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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
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FROM : AMEMBASSY LISBON

E.O. : 11652: GDS

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SUBJECT : Moment of Truth Drawing Near in Portuguese Guinea?

REF : Lisbon 3322

SUMMARY: Insistent reports that the PAIGC will soon declare Portuguese Guinea independent, coupled with the costly loss of aircraft in that territory, may have convinced Portuguese leaders that it is time to seek a political solution or, at a minimum, build a third option which could be used for an honorable exit if things get worse. The Portuguese have given the Guinean People's Congress at least apparent political power and have provided that 90 percent of Congress participants will be selected by universal adult suffrage. The Balanta people, a major prop of the PAIGC, have been promised land of their own and a better future. It may be that these measures and other recent developments could provide Portugal with the basis for leaving Guinea in local hands with the sovereignty issue waffled, and able to deny having been forced out by PAIGC.

There are signs that the PAIGC itself may be interested in reaching a political agreement with Portugal, and it has been reliably reported that the PAIGC has been in contact with the Portuguese Government in the past and is involved in talks with Portuguese representatives in Paris at the moment. There are some indications that the PAIGC is willing to drop its claim to the Cape Verde Islands; this, if true, would meet a major Portuguese goal. The Portuguese Communist Party has begun predicting a political settlement; we would not rule it out. END SUMMARY.

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INTRODUCTION

A number of new elements in the political, military, economic, and social affairs of Portuguese Guinea suggest that the future of that territory may be shaped within the relatively near future. While not all present indicators point the same way--indeed, some are contradictory--we believe that the Portuguese, if not quite planning their departure, are at least building a new option for future contingencies. The basis of this option is the development of a strong political institution among the Africans in Guinea.

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

The evolution of Guinea's annual People's Congress into something akin to a provincial legislature appears to be a major step in turning political decision-making over to the territory's inhabitants. Under current law, the official legislative body in Portuguese Guinea is the Legislative Assembly, only five of whose 17 members are popularly elected. For even those five seats the franchise is restricted to 21-year old literates (and a few others). The law provides that the Legislative Assembly may "take note of the deliberations of the People's Congress when asked to do so by the Governor." This clause was seized upon by General Spinoia and the Legislative Assembly to divest the Assembly of much of its legislative power in favor of the People's Congresses.

At the opening session of the first Legislative Assembly on June 26, General Spinoia made a speech which included the following:

"...It is not possible to govern unless decisions stand on an undisputed foundation of legitimacy, and no one could ever govern in Guinea without seeking that legitimacy in respect for Guinea's social structure and in the real participation of its human groups in the defining and attaining of the objectives in view... I want to stress the necessity of complementing a transitional political architecture which does not yet meet the basic requirement of representativity, which is the essential condition of the legitimacy of political power.

"That is why the active participation of the African majorities must be assured... (This) is very difficult to achieve when it is confined by rigid subjection to orthodox institutions which are not yet adjusted to

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African reality. In search of a solution, we went as far as we could with the shaping of the Legislative Assembly, but everyone is perfectly aware that the fundamental problem remained without any real solution. With this in mind, the Congresses stood out as the solution which circumstances indicated and which even the most elementary notion of justice required."

The Legislative Assembly session took up, as best we can tell, two matters only: its own rules, and a statute formalizing the People's Congresses. The Assembly's rules commit it to a much more intimate relationship with the Congress than "taking note of the deliberations of the Congress when asked to do so by the Governor," but they stop short of requiring the Assembly to approve the acts of the Congress. Its rules require the Assembly to "take cognizance of the conclusions approved by the People's Congresses and deliberate on the imperative and programmatic aspects of those conclusions, having in view the measures which are most suited to the interests and aspirations of the people, in order to provide the Government with any opinion which it might solicit, as well as in the exercise of the powers which are conferred by Art. 25, Section 1 of the provincial politico-administrative statute. (The article referred to reads, "The Legislative Assembly has the power to make laws on all matters which interest that province exclusively, unless reserved to the organs of sovereignty.")

Having drawn up its rules and a statute to govern the People's Congresses, the Legislative Assembly wound up its first session in nine days. At the last session, Governor Spinola (ex-officio President of the Assembly) made it clear that, at least in his mind, the People's Congress was the policy-making body in Guinea:

"I think it fitting that we focus on the importance... of the link between the People's Congress and the Provincial Legislature, a link without which the Congresses would be reduced to the role of adornment for a meaningless system; for what truly institutionalizes a political body is not the legal recognition of its existence, but its effective participation in public life, and such participation has now been unequivocally assured. In making it obligatory that the Legislative Assembly take up the conclusions of the Congresses, with a view to legislating when necessary, we have taken a great step forward, truly integrating the people of Guinea in the process of the formation of the policies which affect them.

"I would also like to stress the fact that the link between the two bodies has contributed to an appreciable

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increase in the effectiveness of this Assembly, whose legitimacy has been substantially strengthened in that the exercise of sovereignty, with respect for the people of Guinea, has been authenticated." Spinola's mention of "respect for the people of Guinea" is a reminder of his frequently-stated belief that the Congresses reach decisions in the African way.

THE PEOPLE'S CONGRESS

Each Spring since 1970, a People's Congress has been held in Bissau (for background, see Lisbon A-136 of October 19, 1971). The new statute formalizes many of the practices already in force and aims to make uniform the process of selecting delegates and the procedures to be used at Congress sessions.

The annual People's Congress takes place in two phases. The first phase is a district-level meeting attended by all tribal chiefs resident in the district, plus elected delegates up to a total of one-half of one percent of the entire population. Each sub-district is to have a representation proportional to its population, and each ethnic group is to be represented proportionally as well. The meetings are to last three days. The statute does not restrict the subjects which can be discussed, but provides that those problems which cannot be solved at the regional meetings will be taken up during the Congress's second phase, which is to be a province-wide gathering.

At the regional meetings, participants are to elect one-fifth of their number to represent their districts (and, by indirection, their ethnic groups) at the provincial meeting. The provincial phase of the Congress, therefore, should draw about 500 participants, or one-tenth of one percent of the population. (The last Congress had 490 participants, according to press reports.)

Aside from the province's 40-odd chiefs, who participate in the regional phase of the Congress by virtue of their position, Congress delegates are to be elected by universal suffrage. All persons over 18 are eligible to vote; there are no requirements for literacy, fluency in Portuguese, or anything else. If, as appears to be the intention of the Portuguese, the Congresses decide matters of public policy, Portuguese Guinea will have at least a quasi-legislative body based on popular suffrage, and with a claim to the "legitimacy" of the Spinola speeches.

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It should be noted that the People's Congresses are African affairs: whites and mulattoes do not take part. Given the leading policy-making roles that white Portuguese and persons of Cape Verdean ancestry have always played in Portuguese Guinea, this is of major significance. It may be speculated that the Portuguese realize the futility of concentrating political power in the hands of the miniscule white population and the attractiveness of passing political power to the native Africans over the heads of the province's Cape Verdean elements, who long dominated (and may still dominate) the PAIGC. Since the conclusions of the Congresses must be approved by the Legislative Assembly before they become operative, it may be said that the whites and Cape Verdeans in Guinea will have to look to that body for the protection of their interests.

MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

The PAIGC's introduction of SA-7 missiles and the downing, in quick succession, of several Portuguese Air Force planes in the Spring of 1973 was followed by a period of gloom in Lisbon. At that time, rumors of GOP plans to throw in the towel were rife in Lisbon; it was widely believed that the use of missiles would end or severely curb air reconnaissance and support of ground operations by the Portuguese, thus giving the PAIGC a much freer hand.

New tactics by the Portuguese Air Force reportedly reduced the risk from missiles, however, and, together with reported poor judgment on the part of PAIGC gunners, blunted the effectiveness of the weapon. Much more important, however, in eroding the psychological advantage which the missiles gave the PAIGC was the success of the Portuguese in destroying a major PAIGC base camp in Senegal (Lisbon 1934). In that operation, the Portuguese forces, consisting of black comandos, reportedly killed 165 PAIGC soldiers and captured or destroyed more ordnance (including the destruction of 13 missiles) than in all of 1972. There was no protest from Senegal over this incident. As a result, the PAIGC cannot now be certain that any of its many base camps in Senegal are immune from attack. It may be expected that the PAIGC will devote more of its manpower and firepower to the protection of these facilities, thus reducing its strength within Portuguese Guinea. Possibly for that reason, military activity in Guinea has slackened appreciably this summer.

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ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENTS

Both the Portuguese Government and the Gulbenkian Foundation have been generous in providing assistance for economic and social development in Portuguese Guinea, and as a result an impressive number of new health and educational facilities have sprung up in the last few years, staffed at present by military personnel for the most part. Little new private investment has moved into the territory, however, although it has been announced that both the National Development Bank and the Banco Totta e Açores will open branches in Bissau next year. The local administration has reportedly met with some success in developing agricultural cooperatives.

Much more dramatic than the foregoing, however, was the announcement a few months ago by General Spinoła that the hitherto landless Balanta people, who have traditionally supplied labor for Fula landowners, would be given land of their own. At the most recent People's Congress, Spinoła told the Fulas: "The Fula group is the one with the greatest responsibilities... it is the one which has attained the highest cultural level... Would it not be unjust if they were not asked to do something so that the others might progress also? ...It is intolerable that one ethnic group remain eternally superior to others." To the Balantas, Spinoła said, "In the new society that the Government is building, the Balanta tribe is the one which will benefit the most... The Government cannot accept that a landowner remain in Bissau while others work his land... In the future, the Balantas will only work for themselves."

Subsequent to Spinoła's remarks, the giant firm Companhia Uniao Fabril announced that it was turning over its 25,000 hectare holdings in Guinea to African cooperatives, and the Banco Nacional Ultramarino revealed plans to do the same with its 15,000 hectares there. We assume that Balanta co-ops will get the lion's share.

The Fula people have traditionally been pro-Portuguese, and few have worked with the PAIGC. The Balanta, on the other hand, have supplied a large percentage of the PAIGC's fighters. Spinoła, in another passage of the speech to the Balantas mentioned above, recognized this and chided the Balantas for it: "... the Balanta used to work for others, and nothing more... this was the basis for the Balantas' complaints... Now those (Balantas) who go into the bush still work and die for others... Has the PAIGC ever asked the Balanta people what they want? You all have relatives or friends in the bush,

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in the PAIGC, and some of you continue to have dealings with the bush. The Government knows this... but does not fear it. But others among you continue to help the PAIGC, giving information and betraying the people of your own villages. Speaking with relatives (even if they are combatants) is one thing, but betraying the people is another. I ask the Balanta people: How have you benefitted from the PAIGC? What promises has the PAIGC ever kept?"

THE DIPLOMATIC FRONT

THE PAIGC

According to information available in Lisbon, the top leaders of the PAIGC are Luis Cabral, born in Bissau of a Cape Verdean father and an African mother, and Aristides Pereira, born in Cape Verde of Cape Verdean parents and educated in Cape Verde. Cabral and Pereira are said to belong to a four-man "Executive Committee for the Struggle Against the Portuguese," along with Francisco (Chico Te) Mendes, born in Guinea of African parents, and Joao Bernardo (Nino) Vieira, likewise born in Guinea of African parents. This group, according to a Portuguese news agency report, was set up by Sekou Toure in order to increase the African element in the leadership of the PAIGC. Many Portuguese, however, believe that Toure himself controls the PAIGC, and some contend that President Senghor of Senegal also believes that Toure, whom Senghor hates, is in the saddle.

GOP/PAIGC CONTACTS?

One of General Spinoza's former top aides and another military officer related to him by marriage have told Embassy officers that the General was in frequent contact with the PAIGC and with Amilcar Cabral. A hypothesis widely accepted in Portugal is that Amilcar Cabral was killed as a result of strife within the PAIGC stemming from Cabral's desire (and steps) to bring about a political settlement with Portugal. The Counselor of the Vatican Diplomatic Mission in Lisbon has told an Embassy officer that he understands that the Portuguese are meeting secretly with PAIGC representatives in Paris in an effort to reach an agreement to end the war. A well-informed reporter has the same story, with the added element that the meetings have been arranged with the help of the French Communist Party.

WHY END THE WAR?

We believe that the Portuguese might be willing to grant virtual independence to Portuguese Guinea if (a) it could

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be done under a formula which would not dishonor the past, would allow for future cultural and honorific links with Portugal, and would not appear to be the fall of the first African domino, and (b) Portugal retained undisputed title to Cape Verde. The PAIGC's threat of a declaration of independence may hasten Portugal's search for such a formula. Portugal has no real economic stake in Guinea, and the cost of hanging on may begin to look prohibitive if more aircraft are lost, since the GOP has limited access to replacements.

On the other hand, the PAIGC may be willing to accept half a loaf. The "revolution" in Cape Verde has been a non-starter, and dissension within the PAIGC, along with the Spinola policies mentioned above, may make the position of Cape Verdeans in Guinea more and more tenuous. These aspects may tempt Cape Verdeans in the PAIGC to settle before things get worse for them. If, as some Portuguese believe, Sekou Toure wants a client PAIGC and a captive (though nominally independent) Guinea-Bissau, Senghor and such PAIGC leaders not interested in the Toure option may be pressing for a settlement. In this connection, it could be significant that recent PAIGC statements mention an independent "Guinea-Bissau" without reference to Cape Verde.

We note that the Portuguese Communist Party, in its radio broadcasts and clandestine propaganda, has repeatedly stated that conditions are ripening for an end to the "colonial wars." A PCP document prepared in mid-August states, "...Facts will prove that the time is coming when the Government... will itself be forced to seek a political solution, to which the Government will try to give a demagogic and neo-colonialist cast, but which in fact will be the death-knell of Portuguese colonialism." This looks to us like a warning that the party faithful should not be frightened by a "neo-colonialist solution."

FUTURE LEADERSHIP

While we cannot judge the quality of the leadership of the PAIGC, it is safe to point out that, unlike Amilcar Cabral, the current PAIGC leaders are not particularly respected or even well-known in Lisbon. On the Portuguese side, the leadership is presently unimpressive. The one Guinean political figure who was well respected on the Portuguese side, National Assembly Deputy James Pinto Bull, was killed in a helicopter crash in 1970. Guinea's only Deputy at the moment is Nicolau Martins Nunes, who is pleasant and intelligent but also timid and lackluster. One possible political

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leader might be Joaquim Baticã Ferreira, a young Manjaco chief who worked closely with Spinola in the past. He is the brother of a physician resident in Lisbon. If the People's Congress develops political muscle, it may be expected that new leaders will emerge from that body.

COMMENT: While the developments reported above do not lend themselves to sweeping conclusions, they do suggest that the Portuguese Government may be seeking to create a third option between the PAIGC route and the status quo. It appears that the Portuguese want to build a new political structure, in order to have a potential inheritor of political power should Portugal decide to leave, and thereby exercise pressure on the PAIGC to come to terms before that structure gains strength. The PAIGC's strongest card at the moment appears to be its threat to declare independence soon. The Portuguese seem to believe that such a declaration would be recognized by many countries and would bring in its wake a host of unpleasant complications. To forestall or avoid this, it is conceivable that the Portuguese would go along with the integration of the PAIGC in GOP-created instruments like the People's Congress or make some other arrangement which would allow Portugal to exit gracefully.

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