

Spain Lifts a Ban On News Reports About Ex-Colony

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MADRID, Oct. 23—The Government this week lifted a 6-year-old news blackout on its obscure former colony of Equatorial Guinea, stirring a political controversy within Spain itself.

The Madrid press suddenly has begun to fill with charges of corruption in and out of the Franco establishment, of the plotting of a coup against Francisco Macias Nguema, the ruler of the west African state, and other unsavory tales.

“This is just the beginning,” said one Spaniard with inside knowledge of the affairs of the tiny nation that became independent in 1968. “A lot more is going to come out—about a lot of people.”

The news ban was imposed in 1971, ostensibly to protect the lives of Spaniards living in Equatorial Guinea, known as Spanish Guinea before independence and made up of the island of Fernando Po and a chunk of mainland west Africa called Rio Muni.

Spaniards Have Left Country

Two years earlier, about 7,000 Spaniards fled the country after Mr. Macias, who is widely believed to have had large numbers of his foes murdered, accused big Spanish business interests of being behind an abortive coup d'état.

Privately, some well-informed Spaniards believe the news ban was also imposed to cover up financial and political machinations of members of the Franco establishment.

Antonio Garcia Trevijano, a controversial Spanish opposition figure who served as an adviser to Mr. Macias, has been accused by Equatorial Guinean exiles of profiting handsomely from the relationship and helping to extinguish democratic liberties in the former colony.

Mr. Garcia Trevijano has denied the accusations and says that the Spanish Government tried to unseat Mr. Macias and install a more pliant president. He also alleges that the family of Luis Carrero Blanco, the late Prime Minister and Franco's right-hand man, wanted to hide from the public its business dealings in Equatorial Guinea, which exports cocoa, coffee and wood and may have

petroleum reserves.

All the charges remain to be proved. Pm his association with Mr. Macias—whom one Spaniard glumly dubbed “our own Idi Amin”—seems to have fatally undercut the aspirations of Mr. Garcia Trevijano to emerge as a leader of the “democratic” opposition.

Some 300 Spaniards—about 200 of them working on Madrid-funded technical assistance programs—remain in Equatorial Guinea. There is some fear that Mr. Macias might react to his bad press here by, mistreating them.