AFRICAN VOICES OF THE GLOBAL PAST

1500 to the Present



EDITED BY TREVOR R. GETZ

African Voices of the Global Past

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Editor

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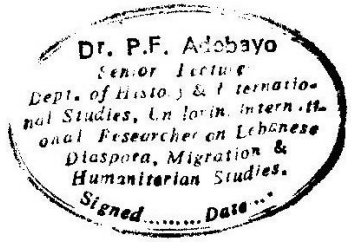
For A. Adu Boahen and Joseph C. Miller,

two great historians of Africa



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Pathways to Decolonization

African Voices of the Fight for Independence, ca. 1880–1994

Peter Adebayo

GLOBAL CONTEXT

The purpose of this chapter is to revisit the issue of decolonization—the process of nationalist struggle that caused the European empires to give up their African colonies—from the perspective of Africans. Decolonization, an important theme in African history, has been experienced in different ways in different places. A political process on the surface, but with economic, social, and cultural implications, decolonization has frequently involved violence. In extreme circumstances, wars of independence followed revolutions. More often, there was a dynamic cycle in which negotiations failed and minor disturbances ensued, resulting in suppression by the police and military forces, escalating into more violent revolts that led to further negotiations until independence was granted.[1] European and American authors have often referred to this process as a "transfer of power," whereas African scholars understand it as a long process of struggle, spanning many decades, that which can be roughly divided into the following phases: 1900–1920, 1920–1940, and 1940–1970. During these phases, Africans

adopted various strategies of resistance—from rebellions, insurrections, and militancy to peaceful and constitutional means. Consequently, decolonization has come to be known by various names—"the fall of colonialism," "regaining independence and sovereignty by African states," the "liberation movements," "struggle for independence," "nationalists' struggle," and "the anticolonial period in Africa."[2] These terms are discussed where appropriate in the chapter.

African Decolonization in Global Context

Arguably, the starting point for understanding decolonization on a global scale was World War I, which emphasized the principles of self-determination. During World War I, the European powers implied that their colonial territories would be granted self-determination and democracy after the war. This propaganda was used by European governments—especially Britain and France—to mobilize African soldiers to fight against German forces in British and French colonies. After the war, European powers failed to adhere to this promise and many African soldiers, whose intellectual outlook had expanded during the war, returned home to mobilize forces against colonialism in Africa. Some soldiers, who returned "politicized and radicalized" from the war, formed national associations critical of colonialism, such as the National Congress of British West Africa formed in 1920 by the nationalists in Ghana.[3] However, these were generally small groups oriented toward the needs of an emerging middle class of formally educated men. In the same period, radical parties such as al-Wafd al Misri in Egypt and the Destour Party in Tunusia were formed to agitate for independence.

Two decades later, during World War II (1939–1945), African soldiers in India and other Asian countries such as Burma widened the political horizon of the soldiers who similarly returned home to mobilize the masses for the liquidation of colonialism. Again, European powers used the propagandistic message that they were fighting for democracy and self-determination to mobilize support for the Allied forces in African and Asian colonies, along with promises and implications that the colonies would be granted self-rule after the war. The principle that all people have the right to self-determination was espoused by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and US President Franklin D. Roosevelt in the third part of their eight-point agenda in the Atlantic Charter of August 14, 1941, and, again, in the United Nations Charter signed in 1945.

Newly formed local political parties that focused on attaining independence and enjoyed widespread grassroots support after World War II probably had the greatest impact in accelerating the decolonization process. This was true in Asia, the Caribbean, and also in Africa, where the period 1945–1950 witnessed the growth of the first organized and widespread political parties outside of Egypt. Founded in almost every corner of the continent, these parties differed dramatically from one another. What they had in common, however, was the ability to appeal to large groups of people and the objective of expelling the overseas empires and their colonial apparatus. This commonality bound together, for example, the Mouvement pour le Triomphe des Libertés Démocratiques (MTLD) in Algeria, the Ashiqq (Brothers) and Umma (Nation) Parties in the Sudan, the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (RDA) throughout French West and Equatorial Africa, the Kenyan African Union (KAU) in Kenya, and the Mouvement pour L'Évolution Sociale de l'Afrique Noire (MESAN) in Central African Republic.

The emergence of the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) as superpowers and their cold war dispute also contributed to the pace of decolonization. The two superpowers generally supported ending colonial rule and wooed emergent nations through economic aid, technical expertise, and military assistance; especially persuasive was the series of aid programs offered to African nationalist forces struggling for independence. US public opinion in support of nationalist movements helped to undermine the British and French will to rule in much of Africa. Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau received military and financial aid from the Soviet Union while struggling to overthrow Portuguese colonial rule in the 1970s, and the United Nations promoted self-determination for colonized peoples by acting as a forum for peaceful resolution of independence struggles. The United Nations Charter explicitly supported the principle of international accountability in Articles 73 and 74, and UN practices aided the decolonization process in Africa.[4] These external factors, combined with

the formation of grassroots political parties, marked a significant turning point in the history of Africa's decolonization.

Precedents and Cross-Currents

In order to understand Africa's decolonization process, we will find it helpful to look briefly at earlier and contemporaneous liberation movements in North America, Latin America, Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. Consider, for example, the struggle for American independence in the 1770s, which was due less to social tensions within the thirteen British North American colonies than to a rather sudden and unexpected effort by the British government to tighten its control over the colonies and to extract more revenue in the form of taxes.[5] The impact of America's revolutionary war of independence was felt in both France and Latin America. In France, thousands of soldiers who assisted American colonists returned home full of enthusiasm for awakening the consciousness of the masses, helping to spur the French Revolution of 1789. The echoes of both the American and the French revolutions reverberated loudly in the French Caribbean colony of Saint Domingue, later renamed Haiti.[6] There, slaves led by the astute former slave Toussaint Louverture, held a massive revolt beginning in 1791, eventually overcoming internal resistance, outmaneuvering foreign powers, and defeating French forces. Haiti's independence was declared on January 1, 1804. This revolution would later embolden nationalist activities in Africa.

In Spain's Latin American colonies, revolutions in the early nineteenth century were shaped by preceding events in North America, France, and Haiti as well as by their own distinctive societies and historical experiences. Native-born elites in the Spanish colonies (known as creoles) opposed the Spanish monarchy's efforts to exercise greater power over its colonies and to subject them to heavier taxes and tariffs. Creole intellectuals were familiar with the concepts of popular sovereignty, republican government, and personal liberty derived from the European philosophers and the Enlightenment. This revolutionary thought was facilitated by the upheavals in Europe that developed from Napoleon Bonaparte's invasion of Spain and Portugal. One major result was the decolonization of continental Latin America and parts of the Caribbean.

However, while twentieth-century African anticolonial leaders sometimes referred to the Enlightenment ideals offered by Latin American and US revolutionaries and certainly saw the Haitian Revolution as an inspiration, the example of Asian states that managed to liberate themselves in the twentieth century was of more immediate relevance. In Asia, the independence of India in 1947 was especially inspirational. This decolonization was characterized by the nonviolent Indian independence movement led by Mohandas Gandhi, which was later imitated by emergent African Leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and Chief Obafemi Awolowo of Nigeria. Other African anticolonial leaders were inspired by the armed resistance of Asian anticolonial forces such as the Viet Minh in Vietnam to resist colonialism with force.

Equally significant for African anticolonial leaders was their connection to black Americans and other Africans of the diaspora. By the 1920s, W.E.B. Du Bois and Marcus Garvey urged African Americans to fight against oppression and racial discrimination in the United States. Both of these intellectuals were also greatly concerned about the suffering of Africans under colonialism. Garvey, in particular, taught his fellow African Americans to be proud of their skin color and preached in favor of the large-scale return of African Americans to Africa and the freedom of Africa from colonialism. Garvey prophesied that Africa's redemption was "coming like a storm."[7] His brand of black nationalism had three components: unity, pride in African cultural heritage, and complete autonomy. Garvey believed that people of African descent could establish a great independent nation in their ancient homeland of Africa. Meanwhile, Du Bois tried to bring black leaders in the United States of America, the West Indies, and Africa together so that they could cooperate toward the liberation of black people everywhere. Under his influence, five Pan-African Congresses were held between 1919 and 1945.[8] At the 1945 Pan-African Congress, delegates declared that "[i]f the western world is still determined to rule mankind by force, then Africans, as a last resort, may have to appeal to force in the effort to achieve freedom, even if force destroys them and the world." A resolution from the conference called on "the colonial workers, farmers and intellectuals to unite and form societies to fight against imperialist exploitation and for independence using such methods as strikes, boycotts, positive actions and other non-violent strategies."[9]

Future African leaders—notably, Nnamdi Azikwe of Nigeria and Kwame Nkumah of Ghana, both of whom studied in America in the 1920s—were influenced by the black nationalism of both Garvey and Du Bois. Garvey's ideas, in particular, affected their outlook and helped bring global awareness to the movement. Young Africans studying abroad joined organizations such as the West African Students' Union (WASU), which was founded in London in 1925 by Ladipo Solanke, a Nigerian student. The WASU, through its social and political activities, attracted numerous West African students in Britain.

The Attitudes of the Colonizers

The process of decolonization was also influenced by the policies and attitudes of each of the great global empires. For instance, Africans in the British colonies were allowed more freedom of expression and association than those in the Portuguese or Belgian colonies. Consequently, liberation struggles in the British colonies were generally peaceful and constitutional, whereas the Portuguese colonies fought protracted liberation wars. In colonies with many European settlers, a military fight was ultimately necessary for independence, even those in British hands (e.g., Kenya) or under French control (e.g., Algeria).

However, the struggles in British colonies were fundamentally different from those in the French colonies. In the 1950s, the British realized that the rebellious colonies were becoming a financial and geopolitical burden, largely due to the efforts of anticolonial protestors, whereas the French believed that they had to reassert their national prestige by maintaining control of their colonies. This difference in attitude was exacerbated by the disparity between the two empires' governing systems. In the British system the governor of each colony (advised by his legislative and executive councils) was in charge, with only general guidelines from London. By contrast, the French system endeavored to evolve a common "philosophy" of administration for all colonies, and colonial affairs were managed more directly from Paris.[10] Accordingly, the nationalist leaders of the British West African colonies concentrated their efforts on influencing their local colonial administrations whereas those of the French colonies focused more on influencing Paris directly. This may explain why French colonial Africa's experience of decolonization was so different from that of British colonial Africa. In short, France's decolonization was bloody and bitter whereas Britain's was relatively peaceful, if not painless.

The other colonial powers, Portugal and Belgium, pursued their own colonial policies. Portuguese leaders perceived their colonies (Angola, Mozambique, Guinea, and the Cape Verde islands Sao Tome and Principe) as appendages of the metropole, spending half of the country's annual budget to maintain military control of these colonies and using them as a means of securing employment for its citizens, who were encouraged to migrate to Africa to help solve Portugal's economic problems. Belgium, on the other hand, adopted a highly centralized policy for its colonial territories. The Congo was divided into five provinces; each had a governor and they were headed overall by a governor-general. The Belgian system of rule rested on a triple alliance of the state, the church, and big corporations. Local representation was considered to be unnecessary. The object of Belgian colonial policy was to create a prosperous black working class that would be content with prosperity instead of votes. The Belgian *Charter Coloniale* omitted freedom of association and freedom of the press as essential rights. Indeed, the Belgian colonial administration wished to remove the Congo from "politics" altogether and, toward this end, formed two related policies that aimed at removing the Congo from nationalist movements in the rest of Africa and at preventing the growth of a landed European class impatient with home control.

AFRICAN EXPERIENCES

The continent-wide process of African decolonization can be roughly divided into three phases: 1900s–1920s, 1920s–1940s, and 1940s–1970s.

First Phase (1900s–1920s): The Gradual Development of the Liberation Struggle

With the exception of Liberia and Ethiopia, the entirety of the African continent was colonized between the 1870s and 1910s. During this period,

Africans engaged in rural armed uprisings and other types of struggles against colonialism. They found it difficult to tolerate the restrictive and often inexplicable ways in which their lives were being reordered. The main objective of the anticolonial movement during this period was to either regain lost sovereignty by expelling the colonial administration or to press for reforms of the colonial system. Strategies included passive resistance as well as campaigns by secret associations, unions, political parties, and the new African-controlled Ethiopian and Pentecostal churches that had begun to emerge. Numerous rebellions also broke out, usually originating in rural areas rather than urban centers and often under the leadership of traditional rulers and priests. These rebellions were usually precipitated by measures introduced by the new colonial order such as taxation, alienation of land, compulsory cultivation of crops, colonial officials' tyrannical behavior, introduction of European culture in the form of Western education and Christianity, and condemnation of African culture and traditional ways of life. One rebellion in West Africa that focused on defending the old order was the Yaa Asantewaa war in 1900, which involved the Asante of Ghana. Other rebellions—such as the Egba revolt of 1903, the Gurunsi rebellion in 1915 in Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso), and the Hut Tax war in Sierra Leone in 1898—were largely uprisings against taxation and forced labor.[11] In the same period more than twenty-five organized rebellions occurred in the five central African colonies of Angola, Mozambique, Nyasaland (Malawi), Northern Rhodesia (Zambia), and the Congo as well as in southern Africa. An interesting aspect of these rebellions in the southern and central African regions was the involvement of cult priests and spirit mediums. The rebellion in Nyasaland in 1908, for example, was led by the Tonga priest Maluma, who urged "black people to rise and drive all the white people out of the country." Similarly, Mbona cult priests spearheaded the Massinga rebellion of 1884, and the priestess Maria Nkoie played a leading role in the rebellion in the Congo that lasted from 1916 to 1921.[12]

In East Africa, the largest uprising of this period was the Maji-Maji rebellion, which broke out in Tanganyika (now Tanzania) with the sole aim of driving out the Germans. Led by the traditional prophet Kinjikitiele, it covered an area of more than ten thousand square miles and involved more

than twenty ethnic groups. The revolt started when the Germans levied new taxes in 1898 and forced locals to build roads and accomplish various other tasks for the government. Four years later, in 1902, the governor of Tanganyika ordered all of the villages of the colony to grow cotton as a cash crop; each was charged with producing a common plot of cotton. The African headmen of these villages were left in charge of overseeing production—a position that left them vulnerable to angry criticism from the population. This decision to force cotton growing on rural peasants, who had their own livings to make, was extremely unpopular across Tanzania and took a toll on their lives. Indeed, the social fabric of society was undergoing rapid change. The roles of men and women were altered to face the needs of the communities. Since men were forced away from their homes to work, women had to assume some of the traditional male roles; as a result, the resources of the village were strained and people were less able to remain self-sufficient. These outcomes created a great deal of animosity against the government. In 1905, a drought threatened the region. This, combined with opposition to the government's agricultural and labor policies, led to an open rebellion against the Germans that lasted from 1905 to 1907.

In places where colonial policies were particularly oppressive, such as the Belgian Congo, country-wide revolts frequently broke out. The biggest of these were the uprisings among the Azande (1892–1912), the Bakaya (1825–1906), the Kasango Nyembo (1907–1917), the Bashi (1900–1916), and the Babua and Budja (1903–1905). Similar revolts occurred in many other parts of Africa. Some of these revolts were carried out jointly by neighboring peoples who had little or nothing to do with each other before the advent of colonial rule. In eastern and central Africa, for instance, the Ndbele and Shona of Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), who had once been antagonistic toward each other, revolted together against the British in 1896–1897. And the Maji-Maji revolt against German rule in 1907 was the result of cooperation among many groups in southeastern Tanzania. Essentially rural movements, such revolts occurred at a time when the colonial powers were firmly establishing their control. In most cases they were easily suppressed by the colonial powers.

Religious insurrections were also common during the early years of colonial rule. In parts of Africa where Christianity had made a considerable

impact, people sought liberation through such insurrections. In 1911 Charles Domingo founded an independent church in Malawi and used his pulpit to criticize colonialism. With rousing sermons he attacked Christian missions and Europeans, pointing out the contrast between their theories and their practices. One of his leaflets, published in 1911, employed the semi-pidgin English common during this period to express his disdain for European hypocrisy. Although such language may seem comical to us today, the sentiment was deadly serious:

> There is too much failure among all Europeans in Nyasaland. The combined bodies—missionaries, Government and Companies organizers of money—do form the same rule to look down upon the native with mockery eyes. It is sometimes startles us to see that the three combined are from Europe and along with them there is little Christiandom. . . . If we had power enough to communicate ourselves to Europe we would advise them not to call themselves Christiandon but Europeandom. Therefore the life of the combined bodies is altogether too cheaty, too thefty, too mockery. Instead of "give," they say take away. There is too much breakage of God's pure law as seen in James's Epistle, Chapter Five, verse four.[13]

In many African communities, separatist Christian churches arose under the leadership of native "messiahs" who declared that they had been sent to liberate the people. Their preachings sparked revolts against the colonial regime. Among many such uprisings, the two best-known ones were led in 1915 by John Chilembewe in Malawi (then Nyasaland) and in 1921 by Simon Kimbangu in the Belgian Congo. In some instances (e.g., Kimbanguism in the Congo), the political influences of these messianic movements persisted for many decades.[14]

Second Phase (1920s—1940s): The Formation of Liberation Movements

The second phase in the struggle for independence, which commenced in the 1920s, was characterized by the influence of communism, the negritude movement, and the emergence of liberation movements. After the October

Revolution of 1917, the communists under V. I. Lenin came to power in Russia and the new Soviet Union government quickly began to operate internationally. In Africa, the Soviet government provided not only money but also training in political organization to African anticolonial leaders. Sierra Leonean Wallace Johnson and Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya had training in Moscow and were influenced by communist and socialist ideologies. So, too, were Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Amilcar Cabral of Guinea Bissau, and Agostinho Neto of Angola.

The emerging anticolonial movements in French West Africa were boosted during this era by the development of the consciousness of African identity known as the concept of negritude. Largely an intellectual and literary movement, negritude had its origins among Francophone Africa and Caribbean students living and studying in Paris in the 1930s. Here young scholars such as Leopold Senghor (who later became the first president of Senegal) and Leon Damas began to develop a philosophy of "blackness," which stressed the shared culture of all those of African descent.[15] Its inspiration was *Légitime Défense*, a literary journal started by French-speaking West Indians. This movement developed the idea of negritude, which became identified with the journal *Présence Africaine*. Its great theorists were the Martiniquan poets Étienne Léro and Aimé Césaire. Negritude reflected the special conditions of French-speaking Africans in the world of the French. Unlike the British and the Belgians, the French believed in a colonial policy of cultural assimilation, sometimes mockingly described as turning Africans into "black Frenchmen"—a policy that included only a small elite. Eventually, many in this group began to feel smothered by the alien clothes and ideas forced on them, and stripped away their French cultural wrappings in order to discover their own true black skins. This intellectual revolt against enforced assimilation and the "search for the roots of African origin" is the essence of negritude.

The anticolonial movements of this period generally did not move to end colonialism decisively but, rather, called for reform in particular policies. They adopted diverse strategies against colonialism but also continued to use religious movements (as they had done during the first phase) as a way of expressing colonial protests. Even in cases where particular protests

appeared to have immediate objectives—such as revolts against taxation, demands for increased employment of Africans, and demands for the return of lands seized by settlers—their underlying motive was the rejection of foreign domination (as we shall see below). Thus, although the pace of progress varied from colony to colony, the many separate local battles of this period should be seen as part of the main struggle for independence.

In North Africa, however, a few radical political parties formed that agitated for full and rapid moves toward independence. These parties were led by charismatic personalities such as the Sudanese radical nationalist Ali Abd al-Latif, who campaigned for liberation from the "slavery of the colonial power" and organized demonstrations and riots in the major towns. In 1924 the Sudanese military staged an unsuccessful revolt against British colonialism, and in 1920 a radical nationalist organization called the Destour party was formed in Tunisia. However, these groups would have to wait many years before their goals were accomplished.

Egypt was the only real exception to the general trend; indeed, it was the only country in which major nationalist progress was made during the 1920s. Egypt enjoyed two advantages: first, British occupation of Egypt was balanced by the continued authority of the Egyptian king and, second, before the British occupation, the Egypt government had begun to educate a new class of leaders in European-style schools. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the country had produced many such leaders and its nationalist movement was therefore very strong. Consequently, in 1922, Britain was compelled to grant independence of a limited sort to Egypt.[16]

Third Phase (1940s–1970s): The Independence Struggle

For most African countries, the late 1940s marked the beginning of the third and culminating stage of the liberation struggle. Anticolonial feelings that had developed in the previous decades became more intense during World War II.[17] Major nationalist leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah, Jomo Kenyatta, and Nnamdi Azikiwe were politicized by the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935, for example. After independence was attained, the emperor of Ethiopia put his country at the forefront of the unity movements by inviting African nationalists to a meeting that led to the formation of the Organization of African Unity.

These three leaders—Nkrumah, Kenyatta, and Azikiwe—deserve special attention. Kwame Nkrumah (1909–1972) was born in the British Gold Coast Colony, which would later become Ghana. He was trained in both the United States and the United Kingdom, and then returned to take an active part in politics. During the colonial era of agitation for independence, Nkrumah broke away from the politically moderate United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC), which called for a gradual evolution of British policy toward decolonization, and in 1949 formed the Convention People's Party (CPP), whose motto was "Self-Government Now." The CPP's Positive Action campaign quickly gained the support of rural and working-class people. Soon, however, Nkrumah and other party leaders were imprisoned by British authorities for organizing boycotts, strikes, and other forms of civil disobedience. In 1951, however, the British allowed a general election. The recently released Nkrumah won, becoming the "Leader of the Government Business" and, later, prime minister. In 1954, the country became virtually self-governing. After further negotiations with Britain, on 6 March 1957 at 12 a.m. Nkrumah declared Ghana "free forever."

Jomo Kenyatta, also known as Kamau wa Ngengi (1894–1978), was born to the family of Ngengi wa Muigai and Wambui in the village of Gatundu in British East Africa (now Kenya). Kenyatta was a member of the Kikuyi people. He entered politics after taking an interest in the political activities of James Beauttah, the leader of the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA). Kenyatta joined the KCA in 1924 and rose up the ranks; he also studied in London and Moscow.[18] Soon after the rebellion against British rule began in 1951, Kenyatta was arrested and indicted with five others on the charges of "managing and being a member" of the Mau Mau—a blanket label applied by the British to a group of radical anticolonial movements including the armed Land Freedom Party. He remained in prison until 1959, after which he was detained in a prison camp in a remote part of Kenya. He was still there when, following an extended military campaign, the state of emergency was lifted on January 12, 1960. The rebels suffered heavy losses but were ultimately successful in forcing the British to the bargaining table. In 1961 and

1962, Kenyatta led the Kenya African National Union (KANU) in negotiations as well as in the subsequent election, winning 83 seats out of 124. On June 1, 1963, Kenyatta became prime minister of the autonomous Kenyan government.

Benjamin Nnamdi Azikiwe (1904–1996), usually referred to as Nnamdi Azikiwe and popularly known as "Zik," was one of the leading figures of modern Nigeria nationalism and the first president of Nigeria in 1960.[19] A journalist, Azikiwe co-founded the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) alongside Herbert Macaulay in 1944. He became the secretary-general of the National Council in 1946 and was elected to the Legislative Council of Nigeria the following year. He went on to serve in the provincial parliaments allowed by Britain after World War II. In 1951, he became the leader of the opposition to the government of Obafemi Awolowo in the Western Region's House of Assembly. In 1952 he moved to the Eastern Region and was elected to the position of chief minister, and in 1954 he became premier of Nigeria's Eastern Region. On November 16, 1960, he became the governor general and on the same day became the first Nigerian named to the Privy Council of the United Kingdom. Following the proclamation of a republic in Nigeria in 1963, he became the first president. At the same time, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa was chosen as Nigeria's first prime minister.

These men and others like them took leadership positions and led their countries to freedom, partly through their own skills and partly owing to the new global situation after 1945. They found fertile ground for their ideas in the post–World War II period. The war not only produced a politicized class of veterans and galvanized the masses, it also discredited the racist ideologies that were used to justify European rule. In addition, it left the colonial powers exhausted economically and infrastructurally. Ever more reliant on the economies of the colonies, the imperial powers had to give in to the pressures of nationalists across Africa. The new nationalist leaders were emboldened by support from the United States and the Soviet Union—especially the 1945 press statement from Soviet foreign minister V. M. Molotov, who said: "We must first of all see to it that the dependent territories are enabled as soon as possible to take the path of national independence."[20]

Soviet attacks on colonialism placed the Soviet Union at the head of the radical anticolonial Afro-Asian group of states at the United Nations, forcing the British and the French to grant concessions to the anticolonial forces in order not to alienate the Afro-Asian states. Together with the rise of the United Nations and the Pan-African Congress of 1945, these external influences helped to solidify the strength of nationalist movements in Africa.[21] However, the strongest factor in the vigorous upsurge of nationalism after World War II was the intensification of feelings of anger, frustration, and disappointment over the inadequate political, social, and economic measures introduced by the colonial powers. Partly in response to criticisms and demands of the African nations during and immediately after the war, and partly to promote their own economic recovery, the colonial powers introduced a number of social, economic, and political changes. However, these reforms were too weak and too oriented toward economic investment from Europe to be satisfactory to the nationalists.

Anticolonial sentiment during this period was advanced through a proliferating number of African political parties, which, with broad popular support, focused on attaining rapid independence for their respective countries (although these parties were not allowed in Portuguese and Belgian colonies until 1954 and 1956, respectively).[22] In contrast to the parties and associations of the 1920s and '30s, which were generally made up of elites and mainly agitated for reform of the colonial system, these independent parties were grassroots oriented and more focused on the objective of attaining independence.

These changes were more significant to the success of the decolonization process in Africa than was the global context. This point was emphasized by historian A. Adu Boahen, perhaps the most important African scholar of decolonization to date:

> It is to Africans themselves and not to the colonial powers, the United Nations or any other powers that the initiative for and the accomplishment of the overthrow of colonialism should be attributed. In other words, the colonial powers did not voluntarily, smoothly or ingeniously hand over sovereignty and independence to Africans and scuttle out. With the sole exception

of Belgium, all the others were kicked out of Africa, politically though unfortunately not yet economically or even culturally, after protracted struggles that were sometimes peaceful and constitutional but often violent and bloody.[23]

AFRICAN PERSPECTIVES ON DECOLONIZATION

Decolonization in British and French West Africa

Ghana, formerly the British Gold Coast Colony, was the first colony in sub-Saharan Africa to attain independence, and managed to do so with minimal violence. Kwame Nkrumah was the main architect of the independence movement here. Between 1947 and 1957 he instituted the Positive Action Campaign, expanding the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) to more than five hundred local offices throughout the colony, all of which were capable of mounting local protests. However, the UGCC leadership did not support his strategy of mounting growing numbers of mass protests. Thus Nkrumah left the UGCC to form his own progressive political party, the Convention People's Party. The more aggressive strategy of this party was reflected in its motto (which, as noted earlier, was "Self-Government Now"), and on July 10, 1953, Kwame Nkrumah called for constitutional reform that would bring independence to Ghana. The CPP also took on a "pan-Africanist" vision that called for union or alliance with nationalist movements in other colonies. Following is Nkrumah's view on this issue:

> For centuries, Europeans dominated the African continent. The white man arrogated to himself the right to rule and to be obeyed by the non-white; his mission, he claimed, was to "civilise" Africa. Under this cloak, the Europeans robbed the continent of vast riches and inflicted unimaginable suffering on the African people. All this makes a sad story, but now we must be prepared to bury the past with its unpleasant memories and look to the future. All we ask of the former colonial powers is their goodwill and co-operation to remedy past mistakes and injustices and to grant independence to the colonies in Africa. . . . It is clear that we must find an African solution

> to our problems, and that this can only be found in African unity. Divided we are weak; united, Africa could become one of the greatest forces for good in the world. Although most Africans are poor, our continent is potentially extremely rich. Our mineral resources, which are being exploited with foreign capital only to enrich foreign investors, range from gold and diamonds to uranium and petroleum. Our forests contain some of the finest woods to be grown anywhere. Our cash crops include cocoa, coffee, rubber, tobacco and cotton. As for power, which is an important factor in any economic development, Africa contains over 40% of the potential water power of the world, as compared with about 10% in Europe and 13% in North America. Yet so far, less than 1% has been developed. This is one of the reasons why we have in Africa the paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty, and scarcity in the midst of abundance.
>
> Never before have a people had within their grasp so great an opportunity for developing a continent endowed with so much wealth. Individually, the independent states of Africa, some of them potentially rich, others poor, can do little for their people. Together, by mutual help, they can achieve much. But the economic development of the continent must be planned and pursued as a whole. A loose confederation designed only for economic co-operation would not provide the necessary unity of purpose. Only a strong political union can bring about full and effective development of our natural resources for the benefit of our people.
>
> The political situation in Africa today is heartening and at the same time disturbing. It is heartening to see so many new flags hoisted in place of the old; it is disturbing to see so many countries of varying sizes and at different levels of development, weak and, in some cases, almost helpless. If this terrible state of fragmentation is allowed to continue it may well be disastrous for us all. There are at present some 28 states in Africa, excluding the Union of South Africa, and those countries not yet free. No less than nine of these states have a population of less than three million. Can we seriously believe that the colonial powers meant these countries to be independent, viable states? The example of South America, which has as much wealth, if not more than North America, and yet remains weak and dependent on outside interests, is one which every African would do well to study. Critics of African

> unity often refer to the wide differences in culture, language and ideas in various parts of Africa. This is true, but the essential fact remains that we are all Africans, and have a common interest in the independence of Africa. The difficulties presented by questions of language, culture and different political systems are not insuperable. If the need for political union is agreed by us all, then the will to create it is born; and where there's a will there's a way.[24]

Ghana became independent under Nkrumah only four years later, on March 6, 1957. This event had the effect of a revolutionary tonic, propelling other African leaders and nationalist movements to struggle for the attainment of independence. Some of its impact was psychological, as reflected in the statement of the great intellectual Frantz Fanon, who wrote that "the independence of a new territory, the liberation of the new people are felt by the other oppressed countries as an invitation, an encouragement and a promise."[25] Ghana also quickly gave material and organizational aid to other African independence movements. In 1958, Nkrumah organized an important meeting that brought together leaders from twenty-eight states to share ideas and strategies. The All African Peoples' Conference (AAPC) commenced on December 5, 1958, and lasted for eight days. The majority of these countries were not independent and were thus represented by heads of anticolonial political parties, movements, and trade unions. The chairman of the conference, Tom Mboya, a dynamic young labor union official from Kenya, opened the meeting by saying that "the problem is not to know if we want independence, but how to get it."[26]

The process of decolonization in other Anglophone African colonies was in some cases similar to that in Ghana. For instance, Nigeria's independence was also achieved without violence. In fact, it might have occurred even earlier than Ghana's if not for the fact that the three main political parties—the Nigerian National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) headed by Nnamidi Azikiwe, the Action Group (AC) headed by Chief Obafemi Awolowo, and the Northern People's Congress (NPC) headed by Sardaruna of Sokoto—found it difficult to work in solidarity with one another.[27]

In French-held West Africa, decolonization was much slower—owing in part to French policy and in part to the strategy implemented by French-speaking African leaders concerned by the lack of resources and educated

personnel in French West Africa. With administrative services still largely manned by France, most nationalist leaders in French West Africa—who were heavily dependent on French aid—realized that immediate independence without France's good will would be economically and politically difficult despite all its emotional attractions.[28] Just one year after Ghanaian independence, however, Sékou Touré, the leader of mineral-rich Guinea Africa, broke with this belief by telling French Prime Minister General Charles de Gaulle: "We prefer liberty with poverty to slavery with wealth."

Touré was inspired partly by revolutionary struggles for independence in French North African colonies such as Algeria, where the members of the Armée Nationale de Libération (ANL) were fighting the French forces. Touré would lead his country, Guinea, to become the first independent former French colony in sub-Saharan Africa in 1959, followed closely by much of French West and Equatorial Africa in 1960.

Violent Struggles for Independence in Settler Colonies

West Africa generally had few European settlers, so the nationalists there had a somewhat easier pathway to independence. French Algeria, by contrast, presents a classic case of independence achieved against the wishes of European settlers and thus pursued through violence. Large numbers of French and other European immigrants had settled in the country as early as the nineteenth century, and they generally refused to countenance independence under African leadership. First formed in 1954, the Algerian Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) issued a series of demands based on immediate independence:

> MEANS OF STRUGGLE: Struggle by every means until our goal is attained. Exertion at home and abroad through political and direct action, with a view to making the Algerian problem a reality for the entire world. The struggle will be long, but the outcome is certain. To limit the bloodshed, we propose an honourable platform for discussion with the French authorities:
>
> 1. The opening of negotiations with the authorized spokesmen the Algerian people, on the basis of a recognition of Algerian sovereignty, one and indivisible.

2. The inception of an atmosphere of confidence brought about [by] freeing all those who are detained, by annulling all measures [without] exception, and by ending all legal action against the combatant forces.

3. The recognition of Algerian nationhood by an official declaration abrogating all edicts, decrees, and laws by virtue of which Algeria was "French soil."

In return for which:

1. French cultural and economic interests will be respected, as well as persons and families.

2. All French citizens desiring to remain in Algeria will be allowed to opt for their original nationality, in which case they will be considered as foreigners, or for Algerian nationality, in which case they will be considered as Algerians, equal both as to rights and as to duties.

3. The ties between France and Algeria will be the object of agreement between the two Powers on the basis of equality and mutual respect.[29]

The French government, supported by the settler population, felt that it had the strength to resist these demands. Accordingly, the FLN's leaders decided that military action was the only way to remove the French and pursued a war for independence. In addition to and simultaneous with armed rebellion, they pursued a strategy of international diplomacy. In 1957, the Algerian independence issue was brought before the UN, putting a great deal of pressure on France. Although these strategies failed to rapidly achieve their objectives, after eight years of intensive fighting the French were forced to grant independence to Algeria in July 1962.[30]

Armed struggle similarly occurred in the British colony of Kenya. Here, the inability of the reformist and anticolonial associations formed in the 1920s and '30s to negotiate with the European settlers led to the formation of a more active and powerful secret society called the Land and Freedom Party, also known as "the Mau Mau." The Mau Mau organized a massive rebellion that erupted throughout the country in 1952 and was suppressed only in 1960. The Land and Freedom Party members' struggle forced the British to grant independence to Kenya on December 12, 1963.[31]

The Portuguese colonies of Africa also contained significant numbers of

settlers and were liberated only through prolonged armed struggle. Liberation wars against Portugal began in Angola 1961, but the fragmenting of the anticolonialists into several groups slowed the path to independence here and in Mozambique. Still, by the 1970s Portugal was fighting three separate wars in Africa. The cost in manpower and money was so high that the Portuguese people overthrew their government in a coup in 1974, and the new government recognized the right of its African subjects to self-governance.[32]

Two other settler colonies—British Rhodesia and South Africa—present striking situations in which nationalist struggles were directed against the settlers who took a harder line for continued colonial rule than the British government itself. In Southern Rhodesia (modern Zimbabwe), one of the major issues was land, inasmuch as the settlers had appropriated much of the arable territory of the country in the early twentieth century. Prior to 1965, African resistance in this colony was largely nonviolent and directed at public opinion in Britain, which was shifting toward support of independence. However, in 1965, when Britain appeared to be giving in to the anticolonial forces, the Rhodesian settler government of Ian Smith issued the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI), which declared Southern Rhodesia free from British white-only rule. Soon after, the national liberation war turned into a guerrilla conflict waged by two associated groups, the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU). The conflict lasted more than a decade. Coupled with international sanctions on the white minority regime as well as support for rebels from other African countries such as Nigeria, this conflict eventually brought the white minority regime to its knees. Zimbabwe became a multiracial democracy in 1980, with ZANU leader Robert Mugabe as the first prime minister.

In South Africa as well, nationalist struggle was directed against a white minority regime that was technically independent of Great Britain. Under this regime, the country's black African majority had no political rights whatsoever within the central state. Black South Africans' struggle was therefore directed against this internal opponent rather against a distant imperial authority. The African resistance against the white minority had initially been characterized by peaceful and moderate protests in the 1920s and '30s. These

protests, which were organized by the African National Congress (ANC) and other African organizations, primarily targeted two laws—namely, the Representation of Natives Act, which took the right to vote from the few previously eligible black voters in South Africa, and the Native Trust Land Bill, which deprived black Africans of their right to buy land outside the African reserves.[33]

As in other territories, World War II stimulated African resistance in South Africa and led to the formation of the ANC Youth League by university graduates, students, and educated workers. The most prominent leaders of the Youth League were African university graduates such as Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo and educated workers such as Walter Sisulu and Anton Lembede. Using the motto "'Africa's Cause Must Triumph," these young men and women criticized the ANC's traditional moderate methods of peaceful protest. As white minority rule became ever more racist and discriminatory, especially with the passing of the segregationist apartheid laws in 1948, they advocated direct mass action.

In 1949, the ANC reacted to these apartheid policies by adopting a program of action that called for the use of boycotts, strikes, civil disobedience, and noncooperation. Massive demonstrations by Africans as well as the Indian and mixed-race Coloured community shook the country during 1950. These groups formed a joint Planning Council to coordinate their efforts. Two years later they launched the famous Defiance Campaign of 1952, through which they defied a number of apartheid laws. Riots broke out in many cities, and 8,500 volunteers were arrested and imprisoned for deliberate acts of civil disobedience.[34] These activities undoubtedly strengthened the popularity of the ANC among Africans, who were also encouraged by developments in other African countries where nationalist forces were gradually driving out colonialism. However, the question of whether or not to move to militant tactics caused a split in 1958 between the ANC and the militant Pan African Congress (PAC).[35] On March 21, 1960, an unarmed crowd protesting against being forced to carry pass cards was shot at in Sharpeville. Sixty-nine of the demonstrators were killed and 178 wounded. Both the ANC and the PAC denounced the Sharpeville massacre; the government followed up with police raids, leading to the arrest of many leaders

of both the ANC and the PAC. Eventually, the government banned both parties as threats to the peace.

Following the ban, both organizations went underground. Under Nelson Mandela, the ANC formed a militant wing, Umkonto we Sizwe (Spear of the Nation), to train guerrillas for the eventual war against the white minority regime.[36] In 1962, Mandela and other leaders were arrested and convicted of sabotage. During his twenty-seven years of imprisonment, Mandela became a powerful symbol of resistance.

Throughout the 1970s, underground nationalists leaders turned to armed struggle, setting up training camps in friendly African states and authorizing selected acts of sabotage and assassination. Meanwhile, students and workers took matters into their own hands in spontaneous uprisings in 1976 and 1983–1985. Through their protests they won massive international support for their cause, including sanctions levied against the South African government by the United States and Europe. This was an important step, as most Arab, African, and Soviet-bloc states had already refused to cooperate with South Africa, leaving it with few friends outside of the West.

One of the few African leaders able to protest the state openly was Bishop Desmond Tutu (b. 1931), the first black Archbishop of Cape Town and the head of the Anglican Church in South Africa. In 1984, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his role in speaking out against apartheid. Shortly afterward, he spoke before the United Nations Security Council, attacking South Africa's racial policies. Tutu's speech was pessimistic about the future—a reflection of the times and the crisis faced by South Africans in 1985, at the height of the uprising:

> I speak out of a full heart, for I am about to speak about a land that I love deeply and passionately; a beautiful land of rolling hills and gurgling streams, of clear starlit skies, of singing birds, and gamboling lambs; a land God has richly endowed with the good things of the earth, a land rich in mineral deposits of nearly every kind; a land of vast open spaces, enough to accommodate all its inhabitants comfortably; a land capable of feeding itself and other lands on the beleaguered continent of Africa, a veritable breadbasket; a land that could contribute wonderfully to the material and spiritual development

and prosperity of all Africa and indeed of the whole world. It is endowed with enough to satisfy the material and spiritual needs of all its peoples. And so we would expect that such a land, veritably flowing with milk and honey, should be a land where peace and harmony and contentment reigned supreme.

Alas, the opposite is the case. For my beloved country is wracked by division, by alienation, by animosity, by separation, by injustice, by avoidable pain and suffering. It is a deeply fragmented society, ridden by fear and anxiety, covered by a pall of despondency and a sense of desperation, split up into hostile, warring factions. It is a highly volatile land, and its inhabitants sit on a powder-keg with a very short fuse indeed, ready to blow us all up into kingdom come. There is endemic unrest, like a festering sore that will not heal until not just the symptoms are treated but the root causes are removed.

South African society is deeply polarized. Nothing illustrates this more sharply than the events of the past week. While the black community was in the seventh heaven of delight because of the decision of that committee in Oslo, and while the world was congratulating the recipient of the Nobel Peace prize, the white government and most white South Africans, very sadly, were seeking to devalue that prize. An event that should have been the occasion of uninhibited joy and thanksgiving revealed a sadly divided society. Before I came to this country in early September to go on sabbatical, I visited one of the trouble-spots near Johannesburg. I went with members of the Executive Committee of the South African Council of Churches, which had met in emergency session after I had urged Mr. P. W. Botha to meet with church leaders to deal with a rapidly deteriorating situation. As a result of our peace initiative, we did get to meet with two cabinet ministers, demonstrating thereby our concern to carry out our call to be ministers of reconciliation and ambassadors of Christ.

In this black township, we met an old lady who told us that she was looking after her grandchildren and the children of neighbors while they were at work. On the day about which she was speaking, the police had been chasing black schoolchildren in that street, but the children had eluded the police, who then drove down the street past the old lady's house. Her wards were playing in front of the house, in the yard. She was sitting in the kitchen at the back, when her daughter burst in, calling agitatedly for her. She rushed out into the living room. A grandson had fallen just inside the door, dead. The police had shot him in the back. He was six years old. Recently a baby, a few weeks old, became the first white casualty of the current uprisings. Every death is one too many.

Those whom the black community has identified as collaborators with a system that oppresses them and denies them the most elementary human rights have met cruel death, which we deplore as much as any others. They have rejected these people operating within the system, whom they have seen as lackies and stooges, despite their titles of town councilors, and so on, under an apparently new dispensation extending the right of local government to the blacks. Over 100,000 black students are out of school, boycotting—as they did in 1976—what they and the black community perceive as an inferior education designed deliberately for inferiority. An already highly volatile situation has been ignited several times and, as a result, over 80 persons have died. There has been industrial unrest, with the first official strike by black miners taking place, not without its toll of fatalities among the blacks. . . .

The South African government is turning us into aliens in the land of our birth. It continues unabated with its vicious policy of forced population removals. It is threatening to remove the people of Kwa Ngema. It treats carelessly the women in the KTC squatter camp near Cape Town whose flimsy plastic coverings are destroyed every day by the authorities; and the heinous crime of those women is that they want to be with their husbands, with the fathers of their children. White South Africans are not demons; they are ordinary human beings, scared human beings, many of them; who would not be, if they were outnumbered five to one? Through this lofty body I wish to appeal to my white fellow South Africans to share in building a new society, for blacks are not intent on driving whites into the sea but on claiming only their rightful place in the sun in the land of their birth. We deplore all forms of violence, the violence of an oppressive and unjust society and the violence of those seeking to overthrow that society, for we believe that violence is not the answer to the crisis of our land. We dream of a new society that will be truly non-racial, truly democratic, in which people count because they are created in the image of God. We are committed to work for justice, for peace,

and for reconciliation. We ask you, please help us; urge the South African authorities to go to the conference table with the representatives of all sections of our community. I appeal to this body to act. I appeal in the name of the ordinary, the little people of South Africa. I appeal in the name of the squatters in crossroads and in the KTC camp. I appeal on behalf of the father who has to live in a single-sex hostel as a migrant worker, separated from his family for 11 months of the year. I appeal on behalf of the students who have rejected this travesty of education made available only for blacks. I appeal on behalf of those who are banned arbitrarily, who are banished, who are detained without trial, those imprisoned because they have had a vision of this new South Africa. I appeal on behalf of those who have been exiled from their homes. I say we will be free, and we ask you: Help us: that this freedom comes for all of us in South Africa, black and white, but that it comes with the least possible violence, that it comes peacefully, that it comes soon.[37]

The combination of internal and external pressures eventually persuaded many white South African that discussion with African nationalist leaders was the only alternative to a massive, bloody, and futile struggle to preserve white privileges. The outcome was the abandonment of key apartheid policies, Nelson Mandela's release from prison, the legalization of the ANC, and a prolonged process of negotiation, culminating in the country's first national elections as a democratic state in 1994. To nearly everyone's surprise, the long nightmare of South African apartheid came to an end without a racial bloodbath.

QUESTIONS

1. In what ways did decolonization and anticolonial struggles elsewhere in the world influence Africans' own struggles for independence?

2. How did the attitude of the United States and the former Soviet Union accelerate the process of decolonization in Africa?

3. Examine the role of the United Nations in hastening the role of decolonization process in Africa.

4. Why do you think nationalist movements developed faster in British West Africa than elsewhere on the continent?

5. Read the FLN Declaration of 1954. How would you describe its tone? What were the organization's leaders asking for?

6. Compare Desmond Tutu's and Kwame Nkrumah's speeches. In what ways are their messages similar? In what ways are they different? What do these differences suggest about the diversity of African perspectives on decolonization?

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