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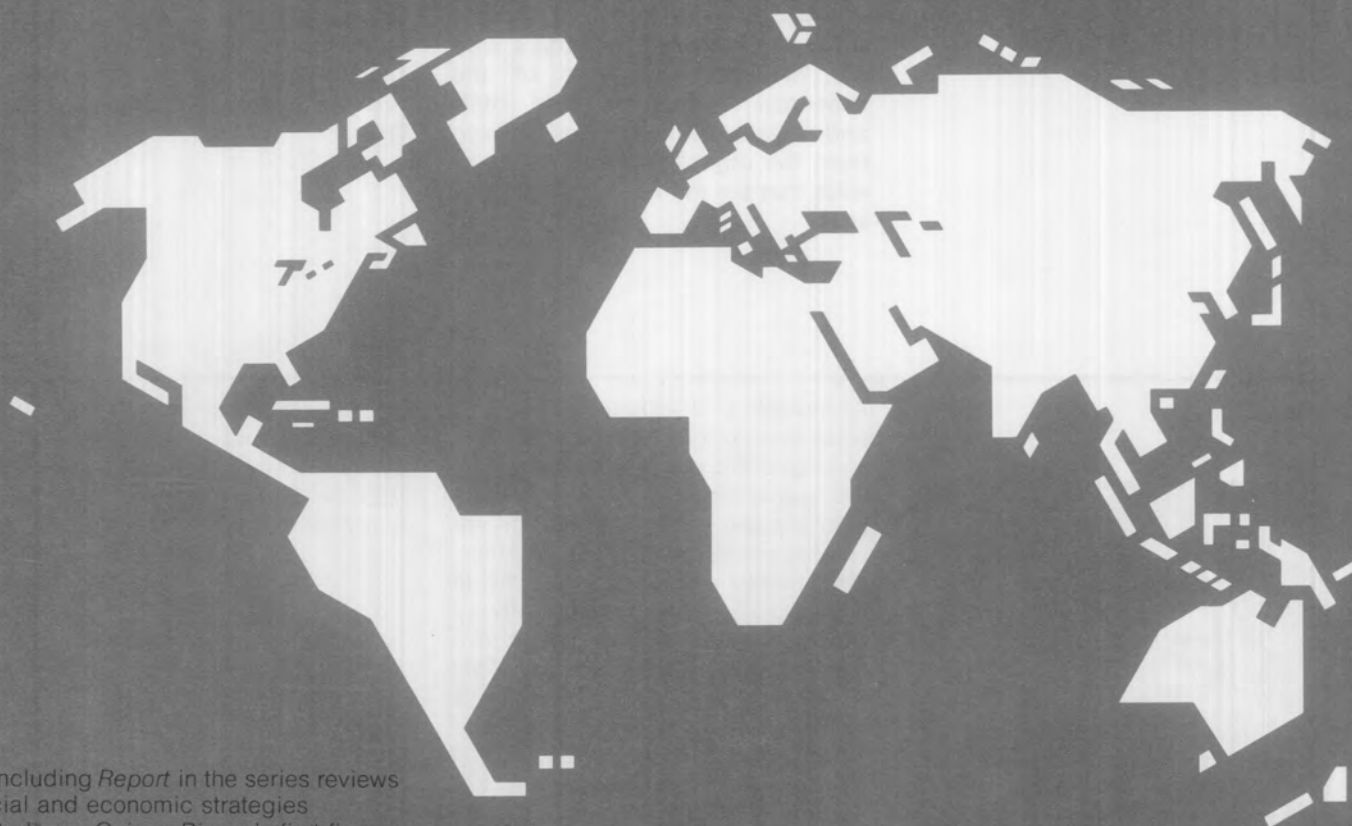
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Reports

GUINEA-BISSAU
Part III: Independent Development

by Barbara Harrell-Bond



The concluding *Report* in the series reviews the social and economic strategies attempted over Guinea-Bissau's first five years of independence and the political fallout resulting from failure to fulfill the peasants' heightened expectations.

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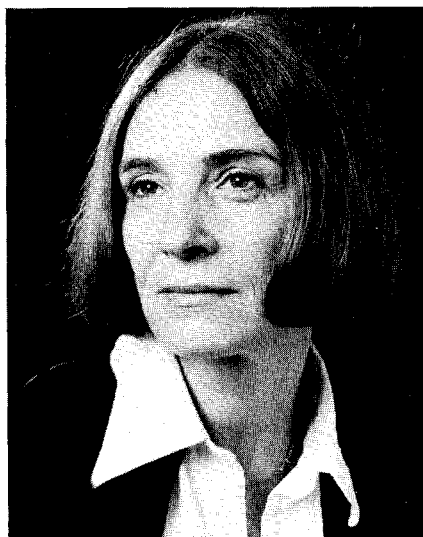
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Reports

AUFS Reports are a continuing series on international affairs and major global issues of our time. Reports have for almost three decades reached a group of readers—both academic and non-academic—who find them a useful source of firsthand observation of political, economic, and social trends in foreign countries. Reports in the series are prepared by writers who are full-time Associates of the American Universities Field Staff and occasionally by persons on leave from the organizations and universities that are the Field Staff's sponsors.

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Part II of this series of *Reports* on Guinea-Bissau concluded by observing that the peasants were led to hold high expectations about the ways in which their lives would be improved by the elimination of colonial rule. They had begun to experience some of these improvements during the war, through the program undertaken in the liberated zones. Amilcar Cabral, founder and leader of the revolutionary movement, however, always taught that the elimination of Portuguese domination was only the first step in the path toward social and economic independence. Excerpts from one of his speeches, recorded during a tour of the liberated zones during the early years of the war, illustrate this realism. The speech was delivered in the village of Djagali, located only 20 kilometers from a Portuguese military base. Apparently among the 3,000 people present there were informers who warned the Portuguese that their prime target, Cabral, was in Djagali, since early the next morning the entire area was bombed. Many peasants were killed, the village destroyed, and Cabral and his party only narrowly escaped death.

Already covered in sweat from the hot and muggy day, stripped to a

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.

small loincloth, Cabral stood among the people on an upturned barrel and spoke in Creole (his speech was translated into Mandingo and Balante):

I salute you all in the name of the Party. I salute the homén grandes, for we Africans respect the old. I salute the children, for they are the future of our people... I salute the women, for they are the strength of our country... I likewise salute the men, who, with the women are the labor power of our country.... Our task does not only consist of liquidating the colonialists, but of blazing a trail for the children of our country so that they can be truly free and we no longer have to fear anyone, white or black. Our destiny is in our own hands. We will have schools and hospitals. No one will be cheated on his labor. Ours is the road to the development of this country's true potential.

... No one should have false dreams about the future. The rice must be planted, the groundnuts made to grow, and nobody is going to harvest them the same day. No one will prosper and be happy without doing anything. The land must be cultivated and the rice tended....

Independence is not just a simple matter of expelling the Portuguese, of having a flag, and a national anthem. The people must be secure in the knowledge that no one is going to steal their labor, that the wealth of our country is not going into somebody else's pocket. Even today, the Guinean people stand naked and are still afraid of the river, the rain, and the forest. We tell the Guinean people that by their work the river will be at their service, the forest will be tamed, and the rain will

be put to good use. Our struggle aims at giving the people work that will feed and clothe them, hospitals for the sick, schools for the children....

The people must know that the wealth of this country is theirs thanks to their labor. We also want our people to be educated because our people must be aware of what is happening elsewhere in the world. Djagali is not the whole land of Guinea, nor is Guinea the whole world....¹

Just a few weeks before his assassination, Cabral asserted to a French journalist,

My death will never mean the defeat of our people. [The people] will always be alive. The people will always be the torchbearers of the glorious combat, this combat in which so many of our comrades have sacrificed themselves; none of them will have died in vain. Others will carry the torch of this struggle until each Guinean feels free and dignified in his own home. The people will never put down their arms before the conquest of real independence, they will struggle until the last man, until the last woman....²

This concluding *Report* reviews the strategies the independent government of Guinea-Bissau attempted to implement during the first five years of independence, and the problems encountered by this extremely poor country of meager resources. That the peasants' expectations have not been entirely fulfilled, given these impoverished circumstances, is hardly surprising.

One reason Portugal hung so tenaciously to Guinea-Bissau, despite

the limited economic benefits it gained from the colony and the immense drain the war made on its own budget, was the fear that giving up Guinea-Bissau would constitute a precedent that would guarantee the loss of economically more important possessions—Angola and Mozambique. Portugal's NATO allies were anxious to support the war in Guinea-Bissau not only because they feared the loss of their investments in Angola and Mozambique, but also because they recognized the threat an independent Guinea-Bissau, organized around Cabral's philosophy of development, would constitute to their spheres of influence.

As noted in Part II, Portugal lacked the resources to install the kind of infrastructure which would allow it to hand over independence but retain a fundamental, neocolonial control of the economy. When the war ended, Guinea-Bissau's state of extreme poverty and underdevelopment presented both advantages and disadvantages to the new government. There was an almost complete absence of western-educated elites, who in other African countries had been co-opted by the interests of their departing "colonial masters." This meant that the PAIGC government could follow an independent path of development, but it also meant that there was a severe shortage of trained personnel to carry out the government's program. Because the Portuguese had not imported machinery or other capital equipment, the newly independent country lacked any form of industrial infrastructure. Nor had Portugal imported consumer goods into the country; thus, Guinea-Bissau, at independence, did not have a developed internal market. Since the Portuguese had not made any significant impact upon the consumer tastes of the majority of the population, the new government was not confronted with a huge import bill to maintain such consumer habits. As one American official pointed out (and I observed), "There is nothing in their houses that they haven't made themselves by hand, not even rope or clothes." Even in villages very near Bissau and other towns the people use no manufactured goods imported from abroad. The markets are also supplied only with goods locally produced. Very recently two "supermarkets" have been opened in



Downtown Bissau.

Bissau to sell canned goods and drinks imported from Portugal. These are bought mainly by foreigners who live in Bissau—diplomats and aid agency personnel.

After five years of independence this situation also has its drawbacks; when an aid project did succeed in radically improving the incomes of fishermen from the Bijagos Islands, for instance, there were few goods available for them to purchase. Because there is no real domestic market, the government also has no internal source of income from taxes on businesses or purchases to use for funding social improvements.

The Portuguese had established a monocultural economy based primarily upon agricultural production for export, but the effects of the war and the withdrawal of Portuguese coercion drastically reduced crop production. Moreover, the new government was more concerned with food self-sufficiency than with cash crops to increase the national income. Thus there was a serious shortage of capital to invest in the expansion of agriculture and in the creation of an industrial sector, to say nothing of the lack of funds for social services.

The PAIGC aimed to avoid the development path taken by neocolonial African states that rely on the export of raw materials while

importing manufactured goods, and on foreign capital for investment. Rather, the PAIGC sought to develop the agricultural sector and to introduce processing industries to increase the price earned from exports (see Table I for trade figures). Additionally, the government hoped gradually to introduce industries for the manufacture of basic consumer items. Foreign investment was to be carefully controlled, with mandatory state participation and a requirement that profits be reinvested within Guinea-Bissau, not repatriated abroad. The location of investments was also to be determined by government priorities and developments were to be based on local technology. The PAIGC acknowledged the necessity to import fuel and machinery (and hence, a certain reliance on the world market), but it was determined to maintain Guinea-Bissau's economic independence.

The most important principle in the PAIGC's development strategy was its commitment to the equitable distribution of benefits throughout the society. Improvements were not to be measured in terms of an increased gross national product. The watchword of the development program was to be grassroots participation and decentralization, not only in economic matters, but also in social and political life.

Land and Property Regulations

One of the first laws passed by the PAIGC defined land as the property of the nation and declared that the government would administer that wealth to serve the people. Control of the land was left essentially as it had been under the indigenous system; that is, land continued to be inalienable, and rights over it were in the hands of the local community.

Unlike many other colonial regimes, the Portuguese had not appropriated large areas of land for plantations in Guinea-Bissau. At independence there were only a few private farms. Some were purchased by the government, but those considered commercially viable were allowed to continue under private ownership as long as they were "productive and socially beneficial."³ While land issues were central to the egalitarian aims of the revolution, governmental policy sought to be flexible and realistic.

The Second Legislature of the People's National Assembly in 1979 debated inadequacies and lack of compliance with laws forbidding the buying and selling of land. Luis Cabral, then President, warned the legislators:

*Here in the Assembly we must decide which lands we should cultivate, what area each person who wants to farm a plot can have, so that he can live well with his family, so that he can live even as though he were a President of that plot. But no person can take an area of land greater than he can work. Our people are not going to ease the way now for the establishment of great estates, so that afterwards, in a few years' time, our children will have to carry out an agrarian reform, as is happening in other countries at the moment.*⁴

Rules were to be established concerning which land could be farmed by people who were "foreign" to a district, once it had been determined how much land should be preserved for each village to sustain itself. While there is an abundance of land in Guinea-Bissau, farming tended to be concentrated in areas around urban centers. Encouraging farming in unexploited regions, therefore, became a new priority.

While protecting the peasants' rights to subsistence, the govern-

TABLE I

Gross National Product (1977): \$150 million (World Bank)
GNP per capita (1977): \$160 (World Bank)

FOREIGN TRADE (million pesos)

	1976	1977	1978
Exports	186.9	427.6	422.6
Imports	1,106.3	1,235.2	1,726.4
Balance	-919.4	-807.6	-1,303.8

(*Anuario Estadístico 1977; No Pintcha*)

AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS (thousand tons)

	1976	1977	1978*
Groundnuts	10.0	16.3	11.0
Palm kernels	4.9	6.3	11.0
*estimated			

(*Anuario Estadístico 1977: Commissariado de Estado de Comercio*)

EXPORTS BY COMMODITY (million pesos)

	1975	1976	1977
Groundnuts	117.8	110.5	258.0
Palm kernels	19.2	21.6	53.4
Shellfish	-	9.5	55.7
Fish	-	8.4	26.1
wood	15.1	31.6	6.4
Total			
(incl. other exports)	180.6	186.9	427.6

DIRECTION OF TRADE 1977 (million pesos)

	value	total (percent)
<i>Exports</i>		
Portugal	252.1	59.0
Egypt	77.7	18.2
Senegal	46.7	10.9
France	13.1	3.1
<i>Imports</i>		
Portugal	493.3	40.0
Sweden	99.7	8.1
U.S.S.R.	95.4	7.7
France	82.8	6.7
Pakistan	53.5	4.3
Netherlands	49.0	3.9
West		
Germany	44.2	3.6
U.S.A.	41.1	3.3
U.K.	35.8	2.9

(*Anuario Estadístico 1977*)

Source: *New African Yearbook*, p. 165.

ment also recognized there were individuals who wanted to farm for profit:

These are people who are not farmers on an everyday basis, people who have a job which guarantees them a salary at the end of the month, but who also want a farm to earn more money. These people cannot have priority over those who are genuine farmers, who live in the villages and earn their living from the soil...people who acquire land, and afterwards employ wage labor to farm it so that they can earn a great deal of money, taking lorryload after lorryload of cane sugar for sale—these people must pay something to the State when they take over land for cultivation.⁵

Some, it was noted, wanted extra income to build houses in towns. Others were farmers who, by increasing their production, were earning money at the expense of those who labored for them. These people, it was asserted, should be required to "pay something to help the State with the costs of running the country." While the topic of taxes was, understandably, a sensitive issue in a country which had suffered so long under the oppressive Portuguese system, it was determined that the government must use this means of acquiring resources to carry out its overall development program and to discourage practices which ran counter to its objectives. Measures were invoked to avoid the destruction of forests, which were needed to maintain the ecological balance; the building of houses in already built-up areas such as in Bissau (the PAIGC aimed to distribute the population evenly throughout the country); and the taking-over of large farms for commercial agriculture in areas where such ventures intruded on the rights of the peasants.

Four kinds of property ownership were delineated by the PAIGC government. State property included all the natural resources of the country such as minerals, water, and forests as well as institutions dealing with culture, communications, and public transport. Second, property could be owned by cooperatives which were not organized by the government, but arose through community initiative for the production of agricultural goods or among artisans

who made consumer goods. Personal property was also recognized; this included houses, consumer goods, and the fruits of people's labor. A fourth category, private property, allowed for the existence and creation of private commercial farms and presumably, later on, for manufacturing enterprises. Legislation allowed individuals to employ labor in privately owned businesses, provided that they paid "a just salary." Such employment was, in fact, encouraged as part of the national reconstruction program to provide incomes for returning refugees and soldiers, and to increase the area of land under cultivation. When disputes arose, however, the tribunals usually decided in favor of those who actually worked the land, rather than recognizing the rights of the "absentee landlord" who employed them.⁶

Agricultural Development

At the end of the war for independence, only 30 percent of the land which had been cultivated in 1953 was still being farmed. In 1974 the costs of importing rice to feed the population of Guinea-Bissau were six times higher than were export earnings, and there had been a dramatic increase in the urban population, especially in Bissau. There was almost no mechanized agriculture. The scorched-earth policy of the Portuguese army had laid waste many cultivated areas. The forests had been stripped of the wild game upon which people relied for food and, as Luis Cabral jested, "Even the monkeys...sought political exile in Senegal and Guinea."⁷ There were postwar shortages of drinking water, transport, and medical supplies as well. The disruptions of war propelled at least 150,000 people out of the country, either to Senegal, Guinea, or to the "protected" towns and villages held by the Portuguese. There were also some 10,000 men who had fought with the Portuguese against the liberation forces who had to be integrated into the new system of governance. The PAIGC introduced an identity card system in 1974 to control population movement and return people to their homes and involve them in production.

Aid monies for refugee resettlement, made available through the United Nations, were very limited and covered only the purchase of

the vehicles needed to transport the refugees back home. Although the returned refugees provided labor for increasing agricultural production, there were still shortages of seeds and tools. Delegations (or agricultural brigades) were sent out by the Ministry of Agriculture to each of the eight regions. They each included one agricultural technician, together with a number of assistants who had practical experience in farming. Before the agricultural brigade supplied the returned refugees with the costly inputs they needed, they instructed them on the aims of the PAIGC and encouraged them to work cooperatively. Although the peasants were never forced, they were always reminded that collective work is more productive than individual labor, whether it be in building a dam or a house, or in plowing a new field.

These delegations were also responsible for debating national policies with local people and for ascertaining their needs and problems. They were told to listen to people at the grassroots level; what they learned would inform and influence official policy. The three objectives of the agricultural development program were (a) to increase production, (b) to diversify agriculture, and (c) to involve more people in it.

Getting the rice and groundnut fields back into production at pre-war levels was a high priority. International aid was required for the purchase of seeds. Money came from France, Holland, and the United Nations, and seeds were either imported or purchased locally. While aware of their need for international aid, the PAIGC hoped to keep it at a minimum. For seeds, a system of reimbursement from farmers was established to cover recurrent costs, the farmer repaying at the end of the season the amount of seed which he had been lent, in order to develop a stockpile for the following season. There were problems, however, with the imported seeds. Some required unfamiliar growing techniques and there were not enough trained agricultural workers to get around the country to teach the farmers the new methods. The delegations also instigated other improvements; for example, some of the saltwater barrages were rebuilt using cement to reduce the labor costs of having

to rebuild the hand-dug dams and canals frequently.

The plan for agricultural development included one state farm—to be devoted to experimental farming—for each of the eight regions. New crops and improved seeds were introduced through the state farms, which were both demonstration areas for local peasants and training centers for agricultural extension workers. The directors for the program, begun in 1975, were appointed by the government, but other staff were recruited locally. People receiving this training were not only responsible for improving agricultural practices within their regions, but also for convincing others of the values of the new techniques and discussing with them PAIGC development policy.

The state farms were found to be very expensive to set up and run. The heavy investment in tools and salaries risked an overall imbalance in state expenditure. Moreover, results have been very slow in coming since the PAIGC is committed to persuasion not coercion, and since peasant farmers are reluctant to risk new agricultural approaches until the results are demonstrated.

The state farms face other problems, too. There are not enough vehicles to get the produce to market after the harvest. Rodents and insects attack the new, unadapted crops. There is a shortage of water for year-round cultivation in those areas where irrigation is either impossible or requires expensive equipment for building canals and pumping water. Even the location of the farms is a problem. Despite the PAIGC's plans to decentralize and distribute benefits into rural areas, the state farms are very near the main towns. Moreover, the farmers tend to spend their earnings in town rather than investing in further development of the rural areas.

Perhaps in the beginning the most important virtue of the state farm scheme was that it provided a credible avenue for aid agency investment. It takes a longer time and is much more difficult to establish an aid project in a rural community, since that requires identifying a need and organizing a community to participate. The state farms minimized such preparation and were an

obvious target for aid expenditure. Farmers living around the state farms were also able to use the cleared land for their own production during parts of the year.

Cooperatives were another element in PAIGC's development strategy. Volunteers were sent to the villages to explain the potential of such cooperatives. (The importance of this strategy for development is discussed below.) Cooperatives were also used to employ members of the military who had been demobilized, since it was recognized that these men and women were among the most politically aware in Guinea-Bissau. The government hoped to establish FARP (Forças Armadas Revolucionárias do Povo or revolutionary armed forces) cooperatives in each region, and had one functioning by 1977. In all cooperatives, each person was to receive the same salary for his work and profits were to be reinvested to buy more equipment and to expand the acreage under cultivation. Small industries were attached to the cooperative farms to provide year-round employment. Funding for the cooperatives came not only from their own profits, but also from a "solidarity fund" established by the state, to which all civil servants contributed.

The PAIGC also created agro-political youth camps to employ and educate young people idle during school holidays, with political educative efforts in the camps (and the cooperatives) directed to transforming attitudes toward manual labor. The value of manual work was to be experienced without regard to educational level or social background. Although some of the educational objectives were achieved, the youth camps have had little economic impact because of the lack of funds to equip the farms.

The national agricultural development strategy also sought to influence eating habits, a task undertaken by both health and agricultural brigades. Rural peasants in Guinea-Bissau raised chickens for meat, but normally did not eat eggs, so they were informed of the value of this addition to their diet. An abundance of fish is available, both from the rivers and from the sea, and people were taught the nutritional value of fish and encouraged

to eat more of it. Since many types of fruit grow easily in this climate, orchards were planted for local consumption and to supply a cannery which preserves it for sale to the towns (and eventually for export).

Since most of the people remained involved in subsistence agriculture, it was necessary to concentrate directly on their needs at the same time as starting up other projects such as the state farms and cooperatives. Credit programs were established to lend money to smallholders to purchase agricultural inputs. Prices were raised to encourage increased production of crops for food and for export, to give the peasants a fairer share of the earnings from their labor than they had received under the Portuguese, and to improve the standard of living of very poor peasant farmers. There being no mechanized agriculture, attempts were made to introduce "animal traction"; tractors could come only much later.

Another objective of the PAIGC's agricultural development program, the diversification of agriculture, involved such projects as setting up sugar cane plantations and growing cotton and tobacco. Cattle breeding and poultry farms were also developed and improved methods of fishing and commercial fishing ventures were introduced. Some of these projects involved foreign investment and all received aid in some form.

The development program in agriculture was, in fact, overwhelmingly dependent on aid. At first these monies were spent on seeds, but later large-scale aid projects were established, using foreign technicians and heavy equipment. Algeria, for example, established an experimental poultry farm, and helped with aid projects to grow fruit and vegetables. France paid for a program to vaccinate cattle at Bafata; Cuban technicians were brought in to plant some 80 thousand trees and to help on experimental farms growing sugar cane, cotton, and tobacco; Chinese agronomists carried out studies to improve techniques for rice cultivation. The United Nations gave money to establish a rice seed production center, and the United States Agency for International Development set up a small-holding irrigation development.

The fundamental problem with the internationally funded projects is that they rarely mesh with reality in Guinea-Bissau. The projects are supported for only a limited period and seldom include planning for financing recurrent costs. Too often decisions as to what projects are to be funded are made with greater consideration for the economic interests of the donor country—such as providing a market for capital-intensive agricultural machinery—than for meeting those of the recipient. Further, a lack of data for identifying the most pressing needs of the country is a problem. Gathering information on existing conditions requires long and detailed preliminary studies, but aid agencies are usually unwilling to fund such research activity. In Guinea-Bissau, apart from Cabral's agricultural survey made in 1952-1954, there are very little data available concerning the country as a whole.

While the government was strong enough to reject some offers of help, Guinea-Bissau could not turn down aid money from the many sources offering it after independence, despite the absence of preliminary studies to pinpoint needs. Moreover, Guinea-Bissau lacked, and still lacks, the administrative infrastructure and personnel to maintain aid projects once the donor agency has left. It lacks even the money necessary to equip offices, to say nothing of maintaining and replacing mechanical equipment.

In Guinea-Bissau, the amount of aid in general (including loans and grants) has been estimated at \$50 per capita, one of the highest levels that any Third World country has received.⁸ In order to avoid overwhelming reliance on foreign funding for development and all the problems it involves, the National Assembly imposed a "National Reconstruction Tax" to help fund projects. The expenditure of these monies was designed to fulfill the overall aims of decentralization of development and grassroots control with 50 percent of the tax spent in the region from which it is collected under the direction of the elected regional council. The central government distributes another 40 percent in the most impoverished areas of the country, and the remaining 10 percent is used to build up social

security funds. The tax is graduated according to income, with civil servants paying by direct deductions from salaries. Taxes imposed on peasants are lower, and since it is difficult to ascertain their incomes, a minimal lump sum has been determined as a fair tax. Students, the elderly, the sick, unemployed women, and FARP soldiers whose earnings are below a certain level are all exempt. People who lived in the liberated zones during the war were also exempted from paying the tax for the first three years after it was imposed.

In his speech to the National Assembly in 1979, Luis Cabral described the tax levied on peasants as "merely symbolic," but emphasized that everyone in Guinea-Bissau must learn to take responsibility for contributions to the national budget. He went into great detail to explain how the government spent the money collected and he encouraged the efficient collection of taxes by local officials.

In 1979 the state budget came to four times the amount spent in the country under Portuguese rule, but income covered only half of state expenditure. Moreover, 70 percent of the annual budget goes for salaries which, as Cabral pointed out in his address, are often paid to employees who are unable to work because they lack the equipment to do their jobs: "If we pay a driver... we must provide him with a car.... If we pay a tractor driver, we must give him a tractor for his work."

One of the problems facing contemporary economic theorists as well as the PAIGC government in its efforts to transform Guinea-Bissau into a "developed economy" is the question of how to deal with what they perceive as the "contradictions" between the indigenous social-economic system and the demands of a modern state within the global economy. A modern economy requires a source of surplus capital to invest in the development of all areas of the economy and to provide social services. As Guinea-Bissau is basically an agricultural economy, the only source of this surplus capital is through increasing production by the peasants, an increase the Portuguese—without destroying the indigenous social system—achieved through forced labor.⁹ The removal

of Portuguese coercion resulted in what has been called "peasant inertia," a theory which disdains indigenous African culture and asserts that the very nature of that social and economic system is responsible for the inertia because there is little motivation to produce crops for export and to create needed surplus capital. (Since independence there has been a steady improvement in export earnings, both from increased production and from price rises on the world market. Rice production for internal consumption also increased, but in 1977 drought affected the crop, making it necessary in 1978 to import much more rice again. In 1980 there were serious shortages of rice because of drought.)

It has already been noted that under the indigenous system, land may not be sold; it belongs to the community. Rights over particular farm plots are allocated within the lineage with decisions made by the elders. (There is no shortage of land.) Since increased production cannot be obtained by acquiring more land through purchase, the only way to increase production is by adding to the number of laborers. (The larger the family, the more it will produce.) The authority structure is based on what is usually referred to as a gerontocracy; that is, the distinctions which exist between people are based on age. Land is allocated to a family on the basis of its need—i.e., its size. Polygamy is one way of recruiting family members, men being motivated to marry several wives in order to build up their group of dependents. Prestige is accorded to those who are able to take responsibility for these larger communities of relatives.

Surplus in such an economic system is invested in cattle which symbolize wealth and which are consumed or exchanged mainly as part of family gatherings or on ceremonial occasions. With needs so simply defined, this economic system is described as essentially "stable," having little internal motivation for increasing production. Thus the price increases the PAIGC introduced to raise production and the standard of living among the peasants had only a limited effect. If the greater incomes earned by the peasant were to be invested only in acquiring more cattle, there is even the possibility—

or so the argument goes—that increasing prices might serve only to strengthen the indigenous structure.

As the PAIGC's development strategy was based primarily on agriculture, anything that might block its success had to be challenged. PAIGC strategists believed that such institutions as polygamy and gerontocracy must be abolished in the long term, but radical structural changes can be accomplished only gradually. The program for altering these values and practices was begun with the establishment of *buying cooperatives* to secure seeds, fertilizers, and tools. When peasant income had increased sufficiently, *sales cooperatives* would follow. Finally, the financial basis would exist for starting *producer cooperatives* in which people would invest together to purchase more efficient technology. The objective of this gradual transformation of the social structure from a traditional familial system was to produce a cooperative/collective social organization composed of independent and equal individuals, related by goals, not kinship.¹⁰

Industrial Development

At independence, Guinea-Bissau had practically no industries, and those in existence (food and beverage production and the repair of automobiles and boats, all concentrated in Bissau and Bafata) were not of the type necessary for the development of an economy. In 1950 only 2 percent of the working population was employed in industry, and in 1963 the earnings from industry contributed but 0.9 percent of the gross national product.

The PAIGC government after nationalizing most existing industry decided to concentrate on three types of industrial development. The first type would produce manufactured goods for internal consumption to reduce dependence on imports, provide employment, and raise the standard of living. These industries would employ simple technology, so that investment in costly machinery and extensive worker training would not be necessary. The second would concentrate on factories to produce goods both for export and for domestic consumption. Third, industries were to be established which would diversify the country's means of earning

foreign exchange from exports. In 1974, groundnuts and palm kernels accounted for 84.3 percent of Guinea-Bissau's export earnings, and this percentage was reduced to only 73 percent in 1977. The manufacturing sector had, by 1977, managed to employ only 1,833 people.

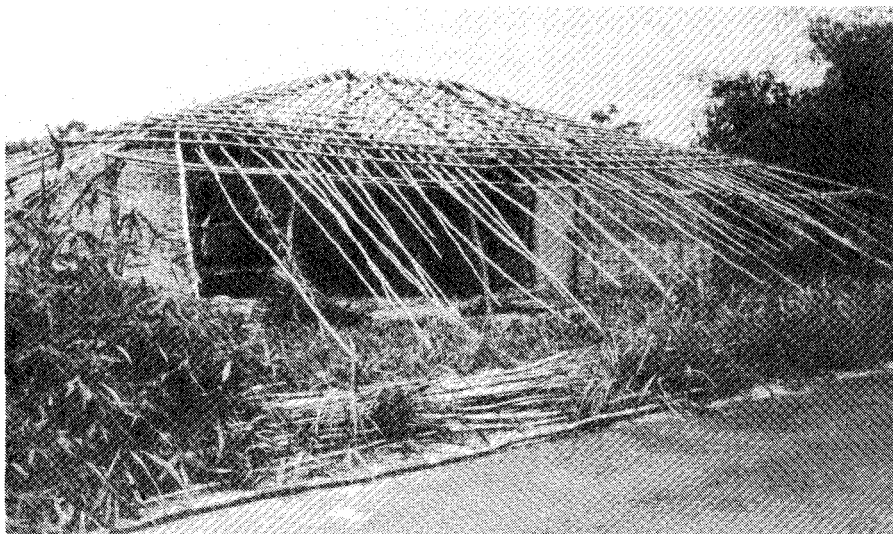
The largest factory in the country is a brewery built by the Portuguese to supply the military with beer. It now runs well below capacity. A small assembly plant for a specially-designed Citroen car was opened in 1979, and 80 employees assemble 500 cars a year. When it is able to satisfy the internal market, cars will be exported. Other small plants have been opened for making bricks and tiles, baking, rice milling, shelling groundnuts and refining groundnut oil. Foam mattresses, prefabricated housing, fruit juices, jams, and soft drinks are also produced. A state timber industry has been set up with both timber and finished boards exported and sold in the domestic market. The Swedish government provided aid for this project which includes systematic reforestation, something the Portuguese never organized, although they exported timber.

The industrial sector has encountered many difficulties. The limited internal market has meant, for example, that production in the mattress factory remains far below capacity, as people cannot afford to buy such items (which they can make by hand, anyway). Not enough fruit is grown yet to keep the cannery operating at full production. The poverty of the people has also led to a tendency to price items sold internally below cost, and because of this, many companies have run into serious debt. Most of the industries in Guinea-Bissau require imports for use in production and these costs add to the foreign exchange bill.

The efforts of the PAIGC to rationalize the industrial development of Guinea-Bissau have suffered from a lack of administrative coordination. Part of the problem is the lack of experienced personnel; for example, an oxygen and acetylene bottling plant lay idle for months because the department responsible for supplying water had not functioned properly.

Expenditure required in the development of the industrial sector also had the further effect of distorting the overall budgetary plan. Wage laborers employed in the new industries or on the state farms must receive at least the minimum salary set by the government, a far higher amount than the peasants can possibly earn through farming. This wage, in 1978, was about \$75 per month in a country where the average per capita income was \$120 per annum (the figure has since risen to \$160 per annum). The wage is paid to all people who work for the government, placing them in a privileged position vis-à-vis the majority of the population engaged in agriculture, though most salaried employees live in urban centers, mainly Bissau, where the cost of living is also higher. The result has been the development of a "two-tiered consumption pattern, the dominant rural pattern in which subsistence consumption is the norm, with only incidental reliance on cash—and the fully monetized sector."¹¹ This pattern has increased the overall cost to the government of maintaining the cities, particularly the largest, Bissau, and has accelerated the drift of population from the rural areas to the towns.

For an egalitarian party like the PAIGC, the two-tiered income structure represents a philosophical compromise, but the nature of Bissau's population at independence was crucial in forcing this compromise.¹² The people who lived there had been providing services for the Portuguese military and civilians, including Portuguese and Lebanese merchants. The Africans who lived in Bissau worked either in service occupations or in the very few industries, catering to the needs of foreign residents, or working in the Portuguese export businesses. The withdrawal of the Portuguese (some Lebanese remain) meant these city-dwellers had to be employed somewhere—in administration, commerce, education, or transport. Acceleration of industrial development was a necessity to provide more jobs, but at the same time, the concentration of investment in the towns resulted in the further neglect of the rural population. (In 1980, 60 percent of the wage laborers were employed by the state.)



School buildings in rural areas are simple functional structures.



Above, an example of the special model of the Citroën which is being assembled in Guinea-Bissau.



A book shop in downtown Bissau.

The third area of industrial development planned by the PAIGC was exploitation of resources for sale on the world market, in order to redress the balance of payments deficit. To this end, plans are afoot to develop bauxite and phosphate mining, fishing, and oil reserves. Studies estimate that there are approximately 200,000 tons of bauxite available. The goal is to create a fully integrated aluminum industry, which will require a developed industrial infrastructure, including electricity generation and a railroad. France, Romania, Sweden, and the Soviets are involved in its development.

Phosphates are present in Guinea-Bissau but as yet the amount of this resource is unknown. Oil reserves have been proven, but disputes over boundaries between Guinea and Senegal have delayed their exploitation. Commercial fishing has already been successful, and today fish is the second largest export product, production having risen beyond existing refrigerated storage and transport capacities. Guinea-Bissau has the controlling interest in three French, Algerian, and Soviet fishing companies. Technical assistance for fishing has also been received from the European Economic Community. Attempting to maintain prices and to conserve this resource, Guinea-Bissau preserves the ecology by limiting the issue of fishing licenses and thus access to coastal waters.

The government also has plans for establishing a sugar refinery which will crush up to 10,000 tons of sugar cane each year. It is moving ahead with plans to build a hydroelectric complex on the Corrubal River (the dam will also allow for rice cultivation). A new port will be built at Buba. These last two projects will serve the aluminum industry once bauxite is being mined and the railway and smelter have been built.

With all the investment in the industrial sector, it still accounted for less than one percent of the gross national product in 1977.

Education—"Decolonizing Minds"

Despite the advances made within the liberated zones during the war for independence, building an educational system was a monumental task. Because the PAIGC wanted an educational system that would mirror their overall objectives, they had to create a unique program.

The importance placed on education is reflected in expenditures: "One fifth of the country's public budget goes to education, and the Ministry of Education accounts for the greatest volume of public expenditures."¹³ Most of this money is spent on basic education; there has been no attempt to start a university because they did not want to follow any of the existing models which, in their view, fostered elitism and class

Many Catholic churches remain as a testimony to the attempt to convert the people during the colonial period.

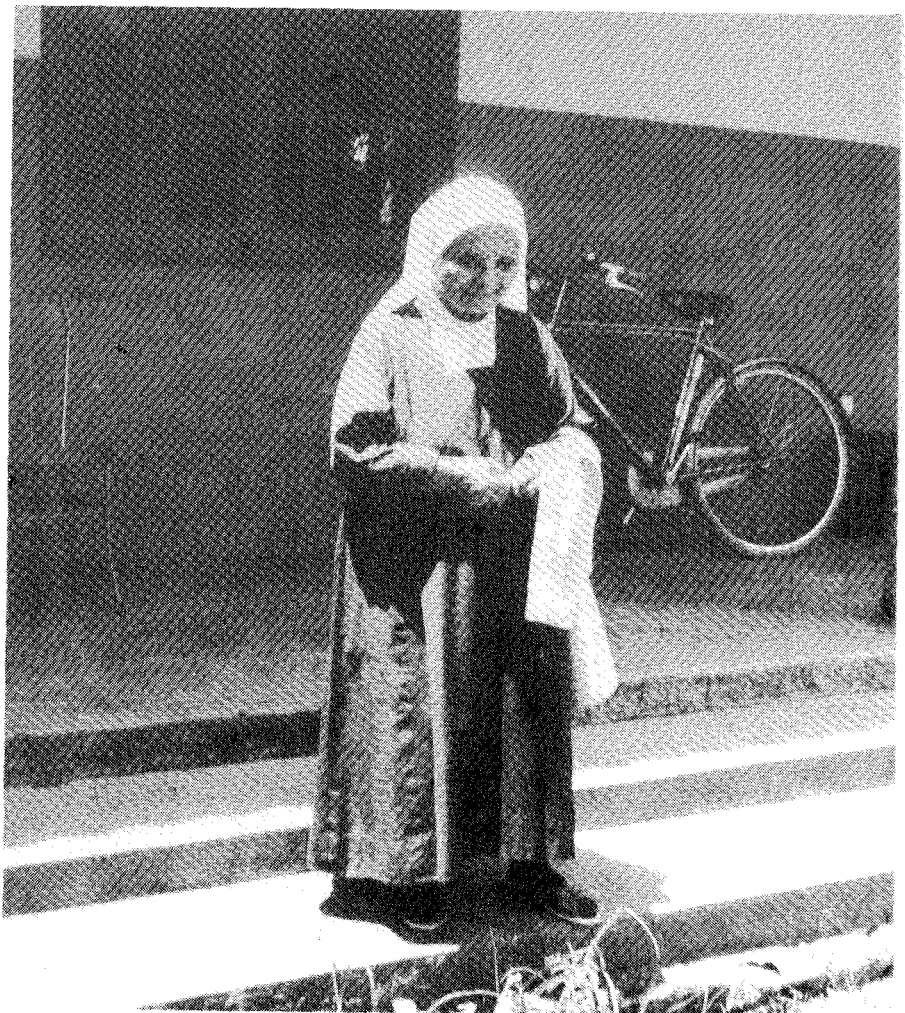
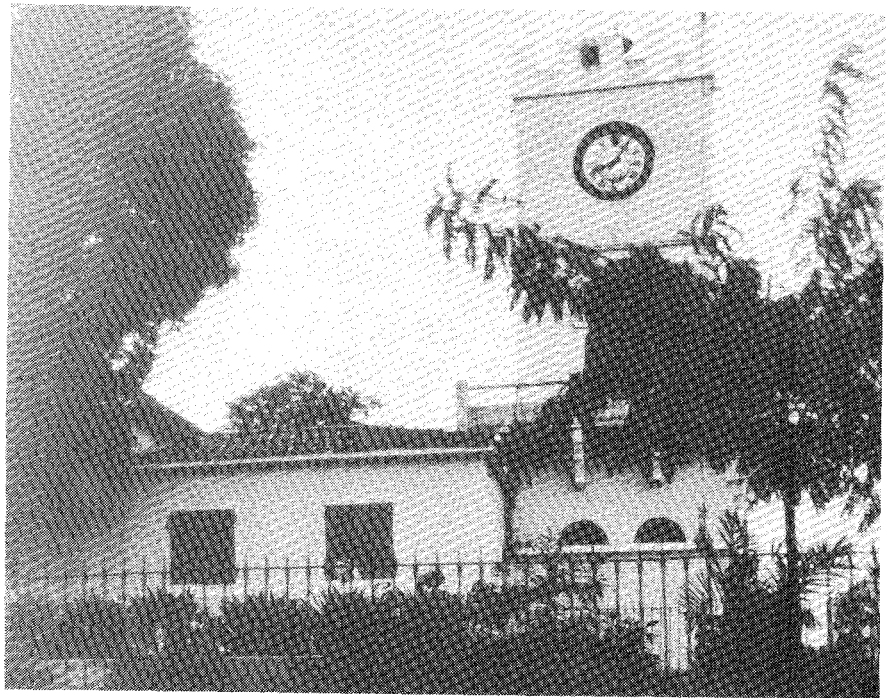
Sister Nazarene Caturgidi, below, is one of the missionaries who cooperated with the liberation struggle and who remains. She heads a hospital for lepers.

differences. A university in Guinea-Bissau should, it was maintained, emerge in organic fashion from those educational experiments that work well.

When the new government took over education in Bissau, in 1974, the children were already attending classes under the old Portuguese system and there was no time to revise the syllabus completely or to acquire new textbooks. One of the first methods of "decolonizing" the content of education was to tear out those pages of the Portuguese textbooks which glorified Portugal or which applauded Africans who collaborated with the colonial masters. Some new textbooks were provided by the Swedish government and others which had been published by the PAIGC during the war were available, but there was a general shortage of *everything*—books, equipment, school buildings, and staff.

The PAIGC decided that all education, even the teaching of practical subjects, was to be *political education*.

What, for the PAIGC, constitutes political education? In a speech delivered in Gabu in October 1975, President Luis Cabral outlined the principles underlying the desired political formation. "The first thing which we should teach our children is to love our land, to be proud of our history and our struggle, and to love our party as the main creation of our people during its entire history." He portrays the party, interestingly, not as a bureaucratic entity or some superimposed structure, but as a creation of the people. It is no exaggeration to state that for the PAIGC there exists no education which is not political, and no political activity which is not educational. Even in educational domains requiring high degrees of technical discipline, the total context and the social purposes of that discipline are justified in terms of the country's broader political goals.... The colonial school system had been



*designed to teach small numbers of docile Africans how to be useful to the Portuguese rulers. Therefore, after independence, schools and all other agencies of education needed to be reinvented: their purpose, mode of operation, values, and relationship to the larger society all needed radical transformation.*¹⁴

Paulo Freire, an exiled Brazilian, and father of the "conscientization" technique for literacy instruction, was invited to advise the Ministry of Education on an appropriate educational philosophy and methods, and his Geneva-based Institute of Cultural Action (IDAC) has been contracted to assist the government with its program.¹⁵

The literacy programs established for adults were concerned not only with teaching functional literacy but with linking that training with education in health, agriculture, and political values. There was to be no dichotomy between intellectual and manual work. Teachers of literacy were responsible for mobilizing people to contribute to the tasks of national construction, for conducting and stimulating research on the socioeconomic conditions in which their students lived, for communication with local government bodies, and for upgrading their own professional skills through meetings with their colleagues in local culture centers. In some rural areas oral histories were collected by literacy teachers, so that the taped interviews could then be played and discussed among the populace, who would correct facts or add further information. The overall object was to heighten illiterate villagers' sense of their own cultural worth.

Paulo Freire, it is reported, was impressed by the impact of the liberation struggle upon the masses, calling Guineans "a people who, notwithstanding their high rate of illiteracy, 90 percent from the linguistic point of view, is nonetheless highly 'literate' from the political point of view."¹⁶

One of the major problems not yet entirely resolved is the question of language. Some 80 percent of the population do not speak Portuguese, yet the lingua franca, Crioulo, is not as yet a written language. Moreover, not everyone speaks Crioulo and it differs from one area

to another in the amount of Portuguese vocabulary it incorporates. Although Portuguese is, for the moment, the official language, these problems suggest that some adjustments may have to be made.

By 1977, 11 percent of the population (including 20,000 adults) were enrolled in school, evidence of considerable success in expanding educational opportunities. Primary schools have been decentralized—reaching every *tabanca* (village organization)—so that even the very poorest have access to a basic education. Secondary schools have been established in Bolama, Canchungo, and Bafata, in addition to the one in Bissau, inherited from the Portuguese. They still lack supplies of all kinds, however, and they have to rely to a great extent on foreign teachers, or *corporantes*, many of whom come from Portugal.

Study is combined with productive work, with students assigned such tasks as weeding fields, planting trees, cleaning hospitals, unloading cargoes at the port, and working in the People's Stores. Those who perform practical work of high quality earn extra credit which can offset lower grades in weaker academic subjects.

Ten boarding schools set up during the war, viewed as "embryonic models of what the entire society should become," accept orphans of soldiers killed during the liberation struggle, children of surviving members of the military, and those from poor or one-parent families. These schools are very austere, housed in former Portuguese army barracks. Food is neither varied nor sufficient, but morale is reportedly high.¹⁷

Teacher-training centers have also been opened. Some are also housed in deserted army barracks. Students include those who have already taught in primary schools as well as new trainees, who study for three years to prepare for primary and secondary teaching. Some will serve as teacher-trainers or administrators of the education programs, and some will work in curriculum design. The explicit aim of education in Guinea-Bissau is to teach people to resist elitism and to realize that "the people are the ultimate repository of wisdom." Those possessing special skills are admonished constantly

to "go to the people and learn from them even as they teach." The aim of education is thus to destroy the notion of a dichotomy between teaching and learning.

Because of the overall need for specialized training, every program, project, and activity has a training component built into its plan. There are only a few formal specialized training programs, however, and enormous gaps still exist in professional education. Guinea-Bissau must send some students overseas for higher education. There is a school for training nurses and paramedics, and recently a law school was opened which offers part-time training to upgrade the abilities of those already employed in administrative posts. (Its director is not a lawyer [she has a doctorate in literature from Lisbon] but as she explained, "There is no one else who has the proper qualifications for this job." When I visited the law school they had, as yet, no books in the library, and they were forced to rely entirely on foreign instructors, some from Russia and East Germany who do not speak Portuguese and have to lecture through an interpreter.)

Another new school funded by the UN and located at the airport illustrates some of the problems arising from dependency on foreign aid. It is expensively equipped and staffed mainly by foreigners who teach, among other subjects, English, public relations, mathematics, chemistry, and physics. Its curriculum is designed to upgrade the standard of graduates from secondary school before sending them abroad to be trained in all aspects of the aeronautics industry—from selling tickets to flying planes. A Lisbon-based consulting agency directed by a French psychologist won the contract for building, equipping, and running the school. In order to select applicants for the program, the consultant has been using a standardized U.S. psychological test—despite the dubious validity of such tests even within the American context.

As some members of the staff complained, the enormous sums spent on this 30-student school (which provides only one year of training) could have been better used for improving secondary

school education. Moreover, the students are paid 12 times as much as students who enroll in nurses' training programs (6,000 pesos per month compared with 500 pesos per month for nurses). It was reported in 1979 that there were *no* applicants at all for the nursing school.

The problems involved in "decolonizing minds" are even more complicated than these cases illustrate. Guinea-Bissau has inherited the "tracking system" of the Portuguese with its series of diplomas and certificates that limit individual opportunity. With social mobility so closely linked to the system, it will eventually result in a "paper chase," everyone hunting diplomas in their competition for employment. The limited resources of the national budget have meant that while attendance at primary school is free for every child, parents must pay for secondary school education, boarding, books, and supplies. Guinea-Bissau has not yet been able to eliminate the injustices of an educational system that is embedded in class structure. Such a job is difficult in the best of circumstances. Here the PAIGC must rely on teachers trained abroad who do not always share its ideology and also send people out of the country for higher education, where they are likely to become alienated from their own society.

Health Programs

Amilcar Cabral said that health is the greatest wealth of a nation. In this, as in every other sense of "wealth," Guinea-Bissau is extremely poor. Mortality before the age of five is at least 50 percent and in some parts of the country it is much higher. Life expectancy has been estimated at 35 to 38 years. Malnutrition is a fundamental problem, and all the diseases and disorders typical of tropical zones are present in Guinea-Bissau.

The high priority the PAIGC placed on health education has been continued since independence, but this has not overcome the lack of money and medical personnel. In 1977 there were only 11 indigenous doctors and 44 foreign doctors, many of whom came as part of volunteer programs sponsored by aid agencies. There are plans for building a system of hospitals and health centers all over the country. Mobile

health units have been set up especially for vaccination programs and health education, but lack of vehicles and poor road conditions limit their ability to reach the people in many areas.

The importation of medicines is controlled by the state and there is an emphasis on basic drugs and the use of locally prepared remedies. Prices are controlled and private merchants are required to display this price list. Although the PAIGC wanted to institute a completely socialized medical scheme, medical care is not entirely free. Charges paid by patients are graduated according to income. Peasants are given care and medicines free of charge, because besides their abject poverty, it is believed they earned the right to free medicine because of their service to the war effort.

Justice

The legal system is being developed according to the philosophy described in Part II of this series, and was introduced first into the liberated zones. Peoples' tribunals, whose memberships are locally elected, continue to be the first level for the resolution of disputes. Instituting this kind of judicial machinery in urban centers, which were under Portuguese military rule throughout the war, was more difficult. The government found it necessary to deviate slightly from their plan to restrict tribunal membership to locally elected people and appointed certain responsible persons to serve alongside elected members.

To provide legal counsel for defendants, whether or not they can pay, an Association of Jurists of Guinea and Cape Verde was founded. Individuals may choose their lawyers, whose salaries are set by the association, but likewise, a lawyer may refuse to defend a client. People who are able to pay contribute to the organization's general fund out of which the lawyers are paid.

The program of transforming prisons into rehabilitation centers which began in the liberated zones, has continued, since PAIGC's policy is to respect the indigenous society—and its system of justice had no prisons. The best such center is located on the island of Carache. It

is completely self-sufficient: inmates grow their own food, and everyone has to work at something. Most farm or fish, but carpentry, watch-repair, and other artisanal skills are taught. The two hundred "prisoners" in the center have a committee which participates in running it—the inmates were even responsible for building their own "prison." Production of palm kernels provides money to improve living conditions and to create a fund to give inmates a monthly allowance after release until they find employment.

As far as the code of law is concerned, the PAIGC government inherited the Portuguese legal system; to start they simply struck off those laws which were most objectionable. Gradually, a new code more in line with the objectives of the new state is being introduced. The overall aims for the legal system are to blend indigenous practices with legislation reflecting the kind of society toward which Guinea-Bissau is working.

The crime rate has gone down since independence compared to rates under Portuguese rule, although even then crime was largely an urban phenomenon. Rural disputes today usually involve quarrels over land, cattle theft, and conflicts which arise when animals damage crops. Statutory law is developing out of local needs. It was decided, for example, to impose the death penalty for armed robbery and robbery while dressed in military uniform, as a result of a number of armed robberies by individuals wearing stolen uniforms. Since public attendance is encouraged at trials in Guinea-Bissau, these cases were tried in the Bissau stadium. Public trial conforms to the indigenous belief that disputes were public events which involved all members of the family of the defendant, publicity having the effect of reminding other people of the norms and sanctions of the society. Decisions to impose "prison" sentences on people who cause serious automobile accidents or are found guilty of rape have also been made.

Women in Independent Guinea-Bissau

At the theoretical level, the PAIGC government has always included

women's equality as part of its long-term goal for the construction of a nonexploitative society. During the war, women in the liberated zones bore arms, served as nurses and teachers, and were represented on the tabanca committees, as well as assuming other important leadership roles. Amílcar Cabral, in his speeches and writing, always emphasized that women must be allowed to play an equal role in the struggle. He clearly understood how colonialism had reduced the status of women. (In one speech, for example, he pointed out how, long ago on the Bijago Islands, there had been queens: "They were not queens because they were daughters of kings; queens succeeded queens. Their religious leaders were women too, but now everything is changing."¹⁸)

The experiences of rural women in Guinea-Bissau had been similar to those of women all over the African continent. During the colonial period the gap in their status vis-à-vis that of the men had widened, because cash crops had involved men's labor, while society continued to rely on women's agricultural production mainly for feeding the population. Educational opportunities for women were very few and all places in vocational training went to men. As a result, women became more dependent on men. Under neocolonialism in independent Africa, women's position has further deteriorated.¹⁹ The economic problems in independent Guinea-Bissau have continued to be an obstacle to the emancipation of women. Moreover, the PAIGC's policy of gradual change of the indigenous social-economic structure has further delayed improvements in the status of women. Women continue to be the main labor force in the production of food, but realize little personal gain from their work.

Cabral's teachings did inspire many individual women, and the case of Carmen Pereira, who was married to a member of the first clandestine movement organized in Bissau, serves as an example. Having read some of the documents her husband had hidden in their house, she eventually decided to devote herself to the struggle. She moved with her three children to Senegal where she started a home for exiled

PAIGC members. Later, after being sent by the PAIGC to the Soviet Union to be trained as a nurse, she returned to the liberated zones to assume an important role in the war. She became Vice-President of the National Assembly. There are, understandably, very few examples of women like this—probably fewer than 30—who had the educational background upon which to build such a career.

During the war hundreds of women responded to Cabral's appeal to take up arms, and they reported for active fighting duty. The need for food production, however, meant that the PAIGC used them as part of the armed village militia, so they could continue to farm. Even when girls were recruited and trained as nurses, they were often soon lost to the profession because of the tendency to marry early. Many returned to the villages to farm once they began their families.

The PAIGC government faces a struggle against both the customs of the people and the extreme poverty of the country in its efforts to provide equal opportunities for women. The appeal to women today is that they must liberate themselves from the "two colonialisms" under which they are oppressed, the colonial economic system and "men," or indigenous customs. Freedom, according to the PAIGC, is not something which is given, *it must be seized*. The PAIGC has provided equal educational opportunities, but women must make use of them. Unfortunately, equal access to the limited educational facilities does not guarantee equality and freedom for women. As we have mentioned, resistance to sending girls to school persists in this country where a high percentage of the population are Muslim and where young hands are needed for farming. Today, the school enrollment ratio is still about one woman to every three men. With under 2,000 jobs available in the industrial sector, it is not surprising that few women are employed in industry. However, 40 percent of the jobs in SOCOTRAM, the timber industry, have been allocated to women. The government has also provided opportunities for women to bring disputes concerning divorce or "forced" marriage to tribunals,

but again women must take responsibility for initiating claims. Moreover, the PAIGC has challenged women to go beyond these provisions and out of their own experiences determine what their greatest needs are. Indigenous women's organizations existed in both rural and urban society during colonialism and through these the PAIGC government has attempted to educate women about their rights. (While I was unable to document it personally, I did hear about such a women's movement in a remote rural area. Here, women had decided that they were unwilling to accept the unequal division of labor in agriculture and had "gone on strike" against the men for a period of over a year. It was reported that the women intended to deprive men of sexual intercourse until they came around to accepting the women's demands.)

Foreign Policy

The official foreign policy of the PAIGC government is peaceful coexistence and positive nonalignment. They also promote the idea of the New International Economic Order (NIEO) and uphold the principles of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). Their support for the Palestinian, the Sahrawi, and the Eritrean peoples, and for Namibia's independence, attest to their allegiance to the principles of self-determination and state autonomy. In May 1980, President Luis Cabral reasserted these principles in an interview with *Afrique Asie*, saying, "We are open to all countries that wish to have a relationship with us on the basis of respect of our sovereignty and our anticolonialist and anti-imperialist choices."²⁰

Economic development can be accomplished only in conditions of peace. As Cabral emphasized in the interview, the main problem for nonaligned countries is development: "Nonalignment is for peace and development. It is acting in a way so as to forestall the dangers of war in order to create conditions for the nonaligned countries to devote themselves to development."

The PAIGC government embraces African unity and cooperation. Underdeveloped countries must be united against the richest countries in order to end the injustices of economic dependence; thus, PAIGC

supports regional organizations in Africa such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), of which it is a member. While acknowledging there is much more that can be done to exploit the natural resources of Guinea-Bissau, PAIGC recognizes the country's dire need for aid. "We benefit from the concrete solidarity of several countries of the world of different regimes," Luis Cabral said, "but in order to break out of under-development much more international aid is required."²¹

The realization of its needs beyond traditional aid has led to the creation of strong bonds of cooperation between Guinea-Bissau, Angola, Mozambique, and Cape Verde in their struggle to become economically independent. Guinea-Bissau's close relationship with these richer ex-Portuguese colonies is one reason why both capitalist and socialist countries have been courting this small country and granting it so much aid. That Guinea-Bissau exercises influence over the policies of these countries is illustrated by the meeting which Luis Cabral arranged in 1977 between representatives from Angola and Mozambique and the President of Portugal to advance reconciliation between these independent states and Portugal.

Guinea-Bissau receives aid from many countries of differing political persuasions: the Soviet Union, Cuba, Sweden, the Netherlands, the United States, and Portugal. Some would argue that accepting such aid has often forced the PAIGC to compromise their anti-imperialist, anti-colonialist stance. Others say taking aid from anyone willing to give it has allowed Guinea-Bissau to remain truly independent.

The immediate problem, however, is controlling aid expenditure to promote development in the direction chosen by the PAIGC. The government has been aware of how grants and loans may increase dependence and encourage the emergence of neocolonialist structures, and aid projects have exacerbated the distortion of the economy in favor of Bissau and other urban centers. The very presence of large numbers of non-Guineans living in Bissau influences the direction of the economy, to say nothing of the values exemplified by the affluent lifestyles of

highly paid foreign "experts." These factors have taken their toll and encouraged small-scale corruption.

It is very difficult to maintain the discipline necessary to inhibit growth of such problems. Decisions about large expenditures are often made by individual bureaucrats; even if they are made collectively, they may be made under pressure. Countries making loans and grants (grants need not be repaid) in the name of aid, also seek to increase sales of their manufactured products and to get a foot in the door for other investments which will eventually reap profits. Sweden's relationship with Guinea-Bissau throughout the liberation struggle and since independence serves as an illustration. Aid from Sweden totaled nearly \$10 million yearly by 1978, all in the form of grants, with 75 percent of it targeted to general support for essential imports (food, medicine, and machinery).²² Between 1975 and 1976 Swedish aid alone was greater than Guinea-Bissau's earnings from exports. Lest this appear too altruistic, note that some two years ago Sweden extended Guinea-Bissau's "credit line," enabling the government to purchase over one hundred air-conditioned Volvo automobiles. In a country with few miles of paved roads and little public transport, such expensive luxury cars contrast markedly with the surroundings; they have been a source of irritation to the generally impoverished local populace who see their officials driving about in these luxury vehicles. The importation of the cars has carried with it other costs the country can ill afford: in 1979, "credit" was again extended to enable the government to finance building a repair depot and stocking an agency for spare parts. It might have been a wiser "collective" decision to limit makes of automobiles driven in the country to such as the modest Citroen which is already being assembled there. One can imagine, however, that government officials would have found it difficult to resist the offer made by Sweden which has been such a long-standing and generous beneficiary.

Yet another "status symbol" has been financed through aid, a "super highway" linking Bissau to the airport. The UN-funded school at

the airport, already described, has also been criticized as use of aid money that encourages development of elitist values and encourages consumer tastes which cannot be financed from the local economy.

The Coup d'Etat of November 14, 1980

During the writing of these *Reports*, the Luis Cabral government was overthrown in a coup led by João Bernardo Vieira (General Nino), the Prime Minister, who had been one of the chief guerrilla leaders during the fight for independence, an African Che Guevara. Nino was also one of the eight members of the permanent high commission of the PAIGC. The fact that the coup primarily resulted from an internal struggle means that information coming out of the country is being carefully controlled. It is, however, possible to suggest some of the main underlying causes.

The months preceding the coup had been marked by extreme shortages of food. In particular, it was reported that there was no rice available in Bissau. On the afternoon of the coup there had been a small-scale rice riot. But there were also other immediate problems.

On November 10, 1980, a new constitution had been approved by the National Assembly. This constitution transferred the powers of the office of Prime Minister to the Presidency, which meant that Luis Cabral would be not only Head of State, but also Head of Government. Nino was displaced by the new constitution.

Throughout the liberation struggle there has been a close connection between Cape Verde and Guinea-Bissau and there was always a plan to unite the two countries. The PAIGC represented the people of both; for example, its secretary-general is Aristedes Pereira, a Cape Verdean. Full unity was to come about gradually as both countries developed their economies. (The economy of Cape Verde is in an even worse state than that of Guinea-Bissau, but educational opportunities for its population were always greater.)

As part of the unification program, it was intended that the constitutions of the two countries should be alike. Cape Verde had only recently

promulgated its first constitution since independence. The new Guinea-Bissau constitution provided citizens of Cape Verde who were resident in Guinea-Bissau with the same rights and obligations as its citizens, but Cape Verde's constitution did not make reciprocal provisions for citizens of Guinea-Bissau who might reside there. As noted, the mestizo population of Cape Verde (Luis Cabral is a mestizo) had greater access to education under Portuguese rule, and some of them had served as functionaries for the Portuguese in colonial Guinea-Bissau. Since independence, the bureaucracy of Guinea-Bissau had continued to be dominated by citizens from Cape Verde and some hostility against them has developed among the black population. The new constitution appeared to be entrenching the Cape Verdean bureaucratic elite at their expense. Although the Western press has placed great emphasis upon color discrimination as a motive for the coup (Nino is black), the new government has retained several members of the overthrown regime, including mestizos.

Some months earlier there had been a move to reorganize the military by abolishing its egalitarian structure and introducing ranks. The size of the army was also to be reduced by retiring former PAIGC guerrillas, thus reducing the defense budget. The army supported Nino's takeover.

In his first press conference after the coup, Nino explained the motives for overthrowing the Cabral government. He mentioned the decline of the social and economic situation in the country and accused Luis Cabral of deviating from the party principles, most notably "a progressive abandonment of the principles" of democracy and of "criticism and self-criticism."²³ He also rejected what he regarded as corruption of the meaning of unity between Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde, no doubt referring to the absence of reciprocal provisions for citizens of Guinea-Bissau in the Cape Verde constitution. (The new government appears to be moving ahead with redefining the basis of that unity.) Nino also decried the development of factions within the PAIGC leadership, as well as among the militants.

Differences over political directions span a wide number of issues. For one thing, Nino has declared a return to the PAIGC's original emphasis on the development within the agricultural sector and on making sure that new industries are based on raw materials originating in the country (though nearly every industry in any African country is likely to be dependent to some degree on imports, since [outside of South Africa] there is almost no basic industry). All machinery, for example, has to be imported because there are no functioning steel mills. (Nigeria is only now building two such complexes which will use local iron ore.)

Industrialization policy in Africa is affected by the extent to which dependency can be tolerated and this determines the kind of industries which are undertaken. In Ghana, for example, Nkrumah promoted wide-scale industrialization, but the factories established are all heavily dependent upon imported raw materials. Local rubber plantations, for instance, supply the tire factory but the manufacture of tires requires other products which are not locally available. These must all be paid for with foreign exchange. The need for more and more foreign exchange to pay the industrial sector's increasing import costs has caused the government to neglect food production in the interest of cash crops, mainly cocoa. The fall in world cocoa prices, together with a number of other complicated factors, has found Ghana today with insufficient food to feed its population and a shortage of foreign exchange to purchase imports to keep its factories running.²⁴

Since the coup, Radio Guinea-Bissau has also charged the Luis Cabral government with having deviated from Amilcar Cabral's political philosophy which condemned the repression of those who disagreed with the government and especially rejected executions as a method of dealing with dissidents. (Ostensibly, there had been an attempted coup in 1978; the discovery of mass graves after the coup of November 14, 1980, raises the question as to who within the government knew about these executions and who was responsible for them.

Luis Cabral, along with Nino, denies any knowledge of them.)

Cabral's government has also been accused of having strayed from the path of decentralization of decision-making and authority. While grassroots participation was being neglected, the government is alleged to have become more authoritarian. When I was in Bissau, people often contrasted their way of life with that in neighboring Guinea's capital, Conakry, where surveillance is the order of the day. The people of Guinea-Bissau maintained they had freedom of movement. One day, during this visit, however, the streets of Bissau were filled with armed soldiers who were reportedly arresting the unemployed and taking them back to their villages for agricultural work.

In 1979 Guinea-Bissau was also involved in a border dispute with Guinea which may have been another factor in the coup environment, since Guinea was the first country to recognize Nino's government. Conakry had been one of the staunchest supporters of the struggle for independence, but Sékou-Touré, Guinea's President, has also been promoting the idea of a unified Guinea which would encompass both states. Oil resources are at stake in the disputed coastal region, and both countries have granted exploration rights which conflict. Troops were moved up to the borders in August 1979—according to the Western press—but in Bissau this was hotly denied at the time, officials insisting that their tradition of friendly relations with the Conakry government had not been disturbed.

Reports of the coup all mention the destabilizing effects of the corruption being practiced by some leaders. Party members were, for example, accused of using any pretext to travel to Europe and elsewhere to purchase fashionable clothes and other luxury goods not available at home. "Volvo elitism" has already been mentioned.

An extremely bizarre happening in Bissau in the early months of 1979 may also have compromised Cabral's leadership. A Canadian woman, employed in Bissau by the United Nations, had been bringing

drugs into the country and involving a number of highly placed officials in "pot-smoking" parties. In Guinea-Bissau, such drug abuse is "bourgeois crime" and the penalty is death. Added to this offense were certain sexual activities—locally described as "perverse"—which had been photographed. The Senegalese police tipped off their counterparts, and the Bissau police arrested the Canadian woman as she returned from Senegal with a new supply of drugs. A diary she kept led them to the arrest of a number of officials. The young woman was confined for more than a month; there was even talk of executing her. Diplomatic efforts finally led to her deportation, but in August 1980, when I was in Guinea-Bissau, a number of highly connected people (including, it was said, a relative of the President) were still in confinement. Legal officers were busily trying to find a way out of this delicate situation to circumvent death sentences.

In a country where food shortages are a persistent problem, another incident did not go unnoticed. Rumors in Bissau in August 1979 had it that a local Lebanese businessman (who is, incidentally, the

representative of the British government in Bissau—his twin brother holds a similar position in Conakry) had mishandled money allocated by the government to purchase rice. When the shipment arrived it allegedly included tinned commodities which local people could not afford, but no rice.

These problems reflect general conditions suffered by most underdeveloped countries in the present world economic order. Despite Guinea-Bissau's attempt to follow a different path of development, concentrating on agriculture, it is, like all other money economies, subject to the forces of a world market system which it cannot control. Until a new international economic order is realized, it is difficult to see how a small country like Guinea-Bissau can make significant advances which will satisfy people's rightful expectations for a just and non-exploitative society. The Brandt Report on the "North-South" problem makes a similar judgment on present economic relations between the developed countries and the developing ones:

The crisis through which international relations and the world

*economy are now passing presents great dangers, and they appear to be growing more serious. We believe that the gap which separates rich and poor countries—a gap so wide that at the extremes people seem to live in different worlds—has not been sufficiently recognized as a major factor in this crisis. It is a great contradiction of our age that these disparities exist—and are in some respects widening—just when human society is beginning to have a clearer perception of how it is interrelated and of how North and South depend on each other in a single world economy. Yet all the major powers have not been able to give hope to developing countries of escaping from poverty, or to reshape and revive the both developing and industrialized countries. The dialogue between North and South will not by itself solve all the world's current problems, many of which are political rather than economic; but we are satisfied that the world community can have no real stability until it faces up to this basic challenge.*²⁵

(May 1981)

(This Report concludes the series, Guinea-Bissau.)

NOTES

1. The speech is reproduced in G. Chaliand, *Armed Struggle in Africa: With the Guerrillas in "Portuguese" Guinea* (New York, 1969), pp. 90-94.
2. *Afrique-Asie*, May 26-June 8, 1980, no. 214, p. 45.
3. D. Goulet, *Looking at Guinea-Bissau: A New Nation's Development Strategy* (Washington, D.C., 1978), p. 25.
4. Luis Cabral, *Strategy in Guinea-Bissau* (London, 1979).
5. Ibid.
6. J. Andreini and M. Lambert, *La Guinée-Bissau: D'Amilcar Cabral à la reconstruction nationale* (Paris, 1978).
7. Goulet, *Looking at Guinea-Bissau: A New Nation's...*, p. 11.
8. Ibid.
9. Peter Aaby, *The State of Guinea-Bissau: African Socialism or Socialism in Africa* (Uppsala, 1978).
10. Ibid.

11. Goulet, *Looking at Guinea-Bissau: A New Nation's...*
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid., p. 26.
14. Ibid., pp. 26-27.

15. Goulet, *Looking at Guinea-Bissau: A New Nation's...* provides some references which give a good introduction to the work of Paulo Freire. These are: *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970); *Cultural Action for Freedom* (Cambridge: Center for the Study of Development and Social Change, and Harvard Educational Review, 1970); and *Education for Critical Consciousness* (New York: Seabury Press, Inc., 1973).
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid., p. 33.
18. Liberation Support Movement Information Center, *Guinea-Bissau: Toward Final Victory!* (Richmond, Canada, 1974), p. 67.

19. For a short discussion of this process, see "Women and the 1979 Ghana Revolution" [BHB-1-'80], *AUFS Reports*, No. 4, 1980.
20. *Afrique-Asie*, May 26-June 8, 1980, no. 214, p. 48.
21. Ibid.
22. Goulet, *Looking at Guinea-Bissau: A New Nation's...*, p. 40.
23. *West Africa*, December 22, 1980.
24. See *AUFS Reports* on Ghana for a fuller discussion of these problems and how they contributed to present economic and political instability: "Politics in Ghana, 1978 [BHB-3-'78], no. 3, 1978; "Ghana's Troubled Transition to Civilian Government" [BHB-7-'79] no. 7, 1979; "Diary of a Revolution 'Which Might Have Been'" Parts I and II [BHB-2,3-'80], nos. 24-25, 1980.
25. *North-South: A Programme for Survival* (London: Pan Books, 1980), p. 30.

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Much of the history of Portuguese involvement in Guinea-Bissau in this series of *Reports* was drawn from:

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