In the fourth week of September, 1973, the territory of Guinea-Bissau proclaimed itself a Republic and declared Portuguese colonial rule null and void. This new African government, created by the 120-member People’s National Assembly of Guinea-Bissau, was recognized by 69 nations by the fourth week of October.
Colonial History and PAIGC

1446 Portuguese navigators land on territory later named Guinea-Bissau. Several decades later, navigators land on the Cape Verde Islands, 280 miles off the west African coast.

18th Century dramatic increase in the slave trade.

1884 European powers partition Africa. Portugal begins its military conquest of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde Islands.

1884-1936 resistance in Guinea-Bissau.

1948 Amilcar Cabral, studying agronomy in Lisbon, meets with other Africans from Portuguese colonies to discuss plans for achieving national liberation.

1956 The African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) is founded. Cabral is elected Secretary General of PAIGC.

1959 Portuguese massacre striking dockworkers in Bissau.

1963 PAIGC begins armed phase of the struggle.

1964 First National Congress of the PAIGC, held inside Guinea-Bissau.

1965-69 Military successes, development of political infrastructure, intensified social development.

January 20, 1973 Assassination of Amilcar Cabral, founder and Secretary General of the PAIGC.

July 18-22, 1973 Second National Congress of the PAIGC, held in Guinea-Bissau.

September 23-24, 1973 meeting of the People’s National Assembly in the Boe Region of Guinea-Bissau.

Article 3 (Constitution of Guinea-Bissau): The State shall have as its objective the complete liberation of Guinea and Cape Verde from colonialism, their unification into one State in accordance with the will of the people and the building of a society that shall create the political, economic and cultural conditions needed to eliminate the exploitation of man by man and all forms of subordination of the human being to degrading interests for the benefit of any individual, group or class.

The armed struggle is very important, but the most important thing of all is an understanding of our people’s situation. Our people support the armed struggle. We must assure them that those who bear arms are sons of the people and that arms are no better than the tools of labor. Between one man carrying a gun and another carrying a tool, the more important of the two is the man with the tool. We’ve taken up arms to defeat the Portuguese, but the whole point of driving out the Portuguese is to defend the man with the tool.—Amilcar Cabral
The New Government

In early November Aristides Pereira, Secretary General of the PAIGC, announced that the Republic controlled 72% of the land mass, with only fortified bases and major towns still held by Portuguese troops. He also announced that 350,000 of the 650,000 people in Guinea-Bissau live within the liberated areas. The first President of the Republic is Luiz Cabral, brother of Amilcar Cabral. The organs of the government consist of the People’s National Assembly, the Council of State, and the Council of Commissioners. The motto of the new government is, “Unity, Struggle, Progress.”

National Liberation and Reconstruction

The national armed forces guard the security of the liberated territory and attack Portuguese occupied bases and towns. The PAIGC stresses that the soldiers are armed militants of the Party and that politics are always in command. There is a regular armed force (FARP) and a local militia (FAL). Attacks on the Portuguese have become more frequent and decisive. The Portuguese military governor of Guinea-Bissau has resigned because of constant defeats. Since March of 1973, the PAIGC has challenged Portuguese control of the air with new anti-aircraft weapons which have already brought down at least 28 enemy jets and planes.

On the economic front Guinea-Bissau has been a disaster for the Portuguese colonial treasury because of huge trade deficits. Before the war the Portuguese were self-sufficient in rice production and even exported some surplus. Now the bulk of rice must be imported. This economic collapse stems from the penetration of the PAIGC’s “People’s Stores” which have eroded the colonial system of exploitation by insuring fair prices to the farmers in liberated zones. The farmers bring their goods to the People’s Stores rather than to the Portuguese.

In the social/political realm the PAIGC has taken steps to eliminate tribal and colonial systems of exploitation, and remove sexual domination of women by men. Women now have new possibilities for social mobility in health and education services. Many are also trained in the use of weapons. In the elected village committees, the basic political unit, at least two of the five members must be women.
...we can state that national liberation is the phenomenon in which a given socio-economic whole rejects the negation of its historical process. In other words, the national liberation of a people is the regaining of the historical personality of that people, its return to history through the destruction of the imperialist domination to which it was subjected.

—Amilcar Cabral
In the field of education the number of PAIGC schools is constantly increasing. The education program began in 1965 in a land where illiteracy was taken for granted. In 1968 there were 191 teachers. In 1969 there were 220 teachers. By 1970 the number had reached 250. Beyond the network of forest primary schools (155) are three boarding schools inside liberated zones and a high school preparation center and kindergarten in Conakry. For higher education the students travel to other African and European countries. Prior to 1963 there were 14 university graduates; now there are 485.

In health services there are now five field hospitals and about 130 dispensaries in the forests. When the armed struggle began in 1963 there were four doctors in the entire country. Now the PAIGC has at least 40 doctors. Health services are also brought to the people in the form of "sanitary brigades" which seek to educate the people about hygiene, sanitation, and community health. They give free innoculations against some of the common tropical diseases. Two larger hospitals are located in two neighboring African nations.

Not only did the Portuguese retard educational and medical services throughout its 500 years of colonial presence, but its bombers have destroyed schools and hospitals during the last ten years. When a three-member mission from the U.N. visited Guinea-Bissau in 1972, the members observed the great destruction carried out by Portugal. In one area they observed, "The surrounding fields showed evidence of heavy artillery shelling: crops had been burned by napalm and there were many shattered huts and granaries." Despite Portuguese military action, the infrastructure of a nation has been developed.

Guinea-Bissau and the United States

The U.S. Government denied the claim of the new Republic and said it did not meet the "criteria" of a nation. In the U.N. General Assembly, the U.S. was one of 7 nations which voted against a resolution condemning Portugal's "illegal occupation" of Guinea-Bissau. 94 nations voted in favor.
The U.S. finds itself in a minority of nations supporting Portugal both because of its commitments to NATO and because of its economic stake in southern Africa. The NATO machinery permits the training of Portuguese officers in the U.S. and West Germany. Portugal also receives other military benefits from its inclusion in NATO which aids its African colonial wars. In bilateral relations, under a five-year executive agreement (Azores Pact) which expires on February 3, 1974, Nixon unilaterally granted $436 million in credits and loans to Portugal in exchange for the use of the Azores as a submarine tracking station and an air force base. In addition, without Congressional approval, Nixon made a military grant of $905,000 for 1973-74 and released $2 million in defense material for Portugal (at one-third the list price). Portugal’s colonial wars are being economically shored up by the same executive, unilateral actions which permitted the Indochina war to be prosecuted.

A victory for Guinea-Bissau would encourage liberation movements in southern Africa, not only in Angola and Mozambique, but also aimed at overthrowing the white regimes of Smith and Vorster. Present U.S. corporate investments and the prospects of further investments in southern Africa is another reason for the U.S. Government to oppose a majority of nations in recognizing Guinea-Bissau.

Citizens to Recognize Guinea-Bissau
The Committee to Support the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, an ad hoc and broadly-based effort sponsored by 77 citizens, has begun a campaign to encourage the people of the U.S. to recognize the new African government. A petition circulated by the committee begins, “We recognize the independence and sovereignty of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau.” Once the petitions have been signed, they will be presented to representatives of the new Republic. In addition, the State Department will be informed of this demonstration of popular support for recognition of Guinea-Bissau. For further information, fill out and mail the coupon.
A revolution is dead when it has no friends in the outside world.—Amilcar Cabral

I want additional information on the citizen’s campaign to recognize Guinea-Bissau. I enclose $____ to help defray the costs of this campaign to recognize and support the Republic of Guinea-Bissau. Please send me ____ copies of the Message and Petition and I will circulate it and return it to your Committee.

I have contacted the following organization(s), and it wants to do a mailing of the Message and Petition to its mailing list. Please send ____ copies of the document to:

Name of organization __________________________________________________________

Address __________________________________________________________

Zip ______________________

I want a silkscreen poster prepared especially to celebrate the Republic of Guinea-Bissau. Enclosed is $1.50.

I want ____ more copies of this brochure describing the struggle in Guinea-Bissau and the Cape Verde Islands. (Bulk orders: 1-9 at 5¢/copy; 10-100 at 3¢/copy. Add 15% for postage.)

I want a description of organizations which have been supporting the struggles for national liberation in Africa.

Name __________________________________________________________

Address __________________________________________________________

City __________ State _____ Zip ______

Return to: Committee to Support the Republic of Guinea-Bissau
164 Madison Avenue, Second Floor
New York, New York 10016