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President Abdou Diouf and Political Opposition in Senegal: Change or Continuity?

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INTRODUCTION

It is to be expected that opposition should exist in new states of Africa. The colonial situation, with its accompanying resentment by the elites of each state against those who deny the dignity, gave rise to nationalist and independence movements in the state concerned. The ultimate incumbents in the central positions of authority in the new states, unfortunately, were rather thinly spread in the society. This unavoidably created an acute consciousness that one's own circle of conferees (whether religious or ethnic) possess the true quality of leadership. The situation was aggravated by the attachment, prestige and prequisites associated with power and too glaringly demonstrated by those in the central position of authority. These leaders consequently became the focus of criticism for shortcomings of which they were more or less aware. It became rather unpleasant for the leaders that their critics were once their nationalist comrades-in-arms and, indeed, brothers.

What is clear, in the first place, is that no independent state in Africa of today is immune from oppositional activity. In fact, within the last two decades, most African governments have had to admit factual existence of opposition through the experience of either conspiracy, assassination or actual coup d'etat. Secondly, African leaders don't take kindly to opposition and where there happens to be toleration of opposition, certain conditions must be fulfilled.

In those state of Africa where opposition is not tolerated, the ruling party bans opposition parties outright or forces them to join its members. This was the case for fifteen years in Senegal under the regime of Leopold Senghor between 1960 and 1976. While one cannot say that the conspirational attempts to assassinate and seize power from Senghor in the early sixties came from the opposition parties,¹ the subsequent revision of the constitution in order to strengthen the Presidential powers, was Senghor's reaction to suspicion along this line.

After the elections which followed the revision of the constitution, there were protests which led to riots. The repressions which followed these incidents and which led to several deaths proved the extent of Senghor's great powers and consequently, organised opposition declined. Soon after, government declared certain parties illegal while others sought the best conditions through which they could incorporate into the ruling party. By 1966, the last legal opposition party, the "Party for African Regrouping" (PRA-Senegal) joined the ruling Senegalese Progressist Union (UPS) and three of its leaders were awarded ministerial posts.

Opposition to Senghor's regime between 1966 and 1968 was mostly clandestine and members were those mostly affected by Senegal's worsening economy. The economic difficulty of the period brought in its wake wage freezes and consequent Trade Union unrests, all of which exploded in May 1968 with a student strike in the University of Dakar followed by a general

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strike called by the National Union of Senegalese Workers (NTS). A potential revolution was averted by a show of force and President Senghor survived only through the loyalty of the Armed Forces which were heavily reinforced at the upper levels with French advisers².

It was the crisis of 1968 (extending beyond that year) that forced Senghor to modify the political structure of Senegal. Here, youthful malcontents, comprising essentially University of Dakar students and Lycee college students who demonstrated a formidable enough capability in raising riots on the streets of Dakar even up to 1973, deserve mention. The first feel of Senghor's change of mind of opposition came in March 1974 with the release of Mamadou Dia, his former Prime Minister, from detention. The new atmosphere encouraged M. Wade to launch in July 1974 his own party, the "Democratic Party of Senegal" (PDS) but which, in order to play it safe, he called a party of contribution and not of opposition!

In April 1976, the constitution was revised allowing three ideological mainstreams - (a) Liberal and Democratic; (b) Socialist and Democratic; and (c) Marxist-Leninist into which all political parties should be subsumed. Abdoulaye Wade's PDS, which was legalised in September 1974, became liberal democratic while the ruling party, which had now adopted a new name "Senegalese Socialist Party" (PS), became Social Democratic. The newest recognised "African Independence Party", which was reconstituted for Senghor's convenience, was slotted into the Marxist-Leninist ideological compartment. Later, in December 1978, Senghor added a fourth ideological mainstream called the extreme right wing and which was occupied by the newly recognised "Senegalese Republican Movement" (MRS). An announcement followed this, banning all political associations outside the mainstreams of political parties approved by the constitution. This move was in reaction to a new coalition attempt by the opposition camp called the "Senegalese Opposition Co-ordination (COSU).

The interest of this paper in the above events is Senghor's paradoxical shift in 1976 from what appeared an exclusive domination of Senegalese political arena by his party — the UPS — and more especially that this shift took place when it was more or less certain that the Prime Minister, Abdou Diouf, would succeed him at the Presidency. Senghor could afford to prove his party's strength against all opposition forces. He was, however, aware of the relative weakness of his party in the urban areas as compared to the various clandestine opposition parties but he also knew that these parties were many and disunited. He decided to proceed with care, hence the limited multi-party system. The revised constitution was clear on this:

Pluralism of political parties is a guarantee to free democracy for citizens within the diversity of their opinion ... however, a proliferation of political parties can equally constitute a mortal peril for the correct function of democracy³.

With the limited multi-party system, the opposition leaders whose strength was not clear could be kept out of the political game. However, as Pathe Diagne⁴ correctly put it, the political situation as Senghor left it for his successor appeared rife with specific difficulties — mainly involving personalities and concerning France's continued co-operation with Senegal⁵.

The position taken in this article is that Senghor's successor at the Presidency could even go further than him in removing the restriction on the number of parties in Senegal because, from all indications, the ruling party — the PS — would be for it. Once the rule of the game is outlined by the constitution (which the ruling party can continue to influence), the opposition can be effectively kept discreet and modest. Above all as long as the opposition can be kept divided, so long will their criticism of the regime remain unfocused and ultimately ineffective as regards public opinion. Thus Abdou Diouf's democratic opening, announced in his first message to the nation as President of Senegal in a Radio-Television broadcast⁶ was simply geared to a carefully planned victory at the polls in 1983.

THE NEW DEMOCRACY

One needs to admit that Senghor, from the time he realised that it would not be in his own interest to impose life presidency with a single party system on Senegal, had started to reintroduce some democratic process that the Senegalese have always cherished. The reform introduced through the constitutional revision of March 19th, 1976 which legalised pluripartism but limited into three main-streams of ideology, was a departure from an earlier process whereby citizens made their electoral choice from only one National list presented to them. As rightly pointed out by O'Brien this move and especially given the peculiar circumstances under which the amendments were adopted in April 1976, "Arouses at least some curiosity"⁸. However, one also needs to agree with the opposition parties that the democratic opening of 1976 did not change anything when properly examined. A journal belonging to an opposition party, Taxaw⁹, rightly opened that liberalisation of the political scene was merely an appearance and that the regime in fact increased its

repressive laws often drafted by design to restrict free action especially among workers and lovers of democracy¹⁰.

Actually certain steps taken between 1976 and 1978 constituted a clear demonstration of Senghor's arrogant control of Senegalese party-politics. Firstly, the fourth party of the right which he judged could exist as from August 1977 did not receive official recognition till December 28th 1978 just because he had to be sure it was the right party for the political Right. Secondly, Senghor surprised political observers when in the same month of December 1978 he backed out on his promise to hand over power to a younger person before 1983. From then on, his constitutional successor, Prime Minister Abdou Diouf was relegated so much to the background that it was felt that the latter was afraid to serve despite the fact that the most important state documents were under his care since February 1978¹¹.

As time went by, the economic and social condition of Senegal went from bad to worse and Senghor realised he had to step down in order to save His own reputation. In a televised speech in March, 1981, he declared:

I can no longer work ten hours a day, including weekends. It is time to step down and hand over the torch to the next generation¹².

This decision which took many people by surprise was greeted with mixed

comments: The most favourable comments saw it as courageous timely and a good example to other sit-tight African heads of State¹³. An opposition view leaves the future generation to judge whether Senghor gave up his presidency on his own free will or whether he was forced to do so. The comment goes on:

Everyone knows at least that Senghor is leaving at a time when Senegal is faced with an Economic and Social Crisis without precedence in her history, crisis for which his regime and particularly himself are responsible through the anti-national orientation given the country for twenty years¹⁴.

This view is quite correct because difficulties in 1980, a year before he decided to retire, were actually having grave repercussions on the Senegalese people especially as regards employment and revenue. This situation was fast degenerating into a political crisis. Thus, towards the end of 1980, party political scene was rife with political violence. The legal and illegal opposition groups, though divided through unnecessary ambitions on the part of their leaders, agreed that Senghor's regime only understood the language of force¹⁵. Interestingly, Senghor's decision to retire from action politics pained the leaders of the opposition groups because Senghor, as a person, was their particular target in the forthcoming elections. Moreover, they all frowned on the clause that made Abdou Diouf automatic successor to the Presidency which they regarded as a flagrant violation of the Democratic process that Senghor pretended to be championing. All the same, they were sceptical about the way Abdou Diouf would lead the political boat of Senegal.

Many people within and outside Senegal felt that Abdou Diouf, who was to succeed Senghor, was not the astute politician that Senghor was and, to succeed the latter effectively, Abdou Diouf would need to demonstrate ability of appealing to the broad masses of the population. Acknowledged widely as an efficient 'technocrat', Abdou Diouf had to convince the world that he was a capable politician. So, in an interview recorded in Dakar in October 1979, Prime Minister Abdou Diouf promised to change his style, becoming less a 'document man' and more a 'contact-with-the-people man'¹⁶. Later in another interview with the same daily newspaper reporter,¹⁷ he went further by projecting the image of a political man. He attacked the opposition parties for their incoherency and was dismissive of them, especially the non-recognised National Democratic Rally (RND) led by Cheik Anta Diop.

Nevertheless, the political contradiction based on the quatripartism steadily became a source of anxiety to the government. There also existed a dangerous reminder of the 1968 and 1973 unrests sparked off by university and secondary school students. In January 1981, student-riots in Ziguinchor, the main city of Casamance region, spread to the University of Dakar and a national catastrophe was just avoided. This was followed a few months later by strikes by members of the sole and Democratic Teacher's Union of Senegal (SUDES). This union remained at logger heads with the government which refused all negotiations. Finally, there were disquieting tensions from extremist muslims especially from a certain Amet Khalifa Niassé, alias: Ayatollah de Kaolack,¹⁸ who was suspected to be manipulated by Colonel Khadafi's Libya to foment trouble in Senegal. This extremely difficult situation must have weighed heavily in favour of Senghor's decision to retire¹⁹.

In actual fact, when he succeeded Senghor in January 1981, Abdou Diouf directly inherited the political, economic and social malaise existing in Senegal. The courage with which Abdou Diouf confronted the situation is, to state the obvious, commendable.

In his first radio-television broadcast to the Senegalese nation as president of the Republic of Senegal, President Abdou Diouf declared that he would be "the president of all Senegalese without exception" and that while continuing with his predecessor's policy, would make changes²⁰. He had learnt a lot from former president Senghor, having been groomed by him, yet he was convinced that Senegal needed some changes. He went further:

I am taking up the challenges of the 80s, admitting that these challenges are serious and difficult to deal with²¹.

These challenges were economic in nature and included energy, inflation, drought and unemployment. The new president thought that there were no miracles nor mysteries but that Senegal simply needed to live within its means²². Particularly to be noted is Abdou Diouf's intention to welcome any positive contribution to government and also not to jeopardise democratic politics,²³ but rather that "democratic opening would be consolidated and reinforced"²⁴. However, President Diouf warned that:

The republican order would reign supreme, thanks to firm, rigorous and just authority within a respect and strong state²⁵

The democratic opening referred to in President Diouf's broadcast was to be based on political pluralism. The president declared:

Led by men of good faith, preoccupied with the search for general interest, political pluralism can be conducted within a rich and constructive dialogue and not within disorder leading to political convulsions, unproductive struggles and anarchy²⁶.

On the Republican Order which would depend on a strong and

the power of law is the peoples' liberty; liberty means the right to do all that the law permits²⁷.

The opposition communist party African Independence Party (PAI - Senegal) was quick to point out, apparently in reaction to the President's Speech, that:

the struggle for democracy in Senegal is also to eliminate the partisan stronghold by the ruling P.S. on the totality of the state's structure and to eliminate corrupt practices against the financial and economic property of the State; to restore and even extend the democratic liberty of the Senegalese people, is a non-replaceable means at the disposal of the people to control the orientation of the nation, and to control those who are charged with the daily conduct of public affairs²⁸.

Simply put, President Diouf intended, as soon as he took up office to introduce his own style in confronting the political task of Senegal. It happened that Diouf's first major confrontation among the inherited problems was with the education sector where opposition was growing. In his inaugural speech, the President announced the convocation of a general assembly of educationists without exception to discuss freely all problems concerning education. He explained later in an interview with a journalist that he took the decision to take up the education challenge as soon as his predecessor confirmed his intention to retire²⁹. President Diouf was of the opinion that social tension would be greatly relaxed as soon as he gave all education contentions a chance to air their grievances and offer suggestions. He declared:

The situation was tense, not only because of educational problems, but because rumours were rife that as soon as Senghor left the Presidency, there would be chaos. I had to act, I think that, coming right after President Senghor's message the night before (i.e. December 31st 1980) and the Supreme Court - President's message, the words that I pronounced went a long way in soothing nerves³⁰.

The Minister of Education, M. Habib Thiam declared open the convocation which brought together about 2,000 people including Trade Unionists, teachers of all categories, and representatives of the bell orient teachers' union (SUDES). At the convocation also sat traditional chiefs, parents' federation, social and economic council members, christian and muslim leaders. The sitting permitted the retabling of demands for improvement in the condition of service for teachers and:

The setting up of a national commission for education reform in which representatives of SUDES, Primary, Secondary and University students, parents and other interested parties will participate³¹.

The conclusions of the convocation touched on the affirmed wish of participants to make schooling in Senegal more popular and more democratic through the re-adaptation of teaching to national realities. The importance of encouragement of the use of national languages in teaching and in official transactions was also tabled as well as the steady reduction of foreign technical assistance personnel in such a way as to simply put an end to their presence within the delay of five years in the secondary school-level of education, and within the delay of ten years in the university. Participants in the convocation also recommended the decolonisation of the university programmes and of scientific research projects, the progressive disappearance of private schools, introduction of religious education in primary schools, and the elimination of audio-visual method of French-teaching which had been introduced since 1971³². Finally, it was recommended that such convocation be held every four years, making it coincide with the end of every development plan. In the meantime, there should be a bi-annual permanent evaluation exercise on the recommendations made at each convocation. There was a declared willingness on the part of government to forget the past quarrels and in fact the education

Minister's desire to be henceforth and remain the teachers' minister was stated³³

The whole exercise of arranging the convocation and the resolutions taken so overwhelmed a participant from the United Nations Educational and Scientific Organisation (UNESCO) that he exclaimed:

Unbelievable! Ten years ago when we suggested all these measures, the authorities raised up their apparatus of repression³⁴.

Actually, had the Abdou Diouf's government allowed the continuation of the educational, social and economic policies adopted by the previous regime, there would have been unrest sooner than later. With the success achieved in this convocation, could the opposition now accuse the government of finally seeing sense in the criticisms levelled against it on matters concerning education? The fact is the opposition parties were taken by surprise on this democratic gesture by Abdou Diouf. Even if the opposition parties, especially the PDS, had useful ideas they kept them secret so that the ruling party might not claim the glory of such ideas. The convocation on education made possible by President Abdou Diouf was an indication of change in the conduct of politics in Senegal and this should encourage the rallying round of all leaders to help the new government.

The charges sought in the education sector were finally confirmed by President Abdou Diouf himself in a speech he made in April 1981, marking Senegal's twenty-first anniversary of Independence from France. The president announced plans for a reform in the education system as a result of which young Senegalese would find jobs. A mass literary campaign would also be launched and attempts would be made to make education more universal. Finally, the president mentioned that national languages were henceforth to be used in schools as opposed to French which was utilised exclusively under President Senghor. The following month (May 1981), the government withdrew the dismissal and suspension notices earlier sent to 59 members of the SUDES, in line with the recommendation of the Education General Assembly in convocation in January 1981. Also in May, university students benefitted from a measure from the government. The council of Ministers, meeting under the chairmanship of the President of the Republic of Senegal, decided to set aside the exceptional measures imposed on the university of Dakar since 1971 which had excluded students of the university from membership of all the administrative institutions of the university. Henceforth, students would be free to form and belong to associations within the university campus. Students could also be invited to take part in university councils, assembly and commissions. Foreign students were also henceforth free to join or form any associations they liked.

New measures were also taken to the benefit of the masses of the population. These concerned freedom of movement of citizens especially regarding their individual liberties. In effect, President Diouf abolished an existing law by which all Senegalese nationals were to apply for exit visas before being allowed to travel abroad. Senghor's regime had passed this law in order to curtail movements, especially of opposition leaders who were often invited abroad. To crown it all, a very important measure was taken by president

Diouf under his open-democracy programme. This was the expansion of the scope of political competition in Senegal through removing all limits to pluripartism in the country's party-politics.

DIOUF'S MULTI-PARTY PLOY

An academic and political critic, Pathe Diagne, was being prophetic when he feared, in an article published during a succeeding regime,

the political institutional heritage built by the poet-president Senghor, who was obsessed by a permanent mark of his image, could be shaken to the roots³⁵.

In effect, President Abdou Diouf in his inaugural speech envisaged an end to the limiting factor of four parties in Senghor's version of multi-party-system³⁶. The position at that point in time was that the party-system, as designed by Senghor, promised they continued dominance of the political scene of Senegal by the ruling P.S. The idea that Abdou Diouf would assume the role of successor to Senghor was already a *fait accompli* but it was also a problem. As soon as he could, Abdou Diouf rejected flatly the idea of successor. He decided to an interviewer:

A successor is always caring to preserve an heritage — which on its own is creditable — to the point of not being totally responsible any more for one's own decisions and then to always put oneself 'what would he do if he were here?' I believe it is much easier to be a replacement³⁷.

Interestingly, quite a number of elderly P.S. party stalwarts were rather sceptical about Abdou Diouf's decision about the multi-party system in Senegal. Not surprisingly Leopold Senghor was one of these. He declared:

The setting up of such a system in Senegal seems to me as things are at present, a bit premature. I fear that certain forces may use this disposition to undermine government efforts³⁸.

In actual fact, President Diouf had his plans well laid out; he was, all the while, also thinking of the ruling party's interest in the whole exercise. In order to have the plan hatched out properly, he first had to be in exclusive control of the party.

When he announced his retirement, Senghor had said he would also give up his post of Secretary General of the P.S., but since this took longer than expected, many suspected that he did not want his successor to be the sole master of the game. On January 14th 1981, the new president became the Secretary General of the party and Senghor was to be contented with the position of honorary president. Thus, Senghor, as had earlier been widely speculated, would no more be able to direct the party from the background. With this newly acquired power, Diouf was poised to take decisive actions regarding the party and it was an opportunity for him to convince the political elite of the party of his competence and ability to keep the political boat of

Senegal stable. To do this, he had to set his own house (in this case, the P.S.) in order.

Even though Abdou Diouf retained 21 of the 28 members of Senghor's cabinet he also formed an unofficial kitchen cabinet of 40-50 year-old technocrats as the cornerstone of his regime. These men were more nationalist-oriented than the older generations and would certainly like to bring much of France's economic interests under Senegalese control³⁹. Already sceptical about Abdou Diouf's multiparty opening, the old P.S. Barons, as the older generation member of the P.S. were called, were further shocked when the president decided to rid the party to all ill-gotten wealth. The move which pleased the generality of Senegalese masses was not totally successful due to clandestine appeals within the political bureau of the party. But Abdou Diouf was still bent on carrying out his battle against party corruption later when his mandate eventually became confirmed in the 1983 elections. Meanwhile, the party Barons are still active in finding a way of dissuading Abdou Diouf, OR IF party Barons are still active in finding a way of dissuading Abdou Diouf, or if need, be preventing him from carrying out his threats.

The reason for Abdou Diouf's draconian measures against corruption is easy to understand. First, he wants to render P.S. the most transparent, the most healthy and the most democratic of all Senegalese parties. Secondly, the economic challenge which he inherited from Senghor has been stubbornly getting out of control. It is on economic affairs that the opposition finds most strength to criticise government, so to keep the opposition at bay, the regime had to work hard⁴⁰. Rightly, the president believes the masses, especially farmers, should not be made to suffer too much from economic set back. Courageously, Abdou Diouf cancelled farmers' debts to the state totalling as at July 1981, 88,000 U.S. dollars⁴¹. Having taken all the measures above, Abdou Diouf had no cause to fear party opposition which, in any case, he considered too divided to merit too great an attention. Yet, as in other challenging areas,

he had well-laid out plans for this important aspect of Senegalese politics.

When Abdou Diouf came to power, the party position was as follows: The Socialist Party (P.S.) born in December 1976 from the Senegalese Progressive Union (UPS); it is the ruling party and is led by President Abdou Diouf who became General Secretary as from January 14th 1981⁴². Its political orientation is Democratic Socialism.

The Senegalese Democratic Party (PDS) became a legal opposition party from September 1974; then parliamentary opposition party from February 1978. It is led by M. Abdoulaye Wade. The party is supposed to be subsumed politically to Liberal Democratism since Senghor's regime, but the radical stance of its leaders especially as regards their links with Ghaddafi's Libya, has rendered the party victim of unpleasant internal and external difficulties for many years now. Consequently, the party has been considerably weakened.⁴³

The African Independence Party (PAI) reconstituted from the clandestine PAI UNDER Senghor's regime, but recognised sometime in March 1976. It is led by M. Majhemout Diop who returned from exile having been pardoned by Senghor from outstanding goal sentences⁴⁴. It is Marxist in orientation.

The Senegalese Republican Movement (MRS) was formed from both the old French. International Workes Union (S.F.I.O.) and the U.P.S. It is led by M. Bob Bacar Gueye, formerly Vice-president of the National Assembly in the early 70s when he was a member of the UPS. The party was recognised in April 1979 and is conservafive in political orientation.

Apart from the three opposition parties (above) recognised by government, were also illegal opposition parties and groups in Senegal. The National Democratic Rally (RND) led by the Historian Cheikh Auta Diop, Dia's Mamodou Socialist Movement, the pro-Soviet PAI, the remnants of the old PRA Senegal and some Maoists who called themselves "Jaay Doole Bi'd were the most active clandestine opposition parties. All of them, except the RND and the pro-Soviet PAI had just formed a movement of the opposition which they called C.O.S.U.S. hen adbou Diop came to POWER. One must mention also a few Trade Union groups systematically opposed to the government such as the National confederation of Senegalese Worker (XNRTA), the Free Workers' Union of Senegal (which was inspired by the legal opposition party - the P.D.S.), the peasant and Farmer Union - Unions S.U.D.E.S. A part from personality rivlary, the opposition groups and parties above were also bedevilled with rather abstract and confusing ideological differences or even competition. In actual fact, the various leaders of the opposition, hiding behind their various ideological masks tended to view with one another in approaching political problems and in appealing to the masses.

It was in this situation that the promise made in Abdou Diouf's inaugural speech on January 1st 1981 was confirmed in April 1981 when the Council of Ministers approved the constitutional revision which virtually removed all restrictions to the number of parties that could legally exist in Senegal. Two conditions were, however, imposed:

- (a) no party could be identified with any race, ethny sex, religion, sex, langauge or region; and
- (b) the parties are obliged to enter into an agreement to respect the constitution, the National Sovereignty and Democratic Principles⁴⁵.

The opposition, legal and illegal, was pleased with this move by Abdou Diouf's regime and the reaction that followed resembles taking the lid of a boiling pot. Requests for legal recognition started streaming in, less than two weeks from the announcement of the constitutional amendmanet. For clarity, the following were the newly recognised political parties as at July 1982:

- (1) The National Democratic Rally (RND), offspring of the Senegalese National Front (FNS) dissolved in December 1963, was created in February 1976 and recognised after a long battle on June 18th 1981⁴⁶. Its leader, Cheikh Auta Diop, a vocal critic of Senghor, leads a partyk that has been a threat both to the P.S. and PDS. The RND believes in Popular Democratic and Independent Sovereing State and therefore does not belong to the usual political and ideological classifications: one reason why Senghor kept the party out of the legasl party-political scene⁴⁷
- (2) The Revolutionary Movement for New Démocracy (Populist-Left) (AJ-

MRDN) is headed by M. Landing Sanave and is a party for pro-Maoist workers. It was recognised sometime in July 1981 and is Marxist-Leninist in political orientation.

The Union for People's Democracy (UDP) is a splinter group from the AJ-MRDN (above) and is led by M. Hamedine Racine Guisse. Although its ideological orientation is not clear because its leader declared:

We are not under the control of anybody and not in any ideological school⁴⁸.

one can safely group the party with other marxists.

- (4) The Democratic League — Independence Labour Party (L.D. M.P.T.) born of the PAI, was created in September 1974, according to its leadership, for the unity of the Marxist family. It incorporates leaders and militants of the influential Teachers' Union (the S.U.D.E.S.).

The party is lead by M. Babacar Sane.

- (5) The Independence and Labour Party (P.I.T.) which was recognised on August 8th 1981, was the former PAI Senegal. Its ideology is Marxist-Leninism close to that of the Soviet Communist party⁴⁹. It is led by M. Seydou Cissokho and Amath Dansckho.
- (6) The Trotskyist Communist League for Workers (LCT) also claims to be Marxist-Leninist.
7. The Democratic and Popular Movement (MDP) was created on May 10th 1981. It believes in socialist self-management based on the Traditional Community custom of Africa⁵⁰. The party is led by Senghor's former Prime Minister of the early 60s who, following his release from political detention, was reinstated in his full political rights as from April 1976.
- (8) The Senegalese People's Party (P.P.S.), recognised in December 1981, is led by M. Amadou Dia. The party's aims include: to work for the "restructuring of the Senegalese society on new scientific bases⁵¹".
- (9) The Socialist Party for the masses (P.S.M.) adopts scientific socialism as its political ideology. *Afrique Nouvelle* records LCT (6 above) and P.S.M. (9 above) as the 13th and 14th Parties to be recognised by government⁵². Even then, the list above does not include two parties awaiting recognition; The People's Party (P.P.) led by M. Omar Wone and the National Salvation Rally (RNR) as recorded in Africa Research Bulletin⁵³ but which could still be added to the list of 14 political opposition parties recognised by government as recorded in Africa Research Bulletin⁵⁴. On the other hand, *Afrique Asie*⁵⁵ reports that only 13 opposition parties have so far been recognised.

Nonetheless, from the list, one observes the recurring marxist ideology among the parties. Five parties, apart from the PAI recognised during Senghor's regime, are now competing for the votes of Senegalese Marxists. They are AJ-MRDN, UDP, LD-MPT, and LCT. Three of them PAI, LD-MPT and PIT are splinters of the old marxist PAI. The socialist parties MDP and PSM and possibly PDS, RND and PPS are no match for the ruling P.S. The MRS, said to be conservative may eventually shift position further left in order to compete with AJ-MRDN, LD-MPT and LCT in canvassing for workers' votes. Thus, it can be seen that the ruling party needs worry only about PDS which has been the only official opposition party in parliament. But since the membership of the party in parliament descended to 10⁵⁶, it has lost all rights as a parliamentary group. Moreover, the disarray within the party's leadership has weakened it considerably. Another party to watch is the newly recognised RND about, being a legal party, it has surely lost the aura it had among the masses while still a clandestine party. A third party to watch within the socialist group is Mamadou Dia's M.D.P. because, while accusing the ruling P.S. of being socialist only in name, it promises to base its own movement on traditional Senegalese socialism.

It goes without saying that Abdou Diouf's move in legalising all parties that desire to play the game of politics within the limits imposed, has gone a long way, not only in splitting the opposition especially on the extreme left, but also in silencing its leaders now that economic difficulties bite harder still. He had challenged the opposition by saying:

the government does not reject any positive contribution ... that is to say I do not intend to jeopardise democratic politics⁵⁷.

With elections coming in a few months' time, Abdou Diouf's well set-out divide and rule tactics became better consolidated still when the National Assembly recently passed the Electoral Bill. This concerns revision of the existing electoral laws and it relates to the way members are to be elected to the 120 (it used to be 100) seat National Assembly. Half of the members will be elected by first-past-the-post departmental representation, while the other half will be elected via proportional representation on a National list. The bill also bans opposition coalitions. Moreover, only political parties registered at least 4 months before elections will be allowed to present candidates. Independent candidature will not be permitted, therefore prospective members of the new House must belong to one of the recognised political parties. Finally, the bill stipulates that only parties securing 5% of total votes can be represented in the National Assembly⁵⁸.

This electoral reform bill had been awaited as the true test of Abdou Diouf's sincerity about his promised open democracy. It should be recalled that the passing of the electoral law is the exclusive prerogative of the overwhelming majority membership which the ruling P.S. enjoys in the National Assembly. One should not expect therefore, Abdou Diouf to have dug a tomb into which his own party would be eventually buried after the elections. In other words, the new electoral measures have been carefully designed to perpetuate P.S. victory. For instance, on departmental representation, the Minister of interior explain that:

parties will present one, two or three candidates in a department,

according to the density of its population. Whichever party's electoral list obtains the majority votes in a department will win all the seats set aside for such electoral constituency⁵⁹.

What this means in effect is that there will be equal competition for votes between one, two or three candidates of the ruling P.S. and one, two or three from each of the 13 or 14 opposition parties in each constituency. But the inequality in the use of the state controlled media, essentially the radio and television, reduces considerably the chances of each of the other parties in reaching the electorate. It was announced that while the majority parties (whatever this means!) would have 30 minutes at their disposal, the others would have a bit more than 2 minutes each. To make matters worse, at elections, the departmental "prefects" would be in charge⁶⁰. When one considers that the departmental prefects were appointed to that post by government one begins to doubt if the elections will truly be free and fair. Actually, the government had gone a step further in planning for total victory by seeking the possibility for any party, having won only 5% of the total votes cast to win all seats in the National Assembly. The final rejection of this does not affect the good chances of the P.S. as matters now stand. M. Abdoulaye Wade, leader of the PDS may finally be proved right in his prediction of February 1981 that:

the recognition of all parties that ask for it will lead to the (inevitable) elimination of the weakest of them i.e. those that will not have secured seats in the National Assembly after elections. It would mean coming back to even more limited multipartism than exists now and the reappearance of semi-clandestine parties⁶¹

As it turned out, one of the greatest handicaps of the opposition was their disunity. This, despite attempts at forging a united front against the ruling P.S., further strengthened Abdou Diouf's political power. After the elections, whose results were announced on March 5th 1983 and which gave overwhelming victory to Abdou Diouf, protests from the opposition⁶², were ineffective. Since the election as President in his own right, Abdou Diouf has maintained an open system and has demonstrated an increased confidence in his internal and external policy making. This is not to say that he can ignore the opposition. Maitre Abdoulaye Wade, claimed a few months after the release of the election results that the various positions he had taken over the years had had considerable influence on Abdou's policy. It is known that other smaller opposition parties than the PDS which Wade leads, have been even more extreme in their opposition to Abdou's policies⁶³.

CONCLUSION

Without doubt, the political situation in Senegal has somewhat changed since Senghor left the Presidency for the younger Abdou Diouf. What has not changed, however, is the vantage position of the P.S. over other political parties in Senegalese politics. This has been the position for more than twenty years now. It becomes too simple to continue to impute this to the overwhelming

economic, military or social presence of the French in the country. There are enough reasons within the Senegalese political society itself that have made this possible. In taking the relay baton from Senghor, Abdou Diouf has made continuity possible but in a different style. When he came to power as president he astutely diffused the tense situation in the country by granting far-reaching concessions on the domain of education and by considerably widening the scope of parti-politicking. The latter action merely rendered the opposition dividend and therefore weak as compared to the ruling P.S. Thus, continuity has meant, for Abdou Diouf, rendering the P.S. stronger by using methods different from those employed by Leopold Senghor.

The U.P.S., which changed its name to a more deceptive but suitable Socialist party under both Senghor and Diouf has been in control of government and naturally economy (including special financial grants from France and other rich and friendly countries) since the country's independence in 1960. For twenty-two years then, it has been in the position to use state money, at will, to finance expensive political propaganda. This propaganda has been carried out, often through the powerful muslim sectleaders who in turn look up to government for support in case of intra-islamic squabbles. No opposition party, legal or clandestine has been able to successfully outdo the ruling party in this domain. For example, Mamadou Dia's failure in 1962 was due largely to Islamic leaders' support for Senghor: a case of scratching each other's back!

Taking a cue from Senghor's experience, Abdou Diouf, himself a muslim, has been moving close to Islamic leaders. The Primary significance of Islam as an hegemonic national religion cannot be overemphasized. In fact, Islam still provides, in Senegal, "a basic element of shared communal identity"⁶⁴. Once addressed as the Giant from Mecca, Abdou Diouf has made a great impression on Senegalese Muslims when he visited the Taif in Mecca⁶⁵. M. Khalifa Niassé, despite all the noise made about him, has not been able to bring to the Senegalese half the finance which Abdou Diouf has secured from Islamic rich nations for Senegal. It is the power of money that has facilitated the propaganda machine of the P.S. to blow the above events across the nation even to the remotest rural areas of Senegal. Even if one opposition leader, or even Khalifa Niassé himself, wanted to counter the Islamic success of Abdou Diouf, he would be too poor to go beyond the too few main cities. Strongest opposition has been weakened when the ruling P.S. uses money-power to buy-over its leaders who are offered ministerial, party or top public-service posts.

In the education sector, the role played by Abdou Diouf's measures in calming the young intellectuals has been dealt with above. By the nature of their training, intellectuals (scholars, students and their teachers of various levels) are prone to criticising government. In Senegal, students have been critical of the overwhelming French presence and influence on economy and culture of the country. They are generally anti-imperialist and anti-neocolonialist in their manifestations. While it is true that they make up a disproportionately large section of the bearers of public opinion (precisely why Abdou Diouf first dealt with their grievances as soon as he was sworn in as President), intellectuals generally are mostly based in Dakar, St. Louis, Ziguinchor and a couple of other main cities where their actions impress only city dwellers. The P.S., it is well known, has always been drawing its support

from the rural dwellers' votes. It has been seen above that government can afford to carry out effective propaganda into the villages. In any case, government also controls the arsenal of dissuasion and repression to deal with any dangerous youth outburst. It needs to be noted also that the ruling P.S. also sponsors rival youth organisations and Trade Unions to those organised in the university and schools which, better financed through government support, tend to be much more effective in reaching and convincing the poor masses in the rural areas. Other weighty bearers of public opinion in the opposition include trade union leaders, writers, businessmen religious leader and leaders of voluntary organisations. These face the same dilemmas as students and their teachers and legislations are passed to the advantage of the ruling elites.

President Abdou Diouf does not agree with those who say he dis-Senghorises social, economic and political trend in Senegal. He declared in an interview that:

effecting changes does not mean dis-senghorisation ... For a man who has neither the temperament nor the stature of President Senghor, it is a question of handling the reins of power and exercising it according to my particular style adapted to the Senegalese problem⁶⁶.

Thus, what has changed on the political scene in Senegal is the style in the control of democracy, not the control itself. In other words, what is happening in Senegal today is political cosmetic change in continuity. So, many months after the election time and as predicted since April 1981⁶⁷, the overall winner is Abdou Diouf. His victory, hotly contested by the opposition parties, has been seen well deserved. However, the opposition parties have since the elections resolved to intensify their struggle in order to finally achieve the "unity in combat of all democratic and anti-imperialist forces"⁶⁸.

NOTES

1. Edward Shils "Opposition in the New States of Asia and Africa" Vol. 1 No. 2 Jan. 1966 p. 57.
2. Dmitri Georges Lavroff Ed. *Les Systemes Constitutionnels en Afrique Noire. Les Etats Francophones*. Pedone Paris 1976 p. 79
4. Pathe Diagne is a well known Academic and Social Critic in Senegal.
5. Pathe Diagne; "Une entinelle pour la democratie" in *Afrique* No. 45 Mars 1981 p. 40.
6. *Afrique Asie* du 2 and 15 Fevrier 1981 p. 29.
7. *Journal Officiel de la Republique du Senegal* No. 76-01 du 3 Avril 1976.
8. Cruise O'Brien D.B.: "Senegal" in John Dunn Ed.: *West African States: Failure and Promise. A Study in Comparative Politics*. Cambridge University Press 1978 African Studies Series p. 173.
9. "Taxaw" pronounced "Tahau" in Wolof language means: Stand up and fight against the system of exploitation. The journal is the brainchild of Majhemout Diop one of Senghor's fiercest critics.
10. *Taxaw* January, 1981 No. 23 p. 3.
11. *Annee Politique et Economique Africaine*. 1981 Societe Africaine d'Edition Dakar p. 253.
12. *Africa Report* March - April 1981 A Publication of the African-American Institute Vol. 26 No. 2 P. 32.
13. I made allusion to this fact in an article entitled "Pluralist Democracy in Senegal: A brief