

## THE RISE OF MODERN ANGOLAN PARTIES – UNITA AND A FAILED GROWTH MODEL

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**Abstract.** *During the 1960's the extension of the capitalist mode of production fastened the disintegration of the Angolan "traditional society". Angola's high-rate growth was made possible because huge oil and diamond rents were taxed and reinvested locally. With these "development policies" which the colonial State expected would support the fading branches of agro-industry and stabilize the political status quo, there was a shift of the main social contradiction. It was no longer a "central" versus "tributary" cleavage but rather labour-capital one within "modern society". Ideologically, although transitional languages expressed by "racial" or cultural phenotypes were still in use, there was now room for different political standings.*

*The nationalist movements, which started as small dissent fractions within the "central society" were therefore forced to change their tactics in order to encompass the support of rising classes and their social mobility aspirations. This paper focuses on UNITA, whose operational circumstances (guerrilla-based operations inside Central Angola) made it easier to fit into the moving social landscape. Some evidences of UNITA ideological stand and of its 1974-1975 electoral behaviour (a period when the guerrilla movements were facing metamorphose into political parties) show that the factor "ethnicity", widely used as a key variable of African politics, needs reviewing, at least in this particular time in Angola.*

**Keywords:** Angola, Class struggle, Ethnicity, UNITA

DOI: 10.31132/2412-5717-2023-63-2-28-43

Bibliographical references about the political history, ideology, and foreign policies of the nationalist movements in modern Angola have piled up during the last half-century<sup>1</sup>. One of the reasons is that the Angolan wars were factors of the so-called Cold War, which during the 1970s included more African geopolitics than ever before. Literature linking the genesis of the Angolan nationalist organizations to the political economy of Angola is less plentiful (except for the role of natural resources during the Angolan wars).

This kind of gap in the studies on the social base of the Angola nationalist movements is partly explained by the scarcity of available sources. Files from colonial administration of the 1960s and 70s have just now been declassified while others, especially related with the Angolan Civil War, are still closed. There is no public access to the archive of any Angolan political movement, not even of the MPLA. But the gap also results from the traditional compliance of historiography with what Simiand once called the "political idol". So far, historians of political history have overlooked important data on social and political change that can be drawn from "economic" reports such as the *Banco de Angola* reports, those of the colonial Development programs, not to speak of the big corporation's annual accounting reports. The shortness of the decolonization process (less than a year), which was intended as the landing time for the foreign-based or bush-sited movements to consolidate their "civil

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<sup>1</sup> For a critical review of the titles published during the years 1995–2011, see Pelissier 2014.

society” standing, was another element of bias when it came to the match of society and “politics” in Angola.

This paper attempts to contribute to linking the societal trends operating in Angola during the period 1955–1975 and their political outcomes as it relates to the Angolan armed movements. These societal trends can be summarized as a rapid extension of the capitalist mode of production, either directly, throughout the absolute and relative growth of the working class, or indirectly, throughout the integration of peasantry into the money economy and the world market. The process was sped up during the recessive phases that have hit Angolan exports since the mid-1950s because, contrary to what could be expected, these coincided with extensive growth in the formation of fixed capital. The emergence of modern social classes (working classes in urban and rural environments, low-income strata of tertiary workers, the flux of middle-class metropolitan migrants that included a higher percentage of technical staff), the break-up of traditional society in segments of different incomes and with varied degrees of exposure to semi-proletarianization created the conditions for the rooting of two important acculturations: the trade union and the European type of the mass political party. Considering that only within this framework of social change could the conditions emerge for the rise of political parties in the original sense of the concept<sup>2</sup>, this paper attempts to follow some aspects of the development of Angolan political parties.

## 1. ANGOLAN CYCLES AND THE GROWTH-MODEL OF THE LATE COLONIAL YEARS (1953–1973)

It is useful to begin with a brief overview of Angola economic cycles after the World War II. An expansive long wave induced a steady rise of the price for tropical commodities that lasted until the mid-1950s. During that time colonial corporations, benefiting from higher rates of surplus value<sup>3</sup> and in some cases, better logistic and natural conditions than competitors located elsewhere, cashed abnormal rates of profit, sometimes in excess of 30 or 40 per cent. Afterwards, the world demand for tropical commodities slowed down, competition coming from peasant production increased, and the political conditions that had allowed colonial capital to pay artificially low wages for decades ceased after 1961. The result was a recessive wave for most Angolan agro-industrial firms (coffee, sugar, cotton, palm oil). Profit rates recovered for some time during the mid-1960s, but the fall resumed in a second recessive phase that lasted until the mid-1970s. For some capitals a comparison of the average profits during this last recession with their peak years during the 1950s showed divisions by 2, 3 and even 4 times. Mining commodities did not follow the evolution of the agro-industrial corporations, and the fall in profit rate for the sector was fully reverted during the 1960s. Besides, as Angola became an important oil producer, the mass of profits in mining increased significantly.

The contrasting evolution of profit rates in Angola is easily shown through a sample of three agro-industrial corporations and the big diamond firm of Angola (*Diamang*).

The fall in the profit rate in the agro-industrial branches, which remained the main Angolan exporters, forced corporations to increase the composition of their capital to raise the surplus-value rate. Most of them engaged in processes of mechanization and tried to counter the fall in the profit rate by increasing its mass. Still, as most increases in output would only contribute to a market glut (as with coffee, Angola’s main export by value), extensive growth was hardly the solution.

<sup>2</sup> Charlot stresses that in Europe until the mid-19th century, “party” stands for a “trend”, an “opinion of a class or of a social group.” (Charlot, 1971: 12).

<sup>3</sup> In the labour theory of value, the rate of surplus value relates value paid to the worker as wages ( $v$ ) to the non-paid labour time transferred to capital as surplus-value ( $s$ ). The rate of surplus value is  $s/v$ .

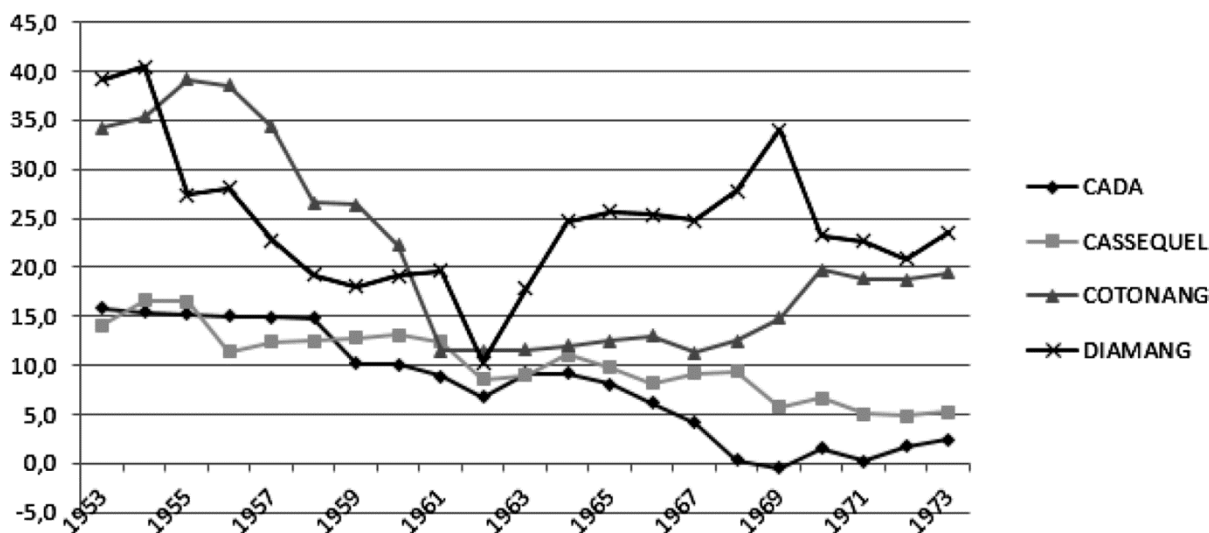


Image 1. Profit rates in Angola – 1953–1973.

Source: Santos (2017).

Even more important was the role public sector capital played. As the Angolan budget usually depended on the taxation of the agro-industrial exporters, the colonial State had a vested interest in rescuing these branches and therefore fostering their modernization. The so-called *Fomento* (Development) Plans implemented a costly program of public works (roads, railroads, ports, electrification) meant to cut production costs. The III and IV *Fomento* Plans made also record high expenditures in health, education, housing, and other “social” policies. These policies started with small wage rises in the late 1950s and especially after 1961, the year in which the Native legislation was abrogated and replaced by a new labour environment. The recently created *Instituto do Trabalho* (1962) was the state agency to direct private and public efforts in order to dispose of a more “productive” workforce, that is, yielding a higher *relative surplus-value rate*<sup>4</sup>.

The heavy State expenditure implied was largely made possible through the taxation of some special mining corporations. In fact, while the profit rate of the main agro-industrial capitals was falling, the *rentier* sector of Angolan capital, whose core was composed of just two corporations (Diamang and Cabinda Gulf Oil) was booming. It had never weighted so much in the State budget: in the years 1968-1973 its direct taxation represented on average 34 per cent of Ordinary Incomes (net of earmarking revenues). Considering 1973 alone, that aggregate amount reached USD 156.1 million, that is, 44 per cent. Colonial Angola was more than ever a *rentier* state but contrary to what future petro-states (including the Republic of Angola) would usually do, a significant share of the taxed profits was reinvested locally. Put simply, the state was now subsidising growth in the low-profit branches with the surplus value produced by mining capital.

This model of growth, which in the 1970s represented a yearly investment of about 20 per cent of the gross product, generated a considerable multiplier effect in Angola. The boom in aggregate demand allowed for rapid expansion of industrial output (annual growth rate of 22 per cent during the years 1962–1968<sup>5</sup>). “Modernization” implied that this growth drove a

<sup>4</sup> That surplus value rate ( $s/v$ ) is determined by working time, work intensity and productivity. The *relative surplus value rate* increases when work intensity and productivity cause  $s$  to increase proportionally more than  $v$  (wages).

<sup>5</sup> Even considering the low starting figures, it was considered “impressive” by the official texts. Oliveira, 1970: 15.

higher composition of capital and so the demand for labour rose slower. Anyway, from 1960 to 1970, annual growth of 5.7 per cent was registered. In 1960, the working class (wage earners less public servants) totalled 367 thousand (13.6 per cent of the active population); ten years later there were no less than 700 thousand (25 per cent of the active population)<sup>6</sup>. Their aggregate could be considered “one of the most important working classes of Africa” (Rocha, 1979: 43).

### *Rent redistribution and the intensification of class-cleavages in Angola*

The governmental multiplier sped up the integration of the traditional society into a money economy by turning a larger number of peasants into full-time wage earners and by increasing the peasant share in the output of commercial agriculture.

One reliable indicator of these fast changes is the composition of the *Diamang* wage bill. For decades this diamond company, the most profitable in the Portuguese colonies, depended on forced labour, which was recruited far away with the support of the colonial administration. In 1953, about 40 per cent of its workforce (*contratados*) was hired under these conditions. But local supply was increasing: in 1970, *contratados*, already engaged “without administrative intervention, represented just 5 per cent, and three years later all *Diamang* workers, some of them facing now unemployment, were recruited in the region (Companhia dos Diamantes). In the maize region of the Central Plateau where wages were the lowest of all<sup>7</sup> and cash crops were badly paid, semi-proletarianization was increasing. In 1960, Huambo and Bié, two of the most populated districts of Angola, contributed with 40.5 per cent of the agricultural migrant workers but seven years later with 74 per cent (Silva, 1969: 157). Elsewhere, like in late *Diamang* times, most workers had no formal contracts, especially when heading for urban jobs. In 1971, about half of the waged workers were already out of the agricultural sector, and the urban population was close to 15 per cent (Republica, 1973: 208-210). In the Luanda district, for instance, local workers represented only 8% of the work force and the newcomers were transforming its suburbs into a ring of slums (*muceques*). The emergence of suburban working classes with no regular incomes would become a particular cause of political suspicion for the colonial administration<sup>8</sup>.

In the areas of the richer cash crops due for exports (such as coffee and cotton), the new labour regime allowed peasants to export more<sup>9</sup>. In the coffee branch, competition between a market-oriented peasantry and European settlers had a long tradition of land clashes, coming as far as the 1917 Seles uprising (Pelissier, 1986: 40–44). During the 1950s, conflicts resumed. In 1961 the administration was aware that land conflicts<sup>10</sup> and commercial extortion were key factors of the general uprising in the Northern districts. Ten years later, a pro-

<sup>6</sup> In 1960, the percentage of waged workers in Angola was much smaller than in the neighbouring colonies where rentier sectors had developed earlier (the Congos, Gabon, etc.) (Mendes, 1966: 52). But in 1970 it was estimated that the just total for waged workers (not considering the tertiary sector) would be about 450 thousand. (Rocha, 1979: 43).

<sup>7</sup> In 1965, Huambo daily wages represented on average 58 per cent of what was paid in the nearby coffee district, Cuanza Norte. (Silva, 1969: 193).

<sup>8</sup> For a full description of the political views of the colonial administration on the rural flow and the emergence of urban classes, see Curto, 2016.

<sup>9</sup> The resistance of local farmers forced European firms to rely almost entirely on a migrant work force. In the coffee districts, less than 14% of the work force was recruited locally. (Mendes, 1966: 59–62). Just two of them (Cuanza-Norte and Uíge) employed 63 per cent of the migrant workforce. (Silva, 1969: 161).

<sup>10</sup> As early as 1958, the “native” producers were producing 25 per cent of the Angolan coffee output (in tons). In the Zaire and Uíge districts, part of the core area of the 1961 uprising, their share was 33 per cent. Based on Pelissier, 1978: 455.

colonial Swiss journalist overestimated that 96 per cent of coffee growers in Angola were Africans, though recognizing that their incomes and share of the market could not compare with “white-owned large-scale corporations”<sup>11</sup>. But a *kulak* stratum of African peasants had meanwhile been developed and according to a well-known geographer, had become the core of the senior staff of the FNLA/UPA (Ribeiro, 1981: 352–353). Even in the cotton areas of the Malanje and Luanda districts, where peasant forced labour had provided abnormally high rates of profit to *Cotonang*, the commercial output of “native” cotton increased after the abrogation of the system<sup>12</sup>. In 1972, most of the oilseeds, maize, bean, and rice outputs came from the “traditional” sector (Antão, 1972: 9). On the whole, it was estimated that 1.1 million small peasants (farmers, shepherds, traditional fishermen) had been more or less integrated into the money economy (Guerra, 1979: 102-106).

The combined effect of more wage workers and an increased peasant output explains the decrease of “non-money flows” in the estimated gross Angolan domestic income. During the period 1953–1964, these flows declined from 54 to 36 per cent (Presidência, 1970: 609).

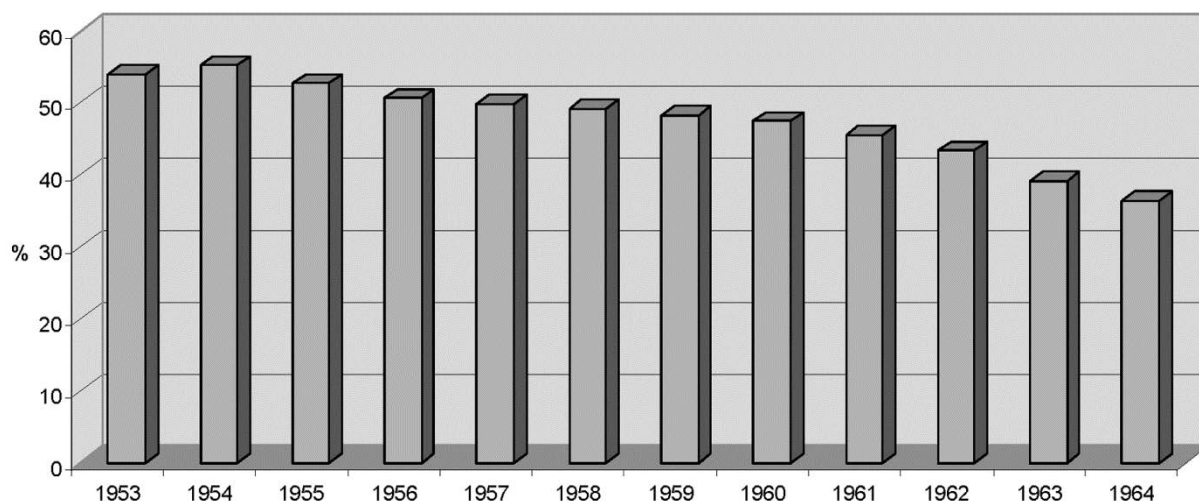


Image 2. Non-moneyed flows in Angola Gross Product – 1953–1964

This indicator seems a reliable one for the pace since such a contraction of “traditional” output occurred during a recessive phase. It surely accelerated during the following expansive phase.

## 2. MAIN CONTRADICTIONS AND POLITICAL RESPONSES

In short, during the last twenty years of colonial rule, “development” and class diversification in Angola were significantly fostered<sup>13</sup>. The effects were plainly visible, and

<sup>11</sup> It was a clear overstatement. Heinz Portman would even say that a third of Angola population (1.5 million people out of the 5 million) would derive their cash income from coffee crops. Portmann, 1973: 4.

<sup>12</sup> *Cotonang* was the main cotton firm of Belgian and Portuguese capitals. In the Malanje district, the area where it benefited from an exclusive monopoly of forced labour until 1961, cotton production continued under a new labour regime alongside the reorganized capitalist production of *Cotonang*. In 1973 the share of “traditional” (i.e. peasant) output was already 20 per cent. Total “traditional” cotton was increasing in absolute and relative terms in Angola during the early 1970s. (Banco de Angola, 1973: 37).

<sup>13</sup> It is obvious that the massive public investment was also part of the effort to consolidate the colonial *status quo*, especially by creating conditions for metropolitan migration. The point here is that independently of the political motivations, public sector capital was operating as a powerful multiplier in the Angola economy and extending the capitalist mode of production.

several scholars highlighted that the “dual society” was ending<sup>14</sup>. F. Heymer, who used the concepts of “central society” and “tributary societies” to express the main contradiction during early colonial times, concluded that by the 1970s a “sole social formation in Angola” had come to be established, although still “heterogeneous and with an unstable cohesion” (Heymer, 1980:23). More recently, Newitt validated it but anticipated its outcome: “two parallel societies engaged in two parallel economies” came to an end during the 1950s (Newitt, 2007: 66).

The debate had started inside the colonial administration. Theories and policies about how to fix the Pandora box of fast social change that capital accumulation had unchained were widely discussed from rank-and-file officials to university sociologists. The key word of the time was “destrribalização”, that is the process under which a mass of “natives” was no longer framed by “traditional authorities” but not yet considered “full citizens”. The suburban areas of the *muçiques* were the most visible displays of that particular kind of “anomy”. Describing them in 1962, one critical geographer, F. Tenreiro, could still argue that the Angolan shantytowns differed from the European ones because in Angola the “destrribalizado” finds in the city, among the folks of his ethnic group, a kind of solidarity inclusion which may be considered an effective underground network of self-help” (in Ribeiro, 1981: 144–146). A decade later, O. Ribeiro, certainly the most important scholar with influence within the colonial administration, was less optimistic and warned about their “subversive” role (Ribeiro, 1981: 355).

It seemed clear that the emergence of new social classes, although welcomed by some of the senior political staff as part of “progress”, would make colonial society harder to control. So far, colonial administrations had to deal with a more or less homogenous peasantry, whose taxation was vital to support the State expenditure (Santos, 2015). In other words, they had the means to manage a simple class struggle where “central society” opposed “tributary” classes but were less familiar with the more complex conflicts within a disorganized “central society”.

A second cause for concern was that as the labour-capital conflict became the driving force in the Angolan social formation, it was plain to see that such a “Great Transformation” (Polanyi, 1988) was taking place within a fragile growth model. In fact, the level of the capital injections that had triggered the peasantry disintegration risked not being enough to fully absorb it. One of the major flaws was that the extension of labour supply promoted by the administration conflicted with the labour-saving investments of the agro-industrial sector. For the first time in Angola there was unemployment even in the areas of diamond or coffee big business. Wage rates, which had risen in the early years of the 1960s, tended to stagnate in the second half, with the decline in real wages further accelerated by inflation. In the mid-1960s, only 15 to 20 per cent of national income was allocated to the wage bill, which meant that there had been a significant rise in the surplus-value rate (Correia, 1966: 63). If combined with a slower growth of peasant incomes, the distortion in income distribution would certainly have political consequences. As early as 1958, Diamang reports had already complained about the rise of “a native proletariat, led by elements without mental or moral background” and “increasingly engaged in political and social vindications” (Companhia dos Diamantes, 1958: 28-29). Almost twenty years later, the last *Plano de Fomento* report concluded that if the rural exodus was to keep flowing as it had in recent years, “social tension could forfeit the development process” (Republica, 1973: II, 211–212) For Sedas Nunes, a leading sociologist

<sup>14</sup> Although often used, the concept of “dual society” does not effectively describe the relationship between pre-capitalist social formations and capital exports. Whenever that relationship existed, “traditional” societies were no longer “traditional” but reorganized in order to produce surplus labour, one way or the other (unequal trade, taxation, etc.). For a discussion of “underdevelopment”, Amin: 1988: 17–20.

with connections to the institutional establishment, only a larger “public and semi-public sector” could counter the negative consequences of “sheer capitalism” among which he highlighted “the great human masses, detached from their traditional socioeconomic and cultural environments”<sup>15</sup>. It is now time to see how the nationalist movements adapted their strategies to the on-going changes.

### 2.1. *Angolan movements: core and tail of “central society” organizations*

Modern nationalist movements of Angola, like elsewhere in colonial Africa, relied on an amalgamation of urban elites<sup>16</sup>. It could hardly have been otherwise because only a western-educated petty bourgeoisie could gain access to the modern tools of political expression, either cultural associations or political parties<sup>17</sup>. The process was often described and it seems that the core leadership of the three main Angolan movements (one of them being, UNITA, an offspring of another, FNLA) did not differ significantly (Newitt, 2007:76). The fact that the MPLA board relied mostly on an “old” urban petty bourgeoisie and the UPA on a rural one (the coffee *kulak* peasantry) was an important but not determinant difference. In both cases, the early staff of both movements moved along the “central society” although, in the late 1950s, less social mobility was allowed therein than twenty years later (Heymer, 1979: 22–23). The ideological stand of both movements reflected their common class references, although it could be expressed differently depending on their environmental context. Creole families of Luanda (MPLA) had certainly less “ethnic” solidarities than the middle-class Kikongo farmers (UPA), and they developed different counter-cultures (Methodism in the Luanda area, Baptism and Tokoism in the northern districts). But contrary to what sometimes is argued (Correia, 2017: 418–432), the rivalry between these two movements did not constitute a town-countryside type of conflict and even less an “educated” versus “primitive” one<sup>18</sup>.

A sort of symmetry in the political evolution seems to confirm this common class pattern. Both movements developed a working class tail according to their restricted fields of action. The MPLA managed to obtain the informal support of the “*muceques*”, that is of most of Luanda working-class and *lumpen*-proletariat<sup>19</sup>. The UPA/FNLA organized the Angola Bakongo migrant workers in Leopoldville (Kinshasa), a community increasing long before the 1961 events. With financial backing from the AFL-CIO, and the political support from the new Congo government, the FNLA even developed a relatively well-organized trade-union, LGTA<sup>20</sup> (Santos, 2017: 244–246).

<sup>15</sup> Sousa, 1965: XXI.

<sup>16</sup> For a thesis about the elites of MPLA and of other movements, see Messiant quoted by Bittancourt, 1999:139-150.

<sup>17</sup> For a vivid autobiographical description of the nationalist awakening of the Luanda petty bourgeoisie, see Amaral, 2000.

<sup>18</sup> Contributing to the many accounts which depict FNLA as a peasant movement, here is how a famous *Washington Post* reporter described it as late as 1973: “A tribally based guerrilla group, it draws most of its strength from the Bakongo tribe in northern Angola”. “*Rebel's Congress Held in Wilderness*,” *Washington Post*, 25-12-1973.

<sup>19</sup> The colonial repression of 1961 induced a guerrilla base close to Luanda (*1ª Região Militar*) that was actively supported by the urban popular classes and had hardly any political ties with the senior staff of the movement, then in exile. Mateus, 2007. The autonomous network was probably the base for the MPLA's own Trade Union, the *União Nacional dos Trabalhadores Angolanos* (UNTA), organised in February 1960. AHD-MNE, GNP – S018 – 3.

<sup>20</sup> The *Liga Geral dos Trabalhadores de Angola* (LGTA) was organized in Leopoldville, Kinshasa, in June 1961. AHD-MNE, GNP - S018 – 3.

Another similarity, which may also reflect a petty bourgeoisie prejudice against rural poor strata, was their frequent inability to avoid military rank-and-file splits. Fissions of this type were all the more probable since the political headquarters of the movements were usually based far away from their military bases (Congo-Brazza for MPLA and Zaire for FNLA) and the peasant element, hegemonic within the guerrilla units, was operating in Cabinda, inside the Northern (Dembos) or the Eastern districts<sup>21</sup>. In 1974, the MPLA had split into three factions, the most important being the wing operating in Eastern Angola (the Chipenda faction). Earlier than that, in 1965, FNLA had already “lost” its Cabinda military branch and also the “Catangueses” militia, the Zairian regime dissidents. (Correia, 2017: 425).

To this pattern includes what Heymer referred to as the “ethnic corporate” identity. In the transition from pre-capitalist to capitalist society, cultural references (language, “racial” phenotypes) may still be used as ideological marks. That is why, Heymer adds, in the mid-1970s urban Africans could still choose between a sheer class identity and an “ethnic” one. This implies that “ethnicity” was part of a social mobility strategy. Such behaviours were usually found among social actors whose political goals were already beyond “ethnic” tradition: it was rather class-driven attitudes using a non-class language.<sup>22</sup> Conversely, there were already worker organisations formed in the early 1960s, without any reference to ethnicity or even to regional areas<sup>23</sup>. Some samples of the UNITA political strategy may highlight the increasing class axis of Angolan politics.

## 2.2. Samples from UNITA during the first bush period

The formation of UNITA, a 1964 fission from the FNLA, has been the subject of several historical accounts.<sup>24</sup> This is hardly the place to summarize them. Since the party is usually depicted as the most rooted in “ethnic” Angola, UNITA presents an interesting case study for the discussion of the class-driven impetus within “central society”. The more common stereotype depictions of the party are not unique. They reflect the general commonplaces about African parties: an “ethno-party” (Correia, 2017:443)<sup>25</sup> or a *big man’s* organization, in this case gravitating around its president, Jonas Savimbi. It is no wonder that the biography of Savimbi is better known than the history of his party. Yet the biography itself provides useful material about class characterization.

Savimbi’s familiar background (he was the son of a CFB<sup>26</sup> employee and Congregationalist pastor) is representative of the Angola rural region most affected by the money economy and proletarianization. The rubber trade since the 1890s, the Benguela Railway since 1902, the

<sup>21</sup>For the guerrilla splits of MPLA, see Mateus, 2007: 32-34; 41.

<sup>22</sup> In a fast-changing process like in the 1960s Angola evidence cannot be interpreted within a static frame. The Luanda *lumpen* population of the *muceques* could identify themselves as Mbundu against the European or Cape-Verdean shop-owners in 1975 but their uprising two years later in support of Poder Popular against the *comprador* state bourgeoisie, also mainly Mbundu, shows the class ground of its self-identity.

<sup>23</sup> As can be shown by “União dos Trabalhadores Angolanos” (UTONA), identifying itself in 1961 as a “worker’s party”. Others were formed among the Angolan workers in Congo-Leopoldville and certainly were short-lived associations, launched as a result of political splits in the milieu of migrant workers: Seleção Cooperativa de Mão de Obra Angolana (OBRANG); Confederação Geral dos Trabalhadores Angolanos, C.G.T.A.; Acção dos Operários Católicos de Angola (AOCA); Confederação dos Sindicatos Livres Angolanos, CSLA (Santos, 2017: 244).

<sup>24</sup> For a sort of official UNITA narrative, see Bridgland, 1988.

<sup>25</sup> The label is a quotation of Edmundo Rocha (Rocha, 2009), who also used it in the description of FNLA. Being “ethnicity” a political charge, it is no wonder that all the movements used it as political weapons, especially the pro-MPLA accounts when referring to the other movements.

<sup>26</sup> *Companhia do Caminho de Ferro de Benguela*, the Railway company operating the line from Lobito to Dilolo (on the Angola-Congo border).



maize commercial agriculture, and later work migrations had for decades subordinated the peasant economy of the Angolan Central Plateau to capital accumulation<sup>27</sup>. L. Heywood showed how by the 1940s the integration of the Ovimbundus in the “central society” was manifest. In the local educational system, there was already a “first group of Umbundu-speaking agents (teachers, nurses, and pastors)” able to reproduce new cultural patterns (Heywood, 1989). The local peasantry was on average poorer than in the coffee areas but it was exposed to the efforts of colonial administration and of CFB to feed the railway line with a regular flow of cash crops (Esteves, 2003: 58–60). The Plateau cities developed smaller African suburbs than Luanda (Nova Lisboa, Silva Porto, and Sá da Bandeira had been designed as settler “white cities”) but migrant work (to the coffee districts, to the Lobito harbour area and to the Zambian Copper Belt) surely acted as pulling poles into a “central society”. The centrality of the region (even before the railway line)<sup>28</sup> also allowed for the spreading of cultural innovations to the more peripheral Tschokwe and Ganguelas cultural areas<sup>29</sup>.

In fact, the setting up of UNITA relied on the network of Angolan mineworkers’ associations (Tschokwe and Ovimbundu)<sup>30</sup> in Zambia. It was a Tschokwe organization that selected the eleven staff members who should attend military traineeship in China and that would become the early senior officials of the movement. The guerrilla activity, which UNITA made a point of basing inside Angola, was located in the Far East end of the Central Plateau. Smart Chata, the main organizer of the Tschokwe migrant association in Zambia, also brokered the willingness of traditional authorities to establish the first permanent base. He seems to have also organised the Muangai meeting, which the movement would later consider its first official activity (Bridgland, 1988: 76). It is worth stressing the role of this unexpected Tschokwe prominence in a so-called ethno-party.

#### a) *Ideology: class language and the manipulation of tradition*

In fact, “anti-tribalism” was the core of UNITA’s official rhetoric all the more because the other movements always tried to corner it in the perimeter of the Ovimbundu<sup>31</sup>. For instance, a 1969 party leaflet on the history of the liberation movements praised the contribution of “tribal” associations (the ATCAR of the Tschokwe, but also the ALIAZO of the Zombes in the Bakongo area) precisely *because* they had overcome “tribalist” ideology<sup>32</sup>. The rejection of “old” society, which included bad “ethnicity”, was one of the points highlighted by Leon Dash, a *Washington Post* reporter covering the party’s third official congress. During his speech Savimbi criticized the FNLA leader (Holden Roberto) “as a

<sup>27</sup> It seems needless to go further back to the slave trade era, which started the integration of the Ovimbundu culture into the world market.

<sup>28</sup> The area of influence of the CFB was estimated by its Board to extend to 123 750 square kilometres stretching from the sea to the Congo, Zambia, and future Botswana borders. Esteves, 2003: 52.

<sup>29</sup> UNITA operations from the Eastern-Central Plateau would also have privileged access to the Ovambo and Herrera cultural areas.

<sup>30</sup> The operational organisation was the Ukwashi Wa Chokwe (Associação Angolana Chokwe). Bridgland, 1988: 73.

<sup>31</sup> Dash wrote: “I had been told by respected “informed sources” that UNITA guerrillas operated among the Ovimbundu in central Angola because their leader, Savimbi, is Ovimbundu and would be supported by any other Angolan tribes. The same sources told me that the entire leadership of UNITA was Ovimbundu, saying, in other words, that the organization was tribally based. I found this to be the stereotyped linear vision with which so many African “experts” treat Africa. Savimbi is unquestionably the leader of UNITA but he is the only Ovimbundu in the 10-member executive political bureau of UNITA”. “Rebel’s Congress Held in Wilderness”, *Washington Post*, 25-12-1973

<sup>32</sup> The *Aliança dos Naturais de Maquela do Zombe, Aliazo*, would later form a political party and integrate the UPA front. *UNITA & Angola’s struggle for independence*. PT/TT/SCCIA/012/0081.

reactionary who wants to re-establish the Bakongo Kingdom that was broken by the Portuguese 400 years ago.”<sup>33</sup> And UNITA propaganda would never let go opportunities to expose “tribalist” policies of the MPLA<sup>34</sup>.

The UNITA social mix was well summarised by Leon Dash<sup>35</sup> and this can explain the more ambiguous statements when UNITA interacted directly with the peasantry. The party wanted to promote “modernization”<sup>36</sup> but used to lecture it throughout its “own version of “African tradition” on the population” (Heywood, 1998, 166-167). In its peasantry-addressed messages, for instance, UNITA downsized the MPLA with “racial” phenotypes, such as “an elite of blacks and mulattos”<sup>37</sup>. These were of course class oriented sentences but typical of a “corporate group” (Umbundu petty bourgeois speakers addressing a peripheral peasantry).

The use of “traditional” labels as a political strategy was common but at no time did UNITA officials want to be identified as primitive rebels. As Savimbi would say in another of his much-quoted interviews, “We are no Mau-Maus”<sup>38</sup>. And of course, dealing with other listeners, class references could be explicit – as when the petty bourgeoisie hegemony of MPLA and FNLA was said to be the main cause for the slow down of the liberation war<sup>39</sup>.

### b) *Sociological samples*

During the bush years, the UNITA board had to recruit among Eastern Angola peasantry. There are no quantitative data to establish the social background of the guerrilla units. To begin with, the figures of the guerrilla total strength are absolutely disparate according to the different sources. In 1971, a CIA information that paid tribute to the “tribalism” of UNITA by pointing out that it had been a successful survival tactic<sup>40</sup>, made the following estimation of the field strength of the movements (*Table 1*).

Still, Dash reported that just the delegates attending the 1973 UNITA congress totalled 221. He added that he had counted “about 600 *guerrillas* and 5,000 peasants in the 800 miles” he had walked within the UNITA area of influence<sup>41</sup>. Dash was surely impressed with

<sup>33</sup> “Rebel’s Congress Held in Wilderness”, *Washington Post*, 25-12-1973.

<sup>34</sup> Commenting an interview with Daniel Chipenda (one of the MPLA leaders in 1974), in which he had admitted “I never considered myself umbundu (...) all umbundus are reactionary”, a UNITA tract explained that it was wrong to be ashamed of their own origins as the MPLA umbundus were. *Quem são os libertadores de Angola? (Até que enfim Chipenda diz a verdade)*. PT/TT/SCCIA/012/0081

<sup>35</sup> “The UNITA guerrillas are made up essentially of Angolan peasants and Africans who followed Portuguese dictates during their elementary school and high school educations.” Savimbi stressed in the same interview: “Most of the leaders of the UNITA guerrillas have graduated from universities in Europe or the United States” in “Angola’s Rebels Seek Black Roots, a Classless Society”, *Washington Post*, 26-12-1973.

<sup>36</sup> “The session lasted one week, with a constant round of meetings that lasted far into the night as the leadership hammered out new goals for administering their “liberated” domain. They sought to deal with such ancient tribal traditions as teeth-filling, arranged marriages and tribal separateness”. “Congress Held in Wilderness”, *Washington Post*, 25-12-1973.

<sup>37</sup> *Actividades da UNITA no Reino Unido*. 639/1212, 1969, PT/TT/SCCIA/012/0081.

<sup>38</sup> AZ, “Geheime Republik der Schwarzen Chinesen”, 14-11-1971 (Portuguese translation of the interview of Savimbi to F. Sitte).

<sup>39</sup> “This urban-bourgeoisie alignment was not only responsible for the slow march towards the expansion of political ideas in Angola as a whole, but also for the acute imbalance that Angolan nationalism is experiencing and suffering today”. *UNITA & Angola’s struggle for independence*. PT/TT/SCCIA/012/0081.

<sup>40</sup> “The smallest and weakest of the three groups is the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) led by Jonas Savimbi. (...) Because of tribal ties and Savimbi’s personal contacts along the Benguela railroad, the organization was initially successful in winning cooperation from eastern and central Angolan tribes who were cool to the other two insurgent groups.” CIA-RDP79-00927A009200010002-0, p.5.

<sup>41</sup> Savimbi had assured him that four other guerrilla groups were operating in different areas of Angola. “Rebels’ Congress Held in Wilderness”, *Washington Post*, 25-12-1973, p. 2.

UNITA's organization, which obviously implied a larger staff.<sup>42</sup> According to the UNITA propaganda, in 1967 the movement would total 1000 fighters divided in 66 postings<sup>43</sup>.

Table 1. **Field strength of Angolan nationalist movements – 1971**

Region	MPLA	FNLA	UNITA
North	500	2500	
East	3500	500	200

Source: CIA-RDP79-00927A009200010002-0, p. 5.

As regards the nature of the party relationship with the peasantry (and, above all, what kind of peasantry) absolute figures are less important. On one of its fundamental items, the recruitment process, it may be worth quoting directly Savimbi's interview to Dash:

*When UNITA guerrillas first go into villages seeking recruits, Savimbi said, they look for the Angolan peasants who have had contact with the Portuguese. "That contact will have always left some smouldering resentment with them" he said.*

*It is possible, Savimbi said, that over half the peasants in a village have had no contact with the Portuguese and see no reason why they should fight them. "We get the men in the village who have done forced labour on the coffee plantations, for example, to tell them what it was like and (h)ow they were treated", Savimbi said.*

The target peasants – those “*who have had contact*” – were those who had experienced direct or indirect disruption of their pre-capitalist way of life. Section 1 referred to the growth of the peasant money economy but how far was this applicable to the far Eastern part of Angola (the Moxico district) where UNITA was operating? Therein the pull of the capitalist economy came not only through migrant work to Zambia and the CFB impact but also from the governmental resettlement schemes, the so-called “*aldeamentos*”. They were framed by the government policies of counter-insurgency and of course, “*development*”, as shown above.

The resettlement program started in 1966. Six years later Bender estimated that on the whole, its schemes were affecting about 1 million people, that is, one fifth of the Angolan population. The percentages were certainly larger in the military areas of Lunda and Moxico districts, although the figures given in 1968 by the Moxico governor (a total of 140,000 peasants, about 80 per cent of the population) surely represented an overestimation. It is important to have in mind that most of the peasantry resettled was an already money-income one because the CFB reports often complained about the negative effect of the schemes on its freights, due to “*the complete abandonment of many crops and serious curtailment in the production of others*”. (Bender, 1972: 317; 341-344). Portuguese petty traders followed suit, complaining about the decrease in the supply of commodities (mainly maize and cattle). Further west in the densely populated area of the Central Plateau, the schemes accelerated proletarianization, migration to the cities<sup>44</sup>, and land conflicts with European settlers.

<sup>42</sup> UNITA “is a political party, an army, a system of government, a bureaucratic administration - an organization that seeks to achieve everything, from teaching children their ABC's and feeding all its citizens to killing Portuguese soldiers. Here is a list of what UNITA does: runs hospitals, schools, farms, military operations and diplomatic initiatives; raises money and administers the land. It serves as an educator, doctor, general, sociologist, politician, bureaucrat, philosopher, diplomat and fundraiser - it does all things that touch the lives of those living in its territory.”

<sup>43</sup> CITA, 12-02-1968 (translation of Savimbi interview to *L'Étudiant*, September-October, 1967).

<sup>44</sup> Cotton and coffee employers also complained about occasional shortages of labour supply caused by the resettlements (Bender, 1972: 353).

Facing such a massive program of changes it is no wonder that the full sample of UNITA rank-and-file informers interviewed by Dash satisfied Savimbi's "contact" criteria<sup>45</sup>. UNITA rhetoric could still exploit the former main contradiction (to quote Heymer again) that opposed a capitalist state to traditional peasantry but even in backward Moxico it increasingly needed to address a population of "destrribalizados".

### 2.3. UNITA as a political party in 1974

In 1960, the Umbundu speakers represented about 36 per cent of the Angolan total African population (Anuário: 1960: 10, 45). In 1967, Savimbi boasted of having 25 per cent of the Angolan population under his control, which was obviously part of UNITA propaganda<sup>46</sup>. Whatever the figures were, during the on-going decolonization process following the April 1974 coup in Portugal, UNITA remained the most confident political force about possible general elections in Angola. That was surely the reason why it became the first guerrilla movement to accept the cease-fire proposed by the new Portuguese authorities<sup>47</sup>. Being the sole armed movement to act freely within the territory, including the major cities, the ceasefire assured it a provisional but almost complete monopoly of propaganda (Correia, 2017: 272). The agreement would also provide it with around 1,000 political prisoners released under the cease-fire agreement (Heywood, 1989:55).

In the Central Plateau, there were objective *class grounded* factors for the UNITA's electoral confidence: the forced return of about 60,000 migrant workers expelled from the coffee areas by FNLA units, a move which had increased their identification with Savimbi's party; the support of factory workers in the Lobito area; and, most importantly, the fact that "now Ovimbundu peasants saw Savimbi as their consummated leader" (Heywood, 1989: 55–60).

UNITA was not the sole movement to enjoy working-class support: MPLA had it by far in the Luanda area. The same can be said about the peasant support: FNLA could count with most of the northern peasantry (those who had remained in Angola or exiled in Congo), although the poorer peasant strata would probably later stand with UNITA. Besides, there was no ideological evidence indicating that the UNITA's option was to become a working-class movement in the socialist European tradition, whose influence could in a second moment spread to other geographical areas<sup>48</sup>.

But UNITA was the most effective low-income class assembler. In fact, both UNITA's propaganda and the official Savimbi interviews show that the party intended to represent an amalgamation of the new working and middle classes. He was aware that the advantage over potential competitors lay in its ability to respond to the social mobility ambitions inside what was then a more open "central society". This implied offering specific messages for its several

<sup>45</sup> One of Dash's reports included the stories of Matende, a bushman who fled contract labour in a diamond field (probably from a southern area of the Diamang concession); of Kambinba and Chihondi, former "regedores" (local authority), punished for failing to collect taxes and providing *contratados* for the coffee plantations of Gabela; of Samwileno, a honey producer and of Isalina Fawima, a peasant girl victim of a colonial army raid. "Rebels Say They Were Cheated, Abused by the Portuguese." *Washington Post*, 26-12-1973.

<sup>46</sup> CITA, 12-02-1968 (translation of a Savimbi interview to *L'Étudiant*. PT/TT/SCCIA/012/0081). Each of three main nationalist movements claimed to control one-third of the territory. Savimbi joked about it in the interview to Dash in 1971 but had stated the same in the 1967.

<sup>47</sup> UNITA signed a provisional cease-fire in 14th June 1974; FNLA and MPLA formally did the same only in October (Martelo, 2001: 165-169).

<sup>48</sup> UNITA repeated the vague slogan of "just socialism", typical of the African nationalist movements of that time, and there were no indications that the cooperative organization implemented in its controlled territory (which certainly deserve further studies) would ever become his societal model for Angola.

layers. For instance, in his interview to F. Sitte, Savimbi replied ambiguously to a question about China's political influence over his organization by saying that Mao talked about the masses but "In Angola, we can find no masses"<sup>49</sup>. The interpretation that by that he considered his party should focus on addressing a class-differentiated society rather than on a peasant mass such as the one of pre-revolutionary China is compatible with what has been described.

However, for UNITA the early 1974 propaganda monopoly was doomed to be as provisional as the advantages conferred by this multi-class approach. The class amalgamation model was possible only while the Angola boom phase could last but much less probable when it ended. Then, aggravated class struggles and sharpened conflict class identities would certainly occur. The inevitable failure of the late colonial growth model and therefore coming recession would certainly force UNITA to choose fields within its heterogeneous support base<sup>50</sup>. Before that time there was still room for a party growth close to the Kircheimer pattern of "Catch all party" (Kircheimer, 1966). And of course, it was even less foreseeable that the this pattern would be completely impossible after the entire class structure collapse – as it did after 1975.

As seen above, UNITA senior staff came from the same petty bourgeois background as other African nationalist movements, including its Angola rivals. As such, they all shared a sort of equidistance from the support of emerging popular classes they intended to win. Still, the fact of being based *within* Angola during the clandestine years gave UNITA the chance for more balanced representation of "corporate groups", as Heymer would put it, in its party apparatus. Such composition would allow it to become less confined to social boundaries as regards future electoral targets (even if that could not last long). Such openness to a changing social landscape could explain its appeal to the "white" working and middle classes<sup>51</sup>. It could also explain its peasant-addressed class language full of regional or racial phenotypes<sup>52</sup> and its strategy of propaganda deep inside the FNLA<sup>53</sup> and MPLA electoral feuds<sup>54</sup>.

## CONCLUSION

During the 1960s, the extension of the capitalist mode of production produced a wider variety of social classes in Angola. This means that the main contradiction was no longer opposing a "modern" ("central") society to tributary classes, typical of a "dualist" phase of capital exports in Africa, but rather the axis of labour-capital conflicts. The public and private capital injection funded by the taxation of mineral rents, which intensified during that period, extended the class-struggle dynamics to the whole social fabric. In 1974 there was hardly any

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<sup>49</sup> AZ, "Geheime Republik der Schwarzen Chinesen", 14-11-1971 (Portuguese translation of the interview of Savimbi to F. Sitte: "nós não temos massas").

<sup>50</sup> In the Luanda area a similar situation forced the MPLA apparatus to take its class option during the events of May 1977, in which the organizations of the popular classes were crushed by the central apparatus controlled by the petty bourgeoisie. For a factual description of the *Poder Popular* fall, see Mateus, 2007

<sup>51</sup> "There can be little disagreement with John Marcum's conclusion that in the aftermath of the Lisbon coup, Savimbi played the role of a political pragmatist who dropped all Maoist rhetoric, and campaigned for support among Angola's whites." (Heywood, 1989: 56).

<sup>52</sup> From a 1974 multi-language tract: *Bailundos – Os donos da terra de Luanda não te gosta: são falsos* (Remember that Luanda land owners do not like you and are treacherous). PT/TT/SCCIA/012/0081

<sup>53</sup> During the months of July and August 1974 the Intelligence Services of Angola (SCCIA) reported several incidents related to the distribution of UNITA propaganda along Malanje and the coffee districts of Cuanza Norte and Uige. Several of them included "white" participation. PT/TT/SCCIA/012/0081

<sup>54</sup> In August 1974, "3 whites and a negro, coming from Luanda", distributed pro-UNITA leaflets in Dondo, where MPLA supporters harassed and tried to beat them, claiming that "in this area, only MPLA propaganda can be distributed". SCCIA, 19-08-1974. PT/TT/SCCIA/012/0081

strata of Angolan population “*who have had no contact*”, to rephrase one of Savimbi’s criteria for preferentially recruitment.

*Caeteris paribus*, class-grounded political parties should soon or later express the new social reality of Angola. Class identities were not yet fully formed and transitional languages as those expressed by “racial” or cultural phenotypes were still in use although to express strategies of social change. It seemed to be a time to bet on a successful party growth if focusing on the support of rising low and middle classes. Gains would be greater during the current ongoing boom, when class conflicts seemed less important than social mobility aspirations. UNITA had the opportunity to make good political use of this brief scenario.

After 1975 the new Angolan State “corrected”, according to the capitalist rationale, the late colonial model which subsidized extensive growth. With capital investment confined to offshore oil (and to some diamond areas), moneyed peasantry and most of the working and low-middle classes fell into the suburban poor strata of the informal sector. This structural change shifted the main contradiction back to a “centre-periphery” conflict, now under the format of a comprador state bourgeoisie backed by foreign capital against new “masses”. The sudden backward change reorganized the political forces and put an end to the “catch all party” model of UNITA, which could only work based on “modern” social classes.

Much further sociological and political data must be included to validate this model. For the moment, it may be useful to the downsizing “ethnicity” as a key variable in Angola and to see it rather as a “surface structure” in the increasing class conflicts. It is also important to show that the axis of class struggle can change very fast, even in the apparently “cool” societies of peripheral capitalism.

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## СТАНОВЛЕНИЕ СОВРЕМЕННЫХ ПАРТИЙ В АНГОЛЕ: УНИТА И МОДЕЛЬ НЕУДАВШЕГОСЯ РОСТА

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***Аннотация.** В 1960-е гг. расширение капиталистического способа производства ускорило распад ангольского «традиционного общества». Высокие темпы роста экономики в Анголе стали возможны благодаря тому, что огромные доходы от добычи нефти и алмазов облагались налогами и реинвестировались в страну. При такой «политике развития», которая, по ожиданиям колониального государства, должна была поддерживать находившиеся в упадке отрасли сельского хозяйства и промышленности и сохранять политическое статус-кво, произошло изменение основного общественного противоречия. Им больше не был раскол между «центральной» и «зависимым»; им стал раскол между трудом и капиталом в рамках «современного общества». С точки зрения идеологии, хотя понятия, отражавшие «расовое» деление или культурные фенотипы все еще использовались, теперь появилась возможность проявления различных политических позиций. Националистические движения, начинавшиеся как маленькие диссидентские фракции в рамках «центрального общества», были в силу этого вынуждены менять свою тактику, чтобы получить поддержку поднимающихся классов. Статья фокусируется на УНИТА, чьи условия деятельности (партизанские операции в Центральной Анголе) облегчали задачу вписаться в изменяющийся социальный ландшафт. Некоторые свидетельства об идеологии УНИТА и его электоральном поведении в 1974–1975 гг. (в период, когда партизанские движения превращались в политические партии) показывают, что фактор «этничности», широко использовавшийся как ключевой в политике в Африке, требует переоценки, по крайней мере, относительно конкретно этого времени в Анголе.*

**Ключевые слова:** Ангола, классовая борьба, этничность, УНИТА

DOI: 10.31132/2412-5717-2023-63-2-28-43