

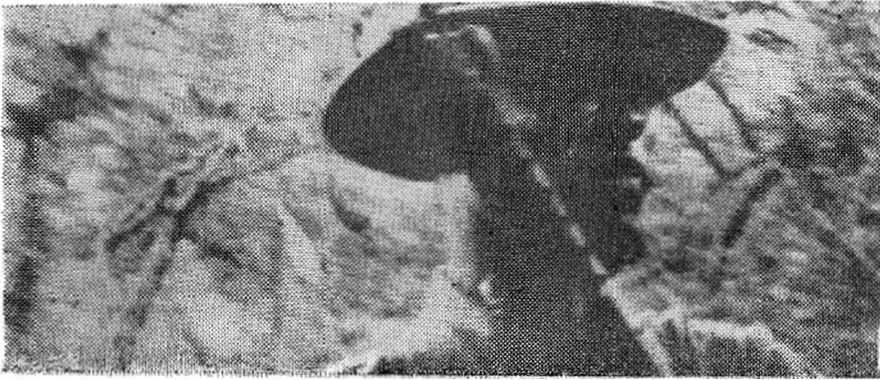
SO - CALLED PORTUGUESE GUINEA

- Official Name:** Portuguese Guinea Province
- Status:** Portuguese Colony (Area of Portuguese influence since 1469).
- Population:** 800 000 inhabitants, according to the latest extra-official estimate. The Portuguese settlers of Guinea number no more than 4000 without counting approximately 30 000 soldiers of the colonial army.
- Area:** 36 125 sq. km.
- Capital:** Bissau.
- Language:** Portuguese (official). More than eighty per cent of the population speaks "creole," a combination of Portuguese and local dialects.
- National Holiday:** August 3 (in 1959 the Pidjiguiti massacre as a result of a dock workers strike) and January 1963 (beginning of the armed struggle for national liberation).
- Political Organizations:** Officially prohibited by the colonialist authorities. The guerrilla movement is headed by the African PAIGC and was founded in September 1956 at Bissau. The guerrilla forces have liberated three-fifths of the country.
- Education:** According to UN figures, 98.8% of the population is illiterate. In the liberated areas, the PAIGC gives elementary and special education to some 20 000 Guinean youths.
- Economy:** Before the insurrection only 13.5% of the territory was cultivated; more than half of the country is covered by woods. Principal products: ground nuts, rice, palm oil, palm nuts, timber. The rice is now controlled by the guerrillas.
Peanut and palm oil make up 90% of its exports.

CAPE VERDE ISLANDS

- Official Name:** Cape Verde Province
- Population:** 230 000 inhabitants. The European population is less than 3%.
- Area:** 4 033 sq. km. (composed of nine islands and five keys).
- Capital:** Praia.
- Language:** Portuguese is the official language, although the majority of the population speaks Portuguese mixed with native dialects.
- Political Organizations:** Their struggle is led by the PAIGC.
- Education:** The population is 80% illiterate.
- Economy:** Only 12.5% of its area is cultivated and is in the hands of one hundred land owners.

The Banta Promise



So-called Portuguese Guinea and Cape Verde Islands. African territories of small extension and limited agricultural and mineral wealth, appear in the history of Portuguese colonialism as its first colonial bases in that long-suffering continent. Inhabited by various ethnic communities (mandjakos, balantas, fulas, mandingas and others) set one against the other by the ambitions and rivalries of traditional caciques and chiefs, besides the different religious factors (Islam versus animism), linguistic and historical factors, when the Portuguese arrived on the scene they knew how to take advantage of the complexity of the African social structure for their own benefit. Bribing and relying on the traditional caciques and chiefs, fostering hatreds and rivalries, they succeeded in imposing their domination.

The maxim "divide and rule" was applied and is still in effect today. Armed resistance of those years and following centuries waged by some communities, as was the case of the mandingas, was crushed not only due to the Portuguese military machine.

Once colonial exploitation had been established the colonialists concentrated mainly on three crops: sugar (Cape Verde), rice and peanuts (Guinea), which were appropriated through companies not directly engaged in the investment or production processes, but rather through a large intermediary trade with the communities. This trade, its bases, prices, ups-and-downs and conditions, represented the most bare-faced swindling of the people. The use of Cape Verde and Bissau as seaport stopping places also began to yield Portugal its profits.

Contrary to what some might have expected, a colonization phenomenon like that in Brazil, of a Spanish nature, or like the French in Algeria, did not take place.



First signs of battle

The first decades of our century went by with apparent normalcy. Nevertheless, as the 50's drew closer, in Bissau and Cape Verde, elements arose inspired by a national and anti-colonialist consciousness. Certain workers' groups, employees of the administration and of the colonial enterprises and intellectuals began to create a vanguard which for the first time proposed the struggle for independence.

Contact with the trends of revolutionary thought in Europe, the struggles in Indochina, Kenya, Algeria and Cameroon made themselves felt in this vanguard. Having broken the ties with the thesis that stood for independence from the metropoli as a previous and indispensable condition for the national liberation of the colonies, and having rejected the attempts to subordinate the incipient patriotic movements to the political life of the metropoli, the Bissau and Cape Verde vanguard took definite shape. Thus was born the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC), headed by men of the most diverse origins, such as Amilcar and Luis Cabral, Barbosa, Nino, Domingo Ramos, Aristides Pereira, Osvaldo and many others, but all pledged to the same and irrevokable historical commitment.

With the development of this struggle established, starting with the urban masses of Bissau and the main towns of the country, through popular mobilization and confrontation of the masses with the Portuguese, the inefficacy of this conception was soon proven. The violence exercised systematically by the colonialists, the massacres of Pidjiguiti in August 1959 and the brutal repression that followed it, clearly indicated the road, the most correct conception. The PAIGC then begins to deploy its leading cadres throughout the interior, to the villages in the jungles and plains, in order to guarantee and to prepare and begin armed struggle as the only way to expel the "tugas" (popular term derived from the Portuguese). The task of incorporating and mobilizing the people for the anticolonialist struggle was not an easy one.

There were, and still are today, complex obstacles which must be overcome, such as the traditional rivalries, linguistic and religious barriers, myths and atavisms, as well as the need to develop strong and convincing motivations that would be capable of leading the men and the women of those far-away regions toward revolutionary actions.

The first militants and cadres during this stage were trained in the rudiments of the war of the people, in guerrilla warfare and accumulating the first rifles and a few automatic weapons, they carried out the first actions. Bissau and the other towns passed on to a secondary position in the development of the struggle, that is, they were used for underground contacts, the procurement of information and such other aspects.

The actions began in the southern part of the country in January 1963, exactly five years ago. Enemy patrols and posts began to be harassed as well as their vehicles and ships. The first "tugas" fell and with them the invincibility of the white man; the word "independence" passed from mouth to mouth; news traveled rapidly and the presence of the guerrillas became an established fact. Barefoot, clothed in rags and insufficiently armed during those early times, nevertheless, for the villagers and communities of the South, they meant the fulfillment of the promise made by Amilcar in the village of Banta years before, when while planting small palm trees, he stated: "When they grow up, the independence of our country will be born." That is how the Banta anecdote came into being with symbolic characters of revolutionary mysticism in the historical process of that country.

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Current struggle

The growth of the struggle presented new and greater demands. The redoubled efforts of the PAIGC, of its combatants, chiefs of staff and leaders was decisive during the years from 1962 to 1966. At the same time, external factors were also contributive to an important extent. The support of the Republic of Guinea and of its Democratic Party, of Algeria and of other African and socialist countries, gave much aid to the cause for independence.

These last 18 months that separate us from 1966 mark a turning point in the course of revolutionary war in so-called Portuguese Guinea. The Popular Revolutionary Armed Forces, name of the military organization of the PAIGC have consolidated their positions. Operating on three fronts. North, South and East, each of them deals with a number of sectors and bases in which the guerrilla columns develop their fighting actions and tactical plans in a war of positions against the Portuguese. These are almost completely isolated in a number of towns and garrisons built and defended in a way very similar to the defeated Staley-Taylor "strategic villages" system of South Vietnam. The network of roads and the limited railroads, are hardly used by the enemy and it does so only in certain places with strong convoys. The numerous navigable rivers are still widely used by the Portuguese to supply their garrisons. The navigation is carried out heavily guarded with cannons and air coverage, but the guerrilla ambushes are already being directed with special emphasis towards blockading this traffic.

According to a systematic plan of harassment, attacks and ambushes, the Popular Revolutionary Armed Forces of the PAIGC are trying to maintain the operational initiative, having placed numerous enemy towns and garrisons —Madina is the best example of this— in a state of siege. Today, the guerrilla columns have a significant number of automatic weapons, bazookas and also the support of mortars and recoilless cannons. In their bases they have organized anti-aircraft defenses that have already enabled them to down three planes and damage as many others. After five years of struggle, the courageous combatants of the so-called Portuguese Guinea and Cape Verde can feel satisfied and very optimistic. The last 18 months have marked an accelerated operational rhythm. Two facts alone serve to explain the turn in the course of the operations and the qualitatively superior stage reached by the revolutionary movement in this African country.

An enemy counter-offensive was launched in the middle of last year against an important guerrilla base of the southern front. Using the U.S. technique of helicopter landings, more than two thousand Portuguese soldiers with light artillery and aerial support, attacked this guerrilla base. After a week of intense combat against the guerrilla forces of the sectors where the base was located, the Portuguese forces could not achieve any of their objectives, except that of the massacre of innocent victims and the demolishing of homes and crops with napalm and of high explosive bombs. At the end of February this year, the international airport of Bissau, scarcely 10 kilometers from this capital, suffered a demolishing attack by the guerrilla forces, who have been operating in that region for many months, with a wide use of bazookas, mortars and recoilless cannons. Considerable damage was inflicted on the Portuguese, to all their installations, hangars, control towers and garrison troops, and two fighter planes —so far as is known up to now— were destroyed, and three damaged. These two actions carried out by the guerrilla movement guided by the PAIGC sum up a complete historical stage of development of the revolutionary war and mark the beginning of a new stage decisive in the battle for national independence.

As the inhabitants of the Banta village proudly say: "The promise has been fulfilled."