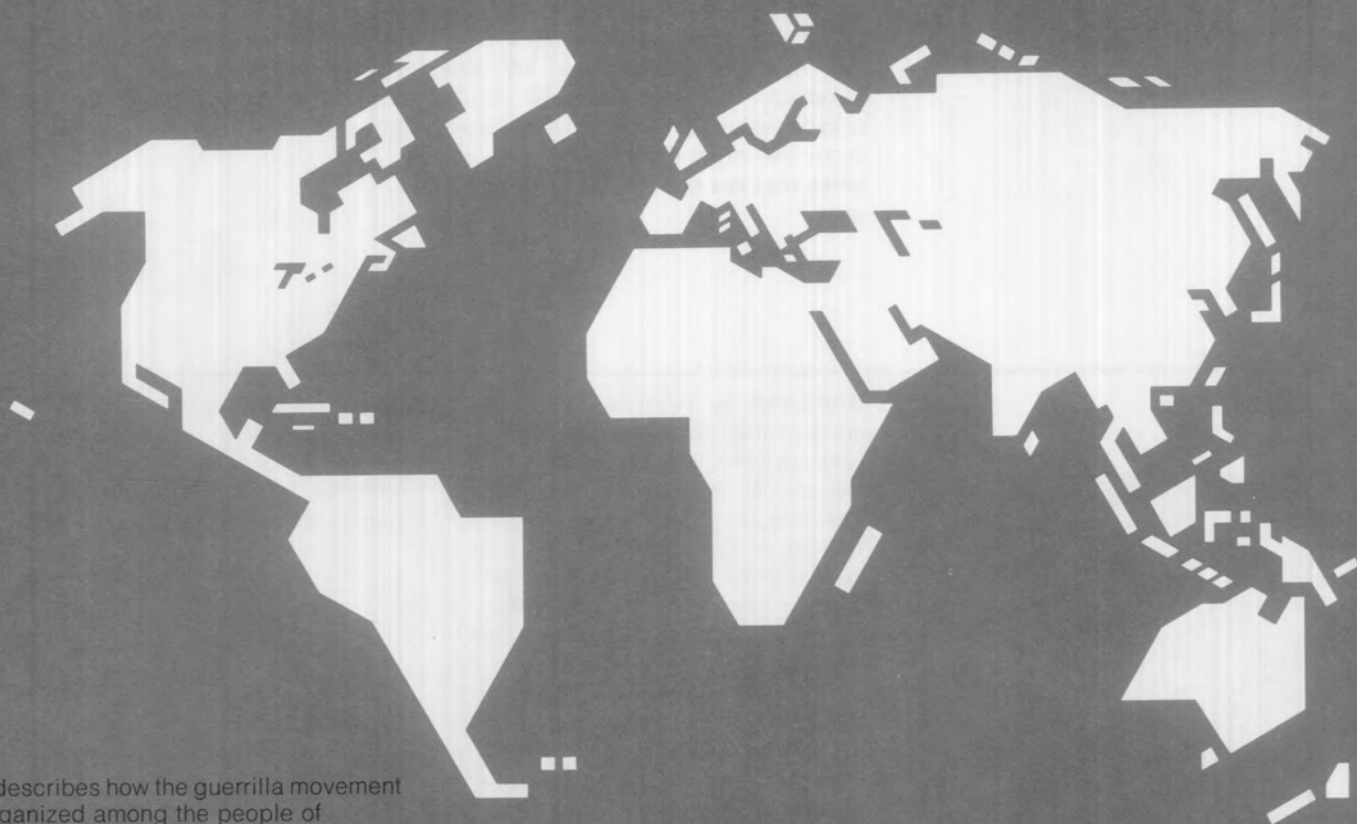


GUINEA-BISSAU
Part II: The Liberation Struggle

by Barbara Harrell-Bond and
Sarah Forer



Part II describes how the guerrilla movement was organized among the people of Guinea-Bissau and how the distinctive characteristics of the various social groups within the country affected the peoples' response to the idea of a revolution.

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In Part I of this series of three *Reports* on Guinea-Bissau, we discussed the rise of the Portuguese colonial empire in Africa and the consequent destruction of the indigenous economies and culture. We explained how Portugal's empire, unlike those of fellow colonial powers France, England, and the Netherlands, did not provide the basis for rapid industrial development within Portugal itself. At a time when other colonial powers were relenting to nationalist sentiments, Portugal hardened its position against decolonization. It was able to maintain this line because of the support it received from its NATO allies. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the people of the colonies saw revolution as the only answer.

Part II describes how the guerrilla movement was organized among the people of Guinea-Bissau and how the distinctive characteristics of the various social groups within the country affected the peoples' response to the idea of a revolution. After outlining the political ideology of the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC), and describing the armed struggle itself, the *Report* reviews Amílcar Cabral's and his

colleagues' early attempts to transform the peasant society of Guinea-Bissau.

The first stirrings of nationalist movements in the Portuguese colonies go back as far as 1920, to the creation of Liga Nacional Africana (LNA). Its membership encompassed African intellectuals from Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau. Representatives attended the Third Pan-African Congress which was led by W.E.B. Dubois, founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in the United States. The Pan-African Congress held its first meeting in 1900 in Manchester, England. Dubois—hoping to give a moral boost to African intellectuals residing in Lisbon—held one session of the Pan-African Congress there in 1923.

The LNA was essentially a reformist movement which aimed to improve conditions in the colonies through legal channels. After 20 years of frustration, the LNA was forced to conclude that without a mass movement it would be impossible to effect change: by that time the Portuguese government had already moved in and taken control of the organization, replacing elected officers with a committee of its own appointment.

During the early 1940s, a nationalist group was formed in Angola, *Associação Regional dos Naturais de Angola* (ANANGOLA), a group primarily concerned about the way the Portuguese colonial presence had destroyed their culture. "Re-Africanization" became the byword of these alienated intellectuals. In 1952 they published *A Mensagem*, a

journal which was banned after the second issue. Because of this and many other reprisals against dissidents made by the Portuguese government, the leadership of the group decided to go underground.

In 1956, an organization of railway workers was formed in Nova Lisboa, Angola, but like all other movements of this kind, the group was ruthlessly crushed. But from this there now developed a coalition of existing groups which grew into the *Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola* (MPLA). Augustino Neto, the leader of this organization (and the first president of independent Angola), was thrown into jail, confined at various times in Angola, Portugal, and Cape Verde. Other political organizations were formed, however, and these eventually became the *Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola* (FNLA). In Mozambique, too, a united front was organized out of several previous groups and was called *Frente de Libertação de Mozambique* (FRELIMO).

Part I described how the PAIGC was founded in Guinea-Bissau in 1956 and how the armed struggle began there in 1963. PAIGC leadership was drawn mainly from the mestizo population who had connections in Cape Verde. *Assimilado* status, as described in Part I was a requirement for educational advancement and remarkably few (*only 14*) people from Guinea-Bissau had received higher education in the 500 years of Portuguese presence.¹ Throughout the colonial period there was only one secondary school located in Bissau; it is, therefore, not surprising that the intellectuals of the movement were drawn largely from the

I spent time in Guinea-Bissau during July and August 1980. Sarah Forer, an American studying for her master's degree in economics at the University of Paris, assisted in the research and writing as an AUFS student intern. I am particularly grateful for her work translating French sources.

group related to Cape Verdeans, as it was relatively easier to obtain an education there. The vast majority of the population of Guinea-Bissau consisted of uneducated peasant farmers from a variety of social and ethnic backgrounds. The direction of the PAIGC movement was largely determined by the nature of these indigenous communities and the environment in which they lived.

The Geography and Climate

Guinea-Bissau, situated on the bulge of West Africa, with a land surface of 13,948 square miles, is small, roughly twice the size of the state of New Jersey. It is bordered on the west by the Atlantic Ocean and surrounded by Senegal to the north and Guinea to the south and east.

Guinea-Bissau is often confused with three other countries with similar names. One of these is its neighbor, Guinea, a former French colony. This area was also named by the Portuguese who in the fifteenth century were among the first Europeans to sail down the coast of West Africa and who referred to the entire region between the Gambia River and Cape Mount, located on the border between today's Liberia and Sierra Leone, as the upper Guinea coast. The Oxford English Dictionary provides no precise definition of the word "guinea" but it has been suggested that the word was a "rather vague term" used by the Portuguese at the time to refer to the "land of the blacks," and was perhaps of Moroccan origin.² This may explain why both Equatorial Guinea (also known as Spanish Guinea), located further south on the west coast of Africa, and Papua New Guinea, a Pacific island, were so named: the Portuguese trading domain spread to all continents.

Guinea-Bissau is generally flat, its highest point, located in the mountains that cross over into Guinea, being 950 feet above sea level. Its coastal plains are riddled with estuaries, surrounded by mangrove swamps which extend into rain forests. Small islands lie just offshore. The interior plateau, mostly a savannah region, is crisscrossed by rivers navigable for distances of up to 80 miles, flowing east and west. The climate is tropical, characterized by heavy rainfall and high humidity. The vegetation is of varying degrees of density. There are two yearly

seasons: the rains fall from June to October and the dry season extends from November to May. The average temperature is about 20° centigrade.

According to the 1979 census, the population of Guinea-Bissau numbers 770,214. Most of the literature describing this small country reports that its population density is 50 people per square mile, making it one of the most "densely populated" countries in Africa.³ These descriptions also point out that the problem of population density is aggravated by the fact that approximately 40 percent of the land surface is either water or virtually uninhabited. The majority of the population lives in rural villages along the rivers, and the main urban centers such as Bafata, Cacheu, Farim, and Bolama have grown up along rivers, because they were in the past—and indeed, still are—the main source of transportation. The port capital of Bissau has a reported population of 190,000, roughly 14 percent of the population.

The boundaries of the country were artificially designated in the nineteenth century by European powers who did not take into account existing territorial sovereignty of particular indigenous groups living along the upper Guinea coast. These concocted international boundaries destroyed the integrity of entire communities. Moreover, the 1886 agreement between Portugal and its neighboring colonial power in West Africa, France, neglected to define maritime boundaries. This has provoked recent disputes between Guinea-Bissau and its two neighbors, Guinea and Senegal. (The main reason for today's interstate conflict is that oil has been discovered off the shore of Guinea-Bissau and some of these oil deposits extend into the disputed territorial waters.⁴)

The Peoples of Guinea-Bissau

The population of Guinea-Bissau is made up of a large number of different ethnic groups, each speaking its own language (some estimate as many as 30). Approximately 90 percent of the population are agriculturalists and some also keep cattle. Certain communities are Islamized and a minute fraction of the population has converted to

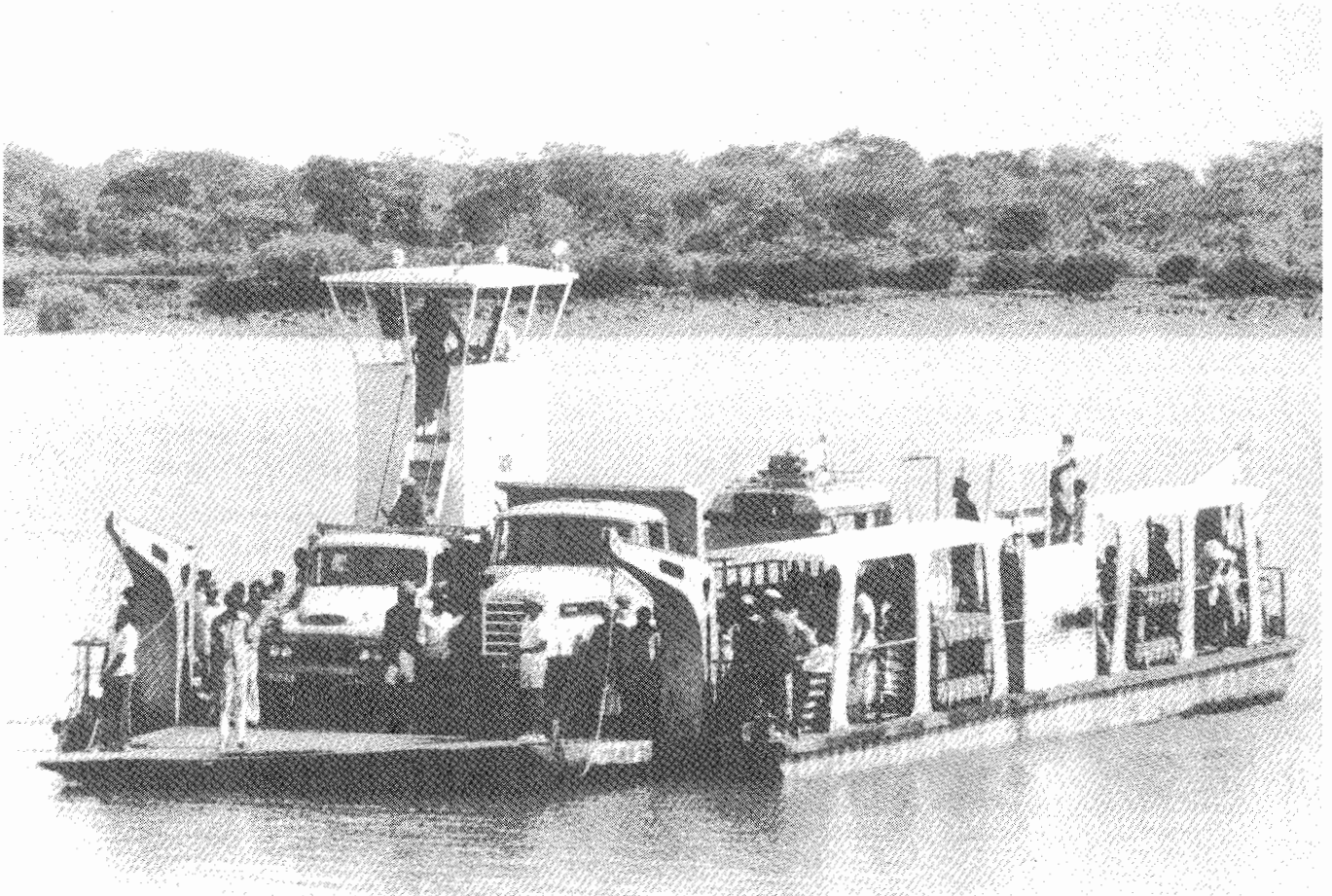
Christianity; others continue to follow African religious beliefs and have resisted both Islam and Christianity. Societies in Guinea-Bissau differ in terms of their social organization, some being more hierarchical than others. The main ethnic groups in order of their size are Balante, Fula, Mandjak, Mandinka, and Pepel.

It is possible only to make the very broadest generalizations about the social organization of these different communities in Guinea-Bissau. One reason is the paucity of non-Portuguese ethnographic sources. Moreover, anthropologists who study such societies tend to describe them as "traditional," as though they represented timeless and universal patterns of social, political and economic organization. In fact, the social, political, and economic life of this region of West Africa was radically reorganized in order to produce a steady flow of slaves and other commodities for trade with Europeans. Indigenous legal systems were disrupted to justify selling individuals (and even entire families) into slavery. Eye-witness accounts record the sophisticated agricultural methods, the patterns of social organization of these people, and the complicated and far-flung trading systems which linked the Africans of this vast region in the fifteenth century. Regular local markets or trading fairs (held every 7 or 8 days) attracted people from distances of up to 60 miles. At the end of the sixteenth century, one European wrote about observing a fair that was regularly attended by 12,000 people.⁵ These systems, and hence the culture and lives of the people, were transformed in abrupt and cruel ways beginning with the first European contact.

The early reactions to the intrusion of European slaving and other trading activities depended upon differences in political organization which existed in the fifteenth century and which, in some cases, have persisted long enough in Guinea-Bissau to provide a basis for the PAIGC nationalist movement. The people, called Djolas, who lived on the Bijagos Island and who were described by the Portuguese as a "wild and unsociable race," were fierce warriors who put themselves



Most people live along the rivers which are the main source of transportation.



at the service of the slavers by carrying out raids on the mainland. They were so ferocious that Europeans tended to stay away from them and they were rarely captured for slaves. Those few who were captured either caused rebellions on board ship or died. It was said they were able to commit suicide by an act of will.

The Balante were also more successful than most in keeping their society intact in the face of the devastating forces of the slave trade and colonialism. Early contacts with this group produced frightening rumors among the Portuguese that the Balante killed all the white men they caught. The Pepels of Bissau were also able to keep the Portuguese traders who settled there under *their* control for a fairly long period of time. In these early days, the reputation of the Balante and the Bijagos peoples was well-established, and, "When differences of opinion with the Portuguese traders arose in the seventeenth century, the Pepels of Bissau often had recourse to this sarcastic barb: 'If you do not like it here, then perhaps the Balantes or the Bijagos would be more to your taste.'"⁶

The social organization within all the other communities in the region of Guinea-Bissau was more hierarchical, with each locality having its chief, who paid allegiance to the king or one of the kings of the tribe. Europeans were accepted with varying degrees of consideration by these groups, the foreigners always dealing with the *régulos*—kings, chiefs, or nobles—for cooperation in trade and for protection. Such leaders were quite easily co-opted by the colonial power. In the early days, they were the ones who were willing to deliver slaves, and later to cooperate in the introduction of cash crops from which they benefited to some degree. Still later they provided the personnel for the so-called "indirect" rule imposed by the colonial government.

It was the fundamental differences in social and political organization which decided how quickly different groups were to forge relations with the Europeans. Those groups in Guinea-Bissau who resisted European involvement longest—the Balante, the Djolas, and the Pepel—all had relatively unarticulated state

structures. In the absence of chiefs, social control was maintained by councils of elders.

The *régulos* had authority over land, and through the support of the colonizers their rule gradually became more absolute. All existing checks on their power were largely eliminated. Certain religious rules concerning the distribution of land were manipulated by the *régulos* to force peasants to rent land from them. Their despotism, underpinned by the Portuguese, resulted in a series of revolts against their rule in various areas, forcing the Portuguese to recognize new leaders from among the dissidents. This did not end oppression, however, for the new leaders tended to follow the same authoritarian tradition backed by the Portuguese in whose service they worked.

The introduction of the cash economy had negative effects upon even the more egalitarian societies. In some communities—among the Mandjaks, for example—the gerontocracies were gradually transformed into chieftaincies. Ironically, the Mandjaks were described by the Europeans as one of the most "developed" ethnic groups. Their social organization included age-grades, a feature common to many African societies, and they practiced a certain amount of economic and political specialization, having, for example, a clergy with political powers and a merchant class.

Without regard to local differences, the Portuguese imposed their system of authoritarian rule on all these communities through the co-optation of *régulos*. If a community lacked a hierarchical system or if there was no suitable person to appoint to this position, *régulos* from another group were imposed. While this system was resisted by the Balantes and less successfully by some others, in general it served Portuguese interests well.

Before the revolution, the class structure of the rural population of Guinea-Bissau, as it had developed during the colonial period, included the following: chiefs (usually Fulah or Mandingo) who had been co-opted by the Portuguese; important noble families of Fulah, Mandingo, and Mandjak origin; a marginal category of small farmers, itin-

erant merchants, and rural artisans; and peasant farmers.⁷ There were also a few *assimilados*, mostly from Cape Verde, living in the country at the time. This class structure was of significance for the revolution.

The Balante, the group from which the PAIGC drew most of its early support, live mainly along the coast of Guinea-Bissau. They have been described as the group worst oppressed by colonial administration, always working on road gangs. As a PAIGC member put it, "They understood what we were talking about faster than any other tribes."⁸ The Balante grow rice by the wet-paddy method and use a sophisticated system of hand-dug canals for paddy irrigation. They also build saltwater barrages designed to prevent excess concentrations of salt in the soil from estuarial tides. This system of rice cultivation was observed in practice at the time of the first contacts with Europeans.

The family is the most important unit of Balante society—production tools are owned by its members although land is held communally by the village, with each family having enough for its needs. Prestige and authority are based upon age, not associated with wealth or the control of land. Social distinctions, as we think of them, are not present in Balante society. There are, however, age-grade divisions. Boys are circumcised, but the Balante do not practice female excision. Institutionalized relations between men and women are more egalitarian than generally is the case in West African societies. The Balante women farm and own the fruits of their labor. Although children belong with the father's lineage, such practices as "widow inheritance" (the levirate) do not exist, and widows are free to marry according to their choice. Some of these characteristics, as far as the institutionalized rights of women are concerned, are present in other groups in Guinea-Bissau, particularly among the Felupe and the Baoite groups in the north-west of the country.

Because the people of Guinea-Bissau are farmers, their exploitation by the Portuguese included both taxation and forced labor in producing cash crops. As one peasant explained to Chaliand, a journalist

visiting the country just after the armed struggle began:

A man couldn't have any self-respect under the Portuguese. Instead of working for themselves, men and women were subjected to forced labor. All we had under the Portuguese was forced labor, taxes, whippings, and canings.... Even with the hardships and the war, we're still better off than we were under the Portuguese. Besides the head tax, we used to have all kinds of taxes.... Sometimes the post commanders would come and show movies glorifying the Portuguese. Well you had to pay to see the movies, and even if you didn't go, they made you pay anyway. The situation was unbearable. We had some livestock—all the villagers want to have livestock—but you couldn't say that it was really ours. Every so often the Portuguese came, took what they wanted.... If you had seen us under the Portuguese, you would have known immediately that we weren't happy. We had no control over our goods or our work, and we had to cater to the whims of our administrators.... Living under colonialism is like being drunk: well, we're healthy now.⁹

Amilcar Cabral and the Foundations of the PAIGC

The story of the founding of the PAIGC is closely connected with the life and ideas of Amilcar Cabral. His early childhood experiences of the suffering in drought-plagued Cape Verde had a direct bearing on his decision to become an agronomist and his later assumption of political responsibility for leading the liberation war of the peoples of Guinea-Bissau.

Amilcar Cabral was born in 1924 in Bafata, Guinea-Bissau's second largest town. His father was an "obscure nongraduate schoolmaster" who came from a farming family in Cape Verde but who had taught in Guinea-Bissau since 1913.¹⁰ Amilcar Cabral was tutored by his parents until he was seven, at which time his family returned to Cape Verde where he continued his studies through secondary school. It was between 1941 and 1948 that one of Cape Verde's repeated droughts struck, claiming the lives of over 50,000 people. (Later, during his university career, Cabral visited

the islands and gave radio broadcasts in which he explained technical reforms that could mitigate some of the worst effects of these droughts. The broadcasts were quickly suppressed by the colonial government.)

During his secondary school years, Cabral had already begun to write stories and poetry. The themes of his writings revealed his early conviction that "men, despite and through their struggles and suffering, were moving towards a future of 'happiness and life'." In one essay he wrote: "On earth there is a single people to which all nations belong." He managed to obtain a university scholarship and went to Lisbon in 1945 to study agriculture. The political and intellectual climate he found was marked by contradictions and contrasts. The war with Germany was over, but Portugal was still bound by fascism. Political activities were severely repressed by the police, but had not dampened the anticolonial spirit which had been awakened around the world, and which dominated the lives of students, particularly African students, at the time. According to his biographer, de Andrade,

Amilcar, who took an enthusiastic part in debates and in organizing antifascist student groups, saw his adolescent beliefs confirmed. But if he was convinced that he must and would struggle for the achievement of the "world of his dreams," he felt the call of his land, Africa. He said this and wrote it. Within a year of being in Europe he felt an irresistible need to return.... It was the great era of the affirmation of differences, of cultural reclaim, of the defiance of those who, after admittance to the privileged enclosure of the alma mater of the dominant world, called it in question and thus opened the way to the challenge of that very world. Amilcar, with other African students in Lisbon, absorbed this message through reading poets and writers from the French colonies published in Paris where an informal movement brought European and African intellectuals more or less together in agreement to denounce that pestilence of history, shame of the twentieth century—colonialism.

Amilcar Cabral completed his course with honors, qualifying in 1950 as an

agronomy engineer, and he began to do research in Portugal. He returned to Guinea-Bissau on the occasion of his father's death, but his *political* decision to return had been made long before. Employed by the Provincial Department for Agriculture and Forestry Service of Portuguese Guinea, his work—to plan and execute the agricultural census—was ideally suited to provide him with both the experience and the contacts with the population that were required for his self-assigned revolutionary task. His professional excellence is demonstrated by the fact that even now his report is the primary source for information of Guinea agriculture. Beyond its technical value, however,

For him it was above all an opportunity to grasp at the roots and in scientific form the characteristics of economic exploitation, and through contacts with the growers to understand historical, racial and cultural data about ethnic groups [a factor of diversity and unity], and finally to identify the basic, essential motivations for the struggle against colonial domination.¹¹

In 1954 he attempted to organize a sports association which would be open to all Guineans without exception, but permission was steadfastly refused and the Governor arranged for his transfer to Angola, granting permission only for yearly visits to his family. His work (in agricultural research) allowed him to learn about the nationalist movement there, and he took an active part in creating the MPLA. He also visited São Tomé. All these experiences led to his consciousness of the need for drawing up an overall strategy for what he called a "unitary struggle against Portuguese colonialism."

On one of his authorized family visits, Cabral met colleagues who shared his aspirations and who had been attempting to take over positions in labor unions in Guinea-Bissau. The founding of the Partido Africano da Independência—União dos Povos de Guiné e Cabo Verde (PAI) took place on September 19, 1956, with six people attending the meeting. The PAI was necessarily a clandestine movement, yet Cabral's travels between Angola, Portugal, and Guinea-Bissau, and stops in Paris and Accra (where he put in an

appearance at the Pan-African session), allowed him to keep the international perspective which he believed was required and to serve as a link between the various movements committed to the liberation of the Portuguese colonies.

The PAI first devoted itself to organizing urban workers. This resulted, in 1969, in the first seamen's strikes in Bissau, Bolama, and Bafata. This strategy was quickly revised, however, after the massacre on August 3, 1959 of some 50 workers at the little quay at Pidiguiti. Cabral and his associates subsequently judged it necessary to mobilize and organize the peasants as the "principal physical force of the national liberation struggle." Thus the Partido Africano de Independência de Guiné e Cabo Verde (PAIGC) was founded in Conakry, the capital of Guinea, in 1960. On November 15 of that year the party sent a memorandum to the Portuguese government containing 12 proposals for the peaceful elimination of colonial domination. At the same time, PAIGC leaders had no illusions about the Portuguese response and began to request material support for the struggle they anticipated, mainly from socialist countries. Cabral visited China, which granted the first substantial practical aid to both the MPLA and the PAIGC.

Even before this, the active mobilization of the peasants of Guinea-Bissau to support the revolution had begun. Amílcar Cabral personally undertook the direction of the training of the first mobilizers who would carry the party's message to the villagers. This arduous preparatory work paid off in support for armed struggle when it began in 1961. The first ambushes occurred in October of that year and continued sporadically throughout the next two years as the PAIGC concentrated its attention on creating a solid base of peasant support. One member of the PAIGC explained the long process of establishing links within villages. After winning over the chief and a few individuals, which could be a very lengthy process, he would explain how mobilization is a much, much harder thing than armed struggle itself:

Our procedure was to speak in a village and then go out into the bush to spend the night. It was the only

way we had of making ourselves and the Party known. Little by little, Party sympathizers among the village people would come out into the bush bringing us meals. Later on we were able to call out the villagers—or at least some of them—and talk with them, explain the meaning of our struggle and ask their help. As time went on, there were some in every village who were with the Party, and others who were not actually with it but still sympathized. Then there were those who were neutral if not downright suspicious. So as to prevent this kind from doing any harm, we had to manage to isolate them bit by bit, which we did—thanks to the more determined people in each village.¹²

The Armed Struggle

The long armed struggle against the colonial regime was punctuated by repeated initiatives from the PAIGC to negotiate with the Portuguese and to bring their rightful aims of self-determination to the attention of the world community through the United Nations and other interested organizations. On August 3, 1960, the PAIGC published a proclamation announcing the end of their "political" struggle and the beginning of national insurrection. On August 13, in an open letter to the Portuguese government, the PAIGC asked it to reconsider its position and agree to the application of the principle of self-determination and independence. When these appeals failed, the party proceeded with the mobilization of the people and the introduction of weapons into the rural villages. A commando unit attack on the barracks at Tite on January 23, 1963, marked the real beginning of open war against the Portuguese in Guinea-Bissau.

Military successes during the first six months of the war brought 15 percent of the national territory under PAIGC control; even the Portuguese Defense Minister was forced to confirm publicly the extent of guerrilla action. Land communications were sabotaged and the colonial economy, which was based on the export of groundnuts (peanuts) and palmnuts under the monopoly of Companhia União Fabril, was paralyzed. The Portuguese were forced to fight on the run and to barricade themselves in town centers in the south and the

center-south of the country. Portuguese Guinea had become, as one journalist put it, the "Achilles heel" of Portugal.

Throughout the war Cabral maintained and enlarged his international links, speaking in Milan at the Frantz Fanon Center in May 1964, and during the next few years in many cities of the world, including Moscow, Stockholm, Helsinki, Dublin, and London. In February 1970 he delivered a lecture at Syracuse University in New York, and during this trip to the United States he engaged in a tough debate with the House Subcommittee on African Affairs on the aims of the PAIGC's struggle. In short, there was ample opportunity for the international community to become fully aware of the struggle being waged in Guinea-Bissau (as well as in Angola and Mozambique) and to learn about the aspirations of the leaders of these movements and to understand the nature of the system which they opposed. Nevertheless, support for Portugal's wars against its colonies continued—notably from NATO.

Only four months after the beginning of the armed struggle, Portugal began heavy bombing raids, using fragmentation bombs and napalm. Many villagers were forced to flee, either to the liberated zones or out of the country into Guinea and Senegal. The pressure of guerrilla warfare was so intense that in a short time the air force became Portugal's main weapon. The numerical disadvantage of the PAIGC (it is estimated that at the height of the war there were about 5,000 PAIGC regular army soldiers to 40,000 Portuguese troops) was made up for "by the massive differences in political strength."¹³

By 1964, so much of the country was already under the control of the PAIGC that it was necessary at the first full party congress in February of that year to consider the political and economic administration of the liberated territory. By 1970 the PAIGC had succeeded in gaining control of more than three-fifths of Guinea-Bissau. In 1971, all the military garrisons in the remaining Portuguese-occupied urban centers, including Bissau, suffered attacks.

The first People's National Assembly of Guinea was created in August

1971, and in the following year a UN Special Mission visited the PAIGC headquarters in Conakry and the liberated zones in the south of Guinea-Bissau. Their observations convinced the committee that PAIGC was the sole and legitimate representative of the people of Portuguese Guinea and Cape Verde, observing that the Portuguese no longer exercised any effective administration over vast areas of the country. In November of that year the UN General Assembly recognized the PAIGC. In the meantime, elections had been held for the members of regional councils to send representatives to the National Assembly. But before the proclamation of Guinea-Bissau as a state, the Portuguese, endowed with their own "political" strategies in this long and cruel war, had succeeded in infiltrating and dividing the highest ranks of the PAIGC. On January 20, 1973, Amílcar Cabral was murdered outside his residence in Conakry.

Portugal and the War

In an effort to rationalize its industrial development, Portugal, beginning in 1953, had drawn up a series of six-year plans. These foresaw a growing increase in foreign investment in the country. The year 1965 marked a major turning point in Portugal's relations with foreign investors. For the first time, legislation allowed foreign companies to set up business in the colonies and in Portugal without the participation of Portuguese capital. The third six-year plan, promulgated in 1968, allowed for 36 percent of the investment in the colonies to come from outside Portugal, and over the next 2 years, this percentage was increased to 40. This was very important for the colonies and for the West's support for the war. Despite the guerrilla wars in Portuguese Africa, there was enormous response from companies based in countries belonging to NATO—most notably from Britain, the United States, and Germany—and from France and South Africa as well. The foreign companies invested in extraction of minerals and other natural resources, as well as in agriculture. Portugal's economy became increasingly reliant on revenue from these companies paid in the form of taxes, leases, and customs charges.

By 1964 Portugal was waging war in all three of its major African colonies. Five years later, 150,000 of its 180,000 troops, in addition to an unknown number of mercenaries—both African and European—had been deployed to these fronts. The costs of the war by the mid-1960s amounted to 40 percent of Portugal's annual budget and every year the military expenditure was increased by 5 billion *escudos*. There were serious shortages of skilled manpower in Portugal; the number of citizens leaving the country had increased; and military service was extended from 18 months to 4 years. Furthermore, Portugal's foreign trade deficit was increasing; and Portugal could no longer rely on surpluses from its colonies to provide the funds for its international payments since, due to the war, the colonies' imports greatly exceeded their exports. The confidence of foreign business within Portugal began to fall, and the economy suffered a large-scale capital drainage which could not be checked even with the newly introduced terms for foreign capital investment.

These pressures on its economy forced Portugal into closer entanglement with its NATO allies. Although by the end of the 1960s the Azores Islands were no longer of great strategic importance to NATO, Portugal resisted the removal of bases or any reduction in NATO military presence there because it could not afford to lose the income it received from that source. The country became more and more dependent upon loans and aid from the West. There was a stepping-up of military training and exchange of military consultants—especially with the United States. A general belief shared by those countries which prided themselves on being members in good standing of the "Free World" was that not only the Vietnam War, but also the wars in Portugal's colonies, could be won. South Africa's interests in supporting Portugal against independence movements, given its own racist apartheid system, were obvious, and clearly expressed in the words of its Foreign Minister speaking in April 1969:

We are two very friendly countries and we are perfectly identified with each other as defenders of civiliza-

tion in Africa. We have a common mission to fulfill and we are fulfilling it. We South Africans, government and people, respect and admire Portugal, and we are fully aware that, in confronting and defeating terrorism, the Portuguese are rendering a noteworthy service to the West and to humanity itself. ¹⁴

Brazil, after the 1964 coup that installed a military regime, reversed its independent foreign policy which had previously aligned its interests with those of the Third World, and declared its support for South Africa and for Portugal's war against its colonies. Yet, despite all the economic and direct military assistance Portugal's allies provided throughout the 1960s, it was clear in Guinea-Bissau—even before 1970—that Portugal had lost the war.

With some exceptions, such as the Christmas attack on Mores in December 1971, which was a complete failure from the Portuguese point of view, and a reported attempt by "thousands of Portuguese soldiers and marines" in December 1972 to "dig themselves into new positions in rebel-infested strongholds in southern Portuguese Guinea" the Portuguese limited themselves to terrorizing the population with bomb attacks. Now and then they landed helicopter-borne troops to burn a school, a hospital, a field, or a village. But this appears to have been done more to maintain a constant feeling of insecurity in the liberated areas than in order to reconquer. ¹⁵

In 1973 even the Portuguese control of the air began to falter—two planes were shot down on March 23. A year later it was reported that 36 Portuguese planes had been destroyed. The guerrillas had also managed to capture a strong Portuguese military base in southern Guinea-Bissau in 1973.

Morale within the military at the battlefield could not be maintained. Throughout the war there were defections, and Cabral's insistence that prisoners be given humanitarian treatment—they were sometimes released immediately—increased the average Portuguese's soldier respect for the discipline of the PAIGC military and the cause for which they were fighting. (The Portuguese tortured the Africans they

captured.) Cabral and his colleagues also reminded PAIGC supporters that in Portugal itself the peasants were still suffering under an oppressive government just as Guineans had suffered under colonial rule. Many Portuguese soldiers were taught to read and write, and were given political education during their imprisonment under the PAIGC.

The reality that the war could not be won was gradually filtering up to the members of the military hierarchy in Portugal, but it was the last governor of Guinea-Bissau who was to popularize this grim truth back in Lisbon. His name was António Sebastião Ribeiro de Spínola.

Winning Hearts and Minds

The Portuguese political police (PIDE) were first brought to Guinea-Bissau in 1957 and used thereafter to identify opposition to Portuguese rule. The PIDE were able to capitalize on the social and class divisions which had been created throughout the colonial period. The régulos, chiefs and others whom the colonial government had co-opted from indigenous groups, remained loyal and placed themselves under Portuguese protection when the war began. Itinerant merchants often played it both ways, working for the Portuguese as well as for the PAIGC. The population of the urban centers represented a complicated mixture of economic groups, many owing their positions to the colonial government. The difficulties of relying on the loyalty of the townspeople in the struggle for independence made it necessary for the PAIGC to delay its concentrated attack upon urban centers.

In 1960 the indigenous populations of the five major urban centers were: Bissau, the capital, 25,000; Bafata, 10,000; Bissora, 5,000; Mansoa, 5,000; and Bolama, 5,000. There were among them some 3,000 Portuguese civilians, none of whom were "poor."¹⁶ Perhaps a dozen Africans—high officials, mostly from Cape Verde, belonged to the assimilado class. Beneath them were about 10,000 lower middle-class indigenous people who worked as government employees, in banks and business, and as clerks and small merchants. The next largest group consisted of wage earners. The population of the

towns was increased, once the armed struggle began, by rural people, "there [being] a tendency here as elsewhere in tropical Africa to swarm around a member of the family who is making a regular salary. The experience of the PAIGC struggle has shown that this category is often reactionary."¹⁷ The PIDE was especially successful in recruiting informers and agents from among them.

Some members of the lower middle-class group were able to enrich themselves during the war as a result of their services to the PIDE. The majority of this group, according to Chaliand, "timidly engaged in the struggle while preparing to be the major beneficiaries of independence because they...[thought] of themselves as irreplaceable experts and organizers." Another group within the towns, the "city youth," were partly educated, spoke Portuguese, and were usually unemployed. Many of these young people joined the liberation struggle under the PAIGC. It was mainly among this mixed urban population and the surrounding villages that Spínola attempted to put into practice his program for "winning hearts and minds."

Spínola was a Portuguese Army officer who had experience in the guerrilla war in Angola. As Brigadier he was appointed governor of the Portuguese colony of Guinea in 1968, the same year Marcello Caetano assumed effective power in Portugal after Salazar was debilitated by a stroke. Caetano was one of those members of Portugal's ruling elite who was determined, whatever the odds, to maintain his country's control over its colonies. Even in 1972, with the "empire" falling around his ears, he said, "The territories today that make up the Portuguese overseas provinces will never cease to be Portuguese."¹⁸ When Salazar died in 1970, Caetano was confirmed as Head of State in Portugal. He inaugurated a program of "reform" in the colonies through constitutional changes. The rhetoric was altered, but nothing changed substantially, and the "reforms" had little if any effect upon the loyalty of the African population in the colonies. In 1972 yet another "organic law" was promulgated which promised statehood "to

Angola and Mozambique at such times as 'the progress of their... social environment and the sufficiency of their administration' has so justified." Guinea-Bissau was not slated for state status but was allowed an increase of elected and appointed representatives to the Lisbon Assembly—from 11 to 17. Formerly, three of these were to be elected (the franchise by this time included all those who could read and write Portuguese); under the new legislation, five were to be elected—the others were still to be appointed by the colonial government.

The Caetano government was adamant, never changing its position or the sentiments Caetano himself expressed in 1969 on an official visit to Bissau:

To protect the admirable fidelity of the people of this land thousands of soldiers, sailors, and airmen, from Portugal and the other provinces, have come to strengthen the security forces of Guinea.... The soldiers of Guinea and of other Portuguese lands have fallen side by side, their generous blood mingling to defend the common cause.

The sorrows, the privations, the suffering, the wounds and deaths of Portuguese soldiers cannot be in vain. This land, thus fructified by their blood, must blossom forth. This miracle will take place, for it... depends on nothing else; by it we shall cause a land where our enemies would have sown mourning and ruin to flower with goodness, where wealth shall be multiplied and well-being shall spread, bathed in the joy of understanding among men, in the light of justice and according to God's law.¹⁹

The rhetoric was underpinned by anticommunist sentiment juxtaposed with Christian values. Earlier Caetano had claimed that the movement in Guinea-Bissau was not nationalist but was blatant evidence of foreign (that is, communist) subversion. This argument was generally used to mask the economic and strategic interests of the NATO allies and South Africa and France. After the shift in U.S. policy and following the publicity given to CIA and mercenary involvement in Angola, Caetano's megalomania pushed him to suggest that through

the wars in Africa, Portugal was almost single-handedly defending the West.

In contrast to Caetano, Spínola was mindful of his experiences in Guinea-Bissau where he had been sent as governor to finish off the PAIGC and end the war, and (eventually) he assumed a more realistic stance. His arrival there in 1968 found more Portuguese soldiers per capita than the Americans ever had in Vietnam. What he also found was a demoralized army, confined to a few urban centers and military bases, unable to move out except by air strikes against the liberation army. At this point, 20 percent of Portugal's gross national product was being used just to fight the war in Guinea-Bissau.

Spínola's program was devoted to two major tasks. The first was to raise the morale of the Portuguese army stationed there, though these men had already realized that they were defeated. The second was to "win the hearts and minds" of the peasants. The PAIGC referred to his program of reform as one of "smiles and blood," for while he was actively engaged in bringing improvements to the areas under his control, he was regularly ordering the napalm bombings of the liberated zones. In 1970 he organized the first People's Congress. He divided those who attended by ethnic group, thus continuing the colonial tradition of playing upon the divisions which already existed within the society. Ostensibly, this and a second such meeting were to provide channels for the government to be informed of the aspirations of the people so as to enlist their participation in building the future. Borrowing ideas from the PAIGC's own approach, and aiming thus to disarm it with its own methods, he addressed the first plenary meeting, exclaiming: "Now we are about to carry out in Portuguese Guinea a real social revolution, above all to enhance the worth and dignity of the people of this land. A revolution has to be conducted in a climate of peace and harmony, without which the fruitful and lasting changes will not be possible."²⁰

To give Spínola his due, it must be acknowledged that he did introduce reforms in the limited areas the

Portuguese still controlled. The military was set to work building houses and schools, and those soldiers with secondary education began to teach. Health programs were introduced and agricultural experts were brought into the country. Mosques were built for the Muslims. The benefits promoted by Spínola were aimed at increasing the loyalty of the people to the colonial regime and some villages were even armed to "protect" them from the liberation struggle. The reforms, however, came too late to reverse 500 years of neglect and they could not compare with what the people knew was happening in the liberated zones; they ultimately had little effect upon the loyalty of the PAIGC's following.

Spínola's term of office was to have been four years, but he was reappointed to give him additional time to try to win over the people of Guinea-Bissau. In fact, Governor Spínola had begun to despair of success in upholding the colonial system in Africa. Then, on August 31, 1973, he was suddenly removed from his post for reasons of "bad health" and replaced by General José Bettencourt Rodrigues, a former army minister under Salazar who had also served as commander in eastern Angola.

When Spínola returned to Lisbon in September 1973, he was appointed Deputy Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces. Received as a national hero, a few months later he published a book entitled *Portugal and the Future* in which he made public the growing realization within Portugal that an exclusively military victory was impossible. He pointed to the catastrophic effects the war was having on Portugal itself—socially, politically, economically, and morally. Arguing for the principle of self-determination and favoring the already established policy of neo-colonialism, he boldly wrote:

*We must continue in Africa. Yes! But not by force of arms, not by suppressing the Africans, not by sustaining myths that enrage the world. We must continue in Africa. Yes! But with a clear vision of the problems within the framework of a Portuguese solution.*²¹

Portugal and the Future was a best-seller in Portugal, but it was also the cause of Spínola's almost immediate dismissal from his post. He was

not alone, however, in his attitude toward the wars in Africa, and in spring 1974, after Portugal itself was "liberated" by a coup, Spínola became the president of Portugal, in part on the strength of what he had learned from the people of Guinea-Bissau and from the PAIGC. On July 27, 1974, Spínola announced that Portugal was prepared to grant independence to the people of Guinea-Bissau, Angola, and Mozambique. The question of Cape Verde's relationship with Portugal was yet to be settled. By 1975, all Portugal's African colonies had been declared independent.

Legacy of Underdevelopment

From the outset of the revolution the PAIGC was acutely aware of the necessity to translate their theory into reality, overcoming the legacy of underdevelopment. This was, in fact, the essence of their ideology, but more importantly, of their strategy in the liberated zones.

*People do not fight for ideas or for notions inside men's heads. The people fight and accept the sacrifices demanded by the struggle to obtain material advantages so as to be able to live in peace and in better conditions, in order to see their lives progress and to guarantee their children's future. National liberation, the struggle against colonialism, the construction of peace and progress—all these are empty things which have no meaning for the people if they are not translated into real improvement in living conditions. It does no good to liberate a region if the people of that region continue to lack the essential goods they need to live their lives.*²²

With considerable justification, Guinea-Bissau has been described as one of the least developed states in Africa. The economic exploitation of the country under Portuguese colonialism was limited to the production of such cash crops as groundnuts and palmdnuts (composing 95 percent of the value of its exports), and to the limited market potential of the population. All of these were under the monopoly control of the Companhia União Fabril (CUF), an international financial trust in which Portugal had the controlling interest. Guinea-Bissau had bauxite and offshore oil, no extraction took place under Portugal's rule, although Esso was



Few children had an opportunity for education under the Portuguese.

small size of the urban centers in Guinea-Bissau in comparison with those in other African countries. No new agricultural technology was introduced, although Spínola attempted vaguely to improve production by bringing in agronomists during his campaign for "winning hearts and minds."

The scarcity even today of bridges and roads in Guinea-Bissau reflects the overall neglect of the country during the colonial period. Those which were built were constructed with forced manual labor. As one peasant reported:

I myself worked to construct the highway you have seen nearby.... Both I and my wife had to work there, when it was under construction. We had to leave our homes. I worked on the road itself and my wife carried sand and stone.

At six o'clock in the evening we were forced to take off all our clothes, so that we would not be able to go home and stay away from work the following day.²³

Ninety-nine percent of the population were illiterate. In 1962 there were eleven primary schools, one secondary school, and one trade school financed by the Portuguese administration. Catholic missionaries ran 43 primary schools, and there was one school for nurses. All these schools followed a syllabus originating in Portugal, and the children were taught in Portuguese. As was common throughout colonial Africa, the indigenous culture was denied; students were required to learn Portuguese history, geography, and literature, and to assimilate the "dominant" culture as if it were their own.

Health was similarly neglected. Medical facilities which had been provided were concentrated in the urban centers mainly for the benefit of the Portuguese civilian and military population. In 1963 there were only 34 doctors for a population of over half a million. During the last years of the occupation, this number was increased to 54 doctors working in hospitals, but all except 5 were military physicians. There was one central hospital in Bissau, plus

granted a franchise in the 1950s. The Portuguese limited social and industrial development to those towns with European populations. Their system of administration did not require local functionaries to be trained, since they relied mainly on personnel recruited from Cape Verde. Thus, in contrast to the situation in the majority of colonies, there was no significant westernized elite at independence. Moreover, it was the explicit policy of the Portuguese to limit educational opportunities, because they were aware that an educated elite could provide the cadre for a revolution. All the above practices, as has been noted, led to an economy almost exclusively controlled by foreigners. The number of merchants and traders of

indigenous origin was minuscule, as even this part of the economy was largely the domain of either Portuguese or Lebanese traders.

The limited potential of Guinea-Bissau also meant that little attention was given to the provision of health, education, and other social services to the indigenous population. In this situation, where the primary objective was to acquire raw agricultural products, it was not necessary to invest in either the training or the maintenance of the workers. Their participation in the economy was insured by coercion—either through taxes or forced labor. A strict policy of keeping the peasants at work on the farms was maintained, which accounts for the

three regional and six rural hospitals, and only one treatment center for leprosy, run by Catholic missionaries, though leprosy is one of the most common illnesses in this tropical climate. Even if indigenous people could get to a doctor and were able to pay for his services, the medicines he might prescribe were even more scarce and expensive. Most childhood illnesses in Guinea-Bissau were related to nutritional deficiencies; doctors could be of little help in their treatment.

Opportunities for wage labor were very few and Europeans were invariably favored. When an indigenous person did the same work as a European, his salary was generally four to ten times less than that of his counterpart. There were no work codes, no contracts, and thus no protection for indigenous labor. The official minimum wage was five escudos per day which, in 1970, was less than seventeen U.S. cents.

The CUF's monopoly, mentioned above, had further implications for the lives of the peasant farmers. Seeds and other agricultural inputs were sold by the company stores and paid for by the crops which the peasants produced. The company speculated on the world market and the prices which farmers received varied greatly. Nutrition was greatly affected by the meager and dependable income peasants earned from selling their crops. Production of rice, for example, was discouraged by this system, since farmers could sell only the specified export products to the company stores.

Farmers in Guinea-Bissau had managed throughout the colonial period to produce their staple food, rice, for home consumption. During the war, the liberated zones were eventually able to feed themselves, with even a surplus production in the south, but it became necessary for the Portuguese to import approximately 30,000 tons each year to feed the population in the nonliberated urban centers. This rice deficit was exacerbated by the drought in the early 1970s, but the real cause was the conditions of the war.

One of the most innovative aspects of PAIGC strategy called for the

destruction of the "economy of the enemy," that is to say, the sabotage of the groundnut crops. This policy of sabotage, together with the spreading competition of the People's Stores, set up by the PAIGC to compete in purchasing agricultural products from the peasants, culminated in a serious fall in exports for the CUF. As a result, even greater pressure was placed on peasants in the nonliberated zones to grow more cash crops and further to neglect growing food for the community. This shortage was yet another drain on the Portuguese economy, as Portugal was forced to pay for the imported rice from its own coffers in order to maintain the fragile loyalty of the townspeople. Portugal paid 15 escudos per kilogram of rice and had to resell it to the local town dwellers for 7 escudos per kilo.

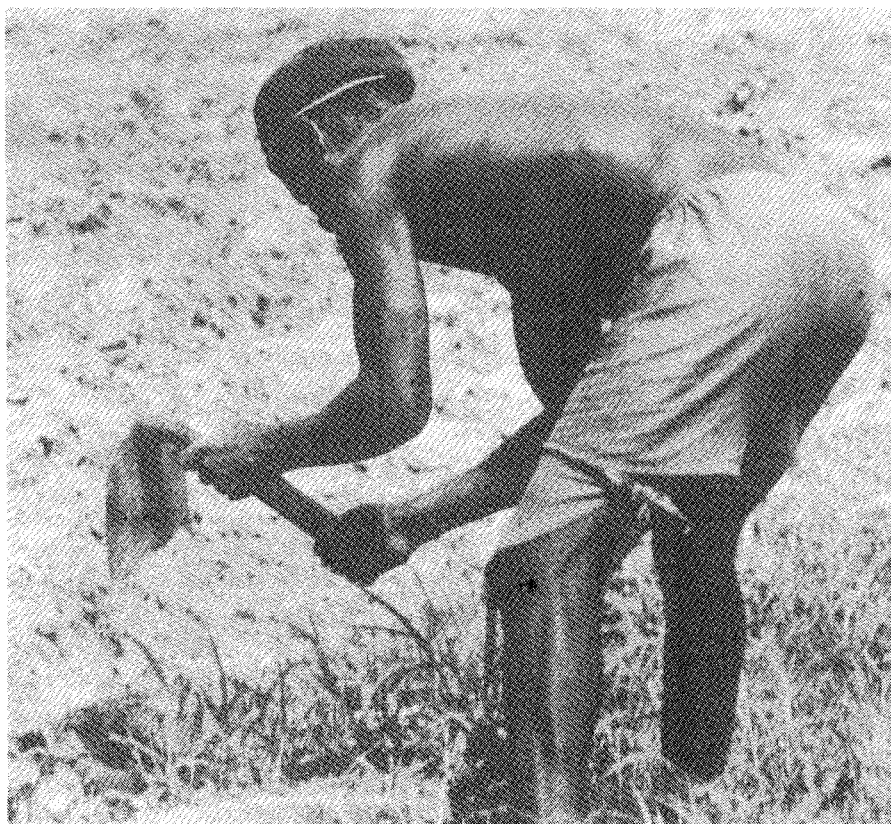
This population, in colonized Guinea, comprised peasants humiliated and exploited by the owners of commercial firms both in the pricing and weighing of their monoculture produce [groundnuts]. It was not an easy thing to convince the peasants that they had an objective interest in committing themselves to the

*struggle for national liberation, since the horizon of their lives was limited to the simple grasp of the difference between the price paid for their products and their true worth.*²⁴

The PAIGC Administrative and Judicial System

The people of Guinea-Bissau began to practice self-government soon after the armed struggle began. As areas were liberated, the PAIGC immediately undertook to create within them administrative structures that were grassroots, decentralized, and democratic.

The liberated zone was divided into 2 areas, north and south, with a National Committee of 12 members for each. North and south were divided into four regions and these regions were subdivided into sectors or zones. The smallest administrative unit was the *tabanca*, or the village organization. The *tabanca* elected a five-member committee. Villages were grouped into sections under the sector or zone administration. The PAIGC placed a great emphasis on the participation of women and made it a policy that every *tabanca* committee include at least two.



Crops are grown on ridges and cultivated by hand.

The PAIGC was also confronted with a lack of judicial services. At first, the local militia took responsibility for hearing disputes at the village level, but in 1964 a peoples' political minister was created to work with the leaders of the tabanca committee to organize the settling of disputes. Two years later a Military Justice Law was enacted to regulate relationships between the military and civilians. The year 1969 marked the beginnings of a more formal judicial system which was gradually implemented throughout the liberated zones. It was based on a system of peoples' tribunals at the tabanca level. These tribunals were competent to try civil cases, the law administered being based on the indigenous laws of the majority of the inhabitants of a given village. An appellate system was also included. Regional-level courts judged the more serious cases and could mete out sentences of up to four years' confinement. These courts administered law based on a mixture of indigenous rules and the Military Justice Law. The highest court at the national level was the War Tribunal, which judged soldiers and members of the PAIGC who were accused of crimes. Capital punishment was limited to conviction for treason, espionage, and sabotage.

Although three of the first six laws passed by the National Assembly pertained to women and children (they eliminated the concept of illegitimacy, changed provisions for divorce, and recognized common-law marriages), the PAIGC did not attempt a wholesale overhaul of the indigenous legal system. In this they differed dramatically in philosophy from FRELIMO in Mozambique, where the party set out to improve, for example, the status of women, by trying to enforce laws against such practices as bridewealth and to impose a minimum age for marriage.²⁵

The PAIGC took a gradualist approach, believing that fundamental change would come about only as people came to understand why it was needed—whether the changes were taking up arms, relinquishing polygamy, or working collectively.²⁶ The PAIGC also believed that any attempt to impose rapid change would only jeopardize their support among the peasants.

The emphasis of "political education" was on achieving consensus within local communities. As one woman expressed it, "If two people have a disagreement, then the committee has to settle their problem. The men and women here think and act as one person, and their opinions are respected by all the committee members."²⁷ The PAIGC went so far as to manifest its respect for the indigenous system (which had no prisons) by doing away with prisons per se. When it was necessary to confine someone, they were sent to retraining centers which aimed at rehabilitation and reintegration back into society. The overall emphasis of the party's program was on instituting both legal and administrative structures to be controlled by people at the grass-roots level.

People's Stores

The company stores, controlled by the CUF and the Banco Ultramarina, were the institutions through which the colonial presence was most immediately felt by the peasants. One of the first acts of the PAIGC was the creation in 1964 of six People's Stores, which were later extended throughout the liberated zones. These stores were also part of a strategy, which proved effective, to make further inroads on the colonial economy. Peasants who sold to these People's Stores received higher prices for their crops and could buy provisions at lower costs. The PAIGC was able to export the surpluses to assist in the financing of the war. This, together with their policy of sabotaging fields of cash crops and encouraging the peasants to concentrate their efforts on growing food, which the PAIGC also bought to feed the military, severely curtailed the earnings of the CUF and lowered the overall level of exports from Guinea-Bissau to Portugal. At first, the exchange system at the People's Stores was based on barter and a system of coupons which could be used at any of the stores. In 1973 the peso was introduced by the PAIGC as the unit of monetary exchange, although barter continued as well. After independence, all CUF and Ultramarina stores throughout the country became People's Stores.

Production in the liberated zones increased during the war. The

military also participated in farming, but all agricultural work was done under extremely adverse conditions. The bombing attacks meant that the farmers frequently had to do the required hard manual labor by night. The amount of land under cultivation in the country was drastically reduced throughout Guinea-Bissau as a result of the war.

Education and Health in the Liberated Zones

Cabral was fond of saying "If we had money we would have fought the war with schools, not with arms."²⁸ He recognized that education was the most effective way of raising the consciousness of an oppressed people. It was important not only to help people analyze the mechanisms of the oppression from which they suffered, but also to bolster their confidence in their own ability to restructure their society. Fundamental to Cabral's ideology was the belief that change could not result from the implantation of imported ideas and theories. He consistently emphasized that social transformations must be based on the particular history, customs, and peculiarities of a people. In fact, adherence to this philosophy drew him into ideological conflict with the Soviets and the Chinese. The virtual absence of a trained cadre of people who could take on leadership tasks within the new administration meant that the PAIGC had to place a high priority on education. But first the peasants had to be persuaded of the benefit of sending their children to schools.

*To get back to the problem of education, it must also be said that some villages have no great comprehension of the meaning or the practical use of education. The Party has to explain it again and again. We try to explain in simple terms, with pictures and concrete examples, that we are going to need a great many educated people after we expel the Portuguese. The example of those villages that have schools breaks down the reluctance of hitherto unwilling villages. And when they see results, the parents themselves push the children and make them attend school regularly. Our schools are set up for children of both sexes.*²⁹

Classes first met in the forests in order to protect children from the

Portuguese bomb attacks. School buildings were very temporary structures made of bamboo and thatch. Often whole schools—buildings, teachers, and students—had to be evacuated and re-established still further into the bush. The necessity for pupils to walk long distances to get to these schools limited the age of children who could be educated to ten years of age and above. The nonmechanized agricultural system which required as many hands as possible complicated the problem of overcoming peasant resistance to education. The loss of children's labor, added to that of the many young men and women who were away from the farms fighting the war, seriously depleted the number of farm workers. Yet another stumbling block was the Muslims' denial of the importance of educating young women. As one Party member explained:

...Islamized tribes such as the Fulahs and the Mandingos are hard to persuade. And with the girls, the custom of involuntary marriage creates a special problem we have to handle with particular care. As a result of our political lectures, the girls are no longer willing to be married off to somebody they were promised to at birth. In this very camp, for example, we have several little nurses who are no longer willing to return to their native villages but insist on staying here at the base and working for the Party. This is especially true among those coming from an Islamized background. They are considered nubile at twelve or thirteen.... The Party upholds the principle of freedom of choice. And so the parents are obliged to return the gifts they had received in advance.... You might call it a cultural revolution—it really is.³⁰

Language diversity was another problem for which the PAIGC had to decide policy. Orthographies had not been developed for the indigenous languages nor for the Creole language which had evolved over the 500 years of contact with Europeans. The enormity of the language problem and the manner in which it was tackled is described by a PAIGC member:

Creole is the language used in first-year classes. Later on, since there is no system of spelling for Creole—it

is only a spoken language—the transition is made to Portuguese. But not all of our pupils can even speak Creole when they come to us. Some have to learn it first, which comes pretty quick at their age. So it is not only a question of teaching them but of dealing with a language problem, trying to help the child make a successful transition from Creole to Portuguese—which is not so hard—or from a local language to Creole and then to Portuguese—which is not so simple. Would it have been better to create spelling systems for the local languages and then teach the people to read and write in them? We mulled this question over and then decided that it would be preferable to make Creole the spoken lingua franca, as it were, and Portuguese the written administrative language. Since Creole is actually an Africanized version of Portuguese, several different forms are spoken: the Creole spoken by our people who live in the towns is very Portuguese, for example, whereas the dialect spoken out in the country is profoundly Africanized—deep Creole you might call it.³¹

The village schools gave only two years of training to children. From these, children graduated to boarding schools. Initially there were only 4 of these schools in the liberated zones, catering to 70 pupils, but their numbers soon increased. Priority in the beginning was given to children who had been orphaned by the war and to children of the people engaged in the armed struggle. It was in these boarding schools that the PAIGC trained the people who would later serve as administrators after liberation. They were required to be totally self-sufficient and if a school was unable to maintain itself, it was closed down. Some of the graduates of the boarding schools were sent for further training to Senegal and Guinea, and a few of these went abroad after finishing secondary school for further education. Under the chaotic conditions of war the PAIGC educated more people in 13 years than the Portuguese had done in 5 centuries. The way in which the conditions of war affected the schoolchildren was dramatically related by the journalist Chaliand in his report on conditions in the liberated zones written after a visit in the 1960s:

At this point we noticed the distant hum of airplanes. It rose in a sudden crescendo as they approached. One could hear children's voices crying, "Tugas! Tugas!" ["Portuguese" in Creole]. In another instant, the planes were visible. An order was given to put away the books and tablets. But the planes were already upon us. The first bomb exploded with a very loud noise, and some of the little girls screamed in terror, tore off their brightly-colored blouses and threw themselves on the ground, shaking all over. As the bombs began falling around us with a terrific din, guerrilla soldiers came on the run and dispersed the children in little groups. Given the altitude at which the planes were flying, our rifles were of about as much use as slingshots, and in any case it was out of the question to give away our position by opening fire; we even turned our watches around on our wrists to eliminate glare. This time around, it was five airplanes. The crash of their bombs contrasted with the deep silence of the forest where all was motionless. For half an hour the planes wheeled over our heads with mechanical regularity. Then at noon, they departed.

"That's it," said Anselmo. "They'll go back and say 'Mission accomplished.' They dumped all their bombs."

Shortly afterward, we learned that shell fragments had been picked up on the ground less than a hundred yards from the school. It is under such conditions that the PAIGC has...managed in eighteen months to teach 4,000 children of the northern region how to read. Four thousand is twice as many as the Portuguese sent to school in the whole country during peacetime.³²

The military organization, Forças Armadas Revolucionárias do Povo (FARP), had its own system of education for soldiers. This included training them in basic literacy, military discipline, and agriculture. The PAIGC philosophy of military organization was that members of FARP were not an army as such, but an armed militia. There were no military grades and there was a conscious policy of rotation between civilian duties and fighting in the war. An egalitarian spirit was fostered by lack of rank and of any material differences in the distribution of food,

housing, and clothing among FARP members.

Health education and the training of medical personnel was also a high priority in the liberated zones. Three different types of facilities for health care were organized. First there were six regional and seven sectional hospitals. The regional hospitals were directed by foreign doctors who had volunteered their services. In these hospitals, nurses and paramedical technicians were given on-the-job training. Primarily established to treat wounded soldiers, the hospitals were also opened to peasants as part of an overall objective of demonstrating to them some of the concrete benefits arising from liberation. The Portuguese were often able to get information on the location of these hospitals and carried out regular raids on them. As a result, these hospitals—like the schools—had to be constructed from temporary materials so that they could be moved quickly, as happened several times each year.

Clinics were also set up in the sectors to meet the health needs of the populace. There were, not surprisingly, insufficient doctors to staff these clinics, and so care was given by paramedics and nurses. Finally, health brigades, staffed by both men and women, were organized to go out to the villages. The emphasis of these visits was on developing grassroots knowledge about health care. Indigenous medical specialists were not shunted aside, rather, the brigades worked with them and attempted to improve their techniques. One member of each *tabanca* was assigned to work with the health brigades and implement improvements in such areas as water supply, sanitation, and nutrition in their absence.

The philosophy behind the PAIGC health and education program was quite different from that which is usual in the West. Teachers and medical personnel were in daily contact with the people. The responsibility they had assumed for educating villagers about the aims

of the PAIGC meant that they had to demonstrate that these objectives were more than just ideas. Peasants did not have to leave their home environment to go and meet a professional with no understanding of their daily lives and the conditions of their existence in the villages.

The program undertaken in the liberated zones was designed to promote a theoretical understanding by the peasants of the necessity for liberation from oppressive colonial rule; that is, that full social and economic development would only be possible after the defeat of Portuguese colonialism. Another principal goal of the PAIGC was the rapid creation of alternative institutions which would be of immediate relevance to the daily lives and problems of the people. Thus the theories of the PAIGC began to become concrete realities. As a result, experiences of the people living in the liberated zones created high expectations for life in an independent Guinea-Bissau.

NOTES

1. L. Rudebeck, *Guinea-Bissau: A Study of Political Mobilization* (Uppsala, 1974), p. 44.
2. *Guinée et Cap-Vert: Information Concp* (Algiers, 1970), p. 12.
3. Most African countries are described as "densely populated" or "overpopulated." Despite the assertions in the literature describing Guinea-Bissau, there is no land shortage. In fact, because the agricultural system is not mechanized, there is a shortage of labor to exploit the land available. It is quite true that Guinea-Bissau cannot feed its present population, but the reasons are far more complicated than are explained by facile demographic arguments.
4. See *Afrique-Asie*, May 26 - June 8, 1980, no. 214, for a discussion of these problems.
5. W. Rodney, *History of the Upper Guinea Coast 1545-1800* (Oxford, 1970), p. 259.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
7. G. Chaliand, *Armed Struggle in Africa: With the Guerillas in "Portuguese" Guinea* (New York, 1969), pp. 16-17.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.
10. The biographical information on Amílcar Cabral is drawn from M. de Andrade, "Biographical Notes" in Amílcar Cabral, *Unity and Struggle* (London, 1980).
11. *Ibid.*
12. Chaliand, *Armed Struggle in Africa: With...*, p. 79.
13. Rudebeck, *Guinea-Bissau: A Study of...*, p. 133.
14. W. Minter, *Portuguese Africa and the West* (Baltimore, Md.: Penguin Books, 1972), p. 129.
15. Rudebeck, *Guinea-Bissau: A Study of...*, p. 51-52.
16. Chaliand, *Armed Struggle in Africa: With...*, p. 18.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
18. Rudebeck, *Guinea-Bissau: A Study of...*, p. 58.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 60.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 63.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 67.
22. Amílcar Cabral cited in D. Goulet, *Looking at Guinea-Bissau: A New Nation's Development Strategy* (Washington, D.C., 1978).
23. Rudebeck, *Guinea-Bissau: A Study of...*, 128.
24. Pereira, cited in D. Goulet, *Looking at...*
25. For publications in English on the aims and objectives of FRELIMO in independent Mozambique write to Mozambique, Angola and Guinea Information Center, 34 Percy Street, London W1P 9FG. This organization publishes a quarterly journal, *People's Power in Mozambique, Angola and Guinea-Bissau*.
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28. J.C. Andreini and M.C. Lambert, *La Guinée-Bissau: D'Amílcar Cabral à la reconstruction nationale* (Paris, 1978), p. 133.
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