

Chapter 4

Peacemaking and the Process of Disarmament

**If your neighbour's beard is burning, fetch water to soak your own beard.
Songhoy-Djerma-Haoussa proverb**

We earlier identified centralized government as one of the causes for the feeling of marginalization in northern Mali: it is therefore salutary to find decentralization among the building blocks for peace. Peacemaking has been carried out at many different levels. The peacemakers have included the Malian authorities, their partners, and the leaders of civil society, to whom we shall return. The present chapter describes a variety of mechanisms which were used to promote a peaceful resolution of the Malian conflict. Peacemaking is how we describe the process which “takes the sting out of a problem”, and peace-building is what happens immediately afterwards, as people begin to recreate the conditions for living together. Our proverb emphasizes that the problems of neighbours are shared: what concerns one, is the concern of both. Peacemaking requires dialogue between communities, between civilian and military institutions and with development partners, and it depends on the reintegration into every community of those who have taken up arms.

We have identified six essential aspects of the peace process in Mali: six different courses of action which together prevented the outbreak of civil war. These were (1) the building of civilian-military relations, (2) discreet mediation by both national and international figures, (3) the decentralization of governance, (4) the promotion of reconciliation through civil society, (5) the process of disarmament and demobilization, and (6) assistance for the reintegration of former rebel combatants. These aspects of the Malian peace process provide a model which may inspire peacemaking elsewhere. The present chapter describes how these various actions were complementary in bringing stability to the North.

4.1 Building Civilian-military Bridges in a Democracy

One key to the peace process in Mali was the importance that the Government placed on re-building civilian-military relations. This is a process which began during the 1991-92 transition and continues today. Unlike some of the other aspects of the peace process described below, such as cantonment or community meetings, the building of civil-military relations is an ongoing process rather than an event or series of events. It is vital for reconciliation within Malian society, to restore the people's confidence in the military, and to repair the morale of the uniformed forces.

In 1968, President Modibo Keita was arrested by a group of young military officers. Among them was Moussa Traore, who became president of a military regime. If it is true that Modibo Keita's government was discredited and unpopular, the military brought change without improvement. It took 23 years for Mali to get rid of Moussa Traore, and another 15 months to reach the inauguration on 8 June 1992 of Mali's first democratically elected president. To understand the bitterness against the military which existed in the hearts of some Malians, we must add to the 23 years of misrule and occasional repression, the 300-odd victims of the popular revolution in Bamako during the January-March 1991 period, and the hundreds of civilian victims of military repression during the 1990-1994 northern troubles.¹

Young Malians see their revolution as throwing off the yoke of military repression. The soldiers don't see it that way. One serving non-commissioned officer told us that conditions for soldiers were so appalling in the North that there might have been a mutiny if the *Pacte National* had not intervened in 1992. With inadequate food, uniforms and supplies, and with salaries so small and so late that the garrison in Tessalit sometimes went three months together without money, the army was in a terrible state. Some soldiers were ready to join the rebels in their demand for better Government. Senior military officers responsible for the North lived in Bamako and were content simply to receive reports. The poor leadership, poor training and poor morale of Mali's army at the end of the dictatorship explain many of the excesses for which the army has been blamed.

¹ Kare Lode (1997) suggests that between 6,000 and 8,000 people died during the northern conflict. His estimate (on which we have no basis for comment) includes both military and civilian casualties.

Within a few days of the fall of Moussa Traore, the eyes of Bamako's citizens were opened to the disgusting state of barrack life. ATT took the television cameras around the various military camps, where everybody could see that, if some senior officers of the old regime had become extremely rich, the ordinary soldiers were equally victims with the rest of Mali. Soldiers too are Malian citizens; they have mothers and sisters and brothers who were also marching in the streets and calling for democratic elections. It is this which drove the army to arrest the Head of State when his repression went beyond the bounds of reason.

To quote a senior military source:

The Institution of the Army had been used by one man—or by a system. But the army cannot be opposed to the nation. At some stage it was necessary to “stop blaming the army”—as ATT said when he was President of the CTSP and Head of State.

The collective presidency of the CTSP was in itself symbolic of national reconciliation, being composed of representatives of all the armed forces and all the major components of the pro-democracy movement (including two seats for the movements in the North). The need for further efforts was clear, however, and it is entirely to its credit that the army took the initiative to heal the wounds of the nation. At the start of the National Conference in August 1992, a junior officer “who had commanded no one and wounded nobody” took the floor, and in the name of all the armed forces, read a statement of regret, asking forgiveness for the loss of life which had taken place under Moussa Traore. This was the second major bridge built between civilians and the military.

At his trial “for crimes of blood” 18 months later, it was widely expected that the ex-dictator would do the same: apologise and ask for forgiveness. That would have been the correct procedure in Malian social culture. But he did not. Moussa Traore and three other military leaders were sentenced to death for their repression (the sentence has not been and will never be carried out). The political and judicial decision was to set responsibility on the shoulders of those who gave the orders: the Ministers of Interior and Defence, and the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces. No specific force nor individual would be held responsible. This was a contribution to national healing. Not that minority groups did not fight and lobby for a wider attribution of responsibility. These groups succeeded in getting lots of symbols (for example, Bamako's first bridge across the Niger was re-named *Pont des Martyrs*, the Bridge of the Martyrs), but they were not allowed to spoil the bridges of reconciliation between civilians and the military.

Under the CTSP, the civilian government of Prime Minister Soumana Sacko² proceeded to put the country back together. A number of military men held ministerial portfolios. After the elections of 1992, Alpha Oumar Konaré's government was entirely civilian: with the single exception of Modibo Sidibé, a police lawyer who became the Minister of Health.³ While the decision to appoint a civilian Minister of Defence led to difficulties in communication and trust between the political and military establishments, it can be argued that it was a necessary step towards bringing the military inside the new democratic fabric of Mali.

Mistrust was reinforced by the existence of a sort of NCO trade union, the *Coordination des sous-officiers et des hommes de rang*, which seriously undermined that discipline and hierarchy without which a professional army cannot truly exist. The late Boubacar Sada Sy was the civilian Minister who finally put his foot down in late 1994, disbanding the *Coordination* for reasons of discipline. It was also Sada Sy who, faced with a strike in the Gendarmerie Training School, sacked every cadet involved. In this case, while dismayed civilian parents pleaded for the re-instatement of their children, the military establishment applauded his decision (although the subsequent riot might have been avoided if the Minister had taken a few more hours to plan his move). Looking back, we can see that the *Institution militaire* has been putting its house in order, after years of neglect by the previous regime.

The Government has also been making efforts to improve conditions for the military. Mali has become a modest contributor to international peace supervision missions (notably with the United Nations in Rwanda and with ECOMOG in Liberia). We applaud the initiative. For reasons which we have never understood, the Government has given little publicity to the achievements of the military in this Malian contribution to African peacemaking and at the beginning the Government actively sought to keep the whole enterprise quiet. It provides good training and prestigious experience for the officers and NCOs involved. For most of them, it is the first time they have been able to meet and work with the soldiers of other nations, to compare their levels of knowledge and discipline. The whole concept of peace operations is a generous one, which

² Sacko is known as to the Malians as "Zou". After the transition he resumed his career as an economist with UNDP in other African countries, returning to Mali's political fray in time to become a candidate in the 1997 presidential elections.

³ In later governments a second police officer, Sada Samaké, was appointed Minister of Territorial Administration and Internal Security. In September 1997 Minister Sidibé moved from Health to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

brings new purpose to those who are involved and which should serve to bring new perspectives to the Malian armed forces concerning their role in a democratic society.

There is also a great deal of investment which has been approved by the Malian Government, including the construction of a new military complex at Sénou, near Bamako's international airport. Decent lodgings and training facilities are certainly far more important for efficiency and morale than the purchase of arms. An *Etat de droit* and the Rule of Law require that the State should have a well-trained police force, an effective customs service, and an efficient, well-trained and well-disciplined army. The advent of decentralization will make their training and discipline even more important, for the role of the security forces will have to expand to supporting the Rule of Law in the many newly created *Communes*. As the uniformed forces are regaining their self-respect and becoming reconciled with themselves, so they are finding their place in a country ruled through democratic governance.

Of all the mechanisms for building bridges of integration, the most important is surely the sharing of information. After the tragic death of Sada Sy in a car accident, his successor Mamadou Ba told us that the military "needed to be better informed about the great issues of the Nation State". This started with the revamping of the Ministry's press department, which became—for the first time—an active disseminator of information to and within the armed forces, instead of being simply a receiver of information (which it then used to withhold from the press).

The press department went out to visit all the regional garrisons, telling them about the National Pact and its constituent parts (notably the question of integrating the ex-rebels), but also collecting information to be published in the Ministry's journal *Frères d'Armes* which had been initiated by the democratic government. This journal is extremely well-produced by some of the most professional journalists in Mali. Its publication is unfortunately irregular, for reasons of budget priorities within the cash-strapped Ministry for the Armed Forces and Veterans (MFAAC, formerly the Ministry of Defence). It is sold to the general public, but of course it is distributed free to the uniformed forces which constitute its principal target audience.

Issue No. 5 of *Frères d'Armes* published an interview with the then Secretary-General of the FPLA, Zeidane ag Sidalamine, under the title "Peace is my credo". In his interview, Zeidane goes on to insist that "I am black, a real black man. Indeed who in Mali is not black? I am certainly black. I know that we are all Malians, and we all want to raise the standard of living of our population. The idea of hatred between blacks and whites is a thing of the

distant past” (Zeidane 1994, p. 15). This is good stuff for “building bridges”, and it is really radical in the context of Mali’s military tradition of silence. The same issue No. 5, dated August 1994, contains a profile of the late Col Mohamed Ould Issa of the Malian army, and a report of the June negotiations in Tamanrasset where the then Minister of Defence (later Foreign Minister), Dioncounda Traore had led the Malian delegation to meet with MFUA leaders and the Algerian Minister for the Interior: such sharing of information is a quite new departure for the Malian military.

Minister Mamadou Ba also decided to bring in civilians to meet the military, by instituting a series of meetings where one of his colleagues addressed the whole officer corps on a burning issue of the day. “Structural Adjustment” is an expression which everyone has heard, but few understand. Soumaila Cissé, Minister of Finance and Commerce presented the Government’s views and plans, and explained to the assembled officers how negotiations take place with the IMF and World Bank. Ousmane Sy, Chief of the Decentralization Mission at the Presidency, explained the philosophy and application of decentralization (not a subject to which military structures can easily relate). Adama Samassekou, Minister of Basic Education, presented the *new primary school* (NEF which we describe in Chapter 6.2), and the list could continue with other non-military discussions from which the officers of “the great silent one” were previously excluded. The Minister describes this process as *interpénétration*. By receiving information and becoming involved in the democratic process, the military will feel less separate, will become part of the civilian debate, and will feel less threatened when civilians feel entitled, in their turn, to discuss affairs which concern the military.

The United Nations has oiled the machinery of interpenetration by adding an international dimension. The concept of micro-disarmament has had a small influence in this regard, as we shall discuss the next chapter. But the original contribution of the United Nations was the organization in July 1996 of a sub-regional seminar specifically on civilian-military relations. One Malian participant dressed in battle fatigues carrying Sergeant stripes, told us enthusiastically that she had learned a lot. She had met people from neighbouring countries and from civil society. For the first time, she had thought coherently about civilian life and military responsibilities, “but above all it gave us a chance to meet and discuss among ourselves!” Apparently the advent of democratic governance is facilitating communications even inside *the great silent one*. Certainly the Minister Mamadou Ba believes so. He sends officers to every training course that is offered abroad, in the belief that the

opening of minds from such experience is beneficial to the whole of the Malian uniformed forces. The bridges are being built.

The United Nations seminar produced a draft Code of Conduct for Civilian-Military Relations which could prove seminal in terms of military conduct. We reproduce the text in Annex 2. This Code emerged from discussions, which included foreign experiences (notably from South Africa) and focused on the need for West African armed forces to “win the hearts and minds” of the civilian populations whom they serve and with whom they live. General Henny van der Graaf observes:

The elaboration of military/civilian relations is an integral part of the Malian peace process initiated by the 1992 Pacte National but is also part of the “security first” assistance approach.... During the seminar there was broad agreement that a code of conduct on civil-military relations should not only ensure that the armed forces will not endanger the basic liberties that they are meant to protect, but also that the civil government is not unduly interfering in military matters which are the professional property of the military. On the other hand it was stressed that civilian control over the military presupposes a sufficient degree of civilian expertise on defence and security matters (1996, p. 23).

The seminar discussed mainly relations with the Executive: the administrative and ministerial arms of government. There is of course a long way to go in most West African countries before the legislative arm is able to exert significant influence over defence and security matters. A clear legal and constitutional framework is needed, which should evolve through time and experience, and which will establish the framework for an overall code of conduct. The text present by the seminar is only a first effort, but it may provide a basis for future civilian-military relations throughout the region, and for further regional collaboration during 1997 and 1998.

This is an area in which the French and Americans have also tried to contribute. The French have a significant military mission in Mali, which is helping to improve discipline in specific areas such as the police and the fire services and moving the Malians away from the rigidity of their Soviet training. The Americans have tried to make an impact using a prestigious television format: with 5-Star Generals in Washington answering questions from officers sitting in a Malian cinema. The simultaneous translation adds to the unreality of the situation, but the theme of “an army in a democratic regime” contributes to the internal debate within the *Grande Muette*. Asked whether the information filters down to the NCOs and to the ordinary soldiers, senior officers reply in terms of memos and orders and regular briefings: all of which tends to confirm our feeling

is that the military concept of transmitting information is not necessarily conducive to greater understanding of the democratic debate. Orders or no orders, when civil rights are abused, experience shows that it is the young women and children who are most at risk. Madam Graça Machel's 1996 report to the Secretary-General confirms this in frightening detail. We believe that training on civilian-military relations needs to be taken into the barracks, and that it should include the wives and mothers of today's soldiers, and of those who will be recruited tomorrow.

Integrating the military into the democratic system has been slow and arduous in the North. Fighting only stopped at the end of 1994, and banditry has continued since. The sack of the market place of Gao, and the death in Niafunké of the Swiss Consul with two Malian colleagues, brought the country close to the breaking point in 1994: for while these were not the first acts of army indiscipline, they represented an inability of the army to accept democratic political authority. At the same time, the creation of *Ganda koy* by infuriated Songhoys and the desertion from the army of Captain Abdrahmane Maiga to become head of *Ganda koy's* armed wing, seemed to be further steps away from political control of the armed forces. 1994 was the year of "make or break", the year when the President managed to regain the initiative by promoting greater democratic debate and *Concertation* between the diverse parts of the Malian Nation, including the military.

The bridges of peace and reconciliation are still fragile. Does Mali need to push ahead with the Commission of enquiry which is mentioned in the National Pact? Would this help reconciliation in Mali, in the same way that the Truth Commission appears to be helping the healing process in South Africa? Or would it reopen the wounds, and lead inevitably to acrimonious exchanges around demands for subsequent compensation? Should Malians be recording these details of their recent history as part of the peace-building process, or is it too soon to achieve historical perspective? Opinions are divided on the advisability of allowing the wounds to bleed again too soon. In the absence of judicial enquiry or accusation, the authorities have been able to restore discipline and morale in the armed forces, to integrate the ex-combatants into these forces, and to begin to help the uniformed forces to identify their role within the new framework of democratic governance. These successes at least are precious.

Curiously enough, it is the banditry which has become the greatest source of solidarity between civilians and the military in the North. Everybody wants an end to lawlessness. For the permanent return of peace, Mali requires a reasonable capacity for disciplining those who would break it: which means stronger security forces as we explain in 6.5. Without this capacity for reasonable force, there can be no rule of law. Without effective security forces, the leaders of civil society are

reduced to impotence. Throughout the North, the populations are calling for the return of the authority of the state: which includes administrative authority, moral authority, health and education services, and a strengthening of the security forces.

4.2 Mediators Official and Unofficial

This is certainly the most complicated part of the Malian peacemaking story. “Mediation” is a strange function, which may involve many people at different times. The success of mediators often depends on their invisibility, yet the mediation function may be vital for resolving conflict as we show below. Alongside the successful efforts of Algeria, the Official Mediator, many people and institutions have tried, each in a different way, to smooth the troubled waters of the North.

National Mediators

The first mediators were the Touareg chiefs, many of whom were part of the one-party *nomenklatura* and who therefore found themselves in an uncomfortable position “between the hammer and the anvil”. In July and August 1990 (immediately after the initial June attack on Menaka) several of them actually led Malian army patrols against the “rebel bandits”. Attaher ag Bisada, Chief of the Idnane, had installed his camp in the Oued Alkit, some 20 km from Kidal. While he was away guiding the army patrols, another group of soldiers arrived and accused his family of being “rebels”. Eight of them were forced to dig a common tomb and to climb down into it. Grenades were thrown inside and the Idnane were killed. When later Attaher met the Malian President, Moussa Traore, he took the initiative of asking the head of State not to mention the incident: “We shall draw a line under it. If I am joining you in the negotiations, it means that we must look forwards and not backwards.”

We cannot name all those of good will. We do not know them all. We shall just take a few examples. One of those who organized civil society to create the peace, Zeidane ag Sidalamine was also the man who spoke on behalf of the movements at the 1996 Flame of Peace ceremony in Timbuktu, and who announced their dissolution. As Secretary-General of the FPLA, uninformed observers might think of Zeidane as a “rebel combatant” (certain xenophobic private newspapers certainly took this view). Well, what was a rebel? Zeidane’s contribution to the problems of northern Mali provides a helpful illustration not

only of the peacemakers, but also of how the “rebellion” really grew and of what it was composed.

Zeidane was interviewed in November 1994 by the very interesting Armed Forces’ journal *Frères d’Armes*. Describing himself as a Man of Peace, Zeidane explains that he left his post with the AEN project in Gossi only in 1994. In June 1991, three months after the fall of the dictatorship, Zeidane decided to take a trip into the desert to see the state of the population, and to find out why the cycle of attacks and reprisals was still continuing. This was a brave move, for it was dangerous to approach armed and unpredictable rebels, many of whom were discharged mercenaries from other wars. While many Touaregs had no family links to the rebels, others had clan or class affinity which made it difficult for them to disassociate themselves entirely. Zeidane recognized his links with cousins in the FPLA, but continued to work in the AEN development programme. Early in 1992, he persuaded Rhissa ag Sidi Mohamed, leader of the FPLA to meet the Malian government delegation. Zeidane explains that he and Rhissa disagreed over the 1992 *Pacte National*. Zeidane travelled to Bamako and signed it on behalf of the FPLA. Rhissa only came around to supporting the Pact in 1994, but “since 1992 I have consistently worked for the application of the Pact, which provides a good framework for integration,” says Zeidane (1994, p. 13)

While he himself was working for peace as adviser to certain UN agencies, some of Ibrahim ag Youssouf’s neighbours living in the Niger valley felt obliged to obtain arms in order to defend themselves against the bandits among the rebels (unfortunately the southerners in the army often did not make a difference between rebels from Kidal and peaceful farmers wearing similar turbans). The peacemakers included most of the professionally qualified French speakers like Ibrahim, many of whom worked in government technical services, NGOs and other development programmes. Ibrahim and Zeidane were among those who obtained as their spokesman, the senior and respected Baba Akhib Haidara, named Delegate for the North in 1991, who was one of many exiled Malians who returned to help rebuild a democratic Mali. Baba Akhib travelled to the North, and prepared a submission on the problems of the North for the National Conference. It was presented to the President of the Conference, Lt Col (now General) Amadou Toumani Touré (ATT), but the Conference itself refused to discuss the North: partly because the nascent political parties were reluctant to make statements on such a difficult issue. This explains why the Transition Government decided to seek an alternative to national mediation. Not wishing to “internationalize” the issue, they hit upon the idea of individual mediators.

International Personalities in the Mediation

One tangible way in which the international community assisted the process of peacemaking was in mediation between the rebel movements and the Malian Government. Mali's Transition Government needed people who could change the debate and create a new dialogue. They invited a tandem composed of the Mauritanian political philosopher (in exile) Ahmed Baba Miské, whose links with the Polisario made him especially valuable as an intermediary with certain Arab rebels, and his colleague Edgar Pisani. This was a shrewd political combination. Algeria's long northern frontier with Mali, and its particular trading proximity to the population of Kidal (where the rebel MPA was based) made it essential to choose a mediator with close ties to Algeria. Baba Miské fitted the description perfectly, without actually being a part of the Algerian political establishment himself.

The advantage of Edgar Pisani was his membership of the French establishment. Having been a French Minister, and later a European Commissioner, his work as Director of the *Institut du Monde Arabe* in Paris provided additional insights into the motivations of those elements of the rebellion (mainly in the FIIA) claiming an Islamic motivation. Pisani's pedigree was especially valuable in terms of his access to the media. The Malian Government was looking for peace, but was also searching for a way to counteract the appallingly bad media coverage which Mali was getting in the French press and radio. It must be said that the Malian military was largely to blame: not only because indiscipline led to civilians being killed by soldiers, but also because the Ministry of Defence was simply terrible at releasing information from the field. Never has the army been more guilty of its nickname *La Grande Muette*, meaning something like "the great silent one" or "a big deaf mute".

In the absence of information, rumours abounded. *Radio France Internationale* was consistently the first on the air with information about trouble in the North: so that the Government was constantly reacting to press reports, pushed onto the defensive. The Transition Government was trapped by its fragility vis-à-vis the army: neither daring to admit military setbacks, nor being able to sanction acts of indiscipline and repression. The movements were not well organized in Europe, but Niger's rebel spokesman Mano Dayak obtained publicity for the Touareg cause through his connections with show business and the Paris-Dakar Rally (he even ran a poster campaign in the Paris Metro). There were also a few French journalists whose love affair with the "blue men of the desert" led them to disseminate rumours of "ethnic discrimination", and even "genocide". French press and radio therefore became, for a while, a source of aggravation, not

of mediation. It is sadly true that terrorism and murder were perpetrated by all parties in the Malian conflict. It is happily true that the conflict never turned into an ethnic war.

Edgar Pisani and Ahmed Baba Miské duly arrived in Mali in 1991, at the end of the rains. They had talks with the authorities, who then deposited them on the summit of a pre-arranged sand dune north of Timbuktu. From there they were collected by rebel units, and taken off for 10 days of negotiations and explanations, before being re-deposited on the same sand dune for collection. Pisani and Miské were instrumental in encouraging the President of the CTSP to make his conciliatory speech of 9 November 1991 in which he made clear that he recognized the necessity of a political solution, and the impossibility of a military solution. This speech and accompanying political pressure from all sides, definitely helped push the movements into signing the *Pacte National* on 11 April 1992.

Ahmed Baba Miské still believes that the 1992 agreement could have worked at that time, if Mali's partners had provided the money and support necessary for the Government to fulfil its side of the Pact. Because the donors were not ready to invest in peace, we had to wait another three years to get the peace that Malians deserved, while several hundred people died or were wounded and tens of thousands remained refugees.

Much of the mediation credit, however, belongs to the amiable General Brehima Siré Traore, who, as a Colonel and Minister of the Interior, signed the Pact on behalf of the Malian Government. Before becoming Minister, Traore had made a number of unofficial missions to meet the rebels and to understand what their problems were. As an airforce officer, he was unconnected with the military losses and excesses on the ground. And his access to aircraft meant that he could move about more freely than most senior people. Traore was a member of the CTSP, the collective presidency of the 1991-92 Transition: as such his informal contacts with the rebels were especially precious, for this was the first time since the fall of the dictatorship that they had been able to air their views to someone "in authority". The exchange of views showed each side that a dialogue was possible: and this was the beginning of the negotiations which led to the signing of the National Pact. His personal contribution and success led to Brehima Siré Traore being named as the first *Commissaire au Nord* in the office of the President, keeping him in the position of principal Malian mediator.

Col Traore's replacement in late 1994 by Police Commissioner (since promoted Police Controller) Mahamadou Diagouraga from Nioro, brought a helpful change of personnel at a moment of extreme tension in the North. Having been Mali's Consul in Tamanrasset, then Ambassador in Algiers, the new *Commissaire au Nord* was one of the few in the military who knew the rebel

leaders individually, and who dared to argue that Mali's rebellion could only be solved through political negotiation.⁴ Diagouraga's special skill has been to create the space which has allowed civil society to operate, even though this is a domain with which military officers are not generally familiar. In the words of a United Nations official who has been active in the North: "He has been successful on each occasion, in removing administrative or political obstacles, so as to give each and every idea a chance to succeed..." That is skill indeed, which Diagouraga was able to exert thanks to his political access and to the support he has received from above. We shall meet Mahamadou Diagouraga again below; meanwhile, this is a good moment to consider the role of Algeria as Official Mediator.

Bilateral Mediators

In times of hardship, each pastoral clan has one or two traditional refuge points. Before colonial times, these were open nomadic spaces without fixed frontiers. People from Kidal have always moved northwards. The migrations from Mali after the 1966 repression and the 1974 drought created a Malian refugee population inside Algeria's southern border, many of whom were easily integrated into local Algerian society. Others moved on to Libya and elsewhere. There were said to be more than 10,000 Malians who had stayed more or less permanently in the southern zones of Algeria since the 1970s and their numbers swelled in 1983-84, creating the beginnings of a refugee problem. Apart from the natural bureaucratic desire to control movements of people, goods and arms, Algeria had a growing (and increasingly expensive) problem with smuggling across the frontier into Kidal and Gao of subsidised food and petroleum products. "Refugees from Mali and Niger had become leeches on the Algerian economy," says the leader of one northern Malian NGO, "They needed to encourage the migrants to return home, which explains why Algeria was responsible for creating around 1986 the IFAD programme in Kidal. However, the failures of this project have actually contributed to instability in Kidal." Malian refugees were seen by the Algerian authorities as a potential source of political problems as well as a drain on their national economy and ecology. When armed rebellion swelled the numbers of refugees, the search for a peaceful solution became an Algerian priority.

⁴ The police force was under military control. It was the democratic government which "de-militarized" the police in 1994 and brought it under an Interior Ministry which has had various appellations, but is most commonly known as *Ministère de l'Administration Territoriale*.

In the earliest days of negotiations a cease-fire was agreed, and the Transition Government set up a tripartite *Cease-fire Commission* (CCF). Officers from Algeria, from the Malian military and from the rebel movements patrolled together to ensure that banditry was kept down. In these days of 1991, immediately after the fall of the dictatorship, the Malian authorities had almost no resources available with which to support the CCF. They housed and fed the officers in Gao, but that was all they could manage. Unable to obtain enough fuel to scour the vast countryside for bandits, the officers of the CCF were frustrated. Donors were not prepared to put money into peace-keeping. Of the ten CCF units planned, only four became operational. The principal support for the CCF (vehicles and some fuel) was provided by Algeria, showing its commitment to brokering the peace. The presence of Algerian officers also contributed to restoring a sense of dignity and discipline in the Malian army. Despite their limited resources, the CCF arrested some trouble-makers and did buy a year of peace for Mali.

The military wings of the movements were frequently reluctant to leave the security of their northern bases. Algeria therefore provided convenient neutral territory for contact although negotiations also took place at various times in Mauritania, Niger and Burkina Faso. Many of the secret negotiations took place in Tamanrasset, others in Algiers. The Algerian authorities did plenty of discreet arm-twisting during 1991, bringing the rebels into a joint *Mouvement des Fronts unifiés de l'Azaouad*. As we described in Chapter 3, the MFUA leaders were finally persuaded to agree terms with each other and with Mali's transitional government, and to sign the *Accords d'Alger* and the *Pacte National*.

Given the historical involvement in the Sahara of France, no solution could be envisaged which did not include French advice and support. The French were helpful in unofficial mediation. Although Pisani had no official position, he received comprehensive government briefings in Paris, and again in Bamako from the French diplomatic machine, notably through the experience of Yves Gueymard who had joined the French mission after many years working with NGOs in the north. The French position remained one of counselling constant prudence, advising Mali's political and military authorities to seek a political and not a military solution. Indeed the view was general that a regular army could not "win" against irregular guerrilla fighters. The French later accepted to commit a certain amount of funding to strengthen the security forces, including some desert-specialized *méhariste* camel patrols to cut out the theft of livestock by cross-border raiders (a particular problem in the western parts of Timbuktu Region).

Missions funded by the French Government have been instrumental in the conception of a number of helpful initiatives which have contributed to peacemaking: for example, the initial moves towards decentralization in the North

were based on the *Colléges transitoires d'arrondissement*, or CTA, which emerged from the 1992 French-sponsored consultation mission. The French and the Algerians have been the primary actors in promoting with the United Nations the doctrine of “security first”, which argues that, in order to get economic development programmes going again, funds need to be spent on ensuring a stable security environment.

Multilateral Mediation Efforts

The United Nations agencies also played a discreet role as mediators. The United Nations inter-agency mission of November 1992 took a fleet of nine vehicles across the North, at a time when virtually no other vehicle was circulating and when talk was more of fear, than of peace and the relaunching of the Northern economy. This was followed in January 1993 by a French Government mission. The two missions became linked in the minds of the farmers and nomads of the North, who saw them as glimmering lights at the end of the tunnel of violence, drops of oil in the machinery of negotiation.

The subsequent *Journées de Concertation sur les Régions du Nord* in February 1993 were also sponsored by the United Nations family (with FAO taking a leading role): so we cannot say that the United Nations was absent from the mediation process, although it was not at this stage taking a lead. The creation of the *Commission Paritaire* with joint-chairmanship of donors and GRM, emerged from the *Journées de Concertation* and provided the first forum for donor coordination and planning for the North. Perhaps the personalities of the Malian and United Nations leadership did not permit then, the emergence of synergies which we shall see from 1995 onwards (we discuss United Nations leadership and coordination in the next chapter), but there is already in 1992-93 a useful behind-the-scenes influence from the United Nations. Other multilateral sources were fairly mute. The OAU had few resources with which to influence peacemaking, and it is fair to say that Africa's peace-builders had their hands full with the Liberian catastrophe and the brave ECOMOG intervention. Later came the crises in Rwanda, Burundi and Zaire... but these take us too far from Timbuktu.

The Red Cross and other NGOs

Among negotiators and among NGOs, the ICRC occupies a place which deserves special analysis. Where no one else dares to go, the International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies drives in with the Red Cross flag flying high. Their operatives risk their lives. In Mali there were several occasions when ICRC Representatives were detained by rebel groups linked to the FIAA: although no one heard about it because the ICRC likes to keep quiet about such things, the danger was no less real.

For the development agencies, the Red Cross was often a principal source of field information. At the Bamako monthly meetings of “development organizations working in the North”—mainly NGOs whose work was seriously curtailed by the rampant insecurity—the news report that everybody was waiting to hear was the one from the ICRC. At a time when the Government was giving out no information, when everybody was seeking to distil fact from rumour, ICRC representatives were the eyes and the ears of the development community. Sometimes they provided the same service for the *Commissariat au Nord*.

The ICRC worked in the vast band of desert across the north of Timbuktu where few government administrators dared to go. The Red Cross flag on a white Landrover became a symbol of hope and neutrality for nomadic camps surviving at the margins of starvation. The amounts of food and medicine distributed by the Red Cross are minute in donor terms, but arriving in places of dire extremity, these gifts often have greater impact than larger donor food distributions.

“We have to realize that the Flame of Peace is only the start of the peace process”, ICRC Representative Suzanne Hofstetter told us in March 1996, “If the refugees return to poverty and destitution, they may want to take up arms again to steal what they cannot earn. So we must stay and support Malian civil society, strengthen the structures of negotiation, and provide advice and assistance to the development agencies helping the Malian people to relaunch pastoralism and agriculture and create jobs. It would be a great mistake to believe that peace is permanent just because people have stopped shooting.”

This is a variation on the usual theme of ICRC activity. Suzanne has moved beyond the usual Red Cross mandate of negotiation and peacemaking, into the medium-term process of peace-building. We are strong supporters of this innovation: for the work of “relief” must move smoothly into the process of “development”, if we are to avoid the slide backwards into disorder. Therein lies a tale. After the signature of the *Pacte National* in 1992, many people felt that Peace had arrived. One of the major signs for optimism was that the ICRC closed its Malian office. One year later, a new wave of violence flared up and the ICRC

came back. This time they are determined to help Malians build their peace, and we salute their decision to stay on.

Other NGOs have contributed to the unofficial mediation process: both as institutions, and through the individual efforts of their staff members whose families were often at risk, or indeed victims of the violence. These were both Malian and international NGOs and we shall meet them again in Chapter 5. Once the civil society initiative was clearly producing results in 1995, and with coherent leadership from both the GRM and the UNDP, French, Dutch, Swiss, Canadian, American and Norwegian support for the peace process—which had been lacking in 1992—became available. The peace negotiations were long and tricky, but the patience of the Malian people, and the Malian and Algerian authorities won through. On 27 March 1996 at the Flame of Peace ceremony, they were all present to hear the representative of Algeria, the Official Mediator, accept the honour of making the opening speech to celebrate peace.

4.3 The *Commissariat au Nord* and the Decentralization of Governance

The promise, in the 1992 National Pact, of a significant degree of autonomy for the North, a “special status”, caused a good deal of unease in Mali mainly because its meaning had not been defined. No one denied the need to reform the socio-political structures of governance, but the creation of the Region of Kidal with such a tiny population, and satisfaction of demands for greater autonomy for the three northern Regions, were difficult to sell in the south. The re-organization of the North was made politically acceptable in the rest of Mali by the commitment of the elected democratic government to decentralize the whole of Mali. For northerners, the reorganization of governance and the good faith of the Malian Government with regard to the National Pact, were given substance by the creation under the President, of a Commissariat with responsibility for implementing the Pact.

The concept of decentralization is of great importance as a background framework for the Malian peace process. The political innovation of Mali’s Third Republic is that President Konaré is seeking to build not just a strong State, but an open State. Decentralization is a mechanism which will allow people to take part in decision-making, and oblige them to take responsibility for conflict-management practice, strategy and theory. No one knows quite how it will work out, but people must make it work themselves, no longer remaining dependent on

administrative or military institutions. This is the contrary of the one party State: in an open State, the people are no longer powerless to act. The content of decentralization is explained in the following paragraphs taken from the official government documents prepared for the Timbuktu Round Table:

The general objective of decentralization implies, at the political level, the transfer of power to institutions elected by the people, so that local affairs may be taken over and run by the population itself. On the economic level, decentralization will multiply the number of decision centres for economic management: which naturally implies independent access to resources. As a result, new approaches will evolve in relationships with development partners. At the sociocultural level, decentralization will create a new relationship between the citizens and the administration (GRM 1995, vol. 1, p. 51).

Decentralization should play an important role in ensuring that northern Malians feel more involved in the democratic process, and less dependent on the centralized administration. During the period of transition (which lasted precisely from 26 March 1991 until 8 June 1992), people were already preparing the concepts and legal instruments for decentralization, perceived as the best route for obtaining the political participation of the people. African experience of the one-party State has instilled doubts, even cynicism about political leaders. Mali's ruling party, Adema is regularly accused in the opposition press of behaving like a *Parti unique*. Every new appointment is assumed to be nepotistic or benefitting Adema supporters; and even where the accusation is obviously untrue, the atmosphere of permanent suspicion means that there is enormous pressure on the Government not to make changes. The result is that many corrupt administrators continue an untroubled existence. And then there is the enormous weight of "social capital": the conservative strength of Mali's inter-cultural linkages which has promoted peace, also provides disincentives to make people unhappy by disciplining them. Once there are significant numbers of local government posts which depend on decentralized elected bodies, nepotism will be decentralized. Electors will have a greater chance of being the judges (and the beneficiaries) of the accusations and of the accused.

Decentralization is the strategy chosen by the Konaré regime for promoting human development and self-sustaining growth. It is an ambitious policy. Even visionary. Years of centralized planning led nowhere, the culture of the *patron state* and the *providential state*, added to the effects of drought, reduced people to feeling powerless to take decisions. In any case there are no longer the resources available to maintain the debt-based fiction of the "Cold War post-colonial State", except in countries which have oil resources to squander. Most of Africa's States will flourish in the 21st century only if they are able to reconcile the need for

broader economic or monetary unions with the pressure from local groups to assume their cultural identities. Decentralization is the new framework which will make people responsible for their own lives, for mobilizing national resources and using them locally for productive investment.

Unlike the tentative measures seen in some countries—which resemble rather the “deconcentration” of administrative power—the Malian government appears to be serious about the transfer of power in 1998 to 682 locally elected rural *Communes* and 19 urban *Communes*, as well as *Conseils* for the Cercle and Region.⁵ The intention is that local authorities will have powers over land-use and investment policies in their area (although the raising and sharing of taxation is still an important area of argument). “Decentralization” as a concept for Mali dates back to 1976, but the one-party State lost sight of the democratic element crucial for a decentralization experiment, and allowed the centralized administration to take control of Party appointments at the local level. The 1991 National Conference can be seen as a “second step” in Mali’s approach towards decentralization, and the National Pact was step number three. It remains to be seen whether the maintenance of administrative power centres after 1997 will actually stifle the final step, and kill off decentralized decision-making before local elected officials can take power. Given the history of the Malian administration (see Chapter 2.1), we may wonder if the political authorities have taken sufficiently radical action to ensure the success of decentralization. This does not mean that we doubt the sincerity of those who have conceived the policy, and there is no doubt whatever that decentralization has already changed the dynamics of political ownership in the North.

The creation in the President’s office of the *Commissariat au Nord* was a gesture in the direction of the special status of the North, and at the same time a half-step towards decentralization. The success of the Commissariat has been its facilitating, negotiating role. The nomination in 1992 of Colonel Brehima Siré Traore (who had been Minister of the Interior and of Internal Security) as the first *Commissaire* brought seniority and negotiating experience to the post and reassured the army. But Mali’s partners remained distant. The resources were not available for Commissioner Traore to bring about the successful integration into the army of the ex-combatants. It is a statistical fact that donors were very slow to provide financial proof of their presumed support of Mali’s democratic

⁵ The text of the National Pact (printed in Annex 2) contains a blueprint for decentralization in the North. Since it is so important for winning the peace, we shall return to implementation of the decentralization policy in several sections of Chapter 6.

government. Traore was replaced in 1994 by Police Controller Diagouraga whom we shall meet throughout the peacemaking process.

4.4 Making Space for Civil Society

While the United Nations' support for the *Commissariat au Nord* was valuable, the most important lesson of the Malian peace process is precisely that it was Malian. It was never a United Nations peace operation, nor was it intended to be. There was a moment in early 1995 when a slightly increased United Nations activity was proposed. After the failure of the first attempt to integrate ex-combatants into the national army, some actors perceived a need to improve incentives for the "integrated units". The idea was to provide prestigious specialist training in desert peace-keeping: the units could then be valuable to the United Nations or the Organization of African Unity (the French government was initiating discussions at that time about a permanent African peace-keeping force). Informal contacts indicated that the Canadians and Moroccans might be interested in providing experienced United Nations blue beret officers to provide peace-keeping training to selected Malian army units in Timbuktu and Gao. The United Nations Secretariat in New York expressed reservations of a political and financial nature, but the idea was making headway.

President Konaré, however, was convinced that there should be no new government initiatives "until we have given time for civil society to work out a solution". To provide both time and space for this, the Malian Government redeployed its uniformed forces, withdrawing to the South all those units which had been involved in aggression or repression. This was accepted by the movements as a positive response to the National Pact demands for the demilitarization of the North, and led directly to the process of negotiation through civil society which we shall describe in the next section.

The hallmark of Mali's democratic Third Republic has been the constant desire to consult with civil society. We have described the bridges which were built to restore confidence and dialogue between the civilian and military parts of the Malian nation, and this is the place to describe the bridges which have been used to promote confidence between Government and the people (as represented by the multifarious components of civil society). The repeated return to popular debate is not simply a political gambit used by the democratic government to demonstrate that the one-party State is a thing of the past. There is a clear undercurrent of belief among ministers and opinion leaders that West African

democratic governance consists of more than western-style confrontational elections.

Debate and discussion are the very essence of West African governance. The power of the Word, *kuma*, in Manding culture is of great importance: in the village council, under the palaver tree, the Word passes to every person in turn, starting with the eldest. Meetings may take a long time. Repetition of the Word is stylistically admired in West Africa. Repetition strengthens the message, reinforces consensus-building within the community. Everybody may not agree, but everybody will be heard before a decision is taken. This irritates a lot of western visitors to Africa, yet it is fundamental to understanding the nature of democratic governance and the Malian Model of Democracy.

The August 1991 National Conference was the first and most important demonstration that the palaver tree tradition can be rendered democratic and modern. It was well-organized, lasting exactly the planned two weeks (some neighbouring countries allowed their National Conference to drag on for months, and one country never finished it at all). Mali's National Conference gave instructions that a series of sectoral consultations, or *Journées nationales*, should be held: for the rural population, for women, for education, etc. They were open to all citizens, and we attended several of them. Although all were held in Bamako, every region was represented by delegations composed of civil society leaders and administrative authorities funded (transport, food and lodging) by the central government. This series of conferences did constitute a real process of democratic consultation between the authorities of the new regime and the people of Mali.

By the start of 1994, however, Mali's democratic experiment was in dire straits. The security situation in the North was looking terrible, and the movements criticized the authorities over the slow application of the terms of the National Pact of April 1992. In Bamako, the Government was having to face up to unrealistic hopes raised by the euphoria of 1991, when every pressure group believed it could demand the moon and receive the stars as well. Student and youth leaders were being manipulated (some were even being paid) by political opposition factions, while the soldiers' union (described earlier) was a menace to discipline within the armed forces. Student strikes and arson were weekly occurrences. The Government could not control the political debate: the agenda was set by Bamako-based groups using organs of the free press and local radio which were far from "free" in terms of funding, ideas and objectives. It is an irony of "multi-party democracy" in Africa that the proportion of votes received in national elections does not seem to bear any relationship to the influence a party may wield in the subsequent political debate.

In February 1994, President Alpha Oumar Konaré appointed his third Prime Minister in 20 months. It is no exaggeration to say that, had he failed to stop the rot, Ibrahim Boubacar Keita would probably have been the last.⁶ AOK and IBK succeeded in regaining the initiative through an astute combination of firm leadership and broader consultation, by taking the debate back to the people who had elected Alpha as President. “By appealing to civil society, (the Prime Minister) changed the terms of the political debate, getting away from a sterile confrontation between political parties whose members were motivated solely by personal ambition” (Diarrah 1996, p. 286). Through the Regional Concertations of August 1994, they side-stepped the Bamako-based cliques, mobilizing in their place the voice and wisdom of civil society in every region: “local representatives of political parties, the public administration, traditional and religious leaders, rural and urban associations, social partners and professional organizations” (to quote the Government’s list of invitees). In his message of 8 June 1994 (the second anniversary of his swearing-in as the first President of Mali’s Third Republic), the President emphasized his commitment to traditional forms of consultation:

On June 8th, 1992, I said that the word “concertation” would guide our policies. Faced with the numerous disturbances and the violence, both physical and verbal, which have characterized the past two years, I could have chosen alternative policies to those of dialogue and consensus. If I had done so, the Third Republic would not have built up that comparative peace of mind and heart, which now enable Malian citizens to consider the future with greater serenity than was possible two years ago.

Let me repeat again today, the pride that I feel to be at the head of a Nation which has made tolerance and dialogue its cardinal virtues. As a modern State, Mali needs to add to its ancestral heritage of dialogue, a modern institutional infrastructure which demonstrates that there is a real democratic process taking place....

With this in mind, I shall ask my government to organize a series of regional “Concertations” in which every current of opinion will be able to express its views. Each participant will be invited to contribute to the debate, seeking to define solutions for tomorrow’s problems. Our purpose will exclude systematic opposition to the ideas of others; nor will there be room for narrow sectoral demands. The government will bring to the discussion both its point of view, and its proposals for change: and together we shall seek the

⁶ The first Prime Minister, the banker Younoussi Touré was appointed on 8 June 1992 and resigned on 9 April 1993. He was succeeded by a lawyer, Abdoulaye Sékou Sow who resigned on 2 February 1994. For a lucid description of this period, and of the governments’ failures of vision, crisis management and policy communication see C.O.Diarrah 1996, pp. 276-85.

necessary consensus to achieve the transformations which we have started (GRM, Synthèse Nationale, 1994).

The *Concertations* lasted three days in every region and in each commune of Bamako, under the chairmanship of two or three ministers. It was a remarkable exercise in African popular democracy: a series of 17 conferences involving 2,786 people. This tipped the balance of political debate away from Bamako and the political parties, and back to the population and civil society. A national consensus emerged notably on the need to re-start schools and colleges, on the problems of the North and the indivisibility of Mali, and on the need to re-establish the authority of the State, allowing the Government to take a stronger line with the students, and opening the path for civil society to continue the process of dialogue in favour of peace in the North.

Before we describe the many dozens of meetings in favour of peace which took place during 1995 and 1996, it will be useful to define civil society, and its role in Mali's new system of democratic governance.

We define civil society as "those citizens who form themselves into associations to promote an interest which does not include seeking or exercising political power." The individual is part of society, but does not by himself form part of "civil society": to do so, he must join an organized group such as cooperatives, associations (including village associations, women's groups, youth groups, NGOs), mutualist insurance, savings or credit groups, social enterprises (such as economic partnerships like the *GIE*), religious associations (but not religion itself⁷), human rights associations, trade unions, professional associations. Private companies (including newspapers) may, like individual citizens, participate in civil society by joining a professional association such as the Chamber of

⁷ The composition of civil society is not the same in every culture. Commercial lobbyists in USA are usually excluded, whereas social pressure groups are included: in Mali such a distinction seems inappropriate. We argue below that village and clan leaders in Mali are leaders of traditional civil society, and this must include the Imam. Madson (1995) says that the churches cannot be part of civil society although de Tocqueville argued otherwise for USA. In Mali, we believe that religion cannot be part of civil society; but religious associations are recognized as so being. For example the CENI *Commission Electorale Nationale Indépendante*, created by law on 8 January 1997, has 30 members of whom 8 are administrative, 14 political, 8 from civil society having 1 each from: the Islamic association (AMUPI), the Catholic Church, the Protestant association (AGEMPEN), the Malian Bar Association, two human rights associations, the magistrates' union, the coordination of women's organizations (CAFO).

Commerce, the Federation of Artisans, a union of journalists or a Press Association.

Civil society is especially important for expressing the voice of women, whose ideas are seldom heard as stridently as those of their husbands and brothers. We have argued (1.4) that women hold a pre-eminent place in the family and clan structure, within traditional civil society. But they tend to lose out in regional and national politics which occupy a different social and political space, and where their voice is often missing from the debate. The argument is advanced that women in West Africa occupy such a dominant role inside the family (which is the primary structure of Malian society), that they actually diminish their influence if they take the public platform. But changing times require changing habits. In the six short years since Malians gained the right of association (after the 1991 revolution), the country has been fortunate in the emergence of ever-stronger women's groups: ranging from well-organized urban groups such as the coordination of women's organizations (CAFO), the Bamako environment cooperative (COFEM), the women's peace movement (MFSPUN), professional associations like the association of women traders (AFC) and the association of women lawyers (AFJ), through numerous women's NGOs working particularly in education, health and family planning, to an increasingly wide network of mutualist health centres and savings banks reaching deep into rural communities where most women have never had the opportunity to learn to read.

The civil and uniformed administrations, like the government and the political parties, are excluded from our definition of civil society because they exercise (or in the case of opposition parties, they seek to exercise) power. In the particular case of West Africa, we consider village councils chaired by the chief, or *dugu tigi*, as part of civil society because their exercise of administrative power emerges from their place in the community: every head of family and each member of the senior age-group is automatically a part of the council. This creates an interesting dichotomy, a creative tension and synergy between "modern" civil society (largely, although not entirely, a product of the urban environment) and "traditional" civil society (composed of village councils, hunters' associations, ecological protection and environmental-management units, age-groups for both men and women which have important functions in education, initiation and mutual self-help).

This interpretation is supported by the eminent historian Joseph Ki-Zerbo (1996), interviewed on the subject of traditional chiefs, "Since they are not, in the strict sense, a part of the political classes, the Chiefs today are rather a part of civil society on the same level as trade unions, religious hierarchies and professional associations."

Mali's new decentralized structure, the rural commune, will be an elected body and therefore of a different nature entirely. The *Commune* will replace the lowest level of centralized government control, the *Arrondissement* (below the *Cercle*, of which there are about five in each of Mali's eight regions). Like the existing urban communes with their elected Mayor and Councillors, the elected rural commune will be exercising political power and cannot be considered as part of civil society.

In the North of Mali during 1995, the Government installed 31 intermediary bodies known as *Collèges transitoires d'arrondissement* (CTA). These are a sort of hybrid body, half civil society and half not: composed in each case of appointed worthies drawn from civil society, but not from the political parties as such. The 1995 document published by the *Commissariat au Nord* describing the role of the CTA states clearly that it is the "sole intermediary for development partners, in order that the populations' needs shall be better taken into account. The populations... shall meet freely to choose (and not to elect) between five and fifteen persons in whom they have confidence."

The CTAs had very little impact on the peace process. If anything it was the other way around: some of those who distinguished themselves as peacemakers were appointed to the *Collèges transitoires*. The peace negotiations that we are about to describe, truly emerged through civil society: a symbiosis between the community leaders of what we have called "traditional" civil society, and younger leaders in the "modern" civil society, including local and international NGOs well-established in the North.

4.5 Half a Hundred Community Meetings

A meeting of 500 or 1,000 Songhoy and Touareg agro-pastoralists is a pretty spectacular event. The colours of their turbans range from traditional dark indigo (the "blue men of the desert") through luminous blues and greens, to bright turquoise and orange and yellow. The elders and the religious leaders tend to favour sober white turbans, and white robes embroidered with gold or grey designs, while younger men go for style and splash. Women in this Saharan culture stay with simple colours. Men dress up like peacocks! Women are usually present at the assemblies of the North, but they are women of the host locality, especially old women who have the status to speak for the group. Women run and control the family. Only men can afford the time to travel two days on the back of a camel to attend a meeting.

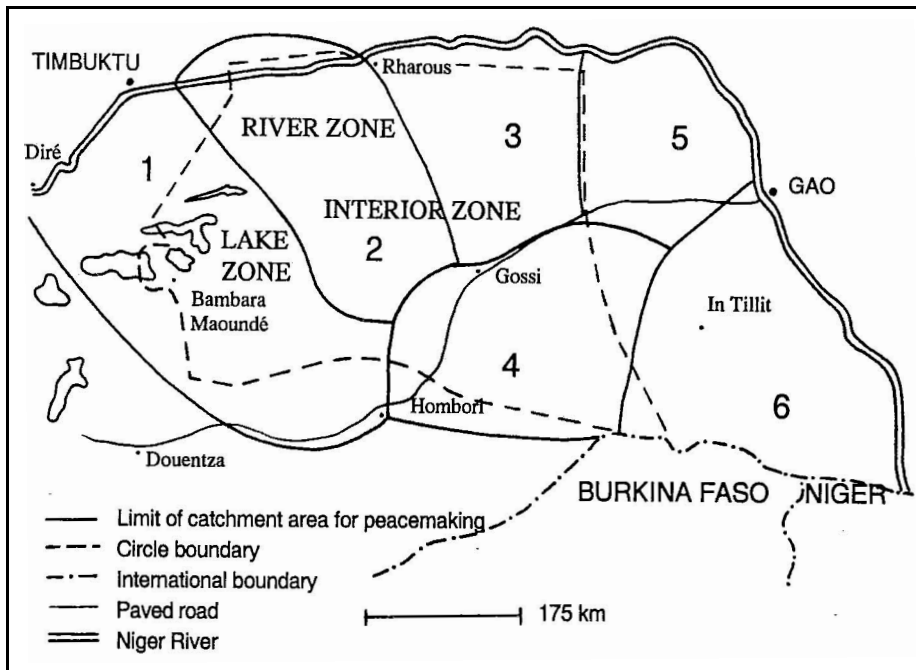
Many dozens of such gatherings, some smaller, some larger, prepared the return of order and peace in Mali's northern regions. These were not meetings organized by the Government. Instead, the impetus came from the leaders of civil society, and their initiatives became reality with the assistance of a number of NGOs. The armed rebellion was launched by men who had long been absent from Mali, who were not yet re-integrated in society (even in their own families). The slow and patient peace negotiations were part of the process of their re-integration into the community. They are described in two booklets written by one of the key facilitators of the process, Kare Lode (1996 and 1997), from which we have taken much of what follows in the present section.

Kare Lode's first book records 38 meetings organized with local community leaders of Malian civil society during 1995 and 1996 (see Annex 1). But many more were organized outside the "official" civil society programme. Some gatherings were sponsored on an *ad hoc* basis by other NGOs such as Oxfam, ACORD and World Vision or the *Fondation pour le Nord*. Other smaller groupings were stimulated by local initiative or by a local NGO such as GARI (in Menaka) or Tassaght (in Djebok), or women's groups like APIF in Gao, the women's cooperative of Tessalit or the sewing school of Pastor Nok Yattara in Timbuktu. The NGOs took, as their starting point, the weekly market where nomads and farmers meet and trade. The meetings brought together leaders of the armed movements with sedentary and nomadic community and religious elders to work out specific problems: such as how firearms might be controlled in each district, how goods might be assured safe conduct in order to restart commercial activities in the area, or how refugees could be integrated after five years of distrust and fear. Points which had been the exclusive domain of the one-party State were now debated as a part of the responsibility of the local community: such as mediation over the use of land and water and pastures, and interventions to reduce violence and armed robbery. Many participants said that this was the first time in history that they had met to discuss such issues without being manipulated.

We have mentioned that the meetings involved all the communities which trade together at the same weekly market. This is an important detail, and it is critical to understanding the success of the negotiation process. We insisted earlier on the integration of agro-pastoral activities in the northern economy, described in Chapter 2 and illustrated by the experiences of the FAO engineer Bathily when he worked on the Bend of the Niger with the twin communities of Hama Koulagi and Tin Aouker. The borders of the administrative units shown on our map of the Gourma (Map 4.1, see for example Rharous Cercle), tend to run parallel to the river: a legacy, as we described in Chapter 2.3, of the French naval conquest, with its denial of the essential complementarity which exists between the herding and

cropping economic systems. The Gourma map is taken from Kare Lode's book. It shows that the catchment areas for peacemaking meetings were quite different from administrative boundaries. The elected parliamentary deputies initially did not always support the NGO peacemaking initiative, for their political constituencies (and power-base) correspond to the colonial administrative Cercle. To take only the example of the Bambara Maoundé meeting (No 1 on the list in Annex 1): the organizers brought together communities from four or five Cercles. This meeting was organized by Nok ag Agtia of Diré (on the Timbuktu side of the river) but included the *Chef d'Arrondissement* of Boni near Hombori, which is not in Timbuktu Region at all, but under the administration of Mopti. The catchment areas were based only on communal and economic ties.

Map 4.1: The Gourma (taken from Kare Lode 1996, Annex 6.6, from a sketch by Ibrahim ag Youssouf)



An article in the Guardian observed:

By 1994, the population was fed up with the “rebels”, wanting peace. No one knew this better than the armed movements themselves. They participated actively in a year of patient negotiations across the north, where village elders, religious and community leaders, the leaders of civil society held palavers on a dozen tricky issues such as how to control arms, how to welcome back the refugees, how to re-integrate fighters... (Lacville 1996).

It is some of these very leaders who took the initiative to invite Kare Lode to return to Mali. Lode had been Director of the Norwegian Church Aid (AEN) programme in Gossi, in the Gourma area south of the Bend of the Niger. He had personal knowledge of the problems and culture of the area (he is fluent in Fulfuldé), and had worked with some of the leaders, notably Zahaby (FIAA), Zeidane (FPLA) and ag Erlaf (Minister of Employment and of the Civil Service, and later Minister of Transport and Public Works during 1992-97). AEN paid for Lode to spend the better part of a year in Mali, where he became the coordinator of an informal group under the protection of the *Commissariat au Nord*.⁸ This special unit included the two chief Assistants of the Commissioner (Aghatam ag Alhassane, and Abacar Sidibé who had by this time left the Commissariat) and two leading actors in the civil society of the North, Zeidane ag Sidalamine (once head of training of AEN, become Secretary-General of the FPLA) and Ibrahim ag Youssouf (a UNDP consultant for the North). It was the last two who designed the strategy which enabled this group to mobilize civil society for peace.

Organizing meetings costs money. Some of these community meetings had up to 1,000 participants, and although there is no hotel to pay for, even hardy nomads need to eat and drink. To help the process of negotiation, a “lubricating fund” of around \$90,000 was provided by donor governments and NGOs. Some Touaregs arrived on camels, others in Landrovers. Some needed diesel fuel. All needed to be fed. For a Sahelian conference you must at least kill some sheep, provide bread or rice, tobacco and lots of sweet green tea. Sometimes, in the cause of peace, the money paid for new tyres or a camel saddle. None of the meetings cost the NGOs more than \$5,000. Local civil society invested a lot more than the external NGOs. The first NGO-sponsored negotiation we have recorded was entirely funded by

⁸ AEN financed the group through a Norwegian government grant and internal resources, making it possible to hire Kare Lode as project coordinator. Before Lode’s arrival, AEN Director in Mali, Terje Eltervag had several times acted as an informal go-between in negotiations. The AEN Regional Director Njell Lofthus participated in a mediation role in the 19 December 1994 hearing at the European Parliament in Brussels on the conflict in northern Mali.

local people of Tinabao (Menaka) in June 1994, on the initiative of GARI. What is clear, is that preventive diplomacy can be inexpensive.

Lode's group tested their model in October 1995 with three meetings in the Gourma at Bambara Maoundé, Gossi and Mandiakoy. The cost was 4.5 million Fcfa for the three meetings (a mere \$9,000 US). The success of these three enabled AEN to persuade the Norwegian Government to put up an additional 14 million francs (\$28,000) to keep the momentum going. Further support was proposed by the German, Canadian and Swiss for a total of 38 million Fcfa (\$76,000), and to this end they created jointly FAR-Nord (*Fonds d'aide pour la réconciliation et la consolidation de la paix dans le Nord du Mali*).

The FAR-Nord shows how simple, flexible and effective "good aid" can be. It was agreed that Lode would supply monthly reports, and that proof of expenditure would consist of the following:

- a contract serving also as a receipt for the money signed by the organiser of the meeting and by Lode, witnessed by a local government official;
- a list of attendance;
- a signed report of all the decisions taken at the meeting; and
- any other interesting document (but not a financial account).

Organizers were chosen by Lode's group on the basis of personal reputation and independence. Several were teachers. One absconded with the money: the communities were so incensed that they sent people after the thief. Meanwhile they organised a collection to make up the sum of money themselves, to save their reputation and honour. Theirs was a very successful meeting. In several areas, additional cash sums were contributed by the agro-pastoralists to ensure the success of the negotiation. Many people contributed a goat or some millet to promote the spirit of reconciliation. By the end of March 1996, Lode was organizing "consolidation meetings". The essential task of discussion and reconciliation had been achieved in half a year, reintegrating the armed movements psychologically into their communities. All that remained was their physical integration (and disarming through the cantonment process), and the institutional disintegration of the rebel movements, elegantly arranged to take place in Timbuktu, spiritual centre of North Mali.

Ghana's president was the guest-of-honour in Timbuktu on 27 March 1996, when Mali's President Konaré and a distinguished international cast gathered in front of the pyramid of weapons handed in by the ex-combatants. A huge roar of applause echoed around the sand dunes as the spokesman for all the five armed movements, Zeidane ag Sidalamine (of the former FPLA), announced their formal

dissolution. He handed the signed document to President Alpha Konaré, shook hands with President Jerry Rawlings, and together they lit what became known as “the Flame of Peace”, turning the arms of destruction into a symbol of reconstruction. The cantonment process through which these weapons were collected is described in the following section.

It is the Presidency which had control of government policy for the North: it is therefore to the Presidency which we must give a large share of the credit for the success of the peacemaking. It was President Konaré who insisted on giving time and space to civil society to create dialogue and reconciliation. To this end, he organized the withdrawal from the North of the army units which had committed atrocities during 1994, and confined many of the rest to barracks. He insisted that regional authorities should support, but not interfere with the work of civil society. At the start, the meetings took place without government representatives. Later they joined the peace movement, and we had the pleasant spectacle of the Regional Governor sitting quietly in the audience, listening. A change from the military model of the previous regime when the Governor was either absent, or dominant. President Konaré’s support for the process allowed the relaunching of civil society, which had been paralysed by the months of insecurity. The result was a symbiotic partnership between NGOs and community leaders, and the dissident movements. It is on this continuing partnership, with support from Government and donors, that the future peace and development of the North depends.

We shall end this section with the words of Mahamadou Diagouraga, the *Commissaire au Nord* whose tact and diplomacy did so much to create the conditions for community peace-making:

Born of the spirit of national consensus in the regional *Concertations*, the inter-communal meetings in the regions of northern Mali, discussing reconciliation and the consolidation of peace, have generously illustrated the commitment to peace of civil society and of the other actors involved, and more specifically their commitment:

- to restoring confidence between the various communities
- to re-establishing dialogue on the basis of alliances and complementarities between ethnic groups
- to reinforcing the dynamics of peace and reconciliation
- to re-establishing trade and supply routes through the re-opening of markets
- to struggle against all forms of violence.

(Preface to Lode 1996)

4.6 The Cantonment Policy

While the community meetings were being held to promote and strengthen civil society, the process of cantonment for the ex-combatants had begun in November 1995. This was an activity for which not one single donor was willing to provide funding. Only the UNDP provided encouragement. Western donors had decided at the Timbuktu *Rencontre* of July 1995 to ask the Malian Government to fund the cantonment phase, as a concrete sign of their determination to see the demobilization process to its conclusion. “We had to scrape the bottom of the drawers containing counterpart funds, just to find the money to feed them”, says the *Commissaire au Nord*, Mahamadou Diagouraga, smiling wryly at his memories of hard debates with the harassed Minister of Finance. The Commissioner went visiting the cantonment sites with the UNDP Resident Representative and some of his colleagues: notably Oumar Sacko, “the pillar of the PAREM” and Djédi Sylla, architect of UNDP’s human development strategies for North Mali. They were distressed to discover the poor quality of the cantonment accommodation. There was barely enough food and green mint tea. Fortunately the cantonment candidates were used to a nomadic existence, often in the more difficult circumstances of foreign wars. Morale was surprisingly good, both among the ex-combatants and among the Malian military who were supervising and training them. The Armed Forces Minister had invested in a few televisions (and a video machine for the biggest camp at Léré), footballs, and basic training to prepare the recruits for integration into the Malian uniformed forces. Given the paucity of the resources available (and the lack of donor support for this critical action of Mali’s democracy), the success of the cantonment process is a tribute to the good will of all the Malians involved.

After the tragic death in a motor accident of the former Minister Boubacar Sada Sy, his successor as *Ministre des Forces Armées et des Anciens Combattants* (Minister of the Armed Forces and Veterans or MFAAC), Mamadou Ba, inherited the difficult cantonment dossier, with figures of 9,000 potential candidates and 5 billion Fcfa in costs. Without admitting that this might pose a problem, the new Minister asked if the candidates could actually be identified. A mission was sent out to find the candidates for demobilization from the armed movements, and it found fewer than 2,000. The movements protested that “the combatants are not here just now”. So a second mission went out and came back with similar figures. The authorities now had an idea of the real scale of the operation. The Minister had the costs recalculated on the basis of a maximum of 3,000, coming up with the figure of 900 million Fcfa. At this stage emerged the concept of identifying two

types of combatants: those with arms and those without arms. In the end, many more unarmed men (and even a few women) turned up to seek integration through the civilian programme, PAREM (see 4.8 below), an expression of the political ambitions of new leaders who have been birthed by the MFUA.

The cantonments were set up in Léré, Bourem, Menaka and Kidal, four well-spaced towns corresponding approximately to the clan and recruitment areas of the four MFUA movements. To be accepted in one of the four cantonments, each man had to surrender a firearm. This had the dual purpose of reducing insecurity by bringing in the small arms, and of making sure that most of the cantonment candidates really were combatants. Once the ex-combatants were in the cantonment areas, the rebel bases were closed. Now work could begin on integrating these young men into society, either by recruitment into the uniformed forces or by their return to socio-economic civilian activity. And the new Minister insisted on a first stage of social integration: unlike in 1992, all elements were to live and mix together in the cantonment, as they would be expected to do in the armed forces. There were to be no separate tents or lodgings for separate family, clan, language or movement affiliations. This rule turned out to be one of the biggest successes of the cantonment system, ensuring camaraderie and sharing, even in difficult circumstances.

The Government's main supporter was the United Nations. Though the cantonment operation was financed by the Government, the UN Trust Fund paid a demobilization premium: \$200 each to the 3,000 who had surrendered their arms, and \$100 each to the approximately 7,000 other ex-combatants without arms, later identified by the movements (to PAREM), but who had not passed through the cantonment process (Rose 1996, p. 4). The PAREM figures show in fact that, for political reasons, the GRM was persuaded to accept something close to the movements' original figure of 9,000 ex-combatants.⁹ Some ex-combatants surrendered an elderly rifle, others produced an AK-47. Colonel Sadio Gassama, president of the demobilization commission and Chief of Staff of the Army, realized that a certain flexibility was needed to encourage a maximum of young men to come forward and to recuperate the widest possible range of arms. Not

⁹ In a communication to the United Nations dated 31 October 1996, for the *Conférence sur le Désarmement et la Prévention des Conflits* in Bamako in November 1996, the President of Mali's *National Commission on Light Weapons CNLPAL*, Lt Col Sirakoro Sangaré cited the following figures: "As of today, out of an initial figure of 9,000 combatants (figure given by the ex-MFUA) which became 11,000 including numbers from the ex-MPGK and ended up at 11,645 for all the five movements together: 2,078 of them have been integrated (or are in the process of integration) into the uniformed forces."

everyone had a personal weapon to give in, but for a machine gun with a tripod, he accepted three candidates for cantonment, a mortar was worth five.

The advantages of cantonment for the individual were free food and training, a bit of money (20,000 Fcfa per month during training), and the chance of a job with the Malian Government. In these times of IMF restrictions, there is no recruitment into the civilian or armed services and cantonment was therefore attractive. The days are past when a diploma led automatically to a government salary and pension. This is vivid proof of Africa's progress because at independence and for many years afterwards, the government services were understaffed. Later they were overstaffed. Today there is competition for places, while opportunities exist outside the Government for young African men and women to use their skills and initiative in the private sector or the social sector which, at least in Mali, are booming. But government service still appears attractive, and therefore cantonment had real appeal, notably to unemployed young men whose lifestyle suited them for a career in the uniformed forces.

Cantonment started on 15 November 1995 and was expected to last four weeks. The lists were actually closed on 10 January 1996, eight weeks later. At first there was barely a trickle of candidates, larger numbers arrived later as confidence was built. This is common to cantonment experiences elsewhere: levels of aggression and suspicion have often been much greater than in Mali (see for example the Zimbabwe cantonment experience described in UNIDIR 1995/41). Commanders send in a handful of volunteers to test out the sincerity of the authorities. Larger numbers arrive later. The Malian Government twice decided to extend the cantonment deadline, before moving the process on and into "integration".

In the case of Mali, the success of cantonment was linked to the success of civil society peacemaking. "The meetings favoured the disarmament of rebel soldiers," Kare Lode told us, "In the case of Talataye we know that a number of armed combatants were convinced at the meeting that the peace was real, with the result that 82 of them went to the cantonment camp to deliver their arms. Even the organizing of the meeting was a positive factor: in many cases armed robbery in the area had stopped completely by the time the meetings were held, and the local market reopened immediately afterwards."

In line with their suspected real manpower, the four movements sent in very different numbers of men with small arms.

Table 4.1: Numbers in the Cantonments at 5 January 1996

	Léré	Ménaka	Bourem	Kidal	Total
MPA	458	nil	nil	620	1,078
FPLA	26	270	66	50	412
FIAA	140	nil	70	nil	210
ARLA	32	95	101	nil	228
MPGK	405	163	185	nil	753
Total	1,061	528	422	670	2,681

Source: Ministère des Forces armées et des anciens combattants.

The selection process for integration into the uniformed forces began on 12 January 1996. For the previous two months, an Integration Commission under the chairmanship of Lt Colonel Seydou Traoré (formerly Governor of Timbuktu) had been working on the rules and selection criteria for integrating ex-combatants into either the uniformed forces or, in the case of those few qualified for a francophone administrative career, into the civilian public service. In 1992, it had been the movements who selected their people. That was a mistake. Although the Commission insisted that the movements should agree on the allocation between them of the numbers, criteria for acceptance were negotiated with the Malian authorities. Col Traoré's team included ministries and movements and the general staff of each of the armed forces, and they thrashed out together a common set of criteria: medical and physical, age and experience, education and aptitude, proof of Malian nationality, etc.

If there is a criticism of the cantonment process, it is that it was allowed to drag on effectively into February 1996. No one had really planned what to do with these young men, between their arrival with a weapon and their actual recruitment into a Malian service. In fact, Col Gassama put a sudden end to the cantonments when he sensed, during a visit to Ménaka, that the limits of frustration were near (this was expressed in various ways to reporters from the government newspaper ESSOR: see Konaté and Sissoko 1996). After four months of playing football and watching videos in the cantonments, some 1,500 men were selected for integration into the uniformed forces. They then received a further 6 months of basic military training, to turn them into Malian military men. Finally a group of 1,479 took their

oath of allegiance before the national flag on 22 September 1996, the 36th anniversary of Mali's independence.

A further 150 were approved for the civil service (although one was later refused when it was found that he had been dismissed some years previously for misuse of funds). The remainder were allowed to leave the cantonments after 4 months, with a demobilisation premium of 55,000 Fcfa and the promise that they would receive help from PAREM (described in section 4.8) to re-enter civilian life. Some of these men are disappointed, failed candidates for the army or the police. Ex-soldiers in any country cause difficult social problems. Some old soldiers never manage to settle down to a quiet domestic routine. If there is a threat to stability in the North, it is likely to come from this group of potential highway robbers who have been handed on to PAREM.

Table 4.2: Numbers Integrated into the Public Services¹⁰

Service	Number
Armed forces	1,199
Police	150
Customs	100
Forestry service	50
Sub-total uniformed forces	1,479
Civilian administration	149
Total	1,648

Source: MFAAC.

¹⁰ There is a difference of 599 between these figures and those quoted in footnote 5 above, because Col Sirakoro includes in his figures certain ex-combatants who were integrated into *unités spéciales* back in April 1993. An additional 150 members of the sedentary MPGK were accepted for integration, mainly into the Gendarmerie, under a separate agreement with the GRM, outside the *Accords d'Alger* which fixed the numbers for the MFUA. These 150 *Gandakoy* recruits were trained in a separate camp at Kayes, while the MFUA group went for training at Banakara, near Markala (and conveniently close to medical services in Ségou). Subject to medical approval and aptitude tests, all the ex-combatants were able to state their preferred career destination. May they all succeed in promoting peace and socio-economic development through their new careers!

4.7 The Flame of Peace

Excellencies, the United Nations is proud to be associated with the Flame of Peace. We have of course checked, Mr President, before laying placing them on the bonfire, that not one of these 3,000 weapons contains any ammunition and that they can be burned without danger, to make a true "Flame of Peace".

With these words, General Henny van der Graaf of the Netherlands handed to President Alpha Oumar Konaré a signed certificate (the text is reproduced in annex 2). Ten thousand spectators gathered on the sand dunes burst into delighted laughter.¹¹ As dusk gathered over the medieval spires of Timbuktu, AOK and his guest-of-honour JJ Rawlings, together with Madame Adame Ba Konaré and Professor Ali Diallo, the President of the National Assembly of Mali, left the podium and led their guests to the pyramid of small arms on the plain between the sand dunes. There flaming torches were awaiting, and the 3,000 weapons disappeared in a vortex of heat flaming into the desert sky.

The initial military reaction to the idea of burning weapons was stunned disbelief. "But we need those weapons! Especially we need them, because we are going to have all the ex-combatants joining the army, and we have got to find them weapons from somewhere. Furthermore, many of these weapons were actually stolen from the army. We should get them back!"

Mali's President stood firm. "This is not a military matter, but a political matter," he explained, "These weapons have been soiled with the blood of Malians. Even if each and every one of these weapons has been stolen from the Malian army, they have been soiled and they shall be burned."

With hindsight, every Malian senior military officer agrees that the President's political judgement was correct. The Flame of Peace became a defining moment in Malian modern history. It has burned into the mythology of peace-making across Africa. Far more valuable than the financial cost of the weapons, is the symbol of national cleansing which the Flame represents. Not everyone agrees, of course. One opposition newspaper denounced the Flame as phoney: the author criticised the ceremony in Timbuktu because, he claimed, it is water which

¹¹ It was not a joke: General van der Graaf had checked the pile of rifles. He had picked out at random a Garand rifle of US make, since he was familiar with this weapon. The breech was jammed, so the General rammed the butt of the rifle on the ground, pointed it into the sky and fired. The assembled army officers were stunned: all the weapons had been checked. They found three live rounds remaining inside the Garand. Every single weapon in the pyramid was rechecked: not another cartridge was discovered. No one knows how General van der Graaf's hand was guided to the only loaded weapon, but his professional reputation soared sky high.

cleanses in the Sahel whereas fire represents aggression, and other weapons remain which were not burned.

While nobody believes that we are rid of every illicit gun in Mali, making a start on disarmament mattered enormously. The number and quality of the weapons are unimportant: anyone can obtain another weapon, for guns are all too easily available from nearby flash-points like Chad and Liberia. The important thing is that the Flame of Peace symbolizes the end of ethnic violence in Mali, and the return of the Touaregs and Arabs into the Malian nation (although some of the refugees have yet to make the journey home).

The Flame of Peace is also a triumph for United Nations diplomacy. Encouraging the armed movements to surrender their weapons, the United Nations supervised their inspection and burning, adding neutrality and flair and international stature to the Malian government's efforts, to the Malian armed forces, and to the cantonment policy which Mali conceived and organized. The success was not due to the United Nations: our story has made clear that this was peace "Made in Mali", by the people and the institutions of Mali. But Mali could not have succeeded so well on its own. In a country with few resources, something exceptional was needed which would attract attention, and funds were needed for the long process of peace-building. And then there was another point: what to do with the collected weapons? Experience shows that it is best to destroy the arms.¹² Conclusion: Mali needed a cheap and spectacular method for arms destruction.

Professor Owen Greene, a British disarmament specialist, commented, "What Mali's partnership with the United Nations has achieved has been to make Mali bigger than it is." By which he means that the Flame of Peace has become a symbol beyond the frontiers of Mali. Here is an African success story, a island of peacemaking in the continent of civil disturbance. It is therefore not surprising that the United Nations delegation in Timbuktu was the biggest. The Secretary-General was unable to come himself, but he was represented by Ibrahima Fall, then Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations Centre for Human Rights in Geneva, who is now Assistant Secretary-General in the United Nations Department for Political Affairs in New York. The UNDP sent Madam Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, Director of the Africa Bureau. Prvoslav Davinic, Director of the United Nations Centre for Disarmament Affairs in New York, acted as an Official Weapons Certifier and with General Henny van der Graaf signed the Certificate

¹² See for example, the World Bank publication of 1993 on demobilization and re-integration experience in Africa, and Lodgaard's article in the UNIDIR *NewsLetter* No. 32 of 1996.

which was presented to the President of Mali. He was supported by his colleague Ivor Richard Fung, an architect of the Flame of Peace, and by another senior disarmament specialist from the United Nations, Sverre Lodgaard, the Director of UNIDIR. Besides the external visitors representing the United Nations, there were the Malian Representatives of UN agencies working in the North of Mali: notably the United Nations Resident Coordinator Tore Rose of the UNDP, and UNICEF Representative André Roberfroid who later became the head of UNICEF's office in Geneva.

There has been some discussion in the diplomatic community as to whether or not the Flame of Peace Ceremony was well-attended. Should we be satisfied with ambassadors? Did Mali need a mass of ministers, or even a gaggle of heads of State? The presence of ministers from most of Mali's neighbours, and from the Netherlands (Jan Pronk, Minister of Overseas Development was present) makes the Timbuktu gathering both important, and practical in orientation. The Bamako rumour-mill was grinding out name after presidential name of political heavyweights, from Boutros Boutros-Ghali downwards! It was probably an illusion to believe that five or eight heads of State would come to Timbuktu. Not being very involved in protocol, we are inclined to wonder whether a crowd of big-wigs would even have been helpful? The guest-of-honour was President JJ Rawlings of Ghana, wearing a second symbolic hat as the current President of ECOWAS, and the importance of his presence and his speech was heightened by the absence of unnecessary protocol. We shall end this section with an extract from JJ Rawlings' speech, which was as significant as the Flame itself in its symbolism. It showed that Ghana's President has drawn the most important lesson from Mali's peacemaking experience: that successful peacemaking cannot be imposed by outsiders. Peace must come from below, from the people and from their communities and from their community leaders:

We are proud to be standing here on the soil of the ancient and most important Kingdom of Mali, father of our ancestors. We are proud to be standing here in Timbuktu, a citadel of great learning, a place of scholars who brought learning to Mali.... I wish to send a Message from Timbuktu to the brothers and sisters of Liberia. Ultimate peace in Liberia rests with the people themselves.¹³

¹³ Protocol was not efficient enough to provide us with a copy of the text, so we quote from an article in *New African* magazine: "The gospel according to St Rawlings" (Tall 1996). Indeed the Flame of Peace experience showed the need to reform the outdated structures of "diplomacy and protocol": invitations were sent late, the international press corps was neglected, and none of the speeches were made available to anybody (nor did anyone know whom to ask, not even ministers, since no one admitted responsibility for anything).

4.8 The Re-integration of Ex-combatants

Once the ex-combatants had been disarmed and demobilized, there remained the challenge of re-integrating them into society. Left to his own devices, released from cantonment into the struggling economy of the North without a profession or any artisanal or agricultural skills, a young man may be tempted to resort to his old ways: to find a weapon and to take up a life of banditry. Demobilization, therefore, cannot be seen as the end of the peacemaking process. Instead, it is the beginning of the long and difficult process of re-integration. As we recounted in chapter 3, it is at this stage that the peace attempts which followed the National Pact of 1992 failed. There were no funds to help former rebels re-integrate into society, and those that were absorbed into the Malian military were segregated and denied proper military training. By 1994, the peace process was nearing collapse.

In 1996, the Malian Government had the will and found the resources it needed to incorporate the majority of the cantoned rebels into the Malian military. Meanwhile the United Nations stepped in to assist with the re-integration of former rebels into civilian society. For this the United Nations created PAREM as a mechanism: *Programme d'Appui à la Réinsertion socio-économique des Ex-combattants du nord Mali* (Support Programme for the Socio-economic Re-integration of Ex-combatants in Northern Mali). The programme is financed through a special international Trust Fund overseen by the UNDP. We shall consider the objectives and the target audience of this programme before looking at the strategy itself to see whether PAREM is likely to be successful in re-inserting the ex-combatants.

Everyone seems to agree that only the United Nations could launch and run PAREM, or the Trust Fund which supports PAREM. Only the United Nations is perceived to occupy a position of neutrality: neither the Government, nor any of the mediators or bilateral donors (nor the World Bank) is considered "neutral and objective" in the same way as the United Nations Development Programme. Seen from Bamako and Geneva, this is a feather in the UNDP cap. Here, we hope, is a success story in the making.

The PAREM model was taken from the United Nations' experience with demobilization in Mozambique. The transfer of a model from country A to culture B is always risky, although the administrative attractions are obvious enough. A joint UN-GRM mission travelled to Mozambique and developed the project design, but it is always the application in the field which holds the secret of success. UNDP provides the management, ILO the training, and the rest of the

team are from OIM (which has field experience in Mozambique) or from the ex-movements.

It is clear that PAREM is political more than economic. The Programme fulfils the political obligations of the Malian Government, solemnly undertaken in the National Pact, to support the ex-combatants of the armed movements. Mali's Transition Government accepted this to help the peace negotiators "sell" the Pact in 1992 to their armed militia, and its elected successors accepted the commitment for the same reason. Without an end to insecurity, the underlying problems of economics, ecology and marginalization cannot be addressed. Thus, PAREM is conceived as a strategy of "security first", which PAREM's manager, Paul Howard of the USA, describes succinctly as "buying time, so that those who are working on the long-term development side of things can get their programmes going again."

In view of the above we can sum up the objectives of the PAREM as follows:

- Political: getting the ex-combatants out of aggression and into society.
- Economic: creating jobs to occupy these angry young men.
- Security: first creating the conditions of security necessary for releasing the \$200 millions, which donors say are waiting to be invested in the North (see Annex 3). In any country, unhappy people walking around with guns are destabilizing.

How many people has PAREM helped? The PAREM start-up document of 16 May 1996 talks of 6,000 *non-cantonnés*: but the 1997 mid-year report shows that the figure had risen to 7,795, added to which are 1,659 from the cantonments who were not taken into government service. PAREM is therefore catering to 9,454 customers in the three regions: 2,423 in Kidal, 3,796 in Gao, and 3,235 in Timbuktu.

There are tricky political matters of judgement concerning "who is an ex-combatant" and how many had better be considered as potential future combatants if ever the integration process does not work out. The Government decided to be flexible (especially with the MPGK), as demands rose in concert with the post-conflict political ambitions of the negotiators. All the lists of ex-combatants were drawn up by the movements and were co-signed by them and by the National Commission. Each person on the list had to turn up to collect a card. This didn't eliminate complaints of the "My name was taken off the list, and I don't agree..." variety, and no doubt there has been a bit of deliberate confusion with similar names, which is easy to arrange when so many people are called Mohamed and Maiga and Cissé. Naturally the lists include plenty of brothers and cousins of leading members of the movements, and some of the ex-combatants are women.

A few returning refugees may be receiving help from both UNHCR and PAREM, not to mention the various NGO programmes, picking up free food or cheap credits or whatever is available in each programme or region. We are talking about Malians whose whole life is one of movement. "Of no fixed address" in Europe signifies someone who has lost out in society or who is in some way threatening or dishonest. But in northern Mali, only elderly farmers really have a fixed address.

In any case, who cares if they are getting a little bit extra? Songhoy, Fulani, Bozo, Arab or Tamacheq, they all deserve a better start in life than has been possible during the past 5 years of insecurity, following 25 years of drought and 100 years of repression. Military figures show that 65 per cent of the ex-fighters in the cantonments were under 25 years of age, and 15 per cent were under 20. How similar is the make-up of the civilian customers? PAREM's first task was to create a database to try to understand the nature and profile of its shifting (and maybe shiftless) population of potential customers. Most of them are under 30. There will never be enough salaried jobs for thousands of young men with small education and little knowledge of French. The difficulties of getting them to produce viable economic projects may be insurmountable. How can PAREM help them get the start in civilian and productive life that they need? Can a cash investment of 300,000 Fcfa really set each on his way through life?

Early evidence suggests that PAREM has been far more successful than we would have dared to hope. Most PAREM clients do have prior work experience, and clear ideas of what they want to do. Many groups have taken the initiative to move into irrigated vegetable growing; others, of pastoral origin, have decided to start herds of small ruminants (which will take advantage of the Malian export business which is thriving since the cfa Franc was devalued and European meat-dumping diminished); and a large number have taken up trading, now that the security situation allows safe travel. These are not sufficient activities to absorb all PAREM's clients of course. Not every one can be successful in commerce, any more than every one can make a living from livestock in the desert, but these are early days.

One surprising and unexpected element has been that most of the early projects have involved groups of clients: of the 866 funded projects, 374 involve 5,083 PAREM participants. This has meant that individual PAREM grants have been grouped to provide more substantial sums for investment. They have attracted additional money invested by neighbours, who have come forward to join the ex-combatants in creating a rice perimeter or in launching a livestock project. Group action is natural in Malian communities, and so it is proving for PAREM. Since these are turning into community projects, the average age and experience of the participants is higher than expected, and PAREM staff find the activities much less

vulnerable than they feared: they can leave groups to get on with their projects, assuming that people are competent. Once ex-combatants are actually working on their own projects, levels of frustration and aggression quickly decline, as in the Eleket rice perimeter near Timbuktu described by Saouti Haidara (1997) where 66 Arab ex-combatants are working together to farm 20 hectares. The atmosphere is so positive in Eleket, that it is now part of the itinerary for VIP visitors to Timbuktu.

Project staff are available for advice, and are responsible for following the progress of participants. Here again, PAREM's task is different from the design since it no longer appears necessary to train all 9,454 customers. Many already possess basic skills for their chosen project: "once a farmer, always a farmer". Training on a rice perimeter may involve only the manager, the accountant and the maintenance men for the irrigation pumps, from a group of 20 ex-combatants: the rest will benefit from ongoing government extension service advice. Training requirements were always difficult to predict. Coordinator Howard and ILO's training manager Léopold Ahounou from Benin adopted a flexible approach, subcontracting training needs to NGOs whose staff already had the required skills. Experience shows that this was a good strategy. Training focuses on management of micro-enterprises, and special skill areas as they are demanded, including agriculture, livestock management, transport and mechanics, and artisan skills such as leather curing, meat-drying, etc.

The concept of PAREM is controversial in Mali. One Ambassador told us that he felt that PAREM rewarded "what I call the 'warrior approach'. We are in effect paying them booty in order to buy peace. But will this bring durability? Paying 300,000 Fcfa to each ex-combatant to further his social and economic integration, implies that there is a social and economic environment into which he can integrate. I would prefer a community development approach." The ICRC Representative Susanne Hofstetter adopts a similar line: "We have preferred to support the communities which are receiving the ex-combatants. The cantonment was too long, and there was not enough preparation to respond to the needs of ex-combatants who were not going into Government service."

**PROGRAMME D'APPUI A LA REINSERTION
DES EX-COMBATTANTS DANS LE NORD MALI**

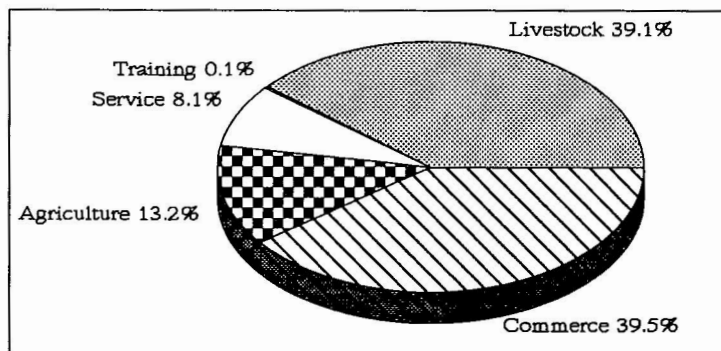
Overview of the Programme

	No. of projects	Ex-combatants demobilized	Ex-combatants financed	% financed	Amount spent (Fcfa)
Gao	195	3,796	3,800	100.11	1,157,169,040
Timbuktu	489	3,235	3,294	101.82	1,024,807,495
Kidal	182	2,423	2,415	99.67	745,347,749
Total	866	9,454	9,509		2,927,324,284

Breakdown of Projects by Sector of Activity (20.09.97)

Projects	No. of projects	No. of ex-combatants	Amount (Fcfa)
Service	96	772	242,447,500
Agriculture	118	1,252	382,316,495
Commerce	337	3,752	1,157,997,994
Livestock	311	3,722	1,137,611,295
Training	4	11	6,951,000
Total	866	9,509	2,927,324,284

Number of Ex-combatants by Sector of Activity



“Situation par secteur d’activité” at 30 September 1997. *Source:* PAREM Activity Report.

Most NGO comments in 1996 supported those of the ICRC. Some even accused PAREM of taking Mali back 12 years to a “relief mentality”, offering cash gifts instead of sustainable development, which requires mobilizing national and local resources that can be matched with technical training or credits. Professionals argue that it is better to make people loans which they must repay, leading to larger loans for themselves or for their partners... then you are creating an economic dynamic, rather than one of dependency. This is the development critique of an essentially political project: the political impact will not be achieved, unless the ex-combatants are integrated into an ongoing economic process. NGO criticisms may be justified technically, but they surely underestimate the political imperatives deriving from promises in the *Pacte National*. On the other hand, simply concentrating on individuals may not be enough: NGO criticisms reflect fairly accurately the thrust of two key strategy documents for the North (from UNDP and ACORD) to which we shall return in chapter 6. But even if not all their worries have been removed, we found that the criticisms we heard in 1996 became muted as people discovered in 1997 that PAREM’s group projects were working better (and were more communal) than might have been expected.

There is also more to PAREM than simple cash gifts. To get the first part of the cash (which is paid in three *tranches*), each registered ex-combatant must come up with a viable project. Individual projects funded by PAREM are supposed to be vetted (to see whether they really exist, and whether they have a chance of succeeding). Ahounou reasons:

Even if we only have 20 per cent of ex-combatant projects succeeding after one year, this will be in line with Western European and American experience of small enterprise survival rates, and that is in advanced countries which are at peace. We are hoping for 25 per cent success. In addition, the training they receive will help the ex-combatants to fit into society and to take advantage of other socio-economic opportunities.

At least—as PAREM staff observe wryly—they do not have 25 per cent failure after 6 months.

Although few of the participants appear to have taken the money and disappeared, PAREM’s NGO partners are critical of the speed with which the money is being distributed. They fear the political imperative (the “booty factor”) will obstruct the economic and social impacts of the project. NGOs maintain that there is pressure on PAREM to cut down the analysis of projects, so as to move the money and get the angry young men settled as soon as possible. The project was slow to begin, and it may have become too rapid, yet PAREM’s management denies that money is going out to people whose projects are not viable. The pressures are real enough. PAREM offices have been occupied, their vehicles have

been hijacked, the wife (“Mama Parem”) of manager Paul Howard was even taken hostage. This is not an easy place to be. February 1997 was a difficult month. Under intense physical pressure, the team in Gao did give out larger payments (more than one third as an initial payment) until the cash ran out, which of course the remaining clients refused to believe. One day shortly after that, Howard had to call in the Gendarmerie to defend the PAREM offices and staff. The gendarmes’ gas canisters remained closed: they palavered in the yard until 3pm, by which time the sun was so hot that everyone went home.

One of PAREM’s problems is communication. It is extraordinarily difficult to explain to semi-literate or non-literate workers (let alone to ex-fighters) why donors and accountants demand all this paper-work (some of which is unnecessary, although the auditors like it). These are not obedient military men, but irregular partisans whose lives have depended on quick thinking for themselves. They are independent types, used to taking their own decisions. They are bored, frustrated, waiting for money. Journalist Saouti Haidara (1997) interviewed bitter young men sitting around the PAREM offices who were happy to admit that they had previously been active “rebels” (others might call them “bandits”) who didn’t hesitate to slit a throat for gain. “They are ignoring the real rebels,” said one Arab, “PAREM gives its money to people who had nothing to do with the rebellion. They choose projects on the basis of family links or personal friendships or because people slip them some money under the table.”

Such complaints may contain a grain of truth, but what is beyond doubt is that people are quick to believe that they are victims: that there is discrimination, or nepotism, or corruption, or that the other ex-movements are receiving greater favours than they are. There has grown up a mythical debate over “quotas” based on the lists signed by the leaders of each movement... quotas between movements which, since 27 March 1996, are not supposed to exist. PAREM cannot dare to change these lists. Rightly, the United Nations refuses simply to give out cash, insisting on examining each project and on paying out the money by stages. “Otherwise,” says Howard, “they’ll just take the money and spend it. They’ll be back at square one, and we won’t have done anything to integrate them back into society.”

PAREM has been criticized by some leaders of the ex-movements as slow, its distribution of funding reluctant, and its systems burdensome. Ex-combatants do not want to hear about problems of cash-flow. The hijacking in broad daylight and in the middle of town of three United Nations vehicles on the 9th (in Kidal), 11th (in Timbuktu) and 12th (in Gao) of December 1996 was too much of a coincidence to be a coincidence. The security forces retrieved two of the vehicles before the end of the month: but such hijackings are a warning to PAREM, to the GRM and

to all donors that development promises must be met. Here is the comment from *Le Républicain*:

PAREM, the gigantic programme for reinsertion of demobilised ex-combatants, is under scrutiny. People criticise its slowness and its partiality. When frustration boils over, it is PAREM and its agents who get scalded. It has happened once already. That was a rough day in Gao, one which they are not likely to forget in a hurry (Maiga 1997).¹⁴

Then there are the horrendous logistical problems of the desert. Kidal for example has no bank, and there is not a single steel safe in the town in which to store large sums of money. “They occupied my offices in Kidal,” remembers Abdoulaye Bathily of the FAO and formerly deputy director of PAREM. “They accused me of being slow to pay out the money. I couldn’t tell them, for security reasons, that my problem was to find a vehicle in which to hide the \$8,000 I needed sending from the bank in Gao. Mr Rose of UNDP was trying to negotiate the use of the UNHCR airplane, but its hire was too expensive. Most donors cannot begin to understand our difficulties.”

Donor cash-flow is a permanent headache. The promises come from the donors, and the United Nations gets the blame when their money doesn’t arrive. Under intense pressure from the ex-combatants, the GRM announced in late 1996 that \$8.5 million were already pledged to the UN Trust Fund (it was \$10 million by June 1997). Naturally, queues (or rather mobs) formed outside the doors of the PAREM. “Give us our money!” But a pledge is a promise, it is not cash. When told that “there is no more money available this month,” it is hardly surprising that ex-combatants in Gao and Timbuktu believed that the millions of dollars had been stolen. Responding to political demands, PAREM disbursed \$3 million by the end of November 1996 in record time, so that in December the UN fund was reduced to just \$10,000. It was actually the Malian Minister of Finance, Soumaila Cissé, who found some cash for the Trust Fund and saved the PAREM staff from a

¹⁴ This refers to the day when the driver of a PAREM vehicle was dragged from his car, and the vehicle was turned over. One of the aggressors was hurt as the vehicle rolled, and the project management refused demands to pay his hospital bills. The men who take most of the heat when ex-combatants want to complain, are the eight “Technical Advisors” in PAREM (3 each in Gao and Timbuktu and 2 in Kidal) who were selected by the ex-movements to be representative of the ethnic and cultural and political composition of PAREM’s customers. (One has moved on and been replaced.) We cite their names with appreciation: Mohamed ag Mahmoud, Zeid ag Mohamed, Mohamed ben Fadi, Boubacar H. Touré, Mahamar Firhoun Maiga, Mohamed el Mehedi ag Rhissa, Hachimould Sidi Mohamed, Ibiya ag Sidi, Housseyni ag Intfaskiwen.

lynching, by pre-financing 50 per cent of the GRM's 1997 \$1 million pledge. Here is a African Government which is contributing to the Trust Fund, alongside the donors, and which is prepared to give its money in the cause of peace. The United Nations would like more such members.

Most United Nations donors are slow to pledge and even slower to pay. Donors blame the Malians. Indifference inside the Malian Administration in Bamako sometimes compounds delays: instead of energetically supporting the efforts of the UNDP, elderly Malian civil servants find themselves burdened with family problems, trying to feed the children of a deceased brother's extended family. But most blockages are due to donor officials—far from Timbuktu and Gao—who are ignorant of how hungry people react on the edge of the desert. The donors' forms and their bureaucratic paper-trail are inappropriate for a crisis. A hungry man with a gun needs to start his project now, at once, perhaps before the rains fall, whereas administrators happily plan in months or years. As one of the PAREM's Malian managers commented, "Donors see far ahead and they are very strong in finance, but they cannot do things fast. They underestimate the vulnerability of our people: that is a danger for peace." In our experience, the turnover of expatriate personnel is a major donor weakness. The funds negotiated by Joan, who may even have been to visit the projects, will now be handled by Jack who has just arrived in Mali, has never been to Gao, who doubts whether Timbuktu really even exists.

It is too early to declare that PAREM is a "success", but its existence has been essential to the process of making peace. We cannot yet, in mid-1997, evaluate the political, economic or security impacts. What does appear so far, however, is that PAREM has succeeded in injecting funds into communities, where ex-combatants are undertaking activities with their clansmen and neighbours. Funding for 9,454 participants has mobilized up to 12,000 people. We usually reckon that 10 dependents benefit indirectly from one income: so PAREM may have benefitted 15 per cent of the northern population. Not a bad start. But the only real success is permanent peace. If the GRM and the United Nations succeed in buying a period of peace through PAREM, how quickly will the donors release the \$200 million (see Annex 3) already programmed for development in the North? For the Trust Fund, the United Nations requested \$12 million and only raised \$10 million. In donor terms, the missing \$2 million are pennies and cents. Mali's partners are showing too little interest in preventive diplomacy and peace-building. If the donors do not come good in the medium-term, the result may well be (as one field worker in Gao told us) that "PAREM does not possess the resources to achieve its objectives". The objective is permanent peace.

In this chapter, we have reviewed the six courses of action which were essential to the making of peace in Mali. After the fall of the dictator, civil-military relations were at a low ebb. Building bridges between the people and the armed forces, the authorities helped to restore the military's sense of self-worth. With the help of mediators, the National Pact reinforced the confidence of the population, while the creation of the *Commissariat au Nord* gave reality to a special status for the North. Recognising that peace must come from the people, Mali's President had the foresight to withdraw many military units, and to allow civil society to take the lead in community reconciliation. Thus the people of the North became the peacemakers, and persuaded the rebels to disarm. The weapons were destroyed in a Flame of Peace. Government reentered the peace process to arrange the demobilization of combatants, barely managing to find enough resources to organize cantonments and to provide training for the integration of former rebels into the Malian army, after a rigorous selection process had been agreed by all parties. The United Nations provided some assistance to the cantonments, while other donors remained aloof. Ex-combatants not accepted in the military, are assisted through the PAREM programme in their transition to civilian life. United Nations leadership has brought some coordination to donor actions, and the United Nations—as we shall examine in the next chapter—has contributed discreetly to many parts of the peace process.

OUR CHILDREN DRAW PEACE

As the sun rose over Timbuktu and extinguished the stars which had witnessed the Flame of Peace, the Malian Government began to organise a children's art competition around the theme: a Monument for Peace.

This was chosen as a way to highlight the importance of the event for the whole of the Malian people. The organisers had three principal objectives: to show that the Flame of Peace has a lasting symbolism, to encourage a true culture of peace among young people, and to provide inspiration through their art for a Peace Monument to be erected on the plain of Abaradjou in Timbuktu.

The art competition produced three winners:

1. Miss Aminata Tamboura of Mopti, studying in 9th grade
2. MrEmile Camara of the Cathedral School, in 9th grade
3. Miss Bintou Diarra of Markala, in 5th grade

In order that the general public can see and appreciate our children's perception of peace, and their choice of symbolism, the Ministry of Basic Education and the *Commissariat au Nord* decided to publish a booklet containing the best drawings and paintings selected by the jury. The secret hope is that our children may influence the behaviour of their elders in favour of peace.

THE *COMMISSARIAT AU NORD*

Introduction by the *Commissariat au Nord* to the drawings by Mali's children, from which we reproduce a few samples.

