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The Institutionalization of Military Rule: The Case of Togo

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In recent years there has been growing interest in the underlying causes of the steadily increasing number of coups in Africa, and in the nature of the ensuing military regimes. With fourteen subsaharan states currently under military rule (and several others with a record of coups or other military upheavals) the new militocracy is an established part of the African scene. At the same time, however, it is becoming evident that the new juntas frequently resemble the civilian elites they replaced in their inability to provide purposeful, cohesive, stable and corruption-free leadership in pursuit of programs of socio-economic and political development. As a small West African state with little international impact, a small population and a barely viable economy Togo might appear to offer few instructive insights into the prerequisites of stable military rule. Yet paradoxically. the little studied administration of General Etienne Eyadema is one of but a handful of exceptions to the generally negative record compiled by military regimes in Africa.

Nothing in the ethnic and ecological parameters or in the early history of independent Togo would have

suggested other than that the country would follow the pattern of grinding political decay so visible in her sister state, Benin, where thirteen years of independence have seen a revolving door procession of ten Presidents, six coups and perennial instability. 2 In many ways Togo is a mirror image of her neighbor possessing similar geographic and ethnic configurations, a wobbly economy, intense regionalist sentiments and inter-elite strife. Indeed, having herself experienced two military takeovers Togo appeared well on the road to developing into a praetorian system. 3 Yet the past ten years of military rule under a remarkably cohesive Army and mixed civilmilitary administration have negated such expectations and brought the country a degree of political stability, economic development and social tranquility. This in itself merits attention and analysis especially when contrasted with the failings of military regimes in Benin, Uganda, Burundi, Congo/Brazzaville, Mali, Sudan or the Central African Republic.

Regionalism and Political Decay

As elsewhere in West Africa the most distinctive feature of Togo's socio-economic infrastructure is the system of reinforcing cleavages that sharply differentiate between the northern (Kabre, Gurma, Kotokoli) and southern (Ewe, Mina) populations. In the mainstream of outside influences, possessing a system of values stressing individualism and upward mobility and conducive to adaptation, the Ewe and Mina of the south have traditionally been more socially advanced than the northern groups. The lopsided colonial policies of both Germany and France and the spread of a cash crop economy in the south further gave impetus to the growing socio-economic gaps between the two parts of the country. Longer affected by missionary activities and avid pursuers of Western education, modern avocations and life-styles Ewe society rapidly evolved and modernized during the colonial era,

contributing important elements to the French administrative apparatus in Africa and later spawning Africa's first nationalist movement.⁵

Regional disparities on practically every dimension punctuate Togolese statistics on literacy, distribution of social and health services, and economic growth rates, resembling data culled from two different countries. Thus, for example, 1970 school attendance figures (of children between the ages of 6 and 14) ranged from 99% in Lome to 18.6% in Sansanne Mango in the far north. 6 Cultivation of cash crops (especially coffee and cocoa), extractive industries and higher per capita incomes are all concentrated in the south. Elsewhere income levels and economic activity are relatively depressed, a function of overpopulation, soil erosion, poor communications and the discriminating socio-economic policies of the past. And the absence until fairly recently of an all-weather road connecting the country along its north-south axis greatly retarded economic development in the north and kept interethnic social-interaction to a minimum.

The general weakness of the erratic Togolese economy, dificitary budgets (until 1968) and a perennially negative balance of trade have all placed serious limitations on prospects for economic development. economic growth rate during the years 1956-1965 was the lowest of the twelve francophone states. 7 Scarcity of developmental resources and pressures for administrative positions by unemployed Ewes resulted in minimum attention to the problems of the underdeveloped north by Togo's first two Ewe-led civilian regimes and a swelling of the largely Ewe civil service, already over-staffed by some 30%. Potentials for national integration have also been hampered by northern mistrust and fear of domination by the south stoked by the arrogant and contemptful attitude of Ewe administrators posted to hinterland localities. Only with the rise of the northern-based Eyadema regime have some of these fears eased, and as the

economy moved out of the doldrums in the late 1960's - due to a pickup in economic activity rather than real economic development - increased government revenues have made possible a more balanced program of social and economic modernization which is very slowly erasing the worse regional disparities.

Togo's regional fissures, early Ewe nationalism and social consciousness, and northern resentments at de-facto southern domination have indelibly affected the evolution of political life in the country. The multiplicity of reinforcing cleavages, personal elite rivalries and antagonisms, and competition for supremacy in a political system with few alternate channels to patronage or power, sharpened political strife, exacerbated ethnic tensions and encourgaed a "winner take all" mentality among the political combatants. The emergence in the 1950's of mutually exclusive ethnic groupings and political parties reflected these inherent domestic tensions and the inability of the major regional leaders to find a common roof within a united national or interethnic institutional framework. Though Togo eventually became a uniparty state under the leadership of Dr. Sylvannus Clympio and the largely Ewe Comite de l'Unite Togolais (C.U.T.) this was largely the result of intimidation, imprisonment and cooptation into the party of political competitors, and the quasi-legal banning of the other political groupings in the country. Indeed, Olympio's authoritarian political style and strict fiscal policies alienated many of his own C.U.T. colleagues as well, and further contributed to the instability of Togo's first government.

The veterans' coup of January 13, 1963 that resulted in Olympio's assassination, though mounted by northern elements, did not substantially change the political and economic array of power in Togo. The very selection of Olympio's brother-in-law, Nicholas Grunitzky, as the next President, was in a sense a return to the

pre-independence style of politics though assuredly Paris exerted significant pressure in the matter. Regionalism was allowed its institutionalized expression in the form of political parties which were in reality elitist linkages between modern power brokers and traditional notables united along an ethnic axis for the purpose of garnering a measure of political influence and patronage in Lome. Political aspirants roundly defeated by Olympio in the U.N.-supervised 1958 election as well as politicians swept into jail or exile after independence promptly emerged to claim their place in the sun in Grunitzky's wall-to-wall cabinet. Yet despite the change in political style from Olympio's authoritarianpaternalism to Grunitzky's consensual approach (with resultant debilitating immobilism and/or vacillations), and though for the first time important northern elements participated in policymaking sessions, the political fulcrum still rested solidly in the south and developmental policies (still lacking necessary financial resources) only paid lip-service to northern emancipation or national integration. Numerically neither Ewe nor Kabre (the principal northern tribe) representation in the cabinet shifted with the former still holding twothirds of the portfolios. Moreover, the new constitutional arrangement was inherently unstable - balancing the indecisive and conservative Grunitzky against his ambitious militant northern Vice President, Antoine Meatchi - within a wider societal context in which Grunitzky had no real power base being mistrusted in the north because of his familial link with Olympio, and despised by the Ewes for accepting power from the assassins of his brother-in-law. When Grunitzky's balancing prowess finally failed him he collapsed as the straw man which he actually was to the true powerbrokers in Togo - the Army.

The Internal Dynamics of the Togolese Army

The previous analysis briefly noted some of the more prominent social, economic and structural weaknesses of the Togolese political system which are mutatis mutandis equally present in most African states. Contrary to much of the literature on political instability there is no direct causal relationship between systemic failings and military upheavals though obviously such weaknesses play a certain role in coups. Though motives behind military interventions in the political realm are complex and sometimes hard to unravel they frequently stem from the internal dynamics of African armed forces and in particular from the interplay of ambitions, fears and grievances within the officer corps. Hence, in order to perceive some of the covert reasons for the 1967 Togolese coup as well as the reasons for the Army's remarkable cohesion (as compared to the frequent splinterization of armed forces elsewhere) and success while in office, it is necessary to delve into the social composition and internal dynamics of the Togolese military hierarchy.

The pre-independence Mandate and Trusteeship provisions under which Togo was governed prohibited military recruitment in the country, yet a military career appealed to many who wished to escape the shackles of a moribund economy and traditional village life. This was especially true in the underdeveloped and overpopulated north where Kabre youth, socially and economically locked out by France's lopsided developmental policies, were attracted by the upward social mobility potentials of an Army career. The proximity of the Dahomean border and the ease of enlistment there as "Dahomeans" assured a steady flow of Togolese "Dahomeans" into the French Colonial Army in the 1950's. Few Ewes joined in this trek since their superior skills and education allowed them easy entry into more advantageous positions in the

civil service and the trades. Even later, when indigenization drives in other ex-French territories flushed back to Lome expatriate Ewes who could not be easily absorbed by the bloated Togolese civil service, few opted for the traditionally Ewe low-status military career; and those who did join the Army ended up concentrated in non-command positions in the service units.

At independence the Togolese army was a miniscule 250-man force trained and commanded by French expatriate officers with few indigenous NCO's and only one middle-rank Togolese officer - Major Kleber Dadjo. Both Dadjo and the bulk of the extremely docile force were largely Kabre, performed super-police duties and were held in very low esteem by Sylvannus Olympio whose views on the absurdity and excessive cost of an Army were well known. Yet among the Kabre NCO's - who felt ill at ease in, and discriminated by the southern host culture - and among the French commanding officers - who knew their promotion prospects within a one-company Army were limited, to say the least - there were potentially explosive grievances against Olympio and pressures for an increase in the size of the Army.

When France demobilized much of her colonial armies, repatriating to Lome her Togolese "Dahomeans", the interests of the returning veterans converged with those of the "expansionists" in the local armed forces. The Kabre veterans, unskilled in other crafts and loath to return to the very same socio-economic stagnation that had originally driven them from their villages in the north, petitioned Olympio for their integration into an expanded Togolese Army, a move supported by most of the local NCO's and officers. Olympio's flat rejection of even their minimum demand - the integration of only sixty of the best qualified men - led to the 1963 confrontation in which the assault group obtained support and weapons from key personnel in the Army. The elevation of

Grunitzky to power and his general political vulnerability assured that the gains secured by the veterans (a tripling of the Army, higher salaries and allocations, and officer rank for most of the key figures) would not be threatened during his tenure of office. 10 His imminent collapse, however, so apparent during 1966 when he faced continuous assaults upon his authority both from within his cabinet and from the Ewe elites and masses in the coastal cities, threatened far more than the Army's corporate interests. For in light of the virtual impossibility of forging either a northern-led civilian regime or another maleable national coalition, it seemed as if power might slip into the hands of Olympio's C.U.T. lieutenants whose major policy plank was the arrest and trial for murder of their dead leader's assassins. 1967 coup can thus be seen to have stemmed primarily from the direct threat to the personal freedom and security of Colonel Eyadema (who admitted firing the shots that killed Olympio) as well as other by-now high-echelon officers who had been with him on that fateful night. Hence the assassination of Olympio inadvertantly assured that the Army would always stay at least at the periphery of political power out of fear of possible future retribution. No matter the degree of "civilianization" or liberalization the Army may undertake in contemporary Togo the key officers involved in the 1963 murder of Clympio are not likely to allow the formation of a true civilian regime. The various anti-Eyadema plots during the past seven years (many masterminded by Noe Kutuklui, Olympio's spiritual heir) have overlooked this fact as well as that Eyadema is not the only figure standing between them and an Ewe civilian regime.

Most of the above factors also throw light on the reasons for the remarkable internal cohesion of both the ruling military clique and the Army as a whole. The self-commissioned officer clique that gained control of

the Togolese armed forces in 1963 were of roughly the same age and social origins, had shared similar socializing experiences including combat duty, had assimilated the same cultural influences and were drawn from the same ethnic group - the Kabre - as were the bulk of the rank and file in the Army. 11 Moreover, the complicity in the 1963 coup of Olympio's Kabre commander, Major Kleber Dadjo and other personnel, their retention and promotion in the post-coup Army, ensured that no schisms were to develop between the two segments of the armed forces. While it is true that the key conspirators and their Army supporters leapfrogged to intermediate officer rank (Eyadema, Bodjolle, Kongo and Assila, the Ewe odd-manout) - with Etienne Eyadema, one of the youngest and brightest of the N.C.O. veterans percolating to the top promotions have since been routinized without excess favoritism. This remarkable professionalism by the nonprofessional N.C.O.'s-turned officers has gone a long way in preventing the development of personal resentments and animosities and their inevitable repercussions in the form of attempted power grabs, factionalism and purges.

Thus the integrity of the hierarchy of command has remained extremely stable over time. Dadjo - a few generations removed from the new young elite in the army - was retained for several years as Chief of Staff even though his powers were in actuality quite nominal. Later, he was gently "promoted" to non-operational duties as Eyadema took over as Chief of Staff. Also, Lt. Colonel Assila - the wwe member of the veterans' inner clique in 1963 - was consistently retained at top governmental and Army command positions right through mid-1972 even though he had developed a critical kidney ailment which kept him incapacitated for over two years in a Paris sanitorium. Indeed, the only serious friction within the officer corps occured when Major Bodjolle, the original head of the 1963 inner clique, tried to wrestle away the leader-

ship he had lost to Eyadema consequent to his backing out of the coup-attempt at the last moment. And even this power-struggle was resolved without factionalizing the Army or tearing asunder the hierarchy of command.

The Institutionalization of Military Rule

The Army has consolidated its aurhority in Togo by linking the continuation of military rule with the economic satisfaction of group interests. At a later stage, as the regime became adept at manipulating the political process and weaning away potential opposition with patronage, it moved to expand its legitimacy by partly institutionalizing itself.

The military regime has been greatly aided in its efforts to consolidate its authority by the general pick-up in the economic pace of the country as phosphate exploitation moved into high gear and by the sharp increase in world prices for cocoa and coffee. Both developments have favored the Ewe coastal areas where the phosphate and cocoa regions are located, and have generated important new revenues for the government especially after the latter acquired a 32% share in the phosphate works. Similarly, a major slash (50-80%) in duties on luxury imports (alcohol, perfumes, watches, tobacco) sparked off a veritable boom in smuggling activities into Ghana that has always maintained high tariffs on imports. Lome's market women, the "principal socioeconomic force in the country" 12 have benefitted most from this illicit trade and the relaxed import-export Indeed, so sensitive has Eyadema been to the interests of the market women that much of his most ardent - and vocal - support in the south is precisely from this powerful group: when the R.P.T. party was established in 1969, for example, they contributed 500 000 CFA to the party coffers and joined it en masse.

Annually larger government revenues from these reduced taxes on a much higher volume of imports and exports (as much as 40% of which might be destined for. or arriving from, Ghana) have permitted an expansion of state services throughout the country, but especially in the north. For the first time in Togo's history there has been a consistent attempt to develop the Kabre areas (though mid-Togo and the Savanes regions have remained neglected), even as Lome and the coastal areas have seen a major face-lifting as well. Since 1968 the expanding and balanced budget has allocated larger sums to the various bureaucracies, which have continued expanding to the satisfaction of the civil service unions. Neither has the Army been neglected. Since 1963 it has grown sevenfold to over 1 800 men equipped with better materiel and receiving higher salaries.

In like manner Eyadema has paid attention to complaints from traditional chiefs regarding the erosion of their authority and slashes in their state remunerations under previous regimes. In a very popular gesture that gained the government the allegiance of the traditional authorities Eyadema raised chiefs' salaries by 50% and established provisions for regular contact between them and the regime. These policies were in particular appreciated in the south due to the much greater pulverization of chiefly authority under the impact of modern influences. The increase in the symbolic status of the chiefs, and Eyadema's frequent visits to the north (and in particular to his natal village, Piya) have not alienated either the coastal populations or youth who have discovered increasing patronage outlets under his administration. 13

The regime has also tried to emphasize its "national" character and that in Eyadema's cabinet both major regions are equally represented by young, untainted and competent technocrats. While the latter is certainly

true, and Togo's cabinets have been marked by stability over time, the ethnic distribution of portfolios favors the Kabre and the true locus of power is squarely in the hands of the military (see TABLE A). Thus while in 1975 8 civilian Ministers were indeed equally drawn from North and South Togo, three of the other four Ministers are northern officers, and many major policy decisions are actually made by the military inner group in an informal manner, later "ratified" by the cabinet.

TABLE A

ETHNIC REPRESEUTATION IN TOGO'S CABINETS

Ethnicity and % of Population	At Independence	Grunitzky's last cabinet	Under Lyadema
Ewe (44)	67	70	25
Kabre (23)	22	20	42
Moba (7)(North)	0	0	8
Central Togo (5)	11	0	0
Gurma (5)(North)	0	0	0
Kotokoli (7)(Central- North)	0	10	17
Cthers (9)	0	0	8

Figures expressed in percentages. Source: Donald Morrison, et al., Black Africa: A Comparative Handbook, The Free Press, New York, 1972

Most of the active opposition to the military regime has come from small groups of exiled politicians either shut out of the administration or unwilling to make their peace with Eyadema. Foremost among these is Noe Kutuklui, a former Clympio Einister and heir-apparent

of the C.U.T. (though in actuality he seems to have little support left among the Ewe), who has been behind most of the plots that punctuated Lome's civic life during 1967-1970. Based in Cotonou Kutuklui has been able to attract a motley group of aspirants and disgruntled fringe elements whose ineptitude in coup-making has only been matched by the wide-scale publicity given their arrest and trials in Lome. Most of the former Ewe political elite has retired from public life or have joined the Eyadema bandwagon accepting sinecures in the higher levels of the civil service. The economic success of the regime has gained it grudging approval among the coastal populations who while still unable to accept the northern and military credentials of Eyadema are also paradoxically unwilling to see his government collapse. This was strikingly demonstrated immediately after an alleged 1970 Kutuklui plot when thousands marched to the Presidency, in Lome's first truly "spontaneous" solidarity demonstration. 14

During Eyadema's first two years in power (1967-69) great stress was placed on the temporary nature of the military regime, a cleansing interregnum prior to the re-establishment of civilian politics. By 1969 with the economic picture greatly improved and under pressure from both the Army command and northern elements who feared a reassertion of Ewe hegemony, the regime moved to legitimate its continued control of the nation. process was a slow and very cautious one and was marked at the outset by quite transparently stage managed public demonstrations in support of continued military rule: indeed, so obvious was the Togolese equivalent of the reluctant acceptance of the Crown by Caesar that one observer quipped that Eyadema was "perhaps a Bokassa pretending to be a Lamizana" alluding to the differing personal ambitions of the military heads of the Central African Republic and Upper Volta. However that may be

on January 17, 1969 Eyadema bowed to "public pressure" - which included government-paid telegrams from the interior and village delegations brought to Lome by the administration - and renounced his recently announced decision to hand over power to civilian parties. 16

The "transformation" from a military regime to a legitimate national government accountable to the masses, albeit still under the control of a Kabre-military inner group, was achieved through the creation of a national party to whom the government was made responsible, and a plebiscite held to confirm Eyadema as the people's choice for President. The Rassemblement du Peuples Togolaises was duly established in September and the carefully screened members of its Constitutive Congress promptly declared that "the participation of the military in public affairs is expressly recognized" 17 in light of the Army's past contributions to Togo's social and political development. Eyadema was expressly requested, in the name of the R.P.T. acting as respesentatives of the people, to stay on as Head of State. Simultaneously the R.P.T. chose a respected Ewe official (Edouard Kodjo) as Secretary General: later, when it became obvious he was not as malleable as had been expected Kodjo was replaced by a 15 man civil-military Folitical Bureau with a northern majority.

The next phase in the legitimation of the regime took place at the first Congress of the R.P.T. in

November 1971. Held in Palimé, the center of the south's cocoa growing district, and scene of economic prosperity consequent to rising world prices, the assembled 2 000 hand picked delegates promoted Eyadema to General, rejected their Central Committee's proposal for a civilianization of the regime ("the people consider the idea of constitutionalizing the regime as inopportune and premature" 18), approved the holding of a referendum on Eyadema's Presidency and announced the site of the next

Congress - Lama Kara, the capital of Kabre country. In the January 1972 referendum (in which villages voted "en bloc") Eyadema was confirmed as the peoples' choice by 99.09% of the voters. The official transformation was complete; directly elected by the populace to head a national civilian government in which there is no distinction between civilian or military elements, Eyadema became institutionally accountable to the R.P.T. through its Political Bureau, that in turn represents the various segments of the population.

The reality of power does not flow as neatly as the institutional diagram would suggest, nor is the R.P.T. a living force. Needless to say the institutional facade of power has changed with the adoption of the concept of pro forma accountability, a slight decentralization in decision-making authority and the inclusion of a larger group of trusted officials at the fringes of power within a more complex institutional setting. Political power in Africa has always been viewed as totally indivisible and hence has been jealously guarded, in civilian as well as military regimes, 19 and there is no reason to expect a different orientation from Eyadema. It is important, however, to drive home this disparity between theory and reality in the case of Togo partly because the regime's favorable press abroad has overstressed Togo's institutionalization, and in part because Togo's stability depends on several factors which may not turn out to be lasting over time.

First, Eyadema's political style, his penchant, has leaned towards the reification of formal trappings of power. Again, rare is the African political party or movement that truly has grass roots to any considerable degree. The R.P.T. is no exception. Structurally it is somewhat an anamoly with each party branch directly linked to Lome without intermediate hierarchies, causing blockages in the capital whenever

party structures have been utilized. More importantly, however, is the lifelessness of the edifice in the countryside: even in the north - where it is quite correctly viewed as a Kabre dominated hierarchy - it elicits little attention or involvement, and is both understaffed and delegated few specific functions. 20 The R.P.T. is neither a control mechanism (the military or administrative network is utilized for this), a political recruitment hierarchy (the Lome bureaucracies are still the best avenues) or an aid to national integration (Eyadema's concept of integration appears to encompass only levelling economic disparities). Its establishment has created some new administrative positions for Togo's elite and it has provided, in its Congresses, for some very timid, lowkeyed discussion of socio-economic options. The regime has been from the outset quite heavy-handed with the few ambitious political reformers who managed to slip through the screening process, as the demotion of Kodjo has illustrated. And the fact that some members of the Political Bureau are also either Cabinet Ministers, or secondary figures of the de facto political elite, assures the synchronization of R.P.T. and government deliberations.

As to the second point, it should be remembered that Eyadema's liberal personality aside, much of the stability of the regime has been consequent to the quickened economic pace of the country, which in turn is greatly affected by external factors. Thus, for example, the possible abolition of high import tariffs by Ghana (already contemplated) would overnight shatter the prosperity and threaten the standard of living of thousands of market women (some of whom are among the richest of Lome's nouveau riche) and other coastal elements who thrive on the two-way smuggling across the border. A joint Togo-Ghana agreement to try to curb this traffic (actually concluded in 1972) might have a similar effect, while the Ewe cocoa cultivators - who turned against

Olympio when he imposed a 5 francs per kilogram tax - might greet a decline in world cocoa prices with massive defections from the Eyadema bandwagon. Similarly, phosphate exports have been going up in tonnage since 1968 though state revenues until 1974 have been level or declining due to lower world prices for this commodity. Though prices startlingly tripled in the mid-1970's a sharp drop or world glut could place the industry in a precarious position, contracting state revenues and inevitably affecting levels of socio-economic services and state patronage that can be provided in a societal context of rising expectations. Such a sequence of events would likely trigger a feeling of relative deprivation with its inexorable consequences. 21

Togo's prospects are not so dim, however, unless all the above factors coincide to shatter the economic picture. Moreover, Eyadema's personality, his liberal policies, the relative non-visibility of the Army and the absence of major scandals connected with it, have soothed and reassured many segments of the population that could not have conceived previously a benign northern military administration. If the government can build upon these social credits in its favor by involving more top level Ewe personalities in major policy-making the Eyadema regime may well start making inroads towards national integration, a goal no previous administration has seriously aimed at. More importantly, moves in this direction would do far more to consolidate and legitimate the government than attempts to date to create and sustain from above control and support structures which remain largely ineffective due to general civic noninvolvement.

FOOTNOTES

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- ⁵Claude E. Welch, <u>Dream of Unity: Pan-Africanism and</u>
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- 8 See Samuel Decalo, "The Politics of Military Rule in Togo", Geneve-Afrique, Winter 1973-74

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- 13 Despite the official freeze in appointments to the civil service the latter grew by 7.8% between 1968 and 1971 to over 11 000
- 14 Le Monde, August 12, 1970. Also, "Behind the Togo
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 Bulletin (political series), January 1971
- 15 West Africa, October 18, 1969

- 16 The New York Times, May 25, 1969
- 17 Afrique Nouvelle, December 11, 1969
- 18 Afrique Nouvelle, November 26, 1971
- 19 Claude Ake, Journal of Modern African Studies
- Fieldwork by the author in Lama Kara, Niamtougou and Nuatja during 1971-3
- 21 See James C. Davies, "Towards a Theory of Revolution,"

 The American Sociological Review, February 1962