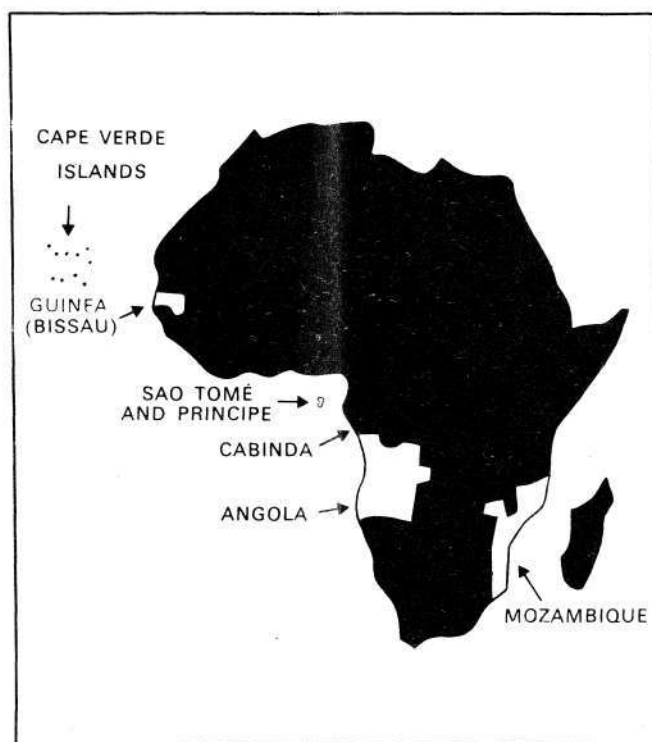


# THE STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE OF 'PORTUGUESE' AFRICA.

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by Basil Davidson



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Map, left, shows in white the African territories under Portuguese administration. On September 24, 1973, the Republic of Guinea (Bissau) was proclaimed by the first session of the newly elected National Assembly held in the liberated areas of the country. General elections for the members of the National Assembly were held in 1972 by the African Party for the Independence of Guinea (Bissau) and Cape Verde, known as PAIGC, following meetings throughout the liberated areas.

Africa's problems of today are sometimes described as being those of the transition from ways and ideas of the more or less distant past to ways and ideas of the modern world. This idea of transition is a useful one, at least so long as one keeps in mind that the ways and ideas of Africa's more or less distant past were valid forms of civilization, in their day and age, and not some kind of hopeless barbarism.

But there may be a better definition for Africa's problems of today, especially in those large regions that are still under foreign rule, whether colonial or racist. I suggest that these problems are really those of the renewal of indigenous processes of social and cultural development: of the renewal, that is, of processes which were already in existence before the period of foreign rule but which

were stopped and distorted by the consequences of foreign rule, and remain so to this day.

Essentially, then, these are the developmental problems of a genuine and effective democratisation within the framework of modernising institutions. Looked at in this light, the problems of the inhabitants of the Portuguese colonies, a total of some fifteen million Africans and about half a million Portuguese and other European settlers or employees, appear in all their difficulty.

The position of these Africans is a rather special one, though possessing obvious parallels with that of their neighbours in Rhodesia and South Africa. This specialness doesn't arise from the antiquity of Portugal's adventures in Africa, for the story of Portuguese colonialism is little

different in its broad outlines from that of any other colonial power.

It's true, of course, that Portuguese soldiers were able to seize and minimally colonize a few coastal areas of Angola and Mozambique as long ago as the 16th century, while others pushed up the valley of the Zambezi as far as Sena and Tete, where they had founded settlements before 1600. But the effective colonial occupation of these vast territories of Angola and Mozambique, and of the smaller territory of West African Guiné (the old "Rios do Cabo Verde"), began only in the 1890s and was not made complete until the 1920s.

The specialness arises from something else. It arises from the nature of the Portuguese colonial system and ethos, and above all from their refusal to make any least concession to the claims of African equality and sovereignty in Africa.

The motivations of those who govern Portugal are various and interesting. But whatever they are their stern intransigence—and words far less polite could reasonably be used, and often are—has enormously enhanced the problems of modernisation.

This intransigence has meant that the necessary journey "into the modern world" of the Africans whom they rule cannot begin so long as they remain in command.

Within the Portuguese system these Africans may be able, if rarely, to acquire the elements of modern education, but it will only be an education designed to serve the ends of Portuguese nationalism. These Africans may be able to participate in modernising forms of economic activity, but once again it will only be as servants or subordinates of an economy designed to benefit Portugal.

The present Prime Minister of Portugal, Professor Marcello Caetano, has explained why. "The natives of Africa," he wrote in an important doctrinal statement of 1954, never since modified "must be directed and organised by Europeans but are indispensable as auxiliaries. The blacks must be seen as productive elements organised, or to be organised, in an economy directed by whites." (*Os Nativos na Economia Africana*, Coimbra 1954).

Denied the hope of peaceful change, the "natives of Africa," as we know, have chosen armed resistance rather than continued surrender to foreign rule, just as the natives of other continents have done in situations not dissimilar.

Much has been written about this armed resistance, but really it is not the interesting or important part of the story. That part lies in the use which the movements of resistance have made of areas, large or small, from which they have evicted Portuguese control. There, at last, they have been able to begin to run their own affairs, and, in doing that, to forge new institutions and structures of society that can underpin the needs of material and cultural progress.

Here, in other words, the tasks of democratisation within modernising frameworks are being tackled for the first time in these territories. No longer "auxiliaries" of the colonial system. Africans in these liberated areas can stand on their own feet and face the challenge of their own problems.

What do you find in these liberated areas? Many visitors from many countries, and of many political loyalties, have gone there to discover the answer. Almost all their reports, whether enthusiastic or sceptical, "committed" or neutral or even hostile, are in substantial agreement on the essence of the matter (1). They find long-deprived peoples who are caught up in a major effort to modernise their lives, and to rule themselves in ways that are as different from their own ways of the more, or less distant past as from the ways of colonial rule.

These peoples apparently see no gain in working for a mere reform of colonial structures and institutions, for no such reform, as they often say, can set them free. What they are engaged upon is something greater and more useful. They define this by what they do and aim for, but their leading spokesmen have also defined it in words which have the ring of profound meditation. They are fortunate in having found spokesmen and leaders of an often remarkable and momentous talent.

Thus the late Amílcar Cabral, founder and outstanding leader of the PAIGC in Guiné and the Cape Verde Islands, is the author of writings now widely recognised as significant contributions to the theory of social change among so-called "under-developed" peoples.

He has described the movements of liberation as comprising "a forced march on the road to cultural progress," because the compulsions of armed resistance have here found their most positive element in the drive for and achievement of new understandings, new ideas, new modes of individual and community behaviour, and, with all this, a new means of mastering the problems of national freedom" (A. Cabral, *National Liberation and Culture*, lecture delivered at Syracuse University, New York, Feb. 20, 1970).

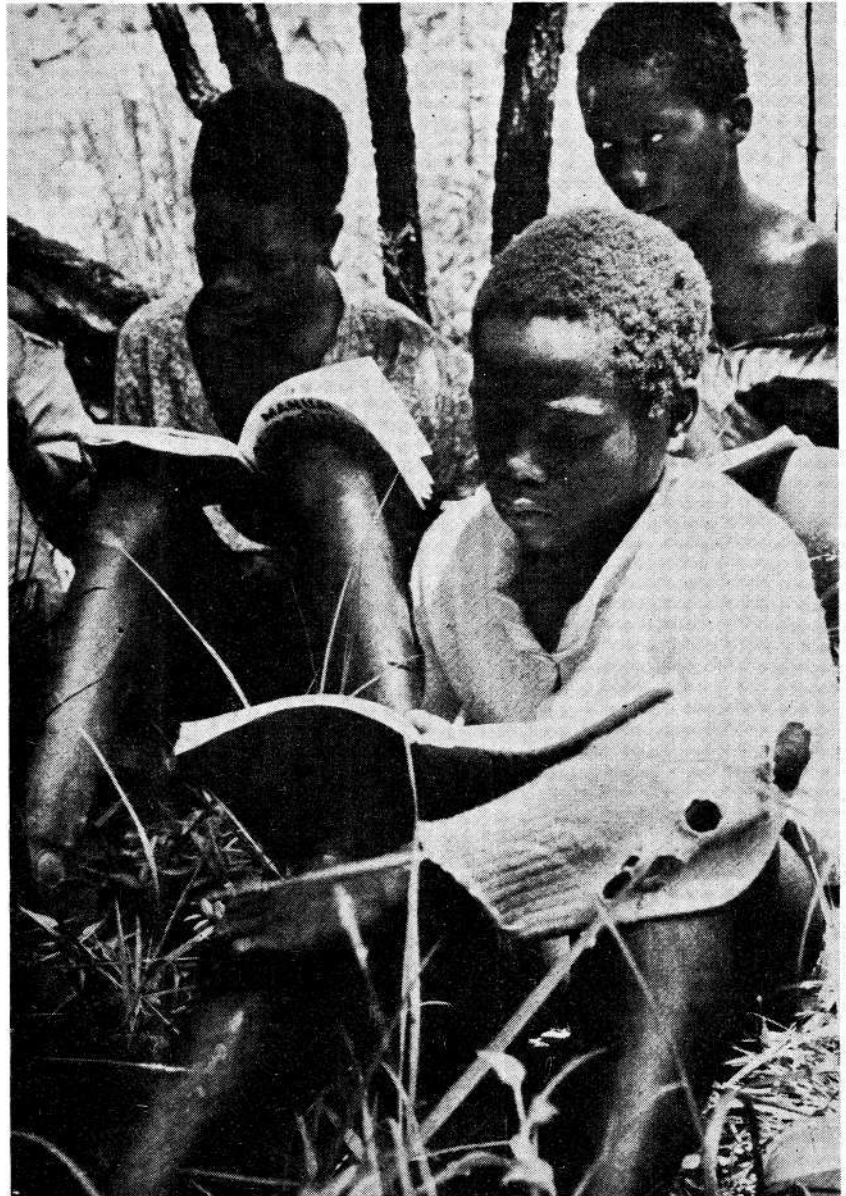
And they have done this because these movements are nothing if not movements of voluntary participation. They are "schools of progress" even more than they are fighting units or other means of self-defence.

Or consider a definition of what these liberated areas are really about that comes from the Angolan leader, Dr Agostinho Neto. What they are trying to do, he said in 1970, "is to free and modernise our peoples by a dual revolution—against their traditional structures which can no longer serve them, and against colonial rule."

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(1) After an initial visit to colonial Angola in 1954, the present writer has so far made four visits to liberated areas: to those of the liberation movement in Guinea (Bissau) and Cape Verde (PAIGC) in 1967, to those of the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) in Mozambique in 1968, to those of the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) in Angola in 1970, and again to Guinea (Bissau) in 1972.

High priority is given to education. As soon as the army has established sufficient control over a region bush schools are set up for full time primary education for children and usually run adult literacy classes as well.



Their aim, in other words, is not only to displace the Portuguese who claim to rule them but to build a new society: to found and develop institutions of self-rule whose democratic and modernising vitality can overcome not only the heritage of foreign autocracy, but also the heritage of an older Africa divided into small groups and rival ethnic states.

One may well think this a bold and unexpected aim to find among peoples so sorely ravaged and harassed by military repression and all its accompanying evils, yet this is none the less the aim that visitors have all agreed that they have found here.

But what does it look like on the ground, this "forced march on the road to cultural progress?" What you find, obviously, differs much according to time and place, for all this has to take place in the midst of wars of repression that are savagely pursued.

Some liberated areas have long been safe from any effective enemy intervention, and there you find the building of a new society already far advanced. Other areas are newly wrested from the enemy, or subject to frequent ground-raids and bombing forays; there you find that the work is often interrupted, and sometimes at an early stage. But although the momentary contrasts are many, the policies and "atmosphere" are strikingly the same. All three movements are in close touch with one another, and have the same basic approaches.

Two examples from my own experience. Travelling in 1970 through areas of eastern Angola under MPLA control, I coincided with one of the Portuguese Army's periodical "sweeps in force." The MPLA's fighting units there were on the move and so, in consequence, was the local population that look to these units for protection. Woodland villages were abandoned for the time being; social services, such as schools and medical services, were likewise disrupted.

Weeks would pass before things could be put together again. It was a trying time, and bore witness to the sufferings caused by these colonial wars. Yet the national movement remained in being, whether in its fighting units, its village committees, or its co-ordinated groups of workers concerned with this or that social and cultural activity, and could settle back to its work again as soon as the danger had passed.

In areas long safe from danger the picture is a different one. Last winter I spent some time in the Como sector of southern Guiné. From this sector the Portuguese were completely evicted in 1965, and had not been able to return. So for seven years the people of Como had been free to work at the building of their new society.

They had gone far towards it. Long-established village committees, all of them elected from local people, had an uninterrupted responsibility together with the full-time workers of their national movement, the PAIGC, for every aspect of public affairs, educational or medical, legal or political.

Here and elsewhere, even before the independence of Guiné was officially proclaimed, a new state was already in existence, a new society was already taking shape, and in an atmosphere of calm and confidence that seemed continuously impressive.

Statistics can tell a little of this story. By 1972, for example, the PAIGC had promoted enough schools and trained enough teachers to give some 8 500 boys and girls the elements of a modern education. They had even carried through a general election for a sovereign National Assembly by direct and secret ballot in wide-ranging liberated areas.

Similar statistics from the liberated areas of Angola and Mozambique can usefully add to the picture. It is also clear that much more could be achieved if the means were to hand, whether in trained personnel or material necessities, and especially the second.

Yet the living reality that unfolds before you in these plains and forests, swamps and woodlands, goes beyond the statistics, even very far beyond. Whether in large liberated areas or in small, strongly held or subject to repeated raids and bombing, here are "backward" people who have become determined to win free from their "backwardness," and to understand the world as it really is.

These are people who are working to achieve this by setting aside the blinkers of tradition or subjection, racism or "tribalism," despair or lack of self-belief. And this they are doing by a process of voluntary participation in the changing of their lives and thoughts.

No one who travels in these areas will come back with any impression of utopia. Far from that, daily life is harsh in toil and hunger or the threat of violent death. Not everyone understands what is being attempted. Many confusions remain, and no doubt will do so for long to come. The timid withdraw, the fools betray.

All things natural to the human condition are present here. Yet these things include clarity and courage, steadfastness and hope, while the unrelenting growth and expansion of these movements suggest that these are the qualities which prevail. These movements of renewal could not otherwise have gained their remarkable success. It is a success that looks to the rest of the world for understanding, and so for aid and friendship. □

# **"THE EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL MENACES TO LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC SOCIETIES"**

by John M. Raftery

It will be impossible to analyse or even mention, in this short exposition, the whole spectrum of internal and external menaces, and their interconnections. So, in order to give a meaningful treatment to a few selected topics, I will dispense with definitional problems, (apart from a comment about the misuse of words in the next paragraph).

At present, we are indisputably living through one of those periods of cultural collapse that periodically overtake history, a time when the human estate is at low ebb, only tenuously connected to the sources of its replenishment. This is more or less a feature of Eastern and Western societies, so my first contention is this: The question of