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Ivory Coast

A ‘Civil War' that is French and Neo-Colonial

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The civil war in Ivory Coast, which started in September 2002, has led to the de facto partition of the country, between the North and the Centre controlled by the rebellion of the New Forces (FN) and the South held by the National Armed Forces of Ivory Coast (FANCI), loyal to President Laurent Gbagbo. It entered a new phase at the beginning of November 2004, when the French army destroyed the FANCI's air force.

Trampling on the accords of Linas-Marcoussis (January 2003) and Accra III (July 2004), Laurent Gbagbo launched on November 4 "Operation Dignity", an air and land offensive against the positions of the New Forces. In spite of the "unlimited war" promised by FN leader Guillaume Soro, this offensive didn't encounter any serious opposition in the first two days. But in the course of the operation the FANCI air force bombed a French military camp at Bouké, in the centre of the country and situated in the zone controlled by the New Forces. Stationed in the country (since September 2002) in the framework of "Operation Unicorn", the French Army also has a mandate from the United Nations Operation in Ivory Coast (ONUCI) as a "force of intervention.”

[https://internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/IvpryFrenchfm-2.jpg]
Laurent Gbagbo hand-in-hand with Dominique de Villepin, French foreign minister

The bombardment left nine French soldiers and a US civilian dead and thirty injured. In an immediate reaction, the French army destroyed the aircraft that had carried out the attack, then, on orders from the French President, its air force destroyed the entire Ivory Coast air force. This disproportionate riposte sparked off a mobilisation of Gbagbo's supporters in Abidjan: there was anti-French and anti-opposition violence, and demonstrators headed for the permanent French base of the 43rd Battalion of Marine Infantry (BIMA), as well as for the airport and the Hotel d'Ivoire, which is occupied by the French army (it is situated about 500 yards from the presidential residence!).

A murderous confrontation ensued between the French Army, which opened fire, and demonstrators led by the "Young Patriots", as the FANCI looked on. The official Ivorian balance sheet is of about 60 Ivorian dead and over a thousand wounded, victims of the French troops - a ‘Franco-Ivorian war'.

"You don't get away with killing...French people"

At an emergency summit in Abuja (Nigeria), the heads of state of the African Union adopted a resolution condemning the violation of the ceasefire by the FANCI and the attack on the French military camp and entrusting South African president Thabo Mbeki - who was not present and had not even sent anyone to represent him - with the task of holding talks with the (Ivorian...) protagonists. On November 15 the UN Security Council adopted in its turn Resolution 1572, proposed by France, by which it "imposes an embargo on arms for the Ivory Coast and envisages freezing the financial assets and restricting travel abroad of any person threatening the process of peace and national reconciliation in this country.”

[https://internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/ivoryconfrontation.jpg]
French soldiers clash with government supporters

In France, a propaganda campaign was unleashed by the President himself, echoed massively in the media. [1] The Africa experts of the main French newspapers seized the occasion to recall that " Françafrique " didn't exist any more: all that had been dead and buried for a long time, according to them. [2] This claim was invalidated by the facts, which as everyone knows are stubborn things.

Gone was the air of superiority that had been manifested with regard to the US invasion of Iraq. Back came the reflexes of the imperialist ethos, of old colonial habits, of ontological superiority, "white" or French. These attitudes were expressed by the media as well as by the governing right and the opposition social democracy. And also by tough talk from one of the vanguard sectors of colonialism, still nostalgic for the colonial epoch, the army of the French Republic: "You don't get away with killing French people.” Should one get away with killing Africans?

There was no compassion for the families of the Ivorian civilians who were victims of the French army, and whose existence was scarcely admitted. The property and belongings looted from French families and companies in Abidjan got more attention than the Ivorian casualties of the army of the French Republic. An army that stooped, via its spokesperson (on the radio station RFI on 10 November 2004) to blaming these deaths on the FANCI, after its own Chief of the General Staff had proudly spoken of his troops who might have "wounded or killed a few people", while "showing very great calm and complete control of the violence.”

This version was backed up by the Minister of Defence, who added that the crowd of Ivorians was "armed with Kalashnikovs and pistols" [3] "There were no doubt some casualties; we don't know exactly, because when things happen at night, it is extremely difficult to know what's going on.” In the darkness of the night, with all these Blacks around, they nevertheless managed to make out "Kalashnikovs" and "pistols.”..The French side could also speak proudly of its "soldiers in the service of peace", certain that we are living in an epoch where news is quickly rubbed off the slate; the French army had already fired without warning on unarmed Gbagboist demonstrators in November 2003 at M'Bahiakro, seriously wounding three of them.

[https://internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/gif/ivorycoastwhereinAfrica-2.gif]

The haughty arrogance shown at the highest level of the French state reeks of colonialism. For the French Minister of Defence, on the evening of November 6 "we were in an insurrectional situation.”..in Ivory Coast. The insurgents being, need we remind you, the partisans of the Ivorian government! These are the remarks of someone who is nostalgic for the colonial epoch. French head of state Jacques Chirac struck the same note, addressing students in Marseilles in the good old tradition of colonial ethnology, in its Negrophile version: "The Africans are by nature joyful. They are enthusiastic. They smile. They clap. They are happy..." [4] .

"Ivorian" crisis? "Franco-Ivorian" crisis? "Françafrican" crisis, or crisis of French domination in Africa, as is implied in reactions like those of the Open Letter to Koffi Annan by Burkinabé intellectuals denouncing France, or the Open Letter of the Committee of Initiative of Senegalese Intellectuals to the French Ambassador to Senegal ("France is behaving like a third belligerent") and other Pan-Africanist reactions? [5]

The result of Linas-Marcoussis

What happened is one of the logical consequences of the solution to the Ivorian crisis initiated by the French state and underwritten by the African Union, then by the United Nations, at Linas-Marcoussis. These accords have become a dogma for national reconciliation, whereas they carried within them the germs of conflict. Allow me to remind readers that after the signature of what are called the Accords of National Reconciliation, I considered that they were opposed to the interests of the Ivorian people and said that they were likely to "make the Ivory Coast even more of a nightmare." [6] Because the purpose of the manoeuvre was obvious: on the pretext of opposing the consequences of the ideology of "Ivority", [7] (which is legitimate and necessary), these agreements were an instrument of pressure on the Gbagbo faction. The policy of restructuring dependence ("Refoundation" in the terminology of the Gbagboists) at the expense of the FranCafrican tradition had to be put a stop to.

Resolution 1464 (4 February 2004) of the UN Security Council contributed to the preparation of the present episode,

by going along with Operation Unicorn and by subsequently subordinating the MINUCI and the ONUCI to it, logistically, instead of helping to set up a force of intervention that was not involved in Ivorian affairs. Forced as he was to accept the French presence, Gbagbo took advantage of it to reorganise his army.

A truce is a classic occasion to rearm. After the non-respect of the 1961 Defence Agreement (see below) - which in the present case should have led the French army to back Gbagbo against the rebellion - the French arms dealers ended up by delivering the equipment ordered by the Ivorian army, fearing the consequences of the diversification of military alliances initiated by Gbagbo. France, not wanting to push the extremists within the Gbagbo faction to demand the dismantling of the base of the 43rd BIMA, and relying on the sympathy of certain officers of the FANCI, attempted reconciliation by several times dispatching the Minister of Defence, Michele Alliot-Marie, to Ivory Coast, even during the festive period at the end of 2003.

As a present for New Year 2004, Gbagbo even made her Commander of the Ivorian National Order. Gbagbo's realism, aimed at reducing the pressure on himself, led France to launch calls to order, relayed by the media, to the rebellion. But without any real pressure for the respect of the programme of disarmament-demobilisation-reinsertion. This led to a surprisingly symmetrical position, on the part of these bourgeois politicians, between the Ivorian Army and the rebellion, as far as disarmament was concerned. This change of attitude created friction between the New Forces and the French Army, with French soldiers being killed (at that time these deaths were described as "unfortunate mistakes”).

[https://internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/ivory6.jpg]

Once the reorganisation of the FANCI had been completed, Gbagbo activated the return to a military solution. His first show of force was the criminal repression of an opposition demonstration in March 2003. The New Forces couldn't disarm, even in the event of the adoption of an amendment to article 35 of the Constitution to permit Alassane Ouattara and many other victims of "Ivority" to stand for election. So there was a double violation of the Accra III agreements: on the one hand, the Gbagbo camp evoked the idea of a referendum on the revision of the Constitution, on the other, there was non-respect of the October 15 date for disarmament. [8]

Since the transformation of the New Forces into a political organisation hadn't taken place, they couldn't commit suicide and thus lose their principal instrument of "legitimacy.” Furthermore, the control of the North and the Centre of the country pays dividends: apart from ministerial income and the hold-up of the Central Bank of West African States (BCEAO), [9] there are highly profitable illicit dealings in various mining raw materials, for example gold, [10] but also in agricultural produce... The offensive of the FANCI - which also led to Ivorian casualties and provoked fresh movements of population - shouldn't have surprised Western governments.

The United States have installed in Abidjan, in the neighbourhood of the presidential palace, the African staging post of the Echelon system of electronic eavesdropping. The Canard Enchainé (10 November 2004) referred to the telephone call from Chirac to Gbagbo, in which he warned him about respecting French interests. Which could make you think that the attack on the camp was a self-fulfilling prophecy. In this case, Gbagbo neglected the warning, so inflated was he at the imminent success of the operation entitled "reconquest of territorial integrity", which was going to put him in a position of strength until the elections in November 2005.

On his part, by ordering reprisals, Chirac underestimated the patriotism that this demonstration of imperialist arrogance would provoke - reviving memories of the colonial repression at Dimbokro in 1950, [11] in a sub-region where part of the elite is more or less Pan-Africanist, even though both Burkinabé and Senegalese intellectuals are perfectly well aware of the "Ivority" policy conducted by Gbagbo.

Thus, in the Elysée palace, the Françafrican reflex won out over the ambiguous UN mandate of Operation Unicorn. The Elysée found its Oussama Ben Laden in the person of Laurent Gbagbo. With the advantage over the White

House that they knew exactly where to find Gbagbo: French tanks of the 43rd BIMA even managed to “take a wrong turning” and end up just outside his front door.

Is Françafrique dead?

The Report of the International Commission of Enquiry on the allegations of violations of human rights in Ivory Coast between 19 September and 15 October 2004, in spite of its origins in the UN and the Linas-Marcoussis accords, confirms, although it is carefully worded, what is at stake economically in the Ivorian crisis. We read for example:

"The Commission has received testimony concerning events that could justify a certain optimism about the economic future of Ivory Coast. This concerned in particular the discovery of oilfields whose reserves are close to those of Kuwait and that thus Ivory Coast could become the second biggest African oil producer, after Nigeria. On top of that it would appear, still according to this testimony, that the reserves are of the much sought after ‘green' oil. Apart from oil, it seems, according to this testimony, that gas deposits have been discovered between San Pedro and Sassandra: the reserves are enough for a hundred years of exploitation. It seems that other resources also exist, such as gold and diamonds, not to mention the rare metals that are now used for building satellites.” These are sources of neo-colonial capitalist barbarism.

The report doesn't mention it, but according to Annex II of the Defence Agreement signed between the governments of the French Republic, the Republic of Ivory Coast, the Republic of Dahomey and the Republic of Niger on 24 April 1961, France has priority in the acquisition of those "raw materials classified as strategic.” In fact, according to article 2 of the agreement, "the French Republic regularly informs the Republic of Ivory Coast(...) of the policy that it intends to follow concerning strategic raw materials and products, taking into account the general needs of defence, the evolution of resources and the situation of the world market.”

According to article 3, "the Republic of Ivory Coast (and the other two) inform the French Republic of the policy they intend to follow concerning strategic raw materials and products and the measures that they propose to take to implement this policy.” And to conclude, article 5: "Concerning these same products, the Republic of Ivory Coast (and the two others) for defence needs, reserve them in priority for sale to the French Republic, after having satisfied the needs of internal consumption, and they will import what they need in priority from it.” The reciprocity between the signatories, need we point out, is rendered false by the inequality of the actual relations of domination by the colonial power that had, in the case of these countries, organised "independence" a few months previously (in August 1960).

This privileged position of France is confirmed by the UN Commission: "The testimony we have assembled has also enabled us to see that the law of 1998 concerning rural property is linked to the dominant position that France and French interests occupy in Ivory Coast. According to these sources, the French own 45 per cent of the land and, curiously, the buildings of the Presidency of the Republic and of the Ivorian National assembly are subject to leases concluded with the French. French interests are said to control the sectors of water and electricity, which are worth 10 billion francs CFA per month.”

Omnipresence of French capital

The report doesn't give details about this dominant position of French interests. But it is not superfluous to recall it, in these times when the injurious myth of the generous action of Western capital in Africa is being propagated. We find many of the leading players of the French capitalist class:

– Bolloré (leader in French maritime transport in 2003), principal operator of maritime transport along with Saga, SDV and Delmas, practically controls the port of Abidjan, the leading transit port in the West African region and the second container port in Africa, whose main container terminal at Vridi was recently acquired by Bolloré in a scandalous fashion, according the other port operators, both French and Ivorian. It also controls the Ivorian-BurkinabÉ railway, Sitarail. Although it has recently withdrawn from the cocoa business, it has on the contrary maintained its leading position in tobacco and rubber...

– Bouygues (leader in construction and public works in France, also present as Vinci, the second company in public works in France) has been traditionally, since independence, number one in construction and public works (we also find Colas, third-ranking firm in road building in France). It also has, through privatisation and obtaining concessions, control of water distribution (Société des Eaux de Côte d'Ivoire), of production and distribution of electricity through the Compagnie Ivoirienne d'Electricité and the Compagnie Ivoirienne de Production d'Electricité. It has also been involved in the recent exploitation of Ivorian oil...

– Total (the biggest French oil company) holds a quarter of the shares of the Société Ivoirienne de Raffinage (SIR, no. 1 company in Ivory Coast) and owns 160 petrol stations.

– France Telecom (seventh in rank among companies in France and leader in the telecommunications sector) is the main shareholder of Côte d'Ivoire Telecom and of the Société Ivoirienne des Mobiles (it holds about 85 per cent of the capital), since concessions were granted in this sector, in the context of the privatisation of public enterprises.

– In the banking and insurance sector, there is the Société Générale(sixth bank in France - the Société Générale des Banques de Côte d'Ivoire has 55 branches) the CrÉdit Lyonnais, BNP-Paribas, AXA (the second largest company in France and leader of the insurance sector, which has been present in Ivory Coast since the colonial period).

– The most long-established of French companies is the Groupe Compagnie Francaise de l'Afrique de l'Ouest de Côte d'Ivoire (CFAO-CI, principal "FranCafrican" company of the French colonial empire in sub-Saharan Africa, the private-sector colonial equivalent of ELF), which operates in many sectors (cars, pharmaceuticals, new technologies... after having for a long time monopolised exports and the retail trade...) and whose profitability (not a single year of loss, from its creation in 1887 until 2003) led to it being recently taken over the Pinault-Printemps-La Redoute group. [12] It occupies the ninth rank among companies in Ivory Coast, after having ceding its interests the logging industry, in which it had been very much present for decades.

– Honour where honour is due. We couldn't conclude the list without mentioning the presence of the boss of French bosses, Baron Ernest-Antoine Seillères, through Technip (plant for the oil sector) and Bivac (which in May 2004 was attributed the scanner of the port of Abidjan).

This presence of French capital is a demonstration of the capitalist profitability of Ivory Coast. And although French direct investment is only 3.5 billion euros - the most profitable ex-state enterprises having often been acquired at knock-down prices - the annual profits from this investment are enormous. As former French senator Jean-Pierre Camoin (of the BollorÉ group and President of the Circle of Friendship and Support to Franco-Ivorian Renewal, created in February 2004) put it so well: "industrialists are not philanthropists. An enterprise only exists if it makes profits, if it progresses; otherwise it disappears."
[13]

Behind "Ivority.”..what is at stake for the capitalists

It is paradoxical that in these times of spectacular denunciation of the way everything in the world I being turned into a commodity, the understanding of the crises that affect that part of humanity that is most victim of the neo-liberal steamroller has difficulty escaping from culturalism, from the underestimation of economic interests. The genocide of the Tutsis, coupled with the massacre of Hutu democrats in Rwanda in 1994, is regularly used (often in glossing over the massacre of Hutu democrats) to legitimise culturalism.

So, in the Ivorian crisis, "Ivority" is presented as the major cause, instead of understanding it as a reactionary response to the structural crisis of neo-colonialism (in the same way, for example, as the electoral results of the National Front in France are the expression of social insecurity). But the relationship between the development of neo-liberalism and the spread of xenophobia, chauvinism and other forms of exclusion, of hatred of those who are different, seems obvious. That in no way signifies the absence of precedents or of the relative autonomy of racist and xenophobic consciousness. In the case of "Ivority" the ingredients were produced by the colonial system, then by the ascendant phase of neo-colonialism, of indirect or reformed colonialism, of which Ivory Coast was really the "model.”

The public demand for a distinction to be made between Ivorians and non-Ivorians was expressed in 1990, during the "democratic opening", on the eve of the first multiparty elections in so-called independent Ivory Coast, by presidential candidate Laurent Gbagbo, opponent of the autocrat Houphouet-Boigny. This "democratic opening" was a response to social and political protests against the effects of the structural crisis of neo-colonialism, characterised, among other things, by problems in public finances. The distinction between Ivorians and non-Ivorians was one possible way of increasing state income, by instituting residence permits for foreigners.

This measure was also advocated by Alassane Dramane Ouattara (who was then Houphouet-Boigny's Prime Minister), who also decided to introduce a forgery-proof national identity card. These measures were not specifically Ivorian. Alassane Ouattara, former Africa director of the IMF, travelled through sub-Saharan Africa during the 1980s to explain to states that were deeply in debt and subject to, or candidates for, Structural Adjustment programmes, that they had from then on to cut social spending and increase state income. The introduction (or the increase in the cost of) residence permits for African residents was also on the agenda in other countries than Ivory Coast, from Nigeria to post-apartheid South Africa. It was entirely in harmony with the policies on this question that were being applied by the developed capitalist countries.

The attempt at a theorisation of "Ivority" by the organic intelligentsia of the Bédié faction, after the victory of Konan Bédié over Ouattara in the battle to succeed Houphouet-Boigny, was not only an operation aimed at legitimising the patrimonialist-capitalist hegemony of this faction of the Democratic Party of Ivory Coast (PDCI, the former Ivorian Democratic Rally, the state party of Houphouet-Boigny) but also a legitimisation of the Houphouetist FranCafrican tradition, threatened by the orthodox and self-serving neo-liberalism of the former Africa director of the IMF.

His years as Prime Minister responsible for implementing the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) under the authority of Houphouet-Boigny - nevertheless safeguarding the sacrosanct interests of Françafrique, for example by curbing the ambitions of Cargill in the cocoa sector - were seen as a foretaste of neo-liberalisation if he ever became president. The alliance between Gbagbo and Ouattara against Bédié, in the form of the Republican Front that boycotted the 1995 presidential election (from which Ouattara had been excluded on the grounds that his nationality was questionable), was also based on the anti-Houphouetist project of Gbagbo's Ivorian Popular Front (FPI).

The recourse to "Ivority" or the criticism of it, thus appear as fairly instrumental in the light of the tragic episodes of Guei - who carried ou a coup d'état in 2000, supposedly to put an end to "Ivority" and ended up by adopting it in order to ban Ouattara from the presidential race - and of Gbagbo, and indeed of the rebellion. For the report of the UN Commission confirms the existence of mass graves in the zone controlled by the New Forces, evidence of inverted chauvinism.

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This "Ivority" is in fact determined by the neo-liberal capitalist advantages that flow from control of the state machine. The first anti-Ouattara offensive, conducted by Bédié before the death of Houphouet-Boigny, was the obstruction that he organised, as President of the National Assembly, to the privatisation of Côte d'Ivoire Telecom (CIT). Bouygues was ready to acquire CIT, after having inherited the Société des Eaux de Côte d'Ivoire by acquiring the SAUR at the start of privatisation in the middle of the 1980s, and having obtained in 1990 the concession for 15 years of Energie Electrique de Côte d'Ivoire, scandalously undervalued in a shady deal orchestrated by Alassane Ouattara. As befits a top civil servant of international finance, Ouattara is also an important businessman.

The acquisition by his friend Bouygues of CIT (finally conceded to France Telecom by Bédié when he became head of state) would have increased Bouyguesís power in Ivory Coast: "In 1991, the dark continent represented a turnover of 7 billion francs, of which 2 billion came from Ivory Coast alone...If Europe with 7.7 billion francs is slightly ahead of Africa in the group's activities, America and Asia come far behind with respectively 3.4 and 2.1 billion francs.” [14] It would also have been further to the advantage of Alassane Ouattara, who didn't just privatise for the benefit of others, according to the other barons of the PDCI-RDA, his rivals, who were threatened or dethroned from their rentier fiefs by privatisation that they had no control over.

What is considered as a Dutch auction of the public sector is also perceived by a well-conditioned public opinion as "an unpatriotic action.” Which led people to question the nationality of the person responsible for it. As Prime Minister, Ouattara thus played the role of a scapegoat for the untouchable Houphouet-Boigny. Ouattara, who had on top of everything else studied and worked outside his country, who had sent in the army against the students, was in a similar situation to that of Kengo Wa Dondo, Mobutu's Prime Minister in Zaire, whose zeal in implementing structural adjustment resulted in people remembering his Polish and Tutsi origins. Nationalist conditioning led them to believe that a "genuine Zairean" wouldn't have done that...

For conservative Françafrique, Ouattara was the one who had helped US capital to penetrate the coffee and cocoa sectors. Houpouet-Boigny, Francophile, didn't want to do that, having only made an exception for Nestlé. And for good reason: apart from French-speaking solidarity, he had property, bank accounts and shares in Switzerland. The multinationals who were interested in Ivorian cocoa - Archer Daniel Midland (ADM) and Cargill - were the leading players in this sector on a world scale. It was impossible to shut them out in a period of structural adjustment organised by the institutions of Bretton Woods, in which the United States holds a veto. So the door was left ajar for them.

Thus, under Bédié, ADM found itself in a minority partnership with one of the major companies of the sector, SIFCOM, in which Bédié owned nearly 12 per cent of the shares. This co-shareholding was not free of some expectation of political backing on the part of Bédié, former Ivory Coast ambassador to the United States, before becoming Minister of the Economy and Finance, who was conscious of the relations with the United States of his rival for the presidential elections due in 2000.

[https://internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/ivorycoast_new_map.jpg]

Is it just a coincidence that Bédié, who while accentuating "Ivority" had created less unfavourable conditions for competition by ADM and Cargill, was overthrown in December 1999 by mutinous soldiers who had served in the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic under the command of the French Army, and that they installed as head of state Guéi, the former Chief of the General Staff under Houphouët-Boigny, who subsequently showed himself to be very Françafrican?

Although the putsch had been fairly well received by the population for its denunciation of it, the Government of Transition wasn't able to settle the problem of "Ivority.” Because the Ã¬Ivoritarianî discourse covered capital accumulation by Bédié's "real Ivorians.” The privatisation of state enterprises and the liberalisation of markets is a particular phase of accumulation and of the transformation of the upstart into a capitalist. Thus, in a rediscovered

national unity (without Bédié, exiled in France), the transition was in Ivory Coast the occasion to reorganise the process of privatisation and liberalisation of markets that the Bédié faction had plotted with those who presented themselves as "generous investors rushing to help an unprofitable Africa", the powerful corrupters who are hidden by the media, which only targets those who are corrupted. Given the composition of the transitional government, with as principal political forces the Republican Rally (RDR, Ouattara's party) and the Ivorian Popular Front (FPI, Gbagbo), the agreement on what to do with the deals that had been made could only be limited to suspending their application.

If the generous share accorded to French companies (Bouygues, France Telecom, Total...) in these deals wasn't to the taste of Mamadou Koulibaly, Minister of the Budget and later of Economy and Finance, who was also economic advisor to Gbagbo, [15] the other liberal (Ouattara) doesn't seem to have opposed the favourable deals prepared, for example, for his friend Bouygues by Bédié's team. In other words, the transition government had to "clean up" the running of public affairs that had been mishandled by the Bédié regime and leave to the winners of the future elections the re-launching of privatisation and liberalisation.

[https://internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/gif/ivorynewforces.gif]
Guillaume Soro with other leaders of the New Forces

Since the two candidates provisionally allied - Ouattara and Gbagbo - basically shared the programme of the Bretton Woods institutions, the race for politico-economic power couldn't do without what discriminated against Ouattara - "Ivority.” As General Guéi's ambitions had made him lose the support of certain former putschists, who were more or less linked to Ouattara, the battle of "Ivority" was now going to be conducted also by armed violence. It has happened more than once in history that a crisis of political legitimacy is accompanied by the loss of the monopoly of violence. Thus, "Ivority" also became paramilitary, each camp getting ready for the end of the transition.

The constitutional battle - to be born of an Ivorian father and/or mother - over eligibility, was concluded at the expense of Ouattara, excluded from the elections, although he had called for a "Yes" vote in the referendum on the Constitution, sure of his "Ivority", proved by his citizenship papers. The transition ended with the mass grave at Yopougon, in the name of "Ivority": Ouattara's suppporters were assassinated by gendarmes backing Gbagbo, considered as victor after Guéi's attempted electoral putsch had been blocked by Gbagbo's supporters. This followed the repression of a demonstration by Ouattara's supporters, who had taken advantage of the situation to call for a re-run of the election in which they hadn't participated.

The operations of "reconciliation" undertaken by Gbagbo couldn't come to anything as long as they weren't accompanied by a willingness to redistribute equitably, for his opponents, the proceeds of privatisation, of the liberalisation of markets, of the landholding reform that penalised non-Ivorians in a country where agriculture is such a dominant part of production. The willingness to carry through the "refoundation", neo-liberal version of African nationalism, in a climate where the tissue of the nation was being torn apart, symbolised by the existence of partisan militias, mainly the government's one, could only encourage a rebellion.

When it did emerge, the rebellion crystallised the frustrations of a whole part of the population that was suffering from the exactions of the government's thugs and from the climate of social insecurity. If all the evidence points to the rebellion having been jointly organised by the Burkinabe regime, [16] which had become the military staging post of Françafrique in the region after the death of Houphouët-Boigny, the soil was fertile for it.

Concerning the mass graves discovered in the zone under the control of the New Forces, evidence gathered by the UN Commission on their relations with certain regimes in the sub-region including the Togolese tyrant Eyadema [17] , it is pretty obvious that the form chosen to combat "Ivority" was motivated more by traditional interests than by a passion for democracy. This could be seen in its lack of originality: an attempted putsch, then an armed rebellion, suposed to lead the politico-military leader of the rebels to power according to the method tried and tested in Liberia (Charles Taylor), Congo-Brazzaville (Sassou Nguesso) and the Central African Republic (Bozizé).

The fact that there was a lot of anti-Burkinabé discrimination and that the financial remittances of Burkinabé immigrants in Ivory Coast were considerable (tens of billions of Francs CFA every year, which could dry up if they were expelled...) would no doubt not have been enough to motivate the destabilisation of the Ivory Coast, pillar of the West African economy and of the Franc CFA zone. For that there had to be more traditional reasons, or at least the approval of France.

Protection of France's "backyard" in Africa

The involvement, on humanitarian pretexts, of the French state in Ivory Coast doesn't depart from the principle of maintaining control over what it considers to be its "backyard" in sub-Saharan Africa. Its humanist fibre only becomes sensitive when there is a substantial challenge to France's interests as a neocolonial power, considered as historic and eternal, represented by its big business interests. Each time that a regime has tried to question or challenge the foundations of this domination, even if it didn't embody a revolutionary socialist alternative, it has in one way or another paid for it; and the people always paid more than the regime that was overthrown. "Independent Africa", marked by a succession of coups d'état, is a legacy of colonial policies, with its organised electoral frauds and overturning of majorities in the territorial assemblies through corruption, which already led in colonial times to so-called ethnic conflicts.

It is symbolic that the first murderous putschist of the CFA zone - the Togolese Etienne Eyadema - is still in power and also that he is backing the leader of the rebellion in Ivory Coast, Guillaume Soro. To refresh our memories, already in 1963 what occurred was a mutiny of soldiers, demobilised after the Algerian war, against the Togolese president, Sylvanus Olympio. What was Olympio supposed to have done, what was held against him? He asked in 1958 for the independence of Togo, which was then under a Franco-UN mandate.

Then, once independence had been achieved in 1960, he sought to revise the contract for the exploitation of Togolese phosphate, which he considered as giving the lion's share to French capital; he undertook the diversification of Togo's economic partnerships with other Western states, including Germany, the former colonial power, which was also going to help him create a national currency, which meant leaving the Franc zone...

The mutiny in the course of which Olympio was assassinated took place, as it happened, a few days before Togo was due to officially leave the Franc zone. Sylvanus Olympio wasnít in the least bit inclined towards socialism, he was in fact a liberal, who had even subordinated "social justice" to the establishment of "macro-economic equilibrium", offering the Togolese soldiers of the colonial army in Algeria reintegration into civilian life rather than letting them swellthe ranks of a non-productive Togolese army of about 300 soldiers.

Other putsches and attempted putsches - sometimes with the help of mercenaries, those "pirates of the Republic", were to follow. Including the one against Hamani Diori, a declared partisan of Francophonie (the community of French-speaking countries), co-signatory with Houphouet-Boigny of the Defence Agreement of April 1961, which provided in an annex for the provision in priority of strategic raw materials to France; in this instance Nigeran uranium, handled exclusively by the French company COGEMA, which Diori, much to the displeasure of General De Gaulle, wanted to make available to the other Western powers who were concerned by nuclear power, [18] so that Niger could benefit more from this - harmful - natural resource, at a time when Nigeran youth was forcefully expressing its demands. He had also put on the agenda the closure of the French military base in Niger. Marien Ngouabi (Congo-Brazzaville) was assassinated in 1977, a few hours before a Franco-Congolese meeting in Paris to discuss the revision of the oil contract, also considered by the Congolese as according the lion's share to ELF. There was no more question of revising the contract for another ten years.

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The list is long. As Mitterrand said, and we can agree with him, we're not talking about past practices: "In Africa the Gaullist way of operating remains exactly the same today. The personnel has changed, but the methods remain. The RPR at present controls all the operations of ELF in Africa. The RPR's men are also agents of the SDEC (intelligence services) (...) These kind of practices have continued into the present (...)Foccart is still going strong. Today he works for Chirac.” [19]

Thus, without being in the least anti-capitalist, or even anti-imperialists - Gbagbo forgot his socialist convictions on the road of the "democratisation" of Africa - or sincere democrats, but rather an oligarchical pigsty of neo-liberal "nationalists", manipulators of ethnicity and Pentecostal businessmen with a direct line to their "born again" brothers and sisters of the American ruling class, the Ivorian "refounders" had the nerve to challenge certain eternal vested interests of French domination of the Franc zone. In so doing so they overestimated their legitimacy and their skill in manoeuvring. That France chose not to activate the Defence Agreement of April 1961, in spite of Gbagbo's request, can in no way be explained by some principle of non-interference in a crisis that is falsely portrayed as strictly Ivorian. The involvement of the BurkinabÉ regime couldn't have escaped French military surveillance of the region.

The Agreement couldn't be activated because in the French neocolonial conception, Gbagbo, who had chosen to maintain this neocolonial agreement, was guilty of having violated it. The rebellion as a prolongation of the aborted putsch was supposed to be a means of pressure on Gbagbo, and not an attempt to install an alternative government. France - "third belligerent, although belligerent in the shadows", according to the Initiative Committee of Senegalese Intellectuals - even acted to block the rebellion's march on Abidjan. So, from Lomé to Linas-Marcoussis, it was a question of calling to order, through a government of "national reconciliation", the various politico-economic interests of the ex-colonial power and of the different factions of the "Ivorian political class", which is indistinguishable from Ivorian capital.

The Gbagboist neo-liberal "refoundation" was guilty of having reopened the dossiers of privatisations and concessions that had been suspended during the transition, of putting them out to tender "following the correct procedure.” The consequence was the highly probable risk for certain French multinationals - those that had benefited from the favours of Houphouet-Boigny, Ouattara and Bédié - of not obtaining the renewal of juicy concessions that ran out under the Gbagbo regime. Of not being given favourable treatment to acquire the choice enterprises that were up for privatisation.

Of not benefiting from the most profitable public contracts, for which, contrary to the idea that if French companies withdrew they would be irreplaceable, there is competition from Chinese, South African, US and many other companies whose presence in the Ivorian market is not devoid of monopolist ambitions. [20] Since "in a period of recession, Africa can only survive in a monopoly situation". [21]

The case of ADM and Cargill in the cocoa sector has demonstrated the greater effectiveness of US multinationals when it comes to "free competition.” From the end of the 1990s to the first years of the 2000 decade, they have progressed from being minority partners or second-rank companies to a position of leadership, absorbing along the way certain holdingd of their former majority partners, who were driven to astronomic loses.

As the African Development Bank and the OECD write: "remarkable evolutions have occurred in terms of the destination of Ivorian products even within the European Union. For example, whereas France and the Netherlands represented respectively 15.2 per cent and 9.8 per cent of Ivorian exports in 2000, the former only accounted for 13.9 per cent in 2001, as against 14.1 per cent for the Netherlands. This is explained by the fact that cocoa dominates Ivorian exports, cocoa whose processing is dominated by multinationals that have experienced profound changes in terms of the ownership of capital. These changes have taken place to the advantage of groups like Cargill, ADM, Callebaut, which have a tradition of transport in bulk, more advanced than in France, with the aim of gaining in efficiency and saving on costs linked to transport logistics.

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Furthermore the ports that have the best logistics for receiving cocoa in bulk are Amsterdam and Hamburg, where important industrial subsidiaries belonging to these groups are situated" [22] . The breakthrough of US capital in this sector has for example driven Bolloré to shed its subsidiary, which was however one of the most important...

Secondary imperialism, divergent interests

The degree of sophistication of French attempts to recall President Gbagbo to order - a choice that is imposed on the Elysee by the relationship of forces on a world scale -,as well as the pressure of competition, has also laid bare the differences within French colonial capital. On the one hand to preserve their interests, and on the other hand faced with the weakening of French support for the rebellion, French bosses have created, along with Ivorian bosses who tend to be close to Gbagbo, the Circle of Friendship and Support to Franco-Ivorian Renewal (CARFI) chaired by UMP ex-senator Jean-Pierre Camoin (of the Bolloré group) which has among its benefactor members...Laurent Gbagbo.

The capitalist realism of the initiative has been expressed by the president of CARFI: "Everyone expected this economy to collapse, with a country cut in two, with transport hindered. In spite of that, Ivory Coast has proved that it could live on its own, without aid, pay its civil servants, keep electricity and water services functioning (...) We might ask why this situation got worse? I firmly believe that past generations did an enormous amount of work, were able to build Ivory Coast; but at present, the young generation is there, with young people educated in the best schools and universities, who want to show what they can do. It is this young generation that interests us.

What does it want? It wants a partnership based on equality, a real partnership where there is no longer a protective France that comes to give lessons to Ivory Coast on how to develop its industries, to develop all its exports. On the other hand there is an adult Ivory Coast with educated elites who need France in order to be able also to develop their country, thanks to a partnership with a country with which it shares the language, the culture and for which, when all is said and done, it has a certain affection (...) What interests us is business. Whether it's M. Gbagbo or M. X doesn't interest us! What we want is for the candidate and later on the President to take account of our opinion." [23]

As if by chance, the end of 2003 and the first half of 2004 were marked, on top of the purchase of French weapons by Gbagbo, by French market acquisitions: Alcatel, Technip and Bivac (Baron E-A Seillères)...and especially the scandalous concession to BollorÉ, for fifteen years, of the Container Terminal at Vridi, in the Autonomous Port of Abidjan, whose general manager, Marcel Gossio, is the vice-president of CARFI. This operation was publicly contested by Jean-Louis Billon, president of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Ivory Coast (a warehousing operator like Bolloré, a transporter of SIFCA cocoa, a joint shareholder with Bédié under the latter's presidency and a non-member of CARFI). BollorÉ thus obtained a situation of quasi-monopoly over Africa's second port, after Durban in South Africa. Thus, "on Thursday 24 June last, Marc Rose, exploitation manager of the Company of Exploitation of the Container Terminal of Vridi (SETV) addressed a note to Jacques Remy of the SIVOM (one of Billonís companies) in which he wrote the following: 'We will no longer accept SIVOM containers at the terminal, with the exception of cargoes that are to be loaded on to our own ships'. [24]

The World Bank didn't fail to criticise this infringement on free enterprise: "The procedure followed puts into question the efforts undertaken by the Bank and the other suppliers of funds to help Ivory Coast create an environment that is propitious to the development of the private sector, among other ways by guaranteeing loyal competition. The result is that the interests of the country have not been safeguarded and that the sharing of risks and profits between the country and the SETV is very inequitable, to the latter's advantage for a period of at least fifteen years". [25] So, in order to stabilise the "external" front, Gbagbo has resorted to the traditional procedures of Françafrique.

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This scandalous concession, which resembled the electricity one accorded to Bouygues by Ouattara, was accompanied by a highly inequitable sharing-out of the managerships of state enterprises, considered as one of the causes of the blockage of the Marcoussis Agreement. Among the points on the agenda of the meetings between Gbagbo and his opponents during this period there figured the equitable and concerted distribution of management posts, in other words of highly profitable positions. This was a privilege that Gbagbo didn't intend to give up, taking care to allocate the enterprises that were most profitable and most in contact with foreign operators - a possible source of economic-political plotting - to those closest to him.

Having thus constituted a lobby within Françafrique, Gbagbo felt able to unleash the bloody repression of the opposition demonstration on 25-26 March, 2004, after the departure from the government of the ministers who contested the new economic set-up. Disorientated by France's reaction, in the towns under the control of the New Forces, its supporters demonstrated their anger against French soldiers, shouting at them, in Korhogo for example: "You are calculators like Gbagbo, get out of our town!” [26] The violation of the ceasefire in November 2004 - of which the UN and the French authorities had been forewarned by Gbagbo - fits well into this dynamic of reconciliation with sectors of French capital. Because the division of Ivory Coast is also a problem for the enterprises that have important activities (sugar cane, cotton...) in the Centre and the North and can't easily transport production towards the markets of the South.

The war climate is also favourable to the "disloyal competition" of merchandise fraudulently imported from neighbouring countries. So, for example, at the end of April, the very influential and discreet president of the Castel-BGI group, Pierre Castel, specialist in wine and breweries, asked the Ivorian president, Laurent Gbagbo, for a sharper struggle against the recurrent and massive frauds that had been identified in the sugar sector. Every year, according to M. Castel, the Ivorian branch of his group, the BGI-Solibra, and its different units lose 15 billion Francs CFA. [27]

But clearly it's a question of a reconciliation in one sector and not of Gbagbo aligning himself with French interests. And the attempted crushing of the rebellion by Gbagbo in November wasn't foreseen in the Elysée's agenda. Hence Chirac's brutal reaction and his decision to bomb Gbagbo's air force.

Oil and financial stakes

From France's point of view, there is something more important at stake than M. Castel's business affairs. That something is oil. In Ivory Coast, the French oil industry is lagging behind the US and Canada. From 2000 to 2003 oil production tripled and oil became the second most important export of Ivory Coast. Without Total, which has to be content with its 25 per cent share in the Société Ivoirienne de Raffinage - a company that is not sure of getting back the concession suspended in 1999-2000 for non-respect of procedure- and with its network of service stations. What's more, as time goes by the reserves are proving to be bigger than was announced at the start.

The Gbagbo regime doesn't seem ready to deviate from the Anglo-American (and very probably Asian in the future) orientation it has adopted. In this way it avoids increasing France's hold on the economy and - in the light of historic precedents in the Gulf of Guinea- onIvorian politics.TheprovisionsoftheannexestotheApril 1961 Defence Agreement which we previously mentioned are not being respected. Elsewhere, where it was a question of revising the French monopoly over oil exploitation, there were putsches and thousands of dead, in a period of neo-liberal "democratisation.” How could the "model" country of Françafrique be an exception to this "rule", consigned here by the Defence Agreement?

Multinational participation in the capital of Total doesn't change anything in this respect. That is proved by the French

position on Iraq as well as by the present state of Franco-Angolan relations, among other things. Isn't it also because of oil interests that the annulment of the judicial procedure known as the "disappeared of the Beach" was decided by the Court of Appeal in Paris on 22 November 2004, concerning the disappearance of about three hundred young Congolese who had been entrusted to the Congolese authorities; "an unprecedented decision", according to Patrick Baudouin, lawyer for the International Federation of the Rights of Man.

An affair in the course of which the so-called "separation of powers" characteristic of the "state of law" was violated by the weekend night-time hearing, at around 1 a.m. on 4 April 2004, in order to release and send back to the Congo the director general of the Congolese police who had been apprehended during a private visit to the Paris region. The consequence was the transfer to another court of the examining magistrate of Meaux, who has incarcerated him. These practices in the land of Montesquieu, worthy of a ‘banana republic', will only surprise those who don't want to know anything about the reciprocal corrupt practices between Françafrican political leaders in the mother country and in the African territories. The association coup d'état/war-oil/minerals is more rational than the association coup d'état/war-cocoa.

In the name of the liberal "refoundation" Gbagbo's supporters, such as Mamadou Koulibaly, don't intend to perpetuate dependence on the former colonial power through the African Financial Community and its "Franc CFA zone.” The devaluation of the Franc CFA announced by France in 1994 before the heads of state of the CFA zone had been convoked, was experienced as a humiliating reminder of the artificial nature of "independence" and of "national sovereignty.” A national, regional or continental currency is for many African economists a project to be implemented.

The capitalist economic performances of Ivory Coast, more important than those of other African countries that have a national currency, would make it possible. In 2003 Ivory Coast produced in fact 38.5 per cent of the GDP and 45 per cent of the monetary mass of the eight countries of the sub-region Economic andMonetary Union of West Africa (UEMOA) of the African Financial Community. Hence the recent appeal by Gbagbo to his peers who were supporting the rebellion: withoutIvory Coast there is no UEMOA. Which he had already unkindly demonstrated by retarding his contribution in 2003, thus blocking the Central Bank of the States of West Africa (BVEAO, of which Ouattara was Governor, the post being reserved for the Ivory Coast).

This economic-monetary importance of Ivory Coast is also why this project of "sovereignty" cannot be accepted by the monetary controlling power, which has maintained, in spite of the introduction of the euro, the guarantee of the Franc CFA by the French exchequer. This monetary protection ensures control of the economies of the zone and guarantees the profits of French capitals by ensuring unlimited convertibility, fixed parity with the euro and especially freedom to transfer funds. The mechanism of control is ensured by the centralisation of exchange reserves. "It appears at two levels, since the states centralise their exchange reserves in each of the two big central banks while in exchange for the unlimited convertibility guaranteed by France, the African central banks are obliged to deposit at least 65 per cent of their exchange reserves with the French exchequer, in the operating account opened in the name of each of them.” [28]

This is an instrument of domination that France doesn't intend to give up. So, the project piloted by Nigeria, of a regional currency for the whole of West Africa programmed in 1992 for 1994, couldn't be put into practice. The two regional central banks have subsequently not been receptive to the arguments of the anti-Zone Franc CFA current that were expressed during the symposium on the Franc CFA organised by the the principal non-governmental pan-African institution, the Council for the Development of Research in Social Sciences in Africa, in Dakar in 1998.

One of the organisers was none other than the present number 2 of the Ivorian state, Mamadou Koulibaly, who as an economic monetarist is sticking to his guns on the question. That Gbagbo, like Olympio in his time, had made preparations to leave the Franc Zone wouldn't be surprising, given the development of relations with Angola, one of

the rare African states whose national currency (the kwanza) is linked to the dollar. Thus, this accident of the calendar was also remarked by the Initiative Committee of Intellectuals of Senegal: "We have difficulty in believing that only a week after the Abidjan International Conference for the Reform of the Franc Zone, the French Army opened fire on the visible symbols of the sovereignty of Ivory Coast in a way that was violent and barbarous, hateful and bloody.”

Barbarism or ...?

The language of arms, in an atmosphere of ethnic and religious conflict, certainly relative, of divisions in a period when revolutionary hope still has difficulty in recovering from decades of fraudulous socialism, makes the situation of the partisans of an anti-capitalist answer to this crisis of neocolonialism and of the radical organisations of the social movement more difficult. Thus, the Ivorian revolutionary organisations, who are also victims of Gbagbo's militias, haven't failed to point out the real nature of this conflict, Franco-Ivorian from the beginning, in which as usual, the people is the grass on which the elephants fight for their oligarchic interests.

Unfortunately, the fate of the Ivorian people,likethatof the WestAfrican,Lebanese, Syrianand French immigrantsdepends on the co-managers of the establishedorder,on the internationallevel, on those who co-organised Linas-Marcoussis and Accra:from Chiracto Mbeki via Eyadema, from the UN to the African Union via the CEDEAO and Francophonie.

The civil peace that could be restored isn't going to put an end to the economic-social violence of neo-liberalisation (implicitly written into the Marcoussis Agreement by the participation of the Bretton Woods institutions in the surveillance of this agreement), on which there is no real opposition between the defenders of "Ivority" and their supposedly anti-Ivority associates - who voted the very "Ivoritarian" landholding code and showed themselves to be just as good at digging mass graves. In this country where the state has been so indebted since the time of the father of neo-colonial dependence the risk of the de-schooling of children - especially girls - is increasing, as are child labour, prostitution, unemployment... In short, social insecurity, the breeding-ground of chauvinism and of the violence of the lumpen-proletariat...So, civil peace, over and above the elections, which are a choice between two evils - keep Gbagbo or replace him by one of his many neo-liberal rivals - should be taken advantage of to build the unity of the struggles of the exploited and oppressed of Ivory Coast, over and aboveethnic, regional, religious or gender differences.

Economic powerhouse of the region, the Ivory Coast could also become one of the poles for building a regional anti-capitalist dynamic, helped by the presence in more than one case of the same multinationals in neighbouring countries (including the "English-speaking" ones, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria...), by the existence of regional neocolonial organisations against which a dynamic of regional solidarity of exploited and oppressed peoples will have to be built. From the region to the continent, from the continent to the intercontinental level, all together against the criminal capitalist order.

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[1] Speaking to students in Marseilles, Jacques Chirac said: “We donít want to let a system develop that could lead to anarchy or to a fascist-type regime.” Which provoked this reply from Laurent Gbagbo, much less widely reported by the media: “President Chirac supported the one-party state for forty years. What is closer to the one-party state than fascism? It was we who were in prison under the one-party state supported by France. It's an insult.” (Interviewed in Libération, 15 November, 2004).

[2] “Françafrique” is the term used to describe the system of French neo-colonial domination of its former African colonies.

[3] Gbagbo and his troops say almost the same thing to justify the criminal repression of the opposition demonstration - without leaders - in March 2004!.

[4] Frantz Fanon, who was a psychiatrist, rightly said that someone who likes Black people is just as sick as someone who hates them. (Cf. “Black Faces, White Masks”). It should be noted that the Togolese political scientist Comi Toulabor describes another reality: “The Francophobia of the young patriots is widely shared. The “Go home!” that they shout at the French Army has been heard in the streets of French-speaking Africa for ten years. There is the feeling that this would never have been done in another country or on another continent. For many Africans, it is an intolerable affront to their feeling of national pride.” (Libération, 10 December 2004).

[5] From Douala, economic capital of Cameroon, the journalist Pius N. Njawé (accustomed to persecution by the Françafrican regime of Paul Biya) spoke of “Colonial war.” (Le Messager, 16 November, 2004).

[6] See Jean Nanga, “Ajustement meurtrier de la ‘Françafrique' au neoliberalisme”, Inprecor 478/479, January-February 2003.

[7] “Ivority” is the ideology developed over the last 10-15 years as a means of discriminating against all those in Ivory Coast who are immigrants or children or grandchildren of immigrants - a large part of the population, especially in the North.

[8] According to the Agreements: “The parties commit themselves to begin disarmament-demobilisation-reinsertion by 15 October 2004 at the latest (!) The process of disarmament-demobilisation-reinsertion will concern all the paramilitary groups and militias.”

[9] French soldiers had been found, having a party, in possession of banknotes from the hold-up of the BCEAO in Bouaké, in September 2003. They claimed to have found sacks of money in the road, whereas all the evidence pointed to them having been accomplices to the hold-up. These soldiers were repatriated to France, with very little publicity.

[10] In the West, the MPIGO (a component part of the New Forces) had taken over for a time a gold mine belonging to the French company COGEMA.

[11] This colonial repression had, among other things, a major political consequence, the disaffiliation in 1951 of the African Democratic Rally (RDA, a pan-African organisation, led by Houphouet-Boigny, leader of its Ivorian section, the PDCI) from the French Communist Party in the French National Assembly. It then attached itself in 1952 to François Mitterrand's Democratic and Socialist Union of the Resistance (UDSR), before becoming Gaullists' stage in the preparation of neo-colonialism.

[12] The article about this in n? 3037 of Marchés tropicaux et méditerranéens (23 January 2004) is worth reading.

[13] Interview published by the Abidjan daily, Fraternité Matin, 18 May 2004.

[14] Stephen Smith and Antoine Glaser, Ces Messieurs Afrique, Le Paris-Village du continent noir, Paris 1992.

[15] Before the devaluation of the Franc CFA in 1994, Koulibaly came out in favour of leaving the African Financial Community (CFA, formerly French Colonies of Africa), with the aspiration to be independent. This was an obvious sign of refusal to adhere to the FranCafrican order inherited from Houphouet-Boigny.

[16] Both the UN Commission of Enquiry and a report of the French Army, quoted by Fraternité Matin, recognised this. See “Crise armée: l'armée francaise avoue l'implication du Burkina”, Fraternité Matin, 23 October 2004

[17] Eyadema (who has died since this article was written) was the mentor of Guillaume Soro, leader of the New Forces, who was on the list headed by the general secretary of Outtaraís RDR in the legislative elections in 2000. On the university campus in the 1990s, Soro fought with machetes against Blé Goudé, today leader of Gbagboís militias, for the control of the student union FESCI. The leadership of this organisation was considered as a stepping stone and a reservoir of votes that could open the doors of the bureaucratic oligarchy. Could that be one of the historical reasons for the present murderous settling of accounts between the Ivorian Armed Forces and the New Forces?

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[18] Niger's uranium contributed to making France a nuclear power, while at the same time contributing to making Niger one of the poorest countries on earth. But in an economic system that favours the dominant economies, it is Niger that is indebted to France. See “Niger, Entretien avec Mamane Sani Adamou”, Inprecor n? 497, September 2004; Claude Wauthier, “Quatre présidents et líAfrique: De Gaulle, Pompidou, Giscard d'Estaing, Mitterrand”, Paris 1995.

[19] Quoted by Laure Adler in her book on Mitterrand, L'année des adieux, Paris, 1995, pp 75-76.

[20] Describing a meeting of French bosses about Ivory Coast, following the Franco-Ivorian crisis, La Lettre du Continent (n? 460, 9 December 2004) wrote: “The insurance companies were very ill at ease, everyoneís greatest - though unspoken -fear being that there would be a deal between Presidents Thabo Mbeki and Laurent Gbagbo that would allow South African groups to take over.” It seems that even before this new episode, the construction of the airport at San Pedro, the country's second port, had been given to a South African company.

[21] According to “Principe des multinationals francaises”, Stephen Smith and Antoine Glaser, op. cit., p.12

[22] ADB and OECD, “Perspectives Économiques en Afrique”, 2003, chapter on Ivory Coast, p. 145.

[23] “Relations d'affaires franco-ivoiriennes: 48 grands patrons interpellent les politiques”, Interview in FraternitÉ Matin, 18 May 2004.

[24] .”Ahua K. “La SETV refuse les conteneurs de la Sivom”, Le Front, 1 July 2004.

[25] Letter from the Director of Operations of the World Bank for Ivory Coast to the Minister of State of the Economy and Finance, 17 May 2004.

[26] “Korhogo - Marche de protestation des populations: un soldat francais blessé”, Le Patriote, 17 May 2004.

[27] The present state of the Adrican economy on 4 May 2004, on "http://www.grioo.com" Pierre Castel is a co-founder of CARFI.

[28] Bank of France, “La Zone Franc”, Note díinformation n? 127, October 2003, p. 10. See also Nicolas Agbohou, “Le Franc CFA et líeuro contre l'Afrique”, Paris, 1999.