UFAHAMU INTERVIEW
BASIL DAVIDSON

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An Interview with Basil Davidson

The following interview with well-known Africanist historian, Basil Davidson, continues Ufahamu's *series of recorded talks with revolutionaries, leaders, and scholars on Black liberation. Mr. Davidson, Visiting UCLA Regents Lecturer, accepted the editors' invitation, and met informally with students* on January 17, 1971. Mr. Davidson's publications are too numerous to list here. However, two of his most recent works are* The Liberation of Guiné *and* The African Genius.

QUESTION: What experiences led to your initial interest in Africa?

ANSWER: It's always difficult to answer questions like that — not in this case because I wouldn't want to say what I think about my own motivations — but rather because my life, like most lives, I suppose, hasn't been a nice orderly advance from one state of mind or position to the next, but has had a great deal of the accidental and the unexpected in it. I first became interested in Africa in 1949 or 1950, initially as an extension of interests and points of view I already had on society and politics in my own country, but also partly because of experiences during World War II. More immediately, it was because of an invitation from the Garment Workers' Union of South Africa, at that time a non-color-bar trade union in a situation which, as you know, wasn't yet one of formalised and systematic apartheid. It was just about possible for a non-color-bar trade union to operate in that society at that time. Still, they could see tough changes on their way — the "Purified National" government had come in, you'll remember, in 1948 — and so they wrote and asked me to come out and do some reporting. I went quite unwillingly, being then much tied up in work on situations in Europe and knowing nothing at all about Africa, and not being much concerned with finding out. But it seemed an interesting thing to do, so off I went. And then, of course, as soon as I actually got there, to South Africa, the situation really hit me. It was, even then, and perhaps *above all* then, an extreme situation of developing drama. In these last ten or fifteen years the drama has, you could say, developed — it's reached its ultimate extension; there's nothing to come, as it were, but the *dénouement*, whatever that may be. But then it was

possible to think that there could be various possible outcomes and lines of development, and this is what gave to an already intensely interesting situation another dimension of interest. There was a tremendous challenge, I felt, to understand what lay beneath the surface. Today, of course, what is going on is so clear and obvious that there's no challenge to understanding it - the whole horrible situation is there on the surface. However, I'm oversimplifying; I got interested in Africans elsewhere. I moved on from one territory to the next, year after year, with the colonial doors sometimes slamming shut behind me, (they banned me from South Africa as early as 1953, and deported me from their country that year), trying to reduce the deserts of my ignorance.

QUESTION: What made you decide to use the discipline of history as the main vehicle for what you were able to absorb about Africa?

ANSWER: That's a good question. I think the answer, if you'll forgive me, is bound to be personal. I was already much concerned with history, actually with the history of the Central European peoples. So I already had what you might call an historical approach. But, of course, in Africa in the early 1950's it was manifest that either one had to deny the fact of African history, or investigate whether there was one. In those days the common attitude, not only of whites in Africa, but also of academics in Western Europe (I don't know about the United States, but certainly academics in Western Europe) was that there was *no* African history. People said: Whatever you may actually think about the South African system, however unjust it may appear to you to be, and whatever you may think about the colonial system, however destructive it may appear to you to be, the fact remains that these peoples, the Africans, the "natives", as they were almost invariably called in those days, have no history of their own institutions; they have been standing stationary through the centuries. They are unable, of their own volition, to move from that stagnant, savage world into the modern world, and consequently other people, like us, must show them how to do it. This is a familiar attitude which you must be well aware of. Therefore, anybody who got interested in Africans and thought that the South African system, for instance, even as it was in 1950, nothing like so severe as it is now, was unjust; or anybody who thought that the colonial system was wrong, had either to renounce the argument or investigate the facts of African history, if there were any. In this respect, those of us who, like myself, (I was by no means alone, needless to say), began to investigate the

facts of African history at the outset of the fifties, were extremely lucky for two reasons. First of all, the rising nationalism of the African peoples themselves posed this very question — what were they in the past; what would they become in the future? Secondly, all over Africa, as it happened for a number of different reasons, some archaeologists, historians, linguists, and anthropologists were at that time beginning to ask themselves the same kind of questions. The beginning of the *systematic* study of African history dates back to the late forties and the early fifties. Those of us who, as it were, plugged in on that kind of activity, had the good fortune to benefit from the active research of a large number of people in various fields and from various nations. Obviously, it was a lucky and valuable development. The more one could say and know about the history of the Africans, the more one could situate the colonial experience in time, and the more one could measure its relative effects — positive or negative.

QUESTION: Would you comment on the people you worked with when you were researching Africa, and the views or people that influenced your historiography?

ANSWER: They are, and were, an extraordinarily interesting, and I must say, disparate sort of people. Some of them, like me, were radical in a political sense. Of those, the most important by far, I think, so far as British Africanist studies are concerned, and to some extent African Studies in former British colonies, is Thomas Hodgkin. He has not published very much, but he must be considered a very great teacher. In the late 1940's, he and some others began to raise certain questions: who *are* these African peoples? what *kind* of peoples are they? what reassessment must we make of African historical values in order to see how the colonial system should be assessed? Then, of course, there were a lot of archaeologists who were politically quite neutral, and usually quite conservative. But they, too, were working on that very same material. One of the interesting things that has happened, to name no names, is that many of those who, whether they were historians or archaeologists, began to research the possible facts of African history, were themselves driven by the very pressure of what they were doing, to take up a stance in favor of the defense of African values — and so, by extension, in favor of what I would regard as radical positions. There were, therefore, all kinds of people, most of whom were engaged by the colonial regimes (British, French, or Belgian), often administrators of one kind or another. On every other subject they might have been most conservative, cautious, and orthodox. But

on the subject of African history, which ideologically was a revolutionary value, since if you could establish that there *was* an African history, you had automatically then to reassess everything that the colonialists had said, these people became very radical. I can think of a number for whom the discovery of African history has been a continuous means of political self-enlightenment.

QUESTION: There was a lively debate around your name in the first two issues of Ufahamu. *One of the issues raised in a Letter-to-the-Editor was whether or not you would consent to, or even be pleased with, having the label "Marxist" attached to your name. We would like to have you respond to that ideological label.*

ANSWER: I have never described myself as a Marxist, and, for a number of reasons, would not describe myself as one today. First of all, I think that doctrinal labels tend to obscure the reality of what one is trying to say. This is especially true of non-Africans, especially Europeans. Every European who has taken up the study of Africa in a serious way, and this includes me certainly, has had to fight his way through all manner of preconceptions. In my country, at least, we have been formed as imperialists and as people who have certain inbuilt attitudes towards Africans which we may call "paternalist". All this is hard enough to fight through without having new labels attached. I think my position on commitment is perfectly clear from my writing. Ever since I took up the study of Africa, and indeed long before, I have been committed to two goals. One is to try to discover the truth of my subject. The other is to practice the craft of writing. In trying to discover the truth, and in discovering part of the truth, I became thoroughly committed to the cause of Africans in the sense that I understand it. But let me add straight away that I think that anyone who would try and discover the truth of Africa, or indeed of any other situation, who is not thoroughly familiar with the thinking of Marx would not get very far.

In 1965 I was talking one day with two undergraduates. We got to a certain point and I said "Well, you must see that in this particular set of circumstances you have to analyze the economic connections which underlie the situation. If you do analyze these economic underpinnings, you will be much nearer to understanding the truth then you otherwise would be". And these two excellent young men went away and afterwards I heard that one of them said to the other in shocked undertones, "The guy's a Marxist!"

Well, in this respect, of course, I *am* a Marxist. I

think that every serious student of Africa would have to be one. You must be familiar at least with the first volume of *Das Kapital*, with *Pre-Capitalist Formations*, with *The Civil War in France*, and some other of Marx's writings. And you must have thought about these matters with deep and constant care. Having said that, I would strongly resist the title "Marxist".

Let me take the argument a little further. There is in progress at the moment a very lively discussion in Paris over the question of how one can categorize or describe with a convenient term the nature of African traditional systems of production. As you know, the doctrinaires have always tried to fit Africa into neat categories developed in their minds from non-African experience. So we have had the "Asiatic mode of production" applied to Africa — and that, to put it mildly, hasn't been exactly helpful. Now over the past few years there's been a lively discussion among thinkers in Paris, Marxists for the most part, on this question of categorisation. A rather brilliant woman called Catherine Coquery came up with the notion of an "African mode of production", and one can easily see what she had in mind — the mode of production, or modes of production, that have gone under the catch-all label of "African subsistence economy" and so on. I still don't think that's useful, though; I still think it's another obfuscating label. If you *have* to have a label, I'd be content with "the mode of production in Africa"; it says very little, of course, but that's why I like it. It leaves the options open for further research and identification.

Let me add that I read all those interesting letters in *Ufahamu* about whether I'm to be regarded as Marxist or not. It seems as though some people would like me to be one, and some wouldn't. Well, I still prefer to have no label. It does appear to me that I am *able* to express myself ideologically, but also that I'm able *not* to. And there may be situations and phases, periods of conceptual development, when it's better not to — when it's better not to place an obstacle between oneself and reality, between oneself and other people's understanding of what one thinks this reality actually is.

QUESTION: What I became aware of while listening to you was that the ideological implications have a lot more reality in Europe than they do here — that is there is a more recognizable category of people who fall into doctrinaire Marxism or whatever you want to call it. Specifically, what the statement that I made in Ufahamu's

"Correspondence" section (Volume I, #2, H. Meserve) *and the questions that I would be interested in asking here, have to do with is the term Marxist when one uses the label to imply a certain viewpoint that follows from the kind of history that you write or the kind of political approach you bring to the study. The basic kind of general histories that you've written, from an American context, to me are Marxist in the sense that they deal with what a Marxist would consider the concrete realities, the phenomena that Africans are really dealing with instead of with the kind of superficial judgments about African societies that have been made. These phenomena don't necessarily fit an "Asian mode of production" or anything of the sort, because Marx didn't really ever deal with that area. Specifically, I would like you to reply to two points: one, that you* do *apply Marxist types of categories to your study, and I know very few other people who do in African history outside of the obvious such as Suret-Canale; and second, that what this implies is a certain kind of commitment in the activist sense. How do you feel about commitment to the guerilla movement in Guinea or to African nationalism in general in its revolt against neo-colonialism? I used the label "Marxist" because I had a certain conception of where you were coming from when you wrote those histories, and how you would answer if I had the chance to ask the question.*

ANSWER: Let me begin by saying in relation to the first part of what you were saying that perhaps one of the reasons that I resist label-pinning is that there is a great tendency to build models into which model-builders then try and fit reality. Recently in England I've been in an argument of much the same type with two good colleagues who are sympathetic, progressive, and enlightened people — sociologists who, in relation to the liberation struggle in the three Portuguese colonies, were searching for some kind of model into which they could fit these liberation struggles. They were suggesting various models which were non-African into which they could fit this experience. I felt that this was unhelpful, and even pretentious, because if you examine what has happened in the last ten years, these peoples, these movements in the Portuguese territories have in fact formed their *own* model. In order to understand reality, one has to study *real* phenomena. Then one may say, yes, there is a parallel between what is happening in Guinea and what is happening in Vietnam, for example. This is legitimate. But forming a model before thoroughly investigating the facts may lead people to look only for evidence which fits into their particular box.

As far as commitment is concerned, I regard myself as totally committed to discovering as much of the truth as I can, and then to acting upon what I have discovered.

Africans are now in a certain phase of their development. If one has understood enough of the truth, I think one sees that they now have to go on to other phases. Exactly how they will proceed is a moot question. This is what I meant in that small book about Guinea Bissau when I dedicated it to the "revolution of our time". "The revolution of our time" can, of course, be interpreted in a manner of different ways. General Motors could have a "revolution of our time". But if you read the book you will see what I am talking about. The basic problem for Africans is to find their own way of revolutionizing the structures of the past, and revolutionizing the colonial structures which they've had imposed upon them, and which they inherited, in large part, when they have become politically independent. Africans need this dual revolution along African lines; they need it because they have to move on to new systems and modes of production. That is the only way in which they will be able to meet the challenges which they are coming up against, such as "neo-colonialism" (I'm not sure that I like the term; I would simply say "colonialism". There is perhaps a difference between "neo" and "paleo", but not much in this respect). Also, they have to meet other challenges of the past twenty or thirty years. One of the most obvious, of course, is the population explosion. The populations of most African countries are increasing at a rate which threatens to produce a situation of acute impoverishment over the next thirty or forty years. This challenge can be met only by building entirely new structures — whether economic, political, or cultural — within which the general mode of production in Africa can move into what one may loosely call "urbanism and industrialism" — in which, if you like, the rural base of Africa's existing economies can be shifted to an urban-industrial base, and so absorb the lessons and advances of modern science and technology. That is the kind of revolution I am talking about, so far as the Third World (or at any rate Africa) is concerned; and it seems to me very clear indeed that this kind of revolution will not be, cannot be, in the direction of capitalism. It must be in the direction of socialism.

QUESTION: I would like to follow up on my question a bit more. Listening to you, it is like reading in the newspaper the phrase: "Suspicions Confirmed! I knew it all along. He really was *one!" It is because of the structure of your argument, one which involves the fundamental awareness that analysis of modes of production is essential and that there is*

the necessity of change. The subtitle of my article was "The Teaching of African History"; and in it I attempted to show areas in which some kind of truths were being systematically excluded from the classroom, especially a Marxist viewpoint, and most especially in the context of the United States.

ANSWER: It does depend on what you understand by "Marxist". This is why I would reject the label. For example, the Soviet school of Africanists, up to five or six years ago, was still bogged down in a quite unreal hunt for the "working class". If they could only find that, they would be all right. Predictions could follow. Otherwise, they were in trouble. Then they looked for the "national bourgeosie", as though that were also something which, once found, was going to put us back in familiar European territory. It wasn't until they had begun to visit Africa early in the sixties (they hadn't been able to visit it before), that they began to be confronted with the realities of Africa, and to see that this categorization, this Procrustean bed into which they had been trying to fit the whole of the African experience, simply would not work. Of course, if Marx's illuminations and insights as distinct from "Marxist" illuminations and insights, (which can be something very different), are excluded from the classroom, then I think that the classroom is in a very unenviable position. But I still can't see, at least for a long way ahead, the advantage of trying to fit the African experience into this or that non-African category.

QUESTION: You were speaking of the fact that Africans will in fact find their own means of social advance. This brings to mind President Nyerere's ideas on African social structure which seem to be focused primarily on the African continent, on the ideas of African personality, Negritude, etc. I wonder if by getting into this kind of "cultural nationalism", if I may call it that, that it poses any kind of problem for a person who is a non-African.

ANSWER: I think that Nyerere's thought is very interesting because it starts off, if you read back to the early sixties, with a very "idealist" approach to things. He gets closer and closer to reality the more he has to deal with it, and veers away from the mythology of "African socialism" quite early in the sixties. You won't find very much relating to "African socialism" in his later writings. Similarly, a man like Senghor, who stopped thinking around 1960, as far as I can see, goes on verbalizing about African socialism and the socialist nature of traditional African society in

complete disregard of all the evidence, and in fact says nothing at all of any interest. Nyerere is someone who allows himself to be taught by the realities, who is ceaselessly interested in the realities, and who, after all, is still at a relatively early point in his own ideological development. I think it will be very interesting to watch where he goes.

But your question was rather would one find it difficult because one wasn't an African to investigate African situations. No, I don't find such a difficulty. In my journeys in the Portuguese territories, for instance, I have not discovered that kind of difficulty. The big difficulty that one discovers is that one doesn't know enough languages. That is not particularly a non-African difficulty; Africans don't know enough languages either. I spent part of this summer amongst an extraordinarily interesting people called the Mbunda who live in eastern Angola in Central Móxico. Now, if I had been able to speak their language, I would have come back with a splendid harvest of historical information. There was no problem because I wasn't an African. I didn't discover that any of them said: Well, this chap is obviously one of *those*, and we're not going to tell him very much. The problem was communication. And the problem of communication comes down to the fact that there are too many languages.

QUESTION: Well, maybe I can bring it down more to the racial level. In Nkrumah's latest book, Class Struggle in Africa, *he does, of course, take the position that it's a class struggle that is raging in Africa, and that we have been misled up until now. Yet he finishes the book with a very non-class comment on the fact that indeed what is happening is a Black revolution which will encompass all the Black peoples of the world - the Black Revolution in capital letters - and would exclude whites. What is your comment on that?*

ANSWER: I have no sympathy for those views. It doesn't seem to me (I have not read that particular book, although I have read most of his previous works), that the books that Nkrumah has published since *Africa Must Unite* have been very helpful. I like DuBois' attitude much more. I had the honor, and it was an honor, to know DuBois at the end of his life quite well. As you probably know, he went back upon his famous statement of 1900 that the problem of the twentieth century is the color problem; he said the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the social structure. But he said that the two are inevitably, dialectically interwoven. And I think that one will not understand these things if one is going to divide them into

entirely separate categories. It's very clear, in the case of the Portuguese territories, that these are struggles which are interwoven in the most intimate way with a more general struggle against imperialism and the consequences of capitalism in the rest of the world.

Certainly the African revolution is complex: it is concerned with *color*, with *class* as far as South Africa is concerned, with the move from pre-industrial patterns to an industrial future. It is a transition of a major kind moving from structures of the past, which were themselves the product of a long development. The basic question is one of productive power. I've argued that before and I'm sure that you will agree. If you consider the relations of the Europeans and Africans in, for instance, 1500 or 1600, the power gap, the gap in productive capacity or in inventive capacity, is relatively narrow. The Europeans had some advantages, thanks to their technological heritage. They built better ships, made firearms, and had some means of mechanical production that the Africans did not have, but the gap was still relatively narrow. By 1900, this gap is immensely wide, and it is immensely wide because the capacity of Africans to produce did not keep in step with the capacity of Europeans to produce. And why not? Because Europeans had gone through an industrial revolution and the Africans had not. It must follow that the challenge today to Africa, the revolution in our time, is in terms of some kind of an industrial revolution. This industrial revolution will not be carried out in the same way as the Western world or in the same way as the Russian or the Chinese revolutions. It will fit the circumstances that are proper to Africa.

QUESTION: As I grow my consciousness and ideology become more racially-oriented instead of class-oriented. I see a distinct difference between the white and the black man's ideas. I have a two-pronged question which harks back to the first question that was asked. Being a white man with your ideas, studying Africa and trying to find the truth, being a historian or a reporter, knowing that you are an individual, you are going to have your own biases. What is your real reason for studying Africa? The second question concerns whether or not Portugal is perpetrating a racial war, and how a liberal interpretation can help eliminate a racial war. Are you continuing neo-colonialism and what are you doing in relationship to eliminating white domination in Africa?

ANSWER: That is a program of questions which would carry us a long way. If I could pinpoint how I feel or how I see my role, I think it comes down to a moment in 1950-

51, when I'm in South Africa and it becomes clearer and clearer to me what kind of education the blacks get in South Africa. This is where I make my own identification that the situation of the Africans in most of Africa, certainly in colonial Africa, so far as education is concerned, was very much like the situation of the English working classes, the Scottish working classes, right through the industrial revolution and after. There was no education at all in our islands for anyone except the ruling strata until 1872 except in church schools and mission schools. And even for a long while after 1872, there still wasn't very much. Education continues to be the business of the churches in England, or the missionaries in Africa.

QUESTION: Are you saying that you are studying Africa and bringing your interpretation of truth to the Western world to educate the Western world, to educate black people in the Western world, or to educate black people in Africa?

ANSWER: My standpoint has always been that, so far as I could find out truth, it was to my own countrymen that it should first be told, be written for. I suppose every writer has always an "ideal audience"; for me, it's three or four sceptical Englishmen: there they are, sitting over there, and I'm trying to persuade them, convince them, explain to them. Now I don't pretend for a moment to have made much of a dent in the culture of my own country--but this has been my first objective.

QUESTION: I've heard from certain black people that they were stimulated to study Africa just from reading one of your books. I wonder if this puts a white interpretation into their minds as truth. Do you see yourself as eliminating white domination in any particular way?

ANSWER: I don't know. You can judge from the written word--it's going to be more convincing than anything I say to you here. I don't believe that this is basically a racial struggle but, of course, race comes into it since some people are black and some are white, and sides tend to be taken in this way. But I think that one has to see the problem in terms of the structure of the society in which one is living, a structure which is the emanation of certain power relations rather than color relations. In this respect I think I am about where DuBois was at the end of his life. He didn't go back on the statement that it was a color question, but he said that you cannot leave it there. If you leave it there, you will go off into a blind alley. It is also a question of the distribution of power; it is a

question of social structure. Of course, at any given point in time and in any particular personality it will vary as to which seems to be most important--color or social structure. Let me give you a concrete case. I can't speak of the United States, but I do know something about one or two other places. Let's take the situation in Angola this summer. On one side there is the national movement which consists of black people, of colored people: they are Mbunda, Chokwe, Ovimbundu, and so on down the line. On the other side there are the Portuguese who are white. The Portuguese have also got a lot of black mercenaries: Angolans, Mbunda, Chokwe, Ovimbundu, etc. So it is a complex situation. Then there is a chap like me, a white man traipsing through the bush. The situation is difficult; people are living in the forest; they are hungry; they are in rags. They are pestered and persecuted by every kind of deprivation that you can imagine. And they are persecuted because of Portuguese colonialism and they know it. They are not stupid. They know why they are in this condition, and they know the Portuguese are white. Then I arrive; I am the only white person there, and very much in their hands. And I happened to be there in a difficult time when the Portuguese were attacking and trying to capture women and children, civilians living in the forest. There was a great deal of movement, a great deal of pain and suffering, and some bombing. The bombing didn't do much harm, but still it might have. Bombs are unpleasant even when they don't hit you. I asked myself this question: was there any kind of feeling of--"Who is this white man? What do we know about him?" And the answer has to be: no.

Once we were sitting in the middle of a piece of forest with bombs falling around the place. There were two elders there, very old men; it was impossible to know how old they were; they looked about ninety. Probably they were only about fifty or sixty and sheer deprivation had ravaged their features, emaciated their bodies. They certainly hadn't eaten a square meal for a month, I'm sure. I asked the guerillas who were with me--they were the sons, husbands, cousins, etc. of these people in the forest--whether those elders were surprised to see a white man there. And the old men said--"No, we are not surprised. We know that our people have foreign friends. This white man must be one of them."

Now I'm only giving you this case because clearly, if you are going to reduce it to a color struggle, you are not going to understand the complexities of the situation in which these peoples, for instance, are plunged. But mani-

festly, color comes into it; of course it does. The Portuguese are white. The Africans are black. One has to see where race is a factor, and how far it is a factor, but, above all, why it is a factor.

QUESTION: I still want to know if you consciously see your role as something more than simply speaking the truth. That is, if you analyze something in terms of class struggle, it means something quite different in terms of changing that situation than if you analyze it in some idealistic way and talk about the difference in ideas about African socialism, etc.

ANSWER: Perhaps I over-emphasize my dislike for this labelling. I come from a European situation, and I am very much involved in commitments of various sorts in my own country. Only the other day, one of our leading historians, a friend of mine, described me as a "disappointed apostle of the left." I took umbrage at this because (a) I'm not disappointed, and (b) I'm not an apostle. Therefore, I resist this kind of argument because once one gets into it, it becomes a terrific distraction. One has only got a certain amount of time, and I myself am not concerned with arguing my credentials. I'm happy to answer your questions--but the books are there, and they'll do it better.

QUESTION: In terms of your commitment to socialist change in Britain, you made a statement at your last lecture that most African countries might need to build a sense of nationalism before they have a socialist revolution. I would like to know if this was again a subscription to Marxism.

ANSWER: Most of us in Europe think that nationalism is a thoroughly bad thing. We have suffered from nationalism in no mean way in my lifetime. We have had the excesses of nationalism thrown at us in every conceivable form, from words to bombs. Nationalism in Europe seems long since to have exhausted its constructive and creative possibilities. But in Africa, it's a very different issue. I would be very nice to say to Africans: "Look, dear friends, don't go through the period of nationalism; don't build nations. After all, you are going to have a lot of trouble. Moreover, your frontiers are foolish, for the most part. You took them over from the colonialists. Don't you think it would be a good idea to get together in a big conference and redraw your frontiers?" This, of course, is the kind of thing that unreal people say. This is not how life actually is,

as you well know in your own country. The answer that we are going to get from Africans in the next ten years on this question of nationalism is going to be very interesting; I don't know if it's going to be constructive or not. In Kenya, for instance, what should nationalism mean? Should it mean the sublimating of all ethnic separatisms or particularities into one Kenya nationhood? And if there is one Kenya nationhood, why not one East African *nationhood*? What is so virtuous about being Kenyan? Why not add Tanzania, and have a much bigger and more rational unit? Africans are going to have to consider these questions very carefully over the next ten years. So far, in the last decade, Africans have suffered from the inheritance of colonial institutions. So far as I can see, nearly all the turmoils and upheavals of Africa today come from the failure of those institutions inherited from the colonial period. And when I say institutions, I interprete that broadly--institutions, cultural attitudes, etc. The very crystallisation of what is misleadingly called *tribalism* is in a large sense an inheritance from the colonial period--a problem created by the colonial period and its divisive institutions and its nationalist ideology.

QUESTION: It's one thing to be an observer and report the truth, as one sees it, but there is a question as to how far one should or needs to go in trying to rectify injustices that one sees. You've recently been in Angola. You have strong feelings about the situation there. You were there as a reporter of events, as an interpreter of events. But you were not there as an active person trying to change those events. A number of us are in this same sort of situation where we tend to be interpreters and not activists. We don't try to change things. How do you feel about your own role in that sort of situation? Are you an agent of change--whether advertently or inadvertently? This is one of the dilemmas that an anthropologist faces.

ANSWER: Yes, I like to think of myself, in however small a way, as an agent of change--in any case, it's what I've intended to be. But I think one's primary duty is towards one's own culture, one's own background, one's own country, if you like. So far as change in Africa is concerned, Africans themselves have got to do it for themselves.

QUESTION: In view of your commitment to a viewpoint which recognizes the importance of various groups of African people and the means of production, and in view of your own self-image as some kind of agent of change, would you con-

sider it proper, by means of speaking or by means of writing, to enter into disputes, not in territories which are being disputed in terms of colonialism/revolution, as is the case in Angola, but in territories that have supposedly had a revolution, as in established African states where governments are faced by dissident movements?

ANSWER: Well, I think one has the right to say what one feels. When I said I was an agent of change, you have to relate it to my own circumstances, my own life. The task that we were up against twenty years ago was to persuade our people to agree to decolonization. If you look at the history of decolonization, in my country, you have to take into account what you might call the *metropolitan factor.* At any point in time, it was possible to mobilize large numbers of good people who would go into political battle over this question of decolonization. This was the principal effort in terms of being an agent of change. And the historical studies that we did early on, Thomas Hodgkin, myself, and others, were also aimed, in part, at the persuasion of our people that Africans were not savages without any history, that they were peoples whose development demanded freedom of development. In order to give them this,decolonization was necessary. Now we have another situation in which we have to consider what the so-called independent African countries should do, and again, I think one has the right to say what one thinks.

QUESTION: Will you comment a bit on how you financed your research and the mechanisms of your research? Who was encouraging you at the time? For instance, you have said from time to time that you have had no encouragement from large academic centers in Europe. And related to that--do you consider yourself to be a journalist, an academician, an archivist, etc.?

ANSWER: That's a lot of biography! I financed my own researches mainly by journalism for many years, and afterwards by the proceeds from my books. I don't consider myself a journalist; I do consider myself an historian.

QUESTION: Did you always make that distinction? I mean, was there some point at which you changed your self-perception?

ANSWER: Yes, I think there was a point. I should say it was around the early 'Fifties--the transition from journalist to historian. Although it was very painful, it did me a lot of good. Journalism is one thing. It's the im-

mediate absorbing of impressions; the discipline of history is different.

QUESTION: Do you think your current interest in contemporary African guerilla movements is a move back towards journalistic reporting, or do you consider this as just an advancement in your interest in Africa's historical development?

ANSWER: I think very much the second. The liberation struggles in the Portuguese colonies are extremely interesting because they represent new and original forms of self-organization--yes, but they also represent *continuity* within the framework of African action-and-reaction. Understanding these movements helps one to understand African history; but understanding African history also helps one understand the liberation struggles.

QUESTION: Would you consider it proper in some situations to enter into internecine battles within particular African governments?

ANSWER: No, I wouldn't as a foreigner. I don't consider that one can interfere; Africans have suffered far too much from interference.

QUESTION: Yes, but I am talking now about a level of commitment especially to some variety of a socialist revolution, which would seem to be implied from your commitment, for example, to the Angolan struggle.

ANSWER: Let me give you this as a *model* (I think that's the fashionable word). At the moment, there is in Guinea Bissau a struggle against paleo-colonialism, old-fashioned colonialism--the real thing. So one should explain this--and, in explaining it, one shows all the many reasons why Africans should be freed from colonialism. Now let us suppose that after liberation from colonialism, for the sake of argument, the independent government of Guinea Bissau falls into a neo-colonial posture, develops an elitist structure, has a president, a palace, a flag, an anthem, fleets of big cars, and so on (very unlikely, by the way). What do I, for instance, do in that situation? This is really the nub of the point, isn't it? Well, I think that what I'd do in that situation would be to say to my audience that decolonization was a good thing and that no progress could have been made without it. But at the moment, I would go on to say that these people have got off onto the wrong track for various reasons. I don't think one

can do more than that. One cannot intervene in other peoples' lives. You have got to work on your own society. If that is on the wrong track, it is because of the social system of which you are a part. Neo-colonialism doesn't come out of Africa, but out of Britain, France, or the United States.

QUESTION: I know that the revolutionaries themselves are very enthusiastic about getting people like you to go and see their activities so that you can give the world a correct picture of their successes. For instance, in the context of Mozambique, there was a lot of controversy around FRELIMO'S claim that it was in full control of the northern part of Mozambique, and in order to convince the world that the claim was correct, they invited a Yugoslav journalist, not only to write a report, but to make a film--which was very successful. I believe that the aim of the Angolan revolutionaries was, more or less, the same in inviting you to view their activities. But there is always another section of opinion in Africa which believes that these sorts of things reveal,whatever precautions you take, certain vital pieces of information which the enemy might use against the struggle. How do you guard against that?

ANSWER: It's not easy to be sure that one doesn't reveal small tactical things that can hurt the movement. In my own case anyway, I discussed in great detail the areas of discretion to be observed and the areas that need not be observed. And I relied on my own experience with these affairs. I've now been briefly in all three Portuguese territories, and I've been quite surprised at the absence of restrictions on seeing and telling--and photographing. For instance, I first went to Guinea Bissau three-and-a-half years ago. I asked them if I could take pictures of anything I might see. They said I could take anything I wanted. This has been the case with all three territories. Perhaps they should observe more discretion; I don't know. But they don't seem to be the slightest bit bothered about such things. There are certain things that one would not tell, such as exactly where one crosses the frontier, exactly where one re-crosses the frontier, the precise route that one takes, and certain other logistic facts such as the relative strength of the guerilla units at various points, etc. This past summer, in Angola, I asked the MPLA representatives at Lusaka to take me to Muié, a place I had chosen previously for a number of reasons. "Yes," they said, "we can take you there." Then I would ask, "Can I say that I have been there?" "Yes," they would say, "you can say that you have been there." There was no prob-

lem. In practice, there are not many things that an observer can see which are going to help the Portuguese. For one thing, the very nature of guerilla war is mobility. The tactical situation at any given place on January 17th is going to be very different from the tactical situation of February 1st. And an observer is not going to be able to give voice for a couple of weeks. One has to get out of the place, to recover, and then start writing. For security's sake, two weeks is quite enough. Everything moves around by then. These movements have learned a lot; they have learned the lessons of mobility. They don't have bases. The notion that the Portuguese overrun guerilla bases is unreal. There are no bases to overrun. These people are living in makeshift huts in the forest, in the fringe of the woodlands. What do the Portuguese overrun? They overrun a dozen thatched huts. And if they capture in the process a few canisters of ammunition, that's too bad. But that doesn't constitute a base. There isn't much of a security problem in that respect.

QUESTION: You have said that you addressed yourself to people outside of Africa with the books that you have written. Oftentimes, Afro-Americans in this country feel that they have more of an identity with Africa inasmuch as they are descendants of Africans. Yet Cabral has made the point quite clear, as have other revolutionaries, that this is really their fight. From what you have seen, do you think that the Black people in this country should also address their writing to the role of the American *government in Africa?*

ANSWER: I must say that I do. I don't want to offer any prescriptions for what is going on in the United States. But insofar as Black people in the United States are Americans, and it seems to me that they are, their primary task is in *America.*

QUESTION: Isn't this a very nationalistic point of view? Why do you come to the United States then? Obviously there are many truths, many realities. You believe that you have hold of one of these. I wonder if this is just a truth for your audience of three Europeans, if the truths that you have may not be meaningful for Africans, and whether placing this sort of nationalistic limit upon your audience is an unfortunate thing or not. I am not convinced, as you are, that this is necessarily a good thing. Presumably you have come to the United States, at least in part, because you believe that you have something to say, which is an extranational kind of thing.

ANSWER: I think that a writer, rightly or wrongly, tends to

respond to his audience. Now my original audience was always these three or four Englishmen. Sometimes they were Welsh, and sometimes they were Scots; it varied from time to time. But I think that as you go on you find that what you write is taken up and to some extent liked or disliked, and in my case, argued about by other people. And if I come to the United States, it is because I have an audience here. And I find this interesting. So those three faces in the audience begin also to be American faces. Perhaps that's illogical, and maybe it's inconsequential, but this is what happens to a writer. It's almost inevitable that anybody engaged in any branch of the arts is going to respond to the audience that he has.

QUESTION: Do you feel that at times you have an African audience?

ANSWER: Oh yes, certainly.

QUESTION: But you don't want to write specifically for that audience?

ANSWER: You've apparently posed this question in terms of commitment and ideological belief. In that context, my commitment is to my own people. Obviously, if you take a broader view, yes, one has an audience; several of my books do have a large audience in Africa. They are textbooks for the most part, and were written specifically for an African context. This is what happens to a writer.

QUESTION: Can we now talk more specifically about the "Portuguese" areas? For example, do you see any basic links between FRELIMO (Mozambique) and PAIGC (Guinea Bissau)?

ANSWER: You mean should they have stronger links than they have now? Well, as an outsider, it seems to me that the links they have are probably adequate for now. You see, there is not much they can do for each other in the field. They can do quite a lot for each other in propaganda terms in presenting their case. I have the view that they don't do enough along those lines. They have very few people, for instance, who can come to Britain to speak; this may also be true of America. Or if you add up the effective leadership in all three movements, you've got a very small number of English-speakers, that is, people who can stand on a platform and speak well in English. You had one of the very best here not so long ago, as I saw from your first issue *(A Talk with a Guinean Revolutionary)*. There are very few like Gil Fernandez who command the language in this way, and I've often thought that they would do better if they

could use these very few English-speaking spokesmen in order to present the case for all three territories rather than only for one. To some extent they have begun to do that.

QUESTION: Why have you espoused the position of MPLA over GRAE (led by Holden Roberto) and over UNITA (led by Savimbi), the latter apparently claiming to be in East Angola and to have been there actively for two years? You wrote an article in Le Monde *which was answered by some critics who claimed that you had, in fact, over-favored the MPLA. Now GRAE is supposedly United States-via-Kongo sponsored, MPLA is Russian-supported, and UNITA is Chinese-supported. I don't know how much truth there is in my information, and I would like your opinion on it. I would also like to know why you chose the MPLA. Was it an opportunist situation, i.e. they were the one who allowed you to get in and see what was going on, or was it that you have some ideological commitment to MPLA? Also, are the cleavages among these groups, in fact, impediments to the liberation of Angola?*

ANSWER: I don't have any ideological commitment to the MPLA, as distinct from the others. I was, and am, only interested in efficacity. I have observed these movements since they began around 1961. First of all, with regards to GRAE, I don't take it very seriously any longer, and for perfectly objective reasons.

QUESTION: Objective and not subjective?

ANSWER: Yes, *objective*. In this respect, I have changed my views. I wrote a report in *West Africa* in 1963 saying that the MPLA was finished, because it seemed to me that it was. I was wrong. Today, I think, if one summarizes all the evidence which is available, one can come to the conclusion that MPLA is by far the most significant movement in Angola. As for UNITA, I must confess it is very difficult to know just how efficacious they are. And that is one of the reasons why I went to Móxico District — to test the credentials of both these groups. And it became perfectly clear from the evidence of my journey that MPLA has been far more effective than UNITA. Incidentally, this is also confirmed by the Portuguese and South African press and by Portuguese war communiques. The people who responded to the *Le Monde* article were solely UNITA representatives in Europe, with one exception, someone who was a GRAE supporter, a Belgian living in Switzerland.

To the extent that UNITA does exist in Angola, I am not sure just how effectively or how often it can make penetrations. It has made large claims, some of which are mani-

festly absurd. Those I was able to test are not true. If you take the book recently published in Brussels by Jorge Valentim, who left UPA in 1965 at the same time as Jonas Savimbi, and joined in forming UNITA, you'll see a map which shows the whole of eastern Angola as being occupied by UNITA. Well, I did not go very far. And I am very careful to say exactly how far I went and where I went. It covers a round trip of some 300 miles, and UNITA does not exist in that area. Ideally, of course, I should have been there a year and should have gone to every area.

I should just like to answer one more point in your question. You asked me *why* I chose MPLA. Well, I had a second and very powerful reason for doing so - the opinion of responsible Zambian leaders. The Zambian government and UNIP regard MPLA as their ally. They do *not* regard UNITA as their ally. On the contrary. It is very clear that UNITA, if it is allied with anyone, is allied with the ANC of Zambia and with its break-away which Mr. Mundia leads. This seems to me to be an interesting piece of information. I respect what the Zambians know; I think they are very well-informed on these matters, much better informed than I am, or, indeed, better informed than any of us can be. They have certain very strong views. One of them is that MPLA is the movement they should support. And they do support it.

QUESTION: But how much is this related to the fact that GRAE is BaKongo primarily and MPLA is composed of a different ethnic group? Just how ethnically-aligned are these political organizations?

ANSWER: GRAE/UPA claim to have a following outside the BaKongo groups, but the evidence for this appears weak, if not altogether missing. At the beginning, in the early 1960's, MPLA was also limited ethnically--largely to the Kimbundu and some *assimilado* (Afro-Portuguese) groups in the main towns, most of all in Luanda. Today, however, the MPLA is a vastly different movement from what it was early in the 1960's. Since its opening of guerilla warfare in eastern Angola, in 1967, it has undoubtedly won the right to claim a wide multi-ethnic support. In the Móxico areas where I was, for instance, its adherents were principally Mbunda (not to be confused with Mbundu), Luchaze and other groups previously denoted by the catch-all label of *Ganguella*. UNITA claims to have support mainly from the Ovimbundu of the center; well, MPLA undoubtedly also has support among the Ovimbundu, and the commander of one of the chief fighting zones in Móxico, a man I got to know very well, is himself an Ovimbundu (Mbundu).

There is another large point here, too. The MPLA had not only made large progress towards transforming itself into a national movement, but also into a revolutionary movement in the senses I have indicated. I do not think that the UPA has been able to do this, or has even wanted to do it; its leadership remains, so far as I can see, elitist and reformist.

In these respects there is an interesting comparison with FRELIMO in Mozambique. In one strand of FRELIMO there were the traditionalists--the chiefs--whether they were real chiefs or Portuguese government-appointees--who were interested strictly in limited reforms which would enable them to acquire certain rights within the Portuguese structure, and eventually, as they hoped, to achieve some type of autonomy. In other words, they were what I would call reformist. But when the armed struggle begins, of course, things began to change because it was the young men who went into battle. And, in the case of the Makonde it was the young age-grades that formed the fighting units. Now they already had a built-in traditional rivalry with the older age-grades, the elders. These young men formed units... went into battle...went into the forest...died...suffered. They took the struggle on their shoulders. And, in doing so, of course, revolutionized themselves. They did not wish to stay with a reformist option which was going to advance chiefs, people they knew very well and disagreed with for some very good reasons. They were not fighting and dying for *limited objectives*. They began to conceive of a Mozambique independence. This brings us to the whole question of nationalism. They considered it a Mozambique affair; they were out to liberate the whole country. They did not set out to die for the Makonde, although they themselves were Makonde. This is one of the interesting intellectual transitions that has occurred. And, so one gets the second main strand in FRELIMO, which consists of the young men who are under thirty years old, and who really are the people who lead the units and form the units. They are the commanders and the fighting men. Increasingly, there comes to be a conflict between these two streams, which breaks out into the open in 1968 in northern Mozambique in a most dramatic way. It is won, in this case, by the *young men*, and the *old men* withdraw from the battle or defect to the Portuguese.

But whereas in Mozambique there has remained a single fighting front; in Angola, for much the same kind of reasons as mentioned above, one has had the development of two main movements, one aimed at a kind of reformism and one aimed at revolution--at revolution in the sense of revolutionizing traditional and colonial structures. Now,

for historical reasons of which you are probably well-aware, the Kongo people are a very self-confident and self-aware people with a long state history, with kings going back to the fourteenth century. It is a history they have never forgotten, of which they are intimately and acutely aware. UPNA (Union of the Peoples of Northern Angola)--the parent of UPA--begins as a struggle concerned with succession to the kingship of the BaKongo. (In this respect Chapter II of John Marcum's book, *The Angolan Revolution* (1969) is well worth reading.) When Holden Roberto becomes the representative of this movement, which aimed to put a different king on the throne (different from the one the Portuguese appointed), he went abroad with an initial task of persuading foreign opinion that the Kongo people wanted a different king. Hence arose a situation with certain comic overtones. I remember it well because I met Holden Roberto for the first time in Accra in 1958 when he was beginning to realize that nobody was going to listen to him on that score. Nobody there gave a damn whether the king of the Kongo was a Protestant or a Catholic. And people explained to him that he had the wrong issue for winning support; the issue was the Portuguese. And these people Holden Roberto was approaching were themselves very taken back because they said to themselves that this man was a spokesman for the Angolan people. And look what he is concerned with!

Holden learned from this, and the UPA's declared objectives were transformed, verbally at least, into those of a national scope; and soon, under various foreign influences, he thought it well to form his so-called Revolutionary Angolan Government in Exile (GRAE, based firmly in Kinshasa): he himself, so far as I know, has not been inside Angola, not even into the BaKongo areas, since at least 1960. Yet the transformation does appear to have remained more than just verbal.

The MPLA's ideological origins were different. From the very start, if confusedly, they were concerned with the national liberation of the whole of Angola, with the building of all of Angola's many different peoples into a working national unity. That is why the split between UPA and MPLA has remained wide, and why mutual hostility is so sharp and continuous.

So when you ask me why I *chose* the MPLA, that would be a third dimension. It did not seem very interesting to inquire into the progress that the Kongo might be making towards resolving their intra-ethnic conflicts; but it did seem interesting and relevant to our times to discover, if one could, what progress the MPLA might be making towards building An-

gola's peoples into a working national unity. As to access, of course, that is perfectly possible either with UPA or with MPLA.

QUESTION: To what extent do you still feel uneasy about making a choice between various groups which might have some potential for uniting in the future?

ANSWER: I think that we're going to have very difficult years ahead. It's perfectly possible that the Portuguese will try to produce some kind of neo-colonial *solution* in which Holden may be used. What is the *outside world's* attitude going to be then? What is going to be said about that?

QUESTION: Is there any basis for assuming that these groups have different sources of support which would contribute to ideological differences?--in Angola specifically?

ANSWER: So far as Holden is concerned, he has had most of his support overtly, so far as we know, from the government of Congo-Kinshasa, some from the OAU, but not much. The Congo-Kinshasa government supports him very strongly indeed. It has been alleged very often that the Congo-Kinshasa government is supported by the United States and Belgium, and there was a long report by Stanley Meisler in the *Los Angeles Times* in which he said that Mr. Mobutu had received aid, crucial aid from the United States. It is up to you, therefore, to decide how far the United States has helped Holden. There have been all sorts of allegations. The MPLA gets its support mainly from the Soviet Union. This might lead one to suppose that this was a straight cold war, East/West fight. I don't think for a moment that it is like that. The real difference is not between who is supporting whom, but between the concepts of liberation which the two movements have. So far as I know, up to last summer, the Chinese had done nothing for anybody in Angola, except to give UNITA some propaganda support.

QUESTION: What do you see as some of the problems of the liberation movements in the areas you have visited so far? And, how do you account for the success of the Guinea Bissau revolution as opposed to the other Portuguese territories?

ANSWER: It's a question of material rehabilitation. These areas are being ravaged by the Portuguese air force and army. Most of the population living in these areas are now living in very tough and deprived conditions. They will end the war with no material resources and with a great need for physical rehabilitation. In terms of political development, they obviously will have two main problems: one is to over-

come ethnic separatism, especially in Angola--to build a nation; and the other is to prevent the development of the leadership of the national movement into an elite which will, intentionally or not, become divided from the masses of the people. There are these two inevitable, built-in problems. It can be argued that the nature of the wars helps them to solve the second, since the nature of guerilla war can be unifying. Fighting, working together, and thinking about the same problems can be a very liberating experience. Those who say that the sufferings of these peoples may be more than made good by the unity which they will achieve, thanks to these wars, have a great deal of probability on their side.

The answer to your question about Guinea-Bissau's success rests on many levels. It's partly geographical. Guinea-Bissau is a small country about the size of Switzerland. Since 1963 it has had an absolutely solid ally in the Republic of Guinea. And since 1964 it's had a fairly useful friend in Senegal. It's a small country where the guerillas have been able to use at least two-thirds of all their land frontiers and some of their ocean frontiers as well. It's a country you can walk across in two or three weeks. Now, if you take Angola, it's a very different kettle of fish. It's an enormous country where the logistic difficulties are appalling for two reasons. First of all, you have to carry the ammunition and supplies for huge distances. Even now men are traversing forests and savannahs of Moxico carrying sixty or seventy pounds of ammunition on their backs, and they will go on doing this for weeks on end until they get where they are going. Secondly, it's very hard to exercise tight control over operations since local commanders are often separated from regional headquarters inside the country by many weeks of marching. So each commander is often left to do as well as he can. Human nature is human nature. Some do well, some do less well. Guinea-Bissau has also benefitted from an extremely effective leadership which at certain points and moments has probably been more effective than the leadership of either of the other movements. I happen to think that Amilcar Cabral (PAIGC) is a very outstanding person, and outstanding persons are important in history.

QUESTION: Do you see the struggle of Afro-Americans in the United States as an integral part of the struggles of Black people in Africa?

ANSWER: Yes, I do. We're concerned with things at two levels: local and general. The local situations fit into the general situation. But the general situation, in my

view, goes far beyond any question of color.

QUESTION: Several Mozambique students at the recent African Studies Association meetings in Boston expressed the view that Afro-Americans in this country should direct their efforts to influencing by pressure, lobbying, etc., the American government and people, as opposed to going to Africa to actively fight in the liberation movements. Would you comment on this?

ANSWER: I think this is the point of view of all those Africans concerned with leading these liberation struggles. If you read the end of the preface that Cabral wrote for my book about Guinea *(The Liberation of Guiné)*, he puts it very clearly. What he says is: "Look, we are going to liberate this country. We're going to do that whether you help us or not. You do the same, but in your own country." That's essentially what he's saying, but, of course, it doesn't mean that he will not be glad of aid of all sorts. In so far as it's possible to mobilize support for these movements, clearly they need all manner of things which are perfectly legal and legitimate--medical supplies, textiles, cash, etc. They would like to have this kind of help, but they won't ask for it. Cabral constantly makes this point--he won't ask for anything. If you give him help, that's fine. Then you're helping him to win a struggle which will help you, he argues, to win yours.

QUESTION: What types of connections did you have to make to gain physical access to the guerilla areas? Or was your renown sufficient?

ANSWER: Certainly my renown, if I have any, would have gone for nothing. These are very realistic people. They're not interested in people who might be thought to be renowned. In my case, I had been in touch with these people, with some of their leaders, since the end of the 1950's. But it's really not difficult; anyone can go there who is honestly interested.

QUESTION: Are the guerillas hospitable to most observers?

ANSWER: The guerillas are disciplined people. They say--"Here is a useful television team from West Germany. They may be opposed to us, but they can still do a useful job by showing the truth." The team will, therefore, get in.

QUESTION: There are said to be two opposite trends in Portugal. There are thousands of people fleeing across the bor-

der, away from conscription, away from unemployment, and also away from the whole breakdown of the economy--mainly resulting from the war. But, on the other hand, you have the industrialists who tend to gain from the continuation of the war. It's very similar to the situation in America. What do you think the prospects are of an internal revolt: an army revolt, a mass revolt--against the Portuguese regime as a result of dissatisfaction with the war?

ANSWER: Well, this is a question which we all ask ourselves, don't we? And we don't know the answer. But it looks as though there is very little chance at all. The Portuguese have sat now for forty-three years under a fascist dictatorship of one kind or another, and nearly all their democratic organizations have been thoroughly wrecked--the capacity to organize has been much destroyed. One has to be something over sixty years old even to have voted in anything other than a managed election. It looks as though the chances of any mass upheavals or radical change are quite small, if not totally absent. But that's not the end of the story. It is true, as you rightly said, that large numbers of Portuguese have fled the country, illegally, of course (all emigration from Portugal is illegal, except to Africa). However, the fact remains that an enormous number, perhaps five per cent of the population have fled to the Common Market countries: France, Italy, Germany, for the main part. And I was even told the other day that there are more Portuguese living in Paris at the moment than there are living in the city of Oporto, which is the second city in Portugal. This may be a slight exaggeration, but it is certainly now true for the whole of France. This means that the chances of effective radical reform in Portugal are, indeed, very small. There is that safety valve for mass pressure of being able to escape to France or wherever. The immigrants get the low-paid jobs in French factories, but the pay is still a lot more than workers get in Portugal.

And then there's another aspect of the matter. The wars have been, and still are, extremely costly to Portugal--non-productive in every economic or, indeed, any other sense. So now there is a *technocratic* trend in the Caetano regime--probably including Caetano himself--towards *modernization*--towards getting out of the *imperial commitment* and signing up Portugal with the European Common Market. That's what the technocrats want; that's what the industrialists want. Now they've gone into partnership with big foreign interests--and that, of course, is what the foreign interests want. However, the army doesn't want that at all. Any such course would soon undermine army power, prestige, and access to floods of money.

We shall see who will win. Caetano's latest *overseas reforms* are manifestly aimed towards some kind of cautious neo-colonial *reform*. If the regime goes ahead with that, we shall also see which guerilla movements--national liberation movements--are real, and which are not: which are going to allow themselves to be bought out, and which are going to stand up for, and hold out for, a truly anti-colonial solution.

QUESTION: You have a great familiarity with the historiography of Africa. And in your efforts to interpret both past and present, what would you like to see happen in African historiography? What are the gaps you have found to be most telling?

ANSWER: My reaction...perhaps it does not directly answer your question...is that the first need was to establish the *fact* of African history, just as, in political terms, the first need was to get the colonial powers out of Africa so as to open the field to advance. It seems to me that over the last ten years the *fact* of African history--that Africans, like any other people, are peoples with a very long history--has been established. If you look back ten years you will be astonished at how few African historians there were. Now, we've got good legions of them. This is excellent. All of us have helped to establish the *fact* of African history: that Africans have had their own history of states, kingdoms, empires, diplomacy, etc.

Now, it seems to me, the very progress in our understanding demands that we take, or try to take, another long step forward. I tried to set forth the nature of this step, as it happens, in a book published last year, *The African Genius*, which was concerned with the cultural and social history of Africa. I tried to *set up* a general survey which might serve as a stimulus to what I regard as being of the greatest importance for the historiography of the 1970's. My hope, if it won't sound pretentious, was that this book could have the same kind of introductory value as another book on chronological history that I'd published eleven years earlier.

Of course, we have to go on with research into chronology, and we have to know and to teach all the chronological history we can. But I think we have achieved a sufficient basis for that. We ought now to turn our minds to the nature of all this history, to the quality of African cultures, to the continuity and metamorphosis of African structural forms. I'm convinced this revolution in Africa that we've been talking about is going to be one in African terms,

mediated through African experience. This means that, even from this standpoint, we are going to have to understand much more about the cultural achievements, and the cultural limitations, of African societies -- taking *cultural* in a very broad sense to include economics and politics. As Evans-Pritchard said twenty years ago, anthropologists are going to have to become historians, and historians anthropologists.

QUESTION: In fact, one of the most historically-oriented of social anthropologists, M.G. Smith, is now on top of the field. One cannot accuse him of being synchronic anymore.

ANSWER: Yes, that's right. M.G. Smith is a very good case in point. But the same is true the other way round, as it were, of some of the most brilliant of our Africanist historians, certainly not least those at UCLA.

The great need now is to put social and cultural *flesh* on the chronological skeleton -- to round out the picture, to give it energy and life. It is not enough, for example, to say that Africans had kings. How did these kings get to be kings? Within what socio-cultural structures did they operate, and so on? Otherwise, we shall never really be able to plumb the depths of Africa's history, to see and to appreciate its inner subtleties and mechanisms, to enjoy and portray its specificity.