

GUINEA-BISSAU "MORE WAR THAN MOST" PART IV: "Revolutionary Structures and Future Prospects"

The success of the guerilla struggle, led by the nationalists of the P.A.I.G.C., has been paralleled by the development of an alternate or new revolutionary "economic, political and judicial structure - a new state to replace the colonial state in the liberated regions." (Amilcar Cabral, as quoted by I. William Zartman, Africa Report, November, 1967): Probing deeper, Basil Davidson characterizes the leaders of the party as having a "stout autonomy of mind and clarity along the lines of building in their native land an entirely new structure of social life, utterly different from the structure of colonial times; but also strong in determination to avoid, if they can, any kind of bureaucratic imposition, whether revolutionary in form or not." (London Times, 11.10.67.) Various P.A.I.G.C. documents and conferences have set forth the goals and processes involved in developing these new forms of social and economic organization. On the political level the party has a pyramidal structure,

the primary unit of which is the GROUP or PARTY CELL organized among small groups on the basis of occupation, residence or the extended family. Five groups create a SECTION and various numbers of SECTIONS comprise a ZONE. There are thirteen zones in a REGION and six regions in the whole country. It appears that the party structures are strongest on the lowest and highest levels. (Zartman, AR, 11.67.) On this upper plane there is a thirty member Central Committee composed of seven departments (Political and External Affairs, Defense and Security, Economy and Finance, Information and Propaganda, Control, Organization and Internal Affairs, and Cultural). Subordinate to the Central Committee are two nine-member National Committees, one actually functioning for the Guinea mainland, the other planned for the Cape Verde Islands. Thus far six National Conferences have been held, and in February, 1964 the First Party Congress.

Going beyond this party hierarchy is the actual functioning of new ideas in the fields of economics, education and social services. On the economic level that 1964 party Congress decided that if possible farming cooperatives would be created and that each family would expand their economic production. "Peoples' Stores" have been established in an attempt to prevent the war disrupting the internal trading system. In these stores local peanuts, kolas, rice, etc. are exchanged for staples and imports from adjacent territories (soaps, sugar, tobacco, etc.). A central store is located in the Southern Zone, which provide goods to branches throughout liberated areas and to itinerant traders. The war has disrupted the activities of the Portuguese trading companies which formerly exported the peanut crop, and the amount of peanuts and rice reaching Bissau and the garrisoned cities has decreased. The P.A.I.G.C. has emphasized the diversification of the economy from the export peanut production to rice, and has announced that in certain zones, particularly in the South, production has expanded from 15 to 20%. (Zartman, AR, 11.68)

A United Nations document of April, 1968 indicates that in 1965-66 the Portuguese claimed to have 184 primary schools with c. 10,400 students and 73 school posts with 5,250 students. In the liceu (academic high school) there were 390 students, and in commercial and industrial high schools c. 600 pupils. Finally 190 students were attending government training schools, mostly for police training. It was estimated by the United Nations that only 15% of the total number of school age children were actually enrolled in schools. The P.A.I.G.C. reports to have c. 20,000 pupils in their village schools, and in 1966, 200 teachers were trained in Conakry (Guinea). (John Marcum, AR, 11.67). In 1964 the party produced their first text books (Caderno Escolar). Upper students attend a secondary school for Guineans from G-B in Conakry, or leave the continent for study in eastern Europe or China. A radio transmission school opened up in early 1966 and inside G-B there are, besides the village schools, there are two "pilot primary schools." (Zartman, AR, 11.67).

Recently the crew of a British television station entered Guinea-Bissau from the south and describing medical facilities at a border hospital in Conakry found where serious cases are transported from the war zones (napalmed victims, etc.) The hospital has only 60 beds, lacks proper medicines, and refrigeration facilities. Although it does get some aid from UNICEF and the RED CROSS, very little else comes from the west or international sources. The P.A.I.G.C. has also established two major hospitals inside the territory, one in the south with 100 beds and one in the north. Nurses aides have been trained in the interior and full nursing education is being provided by Russia and Czechoslovakia. Clinics are scattered throughout liberated areas, attended by orderlies and one travelling doctor. The Portuguese Government has tried to lure back people by offering access to Portuguese hospitals, but it appears that the party even gets the support of male nurses who have left Portuguese infirmaries to join the struggle (Anti-Apartheid News, 3.68; Zartman, AR, 11.67).

All of these segments of the party's emphasis on alternate structures function to different degrees in different areas. The television crew described the functions of a guerilla unit of 50 men and their relationship with a village. The village is responsible with supplying the fighting men with food and supplies, while the military unit provides five men to help organize village affairs (education, medical, etc.). It is obvious, as Zartman indicates, that the nationalists are well aware that they must provide people with their own viable institutions and prevent the damages of war from totally disrupting their lives. He summarizes the goals as a "healthy mixture of pragmatism and idealism in an admittedly disruptive situation."

What is the future of the war in Guinea-Bissau? Rather than delve into the hazard of

describing ultimate victory, the immediate possibilities for the future have been described by Marcum and Zartman as basically those of a military stalemate or a compromise settlement. At present the P.A.I.G.C. forces are confronted with the Portuguese military strength in the cities and urban centers, a strength which can be maintained apparently indefinitely. It is conceivable that if this situation continued according to Marcum, the "nationalists could rusticate and eventually disintegrate in remote irrelevance," although constant guerilla harassment and armaments buildup by the nationalists should not be ruled out. The other possibility as cited by Zartman of a Portuguese liberalization aimed at eventually letting go of the colony seems unlikely if such a release would involve for example, free elections, when this form of political decision-making is not permitted in Portugal itself. A P.A.I.G.C. communique of March, 1968 said that the party "is quite willing at any time to lay down its arms and find a solution to its conflict with the Portuguese Government. Our only condition is that the Portuguese Government must recognize our inalienable right to self-determination." (United Nations document). Such recognition seems unrealistic in the near future. On the other hand, the Portuguese may see it politic to negotiate with non-P.A.I.G.C. forces. There are basically two opposition groups. The Dakar-based Frente para a Libertacao a Independencia da Guine Portugese (FLING) led by Benjamin Pinto-Bull contends that the P.A.I.G.C. is controlled by outsiders (Cape Verdians), Cubans, Marxists, etc. and apparently, in spite of keeping up a stream of military communiques none of which have been verified, hope to be the focus of any possible Portuguese "search for Tsombes." Another group, the Bloc Democratique de Guinee-Bissau (BDG) is an elitist organization of traditional authorities and civil servants within G-B which came together in 1967 because it was felt that Portuguese were on the way out. The group announced its willingness to join a Guinean government-in-exile if necessary and thus tried to put itself on the political blackboard.

To the dominant active P.A.I.G.C. such third party maneuvers must dim in the context and consciousness of the role of the movement in actually freeing half - two-thirds of the land from Portuguese control and in establishing a renewed life through new structures. This makes the struggle in Guinea-Bissau "more war than most."

FILM ON GUINEA-BISSAU NOW AVAILABLE FROM THE AMERICAN DOCUMENTARY FILM COMPANY, 333 W. 86th St., New York, N.Y. "West Africa, Another Vietnam?" filmed by the crew of British Independent Television (ITV). A portrait of the nationalist guerilla forces, their goals, tactics and personalities. Base rental: \$85.00 Call (212) 799-7440. 16 mm., 40 minutes, black and white.