

A. MALI

A crisis in relations between the Republics of Mali and Upper Volta arose in December 1974 when armed clashes occurred in a disputed area on the border between the two countries.

The area in dispute, a strip about 160 kilometres (100 miles) long and of a width varying up to several dozen kilometres, had been the subject of discussions for 13 years, a joint commission charged with establishing the frontier on the basis of pre-independence documents having failed to reach agreement. Mali claimed the area because it was inhabited by Tuaregs and Bellahs, who were considered to be Malians, and also, according to the Malian newspaper *L'Essor*, because it contained deposits of manganese, titanium and petroleum.

Although Presidents Moussa Traore of Mali and Lamizana of Upper Volta had sought a peaceful solution of the dispute at a meeting at the frontier village of Faramana on Dec. 4, 1974, it was reported from Ouagadougou (the capital of Upper Volta) on Dec. 14 that a Malian patrol had attacked an Upper Volta patrol near the village of Gasselago (in the latter country), but this report was denied on Dec. 15 by Radio Mali, which accused Upper Volta of interference in Malian territory.

The Upper Volta Government protested to Mali on Dec. 14 against the arrest of two of its soldiers by Malian Army units, and on Dec. 16 against an earlier incident on Nov. 25, when Malian forces were said to have crossed the frontier and four of their members had been arrested.

On Dec. 16–17 Radio Ouagadougou reported a further clash, in which an Upper Volta soldier was said to have been killed and several others injured. In Bamako (the capital of Mali), however, it was claimed that the Army of Upper Volta had launched a general offensive against Mali, which had, however, been "strongly repulsed".

On Dec. 18 It was announced in Ouagadougou that Malian forces had taken up positions on Upper Volta territory along the whole length of the disputed frontier.

The military operations were accompanied by mutually hostile broadcasts, with Mali in particular claiming that it was merely taking possession of territory which was legally its own. At the same time attempts were made to reach a peaceful settlement of the dispute, especially by Presidents Houphouet-Boigny of the Ivory Coast, Senghor of Senegal and Sekou Toure of Guinea.

After Captain Charles Samba Sissoko the Malian Minister of Foreign Affairs, had visited Nouakchott (the capital of Mauritania) and Dakar (Senegal), President Senghor sent a message to President Siyad Barreh of Somalia, the current President of the Organization of African Unity, with the request to set up, as soon as possible, a commission of inquiry into the frontier incidents between Mali and Upper Volta. Having received the Somali President's reply on Dec. 18, President Senghor visited Bamako on Dec. 20, when he announced that Presidents Moussa Traore and Lamizana had agreed to meet in Lome (Togo) with President Eyadema of Togo, who on the same day also visited Bamako and Ouagadougou. (President Eyadema was currently President of the *Conseil de l'Entente*, which comprises Dahomey, the Ivory Coast, Niger, Togo and Upper Volta.) Meanwhile, also on Dec. 20, Captain Samba Sissoko had declared that his Government had accepted the creation of a commission of inquiry, but he reiterated that his Government had "irrefutable proof" that the disputed zone was part of Mali.

The meeting in Lome on Dec. 26–27 ended with the signing of a communiqué by the Presidents of Mali, Niger (Lieut.-Colonel Seyni Kountche), Togo and Upper Volta. According to the communiqué, broadcast by Radio Mali on Dec. 30, the meeting had decided to set up a mediation commission consisting of Guinea, Niger, Senegal and Togo to guarantee the safety of the two countries' nationals on each other's territory as well as their property, to supervise the effective withdrawal of troops from the border zone, and to seek a solution to the dispute. The Presidents of Mali and Upper Volta agreed to cease their press and radio campaigns against each other.

Constitutional and Cabinet Changes In Upper Volta.

Both in Mali and in Upper Volta the respective military regimes had been consolidated by constitutional changes earlier in 1974 [see 26721 B for Mali and 26396 B for Upper Volta].

In Upper Volta, President Lamizana had announced on May 80 that all political parties were abolished and that a "Renovation Movement" had been set up, which would become the country's sole authorized party.

The new movement was to consist of a "Government of National Renovation", a "National Consultative Council for Renovation" to be formed on July 2, 1974, and political and administrative structures at regional and local level. The country was to be divided into 10 departments, each under a military prefect. There would be a state security court, and the country would have several "defence zones". A formula would be sought to enable the country's traditional chiefs to make their contribution to the renovation. A national commission would be charged with examining the possibility of concluding new agreements with France before the end of 1974, and also the "revaluation" of agreements concluded eight years earlier but still "without the expected results", owing to "misunderstandings". President Lamizana had added that freedom of the press and of trade unions remained guaranteed, though a National Information Council would issue directives to the radio, television and the press.

In a cabinet reorganization on Oct. 26, 1974, Lieut.-Colonel Jean Bila Zagre (Minister of Information, Posts and Telecommunications) and Captain Charles Hounsouho Bambara (Minister of the Interior) exchanged their portfolios, and Police Captain Bagnamou Bonde took over the Justice portfolio from President Lamizana.-(Le Monde - International Herald Tribune - BBC Summary of World Broadcasts) (*Prev. rep. Mali, 26721 B; Upper Volta, 26396 B.*)