# *Preface*

Some Angolan place names and ethnic groups have no universally accepted orthography. My choice of terms reflects the usage most consistent with the contemporary studies and firsthand accounts that formed the backbone of my research.

Attempts to prevent this book from becoming an alphabet soup of abbreviations led me to commit a sin of omission: the armed forces of the MPLA, the FNLA, and UNITA (Angola's three main nationalist movements) are referred to as "the MPLA army" or "the FNLA forces" or simply as "the MPLA," "UNITA," or "the FNLA" rather than by their distinct monograms. (The formal names for the movements' military wings are: for UNITA, the Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola [FALA]; for the FNLA, the National Liberation Army of Angola [ELNA]; and for the MPLA, the People's Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola [FAPLA].) Whenever it is necessary to differentiate the military from the political within a movement, the text does so. The omission of the article before "UNITA" is faithful to popular usage, though I chose not to follow some authors who treat it as if it were an ordinary noun: Unita.

Beginning in January 1975 many Angolan place names became "Africanized." Portuguese names are retained when discussing the preindependence period. Namibia, the name adopted by the U.N. in 1968, is used through the text instead of South Africa's "South West Africa." The events recounted here occurred in the pre-Pinyin period of Chinese phonetic spelling. My retention of "Chou En-lai" and "Peking" in lieu of their modern substitutes "Zhou Enlai" and "Beijing" is in part intended to help place the story in its historical context.

# *Introduction*

Empires may be born in glory, but they always die of embarrassment. Shortly after noon on November 10, 1975, Admiral Leonel Cardoso stood in the hollow, gold trimmed *salão nobre* of Luanda's pink-stuccoed Presidential Palace. At his back was a magnificent tapestry depicting Portugal's great seaborne explorations of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. To the admiral's sides stood half a dozen men. Taut and erect, some hiding their shame and anger behind dark, stony sunglasses, the men were assembled there to officiate at the demise of European colonialism. They all looked grim, severe, and stripped of dignity, the last custodians of an evaporated empire. As they stood, the dull thud of exploding shells, like the pounding of sullen, hollow drums summoning the city to war, rolled in from the countryside and reverberated in their ears, accusing the admiral and his men of failure.

With trembling hands and a steady voice, Admiral Cardoso read a brief statement deploring the state of war in which the country found itself. Then, addressing the purpose of the meeting, he solemnly declared the independence of Angola. He ended the five minute ceremony with the nervy call "Viva Portugal! Viva Angola!" There was no applause. Indeed, there was no response at all, perhaps because there were no Angolans present. The admiral folded his paper, tucked his spectacles into the breast pocket of his starched white jacket, and left the room. Thus ended half a millennium of Portuguese "sovereignty" in Africa.

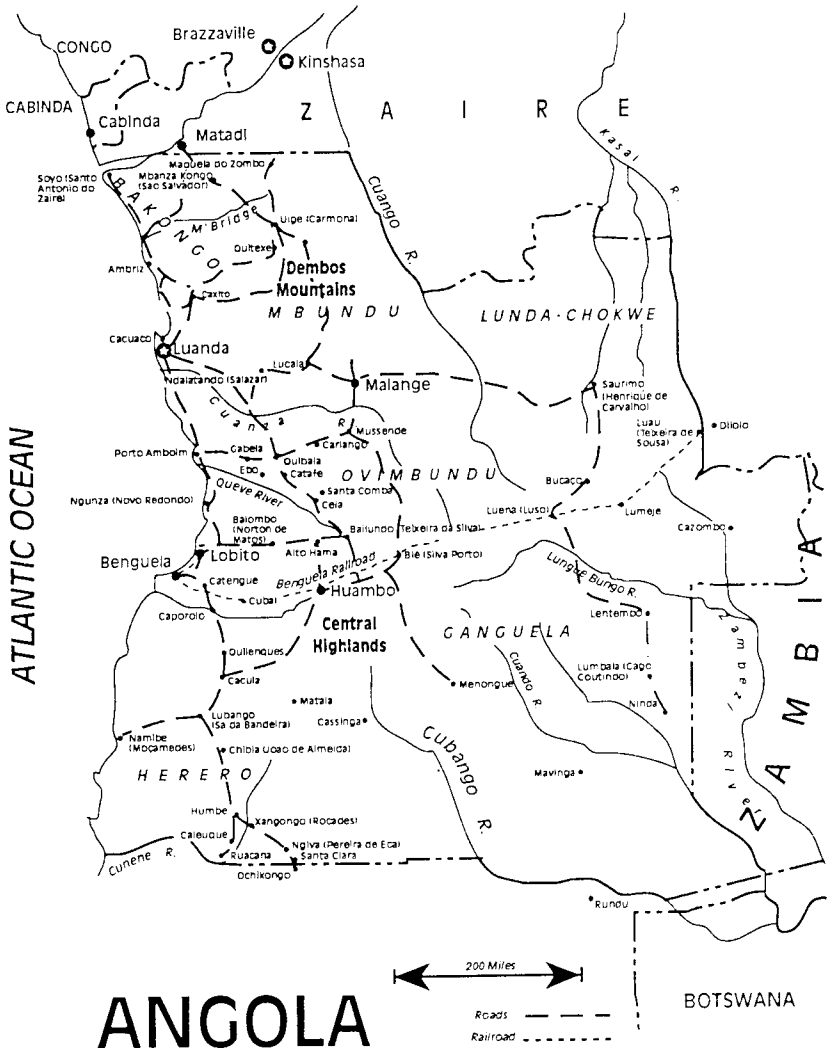
Of all the transfers of sovereignty to come out of this century's long battle with terminal imperialism, this was the most extraordinary. Unable to anoint a successor, Portugal had bestowed sovereignty upon "the Angolan people" and was prepared to steal away, leaving the decision about who would rule in its stead to be made by torch and cannon.

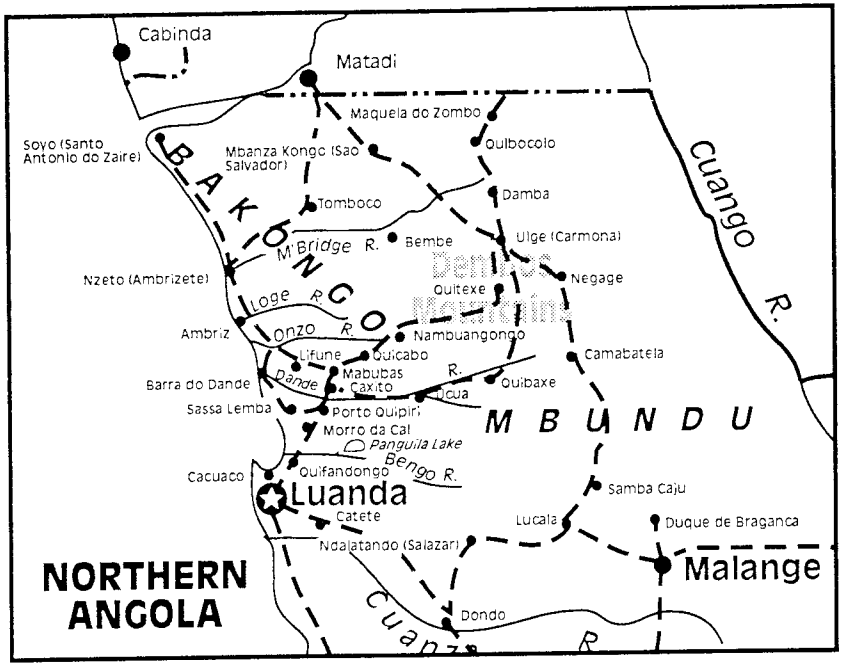
There was no paucity of aspirants to Angola's throne. Early that morning an assortment of Portuguese "ultras," Zairian commandos and hordes of greenhorn Bakongo warriors armed with Chinese, French,

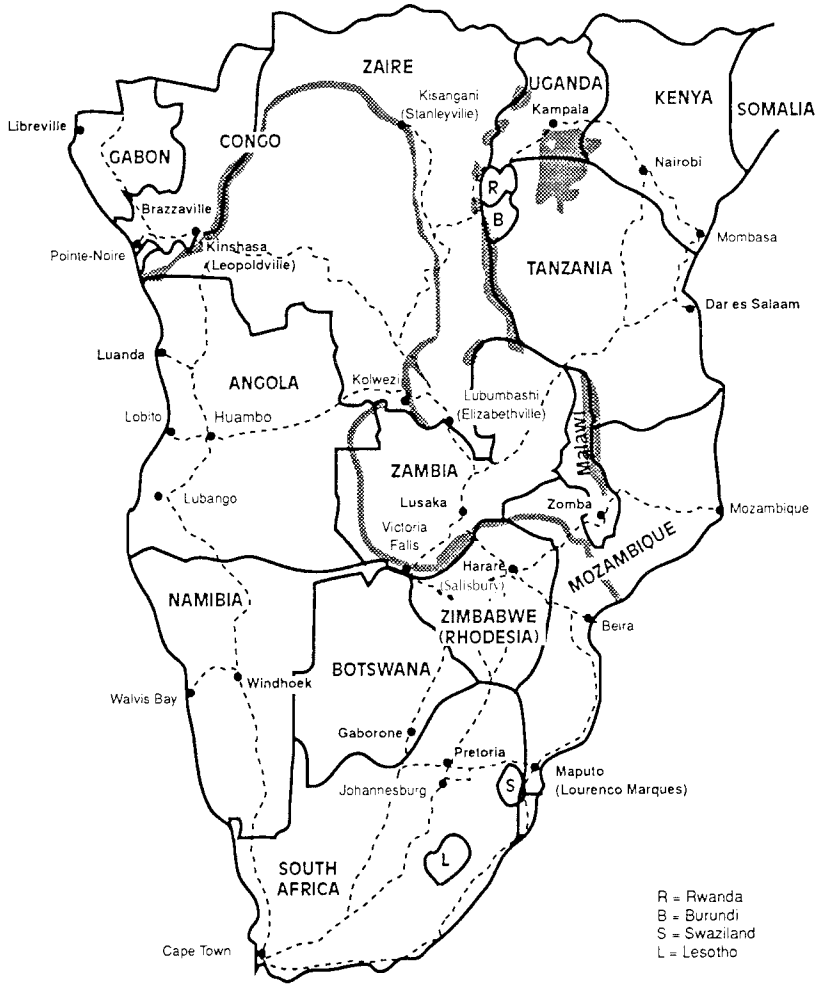
Belgian, and American weapons had begun their final assault on the capital. Defending Luanda were equally inexperienced Mbundu soldiers, armed by Moscow and led by mulatto officers and several hundred Cubans, and backed up by the experienced muscle of Africa's renegade army, the former Gendarmes of Katanga. South African and American intelligence officers on one side, their Cuban and Soviet counterparts on the other, watched in anticipation from hills overlooking the battlefield. The northern forces advanced; the enemy artillery roared into action; the final battle for Luanda was engaged.

Set in the context of "super" and "great" power rivalries and rife with geopolitical maneuverings, the battle for Angola is lodged firmly in an era that now belongs to history. At the same time, standing as it does at the source of this century's last, great leap of imperialism, the battle for Angola has emerged as a pivotal event in the closing drama of this troubled century: the demise of empire and the restoration of national sovereignty to millions of people in Eastern Europe and Asia. Now, as the political world approaches the third millennium of the common era deprived of the bloody signposts by which it has been guided for much of the past hundred years, and as statesmen look toward that future filled with an anxious hope that they might stand at the lip of an era unlike any seen to history, the legacy of Angola serves a sober notice: it warns about the pitfalls of ill prepared independences bestowed upon states artificially conceived, about the fragility of democracy and the compelling solution of civil, often tribal, war. These are problems that haunt the world today and stir in the heart of every thinking person the dark foreboding sense that the more the world may change, the more it stays the same. This is the story, then, of an obscure African bush war suddenly erupting into the greatest clash of arms that had ever bloodied the soil of black Africa. Behind it lay, as in every corner of the earth, centuries of history and tradition.

# *Maps*


ANGOLA
ATLANTIC OCEAN
CONGO
Brazzaville
Kinshasa
CABINDA
Cabinda
Matadi
Z A I R E
Kasai R.
Soyo (Santo Antonio do Zaire)
Mbanza Kongo (Sao Salvador)
Maquela do Zombo
BAKONGO
Uige (Carmona)
Quitexe
Ambriz
Caxito
Dembos Mountains
Cuango R.
MBUNDU
LUNDA-CHOKWE
Cacuaco
Luanda
Lucala
Ndalatando (Salazar)
Malange
Saurimo (Henrique de Carvalho)
Luau (Teixeira de Sousa)
Dilolo
Cuanza R.
Mussende
Porto Amboim
Gabela
Cariango
Quibala
Catafe
OVIMBUNDU
Ebo
Queve River
Santa Comba
Cela
Bucaco
Ngunza (Novo Redondo)
Baiombo (Norton de Matos)
Bailundo
Teixeira da Silva
Luena (Luso)
Lumeje
Cazombo
Benguela
Lobito
Alto Hama
Bie (Silva Porto)
Benguela Railroad
Catengue
Cubal
Huambo
Lungue Bungo R.
Caporolo
Central Highlands
GANGUELA
Lentembo
Quilenques
Cacula
Cuango R.
Lumbala (Cago Coutinho)
Menongue
Matala
Ninda
Lubango (Sa da Bandeira)
Cassinga
Namibe (Mocamedes)
Chibia (Joao de Almeida)
Cubango R.
Zambe z i R.
HERERO
Mavinga
Humbe
Xangongo (Rocades)
Caieuque
Ngiva (Pereira de Eca)
Ruacana
Santa Clara
Cunene R.
Ochikongo
Rundu
ZAMBIA
200 Miles
Roads
Railroad
BOTSWANA




# SOUTHERN AFRICA

International Frontiers

Roads and other lines of transportation

Rivers and Lakes

*We will ally ourselves with the devil if necessary inasmuch as one is always the devil of someone.*
—Holden Roberto

*To win our independence we should even take aid, as they say, from the devil himself.*
—Agostinho Neto

*I am ready to eat with the devil, even if to do so I must use a spoon with a long handle.*
—Jonas Savimbi

*The right of peoples, arms in hand, to strive for liberation from foreign oppression is holy.*
—Alexei Kosygin

*Covert action should not be confused with missionary work.*
—Henry Kissinger

*Surveying the whole world, we see that there is great disorder under heaven and that the situation is excellent.*
—New China News Agency

*Chapter 1*

# Unnatural Dominions

*I do not think it is a situation analogous to Vietnam because in Vietnam the conflict had a much longer, more complicated history.*
—Henry Kissinger on the civil war in Angola, December 12, 1975

## I

Europe exploded into Africa at the end of the nineteenth century in a rabid frenzy of dry land piracy known as "the Scramble." History could not have coined a better name for the event.

The Scramble was classical European imperialism's last hurrah, the final chapter in a saga of worldwide European dominated exploration, commerce, and conquest that Portugal's Prince Henry "the Navigator" had initiated over four centuries earlier. The trigger for the African scramble was competition over control of the Congo River, which Europeans had first "discovered" when the Portuguese explorer Diogo Cao stumbled upon it by accident in 1482. At that time, the river's estuary was controlled by the Mani Kongo, king of the powerful Kongo empire. Kongo was one of the most centralized kingdoms in all of central Africa, and modern scholars have gone to great pains, comparing populations, political organization, and industrial development, to demonstrate that the two kingdoms, Portugal and Kongo in the fifteenth century, were in fact very similar. Perhaps they were, but it was by their differences, specifically Portuguese advances in military and naval technology, that the future relations between the kingdoms were to be determined.

The undoing of Kongo, as it was of every kingdom on Africa's coast, was the slave trade. The introduction of firearms and the willingness of European traders to deal with anyone able to procure the commodity rapidly upset local balances of power. So lucrative did slaving become for buyers and sellers alike that it eclipsed all other forms of commerce. The

result for Africa was as devastating as it was paradoxical: the opening of European markets to Africa resulted in a dramatic drop in the production of African goods. The trade destroyed the power and prestige of the Mani Kongo.

In the second half of the seventeenth century Kongo attempted a political and military comeback. The result was disaster. On October 29, 1665, at M'Bwila, near the boundary between Kongo and its rivals (and former vassals) to the south, the Mbundu kingdoms, the Kongo empire was destroyed in one of the most important battles of precolonial Africa. The battle is claimed by the Portuguese as a victory for themselves; in fact it was a Mbundu triumph over their traditional Bakongo foes. (Bakongo is the name of the people of the Kongo kingdom; their language is Kikongo.) Two hundred twenty European troops, supported by about 150 settlers, 100 African musketeers, and perhaps 3,000 Mbundu bowmen, met and destroyed a Bakongo force consisting of 190 musketeers led by 29 Portuguese traders and a "massive" army of African bowmen. During the battle the Mani Kongo was killed. His head was returned as a trophy to the Portuguese settlement at Luanda where it was displayed in a tiny chapel on Luanda Bay. The Kongo empire never recovered, and influence in the land known today as Angola shifted to the Portuguese settlements in the Mbundu lands to the south. In time the Portuguese themselves grew indifferent toward Kongo. It wasn't until much later, as Portugal became aware of the inherent weakness of its position in the impending fracas over Africa, that Lisbon realized the folly of having abandoned its foothold on the banks of the Congo River.

Portuguese influence in the Mbundu lands that lay to the south of the Kongo empire dates from the arrival, in 1575, of an expeditionary force of some 400 Portuguese settlers at a point around which the future capital city of Luanda arose. Mbundu society (language Kimbundu) was not as cohesive or centralized as that of Kongo; rather, it consisted of several competing kingdoms. As a group, however, the Mbundu did not welcome the Portuguese, and in 1579 the ancient Mbundu kingdom of Ndongo (whose ruler was titled the Ngola, whence the name *Angola*) went to war with the intruders.

It took the Portuguese 90 years to defeat the tiny kingdom of Ndongo. The effort exhausted Portugal's martial will, and by the late 1600s expansion into the Mbundu lands had halted. The handful of Portuguese officials and traders left in Angola settled down to devote themselves to slave trading and to the procreation of a new race of Africans, Angolans of mixed African-European blood. By the late 1700s Angola's mulattoes, or *mestiços*, outnumbered Europeans by more than two to one. They were becoming a powerful force in the future colony's affairs. It was through



their actions, emanating from the small corner of the Mbundu homeland the Portuguese had managed to conquer, that Portuguese influence was extended throughout much of Mbunduland in later centuries.

Following the abolition of the slave trade, Europe's maritime trading states lost interest in Africa; only tiny Portugal laid claim to the hinterlands stretching away from its toehold shoreline outposts into the vast body of Africa. When European interest in Africa began to quicken once again toward the middle of the nineteenth century, Lisbon remained complacent about its presumed rights over great stretches of central Africa. Not until June 1854, when an emaciated Scottish missionary arrived in the Portuguese settlement of Luanda on Africa's southern Atlantic face, not by ship as was the custom but from the interior, did Portugal begin to waken to the fact that it could yet be outmaneuvered by more determined and able imperialists than itself.

Dr. David Livingston had left the Cape of Good Hope in May 1852 and for two years walked the breadth of central Africa. The tales of his epic treks across the "dark continent" did more to open the continent to partition than anything since Portugal's first heroic voyages in the fifteenth century. On his final journey, when the world lost touch with him, James Gordon Bennett, owner of the *New York Herald*, sent the British born American journalist Henry Morton Stanley to Africa to find him. Besides producing one of history's more forgettable quotes, the story of the finding of Livingston had an extraordinarily stimulating effect on European interest in Africa. Thrilled by Stanley's dispatches, scholar and soldier, missionary, trader, and explorer alike surged to the continent. Stanley's journey took the continent several steps closer to the Scramble and inextricably linked his own fate to that of Africa.

After his encounter with Livingston, Stanley found he too had been bitten by that peculiar malady that claims the souls of unfortunate Europeans who linger too long upon the continent. Over the years Stanley was repeatedly drawn back to central Africa. On one journey he made a transcontinental crossing from the Indian Ocean to the mouth of the Congo River, which he reached on August 12, 1877. His dispatch, published in the *London Daily Telegraph* on September 17, caught the attention of King Leopold of the Belgians, a monarch whose tiny corner of Europe imposed an insupportable constraint on the king's imperial ambitions. Leopold enlisted Stanley as an agent for his newly created International Association of the Congo. Ostensibly a disinterested organization whose goal was to promote trade in the Congo basin, the Association, as Leopold's brainchild became known, was in fact the first front company created for the purposes of clandestine infiltration by a foreign power into Africa. Leopold sent Stanley back to the Congo River with instructions to

conclude exclusive treaties between local African chiefs and the Association. Shortly after Stanley began his journey inland in search of an appropriate African monarch, to his chagrin he encountered a Senegalese sergeant bearing the French *tricolore*. Stanley had been outflanked. On September 10, 1880, Savorgnan de Brazza, an Italian resident of Brazil working for the French government, had made a treaty with a minor Bakongo chief, "King" Makoko, on the right bank of the Congo and in October had hoisted the French flag at a location around which would arise the city of Brazzaville. De Brazza was returning to the sea to have his exploits validated by international recognition when he met Stanley. Resolved not to be outdone, on December 1, 1880, Stanley founded Léopoldville, just opposite de Brazza's stake, on the left bank of the Congo. The contest over who would control the mouth of the Congo River was engaged.

On February 26, 1884, Great Britain, whose primary aim was to thwart anything the French were trying to accomplish, signed a treaty with Portugal refuting the claims of both Stanley and de Brazza and granting jurisdiction over the Congo estuary to Lisbon. Portugal's claim to sovereignty had some validity when viewed from the basis of "prior discovery" but none when measured by current occupation.

The Anglo-Portuguese attempt at intimidating rivals by the traditional European tactic of forming an alliance was immediately denounced by France and the Belgian monarch. For good measure, France also denounced Stanley's claims to the left bank of the Congo, saying he had signed a treaty with one of Makoko's vassals whose territories had already been legitimately annexed by France by virtue of de Brazza's treaty. Before long the final ingredient to any European quarrel entered the contest. Acting more from jealousy than any considered interest in Africa, Bismarck masterfully seized the initiative by calling for an international conference to settle the issue of the Congo.

The Berlin West Africa Conference was convened on November 15, 1884, and lasted until February 26, 1885. Fourteen European and North American powers attended. Surprisingly, the conference actually settled a few issues outright. The Congo basin, very roughly described as the land mass drained by the Congo River and its many tributaries, was declared a free trade zone to be administered by Leopold's Association. Despite the conference's careful wording, the gist of this decision was tantamount to recognition of the Association as a sovereign nation. In exchange for having to abandon most (but not all) of its claims to the banks of the Congo, Portugal was granted a coastal foothold north of the estuary (the future enclave of Cabinda). Sovereignty over the estuary was divided between Portugal and the Association; France replaced the Association on the right



bank at Manyanga, and the Association took over the left bank from Portugal at the river port of Noqui, just downstream from Diogo Cao's initial landfall at Matadi. From the mouth of the Congo, the lands administered by the Association ballooned into central Africa all the way to the shores of the great lakes in the east. Without realizing it, white men largely ignorant of local conditions had just drawn the first lines of modern political Africa. In the process, the Bakongo, descendants of the ancient Kongo kingdom, found themselves divided among three European powers: Portugal, Belgium (which succeeded the Association in 1908), and France.

But for the most part the conference, to which no African was invited, did little more than affirm that tropical Africa was now officially up for grabs. The rules laid down in Berlin became the basis for the settlement of all subsequent claims to Africa's interior.

Following the conference, explorers and military men were dispatched to Africa on behalf of one European power or another to seek out African chiefs and kings, real or imaginary, with whom to conclude treaties. The African justification of these treaties was in the promise of "protection" against the encroachments of other white men; the European interpretation was that by signing, Africans ceded sovereignty over their lands to the European signatories. The outcome was that 15 years after the Berlin West Africa Conference virtually the entire continent of Africa entered the twentieth century under the nominal sovereignty of one or another European power.

## II

Despite the supposed voluntary ceding of coherent territories by African sovereigns, all across the continent ethnic and culturally homogeneous societies suffered the same fate as the now fractured Bakongo. In 1886 the Portuguese yielded to German pressure and accepted the Cunene and Cubango rivers as the frontier between Germany's colony of South West Africa and Portugal's Angola. This caused the border to cleave in two the indigenous Ovambo tribes. The English, anxious to appease the capricious German kaiser, in 1890 granted Wilhelm II a thin strip of land wedged in between Angola and modern-day Botswana. This gift, the Caprivi strip of today's Namibia, was intended to provide Germany access to the navigable Zambezi River. Portugal and Belgium reached a series of agreements between 1891 and 1927 which established the border between today's Zaire and Angola, thereby dividing the indigenous Lunda people. Cabinda's boundaries with French and Belgian territories were worked out in 1886 and 1894. The British, in the person of Cecil Rhodes, ended Portugal's

dream of a transcontinental empire by a determined drive north from the Cape culminating in an ultimatum in 1890 obliging Portugal to abandon its claims to central Africa between its coastal colonies of Angola and Mozambique. In 1905 Britain and Portugal finalized the issue of their respective holdings in central Africa when they invited the king of Italy to draw the boundary between their respective colonies of Northern Rhodesia (today's Zambia) and Angola. Living in blissful ignorance of the peoples of the upper Zambezi Valley, King Emmanuel drew a straight line down longitude 22 degrees east slicing through the homeland of the native Mbunda peoples, neatly dividing them between eastern Angola and Northern Rhodesia's Barosteland. As a result of these treaties, Angola and all of Africa were yanked free from the Darwinian process of nation building by struggling prenationalist ethnic groups and cast into the unnatural patchwork of modern Africa.

Treaty making and lines on a map were but the first steps in the colonial process. As stipulated by the Berlin Conference the colonial powers were obliged to "establish and maintain in the territories . . . a jurisdiction sufficient to secure the maintenance of peace." The "maintenance of peace" meant crushing African resistance to European control.

Compared with its fellow imperialists Portugal proceeded slowly. In 1900 only a fraction of Angola was effectively under Portuguese control. Many Portuguese campaigns of pacification lasted well into the twentieth century. In 1907 Portuguese troops fought to control the last hostile Mbundu tribesmen of the hilly Dembos region northwest of the capital. Later, when this area became one of the fiercest centers of nationalist agitation, local Angolans claimed, perhaps with justification, that the Dembos had never been tamed.

The Ovimbundu of the rich Benguela plateau produced another center of resistance. Though never politically united (there were some 22 Ovimbundu kingdoms in the eighteenth century), the Ovimbundu are the most culturally homogeneous group in Angola. They are also the largest. Equal in number to the Mbundu and Bakongo communities combined, one out of every three Angolans today is an Ochimbundu (singular for Ovimbundu; their language is Umbundu). The Ovimbundu were subdued in the Bailundu War of 1902 (skirmishing lasted into 1904).

In 1913 there was a violent Bakongo uprising, which was not extinguished until 1916. Though the power of the ancient Kongo kingdom now belonged to history, an inextinguishable memory of sovereignty continued to burn through the centuries, warming the collective consciousness of every Bakongo. That memory would likewise explode in yet another strain of Angolan nationalism.

In the remote semidesert region of the extreme south, the cattle-raising



Cuanhama (a subgroup of the Ovambo) proved the most resistant of all Angolans to Portuguese penetration. A Portuguese expeditionary force of about 2,000 men managed to crush Cuanhama resistance in 1906, but when World War I broke out the Germans encouraged the Cuanhama to rekindle their quarrel with the Portuguese by supplying them with arms, leading to a bloody clash at Naulila in southern Angola in 1916.

Despite this list of military campaigns, it was not so much the wars that subdued Angola and the rest of Africa as it was the action of bringing the continent into the modern cash economy. Capital, not bullets, broke down traditional barriers to colonization.

In 1903 construction began on the Benguela railroad. Robert Williams, an associate of Cecil Rhodes, obtained a 99 year concession to build the railroad from the port of Lobito, just north of Benguela, to the Katanga province of the Belgian Congo. Construction took 25 years to complete, and 80 percent of the cost was borne by British capital. The railroad cut through the heart of the Ovimbundu homeland. It was a great colonizing force and made Lobito the most important port in Angola. It also facilitated an Ovimbundu diaspora along the rail line into the eastern district of Moxico.

Ovimbundu expansion away from the railroad line was frustrated by local African resistance, however, and as population pressures mounted, many Ovimbundu were forced to seek other avenues of emigration. This was provided by the coffee boom of northern Angola. While native Bakongo were displaced and often driven to emigration by the development of white-controlled coffee plantations, Ovimbundu were brought in as laborers. The result of this first extensive contact between local Bakongo and these Ovimbundu intruders was an understandable enmity.

The British-financed thrust into the center of Angola was an exception to the rule of exceedingly slow Portuguese penetration of Angola. As late as the 1930s parts of the northeastern Lunda district of Angola had not even been explored, let alone brought under Portuguese administration.

Why did the Portuguese take so long to invest themselves in Angola? For one thing, within the fraternity of European imperialists Portugal had a small and weak economy that was unable to provide the capital outlays that colonization required. But further explanation lies in the cultural and political stagnation from which Portugal itself suffered during much of the twentieth century.

In 1910 the outdated Portuguese monarchy fell, and Portugal joined the era of republicanism increasingly enjoyed by Western Europeans. But the Republic of Portugal proved even less stable than the monarchy: 45 governments followed one another in rapid succession during the 16 year life span of Portuguese democracy. A coup in 1926 ended the republic and

ushered in a series of right-wing military governments, which over the next six years evolved into Europe's most durable fascist regime. One of the leaders of this progression toward authoritarianism was the prominent Portuguese economist Antonio Salazar. In 1928 Salazar became minister of finances and in 1930 minister of colonies. In this position he completed the assembly of an administrative web by which he intended irrevocably to bind Portugal's far-flung empire into a vast Luso-tropical network centered firmly on Lisbon. In 1932 Salazar completed his climb to power when he became prime minister. Firmly entrenched at the top of Portugal's narrow bureaucracy, Salazar announced the birth of the *Estado Novo*, or "New State," the culmination of the administrative and cultural apparatus he had painstakingly assembled during his steady climb to the top.

Salazar's "New State" was a cultural throwback to the golden age of Portuguese explorations and as such was ill adapted to the rapidly changing conditions of the twentieth century. In the middle of a century remarkable for its social upheavals, Portugal plunged into 50 years of social and political stagnation into which Prime Minister Salazar also dragged his African colonies. Written histories of Angola follow logical and compelling paths up to this period, but beginning with the *Estado Novo* they lose their narrative drive and flounder in statistics and generalities about the deteriorating economic and social conditions of black Angolans trapped in the steel embrace of a strong man dictator.

It has been popular to criticize the Portuguese for their distinctly unenlightened colonialism. Though the Belgians run a close second, the Portuguese were in fact the worst European colonizers in Africa (the Germans and the Italians were not able to hang on long enough to count). From their policies of forced labor to the degrading results of their assimilation theory, the Portuguese proved over and over that they were incapable of the civilizing mission they claimed to be carrying out.

Forced labor was originally introduced into Angola to circumvent the inconvenience posed by the banning of slavery. It was first instituted in 1875 by legislation that defined all Africans engaged in "nonproductive labor," meaning non-wage earning work such as tending one's fields, as vagrants. Vagrants were susceptible to being pressed into the "civilizing" activity of labor. Forced labor, in one form or another, was a reality in Angola into the 1960s.

The assimilation theory was more subtle. Assimilation was a process whereby black Angolans were given the opportunity to achieve full Portuguese citizenship. Candidates for assimilation status had to meet strict criteria, including adopting a European mode of life, learning to speak and read fluent Portuguese, following the Christian (preferably, but not necessarily, the Catholic) faith, possessing a trade or profession,



and, later, having completed military service. The Portuguese proudly held this policy up to an increasingly hostile world as an example of racial integration, the polar opposite, they claimed, of the despised separate development taking shape in South Africa. But the system was fraught with catch-22s. Unless one was an *assimilado* it was exceedingly difficult to obtain the kind of job one needed to be able to pay the cost of the education that was required for a successful application for assimilation. A few lucky Angolans were able to prepare for assimilation in missionary schools (though not all chose to apply), but by 1956 only 31,000 of Angola's 4 million inhabitants were *assimilados*, less than 1 percent of the population.

Instead of elevating the African population to a "civilized" level, the system degraded the vast majority to the dead-end status of *indigena*, defined in a 1954 statute as "individuals of the Black race and their descendants . . . who do not yet possess the enlightenment and the personal and social habits presupposed . . . of Portuguese citizens."

Prejudice will be a part of the human experience as long as the species exists, but its blatant institutionalization in Angola is a shocking testament to the social backwardness of Portugal in the middle of the twentieth century. One shudders to imagine history's final judgment on South Africa.

## III

Whereas European imperialism was the salient feature of the late 1800s, it is the end of empire that is by far the greatest event of the twentieth century. After Germany lost its colonies and following the implosion of the Ottoman Empire, two of the less confusing results of the First World War, the passing of Europe's great overseas empires proceeded in a fairly straightforward manner. During the interwar period France and Britain began withdrawing from their Middle East mandates (a movement only temporarily contradicted by Italy's misguided adventures in North Africa and the Horn). But the end of Western empire truly came during the decade and a half that followed the Second World War. In one of the most sudden transformations in the history of civilization, within 15 years European empires from Indochina to West Africa's Atlantic seaboard had vanished.

The movement received a generous boost when the British withdrew from the bulk of their Asian possessions shortly after the end of the war. It paused briefly until the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu in 1954, then moved for the first time to black Africa in 1958 when Britain's Gold Coast became the independent state of Ghana under the charismatic guidance of Kwame Nkrumah. With the African logjam broken, the continent began its triumphant sweep toward independence. By now, the worldwide (the

first time in history the term can be even tentatively used) anti-imperialist consensus had so firmly taken hold that modern imperialists dared no longer even call themselves by that name. How surprising than that another great idea of this century, one that sprang from the same notions of social equality that were undermining the Western empires, should have been abducted by a nationalist revolution in Russia and perverted into a new legitimization of empire.

Ever since Lenin published his *Imperialism: The Highest State of Capitalism* in 1919, one of the dogmas of Communist orthodoxy held that the colonies were the Achilles' heel of the capitalist order. Ignoring czarist Russia's own recent imperialist past, Lenin maintained that imperialism, as the child of the capitalist countries, if not the capitalist system, was the natural enemy of Communism and the colonialized peoples were its rightful allies. Lenin held that increasing imperialist competition among the capitalist nations would inevitably lead them into self-destroying wars at the conclusions of which the socialist countries would have but to pick up the scattered pieces and reassemble the shattered world in their own image.

Lenin's theory, of course, had a fatal weakness: it was wrong. Perhaps worse, it never even had the sincere support of those who spoke on its behalf. A realistic gauge of the Soviet commitment to combating imperialism can be found in the words of Central Committee member Nikolai Bukharin, who declared, at the Eighth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, held the same year Lenin published his famous treatise on imperialism, "Let us by all means proclaim self determination for the European colonies, for Hottentots, Bushmen, Negroes, Indians and the rest. It won't cost us anything." That same self-serving cynicism, central to Soviet foreign policy for much of the twentieth century, was to lead Moscow into decades of misadventures in Africa.

In 1948 the staunchly Stalinist Portuguese Communist party created a local chapter in Luanda, and there is evidence that as early as 1952 Soviet agents were working to organize nationalist movements in Angola. The activities of this tiny but aggressive cell performed the work of politically awakening Angola's tiny elite, the educated *assimilados* and the mixed African-European *mestiços*, work that was being done in the French and British colonies by the colonial administrations themselves. But because it was embraced by the "culturally tainted" *assimilados* and *mestiços*, Communism was viewed by many Angolans as just another European import product. The influence of missionary schools, many of them Protestant, contributed to this grass roots hostility toward Communism, particularly in the Bakongo north and on the central plateau. Thus, when the Angolan Communist party was born (in strict clandestinity) in 1955 it was little



more than an overseas branch of the Portuguese Communist party. Its activities radiated from Luanda up the railroad to Catete and Malange through the heart of the Mbundu homelands, but it found scant support outside the educated elite of the cities.

Representing this elite by his birth, nurture, education, and profession was Agostinho Neto, an outstanding Mbundu of Catete. Neto, son of a respected pastor of the Methodist Church, was born on September 17, 1922, in the area of Icolo-e-Bengo in the Mbundu village of Cachincane, 50 miles southeast of Luanda. Neto's village life was cut short when his father was appointed pastor of the Methodist Church in Luanda, and Neto spent most of his youth in the capital. His family lived in a small but "solid" house built on concrete pillars with corrugated iron sidings and roof, unlike the shacks and lean-tos of Luanda's sprawling *musseques*. (Literally, "built on sand." The term is used to denote Luanda's slums where the vast majority of the black population lived.) "Quiet, reserved, a bit shy but always correct and businesslike," Neto was "a very serious lad, very studious and very intelligent." He performed with excellence in Luanda's predominantly white Liceu Salvador Correia and rose to the top of his class. After graduation he worked for three years in the Public Health Department in Luanda until 1947, when, at the age of 25, he obtained a Methodist scholarship and left Luanda for Portugal where he took up the study of medicine.

There is no record of Neto's political activities prior to his departure from Angola; it is very likely there were none. Within a few years of arriving in Portugal, however, he had become active in groups hostile to Salazar. Though Neto's political philosophy developed more as a result of his experiences in Portugal than in Angola, contrary to the accusations of his later rivals he was no less an Angolan nationalist for it.

Neto's political objective while in Portugal was the independence of Angola. The greatest opponent of Angolan independence was the Salazar regime. Therefore, Nego worked for the independence of Angola via opposition to Salazar. Neto discovered that the only political philosophy being pursued in Portugal which offered an alternative to Salazar (democracy not being especially amendable to the clandestinity into which Salazar drove all opposition) was Marxism. Since any activist opposed to Salazar's rule in the 1950s required, at some point in his career, the support of an uncompromising militancy, Neto, whether by design or default, was inevitably drawn to communism.

By this time Stalin was dead and Khrushchev was pursuing Soviet foreign policy, especially in the Third World, with an unprecedented vigor. Khrushchev was an international adventurer; he courted danger and made outlandish boasts he couldn't possibly honor. Though the Soviet

people will be forever in his debt for the campaign of *de*-Stalinization he initiated (which took the rest of the century to complete), Khrushchev's exuberance would eventually rebound against him.

While he was in power, Soviet expansionism became rejuvenated and reimbued with the ideology of "liberation" (the notion having fallen into abeyance during Stalin's reign), and the Soviet regime enjoyed a practice of imperialism unseen since Lenin's days. By posing as the natural ally of the "oppressed peoples of the world," largely identified as the former or actual colonialized or semicolonialized peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, the Soviet Union was able to base its encroachment on the idea of deliverance rather than conquest. To the extent it worked this ruse owed its success to the reactions it provoked in the West.

Left to his own devices, Khrushchev could have accomplished little. He demonstrated this in 1960 when, as African independences fell like rain, his promises of support for revolutionaries consistently lagged behind his ability or willingness to back them up. Nonetheless, for genuinely oppressed peoples living outside the Eastern bloc who, like the Soviets, feared for their survival in their struggle against Western political, cultural, or economic domination, words of encouragement and support, whatever their source and however insincere, were always welcome. Almost despite itself, the Soviet Union managed to assemble a small international army of willing and dedicated agents.

Not all Communist parties profited from Khrushchev's vigor. Throughout the life of the *Estado Novo* all organized opposition to Salazar was driven underground. Cut off from the political development and increasing sophistication of the other European Communist parties, the Portuguese Communist party (PCP) became frozen into staunchly unrepentant Stalinism. It was during this time of contradiction, renewed Communist dynamic on the world stage, and repressed development of Communism in Portugal that Neto underwent his own political development.

To what degree Neto was committed to the Portuguese Communist party is impossible to say. In any case he paid dearly for it. In 1952 his affiliation earned him his first arrest and jail sentence, a process which was often repeated in the following six years. As he shuttled among prison, politics, and school, Neto matured as a poet of somber and prophetic verses

In December 1956 divergent groups of progressive and Communist Portuguese, militant *mestiços*, and politicized *assimilados* primarily of Mbundu origin banded together in Luanda to form the Movimento Popular de Libertaçao do Angola (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola), or MPLA. Exactly what role the Communist party of Angola,



still little more than an appendage of the Portuguese Communist party, played in the formation of the MPLA is unclear. What is clear is that it was small. One hardened Angolan Marxist, himself a founding member of the MPLA, later lamented that the "Communist Party of Portugal . . . had no appreciable influence in either the preparation or the launching of the Angolan revolutionary movement," by which he meant the MPLA. As for Neto, he was in prison at the time of the founding of the MPLA and did not participate directly in its creation.

It is certain, however, that he was closely associated with those who did, such as the Cape Verdan nationalist Amilcar Cabral and the Angolans Mario de Andrade and Viriato da Cruz. These latter two were respectively the MPLA's first president and secretary general. Both were Luandan *mestiços* deeply committed to Angolan nationalism and so by default influenced by Marxism.

Though Communist proselytizing had helped them to formulate their grievances, the only thing that united the diverse groups that joined to create the MPLA was opposition to Portuguese domination. Nonetheless, the role of Communism in the MPLA has been an issue of contention ever since.

Luanda and the other large towns where the MPLA found its adherents were not the only foyers of an emerging Angolan nationalism. At the same time northern Angola, home of the ancient Kongo kingdom, was also providing a strain of anti-Portuguese militants.

Ever since the defeat of the ancient kingdom, the northern Bakongo had seen their influence in Angola decline. The cultural center of the Bakongo people had itself moved away from the traditional Kongo capital of Mbanza Kongo (renamed São Salvador by the Portuguese) in northern Angola to Léopoldville, capital of the Belgian Congo. For years the relative stagnation of Portuguese colonialism combined with the demands for Bakongo land by the expanding coffee plantations forced the emigration north of thousands of Angolan Bakongo. One of the many Angolans swept up in this migration was Holden Roberto, a young Bakongo born in São Salvador on January 12, 1923.

At the age of two Roberto was sent to the Belgian Congo to live with an aunt. He did not return to Angola until 1940 when he was 17. His stay was brief, and he returned to the Congo in 1941 when he went to work as an accountant in the Belgian administration. In 1952 he got a job with a Portuguese commercial company based in Léopoldville. This employment took him back to Angola on several brief visits.

It was during these visits, when he "noticed the difference between the living conditions in the Congo and in Angola," that Roberto claims he became interested in working to "ameliorate this state of affairs in my country."

Just as Neto was to suffer from the suspicion that he was much too Portuguese, Roberto's extended stays in Léopoldville exposed him to accusations of being not quite Angolan. But more damning for both than where they picked up their nationalism was why; Neto's nationalism was always overly philosophical, Roberto's blatantly material.

Roberto's introduction to Angolan politics came through his uncle, Barros Necaca. Necaca's ambition was the deathless dream of the restoration of the Kongo kingdom. A group of like-minded Angolan exiles coalesced around Necaca in the Belgian Congo district of Lower Congo and in the capital of Léopoldville.

Protestant-educated for the most part, from the beginning the group was staunchly anti-Communist. In 1957 the group set itself up in Léopoldville as a formal organization, the Uniao das Populaçoes do Norte de Angola (Union of the Populations of Northern Angola), or UPNA. Necaca was the group's leader.

The next year the UPNA embarked on an effort to gain international recognition and support by sending a representative to the First All-African Peoples' Conference to be held in newly independent Ghana. Necaca himself felt he had become too prominent to leave the Belgian Congo without arousing suspicion, so his nephew and protégé, Holden Roberto, was sent to Accra.

After a clandestine journey overland through the French Congo, Roberto obtained passage, with the help of a former football associate, Cyrille Aduola, on a freighter to the Cameroons. From there he traveled overland to Lagos where he caught another freighter to Accra. Roberto was welcomed in Accra with a marked lack of enthusiasm. The "tribal" orientation of his organization was out of step with the Pan-African ambitions that stirred the visions of Nkrumah and the other organizers of the conference, particularly Nkrumah's adviser, George Padmore. Roberto caught on quickly and wrote to his sponsors in Léopoldville imploring them to create a more inclusive political platform. By the time the conference opened on December 5, Roberto was circulating documents under the heading of the Uniao das Populaçoes de Angola (UPA), having dropped the restrictive qualification *Norte*. But just as charges of Communism were to dog the MPLA, accusations of tribalism were to hound Roberto. Neither would ever succeed in putting these founding suspicions to rest.

While in Accra Roberto conferred with many African leaders, some of whom would play determining roles in the coming struggles in Angola: the future president of Zambia, Kenneth Kaunda, the Kenyan politican Tom Mboya, and the Congolese nationalist Patrice Lumumba, whose tragic destiny awaited him just two years hence. As it was for many of the



participants, this 1958 conference in Accra was a watershed experience for Roberto, projecting him for the first time into the rarified atmosphere of international affairs and providing him with a platform from which to seize the leadership of the UPA away from his uncle. The year 1958 had been kind to other Angolans as well.

In 1958 Agostinho Neto was at last graduated from medical school. By then he was president of a clandestine Communist cell in Lisbon through which African students were routinely introduced to the concepts of Marxism. One of these students was a young Ochimbundu named Jonas Malheiro Savimbi.

Jonas Savimbi was born on August 3, 1934, in the small town of Munhango on the Benguela railroad. Young Savimbi's grandfather, Sakaita Savimbi, had been a traditional Ovimbundu chief from Andulo and had fought in the Bailundu War of 1902. As a result the elder Savimbi had been stripped of his powers and much of his land. Sakaita's son Loth, much to the disappointment of the old chief, chose the course of assimilation. He converted to Christianity, became a Congregationalist pastor, and worked on the Benguela railroad, where, as he was transferred up and down the line, he founded a string of churches, which trace the progress of his career.

It was at his grandfather's knee, listening to stories of the Bailundu War and learning the "classical" Ovimbundu of the traditional courts, that young Savimbi forged his vision of a free Angola. Savimbi claims that by the time he was six years old he had already decided he would fight the Portuguese.

After many trials Savimbi was graduated at the top of his class from the senior secondary school in Sa da Bandeira in southern Angola. He was awarded a scholarship to continue his studies in Portugal, and, like Neto, he too intended to become a doctor. In September 1958 he sailed for Portugal from the port of Lobito. On board ship he met a black American sailor who suggested he disembark at Accra where Kwame Nkrumah was preparing a conference for people from all over Africa interested in fighting for the independence of their countries.

Savimbi, "burning to join a freedom movement," was almost persuaded to jump ship at Accra, but he thought the better of it and stayed his course to Portugal.

Like all Africans newly arrived in Lisbon Savimbi began receiving leaflets distributed by the clandestine Communist party. Savimbi, again like Neto before him, noticed that the Communists seemed to be "the only people attempting to fight the dictatorship." He made contact with the local Communist party cell, whose president, unknown to him at the time, was Agostinho Neto, and began to distribute the pamphlets himself.

Correspondence with friends and classmates back in Angola immediately got Savimbi into trouble. Letters with unflattering references to Portuguese colonialists were intercepted by Portuguese security forces and earned Savimbi a series of interrogations and an attempt to recruit him as an informant.

When Savimbi refused, his friend and mentor, José Liahuca, a fellow Ochimbundu who had taken Savimbi under his wing when the young Angolan arrived in Lisbon, told Savimbi he could now consider himself finished in Portugal. He cited the example of Agostinho Neto, whom Savimbi had heard about but never met. Neto had taken 11 years to complete his studies because of his political activities. But Neto had not started getting into trouble until his fourth year – here Savimbi was in trouble and he'd barely begun his first. Unless he agreed to cooperate with the Portuguese they would never leave him alone to continue his studies. The only other option was to leave the country and try to continue studying elsewhere. Savimbi chose flight.

In July, as he waited to be smuggled out of Portugal, Savimbi met Neto for the first time when the two men shared a meal. It was a rare chance for Savimbi to come face to face with a man who, in the eyes of many young Angolan students, had already achieved the status of a legend. But the meeting stumbled on a faux pas. When Neto learned that Savimbi was from central Angola he was incredulous. Surely Savimbi's family originated from the north, Neto said. Neto disparaged the students from central and southern Angola, and by association all their compatriots, because of their lack of commitment to the struggle for independence.

Wounded by the remarks, Savimbi nonetheless left the meeting deeply impressed by Neto. But the seeds were sown for a deep and lasting enmity.

Savimbi was smuggled out of Portugal with the aid of the Portuguese Communist party. He went on to Switzerland, where he again took up his studies and immediately began searching how best to pursue his political career. He came across some literature about the MPLA and began corresponding with the movement.

By now, Holden Roberto had moved on from Accra to Conakry, the capital of newly independent Guinea. In September, he flew to New York as a member of the Guinean mission to the United Nations. Roberto took advantage of his stay in the United States to establish a wide range of contacts, including one with a senator from Massachusetts, John F. Kennedy.



# IV

Senator Kennedy was one of the few American politicians to grasp the original meaning of the term *Third World* before it became a synonym for poverty. Unlike many of his contemporaries in government, he was aware that many of the conflicts then gripping the world were not narrow arguments embedded solely in the Cold War. His eye on the White House but equally stirred by a sincere moral outrage informed by a keen sense of history, Kennedy repeatedly spoke out against the Eisenhower administration's policies of caution and suspicion with regard to the nations being born of the demise of colonialism. It is another great irony of this century, equal to the one that saw Communism's precepts used for the purposes of national expansion, that the death of the Western empire should have coincided with the covert repudiation of an anti-imperialist tradition in U.S. foreign policy that was as old as the republic itself.

Containment was a defensive strategy intended to maintain an equilibrium until such time as the danger of Communism played itself out, and, reputation notwithstanding, it would be incorrect to characterize U.S. foreign policy, even during the Cold War, as expansionist. However, it was pursued with an unfortunate case of tunnel vision. Every change in the postwar status quo, unless developed under the tight stewardship of the United States, was suspected by many Americans of being Communist inspired. This included the battles being waged against European colonialism. Fear of Communism became so ingrained in the American psyche that the United States was soon paying for containment with broad based *anti*-Americanism. This in itself became Communism's greatest advantage. The result was that however much they tried to forge a "third way" between the two blocs, many nationalist leaders of the Third World ultimately failed to break the molds into which their great power patrons cast them and too often ended up clumsily embracing ideals foreign to their struggles.

On July 2, 1957, Kennedy made a stirring speech denouncing French actions in Algeria, which the French maintained was not a colony but rather an integral part of the French Republic. The reaction against Kennedy, in the Republican as well as the Democratic parties, not to mention among U.S. allies in Europe, might have spelled the end of his promising political career had the young senator not had the good fortune of being proved right. The next year when French planes bombed a town in neighboring Tunisia, killing 68 people and throwing the U.N. Security Council into emergency session, it became apparent that France's problems in North Africa were not the strictly internal affair Paris would have liked the world to believe. Though at the time American influence and interest

in Africa was most conspicuous by its near total absence, for African visitors to Washington, Kennedy had become the man to meet.

Disagreement over French policy in France itself reached a head in May 1958 when units of the French army revolted and threatened to march on Paris. The Fourth Republic fell and the towering figure of de Gaulle re-emerged from self-imposed exile to lead France back from the lip of civil war. Accepting the necessity of unburdening France from an African empire "once glorious but henceforth ruinous," de Gaulle proposed autonomy to the colonies, coupled with membership in a great "Franco-African Community." Only the radical Guinea of former labor leader Sékou Touré responded with a resounding *"Non!"* to de Gaulle's proposal. Guinea declared its independence from France on October 2, 1958. An irate de Gaulle ordered everything French, from the telephones to the wires they were attached to, ripped from the walls as the indignant French departed from their first African colony. Put to shame by Guinea's audacious snubbing of Paris, the leaders of France's other African colonies, who had originally been willing to go along with de Gaulle, now felt they had little choice but to follow Touré's lead. French colonies began preparing to leave the fold en masse. Two years later, during the heralded "year of African independence," 17 African colonies became independent, 14 from France alone.

In this collective euphoria that was sweeping Africa to freedom, Portugal's colonies somehow got misplaced and were forgotten. It was the European system itself, with its growing tradition of democracy and human rights, that had fostered anticolonialism; but for the Africans of the Portuguese colonies there was no shining metropolitan model to hold up in shame against the somber reality of life under the *Estado Novo*.

That the transfer of power to black hands in Africa was largely peaceful is not to discount the courage and tenacity of the African statesmen who led their countries to independence; it *is* an affirmation of the sometimes doubtful ability of democracies to make painful but correct decisions. In Africa, more than elsewhere, it was not rebellion that destroyed empire; it was the loss of faith in the conqueror's right and duty to rule abroad that brought the armies home. Because African independences were, for the most part, orderly and constitutional, most newly independent African countries maintained excellent relations with their former colonizers. Washington, caught off guard by the rapidity of the decolonization of Africa and forced, like Moscow, to play catch up with a process each would have liked the world to believe it was leading, heaved a sigh of relief.

But then the "winds of change," as British prime minister Harold Macmillan described them to a disconcerted South African audience in 1960,



swept into Africa's heart of darkness to fan the fires lit by the bastard independence of the Belgian Congo. In the confusion of this singular *indépendance raté*, the two would-be midwives of African emancipation rushed, each in the name of liberty, to smother the newborn child.

Consummated in blood, assassination, fire, and intrigue, from the independence of the Congo was to be born the battle for Angola.

*Chapter 2*

# Wars and Insurrections

*We are in the presence of the struggles of parties, of tribes in conflict, of tumults and rebellions—all the sanguinary drama that is a spectacle of unbridled license and emancipation conferred on primitive instincts that are more animal than human.*

—Antonio Julio de Castro Fernandes

*However much as we may deplore it . . . enslavement leads to the inducement of violence in the soul of the enslaved, but this is an indication of the latter's bestial existence, nothing more than an instinct for self-preservation.*

—Holden Roberto, March 15, 1961

## I

Of all the fathers of African independence the tall, thin, messianic figure of Patrice Lumumba casts the longest shadow. His party, the Mouvement National Congolais (MNC), was, inasmuch as it was possible within the cultural mosaic of the Belgian Congo, the only truly "nationalist" movement in the colony. All its rivals, especially the Association des Bakongo (or Abako) of the stubborn, heavy-set local burgomaster of Léopoldville, Joseph Kasavubu, and Moise Tshombe's Lunda-based Conakat (Confédération des Associations Tribales du Katanga) of the pocketbook province of Katanga, were blatantly tribal. Nonetheless, it was Abako, not the MNC, that lit the fuse that was to burn rapidly down to the bombshell of Congo independence.

Only days after the return of its delegates from the 1958 conference in Accra, Abako scheduled a demonstration in Léopoldville. Political agitation in the city was barely containable, and bewildered Belgian authorities fretted over the consequences of such a meeting. On January 4, 1959, the Belgians ensured that their worst fears would be fulfilled when, at the last minute, they prohibited the demonstration. Frustrated





Bakongo reacted violently, setting off four days of rioting in the streets of Léopoldville. Before order was restored, scores of Africans had been killed (estimates range from 40 to 540). Though there were no European fatalities, the pent up fury of their black subjects now lay naked before the eyes of the white authorities. In one stroke the psychological foundation of the Belgian Congo, the only foundation that can sustain an empire, had been destroyed. Eighteen months later the Congo was independent.

That 18 month sprint to independence set in motion forces that still today consume the energies and resources of the giant central African state. Political unrest rapidly polarized around Léopoldville and the lower Congo, Abako's domain, and Katanga, the fiefdom of Moise Tshombe, with Lumumba's MNC holding the moral high ground, its thin layer of support spread across the colony. Besides differences of ethnicity and economic development, by no means marginal to their quarrel, distance alone between Léopoldville and Tshombe's capital at Elisabethville (cities as remote from each other as Paris is from Moscow) obliged these two extremities of Congo politics to eye each other with suspicion.

In November 1959 Brussels officially bowed to black opposition and announced a four year plan for the political emancipation of the Congo. But the initiative had already passed from Belgium's hands. Congolese demands for immediate independence overwhelmed all caution, and the colony rushed toward sovereignty at a pace too fast for anyone, the Congolese included, to keep pace.

In December Belgium scrapped its four year plan and declared a roundtable conference for the purpose of resolving the political future of the colony. Brussels invited leading Congolese politicians, including Kasavubu, Tshombe, and, after some convincing (he was in prison at the time), Lumumba. The meetings in Brussels lasted from January 20 to February 20, 1960. For the occasion Lumumba hired as his secretary a young Congolese student, Joseph Desiré Mobutu, then studying journalism in the Belgian capital.

To the surprise of most observers, the decision of the roundtable was to recognize the independence of the Congo on June 30, 1960, just four months away. Denounced by many as precipitate, Belgian plans for independence were not uncalculated. By pulling out quickly, Belgian leaders presumed that an independent Congo would find itself obliged to fall back on its former colonializers for help in managing the new state. Brussels would thereby retain the fruits of colonial control without its burdens, gaining by default what France and Britain had won by design. The plan backfired. Instead of producing an indentured nation, it created a brushfire that engulfed the entire Congo basin.

The Congo wars were a watershed experience for Africa and all

powers, including the U.N., that intervened. For the better part of a decade, the Congo was a playing field for European, American, and Asian intelligence services and paramilitary operators, as well as a host of soldiers of fortune who, from the British "Mad Mike" Hoare and the French Bob Denard to the stateless Che Guevara, fought with relish its tribal conflicts. All acted with impunity, made their names and reputations, and went on, either as ghosts or with arms in hand, to plague the continent for years to come.

Portugal watched nervously as its fellow imperialists, with visibly obscene relief, jumped ship in Africa. In order to halt the spread south of this plague, Lisbon threw up a cultural wall around Angola. Mail was stopped between the Congo and Angola, and, at the request of Lisbon, politicized Angolan émigrés such as Necaca were harassed by Belgian police. Some efforts were counterproductive. Following the rioting in January 1959, Belgian police had forced all unemployed Africans residing in Léopoldville to return to the "interior." Thousands of Angolan Bakongo were compelled to go back to northern Angola where they formed a ready reserve of displaced, disgruntled Africans infected with the contagious virus of nationalism.

The Portuguese moved swiftly within Angola also. Portuguese security forces, the Policia Internacional de Defesa de Estado, otherwise known as PIDE, had already infiltrated the nascent organizations of Angolan nationalism. Wishing to preclude events like the January riots in Léopoldville, in the spring of 1959 PIDE launched a series of preemptive raids. The leaders of the MPLA, Viriato da Cruz and Mario de Andrade, escaped arrest only because both were by then already living in exile in Paris. Another wave of arrests in July netted more suspected nationalists, and still more were picked up a year later in June 1960. This last wave captured 52 persons, including Father Joaquim Pinto de Andrade, brother of the MPLA president-in-exile (where he had prudently chosen to stay), and Agostinho Neto, by then a practicing doctor residing in Luanda and the clandestine president of a local MPLA chapter.

Neto was arrested at his medical cabinet on June 8, 1960, three weeks before Congo independence. It was late afternoon, a time he reserved for treating the poorer residents of Luanda's slums. Neto was hustled out of his waiting room to a police car as an astonished crowd gathered round and his white Portuguese wife pleaded with police to explain what was happening. He was jailed in Luanda for three months, then he and his family were shipped off to prison exile in the Cape Verde Islands. From there, in 1962, he was sent to house arrest in Portugal.

Following his arrest several hundred people from his native region marched in protest to the town of Catete. The Portuguese military, intent



on making it clear they would brook no dissent, opened fire on the marchers. Thirty Africans were reported killed and some 200 wounded. The villages of the demonstrators were razed. For the first time since the end of the wars of pacification the Portuguese military had been called into action against Angolans. It would not be the last.

Just as events in the Congo were approaching their first frenzied climax, the MPLA suddenly found itself decapitated, its leaders either in prison or exile. In Paris, da Cruz, Andrade, and a relative newcomer to the movement, Lucio Lara (son of a wealthy sugar plantation owner, Lara was another Angolan *mestiço*), received an invitation from Holden Roberto's recent host, the Guinean president Sékou Touré, to move MPLA headquarters to Conakry. They accepted. (It was with Conakry that Savimbi corresponded from Switzerland.) Though still some 3,000 miles from Luanda, it was the first step on the long bloody road back to Angola, a path that only one of the three would politically survive.

On June 30, 1960, Belgium granted independence to its giant colony, with Joseph Kasavubu as the country's first president and Patrice Lumumba its prime minister. There was an immediate breakdown of civil and military order. In accordance with Belgian plans, the rapidity of developments had obliged the Congolese military to retain its Belgian officer corps; but the army's African soldiers found in their white officers' stubborn observance of military hierarchy and discipline a lack of appreciation of the changes the soldiers had expected from their country's independence. On July 5 the Congolese army mutinied.

The Belgian government responded to the mutiny by airlifting 1,200 white troops into the Congo, an act that by current political standards constituted invasion. Unable to accept either Belgian interference or the mutiny of their own army, Kasavubu and Lumumba sent an urgent appeal to the United States for help. Eisenhower had no desire to become overtly involved in the Congo and deferred the request to the United Nations. Before the U.N. was able to address the Congo, the situation reached an apogee of chaos when, on July 11, Moise Tshombe declared the independence of Katanga and its secession from the Congo.

With its army in mutiny and invading troops deploying throughout the capital, the new government in Léopoldville was unable to respond to this new affront to the integrity of the state. Concentrating on the Belgian aggression and afraid the U.N. might refuse their call for help, Kasavubu and Lumumba sent a joint message to Moscow informing Secretary-General Khrushchev that they might be forced to ask for Soviet intervention. Already suspicious of Lumumba's politics and under the growing opinion that he had Kasavubu "under [his] thumb," U.S. diplomats in Léopoldville were horrified at the suggestion he might bring in the

Russians. On July 19 the U.S. ambassador in Brussels, William Burden, cabled Washington the suggestion that a principal objective of U.S. "action must therefore be to destroy Lumumba Government [and] at the same time ... find or develop another horse to back." The CIA's cables from Léopoldville supported this position.

The U.N. rushed forward on the Congo government's request for troops. United Nations Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld succeeded in securing the backing of several African nations and in formulating the Security Council resolution in such a way that it was diplomatically difficult for either the United States, which favored the idea anyway, or the Soviet Union, which was less enthusiastic, to veto it. After two days of deliberations the Security Council called on Belgium to remove its troops and authorized Hammarskjöld to provide the Congolese government "with such military assistance as may be necessary" to secure that end. Toward the end of July a mixed Asian and African force of more than 8,000 soldiers under the U.N. flag began deploying throughout the Congo, except for the notable exception of rebel Katanga. By the end of the year the number of U.N. troops would grow to 19,000, ballooning into the most controversial deployment in the history of the United Nations.

While U.N. troops tried to hold the crumbling state together, Tshombe was busy consolidating his position in Katanga. While elsewhere in the Congo, and throughout Africa, Africans were trying to authenticate their independence from Europe, Moise Tshombe was digging new depths of meaning out of the old device of collaboration. The secession of the mineral-rich province was supported by Belgian mining interests, which assured the steady replenishing of Tshombe's coffers. With his abundant resources Tshombe retained several Belgian officers to organize and command a new force he was creating to be the nucleus of the rebel state's army; thus were born the infamous Katangese Gendarmes. To supply additional support and training to this black force, Tshombe recruited European, South African, and Rhodesian mercenaries.

In Léopoldville Lumumba's impromptu threat to invite in the Soviets prompted forceful internal Congolese opposition, and he was obliged, for the time being, to abandon the idea. Instead, to everyone's amazement, on July 24, as the first U.N. troops were poised to arrive, Lumumba commandeered a U.N. plane and left the Congo for New York with the intention of addressing the United Nations. Impulsiveness was beginning to be viewed as the Congolese leader's working method; it was soon his trademark, occasioning comments about his "irrationality" among American observers.

After three days of inconclusive meetings at the U.N., Lumumba went to Washington, where U.S. officials were eager to meet this strange



African for themselves. They were not encouraged by what they saw. To the distress of America's square-shouldered cold warriors, Lumumba never looked them in the eyes; rather, he cast his gaze skyward while spewing, in fluent French, a "tremendous flow of words" that totally lacked "any relation to the particular things we wanted to discuss." Under-Secretary of State C. Douglas Dillon found Lumumba "gripped by this fervor that I can only describe as messianic." He was clearly "just not a rational being." Lumumba further disconcerted the men in power in segregated Washington when he requested the company of *"une blanche blonde"* during the course of his stay. United States willingness to work with Lumumba, never great to begin with, "vanished after these meetings."

Lumumba returned to Léopoldville on August 8 unaware of the impact his visit had had on Washington. As the U.N. presence defused the Belgian issue, he turned his attention to Katanga, where Belgian complicity and U.N. reluctance to intervene suggested to him a Western plot against his government. Having pleaded with them just three weeks earlier to hurry in, he now threatened to expel U.N. troops from the Congo.

Lumumba decided to deal with Tshombe on his own. He began to plan the invasion of Katanga by the unsteady Congolese army. But for this he needed help. On August 15 he made good on his threat to bring in the Soviets, and soon 11 twin engined Ilyushin 18 planes with Soviet crews were touching down in Stanleyville, the center of Lumumba support in eastern Congo. The Soviet planes were accompanied by more than 100 East bloc and Soviet technicians, as well as trucks and spare parts. The U.S. officials were horrified. On August 18 Lawrence Devlin, CIA chief of station, Léopoldville, cabled headquarters a frantic "Congo experiencing classic Communist effort takeover Government." "Whether or not Lumumba actually Commie or just playing Commie game" was not yet clear; however, the warning was implicit: "anti-west forces rapidly increasing power [in the] Congo and there may be little time left in which take action to avoid another Cuba." This time all the alarms went off.

The same day that Devlin's cable reached Washington the National Security Council met to discuss the deteriorating situation in the Congo. During the meeting Under-Secretary Dillon said that if Lumumba carried out his threat to force the U.N. out, this would create a situation "altogether too ghastly to contemplate." President Eisenhower remarked succinctly, without recourse to either adjectives or the conditional, that the possibility of the U.N. being forced out of the Congo "was simply inconceivable." Dillon wished to agree with the president but said that Hammarskjöld and Ambassador Lodge both thought that if the Congo put up determined opposition to U.N. presence, then the U.N. would be obliged

to leave. No, corrected Eisenhower, the issue was not Congo opposition; rather it was a case of "one man" opposing the U.N.

What exactly transpired next is lost to the capriciousness of sensitive government records. According to one participant at the meeting the president then turned to Allen Dulles, director of Central Intelligence, and "said something . . . that came across . . . as an order for the assassination of Lumumba. . . . There was no discussion; the meeting simply moved on." For others present at the meeting the message was not nearly so explicit; still others had "no recollection of any statement, order or reference by the President (or anyone else present at the meeting) which could be interpreted as favoring action by the United States to bring about the assassination of Lumumba." Plausible deniability notwithstanding, whatever Eisenhower said, during this meeting or at any other time, "getting rid of Lumumba" by ungentlemanly means became, in the words of Under-Secretary Dillon, "the general feeling of the Government . . . and it wouldn't have been if the President hadn't agreed with it."

Whether or not this meant Eisenhower wanted Lumumba dead is a bit of information that was buried along with the former president. What is indisputable is that the idea of assassination was embraced by CIA director Dulles, who, in Dillon's opinion, "would have been quite responsive to what he considered implicit authorization" and in any case "was perfectly willing to take the responsibility personally that maybe some of his successors wouldn't have" to order the murder of Patrice Lumumba.

On August 20, before the Soviet materiel had begun to arrive, Lumumba began airlifting troops to Luluabourg in the Kasai province whose leader, Albert Kalonji, had allied himself with Tshombe. The road to Tshombe's capital of Elisabethville ran through Kasai, so it was necessary to crush Kalonji before moving on Katanga. This was the first opportunity the Congolese army had to distinguish itself in battle rather than in the beatings and rioting to which it had devoted itself since the mutiny, and it did so by embarking upon a brutal campaign of annihilation of the Baluba tribesmen of Kasai. The Congo wars had begun.

## II

As it advanced into Kasai the Congolese army mortared Baluba villages and indiscriminately shot people on sight. Columns of Lulua tribesmen followed on the heels of the regular army dispatching wounded Baluba where ever they found them. Men, women, and children were massacred as the army advanced. In a report to the U.N. a distressed Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld described the campaign with the word *genocide*.



After ravaging Kasai, Lumumba's army approached the border of Katanga. There it was met by Tshombe's Gendarmes. Encountering the first organized resistance of the campaign, the Congolese army was broken in a brief engagement with the European-led Gendarmes. Lumumba's plan of crushing Tshombe's rebellion by force died along with the forward momentum of his troops at the Kasai-Katanga border. More fateful yet for the prime minister was that by sending his troops to Kasai he had dealt his army out of the action that was soon engaged back in the capital.

With Lumumba's army wasting itself at the borders of Katanga and the prime minister's standing in Léopoldville falling precipitately as a result of his unilateral decision to bring in the Soviets, President Kasavubu roused himself from the stupor in which he had languished for the past several weeks and on September 5 dismissed Lumumba as prime minister. Kasavubu then ordered Joseph Mobutu (who had dutifully followed events since the roundtable meetings in Brussels, rising to the position of army chief of staff) to arrest his former employer, Lumumba. Lumumba, not to be outdone, replied that Kasavubu was no longer head of state and that the functions of that office were now to be assumed by parliament, and he ordered Mobutu to arrest Kasavubu. Mobutu, uncertain which way to lean, refused both and sulked menacingly in the shadows.

For several days no one in Léopoldville knew who, if anyone, was in control. Fearing renewed violence in the capital, the U.N. secretary-general's special representative in the Congo, the American Andrew Cordier, ordered all Congo airports closed except to U.N. flights. He did this, he later explained, to prevent an outbreak of civil war (as if one wasn't going on already), but it was not lost on critics of the U.N., who considered the organization to be a puppet of the United States and other Western interests, who the beneficiary of the action was. Closing the airports prevented Lumumba from retrieving either his troops from the battle for Katanga or his other supporters now trapped in Stanleyville. The U.N. blockade was lifted on September 10 by Cordier's replacement, the Indian diplomat Rajeshwar Dayal. A dizzying ballet of changing fortunes ensued.

American and Belgian intelligence officers in Léopoldville had been busy for weeks trying to persuade any Congolese politician who would listen to them to tilt to Kasavubu. One of their prime targets had been the young Mobutu. Their efforts began to pay off when Mobutu made up his mind on September 12 to arrest Lumumba. Lumumba's uncle and commander-in-chief of the Congolese army, General Lundula, who had been stuck in Stanleyville, rushed to the capital and released Lumumba. Kasavubu dismissed Lundula and appointed Mobutu in his place. Mobutu put the general under house arrest, but Lundula escaped and put himself under U.N. protection. Both Kasavubu and Lumumba went into

seclusion, each demanding U.N. protection from the forces of the other. On September 14 the 29-year-old Mobutu stepped into the vacuum and seized power for himself.

Through the shifting sands of this struggle for power in Léopoldville waded an uncomfortable young Angolan just back from an extended journey overseas. In mid-July 1960, after two years' absence, Holden Roberto had returned to the tense and confusing atmosphere of Léopoldville just as Lumumba was making his first threats to call in the Soviets and opinion in Washington was crystallizing around the notion of assassination. Roberto had left Léopoldville a young and inexperienced nationalist; he returned a still unenlightened but nonetheless confirmed revolutionary.

Roberto's travels had brought him enough prestige to enable him to seize the leadership of the UPA from his uncle. As head of the UPA he had approached his old friend Lumumba and obtained permission to make weekly broadcasts into Angola over Radio Léopoldville. At the same time, Roberto sent runners into the main urban centers of Angola to distribute tracts about the UPA, especially to black Angolan soldiers, with directions to desert and make their way north. Like every revolutionary, Roberto needed warriors.

The Portuguese were busy doing their best to oblige him. With Congo independence an accomplished (sort of) fact they were anxious to discourage similar movements in Angola. The Portuguese organized mass demonstrations of loyalty to Lisbon at which they described the situation in the Congo where "Lumumba was creating confusion." Referring to dreaded Communist infiltration, they warned that Lumumba "wants to do here what he has already done in Congo-Léopoldville." Not surprisingly, Portuguese denunciation of Congolese independence and Patrice Lumumba did more to stimulate the interest of Angolans than had the rather ambiguous achievement of Congo independence itself. A young Angolan who attended one of these meetings later wrote that the "people returned home with new ideas. The good fortune of the Congo was discussed widely and frequently. The name of Lumumba . . . was widely commented upon." Across Angola, apolitical Africans found their "emotions were aroused" as they "became aware of new realities."

When Mobutu moved against Lumumba in September, Roberto, fearing his association with Lumumba condemned him in the eyes of the new strongman of the Congo, went into hiding at the Tunisian embassy. Thinking it preferable to disappear temporarily, Roberto advanced a planned October departure for Europe and the U.N. and immediately left the Congo for the seedbed of his nationalist education: he returned to Accra. Upon his arrival Nkrumah informed him, however, that his presence in Ghana was no longer desired because, though he had fled the Congo out



of fear of being associated with the "Communist" Lumumba, Accra had discovered he was "in the pay of America." Roberto left Ghana and traveled on via Tunis to Europe.

During his earlier travels Roberto had had occasion to meet and refuse cooperation with the MPLA's Andrade and da Cruz when all three attended the Second All-African People's Conference in Tunis in January 1960. But Roberto, sensitive to charges of tribalism, actively recruited other Angolan émigrés whom he felt less threatening to his position as the leader of Angolan nationalism than these *mestiço* intellectuals of the MPLA. To this end he made an unannounced call on Jonas Savimbi in Switzerland in September 1960.

Savimbi and Roberto talked through the night at the Hotel du Pays near the train station in Lausanne. Savimbi was unimpressed by Roberto, who took a persistent anti-MPLA line, describing that movement as a group of *mestiços* and Communists. But when Savimbi asked him about the way the UPA was organized, Savimbi "discovered that *he* [Roberto] was the organization." Savimbi doubted the accusation that the MPLA was Communist, but he was attentive to the charge that it was run by *mestiços*. That Roberto was unconditionally for blacks was a point in his favor; perhaps recalling Neto's wounding remarks, Savimbi feared that if the MPLA was dominated by *mestiços*, as a "southerner" he might never be able to hold a position of importance in the organization. "It may sound like racialism [which it was]" he later admitted, "but it is a fact that it was very difficult at that time for blacks to understand why *mestiços* should be leading a liberation movement to fight the Portuguese." Still, Savimbi found that Roberto cut a very weak figure next to Neto. The meeting ended inconclusively, and Savimbi "continued to read MPLA publications," seeking but finding nothing in them to support Roberto's charges that the MPLA was Communist. But the charge of its being led by *mestiços* lingered, and Savimbi held back from plunging into the increasingly partisan politics of Angola.

Shortly after Roberto's visit Savimbi received an invitation, through his contacts with the MPLA, to address the International Student Conference in Kampala, Uganda. There Savimbi met Tom Mboya, the president of Kenya's Trade Union Congress and one of Roberto's acquaintances from Accra. Mboya took a liking to Savimbi and invited him to come to Kenya to meet Jomo Kenyetta, then living under house arrest in northwestern Turkana. Savimbi was thrilled at the opportunity to meet the legendary nationalist. As they drove to the meeting with Kenyetta, Mboya echoed Roberto's arguments of the MPLA's *mestiço* and Communist orientation. When Savimbi met Kenyetta, the venerable "Lion of Africa" too recommended he join the UPA. Savimbi objected, saying that after

conversations with Roberto it was clear "he knows nothing." "Okay," Kenyetta replied, "that's one very good reason to join, because you have ideas." Savimbi has maintained ever since that it was the moral force of Kenyetta's opinion that convinced him to decide for Roberto. Mboya, who was scheduled to leave the next day for New York where he would catch up with Roberto at the U.N., offered to hand-deliver Savimbi's request to join the UPA to Roberto himself.

Roberto had traveled on from his meeting with Savimbi in Switzerland to New York, where in October he again addressed the United Nations. In his speech he noted that "after the debacle of English, French and Belgian colonialism" Portugal's empire must be next to fall. He urged the organization to hold an open debate on the question of Portuguese colonialism, as it had on French actions in Algeria. This, he said, would be "much appreciated" by the Angolan people, whose revolt against colonialism, he cautioned, risked "manifesting itself in an explosive manner."

While Roberto kept himself at a safe distance, events in Léopoldville continued their tortuous course. Once Mobutu had acted, the CIA moved in to seal its recruitment. Three days after he took power, CIA officers informed Mobutu that supporters of Lumumba planned to assassinate him the following morning. This assassination attempt, foiled with American help, had a decisive impact on Mobutu's political thinking. Thereafter he listened attentively to the arguments of Devlin, who warned him that there were more Soviet backed assassination plots in the works. Devlin urged the arrest or other "more permanent disposal" of not only Lumumba but his deputy prime minister, Antoine Gizenga, and another Lumumba ally, Minister of Education Pierre Mulele.

One of Mobutu's first acts, and a sign of how closely he was listening to his new advisers, was to give all diplomats from Communist countries (in addition to Soviet and East European personnel there was also a five-man goodwill mission from the People's Republic of China in Léopoldville) 48 hours to leave the country.

News of this development reached Khrushchev in mid-Atlantic as he was en route to New York for a scheduled address to the U.N. Dismayed by events in Léopoldville, the Soviet premier raged impotently that the Congo "is slipping through our fingers."

The U.S. ambassador in Léopoldville, Clare Timberlake, was elated. Let the Russians "volley and thunder," he exclaimed. "They will find it much more difficult to peddle their poison in the Congo.... The trained seals are running for cover and even the local clerks who worked for Lumumbavitch are being methodically arrested.... This new and troubled African country has given the boot to the blob."

Unfortunately for Ambassador Timberlake, the Congo exposes the misconception of "clients" as pliant servants "controlled" by secret agents from whom they receive blood money and to whose councils they lend an unswervingly attentive ear. As Angola would also demonstrate, more often it is the nervous and greedy paymasters who become addicted to their "clients," following them sometimes in folly and blindness down paths they never imagined taking at the outset. In November a more sober Ambassador Timberlake cabled Washington, "I hope the Department is not assuming from a few modest successes that the Embassy has Kasavubu, Mobutu, or any other Congolese 'in the pocket.'" In fact while eagerly devouring aid and money from their patrons, "they rarely consult us voluntarily regarding their prospective moves.... It would be necessary to live twenty-four hours a day with the principals in this drama to know what role they may decide to play at any given moment."



Lawrence Devlin was an experienced covert operator. He had a much firmer grasp than the ambassador of the ambiguities inherent in his line of work. Though the pro-Lumumba forces were being steadily pushed aside by their more substantially supported and skillful opponents, Devlin had seen Lumumba spring back from other seemingly hopeless situations. Radical African diplomats in Léopoldville were already agitating for Lumumba's reinstatement and working for a reconciliation with Kasavubu. Even if this fell through, Lumumba in the opposition could be just as dangerous as in office. On October 9 Lumumba confirmed this by leaving the protective shield of his U.N. guards and driving around Léopoldville announcing his return to power. The next day Mobutu threw up an armed wall of 300 Congolese soldiers around the deposed prime minister's residence and was dissuaded only with difficulty by Ambassador Timberlake not to order an assault. The United States preferred more discreet means of elimination.

Poison that would produce the fatal symptoms of a disease indigenous to the Congo was delivered to Devlin with orders to use it to kill Lumumba. The chief of station set about trying to infiltrate an agent into Lumumba's entourage. But Lumumba, separated from arrest by only a thin contingent of Ghanian soldiers interposed between him and Mobutu's men, had reduced access to himself to a strict inner circle that Devlin's available assets were unable to penetrate. Time slipped away and the poison lost its potency. Devlin began exploring the possibility of shooting Lumumba with a long range rifle. In its efforts to get Lumumba the CIA sent additional agents to the Congo; one was a senior case officer from headquarters, another was a foreign national with a criminal record, "not a man of many scruples." The agency also hired a third "essentially stateless" soldier of fortune, "a forger and former bank robber" whom Devlin had already found could be counted on to "try anything once." But before any

of their plans for abduction or murder could be carried out Lumumba disappeared.

On November 22 a credentials debate at the U.N. ended in defeat for Lumumba's delegation and the seating of Kasavubu's supporters. This was the decisive blow. Lumumba now realized he could no longer count on any substantial support coming to his aid in Léopoldville. His only chance was to break out of the capital and escape to Stanleyville. Devlin found out about Lumumba's intentions to flee. Studying "several plans of action," he set up "several possible assets to use in event of breakout." It wasn't enough. On November 27 Lumumba succeeded in slipping out of the capital and taking the road for Stanleyville. Working with Mobutu, Devlin helped get roads leading out of the city blocked and troops alerted but the resourceful ex-prime minister slipped through their fingers and disappeared into the vast Congolese bush.

Four days later, apparently without significant CIA help, Lumumba was captured in Kasai province. He was transferred back to Léopoldville and later taken to a military camp in Thysville.

Lumumba's deputy prime minister, Antoine Gizenga, who, with the help of sympathetic U.N. troops, had managed earlier to flee Léopoldville and make his way to Stanleyville, reacted to the arrest of Lumumba by declaring, on December 13, that he, Gizenga, now represented the legal government of the Congo. He declared Stanleyville the new capital, and proceeded to set up a rival government, which was promptly recognized by both the Soviet Union and China. When Gizenga openly appealed to the Chinese for support, though, Peking sent money but pleaded geographical constraints in its denial of more material help. Gamal Abdel Nasser of the United Arab Republic, however, did become a steady supporter of the new regime, which immediately flexed its muscles by sending commando groups into neighboring provinces to attack pro-Mobutu forces.

The Congo was now effectively split in three, with a Soviet supported regime in Stanleyville, the Belgian and French supported Tshombe in Elisabethville, and Mobutu and Kasavubu, allied with the United States, in Léopoldville. In each of these centers of power, confused U.N. troops tried to maintain a neutrality clouded in several shades of gray. In between them lay vast tracts of no-man's-lands filled with tribesmen, impenetrable forests, and armed and hostile groups whose allegiance was to no one but themselves.

Though Tshombe was now firmly ensconced in Katanga, neither of the other two groups, Kasavubu and Mobutu, and Gizenga, were confident of their positions. In Stanleyville, after China's disappointing response to his call for aid, Gizenga was also discovering his East bloc allies



were ill equipped to prop up his fledgling government. A combination of the economic weakness of the Soviet Union and interposed African hostility to a Soviet airlift was choking off Stanleyville. Reacting in anger and frustration, Gizenga began expelling East bloc reporters.

The situation in Léopoldville was no better. Devlin cabled headquarters that in the station's and the embassy's opinion Kasavubu and Mobutu's government was about to fall. The result, he feared, "would almost certainly be chaos and return Lumumba to power." Refusal to "take drastic steps at this time will lead to defeat of U.S. policy in Congo." Drastic steps were subsequently taken.

Four weeks after Lumumba's capture, time closed in upon the heralded "year of African independence"; less than three weeks later, on January 17, 1961, two days before the inauguration of President Kennedy, Mobotu disposed of the prime minister by putting him on a plane and shipping him to his mortal enemies in Katanga. Though Lumumba survived the flight it is possible that no medical attention could have saved him upon his arrival. He was beaten so badly en route by his Baluba guards that the sight of the pitiful man caused the plane's Belgian radio operator to vomit. Though his fate was not revealed for some weeks and the exact details have never been divulged, Lumumba was probably executed on his arrival in Elisabethville by Katangese authorities on the night of January 17–18.

After months of planning, the CIA got what it wanted without having to get its own hands dirty. A cable from the CIA's Elisabethville base two days after Lumumba's plane ride to death in which the base chief wrote an ironic "Thanks for Patrice, if we had known he was coming we would have baked a snake" is cited as hard evidence that the CIA was obviously not privy to the decision to send Lumumba to Katanga. The Elisabethville cable goes on to profess the base's ignorance of the current whereabouts of Lumumba, who was in fact two days dead. In the end the murder of Lumumba went down in official CIA records as a "purely . . . African event."

The disappearance of Lumumba did nothing to quiet the disturbances raging across the Congo. Unperturbed by all the commotion, the rebellion in Katanga also continued apace.

Through Lumumba's death Africa gained an enduring myth. Stories spread into illiterate central Angola of "an invisible man called Lumumba," who, "when he wrote, you couldn't see the hand or the body of the writer." This mysterious specter would "drop pictures into towns and posts from the sky. On these pictures were two people, a black man and a white man. The instructions were to tear out the white man and leave the black man." The message was clear: tear out the white man. On cue, out of Angola, that great land of silence, and from the darkness of time came the bloodiest massacre in the history of colonial Africa.

# III

Roberto had returned to Léopoldville in November 1960 just as Lumumba was trying to escape to Stanleyville. There, through the good offices of Damien Kandolo, one of the so-called Binza Boys (a group of prominent Congolese politicians who frequented the Léopoldville suburb of the same name and whose association with the CIA was widely presumed), the issue of his friendship with Lumumba was defused. Roberto jumped at the opportunity to renounce his connections to Lumumba; he was to prove over and over that he was not a man to be hindered in his effort to attain control of Angola by anything as stifling as an adherence to principles.

The runners Roberto had sent into Angola in July had reaped a harvest of deserters to the cause of Angolan nationalism. Many of these Angolans had no fixed political orientation and were eager to join any movement that was working for the expulsion of the Portuguese. In December Roberto assembled his warriors in Léopoldville and arranged for military training to be given in the evenings at the Tunisian embassy.

As the new year opened, speeding Lumumba to his demise, events in Angola also accelerated. The first trouble broke out in the cotton growing region of Kasanje, northeast of the important Mbundu city of Malange, when a popular revolt erupted around spontaneous protests against the falling price of cotton. Peasants wielding *catanas* (machetelike tools used in the fields) attacked Portuguese livestock and property. There were no reports of attacks on Europeans.

Portuguese troops were rushed to the region, and the Marianos, as the protestors became known, were overwhelmed by the NATO supplied Portuguese army. Planes firebombed and strafed the area in the first known use of napalm in attacks against peasant insurgents. Up to 7,000 Africans were killed. There was no mention of the uprising in either the Portuguese or the international press. The entire incident might never have been exposed had it not been for what followed.

The next outbreak in the series of explosions that shook Angola in 1961 occurred in the capital of Luanda. In the early morning darkness of February 4, 1961, several hundred Africans, armed with knives, clubs, and stones, attacked Luanda's São Paulo prison and other localities where African prisoners were held. The objective of the attacks was ostensibly to free prisoners whose deportation it was feared was imminent. Militarily the attacks were a disaster. About forty Africans and seven Portuguese guards were killed at São Paulo. There are no statistics for the other assaults. Nowhere were any Africans freed.

Though nothing suggests its exile leaders in Conakry knew anything about it, the MPLA later claimed credit for organizing the February 4 attacks by which that movement marks the beginning of Angola's war of independence. That some MPLA militants participated is not doubted, but even official MPLA history admits that it was "the people," adding somewhat lamely, "with MPLA militants in front," who "heroically launched" the February 4 assault on the prisons of Luanda.



Two days later, while leaving funeral services for the slain policemen, European civilians turned on a crowd of African onlookers, initiating a bloody week of revenge and reprisals. White vigilante squads mounted murderous raids into African slums where they randomly gunned down blacks. Some Africans tried to organize and launch further attacks. For days Luanda's African neighborhoods were the scenes of repeated horrors. Describing those days of terror a resident of Luanda later recalled he "thought I was dead and that ... heaven has opened. I thought ... the world was coming to kill me straightaway. I couldn't shout or talk or even throw myself under the bed."

Coincidental with the riots in Luanda and the disappearance of Lumumba, figurehead Soviet president Leonid Brezhnev was making a state visit to one of the Soviet Union's few allies in black Africa: radical Guinea, in whose capital resided the MPLA's exile leadership. Up to this point, direct Soviet support for the MPLA had been nonexistent. It was, according to a biographer of Brezhnev, "the staging of a bloody 'popular uprising' in the capital city of Luanda ... [that] convinced Brezhnev of the need to provide direct military assistance to the MPLA." Brezhnev's influence in 1961 over decisions taken in the Politburo was minimal; in Africa he was little more than an errand boy to countries most men in the Kremlin thought not worth their time to bother with. But Moscow was running out of luck in the Congo, and there is no hyperbole in concluding that the Luanda riots and Brezhnev's visit to Conakry in fact mark the beginning of direct Soviet support for the MPLA.

If so, the decision fitted Khrushchev's policy of maintaining reasonably correct state-to-state relations between sovereign nations, even those not particularly friendly to Moscow (a category into which the Congo now fit), which he counterbalanced by sending support to movements engaged in "just wars of national liberation." The insurrection in Luanda hinted that a "just war" might be brewing in Angola, and at least some diversion of resources from the apparently lost cause of the Congo to the potentially promising conflict in its southern neighbor might be appropriate. Shortly after Brezhnev's departure, Andrade addressed a telegram to Khrushchev stating that the MPLA was counting on the support of the Soviet government in the coming struggle.

But who was there to wage the struggle? Inside Luanda the MPLA had virtually ceased to exist. Terrified by the violence gripping the capital,

many Luandans, whether nationalists or not, had fled to the countryside. Some of those who returned to their homelands in the Dembos region northeast of the capital eventually formed the core of an insurrection that would fester in those hilly forests for the next 14 years.

On February 21 the Liberian ambassador to the U.N., the Pan-Africanist from Roberto's days in Accra, George Padmore, who had broken with Nkrumah over the latter's tilt toward the Communist regimes of Asia, followed up on Roberto's calls for a U.N. debate in October and moved to seize the Security Council with the Angolan issue. Discussion of Angola was scheduled to begin March 10. On that day, his plans coming to a head, Roberto again left Léopoldville for New York. He intended to synchronize a limited act of UPA sponsored violence in Angola with the impending discussions, a technique he hoped would precipitate decolonization and divert attention from Luanda.

At the same time in Washington the new Democratic administration was faced with giving substance to the rhetoric of its recently inaugurated president. The first test of Kennedy's convictions came in Angola. When Angola came before the Security Council, Kennedy instructed U.S. ambassador Adlai Stevenson to vote against Portugal, placing the United States for the first time squarely on the side of the nationalists.

After five days of debate, as Ambassador Stevenson was casting the United States' precedent breaking vote in New York, Roberto's "limited act of violence" broke out in northern Angola. Its fury overshadowed all African uprisings that had preceded it.

For months Roberto's fledgling military commanders had been infiltrating back into Angola, recruiting sympathizers and organizing cells. Their plan was to attack, during the night of March 14, between 30 and 40 small settlements throughout northern Angola. Their orders were to destroy bridges, crops, houses, and communications, anything related to the Portuguese colonizers. There do not seem to have been specific orders from Roberto to kill civilians, though the same claim cannot be made for Roberto's ruthless and controversial chief of security, José Peterson. In any case Roberto grossly underestimated the volatility of the popular discontent he was about to unleash.

The stage was set, the fuse lit. During the night of March 14–15 the bomb exploded. Bands of vengeful Africans armed with *catanas*, a few stolen rifles, and any blunt instrument they could find unleashed a terror throughout northern Angola that has marked that country's history every since.

From the very beginning attackers fell on their often helpless victims screaming the words *Mata Mata* ("Kill Kill") and *UPA*. These were not disciplined guerrillas emerging from the bush in coordinated assaults; in



fact, when the bloodletting began the initial insurgents were immediately joined and then overwhelmed by the peasants of the surrounding countryside, by the workers on the local coffee plantations, and by the customers of the small businesses that were attacked. This may explain why some of the Portuguese settlers were caught so off guard: the men who fell upon them and their wives and children, hacking them to death with terrible mutilating strokes of their long knives, were the same men they saw and worked with every day.

Once European blood was spilled, the insurgents became gripped in a killing frenzy that carried the uprising to levels of violence unimagined by its organizers. People were not just put to death, their bodies were mutilated, and neither women nor children were spared. In one of the more horrific incidents of violence several whites were dragged into a lumber mill in a northern Angolan town where they were literally sawed in half.

A confusing mixture of mythology and reality, March 15, 1961, holds an ambiguous position in the history of the decolonization of Africa; claimed by some as a desperate and courageous shriek for freedom, it is regretted by others as an example of the savagery and tribal hatreds that have always been a part of the African image. Of course, March 15 was not an isolated event; the uprising near Malange and the Luanda riots preceded it. To speak of March 15 may even be misleading: some of the attacks that made up the northern uprising, those attributable to MPLA sympathizers who had fled Luanda and fallen in with UPA bands, may have begun a few days earlier. Nonetheless, in the minds of many, this day stands alone as a testament to the consequences of five centuries of frustration and oppression.

From the initial 30 or 40 small groups the uprising spread like wildfire, engulfing some 60,000 Angolans who may have participated in the slaughter of between 250 and 300 Europeans during the first few days. But particularly distressing for the future of Angola was that in addition to the Europeans an uncounted number of Africans were also murdered. Among those massacred were mulattoes and educated Africans (sometimes identified as such simply because they wore eyeglasses), who, by their parentage or education, were also symbols of colonialism. Also slaughtered were many contract laborers, primarily Ovimbundu, who had moved north to work the coffee and cotton fields and therefore to the Bakongo insurgents were strangers, interlopers, and enemies.

Roberto was taken aback by the vehemence of the uprising. Before leaving New York he deplored its "extreme violence," adding that the UPA was trying to educate its people that "freedom, once won, means discipline and responsibility." Then, in a comparison that was to be repeated over

and again during the ensuing decade and a half, Roberto added, "We are trying to insure against Angola becoming another Congo."

As if years of warning and preparation had lulled them into complacency Portuguese authorities in Luanda did not immediately grasp the importance of what was taking place in the north. When the situation became horrifyingly clear, rather than destroying Portuguese confidence the way much less violent riots in Léopoldville had done to the Belgians just two years before, the fury and savagery of the uprising actually steeled the Portuguese to resistance. On April 13, nearly one month after the initial outbreak, with a few isolated farms and towns in northern Angola still holding out, islands in a sea of rebels, Prime Minister Salazar fired his minister of defense, assumed the role himself, and ordered an all-out counterassault.

What troops and material were on hand on March 15 had of course been immediately thrown into battle, but these operations had been primarily limited to bombing raids, sometimes against areas not affected by the insurrection. Not until May 13 did the first motorized column set out from Luanda on the reconquest of the north. But even this powerful force (by comparison with the rebels' meager arsenal) did not assault the rebel stronghold that had been thrown up in the Dembos region and around the town of Nambuangongo directly to the northeast of the capital. Rather it circled around this treacherous zone, thus avoiding having to fight its way to the coffee regions farther north. For four months Portuguese troops slowly but methodically retook the towns of northern Angola and relieved the few isolated farms that had held out. After securing the borderlands, the Portuguese closed in from the north and south on Nambuangongo and the Dembos.

Given the extreme confusion in a region where even during normal times communications were tenuous, statistics on the uprising and Portuguese counterattacks are not entirely reliable. Some speak of 1,000 Europeans killed in three weeks, others of 750 after three months. But one indisputable truth emerges: in the Portuguese counterattack Africans died by factors somewhere between 10 and 100 times that of Europeans. During the initial Portuguese counteroffensives some 6,000 Angolans are thought to have died. The number of African dead six months after the outbreak ranges from 20,000 to 60,000.

Vigilante groups backed by the military carried out random reprisals against Africans suspected of nationalist leanings. Ironically, educated Africans were prime suspects in this Portuguese witch-hunt. Towns that had not joined in the killing were routinely retaliated against. When the Portuguese entered the town of Piri, near Quibaxe in Cuanza Norte district, they told the inhabitants they had come to recruit "pastors and professors" to "go wait for Lumumba at the bridge over the Dande river" in order to stop him from entering their region. All the Angolans thus assembled were then inexplicably murdered. It was by such counterproductive acts that Portugal ensured that the insurrection that had arisen against them would not wither and die.



By July 1 Portugal had 17,000 troops in Angola. In the middle of August they closed in on the last rebel stronghold at Nambuangongo. Angola's new guerrillas retreated into the bush to regroup and plan for the future. Throughout 1961 the Portuguese beefed up their military forces with NATO military equipment and continued wholesale bombing and strafing attacks on suspected rebel areas. Angolans who lived near the Congo border fled north by the hundreds of thousands, depopulating whole tracts of northern Angola. The longest war of liberation in Africa's history had now begun in earnest.

Roberto had started a war. But he did not know what to do with it. None of his presumptions had been borne out. There were no signs of Portuguese acquiescence to UPA demands for independence. The U.N., which Roberto had naively assumed would intervene once the justice of his cause had been brought to its attention, was still embroiled in the confusion and controversy over its role in the Congo; there was little chance it would get involved in another war in Africa. In any case, Salazar's regime, having already decided to live outside the realities of the age, was immune to international reprobation in a way France, when limited violence in Tunisia had led to U.N. calls for negotiation, was not. Lastly, Roberto proved to be at a complete loss regarding what it meant to wage war.

Roberto hurried back from New York to UPA headquarters, a crowded bungalow straddling a potholed dirt alley in central Léopoldville, to face desperate partisans clamoring for arms. Despite a total lack of preparation for an extended struggle, the rebellion in Angola was demonstrating a surprising staying power. Fortunately, Roberto was not without friends. In April 1961, one month after the outbreak of the war, his U.S. contacts paid off when the National Security Council "Special Group" (that Washington committee with the ever changing name whose duty is to authorize U.S. covert operations), responded to the urgings of Attorney General Robert Kennedy and commissioned covert funding for Roberto. On orders from Washington the American embassy in Léopoldville drew close to Roberto, and shortly a contradictory situation emerged in which U.S. weapons, obtained through NATO, were being used against a guerrilla movement receiving modest support from the CIA.

As with the Soviet decision actively to back the MPLA, considerable mythology has arisen around the CIA's "recruitment" of Roberto. While there is no doubt that Roberto was offered, and that he accepted, money

from the CIA and knew where it was coming from, it is a credit to the vigor of Soviet disinformation of the period (and later), as well as a comment on the increasingly tarnished reputation of the United States, that this connection should have grown to create a significant stain on Roberto's reputation as a genuine nationalist.

United States covert support for Roberto in 1961 was financial, nonmilitary, and wholly insufficient for a war against Portugal. It amounted to a $6,000 a year retainer fee for Roberto personally, little more than bribery it was hoped would be enough to buy the favor of a man Washington widely presumed would soon be the leader of an independent Angola. By far the most dramatic and long range consequence of this modest association was that Washington unwittingly allowed the CIA to mortgage its future in Angola to the destiny of Holden Roberto.

The UPA nationalists holding out in the Angolan jungles, as well as those in reserve in the Congo, attempted to organize themselves into military units operating out of Angola's "liberated zones." The UPA's leading military commander in-country at this time was João Batista, a Cuanhama from southern Angola. Batista had deserted from the Portuguese army after learning of the UPA from one of Roberto's early runners. He had helped organize the March uprising and was now trying to bring some coherence to a group of confused would-be jungle fighters while he awaited reinforcements. One year later no reinforcements had arrived, Batista was dead, and the entire Angolan insurgency was mired in betrayal.

## IV

While Angola exploded, a semblance of stability was slowly settling upon Léopoldville. In Stanleyville Gizenga tried vainly to fill the void left by Lumumba, who, despite (or more likely because of) his murder, was now looked upon as "a virtual god" by the inhabitants of the eastern Congo districts. But Gizenga was no Lumumba. He had no popular base in eastern Congo and made no efforts to create one. His Soviet sponsors were soon sniping behind his back, calling him a "third rate theorist" and "of all our African friends . . . the real pygmy." Concluding he had hitched his wagon to a lost cause, Khrushchev decided that the Soviet Union's only hope for influence in the Congo was through a legitimate government in Léopoldville. The Soviets helped coax Gizenga back to the capital where a deal was struck with Mobutu and Kasavubu, in part brokered by the United States, wherein Roberto's old soccer colleague, Cyrille Adoula, was to be named prime minister and Gizenga, if he promised to call off his



rebellion, would return to his old job of deputy prime minister. General Lundula arranged a cease-fire between his forces and Mobutu's, CIA disbursements ensured parliamentary compliance at the meeting that installed Adoula, and at the end of July 1961 the Congo began winding a tortuous way toward a diplomatic resolution. The United States had won the battle, but the war was far from over.

Roberto's rocky relations with the Congo central government took a marked turn for the better with the rise to power of his old friend Adoula. Kasavubu retained the presidency, and the CIA remained firmly entrenched in the Congo through its contacts with the "Binza Boys." This group now included Mobutu, who, as a result of the deal, ostensibly returned to the barracks. After being coaxed back to Léopoldville, however, Gizenga could not keep his eyes off Stanleyville, and he made sporadic attempts to reassert his control over units still loyal to him there. Adoula at last had him arrested in January 1962. The response to this from Khrushchev underscored how deeply he had committed official Soviet prestige to the recognized government in Léopoldville, as opposed to revolutionaries with no future. Soviet propaganda spouted warnings that Gizenga must not come to the same end as Lumumba; officially Moscow was mute. Suspicious Stalinist holdovers in the Kremlin added the episode to their growing list of complaints against Khrushchev, whose "adventurism" had done nothing but produce "a crop of light-headed performers."

Equally infuriated were the Chinese, who had described Khrushchev's blessing on the Adoula-Gizenga reconciliation and now his abandonment of Gizenga as blatant examples of "Soviet revisionism." The Chinese again retreated from the Congo, licking their fingers and accusing Moscow of being too "anxious to 'cooperate' [read collaborate] with U.S. imperialism in putting out the spark in the Congo." In private the Chinese admitted, in their inimically roundabout way, to many of the same difficulties that had defeated Moscow. They found that "at present the national liberation movement of the Congo is mainly led by the capitalist nationalist elements" among whom "wavering and compromise prevail." But when their analysis dug beneath the "wavering and compromise" of individuals, it discovered that though "the situation in the Congo, as seen from the surface, appears to be very confused and 'very rotten,' actually it is very good." Conclusion: "The situation is favorable but the leadership is weak." Nothing would happen until Africa produced its own revolutionary leaders. To Peking, Congo and all of Africa, having "become the key points of world interest," were worth the wait. "Africa is now both the center of the anti-colonial struggle, and the center for the East and West to fight for control of the intermediary zone [that so-called area that lay somewhere between the Soviet Union and the United States]."

Having discovered this great fact the Chinese were not about to let it go.

Realizing nothing could be accomplished from Conakry, Andrade, da Cruz, and Lara moved MPLA headquarters to Léopoldville in October 1961. Publically they hoped to reestablish contact with the remnants of their hard pressed partisans in the southern Dembos region and join in the formation of a united front with other nationalist movements, including the UPA. However, the arrival of these "doctor-members tested in Lisbon and Conakry" created tension within the local MPLA leadership in Léopoldville, most of whom had never enjoyed the safety of exile in Paris. In addition, accusations of Communist affiliation continued to be leveled at the MPLA. These were especially derogatory when understood to mean that the movement was "controlled by European brains and is not a purely African organization." In a manner similar to that in which Roberto's American associations complicated his life possibly more than they aided him, the question of Soviet influence with or control over the MPLA would bedevil its leaders throughout their struggle. That there was Soviet aid is indisputable, but, as both the Congo and Angola would repeatedly demonstrate, translating support into control was a trick few benefactors of nationalist movements, whatever their politics, have ever mastered.

Though for the most part the Angolan émigré population of the Congo remained largely sympathetic to Roberto, not all the refugees arriving in the Congo turned to the UPA. Some crossed the border and went straight to Léopoldville's MPLA offices with convincing tales of hardship and the need to send relief supplies to the small, embattled MPLA contingent in the Dembos. Local MPLA leaders in Léopoldville organized a relief column. As Andrade and the other MPLA leaders were arriving in the Congo, this column was making its way south through a UPA held region in northern Angola. When the column reached the M'Bridge River it was stopped, not by Portuguese soldiers but by UPA henchmen. From the river the column was escorted to the UPA regional headquarters, where the "intruders" were put to death by Roberto's aide, José Peterson. After an official UPA denial, Roberto later admitted that he had given orders to intercept and annihilate MPLA columns that were infiltrating Angola. Jealous of his war and suspicious of the *mestiço* dominated MPLA, Roberto, in one stroke, had just multiplied his mortal enemies in Angola by two.

## V

Jonas Savimbi arrived in Léopoldville to be inducted into the UPA in February 1961, too late to be a party to the uprising. Despite the murder



of many Ovimbundu contract workers, Savimbi was unable to suppress a feeling of satisfaction with, at last, being part of an armed struggle. Appointed secretary-general of the UPA by Roberto, Savimbi was instrumental in engineering the merger of the UPA with another Angolan movement, the Partido Democratico de Angola (PDA), an organization based among the Bazombo (close relatives of the Bakongo). The new organization named itself the Frente Nacional de Libertaçao de Angola (National Front for the Liberation of Angola), or FNLA.

In 1962 Congo prime minister Adoula offered Roberto an abandoned military campsite at Kinkuzu, four and a half bone-jolting hours by sturdy Land Rover north of Thysville, for use by the FNLA, as the UPA dominated coalition was now universally known. It was not an entirely altruistic gesture. Portuguese aid to Tshombe, whose principal lifeline to the outside world was Angola's Benguela railroad, was an essential factor in keeping the rebel state alive. Anything that harassed the Portuguese contributed to weakening Tshombe.

The FNLA recruits were escorted to the new base at Kinkuzu, where they were told to draw on the local Angolan émigé population to create an army to liberate Angola. Though Kinkuzu had "no uniforms, no weapons, and no conditions for training," a ragtag army began to take shape.

Inside Angola the insurrection suffered a blow when Batista was killed during an assault on the town of Bembe. There was speculation in Léopoldville that Roberto's chagrin over the loss of his only outstanding military officer was tempered by his relief at seeing a formidable competitor for control over the war eliminated. Batista's popularity had convinced Roberto that broadening the ethnic base of the FNLA posed the risk of diluting his own power. With the Cuanhama's death, military authority over the insurrection moved squarely out of Angola and into the Congo. Thereafter FNLA leadership coalesced around individuals who not only were primarily Bakongo, but for the most part hailed from Roberto's hometown of São Salvador and were more often than not his blood relations. Roberto was soon eyeing with suspicion his charismatic, ambitious, and independent minded foreign minister, Jonas Savimbi.

In late 1962 some of the newly trained Kinkuzu forces began infiltrating back into Angola. One band was led by commander Margoso Wafuakala. Margoso, a short, wiry, *mestiço* with a dark brown leathery face and "a broad, hooked nose that looks as if it had been smashed into his head," was another rare non-Bakongo. He and his group made their way south to the Dembos forest, where they settled down to the business of guerrilla warfare, primarily ambushing Portuguese convoys. It was a journey into obscurity; Margoso's unit received no supplies or other

support from headquarters in Léopoldville or from the base at Kinkuzu. A year and a half later, the Portuguese army pressing in, Margoso was running desperately short of resources. By the third anniversary of the March 15 uprising, disenchantment with Roberto from within the FNLA was rife. Under fire from both inside and out, Roberto sank into inaction, spending more time on his business ventures in Léopoldville than on the insurgency in Angola.

While Roberto consciously shrank his power base, his distant ally across the ocean was also second-guessing its Angola policy. With the Cold War heating up in both Berlin and Cuba, Washington was again ensnared in the contradiction that had been worming its way into U.S. foreign policy since the end of World War II: public commitment to self-determination on the one hand, and the overwhelming duty to resist Communism on the other. Portugal, as the last colonial power, and also a member of NATO and owner of the strategic mid-Atlantic air bases on the Azores Islands, epitomized the contradiction.

At least one opinion, that of a CIA analyst by the name of Paul Swanka, argued that the twin goals of national liberation and containment of Communism need not be incompatible. Swaka argued that "the integrity of Portugal depends upon the security provided by the U.S." Since Antonio Salazar could not be expected to support any kind of compromise with the insurgency "without the benefit of a frontal lobotomy," the "aged potentate" was putting Portugal's future at risk. The United States' "tacit responsibility" in this case bestowed upon Washington "the moral right to act firmly and judiciously to fulfill its obligations." The conclusion was this: Dump Salazar. Swaka proposed "an overthrow of the . . . regime by pro-American officers of a younger generation."

A remarkable example of superpower rationalization to justify intervening in the domestic politics of an ally, such a plot would have fitted snugly into standard U.S. operating procedures of the day. But it is impossible to say how seriously the idea was considered. International tensions had reached a level that such fine-tuning of allies could not, even if for the theoretical greater good of both Angola and Portugal itself, be risked. Rather than plotting against his regime, in October 1962 the U.S. ambassador to Lisbon, C. Burke Elbrick, assured Salazar's foreign minister that all U.S. contact with Roberto had ceased.

Though this restraint was not rigorously respected by the CIA, Roberto did experience a distinct cooling in his relations with Washington. This happened just as African indignation with him for having accepted U.S. support in the first place reached a peak. It was a crucial step; as NATO-supplied napalm rained down upon hapless Angolans, the epithet "pro-American" had become as damaging in some circles as "pro-Soviet"



was in others. Ironically, even as Washington turned its back on Roberto, Angola was being inexorably drawn into an East-West confrontation with which it had no quarrel.

The FNLA was not the only Angolan movement in difficulty. In May 1962, during stormy sessions of the MPLA Steering Committee, founding member Viriato da Cruz was ousted from his position as secretary-general because of his pro-Chinese leanings. Da Cruz countered by creating a breakaway faction, which he and his supporters claimed represented the real MPLA. As the two factions squared off, into their midst reappeared the legendary, some said mythical, Agostinho Neto.

With the aid of anti-Salazar groups, including the Portuguese Communist party, Neto and his family had escaped house arrest in Portugal, made their way to Morocco and across Africa, to arrive in Léopoldville in August. Upon his arrival, Neto, whose long political career had yet to include the exercise of overt political leadership, claimed the "honorary presidency" that the movement had awarded him during his incarceration. (Neto's position was confirmed toward the end of the year when he was elected president of the Executive Committee at the movement's First National Conference.) Encountering a movement in division, Neto chose to side with Andrade against da Cruz. Rather than setting an example of reconciliation, Neto's actions only succeeded in heightening the already considerable tensions between rival Angolans that now hung over Léopoldville.

Meanwhile, in Katanga the military equation was finally tipping decisively against Tshombe. Throughout 1962 U.N. troops had marched through Katanga occupying most major centers of the province. In January 1963 an Indian contingent pushed Tshombe into his last stronghold at Kolwezi, the final industrial town of Katanga. Beyond Kolwezi lay only Portuguese Angola. On January 11, 1963, Tshombe announced the end of the Katangese secession.

The Portuguese regime had consistently aided Tshombe with arms, ammunition, and fuel. Now, at the border crossing of Dilolo and Teixeira de Sousa it welcomed into exile the defeated Katangese Gendarmes led by the Belgian mercenary Jean Schramme. Tshombe himself crossed into Angola in early February and from there made his way, via Rhodesia and Switzerland, to Paris. Following the subjugation of Katanga, Afro-Asian support for the U.N. military presence in the Congo flagged and the operation was quickly phased out. While a precarious peace settled on Katanga, 100 kilometers from the town of Luso in eastern Angola, Schramme, with Portuguese assistance, set up a camp for the some 400 Gendarmes who had followed him into exile. Over the months their numbers swelled as more Lunda refugees crossed the Kasai into Portuguese Angola. The Congo,

Angola, and the world would yet have to deal with this now homeless army.

Though da Cruz finally abandoned his bid for control of the MPLA, the movement continued to hemorrhage. A new schism erupted when Andrade objected to a move by Neto that evinced the secretive and independent leadership to which years of clandestine organization had conditioned him. In an effort to create a counter front to Roberto's growing diplomatic clout, Neto pushed through a hasty and ill-fated alliance of the MPLA with diverse Angolan groups, some of which were suspected of being deeply compromised with the Portuguese. Andrade decried this "assocation of movements lacking a common policy base" and resigned from the MPLA. The MPLA's leadership, like its body, had collapsed. The finale blow came in November 1963 when Adoula ordered Neto and his only important ally from the traditional leadership of the MPLA, Lucio Lara, to close their offices in Léopoldville. Only the timely developments occurring across the river in neighboring Brazzaville saved the MPLA from political oblivion.

On August 13, after three days of strikes, demonstrations, and riots, the former parish priest and president of Congo-Brazzaville since independence, the staunchly Gaullist Fulbert Youlou was forced to resign. Youlou was replaced by the left-leaning Massamba-Debat, who not only promptly welcomed the expelled MPLA, but opened Brazzaville to Soviets, Chinese, Gizenga partisans, and all other assorted Congolese malcontents. Neto and Lara crossed over to Brazzaville and embarked upon the long struggle to reestablish the revolutionary legitimacy of the MPLA, with which, given Lucio Lara's publicity shyness, Neto alone was now associated.

From a bastion of French neocolonialism Brazzaville was quickly converted into a center of subversion in central Africa. But behind the lofty declarations of liberation and justice, Brazzaville's new radicalism was in fact little more than a device to give vent to 80 years of frustration with having to live in the shadow of its powerful rival across the river. Unanchored in either a deeply held or a clearly thought out national policy, Brazzaville's leftism was destined to bounce across the years, skipping from coup to coup. Later, when the Sino-Soviet conflict had become public knowledge and Brazzaville's strongman was asked which of these two patrons he preferred, the increasingly uncomfortable Massamba-Debat prudently refused to answer, comparing his position to that of the polygamous husband who "fears to cause jealousy by showing favoritism to any of his wives."

The diverse Congo expatriates Brazzaville welcomed organized themselves into a Lumumbist oriented movement whose pro-Soviet faction immediately tried, and failed, to overthrow Adoula in November 1963, one



day before Kennedy's murder. This led to the expulsion of the Soviet embassy from Léopoldville for the second time in less than three years. With this latest failure the Soviet Union became exasperated, not just with the Congo but with Africa in general. Disappointed by the performance of its clients and discouraged by the hemorrhaging of the MPLA, beset by more pressing concerns at home and in Eastern Europe, China, and Southeast Asia, the Soviets began to fade from Africa. Soviet support of the MPLA was minimal in 1963 and by some accounts dried up altogether.

Africa's "progressive" eyes turned to the Chinese to demonstrate their theory of liberation. Whereas during the first bout of Congolese troubles China had been hampered from lending effective support to its protégés because of logistical problems, in the meantime, thanks to China's legendary agent in Africa, the resourceful Colonel Co Liang, head of the New China News Agency in Dar-es-Salaam, Peking had created a network of influence extending over much of east and parts of central Africa. Co Liang had been among the first envoys Peking sent to Brazzaville.

In late 1963 Pierre Mulele, Lumumba's former minister of education, launched a guerrilla operation in the Congo province of Kwilu. Mulele had received several months' training in China, and Chinese prestige received a boost by the initial success of Mulele's rebellion. Encouraged by Mulele's success and supported by Chinese aid, diverse Lumumbist rebels spread across the country. In addition to Mulele's rebellion in Kwilu, another former Lumumba man, Gaston Soumailot, with aid funneled through the Chinese embassy in Burundi, launched a rebellion in the east by attacking the provincial capital of Bukavu. With no more U.N. troops on which to rely, the Congolese army was on its own for the first time since Lumumba first ordered it into battle in Kasai. It quickly demonstrated that it had not learned a great deal in the interval. Without regular training and led by corrupt officers, at the battle for Bukavu government soldiers dropped their automatic weapons and fled in panic from Babulera spearmen. The rebellion spread unchecked. By the middle of 1964 over two-thirds of the Congo was in open insurrection.

In an action befitting the disturbed politics of the Congo, who should reappear in power in Léopoldville but Moise Tshombe. In an effort to ensure that accusations of his being reactionary should become irrefutable, Mobutu had convinced Kasavubu and Adoula to invite the former rebel back to power in the Congo. Tshombe's return, justified as insurance that order would thereby be maintained at least in Katanga, was announced June 24, 1964. Tshombe arrived two days later and set about assembling a new government. African leaders were shocked. Tshombe personified everything they feared and abhorred: secession, collaboration with colonialists, defiance of the U.N., foreign intervention, the death of Lumumba,

and the use of white mercenaries. But Tshombe was undaunted; he would not be denied his 15 minutes in power.

In order to regain the initiative against the rebels, Tshombe resorted to what was for him a time honored tradition: he called in foreign mercenaries. But mercenary officers still needed troops to command. According to Tshombe, "it was then that I offered to place at his [Mobutu's] disposal the Katangese Gendarmes who had remained loyal to me." Like a conjurer, Tshombe produced his homeless army from Angola.

While Mobutu struggled to put together a force capable of countering the advancing rebellion, the insurgents moved on to attack the provincial capital of Stanleyville. The Congolese army was again demoralized as rebel troops fought their way into the heart of the city. The routed Congolese army retreated westward, some units not stopping until, by road and steamer, they reached Léopoldville some 900 miles away.

Washington saw the African state it had just won for the West falling apart before its eyes. Reacting without the characteristic subtlety or nuance of either Eisenhower or Kennedy, President Johnson ordered T-28 aircraft flown by anti-Castro Cubans and armed with rockets and machine guns, C-47 transports, H-21 helicopters, and over 100 technicians and counterinsurgency advisers to the Congo. This was the beginning of a four-year CIA-coordinated paramilitary campaign supported by direct combat operations by both the U.S. and Belgian militaries.

U.S. and Belgium forces struck at the heart of the rebellion by organizing a paratroop drop into Stanleyville to rescue the some 800 Europeans held hostage there. African outrage at this new Belgian and American invasion to rescue whites while blacks were left to slaughter one another caused the political ground of Africa to tremble. Tshombe's popularity, never great in independent Africa, plummeted.

*Chapter 3*

# The Long Dark Night

*But sir, a black among whites is like a fly in a glass of milk.*
—Portuguese woman, resident of Angola

## I

While the Congo burned, the insurgency in Angola continued to flounder. Roberto's base at Kinkuzu provided what little credibility he still retained as the leader of an armed liberation movement. But most of the soldiers at the base were withheld from combat so as to be, according to the FNLA chief of staff José Kalundungo, "at the disposition of photographers, who were for the most part Americans." Roberto consistently claimed to have trained an army of 25,000; the reality was some ten times less. In 1964 Kalundungo resigned, complaining of the difficulties of maintaining order in a camp where "on average, four out of every ten days were days of fasting" and "the majority of the military men were completely unclothed." Of those soldiers who were committed to the war, many found that altogether too much of their actual combat was against the MPLA instead of the Portuguese.

Denouncing the FNLA's "frontier army" and arguing that Angola's liberators must "live and progress in the interior" of the country while counting on the "support of the population" for its survival, Jonas Savimbi, developing a characteristic streak of opportunism that was to serve and disserve him in the coming years, joined his voice to those who were critical of Roberto. A showdown between Roberto and Savimbi was inevitable. Though he denounced the admission of da Cruz to the FNLA ostensibly because of his pro-Chinese position, Savimbi did not hesitate to make contact with Co Liang, who had now moved on from Brazzaville to Accra. (Da Cruz's adherence to the FNLA never became fact. After the assassination of two of his followers by MPLA henchmen, da Cruz became