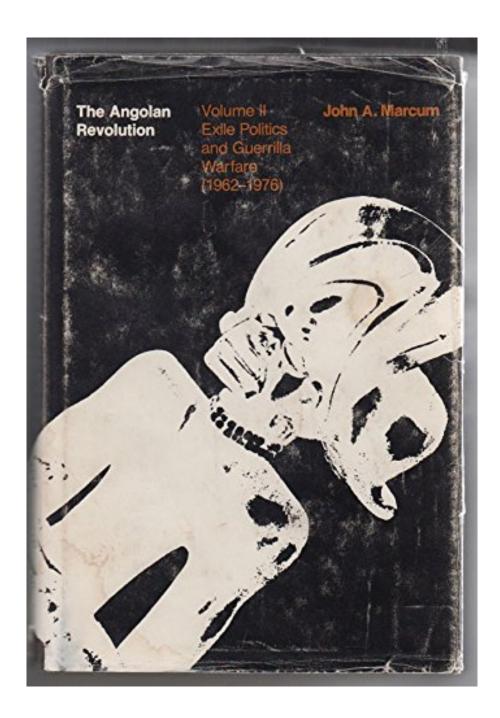


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The first volume of this work, subtitled The Anatomy of an Explosion, 1950-1962, described the background and the first two years of the armed struggle for Angolan independence. It was published in 1969, and left its readers eagerly awaiting the sequel. Thus, a reviewer in the Journal of Modern African Studies wrote that "...this volume was a joy to read. Its contribution to a fuller understanding of Portuguese Africa is immense, especially in light of the meager literature in English. MIT Press will publish a second volume, which will bring us beyond 1962, and I, for one, would not miss it for all the coffee in Angola." And another scholar, writing in the American Historical Review, concluded that "Professor Marcum's able study of the struggle for Angolan independence in 1962 is not likely to be easily replaced for quite some time to come. Everyone interested in this struggle will eagerly look forward to his second volume that brings the story through the sixties."

The second volume narrates how Angola won her independence from Portugal in 1975, traces the course of the continuing conflict among revolutionary groups to its effectively final outcome, and ends as Angola gains worldwide recognition as a sovereign and (tenuously) unified nation.

This new volume fully meets the expectations aroused by its predecessor, with its scrupulous linking of events and evidence. Moreover, since the historical incidents leading to the denouement are intrinsically more dramatic than those of the early years of the struggle, the second volume possesses a heightened narrative drive, enabling the reader to keep up with the quickening and sometimes confusing pace of events.

Marcum thoroughly documents the rival revolutionary parties—based as much on ethnicity as on ideology—that fought the Portuguese and each other. (Two major movements were active in the field up to 1966, when a third party emerged as a full contender.) The origin, programs, leadership, and structure of these parties are examined in considerable detail, including the extent to which their guerrilla operations were controlled by exiled insurgents. The book explores the transterritorial relations among the parties and their interaction with external powers, both before the collapse of Portuguese rule and during the civil war that followed. In particular, Marcum traces the shifting patterns of political and material support provided to the various factions by contiguous African nations, the United States, China, the Soviet Union, Cuba, and others, especially during the final phase of the struggle. The reportorial and scholarly sources referenced here make the civil war understandable—and demonstrate the extent of its predictability, if not its inevitability.

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Dated, but Still the Best on the Subject

By RP

John Marcum's second volume on the Angolan revolution remains the landmark text on the subject. Based primarily on news reports, personally collected documents, and Marcum's own contacts among the revolutionary movements, the release of documents from both Portugal and the United States has yet to produce a better volume on the African side of the revolution. This fact explains why scholarly publications over the last decade on Angola consistently depend on Marcum's work to explain the revolutionary tumult before independence in 1975.

Marcum argues that economic, cultural, and geographic differences divided the movements in the predominantly Bakongo FNLA, the Mbundu-urban MPLA, and the Ovimbundu UNITA. Though the first two of these groups initially looked to the international stage to help free themselves from Portuguese colonialism, frustrations with the United Nations and the United States led them to focus more on the African-led liberation of Angola. Nonetheless, conflicts of personality and regional character prevented the nationalist organizations from creating a united front, leading internal squabbling to hinder the achievement of independence as much as the metropolitan military response. Nonetheless, in assessing the three groups, Marcum leans toward the MPLA, arguing that it represents the most coherent, national, and interracial of the three groups in its aims, makeup, and strategy. In contrast, the author continues to focus on the American side to demonstrate how intermittent official support privileged the paranoid and ineffective Holden Roberto based out of the Congo (Zaire). Publication in 1978 means that this book cannot incorporate realities of the last three decades, but it nonetheless stands out as the fairest and most comprehensive take on this key period in Angolan nationalism. As such, This book and the first volume that preceded it stand as essential reading for understanding the origins and effects of the American intervention in Angola under Gerald Ford.

Scarce, but highly recommended for those trying to understand the increasingly important nation of Angola.

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