leadership in Guinea, but they do not explore them in detail.<sup>6</sup> Although dedicated exclusively to Guinea, Sidiki Kobélé Kéïta's two-volume study and books by Jean Suret-Canale and Ladipo Adamolekun also fail to examine political fissures within the nationalist movement.<sup>7</sup> My earlier work has considered gender, ethnic and class divisions within the Guinean RDA, but not cleavages along the Left–Right political divide.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Morgenthau, *Political Parties*; Mortimer, *France and the Africans*; Finn Fuglestad, 'Djibo Bakary, the French, and the Referendum of 1958 in Niger', *Journal of African History*, 14 (1973), 315; Richard A. Joseph, *Radical Nationalism in Cameroun: Social Origins of the UPC Rebellion* (Oxford, 1977).

<sup>4</sup> Yves Person, 'French West Africa and decolonization', in Prosser Gifford and W. Roger Louis (eds.), *The Transfer of Power in Africa: Decolonization 1940–1960* (New Haven, 1982), 141–72; Victor D. Du Bois, 'Guinea', in Coleman and Rosberg (eds.), *Political Parties*, 186–215; Claude Rivière, *Guinea: The Mobilization of a People* (Ithaca NY, 1977).

<sup>5</sup> Morgenthau, *Political Parties*; Chaffard, *Carnets secrets*, 11; L. Gray Cowan, 'Guinea', in Carter (ed.), *African One-Party States*, 149–236; Sylvain Soriba Camara, *La Guinée sans la France* (Paris, 1976).

<sup>6</sup> Milcent, *AOF entre en scène*, 54; Thompson and Adloff, *French West Africa*; Thomas Hodgkin, *African Political Parties: An Introductory Guide* (Gloucester MA, 1971); Chafer, *End of Empire in French West Africa*.

<sup>7</sup> Sidiki Kobélé Kéïta, *Le PDG: artisan de l'indépendance nationale en Guinée (1947–1958)* (2 vols.) (Conakry, 1978); Jean Suret-Canale, *La République de Guinée* (Paris, 1970); Ladipo Adamolekun, *Sékou Touré's Guinea: An Experiment in Nation Building* (London, 1976).

<sup>8</sup> Schmidt, *Mobilizing the Masses*; Schmidt, 'Top down or bottom up? Nationalist mobilization reconsidered, with special reference to Guinea (French West Africa)',

This article stands received wisdom on its head.<sup>9</sup> Rejecting the top-down approach inherent in the works cited above, it argues, first, that the positions taken by political leaders in Guinea were the result of pressure from the grassroots – not vice versa. Guinea’s progressive politics emanated from the bottom, rather than the top. Second, although Sékou Touré had accumulated significant powers before independence, he did not monopolize decision-making. Local activists pushed Sékou Touré to the Left, even as he sought accommodation with both the interterritorial RDA and the colonial administration. Third, the Guinean RDA’s Leftist tendency was not a constant but, rather, was the product of struggle. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, government repression – under the banner of anti-communism – wreaked havoc in the RDA. Claiming that moderation and accommodation were essential if the movement was to survive, conservative elements gained control of the party leadership. In most French West African territories, elite-run parties with shallow roots made peace with the colonial power. In Guinea, however, the RDA had built a solid grassroots organization. For nearly a decade, Left-wing agitation continued at the local level. In September 1958, progressive activists finally won control of the political agenda. Thus, Guinea’s rejection of the proposed constitution in favor of immediate independence was not an isolated aberration. Rather, it was the outcome of years of political mobilization by grassroots militants who, despite Cold War repression, ultimately pushed the Guinean RDA to the Left.

In making the case for a Left-wing grassroots resurgence, this article examines, as a preliminary, Guinea’s postwar political ferment in the context of the Cold War. It assesses the influence of the PCF on the Guinean political scene, dissension within RDA ranks after the parliamentarians’ severance of ties with the PCF, and grassroots party building as a prelude to the re-emergence of the Left as the dominant force in Guinean politics.

#### THE PCF AND POSTWAR AFRICAN POLITICS

Guinea’s postwar political ferment can be understood only in the context of the Cold War. In 1946, the PCF was France’s largest political party, boasting some 800,000 members. It enjoyed tremendous moral authority due to the critical role its members had played in resisting Nazi rule. In the tripartite government of communists, socialists and Christian democrats formed in 1945, the PCF was the strongest of the governing parties and held important

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*American Historical Review*, 110 (Oct. 2005), 975–1014; Schmidt, “‘Emancipate your husbands!’: women and nationalism in Guinea, 1953–1958”, in Jean Allman, Susan Geiger and Nakanyike Musisi (eds.), *Women in African Colonial Histories* (Bloomington, 2002), 282–304. An in-depth discussion of political divisions within the Guinean RDA will appear in Schmidt, *Cold War and Decolonization in Guinea, 1946–1958* (Athens OH, 2007).

<sup>9</sup> Research for this article was conducted at the Archives Nationales du Sénégal (ANS) in Dakar, the Archives de Guinée (AG) in Conakry, the Centre de Recherche et de Documentation Africaine (CRDA) in Paris, and the Centre des Archives d’Outre-Mer, Archives Nationales de France (CAOM) in Aix-en-Provence. Unless otherwise indicated, I translated all French-language sources, and I conducted all interviews in collaboration with Siba N. Grovogui. In addition, I transcribed and translated all interviews conducted in French. Those conducted in Susu and Malinke were transcribed and translated by Siba N. Grovogui.

ministerial portfolios. Moreover, it was the dominant influence in the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT), the country's largest trade union federation.<sup>10</sup> The PCF's preeminence was of great concern to anti-communist political forces in France and in the United States, which had become the most important benefactor in France's postwar reconstruction. The United States government made it abundantly clear that, in return for critical economic aid, it expected communists to be eliminated from all positions of authority.<sup>11</sup> Inside France, forces from across the political spectrum worried that communists would weaken the nation's hold on its empire, already threatened by postwar African and Asian nationalist movements. In October 1946, when African leaders organized a congress in Bamako to establish an interterritorial movement for African political rights and liberties (the RDA), the PCF sent representatives and even helped to finance the event. The other metropolitan parties boycotted the congress, considering it to be subversive and communist-inspired. Their attitude towards the RDA would be equally antagonistic.<sup>12</sup>

The PCF, more than any other metropolitan party, was identified with postwar African nationalism. The party made a concerted effort to develop the political analysis, organizing capabilities and leadership skills of emerging African elites who subsequently led the postwar nationalist movements.<sup>13</sup> Since the establishment of the Popular Front government (1936–8), French communists had taken positions in the colonial administration, working as teachers, technicians and military officers throughout French West and Equatorial Africa. They had taught at the École Normale William Ponty, the prestigious federal school in Senegal, and the upper-primary and vocational schools in Conakry and other important colonial cities. In 1943, the PCF helped to establish the first Marxist-Leninist study groups, or Groupes d'Études Communistes (GECs), in French West Africa. Because their opposition to imperialism resonated strongly with African intellectuals, French communists had a tremendous influence on African elites educated during the 1930s and '40s.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Jean-Pierre Rioux, *The Fourth Republic, 1944–1958* (New York, 1987), 54, 59, 61, 76, 97f., 110; William I. Hitchcock, *France Restored: Cold War Diplomacy and the Quest for Leadership in Europe, 1944–1954* (Chapel Hill, 1998), 19; John W. Young, *France, the Cold War and the Western Alliance, 1944–49: French Foreign Policy and Post-War Europe* (New York, 1990), 29, 33, 90; Frank Costigliola, *France and the United States: The Cold Alliance Since World War II* (New York, 1992), 51, 53.

<sup>11</sup> Irwin M. Wall, *The United States and the Making of Postwar France, 1945–1954* (New York, 1991), 44–8, 59, 67–8, 74–5, 188; Edward Rice-Maximin, 'The United States and the French Left, 1945–1949: the view from the State Department', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 19 (1984), 730–6; Costigliola, *France and the United States*, 34ff.

<sup>12</sup> Pierre Kipré, *Le Congrès de Bamako: ou la naissance du RDA en 1946* (Paris, 1989), 63, 65, 67, 79, 85–90, 93, 108, 123, 133; Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, 26, 84, 88–9, 224; Kéïta, *PDG*, 1, 185, 233; interview with Mamadou Bela Doumbouya, Conakry, 26 Jan. 1991.

<sup>13</sup> Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, 23–5, 27. See also Schmidt, *Mobilizing the Masses*, 29, 32–4, 44, 51, 56, 58, 67–76, 159–60; Schmidt, 'Top down or bottom up?' 990, 1003–4; Schmidt, *Cold War*, ch. 1.

<sup>14</sup> ANS, 21G13, Guinée Française, Service de la Sûreté, 'État d'esprit de la population', 1–15 Dec. 1950; Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (New York, 1996), 159; Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, 14–5, 23, 25–6, 85; Kéïta, *PDG*, 1, 169, 233.

Elites in Guinea, like those in other French African territories, were extremely receptive to Leftist ideology. A number of the most highly educated had attended William Ponty when it was directed by a Popular Front appointee. Some were active in Guinea's first GEC, established in Conakry in 1944.<sup>15</sup> Among the GEC's founding members were Joseph Montlouis and Sékou Touré, who co-founded the CGT's African postal, telegraph and telephone (PTT) workers' union in 1945; Madéira Kéïta, a technical assistant at the Institut Français d'Afrique Noire; and Léon Maka, a teacher. All of these men helped to establish the Guinean branch of the RDA in 1947.<sup>16</sup> Leadership and organizational training were also provided by the PCF-associated trade union movement. In the postwar period, the CGT provided African unions with funds, training, political experience, opportunities for international travel and metropolitan allies in their labor struggles. Numerous RDA stalwarts possessed trade union backgrounds, which strongly influenced their organizing skills, strategies and ideology.<sup>17</sup> Foremost among these was Sékou Touré, a founding member of the Guinean RDA, who became its secretary-general in 1952. In 1945, he had been elected secretary-general of the fledgling African PTT workers' union – a CGT affiliate. The following year, he organized and was elected secretary-general of the Union des Syndicats Confédérés de Guinée, which brought together all Guinean CGT affiliates.<sup>18</sup>

In the political realm, the PCF influenced the form and orientation taken by the RDA – at both the interterritorial and territorial levels. Even before the RDA's establishment, the PCF had encouraged transterritorial unity and action in the struggle against French imperialism. It had promoted the consolidation of diverse African organizations – ethnic, trade union, youth and party – into a 'single national anti-imperialist front'.<sup>19</sup> Having emerged from the GEC/CGT milieu, RDA activists consciously modeled their party's pyramidal structure and political orientation on those of the PCF and associated workers' organizations, constructing chains of authority that linked each successive level of command.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, 14, 19, 23, 251–2; Kéïta, *PDG*, 1, 169.

<sup>16</sup> AG, 2Z27, 'Syndicat Professionnel des Agents et Sous-Agents Indigènes du Service des Transmissions de la Guinée Française', Conakry, 18 Mar. 1945; 5B43, Guinée Française, Gouverneur, Conakry, à Gouverneur Général, Dakar, 3 Mar. 1947, #42/C; 5B47, Guinée Française, Gouverneur, Conakry, à Joseph Montlouis, Commis des PTT, Conakry, 13 June 1947, #390/C/P; personal archives of Joseph Montlouis, letter from Joseph Montlouis, Conakry, to Jean Suret-Canale, Conakry, 5 Apr. 1983; interviews in Conakry with: Mamadou Bela Doumbouya, 26 Jan. 1991; Léon Maka, 20 Feb. 1991; interviews with Joseph Montlouis (assistant secretary-general, African PTT workers' union), Conakry, 3 and 6 Mar. 1991.

<sup>17</sup> Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, 227.

<sup>18</sup> AG, 2Z27, 'Syndicat Professionnel', 18 Mar. 1945; interviews with Joseph Montlouis, 3 and 6 Mar. 1991; Kéïta, *PDG*, 1, 176–7, 180, 186, 308; Adamolekun, *Sékou Touré's Guinea*, 11.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, 26, 98.

<sup>20</sup> ANS, 17G573, 'Les partis politiques en Guinée, 1er semestre 1951'; 17G573, Gendarmerie, AOF, 'En Guinée Française', 12 Sept. 1951, #174/4; 17G573, Guinée Française, Services de Police, Conakry, 'Rapport de quinzaine du 1er au 15 octobre 1951', #1847/1019, C/PS.2; 17G573, Guinée Française, Services de Police, 'Revue trimestrielle, 3ème trimestre 1951', 24 Nov. 1951; 17G573, Comité Directeur, PDG, 'Analyse de la situation politique en Afrique Noire et des méthodes du RDA en vue de

While RDA branches eventually were established in most of the French West and Equatorial African territories, the extent to which party structures actually penetrated to the grassroots varied considerably from one territory to another. In Guinea, where the party was solidly rooted, the most basic party cells were village and neighborhood committees.<sup>21</sup> Above these were canton committees, which had authority over all the villages of the canton. Above the canton committees were RDA subsections, established at the circle or subdivision level and incorporating all the base-level committees of the region. At the territorial level, the subsections were grouped together as the Guinean branch of the RDA. At the head of the territorial branch were the board of directors and executive committee, the supreme organs of the branch.<sup>22</sup> The strength of this structure at the grassroots was critical to the Guinean RDA's survival during the years of governmental repression.

Meanwhile, far from the grassroots, African politicians in Paris sought to strengthen their precarious position through strategic political alliances. Faced with the hostility of the other metropolitan parties, the RDA quickly formed a parliamentary association with the PCF, then part of the French governing coalition. RDA deputies in the French National Assembly worked closely with their PCF counterparts to promote social, economic and political reforms beneficial to their African constituents.<sup>23</sup> In May 1947, however, the communist ministers were dismissed from the French government, and the PCF embarked on a campaign of strong and systematic opposition. The government cracked down hard, brutally suppressing communist-led strikes with the police, army and national guard.<sup>24</sup> The policy of repression in France was mirrored in sub-Saharan Africa, where colonial authorities clamped down on the RDA, encouraged its break with the PCF, and instigated a split in the CGT. Within seven months of the RDA's founding, the PCF had been ousted from power. Thus, almost from the beginning, the RDA was linked to a much-maligned opposition party, rather than a member of the ruling coalition. Henceforth, those associated with the PCF were deemed to be 'anti-French'.<sup>25</sup> In the late 1940s, as local activists established RDA branches in the territories of French West and Equatorial Africa, and the United Nations trusts of Togo and Cameroon, they were faced with official opposition on every front.

#### COLD WAR IN GUINEA: GOVERNMENT REPRESSION OF THE RDA

As a result of its close parliamentary alliance with the PCF and its links to communist-affiliated CGT unions and GECs, the RDA rapidly fell victim

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dégager un programme d'action', c. 14 Jan. 1952; Kéïta, *PDG*, 1, 241-2; Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, 26, 98.

<sup>21</sup> Morgenthau, *Political Parties*. See also ANS, 17G573, Gouverneur, Guinée Française, Conakry, à Haut Commissaire, Dakar, 7 Oct. 1952, #444/APA.

<sup>22</sup> ANS, 17G573, Gendarmerie, 'En Guinée Française', 12 Sept. 1951; 17G573, Police, 'Rapport de quinzaine du 1er au 15 octobre 1951'; Kéïta, *PDG*, 1, 194-6, 241-2; 11, 179.

<sup>23</sup> Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, 26-7, 88-90.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* 59; Costigliola, *France and the United States*, 53, 59-60, 64-7; Wall, *United States*, 68-9, 85-6, 93; Hitchcock, *France Restored*, 72-3; Mortimer, *France and the Africans*, 117-18; Young, *France*, 146-7.

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Mamadou Bela Doumbouya, 26 Jan. 1991; Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, 59.



to the postwar anti-communist fervor. In the overseas territories, the French government embarked on an all-out battle against the Left. Between 1947 and 1951, the official policy towards the RDA in all the African territories was repression. Unofficially, the period of repression continued through 1955.<sup>26</sup> During this period, RDA movements in Guinea were carefully monitored by the police. The party's organizational efforts were hampered by its inability to obtain meeting halls, a result of government pressure on private landlords and those who controlled public spaces.<sup>27</sup> The colonial administration also took action against party newspapers, preventing their publication and burdening them with lawsuits and punitive damages that broke their budgets.<sup>28</sup> Arrests and imprisonment on trumped-up charges, and suspension, dismissal or transfer from their jobs were practices commonly employed against RDA members.<sup>29</sup> With few private-sector opportunities, most of Guinea's Western-educated elites worked in government service – notably as clerks, teachers and medical personnel. It was from these groups that much of the RDA leadership was drawn. Thus, the most effective weapon against the party was the 'arbitrary transfer' of civil servants to remote areas far from their organizing bases. Some were sent to other territories. Most were sent to regions where their mother-tongue was not spoken – further impeding their ability to mobilize the local population.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Mamadou Bela Doumbouya, 26 Jan. 1991; CAOM, Carton 2143, dos. 8, 'Informations politiques et sociales... La situation politique en Guinée Française', *Interafrique Presse*, c. Oct. 1955; CRDA, Sékou Touré, Dakar, à Ministre, FOM, Paris, 6 Oct. 1955, in *PDG-RDA, Parti Démocratique de Guinée, 1947-1959: activités - répression - élections*; Bureau Exécutif, PDG, Conakry, aux S/Sections et Comités du RDA, 6 Oct. 1955, in *PDG-RDA*; Sékou Touré, Dakar, à Haut Commissaire, Dakar, 7 Oct. 1955, in *PDG-RDA*; Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, 60-1, 63, 90-4, 97, 100-1, 106; Kéïta, *PDG*, 1, 233, 298-301.

<sup>27</sup> ANS, 17G271, Guinée Française, Services de Police, 'Renseignements A/S activités du RDA', 23 June 1949, #579, C/PS; 17G573, Gouvernement Général, AOF, Cabinet, Bureau Technique de Liaison et de Coordination, 'Note de Renseignements *Objet*: activité de la sous-section RDA de Kankan', 25 Nov. 1949, #738, CAB/LC/DK.

<sup>28</sup> ANS, 17G573, Guinée Française, Services de Police, Conakry, 'Renseignements A/S meeting RDA', 29 Apr. 1949, #387, C/PS; 17G573, Guinée Française, Services de Police, 'Renseignements A/S activités Traoré Mamadou, dit "Ray Autra" et RDA', 29 Aug. 1949, #776, C/PS; 17G573, Guinée Française, Services de Police, Conakry, 'Renseignements A/S réunion publique organisée par le RDA', 4 Oct. 1949, #1055, C/PS; 17G573, Guinée Française, Services de Police, 'Renseignements A/S condamnation Traoré Mamadou dit Ray Autra et Cissé Ibrahima', 31 Mar. 1950 #289/161, C/PS; 17G573, 'La semaine politique et sociale en Guinée', extrait du rapport hebdomadaire, 13-20 Nov. 1950; 17G573, 'La semaine politique et sociale en Guinée', extrait du rapport hebdomadaire, 20-7 Nov. 1950.

<sup>29</sup> ANS, 17G573, 'Rapport général d'activité 1947-1950', présenté par Mamadou Madéira Kéïta, Secrétaire Général du PDG, au Premier Congrès Territorial du Parti Démocratique de Guinée (Section Guinéenne du Rassemblement Démocratique Africain), Conakry, 15-18 Oct. 1950; 17G573, Karamoko Diafodé Kéïta, Prison Civile, Kankan, à Groupe Parlementaire RDA, Paris, 3 Jan. 1951.

<sup>30</sup> Interviews in Conakry with: Mamadou Bela Doumbouya, 26 Jan. 1991; Léon Maka, 20 Feb. 1991; Mira Baldé (Mme. Maka), 25 Feb. 1991; Joseph Montlouis, 28 Feb. and 3 Mar. 1991. ANS, 17G573, Guinée Française, Services de Police, 'Renseignements A/S activités RDA', 19 May 1949, #470, C/PS; 17G573, Guinée Française, Services de Police, Kankan, 'Compte-rendu de la réunion publique organisée par la Sous-Section du

Fear of reprisals took a heavy toll on the RDA. By the end of 1949, the RDA's strength was depleted, at both the grassroots and leadership levels. Thousands of militants had abandoned the party as a result of government pressure, personal ambition or economic distress. Most of the party's subsections had disintegrated. Its financial situation was critical. The treasury had been exhausted, but the campaign to renew membership cards was halted due to the transfer of large numbers of RDA militants. Cadres who remained loyal to the RDA were forced to operate clandestinely.<sup>31</sup> One of the most serious blows to the RDA was the resignation of the regional and ethnic associations, which represented a large proportion of the party's constituents. The associations generally were led by civil servants and chiefs who, as state employees, were particularly vulnerable to administrative coercion. Specifically, they were under immense pressure from Governor Roland Pr e, an anti-RDA hardliner. Thus, it was under duress that the regional and ethnic associations first withdrew their representatives from the board of directors, then resigned from the RDA altogether. In less than one year, most of the regional and ethnic associations that had helped to found the Guinean RDA had divorced themselves from it, shutting down a number of regional subsections and taking with them the bulk of the RDA membership. Even more devastating, they allied themselves with the administration in an all-out attack on the RDA.<sup>32</sup>

#### DIVORCE FROM THE PCF: THE RDA LEADERSHIP MOVES RIGHT

Government repression was not the only factor in the RDA's decline. Internal divisions also took their toll, as conservatives and Leftists fought for control of the party's agenda. The primary point of dissension was the relationship between the RDA and the PCF. Government repression of the RDA had been justified largely by the latter's communist affiliations. In

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RDA de Kankan, le 26 janvier 1950', 27 Jan. 1950; 17G573, Guin e Fran aise, Services de Police, 'Renseignements A/S mutations   Youkounkoun de Traor  Mamady', 2 June 1950, #571/291, C/PS/BM; 17G573, Guin e Fran aise, Services de Police, 'Renseignements A/S Baba Camara RDA', 31 July 1950, #912/511, C/PS.2; 17G573, ' volution et activit  des partis politiques et aper u des principaux  v nements politiques en 1950'; 17G573, Gouverneur, Conakry,   Haut Commissaire, Dakar, 7 Oct. 1952.

<sup>31</sup> ANS, 17G573, Guin e Fran aise, Services de Police, 'Renseignements A/S activit s RDA', 1 June 1949, #517, C/PS; 17G573, Gouvernement G n ral, AOF, Cabinet, Bureau Technique de Liaison et de Coordination, 'Note de renseignements *Objet*: activit  politique et sociale en Guin e pendant le mois de d cembre 1949', 15 Jan. 1950, #141, CAB/LC/DK; 17G573, Guin e Fran aise, Services de Police, 'Renseignements A/S activit s RDA', 12 Feb. 1950, #149/76, C/PS.2; 17G573, ' volution et activit  des partis politiques ... en 1950'; K ita, *PDG*, 1, 208, 223.

<sup>32</sup> ANS, 17G573, Guin e Fran aise, Services de Police, Kissidougou, 'Renseignements *Objet*: activit  du RDA', 15 Sept. 1948; 17G573, Guin e Fran aise, Services de Police, 'Renseignements A/S Assembl e G n rale, Union du Mand , Section de Kankan', 23 Sept. 1948, #KE/1018/12; 17G573, Guin e Fran aise, Chef, Service de la S ret , Conakry,   Inspecteur G n ral, S ret  en AOF, Dakar, 5 Nov. 1948, #11762/64 PS; 17G573, Guin e Fran aise, Services de Police, Kankan, 'Compte-rendu A/S r union publique organis e par s/section RDA de Kankan', 11 Sept. 1950, #208 C; AG, 1E42, Guin e Fran aise, 'Note de renseignement: AOF, les  tablissements KABA KOUROU   Kankan, liaison avec l' tranger', 19 Oct. 1949, #776; K ita, *PDG*, 1, 209-10.

1950, after three years of official harassment, some party leaders argued that the RDA-PCF alliance had lost its utility. In the interests of survival, the RDA needed to be pragmatic. By divorcing itself from the PCF, the RDA would destroy the administration's main pretext for acting against it. Moreover, it would be more useful for the RDA to affiliate with one of the governing parties. In terms of programmatic benefits, affiliation with the opposition was pointless. The RDA's interterritorial president, Ivory Coast Deputy Félix Houphouët-Boigny, was the primary proponent of this view. The strongest voice of opposition came from the interterritorial secretary-general, Gabriel d'Arboussier. Houphouët-Boigny's position had been deeply influenced by the severe repression of the RDA in the Ivory Coast. In 1947, the French overseas minister, Paul Coste-Floret, had championed a strong anti-RDA policy intended to fight 'communism'. He designated 'tough' men to head the administrations in various African territories. In February 1948, he informed the newly appointed governor of the Ivory Coast, 'You are going there to suppress the RDA'.<sup>33</sup> Between 1947 and 1950, hundreds of RDA cadres and some of the leadership were injured or killed by the colonial government and its African collaborators. Thousands more were imprisoned.<sup>34</sup> According to Guinean RDA activist Bocar Biro Barry, the interterritorial president wished to sever ties with the PCF before all the RDA cadres in French West Africa were eliminated.<sup>35</sup>

While Houphouët-Boigny clearly was concerned about the party's survival, his position was also influenced by the class base of the Ivorian RDA. In contrast to Guinea, where the RDA was led by civil servants and trade unionists, the Ivorian RDA was dominated by African planters and chiefs – powerful groups with overlapping memberships. Discriminatory policies in favor of French planters had prompted African cocoa and coffee producers to form the Syndicat Agricole Africain (SAA) in 1944. The SAA, in turn, served as the backbone of the Parti Démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire, the Ivorian branch of the RDA. Houphouët-Boigny, a chief, planter and Western-educated African doctor, was president of both bodies – as well as president of the interterritorial RDA.<sup>36</sup> With strong links to the colonial administration, and dependent upon it for the maintenance of their privileges, African chiefs and planters were eager to find common ground with the government. Initially, Houphouët-Boigny's pleas for a break with the PCF fell on deaf ears. At the second interterritorial congress of the RDA, held in February 1949, the majority of territorial representatives rejected a motion to disaffiliate from the PCF.<sup>37</sup> However, in 1950, the conflict between the Houphouët and d'Arboussier factions intensified, ultimately involving maneuvers of dubious legitimacy. According to RDA statutes, parliamentary representatives were subordinate to the RDA coordinating committee, which directed the movement. The head of the coordinating committee was the

<sup>33</sup> Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, 27, 90–1 (quote), 97–8; Kéïta, *PDG*, 1, 127, 232, 234, 237; interview with Mamadou Bela Doumbouya, 26 Jan. 1991; AG, 1E41, Police, 'Réunion publique du RDA', 10 Apr. 1952.

<sup>34</sup> Aristide R. Zolberg, *One-Party Government in the Ivory Coast* (Princeton, 1964), 131–9; Chaffard, *Carnets secrets*, 1, 105–21; Milcent, *AOF entre en scène*, 49–52; Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, 97, 188–202.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Bocar Biro Barry, Conakry, 21 Jan. 1991.

<sup>36</sup> Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, 166–77. <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* 98; Kéïta, *PDG*, 1, 234.

party's secretary-general, Gabriel d'Arboussier. In June 1950, the RDA parliamentarians, led by Houphouët-Boigny, pressured d'Arboussier into resigning from his position.<sup>38</sup> With d'Arboussier silenced, RDA parliamentarians under Houphouët-Boigny's leadership were able to carry out their own agenda. On 18 October 1950, they severed all ties to the PCF and began to forge an alliance with the ruling coalition. The altered situation resulted in new language and policies, as the RDA prepared to collaborate with – rather than oppose – the French government.<sup>39</sup>

The parliamentarians' unilateral action caused serious division within the ranks. Because the coordinating committee alone had the power to take such action, and because they had failed to consult with RDA structures on the ground, the parliamentarians had violated party statutes. At the grassroots, there were strong feelings of confusion and betrayal. The Guinean RDA, which was concluding its second party congress on the day the parliamentarians announced the rupture, was in turmoil. Many regional leaders and local activists sharply disagreed with the parliamentarians' decision. The distinction between the parliamentarians' vote for disaffiliation and grassroots sentiment was not lost on the colonial administration. A state security official noted that local militants questioned the wisdom of the parliamentarians' action. In nearly all the territories, grassroots activists 'have kept their old faith', rendering the territories 'fertile ground for communist infiltration', he wrote. Local RDA activists were not prepared to declare common cause with their former political adversaries, and 'Houphouët will have a hard time convincing them', he concluded. The official was certain that in Guinea, Sékou Touré, Madéira Kéïta and Ray Autra would follow d'Arboussier, rather than Houphouët-Boigny. Perhaps they would even separate from the RDA and establish an African communist party. If they did so, they would find willing cadres, he claimed: 'They only will have to convince the crowds, and we have said frequently enough that a portion of African opinion is not *a priori* hostile to communist propaganda'.<sup>40</sup>

#### THE PERSISTENCE OF THE GUINEAN LEFT: REBUILDING THE MASS BASE

Even as the interterritorial RDA moved to the Right, Left-wing politics continued in Guinea, particularly at the grassroots. During the early 1950s, in the face of relentless government repression and disenchantment with interterritorial leaders, the Guinean RDA painstakingly rebuilt its mass base. After its second party congress, the Guinean RDA concentrated on

<sup>38</sup> Milcent, *AOF entre en scène*, 78–87; Mortimer, *France and the Africans*, 137, 153–4, 156, 177–8, 199; Zolberg, *One-Party Government*, 157; Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, 98.

As 'the supreme directing organ' of the RDA, the coordinating committee was superior in authority to the parliamentarians' *ad hoc* group. Thus, all binding decisions had to be approved by it. See the political resolution of the 1949 RDA Congress in Abidjan, quoted in Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, 98.

<sup>39</sup> ANS, 17G573, Police, Conakry, 'Rapport hebdomadaire ... du 23 au 30 septembre 1951, ... du 1er au 7 octobre 1951'; Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, 98–9, 99 n. 1; Kéïta, *PDG*, 1, 23–6.

<sup>40</sup> ANS, 21G13, Sûreté, 'État d'esprit de la population', 1–15 Dec. 1950. Kéïta, *PDG*, 1, 237–8; Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, 99.

reconstituting its devastated local structures. RDA activity in both the urban and rural areas escalated markedly in 1951. In his semi-annual report, the governor reported that new neighborhood committees had been established in the capital city. In the rural areas, village and canton committees had been formed, exercising a significant influence over the local populations. In October 1951, the police confirmed that 'the Party appears to be organizing itself on a solid basis: village committees, canton committees, etc.' The following month, the police remarked that the RDA was 'organizing methodically, creating branches and subsections in the bush, in the image of communist cells'.<sup>41</sup> In its effort to establish a stronger base in rural areas, home to 95 per cent of the population, the RDA increasingly abandoned the anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist terminology associated with the GECs and the CGT. Instead, organizers increasingly referred to exploitation by local chiefs and made appeals to Muslim tradition.<sup>42</sup>

The Guinean RDA's ultimate triumph was linked to the success of the committee structure, which permitted the party to address local problems and adapt to local realities while carrying out territorial and interterritorial programs. Village and neighborhood committees focused primarily on issues of grassroots concern – the building and maintenance of roads, schools and clinics; and opposition to forced labor and crop requisitions, abuses by the chiefs and excessive taxation.<sup>43</sup> Regular meetings at all levels were encouraged to ensure the rapid transmission of information and concerns – from top to bottom and bottom to top.<sup>44</sup> For example, the Guinean RDA's secretary-general reminded members of the N'Zérékoré subsection that its bureau should meet at least every two weeks, and whenever else deemed necessary. All decisions should be made democratically, after serious and frank discussion, at meetings of the subsection's bureau and in general assemblies of party members.<sup>45</sup> Support for the RDA spread rapidly through the Forest Region, where African traders and migrant laborers carried the message from Upper-Guinea and the Ivory Coast.<sup>46</sup> In early 1951, the governor reported that the RDA message had infiltrated into most

<sup>41</sup> ANS, 17G573, 'Les partis politiques en Guinée, 1er semestre 1951'; 17G573, Gendarmerie, 'En Guinée Française', 12 Sept. 1951; 17G573, Police, 'Rapport de quinzaine du 1er au 15 octobre 1951'; 17G573, Police, 'Revue trimestrielle, 3ème trimestre', 24 Nov. 1951; 17G573, PDG, 'Analyse de la situation politique', c. 14 Jan. 1952; Kéïta, *PDG*, 1, 238, 241–2; Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, 26, 98.

<sup>42</sup> Kéïta, *PDG*, 1, 240; Suret-Canale, *République de Guinée*, 146; Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, 231; Schmidt, 'Top down or bottom up?' 993–5.

<sup>43</sup> ANS, 17G573, PDG, 'Analyse de la situation politique', c. 14 Jan. 1952; 17G573, Guinée Française, Services de Police, 'Renseignements *Objet*: Section RDA du Kankan', 21 Oct. 1954, #2842/1090, C/PS.2; Jean Suret-Canale, 'La fin de la chefferie en Guinée', *Journal of African History*, 7 (1966), 481; Kéïta, *PDG*, 1, 242.

<sup>44</sup> ANS, 17G586, Guinée Française, Services de Police, Kankan, 'Renseignements A/S entretien à Kankan de Sékou Touré (Sily) avec Magassouba Moriba et Touré Sékou (Chavanel) sur cas Lamine Kaba et instructions sur organisation intérieure sections RDA', 17 Nov. 1954, #2955/1158, C/PS.2; Kéïta, *PDG*, 1, 242.

<sup>45</sup> CRDA, Paris, Madéira Kéïta, 'Instructions pour les camarades de N'Zérékoré', Conakry, 9 Dec. 1949, in *PDG-RDA*.

<sup>46</sup> ANS, 17G573, Guinée Française, Services de Police, 'Renseignements A/S plan de travail élaboré par le Comité Directeur de la Section Guinéenne du RDA', 4 Apr. 1950, #315/173, C/PS/BM; Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, 231.

N'Zérékoré cantons. In September, the military police reported that RDA activists were conducting 'a strong activity in all the villages of the circle'. In villages with more than ten RDA members, committees had been established and officers elected. The local RDA committees had begun to regulate all village disputes, forming a veritable shadow government. Colonial officials charged that RDA committees were usurping the functions of the chiefs, who were 'complaining of having ... difficulties in exercising their functions'. In October 1951, the police reported that N'Zérékoré militants, especially PTT workers, were assuming such titles as 'circle commandant', 'canton chief', 'village chief' and 'block chief'. The police official surmised that the RDA was creating these alternative posts in 'preparation for pre-liberation'.<sup>47</sup> Alarmed, the high commissioner's office charged that the Guinean RDA's formation of a shadow government was tantamount to the assumption of 'combat formation'. Guinea in 1951 resembled the Ivory Coast in 1950, the official warned, implying that similar coercive measures might be necessary.<sup>48</sup>

In exchange for its divorce from the PCF, the interterritorial RDA had expected an end to government repression. However, attempts to crush the movement continued unabated. In Guinea, colonial officials were certain that communist influence and sympathies remained strong at the grass-roots – and reacted accordingly.<sup>49</sup> Circle commandants threatened RDA subsections with dissolution unless they submitted to a lengthy set of legal formalities. Declaring that 'the commandant' did not want the RDA in his circle, canton chiefs prohibited RDA leaders from entering their areas and their subjects from joining the movement. Civil servants who had supported RDA electoral lists in the June 1951 legislative elections were transferred to new locations.<sup>50</sup> Once again, government repression took a heavy toll on RDA membership throughout the territory. September 1951 brought the resignation of Ibrahima Cissé, head of the Siguiiri subsection in Upper-Guinea. In the remote Futa subdivision of Youkounkoun, 12 RDA members also severed ties to the party. In October, the Dalaba subsection (Futa Jallon) collectively resigned. In N'Zérékoré circle (Forest Region), some 100 RDA members surrendered their membership cards to the circle commandant, publicly demonstrating their break with the party.<sup>51</sup> In November,

<sup>47</sup> ANS, 17G573, 'Les partis politiques en Guinée, 1er semestre 1951'; 17G573, Gendarmerie, 'En Guinée Française', 12 Sept. 1951; 17G573, Guinée Française, Services de Police, 'Renseignements A/S activité du RDA à N'Zérékoré', 10 Oct. 1951, #1820/1003, C/PS.2.

<sup>48</sup> ANS, 17G573, Direction Générale de l'Intérieur, Service des Affaires Politiques, Dakar, à Gouverneur, Guinée Française, Conakry, 19 Oct. 1951, #906, INT/AP.2.

<sup>49</sup> ANS, 21G13, Sûreté, 'État d'esprit de la population', 1–15 Dec. 1950; 17G573, Guinée Française, Services de Police, 6 Aug. 1951; 17G573, Guinée Française, Services de Police, Conakry, 'Rapport hebdomadaire, semaine du 27 août au 2 septembre 1951', #1435/745, C/PS.2; 17G573, Gouverneur, Conakry, à Haut Commissaire, Dakar, 7 Oct. 1952.

<sup>50</sup> ANS, 17G573, PDG, Comité Directeur, Conakry, 'Rapport à la Délégation du Comité de Coordination et Groupe Parlementaire RDA, Assemblée Nationale, Paris', 14 Jan. 1952, #1.

<sup>51</sup> ANS, 17G573, Police, 'Activités RDA', 1 June 1949; 17G573, Guinée Française, Services de Police, Conakry, 'Rapport hebdomadaire, semaine du 17 au 23 septembre 1951', #1676/898, C/PS.2; 17G573, Guinée Française, Services de Police,

48 members of the Guéckédou subsection (Forest Region) resigned. One resignation letter accused the party of 'being nothing but an auxiliary of this Grand Communism of MOSCOW'.<sup>52</sup>

THE DECISION TO COLLABORATE AND THE  
GRASSROOTS CHALLENGE

The government claimed that the rash of resignations from the RDA demonstrated the rural population's deeply anti-communist, generally conservative, nature. While this characterization may have been apt in some instances, intimidation rather than ideological orientation was responsible for many of the abdications. Moreover, at least some of the grassroots disenchantment with the RDA was due to its new collaborationist relationship with the government and its abandonment of its erstwhile allies on the Left. The interterritorial leaders' decision to collaborate led to a new grassroots challenge. Important segments of the Guinean RDA had opposed the break with the PCF. On 21 October 1950, a few days after the rupture, a group of party stalwarts met at the Conakry home of Lamine Touré. Sékou Touré took the floor. According to the police, who had infiltrated the meeting, Sékou Touré 'forcefully opposed the principle of disaffiliation advocated in Deputy Houphouët's last correspondence'. Most worrisome, the police observed, 'the other members of the local board of directors of the RDA declared themselves to be of the same opinion as Sékou Touré'. Eventually, the Guinean RDA resolved to send a PCF-funded delegation to Paris to express 'the discontent of the people of Guinea' with the new political line.<sup>53</sup>

The cleavage that emerged in October 1950 continued to widen. An August 1951 police report referred to the deepening split between the RDA's interterritorial and territorial leaderships. The report indicated that none of Guinea's RDA leaders proclaimed 'We follow Houphouët'. Although they continued to invoke the RDA president's name and publicly declare allegiance to his cause, they had not halted the stream of communist tracts and brochures flowing into the country, and they continued to broadcast their attachment to the CGT and the PCF. The police were even less certain that the new approach would gain mass support.<sup>54</sup> Each month, large

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'Renseignements A/S Parti Démocratique Guinéen (RDA)', 20 Sept. 1951, #1649/881, C/PS.2; 17G573, Guinée Française, Services de Police, 'Renseignements A/S les démissions du RDA', 3 Oct. 1951, #1747/954, C/PS.2; 17G573, Guinée Française, Services de Police, 'Renseignements A/S propagande RDA à N'Zérékoré', 24 Oct. 1951, #1934/1071, C/PS.2; 17G573, Gouverneur, Guinée Française, Conakry, à Haut Commissaire, Dakar, 21 Dec. 1951, #503/APA.

<sup>52</sup> AG, 1E42, Guinée Française, Services de Police, 'Renseignements A/S le RDA à Guéckédou', 2 Nov. 1951, #1994/1109/C/PS.2.

<sup>53</sup> ANS, 17G573, Guinée Française, Services de Police, 'Renseignements A/S position de Sékou Touré face au "désapparement du RDA"', 24 Oct. 1950, #1249/722, C/PS.2; AG, 1E41, Guinée Française, Services de Police, 'Renseignements A/S autour des activités politiques actuelles', 27 June 1951, #934/432/C/PS.

<sup>54</sup> ANS, 17G573, Guinée Française, Services de Police, 6 Aug. 1951; AG, 1E41, Guinée Française, Services de Police, 'Renseignements A/S politique actuelle du RDA', 19 Oct. 1951, #1890/1048/C/PS.2; 1E41, Guinée Française, Services de Police, 'Renseignements A/S attitude Comité Directeur du RDA locale', 2 Nov. 1951, #1999/C/PS.2.

numbers of RDA militants continued to receive newspapers, brochures and other publications of the PCF and the communist-linked CGT, World Federation of Trade Unions, and World Peace Council. These were rapidly diffused throughout the territory. Whatever the position of the interterritorial RDA, the police reported, the Guinean branch 'is firmly adhering to the line of the Communist Party'.<sup>55</sup> Moricandian Savané, a member of the Guinean RDA's board of directors and secretary-general of the Union des Jeunesses Guinéennes, was among those who had sharply opposed disaffiliation. In a letter intercepted by the police, Savané wrote to Léon Maka: 'The attitude of our RDA parliamentarians is to be deplored. Houphouët and [Mamadou] Konaté [French Soudan] and all the others have betrayed the RDA. They have betrayed the will of the African masses'. Urging adherence to the RDA's statutes, Savané pressed the coordinating committee to define the party's political line, reclaiming the powers usurped by RDA parliamentarians.<sup>56</sup>

Under growing pressure from both the interterritorial RDA and the colonial administration, the Guinean RDA rejected Savané's plea and instead bowed to the Houphouët line. On 15 October 1951, when the territorial board of directors met to clarify its position, Sékou Touré made an unanticipated about-face. Almost one year to the day that he had denounced disaffiliation and charged that no such step could be taken without the approval of the territorial boards, he altered his stance. Sékou Touré informed the Guinean RDA leaders that the rupture with the PCF was real – not simply a tactical maneuver to trick the administration, as had commonly been assumed. Furthermore, Touré proclaimed, Houphouët-Boigny had not betrayed the principles of the 1946 Bamako Congress, as progressives had charged. Therefore, the Guinean RDA should follow his lead. The party's goals remained the same; only the means of achieving them had changed. After the speech, the Guinean board of directors voted. The pro-Houphouët faction, led by Guinean general councillor Amara Soumah, won. While the majority of the branch's board of directors now supported Houphouët's position, a vocal minority continued to oppose it.<sup>57</sup> If the territorial board of directors' new orientation caused dissension within

<sup>55</sup> ANS, 17G573, Guinée Française, Administrateur, Cercle de Labé, à Gouverneur, Conakry, 9 Oct. 1950, #167 C; 17G573, Guinée Française, Services de Police, 'Renseignements A/S activité politique', 18 July 1951, #1040/490, C/PS.2; 17G573, Police, 'Rapport hebdomadaire ... du 27 août au 2 septembre 1951'; 17G573, Police, Conakry, 'Rapport hebdomadaire ... du 23 au 30 septembre 1951, ... du 1er au 7 octobre 1951'; 17G573, Guinée Française, Services de Police, Conakry, 'Rapport hebdomadaire, semaine du 29 octobre au 4 novembre 1951', #2008/1118, C/PS.2; 17G573, Haut Commissaire, Dakar, à Ministre, FOM, Paris, 28 Apr. 1952, #471, INT/AP.2; CRDA, Ministre, FOM, Paris, à Haut Commissaire, Dakar, 21 Mar. 1952.

<sup>56</sup> ANS, 17G573, 'Les partis politiques en Guinée, 1er semestre 1951'; 17G573, Guinée Française, Services de Police, 'Renseignements A/S correspondance RDA', 27 Sept. 1951.

<sup>57</sup> ANS, 17G573, Guinée Française, Services de Police, 16 Oct. 1951, #1863, C/PS.2; 17G573, Guinée Française, Services de Police, Conakry, 'Rapport hebdomadaire, semaine du 15 au 21 octobre 1951', #1907/1053, C/PS.2; 17G573, Police, 'Rapport hebdomadaire ... du 29 octobre au 4 novembre 1951'; 17G573, 'Les partis politiques en Guinée, 1er semestre 1951'. See also 17G573, Haut Commissaire, Dakar, à Ministre, FOM, Paris, 28 Apr. 1952; Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, 98.



the Guinean RDA, it was welcomed by Houphouët-Boigny and his supporters. The day after the vote, Sékou Touré received a letter from the interterritorial president, indicating that he was sending 50,000 francs to the Guinean RDA.<sup>58</sup> Houphouët-Boigny's mission seemed to have been accomplished. He had brought back into line one of the most recalcitrant branches of the RDA – at least in public, at the territorial leadership level.

By late 1951, both Sékou Touré and Madéira Kéïta had publicly fallen into line behind Houphouët-Boigny. However, their private positions remained the subject of official debate. Madéira Kéïta, the police noted, was in an extremely precarious financial situation. He had been suspended from his job and had to contend with serious domestic tensions as a result. He had been forced to go along with the board's majority, despite his own beliefs. The police warned that Kéïta's and Touré's acquiescence, achieved only under duress, was merely a temporary tactical maneuver.<sup>59</sup> Police suspicions were deepened by Sékou Touré's continued involvement in the PCF-linked French West African trade union movement. Since the departure of the communists from the French government in 1947, the government's trade union policy had been marked by staunch anti-communism in both France and its overseas territories. The French government had been implicated in the secession of the anti-communist Force Ouvrière from the CGT in 1948. The following year, in an attempt to undermine the communist-linked World Federation of Trade Unions, with which the CGT was affiliated, the French government had helped to establish the rabidly anti-communist International Confederation of Free Trade Unions.<sup>60</sup> Fearful of communist sway over the trade union movement, colonial security forces kept close tabs on Sékou Touré and other CGT activists. Official reports referred to Touré as a 'notorious marxist', 'fierce partisan of the Third International' and 'star' of the French West African CGT. As secretary-general of Guinea's powerful CGT unions, Sékou Touré had achieved international prominence. He was known to have relationships with 'eminent' people in Paris and 'beyond the iron curtain'. In 1950, he had become a councillor of the Warsaw-based World Peace Council. The following year, his trade union and political activities had taken him to Berlin and Prague, as well as Warsaw.<sup>61</sup>

Aware of Sékou Touré's nationalist inclinations – and his personal political ambitions – the French government hoped to use Sékou Touré as a wedge to break apart the African trade union movement, severing it from its

<sup>58</sup> ANS, 17G573, Police, 'Rapport hebdomadaire ... du 15 au 21 octobre 1951'.

<sup>59</sup> ANS, 17G573, 'Les partis politiques en Guinée, 1er semestre 1951'; 17G573, Police, 'Rapport de quinzaine du 1er au 15 octobre 1951'; 17G573, Police, 'Rapport hebdomadaire ... du 29 octobre au 4 novembre 1951'. See also 17G573, Haut Commissaire, Dakar, à Ministre, FOM, Paris, 28 Apr. 1952.

<sup>60</sup> Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society*, 285, 409; Kéïta, *PDG*, 1, 257; Mortimer, *France and the Africans*, 180.

<sup>61</sup> ANS, 21G13, Sûreté, 'Etat d'esprit de la population', 1–15 Dec. 1950; 17G573, Haut Commissaire, Dakar, à Ministre, FOM, Paris, 28 Apr. 1952; CRDA, Ministre, FOM, Paris, à Haut Commissaire, Dakar, 21 Mar. 1952; AG, 1E41, Guinée Française, Services de Police, 'Fiche de renseignements biographiques relative à M. Sékou Touré', 2 Jan. 1956; Mortimer, *France and the Africans*, 200; Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society*, 409.

communist underpinnings. Police spies had noted that Sékou Touré was using his trade union base as a launching pad for political leadership. They had also reported on tensions between the French and African CGT leadership. African labor leaders were frustrated by the refusal of their metropolitan counterparts to give primacy to African concerns and to allow them a voice in policy-making. Given Sékou Touré's political ambitions and his recent – albeit reluctant – adherence to the Houphouët line, the government was convinced that he could be persuaded to lead an African secession from the CGT.<sup>62</sup> The schism was expected to occur on 22–27 October 1951, during the French West African CGT conference in Bamako. At that meeting, Sékou Touré was supposed to mount a coup, establishing an African trade union federation independent of the French communist-linked CGT. However, the Guinean leader made no such move, and the rupture did not occur. In a letter to his superior in Paris, the French West African high commissioner expressed disappointment, noting that he had 'nursed the hope for a moment that [Sékou Touré] would take the lead in a dissident movement'.<sup>63</sup> If police records are accurate, Sékou Touré's delinquency was more than a disappointment. It was a betrayal. Touré had actually accepted government money as payment for provoking a split within the CGT through the formation of an independent African federation. Not only had he failed to lead a dissident faction into secession, he had channeled the bribe money into his political organization, the Guinean branch of the RDA.<sup>64</sup>

Sékou Touré was taken to task for his inaction, not only by the government, but by the RDA's interterritorial president, Félix Houphouët-Boigny. After the Bamako conference, Houphouët-Boigny ordered Touré to Abidjan for a dressing-down. Many of the delegates to the conference were both CGT and RDA members. Most had ignored the interterritorial RDA president's orders that they break with the CGT, just as the RDA had broken with the PCF. Houphouët-Boigny was furious and held Sékou Touré accountable for their disobedience. While Houphouët-Boigny subsequently forced Ivorian RDA members to choose 'unequivocally between the CGT and the RDA, with the threat of expulsion pure and simple from the party, in the case where the choice is for the CGT', in other territories it was not so simple. Sékou Touré carefully walked a fine line, bowing to the RDA's new collaborationist agenda in his political work, but adhering to the CGT's more militant stance in his trade union activities. He simply refused to disassociate himself completely from the PCF.<sup>65</sup> For the time being, the interterritorial RDA was forced to accept this anomaly.

<sup>62</sup> Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society*, 410, 414.

<sup>63</sup> ANS, 17G573, 'Les partis politiques en Guinée, 1er semestre 1951'; 17G573, Police, 'Rapport hebdomadaire ... du 29 octobre au 4 novembre 1951'; 17G573, Haut Commissaire, Dakar, à Ministre, FOM, Paris, 28 Apr. 1952. See also Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society*, 409–10.

<sup>64</sup> Chaffard, *Carnets secrets*, II, 181; Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society*, 604 n. 29. See also Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, 243.

<sup>65</sup> AG, 1E41, Côte d'Ivoire, Services de Police, Abidjan, 'Renseignements A/S position du RDA après le Congrès Cégétiste de Bamako', 5 Nov. 1951, #5446/757/PS/BM/C; ANS, 17G573, Police, 'Rapport hebdomadaire ... du 29 octobre au 4 novembre 1951'; 17G573, Haut Commissaire, Dakar, à Ministre, FOM, Paris, 28 Apr. 1952; Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society*, 410.

While Houphouët and his backers attacked Sékou Touré from the Right, in Guinea the new line was harshly criticized from the Left. In November 1951, the police intercepted a letter from Ibrahima Diagne, head of the N'Zérékoré RDA subsection, to Madéira Kéïta, the territorial secretary-general. In the strongest terms, Diagne denounced the fact that crucial decisions had been made by the territorial board of directors in the name of the party's rank and file – without consulting the membership. He asserted that the party must convene a congress of all members – not just the board of directors – to study the new position and policies. 'One does not decide on our behalf without consulting us', he declared. 'Houphouët decided on our behalf without consulting us, and until now, we have not been informed of the real goal of this cynical decision. We demand rapid explanations'. The police were convinced that Diagne's views represented those of a large number of Guinean militants.<sup>66</sup> One week later, Morikandian Savané resigned from the RDA, announcing that he could not, in good conscience, follow the new party line. His was the first of many resignations by disillusioned Leftists. According to the police, 'the epidemic of resignations is being carried out among the notorious RDA members of Conakry and of the bush'. A teacher and a nurse at the Conakry dispensary, both members of the board of directors and, according to the police, 'communist diehards', were among the latest to resign. The police concluded that 'the Leftists of the party are pulling back, not because they are abandoning their ideal, but more because the new orientation of the RDA no longer corresponds to their ideas'.<sup>67</sup> When Sékou Touré once again urged the Guinean RDA branch to sever ties with the PCF and work with the colonial administration, he was roundly condemned by his colleagues, including Madéira Kéïta. The Guinean branch was at odds with Houphouët's new line, and Sékou Touré no longer represented his colleagues.<sup>68</sup>

The new cleavages highlighted stark differences between the experiences of the RDA leadership – especially the privileged parliamentarians – and the rank and file. Sané Moussa Diallo, an African pharmacist and member of the Guinean RDA's board of directors, was among those who opposed the Houphouët line. At a 21 November RDA meeting, Diallo criticized both Houphouët-Boigny and Sékou Touré for practicing 'ignoble maneuvers'. He referred to the widespread discontent caused by Houphouët-Boigny's about-face, blaming the interterritorial president and his supporters for the

<sup>66</sup> See, for example, ANS, 17G573, Guinée Française, Services de Police, 'Renseignements A/S Diagne Ibrahima, secrétaire de la section RDA de N'Zérékoré', 8 Nov. 1951, #2033/1137, C/PS.2; 17G573, Guinée Française, Services de Police, 'Renseignements A/S démission du RDA de Savané Morikandian', 14 Nov. 1951, #2093/1167, C/PS.2; AG, 1E41, Guinée Française, Services de Police, 'Renseignements A/S réunion RDA', 5 Dec. 1951, #2282/1293/C/PS.2; 1 E41, Guinée Française, Services de Police, 'Renseignements A/S réunion RDA', 19 Dec. 1951, #2394/1350/C/PS.2.

<sup>67</sup> ANS, 17G573, Police, 'Démission ... de Savané Morikandian', 14 Nov. 1951; 17G573, Haut Commissaire, Dakar, à Ministre, FOM, Paris, 28 Apr. 1952; AG, 1E41, Guinée Française, Services de Police, 'Renseignements A/S démissions du RDA', 4 Dec. 1951, #2261/1279/C/PS.2; 1E41, Guinée Française, Services de Police, 'Renseignements A/S lettre Bandja, Richard à Félix Houphouët (copie)', 24 June 1952, #1129/627/C/PS.2.

<sup>68</sup> AG, 1E41, Police, 'Réunion RDA', 5 Dec. 1951; 1E41, Police, 'Réunion RDA', 19 Dec. 1951.

resignation of key RDA militants. Unlike the Houphouët, the partisans of the bush are not protected by parliamentary immunity, he charged. They bear the brunt of government repression: 'These former comrades say that our leaders lack for nothing and that they are never bothered by the Administration, while, in contrast, simple militants are put in prison, suspended from their functions, dismissed from their jobs'. Such grassroots militants could never sanction collaboration with the oppressor.<sup>69</sup> Although he opposed the RDA's new orientation, Madéira Kéïta counseled private criticism – and public moderation. 'In Guinea, we don't have the financial means to detach ourselves from Houphouët' and the mainstream of the RDA, he warned. The veracity of his words was soon evident. On 30 March 1952, Guinea held elections for its Territorial Assembly (formerly, General Council). The RDA contested seats in seven circles, including Conakry, Kankan and N'Zérékoré – all RDA strongholds. Amara Soumah ran for the Conakry position, and Moussa Diakité for Kankan, while Sékou Touré hoped to represent the Forest Region. Campaign funds were severely lacking. Sékou Touré requested assistance from the Ivorian RDA branch, and from Houphouët-Boigny personally, but was met only with silence.<sup>70</sup> The elections were catastrophic for the RDA and a victory for pro-government regional and ethnic associations. Diakité lost in Kankan. In N'Zérékoré, Sékou Touré lost to the Union Forestière candidate and N'Zérékoré canton chief, Koly Kourouma. Amara Soumah, a founding member of the RDA, won overwhelmingly in Conakry. However, after his victory, he honored a pre-election pledge to the Lower-Guinea regional association, Union de la Basse-Guinée, and abruptly resigned from the RDA.<sup>71</sup>

In 1952, the RDA was in crisis, not only in Guinea, but throughout the French African territories. Madéira Kéïta and Sékou Touré, representing the Guinean RDA's board of directors, appealed to other territorial branches for cooperation. Their letter to the RDA branch in Niger was intercepted by the police. Despite recent electoral successes for the RDA in the Ivory Coast and the French Soudan, they wrote, 'a veritable malaise persists'. The

<sup>69</sup> ANS, 17G573, Police, 'Rapport hebdomadaire ... du 29 octobre au 4 novembre 1951'; AG, 1E41, Guinée Française, Services de Police, 'Renseignements A/S position de Madéira Kéïta, secrétaire général du PDG', 19 Nov. 1951, #2123/1187/C/PS.2; 1E41, Guinée Française, Services de Police, 'Renseignements A/S réunion RDA', 21 Nov. 1951, #2149/1300/C/PS.2; 1E41, Police, 'Réunion RDA', 19 Dec. 1951. For a discussion of parliamentary immunity, see Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, 78, 97, 123, 188, 190, 193, 241; Mortimer, *France and the Africans*, 146.

<sup>70</sup> AG, 1E41, Police, 'Réunion RDA', 19 Dec. 1951; ANS, 17G573, Guinée Française, Services de Police, 'Renseignements A/S activité RDA', 12 Jan. 1952, #88/51, C/PS.2; 17G573, Guinée Française, Services de Police, 'Renseignements A/S passage Député Houphouët-Boigny, Aérodrome, Conakry, le 25/2/1952', c. 26 Feb. 1952, #369/231, C/PS.2; 17G573, Haut Commissaire, Dakar, à Ministre, FOM, Paris, 28 Apr. 1952; Kéïta, *PDG*, 1, 93, 306.

<sup>71</sup> ANS, 17G573, Guinée Française, Services de Police, 'Renseignements A/S Soumah Amara, conseiller RDA', 26 Apr. 1949, #378, C/PS; 17G573, Haut Commissaire, Dakar, à Ministre, FOM, Paris, 28 Apr. 1952; AG, 1E41, Police, 'Réunion publique du RDA', 10 Apr. 1952; 1E41, Guinée Française, Services de Police, 'Renseignements A/S RDA et Montlouis, Joseph', 12 Apr. 1952, #703/405/C/PS.2; Sidiki Kobélé Kéïta, *Ahmed Sékou Touré: L'homme et son combat anti-colonial (1922-1958)* (Conakry, 1998), 113-14; Kéïta, *PDG*, 1, 306-8.

leadership was divided. For a long time, there had been no effective link between the interterritorial coordinating committee and the individual territorial branches. In spite of the RDA's decision to collaborate with the government, the state-run radio and a segment of the colonial press continued to call for repression against the party. To save the movement, the Guinean board of directors called for an emergency meeting of the coordinating committee and a profound analysis of the RDA's past errors and current political situation. After penetrating self-criticism, they concluded that the coordinating committee should devise a general line around which a minimum program could be developed.<sup>72</sup> Despite these urgent pleas, the coordinating committee would not meet for three more years. The RDA parliamentary group, with Houphouët-Boigny at its head, was in no mood to compromise. Sensing victory, the conservatives hardened their stance. In July 1952, the RDA parliamentarians who had engineered the split with the PCF ousted d'Arboussier from the RDA. The legality of this move, by a body theoretically subordinate to the coordinating committee, was highly questionable.<sup>73</sup> In October 1952, Houphouët-Boigny expelled all Ivorian RDA members who remained affiliated with – or were suspected of being affiliated with – the PCF. Meanwhile, in Guinea, Sékou Touré and Madéira Kéïta convened a public meeting during which they reiterated the official disaffiliation of the RDA from the PCF. Further, they announced their desire to collaborate with the administration in ameliorating the lives of the African population. *La Liberté*, the Guinean RDA's official organ, which had not appeared for many months due to financial difficulties, suddenly found the resources to publish a special issue on these themes.<sup>74</sup>

Once again, the situation at the top did not reflect the reality on the ground. Grassroots activists continued to oppose the collaborationist line. The Forest Region, particularly N'Zérékoré and Macenta circles, remained a hotbed of militant activity. The governor lamented that the Western-educated elites and military veterans, who constituted the local party leadership, seemed unresponsive to the ideological fluctuations of the RDA's territorial board.<sup>75</sup> The steadfastness of militants in the Forest Region was due, in part, to their strong antagonism towards government-imposed chieftaincies and their relatively egalitarian social structure, which resonated with the party program. It was also the result of the region's comparative inaccessibility from Conakry, which rendered forest activists less susceptible than others to pressures from territorial leaders in the capital.<sup>76</sup> If the local population remained skeptical two years after the RDA–PCF divorce, the administration was equally so. The governor continued to worry that the

<sup>72</sup> ANS, 17G573, Niger, Services de Police, 'Renseignements A/S copie document PDG', 3 July 1952, #530/C/355/PS.

<sup>73</sup> Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, 98; Thompson and Adloff, *French West Africa*, 90; Mortimer, *France and the Africans*, 178.

<sup>74</sup> ANS, 17G573, Gouverneur, Conakry, à Haut Commissaire, Dakar, 7 Oct. 1952. See also 17G573, Police, 'Rapport hebdomadaire ... du 27 août au 2 septembre 1951'; 17G573, Guinée Française, Services de Police, 'Renseignements A/S activités actuelles RDA et CGT', 2 Oct. 1951, #1730/940, C/PS.2; 17G573, Police, 'Activité RDA', 12 Jan. 1952.

<sup>75</sup> ANS, 17G573, Gouverneur, Conakry, à Haut Commissaire, Dakar, 7 Oct. 1952.

<sup>76</sup> Suret-Canale, 'Fin de la chefferie', 482.

leadership's public pronouncements were a ruse. 'It seems infinitely probable that the Guinean RDA actually is conducting a double cross', he fretted. He feared that while Guinean leaders had publicly supported Houphouët-Boigny, they had not burned their bridges to the PCF. The leadership's about-face was motivated not by a shift in ideology, he claimed, but rather by financial need: 'The position officially adopted by Madéira Kéïta and Sékou Touré is, without a doubt, influenced by the hope they nourish to see the President of the RDA intercede with the Administration in their favor or to give them subsidies of which they always have great need'.<sup>77</sup>

If the militancy of the Guinean populace concerned the RDA's territorial leadership, it caused even greater consternation at the interterritorial level. Houphouët-Boigny and his supporters were determined to reassert control over the Guinean RDA. To promote this objective, the interterritorial coordinating committee held its congress in Conakry from 8 to 12 July 1955. This was the first time the supreme body had met since 1948, two years before RDA parliamentarians broke with the PCF. The purpose of the congress was to elaborate upon the RDA's new policy of moderation and collaboration. The choice of Conakry as a venue was deliberate; the campaign to bring the Guinean branch back into line would be launched at the Conakry congress.<sup>78</sup> During its July 1955 congress, the coordinating committee retroactively confirmed the parliamentarians' decision to sever links with the PCF, finally rendering it binding. It resolved to exclude all dissident branches still operating with communist sympathies. While the Union Démocratique Nigérienne, Union Démocratique Sénégalaise, and Union des Populations du Cameroun were expelled from the interterritorial RDA for refusing to toe the anti-communist line, the Guinean branch was spared. In fact, it was at the Conakry congress that Sékou Touré completed his bow to the Houphouët agenda. Having belatedly endorsed the rift between the RDA and the PCF, he now proposed the long-awaited secession of African trade unions from the French CGT and the formation of a new labor federation under African control.<sup>79</sup>

The schism in the French West African CGT began to take shape in January 1956, when a number of unions broke from it to form the autonomous Confédération Générale des Travailleurs Africains (CGTA). Within months, Sékou Touré would become the CGTA's federal president. Most leaders of the CGT's French West African territorial branches remained loyal to the orthodox CGT until January 1957, when the orthodox CGT, the CGTA and a number of autonomous unions merged to form the Union

<sup>77</sup> ANS, 17G573, Gouverneur, Conakry, à Haut Commissaire, Dakar, 7 Oct. 1952.

<sup>78</sup> CRDA, Gouverneur, Guinée Française, Conakry, 'Rapport politique mensuel, juillet 1955', #435/APAS; Milcent, *AOF entre en scène*, 87-8; Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, 98, 241; Mortimer, *France and the Africans*, 156, 161, 177-8; Thompson and Adloff, *French West Africa*, 94.

<sup>79</sup> ANS, 17G573, 'Les partis politiques en Guinée, 1er semestre 1951'; 17G573, Police, Conakry, 'Rapport hebdomadaire ... du 23 au 30 septembre 1951, ... du 1er au 7 octobre 1951'; 17G573, Police, 16 Oct. 1951, #1863, C/PS.2; 17G573, Police, 'Rapport hebdomadaire ... du 15 au 21 octobre 1951'; CRDA, Gouverneur, 'Rapport politique mensuel, juillet 1955'; Thompson and Adloff, *French West Africa*, 94; Joseph, *Radical Nationalism*, 172-3, 182, 290-2; Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society*, 407-8; Morgenthau, *Political Parties*; Mortimer, *France and the Africans*.

Générale des Travailleurs d'Afrique Noire (UGTAN).<sup>80</sup> In Guinea, however, the CGT unions rapidly fell into line behind their erstwhile leader. When a Guinean branch of the CGTA was formed in May 1956, 22 of Guinea's 27 CGT unions joined, and Sékou Touré was elected secretary-general.<sup>81</sup>

#### THE REEMERGENCE OF THE GUINEAN LEFT

By the mid-1950s, Sékou Touré had abandoned his once-radical politics and was seeking accommodation with the interterritorial RDA and the colonial administration. Given the altered political climate, accommodation, rather than confrontation, now seemed a more promising method for achieving his political objectives. While their leaders at the highest echelons assumed more conservative positions, grassroots activists in Guinea continued to push the party to the Left. The party's strong organization at the base and the ability of its members to influence decisions at the top put constant pressure on party leaders. As Left and Right struggled to control the political agenda, the Guinean RDA was fraught with discord. If the period 1947–51 was characterized by government repression, the years 1951–5 were distinguished by uncertainty and malaise. The purging – or accommodation – of the radicals had not resolved the RDA's problems. The disaffiliation of the RDA from the PCF had disoriented and disillusioned many grassroots militants. Large numbers left the party in disgust. Yet, accommodation had not put an end to government repression. The colonial administration continued to support 'government parties', rig elections and systematically persecute RDA partisans. Between 1951 and 1955, the Guinean RDA won only a single electoral competition – the seat accorded to Sékou Touré in the Territorial Assembly elections of August 1953.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>80</sup> ANS, 21G215, Union des Syndicats Sénégal-Mauritanie, Confédération Générale des Travailleurs Africains (CGTA), Kaolack, 'Appel à tous les travailleurs africains', 12 Nov. 1955; 21G215, Sûreté du Sénégal, 'Renseignements sur la scission au sein de l'Union Territoriale des Syndicats CGTK Sénégal-Mauritanie', 15 Nov. 1955, #1916 C/Su; 2G55/152, Guinée Française, Gouverneur, 'Rapport politique annuel, 1955', #281/APA; 2G56/138, Guinée Française, Gouverneur, 'Rapport politique mensuel, février 1956'; 17G613, Guinée Française, Services de Police, Conakry, 'Renseignements A/S retour en Guinée des délégués à la Conférence de Cotonou', 23 Jan. 1957, #188/86, C/PS.2; Jean Meynaud and Anisse Salah Bey, *Trade Unionism in Africa: A Study of its Growth and Orientation* (London, 1967), 58–61; Milcent, *AOF entre en scène*, 133–7; Kéïta, *Ahmed Sékou Touré*, 86; Kéïta, *PDG*, II, 119, 122–4.

<sup>81</sup> ANS, 2G56/138, Guinée Française, Gouverneur, 'Rapport politique mensuel, mars 1956', 19 April 1956, #185/APA; 179K432, Abdoulaye N'Diaye, secrétaire général, CGT, Conakry, à Inspecteur Territorial du Travail, Conakry, 10 May 1956, #1/US/CGT/G; 17G271, Guinée Française, Services de Police, 'Renseignements d'activités nationalistes, *Objet*: AOF–CGTA activités de Sékou Touré', 11 May 1956, #65/68, ex./10; 179K432, Guinée Française, Inspecteur Territorial du Travail, Conakry, à Inspecteur Général du Travail, Dakar, 19 May 1956, #67T; 2G56/138, Guinée Française, Gouverneur, 'Rapport politique mensuel, mai 1956', 11 June 1956, #260/APA; Kéïta, *Ahmed Sékou Touré*, 88–9; Kéïta, *PDG*, II, 120.

<sup>82</sup> Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, 61; Kéïta, *PDG*, I, 320–1; Suret-Canale, 'Fin de la chefferie', 481.

Repression continued, in part, because the government doubted the veracity of the RDA's transformation. Colonial officials charged that public disaffiliation masked unwavering private support for the PCF. Faced with the disjuncture between the accommodation of the territorial leadership and the unyielding radicalism of grassroots militants, the government cried foul. What the government viewed as double-dealing was, in fact, a growing fissure between the leadership and the rank and file. Ironically, the chasm widened as government repression ended and Guinea was granted territorial self-government under the *loi-cadre* reforms of 1956–7. While the party's territorial leaders were eager to benefit from the career opportunities implicit in running their 'own affairs', regional and local leaders, under growing pressure from the grassroots, became more militant in their demands. While Sékou Touré's RDA government embraced a policy of accommodation with the administration, dissident elements continued to push from the Left, criticizing the new policy of 'constructive collaboration' implicit in the *loi-cadre* administration.<sup>83</sup> Meanwhile, growing numbers of trade unionists, particularly members of the railway workers' and teachers' unions, condemned the subordination of the labor movement to RDA control.<sup>84</sup> Matters came to a head in November 1957, when the RDA subsection in Mamou was expelled from the party for insubordination and 'Left deviationism'. Before its expulsion, the Mamou subsection had taken up the refrain of students, teachers and trade unionists – accusing RDA officials of styling themselves as a new colonial bourgeoisie, condemning the compromises of self-government, and demanding complete independence instead.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>83</sup> ANS, 17G573, Police, 'Rapport de quinzaine du 1er au 15 octobre 1951'; 2G53/187, Guinée Française, Secrétaire Général, 'Revue trimestrielle des événements, 3ème trimestre 1953', 12 Sept. 1953, #862/APA; 17G586, Guinée Française, Services de Police, Kankan, 'Renseignements A/S PDG et Congrès de Dabola', 24 Sept. 1956, #1965/682, C/PS.2; 17G613, Guinée Française, Services de Police, Conakry, 'Renseignements A/S mécontentement régnant chez les évolués guinéens, après la parution des décrets d'application de la loi-cadre modifiés par le Conseil de la République', 30 Apr. 1957, #966/393, C/PS.2; 2G57/128, Guinée Française, Police et Sûreté, 'Synthèse mensuelle de renseignements, novembre 1957', Conakry, 25 Nov. 1957, #2593/C/PS.2; R. W. Johnson, 'The Parti Démocratique de Guinée and the Mamou "deviation"', in Christopher Allen and R. W. Johnson (eds.), *African Perspectives: Papers in the History, Politics and Economics of Africa Presented to Thomas Hodgkin* (Cambridge, 1970), 347–8, 354, 358; Hodgkin, *African Political Parties*, 122–3, 151; Chafer, *End of Empire in French West Africa*, 193–217.

<sup>84</sup> ANS, 17G622, Guinée Française, Services de Police, 'Renseignements A/S activités du Syndicat Autonome des Cheminots Africains du Conakry–Niger, Assemblée Générale tenue le samedi 27 juillet 1957 à Conakry, devant le local de ce syndicat', 30 July 1957, #1690/658, C/PS.2; 17G622, Guinée Française, Services de Police, 'Renseignements A/S rebondissement du conflit des enseignants africains', 8 Nov. 1957, #2485/919, C/PS.2; 17G622, Guinée Française, Services de Police, 'Renseignements A/S conflit des enseignants guinéens', 12 Nov. 1957, #2500/929, C/PS.2; 17G622, Guinée Française, Services de Police, 'Copie du communiqué du Comité Directeur du PDG', Conakry, 12 Nov. 1957, C/PS.2; 17G622, Guinée Française, Services de Police, 'Renseignements A/S exclusion du PDG/RDA de plusieurs dirigeants de la S/Section de Mamou', 15 Nov. 1957, #25\_\_\_/941, C/PS.2; 2G57/128, Police et Sûreté, 'Synthèse mensuelle de renseignements novembre 1957'; Johnson, 'Parti Démocratique de Guinée', 347–69.

<sup>85</sup> ANS, 17G622, Police, 'Exclusion du PDG/RDA de plusieurs dirigeants', 15 Nov. 1957; 17G622, Guinée Française, Services de Police, 'Renseignements A/S conférence



Although characterized by the territorial RDA as an extremist fringe, the Mamou 'deviationists' in fact represented a broad constituency. From 1956 onward, a growing number of Guinean students and other youth, teachers, railway workers and other trade unionists were calling for an end to colonial rule. Significantly, they were demanding independence, not just local autonomy. Official reports are replete with assertions that these pro-independence sentiments reflected the views of many regional and local RDA leaders, as well as grassroots militants in the interior.<sup>86</sup> Pressure from the Left intensified after the implementation of *loi-cadre*, when student, youth and trade union organizations – such as the Association des Étudiants RDA, Union Générale des Étudiants et Élèves de Guinée, Union Générale des Étudiants d'Afrique Occidentale, Fédération des Étudiants d'Afrique Noire en France (FEANF), Conseil de la Jeunesse d'Afrique, Rassemblement de la Jeunesse Démocratique Africaine and UGTAN – urged the RDA to take a more radical stance. By August 1958, these groups had formed a united front to oppose the constitutional project that would establish a new French-dominated community and agitate for immediate independence instead. The proposed constitution would be submitted to a popular referendum on 28 September 1958, when citizens of the French empire would be permitted to vote 'Yes' or 'No'. A victorious 'No' vote would result in immediate independence.<sup>87</sup>

While forces on the Left mobilized for a 'No' vote in the 28 September referendum, Sékou Touré refused to endorse the call for immediate independence. In July and August 1958, he continued to urge constitutional revision rather than rejection. Dismayed by his refusal to take a definitive and radical stand, FEANF representatives met with him in early September,

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publique tenue à Mamou, le 14 novembre 1957, par l'ex-sous-section du PDG/RDA', 19 Nov. 1957, #2565/954, C/PS.2; 2G57/128, Police et Sûreté, 'Synthèse mensuelle de renseignements, novembre 1957'; interview with Fanta Diarra and Ibrahima Fofana, Conakry, 24 May 1991; Johnson, 'Parti Démocratique de Guinée'; Kéïta, *PDG*, II, 101.

<sup>86</sup> ANS, 17G586, Guinée Française, Services de Police, Gendarmerie, 'Renseignements A/S conférence tenue à Dabola par le Député BAG Barry Diawadou', 14 Sept. 1956, #1890/653, C/PS.2; 17G586, Guinée Française, Services de Police, P. Humbert, Commissaire Divisionnaire, Conakry, à Gouverneur, Conakry, 19 Sept. 1956, #1924, C/PS.2; 17G586, Police, Kankan, 'PDG et Congrès de Dabola', 24 Sept. 1956; 17G613, Guinée Française, Services de Police, Gendarmerie, Conakry, 'Renseignements A/S vie politique à l'intérieur du pays', 22 Mar. 1957, #669/290, C/PS.2; 17G613, Police, 'Mécontentement regnant chez les évolués', 30 Apr. 1957; 17G622, Police, 'Exclusion du PDG/RDA de plusieurs dirigeants', 15 Nov. 1957; 17G622, Police, 'Conférence publique tenue à Mamou', 19 Nov. 1957; 2G57/128, Police et Sûreté, 'Synthèse mensuelle de renseignements, novembre 1957'; interview with Fanta Diarra and Ibrahima Fofana, 24 May 1991; Charles Diané, *La FEANF et les grandes heures du mouvement syndical étudiant noir* (Paris, 1990), 46–7; Johnson, 'Parti Démocratique de Guinée', 347, 352, 362.

<sup>87</sup> CAOM, Carton 2181, dos. 6, télégramme arrivée, FOM, Paris. Envoyée par Gouverneur, Guinée Française, Conakry, 29 Aug. 1958, #242–244; Carton 2181, dos. 6, Bordereau à Ministre, FOM, Paris, de Chef du Cabinet Militaire, Conakry, 'Extraits du bulletin de l'Agence France-Presse du 18 septembre', 19 Sept. 1958, #1244/CAB; interview with Bocar Biro Barry, 21 Jan. 1991; Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, 71, 73, 116; Diané, *FEANF*; Chafer, *End of Empire in French West Africa*.

hoping to extract an unequivocal endorsement of the 'No'. On 10–11 September, the Guinean RDA's women's and youth wings paved the way for the territorial branch by calling for a 'No' vote in the referendum. By 14 September, all of the RDA's territorial branches – except Guinea and Senegal – had weighed in for the 'Yes'. Senegal endorsed the 'Yes' on 21 September.<sup>88</sup> The Guinean RDA's decision to oppose the constitution was made on 14 September – only two weeks before the referendum – at a territorial congress attended by some 680 party militants from RDA subsections, neighborhood committees and village committees from across the territory. It was these militants who voted in favor of the 'No'. Resisting the appeals of interterritorial RDA leaders who had sent a high-level delegation to the Conakry congress and critiquing their territorial leaders' conservatism, local-level actors decried the unequal partnership inherent in the new constitution. Propelled by growing criticisms from students, youths, trade unionists and the party's grassroots, the Guinean RDA was forced to move to the Left. The constituency that had been silenced by Cold War repression in the early 1950s had emerged as the strongest faction by the end of the decade. Pushed by the rank and file, the party's territorial leadership was compelled to endorse the call for immediate independence. The decision for the 'No' vote was made only in the eleventh hour.<sup>89</sup>

When the Guinean RDA endorsed the 'No' vote, it found an ally only in Niger, whose local government was dominated by an RDA rival. All the other *loi-cadre* governments in French West Africa had pronounced themselves solidly in favor of the constitution. In Guinea alone, the 'No' vote carried the day. On 28 September 1958, the Guinean people, under the RDA banner, decisively rejected the proposed constitution: 94 per cent of the voters cast their ballots for the 'No', while only 4.7 per cent voted 'Yes'. In every other French West African territory except Niger, the constitution was

<sup>88</sup> CRDA, Sékou Touré, 'L'Afrique et le référendum', *La Liberté*, 25 July 1958, 1; Touré, 'Les conditions de notre vote', *La Liberté*, 25 Aug. 1958, 1–2; Chaffard, *Carnets secrets*, II, 197–8, 206; Diané, *FEANF*, 127–8; Suret-Canale, *République de Guinée*, 170; Mortimer, *France and the Africans*, 320; Kéïta, *PDG*, II, 142; Schmidt, *Cold War*, chs. 5 and 6.

<sup>89</sup> CAOM, Carton 2181, dos. 6, Gouverneur, Guinée Française, Conakry, à Ministre, FOM, Paris, 'Discours prononcé par le Président Sékou Touré, le 14 septembre 1958', 15 Sept. 1958, #0191/CAB; Carton 2181, dos. 6, Gouverneur, Guinée Française, Conakry, à Ministre, FOM, Paris, 'Motion du Parti Démocratique de la Guinée en date du 14 septembre 1958', 15 Sept. 1958, #0191/CAB; Carton 2181, dos. 6, Gouverneur, Guinée Française, Conakry, à Ministre, FOM, Paris, 'Nouvelles locales reçues de l'AFP en date du 19 septembre 1958', 19 Sept. 1958, #2276/CAB; 'La résolution', *La Liberté*, 23 Sept. 1958, 2; interview with Bocar Biro Barry, 21 Jan. 1991; Chaffard, *Carnets secrets*, II, 204–6; Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, 219.

In his address to the territorial congress, Sékou Touré referred to the pro-independence positions already taken by trade union, student, and youth organizations. CAOM, Carton 2181, dos. 6, 'Discours prononcé par le Président Sékou Touré, le 14 septembre 1958'. See also 'Unanimement le 28 septembre la Guinée votera NON', *La Liberté*, 23 Sept. 1958, 1–2. Former university student leader Charles Diané also claims that Sékou Touré opted for the 'No' vote in the eleventh hour – pushed by the student movement. Diané, *FEANF*, 128–9.

approved by an equally staggering majority. In Niger, the 'Yes' vote was 75 per cent.<sup>90</sup> A number of factors account for Guinea's unique position. The Guinean RDA differed from other governing parties in French West Africa in terms of the class base of its leadership, the strength of its organization at the grassroots, the degree of popular participation in party decisions and the party's relationship to the colonial chieftaincy. While the dominant parties in some territories possessed some of the Guinean RDA's strengths, none had Guinea's winning combination. In every territory but Guinea and the French Soudan, varying amalgams of wealthy traders, planters, chiefs and religious leaders dominated the parties' structures – although their conservative tendencies were sometimes mitigated by the more radical views of Western-educated elites. In Guinea, the French Soudan and Niger, radical trade unionists were among the parties' key leaders. In Niger, however, the trade unionists' influence was neutralized by that of conservative chiefs. In terms of a strong party organization down to the lowest levels, Guinea stood alone. Although the RDA in the French Soudan strove to create a local organization, in no territory but Guinea were party cells well established in urban neighborhoods and rural villages. Only in Guinea and the French Soudan were local cells actively involved in decision-making and leaders held accountable to their membership through regular party congresses and elections. Guinea and the French Soudan parted ways, however, in their relationship to the colonial chieftaincy. In Guinea, the *loi-cadre* government had abolished the colonial chieftaincy in December 1957, thus eliminating a longstanding obstacle to RDA success in the rural areas. In every other French West African territory, the chiefs remained in place and continued to wield immense power in favor of the colonial administration – and, in this case, the constitution.<sup>91</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

Guinea's vote for immediate independence, and its break with the inter-territorial RDA over this issue, were the culmination of a decade-long struggle for control of the political agenda between grassroots activists on the political Left and the party's leadership. It was neither an aberration nor a fiat from on high, but the result of intensive political mobilization by

<sup>90</sup> 'Les résultats du scrutin', *La Liberté*, 4 Oct. 1958, 5; Kéïta, *PDG*, II, 147–8; Chaffard, *Carnets secrets*, II, 204–6, 212, 285; Mortimer, *France and the Africans*, 318–24; Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, 219, 312, 399.

<sup>91</sup> See, for instance, Martin Staniland, 'Single-party regimes and political change: the PDCI and Ivory Coast politics', in Colin Leys (ed.), *Politics and Change in Developing Countries: Studies in the Theory and Practice of Development* (New York, 1969), 149, 152, 161; Patrick Manning, *Slavery, Colonialism and Economic Growth in Dahomey, 1640–1960* (New York, 1982), 276–7; Finn Fuglestad, *A History of Niger, 1850–1960* (New York, 1983), 154, 181–5; Thomas Hodgkin and Ruth Schachter Morgenthau, 'Mali', in Coleman and Rosberg (eds.), *Political Parties*, 223–5, 235–41; Aristide R. Zolberg, *Creating Political Order: The Party-States of West Africa* (Chicago, 1966), 28, 32–4; Zolberg, *One-Party Government*, 286–9; Suret-Canale, 'Fin de la chefferie', 459–60, 490–3; Schmidt, *Mobilizing the Masses*, 175–6; Schmidt, *Cold War*, chs. 2, 3 and 5; Morgenthau, *Political Parties*; Mortimer, *France and the Africans*; Thompson and Adloff, *French West Africa*; Fuglestad, 'Djibo Bakary'.

grassroots militants who persevered in the face of Cold War repression. Guinea's progressive politics percolated upward from the grassroots. Local militants, empowered by a strong, unusually democratic party organization, forced party leaders to the Left, even as those leaders sought accommodation with the powers-that-be. Thus, Guinea's radical position on the 1958 constitution was not a foregone conclusion, but the result of a long internal struggle that was won by the Left only in the final hour. This article has disputed the common view that the Guinean RDA was uniformly and consistently radical, and that it was controlled by Sékou Touré, who allegedly possessed uncontested authority over the party. It has shown instead that grassroots militants successfully challenged the party leadership, ultimately pushing the political agenda to the Left. While other recent works have examined ethnic, class and gender divisions in the Guinean nationalist movement, this article contributes to the historiography by exploring political fissures along the Left-Right divide. The import of these findings extends far beyond Guinea, challenging the general assumption that nationalist leaders impose their will on their followers and that the resulting political program reflects the leaders' vision. The Guinean evidence shows that where there are strong local organizations, party programs are the product of struggle, shaped in large part by grassroots activists.