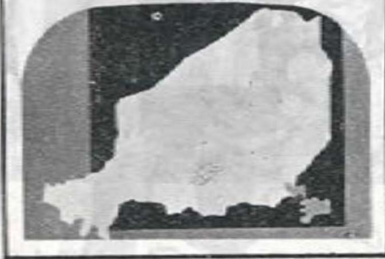


# Niger: neocolonial heart of Africa



**N**iger is a little-known country. It is located in the central part of Africa, more than 500 kilometers from the sea. It is bordered by Mali, Algeria, Libya, Chad, Nigeria and Upper Volta.

The 1188 000 square kilometers with insufficient water supply and influenced by the climate of the Sahara (2/3 of its territory falls within the sands of the Sahara) weigh heavily on an almost primitive agricultural economy, with 95% of its labor force working in agriculture. With 67% of its foreign trade in the hands of French companies and its main economic sectors controlled by foreign monopolies, Niger, which in 1960 became a nominally independent republic, languishes in misery, without plans or prospects.

The discovery of a 360 sq. km., 20 000 ton layer of uranium reserve surprisingly

brought to light the plans of the French Atomic Energy Commission, but the prospects for the people of Niger appear more somber than ever: reinforcement of the France-Niger military "collaboration," greater economic and political dependence...

For the 3 000 000 inhabitants of Niger, who in 1964 had scarcely 30 doctors, 2 hospitals and 60 dispensaries, while there were only 30 students (for all the ligatures of the economy) in the foreign universities, the plans that the local administration of Diiori now presents as the salvation of the country, have very little value.

What prospects can the 39 students who graduate from the Teachers School offer to the 34 448 (of the 587 916 school age children) who attend school (5.8% —the lowest percentage in Africa).

What prospects, finally, can be offered by the neocolonial administrators represented in the person of Hammani Diiori?

Diiori, the president of Niger and one of the principal Francophiles in Africa, upon proclaiming Niger's independence, militated in the Niger section (Niger Progressive Party —PPN) of the Rassemblement Democratique Africain (RDA), the regional organization that headed the national liberation movement in the zones known as West Africa and French Equatorial Africa.

In 1958 the French forces of repression removed the legal government of Djibo Bakary and installed a puppet government representing the foreign interests, headed by Hammani Diiori. The Diiori regime suppressed freedom of expression, of assembly, of trade union and political organization.

Faced with this the UDN, which later took the name of Sawaba (freedom), set itself the task of forming a union with the revolutionary forces to confront the reactionary line of the right wing of the RDA. In this manoeuvr, united with the BNA (Bloc



Nigerien d'Action), together constituting the Mouvement Socialiste Africain (MSA), they then joined the regional organization (PRA), Parti du Regroupement Africain.

At the same time indiscriminate repression was begun against the Sawaba, which was made illegal in 1959. From then on savage repression has hung over those who try to express their hostility to the regime. Especially during 1964 and 1965, crimes such as public executions, hanging, nocturnal assassinations, and rape have been daily occurrences.

On his part, Diiori has tried to consolidate his political positions: Dabomey, the Marfil Coast and Upper Volta were united to the Council of the Entente. In 1961 he signed an accord with France by means of which French troops could operate freely in the country: French officers would serve as "advisors" to their Nigerian colleagues and the troops evacuated from Upper Volta and Mali would be brought to this desert country. At the same time it has had the support of the United States, which has provided a great quantity of arms and munitions, while it has asked Israel to send military instructors.

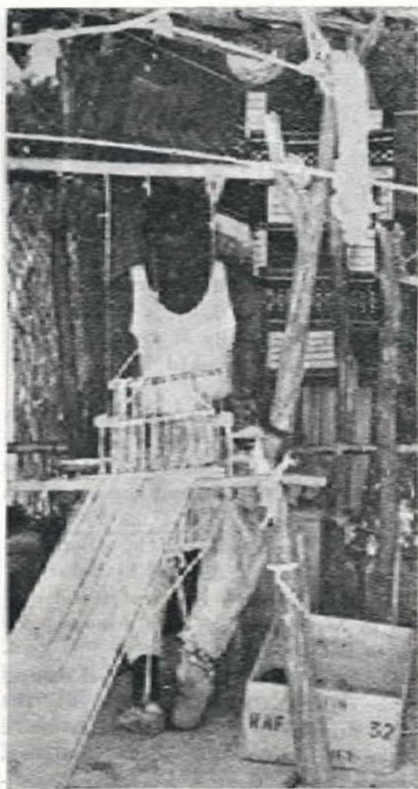
Since then two parties and two positions have become defined: The Union for the French African Community (UFAC), the name that the PPN acquired to point out its role as principal agent of the French interests in Africa, directed by Diiori and Hamma; the Sawaba, directed by Bakary.

Diiori and his party represent neocolonialism in Niger, although they demagogically try to hide this.

The Sawaba Party stands for real changes in the country; thus Bakary declared: "The social structure of Niger would be favorable to the development of a socialist revolution, because apart from a handful of well-to-do individuals, the rest of the population is made up of peasant masses who have nothing to lose."

In order to better organize the country's struggle, Sawaba created the Democratic Front of the Fatherland, open to all true patriots of the nation, and with a nationalist and democratic program.

In the political sphere, the program fundamentally advocates: effective, sovereign and complete independence, which among other things assumes the withdrawal of French troops stationed in Niger; the re-establishment of the basic liberties; the



adoption of a political line tending toward a true union of the African peoples; the practice of an independent international policy and the adoption of the principles of neutrality; and the construction of a government of national unity, representative of all the categories of the country.

Economically, it plans for the application of a policy of planned development, and the elimination of all French economic enterprises; the withdrawal of the interna-

tional economic bodies that signify a limitation of Niger's freedom of action; development of foreign trade and commercial relations with all the African states; exploitation of the natural resources of Niger, and basically the rational development and exploitation of the agricultural reserves based on the equalitarian distribution of the land that would facilitate Agrarian Reform.

Finally the Sawaba sets forth a broad program of health education, and of the recuperation of the culture and art of the different ethnic groups that live in Niger.

But a program of Socialist Revolution, as is set out by the Sawaba, will take power with difficulty without having dislodged the great, foreign exploitative companies.

And in Niger the people had the experience of a party (Sawaba) that had leaders in power—although only formally—who were expelled by the traitors supported by the old settlers. These leaders were persecuted and assassinated, only for trying to initiate their own policy.

Later, in 1965 when they organized themselves militarily for the struggle against Diouri and his "advisors," the latter unfolded the greatest repressive violence of which they were capable.

That guerrilla group was momentarily defeated. There followed in Niger the misery and lack of prospects for the people under the administration of Diouri or others like him.

The patriots of Niger know this, but they know as well that through the defeats there is forged a final triumph: and that is that for them what has passed is part of a struggle that can only be stopped by victory. Today Niger is among the peoples conscious of the necessity of waging armed struggle until they achieve their complete liberation.