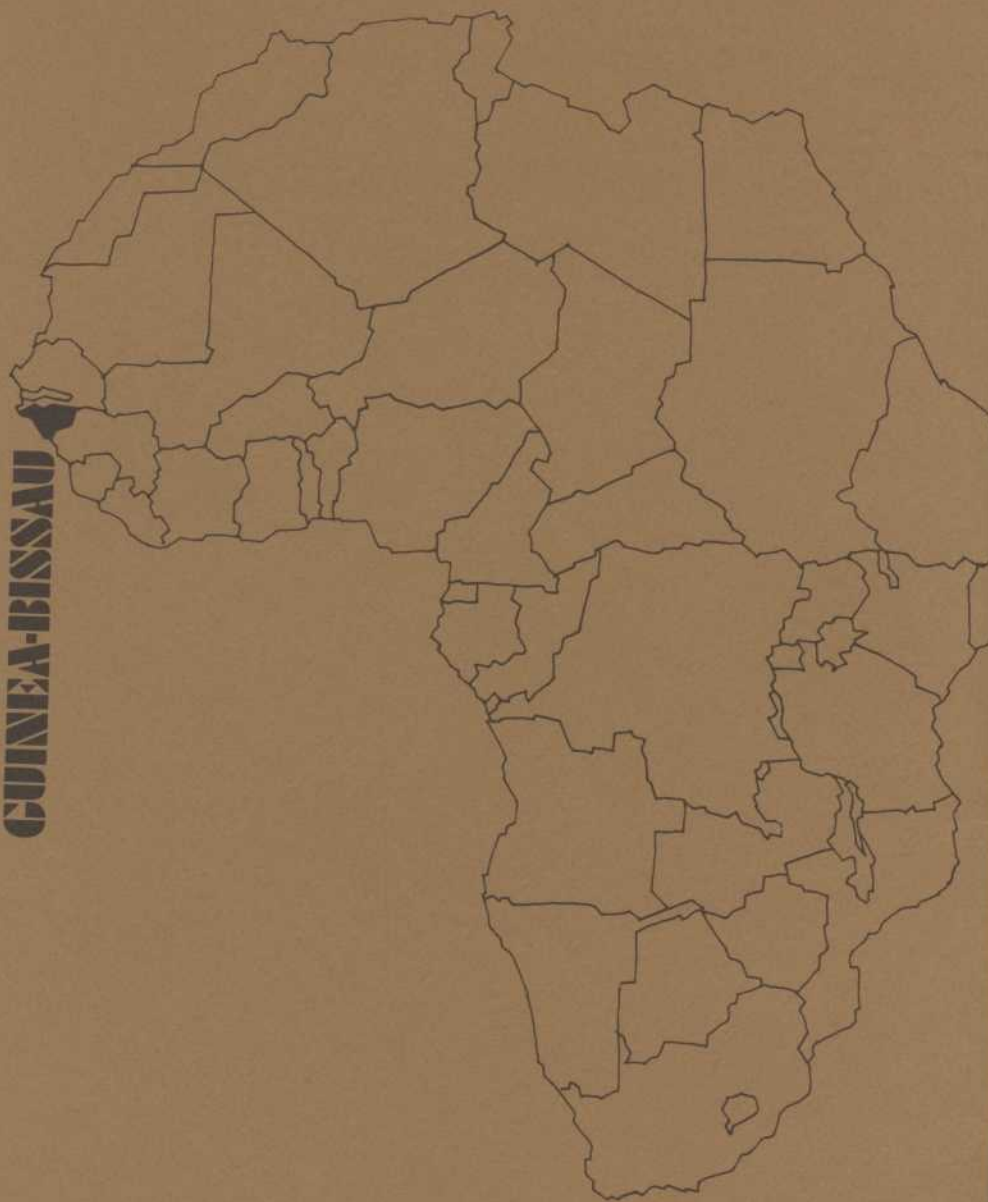


the republic of

GUINEA- BISSAU



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GUINEA- BISSAU

a small country of less than one million people on the west coast of Africa, has been struggling against Portuguese invaders for more than 500 years. In 1956 the PAIGC (African Party for the Independence of Guinea and the Cape Verde Islands) took the lead in this struggle, and by mid-1974 the PAIGC had liberated more than two-thirds of the land in Guinea-Bissau and had made tremendous strides in constructing a new life for the people in most of the country. In 1972, the people of Guinea-Bissau, participating in free elections for the first time ever, chose a democratic National Assembly. On September 24, 1973 at its first meeting that National Assembly proudly proclaimed the establishment of a free and independent state: the Republic of Guinea-Bissau.

This was an event of tremendous importance, reflecting decisive military and political victories over the Portuguese, and it generated an excited and enthusiastic response from the ranks of people who support the struggle against colonialism. Within days, over 50 countries had recognized and welcomed the new State; over 80

Amílcar Cabral makes a statement to the U.N. in October 1972, shortly before his assassination.



nations have now granted recognition to the Republic. Portugal, on the other hand, officially dismissed the Proclamation as "nonsense". The Western powers, taking the lead from their NATO ally, refused to acknowledge the reality of the new State, and the Western press buried the event in miniscule columns deep inside their back pages.

Yet only a few months later, the reverberations of this dramatic struggle had shaken loose the 46 year old dictatorship in Portugal. In April, 1974 the front pages of the world's newspapers were filled with news of the military coup in Portugal. In fact, the joyful days in Lisbon, the apparent dismantling of a fascist state, and the moves towards democratization in Portugal owe much to the long hard struggle by the people of Guinea-Bissau, Angola and Mozambique. It was in Guinea-Bissau, where he served as Commander in Chief and Governor, that Antonio Spínola was forced to acknowledge that there had to be a political rather than a military solution to the problems in Africa. Yet, the U.S., while claiming to welcome the establishment of greater democracy in Portugal, still refuses to acknowledge the

legitimacy of the liberation movements in the Portuguese colonies and continues to deny the existence of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau.

As long as it takes this position, the U.S. stands as an obstacle blocking the path to freedom for the people of Guinea-Bissau, Angola and Mozambique. U.S. recognition of the new State of Guinea-Bissau would end U.S. support for Portuguese colonialism and would help bring the day of ultimate liberation in Southern Africa much closer. It would end the ambivalence of official U.S. policy, which both claims to support self-determination, and constantly re-iterates what it describes as "Portugal's role in Africa," expressed in the belief that "it is important that Portugal continue to contribute to stability and progress on that continent."

the road to independence

"Who are we? I wouldn't like you to think that we're making war because we are warriors who like fighting. We like peace, but peace means nothing without freedom. We are freedom-fighters — our aim is the independence of our country and the total freedom and progress of our people."

— Amilcar Cabral, 1971.

The PAIGC was formed in 1956 by six Africans from Guinea and the Cape Verde Islands, including Amilcar Cabral, Aristides Pereira and Luis Cabral, now President of the new Republic. Because it was apparent that the Portuguese government which was dictatorial at home would not respond in a friendly way to any political opposition in the colonies, the organization was set up as an underground party. It was quickly extended from the capital city of Bissau to the other towns. It believed that it was possible to fight by peaceful means and with the help of some underground trade union organizations it launched strikes protesting labor exploitation by

the Portuguese and held demonstrations. "But the Portuguese always answered us with guns," said Cabral. On August 3, 1956, during a dock workers' strike in Bissau they killed 50 African workers and wounded more than 100 in 20 minutes. "That finally taught us a lesson: in the face of Portuguese colonialism . . . there is no question of whether you use armed struggle or not. The struggle is always armed because the colonialists have already decided to use their arms against you. We decided . . . in September 1959, to stop our demonstrations, to retain our underground organization but to move it to the countryside to mobilize the people, and prepare ourselves for armed struggle."

War is an old reality in Guinea-Bissau. Despite its 500 year presence, Portugal did not manage to extend administrative control over the entire colony until less than 40 years ago. Colonial forces fought 15 military campaigns between 1878 and 1915 against different peoples and regions and renewed military measures were needed as late as 1936 to "pacify" the rebellious population.

Thus when Portuguese soldiers and armed settlers fired on the Bissau dockworkers at Pijiguiti, the

Welcome ceremony for U.N. representatives at the Pilot Primary School.



decision to shift the basis of their action to the countryside and to adopt a policy of struggle "by all means, including war" was rooted in the militant tradition of the people. It reflected also the PAIGC's understanding that it was the peasants in this primarily agricultural society who would have to be the mainstay of the liberation struggle.

But in the PAIGC view, much work was necessary before armed struggle could begin. They believed that guerilla struggle means mass participation; that the struggle could not be carried out by a small elite group, but that the entire people had to be prepared politically to engage in the struggle. Cabral said, "We are, and have always been, first of all a party — a national liberation movement constituted by a party which leads the people to liberation. In Guinea there is no question of the guerillas directing the party: the guerilla is at all times under the direction of the party."

So Cabral left Guinea Bissau, in 1959 and went to Conakry, in the neighboring Republic of Guinea, itself independent from France less than one year. There he set up a training center. In the next two years 800-1000 peasants drawn from Guinea-Bissau went through 3-4 months of intensive political training under his direction. This gave the movement the first cadres with which it could begin the new phase of the struggle for independence.

13 years of armed struggle

In 1961 a campaign of sabotage against Portuguese installations began.

In January, 1963 the first armed attacks were launched from deep inside Guinea-Bissau, and not from across the border. This strategy, which caught the Portuguese off-balance was only possible because the careful years of political mobilization had created a firm base of popular support for the PAIGC and its fighting units. The brunt of

the fighting is borne by FARP (People's Revolutionary Armed Forces), an army composed of volunteers.

Tom Johnson, New York Times reporter, who visited Guinea-Bissau in April, 1974 was struck by the close links between the people and the army, and by the special quality of an army in which each soldier feels intensely involved in the whole process of strategy planning and deeply responsible for the final outcome of the war. He quoted an interview with Joaquim Baro, a commander of the forces, who said of the Africans serving in the Portuguese forces: "They are fighting for money. Their heart is not in what they do. We fight for our land, our people and our children." Johnson commented further, "I saw considerable evidence of the people's support for the African army. Repeatedly, as our party traveled through the jungle, men and women came from nearby villages with food for us."

By 1967, PAIGC had liberated half the national territory. A people's militia was established to defend the liberated territories, while FARP, the regular army, advanced to the fronts. The people were being totally integrated into the defense of their victories.

As the PAIGC won new battles on the land, the Portuguese changed their military tactics and took to the air in a desperate attempt to stave off defeat. They began using other increasingly brutal tactics: 1971 saw the introduction of fragmentation bombing, napalm and herbicide spraying. Tom Johnson describes the results of the bombing of a village which occurred while he was close by. "A 15 year old boy was killed; a 12 year old girl lost an arm; others were injured."

But the PAIGC continued to inflict defeats on the Portuguese, and by the end of 1971, two thirds of the population was living in liberated territory. Yet at the end of 1972 General Spínola's troops and aircraft were still capable of launching raids on liberated territory from their bases in the heavily fortified pocket of Bissau Island and its immediate surroundings. They could supply their isolated garrisons by helicopter; they could main-

*Soldiers of The
Republic of
Guinea-Bissau
assemble.*



tain links between their garrisons for the purpose of combined operations, and they could bomb the liberated territories with almost absolute impunity.

In January, 1973, Amílcar Cabral, the inspired leader of the PAIGC, was assassinated by agents of Portugal. The regime in Lisbon and Bissau thought this would divide the movement and end the struggle. Quite the contrary happened. PAIGC military actions were intensified, and 1973 saw the increasingly swift erosion of what remained of Portuguese military capacity in Guinea-Bissau. March, 1973 brought a dramatic end to the period of relative Portuguese invulnerability, with the introduction of the use of SAM 7 ground-to-air missiles by FARP. The results were shattering to Spínola's airforce. Now a man carrying a launcher on his back could destroy the bombers and helicopters which had seemed so powerful. By early 1974 the Portuguese had lost 44 bombers and other aircraft. Their last strategic advantage was gone . . . military defeat now seemed certain.

It is not surprising that Spínola, so long the architect of the war in Guinea-Bissau, is now forced to talk of a "political solution."

the political struggle... reclaiming history

"Parnell came down the road, he said to a cheering man: Ireland will get her freedom and you still break stone."
— W.B. Yeats

Government of the people, by the people, for the people is an old and powerful ideal, but it is also a promise that has been shattered a thousand times, as new governments replace old ones, while the mass of people remain victims, exploited, poor and powerless.

From its very beginning the PAIGC has struggled to avoid such an outcome by constantly reinforcing mass participation and control in the whole liberation movement. In 1965 Amílcar Cabral drew up a set of instructions to the party which concluded: "Hide nothing from the masses of our people. Tell no lies. Expose lies whenever they are told. Mask no difficulties, mistakes, failures. Claim no easy victories."

It is that political honesty of the PAIGC, combined with the clarity of principle and program in its struggle that has laid the basis for the support given by the people to what is truly their State — the Republic of Guinea-Bissau.

Liberation has been given a very clear meaning by the PAIGC. Cabral answered the question . . . "what does the liberation of the people mean?" by explaining: "It is the liberation of the productive forces of our country, the liquidation of all kinds of imperialist or colonial domination of our country, and the taking of every measure to avoid any new exploitation of our people. We don't confuse exploitation with the color of one's skin. We want equality, social justice and freedom . . . The colonialists have a habit of telling us that when they arrived in Africa they put us into history . . . It is the contrary — when they arrived they took us out of our own history. Liberation for us is to take back our destiny and our history."

Transforming theory into practice the PAIGC has

sought to develop structures which ensure maximum participation of the people in the political life of their country. As new areas of the country were liberated the PAIGC encouraged the people to form their own village committees for local self-government and participation in the national struggle. These democratic, representative committees appeared in every region liberated from colonial control, and began to develop even in areas where the Portuguese were still active.

The village committee has several tasks. At present one of the most important is to increase agricultural production, so that there will be plenty of rice for both families and fighters. The village committee also takes care of the militia, the young people who are not FARP fighters but part of the village self-defense group.

"Political work means getting the people to know . . . that in order to advance, *they* must guarantee the struggle's continuity, *they* must take charge of their own destiny by solving their problems on the village level, developing production, sending their children to school, and holding frequent meetings," according to Major Francisco Mendes, (Chico Te) Political Commissioner of the Northern Interregion.

*The street of one
liberated village.*



The first National Assembly which met in September, 1973 and proclaimed the establishment of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau grew out of this grass roots political network. 82,000 voters, participating in the first general election in the history of Guinea-Bissau, chose, under universal suffrage and by secret ballot, the members of that National Assembly. The declaration of the State was not a maneuver by some small political elite, but a true expression of the will of the people of Guinea Bissau.

building the new society

"Always bear in mind that the people are not fighting for ideas, for the things in anyone's head. They are fighting to win material benefits, to live better and in peace, to see their lives go forward, to guarantee the future of their children."

— Amilcar Cabral, 1965

From the early days of struggle military successes were accompanied by equally important social and economic changes in the liberated areas.

health services

When armed struggle began in 1963 there were only 4 doctors in the countryside. Ten years later the PAIGC had at least 40 doctors to serve the people. Despite a desperate shortage of trained personnel and medical equipment, 13 small hospitals have been established in the liberated areas, in addition to 3 larger hospitals in neighboring Guinea-Conakry and Senegal. Carrying health care to the people wherever they are, the PAIGC has also established 117 dispensaries in the forests, and "sanitary brigades" travel throughout the liberated zones for inoculation programs and health education. Large scale vaccination campaigns have been periodically carried out by PAIGC. In 1971, they effectively protected the people in the liberated zones from a

*PAIGC nursing staff
at a small semi-
mobile hospital in a
liberated area.*



cholera epidemic widespread in neighboring Guinea-Conakry and Senegal. Medical cadres work under tremendous difficulties without electricity or even refrigeration to preserve medicines. Under the Portuguese more than 50% of the children died before their second birthday; now life expectancy has gone up dramatically.

education

After 500 years of Portuguese domination, 99% of the people were illiterate, and only 2,000 children were in school. By 1972 the PAIGC had 14,531 students in 164 schools inside liberated regions. Portuguese education was geared towards producing a few "assmilados" who were trained to become low-level African bureaucrats for the colonial administration. In contrast, PAIGC education stresses basic literacy for all. There is much emphasis on adult literacy programs, and schools are designed to give the people the technical knowledge and skill necessary to make them technologically self-sufficient and capable of transforming their own lives. In addition to the elementary schools, each of the three military fronts has a boarding school through the fourth

*A village school
in the south of
The Republic of
Guinea-Bissau.*



grade, and there is a pilot school in Conakry so that the best students can go on to further training.

economic organization

Economic life under the Portuguese was very hard. People were subjected to high taxes, forced labor and the compulsory growing of certain cash export crops which were then bought by monopolistic trading companies at a fraction of their eventual resale value. Under the PAIGC, forced labor and monetary taxation have disappeared. People's stores have been opened throughout the countryside. Villagers bring their produce to the stores and exchange their goods for basic necessities such as cloth, cooking utensils, sugar and soap. Through the people's stores local produce such as rice, palm oil and hides are collected for distribution to military units, schools, health centers and export.

By 1967 the people in liberated regions were producing enough rice to feed themselves and their fighting units, and even had some left over to export. In contrast the Portuguese had to import rice into the areas they still controlled.

justice

In 1969 a judicial system was set up in the liberated areas so that the people would have an active part in the making of justice. Village courts, composed of three elected villagers were given jurisdiction to handle the "small quarrels" of the people and matters such as petty theft and divorce. Judgments are given on the basis of traditional law, so long as that does not go against the progressive principles of the Party and are aimed at preserving harmony among the villagers. These courts can impose fines, but cannot imprison offenders. Appeals from the village courts are handled by sectoral courts which also try more serious offences and can hand down prison sentences of up to four years. The sectoral courts have five members. The highest court is the Military Tribunal, which can review decisions of the sectoral courts and try people accused of serious offences such as spying, murder and rape. This Court can impose the death sentence.

All court hearings are public. The new Republic is now confronted with the important task of preparing a civil and penal code that is popularly inspired and based on African customs and values, but which would also combat undesirable practices such as forced marriages. The village courts grant divorces and ensure that no woman is forced to remain with a husband against her will.

women

The Party recognized from the very beginning of the struggle against Portuguese colonialism that the struggle for the liberation of women is an important one.

When trained members of the PAIGC began the process of mobilizing the peasantry, the question of equal rights for women, of their emancipation and hence their full and equal participation in the struggle, was discussed and pressed for. Women quickly responded and now the liberation of women, while integrated into the overall program of the Party, is seen as a struggle which must be

essentially waged by women themselves — and it is.

"In Guinea-Bissau" says Carmen Perreira, Vice-President of the National Assembly, "we say that women have to fight two colonialisms. One of the Portuguese, the other of men."

One of the first areas in which women took up positions of leadership on a large scale, was as members of the village councils. Two out of the five members, all elected by the population, had to be women. Though understandably a slow process, the number of women leaders at all levels has increased steadily.



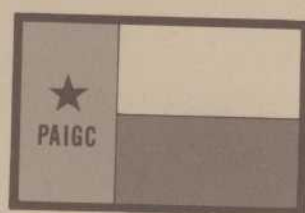
Education is seen as the ultimate equalizer. Through education many of the bad traditions which treat women as inferior can be eradicated. But with the establishment of schools, the Party found they had to fight hard against the attitudes of many fathers, who while willing to send their sons to school, were most unwilling to send their daughters because they felt daughters were to get married and had no need for education. The Party has consistently fought against such attitudes.

Evidence of their success is clear as more and more women take on leadership roles. Now in Guinea-Bissau one sees women actively involved in all facets of the Party and State work — in education, medical services, political education, etc. — working alongside men with ease and mutual respect.

the united states and the republic of guinea-bissau

This then is the new Republic of Guinea-Bissau. A state which had to overcome enormous odds in the process of its birth, a State with clearly defined goals and young institutions working to realize those goals. A State which educates its children, looks after its sick, and fights to preserve its integrity. It is this State which the Government of the United States refuses to recognize.

In 1972, speaking before the United Nations, shortly before he was assassinated, Amilcar Cabral condemned the aid given to Portugal in its fight against the people of Africa by the Governments of the United States and other Western powers. He questioned how nations that called themselves champions of liberty and defenders of the "free world" could continue to give assistance to the "most retrograde colonialist country on the planet." But, he said, no power on earth could prevent the people of Guinea-Bissau from attaining their complete liberation, from protecting the sovereignty of their people and from developing the "new life" they have begun to build in the liberated zones. In closing he said: "It is still a very difficult life indeed, but it is a life of beauty because the depth of work is being carried out in liberty, democracy and the happiness of our people."



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