

Visit of the former President of the Republic of Cape Verde, H.E. Pedro Pires, to the University of Hradec Králové on October 26, 2022 – **LAUDATIO** by assoc. prof. Jan Klíma.

Your Excellency, distinguished leading Cape Verdean statesman, Commander Pedro Pires, Your Magnificence, Vice-Rector of the University of Hradec Králové, distinguished academics, distinguished members of the Cape Verdean delegation, special guests:

Allow me to draw attention to the importance of the visit of one of the prominent African statesman, the former Prime Minister and President of the Republic of Cape Verde, Mr. Pedro Verona Rodrigues Pires, to the University of Hradec Králové. At the same time, I will point out the merits due to which the Rector of the University of Hradec Králové decided to award the UHK rector's medal to our special guest.

It is truly an extraordinary experience to meet a personality who fought for the independence of his people in a prolonged colonial war in the most challenging conditions of the Guinean jungles. It is truly an extraordinary opportunity to welcome one of the liberators of a new African nation to the university grounds. Let us recall the unique work of a man whose life trajectory coincides not only with the fate of the Cape Verdean nation but also with the history of African decolonization and the building of a free Africa.

Pedro Verona Rodrigues Pires was born in 1934 on the Cape Verdean island of Fogo at a time when Cape Verde was a Portuguese colony. It is not without interest that it was in the 1930s that Júlio Bento de Oliveira led the Sokol movement on the Cape Verdean island of São Vicente following the Czechoslovak model. In the poor "island Sahara" it was difficult to get a decent education at the time, but Pedro Pires, after completing primary and part of secondary school in São Filipe on his native island, continued his studies in the capital Praia and then at the famous Gil Eanes secondary grammar school in Mindelo on the aforementioned island of São Vicente. The tragedy of the famine that affected Cape Verde in the years 1943–1947 was also a part of his life experiences.

In 1956, Pedro Pires went to Lisbon to study at the University of Natural Sciences. At this time, African decolonization became the main topic of world politics, and intellectuals from the Portuguese colonies discussed it in Lisbon's House of Students of the Empire (CEI). Pedro Pires realized that the irreversible process of African liberation conflicted with his imposed role as a Portuguese citizen and a militia officer in the Portuguese Air Force. As a nationalist, he watched the emergence and consolidation of liberation organizations in Angola and the creation of local governments in African countries. After the "Year of Africa" 1960, in particular, the beginning of the colonial war in Angola on February 4, 1961, inspired him to decide to contribute to the removal of colonial rule, which the Portuguese "overseas provinces" Angola, Mozambique, Portuguese Guinea, São Tomé e Príncipe, and Cape Verde were subjected to.

In June 1961, Pedro Pires left Portugal and joined the resistance led by the PAIGC party and its president Amílcar Cabral. In the service of the resistance, he worked in Ghana, in Guinea-Conakry, in Morocco, won over patriots in Senegal and France, and built connections to the illegal structures of the PAIGC on the Cape Verde Islands. After the start of combat operations on the territory of Portuguese Guinea in 1963, he trained abroad in combat activities in 1965–1968. In 1968–1974, he was a member of the military-political bodies of the PAIGC on the front in Portuguese Guinea. He held important positions as a member of the Executive Committee of Combat (CEL), the War Council

(CG), and Deputy Commander of the Southern Military Region. On II. PAIGC congress in 1973, he was elected chairman of the Cape Verdean National Commission, i.e., the Cape Verdean National Section of the Resistance.

Amílcar Cabral succumbed to a problematic situation in early 1973. However, the PAIGC party, after a victorious offensive, declared the independent Republic of Guinea-Bissau in September 1973 on a large part of the liberated territory. Pedro Pires participated in the first steps of this African state as Deputy Commissioner for the People's Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARP). The success of the joint Guinean-Cape Verdean resistance disintegrated the Portuguese armed forces. It led to the "Carnation Revolution", which overthrew the authoritarian regime in Portugal on April 25, 1974, and began decolonization. It was Pedro Pires who in December 1974, signed the agreement granting independence to Cape Verde and later negotiated with the revolutionary Portuguese government the course of the transition to independence declared on July 5, 1975.

As the head of the first independent Cape Verdean government, Pedro Pires had to ensure the development of an island country without significant resources. This was achieved through judicious policy, and during the years 1976–1988 the GDP doubled, and education and healthcare improved. As a result, Cape Verde has become a credible state. Meanwhile, in 1981, with the formation of the PAICV political party, Cape Verde completely separated from the PAIGC, and Pedro Pires, as Deputy General Secretary of the PAICV, led the society to a political change confirmed by IV. PAICV congress in February 1990. Political pluralism has proven itself, and in democratic conditions, Pedro Pires announced his candidacy for the highest office of the president of the republic in September 2000. In February 2001, he was elected as the third president of the Republic of Cape Verde in open elections. Already at the end of his first presidential mandate, he negotiated the beneficial economic and monetary connection of Cape Verde to the European Union, which still allows our tourists to use the popular Cape Verdean resorts easily. Again, Pedro Pires was elected president of the republic in the first round on February 12, 2006. He became a symbol of "good governance", and in 2011 he was able to democratically hand over the top office to his successor, the well-known Jorge Carlos Fonseca.

Pedro Pires remained politically and publicly active even after a successful presidential decade. In 2016, he founded the Pedro Pires Institute of Management, enabling the exchange of experience and promoting democracy in the West African and Lusophone regions. World universities and institutions have also appreciated the tolerant political line: Pedro Pires received honorary doctorates from Brazilian and Portuguese universities, in 2011, he became the laureate of the Mo Ibrahim Prize for helping to make Cape Verde "a model of democracy, stability, and growing prosperity". The list of Portuguese, Spanish, East Timorese, Angolan, and other decorations, with which the world has recognized the contribution to stability, peace and democracy, would be long.

Excellency, dear guests! It is extremely rare to meet a freedom fighter, a founder of a state, a successful politician, and a well of experience, which Pedro Pires undoubtedly is. We have that opportunity now. It is all the more pleasant that Commander Pires constantly follows the events in the Czech Republic and is very interested in Czech developments through the honorary consulate. It is therefore logical that the UHK and its Philosophical Faculty with the study field of political science – African studies will follow up on previous successful contacts with leading Cape Verdean officials and will appreciate the extraordinary contribution of the personality we have the honor to host here.

Allow me to summarize the most important reasons for awarding the UHK rector's medals:

1. The political activity of Pedro Pires fundamentally contributed to the deepening of democracy in the Republic of Cape Verde, which today is a model for other African countries. This fact resonated many times in professional studies or diploma theses created at the Philosophical Faculty, UHK.
2. As a representative of the resistance generation, Pedro Pires is fully aware of the support that Czechoslovakia provided to the liberation movement that led to the victory of the PAIGC in the colonial war.
3. Since 2002, Commander Pedro Pires, in his senior positions, has supported relations between UHK and the Jean Piaget University of Cape Verde. In doing so, he contributed to the development of study, professional and interpersonal contacts, which raised the level of the field of African studies, the only academic workplace with such an orientation in the Czech Republic.
4. The deepening of Czech-Cape Verde relations through the awarding of the Rector's Medal to ex-President Pires is an expression of the Czech appreciation of the African state, which, thanks to good governance, has advanced from the position of a developing country to the category of medium-developed countries and acts as a stabilizing factor in the sensitive West African region. With this act, we support other existing and emerging academic ties to Cape Verdean universities as well as the initiative of other Czech institutions to establish fruitful and beneficial relations with the African island republic.

Your Excellency, dear former President of the Republic of Cape Verde: Once again, I express our thanks for your visit and for your efforts to deepen the relations between the Czech Republic and the Republic of Cape Verde, between the University of Hradec Králové and Cape Verdean universities. Your work and your merits fully justify the awarding of the Medal of the Rector of the University of Hradec Králové to Your Excellency.

I now ask the Vice-Rector to present the medal to our distinguished guest, Commander Pedro Verona Rodrigues Pires.