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DH-7  
In Portuguese Guinea

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Dakar, Senegal

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Dear Mr. Nolte:

"If only they would give us a little more time," a Portuguese official said wistfully of the rising tide of nationalism in his nation's African colonies. The Portuguese have been in Portuguese Guinea for five centuries, which is quite a while, but now time is running out. What sort of heritage will the Portuguese leave here?

This is the essential background information about Portuguese Guinea: area, 13,944 square miles; population, about 550,000. The people are divided into 17 tribes, no one of them constituting anywhere near a majority; 40 percent are Moslem. The country is ruled by 10,000 Portuguese and Cape Verdians. The latter, from the Cape Verde Islands off the coast of West Africa, are mulattoes who have long been Portuguese citizens. Now they are in an ambiguous position: they are instruments of Portuguese rule, but some of them have been touched by African nationalism. The land is in African hands; there are virtually no European settlers. The economy is almost entirely agricultural; the country is self-sufficient in food; peanuts are the major export. Though the Portuguese arrived on the coast in the middle of the 15th Century, they did not conquer the interior until 1915-18. Since World War II, there has been some effort to develop the country; Portugal has provided loans which the colony must repay at 4 percent interest. The latest loan of \$6,000,000 was forgiven by Portugal when hopes that Esso would find oil did not materialize. Guinea is now under what amounts to military rule.

Bissau, the capital, is a tidy and attractive town: wide, well-planned streets; houses whose architecture blends pleasantly into the African setting; dotted, unfortunately, with horrible statuary art (see photos on page 2). But among its 30,000 residents are 5,000 Portuguese soldiers who patrol the streets day and night, and the city is occasionally buzzed by three U.S.-built jet fighters. In the African quarter you find cool, well-built mud-brick houses with thatched roofs - far better living quarters than the shantytown Medina of Dakar. But you see no prosperously-dressed Africans. The Africans are quiet. Fear? I saw no overt oppression; an African said there has never been as much violence here, where news can get to Lisbon or nearby countries more easily, as in



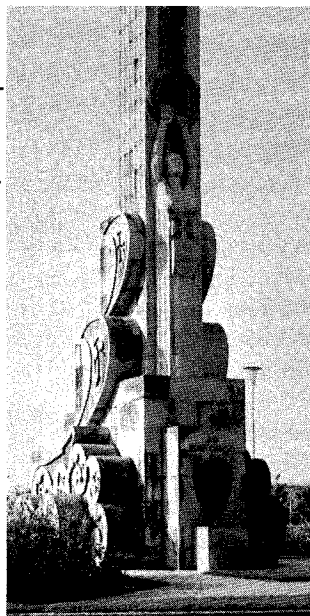
BISSAU: PORTUGUESE SOLDIERS

Mozambique and Angola. A visiting French doctor from Dakar was greatly impressed by the capacity and number of patients handled at the Bissau hospital; but the same doctor found the children of Bissau apathetic and underfed.

If Bissau is quiet, Bolama, the capital before 1947, is motionless and half-deserted. The time there seems out of joint. The main administrative building, with its columns, thirty-foot ceilings and flaking walls, looks like a relic of the 18th or 19th Century. You ask when it was built - 1930! In the main square the inevitable statue is, incredibly, of "Ulisses" Grant. Grant - "justo arbitro na causa de Bolama" - awarded Bolama to Portugal in a territorial dispute with Britain. Bolama and its outskirts have less than 5,000 inhabitants. A young Portuguese administrator started a little free public library last year; 40 to 50 books are in circulation at any given time, he says, but literacy is exceptionally high in the old capital. There is a hospital here, too. The doctor, who is from Goa, explains that there is a dispensary for "natives" and another for "cultured people". Natives do not pay, cultured people do. This legal distinction, the famous "assimilation" system under which an African had to prove he dressed and ate like a European in order to become a Portuguese citizen in this Portuguese "overseas province", was abolished last August 28. Opinions vary on how much practical effect the change is likely to have.

Touring the bush fifty miles outside Bissau - a guided tour - I saw impressive work in education, agriculture and medicine. Schools dot the roadside; an agricultural station distributes young citrus trees and Sumatran oil palms, and a granary gives out peanut seed; a traveling medical team is trying to wipe out leprosy and sleeping sickness, and is starting on tuberculosis. Fourteen unemployed families from Bissau have been settled in the bush and provided with houses, land, seed and a school.

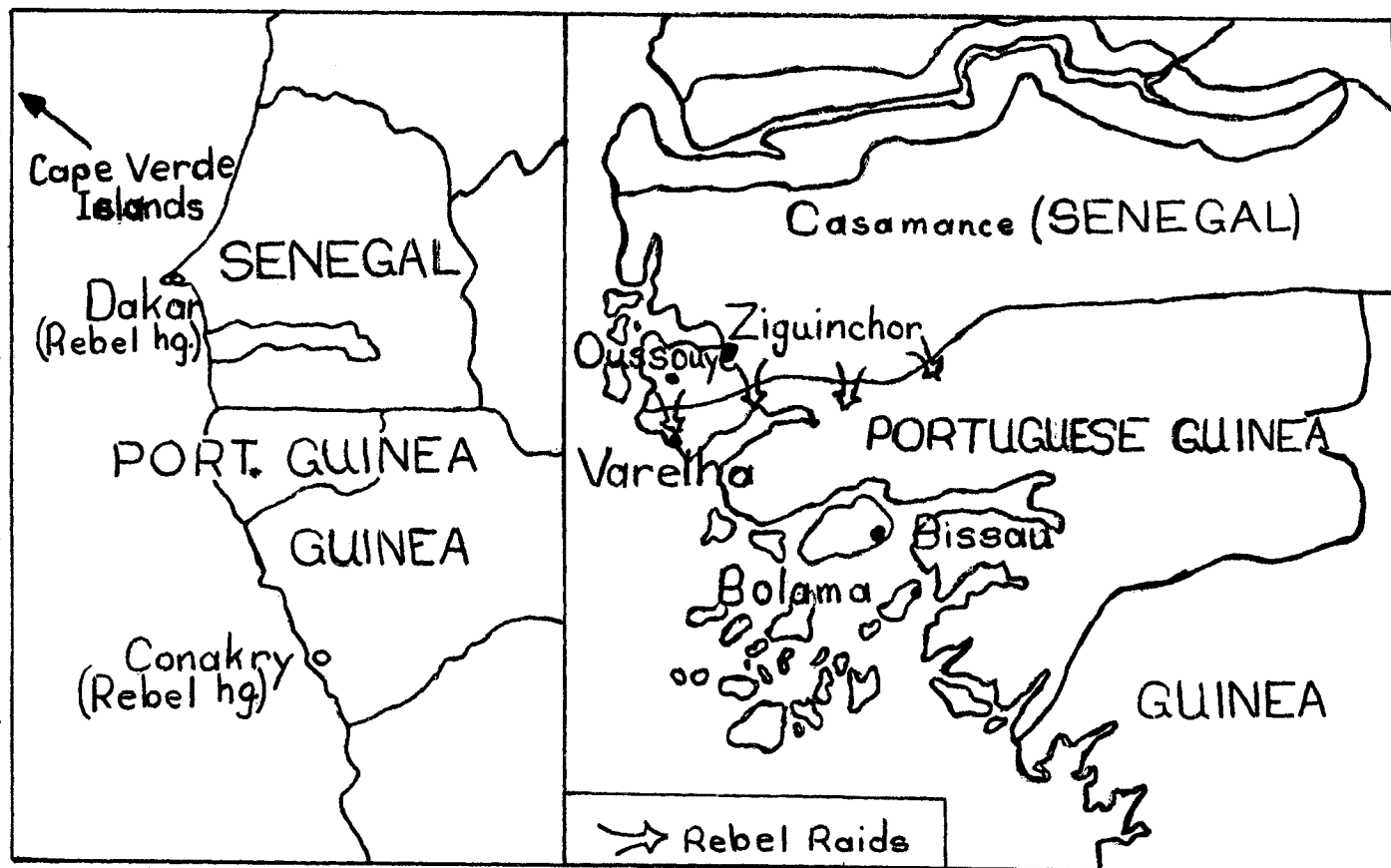
All this is fine: but does it apply to Portuguese Guinea as a whole? "A pretty facade with nothing behind it," is the opinion of a Portuguese liberal. "For the English to



STATUES: Monuments to "The Effort of the Race", left, and to the Governor who "pacified" the interior.

see," says an African. "For the English to see" is an old Portuguese expression for a false front, a Potemkin village. No one I asked knows the origin of the expression; it is tempting to guess that it comes from those 19th Century days when the British, having given up the slave trade, were nagging the Portuguese to do so also with all the self-righteousness of a reformed drunkard. Nowadays people sometimes say "For the cousins to see." The cousins are the Americans. Portuguese Guinea is not a place where statistics or opinions are very accurate. With that warning, here is the information I gathered in the three fields of education, agriculture and health:

**EDUCATION.** I was sent for statistics to Jose Mendes Moreira, a mulatto administrator who also writes a propaganda column in the Bissau paper; Moreira is known to Africans as a "Tshombe", the current term for an Uncle Tom. There are three types of primary schools: regular state schools (1,280 students in 1960-61), Roman Catholic mission schools (about 13,000 students), and "rudimentary" state schools in the Moslem areas (13 schools with irregular attendance). With rare exceptions, only a graduate of the regular state schools can get into a secondary school. The Catholic and the "rudimentary" schools seem to be rudimentary indeed. The government has



built 24 schools in the last two years. Of seven recently announced new schools, six are strung out along the border of Senegal, the area of the greatest nationalist activity - "for the Africans to see." In 1960-61, the two secondary schools, one classical and the other commercial and industrial, had 478 students, about half of them natives of Portuguese Guinea and the rest Portuguese and Cape Verdian. In 1959-60, Moreira said, 13 percent of the children of school age were attending some sort of school; now, he claims, the figure is "about double". Asked when, at the present rate of progress, all children will be in school, Moreira said: "In a year or two". This is so manifestly impossible that it tends to cast doubt on all his figures. Moreira said 21 "Portuguese Guinean" students are studying at universities and institutes in Portugal on state scholarships. But among Moreira's papers were photographs of two of those students: they were clearly Cape Verdians. According to an opponent of the regime, no Guinean went to Portugal for higher education from the time Antonio Salazar came to power in 1928 until after World War II. Moreira had no figures or estimates on illiteracy. An opponent of the regime said, without offering figures, that it is "around 95 percent". (I apologize for not identifying "opponents of the regime" here or elsewhere in this newsletter. Bissau is a small town, and PIDE, the secret police, presumably knows who talked to me, so I have avoided even describing any of those people who were critical of the state.)

**HEALTH.** According to Sylva Marques, civil administrator of the Bissau region and guide on my guided tour, virtually everyone in Guinea is examined twice yearly for leprosy and sleeping sickness, and 20 percent of the population has been x-rayed in a newly-launched tuberculosis campaign. Doctors as well as administrators said both diseases are "under control"; the rate of new cases is falling rapidly. The leprosy campaign was cited by the World Health Organization as the most effective in Africa. The medical work I observed (see photos on page 5) was handling many people at a rapid pace, and the doctor showed me individual case files going back five years. Children suffering from kwashiorkor (protein deficiency) are treated at the Bissau hospital, but there is no education in nutrition as yet. Medical care for the Africans is free. "I suppose you Americans consider that communism," a doctor commented.

**AGRICULTURE.** Marques showed me one of three extension stations and some swamps that the government is reclaiming for rice fields. (It is important to note that this reclamation is being done without any heavy equipment, and is therefore more likely to continue without government intervention.) In 1961, Marques said, the three extension stations distributed (free) 6,500 Sumatran oil palms, which give a higher yield than the African variety; 10,500 citrus fruit trees, and 5,000 Indian mango trees. Peanut seed and rice given out during the planting season is repayable in kind after the harvest. The state has also made some attempt to protect the African peanut producer. It has set a minimum price of two escudos a kilo (about seven cents); the minimum price in Senegal is

22 francs CFA (about nine cents). Usury by storekeepers who advance food to the peanut farmers between harvests has been banned. Whether the law is generally obeyed is debatable. The government of course says it is. Others I asked - and they were generally hostile witnesses - said the minimum price is often ignored and that usury is still widespread. One can say, in the futile phrase of political science, "the truth lies somewhere in between". No doubt it does, but which end is it closer to?

According to this sketchy information, education does not come off as well as health and agriculture. But what matters about education, after all, is its effect on society. Senegal is now trying to expand rural education at a fast pace, but it is the same rural education that, according to the exhaustive Lebret study of the nation's prospects, has a "nefarious" effect because it separates the student from his environment and impels him to go join the unemployed in the city. The Portuguese seem to have done better. In Senegal there is no agricultural education in the rural schools. In Portuguese Guinea each state and "rudimentary" school has a farm attached to it, and agriculture and veterinary science form an important part of what curriculum there is. Perhaps because Portugal is itself an underdeveloped agricultural country - and at least partly



**EXAMINATION FOR SLEEPING SICKNESS IN THE BUSH:** Fluid from a neck gland is examined under a microscope. Tight administration and compulsory identity cards make it possible to get patients back for treatment.



for the unworthy motive of keeping the Africans away from citified ideas like nationalism - the Portuguese educational system seems more geared to reality than the French system inherited by Senegal. For the great majority of Guineans will be poor peasants for the foreseeable future. Any improvement in their standard of living must come primarily from better agriculture, and any increase in their happiness must come within the context of a village agricultural society.

Guinea tends to reflect Portuguese patterns in other ways. There are, of course, no political parties, elections or labor unions. The legal minimum wage is incredibly low, 17½ escudos (about 50 cents) a day. Portuguese administrators live on a far lower standard than their French and British counterparts; the gap between the rulers and ruled is probably smaller here. The Governor gets \$750 a month, and administrator Marques, one of the four or five highest-paid officials, gets \$250 a month. (Some of the administrators were fascinated by James R. Hoffa, whom they felt was responsible for the \$1,000 a month collected by an American truck driver for Esso.) Portuguese officials get home leave every four years, while the French went home every year or two. Does this account for my impression - and it is no more than that - that the Portuguese administrators I saw were closer to the lives of the people they rule than the British and the French?

In politics, the saving grace of the Salazar police state, at least in Guinea, is its inefficiency. Everyone talked about the secret police - but they talked. One man I went to see, having been told he was not entirely sympathetic to the regime, said with rare sharpness after I had introduced myself: "What I want to know is, who sent you to this building, and more particularly who sent you to my office?" He excused himself and phoned a government official and said: "There's an American here asking questions. What should I tell him?" Yet after a while this man talked freely; it was he who told me about his phone call.

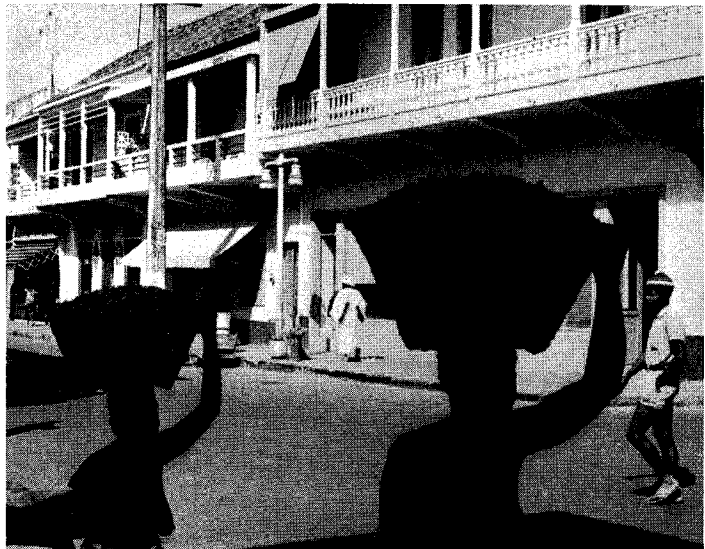
At first the Portuguese must quote the official line, though I did not hear its most extreme form more than once. In that case a young civilian told me: "We are Portuguese. We will stay here until we are all dead. If we had had an airbase between Lisbon and India, we would not have lost Goa." Of course this is pure opera. The Portuguese did not fight to the last man in Goa, and there is no reason to think they will here either.

Most administrators I talked to dropped, sooner or later, a remark that showed they did not take seriously Salazar's view that this corner of Africa must remain forever Portugal. Two officials said they thought the model for the future relationship between Portugal and Guinea should be the relationship between Portugal and Brazil. Another advanced the opinion that Sekou Toure - officially rated as a Communist Devil - is "doing the best job in Africa". Perhaps their attitude is summed up by a remark I heard several times: "We're

waiting for an evolution in Lisbon." One civilian put it more bluntly: "We're waiting for one old man to go - and when he does we'll all be swept out of here." A foreign resident of Bissau estimated that 75 percent of the administration is anti-Salazar, but the wish may have been father to that thought.

The business community is holding back to see what "evolves" in Lisbon. Some of the 150-odd Lebanese who control most retail trade have sent their families out of the bush, to Bissau or even to Lebanon. The Lebanese consul (who raised money for the Portuguese government's fight against "communism" in Angola) denies that the number of Lebanese in Guinea has decreased, but others say some of them have left. There is virtually no private investment these days, and most government construction is admittedly WPA-style work to occupy the skilled labor developed when Bissau was booming five years ago. This year the Portuguese trading firms that buy the peanut crop have been squeezing the Lebanese and African middlemen in the trade. In the past the firms advanced cash to the middlemen to buy the peanuts and bring them in from the bush; but for this crop they are only paying cash after the peanuts are delivered in Bissau. This has put a strain on the middlemen, particularly the Lebanese, who are also under government pressure to import so the government can balance its budget with import duties (a task in which the government often succeeds only by borrowing tax receipts from January for the previous year). Why are the trading companies putting on this pressure? The easy interpretation is that it is because of political uncertainty here and in Lisbon. What seems more likely, and is the opinion offered by one of the firm's economists, is simply that the firms are trying to drive down the price in Bissau so they can sell any surplus on the world market (most of the crop is sold at a fixed price in Lisbon).

What are the Africans' political opinions? This most important question is also the hardest to answer. With few exceptions, they were reluctant to talk politics with a stranger, and none of them were in a position to speak for the country as a whole. But everyone I talked to who was not committed to Salazar - Africans, missionaries and other foreign residents, some administrators - agreed that



WOMEN CARRYING PEANUTS IN BISSAU

there has been a great spread of nationalist feeling, a sudden awareness of the world outside, in the past decade. Coupled with it, these people say, is a rising interest in education. African employees ask for time off to go to school, which they apparently did not do often a decade ago, and in Bissau an occasional African with a primary school education will start a small night school.

Nationalism has spread from the two adjoining countries, Senegal and ex-French Guinea, that became independent in recent years. Each country shelters one or more Portuguese Guinean and Cape Verdian nationalist organizations, evanescent groups that are constantly forming new "fronts" for unity. The organizations have their base of support less in the country than among the Portuguese-speaking population of the two countries, 30,000 in Dakar and 5,000 in Conakry. Most of the leadership is non-Guinean: in Dakar, Henri Laberry is Cape Verdian, Mamadou Barry is from ex-French Guinea and has never been to Portuguese Guinea, Ibrahima Diallo is a Senegalese who used to be in politics in Casamance. The Dakar groups are not taken very seriously by the Portuguese: they say they have only 230 card-carrying members and perhaps 2,000 sympathizers among the 30,000 Portuguese-speaking residents of Dakar. Nor do the Senegalese think these men have much influence in Portuguese Guinea itself. From my conversations with the Dakar leaders, I would agree with the Portuguese and the Senegalese. They do not seem to know much about the country they want to liberate; in the rather irresponsible atmosphere of exile politics, they discuss such questions as whether Holden Roberto of Angola did right in accepting American backing and whether they will join the Casablanca or the Monrovia group of African nations. The Dakar leaders freely admit that they lack a mass base in Portuguese Guinea itself. Only one outside leader seems to be widely respected by his opponents: Amilcar Cabral, an agronomist and former head of agricultural services in Bissau, who is in Conakry. Several Portuguese described him as the only "real leader" among the rebels.

Both the Dakar and the Conakry radios beam daily radio programs to Portuguese Guinea. Thanks to the cheap transistor, there has been a great increase in the number of radios in the bush. The most nationalist - or perhaps just most anti-Portuguese - race in Guinea is said to be the Manjacos, who live near the Senegalese border. Every year some 10,000 Manjacos cross over to Senegal to work on the peanut crop; they come back with bicycles, pith helmets, cash, radios and ideas. They are also the dock workers in Bissau: when Portuguese troops fired into a group of strikers in 1959 most of the victims were Manjacos. Their stirring against the Portuguese predates the nationalist movements in Dakar and Conakry.

Last July the Dakar group headed by Barry, the Union Democratique Guineene, mounted a small military operation across the border from Casamance. Groups of about 25 men each raided across the border at four points (see map on page 3). There were no casualties and no



fighting. The raiders retreated across the border, their main accomplishment having been to cut off the water and the electricity at the resort hotel at Varelha. The Portuguese sent heavy troop reinforcements to Guinea and fortified the border area; today you can see barbed wire, pillboxes and soldiers in many northern villages. And the Portuguese are said to have issued an unofficial warning to Senegal and Guinea that any military operation mounted across the border would bring military retaliation on the country involved. Senegal was told, via missionaries who travel back and forth, that Ziguinchor would be bombed if there was any more trouble. The Guinean border has always been quiet, and the Senegalese border has been quiet since the warning, except for the "pigeon incident". In January, some Portuguese soldiers started shooting near the border, and the inhabitants of two villages - about 1,300 people - fled to Oussouye in Senegal. The villagers said the Portuguese were shooting at them; the Portuguese said they were shooting at pigeons; still another version is that the Portuguese started shooting in exasperation over an unsuccessful effort to buy some chickens from the villagers.

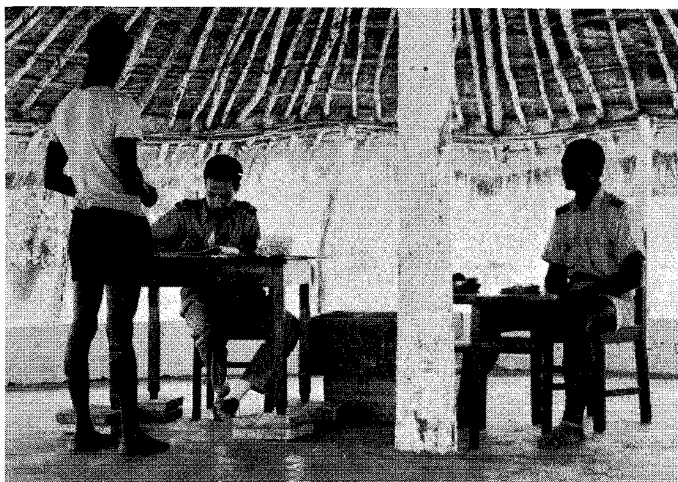
The rebel leaders in Dakar now complain that they receive no material support from Senegal. All the Senegalese give them, they say, is the radio program and "diplomatic support", which consists of denouncing Portugal in international forums. Obviously the Senegalese do not want to be bombed; they do not think military operations have any chance of success; nor do they like the idea of arms floating around the country, particularly in the troublesome province of Casamance, scene of a plot episode last fall (mentioned in DH-6). The Senegalese claim that Sekou Toure's Guinea has smuggled arms into Casamance, so that any retaliation would fall on Senegal. What Guinea is actually doing these days is not clear. Since the border is quiet, Toure may share some of Senegal's motives in avoiding military action. Rumors fly that the Guineans are training rebel troops, and the Portuguese say they expect trouble on that border this spring. But they have done nothing yet, and in Dakar Mamadou Barry, who is more sympathetic to Guinea than to Senegal, says Toure provides no help either.

Both Senegal and Guinea have mixed feelings about Guinea, and a glance at the map on page 3 will show why. Some of the people of Portuguese Guinea are related to each country; each could make an ethnic claim on Portuguese Guinea. Though neither Senegal nor Guinea seems anxious for a test of strength over the future of the little country, each wants as much influence as possible over its potential leaders. (In any case, there seems to be no reason the Portuguese Guineans should not go it alone: many independent African countries are less viable.) The cold war, of course, is in the background. Cabral's group in Conakry is said, in Dakar and in Bissau, to be getting Russian money. Last fall the United States Em-

bassy in Dakar achieved what it considered a coup. It rescued a young Guinean named Gil Fernandes from the possible clutches of Patrice Lumumba Friendship University in Moscow. Fernandes had been offered a full scholarship to Lumumba U.; the Embassy produced a counter-offer from an American university, which Fernandes chose. Then the Embassy quickly got him on a plane before his fellow-students at the University of Dakar could talk him out of his decision.

The latest episode, this one in Bissau itself, came from the Cabral organization in Conakry. On March 13, the Portuguese secret police broke into a house in the African quarter of Bissau and arrested three or four men. (Nineteen men accused of nationalist activity were arrested a year earlier.) The police found a locked drawer containing money and membership lists; some of those listed were in the local African police force. On the basis of the membership lists, there were a series of arrests in the following week: estimates ranged up to a hundred. Africans gave figures for the local following of the organization that ranged from 900 to 2,500 - figures that probably should be treated skeptically. In any case, the group was decapitated. The captured documents may have been the basis for the Portuguese statement that they expect trouble soon on the Guinean border, which is more suited to guerrilla warfare than the area adjoining Senegal.

The wave of arrests did not trouble the surface quiet of Bissau. The night after the first arrests I strolled around both downtown Bissau and the African quarter; nobody gave me more than a glance and nothing seemed to be happening. Meanwhile, Governor Peixoto Correia went on performing his extraordinary evening rite: from nine to eleven or midnight, he strolled alone in front of his palace talking with anyone who approached him. No guards were visible when I went up to him; and in his resplendent white uniform the Governor made an excellent target. Traveling in the bush, unarmed, Sylva Marques kept saying: "See? No terrorists here." Proudly he took me to watch an administrator collecting the head tax (photo at right). There was a pile of escudos by the administrator, and one guard, who was unarmed. Four guns were stacked, unattended, in an office nearby. "You couldn't leave money

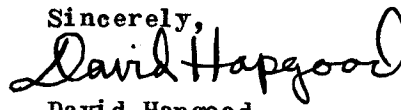


COLLECTING THE HEAD TAX. Administrator is a Cape Verdian.

lying around unguarded like that in the United States," Marques said triumphantly.

There is, of course, a world of difference between nationalist opinions and active rebellion. In the British and French colonies in West Africa, independence was granted rather than won; the colonial power simply left when nationalism became a nuisance. So far the Portuguese have shown that they are willing to use their military strength to stay in Guinea, and it seems unlikely that any armed rebellion can succeed in this tiny country. Everyone in Bissau seemed to be waiting. "We are waiting," an African said, "for independence to drop like a ripe fruit from a tree." Salazar will not rule forever, and, if Portuguese attitudes in Bissau are any criterion, it seems fair to guess that independence will come rapidly after the dictator is off the scene.

The many deficiencies of Portugal colonial rule are too well known to need reciting here. I have tried to suggest some areas in which the Portuguese heritage may prove to be comparatively beneficial.

Sincerely,  
  
David Hapgood

Received New York April 10, 1962