

Anatomy of a Revolution

The Angolan Revolution, Volume I: The Anatomy of an Explosion 1950-1962, by John Marcum. The M.I.T. Press. 380 pp. \$12.50.

by J. Murray MacInnes

The archaic and stagnant world of Portuguese colonialism was shattered in 1961 by violence that left an estimated 45,000 black people and 1,000 whites dead in Angola. Ironically, it is probably the violence of white men that did most to lose Portugal her empire. The hysterically unrestrained, officially armed and officially sponsored white violence of the vigilantes and the brutal imprisonments and executions of the army and police in zones far removed from the northern rebel activity did more than anything else to escalate the issues in world consciousness and convince Africans that the regime was the enemy and the time was "now." 1961 marks the end of exclusive Portuguese control of her three large African territories, even if it requires another ten years and many more lives to complete the transition from autocratically controlled empire to majority government, locally based, enjoying economic responsibility.

John Marcum's account of the events immediately preceding the nationalist/colonialist clashes of 1961 and the repercussions of the year following is an exceedingly important contribution toward understanding the genesis of African nationalism. It is remarkably readable despite the fact that the birth, life and death of more than forty intertwined organizations of political, religious, cultural and trade union character are faithfully catalogued and described. The docu-

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ments used by the author were often in the form of personal notes or unpublished manuscripts, and required hours of painstaking research to check and recheck their validity. Marcum worked most with the position papers, communiqués and press releases of the nationalist parties and gained perspective for their use through innumerable interviews with most of the African leaders and many of their subordinates. The interviews took place in the United States, in Europe, and even within Angola. His background and understanding of historic Portuguese nationalism has instructed the entire account but is nowhere handled directly in the book. He has made relatively little use of contemporary Portuguese statements and rhetoric, much of which is extremely relevant because it indicates the moral and spiritual bankruptcy which made it impossible for the regime to contain the explosion or even to take seriously the threat of one.

The general reader may find it tedious to work through the first and last thirds of the book, for these portions trace the convolutions of more than forty associations formed by Angolans seeking self-expression before 1961 and the accusations and recriminations of organizations and alliances following the year 1961. This material, invaluable for the serious student of Portuguese Africa and of liberation movements generally, may be skimmed by the general reader to illumine Part II, which contains an extremely cogent description of the events of 1961 and a statement of the American position and relationship to Portugal through NATO and the U.N.

The book offers several insightful rewards to the reader:

1. African aspirations are taken seriously. This is a refreshing switch from both the traditional political science point of view

and State Department organization and custom. One of the real payoffs of the book is the space given to profiles of African leadership and the exposition of competing African claims and plans. (The latter is done so carefully that it will please no Angolan patriots at all.) The attention to leadership and party growth indicates how indigenous to Angola the revolt was and the tracing of its urban and rural roots is a fine contribution to analyzing the party dynamics.

2. Marcum traces the genesis of parties, and their need for credibility and visibility in a pre-O.A.U. Africa, and the measure in which external interest exacerbated conflicting claims is well documented. It is startling to recognize that the MPLA (Movimento Popular de Libertacao de Angola) and the U.P.A. (Uniao de Populacoes de Angola), by alternately claiming support or accusing each other of receiving support, called into their situation most of the "cold war" and other pressures of the entire world. Of course external opportunists were not lacking.

3. Ministers and priests were among the rebel leadership. Nationalist ideas were largely planted on seed-beds prepared by mission education. While this is true, religious complicity, particularly Protestant, was neither as massively effective as the Portuguese claimed nor were most missionaries as innocent as they believed themselves to be. By indirect references to people and places and the choice of his sources, Marcum gives as realistic an assessment of the church's impact as any I have seen.

4. The explosion of Angola, rather spontaneous but fed by party organizational work, was appropriated with alacrity by several Angolan parties, partly because they overestimated what the reaction of the U.S., the U.N. and

NATO would be. A new president in America and an American vote at the U.N. raised unrealistic hopes, which were later dashed by subsequent U.S. voting and action. Marcum's excellent analysis of these forces in relation to Portugal gives cause for reflection on the U.S. position toward Southern African independence, especially viewed across the haze of Vietnam and Cambodia. One cannot read the book without drawing parallels between an army of Portuguese commanded by those who speak of their "civilizing mission" and their campaign against international communism, and an army

of Americans in Southeast Asia. The fact that brutality is contagious, also gives us cause to read the book carefully. Marcum mentions summary execution; others have written that men died from beatings in Angola in 1961 and 1962, and in 1963 I heard soldiers brag of collecting African ears as a hobby.

In 1961 the Africans threw themselves at the Portuguese in uncoordinated attacks armed with muzzle loaders, gas-pipe weapons and "garden tools." The Portuguese replied with NATO small arms, made-in-America vehicles, airplanes and napalm. The Portu-

guese are still fighting in Angola and now they are sorely pressed in Guinea Bissau and Mozambique also.

The arms and material do not now come so directly or freely from the American government, but American aid still bolsters a Portuguese "order" that keeps whites supreme though outnumbered twenty to one.

Thus, when John Marcum completes his second volume and brings the story to the present, it will undoubtedly indicate the further corrosion of African trust in America's words of support for self-determination.

in the magazines . . .

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He asserted that if the United States failed to act in Cambodia, it would become a second-rate power and 'accept the first defeat in its proud 190-year history.'

"The unqualified nature of this appeal to national pride leaves the implication that a nation demonstrates its character and maintains its credibility only by offensive military action. Associated with this implication is the notion—supported by a curious reading of American history—that restraint is a symptom of national weakness. Concern to avoid humiliation and defeat manages to overshadow consideration of the risk to millions of lives in an expansion of the Indochinese war. All these elements must disturb those sincere men at home and abroad who believe it right to apply standards of unusual moral sensitivity in the exercise of American power and to the language with which our Chief Executive explains that exercise."

Israeli journalist Yaakov Sharett encountered Noam Chomsky at a symposium on the "New Left and Israel" last February, and prepared for *Jewish Frontier* (May) an examination of "some aspects of Professor Chomsky's"—and the New Left's—"attitude" toward the Middle East conflict.

"It seems that the 'Vietnamization' of the Israeli-Arab conflict is even more satisfying for the American New Left non-Jewish Jew than would be his identifying himself with the Viet Cong in Vietnam. For if the second course reflects hate and hostility towards one's own political establishment, the first fulfills deep-

rooted urges to sadism, masochism, cannibalism (of both father and mother) and fratricide—all combined—which the enlightened Jew, loyal only to universal causes, is currently experiencing, dropping-out not only from American society but from the Jewish fold as well; mistaking rootlessness for total freedom. . . .

"All this, of course, is done for the sake of humanity, in the name of the 'tortured' and 'downtrodden' Palestinians of the occupied territories who daily . . . legally cross the so-called former 'Green Border' into 'Old' Israel for work—in spite of Al Fatah threats and terrorism, supported by Russians, Chinese, French, militant blacks, and New and old Leftists. At the same time, Israel's overwhelming superiority—strategic, tactical, scientific, moral—permits Israel to behave more liberally by far than any other occupying force in history, although Noam Chomsky still dares to equate Israeli response to terror and attack with the Nazi holocaust. Here again, we see the eager acceptance by a non-Jewish Jew of an Arab lie, made possible only by a total ignorance of Middle East reality. In addition, there is a willful persistence in adolescent daydreaming; for only in such dreams are all problems neatly solved—if only *your* solution is accepted, particularly the nonsensical idea that Palestinian binationalism is popular with the Arabs. . . ."

Three articles on "The Jewish Tradition of Protest and Dissent" may be of interest to readers. All are to be found in the Winter issue of *Judaism* quarterly: "The Prophets as Dissenters," by Rinah Lipis Shaskolsky; "Rabbinic Reflections on Defying Illegal Orders: Amasa, Abner, and Joab," by Moshe Greenberg; and "The Rabbinic Ethics of Protest," by Reuven Kimelman.

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