

AMILCAR CABRAL

Antonio de Figueiredo

THE weeks that have elapsed since the assassination of Amilcar Cabral, during which the movement he led, the PAIGC (African Party for the independence of Guinea and the Cape Verde Islands), has shown a remarkable degree of cohesion and discipline, are a gratifying vindication of his leadership. His successor, Aristide Pereira, is also a founding member of the PAIGC and a veteran fighter who knew Amilcar Cabral's thinking and methods better than anyone else. Moreover, although Cabral, by dint of his writings and visits to foreign countries, had acquired a unique personal projection in African politics, the PAIGC had not neglected to develop the collective leadership and organisation that are required for a prolonged struggle for independence.

Cabral's legacy, however, is not confined to the PAIGC and the decisive contribution he gave for the independence of his native country.

Politicians and students of African politics learned from Cabral a new approach which rejected violence and racialism, as well as the deceptions of a formal independence and neo-colonialism.

While the struggle against the Portuguese continues, the PAIGC is giving a contribution to the overall war against Portuguese colonialism. With well over 30,000 Portuguese troops pinned down in towns and outposts scattered throughout the territory, Guinea-Bissau has become a liability that Portugal, already spending nearly half of its budget to maintain wars on extensive fronts in Angola and Mozambique, can ill afford. The Portuguese have granted a large concession for oil to Esso Exploration Guine, Inc, a subsidiary of the American group, in a desperate attempt to find financial support for the war in Guinea-Bissau. But in the long run guerrilla warfare will mean an irreversible drain on the Portuguese economy, and the Portuguese will be forced to come to terms with the realities of the situation.

In the meantime, the PAIGC is already developing its institutions and educating Guineans in the exercise of democratic self-government. Recently there was a general election of 15 regional assemblies, leading to the election of a representative National Assembly. There will follow steps towards organising separate legislative and executive institutions, and defining the roles of the state and the party; by the time national independence is attained, the PAIGC will be prepared

to run the country as a genuinely independent nation and on the basis of socialism.

The PAIGC is, therefore, both an achievement in itself and a model for other African liberation movements, such as FRELIMO and MPLA, whose leaders often come to visit the liberated areas of Guinea-Bissau to follow the practical development of revolutionary methods.

Amilcar Cabral, a man who both created and inspired, leaves behind a body of work which made his life singularly fecund and useful. He was mourned by politicians, professors, students, in many countries throughout Africa and the world; he will be remembered by his many friends as one of the most unforgettable men anyone could have the privilege to meet. And long after the last guardians of colonialism and oppression have left Guinea-Bissau, his name will be honoured by many simple men and women who, as he said of himself, 'want to do their duty in the context of their time.'
