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PORTUGUESE GUINEA: THE PAIGC AFTER AMILCAR CABRAL

The assassination January 20 in Conakry, Guinea, of Amilcar Cabral, Secretary General of the African Party for the Independence of Portuguese Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC), may temporarily set back the African insurgency in Portuguese Guinea. Innocente Camil, the guerrilla naval commander, reportedly confessed to the crime after his effort to escape in a PAIGC patrol boat was thwarted with the help of a Soviet destroyer. While there is no evidence linking the Portuguese Government directly to the assassination, Lisbon's complicity cannot be ruled out.

Under Cabral's direction since 1956, the PAIGC developed into the most successful insurgent force facing the Portuguese. Cabral depended heavily on Soviet and Cuban military assistance, but remained politically moderate, and had been receiving increasing economic and political assistance from the Scandinavian countries and a number of international philanthropic organizations.

Motives for Assassination. The assailants' motives remain unclear. Most signs presently point to a feud between mulattos from the Cape Verde Islands and mainland Africans, but there are also signs of Portuguese involvement. At this stage, our information is so fragmentary that any judgments are highly tentative.

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The PAIGC is known to have had internal stresses. There have been indications for a number of years of friction between the predominantly mulatto leadership and the largely black cadre. Cabral also faced serious though sporadic opposition from his military commanders, who chafed under his curbs on military activity in Portuguese Guinea and the continuing subordination of military to political aims. But this infighting never seemed to get beyond control until, just before the assassination, a bitter dispute reportedly erupted between black mainlanders supporting Cabral, a Cape Verdian, and mulattos opposed to him.

The Portuguese Connection. The Portuguese have called Cabral's murder "a grave and condemnable act" and denied complicity in it. Cabral's assailants, who also kidnapped several other top PAIGC leaders, confessed in recorded depositions that they were working for the Portuguese. According to their elaborate story, Lisbon was to grant independence to a black government in Guinea Bissau on condition that the dissidents kill Cabral and disrupt the PAIGC. Given Guinean President Toure's anti-Portuguese feelings and his penchant for showcase trials, the evidential value of the confessions is problematical.

Even so, Portuguese complicity cannot be ruled out on the basis of what we now know. The attempted escape of the assassins by sea in the direction of Portuguese Guinea suggests that the Portuguese may have been involved, but in itself is not conclusive. The Portuguese assertion that they might better deal with Cabral, whom they know well, than with an unknown and presumably less moderate leader, probably has some substance, but there is little evidence that they have ever acted on this belief or,

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Fernandes, educated in the US, is the movement's representative in Cairo. Moderate, multilingual, and astute, he was Cabral's most frequent traveling companion, and is nearly as well known. Cabral's half-brother, Luiz, PAIGC representative in Dakar, is an outside possibility as successor, although he is not as highly regarded as his brother. Two African military leaders, Mamadou N'Diaye, chief of staff, and Joao Bernardo Vieira, field commander in the south, may figure in the line of succession, if they can successfully establish that they were not parties to the assassination. Both have been critical of the mulatto leadership and the slow pace of the military campaign.

The Guinean Connection. Much of the PAIGC's past success can be attributed to Sekou Toure, who gave Cabral a virtually free hand in operating from Guinea. Toure will probably now demand the final say in choosing the new leader, and the Guinean president's greater involvement in PAIGC affairs could well change the movement's character. Cabral was able to keep his political distance from Toure, who is a doctrinaire radical. Cabral's successor will be much less independent. Toure, who is known to have urged an increase in military activity against the Portuguese, may now seek to escalate the guerrilla war.

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