

SOCIALISM AND THE NATION: MALI, 1957-1968

by

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Abstract

This dissertation offers a historical account of how the USRDA regime practiced politics in Mali's first postcolonial decade. Drawing primarily on Malian archival sources, it studies the regime's relationships with chiefs, merchants, and peasants, revealing how nationalist and socialist ideologies, practical interests, and ambitions of radical social, political, and economic transformation animated the USRDA's political project. While nationalist and socialist ideals significantly shaped the regime's approach to policy-making throughout the 1960s, these sat in tension with the politics of patronage that had long characterized the Malian milieu, creating a complex and chaotic political environment. This environment grew increasingly tense as the economy declined and the USRDA's policies and institutions foundered — often in the face of resistance from merchants, chiefs, and peasants. In 1968 the military resolved this tension by a coup d'état, jettisoning the USRDA's radical socialist ideology while conserving the Malian nationalist ideal.

The era of independence was a time of intellectual ferment and political experimentation in Mali. It was characterized by the advent of territorial nationalism and radical socialism as ideals that helped the USRDA regime manage a postcolonial dispensation more fragmented and impoverished than previously imagined. These emerged from existing preoccupations with development and anticolonialism, while embodying new concerns for territorial sovereignty and political power in a one-party context. These new concerns, in turn, arose from failed efforts to forge a greater polity from French West Africa's colonies and to establish a broad national identity binding citizens across territories as West Africans and across continents as members of a postcolonial French community.

Although nationalism and socialism were the foremost features of Malian political rhetoric during this period, the regime had no clear definition of them, and was not only intent on building a true socialist nation, but also on state-building in general and the exigencies of *realpolitik*. Socialism, although not an amorphous catch-all, was pressed into service to support the regime's new interest in territorial nationalism and its mundane entanglements with the politics of patronage. In this context, nationalism and socialism often served the party's needs in ways that conflicted with the public interest.

List of Abbreviations Used

| | |
|--------------|--|
| A.N.M. | Archives Nationales du Mali |
| A.O.F. | Afrique Occidentale Française |
| B.D.S. | Bloc Démocratique Soudanaise |
| B.P.N. | Bureau Politique Nationale |
| C.A.D.N. | Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes |
| C.C.P. | Chinese Communist Party |
| C.N.D.R. | Conseil National de Défense de la Révolution |
| F.E.A.N.F. | Fédération des Étudiants d’Afrique noire en France |
| G.E.C. | Groupe d’Etudes Communistes |
| I.F.A.N. | Institut Français d’Afrique Noire |
| J.U.S.R.D.A. | Jeunesse de l’Union Soudanaise – R.D.A. |
| P.A.I. | Parti Africain de l’Indépendance |
| P.C.F. | Parti Communiste Français |
| P.D.S. | Parti Démocratique Ségovienne |
| P.R.S. | Parti du Regroupement Soudanais |
| P.S.P. | Parti Progressiste Soudanais (Note: while normally the abbreviation should read “P.P.S.”, the party is nonetheless almost universally referred to as the P.S.P.) |
| R.D.A. | Rassemblement Démocratique Africain |
| S.F.I.O. | Section Française de l’Internationale Ouvrière |
| S.O.M.I.E.X. | Société Malienne pour l’Importation et l’Exportation |
| U.D.S. | Union Démocratique Ségovienne |
| U.S.R.D.A. | Union Soudanaise – Rassemblement Démocratique Africain |
| U.S.S.R. | Union of Soviet Socialist Republics |

Chapter 1: Introduction

The Malian First Republic presents an excellent opportunity to advance the work of historicizing the transition to postcolonial rule in Africa and to examine how two of the most prevalent ideologies of the day — nationalism and socialism — shaped the practice of politics in the 1960s. Like Nasser and the Free Officers Movement in Egypt, the Malian leadership came to power not on a socialist platform but on a progressive one, with the adoption of socialism postdating their ascent to territorial autonomy in 1957 and full independence in 1960. Equally, although Mali's leaders would vigorously promulgate Malian national identity throughout the 1960s, these same politicians were not territorial nationalists even in the late 1950s; they considered the Sudan becoming its own nation-state to be a catastrophic prospect. Although they believed in the idea of the nation, they understood it in a vastly broader way than they would come to in the 1960s. For Malian leaders, the national ideal remained both continental and imperial up until independence; they fought ardently for the idea that residents of France's West African colonies ought to be united *as Africans* (rather than as Malians or Senegalese), and they promoted an enlightened form of postcolonial empire that would keep the supraterritorial African alliance of which they dreamed well within the French sphere politically, economically, and culturally. This “West African Nation... desired by elites and leaders”¹ was a far cry from the territorially focused nationalism they would come

¹ ANM.2.4.5e Congrès de l'USRDA. *Ve Congrès de l'Union Soudanaise, 13-17 août 1958, et 2^e Conférence territoriale de l'Union Soudanaise, 17-19 octobre 1958*, 60. “...raisons qui nous poussent tous à matérialiser définitivement le cadre de cette Nation Ouest Africaine.” “Disons-nous bien qu'une Union Ouest Africaine, désirée par les élites et les dirigeants, ne sera jamais effective tant que la masse n'en aura pas conçu l'impérieuse nécessité.”

to espouse in the postcolonial era. Similarly, the USRDA had no attachment to radical socialism prior to independence; rather it was devoted to establishing a supraterritorial polity, and it was willing to mould its ideological and political positions in order to establish links with neighbouring territories, “despite [their] profound convictions, in order to preserve unity.”² Thus the early postcolonial era in Mali was a period of ideological change, even if many of these changes stemmed from the existing goals and ideals of its political leaders.

Nationalism was consonant with the party's populist electoral promises of a brighter future — although it would ultimately fail to deliver on most of these. Similarly, the promises that came with the adoption of socialism — the establishment of an egalitarian society free of exploitation, the industrial transformation of the country, the successful collectivization of the countryside — would also largely go unkept. Indeed, despite the lofty focus of these hopeful ideologies, the Keita regime would often come to use them as justifications for policies that ran counter to the public interest. In pursuing these policies, the regime came into conflict with local institutions and social groups. In particular, it drew on nationalist ideas to cast chiefs as retrogressive authorities whose power needed to be curtailed for the sake of progress. Also, while the merchant community had been a key supporter and financier of the party, after independence the USRDA followed the example of certain socialist states and labeled merchants parasitical — dead weight hindering the drive for development in an ostensibly egalitarian context. It persecuted them while consolidating economic control in its own hands. The party equally imposed severe austerity measures on peasants,

² Ibid., 47.

monopolizing grain markets and purchasing yields at low prices, drawing variously on nationalist notions like sacrifice in the name of progress and socialist ideas pertaining to state control of the economy.

This was all done either for the sake of national development or in the name of a utopian socialist future — sometimes in the name of both. Yet concern for the wellbeing of the nation’s citizens and devotion to socialist ideology only tell part of the story of Malian politics in the 1960s. Understanding these ideas is crucial to comprehending the political landscape of the day, but it must equally be observed that these ideas were marshalled in loose configurations and in different manners by different political players. And although these ideas influenced the ways in which political agents understood their goals, the exigencies of everyday politics in a one-party state with no opposition also shaped the forms these ideas took over time as they were employed to solve different problems and to meet a variety of objectives. While socialism and nationalism had a considerable impact on USRDA thought, devotion to these ideologies cannot adequately explain the regime’s actions in the 1960s —nor can one particular formulation of them even be identified as the standard of the day.

Consequently, the intention of this study is not to determine the precise definition of nationalism employed by the regime of Modibo Keita that ruled over Mali from independence to 1968 — for it had none — nor to discover whether this regime was truly socialist or orthodox in some way.³ Rather, it seeks to understand the significance of the intellectual ferment and political experimentation that characterized this era in

³ For similar work analyzing postcolonial socialism in terms of what function it served rather than what ideological type it embodied, see, for example, Laura Bier, *Revolutionary Womanhood: Feminisms, Modernity, and the State in Nasser's Egypt*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 10.

Malian history, and to assess the effectiveness of how the regime practiced politics and sought to create a stable postcolonial order. Its basic contention is that although nationalism and socialism were the most prominent features of Malian political rhetoric during this period, the USRDA regime had no clear definition of what they were, and was in fact not nearly so intent on building a true socialist nation as it was on state-building in general and the exigencies of realpolitik. Socialism, although not an amorphous catch-all, was pressed into service to support the regime's new interest in territorial nationalism and its mundane entanglements with the politics of patronage — indeed, pressed so hard that its shape was often barely recognizable. In this single-party context, nationalism and socialism often served the party's needs in ways that ran counter to the public interest; the party did not tend to serve them, as fixed ideologies to which they were devoted on principle, to anywhere near the same extent as they drew on them unsystematically to confront various problems of postcolonial governance. This does not mean that Mali's politicians were insincere, or that the ideology they espoused had no bearing upon the way they conceived of their goals. Ideas mattered in Malian politics, and as the most prominent political ideas of the day, nationalism and socialism were uniquely placed to have a strong impact on political life.

In tracing the impact of these ideas it is crucial to note that the political elite created the idea of the Malian nation at about the same time it adopted socialism. With independence on the horizon in the latter half of the 1950s, political elites in a number of French West African colonies proposed a federated state. Ultimately only Senegal and the French Soudan went forward with the idea. Together they achieved independence on 20 June 1960 under the name "The Mali Federation." By late August of the same year,

this federation had crumbled. Senegal proclaimed its independence as the Republic of Senegal, and the territory known in colonial times as the French Soudan declared its independence as the Republic of Mali.

Thus the idea of the Malian nation emerged roughly at the time of independence, and socialism was adopted contemporaneously. The USRDA turned to territorial nationalism and to radical socialism after failing in its efforts to forge a greater polity from the fragmented territories of colonial French West Africa and to establish a supraterritorial identity binding not only the citizens of neighbouring colonies as West Africans but the entire region with France in an enlightened postcolonial imperial community.⁴ As Frederick Cooper has noted about the vast majority of French West African politicians in the 1950s, “[t]heir politics was firmly anticolonialist, but it was not nationalist in the conventional, territorially focused sense.”⁵ Yet in the wake of the federation’s failure, territorial nationalism and radical socialism would emerge from existing preoccupations with development and anticolonialism while embodying new concerns for territorial sovereignty and political power in a one-party context. Although these ideals would come to shape the Malian political landscape in important ways throughout the 1960s, they would always sit in tension with the politics of patronage that had characterized the Malian milieu even before the anticolonial movement began.

Mali's leaders claimed that all the nation’s citizens would have a bright future under their tutelage, and they drew heavily upon socialist rhetoric to create a national narrative promising swift economic development and social justice in a society divided

⁴ Frederick Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and French Africa, 1945-1960* (Princeton University Press, 2014), 2.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.

along caste lines and still carrying the memory of slavery, which had only been abolished in the early 20th century.⁶ This social justice narrative carried weight, as many USRDA members, including several key regime figures,⁷ were of casted or ex-servile origin; as such, this impulse to flatten the social hierarchy drew the support of individuals belonging to social groups of lower status, like certain merchants,⁸ and equally brought the party into conflict with nobles and chiefs.⁹ The promise of swift economic development, however, was the most prominent plank in the USRDA's policy platform, and it was established early on. One year after the USRDA had won popular elections giving them power over the colony's internal affairs and, later, control of the independent state — *La Tribune du Soudan* noted that:

Everywhere, the Vice-President [Jean-Marie Koné] confirmed for peasants the concern of the Government Council to work for the elevation of the standard of living for all social sectors of the population... he assured the population of the solicitude and help of the Government.¹⁰

Yet by the time soldiers ousted the regime on 19 November 1968 living standards had fallen.¹¹ The government's budget deficit was acute and recurring.¹² And while the

⁶ Martin A. Klein, *Islam and Imperialism in Senegal: Sine-Saloum, 1847-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968).

⁷ E.g. Seydou Badian Kouyaté, Minister of Rural Economy in 1957 and later of the Plan, who was of griot origins. For more on caste, servility, and the role of social justice ideals in USRDA politics, see Chapter 4, "Eliminating the Canton Chiefs."

⁸ See Chapter 5, "The Merchants of Menace."

⁹ See Chapter 4, "The Tradition Condition."

¹⁰ *La Tribune du Soudan* no 2, 8 July 1958, p. 9, "La Tournée de M. Jean-Marie Koné dans les cercles de Koutiala et de San." "Partout, le Vice-Président a confirmé aux Paysans le souci du Conseil de Gouvernement de travailler à l'élévation du niveau de vie de toutes les couches sociales de la population. Il a mis l'accent sur la nécessité d'une augmentation de la production et a assuré la population de la sollicitude et de l'aide du Gouvernement."

¹¹ Pierre Campmas, "L'Union Soudanaise, section Soudanaise du rassemblement démocratique Africain 1946-1968," (PhD Thesis, Université de Toulouse, 1978), 449.

¹² See Chapter 3, "In the Name of the Nation."

regime had promised freedom and equality, personal liberties had declined under USRDA rule. During its reign, the party restricted citizens' options regarding political affiliation,¹³ migration,¹⁴ livelihood, and economic transaction.¹⁵ Indeed, prominent Africanists have recognized that Keita's "autocratic approach did not produce the improvement in living standards of peasants and workers he had promised and alienated much of the population."¹⁶

All of these outcomes, and others, ran counter to USRDA claims about the prosperity and freedom socialism would bring to Malians. Yet given that, as the quotation from Cooper above suggests, the regime took an "autocratic approach" to governance and rolled back the pluralistic political environment established in the late colonial era, this does not surprise. While nationalism provided the USRDA with a narrative of progress and unity, socialism helped the USRDA legitimate its authoritarian tendencies by proposing political uniformity as the swiftest way to achieve such a developmental vision. Jean-François Médard has highlighted the importance of ideological legitimation for African authoritarian regimes, remarking that:

African authoritarian regimes have not solidified their rule merely through patrimonialism and through the nature of the economic and political connections that characterize it, but, like any power trying to get established, they require legitimacy. African regimes have only generally benefited, except perhaps at the very start, from a weak intrinsic institutional legitimacy.¹⁷

¹³ See "Repression in the Keita Years" in Chapter 3.

¹⁴ See Chapter 6, "The Reticent Peasant."

¹⁵ See Chapter 5, "The Merchants of Menace."

¹⁶ Cooper, *Africa in the World: Capitalism, Empire, Nation-State* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 86.

¹⁷ Jean-François Médard, "Autoritarismes et Démocraties En Afrique Noire," *Politique Africaine*, no. 43 (October 1991): 94. "Les régimes autoritaristes africains ne s'enracinent pas seulement dans le patrimonialisme et dans la nature du lien existant entre l'économique et le politique qui le caractérise, mais comme tout pouvoir qui cherche à se consolider, ils doivent se légitimer. Les pouvoirs africains n'ont

This place of weakness was the USRDA's point of departure. As such, it actively developed means of justifying its control of the state to the public while also pursuing policies aimed not at furthering the public weal but at consolidating its power. As mentioned above, the USRDA's nation-building narrative – imbricated with the notion of economic development – was central to such efforts at legitimation, while clientelism, or what Médard terms patrimonialism, was crucial to unseen efforts at entrenching USRDA power. Socialism, in turn, served as a binding agent for these strategies. It provided a ready-made and detailed narrative of progress and economic development around which the Keita regime could fashion its nationalist story. Its vision of a planned economy under the tutelage of the state — of industrialization, agricultural collectivization, and a network of public enterprises — presented both an apparent means of swiftly achieving prosperity and equality for the masses while also offering the USRDA a rationale for consolidating political power within the party.

The Perception of Vulnerability

The regime of President Modibo Keita perceived its political position as highly vulnerable. The volatile African political environment of the early 1960s amplified the regime's self-interested tendencies, as the instability that surrounded Mali in this era caused party leaders to view their state as a fortress under constant threat of attack. This, in conjunction with the high modernism that was globally prevalent at the time and indeed inherent in the radical socialism espoused by the regime, led the USRDA to

généralement bénéficié, sauf peut-être au tout début, que d'une faible légitimité institutionnelle intrinsèque.”

establish relationships with key segments of the population that were both adversarial and paternalistic. These included most notably the chiefs, merchants, and peasants, each of which controlled resources the regime wished to administer directly, and each of which presented unique challenges in terms of imposing the regime's nationalist vision and securing compliance with its political leadership.

Under French control, the Soudan Français had been a poor colony. It had benefited from French subsidies upon which the independent state could no longer rely, making Mali more economically weak than ever. Regime officials noted as much in a 1964 circular announcing that "austerity measures touching the entirety of workers" would soon be introduced due to "[their] budget [being] small and...difficult for [them] to balance."¹⁸ They wrote:

Before, when our country was under domination, subsidies or adjustment entries from the French Treasury permitted the balancing of the budget. It was the compensation for our condition as a colonized country.¹⁹

These financial problems grew worse as the decade wore on, and drastically limited the state's means of defending its sovereignty.

Mali was also militarily weak. At over one million square kilometres the territory is massive, yet the USRDA could afford a military of only a few thousand. Moreover, postcolonial leaders did not trust soldiers, whom they suspected of being pro-French.²⁰ They noted, for example, that "[i]t is frequent to observe in the course of tours the pride

¹⁸ ANM.142.560.Circulaires 1947-1968.*Circulaire 6 Aux Secétaires Généraux des Sections de l'USRDA, 11 Mai 1964.* "mesures d'austérité touchant l'ensemble des travailleurs"... "notre budget est faible et il nous est difficile de le boucler."

¹⁹ Ibid. "Auparavant, lorsque notre pays était sous domination, des subventions ou des régularisations d'écritures du Trésor Français permettaient d'équilibrer le budget. C'était la compensation à notre condition de pays colonisé..."

²⁰ Gregory Mann, "Violence, Dignity, and Mali's New Model Army," *Mande Studies* 5 (2003): 65-82.

and candour with which our comrade ex-combatants sport the vestiges of their sojourn in the colonial army (decorations, chechias, helmets, etc....)."²¹ Such displays — which raised the spectre of French affiliations in competition with the regime's Malian nationalist narrative — appear to have unsettled the Keita government. Many former colonial soldiers served in Mali's postcolonial army, and the regime doubted their loyalty to the party. Indeed, many ex-combatants and demobilized Malian soldiers were vocal critics of the regime from the early days of independence onward.²²

Other internal factors contributed to this perception of vulnerability as well. These included the political power of "traditional" chiefs and the economic clout of the merchant class. The peasants, who constituted 95% of the population, were also a source of worry. USRDA leaders saw them as "mystified" and subject to manipulation.²³ The state's economic survival depended on its ability to extract large amounts of grain from the peasants. This, however, proved a difficult task.

²¹ ANM.141.559.CNDR Circulaires.*Circulaire no 66/CNDR du 4 Nov. 1968: A tous les comités locaux de défense de la révolution* (signed 'Modibo Keita). "Il est fréquent de noter au cours des tournées, la fierté et la candeur avec lesquelles nos camarades anciens combattants arborent les vestiges de leur séjour dans l'armée coloniale (décorations, chéchias, casques, etc...)."

²² CADN.Amb.Bamako.20.Dépêches politiques 1961.*Synthèse du mois de Février 1961, No. 110 (Représentation de France au Mali)*, p. 7. "Les Anciens Combattants eux-mêmes et surtout les militaires Maliens récemment démobilisés critiquent ouvertement la politique du Gouvernement, qu'ils rendent responsable des difficultés présentes."

²³ The party tended to explain opinions deviating from the party line as the result of such manipulation, and members were called upon to perform "a work of explanation in depth to demystify the masses, to make them discover the subtle methods that our local and foreign enemies use" ("un travail d'éclaircissement en profondeur pour démystifier les masses, leur faire découvrir les méthodes subtiles que nos ennemis intérieur et extérieurs utilisent." ANM.109.416.Rapport et Compte-Rendu de Mission à l'Intérieur du Mali 1964-1967.*Thèmes des assemblées générales dans les comités de la ville de Bamako, 1 décembre 1967.*

While some threats to the USRDA are easily spotted in the historical landscape, others remain spectral. Yet, to understand the regime's motivations, quantifying dangers is less important than appreciating the regime's *perception* of vulnerability. It was the way the regime understood itself as beset by subversive enemies — and as part of a continent facing similar attacks — that fuelled its acute concern for consolidating power. And Malian politicians did not see enemies only, or even mainly, within the borders of their own state. They witnessed Lumumba's killing and the intervention of foreign powers in the Congo, and thought they occupied an equally precarious position on the African stage. As stated in a 1960 government report:

The affirmation of the total independence of the Republic of Congo, under the leadership of a patriot like Patrice Lumumba, made the miners worry for their profits. And we all know the rest of the story. And we've all seen the role played by the UN high command.

In Mali, in our opinion it's a question of a similar problem.²⁴

Yet Mali's leaders were not just concerned about the Congo. They were active in supporting the Front de Libération Nationale as the French fought to prevent Algeria from gaining independence in what many viewed as an attack on the rights of Africans everywhere to govern themselves.²⁵ Another government circular from 1960 claimed coups d'état were in the offing closer to home, and that Mali was surely a target. In particular, it claimed:

²⁴ ANM.1.3.Congrès extraordinaire 1960. *Untitled, unsigned document decrying the Senegalese role in the breakup of the Mali Federation and the recent developments in the Congo.* "L'affirmation de l'indépendance totale de la République du Congo, sous la conduite d'un patriote comme Patrice Lumumba a inquiété les miniers pour leurs bénéfices. Et nous savons tous le reste de l'histoire. Et nous avons tous vu le rôle joué par le haut commandement de L'ONU. Au Mali, il s'agit à notre avis d'un problème similaire."

²⁵ Interview with Sékéné Mody Sissoko, Bamako, 3 March 2012.

that counterrevolutionary plots have been discovered in Guinea, as well as various arms and munitions caches in border areas of Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire. These enterprises, of which you cannot fail to see the gravity, are the work of subversive French agents, military or civilian, relying on indigenous elements.

There is reason to believe that the same attempts could take place here. French agents will try to use all discontented elements: ex-Canton chiefs, political adversaries... waiting for an occasion to get revenge, earlier political comrades disappointed that responsibilities they believe they merited have not been given to them.²⁶

Such evidence suggests the continental political context of the era made the Keita regime acutely concerned with ensuring stability. The regime's frequent recourse to violence, even in the face of minor threats to its authority, illustrates this.²⁷ It suggests that regime stability occupied an important place in the party's hierarchy of motives, and thus its embrace of territorial nationalism and radical socialism must be understood in this context of political disintegration and violence.

Questions of freedom and equality — so often raised by the USRDA in defense of its socialist ideal,²⁸ not to speak of its anticolonial struggle — went out the window when a threat to regime authority arose. Its brutal response to regionalist activism around Ségou in 1960, which resulted in several deaths and the razing of an entire

²⁶ ANM.18.36.Fédération du Mali 1960. *Circulaire à toutes les cercles subdivisions et postes administratives, signé Madeira Keita, Ministre de l'Intérieur (23 Mai 1960)*. "Vous avez sans doute appris par la radio et la presse que des complots contre-révolutionnaires ont été découverts en Guinée ainsi que divers dépôts d'armes et munitions dans les régions frontalières du Sénégal et de la Côte d'Ivoire. Ces entreprises dont la gravité ne saurait vous échapper sont le fait des agents français de subversion, militaires ou civils, s'appuyant sur des éléments autochtones... Il y a lieu de croire que les mêmes tentatives pourraient avoir lieu chez nous. Les agents français tenteront d'utiliser contre nous, tous les éléments mécontents : ex-Chefs de canton, adversaires politiques superficiellement convertis, mais attendant une occasion de revanche, camarades politiques de première heure déçus par le fait que des responsabilités qu'ils croyaient mériter ne leur avaient pas été confiées."

²⁷ Mann, "Violence, Dignity, and Mali's New Model Army", 71; Aristide R. Zolberg, "The political revival of Mali," *The World Today* 21, no. 4 (1965): 155.

²⁸ E.g. ANM.125.467. *Correspondances BPN 1957-1967. Appel à la Nation (speech by Modibo Keita)*, 30 Septembre 1961.

village, exemplifies this priority.²⁹ This climate of fear and insecurity shaped the regime's actions throughout the 1960s. Whatever else it sought to accomplish, it had to devote considerable attention to questions of survival in what it viewed as a hostile global and regional environment. Having failed in its effort to avoid the fragmentation of French West Africa into independent states – and being among the poorest of them all – the USRDA regime was left with little but its newly won sovereignty. Its subsequent years in government are characterized by the jealous guarding of this “one resource that mattered, control over the mechanisms of state power.”³⁰ These efforts to retain power, of course, form part of a ubiquitous political phenomenon. What renders them notable is that they were imbued with nationalist and socialist character. The particulars of how USRDA elites employed these ideologies in this period coalesce to make of Mali an interesting case in the practice of postcolonial politics.

Nationalism

The regime drew upon a number of ideals to achieve its goals and stabilize its rule, with nationalism foremost among them. USRDA leaders thought it would help forge a common identity throughout the state's territory and that it would increase the loyalty of ordinary citizens to “Mali” and to the directives of the government. While nationalism or nation-building is a broad notion with deep roots, its implications can be narrowed for the period and area under study, as Saliou Camara notes:

As a working concept, “nation building” is, in this study, equated with “statecraft” based on the fact that in post-colonial Africa, nation building has, in

²⁹ Francis Simonis, "Le Drame de Sakoïba. Magistrats et Autorités Politiques à Ségou (Mali) à La Veille de L'indépendance," *Droit et Cultures* no. 30 (1995): 231-241.

³⁰ Cooper, *Africa in the World*, 86.

many regards, meant the development of a sense of legitimacy measurable by the degree of political loyalty that the state elicits from those under its institutional rule, thus making members of a highly cosmopolitan society citizens of an entity called the nation-state.³¹

While written with specific reference to postcolonial Guinea, Camara's assertion serves equally well for the Malian case. For USRDA leaders, nation-building was a means of acquiring legitimacy, gauging loyalty, and wielding power. They also viewed the nation-state as the only viable state-type for the modern world. At the same time — like most other regimes in francophone West Africa — Keita and his associates engaged in a process not so much of nation-building as of nation-creating. As Pierre Kipré notes, “the national liberation struggle tended to mobilize energies to establish the nation and not to have its existence recognized;”³² indeed, seeking recognition for a concept that did not yet exist in the minds of most citizens would be putting the cart well before the horse. While the USRDA strongly believed a nation could be built, they would have to build it from the ground up. Moreover, they would not only seek to establish the nationalist ideal where it did not exist, but they would fashion it as an identity oriented toward an as yet unaccomplished developmentalist project rather than toward the consolidation of a common history. For the USRDA, “nationalism [was] not based on a supposed primordial past but a glorious future.”³³

³¹ Mohamed Saliou Camara, “Nation Building and the Politics of Islamic Internationalism in Guinea: Toward an Understanding of Muslims' Experience of Globalization in Africa,” *Contemporary Islam* 1, no. 2 (2007): 156.

³² Pierre Kipré, “La crise de l'État-nation en Afrique de l'Ouest,” *Outre-Terre* 11, no. 2 (2005): 27. “Même imaginée par certains ou menée par d'autres (en Guinée-Bissau à partir de 1963), la lutte de libération nationale tend à mobiliser les énergies pour établir la nation et non pour faire reconnaître son existence.”

³³ Jason Sumich, “‘An Imaginary Nation’: Nationalism, Ideology & the Mozambican National Elite,” in *Sure Road? Nationalisms in Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique*, ed. Eric Morier-Genoud (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 147. Sumich here writes of

Because of their emphasis on building a "new society," nationalism justified the party's dispensing with troublesome aspects of the past. For example, the USRDA came to represent chiefs as elements of a retrogressive order needing to be destroyed for the sake of progress — rather than as political elites with longstanding claims to authority and extensive networks of supporters. The troubling result of this, however, was that many elements of indigenous values, culture, and history came into conflict with the USRDA's new nationalist ideals. Whether it was the suppression of chiefs, the persecution of secret societies, the curtailing of Islamic education practices, or a host of other attacks on indigenous institutions, the actions of Modibo Keita's regime prove it found many parts of local society to "denature national sentiment."³⁴ This was often because many such indigenous institutions exercised political authority in the communities where they existed, and represented a threat to USRDA rule or at least a bump on the road to total control of the Malian political sphere. Thus, much like how Sékou Touré went from leading Guinea's trade unions in the 1950s to repressing them in the 1960s,³⁵ the Keita regime went from championing the rights and interests of the Soudanese population in the 1950s to attacking them in the 1960s. Such efforts were often undertaken in the name of the nation or of the process of building a socialist society, and USRDA elites believed in the virtues of these causes. Thus what amounted to attacks on Mali's local cultures were carried out with the intention of creating a better

FRELIMO in Mozambique, but his contention is equally applicable in the Malian case.

³⁴ ANM.1.3.Congrès extraordinaire 1960.*Allocution par Idrissa Diarra (Secrétaire Politique de l'USRDA), 22 Septembre 1961.* "Notre politique, guidée par la volonté de réhabiliter nos valeurs propres, notre culture, notre histoire, passe naturellement par la suppression de tout ce qui continuait à la dénaturer, et à heurter notre sentiment nationale..."

³⁵ Cooper, *Africa in the World*, 84.

culture and a better society for all Malians. Yet at the same time, in what became an increasingly antidemocratic context over the years of USRDA rule, party interests and patronage politics would also play important roles in the evolution of such policies. In this way, ideals and power politics were intertwined in Mali under Modibo Keita's rule.

Since at least the late 1950s the USRDA saw nationalism as essential to creating a functioning independent state — although it envisioned this state not in Soudanese or Malian terms but with regard to a regional federation linked to the metropole, and thus at this time its conception of nationalism was both continental and imperial.³⁶ The party thought it imperative that citizens identify primarily at the national and imperial — rather than ethnic — level. This opinion, however, was not tied specifically to *Malian* national identity. In the late 1950s the particulars of USRDA nationalist ideals fluctuated with the imagined borders of postcolonial West Africa. At the time, efforts to create a regional federation were still afoot, so at certain points party leaders spoke of a West African national identity. At others they used the term "Soudanese," in keeping with the name of the colony, or simply spoke of "national consciousness." Yet while the details of national identity — Soudanese, West Africa, or Malian — were changeable in the late 1950s, the desire among USRDA elites to create one was not.

The party recognized, however, that ordinary people had no sense of national identity. Political Secretary Idrissa Diarra noted in 1958 that:

As long as this national consciousness will not be more real among the masses, as long it will be the sole prerogative of intellectuals or urbanites, immediate Independence will be premature, because the idea of independence supposes *a priori* that the idea of a nation is clear and precise in all minds.³⁷

³⁶ Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation*, 152.

³⁷ ANM.4.5e Congrès de l'Union Soudanaise RDA 1958. *Rapport Politique présenté par Idrissa Diarra*, p. 50. "Tant que cette conscience nationale ne sera pas plus réelle dans

While the national consciousness in question here remains vague — at the time, USRDA leaders were aiming for the largest federated state they could get, and were uncertain of which territories would join them at independence — the perspective is clear. Mali's political elite recognized they were alone in their interest in forging a national identity that would "cover" the state's full territory. Indeed, when justifying why the party had voted to remain in the French Union in 1958 — in contrast to Guinea, which had opted for independence — the party cited "insufficient National Consciousness."³⁸

To USRDA leaders, the population was riddled with local identities that stood in nationalism's way. The party described French West Africa as comprising an "infinity of races,"³⁹ and remarked that:

As long as the Bambaras, the Markas, the Bobos, the Sarakolés, the Peuls, etc.... will not firstly feel Soudanese; as long as the Soudanese, Senegalese, Ivoirians, Voltaics, Nigeriens, will not feel solidarity for each other in the context of the WEST AFRICAN UNION, as long as this will not have been achieved, we will not be ready for another step... We must necessarily, and at all costs, manage in a short time to create this consciousness...which constitutes national sentiment.⁴⁰

At this point in time — 1958 — Malian identity did not exist even as a concept. The ideal expressed above is that citizens would identify as West African at the highest level and as Soudanese at a lower level. USRDA elites viewed nationalism as a unifying

la masse, qu'elle sera le seul apanage des intellectuels ou des citoyens, l'Indépendance immédiate sera prématurée, car l'idée d'indépendance suppose à "priori" que l'idée de nation est claire et précise dans tous les esprits."

³⁸ Ibid., p. 51. "Conscience Nationale insuffisante".

³⁹ Ibid., p. 52.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 60. "Tant que les Bambaras, les Markas, les Bobos, les Sarakolés, les Peulhs, etc.... ne se sentiront pas Soudanais d'abord; tans que les Soudanais, les Sénégalais, les Ivoiriens, les Voltaïques, les Nigériens, ne se sentiront pas solidaires les uns des autres dans le cadres de l'UNION OUEST AFRICAINE, tant que cela ne sera pas réalisé, nous ne serons pas prêts pour une autre étape... Il faut nécessairement, et coûte que coûte, arriver dans peu de temps à créer cette conscience... qui constitue le sentiment national."

force, the content of which was less important than the function. The manner in which they characterized West African territory — as divided rather than diverse — suggests party leaders connected nationalism with stability; the same can be said of the manner in which the party depicted local identities in a consistently negative light. Indeed, USRDA literature characterized them as "ancient racial conflicts."⁴¹ To the party, Mali's many ethnicities did not form part of the area's cultural heritage, but were indexed to an idea of a violent and disorganized past.

Such perspectives were common in francophone West Africa during this period.

As Kipré asserts,

Except in the Togolese and Cameroonien cases, "nationalism" did not bear on a specific territory... The *loi-cadre* Gaston Defferre of 1956 sounded the knell of federations and consecrated the personality of each territory, as had already happened in the scattered British colonies. It appears thus that in political debate before 1960 the nation was still perceived by African social elites as separate from individual territories. The intellectuals, in particular, clearly distinguished the cultures able to found an "African nation," this being nonetheless apprehended on a continental scale and not at the territorial level which was, for many, that of "tribes" and "ethnicities" too numerous to serve as a basis for a "nation."⁴²

Thus prior to independence nationalism was understood at the continental or at least the regional level. The USRDA understood it in an African rather than a territorial light, and characterized the territory as fractured and fraught with conflicting ethnic identities.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 60. "anciennes oppositions raciales."

⁴² Kipré, "La crise de l'État-nation en Afrique de l'Ouest," 26-27. "Sauf dans les cas togolais et camerounais, le "nationalisme" ne porte pas spécifiquement sur un territoire... La loi-cadre Defferre de 1956 sonnait institutionnellement le glas des fédérations et consacrant la personnalité de chaque territoire, comme déjà dans les colonies britanniques éparpillées. Il apparaît donc que dans le débat politique d'avant 1960 la nation est perçue par les élites sociales africaines comme encore isolée des territoires individuels. Les intellectuels, en particulier, distinguent bien la spécificité des cultures susceptibles de fonder une "nation africaine", celle-ci étant néanmoins appréhendée à l'échelle continentale et non au niveau territorial qui est, pour beaucoup, celui de "tribus" et "ethnies" trop nombreuses pour servir de base à une "nation"."

Nationalism, as USRDA elites imagined it, represented the future. Not only would it create unity, but according to definitions used by the party it required certain forms of unity as a prerequisite. Referencing Stalin's 1913 article "Marxism and the National Question," a USRDA report defines nationalism as "a stable Community, historically constituted of language, Territory, economic life, and psychological makeup, which translates into the Cultural Community."⁴³ Despite the social and cultural heterogeneity of the territory, in 1958 the party believed the West African Union they hoped to create met the criteria for a nation. They noted, for example, that "the lingua franca is French," and thus concluded that their proposed nation would satisfy the need for linguistic unity.⁴⁴

This was far from the truth. While political elites spoke French, "the peasants who constitute 95% of the Malian population"⁴⁵ did not. They spoke the languages cited above: Bambara, Peulh, Sarakolé, etc. Consequently, not only was the nationalist ideal foreign to the populace, but many of the *elements* of official nationalism were foreign too. In many instances, the USRDA forced these elements on the population and persecuted those who resisted. Thus, although the details of how the USRDA's nationalist ideal evolved over time are important, the key point here is its adversarial nature. Political elites were aware that their nationalist identity was largely foreign to the

⁴³ ANM.4.5e Congrès de l'Union Soudanaise RDA 1958. *Rapport Politique présenté par Idrissa Diarra*, p. 59. "La nation est une Communauté stable, historiquement constituée de langue, de Territoire, de vie économique et de formation psychique qui se traduit dans la Communauté de Culture".

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 59 "La langue passe partout en est le Français."

⁴⁵ ANM.125.467. Correspondance BPN 1957-1967. *Lettre aux "Chefs de poste" (nommés plus tard chefs d'arrondissement), signée par Idrissa Diarra (Secrétaire politique), 23 December 1960.* " la population paysanne qui constitue les 95% de la population malienne".

populace. They would aggressively promote this new identity, and would also aggressively attack existing ones. As stated in a report from the Fifth Party Congress in 1958, "it is first necessary to systematically demolish all racial or tribal conflicts in the interior of the Soudan" before the new nation could be constructed.⁴⁶ Local identities and ethnicities were seen as problems to be demolished. Foreign institutions like the French language were seen as necessary to impose on the populace in order to "rally unanimity."⁴⁷ Mali sought to foster nationalism by incorporating indigenous institutions and identities into the state apparatus where possible — for example, by supplanting local youth organizations like the Dogon *allamoudjou*⁴⁸ with party institutions like the "pioneers," vigilance brigades, and *civiques* — and by undermining them when they could not be incorporated.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ ANM.4.5e Congrès de l'Union Soudanaise RDA 1958. *Rapport Politique présenté par Idrissa Diarra*, p. 60. "il est d'abord nécessaire de démolir systématiquement toutes les oppositions raciales ou tribales à l'intérieur du Soudan."

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 59. "rallier l'unanimité".

⁴⁸ This "traditional institution" was formerly tasked with forest protection in Dogon society: "Des études diagnostiques, surtout institutionnelles, ont été menées pour identifier les modes antérieurs de gestion. Celles-ci ont révélé dans la zone du plateau, premier site d'installation des dogons après leur migration du Mandé, l'existence d'institutions traditionnelles chargées de la police forestière. Appelées « Allamoudjou » (vilains visages) du fait des maquillages et des masques hideux que ses membres portent pour effrayer les délinquants, ces institutions sont rattachées au Hogon, le chef traditionnel en milieu dogon." Moussa Djiré, "Les conventions locales, un outil de gestion durable des ressources naturelles ? Acquis et interrogations à partir d'exemples maliens," *Forum Praïa+9* (Bamako, 17-21 novembre 2003): 8.

⁴⁹ Interview with Boubacar Sega Diallo, Bamako, 20 March 2012. Even Islamic institutions faced difficulties under the Keita regime, as students were prohibited from begging alms, as had long been their custom (Interview with N'Faly Touré, Fama, 15 March, 2012). The "very religious spirit of the inhabitants" ["l'esprit très religieux des habitants"] of Djenné — a city where the party enjoyed little favour — was also described with disdain by delegates of the National Political Bureau as "almost fanatical" ["presque fanatiques"]. Such labeling of devotion as fanatical appears to be an expression of the party's failure to supplant religious institutions. Indeed, the same report lamented with no small dose of bitterness that in Djenné "Non-activism [in the

These nationalist aspirations help explain why the period of USRDA rule saw the state attack indigenous institutions and groups with such ferocity. Looking to the past, the party saw divisions, conflicts, and an "infinity of races." Indeed, even in the present it was faced with great divisions. By 1962 the first Tuareg-state conflict had broken out, with Tuaregs asserting their own national identity.⁵⁰ A number of other communities across the country also expressed a desire to secede, either to establish independent states or to join neighbouring ones.

In 1963 in the southwestern region of Koulikoro, for example, government officials registered locals' deep dissatisfaction with the Malian state and "a tendency to desire annexation by Guinea."⁵¹ An "explosion of regionalism" was equally noted in the Manding (Mande) heartland of Kangaba. Here officials recorded "a manifestation of xenophobia toward all those from the local [party] leadership who are not from the Manding."⁵² Facing such perceived divisions, the USRDA saw both nationalism and socialism as tools to unify and pacify those living within the state's territorial boundaries — many of whom did not identify with the national community imagined by the

party] in no way detracts from one's respectability" ["La non-militance ne dérange rien à la respectabilité"]. ANM.109.415.Compte-Rendu et Rapport de Mission à l'Intérieur du Mali 1968.9 *Décembre 1963, Rapport de Mission Djenné Délégation du BPN.*

⁵⁰ Baz Lecocq, *Disputed Desert: Decolonisation, Competing Nationalisms and Tuareg Rebellions in Northern Mali* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

⁵¹ ANM.109.407.Rapport et Compte-Rendu du Mission à l'Intérieur du Mali 1963.1963 05 02 *Compte rendu de la mission d'Information de la Délégation du BPN dans les cercles de KITA et de KOLOKANI du 16 avril au 2 mai 1963.* Examples of what the USRDA called regionalism — which was often the absence of strong attachment to a Malian national identity only just invented by the political elite — crop up frequently in the archival record, and can be noted in all regions of the country.

⁵² ANM.109.415.Compte-Rendu et Rapport de Mission à l'Intérieur du Mali 1968. *Mission de la délégation du CNDR à KANGABA (signé Moussa KONATE, Chef de la Délégation).* "explosion de regionalisme"... "une manifestation de xénophobie envers tous ceux de la direction locale non originaire du Manding."

political elite.⁵³ The commonalities in this "new" society would not so much be cultural as aspirational. They would be based on the promise of shared progress rather than a shared history. In a 1961 "Call to the Nation," President Keita described Malian socialism along such lines:

In a word, the whole Community, standing as one man, must make of our land a vast national building site, from which will emerge, tomorrow, for the sole benefit of that same Community, a free country, modern, that will no longer know misery, illiteracy, and terrorizing endemic diseases. That is the meaning of our socialism: all working for all... We have thus followed the prescriptions of the Congress, which asked us to engage the country in the path of planned socialist development. We will never create a category of privileged persons. Prosperity will never be for a single category but for all.⁵⁴

This speech from President Keita highlights the manner in which USRDA leaders often conflated nationalism and socialism, seeing them as two sides of the same developmental coin. It also encapsulates key features of each of these ideologies. Nationalism was intended to create unity. The nation would stand together, work together, and emerge victorious together. Socialism, in addition to providing economic models of how to achieve that victory, made an explicitly egalitarian promise about it: all would enjoy the fruits of this progress to the same extent.

⁵³ On nationalism and imagined communities, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

⁵⁴ ANM.125.467. Correspondances BPN 1957-1967. *Appel à la Nation (discours de Modibo Keita)*, 30 Septembre 1961. "En un mot, la Communauté entière, debout comme un seul homme, doit faire de notre terre un vaste chantier national, d'où sortira, demain, au seul bénéfice de cette même Communauté, un pays libre, moderne, qui connaîtra plus la misère, l'analphabetisme et les endemies qui terrorisent. Voilà le sens de notre socialisme: tous à l'oeuvre pour tous... Nous avons donc suivi les prescriptions du Congrès qui nous demandait d'engager le pays dans la voie d'une économie socialiste planifiée. Nous ne créerons jamais une catégorie de privilégiés. La prospérité ne sera jamais pour une seule catégorie mais pour tous."

The nation, for its part, would “serve as cement” for regimes like the USRDA, “[symbolizing] the new unity in a perfect synthesis where the identity assigned by the natural order but also the promise of better tomorrows are conjugated.”⁵⁵ Indeed, the regime would promote Malian national identity – which meant little in 1960 – throughout its tenure, drawing on “the reactivation of the past [inscribed] in the perspective of collective utopia”⁵⁶ in order to use nationalist ideology as an “exit from the fractured identities accumulated through colonial history.”⁵⁷ Nationalism, in other words, was a means of creating stability in a fragmented and volatile political environment.

Yet it is crucial to understand how far this nationalist ideal was from reality at the time of independence. Indeed, many who lived within the territorial boundaries of the Malian state did not consider themselves Malian. On the contrary, they identified the idea of Mali with President Keita and his associates in power. One regime critic in Horokoto, a village in the Kayes region near the Senegalese and Guinean borders, conveyed this to a government spy posing as a dissident migrant labourer. "Don't

⁵⁵ Daniel Bourmaud, “Aux sources de l’autoritarisme en Afrique : des idéologies et des hommes,” *Revue internationale de politique comparée* 13, no. 4 (March 1, 2007): 630. “La nation va faire office de ciment. Elle symbolise la nouvelle unité dans une parfaite synthèse où se conjuguent l’identité assignée par l’ordre des choses mais aussi la promesse de lendemains meilleurs.”

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, “Mais la réactivation du passé s’inscrit dans la perspective de l’utopie collective,” 630.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, “Sous peine de créer des cataclysmes en chaîne, il va falloir ériger une nouvelle identité à l’intérieur des cadres territoriaux dessinés par les puissances coloniales”; “Il est intimement partagé par les acteurs qui voient dans l’idéologie de la nation l’issue aux fractures identitaires accumulées par l’Histoire coloniale,” 629-630.

worry," he said when the spy recounted a false anecdote about Malian customs officials hassling him at the Senegalese border. "Mali's power is coming to an end."⁵⁸

This villager's diction is important. He does not say the Keita regime's power, or the tenure of the ruling party, is coming to an end. He identifies the idea of Mali with the Keita regime, as did many others. Despite living squarely within the confines of the territory controlled by the state, he positions himself outside of the nation. Given that, as mentioned earlier, Malian nationalism was invented by the USRDA regime circa independence, this is not surprising. Malian national identity was not an established reality during the party's tenure. It was an idea they endeavoured to propagate, yet one that many locals viewed with scepticism. Regime officials equally betrayed an awareness of the idea of Mali being an invention. In his mission report, one of the spies sent on this surveillance detail concluded that "the village of Horokoto today manifests an evident hostility toward Mali."⁵⁹ The way "Mali" is referenced suggests not an established nation, but a national ideal the ruling elite struggled to bring into being. This struggle would continue throughout the regime's tenure, with important consequences for Mali's political future and for citizens from all walks of life.

Socialism

Socialism lent itself to creating the kind of forward-looking developmentalist narrative that USRDA leaders wanted — one that would emphasize the prospect of equal social

⁵⁸ ANM.125.467.Corrépondances BPN 1957-1967. *Au sujet de l'attitude subversive de M Sambou SISSOKO de Borokoné (10 juin 1964)*. "Sois tranquille... le pouvoir du Mali touche à sa fin."

⁵⁹ ANM.125.467.Corrépondances BPN 1957-1967. *Au sujet de l'attitude subversive de M Sambou SISSOKO de Borokoné (10 juin 1964)*. "Selon mon informateur, le village de Horokoto manifeste aujourd'hui une hostilité évidente contre le Mali."

and economic uplift for all Malians. At the same time, it provided a compelling means of rationalizing the clientelist policies supporters pressured it to implement. Established socialist narratives touting the benefits of state-led development — often borrowed from Soviet and Chinese sources — provided a framework for the regime to appropriate resources and redistribute them to supporters through public institutions while characterizing these elite-driven policies as being part of a development program that would benefit all.⁶⁰ Yet this strategy only proved viable in the short term. The USRDA linked the socialist project to modernity and economic development, yet was ill-placed to deliver these. Its emphasis on resource redistribution to clients only reduced the party's capacity to improve life's material conditions for ordinary citizens. By the time soldiers ousted President Keita in 1968, living standards had dropped. The elite still had their eyes fixed on the future, but the populace was moving backward.

Socialist ideology offered a means for the USRDA to synthesize what Daniel Bourmaud has characterized as a “magic triangle of thought crowned by African socialisms.”⁶¹ This triangle was comprised of three ideas – development, nation, and state – that “delineated the order of priorities and contributed to delimiting a political vision where pluralism was erased behind the demand for unity.”⁶² The belief in development is clearly evident in the records and actions of the Keita regime. Indeed, it

⁶⁰ Similar observations about the instrumentalization of socialism in Mali and state accumulation through public enterprises have been made by other scholars. See Guy Martin, "Socialism, Economic Development and Planning in Mali, 1960-1968," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* (1976): 26; Claude Meillassoux, "A Class Analysis of the Bureaucratic Process in Mali," *Journal of Development Studies* 6, no. 2 (1970): 106.

⁶¹ Bourmaud, “Aux sources de l’autoritarisme en Afrique,” 628.

⁶² Ibid. “balisent l’ordre des priorités et contribuent à délimiter une vision du politique où le pluralisme s’efface derrière l’exigence d’unité,” 628.

was central to its identity in the anticolonial struggle as well as after independence. As

Bourmaud observes:

Development formed a part of the new independent states' very identity. It was concomitant with the emergence of the anticolonial critique that emerged after the Second World War. The indictment of colonialism rested on the accusation of exploitation of the resources of the colonized, of their impoverishment and, from this, of their underdevelopment. The third world, in which Africa is a stakeholder, finds its common denominator in a situation that results directly from the actions conducted by the colonizer. The hegemony of economic discourse eluded the political question or, more precisely, provided an atrophied reading of it. The priority was to extract Africa from its condition of destitution... To emerge from colonialism was to develop because, by definition, development was the inverse of colonization.⁶³

As for the state, the USRDA presented it as “the practical instrument of development and of the nation.”⁶⁴ Bourmaud writes,

Development was so established as a myth that all the means of public power were to be deployed for it. The [postcolonial] states thus experienced a veritable hypertrophy, with a multiplication of bureaucratic structures: ministries, various administrations and state enterprises. Few domains remained outside their field of competence. The central place accorded to the state in works of political science is only the reflection of the capital role that it in fact came to play. Such “do everything states” were established as grand organizers of the economy and of society, thanks notably to the tool of planning, in charge of production, investments, the collection of surplus and its redistribution... In short, overseer of all, the African state was conceived and idealized as a providential state, the location for the accomplishment of the material well-being of societies and location for the establishment of social linkages. Via the state, it was the nation that was projected. That the functional logics of these state apparatuses was far removed from the principles upon which they were founded is a truism. This does

⁶³ Ibid. “Le développement fait partie de l’identité même des nouveaux États indépendants. Il est concomitant avec l’émergence de la critique anticoloniale qui émerge après la deuxième guerre mondiale. Le procès du colonialisme repose sur l’accusation d’une exploitation des ressources du colonisé, de son appauvrissement et, partant, de son sous-développement. Le tiers-monde, dont l’Afrique est partie prenante, trouve son commun dénominateur dans une situation qui résulte directement de l’action conduite par le colonisateur. L’hégémonie du discours économique élude la question politique où, plus précisément, en fournit une lecture atrophiée. La priorité est d’extraire l’Afrique de sa condition de dénuement... Sortir du colonialisme, c’est se développer car, par définition, le développement est l’envers de la colonisation,” 628-629.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

nothing to diminish the fact, however, that they delineated the ideological horizon of societies and of leading elites and, from that, fashioned the political by reducing the space of ideological pluralism. How could one be against the idea of development, of the nation and of the state except by erecting oneself as an enemy of the common good, without breaking the unity thus created. African socialisms would be the synthesized expression of this triangle at once mythic and magical.⁶⁵

This is an apt phrase: socialism was indeed the “synthesized expression” of the core ideas that motivated politicians in Africa — certainly in Mali. It allowed the USRDA to fuse its longstanding devotion to development with its new commitment to territorial nationalism while consolidating power within the state. Socialism provided an ideal means of legitimizing the party’s self-interested behaviour, as it linked economic progress, nation-building, and a dominant role for the state in society into one neat political project.

Furthermore, “for the proponents of a ‘scientific’ approach to African socialism, in the lineage of their Western sources, the emphasis placed upon [foreign] economic

⁶⁵ Ibid., 631. “Les États ont ainsi connu une véritable hypertrophie, avec une démultiplication de leurs structures bureaucratiques: ministères, administrations diverses et entreprises publiques. Peu de domaines sont restés en dehors de leur champ de compétence. La place centrale accordée à l’État dans les travaux de science politique n’est que le reflet du rôle capital qui lui a été dévolu dans les faits. « État à tout faire », il a été érigé en grand organisateur de l’économie et de la société, grâce notamment à l’outil de la planification, en charge de la production, des investissements, de la collecte du surplus et de sa répartition à travers par exemple les caisses de stabilisation, mais aussi responsable de l’éducation et de la solidarité... Bref, patrimoine de tous, l’État africain a été conçu et idéalisé comme un État providence, lieu d’accomplissement du bien-être matériel des sociétés et lieu de mise en forme du lien social. À travers l’État, c’est la nation qui se projetait. Que les logiques de fonctionnement de ces appareils étatiques aient été très éloignées des principes qui les fondaient relève du truisme. Il n’en demeure pas moins qu’ils ont balisé l’horizon idéologique des sociétés et des élites dirigeantes et, par là, façonné le politique en réduisant l’espace du pluralisme idéologique. Comment pouvait-on être contre les idéaux du développement, de la nation et de l’État sauf à s’ériger en ennemi du bien commun, sans rompre l’unité ainsi créée. Les socialismes africains seront l’expression synthétisée de ce triangle à la fois mythique et magique.”

domination allowed them to elude the question of political pluralism.”⁶⁶ It legitimized the establishment of a party-state in which the USRDA would not simply be the only political party allowed but where administrators at all levels, and indeed anyone who sought to engage the public sphere, would be required to align with the party as a precondition for the legitimacy of their interventions. Thus socialism presented a means not just for the USRDA to dominate politics, but for the party to expand the definition of the political sphere and, as a result, to justify its control of nearly all institutions found within the state’s borders. Socialism allowed the party to become synonymous with the state, and the state to become synonymous with the interests of the populace. As such, it equally offered a powerful rationale for the creation of state monopolies in the name of protecting Malian consumers and producers from the special interests of private businesses concerned with turning a profit.

Socialism was also linked closely to the ideas of state planning and industrialization, with states like the Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China implementing centrally-planned schemes to modernize “backward” economies in the decades prior to Malian independence. Such programs aligned with the USRDA’s interest in the rapid transformation of an impoverished rural society — whose agricultural yields were relatively low and whose productive technologies were relatively inefficient — into a modern and prosperous one. Socialism not only offered apparent examples of how to accomplish such socioeconomic transformations — both through reshaping the peasant economy and through industrialization — but also

⁶⁶ Ibid., 632. “Pour les tenants d’une approche “scientifique” du socialisme africain, dans la lignée de leurs sources occidentales, l’accent mis sur la domination économique conduit à éluder la question du pluralisme politique.”

provided a rationale for doing so in a political environment dominated, ostensibly for the sake of developmental efficiency, by a single party. Thus socialism offered an enticing means of combining the party's developmental commitment with the realpolitik pressures it faced to consolidate power for the sake of assuring the loyalty of its client base. Socialism, then, was a convenient tool for purposes of political and cultural control. Particularly since leaders like Modibo Keita promoted a glorious future while linking socialism to a past characterized by communitarianism and social solidarity, this ideology was a convenient binding agent for the regime's objectives. Although socialism was not the only means to achieve this kind of binding, the fact that it had had a presence in the Soudan for several decades prior to independence favoured its later adoption as the USRDA's official ideology.

Clientelism

Although the Keita regime would often operate under the influence of the leading global ideologies of the day, particularly nationalism and socialism, it would also be moved by less grandiose questions of power politics. Under Keita's rule, clientelism, or patrimonialism as it is referred to by some scholars, would play a particularly important role in shaping the practice of politics, as it was both a pre-existing feature of the political landscape and one the regime's clients — particularly USRDA supporters within what might be termed the state bourgeoisie⁶⁷ — had no intention of eliminating. Mamoudou Gazibo's definition of this practice is highly suggestive of its relevance to the Malian case under USRDA rule:

⁶⁷ On this term, see "Clerks Without Cash" in Chapter 2.

[N]eopatrimonialism refers to configurations where the state, while claiming to be modern, combines public and private norms, unlike the Weberian bureaucratic state that relies upon impersonal rules. These rules are “partially interiorized” by actors who therefore find themselves in an intermediary position.

Neopatrimonialism refers less to the absence of legal norms or the pre-eminence of tradition, than to the co-existence of conflicting norms.... The outcome is a constant interpenetration between private and public interests, but also the management of official mandates for private purposes, the imprint of nepotism in the recruitment of civil servants and in the selection of the entourage of officials. In the process, personal loyalties prevail over institutionalized relations, with the result of a correlative weakness of institutional and legal frameworks since they lack the capacity to shape the behaviour of actors. We may add to this list the low accountability of the leadership and a lack of incentive or commitment to adopt developmental policies.⁶⁸

With these considerations in mind, this study aims to probe beneath the USRDA’s professed devotion to nationalism and socialism, and to expose the often realpolitikal motivations of the party. It equally seeks to examine how clientelist pressures may have both shaped and been shaped by the nationalist and socialist ideology the USRDA espoused.

Although this approach to understanding how patronage as a political tactic interacted with the regime’s ideological and rhetorical toolkits may present something of a departure from the established literature on the Keita years, the importance of clientelism in Mali before, during, and after the period under study has been well established. Many scholars have noted the prevalence of patron-client relationships in Mali’s postcolonial political system — relationships that would come to bear

⁶⁸ Mamoudou Gazibo, “Introduction,” in Daniel C. Bach and Mamoudou Gazibo, eds., *Neopatrimonialism in Africa and Beyond* (New York: Routledge, 2012). On the concept of neopatrimonialism, see also Christopher S. Clapham, *Third World Politics: An Introduction* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985).

significantly on how the USRDA practiced politics in the early postcolonial era.⁶⁹ For example, Jean-Loup Amselle has remarked that:

in Mali...it is considered totally bizarre, even worthy of condemnation, to not steal from the state. Any individual in a position to withdraw something for his benefit and who would not redistribute it to his relatives or friends, which is to say inside his clientelist network, would be considered a *tubab* (White) at best, at worst would be the object of curses from his kin.⁷⁰

While such tendencies are relevant to Mali's current political culture, they also have deep historical roots. Scholars have both affirmed their importance during the Keita years⁷¹ and have also linked them to the precolonial era, highlighting their significance over the *longue durée*. On the topic of postcolonial clientelism's longstanding importance in Malian (and pre-Malian) politics, Claude Fay writes:

the principles of predation and redistribution that structured power and the economy in precolonial political formations (monarchies and great empires) were reinstated at the same time as was a legitimizing "aristocratic" ideology, by the State bourgeoisie that emerged from the "local" colonial bureaucracy.⁷²

⁶⁹ See for example, Claude Fay, "La Démocratie au Mali ou le Pouvoir en Pature," *Cahier d'Études Africaines* 35, no. 137 (1995): 19–53; Jean-Loup Amselle, "La Corruption et le Clientélisme au Mali et en Europe de l'Est: Quelques Points de Comparaison," *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 32, no. 128 (1992): 629–642; Michael Bratton, Massa Coulibaly, and Fabiana Machado, "Popular Views of the Legitimacy of the State in Mali," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 36, no. 2 (2002): 197–238.

⁷⁰ Amselle, "La Corruption et le Clientélisme au Mali et en Europe de l'Est," 629–630. "au Mali... il est considéré comme totalement incongru, voire condamnable, de ne pas voler l'État. Un individu quelconque en mesure de prélever à son profit et qui ne redistribuerait pas à ses parents ou à ses amis, c'est-à-dire à l'intérieur de son réseau de clientèle, serait considéré au mieux comme un *tubab* (Blanc), au pire serait l'objet de malédictions de la part de ses proches."

⁷¹ Indeed, Amselle has described clientelist tendencies in Mali an article dealing specifically with the Keita era as well. See Jean-Loup Amselle, "La Conscience Paysanne: La Révolte de Ouolossébougou (juin 1968, Mali)," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 12, no. 3 (1978): 339–355; see also Mohamed Saliou Camara, "Nation Building and the Politics of Islamic Internationalism in Guinea," 155–72.

⁷² Fay, "La Démocratie au Mali," 21. "les principes de prédation et de redistribution qui structuraient le pouvoir et l'économie dans les formations politiques précoloniales (monarchies et grands empires) ont été récupérés, en même temps qu'une idéologie

These tendencies were equally noted — with some frustration — by President Keita himself. Many party supporters considered it a matter of course that the regime would reward them with material benefits. As Keita stated in his "Moral and Political Report" at the Fifth Congress of the Union Soudanaise in 1958:

Indeed, a comrade who wants a rifle or a radio set, an activist who wants to get married or build his house, even if sometimes they have the means, prefer to address themselves to the leader, to the elected member, as if these [leaders] had an inexhaustible fortune at their disposal. If the demands of activists go beyond the means of the [elected member] who has been called upon, this places [members] in the dilemma of refusing at the risk of not being understood, or of giving, but of having recourse to expedients prejudicial to their reputation, thus to the RDA. It is therefore imperative that our comrades avoid degrading the beauty of their devotion to the Party.⁷³

While Mali's leaders lamented the way party activists "degraded the beauty of their devotion" with demands for compensation, further evidence for clientelism is found in patterns of public spending during the Keita years. As this dissertation intends to show, the regime expanded the public service far beyond its means and created many enterprises it could not effectively manage. This was not due to poor accounting on the regime's part, but rather because it was responding to immediate pressure from supporters to share the state's wealth now that it was in local hands.⁷⁴ The problem of

'aristocratique' légitimante, par la bourgeoisie d'État issue de la bureaucratie coloniale 'locale'."

⁷³ ANM.4.5e Congrès de l'Union Soudanaise RDA 1958. *Rapport Moral et Politique présenté par Modibo Keita*, p. 5. "En effet un camarade qui veut un fusil ou un poste radio, un militant qui [sic] se marier ou construire sa maison, même s'ils ont parfois les moyens, préfèrent s'adresser au dirigeant, à l'élu comme si ceux-ci disposaient d'une fortune inépuisable. Si les exigences des militants dépassent les moyens de celui auquel il est fait appel, celui-ci se trouve dans l'alternative pénible de refuser, au risque de ne pas être compris ou de donner, mais en ayant recours à d'expédients préjudiciables à leur réputation, donc au R.D.A. Il faut donc que nos camarades évitent de dégrader la beauté de leur dévouement au Parti..."

⁷⁴ See "Clientelism" in Chapter 3.

clientelism would remain important throughout the USRDA's tenure, with President Keita lamenting its deleterious effects again in 1967.⁷⁵

While the regime hoped its enterprises would generate income that would keep the state solvent in the long-term, clientelist political pressures — and the threat of losing support from unsatisfied followers — kept the regime from prioritizing economic development. This strategy was viable in the short-term, but eventually exacerbated economic problems that progressively reduced the state's ability to service client networks effectively. While clientelist policies can of course be enacted in the absence of socialism — indeed, the politics of patronage has been noted across French West Africa, particularly after the advent of territorial autonomy devolving real political power to local authorities⁷⁶ — this rhetoric was useful to the USRDA as it allowed developments driven in a certain measure by clientelism and power politics to be presented as symbols of national development. Clients within the political class were often rewarded with positions in, or resources from, a rapidly expanding state economic sector, the growth of which occurred at the expense of the indigenous merchant class.⁷⁷ This state sector — consisting of enterprises involved mainly in trade, transport, and light industry — played a symbolic role in the USRDA's nationalist narrative, centred as it was on the ideas of modernity, progress, and economic development. Socialism, in turn, allowed institutions that functioned in large part to cement the Keita regime's control of the state through the concentration of economic resources and through distributing patronage to also serve, for a time, to strengthen the perception that the USRDA was

⁷⁵ ANM.141.559.CNDR Circulaires. *Circulaire no 16/CNDR du 22 Novembre 1967 (Modibo Keita)*.

⁷⁶ Cooper, *Africa in the World*, 79.

⁷⁷ See Chapter 5, "The Merchants of Menace."

inaugurating an era not just of economic prosperity but also of equality. Under the banner of socialism, the USRDA could claim not only to be developing Mali but to be doing so in the most egalitarian way possible – through the establishment of public enterprises nominally run by the people and aimed at serving them rather than at generating profits for individuals or corporations. The state enterprise system, however, would do little to serve the population, as many new industries drained the public purse due in part to excessive staffing levels and to losses attributable to other clientelist practices.⁷⁸

The drive to redistribute resources to clients during the Keita years led to significant changes for the political class, chiefs, merchants, and peasants. The main beneficiaries of this tendency were party members who gained positions in the rapidly expanding public service. The merchants and peasants, in contrast, were the groups from which state leaders sought to extract resources to channel through their support networks. This, however, did not always work as planned. Merchants proved skilled at surviving in the black market, just as peasants found ways to circumvent state efforts to extract ever-greater amounts of grain from them at unfavourable prices. Chiefs, too, would frustrate these efforts. Whether through retaining robust client networks of their own, or through effectively infiltrating state institutions — particularly in rural areas — they would remain a political force the party would be obliged to contend with to the last.

⁷⁸ Interview with Dotien Coulibaly, Bamako, 20 March 2012.

Historiographical Contribution

Unlike the bulk of the existing literature, this is not a chronicle of intra-elite intrigue.⁷⁹

This study is about the Malian political class in relation to other segments of the population, and it asks how Mali's political leaders in the 1960s practiced politics and used nationalist and socialist ideas in their engagements with key social groups. It follows these ideological itineraries through political problems related to peasants, merchants, chiefs, and the legitimacy of USRDA rule.

This is a new approach to the study of Malian postcolonial history. While relying chiefly on government accounts, it is one that is squarely focused on the state's engagement with society. It seeks to understand how state actors used socialist discourse to promote Malian nationalism while rationalizing clientelism. It also examines how citizens reacted to these developments, which often had serious implications for their cultural and economic lives. It takes to heart Ivan Karp's exhortation to transcend abstract analysis in historical inquiry, and subscribes to the agenda of producing "nuanced...context-specific studies of time and places that are little known."⁸⁰

⁷⁹ For examples of this type of work, see: Bintou Sanankoua, *La Chute de Modibo Keita* (Bamako: Editions Chaka, 1990); Modibo Diagouraga, *Modibo Keita: Un Destin* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005); Cheick Oumar Diarrah, *Le Mali de Modibo Keita* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1986); Abdoulaye Charles Danioko, "Contribution à l'étude des partis politiques au Mali de 1945 à 1960," (Thèse de 3e cycle, Université de Paris VII, 1984); Frank G. Snyder, *One-Party Government in Mali: Transition toward Control* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965); William Jones, *Planning and Economic Policy: Socialist Mali and Her Neighbors* (Washington: Three Continents Press, 1976); Tiégoué Amadou Ouattara, *Le Destin du socialisme malien* (Bamako: Editions Imprimerie du Mali, 1978); Martin, "Socialism, Economic Development, and Planning in Mali, 1960-1968," 23-47.

⁸⁰ Ivan Karp, "Does Theory Travel? Area Studies and Cultural Studies," *Africa Today* 44, no. 3 (1997): 284.

It must also be noted that the archival material on which this project is based has at present not been exploited to much effect. There is currently no published work based mainly on national government archives from the 1960s. Previous accounts have relied mostly on published sources, as Malian archival records from the era were closed until the 2000s. As such, this project also contributes to an understanding of the national archival collection's value for illuminating Malian history in the 1960s. It equally represents a contribution to Africanist historiography, as accounts of postcolonial socialism mostly remain to be written. Also, because this dissertation will place more emphasis on cultural and intellectual developments than have previous cognate works, it will reveal new aspects of Mali's political history.

The first wave of African independence, circa 1960, saw African politicians from Kenya's Tom Mboya to Senegal's Léopold Sédar Senghor promote socialism in Africa and, sometimes, "African socialism." Many West African states, including Ghana, Guinea, Mali, and Senegal, as well as those in North Africa from Algeria to Egypt, adopted a socialist political orientation.

These developments gave rise to an early literature on African socialism, generated by scholarly observers wondering what was essentially African, or essentially socialist, about the orientation of the political agents in question. Many of these observers placed considerable trust in African elites. They supported their arguments that socialism was a reality on the ground and that it was authentically African —

despite their misgivings about the heterogeneous and fragmented uses of the term in differing local contexts.⁸¹

These accounts did the important work of introducing these regimes and their rhetoric to scholars. However, they did not commonly have a historical orientation. They also tended not to approach politics as a dynamic system between rulers and ruled. Instead, they focused on mapping elite ideologies. As Michael G. Schatzberg has put it:

In restricting their attention to the substantive content of the speeches and writings of major politicians and pan-Africanist figures, scholars writing in a sterile, static, and narrowly exegetical Afro-Saxon tradition have usually emphasized formal ideologies and proceeded along predictable paths of inquiry.⁸²

Consequently, this remains mostly uncharted territory for historians.⁸³ Not only are careful historical accounts of socialism's emergence and use in Africa lacking, but so are analyses of how these developments impacted — and were impacted by — the populace. This study will contribute to addressing this lacuna.

During the "second wave" of socialist activity in Africa in the 1970s and 1980s — as Lusophone Africa was decolonized, Ethiopia adopted socialism, and Tanzania expanded its use of socialist ideas under the aegis of *ujamaa* — there was a renewed burst of intellectual activity on this topic. This time, scholars were warier of the gap between rhetoric and reality. Whether there was anything particularly African or socialist about these regimes was very much in question (though Julius Nyerere's

⁸¹ See, for example, William H. Friedland & Carl G. Rosberg, Jr., eds., *African Socialism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964); Leopold Sedar Senghor, *On African Socialism* (New York: Praeger, 1964); Kenneth W. Grundy, "Marxism-Leninism and African Underdevelopment: The Mali Approach", *International Journal*, 17, 3 (1962): 300-304.

⁸² Michael G. Schatzberg, *Political Legitimacy in Middle Africa: Father, Family, Food* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 3.

⁸³ Frederick Cooper, "Possibility and Constraint: African Independence in Historical Perspective," *The Journal of African History* 49, no. 2 (2008): 173.

Tanzanian socialism had many international believers at this time, particularly in the decade following the Arusha Declaration of 1967).⁸⁴

Much interesting and useful work emerged. However, scholars who did not pursue these topics historically continued to dominate the literature. The focus remained on understanding the nature of state ideology, and on the creation of generalizable models.⁸⁵ More recently, some anthropologists have turned to the study of socialism and post-socialism. They have begun to ask incisive questions about the diverse roles socialism may have played not only for elites but women, youth and other non-elite groups.⁸⁶ However, this work is often oriented toward the present postsocialist era and socialism's legacy for today, rather than toward the past. Furthermore, such work is thin on the ground. Such a study has yet to be done in Mali.

In the last decade, however, a few historians have undertaken path-breaking explorations of the history of postcolonial socialist regimes. Andrew Ivaska's recent book *Cultured States: Youth, Gender, and Modern Style in 1960s Dar Es Salaam* departs from the older model and "moves beyond an analysis of the ideological work performed

⁸⁴ An example of such pro-Nyerere literature is Cranford Pratt's book *The Critical Phase in Tanzania 1945-1968: Nyerere and the Emergence of a Socialist Strategy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); Michelle Bourbonniere, "Debating Socialism on the Hill: The University of Dar es Salaam, 1961-1971," (MA Thesis, Dalhousie University 2007).

⁸⁵ See, for example, Carl G. Rosberg & Thomas M. Callaghy, eds., *Socialism in Sub-Saharan Africa: A New Assessment* (Berkeley: University of California Institute of International Studies, 1979); Jeremy Gould, "Socialism and the Future of Africa," *Review of African Political Economy* 8 (1977): 121-126; Barry Munslow, *Africa: Problems in the Transition to Socialism* (London: Zed Books, 1986); Marina Ottoway & David Ottoway, *Afrocommunism* (New York: Africana, 1986); Crawford Young, *Ideology and Development in Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983).

⁸⁶ M. Anne Pitcher & Kelly M. Askew's article, "African Socialisms and Postsocialisms", *Africa: Journal of the International Africa Institute* 76, 1 (2006): 1-14, stands out in this regard.

by the national cultural project for the state... to the more central investigation of how official cultural discourse and interventions played out in the capital's cultural politics."⁸⁷ James Straker, in a similar study of youth and nationalism in socialist Guinea under Sékou Touré, has equally shifted the focus away from an autopsy of ideology to emphasize the ways in which the revolutionary state acted and opened up new spaces for thought and action among the citizenry.⁸⁸ Such approaches — which shift from a narrow focus on the analysis of fixed categories to an examination of the “subjective and processual nature” of the development of ideas like nationalism and socialism— have recently been promoted by other leading scholars as well.⁸⁹ Indeed, James Brennan has framed his work on political identity in early postcolonial Tanzania in a manner analogous to this dissertation’s analysis of socialist and nationalist ideology. He states that his work “is a study of racial and national thought, but also one that does not seek to divine the “origins” of such thought in East Africa; rather, it examines the specific processes by which historical actors come to identify and politicize humanity’s alleged

⁸⁷ James R. Brennan, *Taifa: Making Nation and Race in Urban Tanzania* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2012), 3.

⁸⁸ "The workings of the revolutionary state are typically cast as purely *prohibitive*, an ensemble of *constraining* impositions. This emphasis on rigidity masks the role that increasingly aggressive state incursions into communal life simultaneously played in forging historically novel forms and fields of sociopolitical action and thought." James D. Straker, *Youth, Nationalism, and the Guinean Revolution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 8.

⁸⁹ Jean-Francois Bayart, *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Polity, 2009); Julian Go, "Modeling States and Sovereignty: Postcolonial Constitutions in Asia and Africa", in *Making a World After Empire: The Bandung Moment and Its Political Afterlives*, Chris Lee, ed. (Athens, OH: University of Ohio Press, 2010), 107-139; Donald L. Donham, *Marxist Modern: An Ethnographic History of the Ethiopian Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); G. Thomas Burgess, "Mao in Zanzibar: Nationalism, Discipline, and the (De)Construction of Afro-Asian Solidarities", in *Making a World After Empire: The Bandung Moment and Its Political Afterlives*, Chris Lee, ed. (Athens, OH: University of Ohio Press, 2010), 196-234.

divisions.”⁹⁰ In similar fashion, this dissertation seeks to analyze how ideals like nationalism and socialism were involved in specific political processes in Mali — and how they were understood differently at different moments in these processes — rather than to pin down complex concepts that are better understood through their changing usage than through static definitions. It seeks, much as Frederick Cooper has done in his most recent work on “citizenship, nation, empire, state, and sovereignty” in French West Africa, to go beyond earlier scholarly tendencies to typologize regimes based on rhetoric and instead to look more deeply at how the local context shaped the use of such rhetoric and ideology in the pursuit of political goals – to understand, that is, “how these concepts were deployed—and queried and transformed—in the course of political action.”⁹¹

In a recent doctoral dissertation, Jeffrey Ahlman has also sought to historicize socialism, along with modernity and pan-Africanism, in the immediate postcolonial era, and offers an example of useful lines of historical questioning. His study of Kwame Nkrumah's Ghana centers its “analysis on the interaction between the elite and the ordinary, the local and the international, and the exceptional and the everyday.”⁹² This is consonant with the manner in which this dissertation will examine Modibo Keita's Mali, shifting the focus from intra-elite questions to ones about elite relationships with “the ordinary,” or at the very least with non-state actors including chiefs, merchants, and peasants. Furthermore, Ahlman's focus on “how Africans themselves employed the language of modernity and modernization... how the language of ‘the modern’ provided

⁹⁰Brennan, *Taifa*, 3.

⁹¹ Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation*, ix.

⁹² Jeffrey S. Ahlman, “Living With Nkrumahism: Nation, State, and Pan-Africanism in Ghana,” (PhD Thesis: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2011), 4.

Africans with a tool by which to make claims"⁹³ is equally consonant with this study's intentions. The key questions of this dissertation revolve not around *what kind of* socialists or modernists or even nationalists the Malian political elites were, but how they used and understood these ideas in their own unique historical circumstances.

Yet this dissertation attempts to go further than Ahlman's work, as it not only documents how the state mobilized such discourses, but also seeks to explain why. It suggests that concern for retaining and increasing control of the state motivated such discursive practices, and that socialism in particular was convenient for promoting nationalism and rationalizing clientelism. These strategies were central to the USRDA's endeavours to retain power in a climate of intense instability.

In this regard, this dissertation is indebted to Bruce Hall's *A History of Race in Muslim West Africa, 1600-1960*.⁹⁴ Here Hall approaches race *as argument* rather than orthodoxy or identity. His orientation toward race can be usefully applied to nationalism and socialism in Mali in the 1960s: not as predefined frameworks needing to be measured against orthodoxy, but both as discourses that were taken up by different political agents to accomplish a variety of goals and also as ideals that shaped – and sometimes misshaped – how those agents thought about the practice of politics. Through identifying these ideologies as tools both working *for* and working *on* Mali's political players, one finds a means of apprehending the complexity of the political process in these early years of Mali's independence, marked as it was by both ideology and realpolitik.

⁹³ Ibid., 12.

⁹⁴ Bruce S. Hall, *A History of Race in Muslim West Africa, 1600-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

In terms of analyzing the fundamental drivers of postcolonial socialist politics, perhaps the most promising historical work — which asks why some postcolonial regimes instrumentalized socialist ideas to further their nationalist aims — comes from an underserved Africanist field: Lusophone studies. Michel Cahen in particular has advanced the field by positioning the nationalist narrative as an elite invention intended to legitimize postcolonial regimes, and by situating socialism as a tool facilitating the nationalist narrative's expansion. These regimes tended to be hostile toward indigenous institutions and identities, as their richness and diversity threatened the nationalist narrative of unity.

Cahen also disaggregates the anticolonial struggle — which enjoyed popular support insofar as it promised to address questions of social justice — from the nationalist project, which was driven by elites to serve their own interests rather than those of the population. On this topic he writes:

In the case of the PAIGC, MPLA or Frelimo, the wish to expel the colonisers, to have new governments and ultimately to have new states was made synonymous with new nations. But the desire for a nation was not produced by the social movement, it was (and has remained) a project, it was proclaimed, it stemmed from the political elite and was imposed to the social movement to deny the first nations' relevance and promote the homogenised New Man.⁹⁵

While he writes here about Guinea-Bissau, Angola, and Mozambique, his analyses can be fruitfully applied to the Malian case. Indeed, a similar drive to create a New Man and a New Society took place in socialist Mali. As in Lusophone Africa, it was imposed by

⁹⁵ Michel Cahen, "Anticolonialism & Nationalism: Deconstructing synonymy, investigating historical processes —Notes on the Heterogeneity of Former African Colonial Portuguese Areas," in *Sure Road? Nationalisms in Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique*, Eric Morier-Genoud, ed., (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 18.

elites on the populace. In many cases, this led Malian leaders to view citizens as a problem to be solved, rather than as a constituency to be represented.

Furthermore, by separating the social justice concerns of the anticolonial struggle, which captured the passions of many ordinary Africans, from nationalist projects issuing from the elite rather than the populace, Cahen provides a framework by which to comprehend the adversarial relationship that emerged in the postcolonial era (in Mali and a number of other countries) between the state and a host of indigenous institutions.

He asserts:

When Frelimo imposed "communal villages," or banned traditional chiefs or rain rituals, when it prohibited African funeral associations, when it organised literacy campaigns only in Portuguese, including for old people, when it nationalised all schools, and so on, it was not primarily engaged in a socialist process, but rather attempting to launch a "nationalising" process, designed to impose the transformation of all inhabitants into modern European-model Mozambicans. This Frelimo state was so strange for a large part of the inhabitants that it seemed entirely foreign.⁹⁶

Similarly, the Keita regime imposed its own collectivization measures, eliminated traditional chiefs and a number of indigenous associations, curtailed the activities of non-government schools, and imposed prison sentences on families refusing to participate in state schools, among a host of other confrontational policies. Yet where this dissertation differs from Cahen is in understanding socialism not simply as an empty vessel used to carry this nationalism forth, but as an ideology with its own goals (even if it did often act as a support for the party's nationalist vision). Indeed, it is problematic to assert that policies like agricultural collectivization, for example, were of an exclusively nationalist nature when they clearly bear the hallmarks of socialist ideals like egalitarianism and state management, and when there are so many possible

⁹⁶ Ibid., 21.

alternatives for modernizing the rural communities and rural production systems. Nonetheless, the characterization of the postcolonial political dispensation as one in which a strong nationalist vision was imposed from the top down – with socialism largely supporting this vision and indeed redeploing (in modified form) the language of emancipation that had inspired the population to vote for the USRDA in the 1950s – is highly relevant.

In a related vein, Ahlman's work demonstrates a laudable interest in how "pan-African and socialist politics created important spaces where a wide array of Ghanaian men and women... could come together to comment on and actively engage in shaping their changing political and social communities." Yet while documenting the opening of spaces for ordinary people represents a positive contribution to the study of subaltern agency in Africa, it does little to explain the nature of postcolonial governance. Why, for example, did the state become autocratic when its leaders had struggled so fiercely against colonial oppression? Analyzing the motivations behind "pan-African and socialist politics," as Cahen does, leads to a deeper understanding of why these discourses enjoyed such prominence in early postcolonial politics, and why their promises for the most part went unkept.

This dissertation builds on such work. Yet it goes further than Cahen in particular by probing the regime's motivations for the nationalist project and the Keita regime's clientelist tendencies. Through such analysis, this study explores how questions of political stability and nationalist and socialist ideals collectively influenced the actions of Mali's first postcolonial regime in ways that were complex and often chaotic.

Methodology

The dissertation is informed by research material gathered through semi-directed interviews and archival work. It makes use of postcolonial archival material that has seen almost no attention from scholars. In regards to the semi-directed interviews, this also allowed participants to contribute their unique understanding of how politics was practiced by the USRDA in Mali from 1957 to 1968.

Such an approach is complimentary to an exploratory research project in a field that has received little attention. The semi-directed interview format allowed participants to direct the research based on their position as experts. The target population for this study was persons involved in politics (ex-ministers and party members) and those employed by the state (ex-administrators).⁹⁷ Most interviews took place in Bamako, with shorter trips to Bandiagara, Sikasso, and Ouéllésébougou.

A minority of interviewees, in contrast, were part of non-state groups. A small number of chiefs, merchants, peasants, and also religious authorities were interviewed in the course of this research. Seventy-five interviews were conducted between January and March 2012. A research assistant, Hamidou Guindo, was present at all interviews, and was instrumental in locating subjects. He transcribed all recordings and, in the few cases necessary, translated from Bambara (Bamanan), Peulh (Fulfulde), and Dogon into French.

The archival series entitled "Bureau Politique Nationale" (the BPN was equivalent to the Malian cabinet), which focuses on the Keita regime and contains policy

⁹⁷ Participants were recruited orally based on a snowball sample methodology, starting with a short list of recommended potential participants provided by local researchers in Mali at the Université de Bamako and Institut des Sciences Humaines.

directives, reports and correspondence, forms the main bulk of the archival material used in this study. It contains a wealth of government reports from various ministries, internal government circulars written by President Keita and other leading advisers, correspondence between the central government and local leaders in rural areas, and the minutes of meetings held by a variety of government agencies. As such, it contains much information that was never made public, and thus it offers a window on the internal workings of the Malian state. It is housed at the ACI 2000 complex of the National Archives of Mali (ANM) in Bamako.

This material has only been open to scholars since the 2000s. Historians have not exploited it to any great extent. To my knowledge, there is no published work based mainly on this material. The ANM files are the best collection of documents on the period available anywhere, although records from the French Embassy in Bamako, available at the Centre d'Archives Diplomatiques à Nantes, have also been very valuable, and have also hardly been exploited by scholars of Mali's postcolonial past.

On the other hand, while the ANM files constitute a rich resource, they are far from a complete record of political activity during the period of USRDA rule. There are notable holes, particularly in regards to sensitive issues like the razing of certain villages, the deaths in captivity of political opponents, or even the proceedings of the Extraordinary Congress of the party in 1960. Even when files appear in the "Bureau Politique Nationale" repertory, access to such files is incomplete. It depends in a certain measure on one's relationship with the archivists on staff and on an apparently informal embargo system affecting dossiers deemed highly sensitive. Thus certain important historical developments from the era remain difficult to study through these records.

Nonetheless, whereas most previous studies of the Keita government have relied on published records and speeches, these sources open the door to the USRDA's internal documents. These include documents pertaining to a variety of matters rarely discussed in public by government representatives, including policy failures, intraparty conflict, and opposition to USRDA rule. They reveal, for example, extensive boycotting of the peculiar 1964 legislative elections, during which only one candidate appeared on the ballot in each riding.⁹⁸ While the party newspaper, *L'Essor* — drawing from a speech by Modibo Keita — characterized the elections as “the expression of the reaffirmation in the current circumstances Africa is going through of the desire of all Malians to remain firmly on course with the choice we freely made the 22nd of September 1960, the course of socialist construction and of total decolonization,”⁹⁹ the party's internal documents reveal an entirely different story. Indeed, rather than demonstrating a universal affirmation of the status quo, government correspondence discovered in the Malian National Archives shows that not only was voter turnout low in many locales, but that in others the population “did not vote at all.”¹⁰⁰ “The reasons advanced by these villages to justify their non-participation in these elections,” noted the Political Bureau of the party

⁹⁸ ANM.11.25.Élections législatives 1964.1964 04 17 *Commandant de cercle de Koro à monsieur le gouverneur de la région de Mopti*; ANM.11.25.Élections législatives 1964.1964 04 22 *Du Président du Comité électoral à Korientze*; ANM.11.25.Élections législatives 1964.*Bafoulabé abstentions*.

⁹⁹ *L'Essor* 6ème année no. 249, 13 avril 1964. “Le Peuple malien plébiscite la liste nationale de l'US-RDA.” “La vote que nous avons effectué à mon avis est l'expression de la réaffirmation dans les circonstances actuelles que traverse l'Afrique de la volonté de tous les Maliens de rester fermes dans la voie de l'option que nous avons librement faite le 22 septembre 1960, la voie de la construction socialiste et la voie de la décolonisation totale.”

¹⁰⁰ ANM.11.25.Élections législatives 1964.*Rapport du bureau politique de la section de Kita sur les élections législatives du 12 avril 1964*. “Les raisons avancées par ces villages pour justifier leur non participation à ces élections est qu'ils ne comprennent pas le système d'une seul bulletin de vote.”

sub-section in Kita, for example, “is that they do not understand the system of voting for a single candidate.” Reports of villages refusing to vote came in from every region except Kidal, where the military commander, Captain Diby Silas Diarra, submitted a dubious report stating that “no difficulty was encountered in the course of the elections” and that “the percentage exceeds 100%.”¹⁰¹

Although by no means an exhaustive analysis of the 1964 legislative elections, this example highlights some of the valuable aspects of these records. They are, firstly, more candid than public accounts like those found in *L'Essor*, thus offering a fuller picture of the era's important political events and issues. They speak, in other words, of issues the regime did not wish to make public, often because they pointed to serious political problems. As such, they permit important developments in Malian political history to be subject to analysis for the first time, or for the analysis of established issues to be strengthened and refined with new evidence. Also, they reveal significant aspects of the government's *relationship* with Mali's communities – how Malians responded to state directives, and what the state made of those responses – which allows for a better understanding of the unequal yet dialogical relationship between populace and government to emerge. This is perhaps the most significant aspect of these resources: they provide a small window onto how Malians responded to the USRDA's political project, and a larger one onto how the USRDA understood and adapted to those responses. Consequently, they can serve as a support for giving historical shape not just to the evolution of USRDA policy, but to the ways in which those policies affected the population, and vice versa. This is the spirit in which the study of the USRDA's

¹⁰¹ ANM.11.25.Élections législatives 1964.1964 04 17 Kidal Élections.

relationships with chiefs, merchants, and peasants – the subjects of chapters four through six – has been undertaken.

These archival sources, of course, do not tell the whole story. As noted above, they are fragmented, partially inaccessible, and incomplete. Documents in the “Bureau Politique Nationale” series are often signed by their authors, yet are just as often anonymous “party” documents; thus they obscure the work of attributing ideas to individuals. And although at times they register the responses of citizens to the implementation of nationalist and socialist policies, such registrations are of course selective and filtered. Consequently, scholars seeking to further historicize the era of USRDA rule must bear such deficiencies in mind as they seek to answer questions about the play of political ideas in the early postcolonial milieu and the impact of those ideas upon the populace.

Structure of this study

This dissertation is in seven parts. Chapter 2 contextualizes the advent of territorial nationalism and radical socialism in the late colonial era, arguing in particular that the collapse of the Mali Federation in August 1960 played a pivotal role in dashing the party’s hopes for the formation of a supraterritorial polity and in allowing radical socialist elements to gain control of the USRDA. Chapter 3 provides an overview of political developments in the 1960s, charting in particular the link between economic decline and increasing socialist radicalization. The remaining three substantive chapters explore how state actors used nationalism and socialism to pursue key agenda items, and

how this impacted Mali in the 1960s.¹⁰² These chapters will focus on efforts to: undermine the power of "traditional" chiefs;¹⁰³ appropriate merchants' economic power; and compel peasants to provide the grain and labour required for USRDA economic initiatives. Each of these three chapters represents a central concern of the regime and reflects the availability of archival sources on these topics.

Consequently, by pursuing the following objectives this research project will make a unique contribution to knowledge: understanding what social and political work the USRDA leadership intended nationalism and socialism to accomplish; revising the intra-elite-focused, events-based approach to Malian history in this period by providing an account which focuses more explicitly on the state's relationship with key social groups; and making use of significant archival and oral data which has not been available or exploited in the past.

¹⁰² These chapters are structured around working categories representing key concerns of the regime (such as their economic and political preoccupations regarding peasants and merchants). Local conceptions of nobility, caste, and ex-servility may in some instances cut across these categories. See Claude Meillassoux, "A Class Analysis of the Bureaucratic Process in Mali," *Journal of Development Studies* 6, 2 (1970): 97-110.

¹⁰³ The US-RDA employed the term "traditional chieftaincies". This term tends to erroneously reify the distinction between the traditional and the modern. See, for example, Jean-Hervé Jézequel, "“Le nationalisme officiel” du Parti Progressiste Soudanais (PSP). Histoire d’un projet politique inabouti,” *Anales de Desclasificación* 1 (2003): 175-186.

Chapter 2: Nation-Building on a Grand Scale: Development in the Soudan, 1946-1960

Introduction

This chapter provides a broad overview of political change in Mali from the late colonial era to the end of Keita's regime in 1968. It seeks to demonstrate that the USRDA's embrace of socialism and of nationalism in a territorially focused form emerged both as responses to the collapse of the Mali Federation in 1960 — representing the failure of attempts to establish a supraterritorial polity and identity — and as expressions of the regime's evolving ideas about state-building and the need to transform a colony comprised of ethnically distinct peoples into a country whose diverse communities would see themselves, for the first time, as one nation. Imbricated with these questions of how to build a strong nation-state were the ever-present concerns for protecting the regime from the dangers inherent in the volatile political climate of the region and for meeting the material demands of party activists and government officials.

The chapter will chart the rise of party politics in the 1940s and the emergence of a new political elite. It aims to show that in the years leading up to independence the USRDA's main goal was to build a modern nation on a regional, West African scale. Indeed, the party considered creating African unity to be its “permanent vocation” and a necessity for “the complete emancipation and the rapid flourishing of [its] peoples.”¹ It was attachment to this flourishing, rather than to territorial nationalism or radical

¹ ANM.2.4.Ve Congrès de l'USRDA. *Ve Congrès de l'Union Soudanaise, 13-17 août 1958 et 2^e Conférence territoriale de l'Union Soudanaise, 17-19 octobre 1958*, 65. “Considérant la vocation permanente du Rassemblement Démocratique Africain du Soudan de réaliser l'Unité Africaine condition indispensable à l'émancipation complète et à l'épanouissement rapide de nos peuples.”

socialism, that characterized the politics of the postwar years leading up to independence. The USRDA wished above all to pull the Soudan out of poverty, and its leaders were not tied to any one means of achieving this.

Consequently, this chapter will argue that the collapse of the Mali Federation was not due to the USRDA's political radicalism, as certain scholars have suggested. Instead, it was the isolation and sense of vulnerability provoked by the collapse that pushed the party to seek out new conceptual models in its efforts to establish a stable and prosperous postcolonial order and to envisage a new way of achieving rapid modernization and prosperity. Thus, the 1960s was an experimental moment in Malian politics, one in which regional and imperial relationships and identities were shifting rapidly — shifts that led Mali's politicians to take up new ideologies in order to make sense of their new reality.

Clerks Without Cash: The USRDA, 1946-1956

The USRDA was comprised mainly of French-educated low-level colonial servants. From 1946-1956 it was an opposition party with few financial resources, and its members suffered discrimination and punishment at the hands of their rivals – the Parti Progressiste Soudanais (PSP) – and at those of the colonial administration, which was allied with this latter party. As Modibo Keita characterized them in 1958, PSP members were “the very ones who had gotten together with the Administration of the day to shoot us, to throw us in prison, to starve our farmers and herders, to recall our public servants and to bring grief to our families.”² When the USRDA finally came to power, first at the

² ANM.2.4.Ve Congrès de l'USRDA. *Ve Congrès de l'Union Soudanaise, 13-17 août*

municipal level in 1956 and then at the territorial level in 1957, it was thanks in large part to an alliance it had forged with Soudanese merchants who supplied it with many of the resources it required to mount successful political campaigns.

Due to the recruitment processes associated with the colonial education system, party politics in the 1940s and 1950s — particularly in regards to the USRDA — was not dominated by economic elites and aristocrats. Rather — much like in other colonies — those who had received a French-language education were most active in this domain. Many of these students were not of wealthy backgrounds, but had been selected for studies — particularly in regards to studies beyond the elementary level — based on their high test scores and good behaviour.³ This resulted in the creation of a new social sector comprised of low-level bureaucrats and administrators working in the French colonial system — a sector characterized by certain scholars as a “state bourgeoisie”⁴ or at least a state bourgeoisie in waiting, for none of these bureaucrats would hold any real power until the *loi-cadre* (or *loi Gaston Defferre*) came into effect in 1957 and gave the territorial government control over the colony’s internal affairs until full independence was proclaimed in 1960.⁵ As Amselle has noted,

1958 et 2^e Conférence territoriale de l’Union Soudanaise, 17-19 octobre 1958, 9.
“Ceux-là-mêmes qui avaient composé avec l’Administration d’alors, pour nous fusiller, nous jeter en prison, affamer nos paysans et nos éleveurs, révoquer nos fonctionnaires et endeuille nos familles.”

³ Peggy R. Sabatier, “‘Elite’ Education in French West Africa: The Era of Limits, 1903-1945,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 11(2) 1978: 247-266; Tony Chafer, “Education and Political Socialisation of a National-Colonial Political Elite in French West Africa, 1936-47,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 3(35) 2007: 437-458.

⁴ E.g. J.L. Amselle, “Le Mali Socialiste (1960-1968),” *Cahier d’Études Africaines* 18, no. 72 (1978): 631-34; John Waterbury, “Twilight of the State Bourgeoisie?,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 23, no. 01 (1991): 1-17.

⁵ Frederick Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation: Remaking France and*

[the USRDA's socialist] conception of Malian social reality was obviously self-interested; it permitted the State bourgeoisie to constitute itself as a class. The process of this class's formation becomes manifest notably... by its propensity to engage in investments that appear useless and lavish but that, in fact, allowed it to develop itself, which is to say to create jobs for its "clients."⁶

The term state bourgeoisie has long been used by scholars of states in Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America⁷ to characterize that “awkward strata” of “white-collar workers, civil servants, public-sector managers” who “neither own (much) capital nor... provide labor to the owners of capital in the same manner as peasants and the proletariat.”⁸ It is itself an awkward term, evoking reductive Marxist analyses of decades past and class comparisons of postcolonial African societies that have tended to be grounded in theory rather than evidence.⁹ In some ways, though, the term is useful — particularly if we consider the state bourgeoisie not as a class per se but as an identifiable social stratum with particular powers and interests. Indeed, as John Waterbury has noted, “that the managers and administrators of large state systems constitute a meaningful unit of analysis and that they wield great power is an almost unanimously accepted principle,

French Africa, 1945-1960 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 280; Frederick Cooper, *Africa in the World: Capitalism, Empire, Nation-State* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 79-86.

⁶ Amselle, "Le Mali socialiste (1960-1968)," *Cahiers d'Études africaines* 18, 72 (1978): 632. "Cette conception de la réalité sociale malienne était évidemment intéressée; elle permettait à la bourgeoisie d'État de se constituer en tant que classe. Le processus de formation de cette classe est rendu manifeste notamment par le peu de cas que le pouvoir fait du plan et par sa propension à opérer des investissements apparemment inutiles et somptueux mais qui, en fait, lui permettaient de se développer, c'est-à-dire de créer des emplois pour ses "clients"."

⁷ M. Catharine Newbury, "Dead and Buried or Just Underground? The Privatization of the State in Zaire," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 18, no. 1 (January 1, 1984): 112-14; Volker Perthes, "A Look at Syria's Upper Class: The Bourgeoisie and the Ba'th," *Middle East Report*, no. 170 (May 1, 1991): 31-37; William L. Canak, "The Peripheral State Debate: State Capitalist and Bureaucratic-Authoritarian Regimes in Latin America," *Latin American Research Review* 19, no. 1 (January 1, 1984): 3-36.

⁸ Waterbury, "Twilight of the State Bourgeoisie?," 1.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

regardless of the level of development of the country under consideration or the ideology of the analyst.”¹⁰ In this light, Amselle’s assertions remain useful even if they are couched in tendentious language. USRDA leaders and officials constituted a group that neither controlled much capital nor provided labour to any other group. Once they won elections in 1957, they did come to be managers and administrators of state assets and institutions that they did not own. As such, it was indeed in the USRDA’s interest to perpetuate and expand its control of such assets, as these granted them a “decisive position” in the economy. Those who occupied the highest posts in these institutions exercised the greatest degree of control over their functioning, but bureaucrats and administrators at all levels — indeed, anyone who derived status or income from such structures — had an interest in perpetuating them, and thus can be considered part of the state bourgeoisie, if only in the petty sense.

Many of these civil servants worked for the colonial state as school teachers, and some of these same teachers — including Modibo Keita and his predecessor Mamadou Konaté — would go on to leading political roles in colonial and postcolonial politics. This phenomenon was so prevalent that in the late colonial era the USRDA was nicknamed the “teachers’ party.”¹¹ Indeed, between 1946 and 1957 up to one third of elected deputies in the local Soudanese assemblies were teachers.¹² Scholars like Amselle and Campmas have characterized the political rivalry between the USRDA and the PSP as one between “new men” — French-educated bureaucrats with a modern

¹⁰ Ibid., 2.

¹¹ Jean-Hervé Jézequel, “Le «Nationalisme Officiel» du Parti Progressiste Soudanais (PSP). Histoire d’un projet politique inabouti,” *Anales de Desclasificación* 1 (2003): 176.

¹² Ibid., 177.

vision — in the “teacher’s party,” the USRDA, and chiefly authorities representing traditional power and colonial compromise in the PSP. Jezequel has rightly criticized this view as an oversimplification, and points out that many of the leaders of the PSP, nicknamed the “chiefs’ party,” were equally drawn from the stock of colonial schoolteachers (and equally advanced a modern nationalist vision rather than a backward-looking traditionalist one).

What Jezequel does not dispute, however, is that the USRDA was mainly comprised of colonial school graduates holding low-level positions in the colonial service.¹³ The fact that a large number of USRDA members were low-level public servants in the French colonial system meant that they lived on rather meagre salaries and could not finance their own political campaigns. Indeed, while their salaries may have been enough to elevate their living standard in comparison to peasants, they were not enough to build a winning political party. To assure electoral victory, the USRDA needed to secure the vote of the peasantry. In the late 1950s, this presented logistical problems. Trucks were needed to transport campaigners to remote communities on rough unpaved roads. Megaphones were required to effectively broadcast the USRDA message. Fuel and batteries, among other materials, were required to support such equipment.¹⁴ Thus the USRDA needed to improve its economic situation in the late colonial era in order to access these resources, and this is one reason the party welcomed Soudanese merchants’ support.

The USRDA allied with merchants — and promised to allow the growth of local entrepreneurship in the postcolonial era — because this gave the party and its members

¹³ *Ibid.*, 177.

¹⁴ Interview with Dr. Abdoulaye Amadou Sy, Bamako, 11 February 2012.

access to important resources. Indeed, Modibo Keita declared in 1958 that merchants were “victims of a regime, and in liberating themselves from oppressive forces they create the opportunity for better working conditions.”¹⁵ The party equally demonstrated concern for the fact that Soudanese merchants found it difficult to compete with larger European businesses that had better access to credit, and “[recommended] thus that African merchants be oriented toward organizations that will allow them to meet the requirements of lending institutions.”¹⁶ In addition, the party prioritized “the Africanization of cadres” at this time, and was overall better disposed to creating opportunities for locals – instead of for Europeans – than was the PSP.

The USRDA-merchant alliance was driven by an alignment of interests.¹⁷ The party benefited from merchant money to finance its campaigns, and merchants thought they would benefit from having an ally in government in the fast-approaching postcolonial era. This was because in the colonial era Soudanese merchants were largely relegated to roles as intermediaries for French trading firms¹⁸ that had important financial resources and political connections, and they saw in the USRDA a desire to reduce the role of foreign businesses in the economy or at least to give indigenous merchants a freer hand. Fundamentally the merchants sought to reap financial benefits

¹⁵ ANM.2.4. Ve Congrès de l’USRDA. *Ve Congrès de l’Union Soudanaise, 13-17 août 1958 et 2^e Conférence territoriale de l’Union Soudanaise, 17-19 octobre 1958*, 10. “il faut que chacun d’eux se fasse à l’idée qu’il est la victime d’un régime et qu’en se libérant des forces oppressives, il s’offre de meilleures conditions de travail.”

¹⁶ ANM.1.2.3e Congrès international du RDA, 1957. “La délégation soudanaise... recommande donc que les commerçants africains soient orientés vers des organisations qui leur permettraient de répondre aux exigences des maisons de crédit.”

¹⁷ Guy Martin, “Socialism, Economic Development and Planning in Mali, 1960-1968,” *Canadian Journal Of African Studies* 10, no. 1 (1976): 23–46.

¹⁸ Abdoulaye Charles Danioko, “Contribution à l’étude des partis politiques au Mali de 1945 à 1960” (Thèse de 3^e cycle, Université de Paris VII, 1984), 137.

once the USRDA was elected, and the USRDA sought to reap financial benefits in order to secure electoral victory. In this sense, these two groups needed each other. The rival PSP party was more closely aligned with the colonial order, including the French commercial houses that traded in the Soudan's agricultural products, and thus appeared as a less advantageous political partner for merchants who sought to replace French business interests. Also, the fact that many “merchants belonged to marginal or foreign ethnic groups (*Jula*, *Soninke*) or to semi-casted people such as the *Jawando*,” further cemented their alliance with the USRDA, which had positioned itself as a champion of the poor and marginalized.¹⁹ While some of the older literature oversimplifies the constitution of the PSP and exaggerates its social conservatism — as Jezequel has noted — there is a consensus that the USRDA was primarily constituted of a French-educated cohort with shallow roots as an elite group and with few financial resources.²⁰

Most scholars have glossed over the membership of merchants in the USRDA, who tended not to have been French-educated or employed in the colonial bureaucracy. This is comprehensible, as merchants never occupied key roles in the party, and thus the merchant-USRDA relationship was more of an alliance between distinct groups, particularly as it was short-lived and as most merchants would have had a limited capacity to participate in a party operating largely in French. Few merchants held posts of significance within the party; they supported it, for their own reasons, but for the most part were not integral to it. This merchant-USRDA alliance proved useful in

¹⁹ Martin, “Socialism, Economic Development and Planning in Mali, 1960-1968,” 28.

²⁰ Amselle, “Le Mali Socialiste (1960-1968)” ; Pierre Campmas, “L’Union Soudanaise, Section Soudanaise Du Rassemblement Démocratique Africain 1946-1968” (PhD Thesis, Université de Toulouse, 1978); Pascal James Imperato, *Mali: A Search for Direction* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989).

securing victories in both municipal and legislative elections in 1956 and 1957. Yet it did not last long into the 1960s. Although merchants were willing partners and could have contributed to the party's nation-building project — much as they had contributed to its political struggle in the 1950s — the rise of a radical socialist contingent within the party drastically altered the course of USRDA-merchant relations. These leaders — politicians like Madeira Keita, Seydou Badian Kouyaté, and Mamadou Gologo — comprised “the US-RDA's more militant wing,”²¹ and they considered merchants to stand in the way of developing the socialist project's central pillar: a state-run economy.²² This ideological objection to merchants would ultimately lead to considerable degradation of Mali's financial situation in the 1960s, but the party — already in control of the state and facing little in the way of organized opposition — had a relatively free hand to pursue a policy agenda setting them on a collision course with Mali's business community.

Moderates, Radicals, and the History of Socialism in Postwar Soudan

Before proceeding further with this account of events leading to the rise of territorial nationalism and radical socialism in Mali in 1960, it is important to further explore the factions noted above in order to tie these events to individual leaders rather than abstract forces. While the analyses of Campmas, Sanankoua, Hopkins, and others have demonstrated that in the late colonial and early postcolonial era the majority of USRDA

²¹ Gregory Mann, “Anti-Colonialism and Social Science: Georges Balandier, Madeira Keita, and ‘the Colonial Situation’ in French Africa,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 55, no. 1 (2013): 114.

²² ANM.142.560.Circulaires 1947-1968. *Circulaire No 11, 1961*. “Le deuxième principe, pour une économie socialiste, c'est l'étatisation des secteurs économiques.”

members were pragmatic, rather than ideologically driven,²³ there was nonetheless a coterie of radical socialist ideologues within the USRDA prior to the socialist turn. Martin speaks to the existence of such disparate factions within the party in the following manner, noting the existence of “a ‘hard core’ of dedicated and austere radicals, including such personalities as Ousmane Bâ, Seydou Badian Kouyaté, Madeira Kéïta and Idrissa Diarra,” who “stood as the guardians of the purity of Malian Socialism and manifested a continued vigilance in denouncing any policy or personality which they judged ‘anti-socialist’ in any way.” Mamadou Gologo, Gabou Diawara, and Mamadou Aw could be added to this group of radicals, along with a number of other minor figures. He contrasted this group with “the ‘moderates,’ represented by such personalities as Jean-Marie Koné, Mahamane Alassane Haïdara, Baréma Bocoum, Hammaciré N'Douré and others” who sat “on the other side of the political spectrum.”²⁴ The analyses of Campmas largely agree with those of Martin, although he would characterize Idrissa Diarra as a socialist who was less radical than the likes of Kouyaté or Madeira Keita, and indeed who for that very reason would not be a member of the *Comité National de Défense de la Révolution* (CNDR) — the eight-person committee that supplanted the BPN as the state’s highest governing body in 1967 — despite his high rank in the party. Campmas would also characterize Mamadou Aw as a largely apolitical “technocrat,” whereas French diplomatic records from 1960 place him with Madeira Keita and Seydou Badian Kouyaté as among the most intransigent and anti-

²³ Campmas, “L’Union Soudanaise, Section Soudanaise Du Rassemblement Démocratique Africain 1946-1968”; Bintou Sanankoua, *La Chute de Modibo Keïta* (Bamako: Chaka, 1990); Nicholas S. Hopkins, “Kita (Mali) in the Time of Modibo Keita: Globalization and Local Continuity,” *Mande Studies* 5 (2003): 101–11.

²⁴ Martin, “Socialism, Economic Development and Planning in Mali, 1960-1968,” 30.

Western radicals.²⁵ These discrepancies do not necessarily imply errors in the accounts of these scholars, but perhaps point to the fact that these factions were not rigidly defined entities — they existed within the confines of a single political party — and that certain politicians may have straddled the ill-defined border between them or leaned in different directions at different times. Such ambiguous figures, however, appear to be the exception.

For the most part, moderate USRDA members sought rapid economic development without radical social restructuring. They supported private commerce and hoped to attract foreign investors. They were pro-democrat and anti-Communist. They had a progressive policy platform — campaigning to improve the lot of the poor and to rein in elite unaccountability — but this platform was set within the boundaries of economic pragmatism and anti-Communism. Thus they *were* moderates, for the only radical change in which they expressed an interest was a sharp increase in economic growth. Furthermore, many political activists had even more pedestrian aspirations than national economic development, and endeavoured in particular to ensure their individual prosperity. Indeed, as Nicholas Hopkins has noted in regards to the early 1960s,

[u]nder the rhetoric of socialism, Malians in fact wanted much more mundane things — a building plot in town, success for their children in school. To achieve these goals they would seek ‘friends’ whom they believed could help them, and these friends in turn drew on their capital of social relations with others to arrange these favors... This patron-client type system undergirded some of... politics.²⁶

Such mundane aims and the corresponding patron-client networks fostered to satisfy

²⁵ CADN.Bamako.Amb.9.Politique au Soudan 1960.*Compte-Rendu no 47 – Quinzaine du 4 au 18 Octobre 1960.*

²⁶ Hopkins, “Kita (Mali) in the Time of Modibo Keita.”

them – phenomena well-documented by scholars²⁷ and regime officials²⁸ alike – suggest that the party mainstream’s priorities were oriented toward tangible goals like improving their standard of living rather than toward political ideals like the establishment of an egalitarian society.

Socialist radicals, on the other hand, had a more ideological vision. Often inspired by Eastern examples, they promoted a state-run economy, agricultural collectivization, and ideological education. As Minister of the Plan from 1960-1962, Seydou Badian Kouyaté was in charge of developing Mali’s Five Year Plan, which set forth many of these goals including replacing private commerce with state enterprises,²⁹ and which was itself characterized as a socialist propaganda tool by informed observers.³⁰ A key figure in the USRDA’s “militant wing,” he was nicknamed *le Chinois*³¹ in the 1960s as he had already visited China three times prior to independence³² and was among the leaders of the party’s pro-Chinese faction along with Mamadou Gologo, who in 1965 published a book entitled *La Chine: un peuple géant au grand destin*.³³

²⁷ Claude Fay, "La Démocratie au Mali ou le Pouvoir en Pature," *Cahier d'Études Africaines* 35, no. 137 (1995): 19– 53; Jean-Loup Amselle, "La Corruption et le Clientélisme au Mali et en Europe de l'Est: Quelques Points de Comparaison," *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 32, no. 128 (1992): 629–642; Michael Bratton, Massa Coulibaly, and Fabiana Machado, "Popular Views of the Legitimacy of the State in Mali," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 36, no. 2 (2002): 197-238.

²⁸ ANM.2.4.Ve Congrès de l'USRDA. *Ve Congrès de l'Union Soudanaise, 13-17 août 1958 et 2^e Conférence territoriale de l'Union Soudanaise, 17-19 octobre 1958*, "Rapport Moral et Politique présenté par Modibo Keita," p. 5; interview with Dotien Coulibaly, Bamako, 20 March 2012.

²⁹ Samir Amin, *Trois Expériences Africaine de Développement: Le Mali, La Guinée et Le Ghana* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1965), 78.

³⁰ CADN.Bamako.Amb.20.Dépêches politiques 1961. *Synthèse du mois de Novembre*.

³¹ Interview with Bintou Sanankoua, Bamako, 13 February 2012.

³² Interview with Seydou Badian Kouyaté, Bamako, 7 March 2012.

³³ Mamadou Gologo, *La Chine: Un Peuple Géant Au Grand Destin* (Pékin: Librairie du Nouveau Monde, 1964).

Madeira Keita was another key figure in Mali's radical faction, and was "both the most pro-Soviet and most "xenophobic," meaning anti-Western, of the Malian leadership".³⁴ Born in the Soudan around 1917, he was educated in Senegal at what would become the Ecole William Ponty, and worked for many years in the colonial civil service as an archivist and librarian.³⁵ While employed at the Institut Français d'Afrique Noire (IFAN) in Conakry in 1946, he began studying in the city's Groupe d'études communitaires (GEC) with Sékou Touré, and the two of them represented Guinea at the RDA's founding conference in Bamako in October of that year.³⁶ In 1947, they established the Guinean branch of the RDA, and Keita was its General Secretary until Touré took over this role in 1952.³⁷ A 1948 Guinean police report identified him as "an ardent partisan of the Communist doctrine," and he "disagreed strongly" with the RDA's decision in 1950 to disaffiliate from the French Communist Party, although "his dedication to party discipline obliged him to accept a maneuver designed to make the party less threatening to the colonial state and more effective in its metropolitan legislative coalition."³⁸ He returned to the Soudan in 1956 after being transferred to Dahomey in 1952 — a move intended to disrupt his political activities in Guinea — becoming Minister of the Interior in 1957. "[H]is presence in Soudan," notes Gregory Mann, "strengthened the hand of the US-RDA's more militant wing—figures like Awa Keita, Seydou Badian Kouyaté, and Mamadou Gologo—against the more moderate

³⁴ Mann, "Anti-Colonialism and Social Science," 115.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 96-97.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 97-98.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 98-99.

party leader Mamadou Konaté and his allies, such as Jean-Marie Koné.”³⁹ Mann further remarks:

It was his signature as minister—not that of Modibo Keita, head of government, US-RDA secretary general, and future president (1960-1968)—that authorized the strongest single move against the colonial system made before independence, namely the dismantling of the chieftaincy and the gradual dismissal of the *chefs de canton*... Under the socialist government of Modibo Keita from 1960 to 1968, he occupied various ministerial posts, changing one portfolio for another, but never leaving the government. Madeira Keita’s political influence waxed and waned, but his ministerial positions served as a barometer or bellwether of “radical” influence within the politburo, or Bureau Politique Nationale... Keita consistently held hard-line positions. For instance, in the wake of a high profile treason case in 1962, he argued that, were it up to him, death sentences handed down by Popular Tribunal would be carried out expeditiously. Although he lost that particular battle, the CIA recognized him as a leader of the “younger militants” within the Party and one of them most powerful voices in the Bureau Politique Nationale, which was the heart of government under the US-RDA.⁴⁰

As Minister of the Interior, Keita equally established the Popular Militias in 1960, exerting considerable control over them until at least 1962, when he was named Minister of Justice.⁴¹

Mamadou Gologo, another important member of the radical socialist faction, was named Director of the Information Service in 1958. He was responsible for the Party newspaper *L’Essor* and for Radio Mali — although Idrissa Diarra would assumed editorial control of *L’Essor* between 1961-63 as Gologo’s articles, which touted the accomplishments of communist regimes across Asia and promoted the perspective of

³⁹ Ibid., 114.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 114-116.

⁴¹ CADN.Bamako.Amb.9.Politique au Soudan 1960.*Compte-Rendu no 47 – Quinzaine du 4 au 18 Octobre 1960*. “L’africanisation du commandement et plus récemment le remplacement des Officiers et sous-officiers français des Goums par des noirs, a provoqué un affaiblissement du contrôle du Gouvernement sur ces régions. Des incidents graves se sont déjà produits se soldant par une vingtaine de morts dans la région de Goundam et de Nara. Le Ministre de l’Intérieur profite de ce prétexte pour constituer des milices populaires qui doivent parer à ce danger mais on peut s’inquiéter de la puissance nouvelle que M. Madeira Keita va ainsi acquérir.”

“the most extreme elements” in the party, were deemed too inflammatory (American diplomats in Bamako had lodged complaints about him).⁴² Yet Gologo regained control of the paper in 1963 and became Minister of Propaganda in 1964. He was an important member of the radical socialist faction who influenced opinion through the media — although his influence was lesser than that of Seydou Badian Kouyaté and Madeira Keita, both of whom held ministerial portfolios giving them greater control of state resources and personnel.⁴³

Gabou Diawara was another noted radical. He was appointed leader of the USRDA’s youth wing in 1956 and would be appointed to the CNDR in 1966, figuring among the small group of socialist radicals who played leading roles in Mali’s government during the period of heightened socialist radicalism and authoritarian rule that came to be known as the Active Revolution (1967-1968)⁴⁴ until the coup of November 1968. He exerted an important influence in pushing the party’s youth wing toward radical socialism — despite the fact that the majority of young Malians were not interested in socialism, tending instead to be concerned with practical matters like economic growth and the job market for school graduates.⁴⁵ Yet given the youth wing’s subordination to the party’s main governing body, the BPN, Diawara’s influence was limited throughout much of the 1960s, and other scholars have identified him as a supporter, not a leader, of the radical faction.⁴⁶

⁴² CADN.Bamako.Amb.9.Politique au Soudan 1960.*Compte-Rendu no 49, Semaine du 25 Octobre au 1 Novembre.*

⁴³ Campmas, “L’Union Soudanaise,” 182-183.

⁴⁴ For more on the Active Revolution, see “Repression in the Keita Years” in Chapter 3.

⁴⁵ CADN.Bamako.Amb.28.Dépêches politiques 1966.*Situation intérieur au Mali dans la perspective des relations franco-maliennes, 30 Juillet 1966.*

⁴⁶ Campmas, “L’Union Soudanaise,” 183-184.

While these radical socialists held a few important posts within the USRDA in the period between its electoral victory in 1957 and the Extraordinary Congress in 1960 — notably Madeira Keita as Minister of the Interior, and Seydou Badian Kouyaté as Minister of Rural Economy and the Plan⁴⁷ — overall they remained a minority force prior to independence. Moderates, who were in greater numbers and who held higher positions within the Political Bureau, tempered their influence. Of particular note is Jean-Marie Koné, a well-known moderate and confidant of Modibo Keita. He was Vice-President of the Government and Head of the Public Service until the Active Revolution era,⁴⁸ and was second only to Modibo Keita, of whom he had been a close friend for many years.⁴⁹ Koné was one of the party's regional leaders — along with such moderate figures as Baréma Bocoum from Mopti and Mahamane Alassane Haïdara from Timbuktu. He enjoyed great popularity in his home region of Sikasso, and was instrumental in securing its allegiance to the party in the 1957 legislative elections. In the same year, he was made Vice-President of the Soudan's governing council (in the context of the *loi-cadre*).⁵⁰ In 1962, after the 6th Party Congress, he would be made Minister of State Responsible for the Plan and the Coordination of Economic and Financial Affairs.⁵¹ Like many moderates, he was more amenable to traditional authority than were radicals like Madeira Keita, and in the late 1950s he asserted the USRDA's commitment to the institution of the chieftaincy.⁵² According to certain observers, he

⁴⁷ Ibid., 214-215.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 214.

⁴⁹ Interview with Oumar Makalou, Bamako, 1 February 2012.

⁵⁰ Campmas, "L'Union Soudanaise," 152.

⁵¹ Ibid., 361.

⁵² 1957 01 07 *L'Essor* no 2396. "Une Conférence de l'Union Soudanaise."

had never hidden the fact that he was not a socialist,⁵³ and his principal commitment appears to have been to elevating the population's standard of living rather than to any ideology.⁵⁴ Along with Idrissa Diarra, he would fall out with Modibo Keita and the radical socialist faction with which he had become firmly aligned during the Active Revolution period.⁵⁵ He would, however, serve briefly in the cabinet of Moussa Traoré's military regime after the 1968 coup d'état, and in the 1980s he was identified as a leader of the US-RDA's reconstituted "right wing" in exile (in Abidjan) along with Mahamane Alassane Haïdara.⁵⁶ Despite the fact that "during the era of Modibo Keita a policy of active "modernization" and a faith in accelerated development had pushed back a certain number of traditional institutions" that the radicals viewed as impediments to such development, Koné apparently held different views and became deeply involved with traditional hunting societies — steeped in magic and secrecy — in the 1970s.⁵⁷ As Vladimir Arseniev relates:

At the same time (the early 1970s), it was not uncommon to hear talk of hunting in my Malian entourage and, particularly, to hear of regular consultations of the state's highest personage with an "elder" who was eventually revealed to be none other than Jean-Marie Koné, former Minister of Foreign Affairs for Modibo Keita and then for the military regime after the 1968 coup d'état. The context in which one spoke of this "elder" left no doubt about his experience and spiritual authority. I was later able to confirm that the ex-Minister, after his political retirement, had played an important role in the Bamako hunters' association.⁵⁸

⁵³ Interview with Abderhamane Diawara, Bamako, 22 February 2012.

⁵⁴ *La Tribune du Soudan* no 2, 8 July 1958, p. 9, "La Tournée de M. Jean-Marie Koné dans les cercles de Koutiala et de San".

⁵⁵ Interview with Meyan Diarra, Bamako, 21 March 2012 ; interview with Abderhamane Diawara, Bamako, 22 February 2012.

⁵⁶ Pierre François, "Class Struggles in Mali," *Review of African Political Economy*, no. 24 (1982): 25.

⁵⁷ Vladimir Arseniev, "Les chasseurs Donso du Mali à l'épreuve du temps," *Afrique contemporaine* 223–224, no. 3 (2008): 353.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* "À la même époque (début des années 1970), il n'était pas rare d'entendre parler dans mon entourage malien de chasse et, notamment, d'évoquer des consultations

Another important member of the moderates was Hammaciré N'Douré, who became Minister of Commerce, Industry, and Mines in April 1959 and then Minister Delegated to the Presidency in September 1962. He had belonged to the PSP in the late colonial era, and was pushed out of government by the radicalizing regime in 1966.⁵⁹ Mahamane Alassane Haïdara is equally a significant moderate figure. He became President of the Territorial Assembly in August 1958,⁶⁰ and of the National Assembly after independence, until it was dissolved in 1968. He was the only moderate to be made a member of the CNDR in 1966, despite the fact that, as a descendant of one of Timbuktu's ruling families, he embodied the feudal, chiefly, and religious authority the leftist radicals on the CNDR sought to eliminate. His presence, however, was a token meant to soften the blow that more important moderates like Jean-Marie Koné had been excluded from the Counsel. Baréma Bocoum also merits attention as a major moderate figure, as he was both key to the USRDA's implantation in the Mopti region of central Mali and a longstanding member of the Bureau Politique, first serving from 1952 to 1955, only leaving it on being transferred to a position in Mopti. In 1958 he regained a spot in the Bureau as Delegate to the Coordination Committee.⁶¹ In the 1956 he was elected as a deputy in the French National Assembly, replacing party leader Mamadou

régulières du premier personnage de l'État avec « un vieux » qui se révéla en fin de compte n'être autre que Jean-Marie Koné, ancien ministre des Affaires étrangères de Modibo Keita puis du régime militaire après le coup d'État de 1968. Le contexte dans lequel on évoquait ce « vieux » ne laissait aucun doute sur l'expérience et l'autorité spirituelle de celui-ci. J'ai eu d'ailleurs confirmation ensuite que l'ancien ministre, après sa retraite politique, avait joué un rôle important dans l'association des chasseurs de Bamako.”

⁵⁹ Campmas, “L'Union Soudanaise,” 154-155.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 181

⁶¹ Ibid., 181.

Konaté, who died in that year of hepatitis.⁶²

With regard to Modibo Keita, his views are difficult to discern, and there is considerable debate regarding whether he was a moderate, a radical, or perhaps an opportunist mainly concerned with maintaining his position. An analysis of USRDA policy statements reveals that he promoted a moderate path until 1960. For example, in 1958, while Guineans were gearing up to vote “no” in the referendum on continued affiliation with France, Keita persuaded Malians to say “yes.”⁶³ He argued publicly that autonomy was as good as independence, and that the benefits of a French alliance would be crucial to the Soudan’s economic development. In 1967 the French ambassador placed him among the moderates, noting for example that he had “recommended and approved” the Franco-Malian monetary accords, which constituted “an important concession to what the USRDA’s intransigents have called neo-colonial monetary dependence.”⁶⁴ In contrast, certain scholars claim that, while certainly not the most radical member of the USRDA government, Keita stood further on the left than did most moderates.⁶⁵ He had, after all, studied in the GEC in Bamako in the 1940s.⁶⁶ Yet others,

⁶² Ibid., 53.

⁶³ *La Tribune du Soudan*, 22 September 1958, “M. Modibo Keita répond aux arguments des partisans du non Bamako”, p. 11. “M. Modibo Keita fait alors remarquer à son auditoire qui répond “OUI”, l’impossibilité pour le Soudan d’entretenir actuellement une armée, d’assurer seul le développement économique, de donner à chacun du pain et du travail.”

⁶⁴ CADN.Bamako.Amb.30.Lignes politiques – Janvier à Mai – 1967.A/S: *Variations maliennes sur des thèses socialistes*. “L’accord monétaire franco-malien, préconisé par le Président Modibo Keita et approuvé par lui, prévoit à plus ou moins long terme le retour du Mali dans l’Union Monétaire de l’Afrique de l’Ouest; il s’agit là d’une concession importante à ce que les rigoristes de l’U.S.-R.D.A. ont appelé la dépendance monétaire néo-colonialiste.”

⁶⁵ Peter Schwab, *Designing West Africa: Prelude to 21st-Century Calamity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 117-133.

⁶⁶ E.g. Imperato, *Mali*; Aristide R. Zolberg, “The Political Revival of Mali,” *The World*

like Sanankoua, argue that he “oscillated between the left and right wings of the USRDA”⁶⁷ over time, without definitively belonging to either. Finally, some have characterized him as having an “instability of character”⁶⁸ and as being prone to mental health “crises” requiring medical attention, thus suggesting that his apparent vacillations were partially due to health issues rather than to a rational evolution in his political perspective.⁶⁹

One of the main reasons there is such debate over Keita’s place in Mali’s political spectrum is that he assumed the role of mediator for the USRDA’s different factions and he tended to endorse the majority view;⁷⁰ thus it is difficult to draw conclusions on his opinion about any given policy, as he almost never advanced his personal perspective. Indeed, “President Modibo Kéïta always indicated that he was speaking only in the name of the BPN,” and the idea of collegiality held great importance in Malian politics in the era, largely due to his efforts.⁷¹ As Du Bois noted in 1963:

In Guinea actual power lies with an inner core of decision makers in the PDG who constitute the so-called permanent members of the National Political Bureau... In

Today 21, no. 4 (April 1, 1965): 151–60; Campmas, “L’Union Soudanaise,”; Danioko, “Contribution à l’étude des partis politiques au Mali de 1945 à 1960.”

⁶⁷ Sanankoua, *La Chute de Modibo Keïta*, 163.

⁶⁸ CADN.Bamako.Amb.20.Dépêches politiques 1961.*Synthèse du mois de Juillet*. “une instabilité de caractère”.

⁶⁹ CADN.Bamako.Amb.21.Dépêches politiques 1962.*Dépêche Hebdomadaire no 42 du 29 Octobre au 4 Novembre 1962*. “Le Président Modibo Keita semble quelque peu faire retraite et les “initiés” sont même un peu surpris de voir qu’il a renoncé depuis quelque temps aux visites matinales et quotidiennes qu’il rendait à son père. De là à affirmer qu’il a été victime d’une nouvelle dépression il n’y a qu’un pas qui a été vite franchi et on dit même qu’un professeur de faculté de médecine est venu de Pologne en consultation. Il faut accueillir cette information avec une très grande prudence, car les langues marchent vite à Bamako, mais le Président du Mali est assez sujet à de telles crises pour qu’il y ait un fond de vérité dans tout ceci.”

⁷⁰ Victor D. Du Bois, “Mali Five Years After the Referendum: Aspects of Independent Mali,” *American Universities Field Staff: West Africa Series* 6, 3 (1963): 4-5.

⁷¹ Martin, “Socialism, Economic Development and Planning in Mali, 1960-1968,” 30.

Mali a comparable situation does not exist in the case of the Political Bureau of the Union Soudanaise. That organ is a much more collegial body.⁷²

Other observers from the era have confirmed that Modibo Keita long arbitrated conflicts within the party, and that he fulfilled this role with alacrity. As the French ambassador noted shortly after independence in 1960:

Mahamane Haïdara [a renowned moderate] apparently bitterly requested that a change in the distribution of high posts in the Malian Republic be made... Meanwhile Mamadou Gologo who has made himself the spokesman of the most forward [radical] elements of the party requested that the future government implement a more authoritarian policy both at home and abroad. Along these lines, he seeks to have persons known for their firmness and intransigence admitted to the new team [of the government]. Modibo Keita attempts to arbitrate between these different factions and does not seem overly worried by attacks made on him.⁷³

Instead, he appears to have focused his energies on fostering party unity, a task that often led him to "subordinate his political views" for the sake of majority opinion.⁷⁴ It was in fact his predecessor as party leader, Mamadou Konaté, who "institutionalized in some manner within the Union Soudanaise the role of patient and tolerant mediator between factions." Modibo Keita inherited this institutional role after Konaté's death in 1956, and "for a long time... Modibo Keita reaffirmed this vision."⁷⁵ Indeed, his long-standing support of high profile liberals — particularly Jean-Marie Koné — had always

⁷² Du Bois, "Mali Five Years After the Referendum," 5.

⁷³ CADN.Bamako.Amb.9.INCIDENTS DE SEGOU 1959 et 1960 et Politique au Soudan. *Télégramme Hebdomadaire No 53, Représentation de France au Mali*. "Mahamane Haïdara aurait demandé avec âpreté que l'on procède à un changement dans la répartition des hautes charges de la République Malienne... Par ailleurs Mamadou Gologo qui se fait le porte-parole des éléments les plus avancés du parti a demandé que le futur gouvernement pratique une politique plus autoritaire à l'intérieur comme à l'extérieur. A cet effet, il cherche à faire admettre dans la nouvelle équipe des personnalités connue pour leur fermeté et leur intransigence. Modibo Keita s'efforce d'arbitrer ces différentes tendances et il ne semble pas s'inquiéter outre mesure des assauts dont il fait l'objet."

⁷⁴ Imperato, *Mali*, 53.

⁷⁵ Campmas, "L'Union Soudanaise," 39.

acted as a brake on the ambitions of the most radical members of government, who – as mentioned above – wished to exclude moderates entirely from the decision-making process.⁷⁶

At the time of the Active Revolution in 1967-68, however, Keita ultimately sided with the radical faction. It appears that his role as the party's arbitrator had become untenable due to increasing polarization with the party leadership; his efforts to reconcile the factions eventually led to frustration among both moderates and radicals at his unwillingness to definitively support a particular policy. As the French ambassador noted in April, 1966:

The role of arbitrator, which [Keita] has been so adept at highlighting on the international scene, was still a major asset in his hands [until recently]. But by dint of having agreed with the arguments of the moderate minister one day and then appearing to take on the theories of the extremist minister the next, he ultimately led them all to grow tired of him.⁷⁷

It is unclear as to whether Keita was still trying at this point to reconcile the party's disparate points of view, or if he was playing both sides. The ambassador appears to support this latter contention, remarking that it was important to “take stock of the character of the Head of State, who by temperament is both impulsive and indecisive and who, above all, while waiting for the results of the Paris conversations [with regard to the Franco-Malian monetary negotiations], reserves the possibility to take the country

⁷⁶ Ibid., 14.

⁷⁷ CADN.Bamako.Amb.28.Dépêches politiques 1966.A/S: *Atmosphère actuelle à Bamako: Le Président Modibo Keita et son entourage (27 Avril 1966)*. “Le rôle d’arbitre, qu’il a su si bien mettre en vedette sur la scène internationale, était encore un atout majeur entre ses mains. Mais à force de donner raison aux arguments du ministre modéré de la veille, puis sembler faire siennes les théories du ministre extrémiste du lendemain, il a fini par lasser les uns et les autres.”

in one direction or the other.”⁷⁸ Given these complex factors and competing perspectives, it is difficult to form a conclusive opinion about Keita’s political stance. Yet as will be demonstrated in the following chapter’s analysis of the Active Revolution, certain evidence suggests Keita’s late shift toward the radical faction was motivated more by calculation than conviction.

Although the USRDA had endorsed a relatively moderate or conservative policy of economic development and postcolonial affiliation with France since its creation in 1946, and had also rejected Communist ideals, it is nonetheless important to recognize that socialism did not arise *ex nihilo* in 1960. Local interest in socialism among a small group of educated elites had existed in the Soudan Français since at least the 1930s.⁷⁹ In 1936, socialists came to power in France under Léon Blum and the Popular Front. Socialism thrived in the metropole, and colonies like the Soudan Français received an influx of leftist colonial servants and rail workers in the following years. The Vichy regime dampened Marxism’s spread during the war years, but after its fall in 1943 things picked up again. Left-leaning expatriates began sharing Marxist ideas with

⁷⁸ CADN.Bamako.Amb.28.Dépêches politiques 1966.A/S: *Impression de Bamako en Novembre 1966: Ramaniement Ministériel et contacts avec la France – Le Mali, la Chine et l’Europe de l’Est*. “...tenir compte du caractère du Chef de l’Etat, qui part tempérament est à la fois impulsif et indécis et qui, surtout, dans l’attente du résultat des conversations de Paris, se réserve les possibilités d’orienter le pays dans une direction ou dans une autre.”

⁷⁹ Tiémoko Garan Kouyaté, a Soudanese schoolteacher, became active in Communist movements in France in the late 1920s, and thus may have been the first “Malian socialist.” Yet he did not return to West Africa, and was not active in Soudanese politics. Had he not been killed by the Nazis in Germany in 1942, however, he might well have returned to play a role in Soudanese political organization once it was legalized in 1946. (Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003)).

interested locals, and by 1946 formal communist study groups (GECs)⁸⁰ had been established. Modibo Keita and a few other figures who would occupy important positions in the party during the period when it controlled the state — including Idrissa Diarra, who would later become the USRDA’s Political Secretary — attended these. Madeira Keita would attend the GEC in Conakry with Sékou Touré during the same era before serving as Secretary General of the Guinean RDA branch; indeed, for a number of years in the late 1940s and early 1950s Madeira Keita played a more significant role in Guinean politics than did its eventual first president.⁸¹

By the time a weakened France legalized party politics in French West Africa in 1946 and began extending political and voting rights to the entire population⁸² — as part of the package of reforms, broadly outlined at the Brazzaville Conference of January 1944, offered to an increasingly strident group of activists and leaders working for change there⁸³ — socialism was already an important political idea among a cohort of educated elites. Indeed, the party founded in December 1945 by Mamadou Konaté — which the following year would become the USRDA — was at first variously called the Bloc Soudanais, the Parti SFIO (Section Française de l’Internationale Ouvrière), and the Bloc SFIO. This, because it was allied with the SFIO in France — the main anti-

⁸⁰ Danioko, “Contribution à l’étude des partis politiques au Mali de 1945 à 1960,” 35-41.

⁸¹ Mann, “Anti-Colonialism and Social Science.”

⁸² Baz Lecocq, “From Colonialism to Keita: Comparing Pre- and Post-Independence Regimes (1946-1968),” *Mande Studies* 5 (2003): 29–48.; Charles-Robert Ageron, ed., *Les Chemins de La Décolonisation de l’Empire Colonial Français, 1936-1956: Colloque Organisé Par l’IHTP Les 4 et 5 Octobre 1984* (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 1986). For more on how African participation in WWI and WWII, and the “blood for rights” debate in particular, contributed to these developments, see Gregory Mann, *Native Sons: West African Veterans and France in the Twentieth Century* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 2006).

⁸³ Sanankoua, *La Chute de Modibo Keita*, 171.

Communist party on the French left — and with its Senegalese branch, led by Lamine Guèye and L.S. Senghor.⁸⁴

Yet, as discussed above, the SFIO was anti-Communist and Senghor was a pragmatic politician. These parties had a concern for social justice, but were comprised of social democrats rather than radical socialists. And while Konaté would bring the Bloc SFIO into French West Africa's interterritorial political alliance, the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (RDA), at its founding conference in Bamako in October 1946 – a conference organized with help from the Parti Communiste Français (PCF) – his party's alliance with the French Communists was only tactical and temporary. As such, the RDA's loose affiliation with the French Communist Party came to an end in 1950 after only a few years. The RDA leader, Félix Houphouët-Boigny, was not a Communist, nor was Mamadou Konaté, who led the Soudanese section of the RDA until his death in 1956. Indeed, only one of the RDA leaders, Gabriel d'Arboussier, belonged to the PCF,⁸⁵ and in 1950 he would be sidelined from Malian politics for being too radical. The RDA's fleeting early alliance with the Communists had been a practical rather than an ideological matter. Communists had helped establish the RDA by facilitating its founding in 1946, and they had also given some Soudanese a political education in the cadre of the GECs they had established in the mid-1940s. The RDA, for its part, had taken all the help it could get, but its members did not agree with Communist ideology. As Campmas has aptly remarked, “[t]here was never an organic link between the two parties, and this eventuality was never envisaged.”⁸⁶ The two

⁸⁴ Danioko, “Contribution à l'étude des partis politiques au Mali de 1945 à 1960,” 63.

⁸⁵ Campmas, “L'Union Soudanaise,” 70.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 70.

movements did, of course, share one important goal — the establishment of African political parties. This, however, had nothing to do with Communism per se, and the two parties were not so much political bedfellows as friendly allies in the fight to put pressure on a French government of which both were deeply critical.

Their alliance was also influenced by the fact that it allowed the RDA access to French politicians at the highest level. When the RDA was founded in 1946, the General Secretary of the PCF, Maurice Thorez, was French Minister of State. Other Communists held important posts within the French government at the time. With the PCF offering to help organize the RDA conference, and with its leader in a key position in the government, it was politically advantageous for African politicians to align with them. Yet when Communists were ejected from the French government the following year and the RDA found itself facing persecution for an affiliation suddenly considered “anti-French,” the alliance proved inconvenient. Since most Soudanese politicians had never supported Communism in the first place, it was with little pain that they severed their link to the PCF in 1950.⁸⁷ Why this link was not broken earlier is unclear, but it may be due to the fact that the PCF had done a great deal for the USRDA, a state of affairs that perhaps made party leaders feel indebted to it. In any case, as Gregory Mann notes, breaking off relations with the communists was “a maneuver designed to make the party less threatening to the colonial state and more effective in its metropolitan legislative coalition.”⁸⁸

It is important to note as well that anti-Communist sentiment was not limited to the USRDA, but was nearly universal in late colonial Soudanese politics. Cheikh Anta

⁸⁷ Ibid., 70.

⁸⁸ Mann, “Anti-Colonialism and Social Science,” 99.

Babou has further noted that “[i]t is revealing that none of the early nationalists who helped to pave the way to independence in Africa professed to be communist, although there is no doubt that they were all influenced by Marxist ideas about class struggle, capitalism, and imperial exploitation.”⁸⁹ Thus disinterest in communism transcended the Soudan Français and was nearly universal in Africa in the 1950s and 1960s. The USRDA’s rival, the PSP, which had remained outside of the RDA alliance, equally rejected Communist ideals. As Abdoulaye Charles Danioko has noted, “the ideological borders known and affirmed between the two parties [the Parti Progressiste Soudanais (PSP)⁹⁰ and the Bloc SFIO/USRDA] had no serious basis, their common point being hostility toward communism.”⁹¹ Indeed, Danioko suggests conflict between interest groups rather than conflicting political ideologies best accounts for the existence of these rival parties. As for the Bloc SFIO’s rejection of Communism (and thus the USRDA’s), its Secretary General, Tidiani Sidibé noted in 1946 that “the Communist Party approves all methods, even dishonesty and violence, for swaying people’s hearts.”⁹² He went on to remark that “the Communist Party has made of a natural tendency a country doctrine to the point where it blindly approves of the attitude of Soviet Russia in all its acts, good or bad.”⁹³ The latter comment perhaps suggests

⁸⁹ Cheikh A. Babou, “Decolonization or National Liberation: Debating the End of British Colonial Rule in Africa,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 632 (November 1, 2010): 44.

⁹⁰ For reasons unknown, the Parti Progressiste Soudanais is commonly referred to as the PSP rather than the PPS.

⁹¹ Danioko, “Contribution à l’étude des partis politiques au Mali de 1945 à 1960,” 71.

⁹² Ibid., 66. “Le Parti Communist trouve tous les moyens bons, même la malhonnêteté et la violence pour convertir les cœurs.”

⁹³ Ibid., 66. “Parce que le Parti Communiste a fait d’une tendance naturelle une doctrine de pays au point qu’il approuve aveuglément l’attitude de la Russie Soviétique dans tous ses actes bons ou mauvais.”

wariness about the possibility of having party policy dictated by a foreign power or international body during a period when Soudanese political parties were just establishing their own identities and goals.

The Autonomous Years: Realpolitik & Nascent Nationalism, 1956-1960

The clientelist tendencies that would come to characterize the early postcolonial era in Mali can also be observed in the late 1950s, particularly after the USRDA gained meaningful power in 1957 in the context of the *loi-cadre*. In 1958 Modibo Keita was already lamenting the fact that, for some, “the Party is a dispensary for distributing mandates and ministerial portfolios,” and he castigated those activists who had taken to attacking the USRDA because they had not obtained positions of power.⁹⁴ Thus pressures within the party to materially reward its rank and file members appear to have been strong well before independence.

Such pressures may have also contributed to a contemporaneous USRDA policy to eliminate political opposition and thus expand the scope of party power. A combination of aggressive efforts to ban opposition parties and popular awareness of who held real power led in particular to the PSP’s gradual collapse between 1957 and 1960.

Immediately following the USRDA electoral victory in 1957, many key PSP supporters threw their weight behind Keita. This is not surprising, as Hopkins has noted the tendency of Mali’s rank and file politicians to support the party or faction serving as the most effective patron, and to change allegiance as the relative strength of political agents

⁹⁴ ANM.2.4.Ve Congrès de l’USRDA. *Ve Congrès de l’Union Soudanaise, 13-17 août 1958 et 2^e Conférence territoriale de l’Union Soudanaise, 17-19 octobre 1958*, 4. “...ceux pour lesquels le Parti est une officine de distribution de mandats et de portefeuilles ministériels.”

rose and fell.⁹⁵ The chief of the Somono people of Segou, for example, endorsed the USRDA in 1957, citing the PSP's inability to bestow upon him a particular official honour he coveted.⁹⁶ *Vérité*, the PSP newspaper, vociferously critiqued such fair-weather friends. For example, in the aftermath of the 1957 elections, an article in *Vérité* had this to say about a chief from Sarro, referred to by the initials "B.T.":

What illness is B.T. suffering from? What can be said about this little wolf who enjoyed all we had to offer for ten years and who, now that we are weak, leads a demagogical propaganda campaign against those to whom he owes everything [i.e. the PSP].

Worthless man – what made you so vain? This RDA majority that you promote like a rabid dog can in no way slow our activities in your fiefdom, which retains only a very bad memory of you.⁹⁷

In spite of such early denunciations and assertions that the party could not be stopped despite declining membership, the combination of waning of support and USRDA pressure to eliminate all opposition – the Keita regime (specifically Madeira Keita, as Minister of the Interior) passed various decrees rendering other small parties illegal, as it did to the Union Démocratique Ségovienne (UDS) in 1959,⁹⁸ or simply arrested party leaders for failing to endorse it, as occurred with the Soudanese branch of the Parti Africain d'Indépendance in 1960⁹⁹ – led even the PSP leader Fily Dabo Sissoko

⁹⁵ Nicholas S. Hopkins, "Kita (Mali) in the Time of Modibo Keita," 101–11.

⁹⁶ *Vérité* no. 601, 8 August 1957.

⁹⁷ *Vérité* no. 603, 10 August 1957. "De quel mal souffre B.T.? Que dire de ce louveteau qui s'est regalé de nous pendant dix ans et qui maintenant défaillant, mène une propagande démagogique contre ceux à qui il doit tout. Homme de rien - qui t'a rendu si vain? Cette majorité RDA que tu prônes tel un chien enragé ne pourra du tout ralentir notre action dans ton fief qui ne garde pour toi qu'un très mauvais souvenir..."

⁹⁸ ANM.245.876. Correspondance Ségou 1958-1968. *Decrét 34 portant dissolution de l'association dénommée "Union Démocratique Ségovienne" (5 February 1959, signé Madeira Keita).*

⁹⁹ ANM.18.36. Fédération du Mali 1960. *1960 03 24 Parti Africain de l'Indépendance au Soudan Malien Alerte au Fascisme.*

to announce his support for the USRDA in 1959.¹⁰⁰ This was not due to a change in political ideology, but to a shift in political fortune. As Guy Martin observes, the USRDA,

although it legally tolerated the existence of the PSP, did everything possible to make life impossible for it. So much so that, seeing no other way out, Fily Dabo Sissoko, on behalf of the Political Bureau of the PRS (formerly PSP), announced the party's adherence to the Union Soudanaise on March 31, 1959.¹⁰¹

Thus USRDA leaders appear to have been motivated in some measure by concern for securing resources and power, at least in the autonomous period from 1957 onward.

Keita sought to justify single-party rule in February 1960, seven months before the socialist option was announced, not only aiming to rationalize such repression – which in fact contradicted the existing legal framework protecting multi-partism¹⁰² – but demonstrating a need to position it in a narrative of unity, nation-building, and independence. He remarked that a young country “that has only just been born to Western-style democracy” cannot afford “the dispersion of efforts and of good will.”¹⁰³

It was for these reasons that the USRDA alleged that it “decided on the single party because it was a question of building Mali, and following that it was a question of bringing Mali to independence!”¹⁰⁴ Socialism would soon buttress such nationalist

¹⁰⁰ Amselle, "Le Mali Socialiste (1960-1968)"; Waterbury, "Twilight of the State Bourgeoisie?," 1–17.

¹⁰¹ Martin, "Socialism, Economic Development and Planning in Mali, 1960-1968," 30.

¹⁰² Cheick Cissé, "Contribution À l'Étude Des Institutions Politiques Du Mali (Recherches Pour Une Théorie de l'État Nouveau)" (Université de Paris I - Panthéon-Sorbonne, 1976).

¹⁰³ *L'Essor* no. 3320, 24 Février 1960, "À Ségou, Modibo Keita dénonce certaines coutumes évoque la question du parti unique stigmatise certaines déviations." "[un pays]... qui vient de naître tout juste à la démocratie à l'occidentale" [ne peut pas permettre] "la dispersion des efforts et des bonnes volontés."

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* "Ainsi donc, nous en sommes arrivés au parti unique parce qu'il s'agissait de faire le MALI, et ensuite il s'agissait de mener le MALI à l'indépendance!"

claims, legitimizing the push for political unity as part of a program of rapid economic development and social transformation. And the USRDA was certainly in need of a means of legitimizing one-party rule. As Giovanni Sartori has noted,

the fact is not simply that single-party states either inherit a politicised society or promote one. It is, further, that they need a pervasively politicised society far more than do the pluralistic polities. The one party claims exclusiveness and is therefore acutely confronted with a problem of self-justification and self-assertion. Whether or not the single-party states arise in a revolutionary situation and by revolutionary means, they are perceived as exceptional, “special” regimes – not merely “new” regimes. Therefore, the monistic polities cannot expect to acquire legitimacy simply with the passing of time; they must show that they can do more, better and faster, than the pluralistic systems. If the claim cannot be sustained by deeds, it will have to be sustained all the more by words. In any case, the society must be mobilised, persuaded, and asked for trustful, if not unconditional, dedication. All these tasks require a powerful system of irrigation, so to speak, and the natural instrument for mobilising a society is precisely the single party. Not only, then, does a modern society need to be channelled. The logic of the one-party formula leads further: to a society that must be “chained”. It is only by compulsive regimentation and monopolistic indoctrination, in fact that the single-party state succeeds to party pluralism and can succeed where a pluralistic polity may fail.¹⁰⁵

This is the context in which one must understand the socialist turn. It does not appear to have been primarily motivated by ideology, but by a need to legitimize the transformation of “the party as a channel of *expression*” to “the party as a *channel*, period”¹⁰⁶ by arguing that socialism could “do more, better, and faster.”¹⁰⁷ Indeed, Modibo Keita demanded such unconditional dedication in 1961, linking it to the achievement of economic independence, a core concept in its socialist program. “One of the sine qua non conditions of our success is unreserved devotion to the Union Soudanaise R.D.A. through blind submission (let’s not fear the word) to the party that is

¹⁰⁵ Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis* (ECPR Press, 2005), 38.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 38.

wholly preoccupied with achieving economic independence.”¹⁰⁸

Yet before socialism had been adopted, and before territorial nationalism would be promoted by the USRDA, party leaders in the late 1950s would demonstrate an affinity for a broad form of Franco-African nationalism – thus showing signs of the nationalist orientation that would drive the Keita regime’s political agenda from independence onward. This broad nationalism, in turn, was motivated to a significant degree by the USRDA’s pressing concern for rapid economic development in the Soudan. Thus although the party can be said to have had an ideological bearing at this time, insofar as it endorsed a form of nationalism, its endorsement of a French West African nation was largely predicated on the belief that establishing such a nation was the only way to prevent the Soudan from remaining perpetually mired in poverty—a widely held view at the time. Indeed, “[a]lmost all agreed that the colonies of French West Africa, eight small states with populations ranging from half a million to four million, were doomed to poverty and subordination if they tried to survive as independent nation-states.”¹⁰⁹ To this end, it was willing to support the policies and ideological orientations of neighbouring territories, so long as West African unity was maintained. Indeed, beyond its commitment to prosperity, modernity, and unity both horizontally with other territories and vertically with France, the USRDA demonstrated a consistent ideological eclecticism. It analyzed and drew inspiration from the results of development policies implemented by states as diverse as Mexico, Afghanistan, Italy, Sudan, China, Israel,

¹⁰⁸ ANM.142.560.Circulaires 1947-1968. *Circulaire no 11, Modibo Keita, 29 Juillet 1961*. “C’est dire qu’une des conditions sine qua non de notre réussite, est le dévouement sans réserve à l’Union Soudanaise R.D.A., par une obéissance aveugle (ne craignons pas le mot) au Parti entièrement préoccupé à la réalisation de l’indépendance économique.”

¹⁰⁹ Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation*, 2.

and Egypt, paying little mind to the ideologies professed by the regimes that undertook them.¹¹⁰ Instead, party leaders focused on how these regimes had been able to address the problem that most concerned the USRDA: economic development and modernization — particularly with regard to agriculture, the mainstay of Soudan's economy. Technical aspects of economic development — like how many villages to start an agricultural modernization program with and how best to expand it over time — saw far greater treatment in USRDA literature than ideological matters. Mexico's "very ambitious agricultural modernization program" was analyzed as a cautionary tale, for example, with a report from the Fifth Party Congress chalking its failure up to "the insufficient quality of personnel" and the "lack of farmers' spirit of cooperation."¹¹¹ "In contrast, in Afghanistan," observed the report, "a pilot operation focused on only two villages developed at such a pace that in less than three years it had expanded to two distinct regions including about 130 villages."¹¹² Indeed, rather than promoting an ideological approach to peasant modernization, Seydou Badian Kouyaté, Minister of Rural Economy, advised in 1957 that the USRDA not impose on the peasants, as they were perfectly capable of engaging with modern ideas on their own terms, and as excessive intervention would only risk their alienation.¹¹³ As regards merchants' role in

¹¹⁰ ANM.2.4. Ve Congrès de l'USRDA. *Ve Congrès de l'Union Soudanaise, 13-17 août 1958 et 2^e Conférence territoriale de l'Union Soudanaise, 17-19 octobre 1958*, 29.

¹¹¹ Ibid. "Parti d'un programme très ambitieux de modernisation de l'agriculture, le Mexique a dû, après trois ans d'expérience, reconsidérer entièrement son programme pour concentrer l'action sur un seul village. Les principales difficultés rencontrées ont été d'une part l'insuffisante qualité du personnel de l'encadrement et, d'autre part, le manque d'esprit de coopération des agriculteurs."

¹¹² Ibid. "Par contre, en Afghanistan, une opération-pilote portant sur deux villages seulement, s'est développée à un rythme tel qu'en moins de trois ans elle a été étendue à deux régions distinctes groupant environ 130 villages."

¹¹³ ANM.1.2.3e Congrès International du RDA – 1957. *Rapport présenté par le Docteur*

hoisting the Soudan out of poverty, far from condemning them at this time, Kouyaté argued their access to credit needed to be strengthened in order to compete with European and foreign companies.¹¹⁴

It was in the interest of economic development that the USRDA so vigorously promoted a supraterritorial union, as this would allow it to compete economically, or develop apace, with their more geographically fortunate coastal neighbours. As Idrissa Diarra, the USRDA's political secretary, stated in 1957, "the general infrastructure situated in the coastal areas must fully benefit all parts of the [hypothetical West African] Federation. African solidarity must be fully and wholly effective."¹¹⁵ To this end, USRDA leaders demanded that industrial investments in any proposed federation be divided equally between all territories, as "thus far the Soudan has seen no significant investments."¹¹⁶ They also requested that a highway be paved between Bamako and Dakar and that both the Niger and Senegal rivers be made navigable year round in order that Soudanese products might be on equal footing with those of coastal colonies in

Kouyaté, Ministre de l'Economie Rurale du Soudan. "Pour la mise en place de ces organismes [coopératives villageoises], nous demandons qu'une large initiative soit laissée aux paysans eux-mêmes. Il n'est ni nécessaire, ni souhaitable d'imposer aux paysans des formules qui heurtent le milieu et ne peuvent répondre à besoins immédiats. Notre rôle à nous est d'orientation, d'adaptation, car il existe dans le milieu paysans des organisations traditionnelles qui peuvent parfaitement servir d'appui aux idées modernes."

¹¹⁴ Ibid. "La Délégation Soudanaise estime que l'état actuel du pays le pouvoir des Sociétés européennes ou étrangères semblent limiter dans nos pays les chances des isolés. Elle recommande donc que les commerçants africains soient orientés vers des organisations qui leur permettraient de répondre aux exigences des maisons de crédit."

¹¹⁵ ANM.1.2.3e Congrès interterritorial du RDA, 1957. *Rapport du Soudan – présenté par Mr. Idrissa Diarra.* "Il faut que l'infrastructure générale installée dans les pays côtiers puisse bénéficier à toutes les parties de la Fédération. Il faut que la solidarité africaine joue pleinement et entièrement."

¹¹⁶ Ibid. "le Soudan ne bénéficie jusqu'ici d'aucun investissement intéressant."

regional and global markets.¹¹⁷ These statements suggest that the USRDA was acutely concerned with its disadvantageous position relative to neighbouring colonies and that it saw forming a West African union as a path out of poverty rather than as an ideological project.

Indeed, in pursuit of this unity, the USRDA was prepared to make sacrifices with regard to even the most important policy choices — party leaders were ready, for example, to change their vote on joining the French Union 1958 from yes to no if the majority of its neighbours elected to do so.¹¹⁸ If Mali's leaders were ready to put their convictions aside on such a key issue — whether to repudiate the relationships established during the colonial era and become independent or to endorse a new kind of French empire — it suggests their priority was not to defend an ideological position but to extricate the Soudan from its condition of poverty by whichever means appeared most expedient. Along these lines, in 1957 party leaders promoted a policy platform that focused simply on identifying effective development strategies and that, drawing inspiration from varied quarters, “[recommended] that [the party] must not adhere exclusively to any one model.”¹¹⁹ USRDA policy makers intended to model their state-building project on whatever had worked for other regimes facing similar problems — like the establishment of a modern agricultural sector where one had never existed. They

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ ANM.2.4.Ve Congrès de l'USRDA. *Ve Congrès de l'Union Soudanaise, 13-17 août 1958 et 2^e Conférence territoriale de l'Union Soudanaise, 17-19 octobre 1958*, 47. “Nous avons affirmé, nous, à l'Union Soudanaise que si à priori, une majorité de NON s'était dégagée, nous aurions préconisés le NON, en dépit de nos convictions profondes, dans le souci de préserver l'UNITÉ.”

¹¹⁹ ANM.1.2.3e Congrès international du RDA, 1957. *Rapport présenté par le Docteur Kouyaté, Ministre de l'Economie Rural du Soudan*. “Dans nos recherches, la Délégation Soudanaise estime que nous ne devons jeter l'exclusive sur aucune expérience.”

noted that “certain projects from other countries, notably the mixed cooperatives of Israel and the Chinese mutual aid teams, seem to match the sociological structures of traditional Africa,”¹²⁰ and they gravitated toward these projects not because of the ideological baggage they carried but because they appeared practical and easy to implement in the Soudanese context. Indeed, up until independence the unifying theme among countries from which the USRDA took inspiration for policy was their ability to rapidly modernize and develop areas with rudimentary infrastructure and economic systems. Even postwar Germany was one of their inspirations, for this very reason. As the report from the second territorial conference of the USRDA noted in 1958:

Following the war that had destroyed it, Germany was the poorest country in Europe. In 1958, thanks to 13 years of determined effort, she is on the path to become one of the foremost Nations of the World. This extraordinary resurrection is the achievement of all the Germans, who put themselves to work with a courage and enthusiasm that has earned them the admiration of the whole world.¹²¹

The following paragraph in the report highlights the achievements of the Israelis, and thus the pattern in party influences starts to become clear. The USRDA was looking for examples of states that had been able to, or had at least attempted to, modernize their territory starting either from scratch or from poor infrastructure and a weak economic base.

The USRDA remained focused on adapting existing economic and political

¹²⁰ Ibid., “certaines réalisations d’autres pays, notamment, les coopératives mixtes d’Israël et les équipes d’entraide chinoises semblent répondre aux structures de l’Afrique traditionnelles.”

¹²¹ ANM.2.4. Ve Congrès de l’USRDA. *Ve Congrès de l’Union Soudanaise, 13-17 août 1958 et 2^e Conférence territoriale de l’Union Soudanaise, 17-19 octobre 1958*, 56-57. “Au lendemain de la guerre qui l’avait anéantie, l’Allemagne était le pays le plus pauvre d’Europe. En 1958, grâce à 13 ans d’efforts acharnés, elle est en passe de devenir l’une des premières Nations du Monde. Cette résurrection extraordinaire est l’œuvre de tous les Allemands eux-mêmes qui se mirent au travail avec un courage et un enthousiasme qui ont suscité l’admiration du monde entier.”

relationships in such a way as to promote rapid economic development. Far from promoting a social revolution, the party sought to identify development strategies that could be implemented with the least disruption to the lives of ordinary people – particularly those of the peasants who comprised over 90 percent of the population and upon whom the economy relied. As Minister Kouyaté wrote in 1957:

It is neither necessary nor advisable to impose models on the peasants that disturb that milieu and that cannot satisfy immediate needs. Our role is one of orientation, adaptation, because in the peasant milieu there exist traditional organizations that can serve perfectly well as supports for modern ideas.¹²²

Along similarly conservative lines, the USRDA hoped to develop the existing capitalist economy, noting that “the urgency of the problem demands that we provide every enticement for foreign capital,” including “tax exemption for newly established industries.”¹²³ Indeed, USRDA officials lamented the absence of a middle class, as it “constituted a serious handicap because it deprives the territories of... factors important for industrialization.”¹²⁴ And although party leaders hoped to attract foreign capital due to the fact that it had no wealthy capitalist class of its own, it nonetheless pledged to support the development of its own class of small businessmen.¹²⁵ It was swift economic

¹²² ANM.1.2.3e Congrès international du RDA, 1957. *Rapport présenté par le Docteur Kouyaté, Ministre de l'Economie Rural du Soudan*. “Il n’est ni nécessaire, ni souhaitable d’imposer aux paysans des formules qui heurtent le milieu et ne peuvent répondre à besoins immédiats. Notre rôle à nous est d’orientation, d’adaptation, car il existe dans le milieu paysan des organisations traditionnelles qui peuvent parfaitement servir d’appui aux idées modernes.”

¹²³ Ibid. “L’urgence du problème demande que nous accordions toutes les facilités aux capitaux étrangers; ces mesures ébauchées par le camarade Lisette pourraient être: Dégrèvements fiscaux aux industries nouvelles installées...”

¹²⁴ Ibid. “L’absence de classes moyennes constitue donc un handicap sérieux car elle prive les territoires des deux facteurs importants de l’Industrialisation: les cadres et les capitaux.”

¹²⁵ ANM.2.4. Ve Congrès de l’USRDA. *Ve Congrès de l’Union Soudanaise, 13-17 août 1958 et 2^e Conférence territoriale de l’Union Soudanaise, 17-19 octobre 1958*, 5. “...si

development – embodied in the drive to industrialize, itself a conspicuous precursor of the socialist turn – that USRDA leaders desired, and they were willing to embrace a broad scope of practices that might achieve this goal. Thus it was the party’s intention to attract private foreign capital “without being limited to the principles of classical capitalism since the bourgeois class that built and developed it is lacking in our society.”¹²⁶ In other words, the party was willing to engage in capitalist development insofar as this bore out the promise of swift economic development and insofar as it had the capacity to do so.

Such discussions remained focused on how such systems could be used to promote the cause of development, and USRDA policy documents from the late 1950s tend to criticize those preoccupied with political theory. Radical Marxists in particular — like certain members of the Fédération des Etudiants d’Afrique Noire résidant en France — were judged to be offering “inappropriate solutions” to the Soudan’s problems, and were called upon to “prove their maturity” by completing a practical course of study and returning home. “Each time that we will gain an engineer, a medical doctor, an economist, a teacher, a technician, etc.,” wrote Modibo Keita in 1958, “we consider that we have won a battle.”¹²⁷ Of course, it was easier for party leaders to

le petit commerçant a la possibilité de vivre décevement de son commerce, etc..., nous pensons que le parti aura rempli pleinement les engagements qu’il a souscrits auprès des masses.”

¹²⁶ ANM.1.2.3e Congrès international du RDA, 1957. *Rapport présenté par le Docteur Kouyaté, Ministre de l’Economie Rural du Soudan*. “Nous ne saurions nous limiter aux principes du capitalisme classique alors que cette classe possédante qui l’a construit et développé fait défaut à notre Société.”

¹²⁷ ANM.2.4.5e Congrès de l’USRDA. *Ve Congrès de l’Union Soudanaise, 13-17 août 1958 et 2e Conférence territoriale de l’Union Soudanaise, 17-19 octobre 1958*, 15. “Chaque fois que nous aurons un ingénieur, un docteur en médecine, un économiste, un professeur, un technicien, etc... nous considérons que nous avons gagné une bataille.”

openly castigate these students — who were not members of the USRDA nor active participants in Soudanese politics — than to critique those party members on the ground who, like Madeira Keita, were “ardent partisan[s] of the Communist doctrine” championing “a new form of radical anti-colonial politics” within the USRDA even as the majority was occupied with more mundane matters.¹²⁸ It would be figures like Keita, who had played an important role in setting the Guinean branch of the RDA on a radically socialist and staunchly anti-Western trajectory in the late 1940s and early 1950s, who would go on to form the radical wing of the USRDA — not the overseas students “who, each day, undertake the liberating revolution of Saint-Michel Boulevard.”¹²⁹

Consequently, in the era of autonomy, lasting from 1957 to 1960, the USRDA did not want radical social change and it did not encourage radical socialist perspectives — such as advocating a state-run economy, anti-merchant policies, or agricultural collectivization — within its ranks. It desired rapid economic development, and it viewed a West African federation as its best prospect for achieving this. That is why the collapse of the Mali Federation in August of 1960 constituted such a crisis for the party — it robbed it of the only economic development plan it believed would pull the Soudan out of poverty.

A Pan-African Nightmare: the dissolution of the Mali Federation

Well, there was the breakup of the Mali Federation — a whole ensemble of things

¹²⁸ Mann, “Anti-Colonialism and Social Science,” 96, 98.

¹²⁹ ANM.2.4.5^e Congrès de l’USRDA. *Ve Congrès de l’Union Soudanaise, 13-17 août 1958 et 2^e Conférence territoriale de l’Union Soudanaise, 17-19 octobre 1958*, 15. “...ils réalisent chaque jour la révolution libératrice Boulevard Saint-Michel.”

that got us a little bit lost.¹³⁰

The Mali Federation is an all but forgotten memory. A union lasting just two months, it ranks among the most ephemeral of polities.¹³¹ Yet its influence on the Malian First Republic was profound. The anger and panic sown in Mali after Senegalese leader L.S. Senghor abruptly cleaved the territories in two in August 1960 set the stage for the movement of radical socialism from the margins to the political centre.

The reasons for the dissolution remain a point of contention in Mali and in the historiography. While the Keita regime harboured bitter feelings toward both the Senegalese and the French — blaming them for the Federation’s dissolution — it equally posited the most reasonable explanation for its breakdown. In a speech given at the Extraordinary Congress of the USRDA in September 1960, President Keita stated that “the rupture between the Soudanese Republic and the Senegalese Republic” was “provoked by fundamental political contradictions.”¹³² The same forces that led neighbouring colonies like Côte d’Ivoire, Haute Volta, and Niger to reject the creation of a regional federation had come to bear on its two remaining members. Fundamentally, neither wished to cede its political power, or a portion thereof, to the other. Cooper has drawn a similar conclusion, remarking that the poor colonies of French West Africa were not willing to compromise their most valuable resource – sovereignty¹³³ – and also that “[t]he Senegalese were indeed worried...that Mali might come under Keita’s sole

¹³⁰ Interview with anonymous former Keita regime official, Bamako, 17 February 2012.

¹³¹ Although it only existed as an independent state for two months, Senegal and the Soudan had been collaborating on its implementation since 1958.

¹³² CADN.Bamako.Amb.11.Union Soudanaise 1960.*Congrès Extraordinaire de l’U.S. RDA les 22 et 23 Septembre 1960, discours de clôture par la Secrétaire Générale Modibo Keita*, p. 5. “La rupture entre la République Soudanaise et la République du Sénégal provoquée par des contradictions politiques fondamentales”.

¹³³ Cooper, *Africa in the World*, 83.

control.”¹³⁴ As Donn M. Kurtz has noted, “[d]isagreement occurred over the powers of the federal government, the distribution of offices, and the Africanisation of the civil service.” This latter point was intimately tied to the question of job creation and, thus, of client network development. While Senghor only favoured Africanization where locals had the proper training to replace Europeans, the USRDA pushed for a swift transfer of jobs regardless of such concerns. The USRDA's position was surely influenced by the Soudan's low education rate, which would have impeded a large increase in government employment if Senghor's policy were adopted.¹³⁵ This would have conflicted with the party's need to satisfy the demands of clients and to provide the highest possible number of jobs and positions of political authority for its demanding supporters. The French ambassador described just how demanding these supporters could be in October, 1960, stating that many bureaucrats were angry at having lost positions of privilege in the wake of the federation's collapse, provoking a wave of bitterness and critical gossip that was stirring up anti-government sentiment.¹³⁶ He further remarked on the concern this caused Modibo Keita:

They even say that, faced with personal rivalries he cannot reconcile and demanding appetites he cannot satisfy, President Modibo Keita has determined to consult a “veteran” old friend of Mamadou Konaté and has asked him to use all

¹³⁴ Cooper, *Citizenship between Empire and Nation*, 402.

¹³⁵ Donn M. Kurtz, “Political Integration in Africa: The Mali Federation,” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 8, no. 03 (1970): 406.

¹³⁶ CADN.Bamako.Amb.9. *Télégramme hebdomadaire no 54, semaine du 14 au 20 décembre 1960*. “Dans l’administration, les fonctionnaires Maliens revenus de Dakar n’ont pas tous retrouvé les situations qu’ils avaient avant le 20 Août. Ils en tirent une certaine amertume et vouent une solide rancune à leurs collègues mieux nantis. Ces éruptions, anodines quand elles sont prises séparément, finissent par créer cependant un climat favorable à l’éclosion de fausses nouvelles qui, sans être encore systématiquement hostiles au Gouvernement se propagent avec une telle rapidité qu’elles l’inquiètent et risquent, aux dires de certains, de détériorer la situation politique.”

of his influence to calm people's spirits and impose a solution.¹³⁷

The respective parties competed for dominance through the summer of 1960 — Senghor seeking the Presidency of the Federation, Keita seeking control of the military — until Senghor appears to have decided that the benefits of federation did not outweigh the risks of potential domination by Soudanese politicians.¹³⁸ Martin argues along these lines, suggesting that “[b]asically, the leaders of the two territories found themselves in sharp personal, political and ideological disagreement.”¹³⁹ While the general contours of these explanations are sound and they correspond closely to Kurtz's analysis, the notion that strong ideological differences account for the federation's breakup is slightly problematic. While neither Zolberg nor Martin elaborate on the precise nature of the major ideological differences they posit, both suggest the Soudanese leaders had a radical socialist orientation whereas the Senegalese were conservative. This analysis is slightly coarse and deterministic, for it suggests the USRDA was a radical party prior to independence – rather than a moderate party with a radical faction – and it assumes Mali's radical turn to the left following the Federation's dissolution was inevitable. Given the facts that have already been explored in this chapter – that the USRDA majority was oriented toward economic pragmatism and was not comprised of radical socialists, that the USRDA had created a political union with the moderate Senegalese, and that the USRDA had supported relatively conservative policies in the late 1950s including voting “yes” in the 1958 referendum and backing Senghor's explicitly

¹³⁷ Ibid. “On dit même que, face aux rivalités de personnes qu'il ne peut concilier, et aux appétits exigeants qu'il ne peut satisfaire, le Président Modibo Keita s'est résigné à consulter un « ancien », vieil ami de Mamadou Konaté, et lui a demandé d'user de toutes son influence pour calmer les esprits et imposer une solution.”

¹³⁸ Kurtz, “Political Integration in Africa,” 406.

¹³⁹ Martin, “Socialism, Economic Development and Planning in Mali, 1960-1968,” 29.

moderate and Western-friendly economic policies – these scholars’ emphasis on the ideological divide separating these two territories seems exaggerated.

Indeed, what this dissertation adds to the historiography of the Mali Federation’s breakup is the contention that this political fracture played a large role in radical socialism’s rise in Mali. While scholars like Martin and Zolberg¹⁴⁰ have suggested the federation dissolved in part *because* the USRDA was so radical, I suggest the opposite: that the dissolution of the federation was important in allowing the party’s radical minority to steer a party that had always taken moderate positions in a new direction. This view is in keeping with Cooper’s assessment that attempts to federate French West African territories failed because territorial leaders had already grown attached to the political power granted to them by the *loi-cadre*, which came into effect in 1957.¹⁴¹ The federation crumbled because neither Keita nor Senghor were willing to cede a part of their power to the other, rather than because the USRDA was devoted to radical socialism. Indeed, it was partly due to this concern for retaining control over the state apparatus that socialism emerged as the dominant political force in Mali in the aftermath of the federation’s dissolution.

More significant than the objective causes of the breakup, however, are the causes perceived by the USRDA and the effects these generated. In Bamako the Federation’s dissolution was considered a coup d’état, and the results for the nascent country of Mali and its political thinkers were dramatic. Indeed, the very circumstances of the rupture could not help but deeply mark the USRDA. Modibo Keita and other Soudanese leaders

¹⁴⁰ For a similar position see also William J. Foltz, *From French West Africa to the Mali Federation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965).

¹⁴¹ Cooper, *Africa in the World*, 79-86.

who were in Dakar on Federation business were arrested, placed in a sealed train car, and expelled from the country.¹⁴² This was not only offensive but in Soudanese eyes illegal, since the Federation constitutionally forbade dissolution in such a manner. Indeed, there was no legal provision for its dissolution at all. On August 20, USRDA officials were quick to note on the airwaves of Radio Soudan that “no disposition elaborated in common and voted by the Federal Assembly, the emanation of the Soudanese and Senegalese people, recognizes the Government of Senegal’s right to substitute itself for federal authorities.” As such, the USRDA accused the Senegalese of “deliberately violating the Constitution,” and claimed that their “odious act” constituted “a coup d’état premeditated at length.”¹⁴³

Compounding the USRDA’s sense of being under attack, the French did nothing to stop Senegal. This was seen as evidence of a conspiracy. As Kenneth Grundy notes, USRDA politicians believed “that Senegal's withdrawal from the aborted Mali Federation in August 1960 was instigated by the French Government for the purpose of keeping black Africa divided and weak, thereby leaving the door ajar for French economic domination in West Africa.”¹⁴⁴ Furthermore, French soldiers who remained on the ground had been put at the disposition of the Mali Federation since its independence

¹⁴² Kurtz, “Political Integration in Africa,” 406.

¹⁴³ CADN.Bamako.Amb.11.Union Soudanaise 1960.*Allocution prononcée à Radio-Soudan le 20 Août 1960 à 20h15 par M. Oumar Baba Diarra, Secrétaire d’État au Travail et aux Affaires Sociales*, pp. 2-3. “...aucune disposition élaborée en commun et votée par l’Assemblée Fédérale, émanation des peuples soudanais et sénégalais, ne reconnaît au Gouvernement du SENEGAL le droit de se substituer aux autorités fédérales”; “...violant délibérément la Constitution de la Fédération du MALI”; “...cet acte odieux”; “...tous ces faits constituent un coup d’État caractérisé longuement prémédité”.

¹⁴⁴ Kenneth W. Grundy, “Marxism-Leninism and African Underdevelopment : The Mali Approach,” *Africa* 17, no. 3 (1962): 302.

in June, 1960. Senegalese leaders ordered these soldiers to carry out the arrests of Soudanese leaders, which the latter took as a sign of French complicity in the break-up of the union. Well justified or not, at the Extraordinary Congress of the USRDA the following month President Keita was unequivocal in his condemnation of the French for conspiring to destroy the Federation:

Our position on the Algerian problem, our determination to construct a true socialism, our desire to create before all other associations a true African community, caused certain French officials to drive the Senegalese leaders to secession.¹⁴⁵

In short, Keita accused French leaders of “inspiring, preparing, unleashing, [and] supporting the secession of the Senegalese Republic.”¹⁴⁶ His account is exaggerated, for construction of “a true socialism” only became USRDA policy after the breakup; in the month between the federation’s dissolution and the Extraordinary Congress the party had shifted considerably to the left. Furthermore, despite Keita's accusations that France masterminded the breakup, the country did not immediately recognize Senegalese independence, although de Gaulle did send a telegram to Modibo Keita addressing “the events which currently separate Senegal and Soudan and break the Mali Federation.” He invited Keita to Paris for talks regarding a potential rapprochement with Senegal or an

¹⁴⁵ CADN.Bamako.Amb.11.Union Soudanaise 1960.*Congrès Extraordinaire de l’U.S. RDA les 22 et 23 Septembre 1960, discours de clôture par la Secrétaire Générale Modibo Keita*, p. 4. “Notre position sur le problème algérien, notre détermination à construire un véritable socialisme, notre volonté de réaliser avant toute autre association, une véritable communauté africaine, ont déterminé certains responsables français à conduire les dirigeants sénégalais à la sécession.”

¹⁴⁶ CADN.Bamako.Amb.11.Union Soudanaise 1960.*Congrès Extraordinaire de l’U.S. RDA les 22 et 23 Septembre 1960, discours de clôture par la Secrétaire Générale Modibo Keita*, p. 4. “...ce sont les dirigeants français qui ont inspiré, préparé, déclenché, soutenu la sécession de la République du Sénégal.”

alternative political arrangement.¹⁴⁷ But the USRDA railed against French recognition of the federation's breakdown, for its initial aim was to reverse the split. Thus Keita tersely thanked de Gaulle for his offer to mediate, but noted that he "considers extremely serious... the fact that France considers the bonds of the Federation to be broken whereas, constitutionally, rupture is impossible."¹⁴⁸

While the language of Keita's letter to de Gaulle remained cordial, he was clearly incensed by any suggestion that the federation had actually come to an end. Meanwhile, the domestic reaction to the Federation's breakdown was furious. Indeed, many Soudanese organized weapons' drives and prepared for war with their neighbour. One observer, whose father was a deputy during this era, recalls:

I remember at the time [of the Federation's breakdown] my parents and the adults had gotten together to form brigades. Each had gone to the family granaries to see if there were rifles, sabres. Then they had to march on Dakar... to liberate the people there [arrested Soudanese officials]... And that was a moment of great, how should I say, of nationalism... I remember very well, everyone was vibrating. "We're going to go gobble up those Wolofs!" and all this. Now it makes me laugh.¹⁴⁹

While sabre-wielding cadres did not invade Senegal, the USRDA did sever diplomatic relations. The party also declared a state of emergency immediately following its leaders' expulsion from Dakar in August 1960.¹⁵⁰ Militias were mobilized. Ordinary

¹⁴⁷ ANM.12.30.Évènements survenus à Dakar du 19 au 20 Août 1960.SSS 931 PARIS 214/213 20 1833 V.T.L.F. ETAT PRIORITÉ= HAUT REPRESENTANT DAKAR = 50076. "Les évènements qui séparent actuellement le Sénégal et le Soudan et rompent la Fédération du Mali."

¹⁴⁸ CADN.Bamako.Amb.11.Union Soudanaise 1960.*Réponse du Président Modibo Keita au Message du Général de Gaulle*. "Mais je considère comme extrêmement grave : ... Que le fait que la FRANCE considère comme rompus les liens de la Fédération alors que la rupture, constitutionnellement, est impossible".

¹⁴⁹ Interview with Sidi Zouboye, Kati, 29 February 2012.

¹⁵⁰ CADN.Bamako.Amb.11.Union Soudanaise 1960.*Allocution prononcée à Radio-Mali le 20 Août 1960 à 12h30 par Me. Hammaciré N'Douré, Président du Conseil P.I. de la République Soudanaise*, p. 1.

people were stopped and asked for identification, and so many roadblocks were established in Bamako that after four months the issue was raised in a government memo: “Why so many blockades just a few metres from each other?”¹⁵¹ Many were prepared to fight in defence of the nation's honour, and Senegal, along with France, was reviled for having “betrayed in dishonourable circumstances” the Soudanese and the goal of political unity.¹⁵²

Economic relations with Senegal were also severed. Significantly, the railway joining Bamako to Dakar — and the landlocked Soudan to the Atlantic coast — was cut. Although former regime officials — and various scholars — make competing claims as to which side was responsible,¹⁵³ there is clear evidence that it was the Soudanese. Indeed, when Modibo Keita pitched the idea of reopening the railway to Dakar in late 1960 he was met with cold rejection in the BPN even though this made ample economic sense¹⁵⁴ (this rejection, however, may not have been unanimous, as other moderates like Minister of Commerce Hammaciré N’Douré had already joined Keita behind the scenes in efforts to ensure that the economy functioned normally, with particular regard to the continuity of French aid).¹⁵⁵ Meyan Diarra confirms the angry sentiment that led the USRDA to take this position:

¹⁵¹ ANM.126.468.BPN Secrétariat 1960-1967.*Etat d'urgence, 13 décembre 1960.* “Pourquoi plusieurs barrages à quelques mètres l’un de l’autre? Il semblerait que 5 barrages suffisaient.”

¹⁵² CADN.Bamako.Amb.11.Union Soudanaise 1960.*Congrès Extraordinaire de l’U.S. RDA les 22 et 23 Septembre 1960, discours de clôture par la Secrétaire Générale Modibo Keita*, p. 5. “...trahie dans des circonstances peu honorables”.

¹⁵³ Interview with Sira Bamba Sissoko, Bamako, 10 February 2012; Interview with Assane Guindo, Bamako, 4 February, 2012.

¹⁵⁴ CADN.Bamako.Amb.9. *Télégramme hebdomadaire no 54, semaine du 14 au 20 décembre 1960.*

¹⁵⁵ CADN.Bamako.Amb.9.Incidents de Ségou 1959 et 1960 et Politique Au Soudan. *Télégramme hebdomadaire no 50, semaine du 15 au 22 novembre 1960.*

With the breakup of the Federation, with Modibo's arrest over there in Senegal, Mali was mad... It was necessary to completely sever things with Senegal... That was our error and it made Malians suffer.¹⁵⁶

Frederick Pedler equally notes that being expelled from Senegal "was an insufferable indignity and when Modibo Keita stepped out of the train on his own soil, he ordered the railway line behind the train to be torn up and said that it should never be restored."¹⁵⁷ Even in the years following the crisis the USRDA regime spent little effort getting their critical transport artery up and running again, allowing it to languish until 1963. This most crucial piece of transportation infrastructure was sacrificed without a fuss.

Since there were no paved roads connecting the Soudan to any other territories at the time, not to speak of a port that might facilitate participation in the global economy, this was significant. In 1950 the colony had only five kilometres of paved road, connecting the governor's palace on Koulouba hill to the cathedral in Bamako.¹⁵⁸ By 1960 road-building projects to connect Bamako with the regional centres of Ségou and Sikasso were in progress, but this did not solve the problem of international trade. Before the breakup of the Mali Federation, the Soudan was already relatively isolated. With the loss of the rail line, the Soudan was nearly choked off from the outside world just as it prepared for its own independence. This was an inauspicious beginning for a new state, one that left Mali vulnerable not only to the vagaries of international trade but to the criticisms of USRDA members disappointed with the Keita regime's failure to create the

¹⁵⁶ Interview with Meyan Diarra, Bamako, 21 March 2012.

¹⁵⁷ Frederick Pedler, *Main Currents of West African History 1940-1978*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 165.

¹⁵⁸ Interview with Bakari Kamian, Bamako, 20 February 2012.

unity for which they had long fought.¹⁵⁹

While allowing the rail service's suspension appears to have been unwise, the Soudan's substantially larger population and imposing territorial stature may partly explain it. With a population of over four million and an area of 1.2 million km², the Soudan Français had 25% more people and six times as much land as its neighbour.¹⁶⁰ It was also the inheritor of a long and illustrious history. The great empires of medieval West Africa had been centred there: Mali, Ghana, Songhai. While poor, landlocked, and disadvantaged in the modern global economy, some Soudanese saw themselves as the natural leaders between the two territories.

They also saw Mali as the principal market for Senegalese industry. Thus by cutting economic ties, the Keita regime hoped to teach the Senegalese a lesson in humility, and to force them to renegotiate an alliance on Soudanese terms. Keita stated:

The demonstration will equally be made to the Senegalese leaders that the Soudanese Republic was the principal market for Senegalese industries and enterprises, that our republic was rich not poor, and that Senegal was rich through our richness...¹⁶¹

Such statements are inaccurate. While smaller in size and population, Senegal dwarfed Mali economically. Circa 1952, it received nearly half of all French development

¹⁵⁹ CADN.Bamako.Amb.9 *Télégramme hebdomadaire no 53, décembre 1960.*

“Beaucoup lui reprochent en effet d’avoir contraint le Mali à un isolement qui les plonge dans de grandes difficultés économiques et d’avoir perdu de vue l’objectif essentiel de l’union soudanaise RDA, c’est-à-dire l’unité africaine.”

¹⁶⁰ Kurtz, “Political Integration in Africa,” 410; Office of Population Research, “Statistics,” *Population Index* 32, 1 (1966): 164.

¹⁶¹ CADN.Bamako.Amb.11.Union Soudanaise 1960.*Congrès Extraordinaire de l’U.S. RDA les 22 et 23 Septembre 1960, discours de clôture par la Secrétaire Générale Modibo Keita, p. 3.* “La démonstration sera également faite aux dirigeants sénégalais que la République Soudanaise était le principal marché des industries et entreprises sénégalaises, que notre République n’était riche pas pauvre, et que le Sénégal était riche de notre richesse, même humaine, pour accélérer le développement économique de notre République.”

subsidies to West Africa, and it also earned 30 times the customs revenue, had twice as many wage earners, and boasted nearly five times as many cars as its neighbour.¹⁶² In other words, the notion that Mali could cripple Senegal's economy by stopping rail service was based upon confusing size with economic clout — particularly as the railway “was designed primarily to carry internal products outwards to the ports” in Dakar, rather than to carry goods from Dakar to market in Bamako.¹⁶³ Obviously it would carry goods both ways, although it seems the arrangement was more favourable for the export of grain to the coast. After all, “Senegal's glittering seaport capital of Dakar was French West Africa's commercial and industrial hub as well as its political center,” whereas Bamako was a distant “hinterland.”¹⁶⁴ The railway would give Soudanese authorities much-needed market exposure for their main exports. Given the Soudan's poverty — and Senegal's easy access to markets via Atlantic trade and land borders with Mauritania, Guinea, Portuguese Guinea, and the Gambia — it seems the Soudanese had the most to gain from the railway despite the fact that there was surely a benefit to shipping Senegalese goods to the Soudan.¹⁶⁵ Indeed, this is precisely how the Senegalese viewed this situation, and is part of the reason why they did not attempt to swiftly restore rail service after the dissolution of the Federation. As Victor D. Du Bois notes:

The Senegalese were as convinced as everyone else that Mali's dependence on the Dakar-Niger Railroad, its only lifeline to the sea, would oblige the Maliens [sic] to petition for a settlement on Senegal's terms. They felt they had only to wait until

¹⁶² Kurtz, “Political Integration in Africa,” 410.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 411.

¹⁶⁴ Victor D. Du Bois, “Mali and Senegal and the Dakar-Niger Railroad: Economic Diplomacy in the New Africa,” *American Universities Field Staff Reports*, West Africa Series, 6, no. 4 (1963): 53–61.

¹⁶⁵ Kurtz, “Political Integration in Africa,” 411.

Maliens started to feel the economic pinch — a shortage of goods and a rise in prices — before they would come around. And sure enough, within a few weeks, the consequences of closing the railroad began to be apparent. The price of cement in Bamako soared from \$46 to \$76 a ton, inevitably causing a slowdown in construction projects then in progress. Similar price increases were registered for machinery and heavy goods of all sorts. Shortages of goods started to be felt in canned foods, spare parts, and appliances. The air was full of talk of Mali becoming another Guinea.¹⁶⁶

Ultimately, however, the Senegalese strategy failed because the Malians decided to weather the economic storm brought on by the railway's closure as they arranged an alternative route to the coast. With the help of the West German and Ivoirian governments, they were able to borrow the money to purchase 360 German Krupp transport trucks and to gain a blanket import duty exemption on goods removed from the port of Abidjan within 15 days.¹⁶⁷

The establishment of a road link with coastal Côte d'Ivoire allowed the USRDA regime to continue trading with the outside world, but it did not come without effort or expense. The rail line was ready for use, whereas the means to move goods to and from Abidjan had to be procured and constructed. The fleet of transport vehicles, of course, constituted a major expense. The road also required investment, as large sections of it were unpaved and could not cope with the heavy traffic without improvements. Port fees in Abidjan were also more expensive than in Dakar.¹⁶⁸

In any case, for the purpose of understanding how these developments affected Mali's move to the left, assessing the costs of establishing a road link to the sea and assigning responsibility for severing the rail link are secondary issues. The crucial point is that the failure to federate had indeed isolated Mali, and its leaders knew it. The

¹⁶⁶ Du Bois, "Mali and Senegal and the Dakar-Niger Railroad."

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 58.

territory was landlocked and poor in comparison to its coastal neighbours. As President Keita would state at the Extraordinary Congress:

The measures taken, both outside and inside the Soudanese Republic, have for a certain period imposed sacrifices on us that are, I know, already accepted. We must foresee the possible isolation of the Soudan, by the force of things and by the evolution of political events.¹⁶⁹

This outcome was precisely the one the USRDA had struggled to prevent. It had vigorously promoted the idea of a West African union, as party leaders understood the Soudan's chances for economic development to depend upon federating with coastal colonies that were better equipped with infrastructure, better placed to participate in global trade, and better endowed with financial resources. The Mali Federation was already a pale shadow of the state they had had in mind, and the USRDA was faced with the political reality it had long considered economically "catastrophic."¹⁷⁰ The price of Soudanese peanuts, for example, would now have "to be paid while taking into account the enormous cost of transport all the way to Dakar," which would considerably diminish the profit margins on Soudanese agricultural products. USRDA authorities saw that such examples "could be multiplied as many times as there are products and territories," and that this kind of economic dispensation – which clearly disadvantaged the landlocked Soudan – would lead to "upheavals such that the economy would

¹⁶⁹ CADN.Bamako.Amb.11.Union Soudanaise 1960.*Congrès Extraordinaire de l'U.S. RDA les 22 et 23 Septembre 1960, discours de clôture par la Secrétaire Générale Modibo Keita*, p. 3. "Les mesures prises, tant à l'extérieur de la République Soudanaisie, qu'à l'intérieur, nous imposeront pour une certaine période des sacrifices qui sont, je le sais, déjà acceptés. Il faut prévoir un isolement possible du Soudan, par la forces des choses et par l'évolution des évènements politiques."

¹⁷⁰ ANM.2.4.5^e Congrès de l'USRDA.*Ve Congrès de l'Union Soudanaise, 13-17 août 1958 et 2^e Conférence territoriale de l'Union Soudanaise, 17-19 octobre 1958*, p. 53.

devolve to veritable anarchy.”¹⁷¹ It was with this prospect of anarchy – or rather the prospect of poverty – that the USRDA had to grapple in the aftermath of the federation’s collapse.

A Decisive Month: Crisis Management & the Extraordinary Congress

Modibo Keita and other members of his government in Senegal reached the Soudanese border on August 20 after being ejected from Dakar in the night of the 19th. The days that immediately followed saw various speeches and press conferences given by Keita and other high-ranking members of government. Signs of a shift toward an ideological approach to politics were almost immediately visible, with accusations that the Senegalese were not committed to instituting genuine African socialism surfacing in official discourse within days. These changes were indicative of the rising influence of the radical socialist wing of the party. Certain leaders of this faction, like Madeira Keita, had held ministerial positions in the Soudanese government since 1957, but had nonetheless represented a minority with a quiet voice. In late August of 1960 that voice grew much louder.

The collapse of the Mali Federation sent the USRDA into a frenzy of action. In the month between its dissolution and Mali’s declaration of independence on September 22, Modibo Keita visited Morocco and Ghana, and party delegations were sent to the USA, the UN, the German Federation, unspecified Eastern Bloc countries, and around West Africa. These missions do not appear to have been organized along factional lines, as moderates like Jean-Marie Koné and Hammaciré N’Douré were sent to Eastern Bloc

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

territories like Czechoslovakia, and other minor officials were sent on tours of countries with varying ideological ties, including “Morocco, Italy, Japan, South Korea, and the People’s Republic of China.”¹⁷² Within ten days, three weeks before the Extraordinary Congress, a territorial conference was held where the party was “content to objectively cover the unfolding of events in Dakar, without drawing any conclusions.”¹⁷³ Yet although this conference did not draw conclusions – i.e. did not set new policy – it did adopt a new tone. Whereas until this point the USRDA had often reiterated its commitment to “perennial Franco-African friendship,”¹⁷⁴ it now spoke of “resisting the ascendance of imperialist forces,” and it accused France of wanting to “establish economic and cultural domination” in the Soudan.¹⁷⁵ This represented a considerable change in tone from even recent USRDA documents, which tended to portray France as a partner and the French language and identity as a unifying force that would facilitate the development of West African nationalism and a new French empire the Soudan had

¹⁷² CADN.Bamako.Amb.9.Politique au Soudan 1960.*Compte-Rendu no 48 – Semaine du 18 au 25 Octobre 1960*. “Un Conseil des Ministres du Mali a désigné les membres de deux missions devant se rendre à l’étranger. Une mission conduite par Me Hammaciré N’Douré se rendra en Tchecoslovaquie et en Israël; une autre conduite par M. Amani Sylla du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères se rendra au Maroc, en Italie, au Japon, en Corée du Sud et en Chine populaire.” Aussi: “Le vice-Président Jean-Marie Koné vient de terminer le voyage qui l’a conduit en Tchecoslovaquie, en Allemagne Fédérale, et en Israël. Il a présenté le 9 Décembre le rapport de sa mission au Comité Directeur du Parti.” (*Télégramme hebdomadaire no 51 (semaine du 23 au 29 Novembre 1960)*.)

¹⁷³ CADN.Bamako.Amb.11.Union Soudanaise 1960.*Conférence du 30 août 1960 (discours de Modibo Keita)*. “Nous nous sommes contentés d’un exposé objectif du déroulement des événements de Dakar, sans en tirer les conséquences.”

¹⁷⁴ ANM.1.2.3e Congrès international du RDA.*3e Congrès international du RDA, 1957 (discours de Modibo Keita)*. “la pérennité de l’amitié Franco-Africaine.”

¹⁷⁵ CADN.Bamako.Amb.11.Union Soudanaise 1960.*Conférence du 30 août 1960 (discours de Modibo Keita)*. “...c’est dans l’unité que l’Afrique pourra résister à l’emprise des forces impérialistes...”. Aussi: “...l’action destructrice des anciennes puissances coloniales qui, ayant perdu la domination politique, veulent asseoir une domination économique et culturelle.”

elected to join.

Socialism had a history in the Soudan dating back several decades, and many USRDA leaders, even relative conservatives like Modibo Keita, had been educated in communist circles. Senghor had endorsed the notion of African socialism, describing it as a kind of African humanism, and in the spring of 1960 Keita endorsed this view as well. Senghor stated:

The foreign policy of Mali will be founded on national independence and integrity, but also on international cooperation... The policy for the future of Mali is first to reinforce our democracy and more precisely to elaborate a path of African socialism. Our socialism is a humanism. Indeed, since the Middle Ages, since the empire of Mali, we have transcended racial and religious conflicts... I almost forgot to tell you that we do not have the intention to nationalize non-Malian capital. We are realists. It is from this perspective of humanism and realism that we envisage our relations on the one hand with France and on the other with other African states. But independence is only a means of achieving the goal of a politics worthy of this name, which is the elevation of citizens' standard of living and culture. Independence in isolation will not meet its goal....¹⁷⁶

At the USRDA cadres' conference at the end of May 1960, African socialism was formally adopted as party doctrine, although it remained vague and appears not to have altered party rhetoric or policy in any significant way.¹⁷⁷ In the summer of 1960 the

¹⁷⁶ *L'Essor* no. 3.315, 18 Février 1960, "Une Déclaration de M. Senghor sur l'Avenir du Mali." "“La politique extérieur du MALI sera fondée sur l'indépendance et l'intégrité nationale, mais aussi sur la coopération internationale” a déclaré M. Léopold Sédar Senghor Président de l'Assemblée Fédérale du MALI... "La politique d'avenir du MALI est d'abord de renforcer notre démocratie et plus précisément d'élaborer une voie africaine du socialisme. Notre socialisme est un humanisme. En fait nous avons dès le Moyen Age, dès l'empire du MALI, transcendé les querelles de race et de religion... J'allais oublier de vous dire que nous n'avons pas l'intention de nationaliser les capitaux non maliens. Nous sommes des réalistes. C'est dans cette perspective d'humanisme et de réalisme que nous envisageons nos rapports d'une part avec la France, d'autre part avec les autres Etats africains. Mais l'indépendance n'est qu'un moyen de réaliser le but d'une politique digne de ce nom qui est l'élévation du niveau de vie et de culture des citoyens. L'indépendance dans l'isolement n'atteindrait pas son but....”

¹⁷⁷ CADN.Bamako.Amb.11.Union Soudanaise 1960.4ème Conférence des cadres de l'Union Soudanaise, Bamako 28-31 Mai 1960 – Résolution Générale. “Considérant que

USRDA's intentions were clearly nationalist and developmentalist —the national community it imagined encompassing the Soudan and Senegal at this point — but they bore no signs of radical socialism. Less than three months before the collapse of the federation, in a general resolution of the party it was stated that “our essential objective remains henceforth the active mobilization of our energies and all our resources to construct the Independence of [the] Mali [Federation].”¹⁷⁸

But in the weeks between the collapse of the federation and the announcement of the socialist option the USRDA's language began to shift, suggesting that the radical wing of the party had gained considerable support, or at least considerable leverage, immediately following the split with Senegal. Within one week President Keita had accused the Senegalese of having “absolutely no plans to revolutionize economic structures for the cause of true African socialism,” and had pledged the USRDA's “fidelity to... a true socialism drawing its inspiration and methods from the intellectual and moral resources of Africa.”¹⁷⁹ Within ten days language reminiscent of communist

notre option doctrinale: la voie africaine du socialisme, a été précisée, la Conférence insiste sur la mise en place d'organismes évolutifs adaptés, et se prononce pour la liquidation des systèmes qui ne répondent pas à notre option.”

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. “la Conférence considère que notre objectif essentiel demeure désormais la mobilisation active de toutes nos énergies et de toutes nos ressources pour construire l'Indépendance du Mali.”

¹⁷⁹ CADN.Bamako.Amb.11.Union Soudanaise 1960.*Conférence de presse du 25 août 1960 par le Président Modibo Keita*. “M. Senghor et ses amis n'entendent nullement révolutionner les structures économiques dans le sens d'un véritable socialisme africain. D'autre part, ils reculent devant l'effort de chercher des débouchés à nos produits en dehors de la zone franc pour atteindre un équilibre de notre balance des devises... Sur le plan social alors que nous sommes pour l'Africanisation des cadres, M. Senghor, sous le prétexte d'éviter une africanisation au rabais, comme nous d'ailleurs, veut africaniser les Blancs alors que le Sénégal a des cadres nanties de toutes les références mais qui demeurent inemployés ou sous-employés...ce qu'ils nous reprochent...c'est notre fidélité à une réelle politique d'austérité et de progrès grâce à une véritable socialisme puisant son inspiration et ses moyens dans les ressources intellectuelles et morales de

propaganda – heretofore absent from USRDA documents – began to feature prominently, with Senegal’s leaders being qualified as “puppets” and ridiculed for not wanting “real independence” and for being “hostile to any politics of decolonization.”¹⁸⁰ Such characterizations were unprecedented, as until this point the USRDA had itself strongly committed itself to France, a new form of empire, and the “perpetuity of Franco-African friendship.”¹⁸¹ Indeed, at the end of May even Madeira Keita, the USRDA’s Minister of the Interior, had asserted that the party was “absolutely certain of its desire to be able to establish good relations, fraternal relations, trusting relations with the French Republic, after independence has been achieved.”¹⁸² Yet a few months later the same government accused Senegal of “voluntarily placing itself at the service of retrograde forces, of decadent French colonialism.”¹⁸³ The USRDA’s youth wing quickly explained the collapse of the federation as a “difference in ideological orientation between the Soudanese and Senegalese leaders,”¹⁸⁴ yet this seems to be a

l’Afrique.”

¹⁸⁰ CADN.Bamako.Amb.11.Union Soudanaise 1960.*Résolution adoptée par l’Union Soudanaise-RDA lors de sa conférence du 30 août 1960*. “La Conférence prend l’engagement solennel de tout mettre en oeuvre pour la restauration de l’intégrité territoriale du Mali mise en cause par des fantoches sénégalais, hostiles à toutes politique de décolonisation, à l’indépendance réelle et à l’unité africaine.”

¹⁸¹ ANM.1.2.3e Congrès international du RDA.*3e Congrès international du RDA, 1957 (discours de Modibo Keita)*. “la pérennité de l’amitié Franco-Africaine.”

¹⁸² CADN.Bamako.Amb.11.Union Soudanaise 1960.*4ème Conférence des cadres de l’Union Soudanaise (Bamako 28-31 Mai 1960) – discours de Madeira Keita*. “la Fédération du Mali était absolument certaine dans sa volonté de pouvoir établir de bons rapports, des rapports fraternels, des rapports confiants avec la République Française, une fois indépendance acquise.”

¹⁸³ CADN.Bamako.Amb.11.Union Soudanaise 1960.*Résolution adoptée par l’Union Soudanaise-RDA lors de sa conférence du 30 août 1960*. “s’est volontairement mis au service des forces rétrogrades, du colonialisme français décadent”.

¹⁸⁴ CADN.Bamako.Amb.11.Union Soudanaise 1960.*Déclaration du Bureau Exécutif de la Jeunesse de l’USRDA* (no date, but apparently originating in the weeks following the collapse of the federation). “Les contradictions au sein de la Fédération du Mali qui

case of history rewritten by the victors — or the losers, as it were — as it is more suggestive of the faction’s new dominance than of the real causes of the split. The language employed in the late days of August — rife as it was with clichés of decadent colonizers and imperialist puppets that seem almost torn from boilerplate Soviet speeches —constituted a profound shift. This shift in usage is suggestive of the growing influence of the radical socialist wing of the USRDA.

Unfortunately, at present it remains difficult to provide a more definitive account, as both Malian and French archives “go dark” in the period between the federation’s collapse and the Extraordinary Congress. French diplomatic cables are absent from the available records between mid-August and early October of 1960. Resolutions from the congress and speeches made in the wake of the collapse are available, but the debates and backroom political details that led to the outcomes represented by such public announcements remain a mystery. As for the documents of the “new” socialist regime, these tend to justify the socialist turn in terms of the new goals it pursued – i.e. to claim the USRDA had adopted socialism to achieve economic independence and freedom from imperialism – rather than probe the underlying reasons that led to its adoption. Nonetheless, a great deal about the socialist turn can be ascertained through analysis of changes in USRDA policy statements before and after the federation’s collapse.

The new economic isolation provoked by this collapse, coupled with the prevailing climate of anger at the actions of Senegal and France, gave radical elements

tiennent à la différence d’orientation idéologique des responsables Soudanais et Sénégalais sur les problèmes qui se posaient à la Fédération du Mali engendraient des difficultés que ne tardait pas à exploiter le Gouvernement Français pour briser l’élan du peuple malien qui prenait de plus en plus conscience de ses destinées.”

within the party several advantages over moderates. In particular, these conditions allowed them to undermine those who believed the swiftest path to prosperity was a continued alliance with France and robust economic relations with Western financial backers. For many in Bamako, France had proved itself an untrustworthy partner through its (in)actions in August 1960. It was no longer an ally that could help Mali grow strong, but an enemy Mali had to strengthen itself against. Radicals pressed these advantages at the political meetings held in the weeks following the collapse and eventually at an emergency “Extraordinary Congress” of the party held on 22 September in Bamako.¹⁸⁵ It was over the course of this month that the balance of power within the USRDA shifted from the majority of moderates to a motivated group of radical socialists – although political decisions would remain contested and moderates would still have considerable influence.

The USRDA leadership turned to socialism at a time when it saw its prospects for economic development as bleak. Until the collapse of the federation, the USRDA had viewed federation as its only real chance for rapid modernization and progress. It had promoted a continued relationship with France, but now it seemed France favoured the Senegalese — which indeed made sense as the French had far more to lose in Senegal than they did in the Soudan. Whereas until the collapse of the federation the USRDA’s plans for the economy has been dependent upon forging a greater polity with other states and colonies, in August and September of 1960 it swung hard in the opposite direction. USRDA leaders wished not only to no longer have their economic plans depend on other political entities, but they wished to blockade the Senegalese economy

¹⁸⁵ Interview with Sina Diourté, Sikasso, 14 March 2012; interview with Boubacar Séga Diallo, Bamako, 20 March 2012.

in order to prove the Soudan was not at the mercy of its neighbours or indeed of anyone. As the Executive Bureau of the USRDA's youth wing put it, "with regards to Senegal, the Executive Bureau proposes that the economic blockade be maintained, not to penalize the Senegalese people but to destroy the myth of the Soudan's economic dependence that Senegalese leaders attempted to inculcate in the Senegalese people."¹⁸⁶ The USRDA would officially reiterate this sentiment in its resolutions from the Extraordinary Congress, affirming the party's commitment to abstaining from economic interactions with Senegal in order "to destroy the myth of the Republic of Mali's economic dependence, exploited by Senegalese leaders for an anti-unitary aim."¹⁸⁷ Party members had the impression that Senegalese leaders viewed the Soudan as being in a compromised position due to its geography and poverty; this impression was surely correct. Indeed, that is why USRDA leaders understood their prospects for rapid economic development to be tied to coastal colonies, and one of the main reasons they wished to form a federation. Yet in the wake of the Mali federation's collapse, USRDA leaders were not willing to put themselves at the mercy of their neighbours again. Indeed, even though they would build a road connecting Bamako to Abidjan, party officials were not keen on developing close ties to Côte d'Ivoire — another powerful coastal colony. As Modibo Keita put it to Edward Kennedy during the visit of an

¹⁸⁶ CADN.Bamako.Amb.11.Union Soudanaise 1960.*Déclaration du Bureau Exécutif de la Jeunesse de l'USRDA* (no date, but apparently originating in the weeks following the collapse of the federation). "Vis-à-vis du Sénégal, le Bureau Exécutif propose que le blocus économique soit maintenu, non pas pour pénaliser le peuple Sénégalais, mais pour détruire le mythe de la dépendance économique du Soudan que les leaders Sénégalais ont tenté d'inculquer au peuple Sénégalais."

¹⁸⁷ CADN.Bamako.Amb.11.Union Soudanaise 1960.*Résolutions de politique générale (Congrès Extraordinaire, 22 septembre 1960)*. "Pour détruire le mythe de la dépendance économique de la République du Mali, exploité par les dirigeants sénégalais dans un but anti-unitaire."

American delegation in late 1960, the regional agenda of the RDA was “outdated” and he was no longer willing to be “Houphouët’s lieutenant.”¹⁸⁸ The Keita regime had compromised its sovereignty once for the sake of unity, and it felt it had been betrayed — by a colony, no less, that ranked lower than the Soudan in size, population, and historical grandeur, although not in economic stature or strategic location.

Why did the radical faction gain power in a context where moderates had dominated for fifteen years? The BPN’s reaction to President Keita’s suggestion that the railway be reopened is telling in this regard. The political mood was violently against Senegal and France. Even where it was clearly in the best interest of the Soudan, in the days and months after the federation’s collapse USRDA leaders of all stripes were unwilling to appear dependent. As the French ambassador noted:

Cast brutally upon this adventure, Mali is now resolved to stay the course at all costs and for however long may be necessary to establish other outlets than that of the port of Dakar. It will only engage in new economic negotiations with Senegal at such time as commercial circuits with Guinea and Côte d’Ivoire have been well established and will definitively protect it from Senegalese economic pressuring in the discussions.¹⁸⁹

Furthermore, although such comments must be interpreted with caution, the French

¹⁸⁸ CADN.Bamako.Amb.9.Incidents de Ségou 1959 et 1960 et Politique Au Soudan. *Télégramme hebdomadaire no 54 – Semaine du 14 au 20 décembre 1960*. “La politique de l’ancien Parti R.D.A. – déclaré Modibo Keita – est une politique révolue. Aujourd’hui, je ne suis ni le lieutenant d’Houphouët Boigny, ni le vice-président de l’ancien R.D.A., mais le Chef d’Etat du Mali et le Secrétaire Général de l’Union Soudanaise.”

¹⁸⁹ CADN.Bamako.Amb.9.Incidents de Ségou 1959 et 1960 et Politique Au Soudan. *Compte-Rendu no 47 – Quinzaine du 4 au 18 octobre 1960*. “Lancé brutalement dans cette aventure, le Mali est décidé maintenant à tenir coûte que coûte et aussi longtemps qu’il faudra pour s’assurer d’autres débouchés que celui du port de Dakar. Il n’engagera de nouvelles négociations économiques avec le Sénégal que lorsque les circuits commerciaux avec la Guinée et la Côte d’Ivoire seront régulièrement établis et le mettront définitivement à l’abri dans la discussion des pressions économiques sénégalaises.”

ambassador qualified the Soudanese as “arrogant,”¹⁹⁰ and their turn to socialism appears to have been inspired in some measure by injury to party leaders’ pride. USRDA leaders expressed a clear wish to demonstrate that the Soudan was in no way inferior to Senegal and also to ensure the Soudan would never again be vulnerable to such political upheavals. Socialism may have helped the USRDA work toward this goal, as it offered the concept of complete economic and political liberation from imperialism and its “puppets” — the very powers that had damaged the Soudan’s position and reputation. Indeed, the French ambassador understood radical socialist pronouncements as just such a means of establishing a strong independent identity in the wake of the federation’s collapse. “It was logical at the beginning of the process [of independence],” he wrote in November 1960, “that the essential preoccupation was to destroy that which could evoke the former regime of subordination.”¹⁹¹

Socialism also allowed the party to forge new alliances with the Eastern Bloc and China, giving them powerful allies in a moment of heightened vulnerability. Such new alliances played a role not just in south-south knowledge transfer, but in associating Mali with an additional locus of political power in a highly polarized Cold War context. This was not, however, a simple question of “switching sides” in a binary struggle between east and west, socialism and capitalism. Mali maintained and established connections throughout the Western world in the 1960s, receiving varied forms of

¹⁹⁰ CADN.Bamako.Amb.9.Incidents de Ségou 1959 et 1960 et Politique Au Soudan.*Compte-Rendu no 47 – Quinzaine du 4 au 18 octobre 1960.* “...l’orgueilleux Soudanais.”

¹⁹¹ CADN.Bamako.Amb.9.Incidents de Ségou 1959 et 1960 et Politique Au Soudan.*Télégramme hebdomadaire no 50, semaine du 15 au 22 novembre 1960.* “Il était logique, au début du processus, que la préoccupation essentielle fut de détruire ce qui pouvait évoquer le régime de subordination antérieur.”

assistance from France, the US, West Germany, and other Western states. Indeed, Modibo Keita was a champion of the non-aligned movement and of “positive neutralism.” At the same time as it declared its favour for socialism, the USRDA asserted that it would collaborate with all nations of the world with no exceptions. It courted the Americans at the same time as the Chinese, the West Germans at the same time as the Soviets.¹⁹² As regime officials noted, “since its accession to independence, the Republic of Mali, practicing a politics of non-alignment, has become an ‘open society’ and citizens of several dozen foreign countries rub shoulders there.”¹⁹³ Tellingly, the USRDA’s policy of positive neutralism came also to be referred to in the late months of 1960 as “the principle of non-submission.”¹⁹⁴ The regime’s policy priority seems to have been attracting outside money while avoiding outside meddling.

The meddling influences the USRDA resented most were those of Senegal and France. This fact surely also played a role in Mali’s turn to the left, as socialism presented a narrative pathway by which the Keita regime could cast a political disaster – the collapse of the party’s long-gestating project of territorial integration in French West Africa – as a blessing in disguise. By adopting socialism, the regime could claim that the souring of relations with Senegal and France did not constitute a failure; rather, it could now contend that this was a liberating moment: the beginning of an era of *true*

¹⁹² CADN.Bamako.Amb.9.Incidents de Ségou 1959 et 1960 et Politique Au Soudan. *Compte-Rendu no 47 – Quinzaine du 4 au 18 octobre 1960.*

¹⁹³ ANM.142.560.Circulaires 1947-1968.1966 03 22 *Circulaire 2 CNDR.* “Depuis son accession à l’indépendance, la République du Mali, pratiquant une politique de non-alignement est devenue une “société ouverte” et des citoyens de plusieurs dizaines de pays étrangers s’y côtoient.”

¹⁹⁴ CADN.Bamako.Amb.9.Incidents de Ségou 1959 et 1960 et Politique Au Soudan. *Télégramme hebdomadaire no 52, Semaine du 30 novembre au 6 décembre.* “Sur le plan extérieur, on retrouve toujours le constant souci de « neutralisme positif » qu’ on tend maintenant d’ ailleurs à appeler « principe de non inféodation ».”

independence, free from the dead hand of metropolitan capital and its colonial pawns. Socialism offered the regime a means of arguing that it had cast off the imperialist yoke “in order that our country can emerge improved, shining from the trial it has experienced, so that free Africans, truly free, can, without the possibility of foreign interference, unite in order to affirm a grand African nation.”¹⁹⁵ It would be free from decadent imperialists and puppet regimes lacking in good intentions. Thus although the Soudan had clearly suffered a loss, this was recast as the beginning of a greater victory than the Senegalese were capable of imagining. “We lost an inning,” stated Modibo Keita, “but we will win the game, in chAllah. The powers of money, retrograde forces, and imperialism don’t stand a chance.”¹⁹⁶

Indeed, if the USRDA had continued along its original policy trajectory it would have run the risk of being shown to be Senegal’s poor cousin. Until the socialist turn, there were no major differences between Soudanese and Senegalese policies. They both subscribed to the vague humanist ideal of African socialism, they both supported a relatively conservative economic development strategy dependent largely on France and private foreign capital, and they both wished to remain within the confines of an enlightened French empire. Yet now the Soudanese were without a port, solid infrastructure, or good investment prospects. They were landlocked and unable to compete on an even economic playing field with coastal colonies. Thus the chance of

¹⁹⁵ CADN.Bamako.Amb.11.Union Soudanaise 1960.*Congrès extraordinaire de l’USRDA, les 22 et 23 septembre 1960 (discours de Modibo Keita)*. “...pour que notre pays puisse sortir grandi, rayonnant de l’épreuve qu’il traverse, pour que les Africains libres, réellement libres, puissent, sans possibilité d’ingérence étrangère, s’unir pour que s’affirme une grande nation africaine”.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. “Nous avons perdu une partie, mais nous gagnerons la manche, in chAllah. Les puissances d’argent, les forces rétrogrades et impérialistes n’y pourront rien.”

becoming simply a poorer version of Senegal was real. Socialism offered the chance to embark on a radically different project – one that could not be readily compared to a capitalist development scheme, one that would be measured in a completely different way. Rather than simply gauging prosperity, under socialism one could gauge freedom from imperialism, *true* independence. In a way, in the wake of the federation’s collapse – which saw the USRDA’s long-held hopes for African unity collapse along with it – the only significant resource left in Soudanese hands was the moral high ground.

Despite even moderates within the party having cause to support radical socialism in the wake of the federation’s collapse in order to save face and to establish a new nationalist narrative differentiating Mali’s goals from those of Senegal, the moderates did not dissolve into the radical wing. Indeed, not only is there no evidence to support the idea that a radical orientation among Soudanese leaders provoked the federation’s breakdown, but after the collapse certain USRDA leaders — including President Keita and other “moderates” who go unnamed in French diplomatic reports — made concerted efforts behind the scenes to preserve the status quo with France, to restore economic links with Senegal, and to generally temper the influence of socialist radicals.¹⁹⁷ Thus there appears to have been a certain discrepancy between the public face of the regime — which appeared united around the socialist project and resolute in asserting its total independence from France and Senegal — and what was transpiring behind closed doors for the sake of Mali’s financial stability. Indeed, in late 1960 Hammaciré N’Douré, the Minister of Commerce, also reaffirmed the status quo with regard to monetary policy and West African trade. He was “visibly concerned with reassuring numerous merchants

¹⁹⁷ CADN.Bamako.Amb.9.Incidents de Ségou 1959 et 1960 et Politique Au Soudan. *Compte-Rendu no 47 – Quinzaine du 4 au 18 octobre 1960.*

who had been awaiting news for some time... that Mali had absolutely no intention of leaving the franc zone, due to the country's geographic position and the difficulties it would have in doing business with the other West African territories if it used its own money."¹⁹⁸ The French ambassador elaborated on other such efforts to preserve the status quo in a letter from October 1960:

Although the Franco-Malian accords have been publicly denounced, the government of Mali does not seem disposed toward renouncing French assistance. On several occasions President Modibo Keita clarified that the invalidity of the accords did not necessarily imply the non-application of the conventions in place and, indeed, one must remark that each decision currently made by the government of Mali refers at least implicitly to the said conventions. It certainly appears that, in this period of confusion, the militant wing of the party would like, in order to prove its independence, for Mali to renounce all French aid! The moderates, on the contrary, understand the necessity of still having recourse to this assistance. They attempt to use it to the maximum without deviating from their political objectives and even perhaps while concealing its origin from public scrutiny.¹⁹⁹

At the same time as Keita and other leading moderates pursued this stabilizing agenda,

¹⁹⁸ CADN.Bamako.Amb.9.Incidents de Ségou 1959 et 1960 et Politique Au Soudan. *Télégramme hebdomadaire no 50, semaine du 15 au 22 novembre 1960.*

“Manifestement soucieux de donner des apaisements aux nombreux commerçants qui, depuis quelque temps, restaient dans l’expectative, le Ministre du Commerce a en effet déclaré qu’il n’était nullement dans l’intention du Mali de quitter la Zone franc, en raison de la positions géographique de ce pays et des difficultés qu’il aurait à commercer, au moyen d’une monnaie spéciale, avec les autres territoires de l’Afrique de l’Ouest.”

¹⁹⁹CADN.Bamako.Amb.11. *Compte-rendu no 47 – quinzaine du 4 au 18 octobre 1960.*

“Bien que les accords franco-maliens aient été publiquement dénoncés, le Gouvernemnet du Mali ne semble pas disposé à renoncer à l’assistance française. A plusieurs reprises, le Président Modibo Keita a précisé que la caducité des accords n’impliquait pas pour autant la non application des conventions en cours et, en fait, il faut remarquer que chaque décision prise actuellement par le Gouvernement du Mali se réfère au moins implicitement aux dites conventions. Il apparait bien que, dans cette période de confusion, l’aile marchante du parti voudrait, pour prouver son indépendance, que le Mali renonce à toute aide française! Les modérés au contraire comprennent la nécessité de recourir encore à cette assistance. Ils cherchent à l’utiliser au maximum sans dévier pour autant de leurs objectifs politiques et même peut-être en dissimulant son origine à l’opinion public.”

radical socialists within the party were challenging his authority and obliging him to concede more ground to their cause than he would have liked. For example, with regard to the composition of Mali's UN delegation, "he was obliged to bow before a decision suggested and no doubt imposed by the most radical elements of his party."²⁰⁰ Keita truly appears to have been pulled between the two camps, as even while he attempted to contain the radicals "many criticized him essentially for consigning Mali to an isolation that has plunged them into great economic difficulty, and to have lost sight of the essential objective of the Union Soudanaise-RDA, which is to say African unity."²⁰¹ Thus the turn to radical socialism was a contentious one, and no sooner was it announced than debates broke out over what it would mean and the extent of change it would bring. Indeed, while regime propaganda encouraged observers to think all party members enthusiastically embraced socialist ideology at the time of the Extraordinary Congress in 1960, behind the scenes a great deal of debate and dissension persisted. Most scholars agree that, even after independence, only "a 'hard core' of dedicated and austere radicals" favoured a communist-inspired vision of radical socialism, rather than the party majority.²⁰²

Although details are lacking with regard to the discussions and ground-level

²⁰⁰ CADN.Bamako.Amb.9.Incidents de Ségou 1959 et 1960 et Politique Au Soudan. *Compte-Rendu no 47 – Quinzaine du 4 au 18 octobre 1960*. "Il est non moins certain que même si Modibo Keita n'a pas été convaincu par ces arguments, il a été obligé de s'incliner devant une décisions suggérée et sans doute imposée par les éléments les plus avancés de son Parti."

²⁰¹ CADN.Bamako.Amb.9.Incidents de Ségou 1959 et 1960 et Politique Au Soudan. *Télégramme hebdomadaire no 53, décembre 1960*. "Beaucoup lui reprochent en effet d'avoir contraint le Mali à un isolement qui les plonge dans de grandes difficultés économiques et d'avoir perdu de vue l'objectif essentiel de l'Union Soudanaise RDA, c'est-à-dire l'unité africaine."

²⁰² Martin, "Socialism, Economic Development and Planning in Mali, 1960-1968," 30. See also Campmas, "L'Union Soudanaise."

political manoeuvres that led to this faction coming to prominence, it is clear that Modibo Keita's position was weakened by events and in need of shoring up – senior leftist figures like Seydou Badian Kouyaté and Mamadou Aw even called his authority into question in the aftermath of the federation's breakdown by going against Keita's orders and making “fierce declarations” at the UN condemning France's war in Algeria.²⁰³ It is also clear that even the moderate majority within the BPN was too offended by the actions of the French and the Senegalese to continue promoting conciliation – as their refusal to satisfy Keita's wish to re-establish the rail link with Senegal demonstrates. Yet the moderate faction within the party remained. French diplomatic cables, for example, noted in late 1960 that “Modibo Keita's concern for moderation should prevent him from ceding to the pressures of the left wing.”²⁰⁴ They also noted that the government, as it stood in December 1960, “reflected rather well the balance of forces present in the party.”²⁰⁵

As far as socialism's role in consolidating political power internally, there are a number of ways in which it coincided with existing USRDA tendencies toward autocracy and also what James Scott terms “high modernism.” In the late 1950s the

²⁰³ CADN.Bamako.Amb.9.Incidents de Ségou 1959 et 1960 et Politique Au Soudan.*Compte-Rendu no 47 – Quinzaine du 4 au 18 octobre 1960.* “Après les déclarations violentes de M. Aw Mamadou, le Président Modibo Keita avait fait annoncer par la radio qu'il se rendrait personnellement à l'O.N.U. Il avait été vexé par l'acte d'indiscipline de sa délégation qui mettait en cause son autorité...”

²⁰⁴ CADN.Bamako.Amb.9.Incidents de Ségou 1959 et 1960 et Politique Au Soudan.*Compte-Rendu no 47 – Quinzaine du 4 au 18 octobre 1960.* “...le souci de modération de Modibo Keita devrait l'empêcher de céder aux pressions de l'aile gauche.”

²⁰⁵ CADN.Bamako.Amb.9.Incidents de Ségou 1959 et 1960 et Politique Au Soudan.*Télégramme hebdomadaire no 54, semaine du 14 au 20 décembre 1960.* “...il semble probable que devant ces tiraillements, Modibo Keita se résoudra à reconduire plus ou moins le Gouvernement actuel dont la composition traduit d'ailleurs assez bien l'équilibre des forces en présence.”

party had already discussed the prospect of establishing state monopolies for the sake of rapid development and had already justified the establishment of a one-party state in the name of the same goal. If nothing else, socialism provided justification for such moves, hitching them to a global movement afoot in the Eastern Bloc and East Asia that was dedicated to social progress and the fight against the capitalist empires of Western countries then dominating global politics. Controlling the economy through state planning would also further stabilize the party's rule, shoring up support through the distribution of jobs to low- and mid-level party members in a host of new state enterprises. These enterprises were portrayed as a key element in the construction of a new, just, and prosperous socialist society. "With regard to the future of our nation and our people, we have deployed a policy whose action tends toward socialism... We believe that this is the only policy that simultaneously reconciles the communitarian traditions of our civilization, the exigencies of accelerated economic development, and the prospect of harmonious social evolution," wrote USRDA Political Secretary Idrissa Diarra in 1961.²⁰⁶ And "socialism," declared a 1961 party report, "demands the creation of new state economic structures... thus the progressive elimination of old commercial circuits in order to allow the state the possibility of orienting the economy toward the general interest."²⁰⁷ Yet it is not at all clear that the USRDA turned to socialism

²⁰⁶ ANM.1.3.Congrès extraordinaire de 1960. *1961 09 22 Allocution par Idrissa Diarra*. "En ce qui concerne l'avenir de notre Nation et de notre peuple, nous avons dégagé une politique dont l'action tend vers le Socialisme... Nous pensons qu'il s'agit de la seule politique, conciliant à la fois les traditions communautaires de notre civilisation, les exigences d'un développement économique accéléré, les perspectives d'une évolution Sociale harmonieuse..."

²⁰⁷ ANM.1.3.Congrès extraordinaire du 1960. *USRDA - Le Socialisme: Une générale théorique – Pourquoi ce choix? Ses voies et ses moyens, 19 Mars 1961*. "Etant entendu que le socialisme exige la création de nouvelles structures économiques d'Etat, ou

cynically in order to achieve these goals. Certainly the collapse of the federation created instability in the Soudanese political sphere, but the benefits socialism might have brought to the USRDA in terms of controlling local society appear to have been secondary to concern for staking out a viable and respected place for the Republic of Mali in the emerging postcolonial order.

Not only would socialism offer the USRDA a role in a global narrative of anti-capitalist, anti-imperial, and anti-colonial struggle, but it also provided “cookie cutter” development solutions in what was rapidly becoming a complex (and fraught) economic context. Through presenting ideas like a centrally-planned economy and agricultural collectivization – the ubiquitous pillars of Eastern Bloc and Chinese development platforms – socialism offered a means for the USRDA to advance simple and elegant “high modern” development solutions in a tumultuous and unstable political and economic milieu. Unfortunately, as the following chapters will demonstrate, these complex problems were not nearly as amenable to the kinds of all-encompassing state-led solutions socialism offered. Yet as Scott remarks, overestimating the state’s capacity to effect sweeping social and economic changes was one of the hallmarks of high modern thought. He writes:

High modernism... was fundamentally, as the term “ideology” implies, a faith that borrowed, as it were, the legitimacy of science and technology. It was, accordingly, uncritical, unskeptical, and thus unscientifically optimistic about the possibilities for the comprehensive planning of human settlement and production.²⁰⁸

collectivistes sous forme de coopératives, donc la suppression progressive des anciens circuits commerciaux pour donner à l’Etat la possibilité d’orienter l’économie dans le sens de l’intérêt général, il faut d’ores et déjà en prévoir les conséquences.”

²⁰⁸ James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 4.

Seydou Badian Kouyaté, who would come to be one of the Keita regime's leading radical socialist figures in the 1960s, expressed just such a conviction in a comprehensive and ostensibly scientific approach to development in 1963:

There exist, of course, several types of socialist constructions in this world, but the one with the widest use and which proposes a comprehensive form of development based on a holistic world vision, is the scientific socialist experiment. It is a fact we simply cannot ignore.²⁰⁹

A single proclamation from one regime figure does not, of course, stand in for the broad (and evolving) thinking of a regime. But more than a nominal scientific orientation, what is most significant in the idea of high modernism, at least in the Malian context, is the sheer scope of ambition it implies with regard to the regime's confidence in its capacity for social engineering; this ambition was nascent in the USRDA's focus on industrialization in the late 1950s, and it came into full force in the socialist era. Indeed, it is Scott's latter point about overestimating the state's capacity for "comprehensive planning of human settlement and production" that is most highly applicable to the USRDA regime. Scott contends that "[h]igh-modernist faith...could be found...particularly among those who wanted to use state power to bring about huge, utopian changes in people's work habits, living patterns, moral conduct, and worldview."²¹⁰ As this dissertation will demonstrate with particular regard to chiefs, merchants, and peasants, this is precisely what the Keita regime attempted – and failed – to accomplish. In the African context, Scott has identified high modern tendencies in Julius Nyerere's villagization programs in Tanzania. He contends that

²⁰⁹ Seydou Badian Kouyaté, "Politique de développement et voies africaines du socialisme", *Présence africaine*, 47(3), 1963: 59-72, in L.V. Thomas, *Le socialisme et l'Afrique* (Paris: Le Livre africain, 1966), 79.

²¹⁰ Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 4.

the existing patterns of settlement and social life in Tanzania were illegible and resistant to the narrow purposes of the state... The thinly veiled subtext of villagization was... to reorganize human communities to make them better objects of political control and to facilitate the new forms of communal farming favored by state policy.²¹¹

Such observations are equally applicable to the Malian context in the 1960s, where USRDA leaders would come, for example, to promote agricultural collectivization schemes with a similar intent to make the countryside more amenable to state control and more productive (as will be shown in Chapter 6). A similar approach to state-run commerce will be analyzed in Chapter 5 with regard to how it impacted Mali's merchant community. In certain ways, high modernism can also be seen in the USRDA's approach to rural governance – with specific reference to the replacement of canton chiefs with a new system of local administration, a topic that will come under study in Chapter 4 – for although this is not directly linked to economic production it does form a part of the Keita regime's broad emerging belief in “comprehensive planning of human settlement.” The USRDA regime's tendency toward this kind of ambitious social intervention has also been noted by leading scholars of Malian postcolonial history.

Gregory Mann, for example, affirms that:

Once in power, the party would identify social forces as the primary constraint on economic growth; its first task was to counter them. It set out to govern aggressively, taking society as its site of intervention, but would fail to nurture any sense of a public or a common good beyond an aggrieved nationalism.²¹²

This kind of paternalistic vision, which sought to intervene aggressively in society without creating opportunities for society's members to play a role in shaping those interventions, would come to characterize the USRDA regime, particularly in its latter

²¹¹ Ibid., 224.

²¹² Gregory Mann, *From Empires to NGOs in the West African Sahel: The Road to Nongovernmentality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 8.

years.

Meanwhile, each of these political projects – collectivization, state-run commerce, and the abolition of chieftaincies – can be linked to socialist ideals, examples provided by other socialist regimes, or at the very least the ambitions of specific radical socialist leaders within the USRDA. As such, while it seems the party’s early industrial ambitions and hopes for modernization were perhaps indicative of high modern predispositions, there are clear indications that socialism played a distinctive role not only in providing ready-made (yet mostly impractical) solutions to complex problems, but also in shifting the way Mali’s political leaders (mis)understood their capacity to effect social, economic, and political change.

Thus the chaotic political situation of August 1960 precipitated a chaotic usage of political ideas. Far from the USRDA simply “turning left,” radical socialist ideas were thrust upon the moderate majority by a faction with a mixture of practical concerns and ideological or even utopian convictions. These ideas would be taken up by moderates to varying degrees, either through the persuasive efforts of their peers or through prudent mimicry, and they would be applied unsystematically to solve problems and also to inadvertently create them. They would be argued over within the party and contested by the citizenry. Socialism was not simply an idea taken up to solve a problem perceived by the regime, but one that appears to have a life of its own, one that would at times prove useful and at others disastrous.

Conclusion

While relatively conservative policies promoting strong relations with France and the

creation of an attractive foreign investment climate had long dominated Malian politics, over the month following the abrupt dissolution of the Mali Federation in August 1960 the USRDA adopted an increasingly radical tone and finally announced its endorsement of radical socialism on September 22. Although this was a major shift toward an ideological approach to politics – a shift the party understood as the most significant since its foundation – radical socialism did not spring forth from nowhere. Socialism had a decades-long history in the Soudan, even if proponents of a radical vision of this ideology remained a minority among USRDA leaders.

This minority, however, was able to successfully push its agenda in the wake of the federation's collapse, as the political goals of moderates had become untenable. The economic development strategy long promoted by this latter group depended on deepening cooperation with France and Senegal, yet these were the very entities the USRDA considered to have betrayed it. This created a policy vacuum that was filled by radical socialism. Although the efforts of radical socialist leaders to push their agenda appear to have been crucial to securing this outcome,²¹³ their task may have been facilitated in the context of the Federation's collapse because socialism provided a means of reframing the nationalist narrative, rejecting the actions and values of Senegal and France, and defining a non-economic political goal in a context where the Soudan was at a clear economic disadvantage compared to its coastal neighbours: that of complete independence from outside influences. It also offered a host of apparently convenient solutions to the murky matter of modernizing a vast territory in conditions of stark poverty. The high modern ideals that inspired the USRDA's belief in the state's

²¹³ Interview with Boubacar Séga Diallo, Bamako, 21 March 2012.

capacity to effect such changes would ultimately be brought low, however, due in no small part to the unanticipated resilience of chiefs, merchants, and peasants – the subjects of this dissertation’s latter chapters.

Even as radical socialism came to be official government policy and socialist planning came to dominate the agenda, high-ranking moderates and even the President pushed back against the radicals in efforts to define the implications of this new ideology on terms agreeable to them. Thus socialism was contested from the start and meant different things to different party members, even among those in the BPN. The debate over Mali’s grand new political project would only grow fiercer in the years to come.

Chapter 3: In the Name of the Nation: Opposition & Repression in an Era of Decline

Introduction

This chapter argues that Mali's socialist turn cannot be understood simply as a case of leftist radicalization within the political elite. Instead, it can be more fully explained as an outgrowth of the USRDA's longstanding desire to spur rapid economic development and to establish a cohesive nationalist narrative, and also as the result of a shift in the balance of power between radical socialist and moderate factions that was precipitated by the collapse of the Mali Federation in August 1960. As such, socialism was both a practical choice insofar as moderates saw in it a means of advancing a viable form of nationalism in the wake of the federation's collapse by focusing on the goal of total independence from colonial influence, and an ideological one insofar as certain members of the USRDA's radical faction were strongly influenced by socialism and a number of the prominent regimes espousing it around the globe at the time. This intellectual heterogeneity within the USRDA led to frequent contestations of socialism's meaning and to mixed outcomes: in some instances socialism clearly furthered the regime's longstanding agenda while in others it appears to have provoked instability.

Radical socialism was a contested policy from the outset, yet debates over its meaning and merits did not take place in an open political environment. Although the USRDA had risen to power in popular elections, its leaders would dismantle the institutions of democracy established in the late colonial era, notably those political parties and media outlets it did not directly control. Thus the autocratic tendencies that had become evident prior to the federation's collapse would find fuller form in the

postcolonial era. And whereas in the autonomous context of colonialism's final years USRDA repression was mainly directed outside of the party — toward rival politicians and chiefs in particular — after independence the regime increasingly focused its repression on party members themselves. Yet, as will be shown in chapters 5 and 6, merchants and peasants were equally victims of this repression.

While USRDA rule grew increasingly autocratic over time, the party did not rely simply or even mainly on threats and violence to ensure control of the political sphere. The regime could hardly ignore the clientelist character of Mali's political culture, and it ceded to strong pressure from rank and file members to reward their political loyalty. Thus while the USRDA punished its opponents it also rewarded its allies, and much public spending under Keita's rule appears to constitute resource distribution to clients.

This acceleration of autocracy, repression, and clientelism took place against a backdrop of progressive economic decline — precipitated at least in part by the aforementioned clientelist tendencies — that developed to crisis proportions. As Mali's economy worsened, opposition to the regime mounted. Increasingly threatened yet disposing of fewer financial resources,¹ the radical faction attempted to retain power by laying Mali's problems at the feet of the moderates. Inspired by Mao's Cultural Revolution, they initiated an "Active Revolution" in 1967 and charged their more conservative peers with lacking enthusiasm for the socialist experiment. They gave

¹ This lack of resources led them, for example, to repeatedly cut public sector wages. ANM.142.560.Circulaires 1947-1968. *11 Mai 1964 Circulaire 6*. "Des mesures d'austérité touchant l'ensemble des travailleurs seront prises sous peu. Sans avoir l'ampleur des précédentes retenues, elles auront cependant une incidence sur le niveau de vie de l'ensemble des salariés."

broad powers to a popular militia that terrorized ordinary citizens and politicians alike.²

Yet although they succeeded in dissolving the National Assembly and BPN in order to dictate state policy from a new institution, the CNDR, thus prolonging their stay in power, they had no answer for the fact that their policies continued to result in economic deterioration. Their unwillingness to compromise with moderates, or to roll back policies alienating important social groups like traditional authorities, merchants, and peasants, created tension and instability that was eventually resolved by a military coup in 1968. Thus, to a certain degree, the same problem that had thwarted USRDA attempts to create West African unity came to bear on its efforts to rule Mali: just as the balkanization of French West Africa was in large part due to the misgivings of each territory's leaders about relinquishing part of their sovereignty for the sake of unity, the fall of the USRDA can in some measure be attributed to the radicals' reluctance to share power with other political contenders or to effectively represent their constituents.

This was the result of both ideology and *realpolitik*. Many USRDA radicals believed deeply in the socialist cause and could not find common ground with moderates; despite members of both factions holding nationalist convictions, they strongly disagreed with each other about how to bring that nationalist vision to fruition. At the same time, a clear pattern of power consolidation is visible during the Malian First Republic, with internecine strife progressively narrowing the circle of power within the party leadership until it was concentrated in the hands of a select few. Consequently, although socialism fostered stability in some ways — offering, among other things, a new focus on total liberation from pernicious outside influences and the establishment of

² For more on the Popular Militia, see Gregory Mann, "Violence, Dignity, and Mali's New Model Army, 1960-1968," *Mande Studies* 5 (2003): 65–82.

an egalitarian society — it also led to a phenomenon of increased political polarization within the party and decreased economic productivity that created instability and contributed to the regime’s undoing.

Clientelism in the Keita Years

Having opted for socialism in September 1960, the USRDA embarked on a program of “economic decolonization”³ focused – at least in a narrative sense – on achieving complete independence from outside influences. In this context, the Five Year Plan, concerning the period from 1 July 1961 to 30 June 1966, was drawn up in order to give “priority to the development of the state Sector, for which all principal domains of economic life had been reserved.”⁴ To this end, the USRDA declared that “all new industries (textiles, refrigerated slaughterhouses, oil factories, canneries, construction materials, etc....) would be managed by the state.”⁵ The intent of these policies was to “progressively eliminate the domination of foreign capital,” with the party coming to dominate Mali’s economy.

Not only would new industries be administered by public bodies, but existing industries in private hands would be replaced by “the creation of state enterprises in the principal sectors of economic activity, notably in foreign commerce (creation of the SOMIEX, benefitting from a monopoly on peanut exports and on the import of 11 staple products), in transportation (Air Mali, Régie des Transports du Mali), [and in] mining

³ Samir Amin, *Trois Expériences Africaine de Développement: Le Mali, La Guinée et Le Ghana* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1965), 77.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 78.

and gas research (Bureau minier).”⁶ The creation of the Malian franc and the establishment of collectivization schemes in the countryside completed the USRDA’s efforts to gain control over all major economic activities.⁷ All of this state-led economic activity would be controlled centrally, with state enterprises turning over revenue to the central government and having funds redistributed to them according to the priorities of state leaders.⁸

These changes not only allowed the USRDA to strengthen its hold on power by administering most of the economy through one central account – the *budget d’équipement* – but it also allowed it to distribute jobs and positions of political privilege, something its supporters fiercely desired. Indeed, in 1961 the French Ambassador noted both party members’ strong expectation of being rewarded in the wake of independence and the competition that existed for the state’s finite resources. He remarked:

Currently, the true danger to Modibo Keita comes from his own political friends... Many consider themselves to have been deprived of benefits they believed they would derive from the newly acquired independence and, their hopes dashed, they complain to the members of government. The bureaucrats... also complain about the inadequacy of the material means put at their disposal and envy their comrades who have been given political positions and who, it seems, enjoy a definitively privileged position.⁹

⁶ Ibid., 77.

⁷ Ibid., 78.

⁸ Ibid., 78.

⁹ CADN.Bamako.Amb.20.Dépêches politiques 1961.*Synthèse du mois de juillet*. “En fait, actuellement, le véritable danger pour Modibo Keita vient de ses propres amis politiques...Beaucoup se croient frustrés d’un bénéfice qu’ils croyaient retirer de cette indépendance nouvellement acquise et, déçus dans leurs espoirs, ils en font grief aux membres du Gouvernement. Les fonctionnaires...critiquent également l’insuffisance des moyens matériels qui sont mis à leur disposition et jalouent leurs camarades qui ont été placés à des postes politiques et qui, semble-t-il, bénéficient d’une situation nettement privilégiée.”

USRDA leaders would manage this potential challenge by capitalizing on their position as gatekeeper of economic and political opportunities to reward loyalty and punish dissent. Indeed, as the economy declined and dissatisfaction mounted, the Keita regime oversaw party purges in Bamako in 1963 and Sikasso in 1964, while President Keita himself came to be “haunted by the idea of subversion, which seems to be his main worry, judging by his behaviour and his speeches.”¹⁰ “The work of purging and recovery within the institutions of the party and the state,” undertaken according to “the desire of the great popular masses to safeguard our gains and our socialist option,” would also be a hallmark of the Active Revolution in 1967-1968.¹¹ Thus access to administrative and political positions within the state apparatus was dependent upon support for the regime. With regards to political positions, Modibo Keita made this explicit in 1961, warning party officials that “the next electoral lists will be national and will certainly not be established by the sub-sections but by the leadership of the party, taking into account the behaviour of the chosen individuals.”¹² In order to be appointed to a coveted spot as a deputy in the National Assembly, one had to demonstrate

¹⁰ CADN.Bamako.Amb.22.Dépêches politiques 1963.*Dépêche hebdomadaire no 37 du 7 au 13 Septembre 1964*. “...hanté par l’idée de la subversion qui semble être son principal souci, à en juger par son comportement et par ses discours... Pendant ce temps, Sikasso devient le théâtre d’une purge du même ordre que celle de Bamako au mois de mai dernier.”

¹¹ ANM.109.416.Rapport et Compte-Rendu de Mission à l’Intérieur du Mali, 1964-1967.*Thèmes des assemblées générales dans les comités de la ville de Bamako, 1 décembre 1967*. “Dans le cadre du travail d’épuration et de redressement au sein des organes du Parti et de l’Etat, le CNDR conscient de l’importance des mesures à prendre, de la volonté des larges masses populaires de sauvegarder nos acquis et notre option socialiste...”

¹² CADN.Bamako.Amb.20.Dépêches politiques 1961.*Synthèse du mois de mars 1961*. “Il [Modibo Keita] espère d’ailleurs bien renforcer sa fonction au sein du Bureau Politique puisque pour éviter toute surprise: “les prochaines listes électorales seront nationales et elles ne seront point établies par les sous-sections mais par la direction du Parti compte tenu du comportement des éléments choisis”.”

conformity with the party policy dictated at the highest levels. Such examples illustrate the manner in which USRDA leaders used political and economic opportunities to retain supporters, who often reacted angrily if not rewarded with advantageous positions, and to contain the “impatience, complaints, and occasional revolts” that emerged from the early days of independence onward in the face of persistent economic stagnation and competition over state resources.¹³

Between 1959 and 1962, public sector salary expenses increased by 47 percent – 3.1 billion CFA francs¹⁴ – and overall administrative costs rose from 9.1 billion CFA francs to 14.4 billion.¹⁵ By 1962 this public sector expansion had already saddled Mali with a heavy debt, the public foreign interest payments alone costing 600 million francs a year. Despite this spending, the effect on economic growth was marginal. Indeed, it seems these investments primarily expanded the number of employees in public administration rather than stimulating any economic development. As Samir Amin notes:

Despite the considerable increase in investments, notably in the administration and in the state enterprises, production only increased in very limited proportions [from 1959 to 1962], because the vast majority of these investments were either unproductive (administration, social services) or barely productive (deficitary transport enterprises).¹⁶

Amin further demonstrates that these large increases in administrative spending were

¹³ Ibid., “La contrainte politique et la surveillance policière, jointe au marasme économique et aux difficultés de ravitaillement provoquent maintenant l’impatience, les protestations et parfois la révolte.”

¹⁴ Amin, *Trois Expériences Africaine de Développement*, 92.

¹⁵ Ibid., 90.

¹⁶ Ibid., 98. “Malgré l’augmentation considérable des investissements notamment de l’administration et des entreprises publiques, la production n’a augmenté que dans les proportions très limitées parce que la grande majorité de ces investissements étaient soit improductifs (administrations, services sociaux) soit peu productifs (entreprises déficitaires de transport).”

mainly directed toward personnel expansion when he makes note, for example, of “the inflation of staff rosters of cabinet ministers, for which spending had gone from 98 million in 1959 to 343 million in 1962.”¹⁷

These unprecedented hiring increases were not only widespread in Bamako’s bureaucracy and in the party’s new state enterprises, but were also mirrored in “the multiplication of agricultural organizations” in the countryside, a development Samir Amin, who helped draft Mali’s Five-Year Plan, qualified as economically “unjustified,” along with a similar proliferation of apparently unnecessary government offices in Bamako.¹⁸ These practices contributed to the degradation of Mali’s financial situation, with new state enterprises running a deficit that was one billion CFA francs greater than anticipated by 1962.¹⁹ Despite this emerging financial crisis, many dubious investments were added to the Plan in an ad hoc manner in 1961-62.

At this time, “sumptuous administrative investments,” including the construction of a variety of party buildings “of great luxury” and a 17-story hotel, were undertaken.²⁰ While these latter projects appear to have been ill-advised, as indeed Amin thought they were, it is important to note that sumptuous edifices to the party would have had both nationalist and clientelist value, distributing wealth to those involved in their construction, and symbolizing the USRDA’s narrative of a grand new future for the nation.

Amin published his account of Mali’s planning process and its early implementation in 1965, based mostly on data collected up to 1962. He could not have

¹⁷ Ibid., 109.

¹⁸ Ibid., 110.

¹⁹ Ibid., 110.

²⁰ Ibid., 111-112.

known exactly how the political and economic situation would develop in Mali; nonetheless, he presciently noted that the state enterprises were poised to become a drain on the economy rather than its motor, due to “debatable attitudes (notably for political reasons or reasons of prestige) and disorderly management,” and thus that the state sector, “rather than being a motor of growth, would become in fact a brake on the country’s economic development.”²¹ That Amin notes a pattern of spending based not on principles of economic development but on calculations of political advantage and prestige is consonant with other scholars’ appraisals of the Malian political system having a clientelist character.

Indeed, Amin goes even further than suggesting that the state bourgeoisie might become a burden on the economy, noting that the USRDA’s message of austerity and revolutionary effort “had not withstood the appetites of the state bureaucracy,”²² which was already visibly engaged in a process of accumulating and distributing resources in a manner detrimental to the overall population. Noting this tendency, he issued a warning in his final assessment of the USRDA’s economic policy:

The new leading elite of Mali... emerging from the urban lower classes, can only justify before history its role as an agent of economic progress if it precisely manages to organize accelerated [capital] accumulation, or at least to establish its conditions. Its capacity to efficiently mobilize the rural masses will be the supreme criterion in this judgement... But if it does not manage to do this, it will be condemned to degeneration, inefficiency, and to parasitism. The example of the inefficiency of the rural management organizations when they are conceived not as mass movements but as administrative organizations is proof of the reality of this danger. The socialist option in principle will thus lose all meaning and will hide poorly the privileges of a narrow bureaucratized stratum, getting by day by day with makeshift means, without prospects.²³

²¹ Ibid., 117.

²² Ibid., 227.

²³ Ibid., 232. “La nouvelle élite dirigeante au Mali... issue du petit peuple des villes, ne justifiera devant l’histoire son rôle d’agent du progrès économique que si elle parvient

There is little hope in these lines. They are the judgements of an economist who had helped the USRDA embark on its socialist path in good faith, yet who subsequently witnessed it use socialism not to stimulate economic development but to expand client networks through a vast campaign of job creation. Socialism as an economic plan had lost much of its inspirational meaning. Indeed, the Five Year Plan apparently held very little meaning even for its creators, who seem to have considered it primarily as a propaganda tool rather than as a viable roadmap for economic development. The French ambassador remarked upon this in November 1961:

It very much seems in fact that the authors of the Plan have no illusions about the results they can expect, and that is undoubtedly one of the reasons why they have been so hesitant to make it public. Only a man as ill-informed about economic matters as Modibo Keita could believe in the real value of a plan conceived solely, it seems, for reasons of propaganda... It is certainly not by chance that the Minister of Rural Economy and the Plan himself – Mr. Seydou Badian Kouyaté – carefully avoided accompanying Modibo Keita in his tours to popularize the Plan.²⁴

This observation further supports the notion that, in the wake of the Mali Federation's

précisément à organiser cette accumulation accélérée, ou tout au moins à en préparer les conditions. Sa capacité de mobiliser efficacement les masses rurales sera le critère suprême de ce jugement... Mais si elle n'y parvient pas elle sera condamnée à la dégénérescence, à l'inefficacité et au parasitisme. L'exemple de l'inefficacité des services d'encadrement rural lorsqu'ils sont conçus non comme des mouvements de masse, mais comme des services administratifs, est une des preuves de la réalité de ce danger. L'option socialiste de principe perdrait alors toute signification et cacherait mal les privilèges d'une mince couche bureaucratisée, vivant au jour le jour des moyens de fortune, sans perspectives."

²⁴ CADN.Bamako.Amb.20.Dépêches politiques 1961.*Synthèse du mois de Novembre*. "Il semble bien d'ailleurs que les auteurs du Plan ne se font guère d'illusions sur les résultats qu'ils peuvent en attendre et c'est sans doute une des raisons pour lesquelles ils ont tant hésité avant de le rendre public. Seul un homme aussi peu averti que Modibo Keita des problèmes économiques, peut croire à la réelle valeur d'un plan conçu uniquement, semble-t-il, à des fins de propagande... Ce n'est sans doute pas par hasard que le propre ministre de l'Economie Rurale et du Plan – M. Seydou Badian Kouyaté – a évité soigneusement d'accompagner Modibo Keita dans ses tournées de vulgarisation du Plan."

collapse, socialism served the regime's need to establish a strong nationalist narrative based on the concepts of rapid economic development and total independence from outside influences – even if such goals were unattainable in the short term.

Although the data above are concerned chiefly with the first years of independence, scholars have affirmed that the clientelist character of Malian politics is longstanding, both before and during USRDA rule. As Victor T. Le Vine notes,

In Mali, after the French conquest of 1890, most of the important chiefs of the country – leaders of Sufi brotherhoods, imams, emirs, *almamys*... – formed a part of the clientelist system of the colonial regime and saw themselves granted official positions, prebends, and rent possibilities. Yet again, after the country gained independence in 1960, as in Senegal, the new regime of Modibo Keita, despite its socialist leanings, kept most of these arrangements intact – just like Keita's successors, notably Amadou Toumani Touré, leader of the current [2011] democratic government.²⁵

Others like Jacky Bouju have echoed this sentiment, noting continuity in the clientelist nature of politics between the colonial and postcolonial eras, influenced in particular by the colonial state's failure to establish either institutions offering social security or civic identity. She writes:

The tutelage of the colonial state resulted in an incapacity to create social security and spaces for identification as citizens, independent of communitarian spaces. This absence of the state only reinforced communitarianism and clientelism to the detriment of civic rights and consciousness. With independence, things could have changed. But the Malian state began functioning, it too, according to a neopatrimonial pattern of clientelist distribution. Consequently, citizens remained reliant on their communitarian connections: it was by means of family, clan, religious, or ethnic networks that financial aid, various types of assistance, jobs, prebends, privileges, interventions, and favours permitting the inscription of

²⁵ Victor T. Le Vine, "Édification nationale et politique informelle," *Revue internationale des sciences sociales* 192, no. 2 (2011): 176. ("Au Mali, après la conquête française de 1890, la plupart des grands chefs traditionnels du pays – chefs des confréries soufies, imams, émirs, *almamys*... – on fait partie du système clientéliste du régime colonial et se sont vu accorder des postes officiels, des prébendes et des possibilités de rente. Là encore, après l'accès du pays à l'indépendance en 1960, comme au Sénégal, le nouveau régime de Modibo Keita, malgré ses velléités socialistes, a maintenu en l'état la plupart de ces arrangements – tout comme les successeurs de Keita, notamment Amadou Toumani Touré, chef de l'actuel gouvernement démocratique.")

individual actors into the overall social system were granted.²⁶

A number of other scholars have noted the prevalence of patron-client relations in Mali, and their influence on the evolution of politics during the Keita years is well established in the literature.²⁷ This pattern of behaviour is also characterized by the related concept of neopatrimonialism. As Bratton and van de Walle describe:

The distinctive institutional hallmark of African regimes is neopatrimonialism... In contemporary neopatrimonialism, relationships of loyalty and dependence pervade a formal political and administrative system and leaders occupy bureaucratic offices less to perform public service than to acquire personal wealth and status. The distinction between private and public interests is purposely blurred. The essence of neopatrimonialism is the award by public officials of personal favors, both within the state (notably public sector jobs) and in society (for instance, licenses, contracts, and projects). In return for material rewards, clients mobilize political support and refer all decisions upward as a mark of deference to patrons.²⁸

Modibo Keita himself wrote plainly of the clientelist problem as it related to dysfunction in the party's rural administration in 1967:

²⁶ Jacky Bouju, "Clientélisme, Corruption et Gouvernance Locale À Mopti (Mali)," in *Logiques Identitaires, Logiques Territoriales*, Cahiers Des Sciences Humaines 14 (La Tour d'Aigues: Éditions de l'Aube, IRD, 2000), 148. "La tutelle de l'État colonial s'est traduite par une incapacité à créer des espaces d'identification citoyenne et de sécurité sociale, indépendants des espaces communautaires. Cette absence de l'État n'a fait que renforcer le communautarisme et le clientélisme au détriment du civisme et de la citoyenneté. Avec l'Indépendance, les choses auraient pu changer. Mais l'État malien s'est mis à fonctionner, lui aussi, selon un mode néopatrimonial de redistribution clientéliste. En conséquence, les citoyens sont demeurés assujettis à leurs liens communautaires: c'est par la voie des réseaux de relations familiales, claniques, religieuses ou ethniques que se sont octroyés aides financières, assistances diverses, emplois, prébendes, passe-droits, interventions et faveurs permettant d'inscrire les acteurs individuels dans le système social global."

²⁷ Hopkins, "Kita (Mali) in the Time of Modibo Keita: Globalization and Local Continuity," *Mande Studies* 5 (2003): 101-111; Jean-Loup Amselle, "La Corruption et Le Clientélisme Au Mali et En Europe de l'Est: Quelques Points de Comparaison," *Cahiers D'études Africaines* 32, no. 128 (1992): 629-42; Kary Dembélé, "La dimension politique du développement rural," in Pierre Jacquemot, ed., *Le Mali: Le Paysan et L'état* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1981), 105-121.

²⁸ Michael Bratton and Nicolas Van de Walle, "Neopatrimonial Regimes and Political Transitions in Africa," *World Politics* 46, no. 4 (1994): 458.

For many comrades the peasants have been a possible electoral clientele; effectively, in their struggle for influence, certain leaders at the *circonscription* level have practiced an electoralist type of politics consisting of being as pleasing as possible to the rural masses in order to pull the rug out from under their neighbour's feet – they were complacent to the maximum, they only said things that would consolidate their personal prestige. By this kind of politics, the state institutions lost considerable sums because everything was “gifted” – grain, manufactured goods, etc... The serious difficulties of the SMDRs [Sociétés Mutuelle de Développement Rural] are often attributable to these acts.²⁹

Based, then, on observers' appraisals and the scholarly consensus, one can qualify Mali under USRDA rule as bearing the hallmarks of a clientelist political culture. This is an important factor to keep in mind, as it bears on the analysis of socialism during Keita's tenure. The practice of clientelism had deeper and more pervasive roots than did the ideology of socialism. In certain ways, socialism, which had such an ostensibly significant role in Mali's political decision-making in the 1960s, was subjected to this powerful underlying force. While certain politicians within the USRDA, particularly in the radical leftist faction, were deeply committed to Marxist ideology, it seems that socialism was nonetheless of clear material value in that it permitted the regime to expand the scope of its economic power and to thus control the economic fortunes of Mali's state bourgeoisie – those French-educated, urban-dwelling bureaucrats who were its most viable challengers.

²⁹ ANM.141.559.CNDR Circulaires. *Circulaire no 16/CNDR du 22 Novembre 1967 (Modibo Keita)*. “Pour beaucoup de camarades les paysans ont été une possible clientèle électorale; en effet dans leur lutte d'influence, certains responsables au niveau des circonscriptions ont pratiqué une politique électoraliste consistant à être agréables le plus possible aux masses rurales afin de faucher l'herbe sous les pieds du voisin – On était complaisant au maximum, l'on ne disait que ce qui pouvait consolider son prestige personnel. Par cette politique les organismes d'Etat ont perdu des sommes considérables car tout était “donné” – les grains, les biens manufacturés etc... Les graves difficultés des SMDR trouvent souvent leurs casues dans ces gestes.”

Opposition in the Keita Years

The failure of USRDA policies to bring about economic improvements precipitated a great deal of criticism and opposition. This opposition emanated from both urban and rural areas, and cut across all segments of society. From bureaucrats to merchants to peasants, all had grievances to air. Mostly they would do this privately, but sometimes discontent surfaced. Occasionally it would take violent shape, particularly in rural areas where state control was often weak. Social and political tensions in Mali in the 1960s, then, were real and widespread. Yet throughout the decade opposition remained disorganized. Consequently, the USRDA regime found itself in a position of having to continually put out fires, however scattered they might have been. The methods it used to contain this opposition were as diverse as the forms taken by these acts of political dissent, and were often very effective. They ranged from instituting laws to punish those who criticized the regime's policies, all the way to razing villages to the ground and sending troops to engage in gun battles with rural communities.

As serious economic problems emerged from the early days of independence onward, so too did criticism of the regime. Peasants complained about lowered prices offered by the state for their agricultural products and about increased taxes. Bureaucrats grumbled over salary reductions. Merchants and politicians spoke out against goods shortages and the failures of new state enterprises, demanding that the SOMIEX be dissolved and that trade be returned to the hands of more competent private businesses; in Sikasso the *commandant de cercle* demanded the use of merchants' vehicles, but merchants refused to comply.³⁰ The leadership of Modibo Keita and his regime was

³⁰ CADN.Bamako.Amb.20.Dépêches politiques 1961..*Synthèse du mois de mars 1961.*

repeatedly called into question. At a meeting with merchants in Bamako in late 1960 “the policy of the government was severely attacked.”³¹ The President was held directly responsible, and “they reproached Modibo Keita for being responsible for the economic quagmire and for a rise in prices unknown in the country ‘not even in colonial times, nor at the time of the war and the black market’.”³² At an agricultural conference in Bamako in 1961, the crowd booed the president himself when he began discussing the regime’s economic policies. In Koutiala a party delegate was beaten to death by a group of truck drivers.³³ In Bandiagara a regime administrator came into conflict with the village of Dinangourou, and “gunfire was exchanged with troops and all of the residents left the village.”³⁴

Outside of a relatively small yet dynamic faction within the party, radical socialism was not supported by any major segment of the population. The policies adopted by the USRDA regime were largely unfavourable to the majority of the population – peasants, merchants, and traditional authorities alike suffered under the new dispensation. Even those bureaucrats and low-level party cadres who most

“A Sikasso, les commerçants ne veulent plus traiter avec la SOMIEX (Société malienne d’importation et d’exportation) et ont exigé d’organiser eux-mêmes le ravitaillement; ils ont refusé de mettre leur véhicules à la disposition Commandant de cercle.”

³¹ Ibid. “Enfin, au cours d’une réunion qui s’est tenue à la mairie et qui groupait des commerçants africains de Bamako et des représentants du Parti, le Politique du Gouvernement fut très sévèrement attaquée.”

³² Ibid. “On reprocha notamment à Modibo Keita d’être responsable du marasme économique et d’une montée des prix jamais connue dans le pays “même au temps du colonialisme, ni même au temps de la guerre et du marché noir”.”

³³ Ibid. “Un autre incident a eu lieu à Koutiala. Une discussion entre un groupe de transporteurs routier et un délégué du parti s’est envenimée au point qu’elle a dégénérée en bagarre et que le délégué a été tué.”

³⁴ Ibid. “Un incident violent qui a opposé le chef de poste à la population du village de Dinangourou, dans la région de Badiagara s’est déroulé le 5 mars. Des coups de feu ont été échangés avec les troupes et la totalité des résidents a quitté le village.”

benefited from the state's rapid expansion of staff registers had much to complain about, as the regime's economic mismanagement often led to failures in paying salaries, increases in taxation, and decreases in pay. Indeed, as the French Ambassador noted in March 1961, "some of [the bureaucrats] have not been paid since the month of January and for most it was not possible to provide them with the traditional advances for the month of Ramadan, despite a circular from the Ministry of Finance to all administrative bodies ordering them to do so."³⁵ Many felt that returning to established ways of doing business, which had provided more economic stability than newly adopted party strategies, was the right course of action.

One must keep in mind that most administrators or politicians were never supporters of radical socialism. The majority of USRDA members did not support it; furthermore, although all of Mali's political parties had, at least on paper, been absorbed into the USRDA, the relatively conservative opinions of many former PSP members had not disappeared. It was written in party newspaper, *L'Essor*, in December 1959 that "unity is total in the Soudan under the aegis of the Union Soudanaise,"³⁶ after the Parti Africain de l'Indépendance (PAI) "joined" the USRDA, although the fact that PAI leaders were thrown in prison three months later for failing to endorse the regime casts doubt on the voluntary nature of this amalgamation.³⁷ "Thus what we have always

³⁵ Ibid. "Certains d'entre eux n'ont pas été payés depuis le mois de janvier et pour la plupart il n'a pas été possible de leur consentir des avances traditionnelles prévues pour le mois de Ramadan, en dépit d'une circulaire impérative du Ministre des Finances à tous les organismes administratifs."

³⁶ *L'Essor hebdomadaire* No 39 du 4 décembre 1959, p. 1, in Daba Diawara, *La Conquête de L'indépendance et L'édification Du Nouvel État Du Mali*, Vol. II, (Bamako: Éditions Tropics, 2012), 12. "...l'unité est totale au Soudan sous l'égide de l'union soudanaise RDA".

³⁷ ANM.18.36.Fédération du Mali 1960.1960 03 24 *Parti Africain de l'Indépendance au*

wished for has been achieved,” the article continued, “the single party gathering together the range of all the nuances of opinion, but with an unshakable national sentiment linking them together, the desire to build an African nation transcending secondary quarrels.”³⁸

This article was correct in that building a strong and prosperous nation was a universal goal across the Malian political spectrum — indeed, even “the discourses developed within the PSP can be understood as a nationalist project.”³⁹ Yet when the socialist policies adopted in September 1960 failed to stimulate the prosperity that all desired, these so-called secondary quarrels came to play an important role in politics. By December 1960 the BPN was already sharply divided, presenting Modibo Keita with the difficult prospect of maintaining unity in a fractious context. As the French ambassador noted:

In truth President Modibo Keita, who in recent times has attempted to personally regain control over the destiny of the country, seems again overcome by the competing factions within the political bureau. He is attempting to find a middle ground solution between those for whom the ever more perceptible consequences of a disastrous economic policy bring about panic and calls for the return to already proven concepts and methods, and those who attempt to profit from the newly encountered difficulties to reinforce the political orientation towards State socialism... It seems that the increasingly deep divergences apparent within the government have made him weary.⁴⁰

Soudan Malien Alerte au Fascisme.

³⁸ *L'Essor hebdomadaire* No 39 du 4 décembre 1959, p. 1, in Diawara, *La Conquête de L'indépendance et L'édification Du Nouvel État Du Mali*, Vol. II, 12. “Ainsi se trouve réalisé ce que nous avons toujours souhaitée: le parti unique groupant l'éventail de toutes les nuances d'opinion, mais avec entre elles le lien inébranlable du sentiment national, la volonté les construire une nation africaine qui transcende les querelles secondaires.”

³⁹ Jean-Hervé Jézequel, “Le ‘Nationalisme Officiel’ Du Parti Progressiste Soudanais (PSP). Histoire D'un Projet Politique Inabouti,” *Anales de Desclasificacion* 1 (2003): 181. “...les discours produits au sein du PSP peuvent également se comprendre comme un projet nationaliste.”

⁴⁰ CADN.Bamako.Amb.9.Politique au Soudan. *Télégramme hebdomadaire numéro 56*,

There was, then, opposition at all levels of society. Generally Malians had been tolerant at first of the regime's efforts to get the independent state up and running and to establish a host of new institutions that would, in theory, strengthen the economy and solidify Mali's status as an independent nation. Yet their patience ran out quickly when prices of many staple goods shot up by 30% within six months of independence⁴¹ while others became scarce, and as the regime presided over a general downturn in Mali's economic fortunes. As the French ambassador noted in March 1961:

Until now the fever of independence, the promises of speeches, [and] the provocative challenges had allowed for the establishment of new institutions and the transformation of social and economic structures to be undertaken with enthusiasm. Political constraints and police surveillance, together with economic stagnation and the difficulties in provisioning now elicit impatience, protests, and occasionally revolt.⁴²

semaine du 28 décembre au 3 janvier 1961. “En vérité, le président Modibo Keita, qui avait ces temps derniers essayé de reprendre personnellement en main les destinées du pays, semble à nouveau dépassée par les tendances qui s'affrontent au sein du bureau politique. Il cherche à trouver une solution moyenne entre ceux qui s'affolent devant les conséquences de plus en plus perceptible d'une politique économique désastreuse et réclament le retour des conceptions et des méthodes déjà éprouvées, et ceux qui essaient de profiter des nouvelles difficultés rencontrées pour renforcer l'orientation politique vers un socialisme d'État. Pour maintenir sa position, il n'a d'ailleurs d'autres moyens que de s'abriter derrière la majorité qu'il détient encore au sein du bureau politique et il se voit contraint, pour affirmer son autorité, de s'adresser directement à la masse et de rappeler à ses “ministres et aux responsables à tous les échelons qu'ils relèvent du Parti”. Il semble qu'il soit lassé des divergences de plus en plus profonde qui se manifestent au sein du Gouvernement et il faut s'attendre à ce qu'il cherche à retrouver dans le pays l'assentiment populaire dont il bénéficiait.”

⁴¹ CADN.Bamako.Amb.20.Dépêches politiques 1961.*Synthèse du mois d'avril.*

⁴² CADN.Bamako.Amb.20.Dépêches politiques 1961.*Synthèse du mois de mars 1961.* “Jusque là, la fièvre de l'indépendance, la promesse des discours, les défis provoquants avaient permis d'entreprendre dans l'enthousiasme la mise en place d'organismes nouveaux et les transformatives des structures sociales et économiques. Mais les conséquences de ces changements commencent à se faire sentir. La contrainte politique et la surveillance policière, jointe au marasme économique et aux difficultés de ravitaillement provoquent maintenant l'impatience, les protestations et parfois la révolte.”

Such opposition and criticism continued throughout the decade. Bamako's merchant revolt in 1962⁴³ would be the largest urban uprising during the regime's tenure, while the Tuareg rebellion of 1962-64 would constitute its most serious — albeit far more remote — manifestation.⁴⁴ In 1965, when the regime proposed additional business restrictions “aimed essentially to eliminate the “dioulas” and other itinerant merchants who participate in traditional commerce,” not only did it “provoke serious discontent among affected merchants and also among consumers,” but even the normally quiescent National Assembly put up a fight against “such draconian financial measures” before buckling to the will of the BPN — this rare show of resistance due perhaps to “the majority of deputies having a stake in private commercial networks.”⁴⁵ Merchants and Tuaregs were not the only groups, however, to voice complaints in the later years of USRDA rule; in 1966 many peasants opposed the state by refusing to sell it their grain — a subject that will be further analyzed in Chapter 6.⁴⁶ In 1967, party officials in Bamako lamented the prevalence of “arguments tending to discredit the revolutionaries” of the USRDA— particularly those suggesting “no one supports them.”⁴⁷ And although

⁴³ This event is explored in detail in Chapter 5, “The Merchants of Menace.”

⁴⁴ On this and subsequent conflicts between Tuareg groups and the Malian government, see Baz Lecocq, *Disputed Desert: Decolonisation, Competing Nationalisms and Tuareg Rebellions in Northern Mali* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

⁴⁵ CADN.Bamako.Amb.25.Dépêches hebdomadaires du poste – janvier à mai – 1965. *Dépêche hebdomadaire no 12 du 19 au 25 Mars 1965*. “D’ores et déjà, il apparaît probable que l’application de ce texte, qui vise essentiellement à supprimer les “dioulas” et autres marchands ambulants qui animaient le commerce traditionnel, gênera, pendant une période difficile à déterminer les activités économiques du pays. Il est également certain que la nouvelle législation a provoqué un vif mécontentement chez les commerçants qui sont touchés et aussi chez les consommateurs qui ne trouveront plus leurs “intermédiaires” habituels.”

⁴⁶ CADN.Bamako.Amb.28.Dépêches politiques 1966. *Situation intérieur au Mali dans la perspective des relations franco-maliennes, 30 Juillet 1966*.

⁴⁷ ANM.109.416.Rapport et Compte-Rendu de Mission à l’Intérieur du mali 1964-

urban discontent would remain largely non-violent, several revolts would erupt in rural areas across the country throughout 1968, involving both peasants and chiefly authorities. In January 1968, for example, residents of Monimpébougou, a village near Macina, attacked the *chef d'arrondissement* in his home, decrying the regime's practices of forced labour, forced grain requisitioning, and the failure of the SOMIEX, its monopolistic commercial enterprise, to supply rural areas with essential goods; they demanded that the former canton chief be reinstated.⁴⁸ In June, a similar revolt in the southern town of Ouéllésébougou would result in several deaths and more than 80 arrests.⁴⁹

Yet although opposition and criticism came from all quarters and required the regime to expend considerable resources on its responses, this was not enough to unseat it – perhaps because such opposition was not organized. One of the main reasons it remained unorganized, in turn, was because the state repressed opposition wherever it reared its head, and thus effectively managed to stymie the development of potential focal points for anti-regime activity. This repression took various forms and was directed not only at peasants, merchants, and traditional authorities like ex-canton chiefs, but also at party members. Thus throughout the 1960s opportunities for political expression within the party were progressively diminished, with competition over control of the

1967.1967 12 01 *Thèmes des assemblées générales dans les comités de la ville de Bamako*. "Arguments tendant à discréditer les révolutionnaires: "Ah ! ils n'ont personne derrière eux"..."

⁴⁸ ANM.245.876.Corrépondance Ségou 1958-1968.1968 01 13 *Affaire Monimpébougou*.

⁴⁹ Jean-Loup Amselle, "La Conscience Paysanne: La Révolte de Ouolossébougou (juin 1968, Mali)," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 12, no. 3 (1978): 339–55; ANM.103.394.Rapport Ouéllésébougou 1963-68.1968 08 26 *Rapport spécial sur l'évolution de la situation politique de la sous-section de Ouéllésébougou*.

party increasingly leading the leftist radical faction in particular to find new ways of silencing its critics. As such, the Keita regime's efforts to establish a stable postcolonial order led it further down the path of autocracy, as its economic policies, many of which were inspired by socialist theory, led to poor results and thus undermined its nationalist narrative of rapid economic development.

A Franc Examination: Economic decline in the Keita years

The era of the Malian First Republic was one of economic decline. Major economic problems existed from the moment Mali became independent, and most of these were never resolved. The rapid economic development the USRDA had wished for – and had promised the people – did not materialize, and this created much opposition at all levels of society while augmenting opposition where it existed already. In response, the Keita regime consolidated its autocratic tendencies, responding to challenges to authority with repression and violence that sometimes left villages razed or led entire communities to flee in fear for their lives.⁵⁰ The French ambassador noted in late 1962, when President Keita made a discreet trip to the north due to reports of unrest, that:

The greatest mystery surrounds this trip. No official communication whatsoever announced the departure of the Head of State... It was a report by the head of the mineral bureau, Mr. N'Daw, that caused the President of Mali to go there himself in order to attempt to resolve the differences that oppose the population of the north to his administration. The tour was originally supposed to be limited to the regions of Goundam and Tombouctou... But events took an unforeseen turn following violent incidents, which unfolded first in the region of Hombori and then in the region of Gao. There were deaths and injuries. With the brutality that has characterized him in similar cases, President Modibo Keita has not hesitated to order the seditious villages to be razed and to intern

⁵⁰ E.g. the entire village of Dinangourou fled after troops fired on villagers to put down dissent there (CADN.Bamako.Amb.20.Dépêches politiques 1961.*Synthèse du mois de mars 1961*).

those responsible at Kidal and Ménaka.⁵¹

At the same time as it stamped out opposition, and despite being so poor, the regime established and expanded many state enterprises and other projects connected with its nation-building agenda. Many of these would prove to be unproductive, ineffective, and expensive, not least because their resources were often diverted toward client networks.⁵²

One of the most important contributors to Mali's economic problems was the fact that the Soudan Français had been a poor colony. Under French rule its budget was considerably subsidized. Even with such assistance, very little in the way of modern infrastructure or development projects had been built or undertaken. In comparison to coastal colonies like Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire, the Soudan was a have-not territory. As Ouattara has noted, "industrial activities were almost non-existent."⁵³ According to Zolberg, "[t]he *modern* sector of the economy which Mali inherited from the colonial period was very backward even by African standards and completely dependent on

⁵¹ CADN.Bamako.Amb.21.Dépêches politiques 1962.*Dépêche Hebdomadaire no 45 du 12 au 18 Novembre 1962*. "Le Président Modibo Keita a quitté Bamako dans la journée du 14 novembre...il effectuera...une tournée d'inspection dans le nord du pays...Le plus grand mystère entoure ce voyage. Aucun communiqué officiel n'a annoncé le départ du Chef de l'Etat...C'est un rapport du chef du bureau minier, M. N'Daw, qui a décidé le président du Mali à se rendre lui-même sur place pour tenter de résoudre les différends qui opposent la population du Nord à son Administration. La tournée devait, à l'origine, se limiter à la région de Goundam et de Tombouctou...Mais les événements ont pris une tournure imprévue à la suite de violents incidents qui se sont déroulés d'abord dans la région d'Hombori ensuite dans la région de Gao. Il y aurait eu des morts et des blessés. Avec la brutalité qui le caractérise dans de pareils cas, le Président Modibo Keita n'hésite pas à ordonner de faire raser les villages séditeux et interner les principaux responsables à Kidal et à Ménaka."

⁵² Interview with Dotien Coulibaly, Bamako, 20 March 2012; interview with Albakaye Ousmane Kounta, Bamako, 21 March 2012.

⁵³ Tiégué Amadou Ouattara, *Le Destin du Socialisme Malien* (Bamako: Editions Imprimerie du Mali, 1978), 29. "Les activités industrielles, nous l'avons noté, sont presque inexistantes."

France."⁵⁴ Nearly all investment came from the French government rather than local fiscal sources.⁵⁵ The USRDA itself readily admitted that after independence it was unable to balance the budget in the absence of French subsidies.⁵⁶

There is wide consensus in the literature that Mali got off to a bad economic start in 1960. Beginning with the loss of French subsidies and the railway's closure, things progressively deteriorated to a state of acute economic crisis.⁵⁷ Commercial agricultural production stagnated throughout the decade, due in part to low prices offered to grain producers by the state and perhaps also due to failed collectivization initiatives — policies that, as will be explored in chapter 6, led to widespread dissatisfaction with USRDA rule among the peasantry. Inflation grew rapidly in response to poor trade outcomes and an aggressive money-printing strategy adopted after the Malian franc was issued in 1962, among other factors.⁵⁸

In spite of these mounting difficulties, the Keita regime continued to spend far beyond its means, with little sign of willingness to slow the growth of its debt. Indeed, when in 1965 the USRDA government realized the dire state of its finances and began discussing with French officials the possibility of entering into negotiations for an

⁵⁴Zolberg, "The Political Revival of Mali," *The World Today* 21, 4 (1965): 155.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 156.

⁵⁶ ANM.142.560.Circulaires 1947-1968. *Circulaire 6 Aux Secrétaires Généraux des Sections de l'USRDA, 11 Mai 1964.*

⁵⁷ See for example Bintou Sanankoua, *La Chute de Modibo Keita* (Bamako: Editions Chaka, 1990), 132-133; C.D. Diarrah, *Mali: Bilan d'une gestion désastreuse* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1990), 15; M. Konaté, *Mali, ils ont assassiné l'espoir* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1990), 85-86; Lê Châu, "Politiques économiques et crises durant les 30 années d'indépendance", *Politique africaine* no 47, 1992: 31-42; Pierre Campmas, "L'Union Soudanaise, Section Soudanaise Du Rassemblement Démocratique Africain 1946-1968," (PhD Thesis, Université de Toulouse, 1978).

⁵⁸ Guy Martin, "Socialism, economic development, and planning in Mali, 1960-1968," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 10, 1 (1976): 31.

economic rescue, it remained deeply involved in the process of expanding the public sector through the establishment of new building projects and state enterprises. As the French ambassador noted,

On a technical level, it seems that caution would incite [the Malian government] to not continue, for example, the stadium the Russians are building, the U.A.R.'s [United Arab Republic's] Grand Hotel, the mineral research undertaken by the Soviets, the sugar refinery provided by China, the cement works that the Russians have to build, etc.... Moreover, even if the year 1965 takes place under the sign of austerity from the point of view of foreign finances, nothing suggests that the same will be true for the national budget, and above all for the state enterprises such as the SOMIEX, Air-Mali, the Malian Navigation Company, all enterprises running a deficit.⁵⁹

In other words, the USRDA was still actively involved in expanding the public sector, even as it was obliged to humble itself before the former colonial power and request assistance. This assistance, however, would oblige such initiatives to be curtailed, and this would eliminate jobs and rent-seeking opportunities. As was noted in a secret protocol document detailing the points of the agreement between Mali and France, reorganizing state enterprises was a top priority:

From the start of the preparatory period the Malian government will undertake a general study of the state enterprise sector. This study, which will notably have recourse to French technical assistance, should result in the reorganization, the reform, even the elimination of those enterprises for which the management in current conditions imposes an excessive burden on the finances or economy of Mali.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ CADN.Bamako.Amb.89.Accord monétaire 1967 (et accord de coopération 1962).A/S : *des relations franco-maliennes à la veille de l'ouverture des négociations, 15 février 1965*, p. 6. "Sur le plan technique, il semble que la prudence inciterait à ne pas continuer, par exemple, le Stade que construisent les Russes, le Grand Hôtel de la R.A.U., les recherches minières entreprises par les Soviétiques, la raffinerie de sucre fournie par la Chine, la cimenterie que doit construire la Russie, etc... D'autre part, et si l'année 1965 se place sous le signe de l'austérité au point de vue des finances extérieures, rien ne permet de dire qu'il en soit de même pour le budget national, et surtout pour les sociétés d'Etat, telles que la SOMIEX, Air-Mali, la Compagnie Malienne de Navigation, toutes entreprises qui sont en déficit."

⁶⁰ CADN.Bamako.Amb.89.Accord monétaire 1967 (et accord de coopération

These cutbacks would naturally have reduced the party leadership's ability to operate as an effective patron, and thus they threatened one of the cornerstones of the USRDA's political strategy: using the state to distribute resources to political supporters.

These reforms, which effectively reduced the economic clout of the state, only served to further polarize the radical and moderate wings of the party. These factions had long been in conflict, and indeed there was hardly ever any agreement – even at the highest levels of the USRDA – about which policies to adopt or reject, or which to repeal or reaffirm. “Can one even be assured,” wrote the French ambassador in late 1960, “that the leaders themselves are certain of the nature of the path they are taking? This has hardly been proven.”⁶¹ Sharp divisions remained throughout the decade, with the French ambassador noting in 1968, for example, the absence from politics of the regime's most high-ranking moderate, Jean-Marie Koné, due to his being “opposed to the party line adopted by Modibo Keita in August 1967.”⁶² Although the goals of

1962). *Accord du 15 février 1967 entre le Gouvernement de la République française et le Gouvernement de la République du Mali concernant les relations monétaires entre les deux États, protocoles et lettres annexes*, p. 13. “Dès le début de la période préparatoire le Gouvernement malien entreprendra une étude générale du secteur des sociétés d'Etat. Cette étude, pour laquelle il sera fait appel notamment à l'assistance technique française, devra aboutir à la réorganisation, à la réforme, voire à la suppression de celles des sociétés dont la gestion dans les conditions actuelles impose une charge excessive aux finances ou à l'économie du Mali.”

⁶¹ CADN.Bamako.Amb.9. *Politique au Soudan. Télégramme hebdomadaire numéro 56, semaine du 28 décembre au 3 janvier 1961*. “Peut-on d'ailleurs être assuré que les responsables sont elles-mêmes bien certains de la nature de la voix qu'ils empruntent ? Ceci n'est guère prouvé.”

⁶² CADN.Bamako.Amb.55. *US-RDA 1959-1969. A:S/ Relation des évènements survenus au Mali du 22 au 26 novembre: la constitution du Gouvernement provisoire et son programme (26 Novembre 1968)* “Deux d'entre eux, M. Jean-Marie Koné aux Affaires étrangères et M. Louis Nègre, au ministère du Plan, des Finances et des Affaires économiques, - services qui sont réunis pour la première fois sous une seule direction, comme il le souhaitait -, ont appartenu aux équipes gouvernementales du régime déchu.

nationalism, development, and unity were almost universally accepted – as noted in the previous section of this chapter – the means of achieving them were hotly contested. Socialism in particular meant very different things to different political agents, with certain radicals possessing a true commitment to socialist ideals like ending capitalism – Madeira Keita, for example, was identified as “an ardent partisan of the Communist doctrine”⁶³ as early as 1948 and he continued to represent the “extremist elements” of the party who “drew their vigour from Marxist rigour” in the late 1960s⁶⁴ – whereas many moderates had an interest in only the loosest conception of socialism as a support for nationalism, without any interest in revolutionizing Mali’s economic system if this could not stimulate development – Mahamane Alassane Haïdara, for example, “did not very favourably view...a severe law regarding the exercise of commerce” that was implemented in 1965, as he was not ideologically opposed to private business.⁶⁵ “Many are those,” wrote the French ambassador in 1961 in regards to this latter group of

En fait, le premier d’entre eux, opposé à la ligne du parti adoptée par le Président Modibo Keita en août 1967, s’était pratiquement retiré...”

⁶³ Gregory Mann, “Anti-Colonialism and Social Science: Georges Balandier, Madeira Keita, and ‘the Colonial Situation’ in French Africa,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 55, no. 1 (2013): 98.

⁶⁴ CADN.Bamako.Amb.28.Dépêches politiques 1966.A/S: *Situation au Mali (29 Octobre 1966)*. “Mais, il existe également une autre forme d’opposition qui, si elle n’appui pas sur le mécontentement des masses, puise sa vigueur dans le rigorisme marxiste: il s’agit de celle des éléments extrémistes, insatisfaits, eux aussi, du ramaniement ministériel et déçus d’avoir été tenus à l’écart des décisions présidentielles, mais qui restent influents au sein du Bureau Politique, essentiellement: Madeira Keita et Seydou Badian Kouyaté.”

⁶⁵ CADN.Bamako.Amb.25.Dépêches hebdomadaires du poste – janvier à mai – 1965.*Dépêche hebdomadaire no 11 du 12 au 18 Mars 1965*. “De son côté, M. Mahamane Alassane Haidara, Président de l’Assemblée Nationale, dans un discours prononcé en séance publique, a prêché la croisade contre les trafiquants. Ses propos, singulièrement dépourvus de chaleur et de convictions, inclinent à penser qu’il s’acquittait simplement d’un devoir mais qu’il n’était pas tellement favorable à une loi aussi sévère sur l’exercice de la profession commerciale...”

moderates, “who have begun to think that the price of independence has become rather high and that it would have been possible to obtain better results without wreaking total havoc on the economic structures inherited from colonialism.”⁶⁶ As the power of these competing factions fluctuated throughout the 1960s, the tone of official socialist policy varied over time. For example, in 1965 the radical faction was firmly in control of the party and used its influence to break off negotiations between France and Mali – presumably as an assertion of total independence from imperialist influence. The delegation declared openly that it was amply justified in doing so despite Mali’s economic stagnation, and “indeed it felt supported by the most ‘radical’ elements in the party and the government, whose influence predominated at the time.”⁶⁷ Yet “one year later, the situation [presented] itself in a completely different manner.” Nkrumah’s regime in Ghana had fallen, as had Ben Bella’s in Algeria, and combined with a number of other factors “the Malians [at that point felt] isolated.”⁶⁸ It was in this context that

⁶⁶ CADN.Bamako.Amb.20.Dépêches politiques 1961.*Synthèse du mois de Novembre*. “Nombreux sont ceux qui commencent à penser que le prix de l’indépendance s’est bien élevé et qu’il eut été possible d’obtenir de meilleurs résultats sans bouleverser de fond en comble les structures économiques héritées du colonialisme.”

⁶⁷ CADN.Bamako.Amb.28.Dépêches politiques 1966.*Situation intérieur au Mali dans la perspective des relations franco-maliennes, 30 Juillet 1966*. “L’an dernier, à pareille époque, les négociations entre la France et le Mali venait d’être suspendu et, de retour à Bamako, la délégation malienne avait encore beau jeu pour déclarer qu’elle avait eu raison de maintenir ses positions. Elle se sentait en effet soutenu par les éléments les plus “durs” du Parti et du Gouvernement, dont l’influence était alors prédominante.”

⁶⁸ Ibid., “Un an après, la situation se présente de manière toute différente. Sur le plan extérieur, plusieurs circonstances se sont conjugués pour mettre le Mali en difficulté: chute de M. Ben Bella; coups d’état militaires dans plusieurs états africains; rupture de la Guinée avec la France; élimination de M. Nkrumah; échecs de l’OUA et progrès de l’OCAM. Les Maliens éprouvent aujourd’hui un sentiment d’isolement. Tout a été dit, d’autre part, sur la situation économique du Mali au milieu de l’année 1966: diminution brutale de la production agricole, opposition des paysans à la commercialisation des produits, aggravation des déficit de la balance commerciale, de la balance des paiements et des Sociétés d’État, raréfaction des biens de consommation, inflation croissante,

moderates were able to re-enter talks with France, and to sign monetary accords in February 1967 that would see them rejoin the West African Franc Zone. Jean-Marie Koné played a central role in these negotiations (before being sidelined during the Active Revolution that would emerge later in the year), along with Louis Nègre, a technocrat named Minister of Finance to assist with the economic reforms that the negotiations would entail.⁶⁹ Despite the embarrassment of having to turn to the former colonial power, whose influence the USRDA had unequivocally rejected at independence, by 1967 Mali was obliged to seek assistance from France as a way out of a situation that had become desperate. Of particular concern was the poor value of the Malian franc — which was adopted in 1962 despite USRDA leaders having categorically rejected such a move in 1960, citing “the geographic position of the country and the difficulties it would have in doing business... with the other territories of West Africa.”⁷⁰ The agreements signed in 1967 devalued Mali's franc by fifty percent, brought Mali back into the CFA franc zone (ending the country's experiment with its

démarches pour obtenir des pays étrangers des moratoire sur les dettes et un accroissement d'aide, etc...”

⁶⁹ CADN.Bamako.Amb.55.US-RDA 1959-1969.A/S: *Relation des évènements survenus au Mali du 22 au 26 Novembre: la constitution du Gouvernement provisoire et son programme (26 Novembre 1968).*

⁷⁰ CADN.Bamako.Amb.9.Politique au Soudan.*Compte-Rendu no 47 – Quinzaine du 4 au 18 octobre 1960.* “Le souci de permettre et d'intensifier des échanges se retrouve encore dans les propos tenus, en matière monétaire, par M. Hammaciré N'Douré devant la Chambre de Commerce de Bamako. Manifestement soucieux de donner des apaisements aux nombreux commerçants qui, depuis quelques temps, restaient dans l'expectative, le Ministre du Commerce à en effet déclaré qu'il n'était nullement dans l'intention du Mali de quitter la zone franc, en raison de la position géographique de ce pays et les difficultés qu'il aurait à commercer, au moyen d'une monnaie spécial, avec les autres territoires de l'Afrique de l'Ouest. M. N'Douré à ajouter que le Gouvernement n'avait même pas l'intention de spécialiser les billets de banque du Mali, et enfin le contrôle des transferts seraient abolis dès que la situation redeviendrait normale.”

own currency), and reigned in public spending.⁷¹

They constituted a shameful defeat for many, particularly those on Mali's far left. As one observer noted in a "grotesque letter against the Mali regime" intercepted by the Popular Militia in April 1968:

In Mali, a single event occupies the political scene, the negotiations... between Modibo's government and France. No intellectual is happy with these shameful negotiations. They have wreaked havoc in Mali. Everyone protests except the poor man in the street who understands nothing of politics... The economy of a socialist country dominated by capitalists. Oh, what a strange kind of socialism. Yes the Malian revolution will continue, but it will break the bones of its current leaders.⁷²

The economic decline in the years leading up to this agreement placed considerable pressure on socialist radicals within the USRDA. Opposition to the regime's economic policies was prevalent at all levels of society, presenting a particular challenge to radicals who had conceived of and defended them.⁷³ The monetary accords of 1967, in contrast, provoked a backlash from radicals who argued that the agreements betrayed their socialist values.⁷⁴ As the French ambassador noted in 1966:

Reversal, which would be a return to the monetary union, would raise a number of problems for the President; nevertheless, opinions are not unanimous in this

⁷¹ Martin, "Socialism, economic development, and planning in Mali, 1960-1968," 31.

⁷² ANM.146.658.Dossier de la Milice Populaire 1964-1968. *Extrait de rapport d'enquête concernant un tel, auteur d'une lettre grotesque contre le régime du Mali, 28 avril 1968.* "Au Mali, un seul fait occupe la scène politique, les négociations (pas entre le Mali et la France) ms entre le gouvernement de Modibo et la France. Aucun intellectuel n'est content de ces négociations de la honte. Elles ont sèmé "la pagaille" au Mali. Tout le monde proteste sauf le pauvre homme de la rue qui ne comprend rien de la politique... L'économie d'un pays socialiste dominé par des capitalistes. Ah, quel drôle de socialisme. Oui la révolution Malienne continuera, ms elle brisera les os de ses actuels dirigeants."

⁷³ CADN.Bamako.Amb.28.Dépêches politiques 1966. *Situation intérieur au Mali dans la perspective des relations franco-maliennes, 30 Juillet 1966.* Notes that goods shortages, inflation, and general economic chaos had led peasants even to refuse to sell their grain to the state.

⁷⁴ Martin, "Socialism, economic development, and planning in Mali, 1960-1968," 31.

regard. For some... it would be political suicide, in the sense that Modibo Keita would lose all authority if he had to publicly confess his past errors and accept what the majority of Malians would consider a step backward. For others, on the contrary, the operation would not present major difficulties: what the population wants is prosperity. By unanimous opinion, this is impeded by monetary inconvertibility. Malians are not attached to the Malian franc, but to the CFA franc, and the President would demonstrate himself to be a well-advised statesman if he was able to take stock of the evolution of the West African situation and to base his opinion on that evolution; this point of view is particularly that of the moderate ministers.⁷⁵

In practical rather than ideological terms, the agreements threatened to undermine the political legitimacy of radicals by reversing their policies, and they had profound implications for both the real earnings and employment prospects of the urban salaried class – a group that had long harboured much opposition to the regime’s socialist policies, despite this opposition remaining unorganized thanks to state repression and surveillance. While until 1967 the USRDA had continually expanded the public service payroll within the host of state enterprises and government departments it had established, the agreement required cutbacks, particularly in regards to enterprises that perennially haemorrhaged money, like Air Mali.⁷⁶

The state’s worsening poverty intensified such conflicts over government policy

⁷⁵ CADN.Bamako.Amb.28.Dépêches politiques 1966.*Juillet 1966: Situation intérieure au Mali dans la perspective des relations franco-maliennes*. “Pour les uns... ce serait le suicide politique, en ce sens que M. Modibo Keita perdrait toute autorité s’il lui fallait confesser publiquement ses erreurs passées et accepter ce que la majorité des Maliens pourrait considérer comme un retour en arrière. Pour d’autres, au contraire, l’opération ne présenterait pas de difficulté majeure: ce que veut la population, c’est la prospérité. De l’avis de tous, celle-ci est entravée par l’inconvertibilité monétaire. Les Maliens ne sont pas attachés au franc malien, mais au franc C.F.A., et le Président se montrerait homme d’Etat avisé s’il savait tenir compte de l’évolution de la situation en Afrique de l’Ouest, et calquer son attitude sur cette évolution; ce point de vue est notamment celui des Ministres modérés qui estiment que la popularité du Président serait considérablement accrue s’il voulait faire un choix souhaité par tous.”

⁷⁶ CADN.Bamako.Amb.21.Dépêches politiques 1962.*Dépêche hebdomadaire no 25, Situation Intérieur*; p. 3; interview with Dotien Coulibaly, Bamako, 20 March 2012; interview with Abdoulaye Amadou Sy, Bamako, 11 February 2012.

and socialism's place in it. This culminated in the Active Revolution of 1967-1968, in which the radical socialist faction took inspiration from Mao's Cultural Revolution and intensified its repression of moderates – and indeed of the entire populace – nominally in order to “safeguard [their] gains and [their] socialist option.”⁷⁷ For certain radicals, then, socialism was both an ideal they believed in and a set of rhetorical devices upon which they drew to justify the repression of their numerous opponents who had a more conservative political disposition. For many moderates, it represented a failing experiment whose major policies – restrictions on private commerce, the imposition of a non-convertible currency, agricultural collectivization – needed to be modified, even if the regime was to remain nominally socialist.

Repression in the Keita Years

The Keita regime began efforts to repress opposition in the late 1950s and augmented them throughout its tenure. By using a variety of legal manoeuvres, surveillance mechanisms, instruments of state violence, as well as its position as gatekeeper of public funds and authority, it was able to prevent opponents from joining forces and coordinating efforts to provoke political change. Under these conditions, despite the fact that many Malians disagreed with the regime's policies, there was little they could do but accept the regime's continued dominance. Some managed to flee the country⁷⁸ and

⁷⁷ ANM.109.416.Rapport et Compte-Rendu de Mission à l'Intérieur du Mali, 1964-1967.1967 12 01 *Thèmes des assemblées générales dans les comités de la ville de Bamako*. “...sauvegarder nos acquis et notre option socialiste.”

⁷⁸ Daouda Gary-Toukara, “Quand Les Migrants Demandent La Route, Modibo Keita Retorque: ‘Retournez À La Terre!’ Les Baragnini et La Desertion Du ‘Chantier National,’ 1958-1968,” *Mande Studies* 5 (2003): 58-59. Peasants, merchants, and public servants alike fled Mali in considerable numbers throughout the decade.

some stood up and critiqued, or occasionally physically attacked,⁷⁹ the regime and its representatives; for example, politicians and ordinary citizens alike notified President Keita “on numerous occasions” in 1961 “that the policy of his government had engendered serious discontent” due to “the economic doldrums in which the country [stagnated].”⁸⁰ But the regime had developed measures to prevent such things from occurring and to punish those who deviated from the norms it imposed. The risks associated with rebelling were high, and the chances of successfully challenging a state that was ready to send in troops to put down obstinate villages and to flatten problem communities with bulldozers were low. In this way the regime managed to keep opposition sporadic, low level, and fragmented throughout the 1960s in spite of the fact that under its leadership the livelihoods and future prospects of many Malians had been considerably compromised.

The USRDA’s policy of eliminating opponents began almost immediately after it gained power over the Soudan’s internal affairs in 1957, with one of the USRDA’s most

⁷⁹ E.g. CADN.Bamako.Amb.9.Politique au Soudan.*Compte-Rendu no 47 – Quinzaine du 4 au 18 octobre 1960*. “Sur le plan de la sécurité intérieure, les difficultés viennent principalement des régions nomades. L’Africanisation du commandement et plus récemment le remplacement des officiers et sous-officiers français des Goums par des noirs, a provoqué un affaiblissement du contrôle du Gouvernement sur ces régions. Des incidents graves se sont déjà produits se soldant par une vingtaine de morts dans la région de Goundam et de Nara.”

⁸⁰ CADN.Bamako.Amb.20.Dépêches politiques 1961.*Synthèse du mois d’avril*. “Le Président Modibo Keita a visité successivement en compagnie de MM. Mamdou Aw et Seydou Kouyaté, les villages de Mopti, Bandagara, Douentza, Hombori, Tombouctou, Goundam, Niafunké et Macina... il est néanmoins significatif que ce trajet passait par tous les centre où avait eu lieu dans les semaines précédentes des troubles parfois importants. Modibo Keita n’a pas rapporté des impressions très favorables de son périple... il a pu constater à de nombreuses reprises aussi bien dans les réunions politiques que dans les entretiens privés que la politique de son gouvernement avait engendré un mécontentement sérieux. Les réserves et les reproches qui ont été exprimés devant lui ont porté essentiellement sur le marasme économique dans lequel stagne le pays.”

prominent radicals playing a key role in these early moves: Madeira Keita, who served as Minister of the Interior from 1957-1962. In late 1958 the regime officially eliminated Mali's canton chiefs, who had constituted its main political opponents both in party politics – within the PSP – and in terms of the political legitimacy chiefs enjoyed in their communities due to their hereditary status.⁸¹ As Gregory Mann observes:

In May 1957, Keita was named minister of the interior of the Territory of Soudan. It was his signature as minister—not that of Modibo Keita, head of government, US-RDA secretary general, and future president (1960–1968)—that authorized the strongest single move against the colonial system made before independence, namely dismantling the chieftaincy and the gradual dismissal of the *chefs de canton*.⁸²

In 1959 the USRDA regime began outlawing opposition parties, like the Parti Démocratique Ségovienne – again, with Madeira Keita's signature on the order⁸³ – while it coerced other parties like the PSP into officially merging with the USRDA.⁸⁴ In 1960 it arrested politicians from rival parties who refused to join with them,⁸⁵ and it razed villages that were strongholds of opposition.⁸⁶ Following the collapse of the Mali Federation it instituted a law that rendered criticizing regime policy illegal, and it used this law to silence some of Mali's most high profile political and cultural agents, like Amadou Hampâté Bâ, who faced sanctions for publicly stating that the closure of the Dakar-Niger Railway had a disastrous impact on Mali's economy. Significantly, this law

⁸¹ *L'Essor* no. 2956, 19 décembre 1958, "Divers arrêtés prononçant la vacance de chefferies traditionnelles de village et de canton," in Diawara, *La Conquête De L'indépendance et L'édification Du Nouvel État Du Mali*, Vol. I, 195-199.

⁸² Mann, "Anti-Colonialism and Social Science," 114-115.

⁸³ ANM.245.876. Correspondance Ségo 1958-1968. *Decrét 34 portant dissolution de l'association dénomée "Union Démocratique Ségovienne" (5 February 1959)*.

⁸⁴ Martin, "Socialism, economic development, and planning in Mali, 1960-1968."

⁸⁵ ANM.18.36. Fédération du Mali 1960. *1960 03 24 Parti Africain de l'Indépendance au Soudan malien alerte au fascisme*.

⁸⁶ Francis Simonis, "Le Drame de Sakoïba. Magistrats et Autorités Politiques à Ségo (Mali) à la Veille de l'Indépendance," *Droit et Cultures*, no. 30 (1995): 231–41.

also rendered statements judged to be anti-national illegal as well. As the French ambassador noted in late 1960:

Security dispositions have been taken to prevent any attempt at opposition to the policies that have been adopted. During its meeting on 28 December the Council of Ministers adopted a bill repressing “crimes and misdemeanours of a racial, religious, or regionalist character”.

The first article of this text stipulates that:

Any remark, any act of a nature to establish or to bring into being racial or ethnic discrimination, any remark, any act having the aim of provoking or maintaining regionalist propaganda, any propagation of information tending to harm the unity of the nation or the credibility of the State, any expression contrary to the liberty of conscience and the liberty of worship that is likely to cause citizens to rise up against each other will be punished by imprisonment for one to five years and optionally by a five to ten year travel ban.

The first victim of this law was the former French Union Counsellor Amadou Hampâté Bâ, who has been rebuked for having declared in public that “the closure of the Dakar-Niger had disastrous consequences for Mali’s economy.”⁸⁷

The existence of such a law highlights the scope of the regime’s nationalist ambitions as well as its move toward “practicing a more authoritarian politics” – something leading

⁸⁷ CADN.Bamako.Amb.9.Politique au Soudan. *Télégramme hebdomadaire numéro 56, semaine du 28 décembre au 3 janvier 1961*. “Parallèlement, des dispositions de sécurité sont prises pour empêcher toute tentative d’opposition à la politique suivie. Au cours de sa séance du 28 décembre le Conseil des Ministres a adoptée un projet de loi réprimant les “crimes et délits à caractère raciale, religieux ou régionaliste”. L’article premier de ce texte stipule que: Tout propos, tout acte de nature à établir ou à faire naître une discrimination raciale ou ethnique, tout propos, tout acte ayant pour but de provoquer ou d’entretenir une propagande régionaliste, toute propagation de nouvelles tendant à porter atteinte à l’unité de la nation au crédit de l’État, toute manifestation contraire à la liberté de conscience et à la liberté du culte susceptible de dresser les citoyens les uns contre les autres sera punie d’un emprisonnement de un à cinq ans et, facultativement de cinq à 10 ans d’interdiction de séjour.

Cette disposition concernant les tentatives de subversion qui réapparaissent dans les régions de Segou, sous l’impulsion notamment des partisans de Moussa Diarra, actuellement en résidence surveillée à Kidal. Mais elle vise également les “propagateurs de fausses nouvelles” dont il a été fait état dans un télégramme précédent. La première victime de cette loi a été l’ancien Conseiller de l’Union Française Bâ Amadou [Hampaté] à qui l’on reproche d’avoir déclaré en public que “la fermeture du Dakar-Niger avait des conséquences désastreuses pour l’économie du Mali”.”

member of the radical faction Mamadou Gologo argued in favour of at the time.⁸⁸ The fact that regionalist remarks were made a criminal offence in 1960 – when in late 1958 the party openly recognized at its Second Territorial Congress that regional sentiment was the norm (“the masses...go no further than common and traditional ethnic solidarity”⁸⁹) and national sentiment was inexistent – speaks to the regime’s increasingly paternalistic and coercive character, and perhaps also to the climate of fear that contributed to the emergence of such draconian diktats. Indeed, the 1958 report makes the absence of national sentiment amply clear: “It is absolutely necessary,” it asserted, “at any cost, to manage to quickly create...national sentiment”⁹⁰ – *create* being the key word, for USRDA leaders recognized ordinary citizens lacked such sentiment, despite the fact that it was “desired by the elites and the leaders.”⁹¹ Yet although this law has clear nationalist dimensions, it is equally important to note that it was first used against someone who was not anti-nationalist – indeed, Bâ’s critique is even formulated in nationalist terms – but instead against someone who simply called one of the Keita regime’s decisions into question. As such, this law typifies the tensions at play in Malian politics in the 1960s, where ideals and power politics would often collide.

⁸⁸ CADN.Bamako.Amb.9.Incidents de Ségou 1959 et 1960 et Politique au Soudan. *Télégramme Hebdomadaire No 53, Représentation de France au Mali*. “Mamadou Gologo qui se fait le porte-parole des éléments les plus avancés du parti a demandé que le futur gouvernement pratique une politique plus autoritaire.”

⁸⁹ ANM.2.4.5^e Congrès de l’USRDA. *Ve Congrès de l’Union Soudanaise, 13-17 août 1958 et 2^e Conférence territoriale de l’Union Soudanaise, 17-19 octobre 1958*, 56-57. “...la masse, qui sent parfois instinctivement ces réalités, ne peut rationnellement développer ce qu’elle ne pressent que confusément, ou même-il faut le dire-ne s’arrête, elle, qu’à la solidarité raciale commune et traditionnelle, souvent superficielle.”

⁹⁰ Ibid. “Il faut nécessairement, et coûte que coûte, arriver dans peu de temps à créer... le sentiment national.”

⁹¹ Ibid. “Disons-nous qu’une Union Ouest Africaine [la nation régionale la création de laquelle l’USRDA visait à l’époque], désirée par les élites et les dirigeants, ne sera jamais effective tant que la masse n’en aura pas conçu l’impérieuse nécessité.”

In September 1960 the regime began to organize popular militias and vigilance brigades under the direction of Interior Minister Madeira Keita; by December 80 tonnes of weapons had arrived in Bamako from Guinea and were being distributed to militias “in regions considered particularly sensitive,” while 70 more tonnes were en route.⁹² It used these and other tools to keep potential opponents under surveillance and to demand that the population not simply tolerate the party but publicly demonstrate willing submission to its authority; indeed, an individual could come under investigation, for example, simply for having a “state of mind toward the party” that was “very bad,” due to “never having attended a general assembly of the [USRDA] Committee of the 4th neighbourhood where he lives, nor any public meetings organized by the party.”⁹³ The regime equally warned party members that any privileged positions they might hold within the party were contingent upon good behaviour.⁹⁴

Although there is little evidence to support the proposition, in 1960 Madeira Keita circulated documents to all USRDA cadres throughout the country suggesting

⁹² CADN.Bamako.Amb.9.Politique au Soudan.*Télégramme hebdomadaire numéro 56, semaine du 28 décembre au 3 janvier 1961.* “De son côté, Madeira Keita accélère l'équipement des milices populaires. Des 150 tonnes d'armes destinée au Mali et entreposé à Kankan, 80 ont déjà été acheminés sur Bamako par des camions appartenant au Ministère de l'Economie rurale et on procède actuellement à leur répartition dans les régions considérés comme particulièrement sensibles.”

⁹³ ANM.245.876.Correspondances Ségou 1958-1968.*1963 07 24 à Monsieur le Commandant de Cercle de Ségou.* “Comme suite à votre lettre citée en référence, j'ai l'honneur de vous faire connaître que l'état d'esprit actuel vis-à-vis du Parti du nommé Mamadou DAFPE refoulé de Mopti, est très mauvais. En effet, depuis son arrivée à Ségou jusqu'à ce jour, l'intéressé non seulement n'a pas fait preuve de militance, mais entretient des rapports très étroits avec les éléments qualifiés de suspects en raison d'une part de leur passé et d'autre part de leur attitude vis-à-vis du Parti. C'est ainsi qu'il n'a jamais assisté ni à aucune assemblée générale du Comité du 4ème quartier dont il relève, ni à aucune réunion publique organisée par le Parti. (Signé Dramane Coulibaly - Pour le Bureau Politique.)”

⁹⁴ CADN.Bamako.Amb.20.Dépêches politiques 1961.*Synthèse du mois de mars 1961.*

subversive French elements were likely to cache weapons along the borders and to stage a coup d'état.⁹⁵ Furthermore, it was often stated by the USRDA that "Mali, in its irreversible march toward socialism, will sweep aside all those who place themselves in the way of the revolution."⁹⁶ It was furthermore asserted that any criticism of the government amounted to "false noises" and "campaigns of intoxication." The remedy for such dissent was to "trace it back, demanding each activist... to give the name of his informant" in order that "all measures necessary to the recovery and stabilization of the situation" might be taken against such individuals.⁹⁷

When the normally quiescent national assembly voted in early 1961 to dissolve the SOMIEX – due to its failure to effectively take over the role of Mali's merchants⁹⁸ – Modibo Keita reacted furiously and demanded that their vote be retracted. When the

⁹⁵ ANM.18.36.Fédération du Mali. *Circulaire à tous les cercles subdivisions et postes administratives, 25 Mai 1960.*

⁹⁶ ANM.83.278.Ministère des Finances et du Commerce 1963-1968.1964 10 14 *Assemblée générale du groupe politique.* "Le Mali dans sa marche irreversible vers le socialisme balayera tous ceux qui se mettront au travers de la révolution."

⁹⁷ ANM.142.560.Circulaires 1947-1968.1965 06 15 *Circulaire 14, signé Idrissa Diarra.* "Il arrive depuis quelques mois que de faux bruits soient répandus dans notre pays, concernant tel ou tel problème, telle ou telle situation. Ces faux bruits portent préjudice au climat politique général, troublent les esprits, donnent à penser que notre parti et notre gouvernement cachent la vérité ou craignent de la dire. Il est devenue absolument indispensable et urgent de mettre un terme à cette campagne d'intoxication. Pour cela, il s'agit tout d'abord, lorsqu'un faux bruit vous parvient, de provoquer des Assemblées Générales afin de clarifier la situation, et de mettre en garde tous les militants contre la propagation de ces faux bruits. Il faut ensuite mener rapidement une enquête, minutieuse, afin de savoir d'où partent ces faux bruits qu'il ne faut jamais minimiser. Pour cela, il faut remonter la filière en exigeant de tout camarade qui se fait l'écho de l'un de ces faux bruits, de donner le nom de son informateur. Ainsi, en remontant un à un, patiemment, on arrivera inexorablement à connaître l'origine de ces faux bruits qui portent un grave préjudice à notre action, discréditent les responsables, le Parti et le Gouvernement. A partir de ces renseignements la Direction pourra prendre toutes les mesure utiles pour le redressement et l'assainissement de la situation. Le Bureau Politique National attache une importance primordiale à la réussite de cette tache qui constitue dans l'époque de difficultés économiques que nous traversons un impératif de tout premier plan."

⁹⁸ See Chapter 5, "The Merchants of Menace," for further details.

assembly refused, he apparently threatened to dissolve it;⁹⁹ although he backed down, this in fact would come to pass later, in 1967, during the Active Revolution. As the following passage will relate, a similar incident occurred in 1962 during the 6th Party Congress.

Although repression was pervasive under USRDA rule, certain acts of repression were more significant than others. The Sixth Congress of the USRDA, held in 1962, was one such act. This was the first opportunity since the Extraordinary Congress of 1960 for elected deputies and local party leaders from around the country to come together with the leaders in Bamako to discuss the current state of affairs. By this time the socialist experiment had been underway for two years and economically speaking the results were poor. By 1962 many deputies and leaders of party committees in rural areas had grievances to voice about socialism's failure to produce material benefits.¹⁰⁰ USRDA members serving in rural areas – as elected deputies, general secretaries of local USRDA committees, and in various other roles – were especially critical of socialism's early results (although most urban cadres and bureaucrats also felt “general discontent” with the regime's policies at this point).¹⁰¹ It is not clear whether this is because, as some have suggested, politicians from rural areas resisted taking instructions from Bamako,¹⁰² or if living in rural communities allowed them to see more clearly than their urban colleagues that USRDA policy had failed to improve living standards.

⁹⁹ CADN.Bamako.Amb.20.Dépêches politiques 1961.*Synthèse du moi de Mai*.

¹⁰⁰ Campmas, “L'Union Soudanaise, Section Soudanaise Du Rassemblement Démocratique Africain 1946-1968,”; Sanankoua, *La Chute de Modibo Keita*; Le Vine, “Édification nationale et politique informelle,” 173–86.

¹⁰¹ CADN.Bamako.Amb.20.Dépêches politiques 1961.*Synthèse du mois de mars 1961*. “...mécontentement générale.”

¹⁰² Nicholas S. Hopkins, *Popular Government in an African Town: Kita, Mali* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 17.

Factors tending to blur the line between rural and urban politicians — and thus to support the latter proposition — are that most USRDA politicians originated in rural areas, and also that the party tended to rotate its cadres through posts across the country in order to promote national identity.¹⁰³ In any case, like most of the population, they were unhappy with Mali's policy orientation and they wanted change.

Indeed, at this time French Ambassador Wibaux noted "the irritation of a population less and less able to bear the constraints of the Party."¹⁰⁴ During the opening address of the Congress, the speaker admitted that critics equated socialism with slavery, hunger, poverty, isolation, and the renunciation of one's personality.¹⁰⁵ A great number of USRDA officials stationed in remote and isolated rural communities had not been able to express this irritation to party leaders before the congress of 1962. Due to Mali's great size and poor infrastructure, many party officials had been isolated from each other since socialism had been declared in 1960, and this was the first chance for the USRDA as a whole to meet with the purpose of discussing policy. Indeed, the fundamental role of the congresses was set out at the Fifth Party Congress in 1958:

The congress is called every two years and at any other time it is felt necessary. It must assess the party's progress, establish its short- and long-term goals, and define the party's position on political, economic social, and cultural problems having repercussion for the life of the party. It elects the Political Bureau.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ E.g. During the Keita years USRDA official Garba Touré was variously stationed in towns in northern, central, and southern Mali including Menaka, Bandiagara, and Sikasso, where he worked as an Adjunct Subdivision Chief and in other roles, often staying in each location for only one or two years. Such rotations were common in the era (Interview with Garba Touré, Bamako, 14 February 2012).

¹⁰⁴ CADN.Bamako.Amb.21.Dépêches politiques 1962.*Dépêche No 40 du 12 au 21 Octobre 1962*. "...l'irritation d'une population qui supportait de plus en plus mal les contraintes du Parti."

¹⁰⁵ ANM.124.466.CNDR Correspondances 1968.*Discours d'ouverture, 6e Congrès de l'USRDA*. [Note: this document is misfiled. It dates to 1962, not 1968.]

¹⁰⁶ ANM.2.4.5^e Congrès de l'USRDA.*Ve Congrès de l'Union Soudanaise, 13-17 août*

As the above passage attests, congresses were powerful moments that would allow rank and file members to set the party's agenda and choose its leaders; yet at the Sixth Congress the majority's power would prove to be more theoretical than real.

The conditions facing the country at the time of the congress were difficult. The state import-export society (SOMIEX), which dominated the staple goods market, had been unable to resolve the problem of persistent shortages and, as will be discussed further in Chapter 5, Malians had little choice but to turn to merchants operating on the black market. Policies relating to the establishment of collective fields and other socialist institutions had proved unpopular and problematic for the rural political representatives charged with implementing them, as peasants showed little enthusiasm and even demonstrated open resistance to such initiatives¹⁰⁷ — a subject that will be taken up in Chapter 6. Thus officials in rural areas were at times obliged to temper policies handed down by the government in Bamako, in accordance with the values and customs of the communities in question, as they attempted to implement them.¹⁰⁸ Most importantly, Mali remained mired in the same poverty the USRDA had promised to end.¹⁰⁹

USRDA officials stationed outside of the capital were faced with these realities in a

1958 et 2^e Conférence territoriale de l'Union Soudanaise, 17-19 octobre 1958, 11. "Le Congrès est convoqué tous les deux ans et chaque fois que la nécessité s'en fait sentir. Il doit établir le bilan du Parti, projeter ses objectifs immédiats et lointains, définir la position du Parti sur des Problèmes politiques, économiques, sociaux et culturels ayant une incidence sur la vie du parti. Il élit le Bureau Politique."

¹⁰⁷ Martin, "Socialism, Economic Development and Planning in Mali, 1960-1968," 23–46.

¹⁰⁸ Nicholas S. Hopkins, "Kita (Mali) in the Time of Modibo Keita: Globalization and Local Continuity," *Mande Studies* 5 (2003): 101-111.

¹⁰⁹ Sanankoua, *La Chute de Modibo Keita*, 161-165.

more tangible way than their colleagues in Bamako, which, as the country's main urban administrative centre, was isolated from the effects socialist policies had on the peasantry (although bureaucrats there had been hit by price increases and pay cuts, as unlike the peasants they were dependent on wages to ensure their survival).¹¹⁰ In some measure, too, the political legitimacy of rural community leaders rested upon their ability to deliver benefits to their communities. Thus while it has been established that many Bamako-based politicians were not enthusiastic about the socialist option — prominent moderate Jean-Marie Koné being a case in point — it appears to have been the USRDA's rural contingent that spearheaded the criticism of Mali's radical socialist trajectory, fearing their political careers were at stake.

Yet these concerns received little attention at the congress. While “a quasi-unanimous coalition of delegates from the subsections” had gathered several times in the lead-up to and during the congress, and had decided to expel the most important radicals from the BPN — men including Madeira Keita and Seydou Badian Kouyaté¹¹¹ — these actions were discovered and condemned by President Keita, who was able to persuade the disaffected delegates to drop their demands for political change at the highest level.¹¹² Ultimately, however, the details regarding how Modibo Keita brought about the moderate majority's retraction of its demands remain unknown. Even Sanankoua, who has highlighted the importance of this event more than any other scholar in the field, is uncertain about how it came to pass, asserting only that moderates organized to demand socialist radicals be removed from the BPN and that President Keita castigated them,

¹¹⁰ CADN.Bamako.Amb.20.Dépêches politiques 1961.*Synthèse du mois de mars 1961*.

¹¹¹ Campmas, “L'Union Soudanaise,” 360.

¹¹² Sanankoua, *La Chute de Modibo Keita*, 130.

leading to moderates dropping their demands.¹¹³

Thus, in the end the Sixth Party Congress of 1962 led to no significant policy or personnel changes, despite majority demands and the fact that the economic situation had worsened considerably since the time of the Extraordinary Congress in 1960. More important, however, was the fact that change was actively thwarted in spite of majority opinion, and also that this avenue of expression was shut down indefinitely, with no further congresses being organized. As the French ambassador remarked, this was likely due to the factional conflicts future congresses would have brought to the surface:

A party congress, which should theoretically take place every three years, has not been called since 1962; this particularity is reminiscent of the Stalinist period. It is revelatory of the conflicting factions that would run the risk of clashing during this type of meeting.¹¹⁴

Thus the party majority found its voice significantly muted throughout the remainder of the 1960s, having been relieved of the opportunity to alter the USRDA's basic agenda. The party's radical faction had managed to contain criticism from moderates in 1962, but this would hardly have been possible at subsequent congresses. The ongoing decline of the economy made it obvious that whatever grievances were held in 1962 would only be magnified by 1964. Consequently, for socialist radicals to authorize a congress would have risked defeat. Since socialism had never been an ideology in which most party members were deeply invested, it enjoyed even less support once proven economically problematic. Sanankoua notes as much in a passage

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ CADN.Bamako.Amb.30.Lignes politiques – Janvier à Mai – 1967. *A/S: Variations maliennes sur des thèses socialistes*. “Le congrès du parti, qui devrait théoriquement se tenir tous les trois ans, n’a pas été convoqué depuis 1962; cette particularité évoque la période stalinienne. Elle est révélatrice des tendances contraires qui risqueraient de s’affronter, lors des assises de ce genre.”

describing the position of the party majority in 1962:

In their large majority, [USRDA decision-makers] were not in favour of socialist ideology. How many of them, moreover, knew exactly what socialist ideology was?... The general secretaries from the interior thought that those who want to impose scientific socialism and its ideology on Malians were precisely those who neither campaigned nor fought in Mali [e.g. Madeira Keita who lived in Guinea during much of the late colonial era, and Seydou Badian Kouyaté, who was in medical school in France during much of the 1950s] and who, consequently, knew neither the country nor its people nor the sociopolitical realities. These were the ones who constituted the party's left wing. [The majority thought that] they must therefore at all cost be eliminated from the political bureau before they led the country on an adventure.¹¹⁵

Although Keita thwarted the attempt to back away from radical socialism in 1962, he did make one concession to the moderate majority; eight days after the congress, he shuffled the cabinet.¹¹⁶ The changes, though relatively minor, seem intended to strike a

¹¹⁵ Sanankoua, *La Chute de Modibo Keita*, 128-129. "...dans leur grande majorité, [les décideurs de l'USRDA] ne veulent pas de l'idéologie socialiste. Combien d'entre eux savent d'ailleurs exactement ce que c'est l'idéologie socialiste?... Ils estiment qu'il y a incompatibilité entre islam... et socialisme scientifique... Les secrétaires généraux de l'intérieur pensent que ceux qui veulent imposer le socialisme scientifique et son idéologique aux Maliens sont précisément ceux qui n'ont ni milité ni lutté au Mali et qui, par conséquent, ne connaissent ni le pays ni les hommes, ni les réalités politico-sociologiques. Ce sont eux qui constituent l'aile gauche du parti. Il faut donc à tout prix les éliminer du bureau politique avant qu'ils n'engagent le pays dans l'aventure."

¹¹⁶ Campmas, "L'Union Soudanaise," 361.

Président du Gouvernement, Chef de l'état, Ministre de la Défense Nationale et des Affaires Étrangères: Modibo Keita

Ministre d'État, chargé du Plan et de la Coordination des Affaires Économiques et Financières: Jean-Marie Koné

Ministre de la Justice: Madeira Keita

Ministre délégué à la Présidence, chargé des Affaires Étrangères: Baréma Bocoum

Ministre de l'Intérieur, de l'Information et du Tourisme: Ousmane Ba

Ministre des Finances: Attaher Maïga

Ministre du Développement: Seydou Badian Kouyaté

Ministre des Travaux Publics, des Télécommunications, de l'Habitat et des ressources énergétiques: Mamadou Aw

Ministre du Commerce et des Transports: Hammaciré N'Douré

Ministres de la Santé et des Affaires sociales: Sominé Dolo

Ministres de l'Éducation Nationale: Abdoulaye Singaré

Secrétaire d'État à la Défense et à la Sécurité: Mamadou Diakité

compromise between the moderates and the radicals, and provide some insight into how he assuaged the moderates. Radicals like Madeira Keita and Seydou Badian Kouyaté were not ejected from the BPN, but were given posts of reduced authority, moving from the Ministry of the Interior to the Ministry of Justice and from the Ministry of the Plan to the Ministry of Development, respectively. Because Madeira Keita had previously managed the entire administrative system and had enjoyed authority over regional governors, a move to Justice was a significant step down — particularly as it gave him little control over state personnel or economic resources. Seydou Badian Kouyaté suffered a similar demotion, as Development was considered a minor portfolio in comparison to the Plan.¹¹⁷ Nonetheless, radicals had prevented the moderate majority from altering the agenda that had been set in 1960, and they had not been removed from the BPN. Institutions like the SOMIEX, against which moderate deputies had revolted in 1961 due to its failure to effectively replace merchants and to supply the country with necessary staple goods, would not be dissolved.¹¹⁸ The end of congresses effectively gutted the party's principle of "democratic centralism," whereby the leaders would listen to the concerns of the base.¹¹⁹

The same tendencies that had been developed from the late 1950s onward to

Secrétaire d'Etat à l'Information et au Tourisme: Mamadou Gologo
Secrétaire d'Etat chargé de la Fonction Publique, du Travail et des Affaires Sociales:
Oumar Baba Diarra

Haut Commissaire à la Jeunesse et aux Sports: Moussa Keita

¹¹⁷ Campmas, "L'Union Soudanaise, Section Soudanaise Du Rassemblement Démocratique Africain 1946-1968."

¹¹⁸ CADN.Bamako.Amb.20.Dépêches politiques 1961.*Synthèse du moi de Mai*. The question of the USRDA's failed attempt to replace the merchants will be taken up in detail in Chapter 5, "The Merchants of Menace."

¹¹⁹ ANM.142.560.Circulaires 1947-1968.2 *Février 1963 Circulaire 6 Ecoles supérieures des cadres*.

repress opposition outside of the party had increasingly been brought to bear on the party itself, which had absorbed many of its former opponents through coercive methods. Why the radical faction was able to seize control of the state's means of repression and gain the upper hand over moderates remains an open question. Certainly some of the radicals were among the most educated and motivated politicians in Mali; Seydou Badian Kouyaté, for example, was not only a medical doctor but also a published author of novels, plays, and essays.¹²⁰ Madeira Keita worked as a librarian and archivist in the late colonial era, and had sociological training.¹²¹ The fact that Madeira Keita, as Minister of the Interior, had established the militias and vigilance brigades may also have been a factor in the radicals' power. Also, "the press and the radio... [were] in the hands of the party's most radical elements," with Mamadou Gologo acting as Commissioner of Information.¹²² With regard to the moderates, the French Ambassador noted that they were at times reticent to openly engage in conflict with the radicals for fear of blowback and because they believed that continuing economic decline would force change without the need for internecine political battles.¹²³

In any case, the repression exercised at the congress led the USRDA — a party that had once championed democracy and fought colonial oppression in the name of the common people — further down the path of autocracy. The hostility of radicals toward

¹²⁰ Eg. Seydou Badian Kouyaté, *Sous l'orage* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1957); Seydou Badian Kouyaté, *Les dirigeants noirs face à leur peuples* (Paris: Maspéro, 1964).

¹²¹ Mann, "Anti-Colonialism and Social Science."

¹²² CADN.Bamako.Amb.9.Situation Politique au Soudan.*Compte-Rendu no 47 – Quinzaine du 4 au 18 Octobre 1960*. "...la presse et la radio sont actuellement entre les mains des éléments les plus avancée du Parti."

¹²³ CADN.Bamako.Amb.28.Dépêches politiques 1966.*Situation intérieur au Mali dans la perspective des relations franco-maliennes, 30 Juillet 1966*.

the majority's will and toward public opinion would only be amplified in later years, leading to increasingly dysfunctional relationships with key social groups; the subsequent chapters will examine these relationships in detail, notably those with traditional authorities, merchants, and peasants. In 1967-1968, these autocratic tendencies would culminate in a period of repression, violence, and party purging known as the Active Revolution.

Such repression would continue throughout the mid-1960s in the years leading up to the Active Revolution. In 1964, for example, Mamadou Faïnké, an obscure low level bureaucrat who attempted to form a political party, was thrown in a desert jail for this act, not to be released during the regime's tenure.¹²⁴ In that same year the former leaders of the PSP, Fily Dabo Sissoko and Hammadoun Dicko, were killed in detention along with a leading merchant, Kassoum Touré, who had opposed the creation of the Malian franc – an incident that will be further examined in Chapter 5.¹²⁵ Also in 1964, single-party elections took place, and villages that complained about the lack of choices on the ballot had their supply of salt cut off and were intimidated by military artillery exercises; as will be demonstrated in Chapter 6, this was far from the only incident where the military was called in to intimidate recalcitrant peasants.¹²⁶

The autocratic tendencies of the Keita regime were accelerated in the wake of the

¹²⁴ Interview with Domo Telly, 17 January 2012, Bandiagara. Also: CADN.Amb.Bamako.9.Incidents de Ségou 1959 et 1960 et Politique au Soudan.*Compte-Rendu d'Écoute de Radio-Mali Emissions du 14/1/1969 et du 15/1/1969 à 7h.*

¹²⁵ *L'Essor* no. 4427, 29 July 1964, "Au sujets de la mort des contre-révolutionnaires du 20 juillet 1962", p. 1; Interview with Oumar Hammadoun Dicko, Bamako, 9 March 2012. For further analysis, see Chapter 5, "The Merchants of Menace."

¹²⁶ Interview with Mamadou Bengaly, Kléla, 16 March 2012; Mann, "Violence, Dignity, and Mali's New Model Army, 1960-1968," 71.

Ghanaian coup d'état that ousted President Kwame Nkrumah in February 1966. This was the point after which the radicals within the political bureau began efforts to remove all remaining moderates from high-level decision-making positions in government.¹²⁷

While the fundamental structure of the state bureaucracy did not change, membership in the small circle of policymakers did, as a commitment to staying the course on Mali's socialist policies became a key criterion for belonging to this group. The events that followed Nkrumah's downfall culminated in the regime's final phase — the Active Revolution — and were the proximal cause for its own downfall by a military coup d'état in 1968.

Although President Keita had long been known as a moderator between factions, his political convictions remain enigmatic. Scholars and well-informed observers have variously described him as a moderate, a radical, a vacillator between factions, an opportunist, and a mentally unstable autocrat.¹²⁸ What is not in question, however, is that he abandoned his role as mediator and endorsed the minority radical faction in 1967.¹²⁹ As Snyder notes, "President Keita reacted to criticism of the monetary agreements [made with France in 1967] by swinging his weight to the 'radical' faction."¹³⁰ While this shift was likely caused by more than simply a reaction to

¹²⁷ Campmas, "L'Union Soudanaise," 401. "Dès que tout espoir de retour de Kwamé N'Krumah au pouvoir semble anéanti, une conférence nationale des cadres de l'Union Soudanaise est convoquée pour le 1er Mars à Bamako... Or, cette conférence allait être le point de départ d'un double processus: élimination en douceur des responsables modérés et influents, radicalisation du régime."

¹²⁸ See Chapter 2, "Moderates, Radicals, and the History of Socialism in Postwar Sudan".

¹²⁹ E.g. Campmas, "L'Union Soudanaise," 39; Martin, "Socialism, Economic Development and Planning in Mali, 1960-1968."

¹³⁰ Francis G. Snyder, "The Keita Decade: An Era Ends in Mali," *Africa Report* (March-April 1969): 17-19.

criticism, the shift itself is agreed upon.

Reports of Keita's preoccupation with saving face and his resulting reluctance to renounce any socialist policies¹³¹ may go some ways in explaining why he picked left. As Head of State, Keita was the symbol of socialism and had promoted it on behalf of the USRDA over the past six years. Keita himself noted in 1962, with regard to state enterprises, that "the prestige of the country depended in large measure on the flourishing of these institutions."¹³² The fact that the decision to adopt socialism had repeatedly been characterized as irreversible, as noted earlier in this chapter, added to the problem. It was the flagship policies of the regime's socialist program that had provoked the greatest economic difficulties – particularly the state-run economy and the restrictions on private business – and yet to repeal these policies and return to previous conventions would have constituted an awkward political problem. To turn his back on them would not only be tantamount to admitting his most important policy decision had been wrong, but would contravene "traditional values like frankness, faithfulness to one's given word and to friendship without expectations, honesty, and integrity."¹³³ Indeed, as noted earlier in this chapter, certain leaders (particularly within the radical faction) believed this would amount to political suicide.¹³⁴ Given the cultural values of

¹³¹ CADN.Bamako.Amb.28.Dépêches politiques 1966.*Situation intérieure au Mali dans la perspective des relations franco-maliennes, 30 Juillet 1966.*

¹³² CADN.Bamako.Amb.21.Dépêches politiques 1962.*Présidence du gouvernement, secrétariat générale – Circulaire no 30 à tous ministères et secrétariats d'états, 5 Novembre 1962.* "Après avoir démontré que la réussite de notre option socialiste et même le prestige de notre pays dépendent en grande partie de l'essor de ces institutions [sociétés d'état], le Chef de l'Etat a mis l'accent sur leur gestion rigoureuse..."

¹³³ Ouattara, *Le Destin du Socialisme Malien*, 12. "Le [Soudanais] était réputé pour son attachement à certaines valeurs traditionnelles comme la franchise, la fidélité à la parole donnée et à l'amitié sans calcul, l'honnêteté et l'intégrité."

¹³⁴ CADN.Bamako.Amb.28.Dépêches politiques 1966.*Juillet 1966: Situation intérieure*

that milieu, Keita may have found it unthinkable to go back on his word that he would transform Mali into a socialist society.

Yet there was likely an even more compelling reason motivating his choice, as concern for keeping his word had not previously stopped him from betraying promises to create favourable circumstances for merchants and peasants, for example (as will be shown in chapters 5 and 6). Crucially, siding with the radicals in the party would not only allow Keita to save face — by arguing USRDA failures were due to moderates' foot dragging — but would also allow him to consolidate power. As the above excerpt from a French diplomatic cable indicates, radicals had long been in favour of authoritarian rule, which would theoretically allow the state to orchestrate economic development without impediment.¹³⁵ Senior radical figures like Seydou Badian Kouyaté, for example, continued even in 2011 to reject the idea of democracy in Mali, promoting a form of government inspired by the People's Republic of China, much as he had in the 1960s¹³⁶ and also in the 1980s when, after the military regime released him from his Saharan imprisonment, he became a political advisor to Denis Sassou Nguesso, then-president of the People's Republic of Congo, and published a book promoting the PRC leader as a socialist revolutionary and African hero.¹³⁷ As previously noted, other

au Mali dans la perspective des relations franco-maliennes. See also "Opposition" earlier in this chapter.

¹³⁵ While French observers cannot be considered neutral observers of political developments in Mali, based on corroborating evidence the characterization of the party's most radical elements as authoritarian is fair.

¹³⁶ Interview with Seydou Badian Kouyaté, Bamako, 7 March 2012. Note: this conclusion is based on common usage of the term "democracy," for in point of fact he qualified the Chinese regime as a democracy ("their own type of democracy") before suggesting Mali could benefit from a similar type of government.

¹³⁷ Seydou Badian Kouyaté, *Congo: forêt féconde, terre généreuse* (Paris: Jeune Afrique, 1983).

major figures like Madeira Keita were directly responsible for passing decrees banning rival parties, and thus actively endeavoured to dismantle Mali's democracy.¹³⁸ Mamadou Gologo, who had expressed support in 1961 for a more authoritarian form of government, argued in 1967 that all outside journalists should be removed from the country, to be replaced "naturally, by devoted [party] activists" in order to stem the tide of "subversive and alarming news items invented by certain foreign correspondents" in order to "intoxicate public opinion."¹³⁹

These, of course, represent only a few samples of a broader policy orientation among USRDA radicals, but they nonetheless suggest an anti-democratic disposition and a desire to silence dissent. Given the recent incident in Ghana — and in light of the spate of coups d'état which had taken place across the continent over the previous years — the idea of concentrating power in his own hands and those of a few dedicated colleagues must have exerted a strong appeal. Indeed, Baba Akhib Haïdara attests that the regime was deeply threatened by the events in Ghana.¹⁴⁰ Internal documents suggest the same, with President Keita justifying party restructuring in November 1966 by claiming that "it is a question of removing all chances of the upheavals already experienced in Ghana, Indonesia, and Algeria from happening."¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ ANM.245.876.Corrépondance Ségou 1958-1968.1959.02.05.Décret no 34 *Dissolution de l'Union Démocratique Ségovienne*.

¹³⁹ ANM.56.145.Commission de Presse et de Propagande, 1966-1968.Mamadou Gologo, 11 July 1968. "En effet, au lendemain de notre indépendance et de notre option historique du 22 Septembre 1960 confirmée et renforcée par le congrès de Septembre 1962, des nouvelles subversives et alarmantes, inventées par certains représentants étrangers à la tête desquels Mr. Paternoster qui était alors correspondant de l'United Press International (UPI), avaient presque intoxiqué l'opinion publique..."

¹⁴⁰ Interview with Baba Akhib Haïdara, Bamako, 15 February 2012.

¹⁴¹ ANM.142.560.Circulaires 1947-1968.Circulaire 37, 3 November 1966. "Il s'agit d'enlever toute chance de se produire, aux bouleversements déjà vécus au GHANA, en

Indeed, the 1966 Ghanaian putsch so profoundly threatened USRDA leaders that on March 1, immediately following Nkrumah's ouster, the CNDR was formed in Mali. While it lay largely fallow until the following year, when the Active Revolution was announced in July 1967 during Youth Week festivities, President Keita had crucially requested the BPN to give it "full powers" over the government.¹⁴² This proposal passed in the BPN, probably because members feared that if they opposed this new power Keita would exile them from the political sphere entirely.

At its inception the CNDR had eight members, who "were chosen either for their 'radicalist' ideas or for their ironclad conformism."¹⁴³ It only included one important moderate figure — Mahamane Alassane Haïdara, who was President of the National Assembly until its dissolution in January 1968 — who may have been something of a token for the moderates, given that more important figures from that camp — especially Jean-Marie Koné— were overlooked for the position. Koné had been Vice-President of the USRDA and Modibo Keita's second-in-command since the 1950s, and thus his absence was significant. Haïdara's presence does indicate, however, that Keita may have attempted to put the brakes on the radicals, if only ever so slightly. Nonetheless, this "exclusion from its ranks of the political bureau's moderate majority... clearly demonstrated... the real political contradictions at the heart of the Union Soudanaise."¹⁴⁴ The remaining figures were Modibo Keita, Gabou Diawara, Madeira Keita, Mamadou

INDONESIE, en ALGERIE.”

¹⁴² Campmas, "L'Union Soudanaise," 403.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 13. "...étaient choisis soit pour leurs idées 'radicalistes', soit pour leur conformisme à toute épreuve."

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 13. "la non-inclusion en son sein de la majorité modérée du bureau politique, à l'exception de deux d'entr'eux, traduisaient clairement la défiance qu'inspirait le bureau politique, donc les contradictions politiques réelles au sein de l'Union Soudanaise."

Diakit , Mamadou Famady Sissoko and Colonel S kou Traor . Colonel Traor 's presence represented an effort to keep the army, which President Keita did not trust, close at hand. The remaining figures were radical socialists enjoying various degrees of influence.¹⁴⁵ Campmas is not alone in advancing such claims, and there is a consensus in the literature that the CNDR was comprised of socialist radicals to the detriment of party moderates¹⁴⁶ and that the regime indeed did not trust the army – a fact largely responsible for the rise of the popular militia.¹⁴⁷

The need for radical leaders to stage a de facto internal coup d' tat developed out of an increasing sense of political polarization. Despite the fact that the competing factions held shared nationalist convictions¹⁴⁸ – indeed, even the most radical socialists like Seydou Badian Kouyat  have been characterized by their contemporaries as devout nationalists¹⁴⁹ while nationalism was also central to the policy positions advanced by moderates even in the late 1950s¹⁵⁰ – fundamental disagreement over how to approach the nation-building project remained. It has been noted, for example, that by 1966 the majority of the BPN had become “more and more opposed to the socialist radicalization

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 404.

¹⁴⁶ Sanankoua, *La chute de Modibo Keita*; Pascal James Imperato, *Mali: A Search for Direction* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989); Martin, “Socialism, Economic Development and Planning in Mali, 1960-1968”; F.G. Snyder, “The Political Thought of Modibo Keita,” *Journal of Modern African Studies* 5, no. 1 (1967): 79–106.

¹⁴⁷ Mann, “Violence, Dignity, and Mali's New Model Army, 1960-1968,” 65–82; Sanankoua, *La Chute de Modibo Keita*.

¹⁴⁸ See “Opposition” section of this chapter.

¹⁴⁹ Interview with Cheikh Tidiani Guiss , Bamako, 17 March 2012. Guiss  was Modibo Keita's *chef de cabinet* in 1968, and knew other party leaders like Kouyat  well; he characterizes him as an ardent nationalist. For a similar point of view, see also Outtara, *Le Destin du Socialisme Malien*, 19. He states: “Finalement, ‘le socialisme malien’ ne semble  tre, au fond, que l'expression (originale) d'un nationalisme intransigeant.”

¹⁵⁰ See Chapter 2, “The Autonomous Years: Realpolitik & Nascent Nationalism, 1956-1960”.

of the regime”¹⁵¹ that had begun in 1960 and that, after six years, had provoked serious economic and social problems – problems pursuant to the implementation of self-consciously socialist policies including a centrally planned economy and collective fields (issues that will be further exposed in chapters 4, 5 and 6). And despite the fact that the President had long been regarded as a unifier of the party’s factions, by this time “the growing hostility of Modibo Keita in regards to the moderation of the majority of the Political Bureau” had equally been noted by colleagues and observers.¹⁵² In light of these developments, Keita’s choice to seek *pleins pouvoirs* for the CNDR makes sense. Not only might he have feared meeting a similar fate to Nkrumah, but it equally appears he was able to use the perceived threat to his advantage. The Ghanaian crisis served as an opportunity to undermine the decision-making power of the moderates without having to remove them from the BPN — under the pretext of “defending the revolution” and its alleged gains.

When the Active Revolution was announced the following July, the CNDR, which had remained largely inactive until that point, began using the powers it had been granted. By August of 1967, the BPN had been dissolved. In January of 1968, the National Assembly was equally dissolved.¹⁵³ Not only were political structures reorganized at the highest level, but – as will be shown in the following chapters – efforts to reorganize society were pursued with renewed vigour, with chiefs, merchants, and peasants serving as focal points of revolutionary reform. To facilitate the pursuit of these tasks, the Popular Militia, which had been active during the state of emergency in

¹⁵¹ Campmas, “L’Union Soudanaise,” 404.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 404.

¹⁵³ Sanankoua, *La Chute de Modibo Keita*, 175.

1960 but relatively inactive since, assumed increasing powers. The organization recruited aggressively in 1967 and 1968, often conscripting state employees whose supervisors subsequently wrote letters to Militia authorities demanding they be allowed to return to work due to short staffing.¹⁵⁴ This mirrors a similar process that took place contemporaneously in Guinea, where Sékou Touré promoted the military training of civilian party members in order to “combat the counter-revolution” and to invest the party with martial power capable of rivalling that of the Guinean army itself. As Mohamed Saliou Camara notes,

[Sékou Touré] most importantly learned to structure the Guinean army along the lines of the ruling party and to literally train and arm all mature party members according to his leitmotiv “the people in arm,” [sic] with the JRDA [Jeunesse de la Révolution Démocratique Africaine] remaining the foundation of Guinea’s self-defence apparatus. Politically and philosophically, Sékou Touré maintained that “every man and every woman must know how to combat the counter-revolution with ideology as well as with a rifle”... By this he meant the transformation of every Guinean adult into a reserve soldier, a system designed to counter-balance the army’s martial power.¹⁵⁵

Given that Madeira Keita was a founding member of the Guinean RDA branch with Sékou Touré, linkages between the Guinean and Malian militias, at least at the intellectual level, are likely.¹⁵⁶ While Malian administrators governed the police and the military, these institutions were not subject to direct party oversight. And whereas the

¹⁵⁴ E.g. ANM.146.568.Dossier de la Milice Populaire 1964-1968. *Société Nationale pour l'Exploitation des Abattoirs et Annexes, Bamako le 22 février 1968, Le Directeur Générale à Monsieur le Secrétaire Permanent de la Milice Populaire.* “Monsieur... J'ai l'honneur de vous prier de bien vouloir accorder un sursis de 3 mois à Monsieur Mamdou DIAWARA appelé au 8ème contingent de la Milice Populaire par lettre sans numéro en date du 21 Février 1968...Le poste occupé par l'intéressé au sein de notre Société ne peut souffrir pour le moment d'aucune absence.”

¹⁵⁵ Mohamed Saliou Camara, “From Military Politization to Militarization of Power in Guinea-Conakry,” *Journal of Political and Military Sociology* 28, no. 2 (Winter 2000): 316.

¹⁵⁶ Mann, “Anti-Colonialism and Social Science.”

radicals in control of the CNDR doubted the loyalty of these forces, they trusted the militia, which had been turned into a powerful institution at their behest and was under their direct authority. During the Active Revolution period, the militia was used to rein in black market merchant activity in an attempt to shore up regime finances – a subject this dissertation will take up further in Chapter 5. It also undertook to intimidate an increasingly disaffected populace. As one citizen noted in a letter of complaint addressed to President Keita:

the militiamen told me to get in the van. I asked why. They jumped me, grabbing me by the feet and hands, and threw me in the vehicle. They sat on me lying down from head to toe and led me deep into the bush on the Koulikoro road behind Korofina. Once we had arrived in a place where there was no one, they stripped me, leaving me just in my underwear. Four people took me by the hands and feet. Militiamen stationed on either side of my outstretched body started hitting the whole length of me with whips. They turned me from back to front. When their whips had broken, they ripped down some tree branches and continued to administer blows upon me. When I fainted, they left me there, motionless and almost dead.¹⁵⁷

While it is only one complaint, its credibility is supported by the consensus among Malian observers that the militia abused the population, creating a climate of fear through intimidation. The scholarly literature too — while usually lacking illustrative

¹⁵⁷ ANM.146.568.Dossier de la Milice Populaire 1964-1968.*BAMAKO, le 9 Décembre 1967 A Monsieur Modibo KEITA Président de la République du MALI.* “...les miliciens me disaient d'entrer dans la camionnette. J'ai demandé pourquoi. Ils se précipitèrent sur moi me prenant par les pieds et les mains et me jeta dans le véhicule. Ils s'assirent sur moi couché de la tête au pied et m'amenèrent loin dans la brousse sur la route de Koulikoro derrière Korofina. Arrivé dans un lieu, où il n'y avait personne, ils me déshabillèrent me laissant seulement en slip. Ils me prirent par les mains et les pieds entre 4 personnes. Des miliciens arrêtés des deux côtés de mon corps étendu se mirent à me frapper de tout mon étendu avec des cravaches. Ils me tournèrent du dos à la face. Quand les cravaches furent brisées, ils arrachèrent des branches d'arbre et continuèrent à m'administrer des coups. Quand je fus évanoui, ils me laissèrent inerte sur place, presque sans vie.”

examples — tends to agree that the militia was abusive.¹⁵⁸ Gregory Mann has noted that the militia harassed citizens, in addition to alienating the army through its continually augmenting power in the late 1960s.¹⁵⁹ Campmas characterizes the militia's reign as follows:

It remained for the militias... to impose their law, without knowing the law, and to provoke a gnawing displeasure. Bamako's nocturnal life withered, whether in the popular quarters (dances were forbidden because they were a sign of decadence) where people feared the capricious moods of young folks [militiamen], previously unemployed for the most part, who found there, suddenly, a marvellous revenge against their fate...¹⁶⁰

This quotation is suggestive of the possibility that the militia constituted a client network that performed double duty: not only did it mitigate the nuisances created by urban youth unemployment, but it also created an institution whose members' power depended upon their service to the party.

Former regime officials have provided accounts that are consonant both with the views set forth in the historiography of the era and the evidence found in the archives.

Mahamane Touré, for example, states that:

It's true that fear was created... [The people] were afraid of the militia and afraid of the party. They were afraid to speak because they worried about being denounced. So it's true that there was an atmosphere which was... a bit perverse. Toward the end I think that this was what created one of the elements that made it easy for soldiers to gain power.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ See for example Sanankoua, *La Chute de Modibo Keita*; Campmas, "L'Union Soudanaise."

¹⁵⁹ Mann, "Violence, Dignity, and Mali's New Model Army, 1960-1968."

¹⁶⁰ Campmas, "L'Union Soudanaise," 444. "Il reste que les milices et les brigades de vigilance, sous la double autorité d'Alioune Diakité et de Bengoro Coulibaly, imposent leur loi, sans connaître les lois, et suscitent de sourds mécontentements. La vie nocturne de Bamako, s'étirole, fut-ce dans les quartiers populaires (les bals sont supprimés car ils sont signe de décadence) où l'on craint l'humeur capricieuse de jeunes gens, préalablement chômeurs pour la plupart, et qui trouvent là, tout à coup, une merveilleuse revanche contre le sort."

¹⁶¹ Interview with Mahamane Touré, Bamako, 15 February 2012.

In light of such testimony, it appears that the focus of this initiative was cowing an increasingly disaffected populace into submission and warning USRDA members to toe the line. Of course, the Active Revolution also had the goal of purging bad elements from the party, and Madeira Keita noted in 1967 that “the first imperative in the current phase of our revolution is the elimination of embezzlement, of economic fraud, and of corruption,”¹⁶² while Modibo Keita declared that “the radicalization of the revolution demands firm measures against counter-revolutionaries” of this kind or even of those who had simply made “tendentious commentaries with the sole aim of creating confusion in the minds of revolutionary militants.”¹⁶³ Along with removing such “counter-revolutionaries” from the party, the Active Revolution equally aimed to “focus on the problem of ideological training of all cadres and activists”¹⁶⁴ in order combat the phenomenon of “opportunism, demagoguery, [and] the race toward enrichment by any means”¹⁶⁵ among those who remained. Yet although the revolution was profoundly marked by radical socialist ideology, this ideology often remained vaguely formulated, and enemies of the revolution were often defined simply as those who disagreed with

¹⁶² ANM.87.293.Rapport et Synthèse de la délégation du CNDR 1967. *Allocution d’ouverture du Ministre de la Justice: “Le rôle de la justice dans la révolution”* (1967). “L’impératif premier dans la phase actuelle de notre Révolution, c’est l’élimination des malversations, de la fraude économique et de la corruption.”

¹⁶³ ANM.141.559.CNDR Circulaires. *Circulaire no 32/CNDR du 30 Avril 1968*. “Il faut qu’il soit clair pour tous, que la radicalisation de la Révolution exige des mesures fermes contre les contre-révolutionnaires et ne saurait souffrir d’aucune faiblesse”; “Aussi, nous invitons donc les Sections, Sous-Sections et Comités à relever immédiatement les noms et adresses de tous ceux qui se sont fait signaler par des commentaires tendancieux dans l’unique but de créer la confusion dans l’esprit des militants révolutionnaires.”

¹⁶⁴ ANM.141.559.CNDR Circulaires. *Circulaire no 7/CNDR (signé Modibo Keita)*. “...le Comité National de Défense de la Révolution a eu à se pencher à nouveau sur le problème de la formation idéologique de tous les cadres et militants de notre Parti.”

¹⁶⁵ ANM.124.466.CNDR Correspondances. *Thème de conférence sur la “Révolution Active” à l’occasion de la commémoration du 1er anniversaire du 22 Août 1967*, p. 2.

the radical faction – or, in the parlance of the era, those whose point of view constituted a “deviation” at a time when the regime “needed greater clarity in party activity.”¹⁶⁶ As such, this nominal revolution constituted a power struggle between moderate and radical factions within the party, which the radicals won (in the short-term). With the CNDR holding the reins of the state in the aftermath of these events, moderates were flushed from government’s highest level and radicals were free to pursue their agenda without compromise.

This, however, is not to say that the moderate majority of the party was cut from the party’s client networks. The intention was to create a climate of fear and to consolidate power in the hands of the radical socialist faction. It was not to remove moderates from the state apparatus, but to remove them from the decision-making apparatus. It would not have been feasible to flush from the public service those who thought radical socialism was a poor policy choice, as this would have entailed liquidating most state employees in the middle of an acute skills shortage.¹⁶⁷ Rather, what the radical socialist faction wanted was to sideline the party’s most powerful moderates and to intimidate rank and file moderates. Indeed, even prominent regime figures like ex-Minister of Commerce Hamciré N’Douré – who would be sidelined during the revolution – would be harassed by the Popular Militia, along with many

¹⁶⁶ ANM.141.559.CNDR Circulaires. *Circulaire no 32/CNDR du 30 Avril 1968*. “...à un moment où nous avons le plus besoin d’une plus grande clarté dans l’action du Parti et de ses institutions, clarté qui exige que toutes les déviations soient signalées dans le souci d’éviter que les militants soient désemparés, clarté qui exige une formation théorique et idéologique plus poussée pour permettre l’appréhension facile des problèmes pratiques de construction socialiste.”

¹⁶⁷ A number of interview subjects noted that the regime desperately lacked cadres with the training and skillsets required to staff a modern bureaucracy; as such, all possible human resources were marshalled for this effort. (Interview with Mady Diallo, Bamako, 23 February 2012; Interview with Seydou Ousmane Diallo, Bamako, 6 February 2012.)

others. As notes Sanankoua, “the list of acting officials who were subjected to the militia’s “verifications” would be long and tedious to cite. But it was a question in every case of persons from the “right wing” [of the USRDA].”¹⁶⁸ This campaign seems to have been successful, as no significant opposition to the Active Revolution emerged from the political class, whose members, despite this harassment, continued by and large to enjoy privileged positions in Malian society.¹⁶⁹

By 1967, socialism had failed by the standards of the common citizen. The architects of this plan, the radicals in the party, could not suggest it was their own policies that had led to acute economic decline. Consequently, they argued that Mali’s lamentable situation was due to the country not being socialist *enough*, relying on models provided in particular by the Chinese Cultural Revolution to shift blame for policy failures away from radical policymakers and toward moderate policy implementers. Indeed, it laid much emphasis on purges and on “having the courage to denounce to Party and Government authorities... all attacks on... the credibility of the State.”¹⁷⁰ As Prasenjit Duara has noted with respect to China, “during the cultural revolution... the goal was to purge or disenfranchise undesirable classes in the nation

¹⁶⁸ Sanankoua, *La Chute de Modibo Keita*, 158-159. “La liste des responsables en poste qui subissent les “vérifications” de la milice serait longue et fastidieuse à citer. Mais il s’agit dans tous les cas de gens à “droite”.”

¹⁶⁹ Indeed, available evidence in the literature and the archives makes no suggestion of administrative rebellion or mass party defections. The denunciation during the Active Revolution of certain high-profile figures known for their moderation appears to have had its intended effect of keeping people in line.

¹⁷⁰ ANM.141.559.Circulaires CNDR 1967-1968. *No 210/CNJ. Circulaire à tous les Bureaux Exécutifs des Jeunes des Sections U.S./R.D.A. et des Sous-Sections US/RDA de Bamako I et II.* “... à avoir le courage de dénoncer aux instances du Parti et du Gouvernement, et en cas d’insuccès, au Président du C.N.D.R., toute violation des principes du Parti, toute atteinte à l’unité de notre pays, au crédit de l’Etat, au patrimoine national.” (Circular signed by USRDA Youth Secretary, Gabou Diawara, but quotation drawn from President Keita’s 22 September 1967 Independence Day speech.)

and strive to shape the nation in the image of the idealized proletariat.”¹⁷¹

Contemporaneously in Mali “the work of purging and of recovery within the organs of the Party and of State” was one of the CNDR’s principal objectives, aware as it was “of the desire of the great popular masses to protect our gains and our socialist option” from “bad management, embezzlement, trafficking, fraud” and other “causes for the decay of the general situation.”¹⁷² Indeed, in September 1967 Modibo Keita exhorted party members to denounce any compatriots failing to support the ideals of unity and nationalism:

In the name of the CNDR, I invite activists and all officials... to have the courage to denounce to party and government authorities... any violation of party principles, any infringement on the unity of our country, on the credibility of the State, on national patrimony.¹⁷³

Gabou Diawara, the radical socialist leader of the USRDA’s youth wing and a member of the CNDR, made a similar call for denunciations, albeit formulated in socialist rather

¹⁷¹ Prasenjit Duara, *The Global and Regional in China’s Nation-Formation* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 108-109.

¹⁷² ANM.109.416.Rapport et Compte-Rendu de Mission à l’Intérieur du Mali 1964-1967.1967 12 01 *Thèmes des assemblées générales dans les comités de la ville de Bamako*. “Dans le cadre du travail d’épuration et de redressement au sein des organes du Parti et de l’Etat, le CNDR conscient de l’importance des mesures à prendre, de la volonté des larges masses populaires de sauvegarder nos acquis et notre option socialiste et vu que, la mauvaise gestion, les malversations, le trafic, la fraude au niveau des coopératives de consommation, constituent l’une des causes du pourrissement de la situation générale, décide de suspendre le renouvellement des Directions des Comités pour permettre que tous les bilans de gestion, d’une façon systématique soient présentés aux militants et sanctionnés par eux.”

¹⁷³ ANM.141.559.Circulaires CNDR 1967-1968.*Bamako, le 20 Décembre 1967, No 210/CNJ. Circulaire à tous les Bureaux Exécutifs des Jeunes des Sections U.S./R.D.A. et des Sous-Sections US/RDA de Bamako I et II*. “Le Président Modibo KEITA, dans son discours programme du 22 Septembre 1967, disait: "Au nom du C.N.D.R., j’invite les militants et tous les responsables à faire appliquer et respecter scrupuleusement au sein des organismes du Parti la libre expression, à avoir le courage de dénoncer aux instances du Parti et du Gouvernement, et en cas d’insuccès, au Président du C.N.D.R., toute violation des principes du Parti, toute atteinte à l’unité de notre pays, au crédit de l’Etat, au patrimoine national.””

than nationalist terms. On behalf of the National Youth Commission he:

made a solemn call on all youth to mobilize themselves in order to eliminate from the party and from positions of political and administrative responsibility all corrupt and degenerate cadres, all those whose attitude and conduct are contrary to the demands of socialist construction.¹⁷⁴

Thus, either through party purges or militia intimidation, the regime demonstrated recourse to the repression of dissent in order to maintain political order in the midst of economic chaos. In addition, it would often draw on nationalist discourse to justify this repression, characterizing its opponents as enemies of the nation rather than of the regime and its policies; thus under USRDA rule efforts to stem opposition were justified by the need to “preserve our national patrimony against the disastrous activities of the *apatrides* [the “nationless”].”¹⁷⁵ As such, it used nationalism as a means of dictating allowable behaviour. “In this way,” writes Baz Lecocq, “nationalism decides who is a member of the nation.”¹⁷⁶ Merchants, for example, would often be labeled as *apatrides* by the regime, particularly in the later years of USRDA rule when radical socialists with strong anti-business views controlled the party (as will be further analyzed in Chapter 5).

The regime also drew upon socialist examples to link the party with the nation itself. For example, inspired by Asia’s Communist states, regime officials noted that:

United as a single man and working under the direction of a communist party,

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. “Dans sa déclaration du 18 Juillet 1967, la Commission Nationale de la Jeunesse lançait un appel solennel à tous les jeunes pour qu'ils se mobilisent afin d'extirper du Parti et des postes de responsabilités tant politiques qu'administratifs tous les cadres corrompus et dégénérés, tous ceux dont l'attitude et le comportement sont contraires aux exigences de la construction socialiste.”

¹⁷⁵ ANM.83.278.Ministère des Finances et du Commerce 1963-1968.1967 04 26 *Ministre du Commerce Attaher MAIGA*. “Pour préserver notre patrimoine national contre l'action néfaste des *apatrides*...”

¹⁷⁶ Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 31.

having at its head a leader who they venerate and who is their enlightened guide, incontestably and uncontested, they offer the most lively example of concrete scientific efficient organization for the national construction of a society. In China, its Mao Zedong, in Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh and in Korea, Kim Il Sung... The reason for the success of these countries is the party... The party meets all needs and well serves the working class and the people for the present and the future.¹⁷⁷

Because the party was portrayed as the instrument of nation-building and as responding to all the country's needs, the regime could argue that opponents of the party and its policies were a threat not just to its stay in office but to Mali itself. In this way socialism constituted a distinct yet complementary form of argument that supported the USRDA's nationalist aims while offering new justifications for the consolidation of power within the party's hands.

The similarities between the Keita regime's policies and those being undertaken contemporaneously in China are clear, and many scholars assert that the USRDA was engaged in its own version of a "cultural revolution," albeit under a different name.¹⁷⁸ On top of this, a number of prominent radicals who would have a hand in the Active Revolution, like Mamadou Gologo and Seydou Badian Kouyaté, were ardent supporters of the Chinese development model.¹⁷⁹ The fact that during the same period nominal

¹⁷⁷ ANM.49.137.Commission de politique générale 1960-1967.*Avant Projet de Rapport de la Commission Politique (1964)*. "Unis comme un seul homme et travaillant sous la direction d'un Parti Communiste, ayant à sa tête un leader, qu'ils vénèrent et qui est leur guide éclairé, incontestablement et incontesté, ils offrent l'exemple le plus vivant de l'organisation scientifique concrète efficiente pour la construction nationale d'une société socialiste. En Chine, c'est Mao Tsé-Toung, au Viet-Nam, Ho Chi Minh et en Corée, Kim Il Sung... La raison du succès dans ces pays, c'est le Parti... Le Parti répond à toutes les questions et sert bien l'intérêt de la classe ouvrière et du peuple pour le présent et l'avenir."

¹⁷⁸ E.g., Martin, "Socialism, Economic Development and Planning in Mali, 1960-1968"; Campmas, "L'Union Soudanaise"; Nicholas S. Hopkins, "Socialism and Social Change in Rural Mali," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 7, no. 3 (1969): 457-67.

¹⁷⁹ Kouyaté, for example, frequently spoke out in favour of Sino-Malian cooperation (CADN.Bamako.Amb.25.Dépêches hebdomadaires du poste – janvier à mai –

cultural revolutions were equally under way in Guinea¹⁸⁰ and Algeria¹⁸¹, countries to which Mali was geographically and ideologically close, further supports the contention that the Keita regime was under Chinese influence in the late 1960s.

The Active Revolution, then, encapsulates many of the characteristic forces that shaped how the Keita regime practiced politics during its tenure. It was driven both by ideological convictions – the radicals’ belief in socialism’s value for the Malian people, in spite of evidence to the contrary – and also by *realpolitik*: in addition to representing an effort by the radicals to impose their political vision, it was also a factional contest for control over the party and the state apparatus. As such, the revolution highlights the paradoxical relationship between the regime’s desire – or at least the dominant radical faction’s desire – to maintain political unity, and the violent and coercive strategies employed to achieve these ends, which ultimately alienated much of the populace and the moderate political leadership. It was, in this sense, the apotheosis of autocratic and paternalistic tendencies that had come to form an increasingly prominent feature of Malian politics over the years since the USRDA came to power in the late-1950s. It was also the high point of tension between the USRDA’s broad nationalist aims related to rapid economic development and modernization, on the one hand, and the radical

1965. *Dépêche Hebdomadaire no 1 du 4 au 10 Janvier 1965*).

¹⁸⁰ Mairi S. MacDonald, “Guinea’s Political Prisoners: Colonial Models, Postcolonial Innovation,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 54, no. 4 (2012): 890–913; Ryan Thomas Skinner, “Cultural Politics in the Post-Colony: Music, Nationalism and Statism in Mali, 1964–75,” *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 82, no. 4 (November 1, 2012): 511–34; Jay Straker, “The State of the Subject: A Guinean Educator’s Odyssey in the Postcolonial Forest, 1960–2001,” *The Journal of African History* 49, no. 01 (April 2008): 93–109; Mairi S. MacDonald, “The Challenge of Guinean Independence, 1958-1971” (PhD Thesis: University of Toronto, 2009), 223.

¹⁸¹ Jeffrey James Byrne, “Our Own Special Brand of Socialism: Algeria and the Contest of Modernities in the 1960s,” *Diplomatic History* 33, no. 3 (2009): 427–47.

faction's attachment to socialist policies implemented in the wake of independence that had clearly failed to contribute to such outcomes, on the other. The following three chapters will explore in further detail both the content of such policies and the failures they provoked. They will also delve deeper into the tensions cited above between ideology and realpolitik, nationalism and socialism, and the desire for prosperity and unity in the face of popular alienation from government and accelerating economic decline.

Conclusion

The regime of Modibo Keita was faced with an economic crisis from the very moment it gained control of Mali as an independent state. Although there was wide consensus about the desire for rapid economic development, there was little agreement about the methods for achieving it, particularly after the socialist policies of limiting private enterprise and expanding state control of the economy did not increase prosperity but instead accelerated economic decline (as will be further analyzed in Chapter 5). The clientelist character of Malian politics only aggravated this degradation, as state funds were spent inefficiently in the 1960s and the public service became bloated – a state of affairs that equally led many peasants to view the Keita regime as an exploitative force rather than as the selfless executor of the nation's wishes it claimed to be.

Because the desire for rapid economic growth was so universal, criticism of the regime when it failed to deliver on this was also widespread and quick to surface. Opposition to the USRDA's political and economic strategy was prevalent both inside and outside of political circles. Although many bureaucrats and party cadres owed their positions to the regime's rapid expansion of the state sector, cuts in pay and failures to

deliver salaries on time soured many on the regime's policies. Peasants and merchants equally felt they had been betrayed, and longed for a return to the more stable and prosperous pre-socialist order – sometimes explicitly calling for the return of deposed canton chiefs. Moderates in the highest levels of government also wished to repeal some of the decisions made in the name of socialism, although the radical faction was largely successful in preventing them from doing so.

The regime responded to this opposition with repression. Through threats, surveillance, violence, and other means, it managed to prevent its opponents from organizing into any sort of movement with the size and coordination to challenge its rule. Within the regime itself, overall the radical faction managed to retain the decisive position it had gained in the wake of the Mali Federation's collapse, and it brought the state's autocratic tendencies to bear on the party leadership itself. This began with the silencing of critics at the Sixth Party Congress in 1962 and culminated in the Active Revolution of 1967-1968, where moderates were completely excluded from government's highest levels and certain lower level cadres were denounced for their ostensible infractions against the regime's radical socialist orientation. As the following chapters will show, these autocratic tendencies, along with this eventual revolutionary zeal, would also be brought to bear on traditional authorities, merchants, and peasants, all of whom presented their own challenges to achieving the nationalist goals of unity and prosperity and the socialist goals of equality and economic independence.

As economic development eluded it, the regime increasingly relied on heavy-handed measures to control the population and maintain political unity. It drew upon nationalist ideas to justify these repressive measures – calling out opponents as enemies

of the nation – and thus in this context nationalism served both a positive role, in terms of building a community, and a negative one, in terms of excluding from the national community those with alternative political visions. Socialism played an important role in this process as well, with the Active Revolution in particular drawing inspiration from Mao's contemporaneous campaign to establish revolutionary purity within his own party.

Chapter 4: The Tradition Condition

Introduction

Although prior to winning legislative elections in 1957 the USRDA had officially supported the existence of chiefs, once in power it sought to eliminate them and to curtail the influence of other indigenous institutions including religious groups, youth organizations, and occasionally entities it characterized as secret societies. Its motivations for taking such an aggressive approach were complex, and the results were mixed. Its nationalist ideology – which had a broad African and French imperial focus between 1957 and 1960, and only became territorially oriented after the collapse of the Mali Federation – led it to believe that sociocultural heterogeneity constituted a threat to the establishment of national unity, and it saw chiefly and religious institutions as problematic in part because they embodied this heterogeneity. They viewed their territory as plagued by a nearly endless number of distinct cultural groups – each with its own chiefs and sometimes with its own religious authorities – that were often in conflict with one another.¹ Not only was the territory fragmented along ethnic lines, but a social hierarchy dividing communities into noble, caste, or (ex-)servile classes also cut across individual communities, further splintering the polity. Party members formulated these views within the context of a relatively unstable African political environment and, particularly from independence onward, in the face of frequent manifestations of opposition to state authority and policy.

The USRDA sought to attenuate these divisions for a number of reasons. As noted

¹ ANM.2.4. Ve Congrès territorial de l'USRDA 1958. *Ve Congrès de l'Union Soudanaise, 12-17 août 1958, et 2e Conférence territoriale de l'Union Soudanaise, 17-19 octobre 1958*, rapport Politique présenté par Idrissa Diarra, p. 32.

above, they were viewed as an impediment to unity, which was understood as a crucial precondition for rapid economic development — a party priority. Because many USRDA members were of casted and ex-servile origin,² the idea of creating a homogenous national identity and, after September 1960, an egalitarian socialist society united for the sake of progress was also a means of challenging the inequality engendered by the existing social hierarchy – something it often referred to as feudalism or a feudal mentality.³ Such efforts constituted, in other words, a project to renegotiate the social standing of society’s most disadvantaged members. Party leaders also crucially believed they *could* attenuate or even eliminate these divisions; the influence of high modernism, embodied somewhat in the USRDA’s nationalist ideology but more especially in its post-1960 radical socialist orientation, led the party to believe in the efficacy of social engineering and the possibility of creating a new society guided by the state’s hand.⁴ In addition, there was an aspect of *realpolitik* to the USRDA’s moves against chiefs and other “traditional” authorities; chiefs in particular – at least those who had been members of the PSP – had participated in the administration of

² Abdoulaye Charles Danioko, “Contribution à l’étude des partis politiques au Mali de 1945 à 1960” (Université de Paris VII, 1984), 108.

³ E.g. ANM.109.415.Rapport et Compte-Rendu de Mission à l’Intérieur du Mali 1968.1967 12 14 *Rapport de Mahamane Touré ex Chef Adjoint de la Zone de Goundam*. “Tout se trame à Goundam ou tout y aboutit, Goundam demeuré quelque peu féodal (les Armas, les Touré par exemple se croient encore des maîtres) où les hommes de caste, particulièrement nombreux tirent un intérêt de toute division ou querelle de “grands”, utilisant toutes sortes de méthodes et où les habitants parlent de tout et sont attentifs à tout.” This term was not unique to the socialist period. It was even employed in the 1950s by the regime’s rivals, the PSP, to disparage a chief who had swung his support from the PSP to the RDA, citing the PSP’s failure to provide him with a coveted official decoration. He was condemned as having an “esprit féodal” (*Vérité* no 601, 8 Août 1957).

⁴ On high modernism see James C. Scott, *Seeing Like A State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), especially chapter 7.

sometimes-harsh punishments to USRDA activists in the 1946-1957 period prior to their gaining power.⁵ Thus there appears to have been an element of revenge in the USRDA's aggressive stance toward the chiefs.⁶ Given the intensity of demands made by USRDA supporters for desirable political posts and material rewards, party leaders may also have been pushed to reduce local institutions' scope of influence in order to make room for state expansion that would be overseen by party officials and administrators.⁷ Finally, the USRDA understood these institutions as playing important roles in manifestations of opposition to its rule – a frequent occurrence in the 1960s and occasionally prior to independence – as numerous communities would reject USRDA rule in favour of local chiefs or at least regional (rather than national) authorities. The party endeavoured to repress such dissent, which it considered a threat to its control of the state and to the success of its political projects, and it also sought to repress the chiefs and indigenous institutions around which such dissent sometimes clustered.

A mixture of ideological and material concerns, then, motivated the USRDA's policy toward chiefs and "traditional" authorities. Revenge, the need to satisfy the demands of clients, and fear of opposition were important contributors to the USRDA's aggressive approach to these social elements. But ideas also played an important, and sometimes deleterious, role. Although the party's nationalist ideals may have been pragmatic insofar as their emphasis on unity at least theoretically supported political cohesion and stability, radical socialism and the attendant high modernist belief in the state's capacity to remake society according to its own vision led to the adoption of

⁵ Modibo Diagouraga, *Modibo Keita, un destin*, (Paris: Harmattan, 2005), 18-28.

⁶ Interview with Hassane Guindo, Bamako, 18 March 2012.

⁷ Kary Dembélé, "La dimension politique du développement rural," in Pierre Jacquemot, ed, *Le Mali: Le Paysan et l'état* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1981), 121.

policies that quickly proved unrealistic.

Although the USRDA was able to eliminate chiefs on paper and to create a variety of party institutions meant to establish a new social and political order – particularly in rural areas – in practice this was often ineffective. Chiefs and other established non-party authorities managed to co-opt new political institutions such as local USRDA sub-committees, and party attacks on other indigenous organizations often alienated the local populace from the state rather than successfully integrating it into the new national community. Indeed, chiefs maintained considerable authority throughout the USRDA's tenure, and what the party called "regionalism" was an important force throughout the 1960s. The economic turmoil that plagued Mali from independence onward amplified opposition throughout the country, which often took the form of expressions of "regional" identity and of support for traditional leaders rather than for representatives of the new state. The fact that the USRDA representatives sent to govern rural communities in chiefs' stead often acted more despotically than had their predecessors⁸ made it all the more difficult to encourage communities to buy in to the new national identity.

The USRDA's approach to eliminating or attenuating the influence of Mali's

⁸ E.g. ANM.109.417.Rapport et Compte-Rendu du Mission à l'Intérieur du Mali 1963.1967 11 21 *Rapport de mission du CNDR à Rharous*. "Pouvoir personnel: Il a été nettement établi qu'aucune décision importante ne pouvait être prise par le BPL ou le CLDR sans la volonté du camarade NOCK... En dépit des recommandation de la première délégation du CNDR le camarade Nock n'a pu se résoudre à confier des tâches de responsabilité à ses autres camarades du CLDR. Tous les organisations démocratiques du Parti: Jeunesse et Commission Sociale des Femmes n'ont jamais reçu le soutien mieux, même la collaboration du CLDR sur les différents problèmes que les préoccupent. L'organisation de la semaine de la jeunesse, alphabétisation, formation idéologique, refus de faciliter les sorties aux jeunes et aux femmes dans le cadre des prises de contact."

existing indigenous political structures, then, largely backfired. Inspired in part by a nationalist vision of rapid economic progress and high modern ideas of the state's tremendous power to reshape society – ideas connected to the rise of radical socialism within the party and to leading socialist figures like Madeira Keita – its aggressive policies were out of touch with the political culture of Mali's mostly-rural communities. Even where the party officially eliminated institutions like chiefs, they could not eliminate the legitimacy such institutions often had in the minds of local residents. Thus in certain cases the USRDA's policy toward chiefs and traditional authorities may have achieved little more than to further "[alienate] the population" from a party that ruled in its name.⁹

Eliminating the Canton Chiefs: A high modern gambit

The USRDA eliminated canton chiefs in late 1958 for a complex mixture of reasons. It claimed that this institution was an anachronistic vestige of the colonial era, one that did not fit well in the party's high modern vision of a new society. As stated in the resolutions of the Fifth USRDA Congress of August 1958: "The Congress...reaffirms its desire to achieve African unity, and demands the abolition of canton chieftaincies, a colonial hangover."¹⁰ Yet the reasons for the USRDA's adversarial relationship with chiefs were much more complicated. USRDA members were well aware, for example, that chiefs were not simply colonial impositions, but political institutions that had

⁹ Frederick Cooper, *Africa in the World: Capitalism, Empire, Nation-State* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 86.

¹⁰ CADN.Bamako.Amb.1.Synthèses politiques du Soudan (Mali) des services de police et du cabinet du gouverneur 1957-1959.*Synthèse mensuel de renseignements – mois d'Août 1958*. [Excerpt from the Fifth Congress proceedings, 13-17 August 1958:] "Le Congrès... réaffirme sa volonté de réaliser l'unité africaine, demande l'abolition des chefferies de canton, séquelle du régime colonial."

existed long before colonialism began.¹¹ Evidence also suggests that prominent moderates in particular had an awareness of, and a respect for, chiefs' significant role in society. For example, Jean-Marie Koné, Modibo Keita's second-in-command, described a society without chiefs as "inconceivable" in 1957.¹² Thus even one year before the policy abolishing the canton chieftaincies came into effect, certain USRDA leaders at the highest level were far from considering chiefs a mere anachronistic vestige of the colonial order that needed to be eradicated. Thus the USRDA's own justification for eliminating chieftaincies is a simplification of its motivations, or at least suggests that profound differences of opinion existed within the party regarding the significance of chiefs in Mali's history and their appropriate place in Malian society.

Rather than the simple destruction of an anachronistic institution, the elimination of the canton chiefs was motivated by a combination of ideological and material factors. On the ideological side, there was much concern within the USRDA for social justice – inspired in part by the desire of numerous casted and (ex-)servile party members to establish a more egalitarian social order that would provide them with more opportunities for economic and political advancement – and a desire to create a new modern society endowed with modern institutions.¹³ As Seydou Camara remarks, Modibo Keita was "a nationalist who desired to modernize Mali," one who would "fight

¹¹ Interview with Hassane Guindo and Samba Sow, Bamako, 3 February 2012.

¹² *L'Essor* no 2396, 7 Janvier 1957, "Une Conférence de l'Union Soudanaise" (animé par Jean-Marie Koné, Conseiller Territorial de Sikasso). "Nous du RDA, ne sommes pas opposés aux chefferies, puisqu'une société sans chefs n'est pas concevable." Keita was later Vice-President of the USRDA and was also a close confidant of Modibo Keita until the Active Revolution.

¹³ Indeed, as noted in Chapter 2 ("Clerks Without Cash"), many within the USRDA were of "humble origins" and the party "was not dominated by economic elites and aristocrats."

without mercy against retrograde traditional practices that were, in his eyes, incompatible with his revolutionary ideas and with a certain modern conception of power.”¹⁴ This desire to remake society along modern lines was not unique to Keita; indeed, it was shared widely among party leaders and officials.¹⁵ This commitment to social justice and the corresponding animosity toward chiefs may also have been particularly prevalent within the party’s nascent radical socialist faction. For although it would still be several years before the USRDA adopted an explicitly socialist political orientation, Madeira Keita – a reputed “ardent... Communist”¹⁶ involved in left-wing politics in Guinea and the Soudan since the 1940s – was Minister of the Interior in the territorial government established by the USRDA in the wake of their 1957 electoral victory, and he was both an advocate for social justice¹⁷ and, according to Gregory Mann, instrumental in having the chieftaincies dissolved; indeed, it was his signature as Interior Minister on the decree, rather than that of Modibo Keita.¹⁸

On the more practical side, eliminating chiefs was a means of exacting revenge on a group that, in conjunction with the colonial regime, had inflicted harsh punishments on

¹⁴ Seydou Camara, “Modibo Keita: Une grande figure de l’histoire du Mali,” *Mande Studies* 5 (2003): 19.

¹⁵ Interviews with Albakaye Ousmane Kounta, Boubacar Séga Diallo, Mady Diallo, Garba Touré, Abdoulaye Amadou Sy, and Oumar Makalou, Bamako, 1 February – 21 March 2012. See also Chapter 2, “The Autonomous Years.”

¹⁶ Gregory Mann, “Anti-Colonialism and Social Science: Georges Balandier, Madeira Keita, and ‘the Colonial Situation’ in French Africa,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 55, no. 1 (2013): 92–119. 115.

¹⁷ He often spoke out about seeking justice for the masses in the face of unfair treatment by those of higher social status, e.g. ANM.141.559.CNDR Circulaires, 1967-68. *Ministère de l’Intérieur, et de l’Information et du Tourisme, No. 232/M.I.I.T.CAB (signé Madeira Keita)* [Note: this document was filed here in the archives, yet it dates to 1961, five years prior to the CNDR’s creation]. This, and other documents authored by Keita will be further analyzed later in this section.

¹⁸ Mann, “Anti-Colonialism and Social Science,” 114.

USRDA members during the decade it had been a minority party. There was also the simple fact that many chiefs had been affiliated with the rival PSP, and were thus political opponents the USRDA wished to remove from positions of authority. Indeed, the fact that the party did not eliminate all chiefs at once, but started with those who were known USRDA opponents, is indicative of this.¹⁹

There may also have been clientelist forces at work, as USRDA officials were exigent in their demands for positions of economic and political advantage, and reducing the scope of chiefly power opened up room for party officials and administrators to manage state affairs at the local community level. Indeed, the party viewed chiefly positions as “sinecures,”²⁰ and yet scholars have described the new positions created for USRDA officials to govern local communities as “sinecures” as well.²¹ This characterization is apt, insofar as there is a clear pattern of abuse of authority and misappropriation of resources on the part of party officials in leadership positions in rural areas. An example of such misappropriation comes from a 1963 USRDA report on the political situation in Segou in which it was asserted that when Segou’s mayor, who was also the General Secretary of the USRDA’s local branch, “speaks of honesty before a crowd, they laugh in his face because it is notoriously well-known in Segou that all the mayor of Segou’s personal building projects are undertaken

¹⁹ CADN.Bamako.Amb.1.Synthèses politiques du Soudan (Mali) des services de police et du cabinet du gouverneur 1957-1959.*Synthèse mensuelle de renseignements – mois de Novembre 1958.*

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Guy Martin, “Socialism, Economic Development and Planning in Mali, 1960-1968,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 10, 1 (1976): 31 ; Dembélé, “La dimension politique du développement rural,” 121.

at the expense of the municipality of Segou.”²² In terms of abusing authority, meanwhile, in 1968 at Niafunké the USRDA’s *chef de zone* reported that officials there “subjected peasants, an entire village to torture,” and he further remarked that “everyone in Niafunké now knows the “bracelets” (manacles).”²³ Also in 1961 a report from a Malian official was written critiquing the *chef d’arrondissement* of Kangaré who “had forced the village inhabitants, right in the middle of the harvest last year, during the gathering of crops, to weed the streets of the village of Kondjiguila, to whitewash the houses of Kangaré [a seemingly bizarre request in an area where adobe houses typically go unpainted] and to construct houses of habitation.”²⁴ He condemned this abuse of power, lamenting the fact that it “was indeed a question of forced labour.”²⁵

Schoolteachers in Sikasso equally complained of the arbitrary and high-handed behaviour of rural administrators, remarking in 1961 that “certain *chefs*

²² ANM.245.876. Correspondances Ségou 1958-1968. 1963 *Les Responsables politiques de Ségou*. “Quand il parle d'honnêteté au public, on lui rit au nez, car il est de notoriété publique à Ségou que tous les travaux personnels du Maire de Ségou, sont exécutés aux frais de la Municipalité de Ségou, et selon certaines rumeurs, le nommé Harouna Coulibaly, Secrétaire Général de la Société Coopérative et d'Entreprise Africaine à Ségou, qui est soupçonné d'avoir détourné plusieurs Millions au préjudice de l'Etat, aurait effectué d'importants travaux à la construction de la maison de M. Dramane Coulibaly à Bamako.”

²³ ANM.109.415. Compte-Rendu et Rapport de Mission à l’Intérieur du Mali 1968. 1968 03 09 *Rapport de mission des responsables de zone de NIAFUNKE*. “On fait subir des supplices à des paysans, un village entier afin de les faire dire qu'ils ont corrompu des responsables dans leur affaire de chefferie, particulièrement SIDI CISSE; ils avouent puis se retractent, puis avouent. Tout le monde à NIAFUNKE connait maintenant le "bracelet" (les menottes)...”

²⁴ ANM.126.468. BPN Secrétariat 1960-1967. 1964 05 01 *Rapport sur les faits reprochés au Commandant de Cercle de Yanfolila le Chef d'Arrondissement de Kangaré et le Secrétaire Politique de Kondjiguila*. “Il est bien exact que Safré Doumbia a obligé les habitants du village, en pleine moisson l'an dernier, pendant la rentrée des récoltes, à désherber les rues du village de Kondjiguila, à blanchir les maisons de Kangaré et à construire des maison d'habitation...”

²⁵ Ibid. “Plusieurs gens du village nous ont affirmé qu'il s'agissait bien en ce moment du travail forcé.”

d'arrondissement demonstrate an authoritarianism to the teachers who are almost always of a higher general education level than the administrative authorities at the level of the *arrondissement*.²⁶ Certain USRDA cadres active during this era have also characterized the *chefs d'arrondissement* – created to replace the canton chiefs – as more despotic and abusive than their predecessors.²⁷ These examples are indicative of a broader pattern of corruption, abuse, and authoritarianism that mar the USRDA's record of rural administration – a pattern that will be more fully established in this chapter's subsequent sections.

Although its officials posted in rural areas would often abuse their authority, one of the important factors bearing upon USRDA leaders' decision to eliminate chiefs was in fact its commitment to social justice. This was in turn largely motivated by the issues of caste and heritable social status. Historically, the societies that comprise modern Mali have been broadly divided into three social categories: nobles (*horon*), casted persons like praisesingers, blacksmiths, and leatherworkers (*nyamakala*), and slaves (*jon*). As a post-slavery society, ex-servility – along with casted status – remained an important marker of inferior social rank.²⁸ Although such social divisions were not openly

²⁶ ANM.144.565.Compte-Rendu divers cercles 1956-1968.1961 09 30 *Sikasso compte rendu*. “Certains Chefs d'Arrondissements inconscients font preuve d'autoritarisme inacceptable par les instituteurs qui presque toujours sont d'une formation générale supérieure à celle des repréensants des autorités administratives à l'échelon des Arrondissements.”

²⁷ Interview with Hassane Guindo, Bamako, 18 March 2012.

²⁸ For more on this topic, see Meillassoux, “A Class Analysis of the Bureaucratic Process in Mali”, *Journal of Development Studies* 6, 2 (1970): 97-110; Charles H. Cutter, “The Politics of Music in Mali,” *African Arts* 1, no. 3 (1968): 38–39 & 74–77. These divisions are of course changing, in particularly as regards slavery, which was officially abolished by the French circa 1905 — see Martin A. Klein, *Slavery and Colonial Rule in French West Africa*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). See also Gregory Mann, *Native Sons: West African Veterans and France in the*

discussed by the USRDA during its tenure, they nonetheless played an important role in politics, particularly as many USRDA members were of non-noble origin. Indeed, one of the factors that helped the USRDA establish a democratic image in the late 1950s was that it fought – to an extent – to overturn these traditional hierarchies, whereas the PSP’s leader, Fily Dabo Sissoko, himself a canton chief, campaigned in favour of the status quo with respect to this issue. In fact, *Vérité*, the PSP’s newspaper, attacked the USRDA on this very basis in late 1957, shortly after the USRDA had won elections (but well before it in fact did decide to eliminate the chieftaincies). It wrote:

If the RDA wishes today to suddenly destroy the traditional chieftaincies, that’s its business. It will not succeed in eliminating the existing social classes, of which the editors of *L’Essor* occupy the lowest levels, with the stroke of pen. It is not in “Frenchifying” their names, in for example changing Makan to Makane, that they will have their social rank forgotten.²⁹

It was not only in the press that caste politics was debated in Mali in the 1950s and 1960s. Even at the level of individual villages the USRDA perceived a great deal of disunity due to clan and caste divisions, and it lamented that its efforts to attenuate these divisions provoked considerable opposition. As Madeira Keita noted in 1968:

The great village of Mandjakuy is divided into clans, there is no harmony. The main reason for these divisions, motivating all the rest, is that there has always been a feudal family, the Dakouos and their allies, who believed and still believe that they are the chosen race in this community. There was a time where its seigneurs didn’t pay tax. Their fields were maintained by other members of the village community. Still today they would judge it inadmissible that someone besides them, especially a blacksmith, a griot, a descendant of a slave, or indeed

Twentieth Century, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 2006), for more on the enduring legacy of slavery today.

²⁹ *Vérité* no 639, 25 septembre 1957, “A Propos d’une mise au point”. “Si le RDA veut aujourd’hui détruire tout d’un coup les chefferies traditionnelles, c’est son affaire. Il n’arrivera pas à supprimer d’un trait de plume les classes sociales existantes dont la plupart des rédacteurs de “L’ESSOR” occupent les plus bas échelons. Ce n’est pas en “francisant” leur nom, en faisant par exemple de MAKAN le nom de MAKANE qu’ils feront oublier leur rang social...”

any person whose ancestors are not native to Mandjakuy, should hold the village chieftaincy.³⁰

Such reports underline both the fractious nature of Mali's political sphere even at the local level and the revolutionary character of USRDA efforts to reform the social hierarchy.

With regards to reform at the highest levels, Seydou Badian Kouyaté, of griot origins, was the most notable example of a casted person attaining a high position within the USRDA, holding the portfolio of Rural Economy and the Plan until 1962 and then that of Development afterward.³¹ Several others, like Ibrahima Sango – who was a member of the party's Political Bureau from 1947 onward and became Malian ambassador to Liberia after independence – and Baréma Bocoum – who was a member of the National Political Bureau in the 1960s – were also of non-noble origins.³² It is important to note, however, that the USRDA modulated this policy for pragmatic ends; in the 1950s it blocked a number of casted politicians from running for office as it was thought they could not win elections due to their status, and the USRDA's leaders – Mamadou Konaté from 1946-1956 and Modibo Keita from 1956 onward – were both of

³⁰ ANM.109.415.Compte-Rendu et Rapport de Mission à l'Intérieur du Mali 1968.1968 04 13 *Rapport Tominian Chef de zone Mamadou Madeira KEITA*. "De surcroit, le gros village de Mandjakuy est divisé en clans, il n'y a pas d'entente. La raison première de cette division, motivant tout le reste, c'est qu'il a existé depuis toujours une famille féodale, les Dakouo et leurs alliés, qui se croyaient et se croient encore la race élue de cette communauté. Il fut un temps où ses seigneurs ne payaient pas d'impôt. Leurs champs étaient entretenus par les autres membres de la collectivité villageoise. Aujourd'hui encore, ils jugeraient inadmissible, qu'un autre qu'eux, surtout un forgeron, un griot, un descendant d'esclave, enfin toute personne dont les parents ne sont pas originaires de Mandjakuy, détienne la chefferie de village..."

³¹ Danioko, "Contribution à l'étude des partis politiques au Mali de 1945 à 1960," 108.

³² *Ibid.*, 108.

noble origins.³³

Important party members have equally highlighted the USRDA's commitment to social justice and its objections to heritable privilege. As Baba Akhib Haïdara – former Minister of Education and 1992 presidential candidate for the party – has noted:

The second fundamental value of the RDA is what? It's social justice... There was so much injustice, iniquity, and disdain, it can't all be explained. With all the sufferings and annoyances of colonialism, it was completely normal that the people who took power should say: Never again. The people must be respected... No more injustice: "I'm the son of... so I have everything."... That's also the origin of hostility vis-à-vis certain traditional chieftaincies. It's personal merit, not merit by birth [that should be valued]. You are considered not for what you are, but for what you do. So social justice was important.³⁴

Other observers from the era have noted that the USRDA offered a way for casted individuals and others of little means “to elevate themselves via the state.”³⁵ Albakaye Ousmane Kounta has equally noted the USRDA's “values of fairness and justice,” which were in considerable tension with their autocratic tendencies.³⁶ Evidence from the 1950s suggests this commitment was longstanding. An article from the editors of *L'Essor* affirmed in 1957 the party's intention to seek justice for a rural community where the canton chief and his supporters had abused their authority. “The man of the bush is on a quest for justice,” they proclaimed. “And the day is not far where the masses, victims of this bullying, will sweep aside these African colonialists [“the successive administrators of this famous *cercle*”] like a wisp of straw.”³⁷(It is important

³³ Ibid., 109-110.

³⁴ Interview with Baba Akhib Haïdara, Bamako, 15 February 2012.

³⁵ Interview with Youssouf Diawara, Bamako, 16 February 2012.

³⁶ Interview with Albakaye Ousmane Kounta, Bamako, 21 March 2012.

³⁷ *L'Essor* no 2474, 9 Avril 1957. “L'homme de la brousse est en quête de la Justice. Et le jour n'est plus lointain, où les masses victimes de ces brimades, balaieront comme un fétu ces colonialistes africains [“les administrateurs successifs de ce fameux cercle”]. -- LA REDACTION.”

to note that, although this article affirms a desire to depose a specific chief, this was due to localized complaints of abuse in the *cercle* of Macina; thus while it is consonant with the USRDA's social justice program, it is not indicative of a broader policy of abolishing chiefs as an institution, which would be developed later.) Madeira Keita also remarked in 1961 that:

The [USRDA's] fight against the injustices of the Colonial Administration was a determining factor in the mobilization of our masses. They are very sensitive to justice and courtesy.³⁸

A 1962 report from the Sixth Party Congress further affirmed the USRDA's "concern for practicing a politics of social justice,"³⁹ and this commitment remained a part of the USRDA's identity even in the Active Revolution period. Indeed, a government circular from Aliou Bakayoko, Minister of the Interior in 1968, affirms as much:

It has been determined from the analysis of relevant documents that the overall quantities [of grain] attributed to the cities are out of proportion with their capacity to consume, whereas those authorized for the countryside do not meet its consumption needs. Such a situation... gives speculators and traffickers the means to set about their dirty work [*basse besogne*]... In the accomplishment of their mission, which is of crucial importance since it regards a key question concerning all social segments, the officials charged with this distribution will have to remind themselves, at all times, that the path of Socialism for the rapid development of the Country is essentially founded on the ideas of working toward a greater production [capacity] and of Social Justice which ought to be achieved at all levels

³⁸ANM.141.559.CNDR Circulaires, 1967-68.*Ministère de l'Intérieur, et de l'Information et du Tourisme, No. 232/M.I.I.T.CAB, signé Madeira Keita* [Note: this document was filed here in the archives, yet it dates to 1961, five years prior to the CNDR's creation]. "La lutte contre les injustices de l'Administration Coloniale a été un facteur déterminant dans la mobilisation de nos masses. Elles sont très sensibles à la justice et à la courtoisie."

³⁹ ANM.3.5.6e Congrès de l'USRDA 1962.*Rapport d'activités et d'orientation présenté au 6^{ème} congrès de l'US-RDA*. "Quelles que soient nos intentions, ou notre souci de mener une politique de justice sociale, l'action de notre Parti se heurte à des obstacles réels."

and in all domains.⁴⁰

This drive to reform the social hierarchy places the USRDA's nationalist convictions – and its commitment to the idea of unity – in a new light. Nationalism would not only have been useful in fighting the scourge of “regionalism” and unifying Mali's diverse communities, but also in offering citizens occupying varied positions in the social hierarchy a uniform national identity, and thus a means of renegotiating their position in society. Socialism, with its emphasis on the principles of equality and non-exploitation, augmented this argument after it became the USRDA's official ideology in 1960. In this way, nationalism and socialism were extensions of attempts to challenge existing social hierarchies that had begun in the early 20th century – most notably, the process of Islamization that accelerated in the Soudan after the abolition of slavery in 1905.⁴¹ Nationalism offered a sense of political equality – all inhabitants of the polity united as

⁴⁰ ANM.141.559.CNDR Circulaires 1967-68. *Circulaire no 7/DI-2 (signé Aliou Bakayoko)*. “OBJET: Répartition judicieuse des marchandises et denrées alimentaires de première nécessité entre populations urbaine et rurale.

Il est relevé de l'examen des documents s'y rapportant que les quantités globales attribuées aux villes sont hors de proportion avec leur capacité de consommation alors que celles consenties à la campagne ne correspondent pas à ses besoins de consommation. Une telle situation... donne aux spéculateurs et trafiquants les moyens de s'adonner à leur basse besogne... Dans l'accomplissement de leur mission qui revêt une importance capitale, puisqu'il s'agit d'une question-clé touchant l'ensemble des couches sociales, les responsables chargés de cette répartition devront se rappeler, à tout moment, que la voie du Socialisme pour le développement rapide du Pays est fondée essentiellement sur les notions du travail pour une plus grande production et de la Justice Sociale qu'il convient de réaliser à tous les niveaux et dans tous les domaines.”

⁴¹ Brian James Peterson, *Islamization from Below: The Making of Muslim Communities in Rural French Sudan, 1880-1960* (Yale University Press, 2011). Similar processes aimed at renegotiating the social status of occurred contemporaneously in East Africa, where converts engaged in and created an Islam that was egalitarian and inclusive in an effort to renegotiate a heritage of relationships of servility and exploitation in response to changes in power relations provoked by the colonial incursion. (Felicitas Becker, *Becoming Muslim in Mainland Tanzania, 1890-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Malian citizens – and socialism added an explicitly economic dimension of equality to the USRDA’s narrative of social change and justice.

The change in power relations after the USRDA’s 1957 electoral victory was equally an important contributor to the USRDA’s decision to eliminate the chiefs, in the simplest sense: the party had gained the power to do so, and since most chiefs had been rivals of the USRDA throughout the 1940s and 1950s, the party also had a motive. Indeed, although most chieftaincies were eliminated in December 1958, the party began dissolving select chieftaincies in November, focusing on those that supported the PSP.⁴² Certain regime officials themselves have noted that the decision to eliminate chiefs was motivated by a desire to exact revenge⁴³ upon a group of opponents who had collaborated with the colonial regime in torturing party members by such means as forcing them to drink urine⁴⁴ and in hindering their political progress by imprisonment or exile to remote areas of the country.⁴⁵ In any case, it seems the decision to eliminate chiefs was not made on behalf of the populace, as already in November of 1958 “the elimination of numerous traditional chieftaincies... had provoked, especially in the interior, a certain current of animosity against the Union Soudanaise (RDA).”⁴⁶

⁴² CADN.Bamako.Amb.1.Synthèses politiques du Soudan (Mali) des services de police et du cabinet du gouverneur 1957-1959.*Synthèse mensuelle de renseignements – mois de Novembre 1958*. “Conformément à ces vœux, les Autorités Territoriales ont déclaré vacantes plusieurs de ces “sinécures” dont les titulaires appartiennent le plus souvent à l’opposition: notamment la chefferie de la province de Bamako, plusieurs chefferies de canton des cercles de Sikasso et de Gao, la chefferie de quartier de Kayes N’Di...”

⁴³ Interview with Hassane Guindo, Bamako, 18 March 2012.

⁴⁴ Interview with Sina Diourté, Sikasso, 14 March 2012.

⁴⁵ Diagouraga, *Modibo Keita, un destin*, 19, 27.

⁴⁶ CADN.Bamako.Amb.1.Synthèses politiques du Soudan (Mali) des services de police et du cabinet du gouverneur 1957-1959.*Synthèse mensuelle de renseignements – mois de Novembre 1958*. “La suppression de plusieurs chefferies traditionnelles... ont provoqué, notamment dans l’intérieur, un certain courant d’animosité contre l’Union Soudanaise

As was hinted at in Chapter 2, another important reason the USRDA sought to abolish the chiefs is because of an emerging belief in “high modernism.”⁴⁷ Put simply, one of the reasons the USRDA undertook to eliminate chiefs was because they thought it was within their power to do so – not just that they could do it on paper, but that they possessed the capacity to establish a new, effective, and modern form of rural administration in spite of chiefs’ deep roots in Soudanese society and in spite of the state’s meagre means. Scott has defined this high modern ideology “as a strong, one might even say muscle-bound, version of the self-confidence about scientific and technical progress, the expansion of production, the growing satisfaction of human needs, the mastery of nature (including human nature), and above all, the rational design of social order.”⁴⁸ Mali was of course not in a position to assert itself as any sort of leader in scientific or technical *innovation*, but it nonetheless understood both its version of socialism⁴⁹ and its approach to solving Mali’s political and economic problems as having a scientific character.⁵⁰ Although Scott has limited his study of this phenomenon in Africa to Julius Nyerere’s Tanzania – where he sees it in TANU’s villagization schemes – it is equally relevant to the Malian case, where the USRDA similarly had faith in its ability to design a new social order and to bring about rapid progress. This desire “to use state power to bring about huge, utopian changes in people’s work habits,

(RDA).”

⁴⁷ Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 3.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁴⁹ E.g. Seydou Badian Kouyaté, “Politique de développement et voies africaines du socialisme”, *Présence africaine*, 47(3) (1963): 59-72. “...l’expérience du socialisme scientifique, c’est une réalité que nous ne saurions ignorer.”

⁵⁰ ANM.104.400.*Rapport sur l’organisation socialiste du monde rurale (1968)*. “Le Parti s’est inspiré d’une méthode traditionnelle de travail exploitée scientifiquement, ayant pour objectif la collectivisation à la campagne à partir de l’implantation du champ collectif.”

living patterns, moral conduct, and worldview,”⁵¹ however, was largely untethered from the state’s real abilities to effect change. It was “uncritical, unskeptical, and thus unscientifically optimistic about the possibilities for the comprehensive planning of human settlement and production.”⁵²

Indeed, the 1957-1968 period of USRDA rule was unique in taking such a radical approach to altering the political culture of Mali’s rural communities. Despite the decade constituting a period of rapid political change – in fact, this kind of high modern overconfidence in the need for, and efficacy of, state-led social engineering intensified considerably over these years – a novel intention to profoundly reshape society even at the village level is nonetheless broadly discernable throughout this period. This represents a new way of thinking about governance, for the French colonial state had not attempted to interfere in these domains, or certainly not on so grand a scale. Indeed, as Jean-François Bayart has noted, “The French Republic...renounced the mirage of “assimilation”” and settled on a form of colonial rule that “does not coincide with the canonical distinction between British indirect rule and French direct rule.”⁵³ Indeed, rather than attempting to create a new society, “the political economy of the colonial state rested on intermediation” through existing or appointed chiefs.⁵⁴ The USRDA in contrast believed in its ability to forge a new order according to its own vision. It made concerted efforts to discredit persons and institutions with historic claims to social and political power, including chiefs and religious personalities. Some of these groups and

⁵¹ Scott, *Seeing Like A State*, 4.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 4.

⁵³ Jean-François Bayart, “La démocratie à l’épreuve de la tradition en Afrique subsaharienne,” *Pouvoirs* 129, no. 2 (March 23, 2009): 37.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 37.

institutions were officially disbanded, some Malians were arrested for participating in such groups, and some were even subject to intimidation for their perceived opinion of deeming religion more important than secular politics.

These were not populist manoeuvres. The USRDA's vision of rapid political change at the local level in Mali differed greatly from that of the average person. Its ideas about reforming the social hierarchy were "advanced compared to those of society," whose members "did not understand all that was happening to them and who thus were crushed" by the pace of political change the party wished to implement.⁵⁵ As former party cadre Issa Ongoïba has noted:

The problem was that there was a very rapid integration [of casted persons, nobles, etc.] and that doesn't work... Here they rushed things and they wanted there to be equality for everyone right away... The USRDA committed a serious error.⁵⁶

He equally noted that these social hierarchies persist into the present; even those non-nobles who hold high offices in the government "are still certainly obliged to lower their heads" and pay respects when they meet with a chiefly or noble individual.⁵⁷ Other regime officials have made similar observations, noting that canton chiefs impeded party efforts to establish a new order because they enjoyed the continued respect of the population:

I can say that [with regard to] the canton chiefs, one cannot [simply eliminate them] because... the people have confidence in them... They have existed for centuries... There are some even today who are nothing [i.e. have no official position], but they were chiefs and they still enjoy the confidence [of the population]. Before making a decision about something, people visit the family [of the chief] to discuss it.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Interview with Youssouf Diawara, Bamako, 16 February 2012.

⁵⁶ Interview with Issa Ongoïba, Bamako, 21 February 2012.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Interview with Hassane Guindo and Samba Sow, Bamako, 3 February 2012.

The USRDA clearly overestimated its ability to effect social change, not only regarding the chiefs but also with respect to its economic initiatives – as noted in Chapter 3, the Five-Year Plan was widely regarded as being so excessively ambitious as to border on delusion. This may be an instance where nationalist ideology, and later socialism, led the USRDA down an impractical path that ultimately failed in its efforts to eliminate the influence of chiefs in Malian politics. It was certainly an instance of “uncritical, unskeptical, and thus unscientifically optimistic” belief in “comprehensive planning of human settlement”⁵⁹ – in this instance with regard to the administration of such settlements.

Despite the USRDA’s ambitious plans to transform Malian society, the institutions it established to replace the canton chiefs were remarkably derivative. After canton chiefs were removed, the cantons themselves were dissolved and replaced by a new administrative unit — the *arrondissement* — that roughly corresponded to the canton in size, even if the boundaries of these units were often redrawn to form new clusters of villages.⁶⁰ The chiefs were replaced by administrators known as *chefs d’arrondissement*. In essence, the canton chiefs were replaced by USRDA canton chiefs operating under a nationalist alias. The difference was in the fact that these administrators were not local leaders whose political legitimacy issued from their family’s historical claims to leadership in the area – i.e., they were not “regionalist” leaders. Instead, they were USRDA activists, many of whom were not from the region to which they were posted. And in a society where the right to rule (at the local level) was intimately linked to one’s

⁵⁹ Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 4.

⁶⁰ There was a general consensus among interviewed ex-administrators that the *arrondissement* was essentially similar to the canton. Eg. interviews with Garba Touré, Bamako, 14 February 2012, and Bakary Diallo, Bamako, 20 March 2012.

history in the community, this new sort of “chieftaincy” often led to crises of legitimacy:

It was a chieftaincy of the party then. But at the time of that chieftaincy of the party [it was] with people who didn’t have all the necessary charisma and... the support of the population.⁶¹

This was a new phenomenon in the Soudan, one that equally marks the era of USRDA rule off from the colonial period. Part of the nation-building project — a project that went hand-in-hand with breaking down local power structures to the advantage of the central government— was to create *Malian* administrators who would govern *Malian* citizens. An arrondissement chief might hail from the central-northern region of Mopti, be a speaker of Dogon or Fulani, and be posted to a *cercle* in the southern region of Sikasso among Bambara or Senufo-speakers.⁶² This was a policy that clearly aligned with the USRDA’s longstanding goal of “condemning the multiple manifestations of regionalist and sectarian sentiment, prejudicial to the unity of the party and the country at a time when national feeling must be developed.”⁶³ Yet it had the opposite effect of deepening the crisis of regionalism, with strong opposition continuing to be voiced across the country throughout the duration of the USRDA’s rule. People were not used to being governed at the local level by people who were not local, and thus who did not have the legitimacy to rule there. It was not only among Tamasheq people in Mali's

⁶¹ Interview with Boubacar Séga Diallo, Bamako, 20 March 2012. Dr. Diallo is professor of history at the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Bamako, and was also a young witness to the USRDA regime.

⁶² Amborco Dolo, for example, hailed from the Dogon country in the central region of Mopti, but served as commandant de cercle in Kolondiéba, a southern area adjacent to the Côte d’Ivoire. Interview with Amborco Dolo, Bamako, 26 February 2012.

⁶³ CADN.Bamako.Amb.1.Synthèses politiques du Soudan (Mali) des services de police et du cabinet du gouverneur 1957-1959. *Synthèse mensuel de renseignements – mois d’Août 1958*. [Excerpt from the 5e Congrès territorial de l’USRDA, du 13 au 17 août] “Le Congrès... condamne solennellement les multiples manifestations de l’esprit régionaliste et sectaire, préjudiciable à l’Unité du Parti et du Pays au moment où doit se développer le sens national.”

north that strong objections to rule from Bamako arose — although secessionist sentiment among that population is the most well known. Such sentiment was prevalent in many areas of Mali in the early years of independence. In 1962, for example, “seditious villages” near Hombori and Gao were destroyed by the Keita regime for their opposition to its rule.⁶⁴ In the same year “many were the Malians who headed with all their belongings toward Niger, Haute-Volta, Côte d’Ivoire, and even Guinea.”⁶⁵ And in 1963, in the southwestern region of Koulikoro, government officials registered deep dissatisfaction with the Malian state and “a tendency to desire annexation by Guinea.”⁶⁶ Some of these objections were explicitly linked to grievances regarding the abolition of the canton chieftaincies. For example, certain Bambara villages that refused to vote for the USRDA in the 1964 single party elections “claimed as a reason... the elimination of the canton chiefs.”⁶⁷ Other evidence shows that the new authorities put in place by the USRDA to administer local areas were not considered legitimate by local citizens, who displayed “a sort of nonchalance, even indifference in the execution of party directives and with regard to our activity in general.”⁶⁸ “Some sin by omission,” lamented the head

⁶⁴ CADN.Bamako.Amb.21.Dépêches politiques 1962.*Dépêche Hebdomadaire no 45 du 12 au 18 Novembre 1962.*

⁶⁵ Ibid., “Beaucoup préfèrent dans ces conditions aller chercher chez des voisins moins exigeants, une hospitalité plus fraternelle, et nombreux sont les maliens qui passent avec armes et bagages, au Niger, en Haute-Volta, en Côte d’Ivoire et même en Guinée. Le Gouvernement s’est profondément ému de cette situation et des mesures sont à l’étude pour essayer d’enrayer cet exode – mesures coercitives, comme il se doit.”

⁶⁶ ANM.109.417.Rapport et Compte-Rendu du Mission à l’Intérieur du Mali 1963.1963 05 02 *Compte rendu de la mission d’Information de la Délégation du BPN dans les cercles de KITA et de KOLOKANI du 16 avril au 2 mai 1963.*

⁶⁷ ANM.109.415.Compte-Rendu et Rapport de Mission à l’Intérieur du Mali 1968.1964 05 22 *Rapport de mission effectuée à NIORO délégation Mamadou DIAKITE et Mamadou GOLOGO.* “Tandis que la portion bambara (limites de Kolokani) prétextait le motif de la liste unique en général ainsi que la suppression des chefferies de canton...”

⁶⁸ ANM.109.417.Rapport et Compte-Rendu du Mission à l’Intérieur du Mali 1963.1963

of a USRDA delegation visiting the Jitumu region in 1963. “One [local] official... paid homage to the administrators (*commandants* and other bureaucrats) in these terms: The foreigners who are staying with us in whom the power has been entrusted.”⁶⁹ That USRDA officials should be considered foreigners within the confines of their own state was a distressing prospect for a party devoted to nation-building and unity; and yet such situations are emblematic of how the Keita regime overestimated its capacity to effect social and political change.

Not only did the new, hastily planned administrative structure headed up by the arrondissement chiefs create a crisis of legitimacy concerning who was fit to rule in the countryside, but it also tarnished the USRDA’s reputation as its new administrators assumed their responsibilities. In many cases, these new administrators operated in a similar manner to the canton chiefs the Party had so vociferously criticized — which is to say arbitrarily and despotically.⁷⁰ Indeed, they often committed more serious abuses:

The arrondissements cover exactly the territories of the cantons. They took out Paul and put in Jack. But Jack acted exactly like Paul, and sometimes even in complicity, to the extent where he hurried to sleep with the commandant’s or the ex-canton chief’s daughter. You [the ex-chief] give him your daughter in marriage, and then after he keeps paying; that’s where the problem is.⁷¹

The arrondissement chiefs in certain areas were accused of corruption, arbitrary

Compte rendu de tournée à l’Intérieur du Mali. “Nos compatriotes des campagnes sont en effet ou mal ou insuffisamment informés, ce qui se traduit chez eux, on ne peut pas dire par ce scepticisme dont font état certains citadins, mais par une sorte de nonchalance, voire d’indifférence dans l’exécution des mots d’ordre du Parti et vis-à-vis de notre activité en général.”

⁶⁹ Ibid., “Certains aussi pêchent par ignorance...un responsable...rend hommage aux fonctionnaires (commandants et autres fonctionnaires) en ces termes: Les étrangers qui sont chez nous et auxquels se trouve confié le pouvoir...”

⁷⁰ Interview with Hassane Guindo, Bamako. 18 March 2012.

⁷¹ Interview with Filifin Sacko, Bamako, 5 March 2012.

arrests,⁷² stealing and raping women, inflicting violence, and other offences.⁷³ Because their positions were fundamentally equivalent to those of the canton chiefs — they administered similar areas and were responsible to the same authorities, the *commandants de cercle*⁷⁴ — there was indeed no reason why such abuses should stop. No new oversight measures were introduced, no strengthened accountability structures were implemented, and consequently no changes in the power dynamic were established, save for the fact that the new leaders were now directly responsible (and indebted) to the USRDA, and that they were often alien to the communities they governed.⁷⁵ Indeed, although many cantons under colonial rule “more or less reconstituted former precolonial chieftaincies,” postcolonial arrondissements tended to be “arbitrary in regards to territorial distributions” – that is to say, although the arrondissements were of similar size to the cantons, the villages that comprised them were often chosen with no regard for the organic political units of the local area.⁷⁶ So

⁷² ANM.231.840. Correspondances Bandiagara 1957-1968. 13 février 1962 LELE GUINDO au Secrétaire de la Sous-Section de BANDIAGARA. “Par ailleurs un nommé Harady Cissé fut emprisonné pendant toute une nuit pour avoir simplement dit que le Chef de Poste n’aurait pas dû leur imposer une autre concession alors que celle commencée n’ayant pas été achevée.”

⁷³ ANM.109.417. Rapport et Compte-Rendu du Mission à l’Intérieur du Mali 1963. 1963 05 02 *Compte rendu de la mission d’Information de la Délégation du BPN dans les cercles de KITA et de KOLOKANI du 16 avril au 2 mai 1963.* “Le Chef d’arrondissement... (originaire de Bamako) Ex-Secrétaire Général PRS au Comité des Jeunes de BAGADADJI se singularise par ses abus:

- Détentions arbitraires avec refus de donner à boire et à manger aux détenus.
- Atteinte à l’intégrité physique des femmes détenus.
- Divorces provoqués avec intention de marier la femme avec la personne de son choix.”

⁷⁴ Aristide R. Zolberg, “The Political Revival of Mali,” *The World Today* 21, no. 4 (April 1, 1965): 151–60.

⁷⁵ Interview with Jean Bosco Konaré, Bamako, 2 March 2012.

⁷⁶ Claude Fay, “Sang, lait, distance et plaisanterie: Articulations et ‘assèchements’ des alliances au Maasina (Mali),” *Cahiers d’études africaines*, no. 184 (April 2006): 755–78.

arbitrary were the groupings of villages that comprised these postcolonial administrative units in the Macina region, for example, that in the post-1991 democratic era “one generally observed... the resurrection of former colonial cantons,” as these corresponded to “thinkable” administrative zones.⁷⁷

The result of the fundamental similarity between colonial and postcolonial administration of rural areas was that rural citizens viewed USRDA administrators not as compatriots who served as their representatives in the project of national construction, but as autocratic leaders who exercised power in the same way as the French had done before them. Indeed, party officials made note in 1963 of “the regrettable fact that the masses address us not as leaders of their own party who they themselves has selected, as comrades in work, but as “*fama*” [a king⁷⁸ or “man of power”⁷⁹], successors of the Toubabs [whites], who are able to use force like them and with the same mentality.”⁸⁰

Reports of rural corruption and despotism also beg the question of clientelism’s role in the elimination of canton chiefs. It has already been established that USRDA leaders were under pressure from their followers to provide them with positions of

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Richard Roberts, “Representation, Structure and Agency: Divorce in the French Soudan during the Early Twentieth Century,” *The Journal of African History* 40, no. 03 (November 1999): 396.

⁷⁹ Claude Fay, “La Démocratie au Mali, ou le pouvoir en pâte,” *Cahier d’Études Africaines* 35, no. 137 (1995): 23.

⁸⁰ ANM.109.417.Rapport et Compte-Rendu du Mission à l’Intérieur du Mali 1963.1963 *Compte rendu de tournée à l’Intérieur du Mali*. “C’est à cette situation qu’il faut attribuer également le fait regrettable que les masses s’adressent à nous non pas en responsables de leur propre parti, placés par eux-mêmes, en camarades de travail, mais en “FAMA”, successeurs de Toubabs, pouvant utiliser la force comme ceux-ci et dans le même esprit.”

authority and privilege.⁸¹ By eliminating chiefs and replacing them with party officials who essentially played the same role, the USRDA was creating a large number of positions that would allow its followers to do exactly what many chiefs had done before them: exploit such positions of authority for personal benefit. Indeed, although in 1958 USRDA leaders would cite the fact that chieftaincies were little more than “sinecures” in justifying why they should be abolished,⁸² the party would operate its own structures of rural governance in much the same way. As Kary Dembélé notes, “[t]he establishment of the entire panoply of [rural] management structures had no other goal than to distribute sinecures to this or that USRDA leader”.⁸³

Beyond Chiefs: The state and indigenous institutions in broader perspective

In recent years there has been a renewed interest in chiefs on the part of historians of Africa. Whereas in the past the idea that chiefs were a dying institution and an obstacle to development and modernization — an idea propagated by many postcolonial regimes including the USRDA — was not subject to heavy scrutiny, the staying power of chiefs who continue to play important roles in many African communities more than fifty years after they were officially abolished has caused this view to be reconsidered.⁸⁴ What has not been fully explored at this stage, however, is the degree to which the struggle

⁸¹ See Chapter 3.

⁸² CADN.Bamako.Amb.1.Synthèses politiques du Soudan (Mali) des services de police et du cabinet du gouverneur 1957-1959.*Synthèse mensuelle de renseignements – mois de Novembre 1958.*

⁸³ Dembélé, “La dimension politique du développement rural,” 121. “La mise sur pied de toute cette panoplie de structures d’encadrement n’avait d’autre but que de distribuer des sinécures à tel ou tel dirigeant de l’USRDA.”

⁸⁴ See, for example, Richard Rathbone, *Nkrumah & the Chiefs: The Politics of Chieftaincy in Ghana, 1951-60*, (Athens, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2000); Olufemi Vaughan, *Nigerian Chiefs: Traditional Power in Modern Politics, 1890s-1990s*, (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2006).

between postcolonial regimes and chiefs represents only part of broader efforts by modern ruling parties to control, shape, or destroy a variety of indigenous institutions. Nationalism motivated such policies in part, insofar as the USRDA had demonstrated anxiety about “regionalism” since the late 1950s⁸⁵ and many indigenous institutions had a “regional” or ethnic character. These institutions certainly did not have a pre-existing nationalist character, as it was only upon the USRDA’s rise to power in 1957 that its leaders introduced this idea to the public and indeed only after independence in 1960 that they began to vigorously promote it.⁸⁶ But socialism also played a unique role in shaping the regime’s view of indigenous institutions and its ambitions for transforming or even dismantling them. The rise of radical socialism within the USRDA was linked to the rise of “high modern” ideology⁸⁷ and to a heightened belief in the state’s capacity for “comprehensive planning of human settlement” and the administration of such settlements.⁸⁸ As demonstrated in the previous section of this chapter, key socialist radical figures like Madeira Keita have also been shown to have played instrumental roles in developing the USRDA’s anti-chief policy, and there is reason to believe that radical socialists had a particular interest in eradicating other types of indigenous

⁸⁵ As noted in Chapter 3, “regionalism” was of serious concern to the Keita regime from early on; this concern remained relevant even into the Active Revolution era. See CADN.Bamako.Amb.9.*Politique au Soudan. Télégramme hebdomadaire numéro 56, semaine du 28 décembre au 3 janvier 1961*; ANM.109.415.Rapport et Compte-Rendu du Mission à l’Intérieur du Mali 1968.1968 04 26 *Rapport de mission de la délégation du CNDR dans la section de Yélimané*. “Dans cet ordre d’idées, le camarade Doucouré s’est rendu coupable de violation du principe de démocratie en minimisant la responsabilité collégiale au sein du CLDR. En outre, il a créé et entretenu le regionalisme chez les masses au risque de compromettre dangereusement la cohésion et l’unité politique au sein du Parti...”

⁸⁶ See Chapter 2, “Repression in the Keita Years”.

⁸⁷ See Chapter 2, “A Decisive Month”.

⁸⁸ Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 4.

institutions and traditional authorities. Indeed, in addition to believing the state could transform the way people worked — through agricultural collectivization and the establishment of state-run industries — radical socialists within the regime also had ambitious goals for transforming the way people lived and thought, and in many cases they aimed to replace indigenous social, cultural, and religious institutions with state-run entities in order to effect this change.

In attempting to erode non-national identities and reduce the influence of indigenous institutions, the USRDA sought to shift the criteria upon which the legitimacy of leadership would be based. Thus the party's repressive policies toward a variety of indigenous institutions were not only about spreading the nationalist message but also about introducing Malians to a system of thought that would prize the ostensibly modern credentials of the USRDA and reject the value of old institutions in building the new nation. With this in mind, one might say the USRDA was not only building a new nation, but also attempting to effect a profound change in the way citizens conceived of the central government's role in the life of local communities. Indeed, in 1958 Modibo Keita suggested as much when he remarked upon the need to “create the necessary psychological shock” that would “bring the masses together [and] create within them a desire for, a collective disposition toward progress.”⁸⁹ In this sense, the Keita regime's attacks on these institutions constitute an expression of its high modern ideology, corresponding as they do to a desire “to bring about huge, utopian

⁸⁹ ANM.2.4.5e Congrès de l'Union Soudanaise RDA 1958. “Dans le contexte actuel, je ne crois pas que les autorités traditionnelles seront partout capables de créer le choc-psychologique nécessaire... à rassembler les masses, à créer chez elle un désir, une volonté collectifs de progrès.”

changes in people's...worldview."⁹⁰ This tendency toward brutal cultural interventions may have contributed to why many citizens rejected Mali altogether, referring to it as the Party's project rather than as the birthright of all citizens.⁹¹

At the same time as they were promoting this modern nation-building project, USRDA leaders attempted to erode the legitimacy of rivals who had the power to organize people according to non-modern principles. This transcended the chiefs, including religious figures, youth organizations, and a variety of other groups including traditional environmental protection societies and what the regime termed "secret societies." Indeed, although some scholars have characterized the USRDA's efforts to absorb Mali's Islamic schools, for example, and to replace their religious content with a uniform national curriculum as being motivated by a Marxist militant secularism,⁹² such efforts are better understood as an expression of high modern ambitions and as part of a wider project of establishing a uniform national culture and national identity under USRDA control – a project, begun in the late 1950s, that transcended questions of religion to include any institutions capable of generating or maintaining non-national identities.

In Djenné in 1963 the fact that religious practice was viewed as a higher priority than engaging with the formal political structures of the nation— above attending party meetings, for example — was distressing to the USRDA. Being pious was not

⁹⁰ Scott, *Seeing Like a State*.

⁹¹ Pierre Campmas notes that circa 1964 in Kangaba, while conducting a tour of the area, the deputy Makane Macoumba Diabaté encountered a local elder who asked him: "Your independence, when will it be over?" Pierre Campmas, "L'Union Soudanaise, Section Soudanaise Du Rassemblement Démocratique Africain 1946-1968," (PhD Thesis: Université de Toulouse, 1978), 14.

⁹² Louis Brenner, *Controlling Knowledge: Religion, Power, and Schooling in a West African Muslim Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001).

inherently problematic, for the vast majority of the population was Muslim (including most party members). But the fact that piety was often more important than national duty was seen as something to be changed. That one could comfortably abstain from political activism and still be considered a respectable person was evidently a state of affairs to be abhorred:

The isolation, the persistence of certain traditions that are hardly progressive, the very religious mindset of the inhabitants, which is almost fanatical, is the cause in Djenné of a defiant particularism. They are sceptical of all that isn't strictly religious (lay studies, the public service, political demonstrations...). Non-activism takes nothing away from one's respectability.⁹³

This quotation provides an indication of the scope of the USRDA's political and social project in the 1960s. They were not only attempting to build a new nation, but to transform the way citizens understood the role of government in their lives.

Djenné was a problem region for the USRDA during the first republic because its residents, though not necessarily in open revolt against the regime, often resisted taking up such ideas. That the city was difficult to access due to its location in an inland delta subject to flooding — a situation that turned Djenné into an island for many months of the year — made effecting such changes in thinking (or provoking a “psychological shock” that would stimulate a thirst for progress, in Modibo Keita's words) all the more challenging there. Indeed, a similar problem to that noted above arose again the following year, in 1964, and representatives from the BPN made the following complaint about it in the course of a mission to assess administrative problems in the

⁹³ ANM.109.415.Compte-rendu et rapport de mission à l'intérieur du Mali 1968.1963 12 09 *Rapport de Mission Djenné, Délégation du BPN*. “L'isolement, la persistance de certaines traditions peu progressistes, l'esprit très religieux des habitants presque fanatiques, valent à Djenné un particularisme réfractaire. On est sceptique pour tout ce qui n'est pas strictement religieux (études laïques, fonctionnariat, manifestations politiques...). La non militance ne dérange rien à la respectabilité.”

area:

The populations of Djenné, in particular those of the city, had never taken political affairs seriously... It is in this way [of eschewing USRDA politics] that for the inhabitants of Djenné, it is preferable to miss a [political] meeting than to be missing from the mosque. For them, life is limited to the mosque.⁹⁴

That the general population of Djenné would prefer to visit the mosque than to attend a political meeting — considering both the crucial role of religious institutions⁹⁵ in the psychological, social, and political health of communities and the striking beauty of Djenné's world-renowned mosques — is unsurprising. That this reality disturbed USRDA officials suggests that Mali's nationalist project was intended not only as a means of development and modernization, but also as a national moral project in which all were expected to participate.

One of the ways the USRDA, or at least certain radical party members, employed socialist ideas in the 1960s was to argue for just such a morality. In the context of what the USRDA claimed was the building of a new society and the onset of rapid development, giving voice to political alternatives was to sin against the nation, to lack the moral qualities of a citizen. These qualities, as the following quotation from a 1967

⁹⁴ ANM.109.416.Rapport et compte-rendu de mission à l'intérieur du Mali 1964-1967.1964 05 02 *Rapport de Mission à DJENNE*. "Les populations de Djenné, en particulier celles de la ville n'avaient jamais pris au sérieux les affaires politiques... C'est ainsi que pour les habitants de Djenné, il est préférable de manquer à une réunion qu'à la mosquée. Pour eux, la vie se borne à la mosquée."

⁹⁵ Sufi orders, particularly the Tijaniyya and Qadiriyya, have historically been the most important Islamic institutions in Mali, although reformist or Salafi iterations of Islam have slowly gained in prominence since their introduction in the 1940s (see, for example, Lansiné Kaba, *The Wahhabiyya: Islamic Reform and Politics in French West Africa* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1974); Brenner, *Controlling Knowledge*; Peterson, *Islamization from Below*. The Hamalliyya is also an important Sufi order in contemporary Mali, particularly in the Nioro area, but this was not the case during the period of USRDA rule. On this question see Benjamin Soares, *Islam and the Prayer Economy: History and Authority in a Malian Town* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005).

report indicates, were portrayed as uniquely socialist — a demonstration of how socialism allowed the USRDA to respond to a political imperative to define what types of attitudes and actions were welcome under its rule:

The re-establishment of morals, the blooming and the flowering of a socialist morality, are integral parts of our national construction. The imperative is to build the new society with a morality that is peculiar to it, specific.⁹⁶

Socialist morality remained a vague concept in the USRDA's rhetorical toolbox, but its egalitarian principles and the party's efforts to link it with the end of "exploitation of man by man"⁹⁷ clearly suggest moral aspects. Furthermore, the importance may have lain less in the particulars of socialist ideology, and more in the change it marked with Mali's past. Embarking on a new path allowed the party to justify the imposition of new political and social norms, and to mediate the competition for resources that took place in the postcolonial context. The connections with high modernism also seem clear in this case, as the notion that a political party possessed the authority and power to establish society's moral code speaks to a vast overconfidence in political leaders' capacity to shape not only politics but ethics and culture. This concept appears to have gained particular importance during the Active Revolution, when radical socialists had full control of the policy-making apparatus (even if their support on the ground may have varied from community to community).

At the same time as the postcolonial state was making these new kinds of demands on its citizens, it was curtailing certain forms of religious action — particularly public

⁹⁶ ANM.110.420.Rapport de synthèse sur le problème de l'amoralité et de la licence chez la jeunesse (Juin 1967). "Le redressement des moeurs, l'éclosion et l'épanouissement d'une morale socialiste sont parties intégrantes de notre construction nationale. L'impératif est de bâtir la société nouvelle avec la morale qui lui est propre, spécifique."

⁹⁷ ANM.125.467.Correspondances BPN 1957-1967.*Untitled*, 21 January 1964.

ones. *Talibés* (students in Quranic schools), for example, were forbidden from going out to collect alms, as was their longstanding custom. While the USRDA leaders knew it was important to maintain a religion-friendly policy if they wanted public support from a deeply religious population — party leaders had taken pains to distance themselves from Communism for this reason — they were also concerned about religion’s power to organize people in communities beyond the state’s control.⁹⁸ Public space was to be entirely national and socialist. And in the same way that Djenné’s pious were allowed to be Muslim so long as they subordinated their adherence to Islam to their devotion to the USRDA, *talibés* too were obliged to place their activities within a framework designed by the state, as this former *talibé* recalls:

[Modibo Keita] said that we had to stop being mendicants, that there was a stock house there where grain could be bought [from the state]... So in this case now in the morning... you know, I personally went to get just five kilograms [for the Quranic school, in lieu of begging alms]. I put myself in the line. I was out of the house from 5:30 until noon, even though that grain was supposed to be for the noon meal on that same day. I myself was in the line-up. So very long was this line that I don’t know what to say.⁹⁹

The Quranic schools were an independent institution operating wholly outside of the state, and yet the USRDA sought in some measure to bring them within it — to transform their independent practice of alms begging into a state-run practice of obtaining grain through government-regulated channels. This was part of a broader initiative to bring all of Mali’s Islamic schools under state authority and to eliminate their religious content in favour of the national curriculum the regime had developed. As Louis Brenner notes with regard to an Islamic school established in the capital in

⁹⁸ Interview with Boubacar Séga Diallo, Bamako, 20 March 2012.

⁹⁹ Interview with N’Faly Touré, Fama (Sikasso), 15 March 2012. Mr. Touré was a *talibé* during the First Republic.

1950:¹⁰⁰

The Bamako médersa was nationalized into the state school system to become the first of a newly established system of *écoles franco-arabes*, which was envisioned eventually to include all the Islamic médersas. The plan was for these schools to teach, in both the French and Arabic languages, a curriculum which would be completely secular.¹⁰¹

“This nationalization,” he continues, “was but a single element in the gradual but definitive ascendancy of secularist forces within the US-RDA leadership. By the mid-1960s médersa directors were becoming increasingly alienated from the Keita regime.”¹⁰² This alienation would not be limited to Islamic educators, but would be felt at a variety of levels across Malian society as the USRDA attempted to bring independent institutions under its control and remake them according to its own ideals. Some Christian mission schools would also be forced to close, as well as mission dispensaries offering medications in remote areas.¹⁰³ Furthermore, party efforts to ensure the dominance of this nationalist identity in Malian society were not limited to formal organizations; individuals were also disciplined for dressing in a manner that did not conform to USRDA standards. For example, although it was a cultural norm, Dogon women were sometimes whipped by state officials for failing to cover their upper body in public.¹⁰⁴ Although the USRDA does not appear to have established a national dress code, a clearly moralizing dimension is visible in its political project – particularly during the Active Revolution period when radical socialists with distinctly high modern ambitions controlled the party. Indeed, one of the functions of the Popular Militia was to

¹⁰⁰ Brenner, *Controlling Knowledge*, 63.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 171.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 126-127.

¹⁰³ Interview with John McKinney, Sévaré, 8 March 2012.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

enforce (informal) codes of decency and morality. As Lamine Sow, Minister for the Regulation of State Companies and Enterprises noted in October 1967, “it is part of our duty to support the Militia in its role of purifying morals that have become lax since independence.”¹⁰⁵ In service to this mission, the militias were called upon, for example, to apprehend adulterous couples at the cinema.¹⁰⁶ Such moralizing was also often used by the regime in an effort to restrict the ways young people dressed (with particular disdain reserved for Western fashions) and to discourage them from listening to Western music.¹⁰⁷ This was both an expression of the regime’s overconfidence in its ability to set Mali’s cultural agenda and an expression of concern about the many urban youth with no apparent interest in socialism or admiration for the regime.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, because “the regime of the First Republic attempted to create a new world” and to “make people change their habits and values,” this led to “many problems” not only of an economic order but also of a cultural one – problems for the most part that the USRDA could not solve.¹⁰⁹

When it did target organized institutions, in some cases the party would take things further, eliminating rather than coopting them. As historian Boubacar Segal Diallo describes:

¹⁰⁵ ANM.118.450. Correspondance et Rapport Présidence du Gouvernement 1960-1968. 26 Octobre 1967 *Le ministre chargé du contrôle des sociétés et entreprises d'état à Monsieur le Secrétaire Permanent de la Milice Populaire – BAMAKO*. “Il est de notre devoir de soutenir la Milice dans son rôle d'assainissement de nos moeurs relachés depuis l'Indépendance.”

¹⁰⁶ ANM.146.568. Dossier de la Milice Populaire, 1964-68. *Lettre à Kansoro Sogoba (Secrétaire Permanent de la Milice Populaire) concernant le cinéma Rio*. (No date; likely 1967-68).

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Abderhamane Diawara, Bamako, 22 February 2012.

¹⁰⁸ CADN. Bamako. Amb. 28. Dépêches politiques 1966. *Situation intérieur au Mali dans la perspective des relations franco-maliennes, 30 Juillet 1966*.

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Abderhamane Diawara, Bamako, 22 February 2012.

They went even further than that. They eliminated the canton chieftaincies, that's what we see. They eliminated here the associations with a traditional character. Oh yes, the initiatory societies. Even the members of the initiatory societies hid — the members of the “Komo,” the members of the “Koré.” All these members hid. Because they were forms of organization that could bring about the form of organization in a revolt or in a fight... So they [the USRDA] dissolved all those who could have a quintessentially very traditional character. In the Dogon country, they almost dismembered, completely destroyed the Dogon country... There were the “Alamuju.” They are secret societies, or organized groups in any case, that look after the environment... yes, indeed, the “Ogokana,” they were secret societies organized with young people... that had legitimacy given by the population to sanction people who came to cut trees in an abusive manner. But all of that, they [the USRDA] wanted to destroy all of that... So that the party could control all that happens in society. Well, it was serious. It was a total destruction of the organizations. I'm not against the RDA, but unfortunately that's my position as a historian.¹¹⁰

Other scholars have confirmed that institutions like the *Alamuju* suffered under the Keita regime, when “monolithic politics bore the hallmarks of its time, notably low public participation, the preponderance of administration in [rural] management structures, as well as an approach that was paternalistic, technical, and coercive.”¹¹¹ Diallo's testimony regarding the USRDA's intolerance of secret societies equally evokes the famous incident of peasant revolt in Ouéllésébougou in June, 1968, at the height of the Active Revolution.¹¹² In the aftermath of the incident, when eighty peasants were arrested, 56 were taken into custody for having participated in the revolt directly, but 24 were also arrested for belonging to what USRDA documents characterize as a “secret

¹¹⁰ Interview with Boubacar Séga Diallo, Bamako. 20 March 2012. Dr. Diallo has visited the Dogon country, where he collected the testimonies that inform his opinion.

¹¹¹ Moussa Djiré, “Les conventions locales, un outil de gestion durable des ressources naturelles ? Acquis et interrogations à partir d'exemples maliens,” *Forum Praïa+9* (Bamako, 17-21 novembre 2003): 6. “De façon générale, les conventions de l'étape du monolithisme politique, portaient la marque de leur temps, à savoir, la faible participation des populations, la prépondérance de l'administration dans les structures de gestion, ainsi que celle des démarches paternalistes, techniciennes et coercitives.”

¹¹² Jean-Loup Amselle, “La Conscience Paysanne: La Révolte de Ouolossébougou (juin 1968, Mali),” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 12, no. 3 (1978): 339–55.

association.”¹¹³ Similarly, in Kangaba party officials noted in 1968 “the real power of the spiritual leaders [*chefs de culte*], legacy of all the secret societies,” and recommended “a veritable ideological ‘crusade’ in order to little by little free the masses from the grip of retrograde habits born of... a feudal system.”¹¹⁴ This latter quote’s emphasis on ideological education may be an expression of ideas that only became popular during the Active Revolution of 1967-68. Indeed, there were even official “Ideological Campaigns” established during this period, with the CNDR meeting in 1968 to discuss the themes that should be taught. These included broad categories – like “Why the people must defend the achievements of the socialist revolution” as well as “What are the achievements of our revolution”¹¹⁵ – and are suggestive of a surge in high modern overconfidence regarding the state’s capacity to effect “utopian changes in people’s...moral conduct and world view.”¹¹⁶ Yet the underlying anxiety expressed about local power and local identities in the party’s reports about the “secret societies” in Kangaba, or observable in the arrests made within the membership of the “secret

¹¹³ ANM.103.394.Rapport Ouélléssébougou 1963-1968.1968 08 26 *Rapport spécial sur l'évolution de la situation politique de la sous-section de Ouélléssébougou.*

¹¹⁴ ANM.109.415.Compte-Rendu et Rapport de Mission à l'Intérieur du Mali 1968.1968 *Mission de la délégation du CNDR à KANGABA.* “Après les plaintes et la réaction des autorités de la place, le Président du CLDR, selon ses propres déclarations a été "taxé par la population d'avoir pris le parti des 'Venant-de-loin' contre ses parents". La délégation, après une analyse exhaustive de la situation, compte tenu du niveau de conscience politique encore bas, du poids réel des chefs de culte, lot de toutes les sociétés secrètes, ne croit pas devoir mettre en cause l'existence du CLDR...Pour ce faire il faut...développer la conscience politique des masses par une formation idéologique intensive en organisant une véritable "croisade" idéologique, afin de soustraire petit-à-petit ces masses de l'emprise des habitudes retrogrades nées de l'action séculaire d'un système féodal...”

¹¹⁵ ANM.129.485.Thème pour la Campagne Education Idéologique et Information 1968.CNDR. “Pourquoi le peuple doit défendre les réalisations de la révolution socialiste”; “Quelles sont les réalisations de notre révolution.”

¹¹⁶ Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 4.

association” of Ouéllésébougou, is indicative of longstanding USRDA concerns about regionalism, unity, and the volatility of the Malian political environment.¹¹⁷ The fact that these organizations are described in USRDA documents in such vague terms perhaps speaks to this very anxiety – the Keita regime did not know much about what they were, but unlike its colonial predecessor it did not make any strong effort to bridge that knowledge gap through sociological inquiry;¹¹⁸ more often, it sought to eliminate institutions with which it was not familiar and that it did not control.

It was not only in the latter years of its rule that the USRDA came into conflict with the spiritual leaders of the Manding in the holy town of Kangaba. In 1961 a local arrondissement chief was beaten after entering a sacred off-limits area during the re-roofing ceremony of the Kamabolon, the holy building for which Kangaba is famous, leading to the arrest of the responsible group’s leader. Later, in 1967, Modibo Keita would come into conflict with the elders of Kangaba, and some would claim that he was turned away from the holy building because his legitimacy was in question — an insult that allegedly caused him to threaten to tear it down.¹¹⁹ This is another example of the conflict between the modern power of the USRDA, a party that sought to be synonymous with the state itself, and Mali’s indigenous institutions. The arrondissement chief’s synecdochic footsteps inside the sacred area stand in for the broader encroachment of the state into the space occupied by religious institutions.

Kangaba was not the only place where such conflicts arose. In 1964, for example, it was found that the arrondissement chief and General Secretary of the Party Sub-

¹¹⁷ See Chapter 2, “Repression in the Keita Years”.

¹¹⁸ Interview with Jean Bosco Konaré, Bamako, 2 March 2012.

¹¹⁹ Camara, “Modibo Keita,” 18-22.

Section of Yanfolila, in the southern region of Sikasso, wrongfully arrested four people. Apparently, “it was a question of individuals implicated in the fetish affair of Morifina.”¹²⁰ Equally, in a village near Koulikoro a village chief who had promoted abstention from the 1964 single-candidate legislative elections was described as enjoying considerable local power “because of the complex of mystification created around him... for reasons of a customary and spiritual order (he is the doyen of the sector, guardian of the fetishes and master of cults).”¹²¹

The USRDA also sought to eradicate traditional youth associations, replacing them with new state structures. Thus the regime attempted a “transformation of the traditional “*ton*” – or village age group organizations – “into associations that were extremely subservient to the party.”¹²² Furthermore, as Seydou Camara has noted, “[i]n the context of supervision of the youth, the religious and lay societies would be dissolved and regrouped within the Popular Militia for the eldest ones and of the National Pioneers Movement for the youngest ones.”¹²³ The pioneers movement was established in 1959, along with the “vigilance brigades,” in an effort to “organize the youth, without distinctions of sex or social and geographic origin, in multiple structures

¹²⁰ ANM.126.468.BPN Secrétariat 1960-1967.1964 06 24 *Faits reprochés aux responsables politiques et administratifs de Yanfolila.*

¹²¹ ANM.11.25.Elections législatives 1964.*Annexe I au rapport général sur les élections législatives du 12 avril 1964 Section de Koulikoro.*

¹²² Dembélé, “La dimension politique du développement rural,” 121. “En effet l’USRDA procédera à un encadrement très complexe des paysans (transformation du « ton » traditionnel en associations fortement inféodées au parti...).”

¹²³ Camara, “Modibo Keita,” 17. “Dans le cadre de l’encadrement de la jeunesse, les associations religieuses et laïques seront dissoutes et regroupées au sein de la Milice Populaire pour les plus âgés et du Mouvement National des Pionniers pour les plus jeunes.”

founded on the idea of the “citizen soldier” that linked civic and physical training.”¹²⁴ While the *pionniers* “organized school-aged children into a national youth movement” that engaged in sport, music, and theatre as “an effective strategy for raising the party’s profile in the towns and for garnering popular support for the party’s political agenda,”¹²⁵ the *brigades de vigilance* were “organizations of party youth constituted with the aim of reinforcing the activities of the security services and of extending them into the smallest settlements by participating in the maintenance of public order in the streets, stadiums, parks, cinemas, theatres and during the assemblies and meetings of the party.”¹²⁶ The militia, meanwhile, was established as early as May 1960¹²⁷ and “constituted the core of the people’s army and [was] to the National Army what the vigilance brigades [were] to the security services.”¹²⁸ The militia’s role would change

¹²⁴ Orphélie Rillon, “Corps Rebelles: La Mode Des Jeunes Urbains Dans Les Années 1960-1970 Au Mali,” *Genèses* 4, no. 81 (2010): 67. “Dès 1959, le Parti unique tenta d’organiser la jeunesse, sans distinction de sexe, ou d’origine sociale et géographique, en de multiples structures fondées sur l’idée du “soldat citoyen” qui associaient formation civique et physique. Les deux grandes structures de masse de la jeunesse furent le Mouvement national des pionniers et les Brigades de vigilance, mises en sommeil à partir de 1964 au profit des milices populaires.”

¹²⁵ Mary Jo Arnoldi, “Youth Festivals and Museums: The Cultural Politics of Public Memory in Postcolonial Mali,” *Africa Today* 52, no. 4 (June 2006): 57.

¹²⁶ ANM.114.437.Rapport et Correspondance – Ministère de la défense et de la Sécurité 1953-1968. *Rôle de forces de sécurité (police, gendarmerie, brigades de vigilance et milice)* n.d. “BRIGADES DE VIGILANCE: Elles sont des organisations de jeunes du Parti constituées dans le but de renforcer l’action des Services de Sécurité et de la prolonger jusque dans les plus petites agglomérations en participant au maintien de l’ordre public dans les rues, les stades, les parcs, cinémas, théâtres et pendant les manifestations et meetings du Parti.”

¹²⁷ ANM.18.36.Fédération du Mali 1960.1960 05 23 *Circulaire à tous les cercles subdivisions et postes administratives*. “Il y a lieu également d’organiser et de faire fonctionner des milices et des groupes de protection dans tous les villages.”

¹²⁸ ANM.114.437.Rapport et Correspondance – Ministère de la défense et de la Sécurité 1953-1968. *Rôle de forces de sécurité (police, gendarmerie, brigades de vigilance et milice)*, n.d. “MILICES POPULAIRES: Elles constituent des noyaux d’armée du Peuple et sont à l’Armée Nationale ce qu’est la Brigade de vigilance par rapport à la Sécurité.”

over time and would in fact come to challenge that of the national army during the Active Revolution,¹²⁹ yet the most interesting aspect of these organizations in this context is the way in which they promoted the “uniformization of the body” in a nationalist context.¹³⁰ The Keita regime not only sought to modify the social hierarchy by subordinating questions of class to questions of national belonging, but it similarly subordinated sex and age roles to national duty in a manner that, due to “the socialist state’s egalitarian concerns, upset the gerontocratic and patriarchal order.”¹³¹ For example, although the party by no means promoted the equality of the sexes, it did advance the idea that “a “good housewife” should be, above all, a “good citizen”.”¹³² Along similar lines, when making national addresses on the radio or in public venues, President Keita was fastidious about opening with the words “Maliennes et Maliens,” thereby explicitly placing women and men on an equal footing in the nation – and, by always placing the feminine before the masculine, asserting that women were first among equals in the new Malian community.¹³³ Furthermore, the BPN did have one female member throughout much of the 1960s, Awa Keita, further indicating a desire on the USRDA’s part to establish political parity between men and women, or at least to

¹²⁹ Camara, “Modibo Keita,” 9–27.

¹³⁰ Rillon, “Corps Rebelles,” 67.

¹³¹ Ibid., 67. “Les normes sociales promues par l’Etat socialiste, dans son souci égalitariste, bouleversaient l’ordre gerontocratique et patriarcal.”

¹³² Ibid., 67. “Si, dans leurs discours, les dirigeants politiques distinguaient les rôles sociaux des hommes et des femmes, l’idée selon laquelle une « bonne ménagère » devait être, avant tout, une « bonne citoyenne » eut des conséquences inattendues: hommes et femmes intégrèrent les mêmes structures et leurs traitements étaient à peu près équivalents.”

¹³³ E.g. “Message au peuple du Mali à l’occasion du nouvel an 1961,” in *Modibo Keita: Discours et interventions* (Bamako: n.p., 1965), 13. “Maliennes et Maliens”. Also, telephone interview with Dr. Pascal J. Imperato, 4 February 2011.

offer women meaningful, if limited, participation in the life of the nation.¹³⁴

Analogously, although the party remained largely patriarchal in orientation, it sought to create a uniform national identity among the youth through the establishment of the aforementioned programs. And although such new institutions surely created opportunities for social change, the USRDA continued “to keep youth in a subaltern position with regard to elders,” and many young Malians “rapidly turned away from these paramilitary organizations, which [they] judged to be too authoritarian.”¹³⁵ Thus the USRDA’s campaign to erode the power of non-state institutions was one that affected not only the nation’s elders, but also young people whose own traditional organizations came under attack during the First Republic.

Chiefs were a major concern for the USRDA during the Malian First Republic, and even before. They constituted the party’s main political rivals, and challenged the USRDA strongly both inside and outside of formal politics. And yet the party’s ongoing conflict with chiefs was only part of a much broader — and more startling — effort to subordinate or destroy a great many institutions, practices, and organizations that drew their legitimacy from non-modern sources to which the Party did not have access. As scholars of Africa have increasingly turned to the post-colonial past with the recent series of fifty-year anniversaries and the opening of certain postcolonial archives, the question of how the postcolonial political dispensation differed from the colonial one has loomed large. What the Malian evidence demonstrates in this case is that, despite

¹³⁴ Mann, “Anti-Colonialism and Social Science’ in French Africa,” 92–119.

¹³⁵ Rillon, “Corps Rebelles,” 67-68. “Enfin, la jeunesse urbaine et scolarisée, qui avait constitué les premiers éléments de ces organisations, se détourna rapidement de ces structures paramilitaires qu’elle jugeait trop autoritaires. De surcroît, si le projet socialiste plaçait les jeunes au coeur de sa politique économique et nationaliste, il ne cessait pour autant de les maintenir dans une position subalterne face aux aînés.”

similarities in the postcolonial state's basic structure to that of the colonial era, a fundamental shift took place in how government leaders conceived of and related to "private society" and its non-state institutions. Paradoxically, this led to a state of affairs where, while the decolonization of Africa was being hailed around the globe as a boon for African liberty, many of the institutions considered hallmarks of African societies, such as chieftaincies, Quranic schools, and traditional youth organizations, were viewed by the state not as patrimony but as problems.

A particular nationalist concern for political unity and progress provided part of the impetus for the implementation of these policies. Yet high modern ideology, which came to play an increasingly important role in shaping USRDA discourse and policy in the era of radical socialism that followed independence – and most particularly in the Active Revolution era of largely unfettered radical policymaking – also provided its own distinct motivation for transforming, appropriating, or destroying a variety of indigenous institutions. Such thinking led (certain) party leaders to embrace both the virtues of comprehensive planning – what one might term social engineering – and the state's capacity to implement such sweeping and reductive plans.

These efforts would meet with mixed results. Indeed, as the following section will explore with specific regard to chiefs (there are grounds to infer that this was also true for other "traditional" forms of authority), such indigenous institutions were far more resilient than the USRDA anticipated. Whatever their efficacy, such policies, and more broadly such a way of approaching state-society relations, cast a shadow upon a nationalist narrative that characterized its interventions in rural life as steps on the road to progress.

Tenacious Traditions: Policy failures in rural governance

As Scott has noted, high modern thought is characterized by an “uncritical, unskeptical, and thus unscientifically optimistic” appraisal of “the possibilities for the comprehensive planning of human settlement” under state guidance.¹³⁶ The approach of certain USRDA leaders — including but not limited to Madeira Keita and other radical socialists — to chiefs and indigenous authorities more broadly bore the hallmarks of this thinking in the decade between 1958-1968 and, like many policies born of overconfidence, “their plans miscarried or were thwarted.”¹³⁷ The Keita regime underestimated the power and legitimacy of these figures, many of whom continued to play informal yet influential roles in rural administration during this period (and indeed afterward). The failure of the regime to accurately take the chiefs’ measure ultimately weakened its grip on certain rural communities, stirred discontent in others, and contributed to the broad alienation of the populace from a government that proved itself out of touch with Malians’ political values.¹³⁸

In October 1962 a government circular was issued concerning the problem of certain ex-canton chiefs who, despite being stripped of their official positions, continued to wield considerable power in their communities. This issue surfaced again in 1963, as the following government correspondence from Djenné indicates:

...we submitted the question [of chiefs’ continuing power] to the Political Bureau who didn’t put up any hurdles to supporting the point of view of the Administration, namely: destroy the influence of ex-Canton Chiefs who find themselves in this situation by a political effort of persuasion, and in the case of

¹³⁶ Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 4.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹³⁸ Cooper, *Africa in the World*, 86.

failure with recourse to more firm methods.¹³⁹

This was the position of the BPN: “destroy the influence of the ex-Canton Chiefs” – by convincing or coercing the population, as need be – for such influence was unacceptable five years after the chieftaincies had been abolished. And yet it was widespread. This is only one of many sources indicating chiefs could not be as easily stripped of their real authority as the USRDA had hoped, even if they were formally stripped of their titles. As with many of the Keita regime’s high modern policies — from restraints on commerce¹⁴⁰ to collectivization¹⁴¹— the Party overestimated its capacity to effect change, particularly where it involved altering the culture and beliefs of the population in profound ways. Even where people had grievances against chiefs in rural areas, they tended to respect the institution; citizens largely considered it to be an accepted fixture of the rural political landscape, even if certain radical party leaders vehemently disagreed.¹⁴² Indeed, canton chiefs had more popular legitimacy than the USRDA was willing to accommodate or admit – one of the reasons the decision to exclude them from the state, spearheaded by Madeira Keita in 1958, often had the unintended consequence of creating a layer of informal parallel administration. Indeed, as B. Marie Perinbam has demonstrated in her enlightening book on the Bamako *kafu* (the precursor in many ways of the canton), political power had long been tied to political families, such that rural

¹³⁹ ANM.140.544.Extraits des évènements 1960-1968.1963 07 Djenné *Revue des évènements du mois*. “...nous avons soumis la question au Bureau Politique qui n'a pas mis de difficultés à rallier le point de vue de l'Administration à savoir: détruire l'influence des ex-Chefs de canton se trouvant dans le cas d'abord par un travail politique de persuasion et en cas d'échec avoir recours à des moyens plus ferme.”

¹⁴⁰ See Chapter 5, “The Merchants of Menace.”

¹⁴¹ See Chapter 6, especially “Collectivization.”

¹⁴² Interview with Abdoulaye Amadou Sy, Bamako, 11 February 2012; interview with Garba Touré, Bamako, 14 February 2012.

Malians understood these chiefly families not just to represent the state but to embody it.

She defines this small, localized state as:

the network of incumbent families holding political power, not families sedentarized within fixed territorial boundaries. In other words, not only were familial political and ethnographic identities derived from the family and state construct. They *were* the state.¹⁴³

The family at the head of the *kafu* in the 19th century, the Niaré, went on to be canton chiefs in the colonial era — and leaders of the family continue to serve today as *chefs de quartier*, something akin to village chiefs for the heart of the city.¹⁴⁴ Thus although their role has not remained static, they have retained their stature as important community figures; this is hardly unique to Bamako, and has been observed in various locations across Mali. Indeed, as Guédiouma Samaké recounts with regard to the Jitumu region of southern Mali:

The canton chieftaincies were abolished officially. In reality there was what we here call “Babo.” The “Babo” are lineages of Jitumu Moussa [descendants of a legendary founding figure]... It exists here [in the present]. There are not canton chiefs but there are great families... These “Babo” [who administer groups of five or six villages] get together when there is a problem, to discuss and adopt a position.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ B. Marie Perinbam, *Family Identity and the State in the Bamako Kafu, 1800-1900*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), 16.

¹⁴⁴ Members of the Niaré family have also gone on to respected roles in the postcolonial state. Salah Niaré would serve as Minister of Agriculture in the Keita regime from 1957-1962 and again from 1966-1968. As will be discussed further in Chapter 6, Niaré was opposed to collectivization and the ideological approach to agriculture taken by the regime’s radical socialists; he was sent to Haute Volta as Malian ambassador between 1962-66 for raising these concerns. I’ve had the good fortune of meeting several members of the Niaré family in Bamako. At one such meeting on the afternoon of 21 March 2012, Salah and I discussed the forces that toppled the Keita regime in a coup d’état in 1968 while, unbeknownst to us, soldiers were laying siege to the presidential palace only a few kilometres across the city in a putsch that would topple the government of Amadou Toumani Touré.

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Guédiouma Samaké (former mayor of Ouéllessébougou), 10 March 2012. Also, with respect to the Sikasso region, interview with Abdoulaye M. Traoré, Sikasso, 12 March 2012.

Chiefs predated the colonial era and they have postdated the socialist era. Yet radical socialists within the party had (largely misplaced) confidence both that they had a better solution for rural administration than chiefs could offer and that they had the means to implement it.

One of the changes provoked by this high modern overconfidence was that, unlike the French, the USRDA did not study chiefs or other traditional authorities to any great extent. Jan Jansen has noted that, even though their centralizing administrative tendencies sometimes created havoc in local politics due to the incorporation of several (formerly independent) powerful families in one canton, the French generally took a strong interest in history and tradition, thinking it useful to respect existing political hierarchies. To this end, they conducted not just sociological but also historical studies concerning lineages of rulership in the interest of what they viewed as good governance.¹⁴⁶ Some Malian scholars have noted that the postcolonial regime's lack of interest in history and general failure to continue a program of sociological and historical research picking up where the French had left off was one of the reasons the USRDA grew increasingly out of touch with the population in this regard.¹⁴⁷ In other words, it appears that the party did not focus on studying the political culture of the communities it governed because it believed it could impose its *own* political culture. This kind of high modern hubris, affiliated as it was with the rise of radical socialism within the party, is suggestive of how socialist ideals may have led the regime astray by

¹⁴⁶ Jan Jansen, "L'administration Française et le canton de Naréna", in S. Camara (Ed.), *Nambala Keïta, chef de canton de Naréna (1895-1969)* (Bamako: Librairie Bah Nord-Sud, 2005), 70-134.

¹⁴⁷ Interview with Boubacar Séga Diallo. Bamako, 20 March 2012.

endowing it with excessive confidence in its ability to simply push such institutions aside and build new ones as they saw fit.

The issue of chiefs' continued power in the countryside plagued the USRDA even at the end of their regime. Certain discouraged USRDA militants were of the mind that, indeed, nothing had changed in the ten years since the Party had come to power. Much to the dismay of policy-makers from Bamako, certain former canton chiefs had managed to obtain positions at the head of new local institutions that had been set up to administer rural communities, and – contrary to the spirit of the 1958 decree proclaiming their elimination – they continued to carry out many of the functions that had formerly fallen to them. This situation led Baréma Bocoum, the USRDA's most senior member from the central region of Mopti (and, interestingly, a prominent moderate), to suggest such ex-chiefs be removed from the positions they had contrived to obtain on various village governing committees, as their continued involvement in politics and administration risked undermining the strength of the Party:

Although expressed timidly, sometimes with much confusion, the position of longstanding comrades drowned by the number and the presence of former canton chiefs or notorious adversaries of yesterday at the head of organizations, indicates the sentiment that nothing has changed. If some seem to accept with resignation this fate that has been made for them, others complain of it openly, as we've had the occasion to remark...

Indeed, to speak of only two comrades who, to justify their "good understanding" with the former canton chiefs [who are] today members of the leadership structures, responded to accusations of their complicity in these terms = "The chief executes all the decisions of the Party and the Government. In his village commercialization, payment of taxes, are subject to no delay." If these criteria are indispensable in a good leader, it must nonetheless be recognized that they do not suffice to define a leader of our Party, whoever he may be, because on the basis of the above-mentioned criteria, we wouldn't have had the need to Africanize our officials, to forgo the services of the European Commandant de Cercle...¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ ANM.144.565.Compte-rendu divers cercles 1956-1968.1967 02 27 *Compte rendu Douentza (signé Baréma Bocoum)*. "...Quoique exprimée timidement, avec beaucoup de

Documents such as this are telling in many ways. They indicate, for one thing, that well after their official abolition chiefs were considered *as* chiefs by certain local officials – even if this was clearly contested by others, as this document also highlights. This is in keeping with Perinbam’s contention that historically the state was a familial affair, and demonstrates that, in spite of efforts to build new institutions excluding chiefs and traditional power-holders, the power invested in ruling lineages was not easily taken away. The quotation within the above-cited document is also important. It shows that canton chiefs were effective administrators who were sometimes better able to collect taxes and persuade peasants to sell their grain than were new party officials, and it further reinforces the idea that many citizens – though certainly not all – still considered them to be chiefs even though, officially, they had no role. (This diversity of opinion over the meaning of the chieftaincies seems to relate to the broad moderate-radical divide within the party, with moderates taking a more conservative view and radicals

confusion des fois, la position des camarades anciens noyés par le nombre et la présence d'anciens chefs de canton ou adversaires notoires d'hier à la tête des organismes, traduit le sentiment que rien n'a changé. Si certains semblent accepter avec résignation ce sort qui leur est fait, d'autres s'en plaignent de façon ouverte comme nous avons eu l'occasion de le constater... En effet, pour ne parler que des deux camarades, qui, pour justifier leur "bonne entente" avec des anciens chefs de canton aujourd'hui membres des organismes dirigeants, ont répondu aux accusations de complicité en ces termes = "Le chef exécute toutes les décisions du Parti et du Gouvernement. Dans son village, la commercialisation, le paiement des impôts, ne souffrent aucun retard". Si ces critères sont indispensables à un bon responsable, il faut pourtant reconnaître qu'ils ne suffisent pas pour définir un responsable de notre Parti, quel qu'il soit, car sur la base des critères ci-dessus invoquées, nous n'aurions pas eu besoin d'africaniser nos cadres, de nous passer des services du Commandant de Cercle européen.... Il serait donc à recommander vivement que les camarades chefs d'arrondissement, sans perdre de vue les résultats positifs dans le travail administratif accordent une priorité absolue aux comportements sociaux de ceux-là qui risquent d'utiliser leur "zèle" pour émousser, voire dissoudre la confiance en notre Parti. (signé Baréma BOCOUM, Tiémoko KEITA).”

tending to believe chiefs should and could be abolished.)¹⁴⁹

The document equally embodies the confrontational attitude of (at least certain) USRDA leaders toward chiefs during the First Republic – even if lower level officials on the ground saw things differently or were powerless to prevent ex-chiefs from exerting an influence on local politics. The fact that radical leftists like Madeira Keita had pushed for the outright elimination of the chieftaincies demonstrates a clear intent to break dramatically with the past. Such leaders did not wish to co-opt chiefs, to share power with “traditional” authorities, or to give chiefs official roles within the new postcolonial state apparatus, and yet in spite of the USRDA’s official anti-chief stance, evidence suggests that chiefs managed nonetheless to achieve a kind of *de facto* accommodation in certain rural communities.

A policy officially geared toward accommodation might have been mutually beneficial — chiefs with local legitimacy acting in the name of the government would lend strength to the name of the state, while also benefiting from a notable position in the new political order. This was indeed the position taken by Kwame Nkrumah and the CPP after Ghanaian independence, where chiefs were officially recognized and incorporated into the state — even as the CPP remained wary of them. This may have allowed the CPP to control the chiefs more effectively, as they were then able to reward allegiance to the party and punish dissidence. Indeed, many anti-CPP chiefs were removed from their posts and replaced. The long-term benefits of this alternative strategy, however, are difficult to gauge, and after Nkrumah’s fall in 1966 deposed

¹⁴⁹ For more on the moderate-radical divide, see Chapter 2, “Moderates, Radicals, and the History of Socialism in Postwar Soudan.”

chiefs were reinstated.¹⁵⁰ Whatever the benefits of such an arrangement might have been for Mali, it seems that a kind of high modern assuredness about the state's capacity to dispense with chiefs rendered the prospect of compromise (theoretically) irrelevant. Madeira Keita and others within the USRDA's radical socialist faction thought it possible and desirable to eliminate chiefs, and they did not wish to compromise.¹⁵¹ (Certain moderates, like Baréma Bocoum, may have also wished to see chiefs eliminated, but others like Jean-Marie Koné and the many PSP cadres absorbed by the USRDA in the wake of this party's collapse in 1959¹⁵² appear to have taken a sympathetic view of chiefs and other traditional authorities.¹⁵³) Like the rest of the high modern agenda that would come to dominate USRDA policymaking in the 1960s, however, this proved much more difficult to accomplish than anticipated. Furthermore, some suggest the USRDA's attacks on the institution of chiefs reduced the efficacy of government, created chaos in the countryside, and isolated rulers from the ruled. In certain rural areas the local party structures appear to have lacked the political legitimacy to govern; it seems that in some of these cases *de facto* arrangements were made at the village or town level — contrary to official policy — that allowed chiefs to

¹⁵⁰ Rathbone, "Kwame Nkrumah and the Chiefs," 62–63.

¹⁵¹ Indeed, Gregory Mann describes this ambitious attack on chiefs as "the strongest single move against the colonial system made before independence," ("Anti-Colonialism and Social Science," 114-115).

¹⁵² Daba Diawara, *La Conquête de L'indépendance et L'édification Du Nouvel État Du Mali*, vol. I, Collection Repères (Bamako: Éditions Tropics, 2012), 248-252.

¹⁵³ Koné affirmed chiefs' fundamental role in Soudanese society in 1957 (*L'Essor* no 2396, 7 Janvier 1957, "Une Conférence de l'Union Soudanaise"), and it appears that he himself became something of a "spiritual authority" in the 1970s as he grew increasingly involved with "traditional institutions" like hunting groups, well known sites of esoteric and magical knowledge in Mali (Vladimir Arseniev, "Les chasseurs Donso du Mali à l'épreuve du temps," *Afrique contemporaine* 223–224, no. 3 (2008): 341–61).

continue performing certain administrative functions (albeit informally), as noted historian and politician Jean Bosco Konaré indicates:

When they eliminated the canton chieftaincies, at that time and now I consider... it was an error. They eliminated the canton chieftaincies, but they actively made an exception for us [the family of the chief of the canton of Torodo]. Because... you couldn't do anything up there [in Torodo]. Even the directives (*mots d'ordre*) of the Party could only pass if the canton chief gave the order. If you put the canton chiefs aside, well, nobody would say they disagreed. But nobody would execute the directives. So it was necessary to spare that organization which allowed, in a way, to revive the directives of the Party.¹⁵⁴

This kind of accommodation was not official policy; indeed, it undermined policy. As noted earlier in this section, these were the kinds of informal and insidious arrangements that senior regime figures characterized as an ongoing problem, not as a solution to the problem of developing a system of rural governance with a national character. Such arrangements, though technically disallowed, appear – at least in certain cases like in Torodo – to have been necessary to the essential work of rural administration that the regime's new structures could not always accomplish effectively; as will be shown in Chapter 5, a similar situation developed with regard to merchants picking up the slack created by the regime's failing system of state-run commerce. With this analogy in mind, one might consider the ongoing informal authority of chiefs as a kind of “black market” administration. The radical socialists who had moved to eliminate chiefs in the first place certainly did not sanction it. On the contrary these elements within the party would devote considerable energy, especially during the Active Revolution, to combatting the influence of traditional authorities and chiefs by, for example, attempting

¹⁵⁴ Interview with Jean Bosco Konaré, Bamako, 2 March 2012.

to replace village chiefs with “Basic Revolutionary Committees.”¹⁵⁵

Torodo was not the only community in the First Republic where chiefs continued to exercise authority despite having been formally excluded from government. Madeira Keita observed in the region of Ségou, for example, that at the village level chiefs often controlled all party structures. Village chiefs were not abolished by the USRDA regime – although, as noted, plans were afoot in 1968 to do so – and they played a role in tax collection. Their role, however, was meant to be limited in scope and subordinated to local party structures. In practice, however, traditional elites tended to dominate these new structures as well. As Madeira Keita recounts:

Our outings have permitted us to realize that if the structures exist, they remain confused. Indeed, our activists in the villages do not make a clear distinction between committee, village council, and administrative council of the rural grouping. The same and sole persons are at once leaders of the village council, of the committee, and of the administrative council of the G.P. At Kouroubadougou... the village chief is equally president of two other institutions in his village. And on top of this, he chairs the meetings of the youth, which he leads.¹⁵⁶

Several similar situations were reported by regime officials in 1964, when they conducted a number of investigations into low voter turnout during the single-party legislative elections. “Feudalists” in Niafunké, for example, still exercised such

¹⁵⁵ These plans were afoot at the time of the 1968 coup d’état; such committees were never implemented. (ANM.129.486.Note sure le Comité Révolutionnaire de Base.CNDR).

¹⁵⁶ ANM.109.415.Compte-Rendu et Rapport de Mission à l’Intérieur du Mali 1968.1968 02 05 *Compte rendu de la tournée des responsables de la zone de San Tominian (signé Madeira Keita)*. “Nos sorties nous ont permis de nous rendre compte que si les structures existent, il reste qu’elles sont confondues. En effet, nos militants des villages ne font pas une nette distinction entre comité, conseil de village et conseil d’administration du groupement rural. Les mêmes et seules personnes sont à la fois responsables du conseil de village, du comité et du conseil d’Administration du G.R. A Kouroubadougou Kagoua le chef de village est aussi, président des eux autres organismes de son village. Et de surcroît, il préside les réunions des jeunes qu’il anime.”

authority that, after “leading a campaign against our party and our socialist option” they were able to convince the population to “categorically refuse to vote” in spite of USRDA directives.¹⁵⁷

At the same time in Korientzé “elements faithful to the ex-canton chief tried to create confusion in people’s minds by provoking incidents” intended to prevent anyone from reaching voting stations and supporting the USRDA.¹⁵⁸ Oral informants equally suggest that ex-chiefs – and their political dynasties – often retained much of their power in a context where chiefs had been abolished by contriving to have close relatives, such as a younger brother, chosen for key roles in the new structures of postcolonial rural administration, like the USRDA’s local committee.¹⁵⁹ Such examples illustrate a broader phenomenon that one might term administrative inertia. In large measure, effective governance depended upon effective control of Mali’s agricultural resources – its main export – and of its overwhelmingly rural population. This population was divided into thousands of small communities across the country, each with its own politics. Motivated by a high modern (over)confidence in their capacity to shape society according to a comprehensive plan, certain USRDA leaders attempted to

¹⁵⁷ ANM.11.25.Élections Législatives 1964.1964 04 15 *Le commandant de cercle de Niafunké à Monsieur le gouverneur de la région de Mopti*. “Ainsi donc, les féodaux, les ex-PRS, les partisans de Daouda Boré et les mécontents de tous bords se sont-ils retrouvés pour mener une campagne contre notre Parti et notre option socialiste...C'est ainsi qu'à Sah dans 10 bureaux de vote sur 20, il n'y eut aucun votant et qu'à N'Gorkou, aucun votant n'a été enregistré au bureau de vote de Saré-Touba où, en dépit de l'intervention du chef d'Arrondissement et du Député Annassy, les populations ont catégoriquement refusé de voter.”

¹⁵⁸ ANM.11.25.Élections Législatives 1964.22 *Avril 1964, de Baba Mamadou Sy, Président du comité électoral*. “Des éléments fidèles à l'ex-Chef de canton ont essayé de jeter la confusion dans les esprits en provoquant des incidents. Ils ont usé des stratagèmes en tendant des barrages au marché et au bord du lac pour empêcher nos militants venus de tous côtés de se rendre aux bureaux de vote. Il proféraient des insultes...”

¹⁵⁹ Interview with Fodé Diawara, Bamako, 8 February 2012.

replace, or at least supersede, these local political traditions with party structures staffed by party advocates pushing party policy. In practice, however, this was not easy to accomplish and, as the examples above suggest, often resulted either in fundamental administrative continuity or unrest and opposition, in spite of USRDA efforts to establish a new society ruled in a new way.

Conclusion

One of the most significant aspects of the Keita regime's political legacy was the tension between the strong position it took against chiefs and other non-state authorities, on the one hand, and its failure in many cases to effectively supplant such institutions in practice, on the other. Whereas the French had attempted to tap into existing political hierarchies — albeit in ways that sometimes violated local customs of governance — the USRDA portrayed these figures as remnants of a fractious bygone era that had no place in a unified African nation oriented toward the future. Canton chieftaincies were officially dissolved, and many other religious and “traditional” organizations were persecuted or discouraged. The leaders of such institutions were variously deemed feudal, exploitative, or retrogressive — foils for the USRDA's self-appointment as the unanimous voice of the nation, the vanguard of economic progress, and (after 1960) a socialist force for equality.

Nationalist concerns motivated the Keita regime to pursue this agenda, notably a desire for political unity across Malian territory and a fear that “regionalism” could fragment the polity. Yet socialism also played a role, as it was the USRDA's radical socialist faction in particular that possessed a “high modern” confidence in the state's ability to build a new society with a new political culture and new administrative

institutions at all levels, including the villages. The USRDA attempted to eliminate or curtail the power of chiefs, youth societies, and religious leaders because it believed in the potency of social engineering, and it also believed that once it had swept these institutions aside it could effectively replace them with ones under party control. Its legitimacy consequently became bound up in its ability to follow through on the promises it had made to build a new society.

Yet a combination of factors made this difficult to accomplish. A deepening economic crisis left the USRDA with few resources it could marshal to establish new institutions, and declining living standards provoked opposition at all levels of society. Unable to demonstrate the benefits of USRDA rule in the tangible terms of economic growth, the regime relied on a narrative positioning indigenous authorities as dangers to the nation and obstacles to the economic gains the party had failed to produce. This, however, further isolated the Party from the population, which for the most part considered chiefly and religious institutions to be potent and legitimate.

The pressures issuing from within the Party to orient policy in this way were strong. As the previous chapter argued, a major focus of the USRDA's postcolonial state-building project was to reward political supporters. These supporters, many of whom were of casted or (ex-)servile origin, were drawn to a reformist, modernizing party like the USRDA by the desire to create new sociopolitical hierarchies in which they would occupy more favourable positions than they had in existing fields of power. They promoted modernity, then, not simply for its own sake, but also to advance their own interests as well as the cause of social justice.

Consequently, the Keita regime's relationship with chiefs and other "traditional"

authorities in many ways exemplifies the manner in which it practiced politics in the late colonial and early postcolonial era. It was motivated by nationalist and, later, socialist ideals that instilled in it an overly optimistic sense of the political changes it could effect in Malian society. It was also motivated by a complex mixture of clientelist forces, social justice ideals, and intolerance of dissension – particularly dissension that challenged the USRDA’s nationalist narrative of territorial unity. Although unity was a dearly held party goal, it would remain elusive as Mali’s existing institutions and identities would prove more resilient than party leaders anticipated. Under these conditions, the regime developed an increasingly autocratic mode of governance that eventually contributed to motivating the military coup d’état.

Chapter 5: The Merchants of Menace

Introduction

Unlike the chiefs, many of whom had persecuted USRDA members or had at least been their political enemies, in the late colonial era Soudanese merchants were key party supporters. Indeed, their financial resources played an instrumental role in allowing the USRDA to mount successful electoral campaigns in 1956 and 1957 at the municipal and territorial levels, respectively. The USRDA, for its part, was a supporter of the merchants, and had promised them a brighter future – much as it had done for the peasants who constituted the Soudan’s major voting bloc. “Whether it be in favour of public servants, peasants, artisans, merchants, students, [or] youths, we have been at the forefront of the defence of their demands and their interests,” stated Modibo Keita at the fourth USRDA congress in 1955.¹ Such assertions would be repeated throughout the late 1950s. Yet like chiefs, merchants would eventually fall foul of the USRDA — or at least of the radical socialist faction that came to play a decisive role in setting policy throughout the 1960s.

Rather than providing them with better opportunities, after independence the Keita regime adopted policies aimed at shrinking the scope of merchant activities via “the progressive elimination of old commercial circuits in order to give the state the possibility of orienting the economy toward the general interest.”² It also came to depict

¹ ANM.1.1.Congrès de l’USRDA – 1955.*Rapport politique présenté par Modibo Keita*, p. 2. “Ainsi donc, que ce soit en faveur des salariés, des paysans, des artisans, des commerçants, des étudiants, des jeunes, nous avons été à l’avant garde de la défense de leurs revendications et de leurs intérêts.”

² ANM.1.3.Congrès Extraordinaire de 1960.*Le Socialisme: Une générale théorique. Pourquoi ce choix? Ses voies et ses moyens*, p. 13. “Etant entendu que le socialisme

Mali's merchants in an increasingly hostile manner, particularly after they opposed the creation of the Malian franc in 1962 and then even more acutely during the Active Revolution period of 1967-1968, during which a small group of radical socialists within the CNDR³ set forth an increasingly repressive and ideologically extreme political program.

Despite how greatly the chiefs' and merchants' relationships with the USRDA differed in the late colonial period, the factors motivating the Keita regime to seek their elimination bore many similarities – even if these processes took place on different timelines and in different ways. As with the chiefs, an element of realpolitik is evident in the USRDA's evolving anti-merchant policies: the same financial weakness that motivated the party to seek assistance from merchants in the late 1950s gave it an interest in bringing a large portion of the economy under its control in order to strengthen its economic position. Further to this, many party members believed merchants could only have accumulated their considerable wealth via dubious alliances with Mali's enemies,⁴ and they wished to bring that wealth under their control.⁵

exige la création de nouvelles structures économiques d'État, ou collectivistes sous forme de coopératives, donc la suppression progressive des anciens circuits commerciaux pour donner à l'Etat la possibilité d'orienter l'économie dans le sens de l'intérêt général, il faut d'ores et déjà en prévoir les conséquences. En effet, toute création d'activités commerciales assurées par l'Etat ou par les collectivités, si elle constitue un moyen de concurrencer les activités des secteurs d'import-export étranger et du secteur national privé, et à terme de les remplacer, entraîne par ailleurs des modifications importantes dans le répartition du revenu national."

³ Formed in March 1966. After the BPN was dissolved in August 1967, it constituted Mali's highest effective governing body.

⁴ ANM.142.560.Circulaires 1947-1968.20 mars 1961 *Circulaire aux Secrétaires Généraux des Sous-Sections, signé Idrissa Diarra*. "Il serait une grave erreur et lourde de conséquences de considérer par exemple tout commerçant malien comme suspect de collusion avec les forces financières étrangères... parce qu'il s'est acquis dans sa vie une certaine aisance."

Yet ideological factors are also clearly at play. Merchants were a powerful and in many ways distinct community within Mali, one whose members often had a unique religious identity (most notably in the Keita period as Salafi Muslim reformers), considerable resources, and a network of contacts across West Africa.⁶ Indeed, merchants in the region were set apart from the general population by having a centuries-old tradition of urbanism and historic links to Islam that predated colonial era mass Islamization.⁷ In this regard, they constituted an obstacle to the USRDA's drive to ensure national unity – by virtue of merchants' capacity to oppose the regime due to their strong financial and social resources – and a potential threat to the establishment of a singular national identity due to their historic role as a distinct group within Soudanese society in religious and sometimes ethnic or caste terms.⁸ This does not mean the merchants opposed Malian national identity, for, as will be shown, it was economic policy and not identity politics that led to the business community's important acts of opposition to the regime. Yet –as was shown in Chapter 4 with regard to chiefs, who were nationalists in their own fashion – the USRDA did not always wait for anti-national movements to arise before it attacked or incorporated indigenous institutions outside of its control.

Nationalism was not the only intellectual force that brought merchants into the

⁵ Interview with Boubacar Séga Diallo, Bamako, 20 March 2012.

⁶ See “Sociology of the Merchants” below for further discussion.

⁷ See Francois Manchuelle, *Willing Migrants: Soninke Labor Diasporas, 1848-1960*, (London: James Currey, 1998); Guy Martin, “Socialism, Economic Development and Planning in Mali, 1960-1968,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 10, 1 (1976): 28; Lansiné Kaba, *The Wahhabiyya: Islamic Reform and Politics in French West Africa* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1974). On Islamization see Brian James Peterson, *Islamization from Below: The Making of Muslim Communities in Rural French Sudan, 1880-1960* (Yale University Press, 2011).

⁸ This question is elaborated further below in: “Sociology of the Merchants.”

Keita regime's crosshairs. Of all the groups the USRDA came into conflict with during its tenure, merchants may have been the most impacted by the radical socialist faction's rise and by the ideas it espoused within the party. Indeed, it was two socialist ideas – that rapid economic development could best be achieved through a state-run economy and that private commerce constituted a parasitical social force – that most clearly established merchants as “*apatrides*”: enemies of the nation.⁹ This ideological opposition to private commerce may partially account for the regime's impractical and ill-considered attacks on merchants, and as such it offers an example of how socialism at times worked against the party's longstanding nationalist goals, particularly that of swift economic development.

A complex mixture of ideological and material factors, then, influenced the evolution of the USRDA's relationship with merchants. And although a kind of self-interested rationality can be discerned in party efforts to replace merchants with state-managed economic entities, it is equally evident that in many instances nationalist and socialist ideals led the party to make decisions with disastrous consequences for the economy and the viability of its rule. The commercial enterprises established by the Keita regime to replace merchants as Mali's provisioners of goods were ineffective, precipitating recurring shortages, wastage, and financial losses.¹⁰ Measures put in place

⁹ ANM.83.278.Ministère des Finances et du Commerce 1963-1968.1967 04 26 *Ministre du Commerce Attaher MAIGA*. “Pour préserver notre patrimoine national contre l'action néfaste des apatrides, nous avons pris beaucoup de mesures hardies dans le cadre de la Loi sur le commerce... En effet, on constate que les prix fixés ne sont pas respectés malgré de multiples interventions de nos services. Ces interventions pour la plupart des cas ont contribué à vider les marchés officiels au profit du circuit parallèle qui ne profite qu'aux seuls spéculateurs et fraudeurs.”

¹⁰ Interview with John McKinney, Sévaré, 21 January 2012; Pierre Campmas, “L'Union Soudanaise, Section Soudanaise Du Rassemblement Démocratique Africain 1946-

to prevent merchants from plying their trade also proved ineffective. Not only was it overly optimistic to believe the state had the capacity to exercise comprehensive customs controls over more than 7000 kilometres of borders with seven neighbouring states, but the regime's consistent inability to provide the necessary amounts and types of goods required by the population¹¹ reinforced the essential role of merchants in Mali's (black) markets. Thus, ironically, while in the 1960s Mali's merchant community faced more persecution than ever before, near the end regime officials bitterly noted that merchants were "practically the only [ones] to have amassed fortunes since national independence."¹²

The USRDA's increasingly antagonistic relationship with merchants offers an important window on how the Keita regime practiced politics between 1957 and 1968. Autocratic tendencies clearly emerge across this trajectory¹³ – as they do with regard to chiefs – yet the urge to consolidate power on behalf of party elites and their clients cannot fully explain the party's decisions. Indeed, the policy of repressing merchants rather than capitalizing on their support only exacerbated Mali's economic problems; it did not achieve its aim of eliminating merchants nor of ameliorating the regime's economic position. The economic fragility and political opposition precipitated by this

1968," (PhD Thesis : Université de Toulouse, 1978), 449 ;
CADN.Bamako.Amb.21.Dépêches politiques 1962.*Dépêche hebdomadaire no 28 du 9 au 15 Juillet 1962 (from the French Ambassador to the Minister of Foreign Affairs)*.
ANM.142.560.Circulaires 1957-1968.29 *Juillet 1964 Circulaire 15*;
ANM.142.560.Circulaires 1957-1968.*Circulaire 12 CNDR 1967 10 18*.

¹¹ Interview with Oumar Makalou, Bamako, 1 February 2012.

¹² ANM.83.278.Ministère des Finances et du Commerce 1963-1968.1967 04 14 *Observations à propos de la loi de finances 1967-1968 USRDA Bureau Politique Nationale Commission Sociale & Culturelle*. "...pratiquement le seul à avoir amassé des fortunes depuis l'indépendance nationale."

¹³ Frederick Cooper, *Africa in the World: Capitalism, Empire, Nation-State* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 86.

policy ultimately contributed to its fall from power. In this instance, nationalism and socialism were not tools that helped it navigate through a troubled period in early postcolonial history, but ideological burdens that hindered the USRDA's deep developmentalist convictions by leading the party, or important elements within it, to consider merchants as a threat to political unity and economic equality, respectively.

Historiography

Mali's merchant community as it existed during the Keita years – or indeed during any other period – has not been well studied. In general, the scholarly literature examining the USRDA era only touches on merchants in passing, if it touches on them at all.¹⁴

There is a consensus that merchants supported the USRDA in the late colonial era and helped them rise to power by financing their electoral campaigns.¹⁵ There is also wide agreement that the party came to attack the merchant community after independence and the advent of socialism. This chapter does not contest these assertions. It seeks instead to provide a more comprehensive, detailed, and evidence-based account of merchant-state relations under Modibo Keita's rule than has been previously published, and to explain not only how, but *why*, the merchant community was transformed from the USRDA's closest ally to its clearest enemy in the 1960s. Furthermore, and in contrast to most

¹⁴ E.g., Campmas, "L'Union Soudanaise"; Bintou Sanankoua, *La Chute de Modibo Keita* (Bamako: Editions Chaka, 1990); Danioko, "Contribution à l'étude des partis politiques au Mali de 1945 à 1960" (Thèse de 3e cycle, Université de Paris VII, 1984); Martin, "Socialism, Economic Development and Planning in Mali, 1960-1968"; Nicholas S. Hopkins, *Popular Government in an African Town: Kita, Mali* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972); Baz Lecocq, *Disputed Desert: Decolonisation, Competing Nationalisms and Tuareg Rebellions in Northern Mali* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

¹⁵ Danioko, "Contribution à l'étude des partis politiques au Mali de 1945 à 1960"; Campmas, "L'Union Soudanaise,"; Martin, "Socialism, Economic Development and Planning in Mali, 1960-1968"; Jean-Loup Amselle, "Le Wahabisme À Bamako (1945-1985)," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 19, no. 2 (1985): 345.

extant accounts, this chapter situates this transformation within a broader argument concerning the manner in which the USRDA practiced politics. In this context, the merchants' change of fate is not simply an isolated historical event or the corollary of the socialist turn, but an illustration of the complex forces that drove the Keita regime – nationalist aspirations for development and political unity, socialist dreams of equality, and autocratic influences connected with Mali's clientelist political culture.

In addition, this chapter adds nuance to the manner in which socialism and the merchant community have been represented in the historical literature of this period. Certain scholars, such as Meillassoux and Martin,¹⁶ have suggested the USRDA drew cynically upon socialism to appropriate merchant resources for its own purposes. While this is not far from the truth, such summary analyses cannot account for the USRDA's more complex motivations, nor for the manner in which the USRDA's merchant policy evolved between 1957-1968 – even after socialism had been adopted in 1960. Furthermore, such accounts ascribe too much power-seeking rationality to the regime's leaders, and fail to take adequate note of decisions that were sometimes ideologically driven and impractical – decisions like the attempt to bring commerce almost entirely under state control, which did not boost the state's economic profile nor eliminate the merchants. Addressing such lacunae, this chapter contends that although the desire to bring the economy under state control and to supplant the merchants with state-run institutions was formulated shortly after independence and remained throughout the decade, the manner in which it sought to bring this about – and the attitude it took to

¹⁶ Claude Meillassoux, "A Class Analysis of the Bureaucratic Process in Mali," *Journal of Development Studies* 6, no. 2 (1970): 97–110; Martin, "Socialism, Economic Development and Planning in Mali, 1960-1968."

merchants who would be affected by these changes – evolved in step with the state’s worsening economic situation and the changing political environment at home and abroad. Of particular note is that there was not a clean break with the merchants as soon as socialism was adopted in 1960. Instead, the USRDA regime attempted to consolidate economic control in a nonconfrontational manner until 1962 – even working with certain merchants to establish public banking and commercial institutions and assuring the community as a whole of a good future in socialist Mali.¹⁷ It was after the Malian franc was announced by surprise in July 1962 that relations became openly adversarial, with the regime arresting merchants thought to be withholding the CFA francs it dearly needed, and merchants staging large protests in response. Merchants quickly became enemies of the nation at this point, and by 1967 USRDA discourse had shifted toward a narrative of revolutionary war in which merchants were the main adversaries. By exploring these developments, this chapter will demonstrate the degree to which the USRDA’s relationship with merchants was evolving and complicated; it did not have one shape or one motivation, but changed over time under the influence of multiple factors.

Another contribution this study makes to our understanding of Malian society and the Keita regime is that it identifies parallels between merchants, chiefs, and peasants. Previous studies have examined these groups individually, and have failed to note their commonalities and the shared themes in how the USRDA dealt with them. Rather than examine each of these groups in isolation, this dissertation contends that merchants, along with chiefs and peasants, were all perceived by the Keita regime as threats to be

¹⁷ Interview with Oumar Makalou, Bamako, February 2012.

managed. The USRDA desired the new Malian nation to be unified in identity and political terms, free from opposition or expressions of “regionalism.” Thus it considered institutions from merchant networks to peasant spiritual organizations as obstacles to the establishment of a singular sense of national belonging and a political dispensation in which most, if not all, important local institutions would be replaced or absorbed by national ones guided by the state’s hand. Michel Cahen has made a similar contention with regard to the Mozambican postcolonial regime’s erosion of indigenous institutions, noting that much of Mozambique’s cultural heritage came under attack in the name of nationalism and socialism in the 1970s.¹⁸ Cahen, however, has not extended his analyses to include merchants, and thus this dissertation pushes these early investigations of postcolonial cultural policy into a new domain – albeit in a different state and thus in a limited context.

Sociology of the Merchants

Mali has a long commercial history. A number of medieval empires were based within its present borders and controlled territory far beyond them – Mali, Ghana, and Songhai being the important examples. Muslim rulers controlled all these empires, and it is widely thought that it was merchants who converted them to Islam.¹⁹ Merchants embarking on trans-Saharan voyages in search of rare products and profitable exchanges

¹⁸ Michel Cahen, “Lutte d’émancipation anticoloniale ou mouvement de libération nationale ? Processus historique et discours idéologique. Le Cas des colonies Portugaises, et du Mozambique en particulier,” *Revue Historique* 637, no. 1 (2006): 113–38.

¹⁹ Richard L. Warm, “Merchants, Muslims, and Wahhābiyya: The Elaboration of Islamic Identity in Sikasso, Mali,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 26, no. 3 (1992): 485–507; J. Spencer Trimingham, *The Influence of Islam upon Africa* (New York: Praeger, 1968); Nehemia Levtzion, *Ancient Ghana and Mali* (New York: Africana, 1973).

would have encountered Islam in the Maghreb and further afield.²⁰ Prior to the establishment of European coastal trading forts and the subsequent era of colonial rule, trans-Saharan trade constituted the major form of long-distance commerce in West Africa.²¹ In this economy, the coastal regions now dotted with Africa's great cities were economic backwaters, whereas the cities of the Sahel, poised on desert shores, thrived like no others. Those on the banks of the region's great waterway, the Niger, were bestowed with the dual gifts of fresh water and desert access. Thus cities like Gao and Timbuktu, perched on the elbow of the Niger as it flows into the desert's heart from the highlands of Futa Jallon before veering toward the Gulf of Guinea, formed not just the core of premodern polities in West Africa; they were also strongholds of medieval merchants.²²

Merchants continued to play an important role in the polities and societies that would come to comprise the Soudan Français and Mali, often maintaining a unique religious identity, much as they had centuries earlier when only they and the ruling class professed allegiance to Islam and when commercial settlements “[resembled] Islamic islands in an animist sea.”²³ In the 20th century — the era of rapid Islamization in the Soudan/Mali during which Islam displaced a variety of local spiritual traditions as the area's dominant faith — many merchants would separate themselves from the Sufi

²⁰ Ghislaine Lydon, *On Trans-Saharan Trails: Islamic Law, Trade Networks, and Cross-Cultural Exchange in Nineteenth-Century Western Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

²¹ Ralph A. Austen, *Trans-Saharan Africa in World History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

²² Paul E. Lovejoy, “The Role of the Wangara in the Economic Transformation of the Central Sudan in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries,” *The Journal of African History* 19, no. 02 (1978): 173–93.

²³ Warms, “Merchants, Muslims, and Wahhābiyya,” 485.

orders that had long dominated Muslim life in West Africa, aligning themselves with the Salafist reform movement then gaining strength in Egypt and other areas of the Middle East.²⁴ Maintaining a unique religious identity – in earlier periods as (Sufi) Muslims in contradistinction to a non-Muslim majority, and in the Keita years often as anti-Sufi reformers in contradistinction to a Sufi majority – allowed merchants to establish the trust necessary to extend credit to one another and to control trade by excluding from the merchant profession those not sharing their religious affiliations.²⁵ In addition to often professing an atypical religious identity as Islamic reformers, merchants also often came from marginal social groups, with the Juula, Jawando, and Soninke – three of Mali’s main merchant groups – being variously considered ignoble, semi-casted, or foreign.²⁶ Merchants equally tended to be unschooled and illiterate, although some were literate in Arabic — due to having attended a Quranic school rather than a colonial one — but not in the state’s official language, French.²⁷ Nima Doucouré, a successful merchant operating in Bamako circa independence, offers a typical example: “I did not go to the Frenchmen’s school, I went to Quranic school,” he recounted during an interview. “I don’t speak French clearly.”²⁸ Of course, not every merchant belonged to such groups and not all traders were Islamic reformers. But exceptions notwithstanding, such analyses appear to have broad validity.

Thus in the era of party politics that began in the Soudan in 1946, the fact that many

²⁴ Amselle, “Le Wahabisme À Bamako (1945-1985)” ; Warm, “Merchants, Muslims, and Wahhābiyya”; Kaba, *The Wahhābiyya*; Louis Brenner, *Controlling Knowledge: Religion, Power, and Schooling in a West African Muslim Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001).

²⁵ Warm, “Merchants, Muslims, and Wahhābiyya.”

²⁶ Martin, “Socialism, Economic Development and Planning in Mali, 1960-1968,” 28.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 28.

²⁸ Interview with Nima Doucouré, Bamako, 18 February 2012.

merchants were social outsiders contributed to their viewing the USRDA as a natural ally.²⁹ This party tended to be dominated by persons of marginal origins, in contrast with the PSP, which was mainly comprised of noblemen and chiefs — even if some of them were also teachers, like PSP leader Fily Dabo Sissoko, who taught primary school before taking over his father’s role as canton chief of Niambia in 1933.³⁰ More than a social affinity, however, the merchants also saw promise in the USRDA’s more strident critiques of the colonial system. They hoped in particular that USRDA rule would open up greater opportunities for them, as during the colonial era Soudanese merchants served mainly as intermediaries for larger French firms and Levantine traders.³¹

The USRDA, for its part, needed merchants for their financial resources and their connections in rural areas, developed over years of trade with remote communities.³² The two remained allies for several years after the USRDA was elected in 1957. Yet the merchants’ long history would come to haunt them in the early postcolonial era. Ironically, the deep roots and unique identity that had allowed them to play an important role in the economy and in society for centuries – and that made them useful to the USRDA in the beginning – was one of the very things that would render them a target of USRDA repression. Over time the Keita regime came to view strong indigenous institutions and identities not as resources but as threats to national unity and political

²⁹ Martin, “Socialism, Economic Development and Planning in Mali, 1960-1968,” 28.

³⁰ Jean-Hervé Jézequel, “Le ‘Nationalisme Officiel’ Du Parti Progressiste Soudanais (PSP). Histoire D’un Projet Politique Inabouti,” *Anales de Desclasificacion* 1 (2003): 175–86.

³¹ Martin, “Socialism, Economic Development and Planning in Mali, 1960-1968,” 29; Warms, “Merchants, Muslims, and Wahnābiyya”; Jean-Loup Amselle, *Les Négociants de la Savane: Histoire et organisation sociale des Kooroko (Mali)* (Paris : Editions Anthropos, 1977), 272.

³² Warms, “Merchants, Muslims, and Wahnābiyya,” 491-492.

stability. Beginning as early as 1958, the USRDA's democratic convictions progressively gave way to autocratic tendencies, with the party expressing a wish to control all important forms of social, political, economic, and cultural organization by 1963.³³ Under these conditions "there was no room for 'reactionary bourgeois' merchants, much less for religious principles, as preached by either the 'Wahhabis' [with whom many merchants were affiliated] or the 'traditionalists'."³⁴ This emerging attitude contributed to the USRDA coming to view merchants, who had long operated as a largely independent group, as an obstacle to nation-building. In the latter years of Keita's rule they would be considered enemies of the nation: "*apatrides* or more exactly those who have chosen money as their *patrie* [homeland]."³⁵

Friends Gained and Lost: The merchants and the USRDA, 1946-1962

Although the USRDA would come to represent merchants as parasites and scapegoats for a degrading economic situation, the Party had a close relationship with them prior to and for some time after independence. This reached a high point in the late 1950s, and even survived the announcement of the socialist option in 1960, only to suffer a dramatic reversal with the 1 July 1962 introduction of the nonconvertible Malian franc,

³³ ANM.4.6.6e Congrès de l'USRDA 1962. *Circulaire No. 9 Aux Camarades Secrétaires Généraux des Sections de l'Union Soudanaise R.D.A., 22 Mars 1963.*

³⁴ Brenner, *Controlling Knowledge*, 171.

³⁵ ANM.87.293. Rapport et Synthèse de la Délégation du CNDR 1967. *Allucution d'Ouverture du Ministre de la Justice: "Le Rôle de la Justice dans la Révolution," 1967.* "L'option socialiste serait en effet un leurre si les sacrifices qu'elle impose au Peuple, si nos finances publiques, nos sociétés et entreprises d'Etat, nos usines, nos organismes coopératifs devaient servir uniquement à engraisser une poignée de profiteurs sans vergogne, de jouisseurs sans dignité, si des *apatrides* ou plus exactement ceux qui ont choisi l'argent comme patrie, devaient continuer à s'enrichir par le trafic, la contrebande, la spéculation, la hausse illicite au préjudice de l'économie nationale. L'objectif de la Révolution doit être, au contraire, de saper les fondements économiques mal acquis de la contre-révolution."

which led to violent protests. Scholars like Pierre Campmas have noted this reversal as one of the regime's fatal mistakes.³⁶

In the postwar years of anticolonial struggle the merchants and the USRDA shared a common interest. While the PSP toed a conservative line and was run by canton chiefs allied with the colonial administration, the USRDA was more strident in its criticism of the colonial state and — most importantly — in its demands for self-government and Africanization, i.e. the replacement of foreigners in Soudanese institutions by locals. Local African merchants at this time were generally middlemen, subcontractors, and junior traders, with the main bulk of commercial activity controlled by French trading houses and businessmen of Syrian or Lebanese origin. In a typical example of “gatekeeping,”³⁷ the import-export nexus remained largely closed to local traders, whose scope of commercial activities was limited.³⁸

Discriminatory rules concerning access to credit made direct import-export relationships with Europe nearly impossible and put a damper on local merchants' growth potential. Many had access to only small amounts of credit used to scour the countryside for raw materials — a risky business, as their foreign bosses would often bring those who could not make good on their commitments to court.³⁹ Of course, compared to other segments of society — excluding the aforementioned foreign businessmen — the Soudan's merchants were relatively wealthy. The peasant population subsisted on its own agricultural products and occasional on wage labour or small-scale

³⁶ Campmas, “L'Union Soudanaise,” 450-460.

³⁷ Frederick Cooper, *Africa since 1940: The Past of the Present* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 5-6.

³⁸ Danioko, “Contribution à l'étude des partis politiques au Mali de 1945 à 1960,” 153-155.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 153-155.

trade. The political class, for its part, lived on meagre wages and had no significant disposable income.

The merchants hoped to expand their role in the economy, and became key early allies of the USRDA for this reason. Questions of identity and social status also played a role in precipitating the merchant-USRDA alliance, as identified earlier in this chapter.⁴⁰ Merchants often — though certainly not always — came from ethnic groups considered foreign or of low status, and thus were (theoretically) well served by the USRDA, which was committed to social justice and had many low-status and caste members, especially compared to the chief-dominated PSP. And although chiefs did not usually derive their authority from religion⁴¹ — most local chieftaincies predated the mass Islamization of the early 20th century — they nonetheless tended to form a part of Mali's Muslim mainstream, where “the Tijaniyya...dominated.”⁴² Merchants, in contrast, often adhered to the anti-Sufi Islamic reform movement that had slowly begun to emerge in the Soudan from the interwar period onward.⁴³ Scholars like Andrew Clark have noted with regard to this reform movement, however, that “their numbers remained small and their impact narrow,”⁴⁴ and have remarked that “[r]eligious brotherhoods have wielded considerably less social and political influence [in Mali], and the government has not been nearly as dependent on their economic and political support as in Senegal.”⁴⁵ Others, like Brenner, have echoed this appraisal, and have further stated that

⁴⁰ See “Sociology of the Merchants” above.

⁴¹ Martin, “Socialism, Economic Development and Planning in Mali, 1960-1968.”

⁴² Andrew F. Clark, “Imperialism, Independence, and Islam in Senegal and Mali,” *Africa Today* 46, no. 3/4 (1999): 160.

⁴³ Brenner, *Controlling Knowledge*, 158.

⁴⁴ Clark, “Imperialism, Independence, and Islam in Senegal and Mali,” 157.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 163.

“Islam... became officially invisible during the 1960s,”⁴⁶ where it was of marginal political importance. The USRDA itself seems to have shared this view, remarking at the Sixth Party Congress in 1962 upon the relative insignificance of Islamic questions in Malian politics:

The quasi-totality of our people are believers, and the vast majority are Muslims. Contrary to what has happened in other countries of the world, the religious hierarchy has never opposed our political evolution. On the contrary, it has always lived closely with the people, from whom it arises, and with whom it shares a way of the living and their profound aspirations. Moreover, it has never constituted a temporal power, nor a centralized hierarchy, dependent upon other countries. In these conditions, to pose the question of relations between religion and socialism in our country amounts to asserting a false problem or to creating one from whole cloth.⁴⁷

Furthermore, although the USRDA forged an alliance with merchants, many of whom were Islamic reformers, the party did not identify with this movement. Indeed, once in power the Keita regime would treat all Muslim groups equally, mostly ignoring Sufis and Salafis alike.⁴⁸ Thus, although merchants may have turned to the USRDA in part because they rejected the mainstream Sufi religious current with which the conservative PSP was aligned, such concerns appear to have been of secondary importance, particularly as the USRDA was not an anti-Sufi party. Furthermore, as the remainder of this chapter intends to demonstrate, economic considerations appear to

⁴⁶ Brenner, *Controlling Knowledge*, 171.

⁴⁷ ANM.3.5.6e Congrès de l'USRDA 1962. *Rapport d'activités et d'orientation présenté au 6^{ème} congrès de l'USRDA*. “La quasi-totalité de notre peuple est croyante, et l'immense majorité est musulmane. Contrairement à ce qui s'est passé dans d'autres pays du monde, la hiérarchie religieuse ne s'est jamais opposée à notre évolution politique. Au contraire, elle s'est toujours étroitement confondue avec le peuple, dont elle est issue, dont elle partage le mode de vie et les aspirations profondes. De plus, elle n'a jamais constitué ni un pouvoir temporel, ni une hiérarchie centralisée, dépendant d'autres pays. Dans ces conditions, poser le problème des relations entre la religion et le socialisme dans notre pays, revient à poser un faux problème ou à le créer de toutes pièces.”

⁴⁸ Brenner, *Controlling Knowledge*, 170-171.

have been more significant in shaping the merchants' position toward the USRDA.

Merchants were not only crucial supporters as a political bloc but also as financiers. In the mid-1950s the merchant community “provided the USRDA with an arsenal and with new and important methods to finance its press, its offices, its electoral campaigns and above all to more easily and rapidly reach the rural electorate.”⁴⁹ A few important businessmen like El Hadj Daouda Sacko and El Hadj Dossolo Traoré were involved directly with the USRDA leadership and were major backers – although even such important merchants occupied no crucial political roles.⁵⁰ Particularly during municipal elections in 1956 and legislative elections in 1957, merchants contributed heavily to USRDA campaigns. They provided vehicles and loudspeakers for touring the country and delivering the party's message. They even purchased Modibo Keita's first suit.⁵¹ To the extent that the PSP was known as the “party of the chiefs,” the USRDA was known as “the party of the merchants.”⁵²

In the era of autonomy between the USRDA's electoral victory of 1957 and its declaration of independence in 1960, relations with merchants remained positive. At the international RDA congress in late 1957 the USRDA's main concern with regard to merchants was to figure out how they could borrow more capital and do more business. “The Soudanese Delegation believes,” states a congress report, “that the power of European or foreign companies seems to limit in our country the opportunities for [individual merchants]. Thus it recommends that African merchants be directed toward

⁴⁹ Danioko, “Contribution à l'étude des partis politiques au Mali de 1945 à 1960,” 153-155.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 153-155.

⁵¹ Interview with Fodé Diawara, Bamako, 8 February 2012.

⁵² Danioko, “Contribution à l'étude des partis politiques au Mali de 1945 à 1960,” 153-155.

organizations that would allow them to satisfy the requirements of lending institutions.”⁵³ At its territorial conference in 1958, the USRDA reaffirmed its commitment to merchants, as it did to farmers, herders, and bureaucrats, characterizing itself as a unifier of all these social groups and a defender of their interests:

The action of the Union Soudanaise has tended to avoid internal contradictions, to reconcile interest groups that sometimes appear opposed by propelling them to the level of the general struggle against colonialism. The interests of the merchants are inseparable from those of the peasant, those of the bureaucrat are tied to the interests of the herder. To try to dissociate them... is to lead oneself toward a classification of social groups in a country where the economy is completely dominated by the colonizing country. The vocation of the RDA is such that it has always worked toward joining all constructive energies together without distinction to orient them toward the emancipation struggle, the democratic movement par excellence.⁵⁴

In 1958 the USRDA openly recognized that it had made a commitment to merchants.

Modibo Keita affirmed that “if small businessmen have the possibility of making a decent living from their commerce... we think the party will have fully satisfied the commitments it has made.”⁵⁵ Not only were merchants assured in the late 1950s that the

⁵³ ANM.1.2.3e Congrès international du RDA. *Rapport présenté par le Docteur Kouyaté, Ministre de l'Economie Rurale du Soudan (Septembre 1957)*. “La Délégation Soudanaise estime que l'état actuel du pays le pouvoir des Sociétés européennes ou étrangères semblent limiter dans nos pays les chances des isolés. Elle recommande donc que les commerçants africains soient orientés vers des organisations qui leur permettraient de répondre aux exigences des maisons de crédit.”

⁵⁴ ANM.4.5e Congrès de l'Union Soudanaise RDA 1958. *Rapport Moral et Politique présenté par Modibo Keita*. “L'action de l'Union Soudanaise a tendu à éviter les contradictions internes, à concilier les intérêts quelquefois apparemment opposés, en les propulsant au niveau de la lutte générale contre le colonialisme. Les intérêts du commerçant sont inséparables de ceux du paysan, ceux du fonctionnaire sont liés aux intérêts du pasteur. Essayer de les dissocier... c'est à priori, s'acheminer vers la classification des couches sociales dans un pays colonisé dont l'économie est toute dominée par le pays colonisateur. La vocation du R.D.A. fait qu'il a toujours oeuvré au regroupement de toutes les énergies saines sans distinction pour les orienter dans la lutte émancipatrice, mouvement démocratique par excellence.”

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 5. “si le petit commerçant a la possibilité de vivre décentement de son commerce... nous pensons que le parti aura rempli pleinement les engagements qu'il a

party had their interests at heart, but they were repeatedly characterized by the USRDA as full and integral members of Soudanese society, worthy of the same consideration as peasants or workers. In fact, Modibo Keita urged these various groups to band together for the sake of political gains that would benefit all:

It is essential that a willingness to harmonize interests be developed between peasants, workers, pastoralists, merchants; each of these must get used to the idea that he is the victim of a regime and that, by liberating themselves from oppressive forces, he offers himself better working conditions. It is therefore essential that the party be able to reach and educate peasants, herders, workers, merchants...⁵⁶

Thus, well after the USRDA had come to territorial power through elections it continued to honour the alliance it had formed with the merchants. Far from considering merchants a parasitical social force, it placed them on an equal footing with the other major segments of society.

This alliance continued into 1960 and even survived the socialist turn, for a time. Merchants collaborated closely with the USRDA government in the early years of independence. While merchants as a whole were not integral to the party and did not constitute a part of the official political class – that group of French-educated civil servants and teachers who would form the core of the USRDA and the postcolonial bureaucracy, occupying official political and administrative positions – leading members of the merchant community were nonetheless invited to participate as stakeholders in certain economic policy fora. Of particular note is a committee of five merchants who were chosen by Modibo Keita in late 1960 to work with the government on business and

souscrits.”

⁵⁶ Ibid., 10. “...il est essentiel qu’entre le paysan, le travailleur, l’éleveur, le commerçant, s’établisse une volonté d’harmonisation des intérêts; il faut que chacun d’eux se fasse à l’idée qu’il est la victime d’un régime et qu’en se libérant des forces oppressives, il s’offre de meilleurs conditions de travail. Il faut donc que le Parti puisse atteindre et éduquer le paysan, l’éleveur, le travailleur, le commerçant...”

economic policy. As Dr. Oumar Makalou notes:

[Modibo] gave me a list of the five biggest merchants. He said, “If you get in touch with these men, they control the whole market... You can work with them.”⁵⁷

Also, two of these same merchants, El Hadji Daouda Sacko and El Hadji Dossolo Traoré, sat on the administrative council of the Malian People’s Development Bank, an institution established after independence because many French financial establishments had all but shut their doors, refusing to provide the credit necessary to bring the fall harvest to market.⁵⁸ Thus, far from considering merchants a social pest, the USRDA actively engaged with some of them as it established the nation’s new institutions.

Yet in spite of the Keita regime’s willingness to accommodate merchants in the new socialist dispensation, tensions slowly began to develop. This was largely due to the fact that the USRDA’s desire to “[establish] state control of the economic sector”⁵⁹ in the new socialist context conflicted with merchant interests in private commerce. In the early days of independence, however, the regime portrayed the development of such state controls not as a betrayal of merchant interests but as an attempt to bring modernity and prosperity to the country. Indeed, in a 1961 document, President Keita described socialism not as a policy intended to edge merchants out of the economy, but merely as one in which the state would benevolently oversee and foster merchant activities: “It is clear that no state can support each merchant, each artisan, each farmer, etc.... but it can... provide merchants with merchandise, help with the marketing of cattle, etc....”⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Interview with Dr. Oumar Makalou, Bamako, 1 February 2012.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ ANM.142.560.Circulaires 1947-1968. *Circulaire No 11, 1961*. “Le deuxième principe, pour une économie socialiste, c’est l’étatisation des secteurs économiques.”

⁶⁰ Ibid., “Il est clair qu’aucun état ne peut soutenir chaque commerçant, chaque artisan,

Such assertions of good will, however, could not mitigate the friction caused by the regime's efforts to gain control over the economy – particularly in the context of Mali's worsening economic crisis. Indeed, the rise of the new state-run commercial enterprises like the SOMIEX led to tensions that appear both as responses to Mali's economic plight and instances of opportunism and clientelism on the part of party officials and administrators who found themselves with new powers. As the French ambassador noted in 1961:

The situation in the region of Kayes is extremely delicate, the SOMIEX requisitions the small deliveries destined for the merchants and takes over their distribution with, it seems, a certain favouritism.⁶¹

As Mali's financial climate worsened and socialism failed to produce the rapid quality of life improvements needed to reinforce the regime's legitimacy, the party increasingly came into conflict with the merchant community, which had not succumbed to the party's notion that merchants – along with most other social groups – would forfeit their autonomy to the state. The emergence of this conflict, of course, cannot be reduced to purely economic concerns. As subsequent sections of this chapter will demonstrate, the growing antagonism between Mali's business class and the USRDA regime proved politically useful for the party, allowing it to further develop a narrative claiming the nation was beset by dangerous enemies. This in turn facilitated the elimination of a number of high profile political opponents.

chaque cultivateur, etc..., mais il peut notamment mettre à la disposition des paysans groupés un tracteur, ouvrir des magasins, la coopérative se développant ; pourvoir les commerçants en marchandises, aider à la commercialisation du bétail, etc..."

⁶¹ CADN.Bamako.Amb.2.Dépêches politiques 1961.*Synthèse du mois de février*. "La situation dans la région de Kayes est extrêmement délicate la SOMIEX réquisitionne les faibles arrivages destinés aux commerçants et en assure elle-même la répartition avec semble-t-il un certain favoritisme."

The Mali Franc

The Malian franc was introduced on 1 July 1962 by surprise. Most members of government had no idea such a project was under way.⁶² The Malian franc was all the more unexpected due to the fact that in May of the same year, Mali became a founding member of the West African Monetary Union (UMOA). Indeed, as other scholars have noted, "[t]he creation of the Malian franc rendered null and void almost all of the monetary accords between Mali, France, and the countries of the UMOA."⁶³

While only a few of Modibo Keita's top advisers were privy to the franc's creation, Modibo Keita appears to have had a keen interest in the possibility of creating a national currency from independence onward. In early 1961 he commissioned a secret report from two Czechoslovakian scholars — Vladislav Brizek, an economist from the Prague Economic Institute, and Dr. Mirko Svoboda, Doctor of Law and Candidate in Juridical Sciences at Prague University — to instruct him on the viability of creating a national currency.⁶⁴

He also wished to explore the possibility of introducing a common currency for

⁶² Interview with Dotien Coulibaly, Bamako, 20 March 2012. Coulibaly suggested only a handful of people were aware of the plan to introduce a new currency. This would have been due to fears that merchants would flee with their reserves of CFA francs if they knew a national currency was in the works.

⁶³ Vincent Géronimi, Boubacar Séga Diallo, and Lansina Sidibé, "Le franc malien: Fausses ruptures ou vraies continuités dans les relations franco-maliennes?" in *Mali-France: regards sur une histoire partagée*, GEMDEV et l'Université du Mali, eds., (Paris/Bamako: Karthala/Donniya, 2005), 440. "La création du franc malien rendait caduque presque tous les accords monétaires entre le Mali, la France et les pays de l'UMOA."

⁶⁴ ANM.136.531.Création Monétaire et Note sur la Dévaluation 1961-1966.*La République du Mali et les questions monétaires (1961)*. The currency was eventually fabricated in Czechoslovakia.

Guinea, Ghana, and Mali.⁶⁵ And while a currency union went nowhere — a testament to the fact that territorial sovereignty mattered more to Sékou Touré, Kwame Nkrumah, and Modibo Keita than did their shared socialist ideology⁶⁶ — a combination of economic pressures related particularly to the budget deficit and nationalist political goals led Keita to forge ahead on his own.⁶⁷ This policy created more problems for the regime than perhaps any other. It provoked fierce protests and caused such severe economic decline that the regime was forced to request re-entry to the French-managed franc zone after only five years.

Citizens, however, were told this was a step forward for economic development, socialism, independence, and the nation. “This creation,” the party argued, “actively militates in favour of our national sovereignty without which our evolution will lack dynamism in the affirmation of progress.”⁶⁸ Malians were told it was a question of freedom and a matter of modernity. They were equally told to forfeit their CFA francs.⁶⁹

Mali’s socialist allies urged it to make its own money; most had their own.⁷⁰ And because the USRDA regime emphasized economic independence as one of the hallmarks of socialism, it was able to place the franc into its narrative of national

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Martin, “Socialism, Economic Development and Planning in Mali, 1960-1968,” 45.

⁶⁷ For more on this political union, see: Mark W. DeLancey, “The Ghana-Guinea-Mali Union: A Bibliographic Essay,” *African Studies Bulletin* 9, no. 2 (1966): 35-51; W. Scott Thompson, *Ghana’s Foreign Policy, 1957-1966: Diplomacy, Ideology, and the New State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 67-73, 150-152.

⁶⁸ *L’Essor* no. 3916, 3 Juillet 1962, “Le Mali bat sa monnaie,” p. 1.

“Cette création milite activement en faveur de notre souveraineté nationale sans laquelle notre évolution manquera de dynamisme dans l’affirmation du progrès.”

⁶⁹ *L’Essor* no. 3916, 3 Juillet 1962, “La République du Mali dispose de sa propre monnaie,” (transcript of speech given by President Keita on 30 June 1962 at 10 p.m. to the National Assembly), p. 4.

⁷⁰ Interview with Doutien Coulibaly, Bamako, 20 March 2012.

progress. “The creation of the Malian money,” a party official wrote in *L’Essor*, “marks a new progress in the evolution of the practical rules for the edification of socialism.”⁷¹

According to Gregory Mann, Keita privately characterized this step forward for socialism in more aggressively anti-French terms. Indeed, “[t]he Malian franc was designed to be “a declaration of political and economic war” against France, President Modibo Keita declared in a closed meeting of the Party’s central committee”⁷² — a testament to the existence within the regime of a strong intellectual current pushing for total freedom from the former metropole’s economic and political influence.

Yet the regime’s decision to create a national currency was also a response to short-term financial pressures. By 1962 the budget deficit was massive, and the Keita government needed funds to survive. Foreign journalists reporting on the Malian franc in August 1962 claimed that “the predicted deficit for this coming December 31 will represent close to 40% of total expenses.”⁷³ The regime resolved this issue by printing money. As a Finance Ministry report put it:

The fundamental characteristic of our public finances is the permanent gulf between the State’s vital needs and the volume of budgetary receipts tolerable for the economy and the populations... The deficit hasn’t been able to be satisfied by budgetary means, but by means of the treasury, thus aggravating inflationist pressure and monetary depreciation.⁷⁴

⁷¹ *L’Essor* no. 3916, 3 Juillet 1962, “Le Mali bat sa monnaie,” p. 1. “La frappe de la monnaie malienne marque un nouveau progrès dans l’évolution des règles pratiques de l’édification du socialisme.”

⁷² Gregory Mann, *From Empires to NGOs in the West African Sahel: The Road to Nongovernmentality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 6.

⁷³ ANM.136.532.La Monnaie.*La Bataille du Franc Malien: Quelles sont, aujourd’hui, les relations entre le Mali et la France?* (Note: this appears to be a typewritten copy of a newspaper article original printed in *France Observateur* 2 August 1962.)

⁷⁴ ANM.83.278.Ministère de la Finance et du Commerce 1963-1968.*Conclusions sur les moyens de résorber le déficit budgétaire, 21 June 1966.* “La caractéristique fondamentale de nos finances publiques est l’écart permanent entre les besoins vitaux de l’Etat et le volume des recettes budgétaires supportables pour l’économie et les

Since a body beyond the control of any member state regulated the money supply in the CFA Franc Zone — one in which the Bank of France had the final say — it was impossible to cover the budget shortfall by increasing the supply of CFA francs. The Malian franc had the advantage of local management. The money supply could easily be expanded to suit the regime's needs. This was an advantage of which the USRDA made considerable use.

While a recurring deficit had existed since independence — at which time the French ceased subsidies on which the colony had long relied — it was aggravated by the spending program outlined in the USRDA's Five Year Plan. The plan called for huge increases in public expenditures. In its first year alone (1961) the government launched 36 new state enterprises. Over the 1959-1962 period administrative costs ballooned by 57% and showed no signs of slowing down.⁷⁵ Meanwhile, the Keita regime was not able to secure all the foreign aid money required to finance the plan — their original hope was that donors would pay for over 50% of its expected costs. Although nominally non-aligned, Mali had alienated most Western donors by endorsing socialism, receiving little support from them. And its eastern donors — primarily the USSR and China — were not willing or able to provide the level of funding the USRDA desired.⁷⁶ This left Mali desperately short of money.

populations... Le déficit n'a pu être comblé par des moyens budgétaires, mais par des moyens de trésorerie, aggravant ainsi la poussée inflationniste et la dépréciation monétaire." (Note: although this report dates to 1966, the observation is valid for the preceding years as well.)

⁷⁵ Martin, "Socialism, Economic Development and Planning in Mali, 1960-1968," 34-36.

⁷⁶ Lê Châu, "Politiques économiques et crises durant les 30 années d'indépendance," *Politique africaine*, Le Mali: la transition, no 47, 1992: 33.

Although it had a clear need for increased financial resources, the USRDA was aware of the risks involved in creating its own currency. “The national currency,” President Keita conceded, “while being an important lever of economic development, also has its dangers.”⁷⁷ Neighbouring Guinea had already launched its own franc, which had led to serious economic problems.⁷⁸ Yet despite being aware of the risks, Keita favoured currency creation over austerity measures that could have reduced the state’s recurring deficit.

Indeed, although shuttering some state enterprises, contracting the bureaucracy, and slowing public sector recruitment would have helped the USRDA balance the budget, such actions would have risked stirring discontent within the politically active urban class. So although Keita promised “budgetary and financial austerity” and claimed he would “spare no effort to assure a balanced budget”⁷⁹ — an assurance likely aimed at assuaging fears of runaway inflation — an assessment of the gap between Mali’s financial means and its spending plans reveals the exact opposite: the Malian franc was primarily created for the sake of printing money. By 1962 the state’s budget deficit was massive, and its continued plans for aggressive spending stirred doubts in even those

⁷⁷ *L’Essor* no. 3916, 3 Juillet 1962, “Le Mali bat sa monnaie,” p. 3. “...la monnaie nationale, tout en étant un levier important pour le développement économique, recèle aussi des dangers.”

⁷⁸ CADN.Amb.Bamako.21.Dépêches politiques 1962.*Dépêche hebdomadaire no 26 du 25 juin au 1er juillet 1962*, p. 4.

⁷⁹ *L’Essor* no, 3 Juillet 1962, “La République du Mali dispose de sa propre monnaie,” p. 3. “L’instrument monétaire, nous le savons, peut agir comme un boomerang si l’on s’en sert maladroitement, mais rassurez-vous, nous ne jouerons pas les apprentis sorciers. Disciplines internes rigoureuses, confiance en la monnaie nationale, telles me paraissent être les conditions objectives de notre réussite, la clé de notre succès. Disciplines rigoureuses, tout d’abord, qui se traduiront avant tout par l’austérité budgétaire et financière. A cet égard, un certain nombre de mesures d’austérité vont être incessamment promulguées. Le Gouvernement n’épargnera aucun effort pour assurer l’équilibre budgétaire.”

socialist scholars like Samir Amin who had helped it develop its first Five Year Plan.⁸⁰

The regime was running out of money, and yet it was reluctant to reduce spending. This was due both to the high modern belief that its grand projects would lead to major economic benefits⁸¹ and to the political problem that slashing jobs would have presented. Indeed, various reports from the early 1960s suggest that Mali's bureaucrats were demanding,⁸² unruly,⁸³ and a source of concern for the regime⁸⁴ – thus stripping even a fraction of them of their positions would have constituted a serious political problem. And although the regime would not confront the issue of public sector reform for another five years – when monetary negotiations with France forced it onto the agenda – the subject of job cuts within state enterprises still remained taboo even under conditions where such discussions had become unavoidable. The French ambassador noted as much in 1967, remarking that “no one dares to deal head on with a problem that is none the less concerning”: that of “reducing staff, merging activities, or shuttering enterprises that are plainly unsalvageable.”⁸⁵ Despite the fact that “certain state

⁸⁰ For a discussion on Amin's analysis of Mali's socialist policy, see Chapter 3, “In the Name of the Nation.”

⁸¹ Indeed, in 1962 Modibo Keita asserted “that the success of [their] socialist option and the very prestige of the country depend in large part on the rise of these institutions [state enterprises].” (CADN.Bamako.Amb.21.Dépêches politiques 1962.*Présidence du gouvernement, secrétariat générale – Circulaire no 30 à tous ministères et secrétariats d'états, 5 Novembre 1962.* “Après avoir démontré que la réussite de notre option socialiste et même le prestige de notre pays dépendent en grande partie de l'essor de ces institutions [sociétés d'état], le Chef de l'Etat a mis l'accent sur leur gestion rigoureuse...”)

⁸² Samir Amin, *Trois Expériences Africaine de Développement: Le Mali, La Guinée et Le Ghana* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1965), 227.

⁸³ CADN.Bamako.Amb.20.Dépêches politiques 1961.*Synthèse du mois de juillet.*

⁸⁴ CADN.Bamako.Amb.20.Dépêches politiques 1961.*Synthèse du mois de mars 1961.*

⁸⁵ CADN.Bamako.Amb.31.Lignes politiques – juin à décembre 1967.*A/S: Les Sociétés d'Etat au Mali et l'application des accords franco-maliens du 15 Février, 30 juin 1967.* “En revanche, les responsables maliens se montrent beaucoup plus discrets dès lors qu'il

enterprises have developed the habit of living off the country rather than working for it” and the fact that by the end of 1966 the state treasury had lent 17 billion francs to the state enterprises to bridge their annual multi-billion franc deficit, the regime was reluctant to reform them because this “would pose very complex political problems and especially problems related to questions of authority.”⁸⁶ It appears that part of this reluctance was due to the leaders of certain state enterprises enjoying considerable autonomy and being difficult to control. Indeed, the French ambassador remarked at the same time upon “the quasi-absolute independence of certain [state enterprise] leaders and the impossibility for the Ministers to make themselves obeyed.”⁸⁷

While the Keita regime did create the Malian franc to “favour and accelerate the internal accumulation of money without which the Five Year Plan is nothing but... an immense trompe l’oeil,”⁸⁸ it also did so in order to restrict the scope of merchant activities. President Keita stated as much in a speech introducing the Malian franc,

est question de compression d’effectifs, de regroupements d’activités ou d’arrêt d’entreprises manifestement condamnées. En bref, ils semblent plutôt désireux de gagner du temps, personne n’osant aborder de front un problème qui est pourtant préoccupant.”⁸⁶ Ibid. “Mais, tout cela, compte non tenu de fait que le budget est très étroit, poserait des problèmes politiques et surtout d’autorité très complexes.”

⁸⁷ Ibid. “...l’indépendance quasi-absolue de certaines directions et l’impossibilité pour les Ministères de se faire obéir.”

⁸⁸ *L’Essor* no. 3916, 3 Juillet 1962, “La République du Mali dispose de sa propre monnaie,” p. 3. “Mais surtout, par ce biais, l’Etat peut, grâce à un réglage convenable de l’émission et des flux monétaires, favoriser et accélérer l’accumulation monétaire interne sans laquelle le Plan Quinquennal n’est plus qu’une affiche de propagande électorale, un immense trompe-l’oeil, et sa réalisation, une chimère. Un contrôle qualitatif ensuite, à la fois discriminatoire et sélectif qui permettra à notre Institut d’Emission, de refuser certains concours considérés comme nuisibles à l’économie, et de mesurer les crédits en fonction des objectifs prioritaires du plan. Cette politique sélective du crédit permettra tout d’abord de renverser les priorités artificielles imposées par l’ordre économique colonial et qui n’avaient d’autres objectifs que de favoriser le commerce de traite et d’importation qui constitue encore la source essentielle des profits du grand capital colonial...”

claiming the CFA currency allowed for the “hypertrophy of certain productive forces less essential to economic development, especially the tertiary sector of commerce and services.” He further stated that: “we will no longer witness the anarchical proliferation of parasitical enterprises or of spectacular operations of a propagandistic character that are without interest for the country.”⁸⁹ This comment is important, as it signals a shift in the manner in which the USRDA would come to represent the merchants. Although merchants are not depicted here as national enemies, the idea of private business being contrary to the national interest and indeed a drain upon society is clearly advanced. Thus these comments evoke the regime’s secondary intent for the new franc: in addition to financing the Five Year Plan, it was intended to restrict private commerce.

While the regime’s alliance with merchants had become strained but not broken during the first two years of independence as the regime sought to bring commercial activity, and indeed most of Mali’s important institutions, under state control, it would crumble under the weight of a non-convertible currency that spelled disaster for their livelihoods. The regime would respond to merchant dissent – ranging from the flouting

⁸⁹ *L’Essor* no. 3916, 3 Juillet 1962, “La République du Mali dispose de sa propre monnaie” (transcript of Modibo Keita’s radio speech announcing the franc’s creation), p. 3. “Mais surtout, ces facilités de crédit à court terme ont imprimé à nos courants d’échanges, une direction unilatérale et rigide qui n’a que trop contribué à figer dans leur aspect rudimentaire nos structures économiques internes, empêchant cette diversification nécessaire et vivifiante de l’économie, soit par l’atrophie des secteurs vitaux et moteurs de l’activité économique, soit au contraire par l’hypertrophie de certaines forces productives moins essentielles au développement économique, singulièrement le secteur tertiaire du commerce et des services.” Parallèlement, nous n’assisterons plus à la prolifération anarchique d’entreprises parasitaires, ou d’opérations spectaculaires à caractère de propagande, sans intérêt pour le pays et trop souvent financées au détriment de réalisations sans doute plus discrètes mais aussi plus décisives pour le développement de la Nation...”

of new trade regulations⁹⁰ to open protest – with increasingly vociferous socialist rhetoric. By the end of July 1962 merchants would be characterized as traitors. In the later years of the regime’s tenure — in language reminiscent of that used contemporaneously by Mao in China⁹¹ — Mali’s merchants would be cast as predators who “made hyper-profits on the backs of peasants who, because of the impotence of their cooperative institutions, allow themselves to be won over by usurious temptations.”⁹²

The anti-merchant narrative that began to take shape in mid-1962 and to grow more vociferous over the coming years clearly owed a debt to nationalism — merchants would be characterized, after all, as enemies of the nation and as *apatrides* (anti-nationalists) for their alleged economic misdeeds. But socialism also helped the USRDA construct an anti-merchant narrative that allowed the party to position itself as a replacement for merchants. Its emphasis on equality made it easy for the party to claim it represented all members of society. The regime routinely asserted that: “the Union Soudanaise R.D.A. is the expression of [the people’s] will.”⁹³ Since the party saw itself in this way, it was able to imply that enterprises “without interest for the country”⁹⁴ were those outside of its control. Socialism also contained a strong message of orderliness

⁹⁰ CADN.Bamako.Amb.20.Dépêches politiques 1961.*Synthèse du mois de mars 1961*.

⁹¹ Rebecca E. Karl, *Mao Zedong and China in the Twentieth-Century World: A Concise History*, (Duke University Press, 2010), 5.

⁹² ANM.114.437.Rapport et correspondances - Ministère de la défense et de la sécurité, 1953-1968.*Rapport sur la restructuration de l'organisation coopérative au Mali* (n.d., likely 1966-1968). "...réalisent des super-bénéfices sur le dos du paysans [sic] qui, en raison de l'impuissance de ses organismes coopératifs, se laisse gagner par les tentations usuriers dont les pratiques sont déjà si bien connues dans nos campagnes..."

⁹³ *L'Essor* no. 3916, 3 Juillet 1962, “Le Mali bat sa monnaie,” p. 3. “Le peuple du Mali n'hésitera pas, car son Parti, l'Union Soudanaise R.D.A. est l'expression de sa volonté par conséquent, le peuple reste dépositaire de sa propre volonté”.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* “...sans intérêt pour le pays.”

linked to rapid progress. Merchants were chaotic (i.e. independent), whereas a commercial sector controlled by the state would be streamlined. Merchants were parasites who sapped the people's resources, whereas state enterprises were implicitly beneficial because they were run by the emanation of the popular will. Rapid national development and the spectre of slow progress often served as a rationale for policies that ultimately served the regime more than Malian citizens. In 1960 Modibo Keita justified his government's persecution of rival parties by claiming that a young country could not afford "the dispersion of efforts and good will." He went on to argue that: "we ended up with the single party because it was a question of making Mali, and then it was a question of leading Mali to independence."⁹⁵ Progress and nation building — creating Mali, bringing it to independence — trumped any concerns about political liberties in 1960, and the same was true in 1962 as well as later on.⁹⁶ Merchants' autonomy represented exactly the kind of "dispersion of efforts" the USRDA could not accept.

The Malian franc was also a nation-building tool, an artefact of national culture. It bore the country's name and was meant to be in exclusive use across the state's full territory. Indeed, its propaganda function was not lost on observers. French Ambassador Fernand Wibaux noted the government was capitalizing on the occasion "to regain control of the population" — suggesting that Mali's grave economic difficulties had taken a toll on the regime's popularity.⁹⁷ To this effect, Modibo Keita announced a "vast

⁹⁵ *L'Essor* no. 3.320, 24 Février 1960. "A Ségou, Modibo Keita Dénonce Certaines Coutumes Évoque la Question du Parti Unique Stigmatise Certaines Déviations" "...la dispersion des efforts et des bonnes volontés"... "Ainsi donc, nous en sommes arrivés au parti unique parce qu'il s'agissait de faire le MALI, et ensuite il s'agissait de mener le MALI à l'indépendance.

⁹⁶ See Chapter 3, "Repression in the Keita Years."

⁹⁷ CADN.Bamako.Amb.21.Dépêches politiques 1962.*Dépêche hebdomadaire no 26 du*

campaign of explanation” where “each deputy” was “mobilized in service of our national currency,” a process that entailed leaving Bamako for their rural *circonscriptions*, overseen by the Ministers who were also sent into the regions, mostly to encourage “the bill exchange operations.”⁹⁸ As Keita gravely remarked to the nation in his June 30 radio address announcing the franc’s creation, “each CFA franc that is not exchanged according to the established timeframe and procedures will be a bitter loss for Mali.”⁹⁹ Unspoken was the fact that not forfeiting one’s CFA francs could equally have bitter consequences for individuals, as certain merchants would soon discover.¹⁰⁰ Meanwhile Modibo Keita’s speech celebrating the franc’s creation, along with commentaries in Bambara, was played all throughout the days on Radio Mali, reminding Malians that “the economic future of the Nation, the social progress of our labouring masses, and the international standing of our young Republic depends on the success of our monetary reform.”¹⁰¹

25 Juin au 1er Juillet 1962 (from the French Ambassador to the Minister of Foreign Affairs). “...reprendre en main la population.”

⁹⁸ CADN.Bamako.Amb.21.Dépêches politiques 1962.*Dépêche hebdomadaire no 26 du 25 Juin au 1er Juillet 1962 (citing from an appended copy of Modibo Keita’s radio address announcing the franc’s creation). “A partir de zéro heure, chaque député devra se considérer comme mobilisé au service de notre monnaie nationale. Dans les meilleurs délais, vous devez regagner vos circonscriptions et organiser une vaste campagne d’explications sur la portée de notre réforme monétaire, de telle sorte que chaque Malien se sente directement concerné par l’événement.”* Aussi: “...la position de votre Gouvernement se trouvera d’autant plus renforcée que vous ferez preuve de civisme et de discipline pendant les opérations d’échanges de billets.”

⁹⁹ Ibid. “Chaque franc C.F.A. qui ne sera pas échangé dans les délais et selon la procédure fixée, sera une perte sèche pour le Mali.”

¹⁰⁰ See below, “The Merchant Revolt.”

¹⁰¹ CADN.Bamako.Amb.21.Dépêches politiques 1962.*Dépêche hebdomadaire no 26 du 25 Juin au 1er Juillet 1962 (citing from an appended copy of Modibo Keita’s radio address announcing the franc’s creation). “Du succès de la réforme monétaire dépendent en effet l’avenir économique de la Nation, la promotion sociale de nos masses laborieuses et l’audience internationale de notre jeune République.”*

These efforts to convince Malians of the benefits of the new monetary policy, however, would meet with mixed results. Many citizens were indifferent to the new franc. Some feared for their livelihoods. Others went further and accused President Keita of a treasonous abuse of power for personal gain, with regard to the fact that his face had been printed on all denominations of bills.¹⁰² Yet it was merchants — rather than the longstanding party members and ex-combatants who deemed Keita’s hubris to be treasonous — who would rise against the currency.

Although the Keita regime had attempted to assuage merchant fears regarding socialism’s effect on their way of life and had made efforts, at least rhetorically, to include merchants in the Malian nation – having, for example, rhetorically placed them on equal footing with peasants and artisans in a 1961 circular concerning economic development¹⁰³ – the state’s increasing interventions into trade were already reducing the scope of merchant endeavours, rather than increasing it as merchants had hoped would be the case when they threw their weight behind the USRDA in the 1950s. The creation of the SOMIEX in 1960, for example, had pushed merchants out of the staple goods market,¹⁰⁴ causing much consternation in business circles.¹⁰⁵ With the introduction of

¹⁰² CADN.Bamako.Amb.21.Dépêches politiques 1962.*Dépêche hebdomadaire no 27 du 2 au 8 Juillet 1962 (from the French Ambassador to the Minister of Foreign Affairs).*

¹⁰³ ANM.142.560.Circulaires 1947-1968.*Circulaire No 11, 1961.* “Il est clair qu’aucun état ne peut soutenir chaque commerçant, chaque artisan, chaque cultivateur, etc..., mais il peut notamment mettre à la disposition des paysans groupés un tracteur, ouvrir des magasins, la coopérative se développant; pourvoir les commerçants en marchandises, aider à la commercialisation du bétail, etc...”

¹⁰⁴ ANM.114.436.Rapports et correspondances – Ministère des finances et de commerce 1960-1969.*ORDONNANCE NO 33 P.G.P. – R.M. Instituant une Société Malienne Pour l’Importation et l’Exportation (SOMIEX) 29 Octobre 1960.* “Article 3: La SOMIEX est seule habilitée à commercialiser les produits collectés par les sociétés para-administratives et les organismes coopératifs ruraux et à les approvisionner en marchandises de consommation courantes, en produits et en matériels nécessaires à leurs

the franc, their livelihoods came under even greater pressure. And when the government began arresting merchants in mid-July on the grounds that they had not surrendered their CFA francs in exchange for Malian currency, they struck back. Their response was the largest mass anti-regime demonstration of the First Republic.

The Merchant Revolt

Merchant protests erupted in Bamako on 20 July 1962, with hundreds of merchants surrounding a city police station where a leading businessman, Kassoum Touré, was being detained on charges of withholding CFA francs; they were violently put down.¹⁰⁶ These were the first major urban protests of the regime's tenure and they challenged in a very public way its claim to enjoy the population's full support.¹⁰⁷ In response, the party used this occasion to strike not only at merchants but also at its political opponents. Several protesters were killed. Official media construed the protests as a foreign-led attack on national independence. In this manner the state furthered its nationalist narrative and positioned itself as the defender of a nation under siege. At the same time it crushed dissent with deadly force.

The Malian franc entered circulation on 1 July 1962. The party set a deadline of

besoins. Elle est également seule habilitée à approvisionner en matériel les services administratifs de la République du Mali.”

¹⁰⁵ CADN.Bamako.Amb.20.Dépêches politiques 1961.*Synthèse du mois de mars 1961*. “A Sikasso, les commerçants ne veulent plus traiter avec la SOMIEX (Société malienne d’importation et d’exportation) et ont exigé d’organiser eux-mêmes le ravitaillement; ils ont refusé de mettre leur véhicules à la disposition Commandant de cercle.”

¹⁰⁶ CADN.Bamako.Amb.21.Dépêches politiques 1962.*Dépêche hebdomadaire no 29 du 16 au 22 Juillet 1962*.

¹⁰⁷ Dating back as far as 1959, sporadic acts of violence and opposition had taken place in remote areas, but these were of lesser significance as they had occurred out of the public eye and far from the capital; see Chapter 3, “Opposition.”

16 July for the forfeiture and exchange of all CFA francs for the new Malian currency.¹⁰⁸

Yet as this deadline approached, a problem emerged. The number of francs collected fell short of predictions. “The Malian people will demonstrate rigorous discipline in placing their total confidence in the currency,” read *L’Essor* on 3 July 1962.¹⁰⁹ Yet the numbers said otherwise. According to French Ambassador Wibaux:

In certain informed circles, they are already certain, on the eve of wrapping up the operation, that the CFA bills presented for exchange are far from representing the totality of the fiduciary circulation estimated at around 7 billion. According to information from a good source, only 4 billion 100 million CFA francs had, on the date of 13 July, been exchanged against new Malian francs.

France could not have been pleased about Mali’s withdrawal from the CFA franc zone, and it is possible the ambassador gave undue credence to simple rumours. Yet Wibaux was an old hand in Mali, and many USRDA officials respected him. According to Dr. Oumar Makalou, Mali’s first State Tax Inspector (*Contrôleur d’État*):

Wibaux was considered by Malians as a Malian, because he’d lived in Mali a long time as the National Director of the Office du Niger... which was the largest agricultural project in Mali and perhaps West Africa, you know, and it was he who was the best ambassador. We trusted him.¹¹⁰

With his particular background, Wibaux would have been well connected and well informed. In any case, the Keita regime’s actions in the days following the 16 July exchange deadline clearly show its dissatisfaction with the amount of CFA collected. It quickly organized raids on those suspected of withholding CFA. The targets of these raids were all merchants, and this set the stage for the revolt that would erupt on 20 July.

¹⁰⁸ CADN.Bamako.Amb.21.Dépêches politiques 1962.*Dépêche hebdomadaire no 28 du 9 au 15 Juillet 1962.*

¹⁰⁹ *L’Essor* no. 3916, 3 Juillet 1962, “Le Mali bat sa monnaie,” p. 1. “Le peuple Malien fera montre d’une discipline rigoureuse en plaçant une confiance totale dans sa monnaie.”

¹¹⁰ Interview with Dr. Oumar Makalou, 1 February 2012.

Targeting merchants made economic sense. They had relatively large reserves of CFA, which the party needed for two reasons. The first concerned imports. The Malian franc was not an international currency; it could not be legally sold abroad, nor was it desirable there. So the Keita regime still needed CFA francs to purchase the imports it required for development projects and general provisioning. It is true that the USRDA arranged to import many required foreign goods through “the large number of barter agreements negotiated with Communist countries from 1961 onwards,”¹¹¹ but such schemes did not eliminate the need for foreign currency.

CFA francs were also needed to guarantee the new franc’s value, which was declared to have the same worth as this currency:

The Malian franc will be a solid instrumental money, guaranteed by a one billion CFA franc hedge in gold and cash. Defined in relation to gold, the Malian franc will have the same value as the current CFA franc, which is to say that one Malian franc will be exchanged for one CFA franc. All measures will be taken to safeguard the value of our money both at home and abroad, such that no transaction will be able to take place at a value other than that legally established.¹¹²

This was the second reason the party required CFA francs. Nonetheless, many feared this *de jure* value would suffer *de facto* devaluation. Ambassador Wibaux reported that:

the merchants established in Mali already [foresaw], rightly or wrongly, a shortage of products, accumulated difficulties for European food provisioning, a new general increase in prices, finally, a *de facto* depreciation of the Malian franc

¹¹¹ Aristide R. Zolberg, "The political revival of Mali," *The World Today* 21, no. 4 (1965): 157.

¹¹² *L'Éssor* no, 3 Juillet 1962, "La République du Mali dispose de sa propre monnaie," p. 3. "Le franc malien sera une monnaie instrumentale solide, gagé par une couverture d'un milliard de francs C.F.A. en or et en devises. Défini par rapport à l'or, le franc malien aura la même valeur que le franc C.F.A. actuel, c'est-à-dire qu'un franc malien sera échangé contre un franc C.F.A. Toutes les mesures seront prises pour sauvegarder la valeur de notre monnaie tant à l'intérieur qu'à l'extérieur, de manière qu'aucune transaction ne puisse se réaliser à une valeur autre que celle légalement fixée."

analogous to that of the Guinean currency.¹¹³

These predictions turned out to be accurate, along with others that foreshadowed the coming raids. Ambassador Wibaux noted on 15 July that “[e]veryone is persuaded that a very severe hunt for C.F.A. francs still hiding in Mali will start from the 16th of July.”¹¹⁴ This is precisely what occurred.

L’Essor reported fruits of these raids in its 21 July edition. It noted that “the Party and the Government had placed an emphasis on their determination to root out and denounce all those who betrayed the Nation to make a little money.”¹¹⁵ The regime seized 2.85 million CFA francs from two Levantine merchants — the Faraht brothers, Nadin and Salim — and 6 million CFA francs from Georges Rached, along with 167,000 CFA francs from a Soudanese merchant, El Hadj Zoumana Koné “no. 1.” *L’Essor* also reported the government's seizure of 101,000 CFA francs from El Hadj Kassoum Touré on 20 July.¹¹⁶ It was this last seizure and arrest — which in reality took

¹¹³ CADN.Bamako.Amb.21.Dépêches politiques 1962.*Dépêche hebdomadaire no 28 du 9 au 15 Juillet 1962*. “Indépendamment de ce renforcement de la surveillance, du contrôle, des perquisitions, voire des arrestations, les commerçants établis au Mali entrevoient déjà à tort ou à raison une raréfaction des produits, des difficultés accrues pour le ravitaillement alimentaire européen, une nouvelle montée générale des prix, finalement, une dépréciation de fait du franc malien analogue à celle de la monnaie guinéenne.”

¹¹⁴ Ibid. “Chacun est persuadé qu’une chasse très sévère aux francs C.F.A. se cachant encore au Mali va commencer dès le 16 Juillet.”

¹¹⁵ *L’Essor* no 3930, 21 Juillet 1962, “Mise au point de la Présidence du Gouvernement” p. 1.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 1. “En son temps, le Parti et le Gouvernement ont mis l’accent sur leur détermination à dépister, dénoncer tous ceux qui ont trahi la Nation pour gagner quelque argent. Dans cet esprit, la Présidence du Gouvernement de la République du Mali porte aujourd’hui à la connaissance des militants que des coupables ont été déjà saisis sur le fait; ce sont: Les frères Faraht Nadin et Faraht Salim sur lesquels ont été saisis la somme de 2.850.000 francs C.F.A., qu’ils s’apprêtaient à subtiliser à la Nation Malienne et au Peuple du Mali, avec la complicité de M. Georges Rached, commerçant à Koutiala; M. Georges Rached devait se charger de faire transférer cette somme.

place on 19 July — that would provoke the merchants' ire.

Ambassador Wibaux described these raids and their significance as follows:

Arrests followed quickly [on the exchange period's end] and the most spectacular was surely that of a merchant from the [main] market, El Hadj Kassoum Touré, undertaken on the night of the 19th. Mr. Kassoum Touré is an old RDA activist who had for many years financially supported the party and more particularly Modibo Keita. For several months he had been known for his hostility to the policies and tendencies of the current government and had taken sides, after 30 June, against the monetary reform. Many Malian merchants, worried about this reform and its consequences, had gathered around him.¹¹⁷

Interviews with former regime officials confirm that Touré was a friend of Keita's and a longstanding party backer.¹¹⁸ Maybe it was this fact — the regime turning on one of its oldest allies — that spread anger. Or perhaps it was that Touré was a leader in the merchant community, and his followers thought that, since he was a target, their turn would come next. Regardless, his arrest spurred them to action. The following morning hundreds of protestors gathered outside the police commissariat where Touré was being held to demand his release. The main market was shuttered, with many merchants

Grâce à la diligence du Peuple Malien, une perquisition effectuée chez le nommé Rached a permis de retrouver 6.000.000 de francs C.F.A. D'autre par, sur le nommé El Hadj Zoumana Koné no. 1, commerçant au premier Badialan, rue 108, angle 109 a été saisi la somme de 167.000 francs C.F.A. à la date du 19 juillet 1962. Sur le nommé El Hadj Kassoum Touré, commerçant à Bagadadji, il a été saisi 101.000 francs C.F.A., hier 20 juillet 1962... Vous pouvez être assurés que le Mali et le Gouvernement ne feront preuve d'aucune faiblesse devant ces traitres.”

¹¹⁷ CADN.Bamako.Amb.21.Dépêches politiques 1962.*Dépêche hebdomadaire no 29 du 16 au 22 Juillet 1962.* “Les arrestations ne tardèrent pas et la plus spectaculaire devait être celle d'un commerçant de la place, El hadj KASSOUM TOURE, opérée dans la nuit du 19. M. KASSOUM TOURE est un vieux militant R.D.A. qui avait de longue date soutenu financièrement le parti et plus particulièrement MODIBO KEITA. Il était connu depuis plusieurs mois pour son hostilité à la politique et aux tendances du Gouvernement actuel et avait pris parti, après le 30 Juin, contre la réforme monétaire. Beaucoup de commerçants maliens, inquiets de cette réforme et de ses conséquences, s'étaient groupés autour de lui.”

¹¹⁸ Eg. Interview with Oumar Makalou, Bamako, 1 February 2012; interview with Abdoulaye Amadou Sy, Bamako, 11 February 2012.

stoning the police station and attempting to liberate their fellow businessman.¹¹⁹

The regime responded violently. Security forces fired on the crowd, killing one and wounding three.¹²⁰ The authorities managed to disperse the protesters from the commissariat, but later in the day they reconvened before the French Embassy and the Great Mosque downtown. These gatherings, too, “were brutally and rapidly dispersed as quickly as they reformed at the end of the afternoon.” The French Ambassador claimed security forces killed another protester on the scene, and that a third died in hospital from complications due to assault.¹²¹

The regime’s official account of the events of July 20th — and the accounts of certain former regime members recorded years later¹²²— differ markedly from that of

¹¹⁹ CADN.Bamako.Amb.21.Dépêches politiques 1962.*Dépêche hebdomadaire no 29 du 16 au 22 Juillet 1962*. “Dès le lendemain de cette arrestation, le marché principal de Bamako fermait ses boutiques et, au cours de la matinée, une cohorte de commerçants se rendait devant le Commissariat Central de la capitale pour exiger la libération de KASSOUM TOURE. Le rassemblement groupa très vite plusieurs centaines de manifestants qui se mirent à lancer des pierres contre le Commissariat et tentèrent d’y pénétrer. Les forces de l’ordre, policiers et gendarmes à cheval, accourus en hâte, durent faire face pour la première fois depuis l’indépendance à une véritable démonstration de masse. Ils se laissèrent déborder et tirèrent dans la foule, tuant net un manifestant et en blessant trois autres.”

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ CADN.Bamako.Amb.21.Dépêches politiques 1962.*Dépêche hebdomadaire no 29 du 16 au 22 Juillet 1962*. “Aussi bien les rassemblements qui se reformèrent en fin d’après midi, notamment devant la mosquée, furent-ils brutalement et rapidement dispersés. Un manifestant fut tué. Ceux qui furent arrêtés subirent pendant la nuit de graves sévices qui entraînèrent l’hospitalisation de six maliens. L’un d’eux mourut des coups qu’il avait reçus.”

¹²² E.g. Interview with Mantalla Baby, Bamako, 27 February 2012; interview with Mamadou Touré, Bamako, 6 March 2012; interview with Youssouf Traoré, Bamako, 27 January 2012. This version is repeated in the work of Amadou Seydou Traoré, the regime’s most vocal contemporary apologist: “The 20th of July 1962, a crowd of protesters started moving from Dabanani Market to the Pink Market [the main market in the heart of the city]. It attacked the Central Commissariat of Bamako... From there the protesters made their way to the French Embassy, passing in front of the cathedral and chanting words of a nature hostile to the currency and the regime... They exhibited the

the French ambassador. They portrayed the merchants as “colonial henchmen” bent on “accrediting abroad the idea of disunion among the people and our Party.” They mentioned that protesters caused a number of injuries, but not that any protesters themselves were injured or killed.¹²³

Significantly, in the reporting on the protests in *L'Essor* between July 21-23, certain key elements of the USRDA's final account had yet to appear. It did not suggest Touré had instigated the protests. Nor did it claim Fily Dabo Sissoko and Hammadoun Dicko — former leaders of the opposition party, the PSP, and former deputies in the French National Assembly — had orchestrated the events. These two were not mentioned at all in the regime's newspaper, or even in the French ambassador's accounts to the Foreign Minister in Paris. And while *L'Essor* had characterized the protesters as “colonial henchmen” in the early days following the protest, this read more like an insult than a concrete accusation. The paper certainly did not suggest foreign forces had pulled the strings in an international plot to overthrow the government.

Even as late as the 24th, *L'Essor* characterized the protests as nothing but the stupid, useless acts of a small band of “pseudo-merchants.” It suggested the motivation behind the protests “was madness, stupid madness,” rather than a far-reaching conspiracy.¹²⁴ When the paper put forth a new narrative on July 25th, it introduced the

French flag, which they applauded; they stomped on the Malian flag; they cried “Vive la France! Down with Mali! Long live the CFA franc! Down with the Malian franc!” And Fily Dabo was the conceiver and organizer.” (*La Mort de Fily Dabo Sissoko et de ses Compagnons*, (Bamako: La Ruche à Livres, 2010), 44-45.)

¹²³ *L'Essor* no 3930, 21 Juillet 1962, “Mise au point de la Présidence du Gouvernement” p. 1.

¹²⁴ *L'Essor*, 12e année, no. 3931, mardi 24 Juillet 1962, “Profondément indigné par la manifestation anti-nationale des contre-révolutionnaires, le peuple du Mali tout entier réaffirme son soutien résolu à sa monnaie et flétrit l'action de trahison des pseudo-

notion that merchants were not simply dense and deranged, but also disloyal. It stated that “[f]or the superficial observer, [the events of 20th July] are summed up as anti-national manoeuvres.”

This, however, is where the story of an act of insanity or a simple anti-government protest ends.¹²⁵ The article goes on to claim that “[t]he latest arrests have just demonstrated, effectively, that the protesters from the commissariat in the 1st arrondissement and from the French embassy were puppets manipulated by elements who are themselves nothing but sterile executors of foreign orders.”¹²⁶ The “sterile

commerçants”, p. 1. “Le mouvement scandaleux et stupide déclenché par les pseudo-commerçants de Bamako, le 20 juillet 1962, n’aura eu d’autres effets que d’accélérer l’exécution du programme de construction nationale, parce qu’il aura permis de démasquer un état d’esprit catastrophique dont l’existence dans un pays comme le nôtre constitue une cause de retard. Pourquoi ont-ils manifesté ceux-là qui hurlaient dans la rue des slogans anti-nationaux louant la puissance colonisatrice d’hier? Ils ne pourront jamais nous faire accepter qu’est à cause de la création du FRANC MALIEN, attribut principal de la souveraineté nationale, qu’ils ont insulté le pays. Ce mouvement anti-national a révolté la conscience de tous les patriotes attachés à la dignité de leur nation... Nous avons brisé les structures coloniales et les avons remplacés par des institutions démocratiques dans l’unique souci d’assurer le bonheur à tous les citoyens. Ces grandes réalisations ont été effectuées dans l’enthousiasme de tout le pays sans note discordante. Que voulaient-ils, ceux-là qui justifiaient leur déchéance dans la rue? Que nous détruisons de notre main l’objet de nos sacrifices, de notre courage? C’était la folie, de la folie stupide que rien, ni de loin, ni de près, ne peut justifier.”

¹²⁵ Note: It is particularly interesting to observe that the USRDA regime characterized any challenge to their leadership as “anti-national.” This is consonant with President Keita’s face appearing on all the Malian money (except the coins). Not only did the party engage in nation-building efforts, but it also offered itself as a metonym for the nation itself. In this way all opposition became anti-national. To criticize a policy was to criticize the nation. To call leaders’ actions into question was to manifest disdain for one’s country. In the Malian First Republic dissent was treason.

¹²⁶ *L’Essor*, 12e année, no. 3932, mercredi 25 Juillet 1962, “Autour du complot anti-national.” “Depuis cette date fatidique du 20 juillet 1962, nous sommes témoins d’événements. pour l’observateur superficiel, ils se résument en manoeuvres anti-nationales suivies peu après de contre-manifestations populaires militantes. Mais pour le connaisseur une analyse si peu profonde soit-elle permet de dégager des enseignements qui méritent qu’on s’y attarde. Les dernières arrestations viennent de démontrer, en effet, que les manifestants du commissariat du 1er arrondissement et de

executors” the party had just arrested were Fily Dabo Sissoko, one of the doyens of Malian literature, and Hammadoun Dicko. They and Kassoum Touré would go on to be sentenced to death in an *ad hoc* “people’s tribunal.” Although Keita commuted their sentences to life, the regime revealed in 1964 that all three had nonetheless been killed. In an unlikely explanation, *L’Essor* stated Tuareg rebels gunned them down during an attempt to escape their Saharan imprisonment.¹²⁷

By July 28 President Keita put forth an even more dramatic version of events. In a speech given at Mamadou Konaté Stadium before a crowd of “almost one hundred thousand people,”¹²⁸ Keita characterized the July 20 merchant protests as:

nothing but a phase in a grand subversive movement organized at length to topple the regime... Effectively, some who wished to play God, satellites of the politics of war, supported by certain persons from foreign countries, had hatched a plan. This plan consisted of creating a movement of disorder in the shadow of which they would proceed to the physical liquidation of certain political leaders. In the great upheaval that would result, Fily Dabo Sissoko, Hammadoun Dicko and their allies would appear as saviours of the Nation in order to take power...

l’Ambassade de France, étaient que des pantins maniés par des éléments qui ne sont eux-mêmes que des stériles exécutants d’ordres extérieurs... Ces traîtres qui se sont mis eux-mêmes hors de la société n’ont plus droit à son indulgence. Ils ne peuvent plus se réclamer d’être Maliens puisqu’ils se seraient plutôt donné la mort que de vivre la honte qui est la leur actuellement. L’Union Soudanaise-R.D.A., parti de masse, forte de l’appui populaire ne sort que plus renforcée de cette épreuve. En avant donc. L’enjeu est de taille. La machine révolutionnaire est décalaminée. Le peuple a parlé; ce qu’il a dit est sans équivoque: tout en renouvelant sa confiance au Parti et au Gouvernement pour l’exécution du programme défini par le Congrès historique du 22 septembre 1960, il exige que soient exemplairement châtiés les ennemis du peuple malien et de la cause africaine.”

¹²⁷ *L’Essor* no. 4427, 29 Juillet 1964, “Au sujets de la mort des contre-révolutionnaires du 20 juillet 1962”, p. 1. The paper also described the party’s apparent indignation at accusations they had assassinated the three prisoners in spite of their sentences having been commuted by Keita himself: “Nous leur rappelons [à leurs détracteurs] simplement, avec un immense dégoût que... l’art de se débarrasser des détenus, l’assassinat politique en un mot, sont des choses inconnues en République du Mali.”

¹²⁸ This approximated the entire population of Bamako at the time. How 100,000 people could fit in one modest stadium, and how *L’Essor* quantified their numbers, remains unknown.

The vigilance of our security services... allowed for these manoeuvres to be thwarted and consequently for the plot to be nipped in the bud. The leaders of the Party and the Government, President Modibo Keita assured, would mercilessly apply the sentence that will be handed down by the popular tribunal against the traitors and the nation-haters [*apatrides*].¹²⁹

The USRDA embellished its narrative over time.¹³⁰ Within a week its account of events transformed from a story about misguided merchants lacking national spirit to a tale of political assassination with roots in shady foreign networks. The USRDA thrived on an embattled image that had originally been forged in the fight against colonialism and that it had perpetuated in the socialist era as a fight against imperialism and economic meddling. Facing strong opposition from merchants on 20 July 1962, the party fell back on this image in order to protect its grip on power. Kassoum Touré, Fily Dabo Sissoko, and Hammadoun Dicko died for a story.

¹²⁹ *L'Essor Hebdomadaire*, 4e année, no. 163, 30 Juillet 1962, "Le Mali Est Un Pays Libre, Qui Entend Se Contruire Librement En Fonction De L'Option Qu'il A Librement Défini," p. 1. "Après avoir dénoncé les 'soutiens occultes des démolisseurs d'Etats'... Le Président en vint alors au film des évènements du 20 juillet qui ne sont qu'une phase d'un grand mouvement de subversion entrepris de longue date, pour renverser le régime afin de remettre en cause toutes les conquêtes que nous avons faites dans les domaines politique, économique et social. En effet, des apprentis sorciers, satellites de la politique de guerre, appuyés sur certains ressortissants de pays étrangers, avaient conçu un plan. Ce plan consistait à créer un mouvement de désordre à l'ombre duquel on procéderait à la liquidation physique de certains responsables politiques. Dans le grand émoi qui en résulterait, les Fily Dabo Sissoko, Hammadoun Dicko et consorts apparaîtraient en sauveurs de la Nation pour prendre le pouvoir. Cette période devait se situer entre le 15 juillet et le 15 août. Mais la vigilance de nos services de sécurité et l'amitié de certains de nos 'alliés naturels' d'Europe ont permis de déjouer ces manoeuvres et par conséquent à étouffer le complot dans l'oeuf. La direction du Parti et du Gouvernement, a assuré le Président Modibo Kéita, appliquera sans pitié la sentence qui sera retenue par le tribunal populaire contre les traîtres et les *apatrides*."

¹³⁰ More recently, former party officials have made various claims about the merchant protests of 20 July 1962. Some have suggested people congregated in such numbers not to voice grievances against the government but because conspirators had spread false rumours about the lions of Bamako's zoo having been let loose in the streets (interview with Mantala Baby, Bamako, 27 February 2012). Others claimed France was responsible for orchestrating the day's events (interview with Oumar Makalou, Bamako, 1 February 2012).

The merchants' actions on their own could not form the basis of the requisite narrative — one where the USRDA protects Malians from imperialism and safeguards “the conquests we have made in the political, economic and social domains” — because they were not a credible threat to the state, nor were they seen as enemies by most Malians. The party had introduced a currency harmful to their livelihoods and had arrested one of their leaders; the merchants had manifested their disapproval. That is all the evidence suggests. But the Keita regime “did not tolerate a single dissonant voice,”¹³¹ believing total political unity was an important factor in national development.¹³² By this time the USRDA was also demonstrating an increasingly autocratic approach to governance¹³³ — something prominent radical socialists like Mamadou Gologo had argued for shortly after independence.¹³⁴ Thus for a variety of reasons — concern about extensive opposition to party rule, nationalist and socialist ideals — the regime prioritized unity over both truth and citizens' lives in its response to the merchant protests.

One of the ways the USRDA sought to create national unity and build legitimacy was to assert that it was the emanation of the unanimous popular will. The party often claimed all Malians agreed with and supported it. The merchant protests presented a problem in this regard. In one sense they were a physical challenge to authority:

¹³¹ Ophélie Rillon, “Ces femmes que je ne saurais voir: Les dimensions sexuées de l'enquête de terrain en histoire,” *Hypothèses* 15, no. 1 (September 2012): 46.

¹³² *L'Essor* no. 3320, 24 Février 1960, “A Ségou, Modibo Keita Dénonce Certaines Coutumes Évoque la Question du Parti Unique Stigmatise Certaines Déviations.”

¹³³ Cooper, *Africa in the World*, 86.

¹³⁴ CADN.Bamako.Amb.9.Incidents de Ségou 1959 et 1960 et Politique au Soudan. *Télégramme Hebdomadaire No 53, Représentation de France au Mali*. “Mamadou Gologo qui se fait le porte-parole des éléments les plus avancés du parti a demandé que le futur gouvernement pratique une politique plus autoritaire.”

merchants threw stones, marched in the streets, chanted slogans. But they were not a serious material threat to the regime. They were not in any position to seize the president or imprison his ministers, as Lieutenant Moussa Traoré would do in November of 1968. Indeed, Aristide Zolberg, who wrote sympathetically of the regime in 1965, had this to say about their intolerance of dissent:

In actual fact, the rulers of Mali are very insecure, and their fears that almost any spark could set off a major catastrophe are reflected in the use of harsh repressive measures to put down what would be only minor incidents in a well-established State. Mali thus reveals most acutely the fundamental paradox of the African one-party States: namely that, while observers have been busy deploring authoritarian trends, the real problem is the weakness of their political structures.¹³⁵

While his rationalization of authoritarianism is questionable, his characterization of the party's insecurity and violent tendencies is accurate.

What Zolberg does not mention is that one of the reasons “minor incidents” like the merchant revolt so threatened the regime was because they represented a narrative problem. They contradicted the regime’s affirmations about national unity — and its account of its own political legitimacy— by demonstrating that it did not represent the popular will in its entirety. They showed that many disagreed with the USRDA. And the regime could not accept this because it shook the foundations of its nationalist narrative, which was premised not just on the establishment of a modern and prosperous society but on the idea that the USRDA was a disinterested executor of this program. In the creation of the new Malian nation, the USRDA claimed the role of “authentic emanation and faithful defender of the interests of the population.”¹³⁶ Under these circumstances, a

¹³⁵ Zolberg, "The political revival of Mali," 155.

¹³⁶ ANM.142.560.Circulaires 1947-1968.25 *Mai 1962 Note Circulaire no 8, signé 'Idrissa Diarra.* “Aujourd'hui l'Union Soudanaise RDA Parti unique en République du Mali, authentique émanation et fidèle défenseur des intérêts des populations, est à même

popular demonstration claiming otherwise could not be tolerated.

A counterargument might run that it simply took time for the USRDA to uncover the truth behind the protests, that they did not report on the conspiracy in the days following the uproar because they had yet to discover it. This, however, contradicts the party's own account. Indeed, the USRDA claimed in *L'Essor* to have known the protests would happen long in advance. "The reality," they wrote, "is that the Party and the Government were in no way surprised by what happened... Since 25 June 1962 the leaders of the Party and the Government had been informed."¹³⁷ The USRDA narrative is also unlikely to be true because there is no evidence to support it and because its claims are improbable. The merchants had a reason to stone the police commissariat on July 20 because one of their leaders had been arrested on July 19 and was being held there. They had grounds to oppose the franc because it hindered their already embattled livelihoods. The idea that the merchants stoned the commissariat in the wake of their compatriot's arrest because foreign elements and old opponents of the USRDA had orchestrated this as a diversion for the murder of the government is far-fetched.

That the party appears to have invented this account five to eight days after the fact does nothing to strengthen its case. Nor does the fact that it appears to have murdered in prison those it accused, even after their death sentences were commuted. And no evidence to support any of the USRDA's claims was ever made public by the party or uncovered later. Research efforts by multiple scholars in French and Malian archives

de faire face à toutes ses responsabilités."

¹³⁷ *L'Essor*; 12e année, no. 3930, samedi 21 Juillet 1962, "Mise au point de la Présidence du Gouvernement," p. 1. "La réalité est que le Parti et le Gouvernement n'ont été nullement surpris de ce qui se passe aujourd'hui. Depuis le 25 juin 1962, les dirigeants du Parti et du Gouvernement, en avaient été informés."

have found no evidence to suggest there is any truth in claims that Kassoum Touré, Fily Dabo Sissoko, and Hammadoun Dicko were involved in a plot against the regime — or indeed that there ever was a plot at all.¹³⁸

In this regard French Ambassador Wibaux demonstrated remarkable prescience. On 24 July 1962 — a day before *L'Essor* revealed the arrests of Fily Dabo Sissoko and Hammadoun Dicko — he wrote:

The days that will follow will show just to what extent the repression can or wishes to go, by leaders who, after the fright and the regaining [of control], see the omnipotence of the political organization that supports them affirmed and the failure of overt resistance to their latest enterprise, monetary reform. Will they continue on this campaign and profit from the occasion by trying to destroy, on the political level, the opposition...?¹³⁹

They did continue this campaign, yet the extent to which the regime profited in the long run from destroying its opponents in the wake of the merchant protests is unclear. While it managed to kill two imposing figures of the erstwhile opposition, it could not oblige merchants to support its economic policies. This would come to have a serious effect on the health of the state budget.

The repression and narrative invention that followed the merchant protests of 20 July 1962 illustrate the USRDA's fear of political fragmentation and its fundamental concern for national unity – a state of affairs it often attempted to bring about by force,

¹³⁸ Interview with Dr. Boubacar Séga Diallo, Bamako, 20 March 2012. This author's own research on this topic similarly bore no evidential fruit.

¹³⁹ CADN.Bamako.Amb.21.Dépêches politiques 1962.*Dépêche hebdomadaire no 29 du 16 au 22 Juillet 1962*. “Les jours qui vont suivre montreront jusqu’où peuvent ou veulent aller, dans la répression des dirigeants qui, après la crainte et le ressaisissement, voient s’affirmer l’omnipotence de l’organisation politique qui les soutient et l’échec de la résistance ouverte à leur dernière entreprise, la réforme monétaire. Vont-ils continuer sur leur lancée et profiter de l’occasion pour tenter d’anéantir sur le plan politique, l’opposition, déclarée ou en puissance de certains groupes?”

as it had done in the face of political dissent in Ségou in 1960¹⁴⁰ and as it would do again in Kidal in 1962-64 when faced with a Tuareg rebellion and what Baz Lecocq calls “competing nationalisms.”¹⁴¹ Killing protesters, jailing dissidents on dubious charges, and feeding misinformation to the public were tools to which it readily turned when threatened. Merchants suffered in this process, but their voices would come to be drowned out. The party dismissed their concerns by portraying them as pawns of foreign elements. This put the USRDA on familiar ground, as it had long represented itself as a liberating agent pitted first against the colonial regime and then, in the socialist era, against neocolonial enemies. In this case, however, it was silencing local citizens, not thwarting evil empires.

Nationalism and socialism helped shape a political context in which killing protesters, imprisoning innocent enemies, and disseminating misleading information to the public were viable strategies for increasing control over the state. Nationalism rationalized the party’s media monopoly, as the regime argued that tolerating only one political voice in Mali would speed up progress. It allowed the regime to justify repression of political opponents for similar reasons. All true patriots were on the same side, marching quickly to the future. Indeed, Modibo Keita had asserted in 1960 that Mali could not afford to indulge in pluralism, as it was a hindrance to nation-building.¹⁴² Socialism augmented these arguments, as it promised everyone an equal place in that

¹⁴⁰ See, Francis Simonis, “Le drame de Sakoiba: Magistrats et autorités politiques à Ségou (Mali) à la veille de l’indépendance,” *Droit et cultures* 30 (1995): 231–41.

¹⁴¹ Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*, 29.

¹⁴² *L’Essor* no 3320, 24 Février 1960, “A Ségou, Modibo Keita dénonce certaines coutumes évoque la question du parti unique stigmatise certaines déviations.” Keita suggéra que le Mali ne pouvait pas se permettre “...la dispersion des efforts et des bonnes volontés...Ainsi donc, nous en sommes arrivés au parti unique parce qu’il s’agissait de faire le MALI, et ensuite il s’agissait de mener le MALI à l’indépendance!”

future, and it offered numerous examples of nominally progressive socialist states that were enacting similar repressive policies — like China and North Vietnam — thus lending them an air of credibility. Indeed, when Keita embarked on a nine-nation international tour in 1964, his delegation found the emphasis laid on monolithic politics by Asian socialist states particularly instructive. As it remarks:

The comrade Modibo Keita...led an important National delegation (Party and Government) in the following countries: China, UAR, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, North Vietnam, [North] Korea, Mongolia, Indonesia, Iraq. Firstly, it should be noted that [concerning] the voyages in countries such as Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Indonesia, and Iraq...it is in no way possible to learn anything of even the remotest use... This is to say that only the experiences of the socialist countries: China – Vietnam – Korea and Mongolia – constitute the centre of our study... The leaders and the peoples of the visited socialist countries...offer all their faith and their unshakeable conviction in service to the Party and to Socialism, and in this way practice a coherent politics... To succeed, [the Chinese] affirm, and it is undeniable, a single dominant force is necessary – and this force, it is the Party.¹⁴³

Furthermore, socialism allowed the party to argue that Mali was under attack by shady foreign elements, as its adherence to socialism positioned it as a progressive force vulnerable to the machinations of capitalist powers. Yet, as will be explored in the following section, being labeled enemies of the nation and pawns of foreign plotters did nothing to stop merchants from plying their trade. The USRDA was able to repress the

¹⁴³ ANM.49.137.Commission de politique générale 1960-1967.*Avant Projet de Rapport de la Commission Politique*. “Le camarade Modibo Keita... a conduit une importante délégation Nationale (Parti et Gouvernement) dans les pays suivants: Chine, RAU, Arabie Saoudite, Tunisie, Viet-Nam du Nord, Corée, Mongolie, Indonésie, Irack. Dès l'abord, il convient de préciser que les voyages dans les Pays tels que l'ARABIE SAOUDITE, la TUNISIE, l'INDONESIE, et l'IRAK, ont permis surtout de mesurer la complexité des problèmes de tous ordres qui se posent aux responsables de ces Etats. Là, il n'est point possible de tirer des enseignements de quelque utilité que ce soit... C'est vous dire que seule l'expérience des Pays Socialistes: CHINE - VIET-NAM - COREE et MONGOLIE - constitue le Centre d'intérêt de notre étude...les dirigeants et les peuples des pays socialistes visités (CHINE - VIETNAM - COREE) apportent toute leur foi et leur conviction inébranlable au service du Parti et du Socialisme, et mènent dans ce sens une politique conséquente... Pour y parvenir, affirment-ils, et c'est indéniable, il faut une seule force dominante - et cette force, c'est le Parti.”

merchant protests and thus to manage their political expression, but managing the economy would prove a more difficult task — one the regime had overestimated its ability to undertake.

Merchants and Militiamen: How the economy left the state behind

Although the USRDA had succeeded in creating a host of state enterprises in accordance with its high modern vision of a comprehensively planned socialist economy that would spur rapid economic development, many of these enterprises haemorrhaged money.¹⁴⁴ In combination with a worsening monetary situation due to the Malian franc's rapid inflation after 1962, the pace of economic decline quickened and the state grew increasingly impoverished.¹⁴⁵ The black market continued to expand as the currency's value plummeted and the state's capacity to extract grain from the peasantry shrank. As Francis Synder describes:

the policy of monetary nationalism led to a scarcity of imports and encouraged smuggling and the rise of a flourishing black market. It also contributed to a growing stagnation of the commercial agricultural sector... The decline in commercial agriculture—the government's main source of domestic income—was paralleled by an inflation stimulated by the government's recourse to loans from the central bank. Unregulated market prices of consumer goods rose 88 percent between 1962-63 and early 1967.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ CADN.Bamako.Amb.21.Dépêches politiques 1962.*Dépêche hebdomadaire no 108 du 24 au 31 Décembre 1961*. "Malgré la bonne volonté indéniable et l'enthousiasme de certains éléments de la population, beaucoup s'inquiètent de la disproportion flagrante entre l'importance des objectifs à atteindre et la faiblesse des moyens pour y parvenir. Quelques uns vont même plus loin et mettent en doute la capacité des dirigeants actuels à mettre sur pied une organisation économique viable, soulignant les résultats médiocres de la SOMIEX et le déficit chronique, voire structurel, d'AIR-MALI."

¹⁴⁵ Francis G. Snyder, "The Keita Decade: An Era Ends in Mali," *Africa Report* 14 (1969): 19.

¹⁴⁶ Snyder, "The Keita Decade," 19. Tiégoué Amadou Ouattara describes this same phenomenon: "Le commerce privé, traqué de toute part, devient une activité marginale, mais florissante grâce au développement des marchés parallèles, à la spéculation contre la monnaie, aux exportations qui sont en réalité des désinvestissements et des transferts

Thus by 1967 USRDA officials would describe Mali as “a country torn apart by mercantile commerce, trafficking, speculation, and the remnants of feudal practices.”¹⁴⁷

These sentiments were echoed by regime officials who characterized trafficking as a huge problem as early as 1963. For example, Cherif Keita, the National Director of the Société Nationale de l'Exploitation des Abattoirs et Annexes (SONEA), noted in a memo to President Keita:

I have... made you aware in due course of the fraud and contraband that have infiltrated this domain since March 1963. My usual suppliers from Bamako, Kayes, Mopti, and Gao have purely and simply abandoned me and prefer to fraudulently export their merchandise... I have formal proof that our skins supply the markets of Senegal, Haute-Volta and Niger. This contraband is doubled by a second fraud: the skins are sold abroad in CFA francs. This money serves to buy merchandise that is fraudulently introduced in Mali.¹⁴⁸

The Keita regime disincentivized Mali's producers through offering low payment in a

de capitaux... Tout ces manoeuvres que la loi sur la profession de commerçant se proposait d'étouffer ont au contraire fleuri et réussi à jeter le doute sur la capacité de l'Etat à maîtriser ce secteur où la corruption, au fur et à mesure que s'amenuisent les conditions matérielles d'existence, tend à devenir monnaie courante." (Ouattara, *Le Destin du Socialisme Malien*, (Bamako: Editions Imprimerie du Mali, 1979), 278-279.)

¹⁴⁷ ANM.109.416.Rapport et Compte-Rendu de Mission à l'Intérieur du Mali 1964-1967.1967 12 01 *Thèmes des assemblées générales dans les comités de la ville de Bamako*. "...un pays déchiré par le commerce mercantile, le trafic, la spéculation, et les survivances des pratiques féodales (discrimination)..."

¹⁴⁸ ANM.23.55.Les Sociétés et Entreprises d'État 1958-1966.*Le Directeur Général de la SONEA (Société Nationale pour l'exploitation des abattoirs et annexes) à Monsieur le Secrétaire Général de l'USRDA, 12 October 1963*. "Je vous ai également signalé en son temps la fraude et la contrebande qui ont gagné ce domaine depuis Mars 1963. Mes fournisseurs habituels de Bamako, Kayes, Mopti et Gao, m'ont purement et simplement laissé tomber et préfèrent exporter frauduleusement leurs marchandises. Des clients qui me donnaient 1000 à 1500 peaux par mois, ne m'en fournissent plus que 50 ou 100, juste de quoi donner le change et écarter nos soupçons. Or j'ai la preuve formelle que nos peaux alimentent les marchés du Sénégal, de Haute-Volta et du Niger. Cette contrebande se double d'une seconde fraude: les peaux sont venues à l'extérieur en FRs CFA. Cet argent sert à acheter des marchandises qui sont introduites frauduleusement au Mali... (signé 'Le directeur Général Ch. KEITA')."

dubious currency. As Snyder noted, this led peasants to market less grain, and it also led other producers to shunt their products to the borders where prices were better and the currency was more stable.

Although the regime repeatedly portrayed merchants as “gravediggers of our economy” and “noxious agents,” it was not able to bring Malians to renounce them.¹⁴⁹ In fact, even the security forces collaborated with merchants to flout the regime's restrictive trade laws. As was ruefully noted in a circular from the Presidency to all units of the army, the gendarmerie, the republican guard, and the police: “for some time now certain elements of our security forces and of the army continuously demonstrate worrying signs of shortcomings.” In addition to denouncing the most predictable forms of corruption — misuse of public goods, embezzlement, and theft — the memo also noted that “soldiers of all ranks tasked with missions in neighbouring countries engaged in trafficking and in the fraudulent transport of merchandise on behalf of merchants, enemies of our [socialist] option.” On top of all this was the fact that “elements of the security forces are implicated in the business of [financial] speculation.”¹⁵⁰ In other

¹⁴⁹ ANM.141.559.Circulaires CNDR 1967-1968.No 482/DNC, *Circulaire du Directeur Général de la Coopération (Bassidy Dembélé), 13 Novembre 1968*. “...fossoyeurs de l'économie”; ANM.141.559.Circulaires CNDR 1967-1968.*Lettre Circulaire No 9/CNDR du 30 Septembre 1967* (signé 'Modibo Keita'), “...les agents nocifs qui sapent quotidiennement l'édifice que notre Peuple élabore patiemment au prix de mille sacrifices - ce sont les trafiquants.”

¹⁵⁰ ANM.117.449.Présidence du Gouvernement-Secrétariat Général 1958-1967.*Circulaire No 2, Présidence du Gouvernement, Ministère de la Défense et de la Sécurité, Koulouba, 16 Janvier 1965, À toutes les unités de l'armée malienne, de la gendarmerie nationale, de la garde républicaine et de la police*. “...depuis quelque temps, le comportement de certains éléments de nos forces de sécurité et de l'armée ne cesse de donner des signes inquiétants de défaillance.” Aussi: “les militaires de tous grades chargés de mission dans les pays voisins se livrent au trafic et aux transports frauduleux de marchandises pour le compte de commerçants ennemis de notre option.” Et: “Des éléments de la sécurité sont impliqués dans des affaires de spéculations”.

words, the party's persecution of merchants seems to have been of little concern to those outside the circle of political decision makers, such that various arms of the public service were happy to work with merchants despite knowing full well it was contrary to state policy.

Indeed, in certain cases dealing with merchants may not have been a matter of preference but of necessity, as shortages of grain and other staples became frequent in the state-managed economy, particularly from 1964 onward.¹⁵¹ The commercial network established by the state was incapable of effectively supplying all of Mali's communities, many of which were in remote areas where access was difficult, as one peasant relates:

The Dioulas [merchants] were pushed out of the circuit of commercial activities. Nobody could do anything on their own. And it was OPAM that had the management [of the commercial grain circuit] in hand yet it was incapable of supplying the country, the people from the bush and the villagers.¹⁵²

While the USRDA aimed to take full control of Mali's commercial sphere, it was unable to do so. It lacked the ability to stop merchants from working — or to stop Malians from wanting the services merchants offered — and in this context the black market blossomed.

Not only did merchants fill many of these gaps in provisioning, but they also offered better prices than the state when buying commodities like grain. In 1968 OPAM, which had a theoretical monopoly on grain, paid 16 francs per kilogram of millet to Malian producers. In a 1968 report Madeira Keita, who was at that time *chef de zone* in Tominian, complained that peasants there were reluctant to sell grain to the state. He

¹⁵¹ ANM.142.560.Circulaires 1957-1968.29 *Juillet 1964 Circulaire 15*; ANM.142.560.Circulaires 1957-1968.*Circulaire 12 CNDR 1967 10 18*.

¹⁵² Interview with François Coulibaly, Sougoula, 11 March 2012.

registered his great frustration that local *dolo* (millet beer) brewers “buy kilos of millet for up to 30 francs,” and described this situation as a “veritable plague in this region.”¹⁵³

Despite strenuous efforts to establish “absolute control of the distribution of consumer goods,” by 1967 President Keita conceded that “[u]nfortunately, daily practice irrefutably proves that things [pertaining to state control of trade] aren’t good, even that they are often going badly and sometimes very badly.”¹⁵⁴ This led the regime to increase efforts to curtail the black market. President Keita viewed this task with such gravity that he likened those in charge of rooting out fraudsters to military personnel in charge of national defence, and he placed them on an equal footing with soldiers:

[T]he supply system... has always and everywhere constituted the most vulnerable and most threatened part of the Revolution’s general front. It’s with good reason that the revolutionary practice of humanity in progress makes of the supply sector an integral and sensitive part of the general problem of National Security, along with National Defence proper, militarily speaking. In truth those who take on responsibilities at different levels occupy the most sensitive positions in the whole of the strategic system of defense of the Revolution. Their actions must be – and it will be so henceforth – appreciated and sanctioned in this light, with the same status as the actions of commanders and fighters in our armed forces...¹⁵⁵

This was the beginning of the Active Revolution, an initiative that began in July

¹⁵³ ANM.109.415.Compte Rendu et Rapport de Mission à l’Intérieur du Mali 1968.*1968 04 13 Rapport Tominian Chef de zone Mamadou Madeira KEITA.*

¹⁵⁴ ANM.142.560.Circulaires 1947-1968.*Projet de Circulaire, signé ‘Modibo Keita’, 17 Novembre 1967.* “Malheureusement, la pratique quotidienne prouve irréfutablement que les choses ne vont pas bien, même qu’elles vont souvent mal et parfois très mal...”

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. “...le système de ravitaillement donc a constitué toujours et partout la partie la plus vulnérable et la plus menacée du front général de la Révolution. C’est à juste raison que la pratique révolutionnaire de l’humanité en progrès fait du secteur du ravitaillement une partie intégrante et névralgique du problème général de la Sécurité nationale, à côté de la Défense nationale proprement dite, militairement parlant. En vérité ceux qui en assument les responsabilités aux différents niveaux occupent les positions les plus sensibles de l’ensemble du système stratégique de défense de la Révolution. Leurs actions doivent être - et elles le seront désormais - appréciées et sanctionnées sous cet angle, au même titre que les actions des commandants et des combattants de nos forces armées...”

1967 and aimed to stem the tide of economic decline by neutralizing merchants, whom the regime labeled “economic fraudsters.” Indeed, the USRDA's Minister of Justice noted in a 1967 speech that “[t]he main imperative of the current phase of our Revolution is the elimination of embezzlement, of economic fraud, and of corruption.”¹⁵⁶ When Modibo Keita announced the CNDR would replace the BPN in a speech on Radio Mali on 22 August 1967, he equally cited the need to “clean up Mali's political and economic situation” as a reason why Mali’s constitutionally mandated institutions should be dissolved in favour of rule by revolutionary committee.¹⁵⁷

The major feature of the Active Revolution — an idea many scholars believe was derived from Mao’s Cultural Revolution¹⁵⁸ — was the advent of the Popular Militia. This was a paramilitary force under the direct control of the party, with a mandate to execute its wishes. The organization had been created in 1960 in the wake of the rupture between Senegal and Mali, but remained largely inactive until 1967. At that time the regime devoted increasing resources to it in the form of manpower, training, and weapons.¹⁵⁹

A number of texts dealing with the Malian First Republic have discussed the Militia in a cursory way. These tend to cite the human rights abuses that developed in the 1967-

¹⁵⁶ ANM.87.293.Rapport et Synthèse de la Délégation du CNDR 1967.*Allocution d’Ouverture du Ministre de la Justice “Le Rôle de la Justice dans la Révolution.”* “L’impératif premier dans la phase actuelle de notre Révolution, c’est l’élimination des malversations, de la fraude économique et de la corruption. Il faut malheureusement reconnaître que si quelques faiblesses subsistent encore au niveau de notre Justice, c’est bien dans ce domaine qu’on a à les déplorer.”

¹⁵⁷ Campmas, “L’Union Soudanaise, Section Soudanaise Du Rassemblement Démocratique Africain 1946-1968,” 428.

¹⁵⁸ Eg. Snyder, “The Keita Decade,” 19; Martin, “Socialism, Economic Development and Planning in Mali, 1960-1968,” 46; Campmas, “L’Union Soudanaise, Section Soudanaise Du Rassemblement Démocratique Africain 1946-1968,” 439-440.

¹⁵⁹ Gregory Mann, “Mali’s New Model Army,” *Mande Studies* 5, 2003: 73-74.

1968 Active Revolution period when the Popular Militia swelled in ranks and gained considerable power, transforming from an essentially dormant institution into the regime's most visible instrument of power.¹⁶⁰ What most observers have failed to point out, however, is that one of the militia's main tasks — if not *the* main task — was to track down merchants operating on the black market. Analysis of the militia's remaining records in the Malian National Archives demonstrates that a great deal of militia work focused on curtailing trafficking. Indeed, the militia was so active in this domain that in January 1968 the Minister of Finance composed a letter to its Permanent Secretary, Kansoro Sogoba, “regarding the intervention of the militia in the fight against economic fraud,” accusing the militia of being overzealous and infringing on his jurisdiction.¹⁶¹

The Popular Militia's records are replete with reports¹⁶² sent from regional branches to the Permanent Secretary in Bamako, Kansoro Sogoba, which explain, for example, that they “have the honour of informing [him] below of the list of merchandise of the delinquents operating in Koulikoro,” which the militia had seized — items like “23 boxes of soap” or “67 packs of *Liberté* cigarettes.”¹⁶³ The militia went as far as to send

¹⁶⁰ See, for example, Sanankou, *La Chute de Modibo Keita* ; Campmas, “L’Union Soudanaise, Section Soudanaise Du Rassemblement Démocratique Africain 1946-1968,” 444.

¹⁶¹ ANM.146.568.Dossier de la Milice Populaire, 1964-68.*Secrétariat Permanent, No 087/SPMP, 1 Février 1968*. “Nous avons l’honneur d’accuser réception de la correspondance No 0003/MF-CAB-C en date du 5/1/1968 du Ministre des Finances relative à l’intervention de la Milice dans la lutte contre la fraude économique.”

¹⁶² ANM.146.568.Dossier de la Milice Populaire, 1964-68.*No 018/SP-MP (Le Secrétaire Permanent, S. Kansoro, le 14 Août 1967)*; ANM.146.568.Dossier de la Milice Populaire 1964-68.*A Monsieur Modibo Keita (BAMAKO, le 9 Décembre 1967)*.

¹⁶³ It should be noted, however, that economic matters are likely overrepresented in the record, for such activities as chasing down smugglers are far less controversial than, say, beating adulterous couples, stripping and beating “enemies” unconscious, or arresting citizens without authorization — all activities which are recorded only rarely in the surviving records. ANM.146.568.Dossier de la Milice Populaire 1964-68.*Milice*

spies to Côte d'Ivoire, disguised as merchants carrying fish and Néré seeds via public transport, to root out merchants flouting export and travel restrictions.¹⁶⁴ In order to enhance government control not just of goods but also of labour, the militia equally arrested many non-merchants who attempted to leave the country, particularly via southern towns like Bougouni and Ouéllésébougou.¹⁶⁵

The Militia's efforts to clamp down on commerce were so aggressive that the Ministry of Finance lodged a complaint, claiming the paramilitaries were attempting to replace Mali's customs officials. Yet this complaint, and many others like it, would have little effect. (As the militia's Permanent Secretary responded, "What could be more normal?")¹⁶⁶ For it was precisely because the leaders within the CNDR felt the economy was beyond their grasp that they gave increasing power to the militia. The regime believed their economic imperatives were so widely flouted by merchants and others that not even customs officials could be trusted, so they passed this job to an organization they controlled directly.¹⁶⁷ Kansoro Sogoba, the Permanent Secretary of the

Populaire du Mali, Noyau de Bamako-Coura. Le milicien un tel au Secrétaire Permanent de la Milice Populaire du Mali à Bamako.

¹⁶⁴ This nearly resulted in the militiamen's arrest in Côte d'Ivoire when they were denounced by a transporter who knew their true identities (ANM.146.568.Dossier de la Milice Populaire, 1964-68.*Bamako, le 8 November 1967, Le Secrétaire Permanent de la Milice Populaire du Mali à Monsieur le Président du CNDR à Koulouba*).

¹⁶⁵ ANM.146.568.Dossier de la Milice Populaire, 1964-68.*A Monsieur le Commissaire de Police du 2e Arrondissement à Bamako, le 2 Octobre 1968.*

¹⁶⁶ ANM.146.568. Dossier de la Milice Populaire, 1964-68.*Bamako, le 26 Janvier 1968, Le Secretariat Permanent de la Milice Populaire du Mali BAMAKO À Monsieur Le PRESIDENT DU C.N.D.R., Chef de l'Etat.*

¹⁶⁷ Indeed, a USRDA document laying out the reasons for the Militia's creation and its organization, administration, and actions, states in regards to its administration: "At the level of the Republic Head Office operates in Bamako. The Director is the Political Secretary of the Union Soudanaise-RDA... At the level of the Sections local centres must function under the authority of the General Secretaries [of the party sections] who fulfill the functions of Director. They direct and control the activity of the militias in the

militia, noted as much in a 1968 letter, remarking that the militia “benefits at the moment from the glow cast upon the political screen of the US-RDA thanks to the advent of the CNDR and to the personal action of the Guide of the Malian Revolution.”¹⁶⁸

Of course, the regime never regained control of the economy, not to speak of public opinion. Merchants continued to operate because it was impossible for a poor state like Mali to effectively police 7,000 km of borders with seven neighbouring states, and because they fulfilled an important economic role that the state was not in a position to take up. Meanwhile, aggressive militia activity made the Active Revolution an alienating period of chaos, fear, and humiliation for many, one where angry youths often abused their newfound power for personal gain.¹⁶⁹ As Albakaye Ousmane Kounta, a former administrator and well-known poet, described:

They wound up unleashing this militia onto the people, well really to stamp out all opposition, even if it was at the smallest level. It was quite a contradiction, between their values of fairness and justice and that of authoritarianism.¹⁷⁰

Such abuses of power are not only emblematic of a regime that grew increasingly autocratic over the course of its rule, but are also suggestive of a clientelist function for the popular militias. The power granted to the militias — and their lack of supervision

Arrondissements." ANM.146.568.Dossier de la Milice Populaire, 1964-68.*Les Brigades de vigilance et les Milices populaires*. (Note: while this document is undoubtedly of USRDA origin based on content, appearance, and its location in the USRDA collection at the Malian National Archives, it is undated and unsigned.)

¹⁶⁸ ANM.142.568.Dossier de la Milice Populaire.*Secrétariat Permanent No 087/SPMP, 1 Février 1968*. “...la Milice qui bénéficie en ce moment des lueurs projetées sur l’écran Politique de l’U.S – R.D.A. grâce à l’avènement du C.N.D.R. et à l’action personnelle du Guide de la Révolution Malienne, nous avons nommé votre personne Monsieur Le PRESIDENT.”

¹⁶⁹ Interview with Jean Bosco Konaré, Bamako, 2 March 2012.

¹⁷⁰ Interview with Albakaye Ousmane Kounta, Bamako, 21 March 2012.

— provided them with opportunities to materially benefit from their role as they enforced the will of the regime.¹⁷¹ Indeed, at least certain elements of the militia were offered a percentage of the value of goods they seized from merchants:

The word going around is that the percentage allocated to unemployed militiamen (*miliciens chômeurs*) who conducted all the seizure operations for over one month has only reached 1750 francs each... It is also known that, considering the significance of the seizures, the militia's percentage should be more significant.¹⁷²

Furthermore, it appears that militia groups were often comprised of powerful USRDA patrons' clients. The militia in Mopti, for example, appears to have been under the influence of Baréma Bocoum, an area politician who was close to Modibo Keita.

Kansoro Sogoba, the Permanent Secretary of the Popular Militia, wrote:

Since the beginning of the Active Revolution, no committee, no Sub-Section board has been changed... At the head of the Sub-Section and Village Committees, those in control have appointed only their devoted followers and not devotees of the party... The Popular Militia in Mopti was constituted with the same mentality as the boards of the neighbourhood committees. In the ranks of the Mopti Militia, you will rarely find non-native elements, the few rare ones that there are being either relatives of Baréma or junior employees who owe him their position.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ ANM.146.568.Dossier de la Milice Populaire, 1964-1968.*Action de la milice au sein de certains services d'état*. "Il y a aussi des miliciens qui procèdent à la rafle des viandes avec certains bouchers. Ces viandes ne sont pas rendues à qui de droit. Elles sont consommées par les miliciens de garde."

¹⁷² ANM.146.568.Dossier de la Milice Populaire, 1964-1968.*Information sur Moctar Gakou et Oumar Aw, 27 Décembre 1967*. "Le bruit court que le pourcentage aloué aux miliciens chômeurs qui ont fait toutes les opérations de saisie pendant plus d'un mois n'ont touché que 1.750 francs chacun... On sait aussi que vu l'importance des saisies, le pourcentage de la milice devait être plus important, à moins que cela ne soit resté en cours."

¹⁷³ ANM.146.568.Dossier de la Milice Populaire, 1964-1968.*Secrétariat Permanent, Renseignements (1967/68)*. "Mais si le marasme a été aussi grand et persistant, c'est le résultat d'un fait incontestable. Depuis le déclenchement de la Révolution active, aucun Comité, aucun bureau de Sous-Section n'a été renouvelé. Personne n'ignore la méthode utilisée dans ces Régions. A la tête des Sous-Sections Comités et Villages, les tenants avaient placé riens que des inconditionnels à eux et non pas ceux du Parti... Par ailleurs, la Milice Populaire à Mopti avait été constituée sur le même esprit que les bureaux des Comités de quartier. Dans les rangs de la Milice de Mopti, on trouvera rarement des

Although far from comprising a comprehensive analysis of Mali's Popular Militia – a worthy study in its own right – such reports nonetheless suggest that, while it did not have the capacity to resolve Mali's economic problems, it may have been able to temporarily shore up the power of the regime — sometimes at the level of its individual members — through the creation of armed bands of supporters.

This heightened battle against merchants — who were attacked with venom as fraudsters and traffickers — was one the USRDA did not win. On the contrary, the regime's effort in 1967-1968 to establish a revolutionary socialist order inspired partly by the Chinese example has been cited by many as the proximal cause of its decline, with reference to militia abuses in particular.¹⁷⁴ Indeed, Mao's writings were used during the Active Revolution to justify erasing the distinction between party and state, thereby justifying the USRDA's direct control over institutions like the militia, whose police-like duties were in fact more properly administrative. In a 1967 circular entitled *Defence of the Revolution*, Modibo Keita quotes the Chinese leader in support of this position:

“As soon as it is a question of revolution in the colonies and the semi-colonies, the State and political power will necessarily be identical there in principle...” wrote Mao Tsé Toung in January 1940.¹⁷⁵

As noted earlier in this chapter, this was not the first occasion on which the regime expressed interest in Chinese policies tending toward the consolidation of the party's

éléments non autochtones, les quelques rares qui y sont, ont ou des parentés avec Baréma, ou sont des employés subalternes qui lui doivent leur place.”

¹⁷⁴ Pacal James Imperato, *Mali: A Search for Direction* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989); Sanankoua, *La Chute de Modibo Keita*. A number of interview subjects raised the same point. Eg. Fodé Diawara, Bamako, 8 February 2012.

¹⁷⁵ ANM.141.559.CNDR Circulaires. *Circulaire no 10/CNDR du 10 Septembre 1967*. ““Dès qu'il s'agit de révolution dans les colonies et les semi-colonies, l'Etat et le pouvoir politique y sont nécessairement identiques en principe...” écrivait Mao Tsé Toung en Janvier 1940.”

grip on power.

These new efforts to stop merchants from competing in a commercial sector the party sought to dominate failed in large part because the regime's economic policies were driven not by a sound appraisal of what was possible given Mali's conditions but by ideological considerations and high modern ideals. This created increasing room for merchants to operate on the margins of a failing system. When Lieutenant Moussa Traoré eventually overthrew the regime on 19 November 1968, the population did not lament the downfall of state planning. On the contrary, the people's response was overwhelmingly positive.¹⁷⁶ Striking directly at one of the Keita regime's most problematic legacies, the new government announced plans to “relax controls on traditional commerce” within a week of the coup.¹⁷⁷

Conclusion

After independence the Keita regime maintained that merchants had a place in Mali's future — despite having defined that future in socialist terms — yet within two years it came to see them as enemies of the nation and its political project. Intolerant of opposition and overconfident in their ability to manage the economy, USRDA leaders cast merchants out of the national community and sought to severely restrict – if not eliminate – their business. Yet its efforts to take over Mali's commercial sector proved ineffective. Private business continued in spite of regime propaganda characterizing merchants as selfish, anti-national parasites. In certain ways it thrived like never before due to goods shortages and the state's unwillingness to match the higher grain prices

¹⁷⁶ Sanankoua, *La chute de Modibo Keita*; phone interview with Pascal James Imperato, 4 February 2012.

¹⁷⁷ Synder, “The Keita Decade,” 22.

offered by merchants on the open market. Indeed, as Bakary Diallo recalls:

There was a merchant who said to me: “*Mon commandant*, we are happy. We are especially happy when the government takes dispositions against us. We have time to thwart them.”... It was a merchant who told me that. He told me that each time the government made a decision against them, the best thing was to keep quiet. But once it’s done, he said, us merchants will find a way to get around it.¹⁷⁸

Illegal commerce grew so prevalent that even the families of high-ranking USRDA members of both radical socialist and moderate persuasions — including Jean-Marie Koné, Mamadou Gologo, Baréma Bocoum, and Idrissa Diarra — were implicated in certain black market activities.¹⁷⁹ Modibo Keita’s wife was equally accused of such involvement.¹⁸⁰

In hindsight, the persecution of Mali's merchants seems an unwise decision in a long line of bad economic choices that led to a decreased standard of living and set the stage for the 1968 coup d'état. The party's aggressive approach appears to have been influenced at least in part by the idea that socialism was a panacea that would deliver them from a variety of problems — an idea that was not universally held within the USRDA but that nonetheless predominated throughout the 1960s, particularly in the

¹⁷⁸ Interview with Bakary Diallo, Bamako, 20 March 2012.

¹⁷⁹ ANM.245.876.Correspondances Ségou 1958-1968.7 *January 1966 Secret – Le Gouverneur de la Région de Ségou à Monsieur le Président de la République*. “En exécution des instructions que vous avez bien voulu me donner lors de la dernière conférence de Mopti au sujet des rumeurs relatives à l'acquisition, à Ségou, de fil à tisser par les épouses de certains responsables de Bamako, j'ai l'honneur de vous rendre compte de ce qui suit: Il ressort de l'enquête que j'ai prescrite à la Police à ce sujet que l'acquisition portée contre Mme la Présidente est sans fondement. En effet, la dame Kadiatou Diallo qui l'a citée parmi les personnes ayant reçu du fil a été obligée de reconnaître qu'il s'agit d'une imputation gratuite. Mais par contre, au cours de nos investigations, il a été établi que les épouses des camarades: Jean-Marie, Mamadou Gologo, Barema Bocoum, Idrissa Diarra, Youssouf Dembélé et Seydou Diarra de la Présidence en ont reçu par l'intermédiaire de Mamadou Koné, Commis des Postes et Télécommunications, en service à Ségou...”

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

latter years of the regime's rule, due to the preponderant influence of socialist radicals at its highest levels.¹⁸¹ Indeed, a CNDR report detailing strategies for educating the populace on ideological matters asked the question in 1968: "Why must the people defend the achievements of the socialist revolution?"¹⁸² Multiple points were raised in response, but the most salient affirmed that it was "because in the very near future they will enable the finding of solutions to all our current difficulties; ultimately because the socialist development path constitutes for our underdeveloped countries the most rapid path for the achievement of economic, political, and real independence."¹⁸³ In this way, analysis of the state's relationship with merchants reveals how socialism was not simply a rational tool employed by the USRDA to solve problems, but an ideology that at times distorted its view of reality. Socialism was, of course, useful to the regime in certain instances. It allowed the party to establish continuity in its struggle narrative between the colonial and postcolonial era, for example, with the postcolonial agenda being characterized as a fight to liberate Mali from the meddling hands of neocolonial powers and for economic independence. But it was a tool of mixed value, as it led the Keita regime to adopt certain policies that contributed to the erosion of its own power.

One of these policies – the party's efforts to monopolize commerce – failed, and this damaged its position over time. Merchants undermined state finances and state authority. They were also partially responsible for the Active Revolution's turn toward

¹⁸¹ Gregory Mann and Baz Lecocq, "Introduction: Writing Histories of an African Post-Colony," *Mande Studies* 5 (2003): 1–8.

¹⁸² ANM.129.485. Thèmes pour la campagne idéologique et information 1968. *CNDR*. "Pourquoi le peuple doit défendre les réalisations de la révolution socialiste."

¹⁸³ *Ibid.* "Parce que dans un avenir très proche, elles permettront de trouver la solution à toutes nos difficultés actuelles; enfin parce que la voie socialiste du développement constitue pour nos pays sous-développés la voie la plus rapide pour la réalisation d'une indépendance économique, politique et réelle."

ruling through the Popular Militia, as one of this institution's main tasks was to stop merchants from operating illegally. This in turn was a proximal cause of the 19 November 1968 military coup d'état, as the militia further alienated both the population and the army from the USRDA government due to their violent tactics and the fact that they often operated as regime clients rather than defenders of the public.¹⁸⁴ In this light, the history of the state's relationship with merchants in the Malian First Republic illustrates a paradoxical search for national unity and development that in fact led to the opposite: increased political opposition and economic decline. Although socialism may have supported these goals in some ways – emphasizing the idea of equality between citizens, for example – it also worked against the nationalist project. In particular, the high modern belief that the USRDA could establish an efficient and prosperous socialist economy managed by the state led the party to adopt merchant policies whose confrontational character undermined the unity and stability it so cherished.

¹⁸⁴ Mann, "Mali's New Model Army," 73-74.

Chapter 6: The Reticent Peasant

Introduction

The manner in which the USRDA's relationship with the peasantry developed during the period of its rule offers a revelatory example of how the party practiced politics between 1957 and 1968. Because peasants constituted the overwhelming majority of the population and generated the majority of Mali's economic product through their agricultural activities, they were of great concern to the regime both as political subjects and as economic instruments. Material and ideological concerns would collide in Mali's countryside during the Keita regime's tenure as it pursued a nationalist agenda inspired by a high modern sensibility and as it responded to widespread — yet sporadic and disorganized — opposition to its rule, a phenomenon that increasingly threatened the political unity the regime so cherished as the country faced mounting difficulties.

Examining the Keita regime's peasant policies brings to light the paradoxical character of its legacy. Since the mid-1940s, the USRDA had fought against its conservative rivals, the PSP, and against the colonial regime, advocating for the interests of the Soudanese “peasant, our *raison d'être* and our pride,” in the face of an oppressive status quo.¹ It had promised peasants not only a more prosperous world but a fairer one where “the disturbing inequality between cities and remote villages” would be rectified and rural communities would prosper. And yet after it gained power the USRDA came to govern in a manner that was autocratic, coercive, paternalistic, and economically

¹ ANM.1.1.4e Congrès de l'USRDA, 1955. *Rapport sur le paysannat, présenté par Jean Marie Koné, Conseiller Territorial*. “Le paysan, notre raison d'être et notre orgueil saurai ainsi que le R.D.A., parti des masses, défend ses intérêts, conscient de la noblesse et de la grandeur de son rôle dans l'ascension à laquelle aspire tout notre peuple.”

deleterious — increasingly so as time went by. Instead of bringing liberty and prosperity to peasants, the Keita regime brought increased taxation, forced labour, rural confinement, and a certain degree of forced collectivization.

The stark contrast between what the USRDA promised peasants and what developed during its rule begs the question: why did the regime practice politics in a manner so divergent from its stated goals? Certain scholars have implied a measure of cynicism in the party's actions, claiming that the regime's aim was to consolidate power by exploiting groups like the peasants.² Other observers have asserted that the regime had good intentions but was overly ambitious, attempting to implement social and economic changes at a scale and pace the populace could not accommodate.³ The answer is more complex than either of these perspectives allow; the USRDA was in fact motivated both by ideals and material concerns.

Party members across the political spectrum were advocates of nationalism — moderates who controlled the party in the late 1950s⁴ promoted it, together with the

² E.g. Guy Martin, "Socialism, Economic Development and Planning in Mali, 1960-1968," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 10, 1 (1976): 23-46; Claude Meillassoux, "A Class Analysis of the Bureaucratic Process in Mali," *Journal of Development Studies* 6, 2 (1970): 97-110;

³ E.g. Pierre Campmas, "L'Union Soudanaise, Section Soudanaise du Rassemblement Démocratique Africain 1946-1968," (PhD Thesis: Université de Toulouse, 1978), 14.

⁴ E.g. at the Second Territorial Conference of the USRDA in October 1958 – two years before radical socialist ideas would have any bearing on party decision-making – such a commitment to unity, nationalism, and progress was made: "Et c'est alors, lorsque 18 millions d'âmes ressentiront ce besoin urgent d'expression sur le plan international, c'est lorsque toute une foule débout frémira en écoutant son hymne national, c'est alors que l'Union Oueat Africaine s'élancera vers un autre destin" (ANM.2.4.Ve Congrès territorial de l'USRDA 1958. *Ve Congrès de l'Union Soudanaise, 12-17 août 1958, et 2e Conférence territoriale de l'Union Soudanaise, 17-19 octobre 1958.*) The radical socialists who controlled the CNDR in 1967-1968 continued to promote nationalism (even in the name of their committee), to warn against "the actions of anti-nationalists [apatrides]," and to promote development for "populations impatient to accede to

related goals of unity and progress, and nationalism would continue to have an important place in USRDA thought after radical socialists came to the fore in 1960. These nationalist ideals shaped the Keita regime's approach to the peasants. And although socialism would be contested and debated throughout the 1960s,⁵ many (but not all) within the party also believed in this ideology and thought the aforementioned nationalist ends could best be achieved through it, even if socialism remained a vaguely defined principle for most.⁶ Furthermore, many of the repressive policies that may appear motivated by a cynical desire to consolidate power — revoking peasants' right to circulate within and outside the country or expropriating their grain at below market prices, as examples — were influenced by a high modern belief in the efficacy and benevolence of comprehensive state control over social organization — a development that appears linked to the rise of socialist ideas within the party⁷ — and also by a stark reality: the collapse of the Mali Federation had left Mali impoverished and isolated. “Before,” affirmed a government circular in 1964, “when our country was under domination, subsidies...from the French Treasury allowed us to balance the budget. It was the compensation for our condition as a colonized country.”⁸ Such subsidies were

modern life” (ANM.141.599.CNDR Circulaires.*Circulaire no 16/CNDR du 22 Novembre 1967*. “La modicité des moyens de l’Etat face à l’impatience des populations à accéder à la vie moderne...”; “l’action des apatrides”). See chapters 2 and 3 for further discussion of this topic.

⁵ On debates and dissent within the party regarding socialism, see Chapter 3.

⁶ Many of course believed in the merits of socialism at the time of its adoption, and Modibo Keita — who had long expressed the party's official opinions, i.e. expressed the will of the dominant forces within it — continued to do so even in 1968, remarking thus: “La révolution continue, le socialisme triomphera. Tant pis pour ceux qui sont dans l’attentisme ou le doute.” (ANM.141.559.CNDR Circulaires.*Circulaire no 32/CNDR du 30 Avril 1968*.)

⁷ On high modernism, socialism, and the USRDA, see Chapter 2, “A Decisive Month.”

⁸ ANM.142.560.Circulaires 1947-68.*11 Mai 1964 Circulaire 6*. “Auparavant, lorsque

discontinued after the collapse, leading Modibo Keita to reaffirm in 1967 that “the state’s resources are very limited; such is the burning problem we must try to resolve.”⁹ The USRDA had long known that peasants were wary of state intervention and that they would only willingly embrace changes that demonstrated clear and tangible benefits in the short term.¹⁰ With the USRDA’s dream of West African unity shattered and its relationship with France in tatters, the Keita regime did not have the means to offer economic enticements to the peasantry. Mali’s weak financial resources — which had previously been compensated by French subsidies, and for which the USRDA had sought to offset through federation with wealthier coastal colonies and through a form of postcolonial empire linking it with France — may in fact have been a motivating factor in the adoption of socialism in 1960. With so few resources at their disposal, the USRDA may have realized they had little choice but to coerce peasants into adopting their economic modernization policies, and socialism offered them some cover in this regard. Because of its utopian character, its promise to end all forms of exploitation, and its commitment to authentic economic independence, socialism allowed the regime to argue that citizens needed to make profound sacrifices in order to reap the profound

notre pays était sous domination, des subventions ou des régularisations d’écritures du Trésor Français permettaient d’équilibrer le budget. C’était la compensation à notre condition de pays colonisé...”

⁹ ANM.141.599.CNDR Circulaires. *Circulaire no 16/CNDR du 22 Novembre 1967*. “Les ressources de l’Etat sont très limitées; tel est le brûlant problème que nous devons essayer de résoudre.”

¹⁰ ANM.3.5.6e Congrès de l’USRDA 1962. *Rapport d’activités et d’orientation présenté au 6ème congrès de l’US-RDA, 10-13 Septembre 1962*. “D’une façon générale, en jetant les bases d’une organisation rationnelle du monde rural, nous devons toujours ménager l’immédiat tout en prévoyant l’avenir, car le bon sens traditionnel des cultivateurs ne s’attachera à la transformation des structures rurales, que dans la mesure où toute modification présentera un intérêt matériel direct et perceptible, ou dans l’immédiat ou à moyen terme.”

rewards of a society that would not simply be new and modern but also equal and free of oppression.

The Keita regime developed an increasingly paternalistic attitude throughout its tenure, and nowhere was this more evident than in its dealings with the peasants. Unlike chiefs who had power and privilege, and who had collaborated extensively with the colonial authorities, and unlike merchants who had wealth, connections, and a relatively broad base of knowledge derived from their travels across the West African region, peasants were considered ignorant and impressionable. The USRDA regime believed it had the capacity to transform peasants' entire lives – rather than simply their agricultural methods – to remake them in the image of a modernized Malian citizen. “Agriculture is less a profession than a way of life,” stated Modibo Keita in 1958. “The modernization of agriculture thus implies that of the conditions of existence.” He consequently viewed it as a “necessity to be concerned with – parallel to purely agricultural problems – all that relates to the existence of farmers.”¹¹ Keita and other party leaders believed this was for the peasants' benefit, even if it implied the destruction of certain aspects of peasant culture and restrictions on their freedoms; these, such leaders felt, were sacrifices worth making in order to create a brighter future.

Yet these estimations were too optimistic, and the USRDA was not able to bring about the swift prosperity of which it dreamed. This was not only a question of moving too fast, but of an erroneous high modern belief in the malleability of local cultures, the

¹¹ ANM.2.4.Ve Congrès territorial de l'USRDA 1958. *Ve Congrès de l'Union Soudanaise, 12-17 août 1958, et 2e Conférence territoriale de l'Union Soudanaise, 17-19 octobre 1958*. “Comme on l'a souligné à plusieurs reprises déjà, l'agriculture est moins une profession qu'un genre de vie. La modernisation de l'agriculture implique donc celle des conditions de l'existence”; “...nécessité de se préoccuper, parallèlement aux problèmes purement agricoles, de tout ce qui intéresse l'existence des agriculteurs”.

awesome power of the state to shape society, and the inherent appeal of the party's nationalist program. Aggravating these intellectual errors were the forces of corruption and clientelism that often managed to infiltrate the new political and administrative structures established in rural areas. Although many such structures and programs had been created with good intentions — as certain scholars have noted — it was not only a simple surfeit of ambition that precipitated their failure, but often also a clear measure of hypocrisy in the way the state operated at the local level. For many peasants, it was plain to see that their requisitioned grain and labour were not being used for the benefit of the community and the nation as a whole, as they had been assured, but for the benefit of well-placed officials. The widespread nature of such corruption and clientelism — even if it was not party policy but a de facto dispensation at the local level of government — robbed the USRDA's altruistic claims of much of their legitimacy in the eyes of the peasantry. Indeed, the reactions of peasants to the grandiose rhetoric of party officials more concerned with their own comfort than with rural development was often one of detached bemusement. As Modibo Keita noted in 1967:

Certain comrade officials have settled into conditions of material comfort, have become “delicate ones” hardly inclined to exert themselves... The very same ones who, yesterday, criss-crossed the bush at the time of the political struggle, village by village, living the life of the peasants, sharing their roof, their meals, and their worries, content themselves now... with making the leaders from the bush come to them in the city in order to pass on party directives! One cannot hope for a peasant revolution with such work methods. In such an atmosphere peasants listen to their speeches with an amused and distracted ear, give their consent with regard to all that is asked of them, but see them a little while after! You will perceive that nothing has been done, everything is at the same point.¹²

¹² ANM.141.599.CNDR Circulaires. *Circulaire no 16/CNDR du 22 Novembre 1967*. “Certains camarades responsables se sont installés dans le confort matériel, sont devenus “délicats” peu enclins à se dépenser, évitant toute tâche qui ne peut s’accomplir dans le cadre adoré des cités. Ceux-là mêmes qui, hier, parcouraient la brousse au moment de la lutte politique, village par village, vivant la vie des paysans, partageant leur toit, leurs

Not only were many of the USRDA's plans for the peasantry unrealistic, but peasants also resisted many of the state's initiatives during the 1957-1968 period. They circulated in the cities and in neighbouring countries in spite of restrictions.¹³ They fled public works projects on which they had been forced to labour, leaving these in a state of incompleteness. They neglected collective fields. They diluted requisitioned grain with dirt, sand and spoiled product.¹⁴ They sold their grain on the black market rather than to the state monopoly.¹⁵ They also occasionally rose against USRDA authorities, killing or beating despotic state representatives.¹⁶

Like chiefs and merchants, they would prove to be far more resilient – and reticent – than the USRDA had anticipated. Their unwillingness to be coerced by a paternalistic state is both an illustration of the drawbacks to a radical socialist ideology inflected with a high modern belief in the virtues of social engineering, and a testament to Malian peasants' capacity to exercise autonomy. In this way, the study of the USRDA's

repas, et leurs soucis, se contentent maintenant des visites "éclair" dans les chef-lieux d'arrondissements, où même pensent préférable de faire venir à eux, dans la ville, les responsables de brousse pour leur transmettre des mots d'ordre! On ne peut espérer une révolution paysanne avec de telles méthodes de travail. Les paysans dans une telle atmosphère écoutent d'une oreille distraite et amusée les discours, donnent leur accord à propos de tout ce qui leur est demandé, mais voyez-les quelque temps après! Vous vous apercevez que rien n'a été fait, tout est au même point."

¹³ Daouda Gary-Toukara, "Quand Les Migrants Demandent La Route, Modibo Keita Retorque: 'Retournez À La Terre!' Les Baragnini et la Désertion du 'Chantier National,' 1958-1968," *Mande Studies* 5 (2003): 60; Daouda Gary-Toukara, *Migrants Soudanais/maliens et Conscience Ivoirienne: Les Étrangers En Côte d'Ivoire (1903-1980)* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008).

¹⁴ ANM.141.559.Circulaires du CNDR 1967-1968. *Bamako, le 12 Août 1967 (signé Idrissa Diarra, Secrétaire Politique)*.

¹⁵ ANM.142.560.Circulaires 1947-1968. *1965 02 12 Circulaire 5*.

¹⁶ Jean-Loup Amselle, "La Conscience Paysanne: La Révolte de Ouolossébougou (juin 1968, Mali)," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 12, no. 3 (1978): 339–55; Kary Dembélé, "La Dimension politique du développement rural," in *Le Mali: Le Paysan et L'état*, Pierre Jacquemot, ed. (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1981), 105-121.

relations with the peasantry presents an ironic dimension: the autonomy of Mali's scattered communities was one of the factors motivating the USRDA's devotion to the ideal of unity, and yet it was partly the regime's coercive efforts to establish this unity that provoked peasant resistance to their rule. This resistance — albeit in mostly passive forms — would ultimately contribute to the acute economic decline and political instability that provoked the regime's downfall.

Peasants in the Library

This chapter both builds on and diverges from the existing literature on Mali's postcolonial peasantry. It substantiates this dissertation's argument by demonstrating how a national identity drawing on a developmentalist program strongly inspired by socialism was imposed on the peasantry. In its application to the Malian peasantry, this argument constitutes a new interpretation of the early postcolonial dispensation. It of course draws from the writings of previous scholars — although many who have written on the Keita regime are relatively silent on the subject of peasants.¹⁷ Among those who have written of the Malian peasantry in the 1960s, some have argued that the USRDA used socialism as a convenience, and that it brutally exploited the peasantry while claiming to be the champion of the humble farmer.¹⁸ Such works are correct in highlighting peasant exploitation, yet they are often burdened with reductive Marxist

¹⁷ Bintou Sanankoua, *La Chute de Modibo Keita* (Chaka, 1990); Campmas, "L'Union Soudanaise, Section Soudanaise du Rassemblement Démocratique Africain 1946-1968"; Lê Châu, "Politiques économiques et crises durant les 30 années d'indépendance," *Politique Africaine* 47 (1992): 31–42; Gregory Mann, "Violence, Dignity, and Mali's New Model Army, 1960-1968," *Mande Studies* 5 (2003): 65–82.

¹⁸ Martin, "Socialism, Economic Development and Planning in Mali, 1960-1968," 23–46; Meillassoux, "A Class Analysis of the Bureaucratic Process in Mali," 97–110; Dembélé, "La Dimension politique du développement rural," 105-121.

narratives, positing a teleology of progress in which Mali's economic problems in the 1960s can be understood as partly caused by "incomplete development"¹⁹ and the machinations of a "comprador class."²⁰ These accounts lack an understanding of how the USRDA's rural policies — even if they resulted in exploitation — in fact had complex ideological underpinnings. Although material concerns played a role in the shape USRDA rule would take, the party's longstanding nationalist convictions — along with secondary concerns for socialism as a means of achieving the pre-existing nationalist goals of economic development, political unity, and national cohesion — were also important in directing policy.

Some scholars, on the other hand, have indeed evoked the importance of the nationalist project in their analyses of USRDA policy. Ouattara, for example, contends USRDA leaders were not really socialists but "intransigent nationalists" who simply used socialism to justify their desire to dominate the economy and institute authoritarian rule.²¹ While this is an important insight, it positions socialism as a kind of artifice or tool of manipulation that dissimulated the regime's true aims. Generally speaking, socialism did serve the nationalist cause, but it was not a cynical instrument its proponents did not believe in; as such, it influenced policy because many policy-makers viewed the world through a socialist lens and had demonstrated a longstanding commitment to socialist ideals.²² Beyond his failure to account for socialism's influence

¹⁹ Meillassoux, "A Class Analysis of the Bureaucratic Process in Mali," 97–110.

²⁰ Dembélé, "La Dimension politique du développement rural," 105-121.

²¹ Tiégoué Amadou Ouattara, *Le Destin Du Socialism Malien* (Bamako: Editions Imprimerie du Mali, 1978), 20-21.

²² Madeira Keita, for example, had been an advocate of radical socialist politics since the 1940s (Gregory Mann, "Anti-Colonialism and Social Science: Georges Balandier, Madeira Keita, and 'the Colonial Situation' in French Africa," *Comparative Studies in*

on USRDA policy, Ouattara also does not apply his insights to the case of peasants. This chapter, in contrast, offers a detailed account of how the party's nationalist agenda took concrete form in the countryside, how socialist ideas influenced peasant policy, and how clientelism and corruption modulated policy ideals, resulting in a relationship between the state and the peasantry that was more complex than previous accounts allow.

Campmas, on the other hand, engages specifically with the peasant question but only in an anecdotal manner. He provides evidence that many peasants rejected the USRDA's rural policies, asking party leaders such question as "When will your independence be over?"²³ While such anecdotes are important — and correlate with archival evidence demonstrating many peasants viewed the USRDA's political project as a burdensome imposition — Campmas does not draw effective conclusions from them. Instead, he chalks peasant opposition up to the regime "moving too fast" and offering "bad explanations" of their policies to the peasantry.²⁴ This amounts to a regurgitation of regime rationalizations and displaces responsibility for exploitative peasant policies from the government to the peasants who endured them. Such explanations also miss an opportunity to place the ideologies motivating USRDA policy in their historical context. Why was it, for example, that the USRDA "moved too fast"? This dissertation attempts to provide such context, suggesting the party's high modern ambitions, influenced by the prevalence of such thinking on a global scale,²⁵ shaped the

Society and History 55, no. 1 (2013): 96-119).

²³ Campmas, "L'Union Soudanaise, Section Soudanaise du Rassemblement Démocratique Africain 1946-1968," 14.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 14.

²⁵ Although Scott posits the origins of high modern thought "in the West, as a by-product of unprecedented progress in science and industry," in the mid-20th century he notes its prevalence in the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc, China, and (slightly later)

forms its nationalist and socialist policies assumed between 1957-1968.

Like Campmas, Hopkins explains USRDA policy with reference to its ideals. He contends that:

Mali's was one of the few African governments actively committed to socialism and to the idea that it was the responsibility of the government to direct social change so as to encourage economic development and bring prosperity to all. This philosophy made the government of Mali particularly interventionist.²⁶

Such accounts of the USRDA's interventions in peasant life are insightful, but they take regime assertions that its aggressive interventionism was primarily motivated by an "intention to bring prosperity to all" at face value, without distinguishing between rhetoric and policy and without taking stock of the fact the USRDA was motivated by a more complex set of material and ideological concerns. Jacquemot more accurately accounts for such rhetoric, positing that USRDA propaganda efforts had an inverse relationship with economic growth — they intensified throughout the 1960s in order to "overcome the political crisis of economic decline."²⁷ Yet Jacquemot does not draw out a cohesive theory explaining the mechanism by which initiatives like ideological education campaigns were thought to compensate for power lost through economic decline. Nor does he link the heightened rhetoric of the regime with the heightened use of violence, as Mann rightly does.²⁸

Snyder, on the other hand, contends that the USRDA's essential function was to

African states like Tanzania, Mozambique, and Ethiopia. (James C. Scott, *Seeing Like A State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 3-4).

²⁶ Nicholas S. Hopkins, *Popular Government in an African Town: Kita, Mali* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 9.

²⁷ Pierre Jacquemot, "Introduction," *Le Mali: Le paysan et l'état*, ed. Pierre Jacquemot (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1981), 17.

²⁸ Mann, "Mali's Model Army," 82.

propagate national identity and to strengthen its own position by manipulating public opinion though raising the spectre of dangerous enemies of the nation.²⁹ He suggests the party almost exclusively relied on rhetoric to maintain its position, and that it never made any genuine efforts toward economic development. “Since independence,” he claims, “the party has not greatly upset the social structure of the country,” noting that “this is due in part to the party’s extremely limited progress in establishing rural cooperatives and collective fields.”³⁰ While he is correct that the party focused heavily on promoting nationalism, he underplays the significant attempts the party made to change peasant life and identity according to its own designs (the fact that his work was published in 1965 limited his ability to appreciate such efforts). He also cannot account for the existence of such institutions as the collective fields if they neither represented an attempt to “upset the social structure” nor develop the economy. This chapter argues that, while the regime indeed hoped the collective fields would bear economic fruit, this institution was also a means of spreading the socialist ideal of equality and the nationalist ideal of progress, and was equally a vehicle for a project of rural modernization that the regime considered essential to its economic prospects.³¹

Perhaps the best work on the Malian peasantry in the Keita era has been conducted by Catherine Bogosian and Daouda Gary-Toukara on the subjects of the *services civiques* — “a quasi-military service” in which “mostly rural men... would learn modern agricultural methods, receive lessons in literacy, and become familiar with the values of

²⁹ Francis G. Snyder, *One-Party Government in Mali: Transition toward control* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), 113.

³⁰ *Ibid.* 115.

³¹ Samir Amin, *Trois Expériences Africaine de Développement: Le Mali, La Guinée et Le Ghana* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1965), 106-119.

the socialist state”³² — and peasant migration respectively.³³ Unlike most of the works cited above, Bogosian’s treatment is grounded in concrete evidence and examples, including interview material, rather than in broad and often unsubstantiated assertions. In this respect, this chapter seeks to build on her example, fleshing out an overall story of USRDA peasant policy that both encompasses and transcends the story of the *civiques* while remaining grounded in specific evidentiary detail drawn from archival and oral research materials. Her contention that the *civiques* were essentially similar to the colonial *deuxième portion* forced labour regime points to interesting similarities between USRDA policies and those of the colonial era. More importantly for this study, her contention that the *civiques* program failed because it was based on the forced labour of peasant youths is sound, and this chapter suggests this conclusion could be expanded to encompass other forced labour programs, particularly the *investissements humains* or *faso baara*.

Daouda Gary-Toukara, for his part, has produced excellent studies of USRDA-peasant relations with regard to migration. He rightly asserts that efforts to restrict peasant movement were driven by an intention to maximize economic exploitation of the peasantry by depriving them of any option but to farm and to sell their products to the state at low prices. He also notes that the Eastern Bloc may have influenced such

³² Catherine Bogosian, “‘The Little Farming Soldiers’: The Evolution of A Labour Army in Post-Colonial Mali,” *Mande Studies* 5 (2003): 83.

³³ Bogosian, “‘The Little Farming Soldiers’”; Gary-Toukara, “Quand Les Migrants Demandent La Route, Modibo Keita Retorque: ‘Retournez À La Terre!’,” 49–64; Gary-Toukara, *Migrants Soudanais/maliens et Conscience Ivoirienne*; Daouda Gary-Toukara, “La dispersion des Soudanais/Maliens à la fin de l’ère coloniale,” *Hommes et migrations. Revue française de référence sur les dynamiques migratoires*, no. 1279 (May 1, 2009): 12–23.

policies, although he does not provide any details that might substantiate this claim.³⁴ This chapter seeks to build on these assertions, highlighting parallels between the Malian *laissez-passer* system and the Chinese *hukou* and Soviet *propiska* systems of peasant immobilization.³⁵ It further seeks to place the narrative of peasant sequestration in the broader context of the nation-building project and the USRDA's belief in a centrally managed economy's ability to promote rapid economic development. Tethering peasants to the land was part of a broader strategy to make the peasantry perform the functions ascribed to it by the socialist economy the Keita regime had envisioned. This involved onerous grain levies, forced labour, and tight restrictions on peasants' movements. Not only did this strategy lead certain peasants to long for the more prosperous days of colonial domination,³⁶ but it also led to major policy failures as the ideologies that shaped USRDA decision-making were ill-attuned to the state's weak capacity to effect change in the countryside.

The Aardvark Digs for the Porcupine: Forced labour in the postcolony

Despite its strong anticolonial stance and apparent commitment to the peasantry, the Keita regime made extensive use of forced labour. While the forced labour policy that had been in place until 1946 constituted perhaps the most hated aspect of French rule, the USRDA nonetheless instituted a number of forced labour programs similar to those

³⁴ Gary-Toukara, "Quand les migrants demandent la route, Modibo Keita retorque: 'Retournez à la terre!'" 49–64.

³⁵ Rob Lambert and Anita Chan, "Global Dance: Factory Regimes, Asian Labour Standards and Corporate Restructuring," in *Globalization and Patterns of Labour Resistance*, ed. Jeremy Waddington (New York: Mansell, 1999), 72–104. See "The Great Malian Labour Camp" later in this chapter for further exploration of this topic.

³⁶ Charles Abdoulaye Danioko, "Contribution à l'étude des partis politiques au Mali de 1945 à 1960" (Thèse de 3e cycle: Université de Paris VII, 1984), 161.

created by the French — although it did not see or admit to such similarities — and it innovated others with no colonial precedent. This section argues that the Keita regime’s use of forced labour had mixed motivations. It was at once ideological and paternalistic. It was also self-interested, demonstrating what Scott calls “an elective affinity between high modernism and the [material] interests of many state officials.”³⁷ The USRDA’s nation-building ideals played a clear role in motivating these policies, as the regime considered them a means of both promoting rapid development in the face of poverty and forging national sentiment through work projects that ostensibly aided the nation as a whole. Socialism also played a role in the (re)emergence of such policies, linked as it was to the high modern ideal of comprehensive planning and state dictation of the way people should live and work. Socialism also offered the regime a means of justifying such policies, allowing them to assert that they were not exploitative because socialism had ended exploitation within Mali and to promote an ethos of sacrifice for the sake of economic liberation. Paternalism was also clearly at play, as the regime believed its forced labour program to be fundamentally dissimilar to those of the colonial era, since it had the best interests of the peasantry at heart. Yet such ideals and good intentions notwithstanding, clientelist tendencies and corruption are also clearly evident in the USRDA’s peasant policies. However much most party members may have believed in the nationalist cause – and certain party members in the radical socialist cause – a pattern of resource extraction from rural areas and increased spending in the state sector emerges from analysis of available records, suggesting that USRDA policy cannot be accepted at face value.

³⁷ Scott, *Seeing Like A State*, 4.

Forced labour took place primarily through three programs. The first, “human investments,” focused on infrastructure projects. Under this program, buildings such as the USRDA’s headquarters were constructed in Bamako, and road construction projects including a highway joining Bamako to Guinea were undertaken but not finished due to worksite abandonment by requisitioned labourers.³⁸ Many smaller projects of a similar nature were completed or attempted in *cercles* and *arrondissements* around the country during the 1960s.

The second major program of forced labour was the *services civiques*, apparently innovated by Seydou Badian Kouyaté, who was Minister of Rural Economy in the USRDA government after it won its first majority in 1957, before gaining responsibility over the Five-Year Plan in 1960³⁹ — at which time he emerged as a prominent advocate for radical socialism.⁴⁰ This program appears to have been largely a revival of a colonial forced labour regime called the *deuxième portion*, but with a clearly nationalist orientation. The *deuxième portion*⁴¹ was an institution in which semi-militarized labourers completed a number of colonial infrastructure projects including the notorious Markala dam,⁴² reported to have caused twenty deaths a day during its construction and to have necessitated the full-time employment of two work teams for grave-digging and burial work.⁴³ Such institutions betray a disturbing continuity with the most unsavoury

³⁸ Interview with Abdoulaye Amadou Sy, Bamako, 11 February 2012.

³⁹ Interview with Seydou Badian Kouyaté, Bamako, 7 March 2012.

⁴⁰ CADN.Bamako.Amb.9.Politique au Soudan 1960.*Compte-Rendu no 47, Quinzaine du 4 au 18 Octobre 1960*. “M. Seydou Kouyaté qui, au cours de ces dernières semaines s’est distingué parmi les plus intransigeants...”

⁴¹ Bogosian, “‘The Little Farming Soldiers’,” 83–100.

⁴² Danioko, “Contribution à l’étude des partis politiques au Mali de 1945 à 1960,” 135.

⁴³ Isaïe Dougnon, *Travail de Blanc, Travail de Noir. La Migration Des Pays Dogon Vers l’Office Du Niger et Au Ghana (1910-1980)* (Paris: Karthala, 2007), 120.

aspects of colonial rule, and further highlights the tension between USRDA claims that “the unconditional defence of [the peasant] cause is the party’s *raison d’être*”⁴⁴ and a reality that was markedly different.

The *civiques* were promoted as an opportunity for young Malians to learn modern agricultural techniques, to participate in the nation-building project, and to become educated in the politics of socialism. But this semi-militarized organization was also used to police rural populations while providing the regime with agricultural labour.⁴⁵ Such efforts to monitor and control the rural population through the *civiques* as well as through the establishment of vigilance brigades, militias, and spy networks in the 1960s are consistent with the broader ways in which the USRDA’s nationalist and socialist ideals collided with its authoritarian and repressive tendencies.

The final pillar in the party’s forced labour regime was the collective field program. Woefully ineffective in terms of agricultural production, the collective fields were in fact largely intended to promote socialism and to secure peasant submission to the party’s economic and political vision. While of course the USRDA hoped they would produce useful amounts of grain to finance its ambitious development plans, it clung to the program until its last days despite being aware for nearly a decade that in

⁴⁴ ANM.142.560.Circulaires 1947-1968.1965 02 12 *Circulaire 5*. “...des populations rurales qui constituent plus de 90% de l’ensemble des habitants du pays, qui assurent la subsistance du pays grâce à leur travail persévérant et combien pénible dans les conditions inclementes de chez nous et qui cependant sont les plus déshéritées de tous. C’est pourquoi la défense inconditionnelle de leur cause est la raison d’être du Parti, une exigence impérative et permanente de son action. Dans ce sens nous avons lutté pour libérer le paysan de l’oppression et de l’exploitation coloniales (diverses formes du travail forcé, de la réquisition des biens, et autres brimades et humiliations quotidiennes) dont il supportait le poids le plus lourd.”

⁴⁵ Bogosian, “‘The Little Farming Soldiers’: The Evolution of A Labour Army in Post-Colonial Mali, 83-110.”

terms of agricultural output the collective fields had been inefficient to begin with and had worsened with the passing years.⁴⁶

Taken as whole, these programs indicate three things. First, the regime was not concerned with *representing* the peasants according to its electoral bargain, but with coercing them in a paternalistic fashion to comply with its high modern vision for the comprehensive restructuring of rural life – through transforming how people worked, lived, and thought – a project it believed would ultimately benefit the peasants. This began in the early years of USRDA rule – indeed, it was noted already in 1962, for example, that over 98 percent of recruitment to the *service civique* was by force⁴⁷ – but reached its apotheosis during the Active Revolution, when the regime would openly “aim to transform the habits, lifestyle, and strongly anchored ways of thinking in the villages” in order to “make the socialist option irreversible among the least advanced sections [of society].”⁴⁸ Indeed, while in the 1950s party leaders would affirm that “it [was] neither necessary nor desirable to impose formulas on the peasants that affront that milieu,”⁴⁹ by 1968 the regime demanded that its officials “lead the ideological battle

⁴⁶ Jacquemot, “Introduction,” 8.

⁴⁷ CADN.Bamako.Amb.21.Dépêches politiques 1962.*Dépêche hebdomadaire no 18*. “Bien encadrés, les Maliens de l’intérieur semblent manifester leur lassitude surtout par l’inertie ou la fuite. Les rapports du Service Civique Rural font ressortir effectivement une résistance des Jeunes au recrutement normal. Le nombre de volontaires n’atteindrait pas deux pour cent des effectifs. Il est également significatif que, dans la région de Sikasso, près de 60.000 personnes ont, selon certaines affirmations, émigré en Côte d’Ivoire.”

⁴⁸ ANM.141.559.CNDR Circulaires.*Circulaire no 47/CNDR (12 Juillet 1968, signé Modibo Keita)*. “La révolutionnarisation de nos campagnes revêt un caractère capital... Elle vise à transformer des habitudes, un style de vie, des façons de penser fortement enracinés dans les villages. Elle a pour objet de rendre irréversible l’option socialiste, dans les couches les moins avancées.”

⁴⁹ ANM.1.2.3° Congrès international du RDA – 1957.*Rapport présenté par le Docteur Kouyaté, Ministre de l’Economie Rurale du Soudan*. “Il n’est ni nécessaire, ni

with [the peasants],” and asserted that they “would transform the established order in the villages.”⁵⁰ This shift toward an increasingly grandiose and paternalistic approach to the peasantry appears to correlate with the rising influence of the radical socialist faction of the party over time, and is indicative of the concomitant advent of a high modern belief in comprehensive state planning.

Second, the party relied on forced work not only to deploy labour in the absence of capital but also to establish mechanisms allowing it to police and control the population more effectively in the face of widespread, if sporadic, opposition in rural areas where the state’s presence was weak.⁵¹ Third, forced labour also had a central role in propagating the USRDA’s nationalist narrative — itself related to creating political unity and to attenuating opposition. As such, programs like the collective fields are best understood not simply as failed economic initiatives but as systematic efforts to incorporate important aspects of rural life — such as agricultural production — into the nation-building narrative. Socialist ideas were often marshalled to justify many of these moves, providing, for example, a rationale that positioned collectivization as an important part of Mali’s transformation to a prosperous, exploitation-free society.

The system of forced labour known as *faso baara*⁵² or “human investment”⁵³ was

souhaitable d’imposer aux paysan des formules qui heurtent le milieu.”

⁵⁰ ANM.141.559.CNDR Circulaires. *Circulaire no 47/CNDR (12 Juillet 1968, signé Modibo Keita)*. “Elle transformera l’ordre établi dans les villages.” Aussi: “Pour mener à bien notre combat, le CLDR doit faire en sorte que les Cadres des Sections vivent en permanence auprès des paysans...[et] mènent avec eux la bataille idéologique.”

⁵¹ See Chapter 3, “Opposition”.

⁵² Literally: “people’s work.” (Interviews with Mohamedoun Dicko, Mantala Baby, Cherif Keita, et al., Bamako, Feb.-Mar. 2012).

⁵³ ANM.125.467.Correspondances BPN 1957-1967. *1964 01 21 Investissements humains*. “Les “investissements humains” au Mali sont au contraire de véritables chantiers d’honneur à travers lesquels un peuple exprime sa volonté de sortir de la

fundamentally similar to that which had existed under French rule. As one former participant notes, “the forced labour [of the colonial era] was transformed into *investissements humains*. What was missing was the whip... That’s the only difference, otherwise it was the same thing.”⁵⁴ The party was aware of such similarities, and attempted to resolve this tension by appealing to the ethos of sacrifice for the sake of nation-building and by asserting the nationalistic character of its projects. “How to educate the peasants?” asked Modibo Keita in a 1967 circular entitled *Champs collectifs et chantiers d’honneur*.⁵⁵ “Do not hesitate to create an ambiance of receptivity by invoking the past,” with particular regard to “the action of the party” leading to “the elimination...of forced labour.”⁵⁶ Yet Keita also affirmed that one must at the same time “highlight the fact that no country can be built without discipline, and it is this discipline the party demands.”⁵⁷ This is an example of how USRDA leaders attempted to distance themselves from forced labour policies by defining them as acts of discipline and by characterizing the party as an agent of liberation rather than of coercion.

Another USRDA report on the *investissements humains* remarked that “the human investments, in the context of the Republic of Mali, [were] under no circumstances a form of forced labour. Forced labour implies an obligatory work contract, irrespective of

paupérisation hérité du régime colonial.”

⁵⁴ Interview with Abdoulaye Traoré, Sikasso, 12 March 2012.

⁵⁵ ANM.141.559.CNDR Circulaires. *Circulaire no 16/CNDR du 22 Novembre 1967 : Champs collectifs et chantiers d’honneur (signé Modibo Keita)*. “Comment éduquer les paysans?”

⁵⁶ Ibid. “vous ne devez donc pas hésiter pour créer une ambiance de réceptivité à rappeler le passé”; aussi: “L’action du Parti: la suppression... du travail forcé.”

⁵⁷ Ibid. “...souligner qu’aucun pays ne peut se construire sans discipline et c’est cette discipline que le Parti exige.”

the character of the work to be accomplished.”⁵⁸ Yet under the Keita regime’s human investment policy, the work contracts *were* obligatory. The logic, then, is that the “character of the work” in the postcolonial context – work pitched as being part of the nation-building project, and thus as benefiting all citizens – effaced its coercive character. As such, the regime made a concerted effort to convince peasants that their requisitioned labour served their own ends. “We must accord the greatest attention and the greatest interest in avoiding that [the *investissements humains*] appear as forced labour through failing to take all the necessary measure such that the masses comprehend their usefulness.”⁵⁹

Such are the semantic games the party came to play as it attempted to reconcile its often-pragmatic aims with its lofty ideals. That such a miscarriage of logic could pass muster in a government report typifies the consequences of one-party rule. It is likely that no one sought to resolve such intellectual points of conflict — i.e. that forcing peasants to do something did not in fact constitute coercion if the state proclaimed it was for their benefit (or for the sake of national edification, itself nominally a project in the popular interest) — because the arguments set forth in reports like the one cited above represent the party’s best effort to smooth the impossibly rough edges of power politics, and also because this was not necessary in the absence of opposition. Indeed, Idrissa Diarra made such an observation in 1961 when he noted that one-party rule had led to increases in coercion and corruption:

⁵⁸ ANM.125.467.Correspondances BPN 1957-1967.*Investissements humains*, 21 January 1964. “En effet, le travail forcé implique un louage obligatoire de service, quelque soit le caractère du travail à accomplir.”

⁵⁹ Ibid. “Il faut donc leur accorder la plus grande attention et le plus grand intérêt et éviter qu’ils ne paraissent un travail forcé en manquant de prendre toutes les mesures nécessaires pour que les masses saisissent leur utilité.”

The one-party situation has caused us to lose the habit, for the most part, of persuasion, and in many cases many leaders, administrative or political, have developed the deplorable habit of imposing their decisions, often unilaterally, by force and for puerile reasons of prestige and authority.⁶⁰

The “one-party situation” meant the USRDA was fundamentally in a position to make itself obeyed by force, and, as Diarra noted, such a coercive approach to governance was already common in early 1961. Given this strong-armed disposition, the state’s poverty, and the history of forced labour in the Soudan, coercing peasants to supply free labour presented a certain logic. The regime saw the same opportunities in a forced labour program that the French had seen: in a poor country with little infrastructure and a relatively large population, it allowed unaffordable building projects to be undertaken. A circular from 1967 affirms as much, noting that although the state lacked financial resources Mali was not lacking in peasants with free time. The “*chantiers d’honneur* offer us the possibility of using this potential work to accelerate our advancement.”⁶¹ Abdoulaye Amadou Sy reiterates this idea, noting that a number of important structures were built with this free labour:

They took young people and told them to go work for free. That’s how the *Maison des jeunes* and the headquarters of the party were built, by human investment... That [policy] contributed to causing an exodus in the first region [Kayes]... Kaysians were asked to build a road between Mali and Guinea for free by human investment. This road only made it ten kilometres before everyone threw down their tools and left... [The state] gave them nothing and even asked

⁶⁰ ANM.1.3.Congrès extraordinaire de 1960. *Circulaire no 4: les tâches nouvelles* (Idrissa Diarra, 29 Janvier 1961). “Le fait du parti unique nous a fait perdre l’habitude, dans une large mesure, de persuader, et dans de nombreux cas, de nombreux responsables, administratifs ou politiques, ont pris l’habitude déplorable d’imposer leurs décisions, souvent unilatérales, par la force et pour des raisons puérides de prestige et d’autorité.”

⁶¹ ANM.141.559.CNDR Circulaires. *Circulaire no 16/CNDR du 22 Novembre 1967* (signé Modibo Keita). “Chantiers d’honneur nous donnent la possibilité d’utiliser ce potentiel travail afin d’accélérer notre promotion.”

them to pay for their own meals.⁶²

N’Faly Diouf, an interview subject in this study, was forced to work on that very project and, like the others, he swiftly abandoned the worksite.⁶³ Radio Mali’s headquarters were also constructed through human investment,⁶⁴ along with many smaller projects around the country, like three houses for schoolteachers in the village of Fama.⁶⁵ “Human investment” projects were also organized for more mundane recurring tasks like “the cleaning of streets in the central *arrondissement*” of Ségou – a project investigated by authorities in 1963 after conscripted labourers abandoned it⁶⁶ – or filling potholes⁶⁷ and repairing bridges.⁶⁸

A key difference between colonial forced labour programs and their postcolonial replacements —the impossibility of the USRDA admitting it *had* a forced labour policy notwithstanding — was the nationalist character of these *investissements humains*. They were not simply a means of sparing the state budget, which faced a considerable deficit from independence onward. *Faso baara* also served as an instrument for the spread of Malian national identity. “We say thus,” goes a USRDA report, “that the human investments in the Republic of Mali are an act of faith by our people in their destiny in

⁶² Interview with Abdoulaye Amadou Sy, Bamako, 11 February 2012.

⁶³ Interview with N’Faly Diouf, Bamako, 10 February 2012.

⁶⁴ Interview with Mantalla Baby, Bamako, 27 February 2012.

⁶⁵ Interview with Abdoulaye Tiémogo Dembélé, Fama, 15 March 2012.

⁶⁶ ANM.245.876. Correspondance Ségou 1958-1968. *1963 Investissements humains*. “Nos services de renseignement menaient depuis un certain moment, une enquête discrète en vue de connaître les raisons pour lesquelles des travaux d’investissement humain, notamment le nettoyage des routes dans l’Arrondissement Central, ont été abandonnés.”

⁶⁷ Interview with Fatogoma Bengaly, Gongasso, 16 March 2012.

⁶⁸ Interview with Abdoulaye Bengaly, Kléla, 16 March 2012.

the context of their Party's orientation."⁶⁹ It continues, suggesting that "the building sites of honour" — the name given by the party to the human investment projects — "are a barometer of political consciousness and of the engagement of the masses."⁷⁰

They were not intended only to erect infrastructure, but to gauge, and indeed augment, the population's attachment to USRDA policy and authority. More than this, they were also a means of declaring one's affiliation with the nation — something that came to be necessary, during the Active Revolution in particular, to avoid official exile. As Modibo Keita remarked in his 1967 circular, *Champs collectifs et chantiers d'honneur*,

With regard to the perverse individuals you will encounter in the rural milieu (those who despite your explanations refuse to participate in collective work), they will exclude themselves from the village, the leaders will be able to understand the practical consequences of that. In other words, the only thing left for those who remain outside of the collective works will be to leave the village.⁷¹

As such, participation in forced labour schemes was one of the ways in which

⁶⁹ ANM.125.467.Correspondances BPN 1957-1967.*Investissements humains*, 21 January 1964. "Nous disons donc que les investissements humains en République du Mali sont un acte de foi de notre peuple en sa destinée dans le cadre de l'orientation de son Parti."

⁷⁰ ANM.125.467.Correspondances BPN 1957-1967.*Investissements humains*, 21 January 1964. "Les chantiers d'honneur sont un baromètre de la conscience politique et de l'engagement de nos masses populaires. Il faut donc leur accorder la plus grande attention et le plus grand intérêt et éviter qu'ils ne paraissent un travail forcé en manquant de prendre toutes les mesures nécessaires pour que les masses saisissent leur utilité et qu'elles participent à leur préparation. Il importe énormément que ces chantiers aboutissent à des résultats concrets palpables dont les masses sentent l'utilité dans le développement national. Ils sont éducatif et permettent de prouver l'intérêt de l'effort collectif."

⁷¹ ANM.141.559.CNDR Circulaires.*Circulaire no 16/CNDR du 22 Novembre 1967 : Champs collectifs et chantiers d'honneur (signé Modibo Keita)*. "Quant aux mauvais esprits que vous rencontrerez en milieu rural, (ceux qui malgré vos explications refusent de participer aux travaux collectifs), ils se seront eux-mêmes exclus du village, les responsables pourront en tirer les conséquences pratiques. Autrement dit ceux qui restent en dehors des travaux collectifs n'auront plus qu'à quitter le village."

“nationalism [decided] who [was] a member of the nation” in the Keita years.⁷²

Thus we see nationalism and also socialism performing multiple tasks in the context of the USRDA’s forced labour regime. On the one hand, socialism rationalized its existence because socialist ideas that related to building a radically new society and to establishing egalitarianism – the end of exploitation of man by man – allowed the party to claim its requisitioned labour system had a benevolent character. In the context of an egalitarian society, one’s labour never disproportionately benefits another; all work for the cause of all, and economic development in a socialist context is a task that requires a contribution from each and every citizen. On the other hand, nationalist rhetoric helped the regime to justify its rural labour policies by characterizing them as “worksites of honour,” where honour accrued to the workers on account of their contribution to edifying a new nation (even though conscripts often complained that these contributions amounted to forced labour).⁷³ Thus, with regard to such questions of “voluntary” yet compulsory labour, Mali’s nationalist narrative was augmented by socialist ideas in the Keita years — ideas that permitted the party to position its forced labour scheme as a step on the road to a modern, egalitarian future.

Malian authorities sought to rationalize their coercive approach to the peasantry with the aid of socialist discourse. For the USRDA, in short, it was not exploitation

⁷² Baz Lecocq, *Disputed Desert: Decolonisation, Competing Nationalisms and Tuareg Rebellions in Northern Mali* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 31.

⁷³ E.g. ANM.245.876.Correspondances Ségou 1958-1968.13 Janvier 1968 – *Affaire Monimpébougou*. “En effet, parmi les griefs articulés contre les responsables de la Sous-Section figurent en bonne place les travaux en chantier d’honneur assimilés à du travail forcé.” Interview subjects confirm the obligatory character of the human investments (e.g. interview with Fatogoma Bengaly, Gongasso, 16 March 2012; interview with Abdoulaye Bengaly, Kléla, 16 March 2012; interview with Abdoulaye Amadou Sy, Bamako, 11 February 2012).

because it was socialism, and socialism had “banished all forms of exploitation of man by man.”⁷⁴ Moreover, the “sacrifices” the regime would ask peasants to make in the socialist era were ostensibly aimed at promoting social justice, “harmonious economic development” free of the class conflict that plagued capitalist societies, and national economic liberation:

The experiments already undertaken in other countries having attained independence before us prove that the only means of promoting harmonious economic development, while at the same time ensuring maximum social justice and eliminating the nascent [class] contradictions in our developing society, consists in planning the economy and modifying economic structures by restoring them to their original collective character... It is probable as well that the first attempt at planning... will see difficulties emerge... in the remuneration of peasants' work... In this task, we are going to come up against major difficulties. The reserved nature of farmers with regard to all that is new will be compensated by the confidence the populations have in the party, which they have proved so many times. For that to happen, it is necessary that these creations, decided at the summit with regard to theory, truly be the work of the populations themselves... It is necessary that [a party official] makes a first visit [to a rural community] to explain the reasons that led the party and the government to adopt the policy of economic liberation that has been undertaken... He must insist upon the benefits... of Mali being liberated from all the forces of foreign finance that oppress it.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ ANM.125.467. Correspondances BPN 1957-1967. *Investissements humains*, 21 January 1964. “Les investissements humains en République du Mali sont le produit d'une prise de conscience politique dans un contexte où sont bannies toutes les formes d'exploitation de l'homme par l'homme.”

⁷⁵ ANM.1.3. Congrès extraordinaire de 1960. *Circulaire no 4: les tâches nouvelles* (Idrissa Diarra, 29 Janvier 1961). “Les expériences déjà réalisées dans d'autres pays ayant accédé à l'indépendance avant nous, prouvent que le seul moyen de promouvoir un développement harmonieux de l'économie, tout en assurant le maximum de justice sociale et en supprimant les contradictions naissantes de notre société en voie de développement, consiste à planifier l'économie et à modifier les structures économiques en leur restituant leur caractère collectif d'origine... Il est probable aussi que la première expérience de planification... verra des difficultés se présenter... dans la rémunération du travail des paysans... Dans cette tâche, nous allons nous heurter à de grosses difficultés. La réserve naturelle des cultivateurs à l'égard de tout ce qui est nouveau sera compensée par la confiance que les populations ont dans le Parti, et qu'elles ont maintes fois prouvée. Pour cela, il faut que ces créations, décidées au sommet pour ce qui concerne la théorie, soient réellement l'oeuvre des populations elles-mêmes... Il faut qu'il passe une fois, d'abord, pour expliquer les raisons qui ont amené le Parti et le Gouvernement à

Many Malian peasants, however, saw the regime's aims in the countryside for what they were. As Kary Dembélé notes, "The peasants, disappointed by the form the period of independence would take, said often '*timba bi magway bala yé,*' which is to say 'the aardvark digs for the porcupine'."⁷⁶ The meaning of this Bambara proverb is that the aardvark's hard labour is for naught because, once his burrow is made, the porcupine, who is incapable of building one himself, will steal it and leave the aardvark empty-handed. In regards to the USRDA's forced labour regime, the analogy could hardly be more apt.

Indeed, peasants would not only express disappointment about the regime's exploitative practices, but they would also often refuse to work on projects for which they had been conscripted. After independence certain party leaders like Idrissa Diarra advanced the view that the peasantry would come to embrace a spirit of sacrifice for the sake of nation-building, provided regime officials set a good example by embracing the idea of sacrifice themselves. As he stated in 1961:

It is essential that all officials visibly and spectacularly simplify their lifestyles, especially with regard to using administrative vehicles outside of work...It is not so much a question of financial measures but of measures with a psychological interests that...will prove that political officials...are the first to accept the greatest material sacrifices for the development of the Nation, and in the interest of the rural masses...If our populations deem us good, they will allow the success of our policies, which demand – one must never forget it – an unreserved commitment on their part. If the populations consider that political, governmental, or administrative officials have attitudes and lifestyles contrary to what they claim to

mener la politique de libération économique qui est entreprise...il doit insister sur l'intérêt...au Mali de se libérer de toutes les forces financières étrangères qui l'oppressent."

⁷⁶ Dembélé, "La Dimension politique du développement rural," 108. "...les paysans, déçus par la tournure que prendra la période de l'indépendance, disent souvent "*timba bi magwan bala yé*" c'est-à-dire que "l'oryctérope travaille (creuse le trou) pour le porc-épic"."

be, we will inevitably head toward failure.⁷⁷

Yet regime officials came to be aware, through such means as “discrete investigation” by its intelligence services, that the reason peasants abandoned these “worksites of honour” en masse was because they did not benefit from them, and because they viewed USRDA leaders as being biased against them.⁷⁸ Many such USRDA projects would be abandoned by peasants during the Keita years and many Malians would critique the USRDA for reinstating a forced labour regime in a country that had just gained its freedom from colonial masters reviled for establishing such practices.⁷⁹ Even where these projects were not abandoned, in certain cases peasants registered their opposition to them in other ways; for example the village of Nagnassoni refused to vote in the 1964

⁷⁷ ANM.1.3.Congrès extraordinaire de 1960.*Circulaire no 4: les tâches nouvelles (Idrissa Diarra, 29 Janvier 1961)*. “Il faut par ailleurs que chaque responsable diminue visiblement et spectaculairement son train de vie, notamment dans l’utilisation des véhicules administratifs, en dehors du travail... Il ne s’agit pas là tellement de mesures d’intérêt financier. Il s’agit de mesures d’intérêt psychologique, qui, repercutées comme il se doit, donneront la preuve que les responsables politiques ont conscience de leurs responsabilités et qu’ils sont les premiers à accepter les plus grands sacrifices matériels pour le développement de la Nation, et dans l’intérêt des masses rurales... Si les populations nous jugent bien, elles permettront la réussite de notre politique, qui exige – il ne faut jamais l’oublier – une adhésion sans réserve de leur part. Si les populations estiment que les responsables politiques, Gouvernementaux et administratifs ont des attitudes et des modes de vie contraires à ce qu’ils prétendent être, nous courons inévitablement à la faillite.”

⁷⁸ ANM.245.876.Correspondances Ségou 1958-1968.*Investissements humains Ségou 1963*. “Nos services de renseignement menaient depuis un certain moment, une enquête discrète en vue de connaître les raisons pour lesquelles des travaux d’investissement humain, notamment le nettoyage des routes dans l’Arrondissement Central, ont été abandonnés. La raison principale aurait été que les paysans de ce centre estiment que les premiers avantages auxquels ils s’attendaient (ouverture des classes et dispensaires) n’ont favorisé que les villages longeant le fleuve (EST-OUEST) et que rien n’avait été entrepris au Sud de Ségou. Les paysans attribuent ce fait à la partialité du Secrétaire Général de la Section de Ségou, M. Dramane COULIBALY.”

⁷⁹ Interview with Abdoulaye Amadou Sy, Bamako, February 2012; ANM.109.416.Rapport de Mission à l’Intérieur du Mali 1964-67.*1964 04 30 Rapport de mission Sikasso*; Interview with Sana Timbiné, 18 January 2012, Dé (Bandiagara).

legislative elections, citing “human investments in Kléla, extraction of sand during high waters when the river and its banks are infested with crocodiles.”⁸⁰ Furthermore, the human investments were not the only forced labour regime in which peasants refused to participate. It was noted in 1968, for example, that four youths had refused to answer a convocation conscripting them into the *service civique*:

These four youths refused to present themselves before the recruitment commission... The village chief who travelled to Sikasso on foot for the recruitment moved heaven and earth in an attempt to make these youths respond to the administrative authority’s convocation, but the four young people maintained their refusal. Well, it is certain that the other villages are watching N’Tiobougou. If you do not take serious action against these refusals we will have many difficulties in getting youths at the next recruitment.⁸¹

Such reports are echoed by oral testimony of individuals who, facing conscription into the *civiques*, fled their rural communities for the city.⁸² This kind of resistance to recruitment is unsurprising, given the obligatory character of these programs.⁸³

The USRDA’s forced labour policies offer a useful window on how nationalist and socialist ideals interacted with the regime’s labour needs to generate a coercive,

⁸⁰ ANM.109.416.Rapport et Compte-Rendu de Mission à l’Intérieur du Mali 1964-1967. *Rapport de mission Sikasso, 30 Avril 1964*. “Village de NAGNASSONI - Le chef de village et Yanouroukou Bengaly, suivaient les raisons de leur mécontentement autour des points suivants:...Investissements humains à Kléla, extraction de sable pendant les hautes Eaux alors que la rivière et ses abords sont infestés de caïmans...”

⁸¹ ANM.130.345.Lettres 1965-1974.1968 01 17 *Le Chef d’Arrondissement de Dogoni à Monsieur le Commandant de cercle de Sikasso*. “Ces quatre jeunes ont refusé de se présenter devant la commission du recrutement Samedi dernier comme les autres. Le Chef de village qui s’est rendu à pied à Sikasso pour le recrutement avait employé pieds et mains pour que ces jeunes puissent répondre à la convocation de l’autorité administrative, mais les quatre jeunes-gens ont maintenu leur refus. Or il est certain que les autres villages observent N’Tiobougou. Si vous ne prenez pas une mesure sérieuse contre ces refus nous aurons beaucoup de difficultés pour avoir des jeunes au prochain recrutement...”

⁸² Interview with Oumar Ongoïba, Bamako, 4 February 2012.

⁸³ ANM.109.415.Compte-Rendu et Rapport de Mission à l’Intérieur du mali 1968.1968 02 05 *Compte rendu de la tournée des responsables de la zone de San Tominian (signé Madeira Keita)*. “[L]es jeunes que l’on recrute...le sont contre leur gré.”

paternalistic dispensation for peasants in the countryside. Although the regime believed in creating a radically new society that would benefit all Malians alike, it relied upon institutions that looked more to the colonial past than to the future. USRDA leaders attempted to resolve this tension by reimagining such institutions as sites for the performance of civic duty, the accrual of national honour, and the edification of a new socialist order. Yet peasants were not nearly as amenable to such arguments as the regime anticipated, particularly as regime officials at the local level often abused their positions of authority to put the fruits of peasant labour to inequitable ends.⁸⁴

The Great Malian Labour Camp: Migration in the Keita years

In the 1960s the USRDA attempted to place tight limits on how peasants moved and worked. As with forced labour, there were both ideological and material motivations for these policies. In accordance with its high modern vision, the USRDA believed it had the capacity to comprehensively plan how peasants lived and laboured – including how they moved (or, in fact, did not). This planning was aimed in the late 1950s toward a nationalist vision intent on the creation of a modern, prosperous society,⁸⁵ and then later, as radical socialists came to exert increasing control over the state, toward “the edification of the new society”⁸⁶ and “the socialist revolution”⁸⁷ – concepts compatible

⁸⁴ See “Clientelism in the Keita Era” in Chapter 3.

⁸⁵ On the USRDA’s longstanding nationalist vision and its “moderate” roots, see chapter 2 – especially, with respect to “planning,” “A Decisive Month.”

⁸⁶ ANM.141.59.CNDR Circulaires. *Circulaire no 38/CNDR, 20 Juin 1968 (signé Modibo Keita)*. “...l’édification de la Société Nouvelle à laquelle le PARTI et le Gouvernement sont attelés.”

⁸⁷ ANM.141.59.CNDR Circulaires. *Circulaire no 52/CNDR du 19 Août 1968 (signé Yacouba Maïga, pour le Président du CNDR)*. “Cette réforme devra aboutir, non seulement à la nécessaire reconversion des mentalités, des habitudes, mais aussi, à l’élimination radicale de certaines pratiques surannées, ou anachroniques, qui ne se

with yet distinct from the party's earlier "moderate" nationalist position. To accomplish this vision, peasants needed to remain in rural areas and to focus on producing grain for the theoretical benefit of their own communities and that of the entire nation. As will be shown in the following section on collectivization, the intensity of the state's interventions into how peasants worked grew over time, along with the regime's efforts to stop peasants from moving around, and both reached their apex during the Active Revolution. The USRDA's rural migration policies equally appear designed to exercise social control over a sometimes restful population. The regime was acutely concerned with opposition, regionalism, and disunity. Its policies promoting a captive rural population facilitated both of these broad objectives: managing unrest and implementing a vision of development that displayed an increasingly high modern character over time (insofar as increasingly strident and impractical efforts toward the comprehensive management of peasant life were undertaken).

In this context, socialism not only inspired this increasingly high modern sensibility, but it provided both examples of peasant sequestration policies employed by other socialist nations and an ethos of sacrifice for the future that rationalized the need to deny peasants the right to leave rural areas. Yet although socialism would provide the regime with lines of argument to support this policy, migration restrictions would nonetheless prove to be largely ineffective due in part to a misplaced high modern belief in the capacity of the state to engineer society according to its vision of a planned polity — borrowed as much from the colonial past as from the communist East — that gave the Keita regime a surfeit of confidence in its economic and social policies.

trouvent plus en harmonie avec les exigences de notre révolution socialiste.”

According to Scott, high modernism is characterized as “a faith that borrowed, as it were, the legitimacy of science and technology.” Sanankoua has noted that by 1962 many USRDA radicals like Madeira Keita and Seydou Badian Kouyaté wanted “to impose scientific socialism and its ideology on Malians.”⁸⁸ Kouyaté himself spoke out in favour of “the project of scientific socialism” in 1963, describing it as “a reality we cannot ignore.”⁸⁹ This approach was maintained and indeed intensified later in the 1960s, with the CNDR affirming in 1968 that “the party has drawn upon a traditional method of work undertaken scientifically, having the goal of collectivizing the countryside from the basis of the collective fields’ implantation.”⁹⁰

This nominally scientific faith in the state’s capacity to implement ambitious policies led the USRDA to attempt to control not just how peasants moved but also how they thought. Indeed, in the early years of USRDA rule but especially in the late 1960s, USRDA policy and rhetoric came to embody this dangerous combination of faith in an ostensibly scientific approach to policymaking and in the state’s capacity to transform the apparent backwardness of the peasantry. In 1957 the party aimed “to spark a

⁸⁸ Sanankoua, *La Chute de Modibo Keita*, 128-129.

⁸⁹ Seydou Badian Kouyaté, “Politique de développement et voies africaines du socialisme”, *Présence africaine*, 47(3) (1963) : 59-72. “...l’expérience du socialisme scientifique, c’est une réalité que nous ne saurions ignorer.” Also regarding a “scientific” approach to agriculture: ANM.144.565.Compte-rendu divers cercles 1956-1968.1968 03 22 *Résolutions du séminaire sur les champs collectifs Ségou*. “...l’option irréversible du Mali pour l’édification d’une économie socialiste au service d’une Société nouvelle débarrassée de l’exploitation de l’homme par l’homme. Considérant la coopération villageoise et la socialisation de la production agricole comme structure de base fondamentale du socialisme scientifique...”

⁹⁰ ANM.104.400.*Rapport sur l’organisation socialiste du monde rurale (1968)*. “Le Parti s’est inspiré d’une méthode traditionnelle de travail exploitée scientifiquement, ayant pour objectif la collectivisation à la campagne à partir de l’implantation du champ collectif.”

realization within the peasant, and to create within him the desire for improvement.”⁹¹

Thus USRDA leaders believed the success of their rural policies hinged on transforming the way peasants understood the world and on shaping their goals. In 1962, it affirmed a desire to “establish the foundations for a rational organization of the rural areas,” notably through agricultural collectivization, affirming how essential it was that “cooperation should effectively appear as a means of economic liberation” to the peasants.⁹² In 1968, “ideological education [would lead] the peasant to have a socialist attitude toward work and collective property,” and rural life would be wholly transformed such that “the collective field [would be] the centre of life in the village” where “all village events would take place...from folklore to village festivals” – and where “existing measures to halt the rural exodus [would be] redoubled.”⁹³ The regime, or at least its most radical members, understood the socialist vision of rural change not as a utopian project but as a reasoned and reasonable undertaking. With regard to peasant migration policy, time would prove this belief largely false.

As Gary-Toukara has noted, the USRDA’s postcolonial policy of “restraining the

⁹¹ ANM.2.4.Ve Congrès de l’USRDA. *Ve Congrès de l’Union Soudanaise, 13-17 août 1958 et 2^e Conférence territoriale de l’Union Soudanaise, 17-19 octobre 1958, Rapport Moral et Politique présenté par Modibo Keita.* “...pour susciter une prise de conscience du paysan, et créer chez lui ce désir de mieux-être.”

⁹² ANM.3.5.6e Congrès de l’USRDA 1962. *Rapport d’activités et d’orientation présenté au 6^{ème} congrès de l’USRDA.* “D’une façon générale, en jetant les bases d’une organisation rationnelle du monde rural, nous devons toujours ménager l’immédiate tout en prévoyant l’avenir”; “...en attendant que la coopération apparaisse effectivement comme un moyen de libération économique.”

⁹³ ANM.104.400. Rapport sur l’organisation socialiste du monde rural - 1968.

“L’éducation idéologique amènera le paysan à avoir une attitude socialiste envers le travail et les propriétés collectives...Le champ collectif sera le centre de la vie au village. Tous les événements du village se dérouleront autour du champ, la communauté, depuis le folklore jusqu’aux fêtes villageoises.”

circulation of persons” was based “probably on the model of Eastern countries.”⁹⁴ There are, at the very least, intriguing parallels between Chinese and Soviet policies — the *hukou* and *propiska* systems, respectively – and the migration policies of the USSR. Although policies limiting the movement of peasants with the use of documents like the *laissez-passer* are not unique – within Africa one can cite, for example, the *kipande* of colonial Kenya⁹⁵ and the pass laws of apartheid South Africa⁹⁶ – the parallels with Soviet and Chinese policies are more relevant as certain leading USSR figures were openly inspired by such regimes, whereas colonialism was the USSR’s longstanding enemy and something that, in the Malian case, leaders like Idrissa Diarra believed the party had “managed to liquidate for all of time.”⁹⁷ Furthermore, Malian leaders did model other policies (like the Five-Year Plan) on Soviet precedents⁹⁸ and were influenced by the Chinese with regard to financial policy and other questions.⁹⁹ A 1961

⁹⁴ Gary-Toukara, “Quand Les Migrants Demandent La Route, Modibo Keita Retorque: ‘Retournez À La Terre!’,” 50. “Ils franchirent un pas supplémentaire à l’indépendance, en 1960, en optant pour le socialisme et en restreignant la circulation des personnes, probablement sur le modèle des pays de l’Est.”

⁹⁵ David M. Anderson, “Master and Servant in Colonial Kenya,” *The Journal of African History* 41, no. 3 (January 1, 2000): 459–85.

⁹⁶ Michael Savage, “The Imposition of Pass Laws on the African Population in South Africa 1916-1984,” *African Affairs* 85, no. 339 (April 1, 1986): 181–205.

⁹⁷ ANM.142.560.Circulaires 1947-68.25 *Mai 1962 Note Circulaire no 8 aux Camarades Secrétaires Généraux des Sous Sections de l’USSR (signé Idrissa Diarra)*. “A présent, après d’âpres luttes patriotiques, sous la direction éclairée du Parti, nous sommes parvenus à liquider à jamais le colonialisme.”

⁹⁸ Certain USSR papers promote the explicit imitation of Soviet institutions like the NEP with regard to the planned economy (ANM.126.468.BPN Secrétariat 1960-1968.*Etat d’urgence, 13 Decembre 1960*).

⁹⁹ E.g. during a 1961 Malian mission in PRC and North Vietnam USSR officials’ “attention was drawn particularly to the financial and banking institutions of Viet-Nam and China,” and the Cabinet Director for the Ministry of Finance declared that “the Popular Development Bank of Mali could profit from the experiences of Viet-Nam.” (ANM.117.449.Présidence du Gouvernement-Secrétariat Général 1958-1967. “C’est ainsi que notre attention a été plus particulièrement portée sur les institutions financières

circular from USRDA Political Secretary Idrissa Diarra equally turns to the USSR and China as models of socialism:

At the current hour, in the USSR, after forty-four years of the communist regime, and in spite of all the affirmations of a press determined to discredit socialism, a Soviet peasant is never forced by the administration to enter into a collective organization. He is solicited, he is shown all the advantages of such and such organization; he is submitted to all possible forms of persuasion, but he is not forced. In the People's Republic of China, a country that fifteen years ago was underdeveloped like ours, the Chinese Communist Party undertook reforms of fundamental institutions, but it never used force with regard to those who supported its struggle – and what a struggle, as it was a question of a war lasting more than twenty years – against the allied forces of feudalism and imperialism. In all socialist countries, force has only been used in the most extremely rare cases, and never with respect to the population. If we insist on this particular fact, it is because a dangerous deviation is emerging in our political action. Because we command the power of the State, because we are the only political force in the country, certain comrades believe themselves capable of imposing the party's decisions.¹⁰⁰

Not only does this document highlight USRDA interest in Chinese and Soviet examples, but it constitutes a clear effort by Diarra – a senior regime figure who bridged the gap

et bancaires du Viet-Nam et de la Chine... Ainsi la Banque Populaire du MALI pour le Développement pourra profiter des expériences du Viet-Nam.”)

¹⁰⁰ ANM.1.3.Congrès extraordinaire de 1960.*Circulaire no 4: les tâches nouvelles (Idrissa Diarra, 29 Janvier 1961)*. “A l’heure actuelle, en U.R.S.S., après quarante quatre ans de régime communiste, et en dépit de toutes les affirmations d’une presse acharnée à discréditer le socialisme, un paysan soviétique n’est jamais contraint par l’administration à entrer dans une organisation collective. On le sollicite, on lui démontre tous les avantages de telle ou telle organisation; il est soumis à toutes les tentatives de persuasion possibles, mais on ne le force pas. En Chine populaire, pays sous-développé il y a quinze ans comme le nôtre, le Parti Communiste Chinois a entrepris des réformes de structures fondamentales, mais il n’a jamais usé de la force à l’égard de ceux qui ont soutenu sa lutte – et quelle lutte, puisqu’il s’est agi d’une guerre de plus de vingt ans – contre les forces coalisées de la féodalité et de l’impérialisme. Dans tous les pays socialistes, la force n’a été employée que le plus rarement possible, et jamais à l’égard des populations. Si nous insistons sur ce fait particulier, c’est qu’il se dessine une dangereuse déviation dans notre action politique. Parce que nous disposons du pouvoir d’Etat, parce que nous sommes la seule force politique du pays, certains camarades croient pouvoir imposer les décisions du Parti.”

between the party's radical socialist and the moderate wings¹⁰¹ – to reconcile a factional disagreement about the appropriate use of coercion in the implementation of rural policy. The use of Soviet and Chinese examples to argue against coercive tactics suggests it was members of the radical faction, many of whom admired these two states, who pushed for an authoritarian style of governance; this is supported by contemporaneous statements from regime radicals like Mamadou Gologo, effectively requesting Modibo Keita to adopt such an approach.¹⁰²

With regard to policy parallels between Mali and China, the similarity of Mali's endeavours to comprehensively control the whereabouts and activities of peasants to the *hukou* system are striking. As Lambert and Chan note in regards to how this system worked in China during and after the 1960s:

Workers are required to apply for a special permit to give them permission to leave their village. This household registration system (*hukou zhidu*) imposes tight control over the movement of people and serves to regulate the entry of peasants into the labour market... To stay in any city, [workers] have to apply to the local police station for a temporary residence permit... The application of these regulations is reminiscent of apartheid South Africa's hated pass laws. Police carry out raids periodically to round up those who do not possess a temporary residence permit. Those without papers are placed in detention centres and then removed from the cities.¹⁰³

In Mali during the Keita years, peasants were similarly rounded up periodically by

¹⁰¹ See "Moderates, Radicals, and the History of Socialism in Postwar Soudan" in Chapter 2.

¹⁰² CADN.Bamako.Amb.9.Incidents de Ségou 1959 et 1960 et Politique au Soudan. *Télégramme Hebdomadaire No 53, Représentation de France au Mali*. "Par ailleurs Mamadou Gologo qui se fait le porte-parole des éléments les plus avancés du parti a demandé que le futur gouvernement pratique une politique plus autoritaire à l'intérieur comme à l'extérieur. A cet effet, il cherche à faire admettre dans la nouvelle équipe des personnalités connue pour leur fermeté et leur intransigeance."

¹⁰³ Lambert et al., "Global Dance," 82.

police and removed from cities to their rural places of origin.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, given that high-ranking radical socialists — one of whom, Seydou Badian Kouyaté, was a leader of the sinophilic faction of the USRDA¹⁰⁵ — had responsibility for key rural portfolios including Ministry of Rural Economy, the possibility that the *hukou* system influenced USRDA policy is all the more likely. Indeed, other socialist radicals like Mamadou Gologo also gushed with enthusiasm for the Chinese method of “organizing the peasants” in his 1964 book recounting his month-long visit there in that year.¹⁰⁶ Without referencing the *hukou* system, he nonetheless argued that the party must play a paternal role with regard to the peasantry, and that its primary concern was to increase peasant production. He notes:

Agriculture is the base of this [economic] development; industrialization its pivot. The growth of the one conditions that of the other. Agriculture must always be ready to supply raw material for industry, which in turn must be able to supply agriculture the means of production... [The peasants] immediately grasped that the C.P.C. was the saviour of the Chinese people, and this is why they defend it even better today than yesterday. Thanks to the Party they are eagerly building a New China, a powerful, democratic nation unconditionally opposed to colonialism and imperialism. On the other hand, the C.P.C. knows that it can do nothing without the peasants. So the relation between the peasants and the C.P.C. today, tomorrow and always must be that between father and son.¹⁰⁷

Gologo’s concern for augmenting peasant production is clear, and he lauds the Chinese for engineering peasant society in a manner intended to augment productivity. He notes in particular how peasants under Communist rule were asked to remain on the land they

¹⁰⁴ ANM.142.560.Circulaires 1947-1968.*Circulaire 13, Aux Secrétaires Généraux de l’USRDA, 30 avril 1963*; Archives du Gouvernorat de Ségou.*Untitled*.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Bintou Sanankoua, Bamako, 13 February 2012.

¹⁰⁶ Mamadou Gologo, *La Chine: Un Peuple Géant Au Grand Destin* (Pékin: Librairie du Nouveau Monde, 1964).

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 92-93.

had always worked, under the auspices of “mutual aid teams,”¹⁰⁸ a policy that corresponds to the USRDA policy of preventing peasants from leaving their villages¹⁰⁹ and pushing them to farm collectively (as will be shown in this chapter’s following section). President Keita himself would show an interest in the Chinese model as well, touring “the People’s Republic of China and the satellite republics of the Far East” in 1964.¹¹⁰

There are also similarities in the Malian migration policy with the Soviet *propiska* system implemented in 1932, which aimed to ensure the state could extract the maximum possible amount of grain from the peasantry by forcing peasants to remain in rural areas working on farms. The Soviets sought to feed their urban population and to finance their projects through peasant agricultural production, much as the Malians would do in the 1960s. Grain would feed workers and civil servants, and it would also fill state coffers with foreign currency via exports. This policy led to such suffering and unrest in the countryside that the *propiska*, an internal passport that allowed the state to dictate where a person could live, was introduced as “an instrument of repression and police control.”¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 87.

¹⁰⁹ Another example of this comes from 1964, when a vigilance brigade (likely from or near Bamako) “repelled 40 youths in exodus coming from Bandiagara and Mopti.” (ANM.125.467.Correspondances BPN 1957-1967.*Rapport de brigade de vigilance, 15 Août 1964.* “La brigade aurait refoulé 40 jeunes en exode venant de Bandiagara et de Mopti.”)

¹¹⁰ CADN.Bamako.Amb.22.Dépêches politiques 1963.*Dépêche hebdomadaire no 37 du 7 au 13 Septembre 1964.* “Avant son départ pour la Chine Populaire et les Républiques satellites d’Extrême Orient le 27 Septembre prochain, le Président Modibo Keita a tenu, en visitant en personne leurs champs collectifs, à s’assurer de la fidélité des corps d’élites de l’armée malienne.”

¹¹¹ Gijss Kessler, “The Passport System and State Control over Population Flows in the Soviet Union, 1932-1940,” *Cahiers Du Monde Russe* 42, 2/4 (2001): 478. “The crisis of

Certain USRDA leaders openly admired the Soviet development model in the 1960s,¹¹² and it appears likely they were influenced by its peasant policies. Madeira Keita in particular was known as “the most pro-Soviet...of the Malian leadership,” and as Minister of the Interior between 1957-1962 he had authority over questions of internal migration as well as over the institutions charged with enforcing migration restrictions, like the vigilance brigades.¹¹³ In 1966 he demonstrated this affinity for the Soviets when he spoke on behalf of the USRDA at the 23rd Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, where “with his dialectic of an unconditional Marxist, the head of the delegation of the Union Soudanaise-R.D.A. covered two topics: an apology

1932-1933 was an almost direct result of the deliberate strategy of unequal development of the urban and rural sector of the economy that had lain at the heart of the industrialisation effort of preceding years. It was a policy of unequal development that aimed at exploiting the rural sector for the benefit of the urban industrial sector through what was called "primitive socialist accumulation in the countryside." During the first five-year plan these exploitative policies had been pushed to such extremes that by 1932 a major rural crisis unfolded, which, in its turn, had an impact on the urban sector of the economy. The central issue around which the crisis of 1932-1933 revolved, was food, and with it, food-supply. The collectivisation of agriculture, combined with the ensuing merciless extraction of grain and other crops for three years in a row, had undermined the productive capacity of the villages to the point, where, in 1932, the rural population could not and would no longer meet the delivery targets set out by the state. This led to a major confrontation between the Bolshevik regime and the peasantry. From the early spring of 1932 on, and following the announcement of the very high procurement plan for the 1932 harvest, unrest started to spread in the villages... The party leadership was not prepared to back down, though. To start with, it desperately needed the grain it had planned to collect, both for export that would enable it to repay foreign loans taken out at the end of 1930 and the start of 1931, and, secondly, to feed an urban population that had mushroomed over the three preceding years due to a rapid expansion of the industrial workforce. Yet, it was not just that the party and state leadership could not lower procurement targets; it was also in no way whatsoever prepared to yield to what it called "peasant sabotage."

¹¹² Walter Kolarz, “The Impact of Communism on West Africa,” *International Affairs* 38, no. 2 (1962): 157.

¹¹³ Mann, “Anti-Colonialism and Social Science,” 115.

of Soviet communism and a condemnation of global imperialism.”¹¹⁴ Other observers, like former Minister of Agriculture Salah Niaré, have equally noted that Russophile radicals within the USRDA wished to “superimpose the *kolkhoz* system” of collective farms on Mali’s rural communities (mistakenly, in his opinion) – a further point of connection between Soviet and Malian rural policy.¹¹⁵

The negative outcomes associated with such policies raise the question of why USRDA leaders would have sought to emulate them. One can determine simply from examples like Madeira Keita’s “apology of Soviet communism” that whatever problems the Soviet system had provoked were not enough to dissuade radical elements with the USRDA of its virtues. Yet some evidence equally suggests that certain USRDA leaders believed reports of negative outcomes were false: as mentioned above, Idrissa Diarra affirmed in 1961, for example, that socialist countries like China and the USSR were the victim of a Western media smear campaign “determined to discredit socialism,” and he proclaimed that no socialist country had ever forced their populations to do anything against their will.¹¹⁶ Thus, the similarities in policy structures, the admiration of influential radical socialists within the USRDA for Chinese and Soviet policies, and the apparent optimism of such leaders regarding the efficacy of these policies, suggest,

¹¹⁴ CADN.Bamako.Amb.28.Dépêches politiques 1966.A/S: *d’une déclaration de M. Madeira Keita au XXIIIème Congrès du Parti Communiste de l’Union Soviétique (6 Avril 1966)*. “Avec sa dialectique de marxiste inconditionnel, le chef de la délégation de l’Union Soudanaise R.D.A. a traité de deux sujets: l’apologie du communisme soviétique et la condamnation de l’impérialisme mondial.”

¹¹⁵ Interview with Salah Niaré, Bamako, 21 March 2012.

¹¹⁶ ANM.1.3.Congrès extraordinaire de 1960.*Circulaire no 4: les tâches nouvelles (Idrissa Diarra, 29 Janvier 1961)*. “A l’heure actuelle, en U.R.S.S., après quarante quatre ans de régime communiste, et en dépit de toutes les affirmations d’une presse acharnée à discréditer le socialisme, un paysan soviétique n’est jamais contraint par l’administration à entrer dans une organisation collective.”

much as Gary-Toukara does, that the Keita regime's migration restriction policies were inspired by "the model of Eastern countries."¹¹⁷

The USRDA "definitively condemned migration" in 1958, perceiving it to be an obstacle to development.¹¹⁸ As such, this policy — like many others under Keita's rule — was not born of socialist ideology, but was motivated by a desire to exert economic control. Emigration was "judgement through action of society and of the regime" — voting with one's feet — and "this political dimension of escapism was perfectly understood by Malian leaders"¹¹⁹ who wished to curtail it for political reasons as well. After independence — once the union with Senegal had collapsed — the regime took more aggressive steps to stop migration both to the cities and out of the country.¹²⁰ New institutions like the *service civique*, the *brigades de vigilance*, and the *milice populaire* were created, and each of these would come to play a role in preventing Malians from leaving their villages or from leaving the state — especially but not exclusively during the Active Revolution years of 1967-1968.¹²¹ Whereas the *laissez-passer* had been

¹¹⁷ Gary-Toukara, "Quand Les Migrants Demandent La Route, Modibo Keita Retorque: 'Retournez À La Terre!'" "Ils franchirent un pas supplémentaire à l'indépendance, en 1960, en optant pour le socialisme et en restreignant la circulation des personnes, probablement sur le modèle des pays de l'Est."

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 50.

¹¹⁹ Johanna Siméant, *Contester au Mali: Formes de la mobilisation et de la critique à Bamako* (Paris: Karthala, 2014), 23.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 50.

¹²¹ Regarding the *civiques*: Interview with Sana Timbiné, 18 January 2012, Dé (Bandiagara); regarding the *brigades*: ANM.125.467.Correspondances BPN 1957-1967.*Rapport de brigade de vigilance, 15 Août 1964*; regarding the *milices*: ANM.146.568.Dossier de la milice populaire 1964-68.*A Monsieur le Commissaire de Police du 2e Arrondissement de Bamako, 2 Octobre 1968*. "J'ai l'honneur de vous envoyer la liste, accompagné des intéressés même, de 35 personnes qui voulaient se rendre frauduleusement en République de Côte d'Ivoire et arrêtées par la Jeunesse de Ouélessebouougou dans la nuit du 1-10-68. Je vous remet également les chauffeurs des véhicules qui transportaient ces personnes..."

abolished in French West Africa along with the *indigénat* legal code in 1946, opening the door to free movement within France's West African territories, this measure was reintroduced and strictly regulated by the regime.¹²² Beyond refusing to grant the *laissez-passer*, the regime took a variety of measures to stop border-crossing, from propaganda drives encouraging Malians to stay on the land to simply arresting, or occasionally killing, those who sought to cross the border.¹²³ The Keita regime would even urge merchants (unsuccessfully) to return to the earth and farm.¹²⁴ The political education of the peasants would be a recurring problem, for, as noted earlier in this section, the regime recognized that the success of its policies depended on convincing the peasants to support them. This was why

[they continued] to fight to liberate [the peasant]...from the cultural and ideological influence of prejudices, superstitions and backward practices that stand in the way of his attaining an adequate level of realization, of his appropriate emancipation, and that make of him easy prey, defenceless against the noxious and harmful forces of society.¹²⁵

Along similar lines, Modibo Keita remarked in 1967 that “in truth education has been insufficient at the level of the countryside.” He further noted that “the peasant question is the most important but also the most difficult of our revolution,” affirming equally

¹²² According to N’Faly Diouf, who more or less illicitly managed to get one, a *laissez-passer* was extremely difficult to obtain in the Keita years (interview, Bamako, 10 February 2012). Also, Gary-Toukara, “La dispersion des Soudanais/Maliens à la fin de l’ère coloniale,” 12–23.

¹²³ Mann, “Violence, Dignity, and Mali’s New Model Army, 1960-1968,” 65–82.

¹²⁴ ANM.84.288.Ministère de l’information.1965 08 21 *Marchés Tropicaux et Méditerranéens* (Ci-joint à titre d’information, la copie “in extenso” d’un article paru dans la revue “*Marchés Tropicaux et Méditerranéens*” du 21 AOÛT 1965, No 1032.)

¹²⁵ ANM.142.560.Circulaires 1947-1968.*Circulaire no 5, 12 Février 1965*. “Dans ce sens nous continuons à lutter pour le libérer...de l’emprise culturelle et idéologique des préjugés, des superstitions et des pratiques retardataires qui s’opposent à sa prise de conscience adéquate, à son émancipation convenable et le livrent en proie facile, sans défense, à l’action des forces malsaines et retrogrades de la société.”

that “it cannot be resolved by amateurs.” He called for greater ideological education, remarking that “the reticence of the peasants, their receptivity to the activities of the *apatrides* are all facts demonstrating that political work has been non-existent or inoperative at their level” – a major failing when it came to “the key problem of the socialist revolution.”¹²⁶

Beyond ideological education, Gregory Mann has noted that even the Malian army was used to keep peasants from fleeing their homes:

Altogether more obscure [than the Malian state’s open conflict with Tuaregs in the north in 1963-64] is the action directed at civilian populations in the region of Douentza and Hombori in November and December 1962. When Tuareg and Dogon people living there sought to migrate to Haute-Volta (Burkina Faso) to avoid tax collection and party dues, the army was called on to block their passage. At least two armoured detachments were deployed with orders to conduct “demonstration exercises” intended to intimidate civilians. Although French intelligence reported that dozens of people were killed, the events remain murky and obscure.¹²⁷

This policy change was a blow to many peasants, who had been accustomed to crossing colonial borders with relative ease.¹²⁸

With respect to the policy of arresting migrants, Idrissa Diarra noted in 1963, for example, that “instructions have been given to administrative authorities to detain youths who abandon their villages to go to neighbouring countries.”¹²⁹ The newly illegal

¹²⁶ ANM.141.559.CNDR Circulaires. *Circulaire no 16/CNDR du 22 Novembre 1967*. “En vérité l’éducation a été insuffisante au niveau de la campagne... La question paysanne est la plus importante mais aussi la plus difficile de notre révolution, elle ne peut être résolue par des amateurs. C’est le problème clé de la révolution socialiste... Les réticences des paysans, leur réceptivité à l’action des *apatrides* sont autant de faits qui démontrent que le travail politique a été inexistant ou inopérant à leur niveau.”

¹²⁷ Mann, “Violence, Dignity, and Mali’s New Model Army, 1960-1968,” 71.

¹²⁸ Interview with Mamadou Bengaly, Kléla, 16 March 2012.

¹²⁹ ANM.142.560.Circulaires 1947-1968. *Circulaire 13, Aux Secrétaires Généraux de l’USRDA, 30 avril 1963*. “D’autre part, des instructions ont été données aux responsables administratifs pour retenir les Jeunes qui abandonnent leurs villages pour

status of border crossing represented a loss of freedom and income to many peasants, particularly those that lived near the borders with Mali's seven neighbouring states. Indeed, while forced labourers in the *civiques* were frequently called upon to serve as border guards — apparently even shooting border-crossers in some instances¹³⁰ — their leaders were gravely concerned about the potential negative impact of border shutdowns if the policy were to be applied to the letter. They wrote:

Following certain seizures the *Service Civique* proceeded to undertake and which provoked a certain turmoil in some border villages, the political and administrative leaders of the *cercle*, the leaders from Customs, the *Service Civique* and the Vigilance Brigade held a meeting at the border at the Bénéna customs post, to discuss the measures necessary for the appeasement of the border populations in this sector where the *Service Civique* has received instructions to seize all products other than shea butter weighing over 2 kg, which boils down to forbidding circulation around the two sides of this border. Applied to the letter, such instructions risk the pure and simple eradication of traditional exchanges between border populations.¹³¹

This document suggests border crossing prior to the USRDA-imposed ban occurred frequently and easily.¹³² And whereas in the colonial era crossing the border from

se rendre dans les Etats voisins.”

¹³⁰ Interview with Sana Timbiné, 18 January 2012, Dé (Bandiagara).

¹³¹ ANM.83.278.Ministère des Finances et du Commerce 1963-1968.*Police Economique*, n.d. “A la suite de certaines saisies auxquelles le Service Civique a procédé et qui ont provoqué un certain émoi dans quelques villages de la frontière, les responsables politiques et administratifs du Cercle, les responsables de la Douane, du Service Civique et de la Brigade de Vigilance se sont réunis à la frontière, au poste douanier de Bénéna, pour discuter des mesures propres à apaiser les populations frontalières de ce secteur où le Service Civique a reçu comme instruction de saisir tout produit autre que le beurre de karité et pesant plus de 2 kg, ce qui revient à interdire la circulation par des deux côtés de la frontière. Appliquées à la lettre, de telles instructions risquent de supprimer purement et simplement les échanges traditionnels entre les populations frontalières...”

¹³² Oral data back this up, with respondents from the southeastern village of Kléla, for example, noting that local residents travelled far more frequently to urban centres in Haute Volta/Burkina Faso to make purchases or conduct business than they did to Bamako (interview with Mamadou Bengaly, Kléla, 16 March 2012). Other archival records equally suggest Malians were accustomed to cross borders easily and frequently.

Soudan to Senegal, Haute Volta, or Côte d'Ivoire had been a simple affair – albeit one the colonial regime may have attempted to channel for its economic benefit – in the postcolonial era the state actively monitored the borders, and those found attempting to cross were subject to arrest. Indeed, although the author of the document quoted above demonstrates a lenient attitude toward border fluidity, party policy remained restrictive with regard to peasant movement throughout the USRDA's tenure. Arrondissement chiefs would even take it upon themselves to thwart those who moved goods over the border by bicycle, surprising them in the dead of night on motorized scooters and sounding whistles to disperse them.¹³³ In addition to the *civiques*, the militia would be used to prevent Malians from leaving the country and to investigate reports of illegal movement.¹³⁴ Although in some instances such efforts were linked to attempts at discouraging cross-border commerce, in others this emigration was linked to a loss of agricultural labour that the regime wished to direct toward its collectivization schemes. “Rural exodus, depriving the village of the most able-bodied persons,” wrote the CNDR, “has its disagreeable repercussions on the work of the collective field.”¹³⁵ Indeed, the Keita regime understood the peasantry as a vast untapped pool of labour power – power

(E.g. ANM.109.416.Rapport et Compte-Rendu de Mission à l'Intérieur du Mali 1964-1967.1964 04 30 *Rapport de mission Sikasso*. In this document it is noted that representatives of nine villages in the Sikasso region cited regime refusal to allow local youths to travel to Côte d'Ivoire as a principal reason why they refused to vote in the 1964 elections.)

¹³³ Interview with Bakary Diallo, Bamako, 20 March 2012.

¹³⁴ ANM.146.568.Dossier de la Milice Populaire 1964-68.*Secrétariat permanent de la milice populaire, Bamako, 2 Octobre 1968*; ANM.146.568.Dossier de la Milice Populaire 1964-68.*A Monsieur le Président du CNDR, 8 Novembre 1967*.

¹³⁵ ANM.137.543.Rapport Coopératives de Consommation 1963-67.(1967 or 1968). “Et aussi l'exode rural, privant le village de ses bras les plus valides a ses fâcheuses repercussions sur le travail du champ commun.”

it intended to direct toward agricultural production and public works projects.¹³⁶ Yet in order to make use of such able bodies, it was necessary to control their whereabouts. This is one of the reasons USRDA officials in Bourem, for example, considered in 1968 that “the true social wound resides in the exodus that has affected more than 80% of the population,” a phenomenon apparently provoked by “snobbery” and a “form of revolt against political authorities whose methods and means of action are no longer supported.”¹³⁷ A similar complaint was registered by authorities in Bankass in the same year with regard to the fact that the nomadic customs of herders rendered grain and tax collection difficult. “Indeed, it often occurs that entire families leave for purposes of transhumance before having freed themselves from their fiscal obligations and their market [grain] quota. Measures have been taken to avoid such situations from recurring.”¹³⁸

The contrast between the hard line of official policy and the more sympathetic outlook of the rural official cited at length above, confronted as he was with the effects

¹³⁶ ANM.141.559.CNDR Circulaires.*Circulaire no 16/CNDR du 22 Novembre 1967 (signé Modibo Keita)*. “En effet, si les pays comme le nôtre manquent de ressources financières pour faire face aux importants et multiples besoins du peuple... nous avons nos bras, le temps mort qui jalonne nos journées, s’étend sur des semaines ou même des mois en certaines périodes et chez certaines catégories de la population. Chantiers d’honneurs nous donnent la possibilité d’utiliser ce potentiel travail afin d’accélérer notre promotion.”

¹³⁷ ANM.54.143.Commission Sociale et Culturelle du CNDR 1968.*Rapport de mission dans la zone de Bourem, 23 Juin 1968*. “La véritable plaie sociale réside dans l’exode qui touche plus de 80% de la population. Les raisons sont multiples:...snobisme, forme de révolte contre les autorités politiques dont on ne cautionnait plus les méthodes et moyens d’actions.”

¹³⁸ ANM.109.415.Compte-Rendu et Rapport de Mission à l’Intérieur du Mali 1968.*Rapport de Mission Bankass 25 Septembre 1968*. “En effet, il arrive souvent que des familles entières partent souvent en transhumance avant de se libérer de leurs obligations fiscales et de leur quota de commercialisation. Des mesures ont été prises pour éviter le renouvellement d'une telle situation.”

of policies “decided at the summit with regards to theory,”¹³⁹ is indicative of the broader phenomenon of impractical policies being dictated by the central government and then modified by officials charged with implementing them, often because following such policies to the letter would cause serious harm (as the letter above suggests).¹⁴⁰ Yet such discrepancies between policy makers in Bamako – often radical socialist elements, particularly in the latter years of Keita’s rule – and policy implementers in rural areas did not lead the regime to compromise, but to engage in a heightened battle against its opponents. “The egotism of certain men, violently opposed to the application of such a policy [“the construction of socialism”], places the activist in a permanent atmosphere of struggle... The militant owes it to himself to always recognize them, to manage to unmask them by obliging them to create contradictions between their declarations and their real engagement in the popular cause,” wrote Modibo Keita in 1967.¹⁴¹ This intransigence, which reached its apotheosis during this Active Revolution period, surely contributed to Keita having “alienated much of the population” by 1968.¹⁴²

Whereas the late colonial era had facilitated free movement between French colonies, the Keita regime not only endeavoured to oblige peasants to remain inside

¹³⁹ ANM.1.3.Congrès extraordinaire de 1960.*Circulaire no 4: les tâches nouvelles (Idrissa Diarra, 29 Janvier 1961)*. “...décidées au sommet pour ce qui concerne la théorie...”

¹⁴⁰ Hopkins, “Kita (Mali) in the Time of Modibo Keita: Globalization and Local Continuity,” *Mande Studies* 5 (2003): 101-111.

¹⁴¹ ANM.141.559.CNDR Circulaires.*Circulaire no 9/CNDR du 30 Septembre 1967*. “L'égoïsme de certains hommes, violemment opposés à l'application d'une telle politique [la construction du socialisme], place donc le militant dans une atmosphère permanente de lutte... Le militant se doit toutefois de les reconnaître, d'arriver à les démasquer en les obligeant à créer de la contradiction entre leurs déclarations et leur engagement réel à la cause populaire.”

¹⁴² Frederick Cooper, *Africa in the World: Capitalism, Empire, Nation-State* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 86.

Mali but to keep them in rural areas and out of cities. This “Call to the Nation” from 1961 suggests as much:

All measures must be taken in order that by the start of the month of April the peasants who abandoned their lands for the illusory and artificial joys of the city can return to their milieu. In the regional capitals, a strict inspection will be undertaken in order that all citizens who do not have fixed employment can return to the land.¹⁴³

Urban police were called upon periodically to round up newcomers to the cities and transport them back to their rural places of origin.¹⁴⁴ Consequently, the Keita years saw peasants’ ability to choose their country and community of residence diminished.

Although the USRDA’s migration restrictions were not age-specific, youth were the main focus of these policies as regime officials noted they were the demographic likely to seek urban opportunities. The USRDA had a good sense of the factors motivating rural youth to move to the city. The Political Secretary, Idrissa Diarra, noted in a 1963 government circular “the problem of youths who go to the cities to work in order to procure clothes, to buy bicycles, others to be able to pay off their family’s taxes or the dowry of their marriage.”¹⁴⁵ And while he showed understanding of those who returned to their villages after a short stay in the city, he harshly critiqued the “few who, hoping

¹⁴³ ANM.125.467. Correspondances BPN 1957-1967. *1961 Appel à la Nation*.

“Toutes les mesures doivent être prises afin que dès le mois d'AVRIL, les paysans qui ont abandonnés leurs terres pour les joies illusoirs et factices de la ville puissent réintégrer leur milieu. Dans les Chefs-lieux de région, un contrôle sévère sera effectué afin que tous les citoyens qui n'ont pas d'emploi fixe puissent retourner à la terre.”

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. Also, in the archives of the Segou *Gouvernorat* in 2011 the author briefly evaluated similar documents ordering police to round up peasants and ship them to their natal villages. While the document originated with the USRDA regime and dated to the 1960s, further details could not be noted as upon ascertaining the nature of the document, the archivist deemed it classified and removed it from the reading room.

¹⁴⁵ ANM.142.560. Circulaires 1947-1968. *Circulaire 13, Aux Secrétaires Généraux de l'USRDA, 30 avril 1963*.

to get rich, refuse to leave the city to go help their parents.”¹⁴⁶ These youths, he claimed, suffered from an “obsession with getting rich at any cost,” an affliction that apparently “pushes them to commit acts that should be cracked down upon.”¹⁴⁷ This narrative of moral decay was concocted to justify the policy of removing young Malians of rural origin from the city — excluding, of course, those employed by the state or otherwise engaged in activities deemed acceptable by the regime. During the Active Revolution period, youth who did not return to the countryside after visiting the city during agricultural downtime continued to be portrayed in a negative light, although the language shifted from descriptions of unruly selfishness to those of shockingly unhealthy character defects: a 1967 report, for example, characterizes such city-bound youth as selfish, weak, and having “insalubrious penchants” along with a tendency for “scandalous conduct.”¹⁴⁸

The USRDA’s preoccupation with rural youths infiltrating the cities was not limited to a desire to see them produce grain the state could expropriate. Party documents on this subject also betray a profound anxiety in the face of youth fashioning identities and modes of conduct that ran contrary to state narratives of Malian culture

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. “Il y a quelques semaines, le Bureau Politique National a eu à étudier le problème des Jeunes qui se rendent dans les villes, pour travailler en vue de se procurer des vêtements, acheter des bicyclettes, les autres pour pouvoir s'acquitter des impôts de leurs familles ou de la dot de leur mariage. Un grand nombre de ces Jeunes retournent dans leurs familles à l'approche de l'hivernage mais quelques uns se refusent à abandonner la ville pour aller aider leurs parents, espérant faire fortune. Cette hantise de faire fortune à tout prix les pousse à commettre des actes répressibles.”

¹⁴⁸ ANM.110.420.Rapport de synthèse sur le problème de l'amoralité et de la licence chez la jeunesse. *Rapport de synthèse sur le problème de l'amoralité et de la licence chez la jeunesse, June 1967*. “Quant aux distractions, elles sont l'occasion pour la jeunesse de donner libre cours à ses penchants malsains”; “Les petits clubs de thé, de tiep se forment multipliant ainsi les occasions de conduite scandaleuse.”

and what it called “socialist morality.” This idea of socialist morality was proposed by the USRDA as a means of defining allowable behaviour¹⁴⁹ and promoting the “blooming and flourishing” of its ideals and identity. That the morality envisioned by the USRDA was specifically socialist may have been because the socialist project was linked to sacrificing for the sake of future communal gains and toeing the party line in order to stimulate progress. For example, Modibo Keita spoke unequivocally of the need to sacrifice for the sake of future gains in 1966 at a conference on “the socialist edification of Mali” – where he equally declared, in a manner characteristic of the regime’s hybrid and high modern ideals, that “socialism is something national and scientific.”¹⁵⁰ A schoolteacher from Timbuktu noted the USRDA’s dubious reliance on a narrative of sacrifice for benefits to come, remarking in 1967 that “President Keita declared ‘We are a sacrificed generation.’” He went on to critique this view – and as a result to face the charge of insanity – declaring that:

This notion does not have my approval, because if the counter-revolution triumphed, what would be the result of our sacrifice and our deprivation? We have many problems to resolve; instead of thinking of future generations let’s resolve our present difficulties... The glory and prestige of a president are measured exclusively by the happiness of his people.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ On USRDA efforts to define allowable behaviour and national membership, see Lecocq, *Disputed Desert*.

¹⁵⁰ CADN.Bamako.Amb.28.Dépêches politiques 1966. *Conférence du Président Modibo Keita sur l’Édification Socialiste au Mali*. (11 June 1966). “[Question:] Les dirigeants demandent, au nom de l’option socialiste, de se sacrifier. Est-il juste de sacrifier la génération existante au profit des générations qui ne sont pas encore nées? [Response from President Keita:] La question ne se pose pas... Toute génération travaille pour les générations suivantes.” Aussi: “President Keita: “D’ailleurs le socialisme est quelque chose de national et de scientifique; même avec un environnement non socialiste, le socialisme malien doit triompher si nos populations y croient.””

¹⁵¹ ANM.109.416.Rapport et Compte-Rendu de Mission à l’Intérieur du Mali.1967 10 *II Rapport de synthèse de la délégation de la 6ème région*. ““Nous sommes une génération sacrifiée” a déclaré le Président Modibo, cette notion ne retient pas mon approbation car, si la contre-révolution triomphait quel serait le résultat de notre

Unfortunately, this teacher's observations were more prescient than perhaps even he had hoped. When the "counter-revolution" won and the USRDA was removed from power in 1968, little would remain to justify the sacrifices endured by Mali's peasantry in the 1960s. Party officials at the time, however, silenced such critiques and continued to promote the nation's soon-to-arise glorious future. They dismissed him as a "madman" (un aliéné mental)¹⁵² and moved on. Despite such legitimate concerns, President Keita reaffirmed this need for sacrifice in 1968: "Since 1960, the party has called upon civil servants, who have consented to sacrifice 1/3 of their salary," he wrote. "The rural populations who have been the greatest beneficiaries of our policies of independence must furnish a substantial and decisive fiscal effort," in their turn, by paying more taxes. Peasants' consent to such sacrifices, he contended, would be "an act of patriotism and... an act of faith in party, a decisive aid in the struggle for the triumph of socialism."¹⁵³

In any case, the issue of youth "misbehaviour" provoked such anxiety that in 1967 the regime produced a lengthy document analyzing the "root causes of the dissolution of morals" among them. This document, the *Summary Report on the Problem of*

sacrifice et de notre privation. Nous avons beaucoup de problèmes à résoudre; au lieu de penser aux générations futures résolvons nos difficultés présentes et Yéhia de conclure "La gloire et le prestige d'un président se mesurent exclusivement au bonheur de son peuple" (applaudissement nourris). Mais nous nous sommes laissés dire par certains camarades du CLDR après l'assemblée générale que le camarade Yéhia est un aliéné mental."

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ ANM.141.559.CNDR Circulaires. *Circulaire no 48/CNDR du 12 Juillet 1968.*

"Depuis 1960, le Parti a fait appel aux salariés, qui ont consenti à sacrifier 1/3 de leur salaire... Les populations rurales qui ont été les plus grands bénéficiaires de notre politique d'indépendance, doivent fournir un effort fiscal conséquent, décisif. Cet effet, aura valeur avant tout d'acte de reconnaissance envers le Parti. Il sera aussi un acte de patriotisme... Il sera un acte de foi dans le Parti, un soutien décisif à la lutte pour le triomphe du socialisme."

Immorality and Licentiousness among the Youth, betrayed a preoccupation with “disorder in sexual relations,” but its main interest was in a youth culture generally indifferent to socialism and its ethos of sacrifice. The party wished to propagate socialist ideals among the youth in order to stem the tide of mounting discontent with the regime’s failure to produce solid economic results,¹⁵⁴ and as such it wished young Malians to respond to the party’s cultural imperatives. As the report asserts:

The blooming and flourishing of a socialist morality are integral parts of our nation-building [project]. The imperative is to build a new society with its own specific, unique morality.¹⁵⁵

This morality was intended as an instrument for dealing with problem youth, some of whom were of rural origin and had come to the city to try their fortune and avoid conscription into institutions like the *civiques*,¹⁵⁶ and some of whom were urban and educated yet, like many of their rural counterparts, remained “wholly silent on political activities,” being less interested in the lessons of “received morality” than in pursuing members of the opposite sex.¹⁵⁷ Disinterest in official politics constituted a troubling form of behaviour for USRDA leaders – a further indication of the regime’s anxiety

¹⁵⁴ CADN.Bamako.Amb.28.Dépêches politiques 1966. *Situation intérieure au Mali dans la perspective des relations franco-maliennes*, 30 Juillet 1966.

¹⁵⁵ ANM.110.420.Rapport de synthèse sur le problème de l’amoralité et de la licence chez la jeunesse.*Rapport de synthèse sur le problème de l’amoralité et de la licence chez la jeunesse*, June 1967. “Le redressement des mœurs, l’éclosion et l’épanouissement d’une morale socialiste sont parties intégrantes de notre construction nationale. L’impératif est de bâtir la société nouvelle avec la morale qui lui est propre, spécifique.”

¹⁵⁶ Interview with Oumar Ongoïba, Bamako, 4 February 2012.

¹⁵⁷ ANM.110.420.Rapport de synthèse sur le problème de l’amoralité et de la licence chez la jeunesse.*Rapport de synthèse sur le problème de l’amoralité et de la licence chez la jeunesse*, June 1967. “D’une psychologie complexe, il soulève des problèmes et ne les analyse pas, ou le fait sèchement lorsqu’il s’agit de flatter son extravagance, signe que le sujet mesure rarement les conséquences de ses actes. Il est sans moral et n’est pas marqué par la morale enseignée. Son journal observe le silence complet sur les activités politiques du comité scolaire. Ce genre de choses ne semble pas l’intéresser.”

about opposition and of its exaggerated belief in its capacity to transform every last citizen into an active participant in party politics. In any case, such narratives of moral decay were useful in that they tended to depoliticize what was in fact an awkward political decision. By casting the issue of exiling rural youth from cities as a case of moral deviance, the USRDA essentially asserted it was acting in the interest of society — that it was doing the only reasonable thing by removing from urban areas youths who were a danger to society and who were neglectful of their families. For the USRDA, the city was a place of danger and illusion — for peasants, not for politicians — and as such setting peasants back on the right path was a matter of paternal guidance and national interest.

The party's policy of stopping migration had important implications. Why would a postcolonial regime wish to reverse what was arguably one of colonialism's collateral benefits, the increased freedom of movement of people across the region? After all, such movement had brought important economic and cultural benefits. It had allowed, for example, for more Soudanese Muslims to undertake the hajj and visit the Middle East,¹⁵⁸ developing Islamic networks in a colony subject to rapid Islamization under French rule.¹⁵⁹ It had permitted Soudanese peasants to partake in the coastal cash economies, with large numbers of labourers from the densely populated Niger Valley migrating seasonally to the Senegalese peanut basin and returning with money that was otherwise difficult to obtain.¹⁶⁰ Why, then, would a progress-oriented regime put a stop

¹⁵⁸ Lansiné Kaba, *The Wahhabiyya: Islamic Reform and Politics in French West Africa* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 73.

¹⁵⁹ Brian James Peterson, *Islamization from Below: The Making of Muslim Communities in Rural French Sudan, 1880-1960* (Yale University Press, 2011), 11.

¹⁶⁰ Gary-Toukara, "Quand les migrants demandent la route, Modibo Keita retorque:

to a process with such economic and cultural benefits? The answer, it seems, is that migration represented both an unacceptable loss of labour power¹⁶¹ and perhaps also a troubling vote of non-confidence for the regime.¹⁶² Indeed, it appears that “President Keita was opposed on principle to all forms of labour migration. He planned to keep the available labour force in Mali.”¹⁶³ The economic aspect of this policy was made clear in a 1968 CNDR report that proclaimed “exodus is a plague that has seriously weakened the rural economy.”¹⁶⁴ To prevent such losses, “they picked people up, people who were walking around Bamako, thus all those whom you would encounter working as day labourers, well they collected them all, put them in trucks, and then went and dumped them in the bush.”¹⁶⁵

Efforts to curb migration, however, were unrealistic and ineffective. Even when the French abolished the *laissez-passer* in 1946 they were mostly acknowledging the established dispensation; indeed, “in the Soudan and elsewhere, administrators ratified a *de facto* situation, because most of their subjects already circulated without a *laissez-passer*.”¹⁶⁶ Furthermore, scholars like Jean-François Bayart have noted that colonial efforts to curb migration in Africa were a total failure, and that postcolonial efforts to do

‘Retournez à la terre!’” 51.

¹⁶¹ ANM.137.543.Rapport Coopératives de Consommation 1963-67.(1967 or 1968).

¹⁶² ANM.54.143.Commission Sociale et Culturelle du CNDR 1968.1968 06 23 *Rapport de mission dans la zone de Bourem*.

¹⁶³ Daouda Gary-Toukara, “Encadrement et Contrôle Des Migrants Par Le Régime Militaire Au Mali (1968-1991),” *Loin Des Yeux, Près Du Coeur: Les États et Leurs Expatriés*, eds. Dufoix, Stéphanie, Carine Guerassimoff, and Anne de Tinguy (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2010), 147–62.

¹⁶⁴ ANM.104.400.Rapport sur l’organisation socialiste du monde rurale, 1968. “L’exode est un fléau qui a sérieusement affaibli l’économie rurale.”

¹⁶⁵ Interview with Boubacar Séga Diallo, Bamako, 20 March 2012.

¹⁶⁶ Gary-Toukara, “La dispersion des Soudanais/Maliens à la fin de l’ère coloniale.”

the same have equally foundered.¹⁶⁷ Along these lines, it was noted by the French Ambassador in 1968 that, despite the restrictions on migrating, “in the region of Sikasso, close to 60,000 people have, according to certain affirmations, emigrated to the Ivory Coast.”¹⁶⁸ This was merely one example from one region, and overall he remarked that “Maliens from the interior demonstrate their weariness above all through inertia or flight....”¹⁶⁹ This account of large-scale emigration in 1968 is consistent with Mali’s worsening economic situation. The rise of the Popular Militia during this latter period of USRDA rule was partially connected with the regime’s increasing efforts to prevent such outmigration, with militia groups in border areas documenting the arrest of individuals “who wished to fraudulently visit Côte d’Ivoire” and other neighbouring states.¹⁷⁰

While the USRDA portrayed itself as a champion of the peasantry, it is difficult to

¹⁶⁷ Jean-François Bayart, Béatrice Hibou, and Boris Samuel, “L’Afrique « cent ans après les indépendances » : vers quel gouvernement politique?,” *Politique africaine* 119, no. 3 (2010): 136. “Les colonisateurs, puis leurs successeurs nationalistes, ont bien tenté de « fixer » les populations, ou d’organiser de façon coercitive leurs migrations de travail, mais en vain. Le durcissement des politiques migratoires en Afrique australe, en Afrique subsaharienne et en Afrique du Nord, depuis les années 1980, à l’initiative des autorités politiques nationales ou, plus récemment, sous la pression des pays européens, n’a nullement endigué ces flux dont on ne soulignera jamais suffisamment qu’ils sont pluriséculaires et irréductibles à la prétendue intensification des mobilités transnationales du fait de la globalisation.”

¹⁶⁸ CADN.Bamako.Amb.21.Dépêches politiques 1962.A/S: *Situation au Mali (Dépêche hebdomadaire no 18 du 30 Avril au 6 Mai 1962)*, p. 7. “Bien encadrés, les Maliens de l’intérieur semblent manifester leur lassitude surtout par l’inertie ou la fuite... Il est également significatif que, dans la région de Sikasso, près de 60.000 personnes ont, selon certaines affirmations, émigré en Côte d’Ivoire.”

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁷⁰ ANM.146.568.Dossier de la Milice Populaire 1964-68.*Secrétariat permanent de la milice populaire, Bamako, 2 Octobre 1968.* “J’ai l’honneur de vous envoyer la liste, accompagné des intéressés même, de 35 personnes qui voulaient se rendre frauduleusement en République de Côte d’Ivoire et arrêtées par la Jeunesse de Ouélessebouyou dans la nuit du 1-10-68...”

reconcile such restrictive policies with peasant interests — at least in the short term. Although the regime believed such measures would ultimately contribute to the nation-building process, peasants frequently complained that “independence had brought them no benefits because they were always asked to work and produce more while their products fetched lower and lower prices and while the little they managed to obtain served to a pay various levies and taxes.”¹⁷¹ This comment about reduced prices gets at the heart of USRDA peasant policies, and explains one of the main reasons the party attempted to restrict peasants’ migratory tendencies. Forbidding peasants from leaving the land was part of a broader strategy to plan the economy and society; indeed, the Five-Year Plan depended heavily upon increases in agricultural production for its success. As Amin notes in his assessment of the plan’s feasibility, the party’s “capacity to efficiently mobilize the rural masses will be the supreme criterion in this judgement.”¹⁷² To this end, restricting peasants’ movement was at least partially aimed at removing all economic alternatives to selling grain at a steep discount to the state monopoly, OPAM.¹⁷³ Indeed, to prevent peasants from capitalizing on economic alternatives, strict laws were enacted not only on the movement of people but also on their personal grain supplies. “The circulation of grain can only be undertaken with the

¹⁷¹ ANM.11.25.Elections Législatives 1964.1964 04 28 *Commandant de Cercle de Bamako*. “Les déclarations faites par le Chef de village de Djibroula me paraissent graves. En effet le Chef d'Arrondissement de Négala dans son compte rendu, écrit: "D'autre part, c'est le Chef de Village de Djibroula qui prétend qu'à part la suppression du travail forcé, l'Indépendance ne leur a apporté aucun profit parce qu'on leur demandait toujours de travailler et de produire davantage alors que leur produits étaient payés de moins en moins cher et que le peu qu'ils arrivaient à obtenir servait à payer les impôts et les taxes diverses". — Le Commandant de Cercle Kalifa TRAORE.”

¹⁷² Amin, *Trois Expériences Africaine de Développement*, 32.

¹⁷³ Prices offered to peasants for their grain were lowered after independence (CADN.Bamako.Amb.20.Dépêches politiques 1961.*Synthèse du mois de mars 1961.*)

express authorization of OPAM both inside and outside of Mali,” wrote Modibo Keita in 1967. These rules were so stringent that one needed to obtain a “notice of movement” to take a quantity of one’s own grain to a special event like a marriage or funeral; decisions to authorize such uses of one’s own grain “were freely left up to the judgement of administrative authorities in residence,” thus giving state officials a further point of leverage over the population.¹⁷⁴ The USRDA pursued a similar strategy of coercing peasants into turning over their grain to the state monopoly with regard to commerce, establishing a monopoly on the sale of staple goods and then threatening to cut off the supply if peasants withheld crops or sold them elsewhere:

The peasant must understand that if he does not sell his peanuts and his cotton to our institutions we will not be able to continue providing him with salt, sugar, cloth — essentially with any staple goods.¹⁷⁵

Restrictions on movement fit within this broader pattern of stripping away peasants’ choices in order to ensure they had little option but to comply with state directives concerning how they lived and worked.

The USRDA’s claims to be building a nation for the benefit of all often failed to convince a peasantry that in many cases was ready to flout migration restrictions in order to evade the harsh conditions of life under Keita’s rule. Admitting that efforts to convince peasants to sell their grain to the state were being seriously undermined by

¹⁷⁴ ANM.141.559.CNDR Circulaires.*Circulaire no 31/PG-RM du 13 Décembre 1967*. “La circulation des céréales ne peut s’effectuer que sur autorisation expresse de l’O.P.A.M. tant à l’intérieur qu’à l’extérieur du Mali...des autorisations de transfert de céréales sollicitées à l’occasion de certaines cérémonies particulières telle que - mariage – décès – sont laissées à la libre appréciation des autorités administratives du lieu en résidence.”

¹⁷⁵ ANM.141.559.CNDR Circulaires.*Circulaire no 33/PG/RM du 27 Décembre 1967*. “Il faut que le paysan comprenne que s’il ne vend pas à nos organismes ses arachides, son coton, nous ne serons pas en mesure de continuer à l’approvisionner en sel, en sucre, en tissus, somme toute en produits de première nécessité.”

those who observed that USRDA grain requisitioning policies bore a troubling similarity to those of the colonial era,¹⁷⁶ party officials asserted in a government circular that “to give the peasant the feeling of reliving the sad memories of the periods of obligatory requisitioning, even for a single second... comes down to doing a disservice to the sacred cause of the party, of the people.”¹⁷⁷ As such, it asked cadres to use the “infinity of arguments at [their] disposal to convince the peasants of the good sense in selling their products to public organizations.” In conclusion, it noted that “[i]t is a question of national solidarity to which the peasant is naturally vulnerable.”¹⁷⁸ And yet not all peasants seem to have been so vulnerable. Many, when faced with orders to remain on the land producing grain for the state lest they face sanctions, decided to take their chances. In certain cases, it appears that “to escape the vexations of a handful of despots... the people preferred to abandon the land.”¹⁷⁹

Thus while the USRDA sought to subject the peasantry to tight controls on where they could live and labour, it had grossly overestimated its ability both to motivate

¹⁷⁶ Boubacar Fall, *Le Travail Foré En Afrique Occidentale* (Paris: Karthala, 1993); Richard Roberts, “The Emergence of a Grain Market in Bamako, 1883-1908,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 14, no. 1 (1980): 37–54.

¹⁷⁷ ANM.142.560.Circulaires 1947-1968.1965 02 12 *Circulaire* 5. “...les activités de sape que connaît la campagne actuelle de commercialisation la rendent plus que jamais impérative, à l'exclusion de toute autre attitude qui puisse, la propagande adverse aidant, donner un seul instant au paysan le sentiment de revivre les périodes des réquisitions obligatoires de triste mémoire. Favoriser consciemment ou non une telle comparaison, revient à desservir la cause sacrée du Parti, du peuple. Ce serait en fait porter de l'eau au moulin des adversaires du Parti, du peuple malien et de son bonheur.”

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. “Nous disposons d'innombrables arguments pour convaincre le paysan des raisons de vendre ses produits aux organismes publics. C'est affaire de solidarité nationale à laquelle le paysan est naturellement sensible et qui ne peut manquer d'avoir son appui quand il en est correctement instruit.”

¹⁷⁹ ANM.54.143.Commission Sociale et Culturelle du CNDR 1968.1968 06 23 *Rapport de mission dans la zone de Bourem*. “Et souvent pour se soustraire à la brimade d'une poignée de despotes, dans l'incertitude et l'impuissance les gens ont préféré abandonner le terrain. Ainsi l'exode a touché même les femmes et les enfants...”

peasants to comply through appeals to nationalist and socialist sentiment and to stop citizens from pulling up stakes when conditions grew too difficult. The regime's high modern sensibility led it astray in this regard, as it did with so many aspects of the party's broad efforts to develop a total plan for the economic and social life of the country. Ironically, although even President Keita admitted in 1966 that "the peasant remains impervious to theory and to abstract ideas, and that what he needs are not words but acts"¹⁸⁰ – a point of view that had long been expressed in various party documents¹⁸¹ – the USRDA regime offered little more than words about the need for sacrifice in the name of nation-building and socialist edification. Indeed, as time went on the regime increasingly disregarded this observation about peasant character, asserting during the Active Revolution in particular that peasants simply lacked sufficient ideological education. The failure of peasants to embrace the socialist ideal of cooperative work, for example, was chalked up by the CNDR in 1967 to a "deficiency inevitably due to the lack of political education."¹⁸² Yet this failure was no so much due to a lack of education as to an understanding that the regime's acts were coercive, economically deleterious, and troublingly similar to those of the colonial regime; in response, peasants not only often flouted the USRDA's migration laws, but also refused to sell the state the grain

¹⁸⁰ CADN.Bamako.Amb.28.Dépêches politiques 1966.*Conférence du Président Modibo Keita sur l'Édification Socialiste au Mali*. (11 June 1966). "Vous [Modibo Keita] avez dit que le paysan est encore inaccessible à la théorie et aux idées abstraites, et que ce qu'il lui faut ce ne sont pas des paroles mais des actes. Que font les dirigeants pour leur donner l'exemple?"

¹⁸¹ ANM.3.5.6e Congrès de l'USRDA 1962.*Rapport d'activités et d'orientation présenté au 6ème congrès de l'USRDA*. "...le bon sens traditionnel des cultivateurs ne s'attachera à la transformation des structures rurales, que dans la mesure où toutes modifications présentera un intérêt matériel direct et perceptible,"

¹⁸² ANM.22.54.Séminaire nationale sur la coopération en milieu rurale, 1967. "Cette carence, dûe inévitablement au manque d'éducation politiques..."

such policies were designed to obtain.¹⁸³

Collectivization

The Keita regime established its collectivization policy in 1961. In a “Call to the Nation” on 22 March, President Keita announced the goal of expanding operations within five years to the point where every village had one hectare of collective fields for each family in the community, such that “a village of 200 families will possess a collective field of 200 hectares.”¹⁸⁴ This policy had precedents in the late colonial era and the era of USRDA autonomy between 1957-1960, yet it also had unique elements setting it apart from rural policies the party and the colonial authorities had previously espoused. The manner in which USRDA policymakers envisioned collectivization — particularly how it could successfully be implemented — also varied over time, with increasingly strident efforts to educate the peasantry on matters of socialist ideology being advanced in the latter years of USRDA rule, despite collectivization having by that time proved to be a failure. That the regime’s approach to implementing collectivization changed over time is indicative of the radical faction’s preponderant influence on the party’s policy agenda in the 1960s as well as of its evolving views,

¹⁸³ CADN.Bamako.Amb.28.Dépêches politiques 1966.*Situation intérieur au Mali dans la perspective des relations franco-maliennes, 30 Juillet 1966.* “Tout a été dit, d’autre part, sur la situation économique du Mali au milieu de l’année 1966: diminution brutale de la production agricole, opposition des paysans à la commercialisation des produits, aggravation des déficits de la balance commerciale, de la balance des paiements et des Sociétés d’État, raréfaction des biens de consommation, inflation croissante, démarches pour obtenir des pays étrangers des moratoire sur les dettes et un accroissement d’aide, etc...”

¹⁸⁴ ANM.142.560.Circulaires 1947-1968.*Circulaire 22, 28 Septembre 1964 (signé Idrissa Diarra, citant le Président Keita).*

which changed over time as it drew on the revolutionary ideas of other socialist states.¹⁸⁵ Meanwhile, the regime's persistent belief that it had the power to transform the peasants' mentality through ideological education, such that they would come to endorse collectivization despite having resisted participating in it throughout most of the decade, constitutes an example of the radical faction's high modern confidence in its capacity "to bring about huge, utopian changes in people's work habits, living patterns, moral conduct, and worldview"¹⁸⁶ in spite of evidence pointing to the contrary. This confidence was misplaced.

The concept of rural cooperation had been promoted under French rule in the form of Mutual Rural Production Societies (SMPRs) established in 1953 – institutions that would be encouraged by the USRDA in the late 1950s. Cooperation was meant to establish points of connection between individual farmers. Jean-Marie Koné described the SMPRs' goals in a 1955 report on the peasantry:

Their essential goal is to group together all the peasants, to cause to be born in them the spirit of solidarity and cooperation in order for them to better protect themselves when selling their products. They propose, through the modernization of farming methods, to augment yields and remuneration for the hard labour in the earth, with a view to the improvement of their living conditions.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ For example, the Director of Rural Cooperation, Bassily Dembélé (a relatively minor figure in the regime), was sent for six months to study agricultural collectivization in Czechoslovakia in 1962, and many other politicians, administrators, and students were sent to the Eastern Bloc during the 1960s to learn directly from the example of communist states; not all of these sojourners were radical socialists themselves (interview with Abdoulaye Amadou Sy, Bamako, 11 February 2012).

¹⁸⁶ Scott, *Seeing Like A State*, 4.

¹⁸⁷ ANM.1.1.4e Congrès de l'USRDA, 1955. *Rapport sur le paysannat, présenté par Jean Marie Koné, Conseiller Territorial*. "En 1953 la Rue Oudinot a bien voulu prendre un décret et le Gouvernement Général d'A.O.F. un arrêté pour l'engagement des groupements paysans dans la voie de la coopérative agricole avec comme point de départ, les S.M.P.R. (Société Mutuelle de Production rurale)... leur but essentiel est de regrouper tous les paysans, de faire naître en eux les esprits de solidarité et de coopération afin qu'ils se défendent mieux à la vente de leurs produits. Elles se

Thus in this era the USRDA characterized cooperation as a means of allowing peasants to earn a better income by, for example, permitting them to sell their grain as a group in order to benefit from an economy of scale, and thus to raise their standard of living.

Similar aspirations of improving the peasants' living conditions and modernizing their working conditions were expressed in 1958. "The first objective to attain is the elevation of the rural masses' standard of living," stated Modibo Keita at the USRDA's Fifth Party Congress.¹⁸⁸ He continued:

This necessity has not escaped African leaders, as all the Governing Councils have inscribed at the top of their platform the modernization of agriculture in order to allow peasants to produce more while putting in less effort, a more rational conditioning of products aimed at augmenting their marketable qualities, the extension of basic education to raise the peasant's consciousness and to create within him the desire for better living, essentially the provision of the means complementary to the efforts of rural personnel for the amelioration of his clothing, food, lodging, and the organization of his leisure. "¹⁸⁹

The aims of the USRDA's peasant policies in the late 1950s, then, were aligned with its nationalist vision: they sought to modernize agricultural methods, to improve the material conditions of life, and to create a taste for progress within the population.

proposent, de par la modernisation des méthodes culturales, d'augmenter leur rendement, la rémunération du dur labeur de la terre en vue de l'amélioration de leur condition de vie."

¹⁸⁸ ANM.2.4.5e Congrès de l'USRDA. *Ve Congrès de l'Union Soudanaise, 13-17 août 1958, et 2e Conférence territoriale de l'Union Soudanaise, 17-19 octobre 1958*. "Le premier objectif à atteindre est donc l'élevation du niveau de vie de la masse rurale."

¹⁸⁹ Ibid. "Cette nécessité n'a pas échappé aux dirigeants africains car tous les Conseils de Gouvernement ont inscrit en tête de leur programme la modernisation de l'Agriculture pour permettre aux paysans de produire davantage en fournissant moins d'effort un conditionnement plus rationnel des produits afin d'accroître leurs qualités commerciales, la suppression de tous les intermédiaires par une organisation coopérative des producteurs, l'extension de l'éducation de base pour susciter une prise de conscience du paysans, et créer chez lui ce désir de mieux-être, enfin la fourniture des moyens complémentaires de l'effort personnel du rural dans l'amélioration de son habillement, de sa nourriture, de son logement et l'organisation de ses loisirs."

Although the idea of modernizing agricultural techniques in order to boost the economy and living standards featured in USRDA thought from the 1950s onward – and formed part of its early (supraterritorial) nationalist plans for development – the notion of collective or communal work did not. Indeed, the only references to communal labour in 1950s USRDA literature bear negative connotations. For example, Jean-Marie Koné warned his colleagues in 1955 that:

If we want our peasants, who have barely recovered from the burden of the war's common fields (they have barely finished paying debts incurred during the war), to benefit from the current political reforms and to sing their hallelujahs, it is high time that we think of them, that we turn toward them, that we help even them to climb the grand mast of progress.¹⁹⁰

Not only do party documents from the 1950s raise concerns about peasants' receptivity to communal work programs, but they also warn against another mode of governance that would come to characterize the USRDA's collectivization program in the 1960s: coercion. Indeed, in the 1950s the regime was wary of the state's heavy hand, and it demonstrated a clear understanding of coercion's pitfalls both in terms of social justice and economic results. Koné noted, for example, that "forced sacrifices of solidarity" had led to the "total failure" of the colonial regime's early efforts at peasant organization.¹⁹¹ This sentiment would be reiterated in *L'Essor* in June 1960, three months prior to independence and the announcement of the "socialist option":

¹⁹⁰ ANM.1.1.4e Congrès de l'USRDA, 1955. *Rapport sur le paysannat, présenté par Jean Marie Koné, Conseiller Territorial*. "Si l'on veut que nos paysans à peine relevés des fatigues des champs communs de guerre (ils finissent à peine de payer les dettes contractées pendant la guerre) bénéficient des réformes politiques actuelles et chantent leur alléluia, il est grand temps de penser à eux, de se tourner vers eux, de les aider eux aussi à grimper le grand mât du progrès."

¹⁹¹ Ibid. "A côté des S.P. dont l'échec total n'est plus à démontrer car leurs adhérents n'y ont pas tiré des bénéfices correspondants aux sommes versées, aux sacrifices de solidarité forcée, les S.M.P.R. pourraient ouvrir une ère nouvelle de révolution paysanne".

The colonial regime essentially relied on constraint, exercising its power by coercion... Our own administration must necessarily rely upon absolutely different principles.¹⁹²

That USRDA moderates would warn against collective and coercive work as early as 1955 – and that it would be reaffirmed in the USRDA’s newspaper just months prior to independence – underscores the magnitude of the political shift that occurred at independence, when the agenda of the party’s radical socialists first came to prominence. The peasant policies of the early postcolonial era — collectivization included — would be characterized by those very qualities. Thus examining collectivization offers a means of understanding how the USRDA’s radical socialists — figures like Seydou Badian Kouyaté, who presided over the development of Mali’s Five Year Plan, the success of which depended on the rapid modernization of rural agriculture¹⁹³ — led the party down a contentious path, the pitfalls of which had already been well established by leading party members years prior.

Klaus Ernst notes that “in line with the slogan ‘for a socialist revolution’, socialist collectivisation was, in fact, put on the agenda,” in Mali in the 1960s.¹⁹⁴ He equally notes, however, that “the most elementary objective conditions let alone the subjective prerequisites did not exist even for agricultural cooperatives,” never mind a full program

¹⁹² *L'Essor* no. 3401, 4 Juin 1960, "L'Organisation administrative de la République Soudanaise." "Le régime coloniale s'appuyait essentiellement sur la contrainte, exerçait son pouvoir par la coercition... Notre administration à nous, doit nécessairement s'appuyer sur des principes absolument différents."

¹⁹³ Amin, *Trois Expériences Africaine de Développement*, 106, 119. "En effet, la majeure partie de l'accroissement attendu de la production provient de l'amélioration de l'agriculture traditionnelle"; "Mais en gros les objectifs [du Plan]... exigeait seulement un puissant mouvement de masse dans les campagnes, une volonté de mobilisation des paysans en vue de la modernisations de leurs techniques, une priorité absolue accordée aux actions productives."

¹⁹⁴ Klaus Ernst, *Tradition and Progress in the African Village* (New York: Saint Martin's Press, 1976), 32-39.

of collectivization.¹⁹⁵ Despite the objective limitations, after independence the USRDA established a collectivization program aimed at gradually increasing the amount of land under communal, state-managed cultivation in Mali's villages. In the early 1960s the ultimate aim of these policies – i.e. what would happen once the five-year goal of establish collective fields of a size corresponding to one hectare per family had been achieved – remained vague. This ambiguity may have been due to the fact that the membership in the BPN in early 1961, at the time this policy was developed, “reflected rather well the balance of forces present in the party” – that is, the forces of moderation and of socialist radicalism.¹⁹⁶ The radical faction did not have sufficient (total) control over the policy agenda in these early years of independence; this is likely why the USRDA did not openly promote an end goal of comprehensive agricultural collectivization. This was, in any case, a moot point, as the collective fields never came close to achieving even the one-hectare per family aim set out in 1961. Yet during the Active Revolution period, the goal of achieving total collectivization was openly and repeatedly set forth by the radical socialist cohort then in control of the regime. A 1967 “National seminar on cooperation in the rural milieu ” affirmed that “personal property is inversely proportional to the degree of socialization of the economy, which is to say that it tends toward a minimum as [the proportion of state and cooperative] property increases.”¹⁹⁷ Although collectivization was clearly inspired by socialist ideals and

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ CADN.Bamako.Amb.9.Incidents de Ségou 1959 et 1960 et Politique Au Soudan. *Télégramme hebdomadaire no 54, semaine du 14 au 20 décembre 1960*. “...il semble probable que devant ces tiraillements, Modibo Keita se résoudra à reconduire plus ou moins le Gouvernement actuel dont la composition traduit d’ailleurs assez bien l’équilibre des forces en présence.”

¹⁹⁷ ANM.22.54.Séminaire national sur la coopération en milieu rural, 1967. “...la

examples from other socialist states, the Keita regime nonetheless linked it to nationalism and to its longstanding goal of economic development. State and cooperative property – the maximization of which was the goal of collectivization and of “socialization” more broadly – “both result in the enrichment of the national estate and in the elevation of the population’s well being,” affirmed the same report.¹⁹⁸ (Such statements exemplify how the USRDA used socialism to further its nationalist narrative by portraying the state’s takeover of the economy – with all of the clientelist implications this had – as ultimately benefiting the nation and the population’s bottom line.) A 1968 CNDR circular further clarified the regime’s view that collective field expansion was intended to proceed as far as possible, stating that “the implantation of collective fields stems from the USRDA’s major preoccupation with achieving the collectivization of the countryside.”¹⁹⁹

Although collectivization represented a particular vision of modernization and progress — and thus remained consonant with the USRDA’s longstanding nationalist convictions — the party’s collectivization policy was driven in part by beliefs about the efficacy and equitability of collective labour that were uniquely socialist, particularly its insistence on communal labour and its abhorrence of land that was privately held and worked. “It is thus that it has been said and proclaimed many times that land in Mali is the property of the state; consequently, it cannot be the property of any individual,”

propriété personnelle, est inversement proportionnelle au degré de socialisation de l’économie, c’est-à-dire qu’elle tend vers un minimum au fur et à mesure que croissent les deux formes précédentes de propriété: propriété d’Etat et propriété coopérative.”

¹⁹⁸ Ibid. “...elles aboutissent toutes deux à l’enrichissement du patrimoine national et à l’élévation du bien être de la population.”

¹⁹⁹ ANM.104.400.Rapport sur l’organisation socialiste du monde rural, 1968.

“L’implantation des champs collectifs découle des préoccupations majeures de l’US.-R.D.A. pour atteindre la collectivisation à la campagne.”

states a 1968 circular from the CNDR, this not being “in harmony with the exigencies of [its] socialist revolution.”²⁰⁰ The regime’s intention of replacing private, small-scale agriculture with large, state-managed farming operations presents a clear parallel to its policy of replacing private business with large, state-run commercial enterprises. In some ways it also bears similarity to the regime’s efforts to eliminate local political authorities like chiefs in favour of a type of administration that was nationally uniform and centrally orchestrated. These were all facets of the high modern vision for the “comprehensive planning of human settlement and production”²⁰¹ that came to characterize the USRDA’s political project in the 1960s.

Much like its peasant control models, the USRDA’s collectivization policy was inspired by the Eastern Bloc, with USRDA officials being sent, for example, to Czechoslovakia shortly after independence to study the implementation of rural cooperatives there.²⁰² Indeed, such policy initiatives must be understood as developing within an intellectual network that included newly independent neighbouring states and those further afield. Collectivization in this era was not only on the agenda in China and the Eastern Bloc, but in Algeria and other nations in sub-Saharan Africa.²⁰³ As Byrne has

²⁰⁰ ANM.141.559.CNDR Circulaires. *Circulaire no 52/CNDR du 19 Août 1968*. “C’est ainsi qu’il a été dit et maintes fois proclamé que la terre au Mali est propriété de l’ETAT; par conséquent, elle ne peut être propriété d’un individu quelqu’il soit.” Aussi: “...en harmonie avec les exigences de notre révolution socialiste.”

²⁰¹ Scott, *Seeing Like A State*, 4.

²⁰² Interview with Dr. Abdoulaye Amadou Sy, Bamako, 11 February 2012. The Czech model of large-scale state farms – along with similar experiments in other Eastern Bloc countries – have long been regarded as inefficient by scholars (Dirk J. Bezemer, “De-Collectivization in Czech and Slovak Agriculture: An Institutional Explanation,” *Journal of Economic Issues* 36, no. 3 (2002): 723–45).

²⁰³ Bonny Ibhawoh and J. I. Dibua, “Deconstructing Ujamaa: The Legacy of Julius Nyerere in the Quest for Social and Economic Development in Africa,” *African Journal of Political Science* 8, no. 1 (June 1, 2003): 59–83.

noted, plans were afoot in Algiers to move the peasantry into “socialist villages,” and a Cultural Revolution was underway there much as it was in Mali (rebranded in this latter case as the “Active Revolution”) and of course in China.²⁰⁴

This goal, however, was not achieved, and it was variously noted that the collective fields were “not exploited to the maximum” and that by 1966 they were “experiencing a period of stagnation.”²⁰⁵ By 1968, it was observed in Ségou that “the evolution of collective fields over time makes apparent a stagnation and even a regression in hectares and yields, the collective field remaining ever neglected in comparison to individual fields.” It was further remarked that in this area collective fields were no larger than one hectare per 100 inhabitants — far less than the one hectare per family the regime intended to have established by 1966.²⁰⁶

Ségou was not the only region to experience disappointing results in regards to the establishment of collectivized agriculture in the countryside. In 1967 Modibo Keita lamented that the yields obtained from the collective fields across the country were “ridiculous,” because “in most villages” the peasants “worry above all about their family’s fields and only come to the collective field when they have nothing else to do.”²⁰⁷ Keita further bemoaned the fact that “unfortunately [the collective field’s]

²⁰⁴ Jeffrey James Byrne, “Our Own Special Brand of Socialism: Algeria and the Contest of Modernities in the 1960s,” *Diplomatic History* 33, 3 (2009): 442.

²⁰⁵ ANM.107.409.Rapport et Correspondances Service Economie rurale des Industries et des Mines 1962-1968.*Projet d’Institution de brigades de travail socialiste à l’Office du Niger, 20 April 1966.*

²⁰⁶ ANM.144.565.Compte-rendu divers cercle 1956-1968.*Résolutions du séminaire sur les champs collectifs Ségou, 22 March 1968.*

²⁰⁷ ANM.141.559.CNDR Circulaires.*Cirulaire no 16/CNDR du 22 Novembre 1967 (signé Modibo Keita).* “Dans la plupart des villages les champs collectifs sont travaillés par tout le monde. Est-ce efficace? Tout est laissé à l’initiative des paysans qui se soucient surtout de leurs champs familiaux – et ne viennent au champ collectif que

significance and role are misunderstood by the populations who are far from treating it with the importance it deserves.”²⁰⁸ Following the CNDR’s National Seminar on Rural Cooperation in 1967, a report was issued, and it explains the collective fields’ failure in some detail:

The collective field, production unit of the rural grouping, suffers from the same ills [as the rural grouping], and this is spectacularly demonstrated by the ridiculously low revenues they bring to the village.²⁰⁹

A similar report from Banamba describes an equally unsatisfactory situation in 1968, where:

In many villages the upkeep of the collective fields is considered forced labour [*corvée*]. Some populations well understand the utility of the fields without, however, being penetrated by the intended objective: the progressive Socialization of the countryside.

It is evident in the results, recorded during the three previous years, that there has been a progressive decline in the area being cultivated. This is because of a total move away from the mindset that prevailed at the creation of the fields — that is the say the collectivization of agriculture.²¹⁰

Other USRDA documents from the late 1960s tell of equally bad results. A 1968 report states that “in no village have the collective fields attained one hectare per family,” citing “frequent abandonment” and “neglected maintenance” as reasons.²¹¹ Thus, as

lorsqu’ils n’ont plus rien à faire. Les façons culturales ne sont pas effectuées en temps opportun d’où les rendements ridicules.”

²⁰⁸ Ibid. “Malheureusement sa signification et son rôle sont mal compris des populations qui sont loin de lui accorder l’importance qu’il mérite.”

²⁰⁹ ANM.137.543.Rapport Coopératives de Consommation 1963-1967.*Séminaire national sur la coopération en milieu rural, 1967*. “Le champ collectif, cellule de production du Groupement rural, souffre du même mal et ceci est démontré spectaculairement par les dérisoires revenus qu’ils procurent au village. Le champ collectif est resté un corps étranger.”

²¹⁰ ANM.144.565.Compte-rendu divers cercle 1956-1968.*Champs collectifs Banamba Cercle de Bamako Compte Rendu sur le Séminaire, 10 February 1968*.

²¹¹ ANM.104.400.Rapport sur l’organisation socialiste du monde rural, 1968. “Dans aucun village le développement des champs collectifs n’a atteint un hectare par famille.” Raisons citées: “abandon fréquent d’année en année...entretien négligé.”

Abdoulaye Amadou Sy notes, “they created what were called the collective fields – the socialization of agriculture – which was a failure; this must be stated clearly.”²¹²

The USRDA identified various causes for the failure of its collectivization scheme. Often they blamed peasants for not “being penetrated by the intended objective,”²¹³ complaining that rural citizens failed to understand the import of socialism and collectivization. A 1967 report attributed blame, for example, to the fact that peasants lacked the appropriate attitude and did not have enough education. “In the rural milieu, cooperation has been blocked by the absence of that spirit without which it is impossible for it to truly exist, the spirit of the ‘co-operator’... This deficiency,” it affirmed, was “inevitably due to a lack of political education.”²¹⁴ A party delegation sent to Gao in 1968 noted that “in many places [the collective fields] have been neglected,” explaining this by remarking that “our delegation has identified insufficiencies in the ideological education of the popular masses.”²¹⁵ A 1968 report from Koulikoro went further than identifying a lack of education as the reason for the failure of collectivization, suggesting that peasants there hated socialism and consequently refused to follow any and all party directives:

²¹² Interview with Abdoulaye Amadou Sy, Bamako, 11 February 2012. (Note: Sy observed that the push to collectivize was especially strong during the Active Revolution period.)

²¹³ ANM.104.400.Rapport sur l’organisation socialiste du monde rural, 1968.

²¹⁴ ANM.22.54.Séminaire national sur la coopération en milieu rural, 1967. “En milieu rural, la coopération s’est heurtée à l’absence de cet esprit sans lequel elle ne saurait exister valablement, l’esprit de “coopérateur”... Cette carence, dûe inévitablement au manque d’éducation politique...”

²¹⁵ ANM.109.415.Compte-Rendu et Rapport de Mission à l’Intérieur du Mali 1968.27 *Mars 1968 Rapport de Mission – Zone Gao, Kidal*. “Champs collectifs:...En bien des endroits ils ont été négligés au profit des parcelles personnelles. Signalons que l’utilité des champs collectifs reste encore méconnue des masses rurales... Notre délégation a relevé chez les masses populaires des insuffisances de formation idéologique, une absence de style de travail.”

In conclusion, in Messékéla, the peasants are not activists. They hate the socialist option. They do everything out of fear. Even the most enlightened teacher in the world in terms of ideological education could not make them voluntarily follow directives in conformity with our socialist regulations. The activists from Messékéla, taciturn, never tell us what they are thinking. Most of them, domiciled in Bamako, smuggle the ideas of certain bad activists from the capital to their sector. What is thus their aim: the free sale of our grains, the return of private buyers, the free sale of merchandise, an exit from our [socialist] option.²¹⁶

Although this was not the only incidence of peasant opposition to the Keita regime,²¹⁷ most USRDA reports nonetheless blamed the non-compliance of peasants not on hatred of socialism but on deficiencies in the peasant's training or character. Indeed, as another 1968 report affirms:

The peasant, due to his mind being atavistic, confused, and not yet logical in most cases, contents himself with little and considers to have finished as soon as he has paid his taxes. As long as his individual [agricultural] exploitation satisfies his subsistence needs and allows him to free himself from his tax obligations, any other productive activity is superfluous to him. The execution of the party's economic directives is for him an act of blind submission to established power. That is to say clearly that, despite real and permanent political education, despite the concrete advantages drawn from the product of the collective field, from which the peasant is beginning to benefit, it is not objective to affirm that he is convinced of the finality that we ascribe to this institution.²¹⁸

²¹⁶ 140.554.Extraits des évènements 1960-1968. *1968 02 Revue mensuelle des évènements du cercle de Koulikoro*. "Le Chef d'Arrondissement de Tougouni stigmatise le comportement des paysans du Messékéla en écrivant notamment: "En conclusion dans le Messékéla, les paysans ne sont pas militants. Ils haïssent l'option socialiste. Ils font tout par crainte. Même un professeur, le mieux éclairé du monde, en formation idéologique ne les fera pas suivre volontairement les mots d'ordre conformément à notre réglementation socialiste. Les militants de Messékéla, fermés, ne nous disent jamais leur idée. La plupart d'entre eux, domiciliés à Bamako, colportent les idées de certains mauvais militants de la capitale pour leur secteur. Quel est donc leur dessein: la vente libre de nos céréales, le retour des acheteurs privés, la vente libre des marchandises, la sortie de notre option.""

²¹⁷ See "Opposition" in Chapter 3.

²¹⁸ ANM.104.400.Rapport sur l'organisation socialiste du monde rural, 1968. "Aussi le paysan, en raison de son esprit atavique ébranlé mais non encore conéquent dans la plupart des cas, se contente de peu et estime avoir terminé dès qu'il a acquitté ses impôts. Tant que son exploitation individuelle satisfait à sa subsistance et lui permet de se libérer du fise, toute autre activité productive est pour lui superfétatoire. L'exécution des mots d'ordre économique du Parti correspond chez lui à une soumission aveugle au

Certain officials, however, were observant enough to note that it was not an inability to understand that led peasants to neglect the collective fields, but a general perception that they were a form of forced labour. As a 1967 CNDR report states:

The collective field remains a foreign entity, imposed on the village by the power of the state (fama-foro),²¹⁹ whereas it should cause to materialize that common desire to live connected to one another and to advance together on the path of progress. Considered as imposed from the exterior, it has not benefited from any of the conditions that would have made of it the village nucleus of economic advancement.²²⁰

Other reports note that “the peasant considers it the party’s concern, thus the name... “Mali foro”... given to the collective field.”²²¹ This view is echoed by elderly peasants obliged to participate in collective field work during the Keita years, who state that “it was forced labour; it didn’t interest the people.”²²² Former participants also cited as reasons for the unpopularity of the collective fields the fact that “in the collective field

pouvoir établi. C’est dire clairement que, malgré l’éducation politique réelle et permanente, malgré les avantages concrets que le paysan commence à tirer du produit du champ collectif, il n’est pas objectif d’affirmer qu’il est convaincu de la finalité que nous assignons à cette institution.”

²¹⁹ *Fama* is the Bamanan word for political authority imposed by force; *foro* means “field.”

²²⁰ ANM.137.543.Rapport coopératives de consommation 1963-1967. *Séminaire national sur la coopération en milieu rural*. “Le champs collectif est resté un corps étranger, imposé au village par le pouvoir public (fama-foro), alors qu’il devait matérialiser cette volonté commune de vivre liés les uns aux autres et d’avancer ensemble sur la voie du progrès. Considéré comme imposé de l’extérieur il n’a pu bénéficier d’aucune des conditions qui auraient pu faire de lui le noyau villageois de promotion économique.”

²²¹ “Mali” representing the idea of state power and and “foro,” again, meaning “field.” “Le paysan s’en acquitte comme affaire du parti, d’où l’appellation: “ton-foro” – “Mali-foro” – “Foroba-foro” donnée au champ collectif.” (ANM.104.400.Rapport sur l’organisation socialiste du monde rural, 1968.)

²²² Interview with François Coulibaly, Sougoula, 11 March 2012; interview with Fatogoma Bengaly, Gongasso, 16 March 2012.

[they] didn't benefit from the grain"²²³ and did not know how local officials spent the funds derived from such communal agricultural projects.²²⁴

Former regime officials equally affirm that peasants understood the collective fields – and the USRDA's socialist policies more broadly – not as a benefit to them but as a feared constraint on their freedom.²²⁵ Considering that certain officials deemed forced labour in the collective fields a more effective form of punishment than prison, this point of view is hardly surprising. Indeed, the Governor of Mopti recommended as an expedient means of putting an end to marriage code violations that “you take both the man and the woman and you go and put them in the collective fields; no prison or anything like that.”²²⁶ This was not an isolated case. As Fatogoma Bengaly notes with regard to the village of Gongasso in the Sikasso region, “political authorities always have ways of resolving certain problems...the villagers can make you work for a few days in the collective fields, they can even take your money away.”²²⁷

While collective fields may have been designed to have an obligatory character, they were nonetheless theoretically intended to benefit local communities. Collectivization was supposed to increase efficiency and to augment the percentage of grain that came into government hands. All grain produced in collective fields would be sold by the state, resulting in an influx of foreign reserves that could be invested in economic development projects, lifting all from poverty. In practice, however, local officials often misappropriated the grain produced in collective fields. Party leaders like

²²³ Interview with François Coulibaly, Sougoula, 11 March 2012.

²²⁴ Interview with Lansina Konaté, Ouéllessebouyou, 10 March 2012.

²²⁵ Interview with Garba Touré, Bamako, 14 February 2012.

²²⁶ Interview with Mady Diallo, Bamako, 23 February 2012.

²²⁷ Interview with Fatogoma Bengaly, Gongasso, 16 March 2012.

Idrissa Diarra and Modibo Keita lamented on multiple occasions that “errors had been committed in the usage of the product of the collective field”²²⁸ and that the patently self-interested attitude of many party officials was undermining efforts to convince peasants of collectivization’s benefits.²²⁹ And in Gao, for example, it was noted by officials, in regards to the collective fields, that “unjust distribution has favoured only those few privileged with money to the detriment of a majority.”²³⁰ Not only did this perpetuate inequality, but the result was that “an erroneous conception of the collective field resulted in indifference and negligence aggravated by the lack of agricultural personnel.”²³¹ It may not only have been agricultural personnel that were lacking, however, as the same document notes that the Gao region was by 1968 subject to a “massive exodus” coinciding with “difficulties in provisioning.”²³² Given that such serious economic problems were occurring at the same time, it is unsurprising that locals felt they had more important affairs on which to focus than toiling on government projects with dubious benefits.

Misappropriation of the products of collective work was not unique to Gao. This is in keeping with broader reports of corruption and of misappropriation of resources by USRDA officials. Indeed, even the well-known Ouéllésébougou revolt of June 1968 may have been partially caused by local irritation at being obliged to contribute free labour to ostensibly public causes, only to see such projects come to naught because of

²²⁸ ANM.142.560.Circulaires 1947-1968.*Circulaire 22, 28 Septembre 1964 (signé Idrissa Diarra).*

²²⁹ ANM.141.599.CNDR Circulaires.*Circulaire no 16/CNDR du 22 Novembre 1967.*

²³⁰ ANM.109.415.Rapport et Compte-Rendu de Mission à l’Intérieur du Mali 1968.*Rapport de mission Zone Gao Kidal (signed Hadji SANGARE), 27 March 1968.*

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid. “En 1967 en raison des difficultés que le Cercle a connues dans le domaine du ravitaillement et de l’exode massif...”

corruption. As the town's former mayor notes:

We built the seat of the USRDA party. We constructed an office, a meeting room, a conference room... But in truth, what happens? Everything that we gave, everything that we contributed as funds for the construction of that building, that deputy — Diakité, who was the school director, Diakité who was in politics — they ate the money... It's not possible! Everything we gave. We have a little building like that and we don't even have enough sheet metal. A roof was never put on the building. There were a few pieces of sheet metal on the roof, it's inadmissible. He ate the money so... he has to leave here. The deputy must leave, that's why there was the revolt, the beginning of the revolt... he exploited us.²³³

Of course, the Ouéllésébougou revolt had other causes — particularly the imprisonment of a group of local men who had held an unauthorized meeting.²³⁴ Yet other reports from those who participated in the revolt — and indeed who were subsequently arrested — confirm that corruption and the misuse of taxes were key elements of popular dissatisfaction. As one participant notes:

The Ouéllésébougou revolt started by the government asking all our women to contribute 5 kg of shea butter each, because the maternity ward was small, that they were going to rebuild... They sold that and they expanded the birthing room on the east side a little. And they kept the rest of the money... They didn't tell us the total sum of the money after the sale of the shea butter. After the expenses also, they didn't communicate to us how much money remained; they told us nothing... Yes, after the contribution of the shea butter each person contributes 25 francs... We contributed in the beginning, we built [the local party headquarters]; after the construction the house fell down. They sold the sheet metal and all the construction wood. They didn't give an account to anyone... We got angry. We said that's fine, if it's like that next time we'll refuse. After that, aïwa, they told us to contribute 25 francs, everyone refused to contribute. When everyone refused, aïwa, the battle started.²³⁵

The issues of state predation and corruption are of course related to the clientelist political culture that scholars have identified in Mali in the precolonial, colonial, and

²³³ Interview with Guédiouma Samaké, Ouéllésébougou, 10 March 2012.

²³⁴ For a fuller account of this incident, which resulted in several deaths and 80 arrests, see: Amselle, "La Conscience Paysanne," 339.

²³⁵ Interview with Oumar Doumbia, Dialakoro, 11 March 2012.

postcolonial eras.²³⁶ Modibo Keita himself noted in 1967 that the USRDA officials were misappropriating rural resources for clearly clientelist purposes, i.e. distributing resources to attract followers, resulting in “state institutions losing considerable sums.”²³⁷ In the same year a “notable from Korianzé” suggested that clientelist forces were at play in the Mopti region with regard to the collective fields in particular. As he recounted in a letter to President Keita:

Mister President,

I have the honour of informing you that all the inhabitants of Korianzé, we have tried everything but we cannot manage to get along with our *chef d'arrondissement*.

As proof, our [Party] Committee secretaries, Saïdou Tall and Ali Hamaze, with the complicity of the *chef d'arrondissement*, treat the entire population like slaves. The three of them ate the grain that we harvested from the collective field last year, and on top of that we remarked that Ali Hamaze gave his son 16 cases of sugar to go sell in the neighbouring village on the black market.

Whereas, it is impossible for us, the population, to get any sugar... Furthermore, they have distributed land to other people whom they like and kicked out the owners of these lands.²³⁸

Thus it seems, in certain cases at least, that the pattern of misappropriation of rural resources actually served to entrench rural inequality; consequently, in practice the USRDA's socialist program came in some instances to embody the very opposite of the

²³⁶ See “Clientelism” in Chapter 3.

²³⁷ ANM.141.559.CNDR Circulaires. *Circulaire no 16/CNDR du 22 Novembre 1967 (Modibo Keita)*. For more on this topic, see Chapter 3.

²³⁸ ANM.124.466.CNDR Correspondances 1968. *14 NOVEMBRE 1967 Monsieur Moussa Aly SEKOU, Notable à Korianzé de passage chez Madame AISSATA DIARRA, quartier médina-coura BAMAKO*. “Monsieur le Président, J'ai l'honneur de vous rendre compte que tous les habitants de KORIANZE [Korientzé] nous avons tout fait, mais nous n'arrivons pas à être d'accord avec notre chef d'arrondissement. La bonne preuve, notre secrétaire du Comité, Saïdou TALL et Ali Hamaze, avec la complicité du Chef d'arrondissement traitent toute la population comme des esclaves. Ils ont mangé tous les vivres du champ collectif que nous avons récolté l'an passé, de là, nous avons constaté aussi qu'Ali Hamaze a donné à son fils 16 caisses de sucre pour aller vendre au village voisin au noir. D'autre part, nous la population, il nous est impossible d'avoir du sucre... D'autre part, ils ont partagé les terres à d'autres types qu'ils aiment et renvoyé les propriétaires de ces terres.”

egalitarian principles upon which it was built.

Yet despite the problems associated with the collectivization scheme — low levels of public interest, low productivity, and low expansion of the area under collective cultivation — collectivization was never abandoned by the USRDA. On the contrary, as the radical leftist faction of the party gained greater control of political decision-making throughout the decade, particularly during the Active Revolution period, the importance of collectivization policy grew even as the agricultural results of the collective fields shrank. Indeed, in 1967 a USRDA report affirmed that “agricultural collectivization is the major objective of all socialist agriculture.”²³⁹ During this period a new form of village-level government was envisioned, the *comités révolutionnaires de base*, whose “principal task” was “to promote collectivization in the countryside.”²⁴⁰ Along similar lines, Modibo Keita proclaimed in July 1968 that “the triumph of the edification of socialism [depended] definitively” on the successful implementation of recommendations derived from a “national seminar...on collectivization in our countryside.”²⁴¹

“Ideological education campaigns” were also quickly developed, and these sought to convince peasants of the virtues of radical socialism and of the pressing need to band

²³⁹ ANM.22.54.Séminaire nationale sur la coopération en milieu rurale, 1967. “La collectivisation agricole est l’objectif majeur de toute agriculture socialiste.”

²⁴⁰ ANM.129.468.Note sure le Comité Révolutionnaire de Base.*Note sure le Comité Révolutionnaire de Base* (1968). “Il a pour tâche principale de promouvoir la collectivisation dans les campagnes.”

²⁴¹ ANM.141.559.CNDR Circulaires.*Circulaire no 47/CNDR du 12 Juillet 1968*. “Du succès de son application [concernant le “rapport de synthèse” issu du “Séminaire Nationale...sur la collectivisation dans nos campagnes”] dépend en définitive le triomphe de l’édification socialiste de notre pays.”

together under the aegis of government and work in new, collective ways.²⁴² A 1967 CNDR report concluded, for example, that “the cooperative movement in the countryside demands substantial education and revolutionary steadfastness.”²⁴³ A 1968 report equally affirmed that “ideological education will lead the peasant to have a socialist attitude toward work and collective property.”²⁴⁴ To this end, the goal of “systematizing and reinforcing education and ideological training in the countryside in order to establish in the consciousness of the peasant the possibility of collectivization as the sole means of his elevation” was set forth.²⁴⁵ Other contemporary regime documents concerned with collectivization speak vaguely of “the necessary conversion of mentalities, of habits,”²⁴⁶ while still others detail a more thoroughgoing plan for leading an “ideological battle” with the peasants against “counter-revolutionaries vomited by the people” in the course of the Active Revolution.²⁴⁷ Indeed, as Modibo Keita proclaimed in July 1968:

²⁴² ANM.129.485. Thèmes pour la campagne éducation idéologique et information. *Thèmes pour la campagne éducation idéologique et information 1968.*

²⁴³ ANM.22.54. Séminaire nationale sur la coopération en milieu rurale, 1967. “Le mouvement coopératif dans la campagne demande une éducation conséquente et la fermeté révolutionnaire.”

²⁴⁴ ANM.104.400. Rapport sur l’organisation socialiste du monde rural, 1968. “L’éducation idéologique amènera le paysan à avoir une attitude socialiste envers le travail et les propriétés collectives.”

²⁴⁵ Ibid. “Systématiser – renforcer l’éducation et la formation idéologique à la campagne afin de créer la perspective de collectivisation dans la conscience du paysan comme seul moyen de l’élever.”

²⁴⁶ ANM.141.559. CNDR Circulaires. *Circulaire no 52/CNDR du 19 Août 1968.* “Cette réforme devra aboutir, non seulement à la nécessaire reconversion des mentalités, des habitudes, mais aussi, à l’élimination radicale de certaines pratiques surannées, ou anachronique, qui ne se trouvent plus en harmonie avec les exigences de notre révolution socialiste.”

²⁴⁷ ANM.141.559. CNDR Circulaires. *Circulaire no 47/CNDR du 12 Juillet 1968.* “Pour mener à bien notre bon combat, le CLDR doit faire en sorte que les Cadres des Sections... mènent avec eux [les paysans] la bataille idéologique.” Aussi: “les contre-révolutionnaires vomis par le peuple.”

The revolutionarization of our countryside assumes a crucial nature...it concerns more than 90% of the population. It aims to transform habits, a lifestyle, ways of thinking deeply rooted in the villages. It has for its aim to render the socialist option irreversible among the least advanced strata.²⁴⁸

There was, thus, a clear pattern of regime thinking and of initiatives aimed at solving the problem of collectivization's failure, and of the failure of the regime's rural policies more broadly, by steeping the peasants in socialist ideas until they absorbed their meaning and endorsed their purpose – despite the fact that peasants had in fact demonstrated an understanding of what collectivization entailed, and had broadly and consistently rejected it.

One of the most interesting aspects of this push to collectivize is that it was rarely linked to any practical explanation of how such a change would improve productivity. Indeed, while collective fields were intended to “have the purpose of being the embryo of collectivization,”²⁴⁹ as late as 1967 USRDA authorities noted in certain communities either “the non-existence or the theoretical existence of institutions like the rural organizations, collective fields, [and] livestock cooperatives.”²⁵⁰ It was clear from early on that efforts at collectivization had borne, and would bear, little economic fruit. Yet the Keita regime promoted collectivization until the very end. The CNDR noted in 1967, for

²⁴⁸ Ibid. “La révolutionnarisation de nos campagnes revêt d’un caractère capital...elle concerne plus de 90% de la population. Elle vise à transformer des habitudes, un style de vie, des façons de penser fortement enracinés dans les villages. Elle a pour objet de rendre irréversible l’option socialiste, dans les couches les moins avancées.”

²⁴⁹ ANM.107.409.Rapport et Correspondance Service Economie rurale des Industries et des mines 1962-1968.1966 04 20 *Projet d’Institution de brigades de travail socialiste à l’Office du Niger*. “...champ collectif qui a la vocation d’être l’embryon de la collectivisation.”

²⁵⁰ ANM.109.416.Compte-Rendu de Mission à l’Intérieur du Mali 1964-1967.1967 10 *II Rapport de synthèse de la délégation de la 6ème région*. “...inexistence, ou existence théorique des organismes tels que groupements ruraux, champs collectifs, coopératives des éleveurs.”

example, that:

with regard to the current collective fields, after assessing seven years of experience, it appears that, far from becoming a pole of attraction for the village community... it has on the contrary remained “someone else’s thing,” and the overall elevation of consciousness, the extirpation of negative psychological factors has not been able to take place, due to a lack of political education.²⁵¹

By 1968 the USRDA government knew the results of its collective field program had been dismal, yet it continued to view it as the centrepiece of its agricultural strategy, which would lead, “by virtue of the creation of large units, to the utilization of high-yielding modern material, a definitive break from artisanal agriculture, and the progressive reduction and elimination of the existing contradictions between the city and the countryside.”²⁵²

Why would the USRDA remain so attached to a policy that was clearly a failure? It appears that socialist and high modern ideologies played a role. The Keita regime — especially the radical socialists who would control it during the Active Revolution years — believed that agricultural collectivization was fundamental to socialism, and thus indispensable for that reason. It also believed, in time and once the peasants had been appropriately educated about why socialism was right for them, that it had the capacity to turn the situation around and to proceed toward full collectivization of the

²⁵¹ ANM.137.543.Rapport coopératives de consommation 1963-1967.*Séminaire national sur la coopération en milieu rural*. “Quant au champ collectif actuel, il ressort au bilan de sept années d’expérience, que, loin de devenir un pôle d’attraction pour la communauté villageoise... il est au contraire resté la “chose d’autrui” et la prise de conscience globale, l’extirpation des facteurs psychologiques négatifs n’ont pu avoir lieu, faute d’éducation politique.”

²⁵² ANM.22.54.Séminaire nationale sur la coopération en milieu rurale, 1967. “La collectivisation agricole est l’objectif majeur de toute agriculture socialiste. Elle permet, grâce à la constitution de grandes unités, l’utilisation du matériel moderne à haut rendement, la rupture définitive avec l’agriculture artisanale et la réduction progressive et l’élimination des contradictions existant entre la ville et la campagne.”

countryside. Indeed, USRDA leaders not only believed that they *could* accomplish this grand plan, but they believed pursuing such ambitious projects was part of what made socialists stronger and better than their rivals. A less revolutionary regime, noted Modibo Keita in 1968, would give up in the face of such difficulties. “A petty bourgeois party relying upon demagoguery would have been afraid of the difficulties on the horizon.”²⁵³ Indeed, the goals of the USRDA’s agricultural socialization project, described at a high-level “National Seminar on Cooperation in Rural Areas,” were characterized as attempting to:

create and develop the conscience of the new man based on the new scale of values — norms of new behaviour, of ideas, and of specific attitudes. Socialist agricultural cooperation is the school which permits the individual peasant producer to educate himself in view of his progressive integration to the socialist vision of the new society - (solidarity - mutual aid - patriotism - spirit of self-sacrifice - fraternity - consciousness of the collective interest).²⁵⁴

Such a policy orientation indicates a remarkably paternalistic shift for a party that was elected by peasants in 1957 as their representatives, demonstrating a clear desire to displace the identities of the very people who had brought it to power, replacing their values, norms, and ideas, with those the party saw fit to impose. Paternalism can be observed not only in the attitudes of USRDA representatives, but also in the party’s self-

²⁵³ ANM.141.559.CNDR Circulaires.*Circulaire no 48/CNDR du 12 Juillet 1968*. “Un parti petit-bourgeois et usant de démagogie aurait pris peur des difficultés en perspectives.”

²⁵⁴ ANM.49.137.Commission de Politique Générale 1960-1967.*Intervention de la Commission de Politique Générale au Séminaire National sur la Coopération en Milieu Rural (CNDR), (likely from 1967)*. “...crée et développe la conscience de l’homme nouveau basée sur une nouvelle échelle des valeurs - des normes de comportements nouveaux des idées et des attitudes spécifiques. La coopération agricole socialiste est l’école qui permet au paysan producteur individuel de s’éduquer en vue de son intégration progressive à la vision socialiste de la nouvelle société - (solidarité - entr’aide - patriotisme - esprit d’abnégation - fraternité - conscience de l’intérêt collectif).”

conception. As Ryan Skinner has noted with respect to the Keita years as a whole, certain party officials “emphasized the importance of this familial state-subject relationship,” with the state playing the role of benevolent father.²⁵⁵

This continued support for the policy despite its poor performance underscores the fact that increasing productivity was not the only concern of USRDA policy makers who promoted the collective. Questions of identity and ideology also figured prominently. For not only was the Keita regime caught up in an attempt to forge a “new man” with “a socialist vision of the new society,”²⁵⁶ it was equally occupied with convincing him to donate free labour in the absence of any tangible reward, despite knowing full well that peasants were notoriously reluctant to work on anything that did not provide them with a clear and immediate benefit.²⁵⁷ As Modibo Keita remarked early in the Active

Revolution period:

If countries such as ours lack the financial resources to deal with the multiple and important needs of the people... we have our arms, the free time that straddles our days, extends over our weeks or even months in certain periods and among certain categories of the population. Collective fields and worksites of honour give us the possibility of using this potential work in order to accelerate our progress.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁵ Ryan Thomas Skinner, “Cultural Politics in the Post-Colonay: Music, Nationalism and Statism in Mali, 1964-75,” *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 82, no. 4 (November 1, 2012): 511–34.

²⁵⁶ ANM.49.137.Commission de Politique Générale 1960-1967.*Intervention de la Commission de Politique Générale au Séminaire National sur la Coopération en Milieu Rural (CNDR) (likely from 1967)*. “...la vision socialiste de la nouvelle société.”

²⁵⁷ ANM.3.5.6^e Congrès de l’USRDA 1962.*Rapport d’activités et d’orientation présenté au 6^{ème} congrès de l’US-RDA*.

²⁵⁸ ANM.141.559.CNDR Circulaires.*Circulaire no 16/CNDR du 22 Novembre 1967*.

“En effet, si les pays comme le nôtre manquent de ressources financières pour faire face aux importants et multiples besoins de peuple et un laps de temps que chacun voudrait le plus court possible, nous avons nos bras, le temps mort qui jalonne nos journées, s’étend sur des semaines ou même des mois en certaines périodes et chez certaines catégories de la population. Champs Collectifs et Chantiers d’honneur nous donnent la possibilité d’utiliser ce potentiel travail afin d’accélérer notre promotion.”

The USRDA's socialist narrative allowed it to justify this lack of improvement for peasants through appeals to the language of sacrifice that it began to develop from independence onward.²⁵⁹ Whether it was to work collectively, to produce more, or to submit to higher rates of taxation, the party suggested throughout the 1960s – increasingly so in the Active Revolution period – that it was “normal that all Malians put in extra effort,” with “an important share falling on the farmers.”²⁶⁰

Thus, in conclusion, collectivization was promoted for ideological reasons, but also for practical ones. It was central to the agricultural policies of many socialist regimes around the world, and radical socialists within the USRDA considered it a pillar of socialist development, with “the BPN [attaching] great importance to the activities

²⁵⁹ CADN.Bamako.Amb.11.Union Soudanaise 1960.*Congrès Extraordinaire de l'U.S. RDA les 22 et 23 Septembre 1960, discours de clôture par la Secrétaire Générale Modibo Keita, p. 3.* “Les mesures prises, tant à l'extérieur de la République Soudanasie, qu'à l'intérieur, nous imposeront pour une certaine période des sacrifices qui sont, je le sais, déjà acceptés. Il faut prévoir un isolement possible du Soudan, par la forces des choses et par l'évolution des évènements politiques.” Also, due to the regime's “determination to achieve economic independence” – a goal established in the socialist context – Idrissa Diarra, the USRDA's Political Secretary, asserted in 1964 that “it is normal for each Malian to accept the need to put in extra effort to strengthen Mali's reach. An important share of this task falls to the farmers. Yet what we are asking of the farmers is not to accept new taxes, it is in reality to understand that all new efforts on their part will be a gain firstly for themselves, and then for the entire nation.” (ANM.142.560.Circulaires 1947-1968.14 Mai 1964 *Circulaire 7.* “La première raison réside dans notre détermination à rééaliser notre indépendance économique... Il est donc normal que chaque malien accepte un surcroît d'efforts pour renforcer l'audience du Mali. Dans cette tâche, une part importante revient aux cultivateurs. Or, ce que nous demandons aux cultivateurs, ce n'est pas d'accepter des impôts nouveaux, c'est en réalité de comprendre que tout nouvel effort de leur part sera un gain pour eux-mêmes d'abord, pour la Nation tout entière ensuite.”)

²⁶⁰ ANM.49.137.Commission de Politique Générale 1960-1967.*Intervention de la Commission de Politique Générale au Séminaire National sur la Coopération en Milieu Rural (CNDR), (likely from 1967).* “Il est donc normal que chaque malien accepte un surcroît d'efforts pour renforcer l'audience du Mali. Dans cette tâche, une part importante revient aux cultivateurs.”

undertaken for the creation of collective fields”²⁶¹ throughout the 1960s. Indeed, even during the Active Revolution when it had become clear that collectivization policies had been unsuccessful despite nearly a decade of efforts,²⁶² (certain) party officials still considered “village cooperation and the socialization of agricultural production as the fundamental structures of scientific socialism,” and asserted collectivization’s importance in the creation of “a New Society devoid of exploitation of man by man.”²⁶³ They did so because of an ideological attachment to socialism and because of a high modern mindset that led USRDA leaders, particularly those radical socialists like Seydou Badian Kouyaté and Madeira Keita who would control the policy agenda during the Active Revolution, to believe the state had the means to fundamentally alter the values and habits of the entire peasant population in such a way as to make them voluntarily devote themselves to the socialist project.

Although agricultural collectivization was an ideological policy motivated by the aforementioned ideals, it also came to be marred by coercion, corruption, and clientelism. Its coercive character in particular was due partly to the state’s poverty, which left the Keita regime ill-placed to attach any material, short-term incentives to its agricultural policy. Free labour performed on collective fields was intended to furnish the regime with grain it could sell in order to fill its empty coffers. While moderate

²⁶¹ ANM.125.467. Correspondances BPN 1957-1967. *1964 05 26 Circulaire 10*. “Le BPN attache une grande importance à l’action entreprise pour la création des champs collectifs.”

²⁶² ANM.144.565. Compte-rendu divers cercles 1956-1968. *1968 03 22 Résolutions du séminaire sur les champs collectifs Ségou*.

²⁶³ Ibid. “...l’option irréversible du Mali pour l’édification d’une économie socialiste au service d’une Société nouvelle débarrassée de l’exploitation de l’homme par l’homme. Considérant la coopération villageoise et la socialisation de la production agricole comme structure de base fondamentale du socialisme scientifique...”

USRDA leaders like Jean-Marie Koné had warned that coercive policies would be doomed and had suggested as early as 1955 that rural institutions needed to present clear and tangible benefits to the rural populace in order to garner peasants' support – most notably through “substantial start-up indemnities” for farmers and “a minimum purchasing price [for the grain they produced] in order to safeguard the interests of the peasant”²⁶⁴ – this was easier said than done. In the wake of the Mali Federation's collapse, the USRDA had gained control of an independent state in far more precarious and isolated economic conditions than it had anticipated in the 1950s, when the party's goal was to form a federation with neighbouring colonies and to remain within a reformed French empire. Thus the coercive character its collectivization program assumed was not just ideological – although the radical socialists who promoted this policy did at various points in the 1960s advocate for a more autocratic form of government on ideological grounds²⁶⁵ – but was also precipitated by Mali's meagre means.

Conclusion

The USRDA's peasant policy evolved considerably between the decade spanning the late 1950s to the late 1960s as Mali's political and economic circumstances changed.

²⁶⁴ ANM.1.1.4e Congrès de l'USRDA, 1955. *Rapport sur le paysannat, présenté par Jean Marie Koné, Conseiller Territorial*. “Il faudrait les aider au départ en leur attribuant des indemnités substantielles de démarrage, du matériel d'exploitation (tracteurs, charrues, petites fermes) qu'ils rembourseraient petit à petit aussitôt que leurs terres commenceraient à produire”; “Il ne faut pas que l'administration fixe des prix de vente en dehors des production mais un prix minimum à l'achat pour la sauvegarde des intérêts du paysan.”

²⁶⁵ CADN.Bamako.Amb.9.Incidents de Ségou 1959 et 1960 et Politique au Soudan. *Télégramme Hebdomadaire No 53, Représentation de France au Mali*. For more on the autocratic leanings of the party's radical socialist leaders, see Chapter 3.

Certain underlying aims, like the desire to modernize the countryside in terms of agricultural production, standard of living, and national identity, remained present throughout this period. These aims were broadly related to the party's nationalist convictions, even if its nationalist vision in the late 1950s was of far wider scope than the territorially focused form that would come to the fore after independence. What changed most markedly over this time period were the ideas USRDA leaders proposed for the achievement of these aims. These changes were partially due to developments in the political and economic situation that forced Mali's politicians as a whole toward new ways of thinking — the collapse of the Mali Federation and the souring of relations with Senegal and France, most particularly — but they were also partially precipitated by changes in the balance of power between the moderate and radical factions of the USRDA. In particular, the rise of radical socialism within the party after the Mali Federation's demise brought with it a new high modern vision for the transformation of rural Malian life.

The socialists' vision for “[bringing] about huge, utopian changes in people's work habits, living patterns, moral conduct, and worldview”²⁶⁶ was paternalistic, coercive, and marked by ideological commitments that were at times uncoupled from economic performance — or at least clouded by a belief in their eventual efficacy even when observable results pointed in the opposite direction. The most notable of these ideologically oriented programs was the collectivization scheme, which the regime continued to promote throughout the decade — and with renewed vigour during the Active Revolution — in spite of clear evidence that collective fields were neglected,

²⁶⁶ Scott, *Seeing Like A State*, 4.

disliked, and underproductive. Other aspects of the USRDA's peasant policies, like its forced labour schemes and migration restrictions, were also paternalistic and coercive, and these too were nowhere near as effective as the regime had hoped. Thus, as with chiefs and merchants, the party overestimated its capacity to compel citizens — peasants in this case — to act on its *mots d'ordre*. Here too socialism may have played a role in leading the party to overestimate the effectiveness of “the comprehensive planning of human settlement and production.”²⁶⁷

Although also committed to transforming the way peasants worked, lived, and thought, in the mid- to late-1950s moderates like Jean-Marie Koné had set forth a very different set of parameters for achieving these ends. He had warned against adopting those qualities of government that came to be emblematic of the Keita regime in the era of radical socialist dominance in the 1960s. In particular he had cautioned against the dangers of coercion, pointing out that “the total failure” of colonial efforts to force peasants to cooperate “was plainly obvious.”²⁶⁸ He recommended instead that peasants remain independent farmers rather than being incorporated into a government-run agricultural scheme,²⁶⁹ that government intervention in rural life be kept to a minimum lest it provoke policy failure,²⁷⁰ that peasants' crops have a mandated “minimum

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 4.

²⁶⁸ ANM.1.1.4e Congrès de l'USRDA, 1955. *Rapport sur le paysannat, présenté par Jean Marie Koné, Conseiller Territorial*. “...l'échec total n'est plus à démontrer...”

²⁶⁹ Ibid. “Après deux ou trois ans d'éducation rurale et artisanale ces jeunes gens seraient installés dans leur village, leur région, non pas comme fonctionnaires, mais comme particuliers. Il faudrait les aider au départ en leur attribuant des indemnités substantielles de démarrage.”

²⁷⁰ Ibid. “La formule S.M.P.R. est certes meilleure, mais elle a des imperfections qu'il faut corriger, si on ne veut pas la vouer elle aussi à l'échec après la période d'enthousiasme et de zèle du début. La tutelle administrative s'y fait trop sentir; le Commissaire du Gouvernement a parfois tendance à diriger et à s'imposer.”

purchasing price,²⁷¹ and that peasants cooperate insofar as this would allow them to negotiate a better selling price for their harvests.²⁷² As this chapter has shown, these warnings went largely unheeded in the 1960s; indeed, the interventionist and coercive peasant policies the USRDA came to implement after independence contradicted these recommendations.

Considering Mali's precarious economic position after independence, following through on certain aspects of the moderate vision expressed by figures like Koné – raising the price paid to farmers for their crops, for example – would have proved challenging. Yet it was not only harsh economic realities that motivated the USRDA's peasant policies, but high modern beliefs held by influential radical socialists within the party regarding the merits of authoritarianism, state planning, and social engineering.²⁷³ And although the voices of moderates like Koné would be largely muted during the 1960s, their unheeded warnings would be proven correct throughout the decade by the poor results of the regime's forced labour, migration, and collectivization programs and by the resistance, both passive and active, that Mali's peasants frequently offered.

²⁷¹ Ibid. “Il ne faut pas que l'administration fixe des prix de vente en dehors des productions, mais un prix minimum d'achat pour la sauvegarde des intérêts du paysan.”

²⁷² Ibid. “leur but essentiel [des S.M.P.R.] est de regrouper tous les paysans, de faire naître en eux les esprits de solidarité et de coopération afin qu'ils se défendent mieux à la vente de leurs produits.”

²⁷³ Interview with Salah Niaré, Bamako, 21 March 2012; interview with Abdoulaye Amadou Sy, Bamako, 11 February 2012; interview with Jean Bosco Konaré, Bamako, 2 March 2012. With respect to authoritarianism in particular, Mamadou Gologo argued, as “the spokesman of the most forward [radical] elements of the party,” in favour of its merits in late 1960 (CADN.Bamako.Amb.9.INCIDENTS DE SEGOU 1959 et 1960 et Politique au Soudan. *Télégramme Hebdomadaire No 53, Représentation de France au Mali*). On radical socialism, state planning, and high modernism, see also “A Decisive Month” in Chapter 2.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This dissertation sought to comprehend the manner in which the USRDA regime led by Modibo Keita practiced politics between 1957 and 1968, and to assess the significance of its political experimentations with nationalism and socialism. Through its analyses of the state's relationships with merchants, chiefs, and peasants, it has endeavoured to demonstrate that Mali's leaders were motivated by a complex cluster of ideological and material concerns that evolved over time and that were understood differently by politicians in different factions of the USRDA. These composite concerns would precipitate a political dispensation that bore the hallmarks of both ideals and *realpolitik*, and that became increasingly fraught with economic and political tensions over time.

While worsening political and economic problems — and shifts in influence among factions — modified the regime's strategies over the course of its tenure, a belief in nationalism was longstanding and widely held across the political spectrum. Indeed, although USRDA leaders held diverse opinions on the form Mali's socialism ought to have assumed — or on the merits of socialism in general — there is little evidence of disagreement over the value of promoting the Malian nationalist narrative in order to create the political unity it understood as necessary for the development of a modern, unified, and prosperous state. USRDA leaders had promoted this ideal in the 1950s,¹ when moderates dominated the party, and it was carried forward after the rise of the

¹ *L'Essor hebdomadaire* No 39 du 4 décembre 1959, p. 1, in Daba Diawara, *La Conquête de L'indépendance et L'édification Du Nouvel État Du Mali*, Vol. II, (Bamako: Éditions Tropics, 2012), 12. “Ainsi se trouve réalisé ce que nous avons toujours souhaité: le parti unique groupant l'éventail de toutes les nuances d'opinion, mais avec entre elles le lien inébranlable du sentiment national, la volonté les construire une nation africaine qui transcende les querelles secondaires.”

radical socialist faction in 1960² and was in fact often conflated with socialism by USRDA leaders.³ Socialism, though less widely endorsed (at least in the radical form it assumed in the 1960s,) gave the nationalist promise of economic prosperity an explicitly egalitarian character and also offered the USRDA a means of reorienting its political liberation narrative, which had served it well during the anticolonial struggle, toward a new struggle for economic liberation, genuine independence, and freedom from neocolonial influence⁴ – a move that deflected attention from the profound economic problems provoked by the collapse of the Mali Federation in 1960.

Nationalist and socialist ideologies shaped the way USRDA leaders formulated the policies that would come to define the early postcolonial state. These ideologies would often be put to work on political problems that required urgent solutions – like creating a shared national identity in the fragmented context of West African politics⁵ or providing the USRDA with a means of sidestepping Mali’s serious economic difficulties by focusing on socialist ideas like economic independence and social justice.⁶ Yet these were not simply tools the Keita regime used to solve existing problems, but ideologies that profoundly shaped the way Mali’s politicians thought and that sometimes led them to adopt impractical policies. Devotion to socialist ideals including agricultural

² Indeed, leading socialist radicals like Seydou Badian Kouyaté have been characterized by their peers as being more significantly motivated by nationalist concerns than by socialist ones (interview with Cheikh Tidiani Guissé, Bamako, 17 March 2012).

³ E.g. ANM.125.467.Correspondances BPN 1957-1967.*Appel à la Nation (speech by Modibo Keita)*, 30 Septembre 1961. "En un mot, la Communauté entière, debout comme un seul homme, doit faire de notre terre un vaste chantier national, d'où sortira, demain, au seul bénéfice de cette même Communauté, un pays libre, moderne, qui connaîtra plus la misère, l'analphabétisme et les endémies qui terrorisent. Voilà le sens de notre socialisme: tous à l'oeuvre pour tous."

⁴ See "A Decisive Month" in Chapter 2.

⁵ See "The Perception of Vulnerability" in Chapter 1.

⁶ See Chapter 2, "Nation Building on A Grand Scale," especially "Conclusion."

collectivization⁷ and state-run commerce,⁸ for example, as well as the related high modern belief in the state's capacity "for the comprehensive planning of human settlement and production,"⁹ led to serious economic problems.

In addition to being motivated by nationalist and socialist ideologies and by a desire to solve political problems of broad significance to the populace (like economic development), the Keita regime was also confronted by the question of realpolitik and particularly by the problem of clientelism. The party did not create clientelist relations between leaders and subordinates *de novo*. Servicing and strengthening client networks was a question of grappling with Mali's established political culture. When the USRDA rose to power in the 1950s it was already common to trade political support for favours or compensation. USRDA supporters were quick to shift allegiances as the political fortune of patrons ebbed and flowed;¹⁰ President Keita himself exhorted party members to rise above this "politics of the belly"¹¹ in order not to sully the ideological purity of their mission.¹² Such demands often fell flat, however, as over the course of the 1960s the state's deepening poverty intensified competition for resources among administrators and politicians, many of whom had no profound ideological attachment to socialist ideology.

Although the Keita regime used client networks to appease its demanding

⁷ See Chapter 6, "The Reticent Peasant."

⁸ See Chapter 5, "The Merchants of Menace."

⁹ James C. Scott, *Seeing Like A State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 4.

¹⁰ Nicholas S. Hopkins, "Kita (Mali) in the Time of Modibo Keita: Globalization and Local Continuity," *Mande Studies* 5 (2003): 101–11.

¹¹ Jean-Francois Bayart, *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly* (Cambridge: Polity, 2009).

¹² ANM.4.5e Congrès de l'Union Soudanaise RDA 1958. *Rapport Moral et Politique présenté par Modibo Keita*.

supporters, it is of course necessary to note, as Gregory Mann has, that it also had frequent recourse to violence in its pursuit of political stability.¹³ As Mali's economic situation worsened over the 1960s, the violent repression of dissent became an increasingly prominent element in the state's power management strategy, much as it did in certain neighbouring states.¹⁴ This tendency culminated during the Active Revolution period of 1967-1968, when the regime greatly expanded both the size and scope of power of the Popular Militia, an institution that quickly found notoriety for its aggressive intimidation tactics.¹⁵ Yet violence was not merely improvised in the face of policy failure; it figured in the party's response to opposition from the earliest days of its rule — as the razing in 1960 of the village of Sakoïba, a stronghold of the Parti Démocratique Ségovienne (PDS), demonstrates.¹⁶ It was the counterpart of tactics used to secure the loyalty of the political class through enticement measures inherent in Mali's patron-client political culture, and as such it was often marshalled against those who fell outside such networks. The signs of violent repression are visible in the USRDA's dealing with the social groups studied in this dissertation — from the assassination of prominent merchants, chiefs, and political opponents¹⁷ to the killing of

¹³ Gregory Mann, "Violence, Dignity, and Mali's New Model Army, 1960-1968," *Mande Studies* 5 (2003): 65–82.

¹⁴ Mairi S. MacDonald, "The Challenge of Guinean Independence, 1958-1971" (University of Toronto, 2009), 260-271.

¹⁵ On the militia see Mann, "Violence, Dignity, and Mali's New Model Army, 1960-1968," 65–82; Bintou Sanankoua, *La Chute de Modibo Keita* (Bamako: Chaka, 1990); Pierre Campmas, "L'Union Soudanaise, Section Soudanaise Du Rassemblement Démocratique Africain 1946-1968" (PhD Thesis, Université de Toulouse, 1978).

¹⁶ See Francis Simonis, "Le drame de Sakoïba: Magistrats et autorités politiques à Ségou (Mali) à la veille de l'indépendance," *Droit et cultures* 30 (1995): 231–41.

¹⁷ I refer here to the deaths in custody of Kassoum Touré, a leader in the merchant community, and of Fily Dabo Sissoko and Hammadoun Dicko, former leaders of the principal opposition party, the PSP. Sissoko was also a canton chief, and Dicko was the

peasants who sought relief from the state's oppressive taxation and forced labour policies through migration.¹⁸ Thus the Keita regime demonstrated a willingness to resort to violence when its cherished ideal of national unity — and its control of the state apparatus — was challenged. Indeed, at the outset of the Active Revolution in 1967, Modibo Keita exhorted party activists “to have the courage to denounce...any violation of our country's unity,” and he would charge the Popular Militia with the task of trolling for and punishing such violations.¹⁹ The 1960s, then, were punctuated by acts of violence that corresponded to challenges to regime authority – the aforementioned incident in Sakoïba, the poisoning of wells in the Sahara during the Tuareg rebellion of 1962-64, and the terror of the Popular Militia during the acute economic and political crisis of 1967-68, which saw Mali's radical socialist government obliged to seek France's protection from what had become a monetary disaster.

Socialism facilitated the use of state violence when necessary, as its proponents within the party used it to raise the spectre of ruthless enemies apparently jealous of Mali's socialist transformation²⁰ and to argue the benefits of an authoritarian style of

son of a village chief. For further details see Chapter 5, “The Merchants of Menace.”

¹⁸ Mann, “Violence, Dignity, and Mali's New Model Army, 1960-1968,” 65–82.

¹⁹ ANM.141.559.CNDR Circulaires.*Bamako, le 20 Décembre 1967. No 210/CNJ. Circulaire à tous les Bureaux Exécutifs des Jeunes des Sections U.S./R.D.A. et des Sous-Sections US/RDA de Bamako I et II.* “Le Président Modibo KEITA, dans son discours programme du 22 Septembre 1967, disait: “Au nom du C.N.D.R., j'invite les militants et tous les responsables...à avoir le courage de dénoncer aux instances du Parti et du Gouvernement, et en cas d'insuccès, au Président du C.N.D.R., toute violation des principes du Parti, toute atteinte à l'unité de notre pays.”

²⁰ ANM.18.36.Fédération du Mali 1960.*Circulaire à toutes les cercles subdivisions et postes administratives, signé Madeira Keita, Ministre de l'Intérieur (23 Mai 1960).*

“Vous avez sans doute appris par la radio et la presse que des complots contre-révolutionnaires ont été découverts en Guinée ainsi que divers dépôts d'armes et munitions dans les régions frontalières du Sénégal et de la Côte d'Ivoire. Ces entreprises dont la gravité ne saurait vous échapper sont le fait des agents français de subversion,

governance.²¹ It also helped the USRDA strengthen its position in other ways. By developing the state economic sector under the aegis of socialism, for example, the regime was able to gain economic and political advantage, as the new state enterprises simultaneously symbolized the modern future it had promised citizens and also offered material rewards to the many party activists who would come to be employed therein.²² State enterprises — material manifestations of the regime’s “concern for practicing a politics of social justice”²³ — were intended both to serve the public interest and to spur rapid development. In the short term, such institutions tangibly embodied the socialist promise of equality and furthered the nationalist promise of progress and economic prosperity.²⁴ In reality, however, many of these institutions drained state coffers and had a deleterious effect on the economy.

Like many postcolonial African governments, the Keita regime established its progress-oriented nationalist narrative with an emphasis on “a sense of change, of a

militaires ou civils, s'appuyant sur des éléments autochtones... Il y a lieu de croire que les mêmes tentatives pourraient avoir lieu chez nous. Les agents français tenteront d'utiliser contre nous, tous les éléments mécontents: ex-Chefs de canton, adversaires politiques superficiellement convertis, mais attendant une occasion de revanche, camarades politiques de première heure déçus par le fait que des responsabilités qu'ils croyaient mériter ne leur avaient pas été confiées."

²¹ CADN.Bamako.Amb.9.Incidents de Ségou 1959 et 1960 et Politique au Soudan. *Télégramme Hebdomadaire No 53, Représentation de France au Mali.*

“Par ailleurs Mamadou Gologo qui se fait le porte-parole des éléments les plus avancés du parti a demandé que le futur gouvernement pratique une politique plus autoritaire à l’intérieur comme à l’extérieur.”

²² See “Clientelism” in Chapter 3.

²³ ANM.3.5.6e Congrès de l’USRDA 1962. *Rapport d’activités et d’orientation présenté au 6^{ème} congrès de l’USRDA.* “Quelles que soient nos intentions, ou notre souci de mener une politique de justice sociale, l’action de notre parti se heurte à des obstacles réels”.

²⁴ See “A Decisive Month” in Chapter 2.

shared destiny and [bolstered] hopes for a brighter future,” rather than a common past.²⁵ The legacy of the past — which the regime (or at least certain prominent socialist radicals within it like Seydou Badian Kouyaté, Mamadou Gologo, and Madeira Keita²⁶) saw as replete with "ancient racial conflicts"²⁷ and retrogressive chiefly authority²⁸ — was complicated and dangerous. The USRDA had no legitimate *historical* claim to political authority. Instead, it had risen to power by positioning itself as a modern alternative to chiefs and as a catalyst of development. In short, the USRDA promised Malians a bright future. Socialism augmented this narrative with its promise of radical social transformation for the sake of establishing a society that was not just new and thriving but equal and inclusive.

Socialism, however, did not always help USRDA leaders further their nationalist aims of rapid development and modernization. Commitment to socialist ideals like the state-run economy and agricultural collectivization — on the part of certain radical socialist politicians, at least — even in the face of unambiguous negative economic data suggests that socialism was not always a tool furthering the regime’s pre-existing developmentalist goals but also an ideology that at times clouded its vision or conflicted

²⁵ Philip J. Havik, “Virtual Nations and Failed States: Making Sense of the Labyrinth,” in *Sure Road? Nationalisms in Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique*, ed. Eric Morier-Genoud (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 71.

²⁶ Gregory Mann, “Anti-Colonialism and Social Science: Georges Balandier, Madeira Keita, and ‘the Colonial Situation’ in French Africa,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 55, no. 1 (2013): 92–119.

²⁷ ANM.4.5e Congrès de l'Union Soudanaise RDA 1958. *Rapport Politique présenté par Idrissa Diarra*, p. 60. "...anciennes oppositions raciales."

²⁸ ANM.124.466.CNDR Corréspondances.2 *Octobre 1968, No. 152/CNDR/L*. Here, for example, party officials critiqued the continued authority of traditional chiefs in the town of Dia as “stemming from their feudal and retrograde mentality.”

with its progressive aims.²⁹ Indeed, the economic degradation precipitated by overspending in the public sector and by agricultural stagnation rendered the maintenance of client networks problematic and corroded the nationalist narrative, which was rooted in the promise of a prosperous new society. The ever-expanding civil service and state enterprise staff registers were expensive and acted as a drain on public finances. The Malian franc, created in large part to allow the Keita regime to print money for the expansion of the public sector, had been subject to acute inflation and was devalued by fifty percent on readmission to the CFA franc zone in 1967. The attempts to requisition peasant labour and grain had failed to stimulate growth, having instead provoked considerable outmigration and the expansion of black markets for agricultural and consumer goods. By the late 1960s, the economy was in dire condition. The promises of rapid development and social equality had not been met. Indeed, living standards had fallen on the regime's watch.

Under these circumstances, the radical socialist faction adapted socialism to its needs at the time. Facing pressure to roll back socialist policy in response to lacklustre results, this faction took an aggressive position toward moderates within the party. First it condemned rank and file members' opposition to the continued presence of socialist radicals in the highest levels of government — as Modibo Keita did at the Sixth USRDA Congress in 1962 — and then during the Active Revolution period they argued that “false revolutionaries” had to be purged from the party. Radicals made the case that socialism was failing due to the presence of individuals harbouring reservations about the nominal revolution then under way. As such, it was “a question of purging the Party

²⁹ See “A Franc Examination” in Chapter 3, and “Collectivization” in Chapter 6.

and all [Mali's] institutions of gangrenous elements that [had] been sapping them over the past five years."³⁰ This strategy created a climate of fear such that even ordinary citizens often felt they could not speak freely among friends lest they be denounced to the Popular Militia.³¹ Over time this increasingly "alienated much of the population" from the government.³² And while the cadres who fell from grace during this period could do little to halt these developments, this was not the case with regard to the military. The Keita regime had never trusted the armed forces, which, more so than the party, were dominated by individuals with strong French sympathies – the result of bonds forged during service to the colonial army.³³ On 19 November 1968, with the economy continuing to falter and the regime engaging in an aggressive campaign of intimidation against those who might disagree with its radical socialist orientation, the army arrested President Keita and the other members of the ruling cohort. Noted moderates like Jean-Marie Koné, who had been pushed out of government in the regime's final years, were spared and even recruited into the new regime.

Through its analysis of how the Keita regime practiced politics in postcolonial Mali, this dissertation has contributed to Africanist historiography in several ways. Broadly, it has contributed to the work of extending historical representations of Africa from the colonial era into the postcolonial one – albeit in the limited context of a single nation-state. Well-historicized accounts of postcolonial African political history remain

³⁰ ANM.109.417.Rapport et Compte-Rendu de Mission à l'Intérieur du Mali 1963.1967 09 12 *Compte rendu de la Mission N'Tomikorobougou et Camp des Gardes (Bamako)*. "Il s'agit d'épurer le Parti et toutes nos institutions des éléments gangrenés qui les minaient depuis cinq ans."

³¹ Interview with Oumar Hâne, Bandiagara, 14 January 2012.

³² Frederick Cooper, *Africa in the World: Capitalism, Empire, Nation-State* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 86.

³³ Mann, "Violence, Dignity, and Mali's New Model Army, 1960-1968," 65–82.

few and far between, yet more than half a century has passed since Mali and many other African states shed their colonial yokes. Histories of this era are needed in order to fill considerable gaps in our knowledge, which continues to rely in large measure on studies not grounded in archival or oral data, being instead heavily based on material of a public or propagandistic nature (i.e. media content generated by postcolonial regimes).³⁴

More particularly, this dissertation has contributed to the study of postcolonial politics by approaching it from a new perspective, particularly with regard to the role of ideology. Drawing inspiration from recent works by scholars like Hall, Brennan, and Ivaska, it has taken a processual rather than a theoretical point of view³⁵ — which is to say, it has aimed to explore how the regime practiced politics over time rather than to slot it into an ideological category based on rhetoric. Using such works as points of departure (rather than as frequent points of reference, for although their broad approach to ideology and politics is highly relevant, the eras and areas they examine diverge widely from the topic of this dissertation), this study has developed a portrait of nationalism and socialism that examines how they were used as intellectual tools taken up in contingent historical circumstances to solve particular problems. Yet this dissertation also combines this approach with an analysis of how these tools were not only used by Mali's leaders to shape political outcomes, but also how such ideologies shaped the thinking of Mali's leaders and sometimes led them to make mistakes out of

³⁴ E.g. Snyder, Francis G. *One-Party Government in Mali: Transition toward Control*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965.

³⁵ Bruce S. Hall, *A History of Race in Muslim West Africa, 1600-1960* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); James R. Brennan, *Taija: Making Nation and Race in Urban Tanzania* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2012); Andrew Ivaska, *Cultured States: Youth, Gender, and Modern Style in 1960s Dar Es Salaam* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).

devotion to theory. These ideologies were not simply one or the other – mere instruments serving pragmatic aims, or pure ideals guiding policy without regard for realpolitik – they came to be used in both of these ways at different times by various agents within the USRDA. As such, the practice of politics in the Soudan Français/Mali between 1957 and 1968 was complex, driven as it was by mundane material concerns and also by devotion to revolutionary change. By framing Mali’s political environment in this manner, this dissertation presents a novel means of understanding how both ideas and material concerns shaped Mali’s historical trajectory during this period, often in chaotic and deleterious ways.

In regards, lastly, to the field of Malian postcolonial history, this dissertation has also contributed to the historiography from a documentary perspective. It is, according to available information, the first project of this scope to be based primarily on USRDA records recently made public in the Malian National Archives, and equally the first to exploit to any great extent the French Embassy of Mali’s archives at the Centre d’Archives Diplomatiques à Nantes. Aided by these resources, it has substantiated, with evidence from previously classified government documents and foreign diplomatic reports, many ideas set forth by other scholars in the absence of direct evidence. Others have noted, for example, the regime’s contentious relationship with merchants in the 1960s,³⁶ yet they have not had access to internal USRDA documents detailing the extent of operations conducted to curtail their activities and the diverse ways in which merchants skirted such controls.³⁷ This project has sought to rectify such lacunae in the

³⁶ E.g. Guy Martin, “Socialism, Economic Development and Planning in Mali, 1960-1968,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 10, 1 (1976): 23-46.

³⁷ See Chapter 5, “The Merchants of Menace.”

literature, and thereby to provide a depth and texture to the political history of the Malian First Republic that has heretofore been absent.³⁸

This dissertation has also contributed to the historiography of Malian postcolonial politics by advancing a new way of conceptualizing the socialist turn. By putting the advent of radical socialism in the context of the Mali Federation's collapse, and by exploring the USRDA's moderate nationalist roots, it has highlighted the contingent nature of this development. Although it was not predestined that USRDA leaders would endorse socialism, and certainly not assured that such a radical instance of it would come to prominence, there were nonetheless important historical reasons pushing postcolonial African states toward socialist ideology, and states like Mali toward radical iterations of it, at least in style if not always in substance. While socialism in the broadest sense found widespread acceptance in early postcolonial African states, not all endorsed so radical a version of it as Mali. Indeed, for Keita's erstwhile political partner, Léopold Sédar Senghor, socialism was largely assimilated to a form of humanism and social solidarity.³⁹ In other circumstances, the Keita regime may have promoted a similar incarnation of socialism, one not so marked by the revolutionary rhetoric and grand planning that came to characterize USRDA policy in the 1960s. Yet due to a constellation of factors—including instability and isolation provoked by the Mali Federation's collapse, a tradition of socialist political education

³⁸ Others have noted the policy similarities between the Keita regime and, for example, the Soviet Union (e.g. Gary-Toukara, Sanankoua, and Campmas), yet they have not had access to internal USRDA papers promoting the explicit imitation of Soviet institutions like the NEP (ANM.126.468.BPN Secrétariat 1960-1968.*Etat d'urgence*, 13 Decembre 1960).

³⁹ *L'Essor* no. 3.315, 18 Février 1960, "Une Déclaration de M. Senghor sur l'avenir du Mali."

inaugurated by French colonial activists in the 1940s, the poverty of the colony, and the imperatives of a nationalist agenda — Mali's political history developed in a manner displaying both broad similarities with numerous African states and its own particularities.

This dissertation, of course, is not a comprehensive political history of the Malian First Republic. In covering a relatively broad array of topics — merchants, chiefs, peasants, and politicians — it has necessarily only traced the contours of these groups' histories. Yet while each chapter cannot claim to provide a full or definitive account of its subject, each has contributed to the elucidation of the overall thesis, serving as case studies that illuminate the manner in which the regime practiced politics between 1957-1968, and the complex interplay between ideological and material concerns. There remains a great deal to be explored in each of these subtopics, as there does in the broader subject of connecting Mali's socialist experiment to the continental and indeed global phenomenon of postcolonial socialism. This dissertation has perhaps raised as many questions as it has answered. How, for example, did chiefs, merchants, and peasants think about governance in this era, and how did that affect their understanding of the USRDA's nationalist and socialist project? What form did nationalism take in the post-Keita years, and how did the military regime differentiate its politics from the (ostensibly) revolutionary socialism that preceded it? Such questions require their own studies, and cannot be answered in the scope of this work, yet they nonetheless point the way toward future avenues of fruitful analysis. Mali's postcolonial political history is only beginning to be written, and this study of how politics was practiced in the years falling immediately on either side of independence provides a foundation for further

investigations grounded not in the drive to categorize politicians, but in the desire to understand the practice of politics.

Appendix I: Timeline of Events in Malian Political History, 1936-1968 ¹

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| 1936 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socialists come to power in France under Léon Blum and the Popular Front. The Soudan and other colonies receive an influx of leftist colonial servants and rail workers, some of whom would go on to teach Marxism to locals. |
| 1946 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postwar reforms in colonial rule for the first time allow the existence of local political parties. Mamadou Konaté's Bloc Soudanais, Fily Dabo Sissoko's Parti Progressiste Soudanais (PSP), and Pierre Molet's Parti Démocratique Soudanais (PDS) are created the same year. • Groupes d'Etudes Communistes (GEC) created by. These were attended by Modibo Keita and other figures who would rise to positions of importance in the postcolonial era. E.g. Idrissa Diarra, who would later become the USRDA's political secretary. • October 11-18. Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (RDA) created in Bamako at a conference organized with the aid of the French Communist Party. The Bloc Soudanais and the PDS join to form the Union Soudanaise-Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (US-RDA). |
| 1950 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The RDA splits from the French Communist Party. |
| 1956 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • January. USRDA becomes majority party in the Soudan, overtaking the PSP, which enjoyed the tacit support of the colonial regime. • 23 March. French National Assembly passes the Loi-Cadre, setting the stage for popularly elected local colonial governments with internal autonomy. |
| 1957 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • March. US-RDA wins legislative elections. • May. US-RDA forms first government of the colony comprised of local politicians. Some figures who would be important throughout the 1960s were present here — particularly Jean-Marie Koné, Madeira Keita, and Seydou Badian Kouyaté. |
| 1958 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Soudan votes "Yes" in a referendum on staying in the French Union, as outlined in the constitution of the French Fourth Republic. Modibo |

¹ Drawn chiefly from Bintou Sanankoua, *La Chute de Modibo Keita*, 171-182.

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| | <p>Keita and the USRDA campaign strongly in favour of the "Yes" vote.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24 November. The colony of French Soudan becomes the Republic of Soudan. • December. Canton chieftaincies are declared vacant by the US-RDA government in L'Essor, contradicting pre-election statements that a society without chiefs was inconceivable.² |
| 1959 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • January 12-14. Constitution of the Mali Federation adopted. • 5 February. Union Démocratique Ségovienne (UDS), a rival party from Ségou, banned by decree of USRDA government.³ |
| 1960 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Village of Sakoïba, a UDS stronghold, razed by government forces. Results in several deaths and the imprisonment of many, who remain jailed until the 1968 coup d'état.⁴ • 22 March. Leaders of rival Parti Africain d'Indépendance arrested. USRDA seeks legal means to dissolve party.⁵ • 20 June. Malian Federal Assembly passes law of independence. • 19-20 August. Mali Federation breaks down. • 22 September. Extraordinary Congress of the US-RDA announces adoption of socialist planned economy as independent Republic of Mali, free from all ties and obligations to Senegal and France. Popular militia created the same month. • Following political structure adopted: main governmental decision-making body was the Bureau Politique National (BPN), with Party General Secretary, Modibo Keita, at its head. The BPN contained all appointed ministers, as well as a few other members. |
| 1961 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet shuffle. Mainly represents the reorganization of ministries. The members of this government and that of September 1960 are essentially identical.⁶ |

² *L'Essor* no 2396, 7 Janvier 1957, "Une Conférence de l'Union Soudanaise."

³ ANM.245.876.Corrépondance Ségou 1958-1968.1959.02.05.Decrét no 34 *Dissolution de l'Union Démocratique Ségovienne*.

⁴ François Simonis, "Le Drame de Sakoïba. Magistrats et Autorités Politiques à Ségou (Mali) à La Veille de L'indépendance," *Droit et Cultures* no. 30 (1995): 231-241.

⁵ ANM.18.36.Fédération du Mali 1960.1960 03 24 *Parti Africain de l'Indépendance au Soudan malien alerte au fascisme*.

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18 August. National Assembly adopts Five Year Plan. |
| 1962 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 July. Malian Franc created. • 19 July. Kassoum Touré arrested for possession of CFA francs, illegal under new monetary regulations. • 20 July. Merchants protest as Police Commissariat in Bamako where Touré is held, then before the French Embassy and near the Great Mosque downtown. More than 200 arrested, three killed, and ten injured. • September 10-12. Sixth Congress of the USRDA takes place in Bamako. Disgruntled deputies and Party Committee Presidents from around the country prevented from airing grievances against socialist option. The party's Youth Wing, led by radicals and nicknamed "the little government" for its considerable influence, is dissolved at the behest of moderates. • September 20. Cabinet shuffle. Radical leftists, including Madeira Keita, Seydou Badian Kouyaté and Mamadou Gologo, are demoted. Moderates including Jean-Marie Koné, Baréma Bocoum, and Ousmane Ba, are given positions of increased responsibility.⁷ |
| 1963 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • June. Rail service between Dakar and Bamako restarts. |
| 1964 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • October. Mamadou Faïnké arrested for attempt to start a political party. He |

⁶ Pierre Campmas, "L'Union Soudanaise, Section Soudanaise Du Rassemblement Démocratique Africain 1946-1968" (PhD Thesis, Université de Toulouse, 1978), 301. Président du Gouvernement, chargée de la Défense, de la Sécurité, et des Affaires Etrangères: Modibo Keita

Ministre d'Etat, chargé de la Justice: Jean-Marie Koné

Minsitre de l'Intérieur, de l'Information et du Tourisme: Madiera Keita

Ministre du Plan et du Développement: Seydou Badian Kouyaté

Ministre des Finances: Attaher Maïga

Ministre de la Fonction Publique et des Lois sociales: Ousmane Ba

Ministre du Commerce et de l'Industrie: Hammaciré N'Douré

Ministre des Travaux Publics, des Mines et des Ressources Energétiques: Mamadou Aw

Ministre des Télécommunications et des Transports: Henri Corenthin

Ministre de la Santé: Sominé Dolo

Ministre de l'Éducation Nationale: Abdoulaye Singaré

Secrétaire d'État à la Défense et à la Sécurité: Mamadou Diawara

Secrétaire d'État à la Fonction Publique: Oumar Daba Diawara/Diarra

Secrétaire d'État à l'Information et au Tourisme: Mamadou Gologo

Haut-Commissaire à la Jeunesse et aux Sports: Moussa Keita

⁷ Campmas, "L'Union Soudanaise, Section Soudanaise Du Rassemblement Démocratique Africain 1946-1968," 180-185.

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| | would remain in a Kidal prison until after the coup d'état. |
| 1966 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24 February. Kwamé Nkrumah government overthrown in Ghana. • 1 March. Conseil National de Défense de la Révolution (CNDR) created. • 16 September. Cabinet shuffle. The ministries of the Interior and of Cooperation are dissolved. Long-time moderate government members — Hammaciré N'Douré, Baréma Bocoum and Abdoulaye Singaré — are replaced by technocrats. Surprisingly, Seydou Badian Kouyaté no longer holds a post in the highest levels of government, despite the high esteem in which he is held by Modibo Keita.⁸ • 20 September. Modibo Keita modifies the structure of government by announcing five commissions of the party — Political, Economic and Financial, Administrative and Judicial Affairs, Social and Cultural, and Press — with ill-defined authority over matters of party and state.⁹ |

⁸ Ibid., 410.

Jean-Marie Koné: Ministre d'état chargé du Plan et de la coordination des affaires économiques et financières.

Madeira Keita: Ministre de la Justice

Ousmane Ba: Ministre des Affaires Étrangères

Ministres Délégué à la Présidence, Chargé de la Défense et de la Sécurité: Mamadou Diakité

Ministre du Commerce: Attaher Maïga

Ministre de l'Information et du Tourisme: Mamadou Gologo

Ministre des Travaux Publics et des Communications: Mamadou Aw

Ministre des Finances: Louis Nègre

Ministre Chargé du Contrôle des Sociétés et Entreprises d'État

Ministre de la Santé et des Affaires Sociales: Sominé Dolo

Ministre de l'Éducation Nationale: Seydou Tall

Ministre du Travail: Oumar Baba Diarra

Ministre Chargé du Haut-Commissariat à la Jeunesse et aux Sports: Moussa Keita

Secrétaire d'État à la Présidence, Chargé de l'Énergie et des Industries: Salif N'Diaye

Secrétaire d'État à la Présidence, Chargé de l'Énergie et des Industries: Sa

⁹ As Keita announced in the communiqué: "Chacun des présidents de ces commissions devient Ministre délégué et les autres membres ont prérogative de conseillers techniques des départements ministériels. En outre, les membres des commissions sont dégagés de leurs fonctions actuelles. Ces commissions seront saisies de tous les problèmes nationaux sur lesquels elles ont compétence générale dans le cadre de leurs attributions. Elles auront à faire des études approfondies sur toutes les questions intéressant la vie du parti et de l'état, donc de la nation toute entière. Elles constituent de véritables départements au niveau du Bureau Politique National." (Campmas 411-412.)

Idrissa Diarra led the Political Commission, Seydou Badian Kouyaté the Economic and Financial Commission, Madeira Keita the Administrative and Judicial Affairs

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| 1967 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 February. Franco-Malian Monetary Accords signed. The Malian Franc was devalued fifty percent. Mali re-enters the CFA Franc zone, with its francs guaranteed by the French government and interchangeable for CFA at a rate of 1:1. • 18 July. Active Revolution announced. • 22 August. BPN dissolved. CNDR assumes full control of government. Moderates including Jean-Marie Koné are removed from government. |
| 1968 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 22 January. National Assembly dissolved. • 26 June. Ouélléssebougou Revolt. Security forces kill two, injure ten, and arrest eighty. • 19 November. Coup d'état led by 14 low-ranking officers ousts Modibo Keita and USRDA regime. A Military Committee under the leadership of Lieutenant Moussa Traoré. Leftists — including Modibo Keita, Seydou Badian Kouyaté, Madeira Keita, Mamadou Gologo, and others — are arrested and subsequently imprisoned. Many moderates — including Jean-Marie Koné, Louis Nègre, and Mahamane Alassane Haïdara — remain free. |

Commission, Gabou Diawara the Social and Cultural Commission, and Ousmane Bâ the Press Commission. These appointments represent Idrissa Diarra's demotion and Modibo Keita's intention to place the party firmly in the hands of socialist radicals.

Appendix II: Key USRDA Members

There are a number of important personages with whom familiarity is essential to an understanding of political developments in the 1960s. While this is not an exhaustive list, it is meant to provide context regarding those names appearing most frequently in this study. The names in bold are — in the author's opinion — the most important political figures of the period.

Mamadou Aw. Named *Ministre des Travaux Publics* in May 1957, then *Ministre des Travaux Publics, des Transports, des Télécommunications et des Mines* in 1959. He would maintain this latter post until 1969, all the way through the Keita years and even briefly into the Traoré era — the only person to maintain a ministerial post so long. Although Campmas suggests his longevity may have been due to the fact that he was “the very archetype of the progressive technocrat” and was hardly ever involved in the political struggles that took place over the decade,¹ he did in fact call President Keita’s authority into question in the aftermath of the Mali Federation’s breakdown, along with Seydou Badian Kouyaté, by making “fierce declarations” at the UN condemning France’s war in Algeria against Keita’s orders.²

¹ Pierre Campmas, “L’Union Soudanaise, Section Soudanaise Du Rassemblement Démocratique Africain 1946-1968,” 158.

² CADN.Bamako.Amb.9.Incidents de Ségou 1959 et 1960 et Politique Au Soudan.*Compte-Rendu no 47 – Quinzaine du 4 au 18 octobre 1960.* “Après les déclarations violentes de M. Aw Mamadou, le Président Modibo Keita avait fait annoncer par la radio qu’il se rendrait personnellement à l’O.N.U. Il avait été vexé par l’acte d’indiscipline de sa délégation qui mettait en cause son autorité...”

Ousmane Bâ. Became Ministre du Travail et de la Fonction Publique 1960, then Ministre de la Fonction Publique et des Lois sociales in 1962, then Ministre des Affaires Étrangères in September 1966. A radical socialist.

Baréma Bocoum. Early party member who was part of the Bureau Politique from 1952 to 1955, only leaving it on being transferred to a position in Mopti. In 1958 he regained a spot in the Bureau as Délégué au Comité de Coordination.³ Bocoum was key to the USRDA's implantation in Mopti. In the 1956 he was elected as a deputy in the French National Assembly, replacing party leader Mamadou Konaté, who died in that year.⁴ A moderate.

Idrissa Diarra. A founding member of the USRDA, and acted as its political secretary from 1955 until 1967,⁵ when the party was reorganized and he was effectively demoted. Diarra was a key figure who embodied the centre-left socialist faction of the regime. In the later years of Keita's rule he would be marginalized, as he was not considered to be sufficiently radical.

Gabou Diawara. Beginning in 1955-1956, Diawara was the main leader of the USRDA youth wing until the 1968 coup d'état. A radical, he was made a member of the CNDR in 1966. He played a role, although not a leading one, in the Active Revolution period.⁶

Mamadou Gologo. Became Directeur du Service de l'Information in 1958. He was responsible for the Party newspaper *L'Essor* from 1963 onward, and became Minister of Propaganda in 1964. A noted radical socialist who influenced opinion

³ Ibid., 181.

⁴ Ibid., 53.

⁵ Ibid., 134.

⁶ Ibid., 183-184.

through media in particular, he was, with Seydou Badian Kouyaté, one of the most pro-Chinese members of the regime.⁷

Mahamane Alassane Haïdara. Became Président de l'Assemblée Territoriale in August 1958,⁸ and of the Assemblée Nationale after independence, until it was dissolved in 1968. He was the only moderate to be made a member of the CNDR in 1966, despite the fact that, as a descendant of one of Timbuktu's ruling families, he embodied the (ostensibly) feudal, chiefly, and religious authority the radicals on the CNDR sought to eliminate. Campmas contends his presence was fundamentally a token, meant to soften the blow that more important moderates like Jean-Marie Koné had been excluded from the Counsel.

Madeira Keita. According to Gregory Mann, a contender for most significant politician of the era.⁹ Played a key role in organizing leftist politics in Guinea – indeed, in founding the Guinean branch of the RDA with Sékou Touré – before returning to the Soudan in the 1950s and becoming Minister of the Interior and of Information in 1957.¹⁰ He held this position until September 1962, making notable use of it in 1958 to sign the order abolishing the canton chieftaincies, at which point he was made Minister of Justice, a position he retained until 1968. As one of the party's leading radicals, he remained important and active on the CNDR after the BPN was dissolved in 1967.

Modibo Keita. A schoolteacher who studied in the GECs in the 1940s. When USRDA

⁷ Ibid., 182-183.

⁸ Ibid., 181.

⁹ Gregory Mann, *From Empires to NGOs in the West African Sahel: The Road to Nongovernmentality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

¹⁰ Campmas, "L'Union Soudanaise," 153.

President Mamadou Konaté died in 1956, he took up the leadership role, ultimately becoming President of the Republic of Mali — a position he maintained until the 19 November 1968 coup d'état. While he was long known as a conciliator of the party's various factions, and indeed considered a moderate by some, in 1967 he sided with the leftist faction, and was thus instrumental in the regime's further radicalization in 1967-1968.

Jean-Marie Koné. President of the Government and Vice-President of the USRDA for much of the 1960s, Koné was a key figure from the southern region of Sikasso and the regime's most prominent moderate. Having no apparent socialist inclinations, he was one of the party's regional leaders — along with other moderate figures including Baréma Bocoum from Mopti and Mahamane Alassane Haïdara from Timbuktu. He enjoyed great popularity in his home region, and was instrumental in securing its allegiance to the party in the 1957 legislative elections. In the same year, he was made Vice-President of the Soudan's governing council (in the context of the Loi-Cadre), and would be USRDA Vice-President after independence.¹¹ In 1967 he was sidelined by the CNDR, only to be incorporated briefly into the government of Moussa Traoré after the 1968 coup d'état.

Seydou Badian Kouyaté. Became Minister of Rural Economy in 1957,¹² and then Minister of Planning after the 22 September 1960 decision to develop a planned socialist economy. In 1962 he became Minister of Development — a less significant post — with the planning portfolio given to Jean-Marie Koné. Also one of the party's most ardent radical socialists, he remained an important member of the CNDR after

¹¹ Ibid., 152.

¹² Ibid., 153-159.

the National Political Bureau was dissolved in 1967. The author of a number of novels, plays, and essays, he is well known as an intellectual. While his legacy as a writer has given him international recognition, this intellectual output does not seem to have accorded him a particularly elevated status in the Malian political sphere of the 1960s.

Attaher Maïga. Elected to the Territorial Assembly in 1957. Became Président de la Commission des Finances during the same period. Became the first Ministre des Finances, a position he held until 1966, at which point he was made Ministre du Commerce until the coup d'état.¹³ Not considered a major figure in the internal political disputes between leftist and moderate factions, his position in the USRDA's political spectrum remains ambiguous.

Yacouba Maïga. Gained a position in the Bureau Politique in 1955, retaining it until its dissolution in 1967, at which point he became part of the CNDR.¹⁴ In August 1967 President Keita named him one of three Ministres-Délégués à la Présidence, along with Seydou Badian Kouyaté and Gabou Diawara.¹⁵ In the final years of the regime he led a delegation of the CNDR in various political inquiries around the country. As such, he remained close to President Keita to the very end, and was an important radical socialist.

Hammaciré N'Douré. Became Ministre du Commerce, de l'Industrie et des Mines in April 1959. Moved to Ministre Délégué à la Présidence in September 1962. A known moderate who belonged to the PSP in the late colonial era, he was pushed

¹³ Ibid., 215-216.

¹⁴ Ibid., 47.

¹⁵ ANM.118.450. Correspondance et Rapport Présidence du Gouvernement 1960-1968.30 *Août 1967 Note pour le CNDR.*

out of government by the radicalizing regime in 1966.¹⁶

¹⁶ Campmas, “L’Union Soudanaise,” 154-155.

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¹ The Malian National Archives have two locations, both in Bamako. The sources consulted in this study are housed at the location in Hamdallaye/ACI 2000. As regards classification, the records are organized at the top level by carton and at the sublevel by dossier; each carton can have multiple dossiers. In this dissertation, carton has been listed first, followed by dossier number, dossier name, and finally document name (in italics). Consider the following citation as an example: “ANM.118.450.Correspondance et Rapport Présidence du Gouvernement 1960-1968.30 Août 1967 Note pour le CNDR.” “ANM” refers to “Archives Nationales du Mali”; 118 refers to the carton; 450 refers to the dossier; “Correspondance et Rapport Présidence du Gouvernement 1960-1968” is the dossier title; and “30 Août 1967 Note pour le CNDR” is the identifier of the particular document referenced.

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² The Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes houses the records of the French embassy in Bamako. Thus, “CADN.Bamako.Amb” is shorthand for “Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes – Bamako Ambassade.”

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| | | | |
|---------------------|-----------------|------------|---|
| Sodiougou Ouologuem | 13 January 2012 | Bandiagara | Participant in the <i>pionniers</i> program during the Keita years. |
| Fatoumata Ombotimbé | 13 January 2012 | Bandiagara | Participant in the <i>pionniers</i> program during the Keita years. |
| Daouda Garango | 13 January 2012 | Bandiagara | Griot. |
| Hassane Traoré | 14 January 2012 | Bandiagara | Well sinker. |
| Samba Coulibaly | 14 January 2012 | Bandiagara | Merchant. |
| Oumar Hâne | 14 January | Bandiagara | Member of the Popular Militia |

| | | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|--|
| | 2012 | | during the Keita years. |
| Cheikh Oumar Yattassaye | 15 January 2012 | Bandiagara | Participant in the <i>pionniers</i> program during the Keita years (student). |
| Bokary Cissé | 15 January 2012 | Bandiagara | Student during Keita years. |
| Amadou Traoré | 15 January 2012 | Bandiagara | Student in Quranic school during Keita years. |
| Padial Diepkilé | 17 January 2012 | Dé (Bandiagara) | Soldier in the colonial and Malian armies, 1953-1962. |
| Abdoullaye Diepkilé | 17 January 2012 | Dé (Bandiagara) | Student during Keita years. |
| Domo Telly | 17 January 2012 | Dé (Bandiagara) | Nurse; imprisoned in 1964 on suspicion of association with Mamadou Faïnké, who had attempted to establish an opposition party. |
| Sana Timbiné | 18 January 2012 | Dé (Bandiagara) | Participant in the Service Civique during the Keita years; farmer. |
| Sana Diepkilé | 18 January 2012 | Dé (Bandiagara) | Merchant. |
| Bakari Diambilaba | 18 January 2012 | Dé (Bandiagara) | Leader of Dé's Vigilance Brigade during the Keita years; weaver. |
| Sala dit N'Dogo Telly | 19 January 2012 | Dé (Bandiagara) | Farmer. |
| Aoua Traoré | 19 January 2012 | Dé (Bandiagara) | Participant in the <i>pionniers</i> in the Keita years. |
| Oumar Semoguem | 19 January 2012 | Dé (Bandiagara) | Participant in the <i>pionniers</i> ; student. |
| John McKinney | 21 January 2012 | Sévaré | Missionary; born in Dogon country. |
| Youssouf Traoré | 27 January 2012 | Bamako | Governor of Kayes region during the Keita years, and a founding member of the RDA in 1946. |
| Oumar Makalou | 1 February 2012 | Bamako | Served as <i>Contrôleur d'État</i> in Keita's government. |
| Hassane Guindo | 3 February 2012 | Bamako | General Secretary for Foreign Relations in the JUSRDA in the 1950s; held various high-level |

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| | | | positions during the Keita years, including Director General of Air Mali, Adjunct Cabinet Chief to the Ministry of Public Works and Transport, ambassador to China. |
| Samba Sow | 3 February 2012 | Bamako | General Secretary for Information in the JUSRDA in the 1950s; was among the creators of the <i>Institut des Prévoyances Sociales</i> (INPS), where was an accountant. Director General of the <i>Entreprise nationale de construction et d'outillages mécaniques</i> (ENCOM), 1962-1968. |
| Pascal James Imperato | 4 February 2012 | Telephone | Medical doctor serving in Mali during the Keita years; scholar of Malian history and culture. |
| Oumar Ongoïba | 4 February 2012 | Bamako | Fled Bandiagara for Bamako upon recruitment in to the <i>service civique</i> . |
| Dr. Seydou Ousmane Diallo | 6 February 2012 | Bamako | Served as Regional Director of Health for the region of Mopti from 1967-1974. |
| Fodé Diawara | 8 February 2012 | Bamako | Served as customs official in the region of Sikasso during the Keita years. Is currently the chief of the Oulofobougou-Bolibana neighbourhood in Bamako. |
| Victor Sy | 9 February 2012 | Bamako | A leader of the <i>Etudiants Soudanais à Dakar</i> and a member of the Parti Africain d'Indépendance in the late 1950s. From 1962 to 1968 taught physics and chemistry at the <i>École Nationale d'Ingénieurs</i> (ENI) and at the <i>École Centrale pour l'Industrie, le Commerce et l'Administration</i> (ECICA). |
| Sira Bamba Sissoko | 10 February 2012 | Bamako | Served as an administrator at Gabriel Touré Hospital, Bamako, during the Keita years. |
| N'Faly Diouf | 10 February 2012 | Bamako | Diouf was conscripted to build a road joining Bamako to the Western city of Kayes. Like most of the other youth involved, he fled. |

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| Abdoulaye Amadou Sy | 11 February 2012 | Bamako | Served as a Consultant to the Ministry of Finance from 1967 onward. Later served as Malian Ambassador to China. |
| Bintou Sanankoua | 13 February 2012 | Bamako | Professor of Malian History, Institut des Sciences Humaines; former deputy in the Malian National Assembly (democratic era). |
| Garba Touré | 14 February 2012 | Bamako | Served as Adjunct Subdivision Chief in Ménaka (Gao) from 1960-1961 and Chief of the Central Subdivision of Sikasso in 1961, and as Cabinet Chief for the region of Ségou from 1961-1968. |
| Baba Akhib Haïdara | 15 February 2012 | Bamako | Served as a teacher at Askia Mohammed highschool, then as Director of Public Works, then Professor at the Ecole Normale Supérieure, and finally a teacher at the Malian military college, the Ecole Interarmes de Kati, during the Keita years. After the fall of the military regime in 1991, he was USRDA presidential candidate in the 1992 elections, losing to Alpha Oumar Konaré. |
| Mahamane Touré | 15 February 2012 | Bamako | Served as General Secretary of the Executive Bureau of the JURDA in the Gao region (comprising modern-day Gao, Timbuktu, and Kidal) in the Keita era. |
| Youssouf Diawara | 16 February 2012 | Bamako | Studied at taught economics in France during the Keita years. Served on the provincial bureau of the Fédération des étudiants d'Afrique noire en France (FEANF) in Caen. |
| Anonymous | 17 February 2012 | Bamako | Served as an adjunct <i>commandant de cercle</i> in western Mali during the Keita years. |
| Nima Doucouré | 18 February 2012 | Bamako | One of Mali's most important merchants during the Keita years. |

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| Issa Ongoïba | 21 February 2012 | Bamako | Received military training in the USSR from 1960-1962. In 1963-1964 he served as a sous-lieutenant in the Malian armed forces, during the first Tuareg conflict. From 1964-1968 he was an instructor at the Ecole Supérieure du Parti. |
| Abderhamane Diawara | 22 February 2012 | Bamako | Was a primary and secondary school student during the Keita years, participating in the <i>pionniers</i> program until 1964. |
| Hamady Diallo | 23 February 2012 | Bamako | Served as Directeur de cabinet du secrétaire d'Etat aux affaires sociales and later as Governor of the Mopti region during the Keita years. |
| Cheick Cissé | 24 February 2012 | Bamako | Cissé completed his doctoral thesis, "Contribution à l'Etude des Institutions Politiques du Mali," in 1976 at the University of Paris XI. In 2012 he was Second Vice-President of the Commission électorale nationale indépendante (CENI). |
| Mohammedoun Dicko | 25 February 2012 | Bamako | Taught at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure during the Keita years. |
| Amborco Dolo | 26 February 2012 | Bamako | Served for 15 years in the colonial administration as <i>chef du personnel des cadres locaux</i> , before being named <i>commandant de cercle</i> of Kolondiéba by the Keita government. |
| Boubacar Sidibé | 27 February 2012 | Bamako | Served as Secretary of the First African Youth Festival of 1958, as a representative of the JUSRDA. Was later Chef d'Etat-major de la Milice Populaire during the later Keita years. |
| Mantala Baby | 27 February 2012 | Bamako | A founding member of the USRDA in 1946. Served as a colonial civil servant in the 1940s and 50s, and an administrator in Keita's |

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| | | | government. |
| Sidi Zouboye | 29 February 2012 | Kati | Zouboye's father served as a deputy in the Keita government. He was a student at Askia Mohammed highschool in 1960, leaving to studying mining in Belgrade in 1963. |
| Hamidou Magassa | 1 March 2012 | Bamako | Was a student in Bamako during the Keita years. Is currently Director of the Service d'Experts pour les Ressources Naturelles et l'Environnement au Sahel (SERNES) in Bamako. |
| Jean Bosco Konaré | 2 March 2012 | Bamako | Was a student during the Keita years. His family held the canton chieftaincy of Torodo until the institution was abolished in 1958. Later he would become a noted historian and a deputy in the Second Republic. |
| Sékéné Mody Cissoko | 3 March 2012 | Bamako | Was a doctoral student in France and later a researcher in Dakar during the Keita years. Served as first President of the Association des historiens africains in 1972. Was a longtime researcher at the Université Cheikh Anta Diop and at the Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire in Dakar. |
| Chérif Keita | 4 March 2012 | Bamako | A student during the Keita years. Professor in the French Department, Carleton College, USA. |
| Filifing Sacko | 5 March 2012 | Bamako | Served as an anthropological researcher at the Institut des Sciences Humaines in Bamako during the Keita years. |
| Mamadou Touré | 6 March 2012 | Bamako | Worked at Radio Soudan and later at Radio Mali, from 1956-1960 as office staff and from 1960 onward as a reporter. |
| Salah Niaré | 6 March 2012 | Bamako | Served as Minister of Agriculture in the Keita government from 1960- |

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| | | | 1962, and again in 1966-1967. Descended from one of Bamako's founding families, his uncle Maridié Niaré was canton chief in Bamako until 1958. |
| Kansoro Sogoba | 7 March 2012 | Bamako | Permanent Secretary of the Popular Militia until 1968. |
| Seydou Badian Kouyaté | 7 March 2012 | Bamako | Minister of Rural Economy and of Planning, 1960-1962; Minister of Development, 1962-1968. |
| Oumar Hammadoun Dicko | 9 March 2012 | Bamako | Son of Hammadoun Dicko, PSP leader killed by the USRDA regime. Current leader of the reconstituted PSP. |
| Guédiouma Samaké | 10 March 2012 | Ouélessébougou | Served as a soldier in the Malian armed forces during the Keita years. Later served as mayor of Ouélessébougou. |
| Lansina Konaté | 10 March 2012 | Ouélessébougou | Former member of the Popular Militia. |
| François Coulibaly | 11 March 2012 | Sougoula | Was a student and a farmer during the Keita years. |
| Oumar Doumbia | 11 March 2012 | Dialakoro | Farmer. Was taken prisoner during the Ouélessébougou revolt of 1968. |
| Abdoulaye Traoré | 12 March 2012 | Sikasso | A student during the Keita years. Nephew of Sikasso's last canton chief, Fatogoma Traoré. |
| Ousmane Traoré | 12 March 2012 | Sikasso | Senior member of the chiefly Traoré family of Sikasso. |
| Sina Diourté | 14 March 2012 | Sikasso | Founding member of the USRDA in 1946. Served as a teacher during the Keita years. |
| Fousséini & Soungalo Dembélé | 15 March 2012 | Fama | Farmers. |
| Abdoulaye Tiémogo Dembélé | 15 March 2012 | Fama | Head of the JUSRDA in Fama during the Keita years. Currently representative of the village chief. |
| N'Faly Touré | 15 March 2012 | Fama | Was a talibé in a quranic school in Ségou during the Keita years. |
| Abdoulaye | 16 March | Kléla | Farmer. |

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| Bengaly | 2012 | | |
| Diakalia Bengaly (and eight other men) | 16 March 2012 | Gongasso | Farmers. |
| Fatogoma Bengaly | 16 March 2012 | Gongasso | Village chief; his father was village chief during the Keita years. |
| Mamadou Bengaly | 16 March 2012 | Kléla | Farmer and merchant. |
| Cheikh Tidiani Guissé | 17 March 2012 | Bamako | Modibo Keita's <i>chef de cabinet</i> in 1968; later Mali's ambassador to numerous countries including the People's Republic of China. |
| Boubacar Séga Diallo | 20 March 2012 | Bamako | Professor of African History, École Nationale Supérieure. |
| Bakary Diallo | 20 March 2012 | Bamako | Chef d'arrondissement, Blendio (Sikasso), April 1964-February 1967; chef d'arrondissement, Monimpébougou (Ségou), February 1967-November 1968. |
| Dotien Coulibaly | 20 March 2012 | Bamako | State Tax Inspector (Contrôleur d'État) during the Keita years. |
| Albakaye Ousmane Kounta | 21 March 2012 | Bamako | Teacher during the Keita years; sent to Moscow by USRDA to study planning; appointed director of the Régie des Transports du Mali after the 1968 coup d'état. |
| Meyan Diarra | 21 March 2012 | Bamako | Special Secretary to the Commandant de cercle of Bamako, 1957-1960; Secretariat Chief for the Governor of Ségou, 1962-1964; Women's General Secretary (ca. 1968, level unknown); active in trade unionism. |
| Salah Niaré | 21 March 2012 | Bamako | Minister of Agriculture, Husbandry, and Water and Forests, 1960-1962, and 1966-1967. |

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