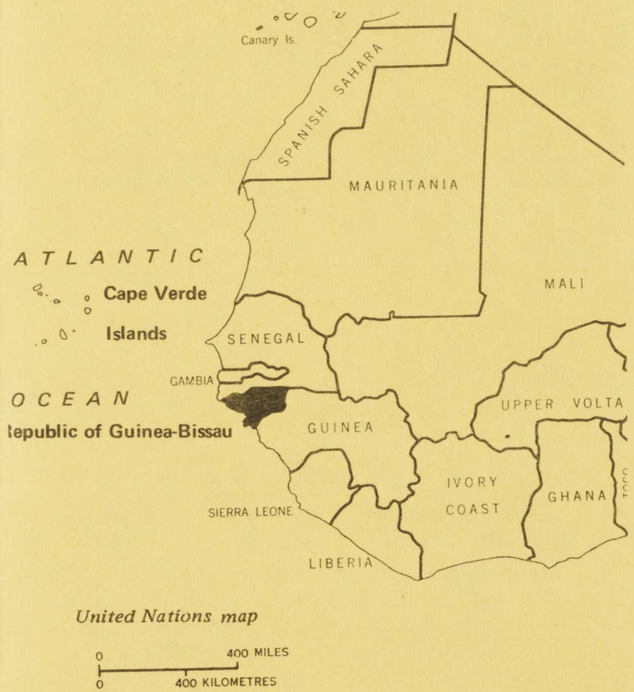
Colonial History and PAIGC

1446	Portuguese navigators land on territory later named Guinea-Bissau. Several decades later, navigators land on the Cape Verde Islands, 280 miles off the west African coast.
18th Century	dramatic increase in the slave trade.
1884	European powers partition Africa. Portugal begins its military conquest of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde Islands.
1886-1936	resistance in Guinea-Bissau.
1948	Amilcar Cabral, studying agronomy in Lisbon, meets with other Africans from Portuguese colonies to discuss plans for achieving national liberation.
1956	The African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) is founded. Cabral is elected Secretary General of PAIGC.
1959	Portuguese massacre striking dockworkers in Bissau.
1963	PAIGC begins armed phase of the struggle.
1964	First National Congress of the PAIGC, held inside Guinea-Bissau.
1965-69	Military successes, development of political infrastructure, intensified social development.
January 20, 1973	Assassination of Amilcar Cabral, founder and Secretary General of the PAIGC.
July 18-22, 1973	Second National Congress of the PAIGC, held in Guinea-Bissau.
September 23-24, 1973	meeting of the People's National Assembly in the Boe Region of Guinea-Bissau.
September 24, 1973	Proclamation of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau.

Article 3 (Constitution of Guinea-Bissau): The State shall have as its objective the complete liberation of Guinea and Cape Verde from colonialism, their unification into one State in accordance with the will of the people and the building of a society that shall create the political, economic and cultural conditions needed to eliminate the exploitation of man by man and all forms of subordination of the human being to degrading interests for the benefit of any individual, group or class.



United Nations map

The armed struggle is very important, but the most important thing of all is an understanding of our people's situation. Our people support the armed struggle. We must assure them that those who bear arms are sons of the people and that arms are no better than the tools of labor. Between one man carrying a gun and another carrying a tool, the more important of the two is the man with the tool. We've taken up arms to defeat the Portuguese, but the whole point of driving out the Portuguese is to defend the man with the tool.—Amilcar Cabral

The New Government

In early November Aristides Pereira, Secretary General of the PAIGC, announced that the Republic controlled 72% of the land mass, with only fortified bases and major towns still held by Portuguese troops. He also announced that 350,000 of the 650,000 people in Guinea-Bissau live within the liberated areas. The first President of the Republic is Luiz Cabral, brother of Amilcar Cabral. The organs of the government consist of the People's National Assembly, the Council of State, and the Council of Commissioners. The motto of the new government is, "Unity, Struggle, Progress."

National Liberation and Reconstruction

The *national armed forces* guard the security of the liberated territory and attack Portuguese occupied bases and towns. The PAIGC stresses that the soldiers are armed militants of the Party and that politics are always in command. There is a regular armed force (FARP) and a local militia (FAL). Attacks on the Portuguese have become more frequent and decisive. The Portuguese military governor of Guinea-Bissau has resigned because of constant defeats. Since March of 1973, the PAIGC has challenged Portuguese control of the air with new anti-aircraft weapons which have already brought down at least 28 enemy jets and planes.

On the *economic* front Guinea-Bissau has been a disaster for the Portuguese colonial treasury because of huge trade deficits. Before the war the Portuguese were self-sufficient in rice production and even exported some surplus. Now the bulk of rice must be imported. This economic collapse stems from the penetration of the PAIGC's "People's Stores" which have eroded the colonial system of exploitation by insuring fair prices to the farmers in liberated zones. The farmers bring their goods to the People's Stores rather than to the Portuguese.

In the *social/political* realm the PAIGC has taken steps to eliminate tribal and colonial systems of exploitation, and remove sexual domination of women by men. Women now have new possibilities for social mobility in health and education services. Many are also trained in the use of weapons. In the elected village committees, the basic political unit, at least two of the five members must be women.

Women health leader explains medical program.

. . . we can state that national liberation is the phenomenon in which a given socio-economic whole rejects the negation of its historical process. In other words, the national liberation of a people is the regaining of the historical personality of that people, its return to history through the destruction of the imperialist domination to which it was subjected. —Amilcar Cabral