

gradual unification of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde into a single state.

That work has been abruptly cut short by the coup, whose leaders have now declared that Guinea-Bissau will go it alone. Capverdeans have been purged from government. The new 'Council of the Revolution' consists entirely of Guineans, and has a majority of military personnel.

There has always been a danger that unscrupulous Guinean politicians could whip up anti-Capverdean feeling. Quite deliberately Portuguese colonialism used Capverdeans in Guinea-Bissau in much the same way as the British used Indians in East Africa. They would fill the lower ranks of the bureaucracy, and hold important trading positions. The Portuguese provided better schooling for Capverdeans than for Guineans: with the result that the illiteracy rate in Cape Verde in the early 1960s was 'only' 85% compared to about 99% in Guinea-Bissau. There was a racial difference too: centuries of intermixing had produced a population on Cape Verde that was largely mestizo (of mixed blood), while in Guinea-Bissau there were very few whites or mestizos.

#### GUINEA-BISSAU COUP

The coup in Guinea-Bissau on November 14 was totally unexpected — a rude shock for all who had supported the exemplary and successful armed struggle waged by PAIGC (African Party for the Independence of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde) against Portuguese colonialism. Although the coup-makers later pledged their fidelity to the principles of Amílcar Cabral, the founder of PAIGC and its leader until his assassination in 1973, by their action they had already violated at least two of those principles.

The first was that disagreements inside PAIGC should be settled through discussion and democratic procedures, not by the use of military force. In the past the army has been strictly subordinate to the Party: now coup leader and former Prime Minister Nino Vieira has used the army against the Party.

Secondly, PAIGC was founded on the basis of unity between Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde, despite the obvious geographical difficulties (Cape Verde, an arid archipelago, with nine inhabited islands, is separated from Guinea-Bissau by 500 miles of the Atlantic). In his lectures for PAIGC cadres, Amílcar Cabral wrote: 'Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde are one. Only an ignorant man does not know this'. PAIGC fought against all tendencies to treat one of the countries in isolation from the other, and succeeded in wresting independence from the Portuguese for both. Since then, the two PAIGC governments have worked for the

and in August exacerbated the situation by inviting Western companies to start prospecting in the disputed area.

There is no evidence of direct intervention by Sekou Toure, but it is significant that Vieira was in Conakry a week before the coup, and that Conakry not only immediately recognised the new regime, but sent a senior delegation to Bissau with offers of food aid. For Vieira had turned popular discontent over economic problems to his advantage. Serious food shortages were the most important of these difficulties. They were caused, not by Capverdean sharp practice, as was insinuated, but the irregular rainfall for three out of the past four years.

As for the army, it appears that this was mobilised against President Luis Cabral's government on sectional, professional grounds. The government was preparing a reduction in the size of the armed forces, and in the defence budget, and the introduction of a hierarchy appropriate to a regular army, rather than the looser command structure inherited from the guerrilla war. Army commanders may thus have thrown their lot in with Vieira in order to protect their own relatively privileged position.

In terms of future domestic policy, little is clear at the time of writing. The one specific pledge made by the new regime is to develop the private sector, in particular by relaxing the state monopoly on foreign trade. A move to the right in social policy is to be feared, especially if the new regime seeks a base for itself among the local Muslim aristocracies of the Fula, Mandjack and Mandinka tribes.

One intriguing, and possibly hopeful, sign, however, is the composition of the Provisional government announced by the 'Council of the Revolution' a week after the coup. Although the 'hard-core' PAIGC leaders have been purged, a majority of the members of the former cabinet have been allowed to retain their posts. Most of these men were not initially associated with the coup, and this may represent an attempt at compromise by Vieira. It is clear, however, that the government is not the true locus of power. Real power is currently held by the army via the 'Council of the Revolution'.

A major concern must be for the physical safety of President Luis Cabral. The Capverdean National Council of PAIGC has demanded the immediate release of Cabral, who is also the Party's Assistant General Secretary. The way in which the former President is treated could have a determining influence on the future relations between Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde.

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