On Guinea Bissau and the Cape Verde Islands

Guinea Bissau is a West African country located between Senegal and Guinea (Conakry), covering an area of 14,000 square miles with a population of 500,000. The Cape Verde Islands lie 280 miles off the West African coast in the Atlantic Ocean, with a population of 300,000. Since 1956 the P.A.I.G.C. (African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde) has struggled to liberate these two areas from Portuguese colonial rule.

On September 24, 1973, the National Popular Assembly, a 120-member body composed of 80 representatives elected by the people in the 75% of the Guinea Bissau countryside liberated by the P.A.I.G.C., and 40 representatives elected from the party, proclaimed the Republic of Guinea Bissau. The Assembly met on September 23-24 in Madina do Boe, Guinea Bissau, which was the site of the very first Portuguese camp liberated by the P.A.I.G.C. after its armed struggle commenced in 1963. The Assembly also adopted a Constitution, national anthem and flag. Luiz Cabral, brother of the assassinated Amilcar Cabral who founded the P.A.I.G.C., was installed as the first President of the Republic. Various organs of government were also created.

The new Republic of Guinea Bissau controls three fourths of the territory of the country. Portuguese colonialists still hold the capital, Bissau, and several coastal towns. While the political movement on the Cape Verde Islands has increased under the leadership of the P.A.I.G.C., the Portuguese colonialists still control the Islands. They are trying to convince the U.S. Government to build an air force base there.

Over seventy countries, including 39 African countries, Russia, China and the Scandanavian countries have recognized the Republic of Guinea Bissau. The Organization of African Unity is moving to invite the new government to become a member. Discussions between the United Nations and the new government are expected regarding membership. But the U.S. Government, a staunch ally of Portugal and supplier of military assistance and economic aid both unilaterally and via NATO, has flatly refused to recognize Guinea Bissau.

During the ten-year armed struggle, P.A.I.G.C. has also been building a nation in the liberated areas. Where there were no schools and clinics under Portugal's rule, there are now hundreds of schools and clinics. Where there were a half-dozen university graduates under the Portuguese, there are now 485 graduates sponsored by the P.A.I.G.C. Whereas there was no self-government before, there are now village councils elected by the people, as well as the National Popular Assembly. On the village level, at least two of the five council members in the larger villages must be women; one of three at least in the smaller villages must be women. Besides struggling with centuries-old sex attitudes, the P.A.I.G.C. has also struggled with tribal and property attitudes which created a highly stratified class system in some tribes. In all, the struggles have not only been on the military front, but a national infrastructure and spirit is being forged.

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