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liberation

Inside a Struggle

FROLINA and the Armed Struggle

ARMED struggle broke out on June 22, 1966, and after four years we are able to weigh the balance of our action. At present, the People's Liberation Forces have two army groups in the interior, consisting of the first infantry army, stationed in the Central-East of the country, which includes the regions of Wadai, Biltine, Salamat, Guera, Chari-Baguirmi, Bata and a part of Middle Chari; and the second, created in March 1968, covering the entire northern prefecture of 500 000 km² with a population of 100 000 inhabitants, a very mountainous region with old volcanoes like Michoussi, that rise to 3414 m. There the army is divided into three detachments, one for each of

the regions that make up the prefecture, namely Tibesti on the West, Borku in the Center and Ennedi on the East. The raid made October 11 by the Borku detachment on Argeau, capital of the prefecture, shed a new light on what was happening and on the Chad revolution.

In general, we can evaluate our work as having been very good: we have taken control politically and militarily of three fourths of Chad. Despite the declarations of the French authorities, at the present moment it is impossible to destroy — or phrased more exactly, to rub out of the minds of the people — the idea of a new era, that of revolution in Chad.

The encounters at the end of 1970 were the result of a plan elaborated by the Political Bureau of FROLINA which, in the month of June, decided to undertake a general of-

fensive. Unfortunately, instead of taking place on two separate occasions, this offensive took place on one only. That is, we did not have the Center-East move, for reasons that had nothing to do with our desire to do so, but rather because of the problem of supply and related matters. In the North, the operation went according to plans: we won all our objectives both in the East, where the Ennedi detachment destroyed the Fada post, and in the Center, where the Borku detachment carried out a raid that changed the meaning of events in Chad or at least in Tibesti. Finally, the actions carried out against the forts of Bardai and Zua. In the Center, we undertook small actions that didn't correspond to what we wanted to undertake because it is in the Center that we have our most important forces.

The cities of our country are small, and although we have cells in the cities, for the moment we do not wish to undertake action at that level because we don't have the means of defense for it. Liaison is very difficult. We lack wireless and must maintain communications on the backs of animals — camels, horses; we are very isolated; to go from one combat group to another we can count on a day or two of march. Although communications appear to be improving, we still need wireless because, without this, it is really very difficult to contact the isolated bases, such as group 6 which is on the outskirts of Fort-Lamy. There is an incredible delay in reaching it now, whereas if we had radio or wireless transmission, we would be able to reach it more easily and could coordinate our actions in a much more efficient manner. Given the difficulty of communications, we

have set up autonomous combat groups that do not have to seek support from their neighbors or the High Command at every moment in order to carry through an action, but only do so when it is a question of an operation planned ahead of time which demands the coordination of two or three combat groups; but in other cases each combat group is given a fairly broad autonomy to go ahead on its own without getting into difficulties or being annihilated by an attack from the enemy. This is a rather difficult region, there are very few mountains and moreover the few that exist are barren; there are few woods, but in any case there is refuge for us to hide from the bombings which do little damage unless we are taken by surprise in open country.

There are no mobile bases. At the beginning they existed but not now, because of the planes. The French use considerable numbers of planes and helicopters, to attack, bomb and strafe. Therefore we have no mobile bases or fixed general headquarters; everything has been dispersed to escape the airplanes.

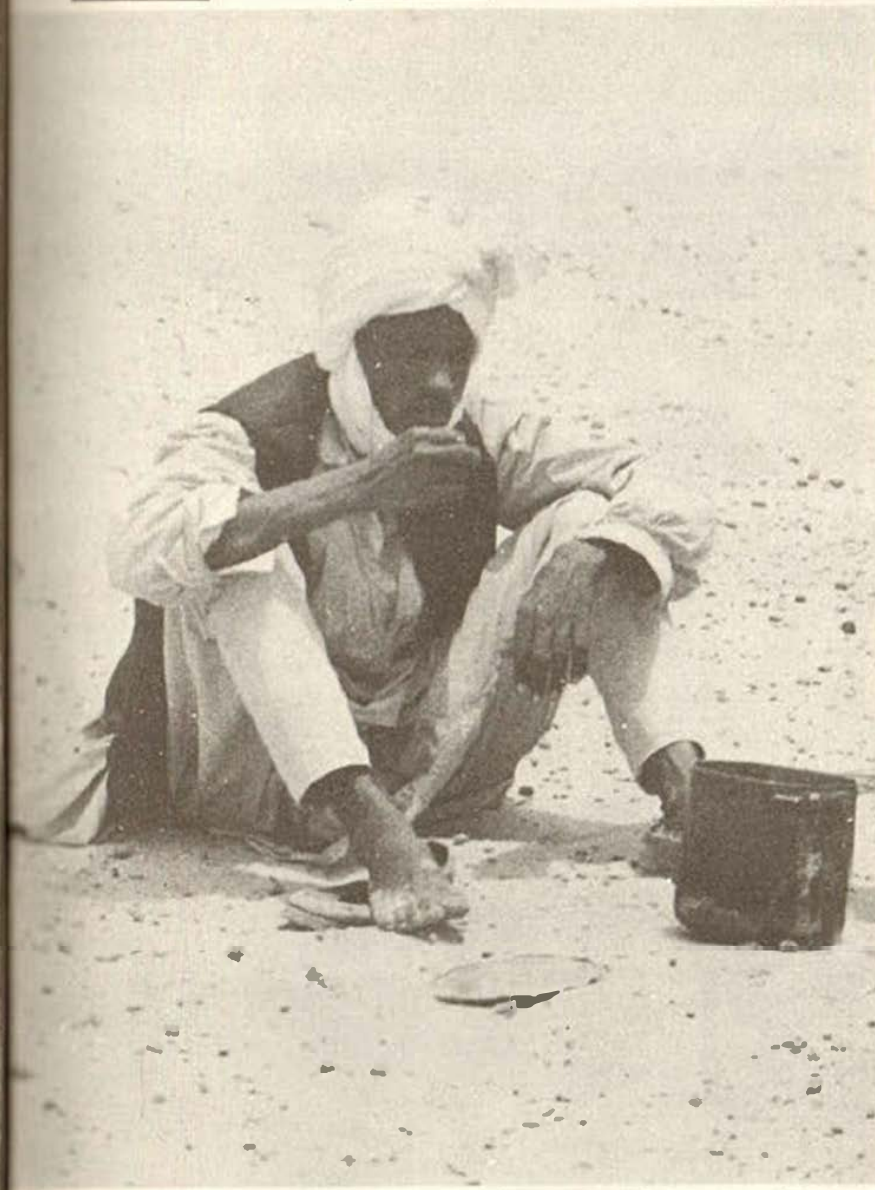
When Chad achieved independence, the government in power committed many injustices, to such a point that at the end of a certain time there was no longer personal nor collective freedom, there were no trade unions nor political parties nor any cultural movement. In short, we lived in a police state. In the cities, the people severely felt this loss of liberty, this lowering of the standard of living, this tie to any reasonable activity in our world of the 20th century. And among the rural masses, this was translated into a lowering of their standard of

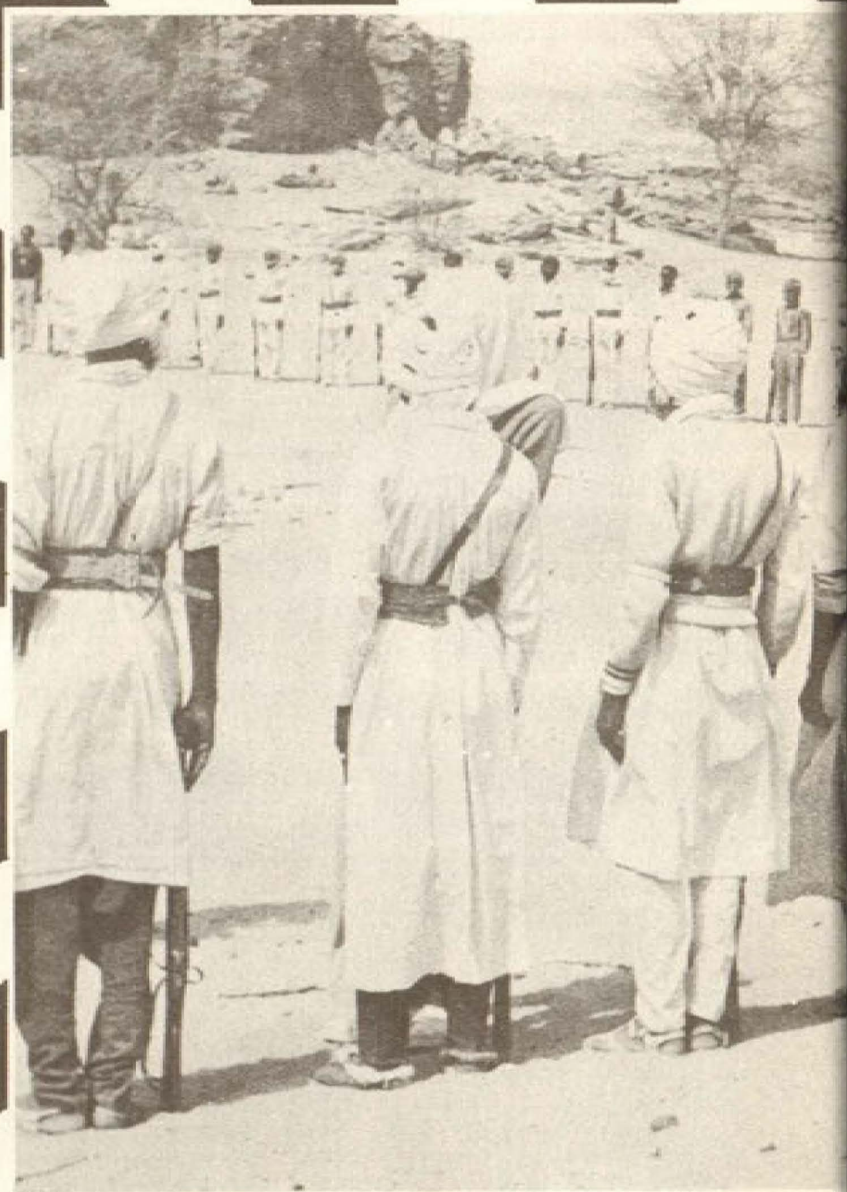
living, a much greater impoverishment than before. But we cannot say that these factors were the cause of the beginning of armed struggle. The intellectuals, the workers complained of the loss of their purchasing power, the restriction of their freedom, but they never decided to begin armed struggle. Armed struggle broke out spontaneously in the countryside because there was an incompetent and greedy administration which not only robbed the people's wealth but also behaved in a hateful fashion. After the initiation of armed struggle, when an inquiry was made both among peasants and among the peasant soldiers, I realized that the principal motivation that pushed the people to take up arms to fight, was not that their standard of living had dropped, not that their freedom had been restricted, but rather it came from the fact that they found themselves in an uncomfortable situation, morally speaking, because of harassments and humiliations of every kind. And this subjective factor was the principal one that projected the people toward armed struggle.

If we are going to burn the weeds, we need dry leaves, straw, matches, but in any case we have to feed the fire; there have to be weeds. The dry leaves, paper, straw, matches are the equivalent of moral factors, the subjective motivations that are not sufficient for the continuation, the permanence of the armed struggle. But there have to be weeds that are the equivalent of objective economic, social and cultural conditions.

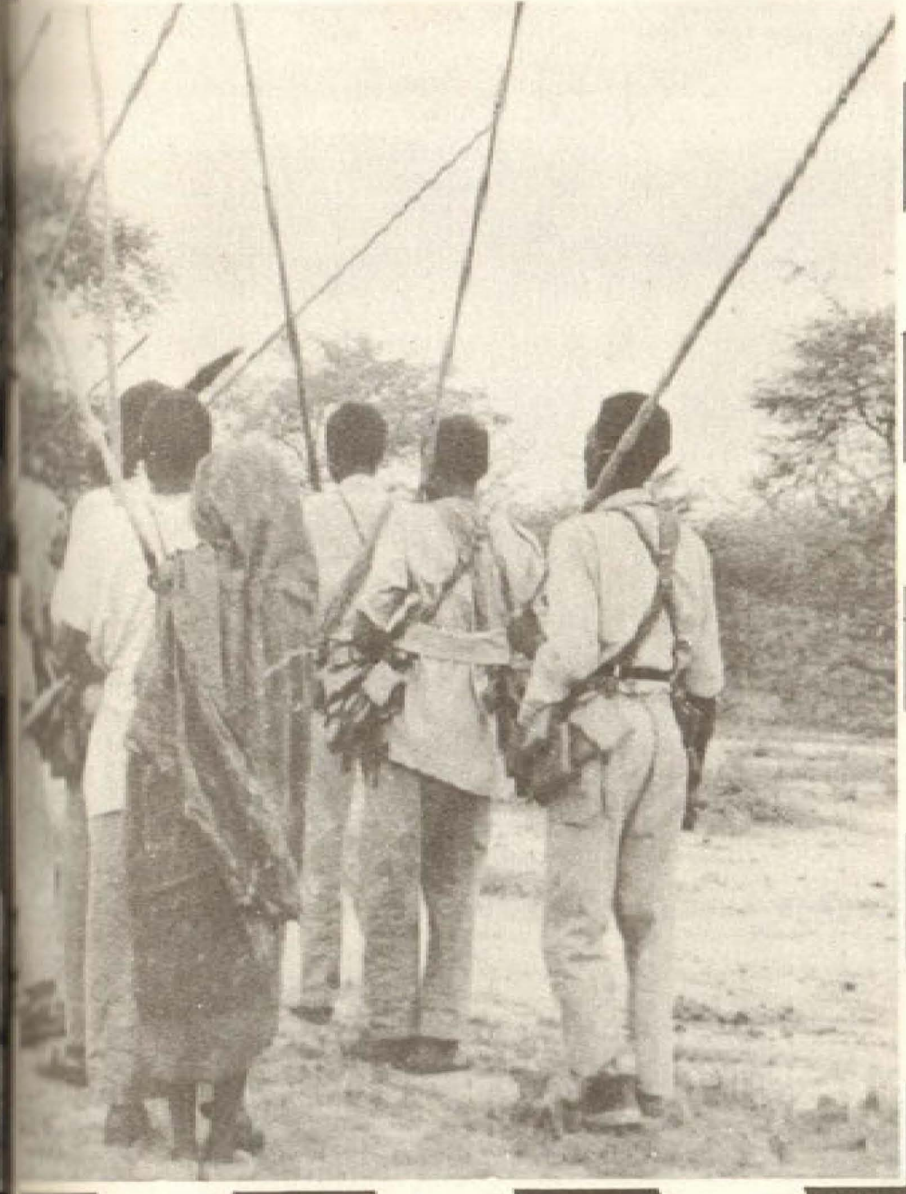
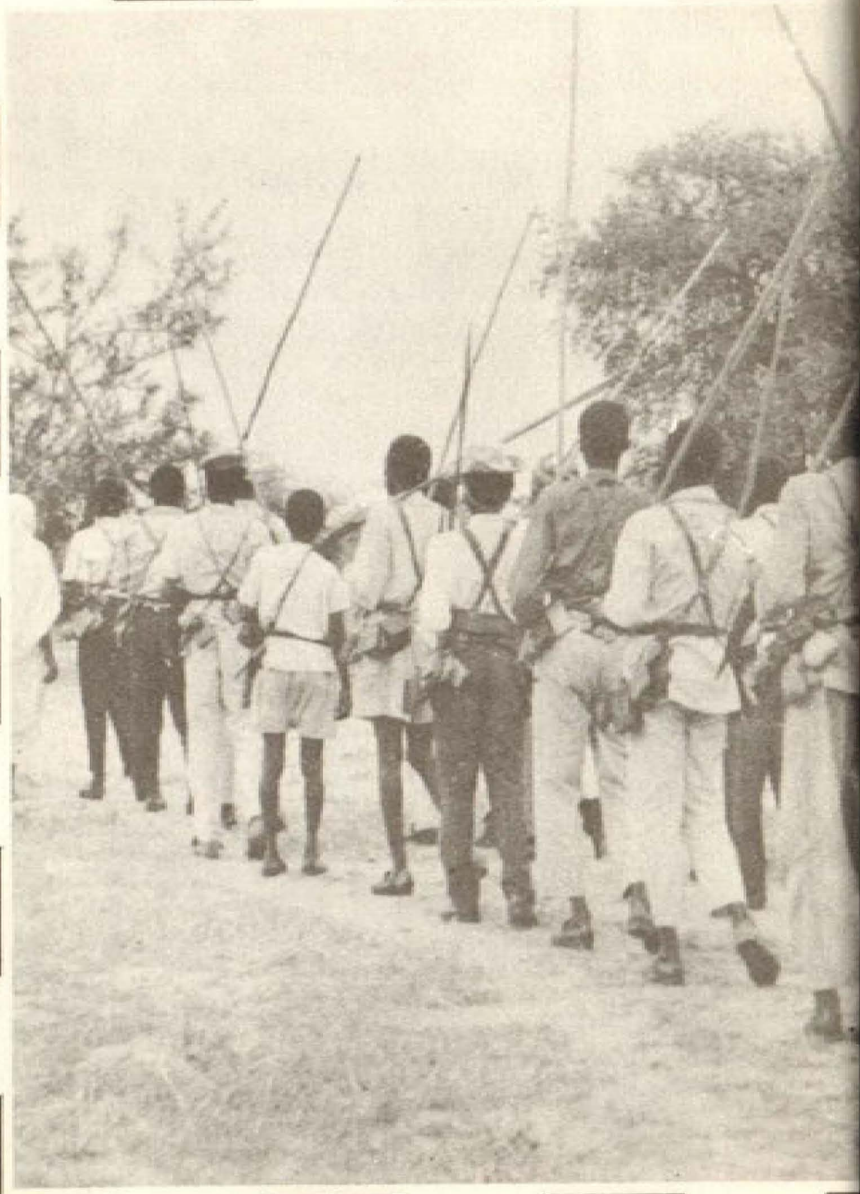
If a revolution is based solely on subjective factors, it cannot go very far because any government could

provide the correction necessary and provide it very well, for example, by preventing the prefects from being brutal, from robbing the people, preventing the gendarmes from being repressive, the tax collectors from collecting more taxes in a month or year — but the economic conditions of dependency will continue. As a peasant said to me: "The colonial government is a comparatively just government." But this does not change our condition. I believe, then, that there are many revolutionary possibilities in Africa, because the subjective conditions exist. The independent governments that now exist in Africa are inferior in quality to the colonial governments and administrations. I believe this factor can serve to light the fire, and it is up to the leaders to maintain this fire by feeding the flame. During a first period, the peasant masses do not understand why there is a bad administration, why, in fact, there are so many abuses. But it is in a second period, as we have been able to see here through the struggle that is unfolding, that the people begin to ask questions and pose problems, saying: "But after all, why am I fighting? Actually, since I have been in the struggle, I haven't had this thing or I've been without that." And I find this very interesting because I don't feel obliged to give them explanations as a teacher would to his pupils; I simply answer the questions. The administration of Fort-Lamy reestablished the power of the chiefs, and in the North it placed administrators that came from the North, but it was already too late. This was like water running over a dam because the masses have gone beyond the subjective phase of the revolution to approach the objective











phase of the problem.

At the beginning the French expeditionary corps embarked on terrorist actions — that is, the bombing of villages, the destruction of palm groves, of cattle and camel herds — believing that by this measure they were going to cause the disintegration of the people's masses. But the opposite effect was produced instead — that is, instead of disintegrating, the peasant masses united strongly in fighting forces, and we are currently having great difficulties rejecting those who come to enroll. The social categories that make up the fighting forces are simple people, peasants, small cattle raisers, small merchants and some intellectuals, with an average age of between 15 and 25 years, very young in order to be able to stand the difficulties.

It is interesting to see an armed struggle carried out by people who have never been to school, who do not reason things out in an elaborate fashion by classic standards. The majority of the Chad peasants have never been in contact with books and it is only now when they have posed problems that they have felt the need to verify in books what they feel.

There are peasant soldiers who have been at the front since before the struggle was organized in 1966. Before that there were groups that were spontaneously formed, especially in the Central area, that fought against the control of the tax collectors. One of them said: "I am not fighting because they robbed me, but against the way I've been robbed, in the end they have always robbed the poor, but it is the way they do it that shocks me." So he revolted against the way he was being robbed. From the beginning

of 1965, he was there against the gendarmes, against the administrator, against the tax collector, against the members of the old party, against all of this.

This peasant came spontaneously and there are thousands like him in Chad who help us by giving us food, drink, supplying us with information. But we cannot let them continue in the state they are in today. They must study, they must become like us. But how to do that? He answered me very poetically:

It is necessary, it is the responsibility of the government, but not of just any government. A socialist regime is needed. There are countries where the people don't learn to read or write, and when the revolution takes place they all learn to read and write, because if we don't know how we will never be able to transform the country, we will never be able to explain how rain is formed, we will never be able to explain how a human being is formed in his mother's womb; you have to learn to be able to exploit the wealth and this only comes with education. And I believe it is only possible under socialism.

We have good relations with the peasants. If we didn't we would have been destroyed long ago because we are only 10% armed. We have based all our action on the close collaboration between fighting forces and those of the rural masses, to the point that we do not incorporate the prisoners we take from the governmental forces, because due to the little time we have, we don't succeed in reeducating them. At first we took them with us because they knew how to

shoot, but once the action was over, they went into the villages and started beating up the population, stealing a chicken here, a lamb there, and this was prejudicial to us. Now we don't do this unless they desert, because if they desert we know that they are really motivated by good intentions. The regular prisoners we send home in their underwear. We take their guns and uniforms.

Relations with the students are beginning to improve. We have two categories of students: those who study in Europe, who are Chad Government scholarship students, and those who study in the Arab countries, who are not government scholarship students, but are independent. Because of this difference, it is easy for the students from the Arab universities to take positions since they do not depend for their studies on the Chad Government, while those who study in Europe depend on the government and can have their scholarships lifted at any moment. There is a difference between the revolutionary commitment of the students who study in Europe and those who study in the Arab countries. Those who study in the Arab countries commit themselves immediately to the struggle — the first who decided to carry out armed action were students from the Arab universities.

Women have also played an active part in our struggle. In each detachment, in each combat group, we now have women who participate in the struggle alongside the man. They have refused to be in autonomous units and prefer mixed units, a notable thing in a country that is very much tied to Moslem traditions.

Recent History

The colonization of Chad is very recent, it dates from the end of the 19th century and up until the conquest of the South it was accomplished without important clashes; but from the moment that the French forces took the 11th parallel, they began to encounter some resistance, since from the 11th parallel there were organized states such as the Empire of Wadai, that of Raba which at that time covered almost all of Chad, the Kanem Empire, the Baguirmi Empire, not to mention the religious sects such as the Sinusia, which offered bitter resistance to the French penetration from 1901 to 1913.

The conquest of Chad never ended. Until independence, the North was a military region and consequently always had a nationalist feeling which remained alive, especially in the Central-Eastern part and in the North where the French never were at peace with the population. All the people were spied upon and watched from the moment they travelled abroad. The old empires that formed part of the territory of Chad were the Wadai Empire, which covered almost all of present-day Chad and was the dominant empire with its capital in Abéché and was visited by the German explorer Nachtigal (there is presently a Nachtigal Institute in Chad); and the last empire which covered part of Chad, part of the Central-African Republic, part of Cameroon, part of Nigeria, which was the Empire of Raba, overthrown on April 22, 1900, in Cusserie, a city that is opposite Fort-Lamy.

All this shows that, contrary to what is taught today, there is a

history of Chad, a modern history built above all on resistance to colonial penetration and marked by dates that continue to live in the spirit of the Chad people because nationalist sentiment in our country is very much alive. In fact, when it was a question of giving some combat groups the names of martyrs, of heroes of the revolution outside of the well-known international heroes, it was accepted that a detachment would receive the name of a great Chad resistance hero, who was also a Sultan — although it did cause considerable discussion. Nevertheless, even though he was a reactionary, his name was given to the detachment.

The future is quite clear, though we have started with very little; when on June 22, 1956, we began the armed struggle, there were only six young men who had returned from a course abroad, and who fired the first shots of the freedom struggle. At that point we did not think it was going to spread like a weed fire or like an oil slick. We thought they had to be young and crazy to launch such an adventure, because seven armed with two pistols could not go out and destroy a government with an army supported by France. Clearly, the exploit, which was truly dangerous, was successful, since, after scarcely five years of struggle, we have succeeded in establishing, for example, more than ten combat groups in the Central-East and three in the North, and we are overwhelmed with calls from people who want to enroll in the fighting forces, which means that the cause we defend is not only ours but that it answers to the profound motivations of the people, who seek a change in the archaic structure.

Social-Economic Situation

Like all African states, Chad was a French colonial administrative creation and we inherited this administrative entity and from it hope to build the national state of Chad, despite the ethnic puzzle this presents. There is an interdependence between the zones in Chad, between the North and the South which complement each other culturally and economically. The North is the livestock country, the South is the agricultural country, two elements that are indispensable for the economic life of a nation.

Chad has an area of 1 284 000 km² and 4 500 00 inhabitants. Feudal structures persist in the North. They are the traditional great chiefs, feudal chiefs who own a great deal of livestock and are Islamic. In the South, the society is somewhat archaic and its chiefs have none of the initiative of those in the North; they do not own property, and the peasants cultivate only their own piece of land. The working class is very small because of the economic underdevelopment of the country, which has some 15 000 workers between those in the city and the countryside, but has a large rural mass.

We can divide Chad into two parts: the Chad of the North and Center, which is the livestock zone, and the Chad of the South, which is the agricultural zone where there is industrial farming — that is, monoculture, the cultivation of cotton, which was imposed more than 30 years ago to permit the population to pay its taxes. This form of cultivation continues up to the present despite the fact that Chad ob-

tained its independence in 1960. We can say that the 150 days out of the year that are given to the cultivation of cotton provide the Chad peasant with only 10 000 old French francs, that is less than 20 dollars, just enough to allow him to pay his taxes and that is all. As far as Northern Chad is concerned, it is livestock and multicrop country, riches that are not commercialized — that is, they are not transformed or exported. In the North and Center they raise oxen, cattle, sheep, camels, horses, and many crops: millet, wheat, sugarcane around Lake Chad, peanuts, peas, etc. There are 5 000 000 head of cattle, 10 000 000 sheep, a half million horses, and a half million camels, without mentioning pigs, which are very seldom raised since it is mainly Moslem region.

Very few products come from outside. The standard of living is low, Chad still lives in the era of the trader economy, and for the most part the exchanges are on an object for object basis. Money and its circulation are very rare in the North of Chad.

We have recently discovered important deposits of oil, uranium, tungsten and gas around Lake Chad, in the North, and also diamond veins near the Central-African Republic.

Culturally, the North and the Center form a block since, even though ethnically there is a wide spread of races, culturally they are peoples of the Moslem faith who speak Arabic, which is the dominant language in the country.

In the South, Arabic is also an important language although only the people in the large centers speak

it. Outside these centers there is a national dialect which is understood by the inhabitants in three fourths of the Southern departments — that is, in Middle Kiri, Middle Chari, Tanjile, Eastern Ugon and Western Ugon.

Taking these factors into account in Chad, the teaching of French and of Arabic will be obligatory because, while the North evidences a certain facility, an inclination to study Arabic, this phenomenon is not true in the South where the people are not Arabized, are not Moslems, and are more open to the teaching of French than to the teaching of Arabic. We must take all of this into account.

There are scholastic differences between the two zones. In the South 75% of the population has had schooling. In the North, approximately 5% has had schooling. Educationally, Chad is very backward, because ten years after independence it has not a single university. All the schools of higher education are secondary schools, there are technical high schools, and finally general high schools, that is all. Chad has no more than three doctors, no engineers, no lawyers, but it has petty officials. There are no newspapers. There is only a mimeographed government sheet, called Info-Chad, which gives daily news. There is a radio program, a weak radio station that can be heard only in Chad but not outside of Chad. The government also operates with a lack of information. There is no trade union, no political force, absolutely nothing. There is a governmental party but it has no popular base.

The Enemies

French intervention escalated in

two periods. The first at the end of the month of August 1968 — which was when we opened the second front — and which consisted in freeing the posts we had closed in the West, Zua, Anzur, Barjai, old Turk fortresses. In the face of the superior material power of the French, our fighting forces withdrew to the mountains. The French concluded that the FROLINA forces had been annihilated, and they left at the end of 1968. The second intervention occurred in April 1969 and was the occasion for sending to Chad the second foreign parachute regiment which was immediately fortified by the sixth army regiment. We were 75 km from Fort-Lamy.

At the present time we can estimate there are more than 5000 French soldiers in Chad, not counting the aerial forces which include dozens of helicopters, fighter-bombers and transport planes. But at last notice, contrary to the declarations made by the French Government, we have information indicating that France is sending to Chad elements of the 11th Light Infantry Division stationed in the Southwest of France. Undoubtedly, this would be a fairly important force and follows from the conclusions of the report given by General Cortadellas, General Commander of the Expeditionary Corps, who at the beginning of last year said that to pacify Chad 50 000 soldiers were necessary, not counting aviation pilots, etc. I do not believe that France can take charge of maintaining such an important contingent and especially paying the costs that would arise from the presence of such a force in Chad. Moreover, the local government of Chad is using all its efforts, with Liberia as intermediary, to re-

cruit some 800 mercenary soldiers.

As of now, there are no mercenary soldiers, and before there was only the so-called National Army of Chad, whose members are 80% of Chad origin. But now the National Army of Chad has been converted into a colonial-type army — that is, into a French army such as formerly existed in Chad. Now there are 529 French officers and sub-officers in the National Army of Chad.

Independently of French aid, the Government of Chad receives aid from Israel. It is Israel that has the high hand in the training of the so-called Chad Security Companies (CTS) which are special forces, similar to the Green Berets. In November of 1969, there were 50 Israeli officer instructors in the CTS and there are now three Israeli bases in Chad, one in the East in Mongororo, not far from the Sudan border, another 10 km from Fort-Lamy in a place called Kundul, and a third 350 km from Fort-Lamy in Bokovo. The Mongororo base serves as a supply base for the Sudanese bands in the South, some of which are controlled by Israel. There is also the Belgian Congo which has aerial bases at Fort-Lamy and in the North — that is, in Unianga Kabir and in Mangalmi. The aid from Congo-Kinshasa is currently limited to sending some helicopters, in addition to supplies and money. There is also a type of tonton-macoute, because there are fairly close relations with Haiti. Over a long period of time and until very recently there were two counsellors of Haitian origin, one concerned with cultural problems and the other with trade unions. Neither of these two things exists.

Colonialist Maneuvers

There was a French king, Louis XI, who said, "Divide and rule." It is clear that either the puppet government or the French authorities have tried to pit Moslems against non-Moslems and it is for this reason that, with obvious results, they stimulated education in the South and paid no attention to it in the North. And this is how they tried to oppose those who speak Arab to those who don't. Ethnic differences have also been exploited, but FROLINA has rapidly overcome these contradictions and the people understand that the unity of Chad is based on good relationships and cooperation among all ethnic groups that live in the territory of Chad.

The colonial power tries to do what it did in Sudan but in reverse, instead of it being the Moslems who try to rule as in Sudan, here in our country it is the animist Chadians they have pushed to the front of the scene; this is a convenient method that permits colonialism to survive by opposing one to the other. But the nationalists who have a sane view of the problem must perceive that this does not work in the interests of national unity and for this reason when someone enrolls in the fighting forces he has to swear to combat all racial, religious, ethnic, tribal, regional discrimination, and it is only after having done this that he is conditionally accepted into the fighting forces. Then, for two months, all his actions are watched to see that he understands this. Only after these two months of proof is he finally admitted.

There are possibilities that a coup d'etat may take place although this

is not an auspicious period, for the very good reason that it is no longer possible to give Chad a reformist policy. The masses that have been fighting since 1986 have already gone past this stage. This is no longer the question now because there is a comparison that the fighters make. At the beginning they blamed the present government for injustices, that they imposed too many taxes, that the administrators behaved like extortionists in imposing contributions. In comparison with the French colonial administration, this administration was unjust. But for a reformist government this means precisely the installation of a type of government whose practice would be comparable to the French administration — that is, a government that is simply less unjust. Very well, but what the people now want are radical reforms that no reformist government can undertake.

There are contradictions of interest within the local government ranks; that is, since the present situation is very bad, each one tries to take care of himself, defend his interests. The people who are in power pay no attention to Chad's interests but use it only as a way to get ahead.

Chad is an African state and, as such, is a member of the OAU; however, the OAU is an organization that was created under the auspices of the North Americans with a very subtle clause that says that "it is prohibited for any state to intervene in the internal affairs of its neighbor." Thus a movement such as ours, which has to do with what are called internal affairs, causes the moderate African states to obey this formula; of course the North Americans do not respect it,

because when their interests are endangered they intervene to re-establish them. This is what obstructs our struggle. There are African countries that believe the OAU is in no way as it pretends to be, an organization of African unity, but is rather a species of body whose objectives rather aid in the defense of the interests of imperialism. We have good relations with countries that have overcome this contradiction. I cite the case of a young country which has just liberated itself, Libya, which tries to understand our problems in an objective manner. Sudan also, but it has many difficulties because it also has internal problems.

FROLINA: Structure and Future

Ideologically we are progressives because we cannot be otherwise given the level of evolution of our country, but as we say, the movement proves itself as it goes along, and I believe we will do very interesting things, very evolutionary things when we are in power. With respect to our organization, it is structured in the following way: an executive organ, the Political Bureau, which includes ten members, among whom are the two commanders of the armed forces; below the Political Bureau is the National Council of the Revolution with 30 members, among them the ten members of the Political Bureau. To be a member of the Political Bureau one must be a member of the National Council of the Revolution. These are the organs, the supreme bodies of the Front. Apart from these we have important colonies of Chadians outside of Chad, in Sudan, in the Central-African Republic, in Libya, in Gabon, in Niger, etc. In each one of these states

cited, we have what we call the general delegate of the Front, who is frequently one of the members of the Political Bureau, and who is concerned with administrative organization, people's education, the policy of the Chad people's masses abroad. At home, in each village we have base organizations that include the people's militias, the village committees. The people's militias are support forces for the combat forces and the people's committees in the villages have as their aim the indoctrination and political education or explanation of what our Front is.

These cells and the supreme bodies of the Front, for example, the committees that exist in the interior, depend directly on the High Command of the People's Forces. There is a constant relationship between the fighting forces and the village committees. The people's committees are stationary, they remain in the village and are not dispersed. They serve to maintain the population; they are the FROLINA support forces.

The task of the committees abroad is to aid us materially, financially, to permit for example sending recruits, food, clothing, medicine from abroad into the country.

Our forces are grouped into two armies, as I said. Each army is led by a collegiate committee of four cadre comrades, a commander-in-chief assisted by an adjutant in charge of military affairs, another in charge of political affairs and a third in charge of financial affairs. Each combat group has a commander and at the level of the combat group there is the same organization. The chief of the military group and

his adjutants form the military council of the armed group. At the beginning, all those responsible were appointed, then we realized that there was a kind of corporatism, a Prussianism that was beginning to adopt militaristic attitudes that were truly prejudicial. We saw that by electing them we could succeed in building very courageous cadres, especially as far as their command and human qualities are concerned, and this produced good results in the North as well as in the Central-East. We have a Military High Command Council that meets every month or every other month to coordinate plans.

FROLINA, like all revolutionary movements, is a part of the great international revolutionary movement whose objective it is to diminish imperialism's zone of influence or destroy it. Consequently FROLINA is interested in maintaining good relations with all the revolutionary movements that pursue the same objective. This is why we maintain relations with African, Asian revolutionary movements as well as others that pursue the same objectives. On the diplomatic level there will be a kind of revolution when we come to power because at present Chad is an area that France has completely closed off. Despite its important geographic location, only one airline goes into Chad; Chad has almost no diplomatic relations with member countries of the United Nations, and thus our first task is to break out of this isolation; it is necessary that Chad be closed to no one, that it maintain diplomatic relations with all states, especially with the socialist camp, because we want a change, we want

to live in the 20th century.

It is necessary that our comrades outside the country realize that our battle is their battle because we have the same objectives, which in the final analysis seek to restrict imperialist domination so that the peoples direct their own affairs freely and nationally, so that the peoples are liberated from the chains of servitude, and can communicate freely with each other without going through any intermediary. For this reason we hope that all the peoples who understand our struggle help us with their information media, with material, with arms, with scholarships to study in their countries. In a word, we hope that as we move toward the world, the world will come to us, so that we are not isolated, given the shape of the struggle in our country.

Consequently we must maintain diplomatic relations with the whole world, with the countries of the East, the socialist countries, as well as with other countries. Our relations will not be exclusive but of course they will be selective: we are not going to maintain diplomatic relations with Israel, because it has troops in our country, bases in our country, and above all maintains special troops that are noted for their cruelty, that practice torture. Beyond this, we will try in so far as we are able, to better our relations with certain countries, and also to improve the functioning of certain international organizations such as the OAU and the regional organizations in which Chad participates, whether it be OCAM (Africa-Madagascar Joint Organization) or any other, because we want to come out of our isolation, this is one of the first conditions of our work.