LESSON 29.

THE GOLD MINES (Part 2.)

surface, separate, blown, ounces, melt, games, charge, thrown, large, half, nurses.

When the trucks are on the surface they are taken to the mills where the pieces of rock are crushed into fine dust. In this dust is the gold which must be separated from it.

At one time when the gold had been taken out, the fine white dust that was left was carried in trucks along a railway line and thrown on to the veld. In the last fifty or sixty years so much dust has been thrown out that there are now many white hills near Johannesburg. On these hills nothing grows and when there is a wind the dust is blown about and covers everything.

The gold is melted in great pots and made into bricks, most of which are sent away to other countries.

The miners work underground for about eight hours and then come to the surface again in cages. They go to their rooms where those who want to do so may have a hot bath to wash off the dust.

All the cooking is done by steam in fine large clean kitchens and dinner is ready when the men come in from work. Each man gets twenty-four ounces of mealie-meal, six ounces of bread, three ounces of beans, half an ounce of fat, five ounces of vegetables and about half a pound of meat every day.

After they have finished eating, the men do as they please. Some play games in the fresh air to keep themselves well and strong, some lie on the grass and smoke, rest and talk, others read books or write letters home. There is a night school for those who want to learn. If a man wishes to go away from the mines to do some shopping or to visit his friends, he must get permission first.

The men get free bedrooms and beds but must bring their own blankets and pillows. Some like clean white sheets and pretty covers on their beds. Everything in these rooms is kept very clean.

If a man shows that he is hard-working, brave and wise, he is put in charge of a small party and is paid more money.

Many men send money to their parents or wives every month. Sometimes they draw only ten shillings of their pay each month to buy clothes and any other little things they want and leave the rest to take home when they have finished working.

At each big mine there is a hospital where those who are sick or hurt are looked after carefully by doctors and nurses.

Boxed inserts are extracts from 'Govan English Readers for Bantu Schools'.

Angola : 1961 rebellion

THE ANGOLAN REVOLUTION and subsequent civil war has been one of the longest and bloodiest conflicts ever experienced in modern African history. In this paper I am going to examine in some detail one of the insurrections which occurred during the initial phase of the revolution, in March 1961, in the coffee growing region of Northern Angola. I have three reasons for wanting to attempt an analysis of this event. First of all, the Northern revolt is in danger of being written off historically as being of little consequence to the development of Angola's national revolution. The events of the insurrection did not substantially involve the political party which has subsequently become the government of Angola, the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Amgola (MPLA). The MPLA was in 1961 an urban-oriented movement, with its base in the musseques of the Angolan capital, Luanda. For the MPLA, the significant event in 1961 was an uprising in Luanda, when in February, 500 badly armed men, apparently organised by MPLA cadres, attacked Luanda prison. According to an official MPLA account:

> "This date, which profoundly touches the heart of our people, marks the beginning of the phase of our national liberation struggle which is inevitably leading to complete independence...."

Whereas the March insurrection in the North involved

> "....the most backward elements of the Angolan people in a desperate struggle without determined objectives, which could only lead to defeat and failure." (1)

However, notwithstanding the emphasis early MPLA ideologues placed on the role of an African petit bourgeoisie of civil servants and intellectual workers in conjunction with the urban working class in being the main driving force behind the revolution (2), by and large the Angolan war has been a peasant war and any analysis of it that does not include an appreciation of the dynamics of peasant societies in Angola in the 1950s and 1960s is bound to be superficial.

My second reason for looking at the Northern revolt is that I sense that there is a very real deficiency in the available literature on the war. I will be referring to

this in more detail below; here I will just briefly outline my misgivings. There are four standard works on the war: two of them are open in their political commitment to the cause of the Popular Movement - the works of the British journalist Basil Davidson, and the Canadian writer Don Barnett. Their work represents a considerable achievement: at a time when little attention was being paid to a conflict in a very remote and inaccessible part of the world, both Davidson and Barnett were active in the field, in the front line of historical research, interviewing participants in the conflict and collecting oral material from those who had lived through the colonial experience. And it is done with historical sensitivity and *considerable sympathy (a quality which certain* literature sadly lacks). However, their first hand experience was limited to the relatively isolated and sparsely settled districts of the Eastern theatre of the war, where the MPLA found its initial rural base. This region was in certain ways the least affected by the impact of Portuguese colonialism and the incorporation of Angola into the international capitalist economy: it did not provide conditions which would be easy to generalise from with regard to the other theatres of conflict. If we are talking about a peasantry in terms of the definition given to that group by John Saul and Roger Woods, that is

> "small agricultural producers who with the help of simple equipment and the labor of their families produce mainly for their own consumption and (my emphasis) for the fulfilment of obligations to the holder of economic and political power...." (3)

then in terms of the following, and to an extent their middle ranking leadership, UNITA and FNLA/UPA, (the two other nationalist parties involved in the revolution), were peasant-oriented in a way that the MPLA was not: the Eastern regions did not produce a significant agricultural surplus for the capitalist market as was the case elsewhere.

Of the other two main studies, one by American academic Professor John Marcum is more concerned with the development of political parties as such, rather than the details of the socio-economic environment they operated in; that of the French commentator Rene Pelissier is marred by an uncritical acceptance of official Portuguese accounts of the revolt as well as a tendency to look for explanations in *psychological features and ill-defined concepts* like 'tribalism' (4). What is lacking is a study which attempts to look at the political movements within specific regional contexts giving due consideration to the way local economies and their societies can shape and determine the political movement. In a very modest way, this paper attempts some suggestions as to how this can be done.

My third and main reason for writing about the 1961 insurrection is that a couple of years ago during a period as a research worker at the University of York's Centre for Southern African Studies I met someone with an intimate knowledge of the region who generously provided some very valuable source material for me. This was the Baptist missionary, David Grenfell, who worked in Northern Angola for thirty years before his expulsion by the Portuguese authorities. He knew many of the political leaders, especially those of the Union of the People of Angola (known today as the FNLA), many of them having been educated at Baptist schools. In the ten years following the initial explosion he ran a refugee settlement in Zaire and through this was in constant and intimate touch both with the exile political leadership in Kinshasa but also with conditions within Angola. It is on his unpublished manuscripts, notes and memorandums that many of the remarks in this paper are based.

Let us start with a brief outline of the events of the revolt in the North. I am basing this very bare chronology on the most ample source: that is, John Marcum. During February 1961 young activists of the Union of the People of Angola were sent over the Congolese border into Northern Angola to organise and make preparations for an uprising. The UPA claimed an overwhelming popular response, citing revolutionary rallies held in certain villages, attracting over 3,000 people. On March 12th the first small scale isolated attacks on coffee plantations began: these reached a crescendo of violence three days later with the revolt in several places of plantation workers who killed managers and white personnel, a loosely co-ordinated strategy of independent assaults on farms, stores and government offices, accompanied by the disruption of communications. Portuguese casualties within the first few days amounted to about 250, and at the end of three months this figure had swelled to 750. In addition, a large unspecified number of plantation workers on contract from Southern Angola were killed, though there is considerable conflict between the various sources as to whether these

people were killed by UPA insurgents or as the result of Portuguese-inspired reprisals. Where there is agreement is that the Portuguese countermeasures which followed the initial attacks massively enlarged the arena of the conflict. A Corpos de Voluntarios (voluntary force) was created: a loosely disciplined civilian auxiliary to the armed forces which was able to exact the most terrible retribution on the African community: 20,000 were to die as the result both of white settler action and the efforts of the military which included the destruction of villages with bombs and napalm that had up until then been unaffected by the conflict. In this initial phase elements of a crude UPA strategy had been based on the belief that, as in the case of the Belgian Congo, one massive sudden general uprising would shock the Portuguese administration and the settlers into withdrawal; and as in the case of then recent events in Tunisia, a general uprising would mobilise the force of world opinion and in particular that of the United Nations, into acting against Portugal.

These expectations were to be disappointed: in late April a 'second guerilla phase' was proclaimed by the UPA leadership, which concentrated in the following months on attempting to destroy the coffee crop - which initially they had hoped would be harvested by African farmers in a liberated Angola. The Portuguese began a counter-offensive in August. Refugee communities and guerillas withdrew from the areas of settlement and main lines of communication to form temporary villages - Sanzalas - in accessible mountain ranges and forests. Then began a long and savage war of attrition as the Portuguese went along trying to flush these people out of the UPA 'liberated zones'.

It is with this initial general uprising that this paper deals with. Why did the revolt take place when it did and why did it take on this particular form: an initial insurgency generating a massive popular response? What was the social crisis that these events reflected?

A description of the region and the people who inhabited it will be useful. The revolt took place in the two Northern districts of Angola, once known slightly confusingly as the Congo district, now divided into the Zaire and Uige districts. It is an area which is bisected by rivers including tributaries of the great River Congo, marked by heavy rainfall, dense vegetation including tropical rain forest, generally low relief save for the Malange plateau in the centre of the two regions which contains the headwaters for the main rivers. The terrain creates considerable difficulties for communications, and despite relatively large population many areas are fairly inaccessible. Combine these features with a border (with Zaire) that represented neither significant geographical nor ethnic/language divisions and it is not difficult to see natural factors which could favour the existence of a sustained guerilla movement.

The Northern Angolan region is inhabited by the Bakongo peoples, a cluster of tribes speaking closely related languages and sharing a past tradition of political unity under the Kongo kingdom at Sao Salvador. There were in 1960 approximately one and a half million Kicongo speakers settled on both sides of the Angola/Zaire border: of these about half a million lived in Angola. The Bakongo were the first group to come into contact with the Portuguese when explorers arrived at what is now called Sao Salvador in 1482. The Kongo king was baptised in 1491 and since then there has been a tradition of Kongo kings assuming Portuguese/Christian names. During the sixteenth century the Kongo court was restructured along Portuguese lines and the royal family was to embrace Portuguese culture. However, the initial relationship between the two kingdoms, which in the beginning was based on an acceptance by the Portuguese of the equal sovereignty of the Kongo kingdom, was to deteriorate with the development of the Portuguese slave trade.

The slave trade involved wars between the neighbouring peoples and the Portuguese Bakongo client state as well as internecine conflict, and this was to slowly erode the power and moral authority of the Kongo state. By 1800, 14,000 slaves were being exported from this region every year. Attempts by Kongo kings to resist Portuguese influence culminated in their defeat in 1665 at Ambuila. From 1665 until the time of formal annexation into the Portuguese empire which took place in 1883, the Kongo kingdom, increasingly demoralised and disunited, was dependent on Portuguese goodwill rather than popular acceptance of its legitimacy for its continued existence. The relative earliness of colonial penetration and the blatency of the incorporation of traditional authority into colonial culture by the metropolitan power point to a state of ideological crisis in Bakongo society: a state of crisis that was well developed by the middle of the nineteenth century when

the establishment of plantation agriculture to the South of the region demanded a new intensity in the exploitation of the region's labour resources. This took place first under slavery, and then from 1878 in terms of a forced labour code which the traditional authorities were powerless to resist.

This crisis found its expression in a series of rural uprisings and millenarian movements, as the Bakongo masses, despairing of finding solace, security and happiness within the subverted old order, sought the dawning of a new age. (Millenarian movements usually involve a response to the undermining of traditional security as a society, or a particular class or group in that society, is undermined and gradually destroyed. Such movements usually emerge in response to the processes of colonialism and under-development, and the initial emergence of capitalism in one of its forms. Usually involving rural, peasant-based societies, millenarian movements often include a mystical, semi-religious character, and are characterised by a belief in the coming of a new period (the millennium, or thousand year period of happiness)-editors). In Northern Angola these movements took a violent form in the period 1860 to 1914, during which time the Portuguese undertook a series of military campaigns to bring the North under their effective control in terms of the 1885 Berlin agreement. However, the ending of this primary period of resistance by the Bakongo masses did not end the influence of millenarianism: rather it gathered a new intensity, first with the Mafulaists, then the Kimbanguists, then the Tocoists, then the Lassyists and finally the Tonsi movement, which like its predecessors proclaimed the coming of a new millennium

> "...in which the ancestors would be resurrected and bring with them the riches of Europe; whites would be destroyed by fire and water; the black kingdom of the negroes would be established; and the blacks would become whites." (5)

This millenial tradition, I am going to suggest, conditioned and effected the nature of the insurrection of 1961. A millenial movement proclaims the dawning of a new age, and is often based around the religious leadership of a prophet claiming to have special powers of vision and healing. Its prevalence in Bakongo tradition is not accidental: first of all there was a heritage of a form of Christianity which involved reverence of ancestors, which dated from the initial period of colonial contact; secondly, we have the early breakdown of traditional authority and its moral order, a process actively encouraged by the Portuguese who destroyed those chieftaincies that showed any independent authority: by 1933 no genuine chiefs any longer existed (6); thirdly there was the long-term disruption of the social structure as a result of the impact of the slave trade; fourthly there was a strong folk memory of a once united and strong political kingdom: certain movements like the Kimbanguists sought its resurrection; and finally there was the problem of land alienation - this was the region most seriously affected in Angola. We will look at the detail and complexity of the land question in a moment: here it is sufficient to state that the loss of land represented not simply a material loss but also contributed to the disruption of the moral foundations of traditional beliefs and feelings of self identity among the Bakongo: land was not simply the site of the living representatives of the clan, but also of their ancestors (7).

Millenial movements are often associated with classes in decline, with societies which have little hope of preserving their integrity and cohesion in a changing economic order: a millenial movement thus often questions the foundations and nature of the new order which is undermining old values. It is in these terms that, in 1958 the Angolan Prophet, Simao Toko, was to write to his Bakongo followers:

> "There is no reason to fear the white man, because he has already lost the power previously given to him by God. God is angry with him, because he has committed several great sins. A new Christ, a black Christ, shall come, and Toko is his prophet. To him God has given the power which before he had given to the white man.
>
> The land is ours and it was the white man who stole it. Now, we are very strong, and besides we have the help of our ancestors. Already we have occupied the North and the South; now we have only to build up churches in the East and the West. Within a short time we shall command all Africa. The white shall submit to us and will become our servants. Within a short time, Simao Toko shall return as our liberator."

Toko was to find the greatest number of his followers amongst displaced elements of the population, especially among those who were literate (the fact that the Baptists, the main Protestant influence in the region, were the only Angolan mission to provide literature in

the vernacular language, is significant). It was this group who tended to openly defy the authority of tribal elders who had been discredited for their complicity with whites in the recruitment of contract labour (8).

The participation of such people contradicts the MPLA analysis of the Northern Revolt, which argued that the revolt found its main constituency among the 'most backward elements of the peasantry'. Other analyses, including that of Marcum and the Baptist missionary, Thomas Okuma, argue that the main focus of the revolt is found in the aspirations and concerns of a small educated Bakongo elite. I would argue that this is also misleading. To fully understand the events in Northern Angola during 1961, we need to know something of the impact of capitalism on rural economic life.

The first attempts to develop Angola as a plantation economy came in the 1830s, with the establishment of coffee and sugar plantations worked by slave labour just north of Luanda. In the following years these plantations gradually extended northwards with the extention of the area of effective Portuguese authority. In 1858 the Portuguese announced that slavery would gradually be phased out over the next twenty years. In its place a system of forced labour was introduced. A labour code was drawn up which specified that people defined as vagrants could be put to work. This was extended in the 1899 regulations which were centred on the 'moral and legal obligation to work'. In 1914 all Africans save those defined as '<u>civilados</u>' ('civilised ones') were required to enter into wage labour (or have some means of cash production) for a specifi period each year.

The movement and flow of labour was regulated and controlled through a '<u>cardenete</u>' or passbook system. In 1928 the system was fully elaborated with the institution of the classification of the African population into '<u>indigenatos</u>' and '<u>assimilados</u>'.(ie those classified as not fully 'civilised', and those whom the Portuguese felt were 'civilised' enough to be assimilated into the ruling elite - editor) <u>Indigenatos</u> were all those who did not fulfil rather rigorous criteria and tests of education, wealth and absorption of Portuguese culture. They were placed under a system of native law which subjected them to labour requirements, and an indirect rule system in which the chiefs functioned as labour recruiting agents and petty administrators, under the close supervision of Portuguese officials. Apart from other disabilities, the <u>indigenatos</u> could not hold landed property under individual tenure (ownership). To comply with the requirements for membership of the <u>assimilados</u> group was very difficult - and even by 1960, the numbers of this priviliged minority were tiny.

Coffee cultivation only began contributing a major proportion of Angolan exports after the depression of the 1930s, and in the years up to and during the second world war. The first phase of the development of coffee as a major export crop in this region was dominated by a few huge companies with concessions to grow coffee from the Portuguese. However, this initial period also provided an opportunity for African producers to respond to the new world demand: African farmers had been growing coffee in the region to supplement their subsistence production for nearly a century. Even during the 1960s, after a decade of encroachment on African landholdings, nearly a quarter of the acreage devoted to coffee cultivation was farmed by an African peasantry. (9). That it remained a peasantry and did not evolve into a capitalist farmer population employing labour was at least partly attributable to the regulations regarding African land tenure. Under a communal system of traditional tenure it was difficult for individuals to acquire large plots of land for their own or their families' use. Only those who qualified for <u>assimilado</u> status could buy or sell land in competition with other Portuguese citizens. Given the cultural requirements of full Portuguese citizenship, it was unlikely that such people would remain within the agricultural sector. Consequently, despite the positive response of the Bakongo peasantry to coffee growing for the market, we do not find the emergence of large-scale social stratification (eg the emergence of rich peasants employing poor peasants as labourers, etc - editor). Coffee planting rather remained a source of supplementary income, and confirmed Bakongo agriculturalists in their status of small farmers producing mainly for subsistence, and to fulfil obligations to the holders of political and economic power (ie the definition of a peasantry quoted from Saul and Woods at the beginning of this paper - editor). Despite this, the region enjoyed relative prosperity when compared to other areas of Angola: this was reflected in the wages of the plantation sector in Uige, which were nearly three times

greater than those paid in the central plateau region of Bengu la (10). As will be seen, the plantations were to experience considerable difficulty in local recruitment from the Bakongo.

However, developments after the second world war were to cause a sharp decline in the position of the Bakongo peasantry. The colonising power, Portugal, began a programme of extensive resettlement of its rural population. This was aimed at offsetting the rising social tensions of a swiftly growing population which could not be provided for by domestic (ie Portuguese) economic growth: in European terms Portugal was and remains a desperately poor country with a per capita *income during the 1950s which was not much* larger than that of Ghana. Between 1955 and 1960 the government encouraged 50,000 peasants from metropolitan Portugal and the Cape Verde islands to settle in Angola; in the whole decade the white population increased from 79,000 in 1950 to 175,000 in 1961 (11). The settlers from Portugal were expected by the authorities to develop a peasant-small farmer mode of existence. Though these plans were not altogether successful - many of the settlers moved into towns to compete with Africans for low-skilled jobs - nevertheless the effects of settlement on the livelihood of Bakongo peasants were severe: 360,000 acres were granted during the 1950s to white immigrants in the coffee-growing areas of Zaire and Uige with the result that by 1960 nearly half the African population which had previously enjoyed access to land suitable for the growing of coffee, had been forced off that land (12).

This process of resettling Portuguese peasants in Angola was to involve widespread abusage of African land tenure. African communally-held land was, by virtue of the 1933 constitution, part of the public domain. The right of access to land customarily occupied by the community was in theory guaranteed by the Native Statute of 1954. Indigenatos were forbidden to sell or donate land to non-Africans. Land could only be parcelled out to settlers if it was held to be vacant and unoccupied. Before such land was handed over to settlers, they were supposed to go through an immensely complicated bureaucratic procedure. Inevitably this administrative system broke down: it was too complicated to cope efficiently with the requirements of over a *thousand new applications* for land by settlers. Consequently, settlers tended to bypass the legal process and on their own initiative occupy land regardless of its actual status. David Grenfell noted in 1961:

> "The indigene has no rights to his own land, or even that on which his village is built. I have known several villages ordered to move because a Portuguese wanted that and an ajacent land for a coffee garden....many more cases of where a Portuguese had taken a coffee garden of an African because it was 'neglected'. On some occasions the owner was away on contract labour working in the coffee garden of a Portuguese.." (13).

In 1956 the Bakongo king warned his subjects that if they did not cultivate their coffee holdings intensively and efficiently they would have them expropriated by the authorities. (14) Certain administrative officials had the power to declare gardens neglected (15).

The settler presence effected the Bakongo economic existence in other ways too. Traditionally the division of labour within Bakongo households had left subsistence activity to women while men were engaged in more ambitious cultivation, livestock rearing and trading. Petty trade was widespread among the Bakongo and with the initial coffee boom, trading could provide the initial capital required for coffee farming. However, trading could provide the same function for the new Portuguese settlers: the 1950s saw not only the taking over of customarily African-held land by Portuguese farmers and companies, but also the opening up of hundreds of small settler-owned trading stores in the Zaire/Uige region. Traders would operate in the following fashion: Producers would take their harvest of beans, coffee and groundnuts to the nearby trading store. The trader would allow them credit (usable only at his store) for part of the value of the goods. Credit would be advanced before harvest and would be recovered by the trader when crops were harvested; consequently their value was relatively low. The trader would then store the coffee, beans etc. and sell them for higher prices later (16). Towards the end of the 1950s it seems that the traders were increasingly exploitative in their practices. This reflected and was caused by difficulties in their own situation. With planters taking over the best coffee lands from African producers, and the increasing demands of planters made on African labour, there was a decline in agricultural activity in the villages: less land was being independently cultivated by Africans and so there was less surplus to exchange for goods at the store. In other words, there was a decline in African purchasing power. The solution, in the short

term, was for the trader to extend the terms of credit, and make them more demanding. Progressively the African community was finding itself trapped in a cycle of indebtedness. Nor was the situation made any easier by the blatant price discrimination practised by shopkeepers: traders in Bakongo towns had two different price scales. A kilo of sugar, for example, would cost a white purchaser six escudos and an African eight escudos (17).

With the extention of European landholding in the area there was a sharp rise in the demand for African labour. The vast majority of workers on coffee plantations were contract workers. Plantation owners and other employers would submit their labour requirements to the administration which would then request so many men from each white local administrative officer (Chefe de Posto). He in turn would demand a quota from his sobas (headmen) who would then be responsible for recruiting the men needed. The contracts, which would be legally enforceable, would last for anything from between six months and three years. They would impose certain minimum obligations on employers and generally set very low rates of pay. Not surprisingly, if Africans had any other way of meeting their cash requirements, they would avoid labour contracts. Accordingly, in the Bakongo areas, the labour on the coffee plantations had for a long time to be drawn from southern and central Angola; this recruitment took place from amongst the Ovimbundu people, for whom economic opportunities were rather more limited, where land settlement was considerably greater, and who did not enjoy the option open to the Bakongos of migrating over a friendly border to escape coerced recruitment.

Nevertheless, by 1960 there are signs that the Kikongo speakers were increasingly being pressed into contract labour on the plantations. Grenfell mentions as an example the people of Muinguila village who were forced to work on a nearby coffee fazenda. The workers were not paid for five months, at which stage the men refused to work and went into hiding. Significantly, this village was one of the first to join the revolt.

There are also indications that the use of child labour drawn from local sources for work on the plantations was on the increase. There was an increase in taxation obligations in the area: the tax age was lowered from 18 to 16, and in 1960 the sobas (headmen) were given the responsibility for its collection. All those who could not pay were arrested and held for contract labour. By the end of the decade people were confronted with a choice: migrate over the border to the Congo (where there were better economic opportunities and educational and social facilities) and leave their land; or submit themselves to a particularly hopeless form of proletarianisation (ie the process of being forced off the land and turned into a wage-labourer working for someone else - editor). Grenfell reports that by 1960 the practice of men going away on contract had become a 'recognised system', although Bakongos made up only 14 per cent of the region's labour force.

Another source of disruption resulted from the Government resettlement schemes. Starting in the 1930s, but increasing in pace and intensity in the 1950s, the administration began to force people to move from their tradtional village sites, and to build new villages at administratively convenient places alongside new roads. This was often highly unpopular. The old villages were naturally situated in places where fertile land was most abundant. In new sites, chosen and decided upon according to non-economic rationality, land was short. What people tended to do was to go on quietly planting their gardens in the old sites - often in fairly inaccessible forested regions remote from modern networks of communication. This was to have an obvious significance for the development of guerilla struggle. But the destruction of the old villages also hastened the collapse of the traditional system of markets and trade.

There were various other petty restrictions on independent African economic activity which increased the weight of the obligations imposed on them. For example, in the late 1950s, people were forbidden to burn grass. Grass burning was an aid to hunting as well as an easy way to clear ground. The measure was widely seen as just one more way in which the Chefe de Posto could increase his income by enforcing fines.

A final blow to small scale African coffee producers came after 1958. During that year Portugal agreed to a quota system being imposed on coffee production to counter the effects of world overproduction. Angolan coffee production was rather higher than the quota set. Consequently 1959-1960 was a bad period for coffee farmers. World prices fell dramatically - by 75 per cent in that period - and producers had to restrict production. The effects on the plantations were reflected in wage cuts

and the witholding of wages. But for the African producer, without the privileged access to markets enjoyed by large scale concerns and without the facilities for storing his crops until prices rose again (coffee beans in their raw state can be kept for quite a long time), the situation was considerably worse.

There were of course other factors conditioning the outbreak of the revolt in 1961, and the ones listed below are those which have been paid most attention to in published accounts of the war:

1). The frustrations experienced by Africans of assimilado status when they discovered growing restrictions on upward mobility and advancement in an increasingly race-conscious society;

2). Competition at the bottom end of the job market in urban areas between desperately poor recent Portuguese emigrants and recently urbanised Africans.

3). The unwillingness of the Portuguese administration to provide political safety valves or outlets for the aspirations of educated Africans at a time of rapid de-colonisation elsewhere in Africa.

4). The influence, especially among the Bakongo, of nationalist movements operative in the Belgian Congo; this refers especially to those like ABAKO which appealed to pan-Bakongo sentiments.

5). An economic environment which, because of Portugal's own inability to generate capital for large overseas investment and her unwillingness to allow other foreign capital to invest in her colonial territories, could not provide the employment and educational opportunities for an increasingly urbanised

Jet pilot bales out

A South African Air Force pilot successfully ejected from his Impala jet aircraft which crashed in the operational area.

He is Captain A Bell of No 4 Squadron, Lanseria.

Captain Bell suffered an ankle injury when he parachuted to the ground.

A SAAF spokesman said today the Impala crashed yesterday while on a training flight in the operational area.

A board of inquiry has been appointed to investigate the aircraft's crash.

The Star: 79 10 19

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SA plane shot down — report

LISBON — A South African fighter bomber was shot down and a helicopter hit by Angolan anti-aircraft batteries yesterday, the Angolan news agency Angop said yesterday. An SA Defence Force spokesman in Pretoria refused to comment on "this propaganda onslaught." — Sapa-Reuter.

The Star: 79 10 20

and educated population. Some of the urban population, because of a tradition of migration to other colonial territories such as the Belgian Congo, were able to make comparisons that were highly unfavourable to Portuguese rule in Angola.

All of these were important factors, and go a long way to explaining the emergence of a political leadership in Angola, both in Luanda and in the North (the Southern group giving support to UNITA emerged somewhat later in the 1960s). We have, then, in the Bakongo region the foundation of a party in 1954 that initially dedicated itself to the revival of the old Kongo kingdom, which at that time was in the middle of a succession dispute between a Government-backed Catholic, and a Baptist candidate. The Union of the People of Northern Angola was founded by a group of minor civil servants and other functionaries, petty bourgeois elements, shopkeepers, bookeepers and the like, most of them from a Baptist mission background, and many having taken advantage of economic opportunities available in Leopoldville, Belgian Congo. The Union was to drop its regional connotations in 1958 in the light of pan-African disapproval of separatist movements, and become the Union of the People of Angola. It was presided over by Holden Roberto, who acquired considerable business interests in the Congo and was close to the Congolese political leadership.

But here I am not especially concerned with political leadership, which in one form or another has been a constant factor in African politics since the Second World war: what has been far more decisive than the emergence of leaders in any one country's history has been the popular mood: the degree and nature of mass response to leadership calls and appeals. It is only by looking, as we have been doing here, at the undermining of the economy in peasant society - which had initially responded progressivly to Angola's incorporation into the capitalist economy - that we can understand the nature of the response of the people to the insurgency of UPA (Union of the People of Angola) in 1961.

For this was a revolt that, whatever the intentions of the petty bourgeois leadership, was shaped by the emotions, concerns and the desperation of a peasantry facing the prospect

of destruction as a class. According to missionary sources, the first emissaries of revolt came not in the form of sophisticated political cadres, but as prophets, Ngunzas. They held services in the main villages and everybody was required to attend a simple ceremony in which all had to drink a cup of water and pay 2.50 escudos. The authorities found one fund collection register in which 30,000 escudos had been collected. Speeches at such gatherings had a millenarian character: the use of water was very similar to that of the Lassyist movement which laid great emphasis on the power of holy water to remove the curses of witchcraft. In February 1961, schoolchildren around Bembe, an area where the use of child labour on plantations was notorious, refused to buy textbooks and went on strike, standing outside their schools and shouting 'Kimpwanza' (Independence). When the killings began, it was obvious to observers that many of the whites who died (administrators and Roman Catholic priests were especially singled out) were not killed as a result of the actions of organised groups of UPA insurgents, but rather by the villagers in the locality (19). Whatever the class nature of the UPA leadership (and to call it a party of the businessmen seems an accurate assessment of its higher levels), when we look at local leaders it is not surprising to find them drawn from the African coffee farming group (20). The development of the revolt into its protracted guerilla phase again followed the logic suggested by the economic experience of the peasantry: whole villages withdrew into the forests to recolonise their old villages: for them the revolt was a homecoming, a restoration of the old order - a peasant utopia.

Frantz Fanon, ideologue of the Algerian revolution and a friend of Holden Roberto, professed a belief in the peasantry as 'rebels by instinct', as people who could in no way profit within the social framework imposed by colonialism, and as a group which stands outside the class system. Not surprisingly, he closely identified himself with the Bakongo insurrection. In strict terms, Fanon's arguments make sociological nonsense: as we have seen this was not a backward population isolated from the currents of colonial culture and economy, but rather one which attempted to respond positively to fresh economic influences. There is, however, a grain of truth in his claims. For while an urban working class can increase its potential power as it expands with the emergence and growth of capitalism, the Bakongo peasantry was doomed as a class: as capitalism penetrated the rural areas, there could only be a return to the past for the Bakongo peasantry - an attempt to destroy the present order and replace it with its negative inverted image: to make black white and white black.

But such limitations should not make us ignore the historical importance of the 1961 northern insurrection. It created a major crisis for colonial society, initiated a long and terrible struggle, and massively widened the arena of conflict. It also provided a period when other movements with different constituencies could regroup and reorganise themselves while Portuguese energies were occupied in suppressing the northern revolt: this process was really only completed in the second half of the 1960s. It seems appropriate to conclude with a thought from Barrington Moore:

> "...one may well conclude that the well springs of human freedom lie not only as Marx saw them in the aspirations of classes about to take power, but perhaps even more in the dying wail of a class over whom the wave of progress is about to fall (21)."

In these terms the Angolan revolt of the north was tragic not only because of the human suffering involved.

Notes:

1. MPLA The Road to Liberation. Liberation Support Committee publications 1975.
2. Eg. de Andrade and Olivier The War in Angola Dar es Salaam 1975 p.54
3. T.Shanin (ed) Peasants and Peasant Societies Harmonsworth 1971 p.240
4. Basil Davidson In the Eye of the Storm London 1972.
   Don Barnett The Angolan Revolution.
   John Marcum The Angolan Revolution: anatomy of an explosion M.I.T. 1969.
   Wheeler and Pelissier Angola London 1971.
5. American Universities Area Handbook for Angola Washington 1967 pp.158-159
6. David Grenfell Papers University of York Library (henceforth Grenfell ms.)
7. Alfredo Magerido 'The Tokoist Church and Portuguese Colonialism' in R Chilcote (ed) Protest and Resistance California 1972 p.33
8. Ibid. p.45
9. American Universities op cit p.288
10. de Andrade and Olivier op cit p.45
11. Thomas Okuma Angola in Ferment Westport 1974 p.8 and American Universities op cit p.45

12. See American Univeraities op cit pp 279-288.
13. Grenfell ms.
14. Wheeler and Pelissier op cit p.141
15. Grenfell ms.
16. Grenfell ms.
17. Grenfell ms.
18. American Univeraities op cit p.322
19. Grenfell ms.
20. John Marcum op cit p.141
21. Barrington Moore The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy Harmondsworth 1974 p.505

This paper is based around a talk given to the Gubbins Society, University of Witwatersrand, on 15th May 1979.

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labour action

Technical Officials' Association: (see WIP, 9) The Association backed down in its confrontation with and threatened strike action against the Chamber of Mines. Some mines were said to have suffered large losses (R1-million on one mine) due to a 'go-slow' by the officials, but this was probably compensated for by the amount saved on postponed salary increases.

> The settlement was reached after the association had lost an unspecified *number of its members* to the other mine officials associations which accepted the Chamber's pay offer... (Star, 79.07.20).

Motor Industry: (eastern Cape) (see WIP, 9) The unions representing these workers won across the board increases of an average of about 8% with further increases due in March, 1980.

The wages were negotiated between employer representatives (Ford, GM and Volkswagen), the 'coloured' National Union of Motor Assembly and Rubber Workers of South Africa, the white South African Iron and Steelworkers' Union, with attendance by the African United Automobile, Rubber and Allied Workers' Union. The negotiations took place after workers had threatened strike action.

The amount of nonsense that is presented on the unemployment position in the columns of the commercial press in South Africa, and then put forward as scholarship, seems to be on the increase.

Prize-winning report of the month must be that of the Star (79.10.16) in its reproduction of the neo-Malthusianism of the latest Volkskas Economic Review:

> If South Africa does not succeed in lowering the birth rate, there can be little hope of a satisfactory solution to the problem of unemployment.
>
> Billions of rands may be squandered on social plans, which will have a reduced economic impact with little hope of getting to the root of the problem.
>
> But what must be avoided is an emotional approach to this solution (?) ...

VOLK, WHICH VOLK?

> Greater impetus should be given with everyone's co-operation to the recent decline in the high rate of population growth.
>
> ....
>
> A lower birth rate will lead to higher per capita welfare, and in turn to better nourishment, health, housing and education. It will also relieve the pressure on the provision for housing, food subsidies, transport, education and medical facilities.
>
> South Africa has reached a stage in its industrial development where future growth will emanate increasingly from the more capital-intensive sectors.

The last paragraph is, of course, closer to what it is all about. But no mention of who is to benefit from the "future growth"; why it will "emanate increasingly from the more capital-intensive sectors"; or why the working class (overwhelmingly African) should decrease their numbers in the interests of the beneficiaries of capital-intensive growth (mainly large-scale local and foreign capital).

VAB