

Angolan Woman and the Electoral Process in Angola, 1992

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Résumé: Au centre de la lutte pour la paix et la reconstruction en Angola se trouvait le processus électoral. Les Angolaises ont fait montre d'une grande flexibilité et de stratégies de survie face à la violence de la guerre et à l'extrême déconfiture de l'économie. C'est pourquoi, et surtout dans les zones urbaines, les femmes sont devenues des acteurs sociaux dignes de ce nom et moins dépendantes des hommes et du gouvernement. Elles ont soutenu les élections avec un zèle inouï et ont fait montre sous différentes formes de leur soutien à de nouvelles formes d'arbitrage politique dans la société. Les femmes constituent l'essentiel d'une pléthore d'associations professionnelles, civiles et entrepreneuriales. Cependant la plupart des partis qui avaient pris part aux élections de 1992 avaient une aile féminine, mais reflétaient une forme d'organisation commune en Afrique et qui milite contre l'organisation autonome des femmes. Pour ce qui concerne plus particulièrement ces femmes, ces formes d'organisation sont le témoin que les femmes peuvent être organisées pour des objectifs différents et non pas seulement pour mettre fin à l'oppression et à la violence contre elles. En réalité, comme le prouve la ligue indépendante des femmes angolaises, on peut organiser les femmes autour du renforcement de leur oppression. Dans ce cas, la valeur qu'on leur accorde est liée à leur état de mères qui produisent les nouvelles générations de combattants.

Angolan women of all races and classes have suffered from the oppression inflicted by colonialism, war and destabilization. African women have suffered disproportionately from the dislocation of rural society. During the recent elections they intervened decisively to demonstrate their vast interest in peace and reconstruction. Displaced by war, mobilized on the basis of ethnic consciousness and exploited at every level of the social structure, African Women in Angola developed techniques of survival while planning for a period of peace where they could participate in the building of a new society.

The recent focus on the so called 'civil war' in Angola has tended to erase the memory of the wars of resistance of the Angolan people which culminated in the national liberation struggle which was launched in February 1961. The cold war legacy of East - West confrontation meant that even before the achievement of independence of Angola in 1975 the politics of the society was thrust in external manipulation. From the period of the first South African invasion in 1975 up to the defeat of the Boers at Cuito Cuanavale, the conventional war in Angola was one of the fiercest in Africa

since Rommel was defeated in North Africa in World War II. The weaponry available to the Angolans and to the South Africans made this arena of military confrontation important not only in the context of African liberation but in the manipulations of the cold war and low intensity warfare of recolonization (Campbell, 1990). In the thirty year period from 1961 to 1991 over a third of the Angolan peoples were uprooted from their village communities and over a million lost their lives.

On top of the tragedy of this massive loss of life in this rich but underpopulated society, living conditions of Angolan workers and peasants deteriorated according to every index of the quality of life: health care, delivery of water, infant mortality, access to primary education, nutrition and food security, pre- and post-natal care and household incomes. In this pervasive climate of violence and destruction, women were more susceptible to multiple assaults and attacks. Increased violence meant there was more sexual abuse and beating of women. The militaristic struggle for state power affected social relations. With the collapse of the economic infrastructure (except for the extraction of petroleum products) it was the resistance and resilience of the African women which on the whole kept body and soul together.

With the existence of over 1 million explosive mines, roads and village paths became danger zones in a society beset by all the scars of war. The limited transportation and economic infrastructure in the rural areas had collapsed under the weight of the most massive bloodletting and dispersal since the slave trade. This large scale movement and dispersal which had been precipitated by war and violence reflected the continuities in the centrality of force in the processes of production and social reproduction in Angola. European colonialism in Africa had refused to recognize the dignity of the African and the more oppressed the European society was the more they intensified the oppression of Africans. As a backward state, which had turned its back on the enlightenment in the 18th and 19th centuries and on the social democratic changes in Europe in the 20th century, Portugal resisted all claims for human rights and dignity for African people. Yet it was this same state which laid the claim to the defender of white civilization in Africa (Panikkar, 1962).

Without the financial means to fully exploit the rich resources of the territory (via real subordination), extra-economic coercion, force and the threat of force were central to colonial rule. It was this force which was at the heart of the fascism and militarism of Portuguese colonialism in Africa. African reaction to this force was manifest in many forms of covert and open rebellion but was most striking in the form of the liberation struggle for independence. African women from the period of Queen Nzinga were central to this anti-colonial struggle and fought at different fronts of the liberation war 1961-1975. There were several notable women in the fight for

independence and one of the monuments to the heroic struggles of Women is the eternal flame of peace at the square in Luanda named after Deodlina Rodriguez, one of the first women to fall in the war of liberation.

The Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA) as the historic liberation movement had underscored the importance of Angolan women in struggle by affirming that:

The role of women, and the need for them to mobilize on their specific questions, was recognized from the start; In 1962, one year after MPLA launched the armed struggle, the Organization of Angolan Women (OMA) was set up, (OAW, 1984).

This statement on the formation of the OMA; and the legal initiatives of the MPLA on sex discrimination at work and in the payment of wages had underscored the prevailing position of the discussion of Angolan women, especially in the analysis of the importance of mass organs of the MPLA. The fact that the government was the largest employer meant that abolishing sex discrimination at work was easier in some aspects, especially with respect to training schemes and to equal pay. By 1990 under the impact of pressures from the OMA the Angolan government enacted one of the most progressive Family Codes in Africa Wolfers, Bergerol, 1963: 125-127 Sogge, 1992: 109-110).¹

The changes of legal statutes in relation to the oppression of women by the MPLA government did not change the deeply ingrained social practices of male centered inheritance, bride price, initiation rites, polygamy, arranged marriages and sexual abuse of women. The constitutional guarantees of equal rights which have been championed by the OMA and found in the election manifesto of the MPLA have not changed the social differences between whites and Africans and between men and women. War and its consequences have created new forms of social relations which are now being consolidated. One of the more important thrusts is the attempt by women to develop economic independence in the market place so that they can lessen their dependence on men.

The peace accord signed by the MPLA and União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA) in May 1991 had been welcomed by all Angolans but especially by the African women of Angola. They had been at the forefront of the calls for peace and those organized in the OMA had demonstrated and called for an end to the war. Angolan women who have been maimed by the war have been silenced in the literature on the 'civil

1 Commentaries on the OMA by those who were sympathetic to the MPLA pointed out that the OMA was passives and the oppression of Women was rarely discussed in the government controlled media.

war'. The memories of the African people of peace and self rule become important in the present conjuncture because so much of the writing on Angola has been influenced by cold war politics.

The tragedy of continuous warfare in Angola forces progressive scholars to reconsider the dominant conceptualization of conflict resolution, peace and humanitarian efforts imposed from outside. Current research by Jacques Depelchin on the search for peace in Southern Africa asks the question: how do those who long for peace but reap war conceptualize these experiences when the most accessible modes of expression and communication are imposed by forces which are directly or indirectly responsible for such a situation? Depelchin (1993) argued that even the efforts to measure the cost of warfare has had the unintended effects of trivializing the experiences of war and destruction. This paper attempts to examine the experiences of African women in the search for peace in a society which has been virtually torn asunder by war and violence.

The signs of the physical costs of the war can be seen in the destruction of the farmlands, of the roads, bridges, vehicles, rail service and communications system. One can also measure the impact of the war on the support of water supply services, on health care delivery and on impact on the environment. International agencies have documented the economic costs of war and destabilization in Southern Africa. The official estimate by the Angolan government was that the cost of the war 1975-1991 may well be over US\$ 20 million. Yet as Depelchin cautioned, one cannot take accurate statistical measurement on the impact of the war on women and children because the process of destruction which is involved is not easy to quantify (Urdang, 1969; Magaia, Mengue, 1989). Angolan women had to flee their villages because of South African attacks, they were killed, they saw their children killed and kidnapped, they were pressed ganged into the army of UNITA as child bearers, and they were exploited in the factories and sweat shops of the urban areas, while others survived in the *musseques* as itinerant traders and small time operators in the informal sector. The war and destruction had a devastating effect on the peasant woman.

Studies on women and war in other parts of Southern Africa have pointed to the dual and paradoxical position of women in war situations:

On the one hand the traditional women's role of nurturing (associated with sacred life-giving forces) and protecting are not only sustained but significantly extended by the conditions of war. On the other hand women's tending roles in this war implicate them in perpetuating it; they literally keep combatants alive to fight another day. For example, the hazardous tasks of hiding and protecting their kinsmen, preparing and taking food to comrades/warriors in the bush are nurturing roles which are also evidence of women's active role in the conflict (Anneck, 1990).

This statement on the position of women in the violence in South Africa may not be totally accurate in the context of Angola but in the camps of UNITA women have to show solidarity in praise songs that they sing to Savimbi and UNITA, and songs to engender courage in anticipation of victory. The exploitation in the South is reinforced behind the myth that the military camps of UNITA are organized on the basis of military communism. This version of communism did not include the emancipation of women.

The upheavals in the countryside and besieged towns also increased the burden of household production in every conceivable way. All women in Angola expended a disproportionate amount of labour time carrying the double burden of unpaid work in the reproduction and maintenance of human resources as well as the work of producing goods and services. Angolan women spent more hours on housework than their counterparts in most of the countries of Southern Africa (except for Mozambique which has seen the same violence and destabilization) (Sheldon, 1986). Aside from the usual labour intensive tasks of providing water, fuel supplies (usually wood) in the rural areas and agricultural labour, Angolan women add the labour of organizing to perform work in conditions of a destroyed social infrastructure. In the urban areas, in overcrowded shanties called *musseques*, the search for food and the provision of a daily meal is a major undertaking. In this condition of adversity new forms of solidarity and resistance emerge.

The survival techniques of Angolan women can be seen in the basic struggle for existence, processing food and preparing meals, caring for the ill, children, the elderly and wounded soldiers, sewing, cooking and consoling the bereaved. Even events of bereavement are used to inculcate solidarity and cooperation. In the process of arranging funerals and other by-products of the war, Angolan women forge new relationships with each other to survive in the society.

Women as widows dominate the social landscape and the worse the conditions the greater the survival skills. Unfortunately these survival skills have not been manifest in autonomous organizations for women, except in the case of emerging middle classes who have organized legal clinics for battered women (Sogge, 1992:105). The more educated, the more the propensity for organization and women now form the backbone of a plethora of civic associations, neighbourhood organizations and local non-governmental organizations. Along side these new organizations formed in the aftermath of the 1991 peace accords, women are to be found in entrepreneurial and professional associations with one group of women forming the Women-Entrepreneurs Associations of Huila. Other professional organizations of teachers, doctors, lawyers and translators carried on the tradition of having branches for women.

Most of the parties which competed in the 1992 elections had a women's wing reflecting the traditions of the mass party in Africa which militate against autonomous organizing in civil society. The fact that these forms of organizations of women exist (among parties competing for power) points to the fact that women can be organized for different purposes and not always to end oppression and violence against women.

Experience in North Africa and in the Sudan showed that women could be mobilized to support traditional concepts of women which even take away the rights which were won at independence. In effect, women could be organized for the reinforcement of their own oppression. This was most apparent in the organization of the Independent League of Angolan Women (LIMA) the women's arm of UNITA. This form of organization was manifest in the elections and reinforced the conservative form, women's organization of which is seen all over Africa, where the conservative definition of women are maintained (Hassim, 1988).

Struggles for peace and reconstruction were central to the electoral process in Angola. Women demonstrated that they had a vested interest in peace and supported the elections with unusual zeal. They came out in large numbers for the registration and they waited patiently to vote. The participation of women in the elections opened up a major area of research which is still underdeveloped in Africa.

The question of the centrality of women's involvement in the present democratic movements in Africa has been the subject of numerous meetings and seminars all across the continent. The issues of democracy and the fact that the costs of structural adjustment has been shifted on to the shoulders of women has been documented extensively as the process of democratization deepens in Africa (Meena, Elson, 1986). A number of papers at the recent conference of CODESRIA on Gender Analysis and African Social Science sharpened the discussion of engendering the social sciences in Africa and focussed attention on the demand for a reconceptualization of those frameworks, methodologies and disciplines which deal with the relationships between men and women in society. It was significant that this conference noted that the dominant methodologies used in the social sciences have been the very ones that produce misconceptions that perpetuate the marginalization and subordination of women (CODESRIA, 1991).

This question of the theoretical framework for the study of African women in the political process has been sharpened by the fact that power is central to both politics and gender relations. African governments have recognized this fact and hence the proliferation of State-feminism (officially sponsored women's organization) and the first lady syndrome (officially sponsored women's organization led by the wife of the head of state) in Africa. Fatima Babiker who has paid attention to the forms of women's organization in Africa, starting from an explicit class analysis, has pointed out

that there were basically three forms of women organization on the continent:

- a) the state supported women's movement which is usually conservative and reinforces the conservative image of women as mothers;
- b) liberal organizations which want women to have the same position as men, equal access to education and all positions of power without changes in the class structure and production relations; and
- c) the organizations dedicated to the emancipation of women including the transformation of the relations of the labour process. These organizations are dedicated to changing production relations to socialize and democratize household production leading to the end of all forms of oppression of women, whether domestic, social, sexual or political (Mahmoud, 1991).

The issue of the organizational objectives of different models of women movements is also reflected in the literature on women in Africa; while the literature, especially in the context of the women in development paradigm (WID), is growing there is a growing theoretical division between those who seek to develop the ideas of liberation in the context of the specific struggles of African women and those who believe that the links between African women and the international feminist movement is central to feminism in Africa. This theoretical division is even more critical since most of the international agencies (which were yesterday called imperialist and today called donor agencies) have programs for women in development.²

In Southern Africa, especially Tanzania, Zimbabwe and South Africa, the general discourse on Women in Development and feminism is growing with a corresponding body of literature. The discussion in South Africa centers around two journals on women and gender. One of the journals is called *Agenda*, while the other is called *Women's Studies* and is based in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Transkei. The Zimbabwean effort is geared towards practical issues of the legal problems of women especially with respect to wife beating, child care, inheritance and sexual violence. In Tanzania where there is a Women's Research and Documentation Center, there is a major bibliographical study on women in the society. There is also some documentation to show how Women in Development (WID) policies:

2 For the Political Imperatives behind the Women in Development in North America see, *Women in Development*, 1980 Report to the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate and the Committee on Foreign Affairs, United States House of Representatives, February 10, 1981.

represent the most recent form of state intervention to construct gender relations which are compatible with capital's need for cheap labour (seasonal casual labour) and cheap production (produced largely by female waged and unwaged labour) (Mbilinyi, 1988).

Outside of these three territories in the region of southern Africa, and especially in Angola, the literature on women remains fairly underdeveloped. The most recent study on Angola has been cast in the WID mould with the emphasis on recycled World Bank data to describe the position of women in Angolan society. Unlike in Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, Zimbabwe and South Africa, where the issues of women and war have received some attention, there is very little written on Angolan women except the major report of the OMA, *Angolan Women Building the Future* (Cleaver, Wallace, 1990; Presley, 1992).

There is no doubt that African women were at the forefront of the decolonization process. This much is evident in the area of creative writing and the novels of Sembene Ousmane *God's Bits of Wood* and Ngugi Wa Thiongo's *Petals of Blood* which brought to life the leadership roles performed by women in the independence movement. The fact has been that within liberation movements, women and youth have been mobilized into auxiliary forces and not as constituencies in their own right. Frantz Fanon had noted the power of the mobilization of Algerian women in his seminal article 'Algeria Unveiled' (Fanon, 1989). In many respects one can link the process of political retrogression in Algeria to the subordination of women after independence.

This issue of women and the liberation struggles in Africa has been the subject of numerous meetings with the clear recognition of women who were demobilized after the taking of power. Most recently in South Africa it was none other than Winnie Mandela who questioned whether it is still advisable to maintain such a thing as the ANC Women's League, whether this does not play into the hands of the sexists? Within our organizations why should we not say that women must participate in our movement on the same footing as everybody and prove their own capabilities in the terrain of struggle? Why should we continue to accept a situation where, in every branch, the cream of women's leadership must be channeled into the league thereby denying them a chance of playing any meaningful role in the main activities and policy formulation of the movement (Mandela, 1989).

The issues raised by the liberation project in the period of decolonization have been erased by the destructive violence unleashed by the very forces who now seek to intervene as humanitarian imperialists in Africa. The question of the place of women in the struggle for peace and democracy helps to bring back the issues of social emancipation to the center away from the ideas of liberalization and structural adjustment. This paper is located in the

general discussion which seeks to break the silencing of the African people. It begins with an analysis of the social structure of Angola in the context of gender relations and focus on the elections and their aftermath as one window into the triple oppression of African women in Angola. The overwhelming majority of African women who speak one of the many African languages of the society seek new forms of security beyond the heritage of the cultural and economic traditions of Portugal.

The search for the organization of women, youth, workers, farmers, professionals and students outside of the ambit of traditional political parties was brought into sharp focus by the issues of the election campaign. The fact that one of the parties has resorted to war and violence has sharpened the alternatives and in the short run reinforced the politics of the historic political parties in Angolan politics. The armed wing of UNITA decided that if its leader could not come to power then there would be no country. This continuation of the destruction weighs heavily on Angolan women.

The long term struggles for self determination in Angola and social reconstruction are bound up with the short term tasks of finding an end to the war which now consumes the energies and lives of the peoples. The war continues to postpone the question of how to remove the legal and social barriers to women's equality and the participation of women in national policy making. This requirement of women in national policy making is a necessity to ensure that women's power in their communities can translate into real influence in order to end the pigeon holing of women's issues into specialist wings called women's arm.

The Traditions of Oppression and Resistance in Angola: Women in Angolan Society

The Angolan society in Africa has been the scene of the most intense oppression and resistance over five centuries. From the period of the arrival of the Portuguese in 1483, 'the history of the modern conquest of Angola is irrigated with the blood of its victims' (Sogge, 1992). All the scholars writing on Angolan society have pointed to the devastating effects of slavery in Angola and the long historical period of this slavery from the fifteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century. In the words of Walter Rodney, 'It was in Angola that the slave trade was conducted with the greatest violence' (Rodney, 1968a).

While scholars chronicled the war and raiding activities of the Portuguese traders, African women communicated to their children the history of the atrocities of the relationship between Portugal and Angola. Contrary to the Portuguese historical record where the victims of colonialism, slavery and pacification appear as silent victims the fact was that African women devised methods to inspire the young despite the ruptures and breakdown imposed by colonial rule. The telling of stories and the collective memories of the African community were carried from generation to generation

through the oral traditions of the society. The forms of African resistance and protest against Portuguese atrocities in Angola were armed violence, repeated on countless occasions, over a period of three hundred years. Throughout this period the women inspired the opposition to Portuguese rule.

It is out of the scope of this paper to detail the impact of settler colonialism and the contours of fascism in Portugal and its impact on Africa. It is important to italicize the fact that throughout the 19th and 20th century Portugal encouraged white settlers to carry out its 'civilizing mission' in Africa. The economic weakness of Portugal meant that while it was the nominal colonial power in Angola, the society was the field for multinational exploitation led by the British in the period of colonialism and the United States oil companies in the period after World War II. This multinational involvement in the economy partly accounts for the intense international interest in the elections and their aftermath in Angola. This international interest was manifest in the numerous election observers who participated in the elections.

The consequences of Portuguese colonial rule are still to be documented from the point of view of the African majority. The impact of slavery, forced labour and the military campaigns of subjugating African political entities have been the focus of some scholarly work (Duffy, 1962) but the repercussions of the colonial political economy on African women is still to be documented. Because most of the Portuguese who settled in Angola in the 19th century were criminals, they laid a tradition of disorder and corruption which still pervades the body politic of Angolan society. A great deal has been written about Angolan society from the point of view of settlers, ethnic and racial identities but not enough on the social structure as it relates to women.

Because the impact of colonial domination has been so obvious on African women, one of the starting points for drawing attention to the resistance has been to point to the centrality of African women in the resistance against Portuguese rule. The issue of the development of the state structures (kingdoms) in the Angolan territory prior to the invasion of Europeans has been the subject of those studies focussing on 'the African Response to early Portuguese activities in Angola' (Birmingham, 1972). Walter Rodney in his own work has not only drawn attention to the military resistance of Africans but to the fact that those who were fighting the Portuguese also sought unity beyond the pre-slavery kingdoms:

We need to give full credit to those individuals who rose above the ordinary; there were those Africans who recognized the full significance of the threat posed by the presence of the economically and technologically more advanced Europeans, and who realized that as an answer to this threat it was necessary to work for a greater unity among

the peoples of Angola... Those who noticed this trend at an earlier date than most of their fellows and those who sought the means of ensuring the welfare of the greatest number of Angolans are to be placed among the heroes of Angola and Africa (Rodney, 1968b).

The heroine who rose above the ordinary to give leadership to African resistance to Europeans was Queen Nzinga of Matamba. Nzinga was outstanding as a diplomat, military tactician, political leader and monarch.

Both within Angola and elsewhere throughout Africa there is a growing literature about Nzinga as well as a wealth of oral stories and myths. So powerful is her legend that a prehistoric imprint on a rock in the natural fortress of Pungu Andongo near the Cuanza river is known as Queen Nzinga's footprint, as if her very feet could mark solid stone (Sweetman, 1984: 39).

In Angola there are numerous women who were distinguished leaders and Dona Beatrice of the Kongo Kingdom (1682-1706) used religious appeals to mobilize her people to African consciousness. Queen Nzinga and Dona Beatrice are important in the present context of the ideological struggles in Angola not simply because of their individual leadership but because of the ideas which underscored their leadership. In the case of Beatrice it was the centrality of African consciousness which was her lasting contribution. In the case of Nzinga her most striking achievement was her creation of broad alliances which drew together, in a common cause, several of the peoples of Angola.

In 1635 she was at the head of an alliance involving the Mbundu and the Jagas of Ndongo and Matamba, Jagas of Dembos, Bangale of Kasanje, the peoples of Kissima and the Ovimbundo of the plateau region of the South. This impressive grouping was maintained for over twenty years. During this time, defeats were inflicted on the Portuguese, and they were forced to negotiate with Queen Nzinga. Her pride, courage and resourcefulness both in military matters and in negotiations impressed even the Portuguese...

However, no single individual can change the direction of history. Because of her great foresight, Queen Nzinga could point the way to the future unity when Angola would achieve unity in the face of the enemy, but the rate of change was determined by the impact of the European capitalist economy on the Angolan situation (Rodney, 1968a:57).

The history of Queen Nzinga (1581-1663) as an African woman who never surrendered has long been a source of inspiration to women throughout the continent of Africa and beyond.

A close analysis of the gender roles of military leaders in Angola also revealed the forms of kinship organization which existed in precolonial society. Throughout most of the territory of Angola the forms of kinship organization was based on matrimonial structures or inheritance through the female line. The crucial social unit in Angola up to the period of independence were the villages and groups based on common descent. Yet even though descent groups in Angola were matrimonial, that is all persons descended from a common female ancestor, through females, the structures of power and authority in class divided societies were vested in males. Property relations vested social and economic power in the males and this was most evident in the pastoral societies.

Because it was the deliberate policy of the colonial authorities to impose fragmentation and intergroup rivalry in the interest of divide-and-rule, ethnicity and ethnic consciousness became important components of the politics of Angola. During the period of colonial rule rural women embraced the positive aspects of ethnic consciousness as a way of preserving African languages and those traditions which incorporated the skills and knowledge from one generation to the next. This positive aspect of ethnic identities were exacerbated by the manipulations of the West who exploited the cleavages in order to find a political base for the cold war intervention in Angola through UNITA and Jonas Savimbi. The literature on Angola identified the liberation movements according to ethnic groups and not according to their political philosophies in calling for self determination (Marcum [1969] 1978).

The social conditions of African women in precolonial society were reinforced by the triple burden of racial, sexual and class oppression under colonialism. The extent of this oppression and the common forms of domination have been submerged under the weight of anthropological and historical analysis which focussed attention on the ethnic orientation of the Angolan peoples. Gender oppression was not specific to any one ethnic group and the conditions of forced labour, taxation and contract labour weighed heavily on women.

The principal tools of the labour process were rudimentary. Women sowed, weeded and harvested crops on land cleared by men. Women cared for domestic animals and collected fruits and other supplements necessary for the reconstitution of labour power.

Basil Davidson visited Angola in the fifties and at that time called the system of forced labour and contract labour a system of modern slavery. He noted how all sections of the colonial state apparatus, the administrators, the settlers, mining capital, the church and the coercive institutions (military, prison, chiefs, etc.), participated in the abuse of Africans in this coerced form of employment. Davidson wrote of the use of women on road projects:

In the first place, the Government makes universal use of forced labour for all its own needs, and above all for the maintenance or building of roads. Rural roads are invariably built and maintained by unpaid conscripted labour of the people of the area through which the road passes. These people have to furnish not only their labour but also their own food, and often enough their own tools. Since many men are absent on forced labour elsewhere, the local chief or headman in whose hands responsibility for the road is left will frequently call up women and quite small children. That is why one sees women with babies on their backs, and pregnant women, and quite small girls, scraping at roads with primitive hoes and carrying cupfuls of earth in little basket containers on their heads, while their headman or his 'responsible' sits nearby hugging his knees. Quite small boys are rarely seen, because they are contractible for labour outside their tribal area. These people who work on roads may be conscripted for a few weeks or for a few months at a time (Davidson, 1955: 203).

Davidson further pointed out the negative consequences of forced labour in a context where the state acted openly and deliberately as a recruiting agent on behalf of settlers:

In some ways the situation is worse than simple slavery. Under slavery, after all, the native is bought as an animal: his owner prefers him to remain as fit as a horse or an ox. Yet here the native is not bought - he is hired from the state, although he is called a free man. And his employer cares little if he sickens or dies, once he is working, because when he sickens or dies his employer will simply ask for another. High death rate among forced workers, have never debarred an employer from being supplied with more men.

The impact of the system of forced labour on women was tremendous. Not only did they themselves participate in the building of roads but the system of forced labour deeply affected the southern provinces of Angola.

Regional differentiation of the economy meant that there were significant differences between the African women around the cities where colonial economic activities were more intense, and between the women of the settler zones of the coffee producing areas as opposed to the women of the South whose communities were negatively affected by the system of contract labour. One effect of the stress on ethnic identification in Angola has been to minimize this aspect on Angolan history in the recent wars of national liberation and destabilization. It was a tragedy that the regions with the most intense exploitation were the same regions where there was the attempt to reinforce the conservative forms of organizing women. Regional differentiation and the neglect of the government provided a fertile base for the armed

opposition which became integrated into the cold war politics of the region in the eighties.

Social Structure and the Angolan Women

White Women

Numerous writers including Frantz Fanon and Walter Rodney have pointed to the racial hierarchy of colonialism and the relationship between race and power in settler occupied territory. As a settler territory Angola was no different except in the sense that intensive settlement was a post World War II phenomenon.

For European women the gender inequalities of colonial society were mitigated by their ability to buy substitutes for their own unpaid work - employing cleaners, maids, nannies and cooks. Domestic slavery and the exploitation of African women in the homes of European women was significant for, as in other colonial societies, there were European women who thought that it was below their status to even wean their children. Prior to the period of the massive influx of settler in the twentieth century the sexual exploitation of slave women was a central aspect of European domination and the evidence of this can be seen by the large strata of mesticos in Angola.

Prior to 1940 the number of whites in Angola numbered a mere 44,000 and most were military men, administrators, petty traders or struggling settlers. The number of women in this count was not given but the low number of immigrants had reflected the failure of the fascist state to establish a sizeable European population in Angola. White immigration increased considerably after World War II so that by 1973 the number of whites in Angola had risen by seven fold from 44,083 in 1940, 78,826 in 1950, 172,529 in 1960, 290,000 in 1970 and 335,000 in 1973. Most of the Europeans who lived in Angola resided in the urban areas and the class distinctions between the commercial, agricultural/settler elements and the poor whites (*pequenos brancos*) were sharp. There were many poor whites who settled in the musseques and sought unskilled work as taxi drivers, waiters, bartenders and other jobs where they competed with Africans.

Racial differences reinforces class differences in the society and European women were at the forefront of reinforcing consciousness of skin color. The Portuguese who held jobs of lower social status often felt it all the more necessary to claim social superiority over Africans. Books on white women in colonial Angola made them out to be energetic heroines of the settler society engendering social solidarity among the oppressors (Dias, 1948). The majority of whites, regardless of class background, opposed self determination for Africans.

Except for a few Portuguese men and women who were members of the Communist Party in Lisbon, the majority of these *colonatas* became more

conservative as Africans moved towards independence in the rest of Africa. By 1990 there were only 80,000 Europeans in Angola working to support the basic links between foreign oil companies, transnational capital and Angolan labour.

Mestico Women

The sexual oppression meted out by European males and the gender inequalities in the society created a distinct strata of Euro/Africans called *Mestico*. According to Portuguese law a Mestico was an individual of mixed white and African ancestry, but according to the deformities of racial identification there were several varieties of *mestico*, depending on the nature and the degree of the mixture.³ The gradations increased the insecurity and disorientation among *mestico* men and women.

In 1960 this strata represented approximately 1% of the total population but they had more access to education than African men or women and at this time the *mesticos* were also called *assimilado*. The *mesticos* internalized the racial distinctions and by the end of the eighties, with the flight of whites, accounted for about 2% of the population. The position of the *mesticos* continue to be a major political issue in Angolan politics and was one of the issues of the election campaign. One *mestico* woman, Analia de Victoria formed her own political party to represent the *mesticos* and ran as a Presidential candidate in the 1992 elections.

Up to the present there has not been enough research on the specific conditions under which African women entered into sexual relations with European males. Forced sexual relations were common during the period of colonial pacification and the cases of European men marrying African women were few. Right up to the period of the national liberation war of 1961 African women had little legal protection against sexual violence. *Mestico* women were exposed to the same violence meted out against African Women and they sought to escape the drudgery of household production by taking advantage of the access to education offered after the 60s. With few exceptions the *mestico* men and women identified with European culture and accepted the system relating to the superiority of the European and the inferiority of the Africans.

The fact that they had some education allowed the *mestico* women to rise in the ranks of the bureaucracy after the exodus of the Portuguese so that in the present period *mestico* women dominate the lower ranks of the civil service. The *mesticos* continue to dominate the bureaucracy and the ad-

3 A *mestico* may be applied to the child of a European and a mulatto, the term *mestico cabrio* referring to the union between two *mesticos* and the term *mestico cafuso* to refer to the child of a union between a *mestico* and an African.

ministrative apparatus of the Angolan state and to guard the position that they held in the national liberation movement. It is this stratum which holds on to the myth of multi-racialism in Angola.

African Women

The African society did not remain homogeneous in the period of colonialism. There were social differences between the children of chiefs, those associated with the missionaries and those who were able to distinguish themselves as traders and farmers appropriating surplus from other Africans. The colonial policy of assimilation led to the creation of a small stratum of Africans who were supposed to be civilized. These Africans became civilized if they could read and write and speak Portuguese, in short successfully absorb Portuguese language and culture. These Africans were called *Assimilados*, a legal status which in principle gave them the rights of Portuguese citizenship so that they could escape the burdens of forced labour. The status of *assimilado* and the legal implications were only abolished after the launching of the armed struggle for national liberation in 1961. *Assimilado* women were in a precarious social situation since the hierarchy of race meant that many *assimilado* men sought to move up the social ladder by marrying *Mestico* or Portuguese women.

The social status of African women has been clouded by the emphasis on ethnicity and ethnic consciousness by anthropologists and historians. Portuguese colonial authorities had understood this aspect of divide-and-rule so that their policies tended to stress ethnic identity. This stress was reinforced by the activities of the religious institutions of Europe in the village community. Both the church and the colonial administration were concerned with the deep resistance by certain ethnic groups. This was the case with the Chokwe. It was for this reason that one of the few works on Angolan women during the period of colonialism looked at women in an ethnic context.

Because the Chokwe's resistance to colonial domination was so deep and because the colonial authorities considered these people backward (if not exotic) there was a lot of study by the Portuguese of how to break down the cultural resistance among women. The book on African women *Sobre a Mulher Lunda-Ouioca* (Angola) written in 1971 obscured the real exploitation of African women (De Sousa, 1971). This kind of study placed great emphasis on the family, polygamy, sexual organs, traditional customs and those areas of spiritual reflection which formed the cosmic orientation of the village. The ethnic origins of women is important but to place importance of ethnicity over class would be a grave error. Unfortunately this emphasis on ethnic ties continues to dominate the understanding of Angolan society.

At the bottom of the social ladder forming the overwhelming majority of the population were the African toilers who were exploited and who resisted external domination by any means necessary. Regional differentiation and

social stratification after independence meant that different sections of the Angolan population were unevenly integrated into the economy. The urban population were unevenly integrated into the economy. The urban elements around Luanda, Lobito, Benguela and Huambo, along with the Africans from the major coffee cultivation areas, had more access to housing, health care and the limited education offered by the colonial authorities. The expenditure of the Portuguese on war meant that there was very little invested in social expenditures so that by the time of independence over 85% of the Angolan population were illiterate.

African women could be viewed as three distinct groups: workers, peasants and traders. Women workers are found in the factories, in the fishing industry, in the homes of petty bureaucrats as domestic servants. Throughout the period of the war women who were employed in the state sector saw their incomes dwindle under the weight of inflation, shortages of consumer goods and the embrace of the government for the packages of the IMF which increased food prices. Stifled by government-controlled trade unions African men and women resorted to the strike as a weapon to demand better living conditions.

African Women and the War

Angolan peasant women up to the period of independence formed the overwhelming majority of the population. They had been the bearers of the ideas of resistance to European cultural and political domination. Through songs, dance, music and the retention of African spiritual values they maintained the spirit of independence under Portuguese colonial rule. They bore the brunt of the disruption and dislocation created by the war of national liberation and the period of destabilization.

During the period of national liberation the political situation was much more straightforward since African women were uncompromising in their opposition to Portuguese colonialism. During the war of national liberation the role of women was diverse with many serving as armed combatants. In the words of the official history of Fapla,

From the legendary Queen Nzinga who bravely resisted colonial penetration in Angola to Deolinda Rodriguez and her companions Irene, Teresa, Lucrecia, Engracia - all heroines who fell during the 1st war of national liberation - Angolan women have always been exemplary mothers, companions under all circumstances and intrepid fighters who have helped to hoist the torch of victory even higher (Government of Angola 1989:222-223).

Angolan women participated in the military structures of Fapla as radiotelegraphists, teletypists, telephone operators, stenographers, nurses, doctors, secretaries, and on the frontline in Aviation, Anti Aerial defence, transport and repairs. The high point of women in the war was the participa-

tion of Cuban and Angolan women working the anti aircraft batteries which broke the South African control of the air space during the siege of Cuito Cuanavale.

In reality, however, the numbers of women fighting in the national liberation movements were few but were highlighted and the liberation movements in Angola and Mozambique quoted the often repeated statement of Samora Machel that: 'the liberation of women is a basic requirement for the revolution, the guarantee of its continuity and a precondition of its victory' (CFIMAG, 1973).

In Angola the formation of the Organization of Angolan Women in 1962 formally recognized the centrality of women in the struggle but the politics of liberation at that time did not involve a transformation of gender relations. In theory, however, the concept of equality between the sexes was adopted.

The reality was that the verbal and legal initiatives with respect to equality did not carry fundamental changes in the relations between white women, *mestizo* women and the large majority of African women. In many cases the urban educated cadre of the political movement had more in common with intellectuals from the international progressive movement than with the mass of peasant women toiling under the weight of war and destabilization. This meant that the use of Portuguese and European languages in discussions about abortion, inheritance, and what a 'socialist family code should embody' excludes a large section of the African population.

The regression in the rural political economy in the period after the independence and war can be measured today by the amount of food imported into Angola. In the villages the peasantry suffered regardless of whether they supported the government or the armed opposition. One important study of the peasantry by W G. Clarence-Smith squarely blamed the crisis in the countryside on the Leninist approaches of the MPLA and its simplistic definition of the peasantry (Clarence-Smith, 1983, 1979).

While the work of Clarence Smith downplayed the impact of South African destabilization in the eighties and one may agree or disagree with the critique of the Leninist position of the peasantry, the important point made was that the MPLA ignored the developing class formation in the countryside. He argued that there were changes in the property relations in the coffee zones of the north and in those areas where privatization of communal lands had reached an advanced stage. The important point was that this class differentiation created a social base for the opposition to the collectivization policies of the MPLA. The proletarianization of women and children in this context was a noted feature of the social relations in the villages.

One important point in relation to the conditions of rural men and women was the extent to which the hardships provided a recruiting ground

for the armed opposition, UNITA. Gervase Clarence-Smith had observed that: 'Impoverishment of the peasantry has led to at least apathy and at worst overt hostility to the government in Luanda'.

The Maoist strategy of UNITA to control the countryside and hold the towns hostage meant that the spread of UNITA's war depended on the villages and the support of the peasantry meant that peasant women in Angola felt the full force of the war from both sides. Where the government officially gestured towards a family code and equality for women in those areas controlled by UNITA, women had very few rights. More significantly in seeking support from the peasantry the MPLA sought to offer stipends to the traditional elders (*sobas*), usually men, while ignoring the supply of hoes and water. During the election campaign in more than one case, peasant women called on the government to bring plows and other tools instead of alcoholic beverages.

The widespread disruption of rural life meant that women were participating in all aspects of the war both in terms of physical fighting and trying to fend for their communities while under constant distress. The breakdown of the peasant sector created food shortages, dumped millions in the poor *musseques* and as refugees in neighbouring countries. This affected all spheres of social reproduction. Women had no immunity to violence, whether social or domestic and were called upon by different parties to support their version of the political divide.

The unevenness of the economy and the facts of regional differentiation meant that different sections of the population had differing impact. This became apparent in the elections when there were two parties representing emerging class forces in the North which came out and supported Savimbi in the election campaign. The parties of CNDA and PNDA represented elements which had remained within the ranks of the one party system but sought new ground rules for accumulation.

It was clear, however, that in the rural areas and in the overcrowded shanties women did everything that they did before, with added tasks as a result of the military clashes. War and destabilization meant that women's work became more hazardous, more exhausting, more frightening and more stressful. The proletarianized women had to take on extension of the role of keeping body and soul together with the breakdown of the health and sanitation infrastructure. Numerous commentaries spoke of the number of amputees in Angola but few spoke of the fact that care of the sick and wounded of war fell to Angolan women.

African women had to stretch their activities beyond providing food and care to include the search for missing relatives, preparing for frequent funerals, protecting children from conscription, protecting possessions while trying to cope with the lack of schooling and child care. The conditions of the women in the areas attacked by the South Africans were even more

precarious. On top of this insecurity, armed violence and robbery became a feature of urban life.

The women in the areas controlled by UNITA were especially exploited since the ideas of military communism of UNITA precluded any form of independent thinking by women. In late 1987, women soldiers were integrated into the official fighting force of UNITA's army and there were seven who were even commissioned as officers. The organizational arm of UNITA which represented women was a vehicle to sing praises to the supreme leader of the organization and women had no control over their lives.

Sexual abuse and violence was the norm in the military camps of UNITA where women, especially the younger ones, had to be made available to the commanders. The leader of UNITA established a tradition where as the maximum leader it was possible for the political leadership to arrange marriages. The traditional reproductive roles of women in these areas are seen as an extension of the war effort since women produce the human labour necessary for UNITA to continue fighting. Their roles as mothers are seen as essential in providing the new generation of fighters. UNITA recruits youths from their early childhood for military training. Women also act as porters carrying weapons for the South African supported forces of UNITA.

The chronicling of the impact of the war in the areas under military occupation by UNITA has not yet been done in any systematic manner. However, the effects of the war on women and children has been so devastating that agencies of the United Nations such as UNICEF have attempted to provide some elementary basis for understanding the impact of the war. According to UNICEF the war affected women in obvious ways:

as widows of the carnage, left to look after the physically handicapped as a result of the war, looking after amputees, feeling the brunt of the shortages and hardships imposed by war, water shortages, chronic electricity shortages in the urban areas, shortages of food, shortages of drugs and the breakdown of the health facilities, and the sexual oppression and manipulation by the political parties.

One of the international NGOs source in highlighting the impact of the war remarked:

On battlefields and rural roads, in farmers' huts and children's wards, war brought death to hundreds of thousands of Angolans. It left countless others physically and psychologically crippled. It spared no age, no ethnic group nor region. Nor did it leave social institutions and national culture untouched. Parts of Angolas rich environment were badly degraded. Altogether, the war seriously compromised the future of the country. In total, about 900,000 Angolans died (Wolfers, Bergerol, 1983: 23).

One of the by-products of the dispersal of rural women in the face of the war was the fact that many of these women become itinerant traders in the so called informal sector. By entering the *Candonga* (the parallel market) urban women are treated as social agents in their own right lessen their dependence on the government and on males. These women have shown remarkable resilience and survival skills in the face of war, violence and extreme disruptions of the economy. While there are many NGOs who romanticize this informal sector, one Angolan scholar has observed that the parallelisation of the economy of Angola is not new - after slavery was abolished, a parallel slave trade was conducted.

The current informal sector is very important in Angola, since 78% of the goods and services are conducted in this sector and 35% of the active labour force participate in it. Women are prominent in these distribution systems and control nearly 80%. Resources generated from this activity are managed by women and their role is complimentary to men who work in the official sectors (CODESRIA, 1991).

The relation between women, the *candonga* and the government is complex. Because the government and official authorities play a major role in perpetuating social, economic and ideological processes that subordinate women, African women are always seeking avenues of self expression and independence. Despite the progressive family code enacted in 1990 the government upholds Western patriarchal family forms in which women do not have access to the same resources as men. Women are treated as dependents of men in legal and administrative terms so that even when they are able to establish their autonomy through participation in the market the established structures of banking and import export do not support the commercial initiatives of African women.

One could see in the elections that these urban women were active in the whole process for they saw the necessity to move to a new economic stage where women would have more control over their own resources. All the parties spoke of liberalization but the market forces rhetoric of the politicians did not include the activities of the women who were active in the real market. The discussion of structural adjustment was hardly understood since on the one hand men and women wanted the government to relax control over trade while on the other they did not want the increase of food prices which came with the abolition of price controls and the removal of subsidies. The more educated understood that privatization would not empower African working people but bring back the former Portuguese traders. Anxiety among women traders in the period of the cease fire stemmed from the following:

- a) changes in family as a result of the economic and political situation and the war. For example many of the men and women who live together are not officially married.
- b) while women may make as much as three times as much money as men and basically support their husbands, bank accounts are in the name of men. Hence, for these women privatization would mean that men will have access to resources they did not have before (CODESRIA, 1991:5).

The changing demographic condition in Angola is one of the clear by-products of the war. The urban population grew from 10.3% in 1960 to 33.8% in 1988. By 1992 it was estimated that over 60% of the population were living in towns and cities. The internal displacement has affected the ability of the government to provide basic services so that the shifts in the population reinforce the processes of underdevelopment and impoverishment. Forced migration to the urban areas compound the crisis of agricultural production by forcing the state to import more food.

A survey of nineteen neighbourhood in Luanda by a food studies group found that 35% of the population could be defined as poor by absolute standards. The survey found that all the households classified as poor were without the nutritional requirements or caloric intake needed to remain healthy and energetic. 95% of those who were classified in this group were unable to meet their basic food intake needs. This study on the Luanda Household Budget and Nutrition Survey found that all the indices of poverty had negative effects on women.

Among the findings of this survey was the fact that poor women spend a substantial amount of time just getting water, firewood and moving to and fro in search of food.

Not only does the time available for work or other activities get usurped by the lack of transport, electricity, and running water, but the burden is placed heavily on women... General health conditions in Luanda are strikingly poor across income groups. Malnutrition perpetuates the inability to fight illness. Public health facilities are in short supply and riddled with long lines keeping their use down, Prices at private facilities limit access to the very well off.

Children have been the hardest hit by these conditions. The Angolan mortality figures show that 30% of children die before the age of five. Diseases that could be prevented through immunization are rampant. The fortnightly rate of illness in children under is 50% and 45% of these children have stunted growth (UNICEF and OXFORD, 1992, 1991).

The conclusion of these consultants were that the rebuilding of the internal infrastructure after the war would be the only way to begin to overcome the levels of poverty and insecurity as it affected women and children. And

yet despite the overwhelming evidence of the absolute poverty of women and children, these same consultants recommended the introduction of 'free market reforms' as the basis for the 'stabilization' of the Angolan economy. In the short run the implementation of the Program of Action by the Angolan government has served to increase unemployment, cut food subsidies and has devalued the return for labour.

The current focus of the humanitarian agencies in Angola and the rest of Africa is to present the problems of the poverty of women and children outside of the context of the forms of exploitation of labour power which exists in Africa. Poverty and maternal mortality rates are by-products of the same process, that of the lack of integration between production and consumption. Angola is a rich society with petroleum and minerals. The people of Angola wanted to be able to move to a stage where the natural resources would be used for economic reconstruction and not simply to purchase weapons for more destruction. In this sense the elections of 1992 were seen as a first step in the process recovering peace.

Angolan Women and the Peace Process

During the period of one party rule in Angola the self expression of African women was channelled at the official level through the mass organ called the OMA. As the intensity of the war increased in the period after 1989 there was the effort to develop autonomous organizations such as civic associations and neighbourhood groups. The effect of the war was to break down the kinship ties of the village since the urban *musseques* did not provide the conditions for the kind of kinship ties which existed. This was at the time when institutions of community solidarity was most needed.

Angolan women demonstrated in every way their support for new forms of political arbitration in the society after the signing of the peace accords in 1991. Numerous non governmental groups organized projects specifically aimed at African women and the research work on Women in Angola emerged from one such undertaking.

At the official level of the international thrust for peace, the participation of women in the peace process was symbolized by the fact that the special representative of the United Nations Secretary General for Angola was a British woman named Margaret Anstee. It was her responsibility to carry forward the mandate of the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM II) with respect to the peace accords. These included the cease fire, confinement of troops to assembly areas, demobilization and formation of a new army and the collection and disposal of weapons.

It was also the responsibility of the United Nations to monitor and verify the neutrality of the police, to observe and verify the electoral process, in-

cluding registration and the political campaign, and to monitor the elections of September 29 and 30th, 1992 (Friedman et al).⁴

In the specific case of the Angolan elections, apart from the symbolism of a woman as the peace maker there was no content to the UNAVEM mission. After the elections when there was a renewal of fighting the failure of the United Nations was simultaneously the failure of the special Representative of the Secretary General. The leadership of Margaret Anstee in carrying out the mandate of the Security Council demonstrated more confidence in the President of the USA than in Angolan men and women. She requested assistance from the USA and spent more effort soliciting the assistance of the US Government than seeking the cooperation of Angolan men and women to ensure the success of the peace effort. UNAVEM activities and public statements of this official reflected the fact that the United Nations was not completely sure of its mission in a context where the United States, dominant force in the United Nations, was publicly committed to one of the opposition parties and had not recognized the Angolan government. In fact there were assertions during the election campaign that the United Nations was partial in favour of UNITA (Dos Santos, 1992). This accusation was repeated at the non-aligned meeting in Indonesia in early September, where the Foreign Minister of Angola accused the Secretary General and the United Nations of not being impartial in the electoral process.

The monitoring system for the peace accords was comprised of soldiers from the Joint Political-Military Commission. This was a commission of primarily military men who had a history of solving political questions by violence. There were no Angolan women in this main monitoring body, nor on the Joint Verification and Monitoring Commission (GMVF) which was responsible for the implementation and functioning of the mechanisms instituted to verify and exercise control over the cease fire. Even though both the armies of the MPLA and UNITA claimed to have women in their ranks there were no women supervising the cease fire, nor ensuring the effective observance of the cease fire.⁵

The fundamental principles for the establishment of peace in Angola were hammered out in a situation where the United States wanted to present the accord as a victory over the forces of communism and Cuban intervention in Africa. For this reason the majority of Angolans who were not organized in either UNITA or the MPLA were not consulted. The cease fire

4 Ms Margaret Anstee as the special representative demonstrated that the conception of liberal feminists of equality with men will remain limited if women simply occupy positions of men to do the same jobs of men.

5 For the full text of the cease-fire agreement and the various protocol see *Peace accords for Angola*, official translation of the State Department of the USA, Washington, May 1991.

agreement recognized the government of the MPLA, established a timetable for the demobilization of troops, the formation of multi-party democracy and the registration of voters and the holding of elections. Though Angolan women were not consulted nor were represented in the OCPM they used whatever medium to express their support for peace.

Registration

From the period of the registration the figures showed that women represent 52% of the population. The registration period undertaken from 16 June to 10 August brought women in contact with the state for the first time in many years. The elections were greeted with enthusiasm. This was the first time in the history of the society that Angolans were being allowed to exercise the franchise. The fact that women were able to make independent choices by secret ballot was also an added incentive. With the high level of illiteracy and the large number of candidates however, more than 15% of the ballot were spoilt.

There were over 4,8 million Angolans who were registered in this exercise, a major logistical achievement considering the fact that there were hardly any roads in many parts of the country and the existence of land mines made movements precarious. Women walked for miles to the registration centers to be given the plastic picture with their registration number. The enthusiasm of women for the election could be seen in this initial period even before the official start of the political campaign which lasted from 28 August to 28 September.

Women comprised the majority of the population and were visible at all levels of the political campaign, but were less visible at the level of the leadership of the main political parties. Of the thirteen candidates competing for the Presidency, only one was a woman. This candidate, Analia de Victoria Pereira, was the explicit representative of the *mesticos* despite the fact that in interviews the militants of this party claimed that they were representing the youths and women of Angola. The basic position of this party was a pledge to build a democratic Angola.

Which can only be reached by assuring to all citizens equal opportunities for education and culture... We want to contribute to building a more just society, where people could be treated equally, without discrimination and privileges. In order to achieve this goal we want to fight for the social valuation of the family, as the basic element of the collective structure; for women's rights to communitarian life. We will defend the interest of labourers through the establishment of a strong trade union.

This party like all parties claimed to be fighting for democracy and claimed that the social base of the party was students, workers and women. The reality however was that the party drew its members from four main urban

areas, Luanda, Benguela, Malanje and Kwanza South. Founded in Portugal in 1983 as the Liberal Democratic party of Angola the party had changed its name for the elections to the Liberal Democratic Party (PLD). The registration in Portugal and the location of the party headquarters in a compound of expatriate workers said more about this party than its actual program.

This party was able to get 2.39% of the votes for the legislative elections and received three seats in parliament after the election results were announced on October 17, 1992. As a Presidential candidate Ms. Pereira received 11,475 votes, equivalent to 0.29% of votes. There were no indications that African women voted for this candidate.

The symbolism of the leadership of women in the UN system and at the helm of one of the main political parties reflected the fact that there was more tokenism than content to the political expression of women in the election campaign. The issues of peace, adequate provision of water, health care, child care, education, housing, and employment required a political platform beyond the embrace of structural adjustment and free market economic policies. All parties in the elections campaigned on a platform of liberalization and privatization of the economy. The only variation was one of the small parties of the left which wanted free market but not 'savage capitalism'.

The coalition of Angolan Democrats, a coalition emerging from a front for Angolan Civic Association, campaigned against militarism and took a leading role in campaigning on issues of health care with a particular appeal to women. The party claimed that voting for UNITA or the MPLA was voting for cholera or malaria which was certain death. One of the more organized of the small parties, the Democratic Party of Angola (PDA) also had a women's arm called the Union of Democratic Women of Angola (UDEMA). This party, led by a prominent African jurist spoke on the issues of health care, education, housing and of the disabled in a clear attempt to get the votes of women.

Despite the appeals by the small parties they did not have the resources to compete with the two main parties which were signatories to the Bicesse Accords. MPLA as the party of the government used the resources of the government while the armed opposition of UNITA had resources from external sources such as (non lethal financial support from the US Congress) to finance the campaign. Women were active in the ranks of both parties. In some neighbourhoods those involved in the marketing and distribution of goods enthusiastically participated in the marketing of the more than one hundred brands of imported beer which became available during the campaign. The distribution of the paraphernalia of the campaign (t-shirt, headbands, plastic bags and other imported knick knacks) elicited a positive response from all sections of the population.

Women in the MPLA and UNITA

The MPLA had been proud of its record and legislation with respect to the equality of women in the society. As one of the mass organs during the period of the single party, the MPLA, the organization of Angolan women had been established in 1962 to mobilize support for the national liberation struggles. All the written accounts of the war of national liberation pointed to the active participation of women in opposing colonial rule.

By the time of the peace accords the question of the position of the MPLA required more clarity than the declaration with respect to the emancipation of women. The destabilization and war had a disproportionate effect on women and solutions were needed to address the myriad of problems. This need was greatest in the regions of South African activity where UNITA had attempted to mobilize on the basis of race and ethnic consciousness.

Even in the midst of war the ranks of the OMA grew from over 400,000 during the period of independence to over 1,3 million members in 1987. During the sixties and seventies the OMA established literacy programs and worked to expand educational opportunities for women. In 1983 the OMA had announced that 297,604 women had learned to read through their literacy program, including 108,479 housewives, 105,873 workers and 8,644 members of Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola (FAPLA) (OAW, 1984: 31). The government had passed legislation against gender discrimination in employment and in working conditions and the OMA had taken high profile statements on women and national reconstruction. The organizational framework of the OMA was at the level of the government, i.e. from the top down. The Secretary General of the OMA was Ruth Neto, sister of the late President Neto. She had been elected secretary General at the first congress in 1983 and reelected at the second congress in March, 1988. The OMA also took an active role in the Pan African Women's Organization (PAWO) which had its headquarters in Luanda.

The MPLA then entered the campaign with its credentials as a party which had found jobs for women in the teaching profession and in the health services. The President of the MPLA campaigned on the theme of a 'certain future'. This theme resonated with Angolans who, in the final weeks of the campaign, enthusiastically supported the MPLA in the hope that the party would be able to consolidate the fragile peace.

Of all the parties' manifestos, that of the MPLA was one of the few with a clear statement on the conditions of women. The election manifesto promised to 'integrate women in the process of development as a factor of progress. To facilitate the formation of professional organizations to increase equal opportunities for women'.

The election manifesto also appealed to women on the basis of the fact that the MPLA would improve conditions in housing, education and culture.

The campaign of the MPLA was also assisted by the campaign style of Jonas Savimbi who had taken a belligerent attitude during the campaign, threatening various groups. It became clear in the campaign, especially to the urban poor, that UNITA had not been able to make the transition from a guerilla organization to a political party.

Jose Eduardo Dos Santos campaigned alongside his wife to communicate the image of stability and peace. The message of the campaign was that the election was a 'family reunion' and that:

the reunification of the MPLA family is aimed at the adoption of the party to the new condition of political struggle in the system of multiparty democracy, where tolerance and the spirit of internal unity must be the driving force of the party that is willing to defend the construction of a free and democratic society for all Angolans.

The MPLA family are all of us, militants and ex militants; MPLA supporters and friends, youth and elders, men and women, citizens from the countryside and cities, from Cabinda to Cunene, always waited and fought for this hour of peace freedom and democracy, and who are ready to strengthen our unity for the fulfillment of our dream.

The campaigning of the wife of the Presidential candidate of the MPLA was a clear case of the first lady syndrome. She was portrayed effectively on television visiting day care centers and other projects of the government. As an assimilated woman, this leader could not communicate in the language of the large majority of the peasantry, but the rallies of the President and his wife attracted hundreds of thousands throughout the country. Even the MPLA was taken back by the outpouring of support in areas where there was supposed to be solid support for the opposition parties. The MPLA did not have a clear program for the rural women.

The contradictions of this first lady syndrome and the retreat of the MPLA from its socialist declaration was clear in the embrace of the IMF, the World Bank and the obscene attempts to out lobby UNITA in Washington, but became clearest in the context of the visit of the Pope to Angola prior to the start of the election campaign. The President of this secular Republic had his young child publicly baptized by the Pontiff. This act seemed to be the mending of fences between the ruling party and the church but in the campaign there was no mention whether the MPLA would retreat on the question of the right of women to abortion in order to gain more support from the Catholic church.

UNITA and Women

UNITA was the party with the most visible claim of the support of the most oppressed of the society - African women. In its propaganda UNITA blasted the MPLA as a party of whites and *mesticos* and made a deliberate appeal

on the basis of African consciousness and the philosophy of Negritude (James Martin III, 1992: 132). The party claimed that it was based on the model of African socialism formulated by Leopold Senghor. Under the slogan 'we are Angolans first and Angolan always', UNITA proclaimed that one of the untapped riches of the country was its culture. 'There is no technological and economic progress of national undertaking that can succeed without respecting the feelings and customs of the people'.⁶ This was an explicit attack on the multiracialism of the MPLA and the fact that most of the leaders of the MPLA were *assimilado*. 'The UNITA leader speaks many national languages and dialects and he knows deeply the soul of his people'.

The social base of UNITA was clearly the Angolan peasantry. Appeals of the leadership over the radio were explicitly aimed at this section of the population. The campaign strategy of UNITA suggested that the whole period of South African involvement was simply the recourse to external support to fight the MPLA, the communist party supported by the Cubans. It was obvious that this line was not accepted because UNITA was overwhelmingly rejected in both Namibe and Cunene, two provinces which were occupied by the South African defence forces until they were defeated at Cuito Cuanavala in Cuando Cubango region. The reality however was that the poor peasant women of Angola had suffered from the war and the invasions of South Africa.

Quando Cubango was the area of the most extreme domination of Angolan women and the area of complete control by UNITA. Except for the provincial capital of Menongue and Cuito Cuanavale, UNITA's military and administrative control over this region of 250,000 persons was total. This was one region where the only nominal government control over the administration appeared during the registration period. The major problem for UNITA was that the constituencies in the area under their control was small. For example while in the whole of Cuando Cubango the number of registered voters were over 100,000 in one constituency in Luanda the number of voters were 160,000. It was because UNITA controlled underpopulated areas such as Cuando Cubango that it exaggerated the strength of its political support.

Because of the war some communities and villages dating from the period of Portuguese administration were no longer inhabited or had been replaced by new locations which did not appear on available maps. For example, the commune of Nancova was by the time of the elections infested with mines and the people resided in nearby Kito. Jamba is not on the map

6 The reference to Socialism and Senghor can be found in *Terra Angolano* of September 23, 1992. The appeal for Angolans to vote on the basis of culture and tradition was made in the same paper on August 22, 1992.

of Angola as a commune or municipality but was the seat of UNITA's government. Transportation in this region was either impossible because of mines or impractical because of the distance between locations. In this region the only vehicles to be seen are the military vehicles of UNITA or the road trucks of the World Food Programme delivering food to the assembly points of the troops of UNITA.

This region was politically important for women in the sense that it was totally UNITA controlled and the government only maintained a symbolic presence. This meant that Angola laws relating to equality between the sexes did not apply in this region. There was no election campaign in this region. The idea of military communism and the forms of forced labour in the UNITA camps in the South ensured that there was no room for complaints with respect to the equality of the sexes.

UNITA had two political appeals. One appeal was directed to the urban African youth who were excluded from the MPLA circuit and to the devastated region of Uige. The other appeal was to the so called UNITA heartland on the basis of ethnic consciousness. UNITA blamed shortages on government corruption and incompetence of the government and campaigned on the slogan 'a better future'. There was no explicit appeal to women in the election manifesto of UNITA. The explicit sexist tone of the campaign was set very early by the leading slogan of UNITA that it was 'time for new trousers'. The symbol of UNITA - the rooster - was also designed to awaken traditional images of male domination. In the village there could only be one dominant (jogoo) rooster among the hens.

The tradition of the political party having a women's wing was also carried forward by UNITA. The independent League of Angolan Women (LIMA), the women's wing of UNITA, sought to give legitimacy to the claim that UNITA was working for the equality of women. Savimbi also sought to exploit the ideology of the peasantry by having some UNITA leaders claim that Savimbi had supernatural powers and that UNITA understood African traditions more than any other party. While the camps of UNITA seemed calm compared to the destruction of urban areas, more than one aid worker in the UNITA camps spoke of the psychological violence against women.⁷

The cult of the personality and leaderism dominated this party and there was no room for democratic discussion. LIMA's public profile was to provide dancers to welcome foreign visitors to Jamba and to reinforce the subservient role of women. Even though UNITA was supposed to be the champion of African values and culture, UNITA discouraged traditional religions

7 The information on the intensity of the coercion of men and women in UNITA camps was obtained in an interview in one of the assembly areas in Mavinga by this writer, October 5, 1992.

and medicinal practices by women. The military discipline of the guerilla camp was the form of organization in UNITA's political campaign and this discipline meant that women had to submit to the commands of men, even when these commands involved sexual coercion.

LIMA also reinforced the conservative philosophies by promoting the idea that the women were child bearers and the women in UNITA are encouraged to bring up children according to traditions. In short, women were to be sexual objects and mothers. After the age of six these children are available to the party for training and indoctrination. The reinforcement of the conservative definition of women within the ranks of UNITA was known throughout the country. Women inside and outside UNITA were open to sexual violence but the fact that this was tolerated in the armed camps and assembly areas of UNITA was known beyond the confines of these camps.

There was a marked difference between the image given to aid workers in the urban areas and the reality of the harsh discipline and sexual violence in the assembly points. Some indication of this violence had come to light in the context of the murder of Tito Chingunji and the defections of Nzau Puna and Tony Fernandes from UNITA. Two years earlier one of the former supporters of UNITA had pierced the public relations armor of UNITA and observed that:

there was a great deal of difference between UNITA's claim of high ideals, openness and efficiency and the reality of deceit, manipulation and sloth, whether concerning the pettiest of details or the heaviest of policy matters (Sikorski, 1989: 34-37).⁸

Despite their claim to represent African consciousness and African traditions, from a very early period UNITA aligned itself with the remnants of the Portuguese community inside Angola, in South Africa and in Portugal itself. As early as 1975 Jonas Savimbi had come to an understanding with the white settler party, the *Frente de Unidade Angolana* (FUA) (James Martin III, 1989: 104). UNITA and Savimbi had also been seen as a savior to the 'pequenos brancos' or poor whites who had been 'traumatized by the unexpected downfall of the metropolitan government, and fiercely opposed the Marxist policies of the MPLA' (Braganca (de), 1981: 90). Poor whites who had emigrated to South Africa formed a solid rock of support for UNITA. Hence the military support of the South Africans for the victory of UNITA also had a political base.

⁸ This analysis is important for it represented a parting of ways between the elements of this magazine and some sections of UNITA. Despite the claims of Sikorski the right in the USA still supported Savimbi.

The most public representative of women in UNITA was a Portuguese economist, Fatima Roque. She had written two books on Angola basically recycling the statistics of the World Bank (Roque et al, 1991). Her family was associated with an offshore banking concern in Madeira. As a woman and as a white this economist served one of the more important constituencies of UNITA, the conservative forces in the USA, Portugal and South Africa. While UNITA took leaders with a line on black consciousness to meetings in the USA of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Fatima Roque was taken to the meetings of bankers and financiers in the USA and to potential investors in Angola.

After the elections and the failed uprising of UNITA in October, 1992 Fatima Roque was arrested. She then claimed immunity from arrest because she was a Portuguese citizen. This was despite her public profile, featured every week up to October in the paper *Terra Angolano* as the economic expert who had the short term, medium term and long term plan for the economic recovery of Angola. In an interview prior to the elections Savimbi had declared that he would form the next government and that Ms. Roque would be the Minister of Finance.

The Elections of 1992

The elections were historic since it was the first time that this form of political representation was occurring in Angola. For weeks before the election there was insecurity all over the country because of the continued armed clashes between UNITA and the forces of the MPLA. Three weeks before the elections the Secretary General of the United Nations reported to the Security Council that:

The political and security situation in the country has deteriorated considerably. There are reports of intimidation and provocation by both government and UNITA supporters. Violent incidents, accompanied by killings have erupted since my last report, notably in Malanja in early July and early August, as well as Huambo, Saurimo and the provinces of Benguela and Bie (Angola, 1992).

By planning with both sides the UN refused to draw attention to the fact that UNITA refused to allow the government to restore civil administration across the country.

The days prior to the elections saw a heightening of tension. Two days before the elections the population came out in large numbers to political rallies to demonstrate their support for differing political parties. The huge turnout in MPLA stronghold of Savimbi supporters on the Saturday before the elections was especially significant. Throughout the urban areas women and children made the armed men temporarily retreat while the festive mood of campaign rallies temporarily prevailed.

Angolans were aware of the intense international interest in the elections. The United Nations had mobilized over 800 international observers to monitor the voting process. The logistical problems of destroyed roads and mines dictated that a lot of movement in the rural areas had to be by air. The United Nations had guaranteed 120 flights to take registered voters to remote areas to vote. There were over 40 helicopters and 10 fixed wing cargo planes to assure transport of election materials. Another 14 helicopters and 12 planes ferried the over 400 international observers.

Angolan men, women and children in the final days were aware of this international presence and therefore celebrated during the day only to retreat to their homes at night. Gunfire could be heard all over Luanda at night. On the morning of the elections there was a complete electrical blackout in Luanda affecting water supplies.

The two days on which the elections were held were designated public holiday. There was a mood of relief and joy as Angolans lined up for hours to cast their votes. Voting took place at over 5800 polling stations throughout the country. Each polling station had enough ballots for 1000 persons. The polling stations were usually set up in schools, warehouses, stores, public building and other makeshift facilities.

Each polling station had a team of five officials who were termed the election brigades. Each brigade was overseen by the President who was in charge. These officials had participated in civic education classes carried out by the National Electoral Council before the election. There was a noticeable absence of women among the heads of the brigades in the 25 voting stations visited by this writer over the two day period. There was one woman in Cazenga who was the head of the team though there were at least one woman in most polling station. Investigations on the participation of women as officials in the voting process showed that their participation was mainly in the urban areas where there were women who were school teachers and who worked in the lower ranks of the state apparatus.

If women were not prominent as officials of the voting process they were certainly most prominent in the anxiety to cast the vote. They queued for hours in the sun. Young and old came out all across the country and the state controlled paper carried a picture on the front page of September 30th of a woman over 80 years old who was carried to the polls. Pictures of old women conveyed the image of all of those who had survived the horrors of forced labour under colonialism, the displacement and resettlement of the war against colonialism and the violence and destruction of the war since independence.

The enthusiasm of women to vote was manifest in many ways but most dramatically by the woman who waited in line to vote and gave birth to her child while waiting. As a testimony to the process she named her child, 'vote' (Journal De Angola 1992).

This intervention by women in the election process was an important demonstration which rendered insignificant some of the logistical problems which affected the process. One of the most pressing was the slowness of the process due to the high rate of illiteracy in the society. Under normal circumstances voting for two or three parties took time but in this election the people were choosing among 11 Presidential candidates and among eighteen political parties for the parliamentary elections. Under the system of proportional representation the voters placed an 'X' beside the candidate of their choice and beside the party of their choice.

Officials of UNAVEM and the Angolan government paid great attention to mobilizing people to the polls but there had not been adequate civic education to explain the process. Future research will expose the extent to which this failure was due to the fact that the principal assistance for political party training and for civic organization training in voter education came from the International Republican Institute in Washington (1992).

Each party had voting guides for their supporters, but from the evidence in the capital it seemed as if the information by the smaller parties had not been widely disseminated.

One other problem was the large number of Angolans with poor eyesight. The lighting conditions in the booths did not help and many of the booths had to close before closing time because of lack of electricity or lighting. The facilities for election workers reflected the general level of the society with poor food (American rations from the Gulf war for the election brigades) and poor sleeping facilities. It was a tribute to the over five thousand mostly young Angolan men and women that the elections were carried out successfully.

The Aftermath

The election turnout and the celebration by the voters was distinct. Despite corruption, mismanagement and the incompetence of the ruling party it was clear from the returns that the Angolan people had made a calculation that they wanted peace and an end to violence. They were not convinced that UNITA had made the transition from a guerilla organization to a political party. The election results from the very first days showed that the ruling party was ahead in both the Parliamentary and Presidential elections. UNITA was trailing and all the other parties were showing less than 3% of the vote. According to election law the winning candidate had to receive more than 50% of the vote. The election had been run on the basis of proportional representation and the parties would receive 5 Provincial seats according to votes (from 18 provinces) and seats according to the percentage of the vote. The total of the Parliamentary seats were 220. From the second day it was clear that the MPLA was in the lead and the doubt was to whether the President would receive over 50% of the vote.

The trend of the vote had also been calculated by the quick count of the United Nations. This quick count of selected polling stations all across the country had shown a decisive victory for the MPLA in the parliamentary elections and a strong lead for Dos Santos over Jonas Savimbi. The count had revealed 58,697 votes for Dos Santos and 45,433 for Savimbi.

Jonas Savimbi with an impressive intelligence organization interpenetrating the government and the international organizations must have had access to this information. Three days after the counting had begun UNITA issued a statement that the elections were fraudulent and that there would have to be another election. The questions relating to the voting procedures and the irregularities in the counting were supported by one letter from four observers from France. This was the only evidence presented out of the reports of the 400 international observers. In this letter the four deputies had alleged that in Kikolo, MPLA election officers were showing people how to vote. This was curious since as an observer this writer spent more than one hour in one of the polling stations cited as evidence.

Even though there was no corroboration of the evidence of irregularities the leaders of UNITA later amplified their charges, especially for the consumption of the conservative forces in the USA and France. The charges of UNITA were carried by the *Washington Times* (1992) and *Christian Science Monitor* which had consistently supported Savimbi. Among the allegations were the claim that:

- a) the number of UN observers was far too low to guarantee adequate supervision;
- b) that the government controlled National Election Commission (NEC) cut off registration prematurely thus disenfranchising over 500,000 supporters of UNITA;
- c) that voter registration lists were not provided for opposition parties;
- d) that several thousand Namibians were brought across the borders to vote for the MPLA;
- e) that there were over 100 polling stations which were set up without the knowledge of the opposition and that thousands of extra ballots were secretly printed.

These charges were investigated by the United Nations and were found to be baseless. The country was virtuously held hostage and the climate of war and violence quickly returned. Even though Savimbi called on the CNE not to announce the results, he himself announced the results from Huambo on 13 October when it was evident that Dos Santos had not received over 50% of the vote and that a second round of Presidential elections were to be held. After the election results were announced the UN representative declared that the voting had been in the main free and fair except for incidents of human error.

**Table 1: The 1992 Angolan Election Results
as Announced on 17 October**

Party	Presidential Elections		Parliamentary		Seats National	
	(Candidate)	Votes	%	Votes		%
PRD	Luis dos Pasos	58,121	1.47	35,293	0.89	1
Pajoca				13,294	0.35	1
PAI				9,007	0.23	0
PDLA				8,025	0.20	0
PSDA				10,217	0.26	0
FNLA	Holden Roberto	83,135	2.11	94,742	2.40	3
PDP-ANA				10,620	0.27	1
PRA	Ruis de Victoria Pereira	9,208	0.23	6,719	0.17	0
CNDA				10,237	0.26	0
PNDA	Daniel Chipenda	20,646	0.52	10,281	0.26	1
PDA	Alberto Neto	85,249	2.16	8,014	0.20	0
FDA				12,038	0.30	1
AD	Simao Cacete	26,385	0.67	34,166	0.86	1
Coalition						
MPLA	Jose Dos Santos	1,953,335	49.57	2,124,126	53.74	70
PRS				89,875	2.27	3
UNITA	Jonas Savimbi	1,579,298	40.07	1,347,636	34.10	44
PSD	Bengue Joao	38,243	0.97	33,088	0.84	1
PLD	Analia Pereira	11,475	0.29	94,269	2.39	3

Source: Compiled by author.

The total number of registered voters was 4,828,368 and the total number of voters in the parliamentary elections was 4,402,575, equivalent to 91.34% of registered voters'. The seats when divided at the national and provincial levels worked out to the following parliamentary seats for each party:

PRD	1	AD Coalition	1
PAJOCA	1	MPLA	129
FNLA	5	PRS	4
PNDA	1	UNITA	70
PDP/ANA	1	PSD	1
PDA	1	PLD	3

In the presidential elections the total number of voters was 4,401,339, 91.15% of the registered number of voters.

Under the terms of Article 147 of the Electoral Law a second round of Presidential elections was required because the leading candidate Jose Eduardo Dos Santos did not receive over 50% of the vote.⁹

Before the results of the elections were announced, Jonas Savimbi declared on October 3rd that the MPLA was clinging to power illegally and that there are those in the country who would be willing to give up their lives so that the country can redeem itself. As far as we are concerned, it will not depend on any international organization to say that the elections were free and fair. Two days later on Monday, October 5th UNITA withdrew from the national army. The signal of the return to war was immediate all across the country.

Frenzied public attempts to conciliate by those who had supported Savimbi (the United States and South Africa) did not lead to an acceptance of the results by UNITA. A very public intervention by the foreign minister of South Africa to mediate later revealed that his visit to Huambo was an effort to provide UNITA with logistical and political support so that Savimbi could win militarily what he had lost in the electoral contest (Weekly Mail 1992). The South Africans who had no experience of democratic participation in their society had drafted a strategic concept paper to give more political power to UNITA in a power sharing agreement.

Under this strategy there was to be joint responsibility for all key ministries (defence, interior and territorial administration) with UNITA in a crucial position to oversee the integration of the new army. Claiming that the CCPM should dissolve and leave the process to the South Africans, the South African air force was at the same time resupplying UNITA with weapons. The war of words over the fraudulent nature of the elections continued with sporadic acts of violence and UNITA moving to retake strategic areas in the rural areas.

Open confrontation between UNITA and the government flared in Luanda and other cities on 31 October, 1992. Before the third of November UNITA had retaken most of Uige, Bengo, Moxico and Huambo. There were major battles around the international airport, the radio and television station, the presidential palace and at the bank of Angola. In the battles of Luanda, UNITA suffered major losses of the top leadership, the most noteworthy being the Vice President, J Chitunda. Over 1500 civilians lost their lives in Luanda. The Government accused UNITA of planning a coup while UNITA accused the government of planning an ambush. The real result of this outbreak of war was to further entrench force and violence at

9 The full details of the results were announced on Angolan radio and television by the President of the national Electoral Council on 17 October on the occasion of the publication of the results of the Angolan Presidential and Parliamentary elections.

the center of Angolan politics. By the end of 1992 UNITA had gained control of more territory than they held before the peace accords of 1991.

Angolan Women: Reconstruction and the Position of Women in the Society

Despite the massive intervention by the Angolan people the legacies of war and violence weighed against peace. The outbreak of war in the short run postponed the basis for reconstruction which could be based on democratic participation. The return to war meant that militarism had won and those forces in both MPLA and UNITA which were more comfortable with fighting were again in the ascendancy. The authoritarian traditions of Portuguese culture had won against the struggles for democracy and popular participation. African women were the clear losers in this context.

The fighting also demonstrated the failure of the United Nations in Angola. The UN had no contingency plan for a return to war. The violations of the cease fire had been overlooked while the Secretary General vouched for the democratic commitments of Savimbi. This was in line with the accepted view of the West that Savimbi would win election if they were held. UNITA refused to surrender its heavy weapons to the new unified army or to demobilize the biggest part of its army - FALA.

Comparisons have been made between the missions of the UN in Namibia in 1990 and in Angola in 1992. Observers for the UN mission in Namibia of 1990 numbered 1700 in a country of one million, as opposed to 400 for Angola in 1992, a country of over 10 million people and over 4,8 million registered voters. These comparisons fall short of taking into account the stakes in Angola. Who were the forces in contention? What were the international implications and how did the elections affect the future of class formation? All classes and strata asked different questions in the society. For Angolan women the fundamental issue was the desire for peace.

The winners in the elections were those forces who propose liberalization, privatization and the return of the Portuguese to Angola. The economic program of structural adjustment being implemented by the International Monetary Fund and packaged under the various emergency plans for Economic and financial restoration were meant to deepen the process of class formation. The ideas of privatization and liberalization were embraced by the managers, officers and administrators who were being trained to become entrepreneurs. An alliance between this emerging strata and the international monopolies who dominate the mining sector is already evident. This can be seen especially with the contracts for Angolan oil up to 1996.

Because working women bore the brunt of the hardships they continued to bear the burden of the renewed fighting. Those who were in the real market (called the parallel Market) saw that privatization and liberalization did not mean the reconstruction of the society for their benefit. Former bureaucrats and rehabilitated exile elements with commercial expertise from

abroad with contacts in the import export sector and with commercial links with Brazil, Portugal, and South Africa were in the ascendancy in the so called formal sector while the vigorous parallel market was dominated by working women. They had no control over the legal basis for commercial transactions.

The programs of reconstruction and economic revival showed that the interests of international capitalism were not the same as those of the African women who formed the overwhelming majority of the population. The return to war demonstrated that the efforts of the working people to support elections were insufficient to lay the foundations for new politics. The weakness of the popular forces in Africa were apparent with the open support of Zaire, Morocco and South Africa for the carnage in the Angolan countryside.

The election showed that the liberal form of women's organization organized by mainstream political parties could not raise the issues which were fundamental for women. And yet in the context of the war it was important that the government did not retreat from the laws which gave women equality and protected them under the Family Code. The requirement of building women's groups on a non-partisan basis was an important step in the direction of political and economic freedom for Angolan women. This was especially the case for the majority of women who had neither the time nor energy for formal political activity after a day's work in the fields, factory or in the hustle and bustle of the market place.

All of the parties paid lip service to repairing the social infrastructure, but the issues of sexual violence and wife beating did not figure in any of the campaign literature of the two leading parties. The campaign and the experience of the OMA also showed the need for women's organizations which are independent and self-directed. Ideological questions raised by the elections also pointed out that progressive Africans must not retreat from self-determination to recolonization (under the guise of the so called market) but must link the issues of self-determination to the question of the people. This would be an important step beyond the vanguardism of formal Marxism Leninism, or a Marxism which was not linked to the history and culture of Africa.

Poverty, hunger and insecure shelter have visited the vast majority of the Angolan people regardless of ethnic origin or political orientation. The war has been particularly harsh in the regions of the North, the Southeast and the South. The reconstruction of the means of feeding, clothing and housing the society while cutting infant mortality and increasing life expectancy through nutrition remain the minimum basis for reorienting the priorities of the society. This transformation of the priorities requires the kind of leadership which was inspired by Queen Nzinga in the 17th century.

Her attempt to develop unity and military resistance prior to the development of industrial capitalism had failed because no single individual could withstand the tide of external domination. Colonialism weakened the society and reinforced ethnic consciousness so that the society could be divided. African women from all regions suffered from the politicization of ethnicity. Their independent organization to reverse the cultural domination by Portugal and Europe will define the contours of politics in Angola for the next century.

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