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Studies and documents 12

The role of African student movements in the political and social evolution of Africa from 1900 to 1975

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Preface

In the literature devoted to twentieth-century African history it appears that a key chapter has been overlooked. Apparently not a single student, researcher, political analyst, historian, sociologist or politician would appear to have noticed the want of an adequate study of the undeniably important role played by student associations, not to say students themselves, in spreading ideas and otherwise contributing to the struggle for the liberation of Africa. The fact is all the more surprising in that many of those who played a part in the contemporary history of Africa, particularly since the 1950s, served their apprenticeship in the ranks of the student movements. Moreover, although they were not associated with any such movements, many pre-independence politicians – too numerous to mention here – none the less learned lessons from them or voiced similar political demands and even criticism. We may say unhesitatingly that no political leader, either in the colonial states or in the colonies themselves, could afford to overlook the African student movements in his political planning, whether he favoured or opposed them, or even wished to infiltrate them so as to absorb them into the party in power or to weaken them.

That gap has now been filled with the appearance of the present work, which has been carefully revised by Amady Aly Dieng, an active member of one such movements, to whom we should like to convey our gratitude.

As in the case of the previous volumes in the 'General History of Africa: Studies and Documents' series, Volume 12 is aimed chiefly at encouraging researchers to focus particular attention on a subject that all are agreed is important, yet which unaccountably has received very little notice up to the present time.

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Introduction

A. Adu Boahen

The papers collected in this volume were written for a symposium on 'The Role of African Student Movements in the Political and Social Evolution of Africa from 1900 to 1975', which took place in Dakar (Senegal) from 5 to 9 April 1988. The holding of such colloquia on a specific theme has been an integral part of UNESCO's project for the preparation of an eight-volume general history of Africa which has already appeared in the English version. The papers and reports of such discussions are published in a series entitled 'The General History of Africa: Studies and Documents' for the information of the general public. To date, eleven such reports have been published. For financial reasons, however, the Dakar symposium organized in connection with the preparation of Volume VIII was cancelled; it was decided none the less that, as the papers had already been prepared, they should be published in the series. Hence this volume.

The theme chosen for the symposium had hitherto not attracted the attention of many scholars and research students. Indeed, until the student upheavals starting at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1964, the study of student movements was virtually unknown, even in Europe and the United States. As one of the pioneers in this field, the American scholar S. M. Lipcet, put it in 1968: 'Ten years ago, hardly anyone devoted himself to research on students and politics.' It was from 1964 onwards that scholars began to lend serious attention to this, and in 1968 *Daedalus*, the Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, on the occasion of its tenth anniversary, devoted an entire issue to the subject. The editorial stated:

> ... There is a certain appropriateness in the second decade of *Daedalus* opening with an issue devoted to 'Students and Politics'. The topic is novel, as scholarly inquiry into such matters was almost unknown a decade ago. Those who write for the issue are almost all young themselves; it is to be expected that they will persist in their enquiries and continue to make a considerable contribution in a field which was until recently largely unexplored.

The inquiry continued in Europe and the United States and a host of articles and monographs have appeared since then.

In Africa, on the other hand, such studies are few and far between and have not gathered the necessary momentum. Following Gariuki's study of the West African Students' Union (WASU), published in a single article in 1953, no work on student movements in West Africa appeared until S. A. Amoa's study entitled *University Students' Political Action in Ghana* in 1979 and Olusanya's study of WASU in 1982. Similarly, nothing was written about the relatively active student movements in former French Africa, including the most powerful of all, the Fédération des Étudiants d'Afrique Noire en France (FEANF), until S. Traore published his book on that association entitled *La FEANF* (Paris, L'Harmattan, 1985). Indeed, there is as yet no synoptic survey of any region in Africa, let alone the whole of the continent, and it is clear from the papers in the present volume that the role of students in many African countries has not been examined either. It is no surprise, therefore, that the subject attracted the attention of the International Scientific Committee for the drafting of a *General History of Africa*.

Unfortunately the collection of papers in this volume is not as comprehensive or as balanced as one would have wished. While as many as four papers are devoted to WASU and two to FEANF, only four deal with individual African countries (Cameroon, Ethiopia, Madagascar and Tunisia). There is one paper on North Africa but none covering the other regions – none on Central, Southern, East or West Africa. Particularly regrettable is the absence of papers on Egypt, Somalia, South Africa and Sudan, countries in which students are believed to have played particularly active roles. These omissions were, however, never intended; papers were commissioned but were never delivered.

African student movements, 1900–35

The history of African student movements falls into three distinct phases: 1900–35, 1935–60 and 1960–75. During the first phase, very few movements existed on the continent of Africa itself. There were none in former British Africa, only one in Ethiopia, which, according to Kifle Selassie, was active from 1925 to 1935, and none in Madagascar, for, in spite of F. Ramiandrasoa's contention, the Vy Vato Sakalika (VVS) was not really a student movement but rather a nationalist one in which students admittedly played an important role (see *General History of Africa*, Vol. VII, pp. 245–7, UNESCO, 1985). Nor could there have been any in former Portuguese or Belgian Africa during the period. It was only in former French Africa, and especially North Africa, that student movements appeared at that time. According to our survey, the very first student movement, the Association des Anciens de Sadiki, was formed in Tunis in 1905 by the students of the Sadiki College. The second, the Association des Élèves de la Grande Mosquée de l'Olivier (AEGMO), was created in Tunis in 1907. Another was formed in Algiers in 1919, the Association des Étudiants

Musulmans Nord-Africains (AEMNA), which operated in all three Maghrebian countries. The Amis de l'Étudiant was also formed in Tunis in 1931 and similar associations appeared in Algiers, Constantine and Tlemcen at that time.

It was rather in the metropolitan countries, mainly in London and Paris, that a significant though still relatively small number of student movements emerged. In London, for instance, there were only four – the Union of African Descent (UAD) founded in 1917, the Gold Coast Students' Union (GCSU) in 1924, the Nigerian Progress Union (NPU) in 1924, and finally the West African Students' Union (WASU), the most important of all, in 1925. An Ethiopian movement, the Association Mutualiste des Étudiants Éthiopiens en France (AMEEF), emerged in 1920, while another, the Association des Étudiants d'Origine Malgache (AEOM), appeared in France in 1934. Again, it was students from the Maghreb who formed the majority of such movements in France. Among them were the Association des Étudiants Musulmans Nord-Africains en France (AEMNAF), formed in Paris in 1927, and the Association Française des Étudiants Nord-Africains (AFENA), formed in 1931.

That student movements were so few both in Africa and the metropolitan countries before 1935 should cause no surprise. In the first place, until the Ethiopian crisis and even until after the Second World War, there were very few secondary schools and almost no universities or institutions of higher learning in Black Africa. It was only in North Africa, as M. Chenoufi has pointed out, that there existed a number of higher institutions, some of very great antiquity, such as Al-Karawiyyin University in Fès. It is not surprising, then, that the first student movements were founded mainly in North Africa.

Nor is the limited nature of the student movements in the metropolitan countries difficult to explain. During the period under review, the number of African students studying in Europe, even in France and the United Kingdom, was very small. As S. I. Nyagava points out, a single Tanganyikan was educated in Europe, and this for one term only, in the inter-war period, while there were a mere 150 West African students in the United Kingdom. In 1931 there were only 152 Muslim students from the three Maghrebian countries in France, 119 of whom came from Tunisia and only 11 from Morocco.

What were the typologies, objectives and strategies of these early student movements formed in Africa and in Europe, and particularly in London and Paris? Those based in Europe were of two categories: territorial, i.e. composed of students from a particular African country, and regional. Typical of the first were AEOM, AMEEF, AEMA, and GCU, while the second included AEMNA, grouping students from Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia, as well as WASU and the Association des Étudiants Ouest-Africains (AEOA), founded in November 1933 and headed by Léopold Sédar Senghor.

However, whether based in Africa or in Europe, the objectives of the early student movements were above all social and cultural rather than political. The main

concerns of the Africa-based associations were to achieve better conditions for students and, especially in Muslim countries, modernization of the educational system and curricula. According to M. Chenoufi, the demands of AEMNA 'were concerned with the status of Arabic in education, the reform of religious education and the education of Muslim women. It was only later that aspirations for Maghrebian unity appeared in AEMNA meetings.' The main concerns of those based in Europe were the acquisition of hostels and accommodation, the organization of holiday camps, employment, scholarships, student welfare and, above all, the ending of racial discrimination and the education of Europeans in African history and culture to counteract prevailing racist views about the inferiority of the African. They were primarily mutual aid organizations. Only a few, such as WASU and AEMNA, lent a political dimension to their campaigns; their demands were almost exclusively moderate and conservative, like those of such contemporaneous nationalist movements in the colonies as the National Congress of British West Africa (NCBWA). Student movements aimed at revealing the wrongs of the colonial system and campaigning for their reform, while pressing for the integration of the educated élite into the colonial system. Only a small number such as AEMNA called for independence in the 1930s.

The strategies that the students adopted to attain their objectives at the time consisted of publishing books, periodicals, journals, newspapers and pamphlets; organizing meetings, congresses and conferences; holding symposia, debates, lectures and seminars; and, finally, organizing rallies, demonstrations and strikes. Among the early journals were *WASU*, *Le Maghréb* (the voice of AEMNA), and *Al-Hilal* (published by the Zaytounian students). AEMNA published a book entitled *Tempête sur le Maroc* which 'had a bombshell effect in colonialist circles and opened the eyes of the French public at home . . . to the revolting acts perpetrated by the settlers who held power in Morocco'. AEGMO organized a strike, demonstrations and public meetings in Tunis in 1910. AEMNA held seven annual conferences between 1931 and 1937. WASU too organized meetings, lectures and symposia and published books such as *United West Africa or Africa at the Bar of the Family of Nations* (1927) and *Towards Nationhood in West Africa* (1928). On the whole, then, in their objectives and strategies, the African student movements of the first period were very similar to the nationalist movements of the time, reflecting the mood of what has been described as cultural nationalism in Africa.

African student movements, 1935–60

In the second phase, African student movements underwent a revolutionary change in terms of numbers, territory, typology and ideology (goals and strategies).

The period, especially after the Second World War, was marked by a huge

increase in the number of student movements, firstly in Africa and then in Europe. As has been pointed out already, studies of former British colonial Africa are few in number, but we know from other sources that nearly all the British colonies in Africa saw the formation of one or two student movements or unions by students of the new university colleges that were created at the time. Typical examples were the Tanganyika African Welfare Society founded by the students of Makerere College in Uganda and the National Union of Ghana Students (NUGS) formed in 1959. In Madagascar the Teachers' Union (SECES) and the Union of Secondary School Students (SEMPA) were formed. It was however in former French Africa, and especially North Africa, that there was a proliferation of student movements during the period under review. These included the Association Générale des Étudiants de Dakar (AGED), formed in 1950 in Dakar, and which became the Union Générale des Étudiants d'Afrique Occidentale (UGEAO) in 1956; the Association Générale des Étudiants Français en Afrique Noire (AGEFAN), founded by French students in Dakar in reaction to the formation of UGEAO; the Association Musulmane des Étudiants d'Afrique Noire (AMEAN) and the Association Musulmane des Étudiants Africains (AMEA), formed in 1953 in Dakar to cater for the interests of Muslim students and oppose the colonial regime's prejudice in favour of the 'Christian religion and its members'.

In the Maghreb, the Comité de la Voix de l'Étudiant Zaytounien (CVEZ) was formed in Tunisia in 1949, changing its name to the Voix de l'Étudiant Musulman de Tunisie (VEMT) in 1955, while, for its part, the Union Générale des Étudiants de Tunisie (UGET) was set up by the authorities in 1952, while the Union Générale des Étudiants Musulmans Algériens (UGEMA) was formed in Algeria in 1955.

More numerous still were the movements created in Europe, especially in France. In the United Kingdom WASU continued to be active in the 1940s and early 1950s but went into decline and finally disappeared in 1958. The 1950s also saw the formation of a growing number of territorial student movements, for example, the Ghana Students' Union or the Nigerian Students' Union, most of which were WASU splinter groups. In 1958, the Council of African Organizations (CAO) was formed, mainly through the efforts of Kwame Nkrumah; it sought to unite all the African student unions in the United Kingdom to fight for independence and African unity and propagate the ideology of pan-Africanism. The Association des Étudiants Éthiopiens en France (AEEF) was formed in Paris in the 1950s. According to B. Kifle Selassie, this was 'the first association of Ethiopian students set up in Europe following the liberation of 1941'. The Association des Étudiants d'Origine Malgache (AEOM) also continued to be active during the period.

Yet it was really in France, and especially in Paris, that student movements proliferated and intensified their activities at this time. The Groupement d'Études Politiques Africaines (GEPA), which was set up in Paris after the Second World War, was replaced in 1947 by the Groupement Africain de Recherches Économiques et Politiques (GAREP), under the direction of Abdoulaye Ly; it ceased to exist for all

practical purposes in 1951. In parallel to this unofficial student political group there emerged the Association des Étudiants du Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (AERDA), which was granted legal status on 23 October 1950. It was at this time (1950) that FEANF was formed by students from French-speaking Africa and this became the most important and active black student movement in Africa. Mention should also be made of the Association Générale des Étudiants Africains de Paris (AGEAP) and the Association des Étudiants Togolais (AET) or Jeune Togo, formed in 1946, the Association des Étudiants Dahoméens en France (AEDF) and the Association des Étudiants Camerounais (AEC) in 1948 and the Association des Étudiants Guinéens en France (AEGF) in 1950. Seven more such associations were created in France between 1951 and 1956, bringing the total to fourteen and covering all the countries of former French West, Central and Equatorial Africa.

Equally numerous were the movements formed in France by students from the Maghreb during the second period. Those in Paris included the Union Générale des Étudiants de Tunisie (UGET) in 1952 and the Union des Étudiants Algériens de Paris (UEAP) in 1953 and the Union Générale des Étudiants Musulmans Algériens (UGEMA) in 1955.

It is clear from the above, first, that far more student movements emerged during this period than in the previous one; secondly, that more of them were formed in Europe than in Africa; and, thirdly, that there were more of them in France than in any other country. The primary reason for this huge increase in numbers is the major growth in facilities for higher education in Africa. Thus, while the British after the Second World War established university colleges in many of their colonies, such as Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Sudan, Tanganyika and Uganda, the French for their part created the Institut des Hautes Études and the École de Médecine in Dakar in 1950, and the Institut Ben Badis in Constantine (Algeria) in 1947. The creation of universities led to an increase in the numbers of students. Moreover, the flow of African students doing higher studies in Europe grew, especially after the war, and continued throughout the 1950s. The number of Algerian students in France, for instance, rose from 206 in 1949–50 to 600 in 1954–55, while those from Tunisia leaped from 300 in 1953 to 700 in 1956.

What is even more interesting is the nature or typology of the movements that emerged during the period. As usual there were those formed in Africa, such as the Tanganyika African Welfare Society and AGED, and those formed in Europe, such as AEEF, FEANF and AGEAP. Those founded in Europe, particularly in France, fall into four distinct categories: academic associations such as the Groupement Africain de Recherches Économiques et Politiques (GAREP), which numbered twenty by 1959; territorial associations (fourteen by 1956); political and cultural associations, such as FEANF and AEOM; and purely political ones, such as the Association des Étudiants du RDA (AERDA). The large increase in the number of territorial student movements is due to the fact that the 1940s and 1950s were the decades of the fight

for independence, which was waged mainly on a territorial basis, so that regional or pan-Africanist organizations such as WASU or even FEANF were gradually abandoned and replaced by territorial groups. Furthermore, the formation of competing politicial parties in each colony, and the opening of branches in the metropolitan countries, meant that some students were attracted by such parties away from regional and pan-Africanist student movements. One further interesting development during the period was the fact that some of the movements formed in Europe, such as FEANF and UGEMA, opened branches in Africa and held some of their congresses and meetings on both continents.

Divided as they were between these categories, African student movements all had practically the same objectives during the period, becoming increasingly political rather than cultural. Indeed, most of them, especially those in French-speaking Africa and France, became exclusively political and highly radical in the 1950s, their aim being the total overthrow rather than the mere reform of the colonial system. Nothing could better illustrate this trend than the objectives of both WASU and FEANF.

While WASU had hitherto been advocating the reform of the colonial system, its memorandum of 6 April 1942 to the Colonial Office used these terms for the first time:

> In the interest of Freedom, Justice and true Democracy, and in view of the lessons of Malaya and Burma, as well as the obvious need for giving the people of the Empire something to fight for, WASU in Great Britain strongly urges the British Government to grant Internal Self-Government Now, with a definite guarantee of complete self-government within five years of the end of the war.

When it was formed in 1950, FEANF aimed to pursue purely social and cultural objectives in accordance with Article 4 of its constitution, which specifically states: 'The Federation shall subscribe to no political party or group and shall not take part in any event organized by any political party or group.'

However, at the Congress at Toulouse in December 1953, only three years after its formation, FEANF took a political turn, the students having come to believe that the political struggle was indissolubly bound up with the cultural struggle. From then on at international meetings, FEANF forcefully 'denounced colonial oppression and exploitation, racism, and all other forms of injustice in Black Africa'. At its Eighth Congress, held in Paris in December 1957, FEANF finally resolved that 'having regard to the specific nature of French colonialism, independence has to be gained not so much through the piling-up of illusory reforms as by the revolutionary struggle of the African masses'. Similarly AGED, which had initially concentrated in Dakar on social and cultural issues, especially the reform of the university, changed its name to UGEAO in 1956 and began to demand full independence. The *Daka-étudiant* of 10 March 1958 published an editorial by UGEAO that spoke of 'doing away completely with the colonial system, even when patched up with the aid of such hypocritical

devices as the Outline Law (*loi-cadre*), the Union Française, the Franco-African community and so forth'. Before that, in 1956, the Union Générale des Étudiants Musulmans Algériens (UGEMA), the radical Algerian student movement, had advocated 'solidarity with the victims of repression, recognition of the Algerian nation and the right of the Algerian people to sovereignty and negotiation with the true representatives of the Algerian people'.

It is important to emphasize that the student movements in former French Africa and in the Maghreb continued with their radical demands and militant action following the violent repression of the radical political movements in French colonial Africa between 1947 and 1950, which were years of 'bloody riots, assassinations, machine-gunnings and massacre' by French colonial forces. In the British colonies, on the other hand, the student movements, with the exception of WASU, did not play any role in the struggle for independence. Indeed, students showed what S. A. Amoa has termed a 'low degree of politicization' throughout the period. To take the case of Ghana, only a single student movement – NUGS – was formed there during the period under review (1959). It is true that students from the three secondary schools in Cape Coast went on strike in 1948 to demand the release of the six Ghanaian political leaders detained by the colonial government, thereby giving some impetus to the liberation movement, but they did not do so as members of any student group. In any case, students withdrew completely from the Ghanaian political scene following the events of 1948 and, as we will see later, the first confrontation between students and government did not occur there until 1964. This picture is probably true of the students in most, if not all, of the British colonies in Africa in the 1940s and 1950s.

Why did students in the former French African colonies and the Maghreb at that time play such a key role in politics when their counterparts in the former British colonies did not? Though this question is not directly confronted in any of the papers in this volume, it should be faced here. First of all, African politicians, intellectuals and students were in a state of shock following the invasion of Ethiopia by Fascist Italy in 1935. As C. Ake has pointed out: 'The outrage of the Italian invasion brought home to Africans a heightened appreciation of the threat of racism and imperialism and elicited an unprecedented show of solidarity.' Secondly, the impact of international communism and the communist parties of France and the United Kingdom on African students and political leaders was very real. The Russian Revolution of 1917 and the Third International proclaimed the 'right to independence of all colonized and dependent peoples without exception', and this message certainly affected students and political leaders in French Africa far more than those in British Africa. At the Anti-Imperialist Conference in Brussels in 1927, Black Africa was represented by Lamine Senghor and Jomo Kenyatta. Moreover, throughout the 1950s, student movements in French Africa and Paris maintained close relations with the International Union of Students (IUS) based in Prague (Czechoslovakia) and the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY) based in Romania.

Even more direct and crucial was the impact of the French Communist Party. As early as 1943, French communists had created study groups in Abidjan, Bamako, Conakry, Dakar and Yaoundé which influenced the élite and the students. More important still, almost all the political leaders of French-speaking Black Africa had strong ties with the French Communist Party. Indeed, the first party formed by Félix Houphouët-Boigny, the Parti Démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI), was structured on the pattern of the French Communist Party (PCF), while the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (RDA), which embraced all of French and Equatorial Africa, was closely allied to and influenced by the PCF. Between 1945 and 1949, therefore, the RDA and the students demanded not just the reform but the overthrow of the colonial system. None of the British African political leaders, with the possible exception of Kwame Nkrumah, I. T. A. Wallace-Johnson and Jomo Kenyatta, not to mention the students, ever came under the influence of international communism or the British Communist Party.

But what made French-speaking African students so radical and militant was the historic volte-face of 1950 when Félix Houphouët-Boigny announced the separation of the RDA from the Communist Party, and was followed in this by almost every leading Francophone African politician. As one would expect, this came as a shock to many students and intellectuals like Cheikh Anta Diop, who thereby became even more radical and militant. It is not surprising that the students of the RDA seceded from their parent body in protest and that FEANF and other student organizations became progressively more radical from 1953 onwards. No British African political leader ever made such a dramatic about-turn and thereby aroused the conscience of his student followers.

The third factor was the brutality with which the French suppressed radical movements, first in Black Africa, then in Viet Nam and finally in Algeria and Tunisia. Such methods could not but fan radicalism and militancy among young students. Apart from the suppression of the Mau Mau uprising, the British never went that far in their reaction to the liberation movements in their colonies. Besides these three factors, for Muslim Africa a fourth ingredient should be mentioned: the impact of militant Islam. The modernization policy of Mustapha Kemal in Turkey, the revolutions in Iran and Egypt and the propagation of fundamentalist ideas by bodies such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt also greatly influenced the intelligentsia and students in Muslim Africa.

During the early part of the period, the strategies adopted were virtually the same as before. However, as the objectives became increasingly radical and the approach more militant, so too did the strategies. Strikes and street demonstrations became a frequent weapon, both in Europe and Africa. AGED, for instance, organized strikes and street demonstrations in Dakar that were often joined by the masses and the pupils of the lycées and other secondary schools. The Zaytounian students in Tunis called a warning strike with a big demonstration followed by a general strike of forty-

eight hours in April 1950 in support of their demand for the reform and modernization of the university. In May 1956, UGEMA called for an unlimited general strike, and was joined by all Algerian Muslim students in France, Morocco and Tunisia. Often the students also resorted to boycotting examinations and classes. A very common strategy used by the associations was the holding of annual congresses at which resolutions covering all sorts of questions were passed. The students also organized special congresses, such as the one held by WASU in Manchester in 1945, where the call for the independence of the colonial territories became louder and clearer than ever. In addition, students frequently attended international conferences and congresses such as the Bandung Conference and those organized by IUS and WFD.

Many movements worked in close liaison with existing political parties and youth movements. AGED, for instance, co-operated with the Conseil de la Jeunesse du Sénégal and the Rassemblement de la Jeunesse Démocratique Africaine (RJDA), a youth wing of the Union Démocratique Sénégalaise (UDS), while UGEMA became a more or less integral part of the Algerian Front de Libération Nationale (FLN). Some of the associations, in fact, joined the army on the field of battle, and their members 'died with their arms in their hands'. A typical example is the way UGEMA assisted with the administration of the liberated areas in Algeria.

The last but most widely adopted strategy was what B. Kotchy terms the students' 'explosive and iconoclastic journalism'. Nearly every movement had its own newspaper. M. Chenoufi has listed thirteen periodicals published by Tunisian student organizations between 1927 and 1970. Among the books published by the students was *Nations nègres et culture* by Cheikh Anta Diop.

The second phase of the student movement in Africa was by far the most radical, militant and successful in its history.

African student movements, 1960–75

The final period examined in this study corresponds to the first fifteen years of independence of African states; the circumstances of those years had far-reaching effects on student movements, especially in the former French colonies in Africa. In the first place, at no time in the history of the continent had there been such a phenomenal expansion in the field of education. Not only were large numbers of elementary, secondary and technical schools opened, but almost every independent African country had set up one or more universities on its soil. The number of university students in Algeria increased from 1,372 in 1962 to 19,213 in 1970 and 24,048 in 1972, while in Morocco the figure rose from 6,847 in 1962 to 10,136 in 1964 and 12,726 in 1970. The number of university students in Ghana rose from 90 in 1948 to 4,286 in 1965/66. Nor was there any decline in the flow of students to the metropolitan countries for graduate and professional courses. By 1965/66 there were

3,410 Ghanaians studying abroad, of whom 1,991 were in the United Kingdom and the United States.

Despite this phenomenal increase in student numbers, it does not appear that there was a corresponding increase in the number of student movements, either locally or abroad. In Ghana only one movement was formed in the 1960s: the National Association of Socialist Students' Organizations (NASSO), the student branch of the ruling Convention People's Party, in opposition to NUGS. Similar national student unions and rival groups must have been set up in the other former British African colonies. New student movements appeared in Madagascar, the Union des Étudiants et Stagiaires Malgaches (UESM) and the Syndicat des Élèves de l'Enseignement Secondaire (SEMPA). All these student unions and the teachers' union (SECES) made up the FAEM. In Côte d'Ivoire, the Union Nationale des Étudiants de Côte d'Ivoire (UNECI) was created in January 1960 to replace the former Association des Étudiants de Côte d'Ivoire (AECI) and the Union Générale des Étudiants de Côte d'Ivoire (UGECI); the Union Nationale des Élèves et Étudiants de Côte d'Ivoire (UNEECI) was set up by Houphouët-Boigny in July 1964 with a branch in France, to be replaced by the Mouvement des Élèves et Étudiants de Côte d'Ivoire (MEECI) in 1966. Similar associations, created by the government to compete with FEANF, were set up in the Central African Republic, Dahomey (now Benin), Gabon, Mauritania and Senegal in 1967. Following the establishment of the Common Afro-Mauritanian Organization (OCAM), the Mouvement des Étudiants de l'Organisation Commune Africaine et Malgache (MEOCAM) was set up in France that year, primarily to eliminate FEANF. It was formed to operate both in France and in Africa, but folded in 1971. The Ethiopian students formed the Association des Étudiants Éthiopiens en Europe (AEEE) in December 1960, followed by the Ethiopian Pan-Socialist Movement (EPSOM) and the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP) in 1968. In Tunis, the Neo-Destour Government established the Fédération Nationale des Étudiants Destouriens (FNED) in 1964 as a challenge to the long-established UGET with consequences that are closely examined by M. Chenoufi.

Typologically, there were no fundamental changes in the student movements that emerged during the period; all were of a national or regional nature and were formed in Africa and Europe.

What is of interest are the main objectives of the student movements during this later phase. It would appear that in former British Africa, there was a lack of political radicalism among students until the mid-1960s. The case of Ghanaian students is quite well documented (see S. A. Amoa, *University Students' Political Action in Ghana*, 1979). Following independence in 1957, there was no confrontation between the students of the universities of Ghana and Nkrumah's government when NUGS passed resolutions condemning the dismissal of the Chief Justice and protesting against the deportation of six members of the academic staff of the University of Ghana. The students of the University of Ghana followed these up with a demonstration on the

campus. The government responded by closing the three universities for seventeen days and by forming a rival student association, the Ghana National Students' Organization (GNSO) to replace NUGS. No such student action was to reoccur until after the overthrow of Nkrumah. Not even the tragic death of J. B. Danquah, the 'doyen of Ghanaian politics', in detention in February 1965 could move the students to act. This apathy continued until 1971, when there was a further direct clash between the students and the government caused by NUGS' demand that Members of Parliament should declare their assets as provided for in the Constitution. But nothing came of this either. At no time, as S. A. Amoa points out, did the students come out openly to challenge the whole political system.

S. A. Amoa attributes this failure on the part of Ghanaian students to become actively involved in national politics to 'their low degree of politicization'; this, he claims, was due to the repressive and dictatorial regime of Nkrumah and 'the influences of certain elements in the university system and the macro-socio-economic system', that is, 'achievement orientation, insulation from societal strain and guaranteed occupational future'. From 1971 onwards, however, Ghanaian students became increasingly politicized and certainly played no small role in the overthrow of Busia's civilian government in 1971 and Acheampong's military government in 1978; they have been active in politics ever since.

This low degree of politicization, or lack of political activism, among Ghanaian students before the end of the 1960s, and their increasing involvement from the 1970s onwards, seem typical of almost all students of the former British African colonies, especially Kenya, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

But while these students of the former British colonies remained politically conservative in the 1960s, those in the former French colonies and Ethiopia grew increasingly radical and militant then and in the early 1970s. Treating independence as a sham, FEANF and its territorial sections stepped up their campaigns to overthrow the leaders so as to achieve true independence for most of French Africa. FEANF advocated 'total and unconditional independence' and the severance 'of organic and institutional ties with the ex-metropolis and the imperialist countries'. A resolution at FEANF's Nineteenth Congress (Paris, December 1966) also called for a union between the workers and the peasant masses for 'the creation and reinforcement of avant-garde organizations, essential support for an effective anti-imperialist front for the true liberation and unification of Africa'.

It was mainly to counteract this increasing radicalism of FEANF and its associated unions that the new leaders of Francophone Africa created between 1963 and 1967 a whole host of dissident student movements, such as UNECI, UNED and, above all, MEOCAM with its territorial sections, and banned some of the existing more radical ones. These new movements helped to weaken FEANF, leading to its final demise in 1980.

In Ethiopia, too, the students intensified their radical political activities,

especially after the abortive coup d'état in December 1960. As B.K. Selassie has shown, their rallying cry of 'The land to those who till it' grew louder and louder as the years went by until the fall of Haile Selassie and the adoption of a radical agrarian reform bill by the Revolutionary Council in 1975. The Ethiopian student movement became particularly radicalized and militant with the emergence of two rival Marxist-Leninist groups, the Ethiopian Pan-African Socialist Movement (MEISON) and the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP), between 1968 and 1970.

In Madagascar the students continued to voice opposition to the government at home, while AEOM called for genuine independence at its Tenth Congress in 1961. In order to undermine AEOM, the government established a rival student movement, the Union des Étudiants et Stagiaires Malgaches (UESM). The medical students went on strike in 1972, their action partly contributing to the resignation of the government in May of that year. AEOM welcomed the change of government but then dropped its radical stance.

In the Maghreb, UGET in Tunisia lost its radical character after independence, following infiltration and repression by the Neo-Destour Government. UNEM in Morocco continued its militant activities during the period, demanding more freedom, the democratization of institutions and the withdrawal of foreign troops from the country. At its Tenth Congress in 1966, UNEM's rallying-cry was 'The land to the peasants, the factories to the workers, education for all and true democracy', and the students resorted to strikes and demonstrations between 1967 and 1970. In Algeria, UGEMA changed its name to the Union Nationale des Étudiants Algériens (UNEA) but remained a national organization of the FLN. Relations between the two, however, became strained after the coup d'état of June 1965 and continued thus until the 1970s.

It is quite clear from this survey that African student movements played a significant role in the political and social evolution of Africa between 1900 and 1975. However, by the latter date most of them, such as WASU, had faded from the scene, while many of those that were still active, such as FEANF, had lost their spirit of militancy or, like AEOM and UGET, were now marginalized. There are several possible reasons for this rather unexpected turn of events. Some are given in the papers that follow, especially those by A. A. Boahen and F. Ramiandrasoa. WASU collapsed partly through lack of finance to support its activities, partly because the emergence of ethnic and territorial student associations in the United Kingdom weakened the pan-Africanist ones such as WASU, and partly because of the death of L. Solanke, its principal founder. Those in French-speaking Africa, Ethiopia, Madagascar and the Maghreb either collapsed or became marginalized as a result of various factors: the attacks on them through infiltration, the creation of rival student movements, assassinations and outright banning by the newly independent African governments, which proved to be just as intolerant of opposition and student radicalism as the colonial ones; the opportunism displayed by some of the students; and the ideological and strategic differences within particular movements.

What, then, is the real impact of these student movements? That question is answered in some of the papers presented here, particularly in the chapter by A. I. Sow. The answer lies above all in the legacies left behind by these movements, as well as in their precepts or ideologies. Socially, through their publications, newspapers and resolutions, they informed the people of the metropolitan countries of the baselessness and falsity of the prevailing racist doctrines and views. Again, in the Maghreb and in Senegal, they certainly played a leading part in improving and modernizing educational institutions and curricula, while also modernizing and strengthening Islam.

It is in the political field that the legacies of the student movements are most evident. It was they that first radicalized the anti-colonial movements and called for total independence in many countries. It should also be emphasized that the radical streak introduced in this way has remained a permanent feature of the political life of countries such as Algeria, Benin, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal. Their books and journals won moral and even material support for the liberation movements in Africa. In countries like Algeria and Tunisia in particular, and in the 1940s and 1950s in French Black Africa, the student movements played a crucial role in the drive for liberation. Another valuable legacy was the training that student movements gave to future political leaders in Africa. Indeed, throughout French-speaking Black Africa and in the Malagasy Republic, there are few political leaders, senior civil servants, ministers or even heads of state of the new generation who were not at one time either FEANF militants or directly or indirectly influenced by the movement.

In spite of A. I. Asiwaju's scepticism, the same may be said of such leaders of former British colonial Africa as Kwame Nkrumah, Jomo Kenyatta and Milton Magai. In the same vein, those movements that worked in co-operation with secondary-school pupils and teachers and with the masses, as was the case in Algeria, Madagascar and Tunisia, certainly inspired national and political awareness among young people, thereby preparing them for the future struggle. Again, as M. Chenoufi points out, by refusing to accept the drift towards dictatorship and the one-party system started by the political leaders of the newly independent Africa, and by denouncing the fraud that consisted of replacing the old direct colonialism by the new neo-colonialism, these movements upheld the cause of true democracy and genuine independence in Africa. As M. Chenoufi puts it:

> With independence and the rise of the new generations, the struggle continued, but with a new ideology: in refusing to become subservient to the party in power, in trying to impose a new legitimacy in the name of marginalized groups, the student movement helped to call in question the hegemony of the State Party with a view to the emergence of a pluralist and democratic society, to replace a 'rigid' and 'crisis-ridden' society.

Finally, the African student movements, especially WASU and FEANF, also strengthened and diffused the spirit of pan-Africanism, first in Europe and subse-

quently in Africa: its transfer to and practical application in Africa can first be seen in the attainment by Ghana of independence in 1957.

Naturally these African students' movements, which were at the forefront of the struggle for independence, were a source of concern to the various colonial administrations (see J. R. de Benoist's article for an account of the attitude of the colonial authorities to FEANF). The movements were also concerned to express their views on the different problems facing their particular homelands (see the article by N. Bancel and J. Devisse, who scoured the newspapers published in France between 1943 and 1960).

In his conclusion, A. I. Sow maintains that the African student movements, particularly after 1954, played a role of the very first importance in the political climate of the period. They certainly participated actively in, if not initiated, the cultural and anti-colonial movements of the time by injecting them with an element of mass participation and radicalism and thereby hastening the downfall of colonialism. But they bequeathed an even more important legacy: the need to fight neo-colonialism, establish genuine democracy and mass participation in decision-making, and achieve African unity and pan-Africanism. This legacy has yet to bear fruit.

Part I

African student movements: an overview

African student movements and the question of the African revolution

A. I. Sow

The forty years from 1935 to 1975 saw the African peoples adjusting to foreign domination whilst resisting the excesses of colonial occupation, playing their part in the Second World War, fighting to regain their national independence and undertaking the construction of nation-states with modern economies and cultures.

During this period certain important international events had a resounding impact on Africa: the consolidation of the Soviet state and its victory over Fascism, the advent of the Popular Front in France, the emancipation of the colonized countries in the Middle East (the Arabian states, Lebanon and Syria) and Asia (India, Indonesia, Pakistan and Viet Nam), the creation of the United Nations Organization, the triumph of socialism in China and the Arab revolution in Egypt, the Afro-Asian conferences in Bandung and Cairo, the armed resistance of the Algerian and Cameroon peoples to French colonialism, the victorious resistance of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the coalition between the United States of America and its Western allies, the nationalization of the Suez canal, the independence of Ghana and Guinea and the events in the Congo, the upsurge of the liberation movement in the Portuguese colonies and of the Afro-Americans' fight for civil rights, the resistance of the black South African people to apartheid and colonialism, the Sino-Soviet conflict and the revolution of May 1968 in France, the Albanian resistance to political and economic pressure from the Soviet Union, the events in Cambodia and the invasion of Viet Nam. The list could be greatly extended.

Making these events known and understood in Africa in the face of the censorship exercised by the colonial and neo-colonial powers called for tireless efforts on the part of many workers' and young people's progressive organizations, including the African student movements, which, particularly after 1954, played a role of the very first importance.

African students in the national liberation revolution

Until the appearance of the Popular Front, and especially until the end of the Second World War, the consolidation of colonial domination over the African peoples seemed irreversible, so uprooted from their ancestral cultures and so depersonalized did their Westernized élites of officials and businessmen seem to have become, mesmerized as they were by the impossible mirage of 'assimilation'. 'As of 1936 with the advent of the Popular Front', wrote Amadou Hampate Ba,

> communist study groups began to form on the fringe of school life and almost in secret. The great virtue of these communist study groups was that they acted as a training ground for the political leadership at grass-roots level. Civil servants and business employees learned how to press their claims and confound their political opponents. The first steps towards complete liberation were taken with the creation of 'non-political' associations whose professed purpose was mutual aid and recreation, whereas they were really cells of political activity. Out of these associations, unions very quickly sprang, and from unionism to journalism was but one step.[1]

The students organize in order to fight

The task of the African student movements, therefore, was to find the best form of organization, not only to defend the material and moral interests of their members, as any union must, but also and above all to fight against the overall situation of deculturation and depersonalization, to support, uphold and make known the African peoples' struggle for emancipation and unity, and to expose and denounce all forms of domination imposed on the peoples of the colonial and dependent countries, the plundering of their wealth and the denial or ridicule of their cultural values, traditions, languages, history and so forth.

To implement these objectives, young people in African universities naturally needed student newspapers that would appear at reasonably regular intervals, and these developed particularly after 1954. They included *Dakar-étudiant* (the organ of UGEAO), *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire* (that of FEANF) and others.

The student press, gaining ground year by year, became a powerful instrument for the political education and mobilization of students and an effective vehicle for broadcasting news of the struggle of the African peoples and of what was happening to other contemporary revolutionary movements. As a result, the colonial administration stepped up its seizures and other types of harassment in a vain attempt to halt its growth.

The student movements launched an extensive campaign of cultural resource development to inform people of the positive achievements of certain kings and emperors of African history, such as Kings Ghezo and Radama I and Queen Abraha Pokou, and to rehabilitate those who, like Behanzin, Samori, El Hadj Omar, Emir

'Abd al-Kadir, Queen Ranavalona III and so on, had led national resistance struggles against colonial aggression.

It was in this climate of cultural reaffirmation favoured by the exchange of ideas in the African student movements that young researchers like Cheikh Anta Diop made their name and whole cohorts of African anthropologists, linguists and historians, whose influence dates from 1954, were formed.

The students unite the liberation fighters and open their eyes to the rest of the world

The student movement generated the patriotic awareness of national liberation fighters. It opened African militants' eyes to the history and present condition of the world's dependent peoples and countries in their fight for emancipation. It threw light on crucial decisions, showing the road to follow and the means to achieve a successful outcome. 'In view of the special nature of French imperialism, independence has to be won not by a specific package of illusory reforms but by the revolutionary struggle of the mass of the people'.[2]

The student movement smoothed over differences between organizations, defusing conflicts between leaders, individuals and interests. It led to the creation of a broad front, uniting movements of students, young people, women, trade unions and political parties. It helped to place the inadequacies and momentary setbacks of the struggle in proper perspective by situating them in their socio-historical context. The student movements encouraged militants and leaders who were willing and able to resist and fight by showing them that they were neither alone nor anonymous nor powerless against the repression they were subjected to.

This is borne out convincingly in the statements, general policy resolutions and other policy documents produced by student movement congresses and boards of administration, and in the opening and closing addresses and other important reports drafted for such meetings. Such documents informed African militants of what was happening in the world, and analysed the experience of struggling peoples. They also enabled student movements to voice their fellow feeling for African militants and their 'active solidarity' with Africa, Asia and the Americas and with the workers and youth of Europe.

Year by year the movements grew more mature, the analyses more subtle and the slogans clearer, while the difficulties and intricacies of the struggle called for more lucid thinking and greater realism and serenity. 'In response to the mystification of the Outline Law (*loi-cadre),* whose aim is to sow confusion and restrain the historical advance of our liberation, the young people and students of Black Africa are resolved to seal their unity and create the practical conditions for the formation of a common front in the fight for national unity and independence.'[3]

One can feel this constant concern of the students for a global view of things:

their continent and the rest of the struggling world were one and indivisible. They discussed all the great issues of the time, intervening everywhere and denying no attitude required by their open-handed approach, their genuine internationalism and their exacting and vigilant conscience as militants: in other words, their perception of their historical mission and responsibilities.

Thus the twenty-five years from 1935 to 1960 were years of intense and determined struggle for liberation, in which the African student movements helped to create a broad united front of colonized peoples struggling against foreign domination. Their contribution was decisive in overcoming the many difficulties and deficiencies, and in arousing the awareness of Africans to the millions throughout the world who suffer and yearn for greater justice and solidarity, happiness and fraternity. There can be no doubt that 'a study of students' associations and their political role would reveal the decisive influence of the movements of ideas that they cultivated in favour of independence'.[4]

African student movements and the construction of nation-states in Africa

In 1960, the big colonial empires began to break up, giving birth to a large number of states against which the African students' organizations revolted, voicing the 'understandable aspirations' of their peoples for federal units which they considered would be better balanced and more viable. However, now that they were in positions of power, or even heads of state, yesterday's allies were bent more on feathering their own nests and those of their families and on ensuring stability for the political systems that they controlled.

Already in 1960 students denounced the fraud that consisted of replacing the old, direct style of colonialism by neo-colonialism, and of establishing 'anti-national bourgeoisies, faithful stewards of the interests of imperialism'. They launched an appeal for the formation of an anti-imperialist front and spelled out the essential conditions for the genuine independence and unity of Africa, as follows: (a) the breaking of all organic and institutional ties with the old colonial and imperialist powers; (b) the dismantling of all foreign bases on national territory; (c) the ending of all monopolies, and (d) the organization of democratic institutions ensuring the control of national construction by the mass of the people and the full satisfaction of their aspirations and legitimate interests.[5]

In their analysis of the first years of independence, students observed that the *petite bourgeoisie* that had led the struggle for independence had taken advantage of the situation to set up and impose bureaucratic structures enabling senior officials and powerful traders to exploit and oppress the masses. 'In addition, this *petite bourgeoisie,* in its anxiety to secure its own economic base, allied itself with various forms of

imperialism as in the cases of Guinea and Mali.'[6]

The heads of the post-colonial states hounded the student movements mercilessly, using violence, threats and corruption in turn, and employing division, intimidation and demagogy to marginalize and isolate the 'thinking, acting and demanding nucleus'.[7]

Since their primary concern was to crush the predominantly progressive tendencies of the student movements of the time, they sought systematically to mobilize the least politicized and least interesting elements in the university world, the 'cha-cha-cha' students whose prime object was to stock their wardrobe or have a good time, together with a few opportunists and career-seekers, whom they made members of their 'single party' or 'single union'.

> They were concerned solely with their own advancement, wrapped up in the passivity of newly rich *petits bourgeois*. While there were some who worked so hard that they aged prematurely, there were others who were pleased to take the place of the Europeans with the apartment, official car, honours and privileges that went with their position, while the duties towards their people that all this implied appeared to be far from uppermost in their minds.[8]

Thus it often happened that, with student movements purged in this way of their militants and leaders who had experienced and been hardened in the national liberation struggle, the African political leaders and those who inspired and counselled them undertook the construction of the nation-states of post-colonial Africa. Fully recognizing the gravity and significance of the situation and of all that was at stake, the militant students denounced the opportunism, careerism and reformism within the movement and decided on a campaign of resistance. This out-and-out search for absolutists among the most questionable elements in the student movements had serious consequences. Many militants were driven to intransigence, disillusionment, passive resistance and even exile, and the movements they led gradually foundered in wordy maximalism, degeneracy, political suicide and liquidation.

This neutralization of the best it had to offer was a cruel blow for Africa. Its real élite, born at a great cost in human effort during the liberation struggle, was sacrificed in this way.

Conclusion

In short, the African student movements were active at a time of national revolution when the situation in the world as a whole, and in Africa in particular, still favoured the formation of a broad and united front against foreign domination. Everything in those days was expressed in the form of resolutions and declarations, often emanating from the colonial capitals themselves.

It would appear today, however, upon critical examination of what has taken place, that the fact that the emerging political regimes were subtly controlled or manipulated from afar by the old colonial capitals was not clearly grasped by the student movements, which went on proclaiming their revolutionary gospel with the same sincerity and truth, and in the same forms, as before. And these heterogeneous and socially unstable organizations of enlightened amateurs – so ready to give lessons on civic policy and good behaviour in foreign languages to a governing class that was no longer listening to them – at length wearied and annoyed so many people that they were stopped and rendered ineffectual. Needless to say, this state of affairs has not put an end to their struggle.

Notes

1. A. H. Bâ, 'Cultures traditionnelles et transformations sociales', *La jeunesse et les valeurs culturelles africaines*, pp. 45–6, Paris, UNESCO, 1975 (UNESCO doc. SHC-75/WS/9).
2. General policy statement by the Eighth FEANF Congress, Paris, December 1957.
3. Joint declaration by UGTAN (Union Générale des Travailleurs d'Afrique Noire), UGEAO (Union Générale des Étudiants d'Afrique Occidentale), CJA (Conseil de la Jeunesse d'Afrique) and FEANF (Fédération des Étudiants d'Afrique Noire en France), issued in Paris in December 1957 on the occasion of the Eighth FEANF Congress.
4. M. A. Glélé, *Naissance d'un état noir*, p. 330, Paris, LGDJ, 1969.
5. General policy statement, Twelfth FEANF Congress, December 1960.
6. Opening address by C. Sylla, Chairman, Twenty-third FEANF Congress, December 1970.
7. Glélé, op. cit.
8. A. Quenum, 'Culture de l'intelligentsia et culture du peuple', Bâ, op. cit., p. 30.

Part II

The West African Students' Union (WASU)

The history of WASU

A. Adu Boahen

In their introduction to *Readings in African Political Thought*, G. R. Mutiso and S. W. Rohio identify three phases of African nationalism: cultural nationalism, which they date from the 1860s; plaintive nationalism (from the 1900s); and radical nationalism (from about the end of the Second World War).[1] Not only do I find this categorization valid, but I intend to argue in this chapter that the West African Students' Union (WASU) not only belongs to the two latter phases, but also played a leading role in the transition from the plaintive to the radical phase of African nationalism.

Founded in 1925, WASU was not the first African student union to be formed in London, as is generally supposed. It was in fact preceded by three other student organizations: the Union for Students of African Descent, founded in 1917, the Gold Coast Students' Union and the Nigerian Progress Union, both set up in 1924.[2] The formation of WASU was the result of a number of factors, namely the intensification of nationalist activities in West Africa culminating in the launching of the National Congress of British West Africa (NCBWA) in 1920, the impact of Garveyism both in West Africa and in the United Kingdom, the increasingly bitter experiences of African students in the United Kingdom, whose numbers rose steadily during the inter-war years, and, above all, the action carried on in London by Ladipo Solanke and Dr H. G. Bankole-Bright who came from Nigeria and Sierra Leone respectively.

African student associations prior to WASU

It is a little surprising that, in the first two lengthy studies of WASU to appear,[3] both P. Garigue and G. O. Olusanya ignored the first two factors mentioned above and discussed the origins of WASU only in terms of the last two. However, it cannot be overemphasized that the students who formed WASU in the mid-1920s came from and were influenced by a West African political milieu in which the transition from

cultural to plaintive nationalism had occurred as a result of the activities of scholars and nationalists such as Mensah Sarbah and Casely Hayford of the then Gold Coast, Dr Akinwade Savage, Adeoye Deniga and Rev. J. G. Campbell of Nigeria, J. C. May, Dr Bankole-Bright and I. J. Roberts of Sierra Leone and H. M. Jones and E. F. Small of Gambia. The theories of pan-Africanism, West African unity and African personality had also been given concrete expression with the formation of NCBWA, which had branches in all four British West African colonies.[4] NCBWA did not campaign for the overthrow but rather for the reform of the colonial system and for accommodation within that system, as well as for the unity of the West African states. The people who left West Africa to study in Europe and North America, not only in the 1920s but also in the 1930s, were therefore already imbued with the pan-Africanist, anti-colonial and nationalist spirit then pervading the political atmosphere in West Africa. Indeed, as P. Garigue has pointed out, although its significance seems to have been lost on him, one of the people with whom Solanke discussed the idea of the formation of WASU in London was Casely Hayford, the leading founder and at the time President of NCBWA, while one of the two founding fathers of WASU, Dr Bankole-Bright, was an active member of the NCBWA branch in Sierra Leone.[5] In his speech at the inaugural meeting of WASU in August 1925, Dr Bankole-Bright referred to the activities of NCBWA, pointed out its achievements – which could not have been accomplished had each colony gone it alone – and emphasized the weakness of NCBWA in Nigeria, which he said should be a lesson 'to all Nigerian students on what disunity meant'.[6] Indeed, WASU could with every justification be regarded as the student wing of NCBWA in London.

Another factor which had further intensified the pan-Africanist spirit and nationalist sentiment in West Africa during the first two decades of this century was Garveyism. It has now been established that branches of Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association had been formed not only in Nigeria, Sierra Leone and the Gambia but also in Ghana by the early 1920s.[7] Though the membership of this association was rather small compared with that of NCBWA, there is no doubt that it added a radical tinge to African nationalism in West Africa, with its advocacy not only of reform but of the complete overthrow of colonialism in Africa. It should not be forgotten that Garvey did not extend his activities to Africa only, but to the United Kingdom too, and that he in fact became an active WASU supporter and benefactor in its early days in London.[8]

The experiences that students underwent on their arrival in Britain – imbued as they were with pan-Africanist, anti-colonial and nationalist ideas – as well as the interests and activities of Ladipo Solanke and Dr Bankole-Bright precipitated the formation of WASU in 1925. The first of the difficulties that a newly arrived student encountered was racial discrimination or the colour bar. This manifested itself during the search for accommodation, in bars and restaurants and in social relationships. Everything African was condemned and there was a prevailing belief that Africans

were inferior beings by nature and by race. African students in London were particularly enraged when some Africans were put on show at the Wembley Exhibition in 1924 'as curios'.[9] One of the fundamental reasons for the formation of WASU was, therefore, to fight the racial prejudice and discrimination then prevalent in the United Kingdom and change the attitude of the white man towards the educated African. 'As the moving spirit behind the founding of WASU', Ladipo Solanke stated,

> I had a long and most interesting dream one night during which Almighty God graciously revealed to me the following conclusion as a fundamental guide to my future national duties in life: that until Africans at home and abroad, including all persons of African descent, organize and develop the spirit of the principles of self-help, unity and co-operation among themselves and fight it out to remove this colour bar, they would have to continue to suffer the results of colour prejudice, and remain hewers of wood and drawers of water for the other races of mankind.[10]

However, WASU would not have been formed at that time without the efforts of Ladipo Solanke, followed by those of Dr Bankole-Bright. Solanke arrived in Britain in 1922, like most of the students at the time, to study law. It was mainly because of the racial discrimination he encountered that, after having the above-mentioned dream and 'in grateful appreciation of what the Almighty God had thus disclosed to me, I at once decided to devote my life first of all towards seeing that the enunciated principles and objects set in the dream should be carried out'. He therefore started contacting West African students with a view to forming 'an organization embracing the whole of British West Africa, which could effectively speak for all students from these areas and which would be the first step towards creating a United States of West Africa which might eventually blossom into a "United Africa" '.[11] Having failed to win the support of other students despite the fact that he had the blessing of J. E. Casely Hayford, the then President of NCBWA, he decided to concentrate on Nigerian students, and this led to the formation of the Nigerian Progress Union in 1924. None the less, he never abandoned his pan-Africanist dream and persisted in his efforts in that direction.

WASU from its creation in 1925 to the eve of the Second World War

It was at this juncture that Ladipo Solanke met Dr Bankole-Bright, a medical doctor and member of the Sierra Leone Legislative Council and of the National Congress of British West Africa, during the latter's visit to London in 1925. It was Dr Bankole-Bright who, after referring to the achievements of the National Congress of British West Africa (NCBWA) already mentioned, managed to persuade the various existing West African unions to come together; it was at his suggestion that a meeting of West

African students was held on 7 August 1925 at the residence of Ladipo Solanke at 5 Lancaster Road, Bayswater.[12] This meeting was attended by twenty-one students from British West Africa including Ladipo Solanke, J. Akanni Doherty, Olatunde Vincent, Ekundayo Williams, M. A. Sorinola Siffre, B. J. Farreira and Kusimo Soluade, all from Nigeria; Blay, Minnow, C. F. Hayfron-Benjamin, Ampaw and Dr J. B. Danquah from Ghana; Emile Luke, Otto During, Omoliyi Coker and H. J. Lightfoot Boston from Sierra Leone; and W. Davidson-Carol and Kusika Roberts from the Gambia. It is interesting to note that, apart from Doherty, who was a medical student, all the others were law students, law being one of the very few professions that Africans could then freely and independently practise in colonial Africa. It was this meeting that resolved to form WASU, whose principal objective was 'To afford the opportunity exclusively to West African students in Great Britain and Ireland to discuss matters affecting West Africa educationally, commercially, economically and politically, and to cooperate with the NCBWA'.[13]

A committee was then set up to work out the details. Its members were C. F. Hayfron-Benjamin, Kusika Roberts, Otto During and M. A. Siffre. The committee drew up the following aims and objectives, which were adopted by WASU:

1. To provide and maintain a hostel for students of African descent.
2. To act as a bureau of information on African history, customs, laws and institutions.
3. To act as a centre for research on all subjects appertaining to Africa and its development.
4. To provide through regular contacts a spirit of goodwill, better understanding and brotherhood between all persons of African descent and other races of mankind.
5. To present to the world a true picture of African life and philosophy, thereby making a genuinely African contribution towards the progress of civilization.
6. To promote the spirit of self-help, unity and co-operation among its members.
7. To foster a spirit of national consciousness and racial pride among its members.
8. To publish a monthly magazine entitled *WASU*.[14]

J. B. Danquah of Ghana was elected first President, Ladipo Solanke Secretary and J. E. Casely Hayford first patron, and the union adopted as its motto: self-help, unity and co-operation. Considering the circumstances that led to the formation of WASU, these aims and objectives should not surprise us. A more crucial question, however, is the degree to which the founders and members were able to implement these objectives during the thirty years or so of the association's existence. Thanks mainly to the selfless dedication and unflagging zeal and dynamism of Ladipo Solanke, who remained its Secretary until his death in 1958, most of these aims were accomplished.

The earliest of these objectives to occupy the attention of the union were the first and the last on the list, that is, the founding of a hostel and the publication of a monthly magazine entitled *WASU*. Moves in the first direction were begun soon after

the inauguration of the union and, after negotiations between the union and the Colonial Office for the establishment of a joint hostel had broken down (mainly because WASU insisted on the hostel being completely independent), Solanke turned his own room into a club house until 1928, when it moved to a house at 109A Holland Road, London, given by Dr Marcus Garvey.[15] Unfortunately, the lease for this expired in 1929, and it was to raise funds for a more permanent establishment that Solanke was sent out to West Africa. This tour lasted from September 1929 to 1932, during which time he succeeded in raising a total of £1,380, mainly in Nigeria.[16] This enabled WASU to open its first real hostel at 62 Camden Road, London, on 9 March 1932, with facilities not only for accommodation and meals, but also for a library, reading room, games room and visitors' room. It served West African dishes, and thereby attracted many West Africans.

However, partly as a result of inadequate financing and partly owing to competition from another hostel for African students founded by the Colonial Office in 1934, the WASU hostel ran into difficulties in the mid-1930s.[17] Following a favourable response to its appeal for funds and with assistance accepted with great reluctance from the Colonial Office, WASU was able to raise sufficient money not only to settle its debts on the existing hostel but to move into a new one at South Villas, Camden Square, in July 1938. This soon became a very important cultural and educational centre for African students in particular and, from the late 1930s onwards, for contact between Africans and persons of other races. Indeed, by the early 1940s the facilities on offer could no longer meet the demand, and it was to raise funds to extend these that Solanke went on a second tour of West Africa from 1944 to 1948. Partly because of the economic restrictions of the war years and partly because of the hostility of the colonial governors, Solanke managed to raise only £6,000 of the required £50,000. Further appeals for funds in the United Kingdom, supplemented by an increase in the annual grant from the Colonial Office and grants from the colonial governments, enabled WASU to open a second hostel at 13 Chelsea Embankment in 1949. Both hostels were maintained, though with increasing difficulty, until Solanke's death.[18]

While operating the hostel, WASU devoted a great deal of time to attaining its other objectives. To these ends, it set about creating a magazine, publishing books and pamphlets, giving lectures to different groups and societies throughout the United Kingdom, attending international conferences and meetings and opening WASU branches in West Africa. The first such step was the launching of *WASU,* the first number of which appeared in March 1926, a mere eight months after the inauguration of the union. The aim of the magazine was:

> To foster West African nationalism and to combat the false exaggerated views given to the world by strayed European travellers, anthropologists, missionaries, officials and film producers who to their own good aggrandizement embellish with exaggeration the so-called difficulties which they come across in their duties towards 'Brother Africans'.[19]

A look at the contents of the maiden issue shows that the magazine set out not only to foster West African nationalism and unity, but also, in the words of Olusanya, 'to educate the ignorant, to create self-pride, to foster national consciousness and to stimulate fellow Africans to fight for their emancipation, not only political, economic and social emancipation, but also mental.[20] Besides the editorial and presidential message, there were in all six articles, as well as poems. The editorial asserted the African's claim to his rightful place in the world. In the presidential message, J. B. Danquah of Ghana highlighted the theme of co-operation:

There is need for co-operation in and amongst ourselves. Nigeria is by far the greatest country in British West Africa. It is disappointing to read of a West African Congress with Nigeria unrepresented. It is sad to think of the Gold Coast political world torn by factious elements between the learned and the untutored, between the ruling and the ruled. There can be no union without homogeneity of purposes and interests. In co-operation lies our salvation, for without it, however intense and concentrated our efforts may be, the mocking fate of Tantalus will painfully supplant the substance of our achievement.[21]

In an article entitled 'Intelligence Tests and the Negro', Francis Montague challenged the validity of such tests; another, by Asafu-Adjaye, entitled 'Should West Africans Co-operate?', dealt with the need for co-operation, particularly between African intellectuals, traditional rulers and colonial rulers, and called for liberty and progress. H. J. Lightfoot Boston, in 'Fifty Years Hence', prophesied a federation of West African territories by 1976; Melville Mark drew attention in 'A Primitive People' to the original invention of a script by the Vai people of Liberia; while Solanke, in 'Lifting the Veil', bitterly criticized the condemnation of African culture and everything African by the Christian missionaries and attributed the conflict between Africans and their colonial rulers to the ignorance of the latter about African traditions, institutions and languages. He concluded his article with a plea:

Africa has always been misunderstood and misinterpreted, perhaps unwillingly, but certainly through lack of knowledge. Europeans by the fact that they are Europeans, can never understand the genius of our race nor arrive at the meaning of our institutions and customs. It is the duty of Africans to investigate and give to the world in suitable literary form, an account of their history, laws, customs, institutions and languages. Without such materials it would be impossible for us to know what lines our development should take, and moreover, such materials would be serviceable to the cause of education. . . . In a few years from now all the materials will have disappeared and investigation becomes impossible. There is no need for delay.[22]

In another article, entitled 'Is the Negro a Dead Letter?', J. B. Danquah emphasized the contribution that Africa has made to ethical idealism and humanitarianism.

Between 1926 and 1932 nine numbers of the magazine appeared; it continued to appear after 1933, though irregularly because of lack of funds, and survived into

the 1950s. It reached not only West Africa but also South Africa, East Africa – Kenya, in particular – the West Indies and parts of the United States. Thus the magazine contributed to the dissemination of pan-Africanism, racial pride and consciousness in those regions.

WASU also encouraged its members to undertake research into African history and culture, to write in order to refute racist ideas and preconceptions and to campaign for the reform of the colonial system. The two best-known such works were *United West Africa or Africa at the Bar of the Family of Nations* (1927) by Ladipo Solanke and *Towards Nationhood in West Africa* (1928) by J. W. de Graft-Johnson. Coleman has described these as 'the first major literary works of a nationalist character to appear since Blyden's writings in the late nineteenth century'.[23] In his work Solanke recounted the history of Africa in glowing terms: 'In ancient and medieval negroland . . . West Africa had organized governments of her own creation whose standard was . . . equal to . . . any other of the then known world. . . . In Europe at this period there was neither a nation . . . nor a constitution, nor a Parliament. . . .'[24] He blamed the decline of Africa on the slave trade. As he put it, 'Europe and America ruined her to improve and enrich themselves . . . while Africa had retrogressed almost to the primitive stage.' He pleaded for the rejection of foreign names, for the establishment of 'a real African National Church', for the recognition of the important role of the educated African, who should be accepted by the colonial ruler as 'his brother, his co-partner in the duty of guardianship of Africa'. He ended on a note of optimism: 'It took the white race a thousand years to arrive at their present level of advance; it took the Japanese, a Mongol race, fifty years to catch up; . . . there is no reason why we West Africans should not catch up with the Aryans and the Mongols in one quarter of a century.'[25]

In his book, published a year later, de Graft-Johnson picked up some of the themes discussed by Solanke and went even further. The very first sentence of the preface, which he significantly subtitled 'Thoughts of Young Africa Addressed to Young Britain', reads:

> The hope and desire of Africa is the same throughout the length and breadth of the continent. It is concentrated in the great yearning for freedom, for emancipation from the yoke of the centuries. The youth of Africa everywhere, is assailed by the alluring thoughts of a free Africa, of an Africa that, carrying no foreign burden, but stepping into her rightful place as a unit in the powerful army of the human family, will emerge from the darkness of the past and assume her obligations and responsibilities as a respectable and respected member of Society.[26]

The same preface goes on:

> Young Africans are co-operating for the cause of Africa. In their two organizations, the Union of Students of African Descent and the West African Students' Union, they are correlating lines of thought and action. They have laid siege to the citadel of England's nobleness of mind and

soul, and there are hopes, great hopes, that the future will see the African better understood and appreciated, and given his due right of recognition in the comity of Nations.

The first chapter begins with the sentence, 'The African is a much maligned man', and goes on to point out how every white man who visits the coast seems to be under the impression that 'the Native has no faculties for reasoning; that his thinking is largely to be done by others and that he ought to be sufficiently grateful for such gratuitous service'.

Like Solanke and others, he too rose in defence of the educated African: 'Denationalized? Not in the least. If anything the educated African is more capable of an African orientation and hence it is that he often finds himself in disagreement with policies and methods laid down for his guidance and progress by those who do not share that orientation.'[27]

He returns to this theme in the ninth chapter of the book, entitled 'The Educated African' and concludes:

The suspicion, therefore, that the educated African is an obstacle to government or that he is denationalized and has lost touch with his illiterate brethren is quite unwarranted. Neither the intense passionate fervour of his rich eloquence when moved to righteous indignation over the inroads into his nationality, nor his deep appreciation of nature and ready wit, disguise or blunt the radical simplicity and directness of his character. After all, in all ages and in all climes, it is the grand and solemn duty of the intelligent members of the community to work for the uplift, advancement and progress of the people. England recognizes this fact, and grants more privileges to such men by allowing graduates of Universities an extra vote. Why should not the educated African, who thoroughly understands his people to a degree nobody else can, in words and actions, feelings and sentiments, hopes and aspirations, take the lead in the forward march of progress? Why not?[28]

Among the other themes discussed in the book are the history of British relations with the Gold Coast, the history of the Aborigines' Society and the conflict between that society and the colonial government, the nature of African traditional government, which he concludes 'is purely democratic in character, the sovereignty lying with the people through their representative, the Oman Government',[29] and the 'colour question'. In four chapters entitled 'Reconstructions', he proposes solutions to some of the political, constitutional and social problems raised in the book, emphasizing the role of education, 'true Christianity' and the generation of wealth.[30] In the concluding paragraph of the chapter in which he pleads for co-operation between the ARPS and the colonial government, he writes:

To you, members of the rising generation of Britain, we appeal on behalf of young Africa! You have it in your power – and opportunity is golden – to make friends with Africa, to heal up her broken sores, to pour oil into her gaping wounds; to lend a hand to raise her up upon the pinnacle of one common humanity and the highest eminence of service to mankind. Will you stretch out the hand of comradeship and true friendship?[31]

WASU itself also published a number of pamphlets such as *The Truth about Aggrey House* (1934) and *The Labour Government: A Record of Unfulfilled Promises* (n.d.). In all these publications, WASU sought to educate the British in particular and other nationalities in general about the true nature and aspirations of Africa, the iniquities of the colonial system and the lines along which it could be reformed, and, above all, the falsity of racism.

It also organized throughout the United Kingdom a number of lectures, get-togethers, debates and socials at its hostels, conferences and seminars, published memoranda and sent delegations to international conferences. According to G. O. Olusanya, in the first quarter of 1927, Solanke alone delivered twenty such lectures aimed at educating the British public in African history, traditions, music, folklore and social institutions. In 1942, WASU organized a major conference in London to which it invited the Labour Party, mainly to discuss the Atlantic Charter and other pressing issues. This conference ended with a very long and detailed resolution calling for political, educational, social, economic and land reforms.[32] Others were held in April 1947 and July 1948 on post-war developments in West Africa. In 1940 WASU sent a memorandum to the Secretary of State demanding among other things dominion status, reform of the indirect rule system, the introduction of compulsory elementary education and African majority representation on the Executive Council.[33] In 1941 it asked for the establishment of municipal councils with African majorities and African presidents and for the introduction of the adult franchise in all the West African colonies.[34] In 1943 it presented a memorandum on higher education to the Elliot Commission in which it advocated the establishment of a university college in all the British West African colonies except the Gambia.[35]

WASU also attended a number of international conferences, including the Liverpool International Youth Movement for Peace (LIYMP) and the British Fellowship of Youth International Conference in 1928 and, in the 1930s and 1940s, the Wallasey Youth Conference, the Anglo-African Conference in Bristol, the Conference of the Communist Party of Great Britain, the British African Congress in Edinburgh, the Youth Council in London in November 1945 and the congresses organized by the International Union of Students in Berlin, Beijing and Prague.[36] Through these conferences, and also by associating in the 1920s and 1930s with such organizations as the Racial Relations Group, the British Centre for Colonial Freedom, the Pan-African Federation, the League of Coloured Peoples, the Fabian Colonial Bureau, the Labour Party and the League against Imperialism, and with communist groups such as the International Union of Students, WASU not only diffused information about Africa and drew attention to its problems and aspirations but above all greatly extended the political horizon and consciousness of its members.

WASU, however, did not confine its activities to the United Kingdom and Europe but extended them to West Africa. During his tour of the West African countries, Solanke not only devoted his time to raising funds, but also gave public

lectures about the objectives of WASU and established branches in each of the colonies. The first of such lectures was given at the Glover Memorial Hall in Lagos on 14 November 1929 and is reported to have attracted 2,600 people.[37] The first branch of WASU was established in Accra and later others were formed in Cape Coast, Elmina, Nsawam and Sekondi in Ghana, Freetown and Bo in Sierra Leone, and Lagos, Ebuta-Meta, Abeokuta, Ijebu-Ode, Jos, Zaria, Kano, Ibadan, Agolwoye, Ile-Ife and Enugu in Nigeria.[38] Solanke appealed not only to the educated élite but also to traditional rulers, some of whom became the patrons or presidents of the local branches, which sought to implement some of the principal objectives of WASU. In an address on the anniversary of a local branch in 1930, Rev. M. S. Cole said:

> The Union looks beyond the broadest differences of race and civilization to the national life of West Africa. The programme of the Union . . . is not impracticable . . . surely God has some purpose and a place for Africans in his wonderful creation. It is a pity we copy examples from the Western world, but we leave out those that would make for our permanent progress, happiness and peace.[39]

The activities of these branches contributed to the revival of the spirit of pan-Africanism and nationalism, which was flagging in West Africa with the demise of NCBWA in 1930. It is significant that most of the educated élite who were the moving spirits behind the youth movements that arose in West Africa in the 1930s became members either of the local branches or of the parent branch on their return home from the United Kingdom.

WASU also saw itself as the watchdog of the interests of the whole of Africa. Nothing illustrates this better than its role in the Ethiopian crisis, in the cocoa crisis of 1934, and finally in the rumours about the transfer of some British colonies in Africa to Hitler. On the Fascist invasion of Ethiopia by Italy in 1935, WASU became the centre of the protest of West Africans in the United Kingdom.[40]

Considering the invasion as 'an ugly manifestation of totalitarianism in Europe in which Africa was tragically involved as the victim', it established an Ethiopian Defence Committee to raise funds for the defence of 'the people of Ethiopia against the present Italian Aggression and to arouse British opinion against it'.[41] It organized a number of religious services at its hostel to pray for a peaceful solution to the crisis, while its mouthpiece, *WASU*, described the conflict as the 'age-long conflict between Right and Wrong', condemned Italy for attacking another Christian country and criticized the role of the British Government in the crisis. But what was even more significant was the effect of the crisis on WASU. That crisis shook its belief in Western civilization and its confidence in the United Kingdom, and compelled not only the members of WASU but the intellectuals of West Africa to step up their attack on the colonial system. In the cocoa crisis of 1937–38, WASU aroused public opinion in its favour by organizing a public meeting in April 1938 which was addressed by Arthur Creech Jones and Reginald Sorenson, both Labour MPs.[42] Again, when

rumours circulated in 1938 about the possible transfer of some British African colonies to Germany by way of appeasement, WASU organized protests and some of its members, such as Kobina Kesse, wrote pamphlets to expose and condemn the rumour. It was mainly in response to this protest that the Colonial Office issued a statement denying the rumour and giving an assurance that no such transfer would occur without the knowledge and consent of the people concerned.[43]

There is no doubt, however, that one of WASU's most important roles was the radicalization of the African nationalist movement in the United Kingdom and West Africa during and after the Second World War.

WASU from the Second World War to 1958

It was during the war, when the National Congress of British West Africa (NCBWA) had long disappeared and the youth movements had lost their momentum, that WASU for the first time demanded not just internal but complete self-government. As its memorandum of 6 April 1942 to the Colonial Office put it:

> In the interest of Freedom, Justice and true Democracy, and in view of the lessons of Malaya and Burma, as well as the obvious need for giving the people of the Empire something to fight for, WASU in Great Britain strongly urges the British Government to grant Internal Self-Government Now, with a definite guarantee of complete self-government within five years of the end of the war.[44]

Solanke followed this up with a letter in March 1943 to Ernest Ikoli and Nnamdi Azikiwe in Nigeria urging them to ask for 'Self-Government Now'.[45] That memorandum of 1942 and the letter of 1943 are significant landmarks in nationalist demands, since they signify the change-over from the era of plaintive nationalism, whose main objective was the reform of the colonial system, to that of radical nationalism – with its slogan of 'Self-Government Now'.

This radical trend was strengthened and accelerated two years later at the Fifth Pan-African Congress, held at Manchester in October 1945. This congress, organized by WASU in collaboration with the League of Coloured Peoples, the Pan-African Federation, the Negro Welfare Centre and the International African Service Bureau, was attended by delegates from the Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.[46] That conference clearly and unequivocably reiterated the call for self-government. WASU followed this up in January 1946 with a resolution drawing attention to the declarations and charters made by the colonial powers during the war 'in which they held out hopes of full democratic rights and liberties to all peoples after the war', and asked the United Nations 'not only to obtain from the Colonial Powers the assurance that colonial Peoples will be speedily advanced to self-government and independence, but their plans and time limits within which this will be achieved with the active

participation of the colonial Peoples themselves'.[47] Finally, in a resolution passed in April 1947, WASU drew attention to the Atlantic Charter of August 1941 and to its resolution of 1942 asking for independence within five years, expressed its concern that 'the Imperial Government of Great Britain has shown no indication of its intention to leave West Africa in order that the Africans might govern themselves as free sovereign peoples', and declared that 'the time has come when the question of national independence of the African peoples and their complete break from the imperialist domination of Great Britain must be decided once and for all in the interests of world peace'.[48] At the same time its magazine called for the organization of the masses for the struggle for independence.

It was these revolutionary and radical ideas and demands that members of WASU carried with them on their return home in 1945 and the years that followed, thereby reorienting the nationalist movements. It is important to note that among the active members of WASU and those responsible for those radical resolutions were Kwame Nkrumah, Joe Appiah, R. B. Botsio and Ako Adjei of Ghana, and Ladipo Solanke, H. O. Davies, G. K. Amachree, M. Odesanya and B. Akpata of Nigeria, all of whom played important roles in the struggle for independence in their respective countries on their return home after 1947.

This increasingly radical trend in the demands of WASU was the outcome of a number of factors, beginning with the impact of the Second World War. The propaganda of the Allied Powers, which emphasized freedom and democracy and condemned imperialism, totalitarianism and above all racism, definitely intensified the political consciousness and raised the hopes of Africans not only in the United Kingdom but also in the continent itself. These hopes were further heightened by the adoption of the Atlantic Charter in August 1941 by President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill. The Charter declared, among other things, that the signatories 'respect the rights of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and they wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them'. It was the dashing of these hopes by Winston Churchill's denial that the Atlantic Charter applied to the British colonies that shocked educated Africans and students as well as blacks in the United States and launched them on the radical path. It is significant that the WASU Conference of 1942 was organized mainly to consider the Atlantic Charter and Churchill's statement on it,[49] and it is equally significant that it was at that conference that WASU demanded internal self-government immediately and complete self-government within five years.

In addition to the war, a further factor leading to radicalism was the political campaign being carried on in Asia and the West Indies in the late 1930s and early 1940s, where the demand was for independence and not merely reform. As early as October 1939, in a letter to the Rev. I. O. Ransome-Kuti, Solanke referred to the events in India and the West Indies and asked: 'What are we doing in West Africa?

Is it merely to pass a resolution of loyalty to take part in the war and nothing more? Alas! we are very very far behind.'[50] It is significant too that, in its memorandum of April 1942, WASU referred to 'the lessons of Malaya and Burma'.

The third factor was the seizure of the leadership of WASU after 1945 by students who had come under Marxist influence and/or were very radical in orientation. Typical of these were Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, who went to the United Kingdom after spending several years in the United States, and H. O. Davies of Nigeria; others were Joe Appiah, R. B. Botsio and Ako Adjei of Ghana and G. K. Amachree, M. Odesanya and B. Akpata of Nigeria.[51] It was such young firebrands who were responsible for all the radical memoranda and resolutions presented by WASU between 1942 and 1947.

The final factor was the disenchantment of WASU with the Labour Party after 1945. In the 1930s and early 1940s, WASU worked in close co-operation with the Labour Party, whose leader, Clement Attlee, endeared himself to its members when on 15 August 1941, the day after the declaration of the Atlantic Charter, he told them in a lecture at their hostel: 'We in the Labour Party have always been conscious of the wrongs done by the white race to the races with darker skins. We have always demanded that the freedom which we claim for ourselves should be extended to all men. I look for an ever-increasing measure of self-government in Africa.'[52] The party maintained this position even after Churchill's declaration concerning the Charter a week after Attlee's speech. Thus, when the party came to power after the elections of 1945, during which WASU and the other black organizations campaigned in its favour, a great deal was expected. But no sooner had Labour assumed power than it began to plead for gradualism and to reject the views of the Fabian Colonial Bureau for accelerated progress towards independence. It was this volte-face that made some of the moderate members of WASU switch over to the radical cause.

WASU set the pace for nationalism and anti-colonial movements from the 1920s until the end of the 1940s. In the 1950s, however, it grew steadily weaker and by 1958 had virtually ceased to exist. The reasons for this decline are firstly financial. After the mid-1940s, WASU could not finance itself, and its attempts at fund-raising in West Africa between 1944 and 1948 proved a failure. In the 1950s, in spite of the opening of the second hostel, the financial problems were not solved and that period was marked by a bitter struggle among its members regarding which of the two hostels should be sold; this greatly weakened the union.[53] The second and even more important factor was the emergence of ethnic and territorial student unions in the United Kingdom, beginning with the Ibo Students' Union in 1944, followed by the Egbe Omo Oduduwa (Society for the Descendants of Oduduwa, the mythical ancestor of the Yoruba) in 1945, the Yoruba Federal Union, the Gold Coast Students' Union and the Sierra Leone Students' Union. The rise of these ethnic and territorial unions from the mid-1940s onwards should not surprise us since, with the radicalization of the anti-colonial movement and the ensuing struggle for independence on a country-

by-country basis in British West Africa, such pan-Africanist and inter-territorial organizations as WASU became increasingly irrelevant and anachronistic. Moreover, the real venue for the struggle from 1945 onwards shifted from the United Kingdom to the African colonies, thereby further weakening the stance of organizations such as WASU. The final reason was, of course, the death of Ladipo Solanke in 1958. Not only was WASU his brain-child, but, as the first and only Secretary, Solanke remained throughout its main spirit and support and, with his death, WASU could not and did not survive.

It is important to note that WASU was in regular contact with African student organizations based in France. Abdoul Aziz Wane represented FEANF at the celebration of the twenty-ninth anniversary of the founding of the West African Students' Union in London in 1954, and reported the event in the *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire* (No. 3, October–November 1954). Similarly, Cheikh Anta Diop represented the Association des Étudiants RDA (AERDA), of which he was Secretary-General, at a meeting organized by WASU, as reported in *La voix de l'Afrique noire*, the organ of this African students' political group. The group's Chairman and Vice-chairman for external relations, Amady Aly Dieng and Simon Idéfé Ogouma, attended the WASU Congress in London in July 1962.

Conclusion

Though not the first African student union founded in Britain, WASU became the most active and influential during the period of its existence. Through its hostels and the advice it gave to students, it contributed much to the education and professional training of West Africans. Through its magazine, books, pamphlets, lectures and conferences, it succeeded in informing the British public about African culture and history, the falsity of the racist ideas then current, the iniquities and injustice of the colonial system and, above all, the political aspirations of West Africans in particular and Africans in general. Its greatest achievement was, however, in the political field. Not only did it strengthen and diffuse pan-Africanism, which culminated in the Pan-African Congress at Manchester in 1945, but it also intensified and radicalized West African political awareness and aspirations. Ironically, the radical trend it introduced contributed to the emergence of territorial and ethnic unions and weakened pan-Africanist and inter-territorial ones after 1945. This evolution, coupled with the death of Solanke, its main founder and leading spirit, accounts for its disappearance in the late 1950s.

Notes (See bibliography for titles)

1. Mutiso and Rohio, 1975, pp. xi–xiv.
2. Coleman, 1958, pp. 202–4; Asante, 1977, pp. 48–9; Garigue, 1953, pp. 55–69.
3. Garigue, pp. 55–7; Olusanya, 1982, pp. 1–15.
4. For details of the NCBWA, see Asante, pp. 19–20; Langley, 1973, pp. 107–94; Boahen (ed.), 1985, pp. 632–8.
5. Olusanya, pp. 6–7.
6. Ibid., p. 7.
7. Langley, 1969, pp. 157–72; Okonkwo, 1980, pp. 105–17; Boahen, forthcoming.
8. Asante, p. 49; Garigue, p. 58.
9. Garigue, p. 56.
10. Quoted by Garigue, op. cit.
11. Ibid.
12. Asante, p. 48; Garigue, pp. 56–7.
13. Olusanya, pp. 6–9.
14. Quoted by Olusanya, pp. 9–10.
15. Garigue, p. 58.
16. Olusanya, pp. 23–5.
17. For details of these difficulties, see Olusanya, pp. 27–36.
18. For further details, see Olusanya, pp. 69–74, 93–7.
19. Quoted by Olusanya, p. 11.
20. Ibid., p. 21.
21. Ibid., p. 18.
22. Ibid., p. 19.
23. Coleman, p. 205.
24. Ibid., p. 205.
25. Ibid., p. 206.
26. De Graft-Johnson, 1928, p. v.
27. Ibid., pp. 2–3.
28. Ibid., pp. 49–50.
29. Ibid., p. 36.
30. Ibid., pp. 86–95.
31. Ibid., pp. 72–3.
32. Olusanya, pp. 53–62.
33. Ibid., pp. 48–9.
34. Ibid., pp. 54–5; Pearce, 1982, p. 134.
35. Olusanya, pp. 64–5.
36. Garigue, pp. 65–6; Olusanya, p. 39.
37. Olusanya, pp. 25–6.
38. Ibid., pp. 43–5; Garigue, pp. 58–9.
39. Quoted by Garigue, p. 59.
40. Asante, pp. 48–51.
41. Ibid., p. 50.
42. Olusanya, p. 41.
43. Ibid., p. 41.
44. Quoted by Olusanya, pp. 49–50; also see Pearce, pp. 113–14.
45. Olusanya, p. 51.
46. Langley, pp. 347–57.
47. Boahen, 1986, pp. 142–3; quoted by Olusanya, p. 88.
48. Quoted by Olusanya, pp. 88–9.

49. Langley, pp. 347–8; Olusanya, pp. 47–8; Pearce, pp. 132–6.
50. Quoted by Olusanya, p. 50.
51. Ibid., pp. 83–4.
52. Ibid., p. 52.
53. For details of this conflict, see Olusanya, pp. 93–7.

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WASU in Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone

C. Ake

The young are often made to feel insignificant in a world that values wealth and power, assets that are not usually accessible early in life. Africa has been rather exceptional in this respect; the young, and particularly students, have always been a powerful presence in society there because they have played a very important role in the continent's social and political development. This legacy is epitomized by the West African Students' Union (WASU) which made an immense contribution to raising nationalist consciousness in Africa and to the advancement and consummation of the struggle for independence. It gave impetus to the quest for development and to the desire to make Africa a going concern in the global system and to democratize its society. But this role was not without contradictions and ambiguities.

The origins of the pan-African movement go back to the period of American independence, when, in the euphoria of independence and liberty, the blacks of the New World became more sophisticated in articulating their feelings against racial domination and better organized in their struggle for liberation. It drew part of its inspiration from abolitionist works such as James Ramsay's *Essays on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British Sugar Colonies* (1784), Abbé H. Grégoire's *An Inquiry Concerning the Intellectual and Moral Faculties, and Literatures of the Negro* (1810), W. Armistead's *Tribute for the Negro* (1848) and A. Benezet's *A Caution and Warning to Great Britain and Her Colonies* (1766) and *Some Historical Account of Guinea* (1788). Following abolition, the black diaspora in the New World found that it had won a pyrrhic victory. Racial discrimination and domination continued unabated. Try as they might, black Americans could not find acceptance even when they aped the white man's ways; the harder they tried the more they were humiliated, the more their sense of inferiority was deepened. Eventually this state of affairs forced some of them to downgrade the idea of equality and turn their attention to stressing their separateness and uniqueness and to forging a sense of their own identity. It was in this mood that the black diaspora in America and the Caribbean began to look longingly to Africa, to think more of black unity and the possibility of returning to Africa.

This mood found articulate theoretical expression in the writings of Edward Blyden, a black West Indian who was later to become a Liberian citizen. He argued brilliantly against the European denigration of African history and culture. He demonstrated the achievements of Africans in the past and showed that they were sometimes superior to those of the Europeans. He held out the possibility of Africa's return to greatness and called for 'an African nationality' and the development of an 'African personality' to hasten it – this famous phrase, African personality, was in fact invented by Blyden and not by Kwame Nkrumah. He insisted that Africa is the home of black peoples and that they should draw inspiration from her and unite to make her great. These ideas were to be echoed later in the speeches and writings of the great pan-Africanists, W. E. B. Dubois, George Padmore, Marcus Garvey and Kwame Nkrumah. Even more significantly, they were to feature in the resolutions of the pan-African conferences. The first of these which was held in 1900 may be regarded as the formal beginning of the pan-African movement. Others were to follow in 1919, 1921, 1923, 1927, 1945 and 1958.

However paradoxical it may seem, it is quite understandable that the movement was originally established and flourished in the diaspora. Yet this Afrocentric movement could not be consummated outside Africa. As it developed, it began to lean towards Africa. And it was in West Africa that it found fertile ground, much to the credit of WASU. The West African intelligentsia had affinities with the ideals of pan-Africanism and with the diaspora, and took for granted its vanguard role in the fight against racism and the subordination and exploitation of the peoples of Africa. A large proportion of the returned slaves had roots in West Africa, which naturally became the major receptacle for them – particularly Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Togo. These circumstances may have been the major source of West Africa's affinity with the diaspora.

One major explanation for the success of pan-Africanism in West Africa was the unifying influence of Sierra Leone. As a colony Sierra Leone was founded about a century before the era of colonialism in Africa. Right from its birth, abolitionists and missionaries played a major role in its development. As a result, the colony had a broad liberal tradition and an advanced educational system. The first resettlement of freed slaves in Africa was in Sierra Leone in 1787, and about 16,000 were settled there by 1808. Fourah Bay College was founded in Freetown as early as 1827. Then came the CMS Grammar School for boys in 1845, followed by a similar secondary school for girls the same year.

Because of the quality of these institutions and the backwardness of education in other parts of Africa, they attracted students from all over the continent, especially West Africa. Students came from Cameroon, Fernando Po, Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, South Africa and Zanzibar. Fourah Bay College in particular was a veritable pan-African institution. It not only brought Africans – especially West Africans – together, but it also brought them close to the diaspora, since many students there were

children of freed slaves. It was not surprising, therefore, that the CMS Grammar School in Freetown started a bi-monthly journal, *The Ethiopian*, which propagated black and continental nationalism. This first appeared in 1873, long before the rise of pan-Africanism in the diaspora.

The rising pan-African consciousness was diffused throughout West Africa by Sierra Leonean missionaries, abolitionists, professionals and business people, some of whom were resettled immigrants who wanted to go back to their original homes in Africa. The fact that Sierra Leone played such an important role in the development of other parts of West Africa led to a certain homogenization. Sierra Leoneans such as Samuel Crowther and James Johnson were particularly energetic in missionary activity. The missionaries typically pushed for the expansion of educational facilities for Africans. In 1859 a CMS Grammar School was founded in Lagos by Rev. T. B. Macaulay, Samuel Crowther's son-in-law and, like him, a Sierra Leonean. Another descendant of Samuel Crowther and Rev. T. B. Macaulay, Herbert Macaulay, was later to become the father of Nigerian nationalism.

The vanguard role of the West African intelligentsia was not purely fortuitous, but arose from a specific historical conjuncture whose elements include the early development of Western education in West Africa, the internationalization of the intelligentsia through institutions such as Fourah Bay College, homogenization through the pivotal role of Sierra Leone, and contact with the diaspora through the prominent presence of freed slaves. There is a sense in which WASU was the outcome of this conjuncture.

WASU waged the struggle for African emancipation wherever it could and by all means in its power. In Africa it acted through its numerous branches, its journal and the nationalist press and in co-operation with political formations of similar disposition in trying to influence the principal African politicians. Solanke appears to have been in contact with Adjei, Azikiwe, Banda, de Graft-Johnson and Nkrumah. In the metropolitan countries it tried its utmost to advance African interests through incessant lobbying and promotional activities. In France Solanke appears to have been in touch with the deputies from Africa and to have tried to influence French policy through them. In London he set up the WASU Parliamentary Committee to lobby for African interests.

WASU tried to encourage new formations with similar ideas and to involve them in a collective struggle to enhance their effectiveness. A case in point is the African Students' Association in the United States, in which Nkrumah played a prominent role. For instance, in November 1942 WASU collaborated with the African Students' Association of the United States and Canada on the occasion of the anniversary of the death of Aggrey. It is an indication of the status of WASU that this association decided to take up corporate membership of it.

WASU did not simply propagate ideas, but was actively engaged in the struggle. This contributed a great deal to its influence, especially in West Africa. The

union did not necessarily carry out this role as an organization; its influence was sometimes exerted through individual members or organizations and individuals associated with it. But the fact that it had a hand in affairs was generally conspicious. One of these struggles arose from the accusation levelled against Liberia by the mass media of the Western powers – the United States, France and the United Kingdom – that Liberia was engaged in forced labour and slavery. As a result of these charges it was suggested that Liberia be placed under the control of the League of Nations. Even though the Committee of Inquiry which was set up in 1929 reported that domestic slavery only was evident in Liberia and that this did not have the support of the Liberian Government, the criticism voiced by the Western media continued and became even more bitter. The attack was widely seen as an attempt to discredit the only independent black republic in Africa, and caused general outrage in the continent. The incident demonstrated the usefulness of bodies such as WASU and the nationalist press, and gave considerable impetus to political mobilization in West Africa.

When Italy invaded Ethiopia, WASU waged a determined campaign against it and became the centre of the opposition to the invasion in the United Kingdom. The union attacked not only the Italian Government, but also the Church in Italy and the United Kingdom for not coming out forcefully against such an unchristian act. Among other things, WASU set up an Ethiopian Defence Committee to raise funds to support the Ethiopian effort, promoted the Ethiopian cause in its journal and even organized church services in connection with the crisis. Outrage at the Italian invasion brought home to Africans a heightened appreciation of the threat of racism and imperialism and elicited an unprecedented show of solidarity. But this was partly due to the consciousness-raising efforts of organizations such as WASU.

The influence of WASU on social and political development in Africa cannot be properly appreciated if it is looked at merely from the perspective of international affairs. Its activities were more important on the national level, affecting the course of national development in countries such as Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

Ghana

The person of Joseph Boakye Danquah is a convenient point of departure in tracing the impact of WASU on the social and political development of Ghana. Danquah, born in 1895, went to the United Kingdom to study in November 1921; he was already involved in nationalist politics, having represented his home area, Akim Abuakwa state, at the conferences of the Aborigines' Society in Cape Coast. So it was quite natural that he should quickly become involved in African student politics in the United Kingdom. A founding member of WASU, he served as the first Deputy President of the union and its second President.

When he returned to Ghana in 1927 Danquah continued his activism. He was elected President of the local branch of WASU. At the time, the nationalist movement in Ghana was losing momentum. Up until 1930, two organizations had been in the forefront of the struggle: the Aborigines' Rights' Protection Society (ARPS), the major nationalist organization in Ghana until the 1920s, and the National Congress of British West Africa (NCBWA), founded by J. E. Casely Hayford in March 1920. By the mid-1920s the Congress was already in decline owing to the opposition of three powerful forces: the colonial governors of both Ghana and Nigeria, certain traditional rulers (notably Ofori Atta), and some of the old guard politicians such as Dr B. W. Quartey-Papafio. In 1927 a split occurred in the Ghana branch and by 1930, when its founder died, the Congress collapsed.

From then on the nationalist flag in Ghana was carried by the Gold Coast Youth Conference (GCYC) and the West African Youth League (WAYL). GCYC was Danquah's brain-child. Shortly after his return from the United Kingdom he wrote a pamphlet entitled *An Epistle to the Educated Young Men in Akim Abuakwa* (1929), in which he advocated the formation of village and town councils to facilitate development and an assembly of youth to study and tackle the problems facing Ghana. He echoed this call on the occasion of the general meeting of WASU on 18 May 1929. In this way, GCYC was formed in 1929 mainly by WASU veterans, including J. W. de Graft-Johnson. Danquah and his colleagues were initially concerned about the breach between the educated élite and the traditional leaders, which had climaxed in the disagreement between Casely Hayford and Nana Ofori Atta 1, an event that contributed to the demise of NCBWA. The move succeeded: significantly, the educated élite and traditional rulers of Ghana jointly opposed the Sedition Ordinance (1934) and the Water Works Ordinance (1934). The solidarity between these two forces was underlined by the fact that the Youth Conference was formally received by the Joint Provincial Council in 1935 at Swedru. When the Youth Conference met in April 1939, it was under the patronage of the *ashantihene.*

Perhaps J. B. Danquah succeeded too well. GCYC, never very radical in the first place, appears to have been completely deradicalized and somewhat weakened as a nationalist movement by its alliance with traditional rulers. As a nationalist movement, it was only modestly successful. It brought some unity, especially between the chiefs and the intelligentsia, advanced national consciousness and mobilized certain people into politics and paved the way for the unity of the Colony regions and the Asante in 1946. But it was never really able to bring much pressure to bear on the colonial regime and had relatively little impact on its policies. Most importantly, its conservative disposition eventually alienated some of the youth who were its *raison d'être.* For good reason, they were finding Wallace-Johnson's WAYL more interesting. Unfortunately, WAYL disappeared prematurely in 1940, shortly after the deportation of Wallace-Johnson in 1938. By the end of the 1930s, it resembled a moribund élitist movement, and the whole nationalist movement in the

Gold Coast appeared to be stalling once again. Against this background, few could have foreseen the independence of the Gold Coast as early as 1958.

After the Second World War, the Gold Coast moved rapidly towards independence thanks to the emergence of two political organizations, the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) and the Convention People's Party (CPP). Once more J. B. Danquah and WASU played an important role in these developments. UGCC was founded on 4 August 1947, emerging from the fusion of a political group formed by J. B. Danquah and George Grant in Sekondi in 1947 and the National League of the Gold Coast of Akufo Addo. George Grant was elected Chairman while J. B. Danquah became Vice-Chairman. Kwame Nkrumah was appointed General Secretary of the party in December 1947. Nkrumah had been an activist in his student days in the United States and the President of the African Students' Association of the United States and Canada. He had been elected Vice-President of WASU on his arrival in England in 1945. Owing to Nkrumah's organizational abilities and charismatic appeal, the party became very popular.

However, a rift soon developed between Nkrumah and the UGCC leadership, the source being the conservatism of the latter. This was not unconnected with the leaders' background; they included Akufo Addo, John Tsiboe, J. W. de Graft-Johnson, J. B. Danquah, R. A. Awoonor and R. S. Blay. Most were highly successful professionally and considered to be prosperous people. Some of them, Danquah for instance, hailed from chiefly families. Indeed, Nkrumah's appointment had come about precisely because no member of the top leadership was willing to abandon his professional pursuits to work full-time for the party.

In the spectrum of African student politics in the United States and the United Kingdom, Nkrumah had been on the left. When he saw the possibilities that the contradictions in the post-war Gold Coast offered for the advancement of the struggle, he was greatly disillusioned and frustrated by the plodding conservatism of the UGCC leadership. But the disillusion and frustration were mutual. The party leadership, through its Working Committee, decided to suspend Nkrumah as General Secretary in 1948 for alleged inefficiency and ties with Communists and other left-wing formations. To cut a long story short, Nkrumah left in the end and formed the Convention People's Party (CPP) on 12 June 1949.

The CPP emerged from the Committee of Youth Organizations (CYO), a body made up of four youth groups: the Asante Youth Association in Kumasi, the Ghana Youth Association in Sekondi, the Youth Study Group in Accra and the Wassa Youth Association in Tarkwa. The CYO had been an affiliate of the UGCC but had been disillusioned by the stuffiness and conservatism of its leadership. When the rift between the UGCC and Nkrumah surfaced, it backed Nkrumah and eventually broke away to form the CPP. The CYO was predominantly a movement of *petit bourgeois* and proletarian elements. None of its principal leaders was a professional or a rich person, and only one was a graduate. It had been marginalized and alienated by the

UGCC, which had already assumed the character of the party of the bourgeoisie. The rift that led to the formation of the CPP was not just a matter of clashing personalities or political styles, but rather the reflection of a conflict of social forces.

The way in which Nkrumah used the CPP to move the Gold Coast very quickly along the road to political independence is no doubt familiar to the reader and will not detain us here. Instead we should underline some points arising from the consideration of WASU's influence on the social and political development of Ghana. Youth and student organizations, particularly WASU, have played the leading role in Ghana's progress to political independence. They did this through conscientization, leadership and mobilization in order to take advantage of the developing objective conditions. But this role was not without ambiguities and contradictions. We have seen evidence of this on a lower level, in the conflict that led to Nkrumah's break with UGCC. This contradiction was not deeply ideological, for Nkrumah too was inevitably to lose touch with the grass-roots. We may also suggest a contradiction of form and content. The political formations engendered by WASU and the Gold Coast youth seem to have been uniformly concerned with political forms, especially the locus of power, without paying much attention to social transformation and often confusing one with the other. This may well point to certain generic weaknesses in the political intervention of youth movements and student organizations.

Nigeria

It was relatively easy for WASU to make an impact on Nigeria because the political awareness of the Nigerian intelligentsia had already moved a long way in the direction in which WASU was heading. A flourishing branch of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) opened in Lagos as early as 1920. Nigeria boasted a relatively strong and nationalistic branch of NCBWA. Indeed, WASU is to some extent a manifestation of the substantially developed political consciousness of the Nigerian intelligentsia. Nigerian students in London spearheaded the founding of WASU; particularly outstanding was Ladipo Solanke, who became the leading light of the union. Three members of the first executive committee of WASU were Nigerians: Ladipo Solanke, Honorary Secretary; Kusimo Soluade, Assistant Treasurer; and J. Akanni Doherty, Treasurer and Financial Secretary.

WASU made a substantial contribution to the political mobilization of Nigeria, beginning with Solanke's mission to West Africa in 1929. He had been sent by WASU's executive committee to publicize the union and raise funds. For most of the period of the mission, which lasted from 1929 to 1932,Solanke was mainly in Nigeria. He did an excellent job of publicizing WASU and mobilizing Nigerians for the liberation struggle, and founded WASU branches in Abeokuta, Ebute Meta, Ibadan, Ile-Ife, Kano, Lagos and Zaria. In some of these places political consciousness was relatively underdeveloped.

Charged with extending a student political organization, Ladipo Solanke placed particular emphasis on the mobilization of youth. In doing this he was paving the way for the tapping of a tremendous national political and economic resource whose potential had been relatively unexplored. To be sure, as James Coleman pointed out in *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism*, the so-called youth of Nigeria was not so young; in 1939 the average age of the members of the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) was 40. However, the fact that the general thrust was youth-specific was important in bringing to the nationalist fold a new social type that was generally more idealistic and dynamic and less tied to the past. Legitimizing the participation of youth and stressing their vanguard role was clearly valuable work, considering the rash of youth political formations that subsequently mushroomed in Nigeria and the critical role they played in Nigeria's march to independence.

The domination of politics by older, more conservative figures such as Herbert Macaulay had become a problem, as it was becoming increasingly clear that these older politicians were preoccupied with their own narrow interests and were not helping other groups to articulate and resolve their grievances. There had already been a reaction to this situation, albeit a modest one. For instance, there was already the Union of Young Nigerians (UYN), formed by Ernest Ikoli, Dr J. Vaughn and Ayo Williams in 1923 to involve young persons in national affairs. Later, in 1938, the latter was to found the Nigerian Union of Young Democrats (NUYD).

UYN had not been effective in challenging the status of Herbert Macaulay and the old-style politicians and was quickly dissipated. However, during the furore over the alleged intention of the colonial government to downgrade the educational status of Yaba Higher College, the union was reconstituted by Ernest Ikoli, Dr Vaughn, S. Akinsaya and H. O. Davies in 1934 as the Lagos Youth Movement (LYM). In 1936, the name was changed to the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM). This movement, the first mass movement of the Nigerian independence struggle, benefited immensely from the preparatory work, personnel and political infrastructures of WASU. One of its founders and best assets was H. O. Davies, a student activist who became President of WASU in 1936. The spread of the movement was helped by the fact that some WASU branches changed their name and became affiliated to it.

The NYM had relatively modest objectives: to promote national unity, to advance national consciousness, and to achieve for Nigeria political autonomy within the British Commonwealth. These were the cornerstones of its manifesto, the Nigerian Youth Charter (NYC) issued in 1938.

To its credit the movement pursued its objectives with rigour and won some notable struggles, which enhanced its political presence. It plunged into electoral politics and won control of Lagos town council. Then it stood for the Lagos seats in the Legislative Council and captured them from Macaulay's National Democratic Party (NDP) in 1938. The movement led the opposition in Nigeria to the Italian invasion of Ethiopia and also organized the Nigerian relief effort for that country. It

kept in touch with other relief organizations such as the Enugu Ethiopia Relief Fund and the Prominent Lagos Women's Society. The active role it played in this matter won it an even greater following, as feelings against the invasion were as strong in Nigeria as in the rest of West Africa. The Italian invasion of Ethiopia appears to have made the movement more radical. According to H. O. Davies, who was its Secretary in 1938, this was the event that turned NYM irrevocably against indirect rule and in favour of independence and a more effective instrument of liberation.

Nigeria's progress towards self-determination benefited from WASU's relentless lobbying in Europe against colonial exploitation and domination. It increased the price of colonization to the colonial masters, harnessed the support of liberal Europeans and kept racism and decolonization on the agenda. Above all, it helped to show that the choice for the colonizers was not between yielding power or retaining it but rather between yielding power to moderates or to revolutionaries, between peaceful and violent decolonization.

One of the ways in which WASU accomplished this was by embarrassing the British, by showing up the contradictions between their professed ideals and values and the practice of colonialism. This was used to great effect during the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, not only against the United Kingdom and the European governments but also against the Protestant Church and the papacy. Concerning Nigeria in particular, following the Atlantic Charter WASU challenged the British Prime Minister to account for the fact that his government was determined to support the independence of Ethiopia, Syria and Europe, but not that of West Africa. Later on, in 1943, eight West African journalists were invited to London by the British Council.

WASU contrived with Nnamdi Azikiwe, one of the journalists on the trip, to present a document entitled 'The Atlantic Charter and British West Africa', which called for abolition of the crown colony system, Africanization and steady progress towards self-government. The British Government ignored the document, much to the disappointment of the delegation. But somehow the actual pace of movement towards independence in West Africa was not far off that prescribed by the delegation and WASU. They wanted independence for West Africa by 1958: Ghana in fact became independent in 1957, the eastern and western regions of Nigeria also achieved internal self-government in 1958, and the whole country became self-governing in 1960.

By the end of the war the wheel had come full circle. The Nigerians who had largely created and inspired WASU now helped to dismantle it. So many African students had come to the United Kingdom that solidarity became difficult, and student organizations formed on a national basis began to emerge. WASU was finally doomed when Nigeria's ethnic rivalries were exported to the United Kingdom with the formation in London of Nnamdi Azikiwe's Ibo-based National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC) and Obafemi Awolowo's Egbe Omo Oduduwa (EOO), a Yoruba cultural organization with thinly disguised political ambitions.

NYM suffered the same fate on account of 'tribalism' in 1941, at a time when it was just beginning to look like a winner. There was a clash between two leaders of the movement, Ernest Ikoli, one of its founders, and Nnamdi Azikiwe, perhaps its most charismatic member. The clash had to do with their professional rivalry as journalists. The next problem was the struggle for the succession to the Legislative Council when Dr K. A. Abayomi, President of NYM, resigned after being appointed to the Executive Council. When Ernest Ikoli, editor of the movement's paper, the *Lagos Daily Service*, was chosen as successor, Dr Azikiwe, with whom he was on bad terms, and Samuel Akinsaya, his defeated rival, accused the Ibos and Ijebu Yoruba of discrimination. Akinsaya and Azikiwe subsequently left the movement. Since Azikiwe took virtually all of NYM's Ibo following with him, the movement became simply a Yoruba organization. Then followed a press war between the *Lagos Daily Service* and Azikiwe's *West African Pilot*. The NYM never recovered from this crisis.

Sierra Leone

I. T. A. Wallace-Johnson is a useful focal point from which to examine the case of Sierra Leone. Born in 1895, he was a Creole from Wilberforce village. He attended the well-known CMS Grammar School and, later, the United Methodist Collegiate School. From 1926 to 1928 he did several courses of study in the United States and the United Kingdom. He entered Moscow University in 1932. Wallace-Johnson's relationship with WASU is rather tenuous compared to that of someone like Danquah. He shared the pan-Africanist ideas of WASU, moved freely in student activist circles and collaborated in some of the organization's struggles. But he was of a far more radical bent than the average WASU activist, and this led him to join other more radical political groups in London and other parts of Europe, especially those that were of a socialist orientation. Even though his ties with WASU were tenuous and his concerns guided by ideas far in advance of those of the organization, his experience greatly clarifies WASU's contribution to the social and political development of Africa by showing us its limitations. WASU, like other pan-Africanist and nationalist movements, was focused too sharply on black identity and the relocation of power from the colonizers to African rulers.

In 1931, Wallace-Johnson returned to West Africa and joined the staff of the *Nigerian Daily Times* while also serving as Secretary of the Koffey African United Church Society in Lagos. Soon he resumed his political activism, convinced that the independence and anti-imperialist struggle needed a popular base. Victory could not come about merely by the relocation of power – social transformation too was a necessity. He therefore set out to organize Nigerian workers. On the formation of the African Workers' Union of Nigeria (AWUN) in 1931, he became General Secretary. The colonial government was worried about his efforts to arouse radical conscious-

ness and labour militancy and began to put pressure on him: in 1933, his premises were searched for banned or seditious literature. It is said that he was subsequently deported, but the evidence for this is not very conclusive; it would appear that he left for the Gold Coast on his own to avoid deportation or further harassment.

In the Gold Coast, Wallace-Johnson's political activism was renewed with undiminished zeal. In 1933, he founded the Gold Coast Workers' Protection Association, which had several branches, to promote solidarity in defence of workers' interests. He also founded the Gold Coast Motor Car Union in the same year. The following year he founded the West African Youth League (WAYL), a front for collective struggle against colonialism. WAYL quickly caught on, and soon had branches all over the Gold Coast. Its support for the Mambii Party in 1935 was decisive in the victory of Kojo Thompson, the party's candidate for the Accra constituency of the Legislative Council.

The mass appeal of the League was greatly boosted by its opposition to the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, which it made a *cause célèbre*. With considerable ingenuity, Wallace-Johnson and his League used the invasion to rouse and radicalize nationalist consciousness, not only in the Gold Coast but in the rest of West Africa too. The League launched the Ethiopian Defence League and managed to mobilize an impressive array of political organizations and unions, media groups, young persons and even traditional rulers in opposition to the invasion. The growth in the League's influence, and its success at mobilization from 1935 on, alarmed the colonial authorities, who deported Wallace-Johnson to Sierra Leone in 1938. With this development the League rapidly declined and was defunct by 1940.

In Sierra Leone, Wallace-Johnson found even more fertile ground for the development of militant nationalism. The nationalist movement was even more tame in Sierra Leone than it was in the Gold Coast and Nigeria. The Creole élite who dominated the indigenous political leadership of the colony seemed unusually complacent and cautious. The Sierra Leone branch of NCBWA was singularly ineffective, having almost no presence in the country outside Freetown, and took hardly any interest in matters not affecting the interests of the Creole élite; by 1935 its membership had fallen to below forty. This situation quickly changed. Wallace-Johnson established a Sierra Leone branch of WAYL, the Sierra Leone Youth League (SLYL), and also the West African Civil Liberties and National Defence League (WACLNDL), another activist agency. An organ for the League, the *African Standard*, was started in 1939. Every opportunity for popular struggle which presented itself was seized by the League; these included the Rural Ordinance of 1938, the question of equal voting rights in the Legislative Council, the Mining Laws and the Education Ordinance.

Once again a West African colonial government felt threatened. But this time the threat was also felt by the local Creole élite, who began to resent Wallace-Johnson's stirring up of the grass-roots and his disdain for them as collaborators. He

was detained on 6 September 1939, under Regulation 18 of the Defence Regulations, 1939, and was not released until the end of 1944. He came out a changed man, all radicalism seemingly crushed in him. Somewhat paradoxically the radicalism of Wallace-Johnson and those who took his line helped conservative nationalist formations to come to power. Many of the concessions they made to African nationalism were for the purpose of pre-empting the triumph of the extreme left.

Conclusion

What we have seen here is a unique historical situation in which youth in general and students in particular refused to be marginalized as is so often the case, and instead elbowed their way into history with remarkable success. It is as if the young people of West Africa had set out to demonstrate the real significance of the saying that 'the future belongs to youth', a saying that, oddly enough, had become an excuse for their marginalization rather than one that inspired them to take the vanguard in changing society. They appear to have been saying that the future began yesterday, and that its priorities had to be attended to immediately. For about three decades – from 1910 to 1940 – they were a decisive force, arguably *the* decisive force, in the march to independence. WASU in particular contributed a great deal to the development of nationalist consciousness in West Africa through its vigorous educational programme in both London and West Africa.

WASU was only one of several forces playing this role. But its contribution was uniquely useful in that it gave depth to the nationalist movement in at least three senses. First, before WASU came on the scene, the issues of the nationalist struggle had tended to be of interest only to a small élite, and not surprisingly these also tended to be issues relevant mainly in the context of the national capital. It was much to WASU's credit that it transformed the struggle into a truly national one in regard both to the issues and to geographical spread. Secondly, WASU gave depth to the nationalist movement in that it rescued it from the domination of a small élite, such as that of the Creoles who were challenged by Wallace-Johnson in Sierra Leone and that challenged in Nigeria by NYM. The influence of WASU made the nationalist movement a popular movement, though never quite a mass movement in the strict sense of the term. One of the ways in which it was able to do this was by placing emphasis on the role of youth. Thirdly, WASU made the nationalist movement more radical, that is, it helped to move it beyond demands for the simple amelioration of the colonial system to a call for its outright abrogation, and began encouraging the rejection of any accommodation with imperialism.

The political work of WASU in the metropolitan capitals, especially London, played an important part in making independence possible, for it gave the colonizers less room in which to perpetrate atrocities in the colonies, out of sight of those whose

opinions really mattered. When WASU carried the battle to London and other parts of Europe, and mobilized progressive opinion there, colonialism was put on the defensive, becoming from time to time a domestic political issue.

WASU advanced the nationalist struggle by regionalizing and even internationalizing it. That this trend was already present is indicated by the existence of NCBWA. But WASU was in a particularly appropriate position to reinforce it, and did so, to the benefit of decolonization in West Africa.

It is important not to take a voluntarist view of WASU's role, which was the effect of determinate objective conditions, namely: the homogenizing influence of Sierra Leone in the development of the rest of British West Africa, especially Fourah Bay College; the solidarity forced on African students by the hostile racist environment of the United Kingdom; the rising tide of black consciousness in the diaspora; the prestige of Western education in colonial West Africa; the peculiar contradictions of colonialism; and, particularly, the rejection of those Africans whom the 'civilizing mission' had fashioned in the image of the Westerner.

The objective conditions that led to WASU's rise and success were responsible too for its considerable limitations. It is neither desirable nor possible to explore this theme here. But let us by way of illustration consider one of the major contradictions of colonialism, that arising out of the 'civilizing mission'.

Colonization was a phenomenally brutal assault on its victims' liberties, culture and history. There was only one way of justifying this assault and that was to pretend that the victims were less than human. At the same time, some concession had to be made to the ideology of the civilizing mission, so there had to be some token commitment to development and education. We know that the colonizers talked a good deal and did very little, even when we add the efforts of the missionaries. But the little they bestowed on some of the natives gave rise to a major contradiction. Soon, a tiny educated and Westernized élite began to emerge in each colony. When the racist and exploitative predilections of colonialism led to their rejection, they were naturally outraged, all the more so because their Western education had made them more sensitive to the humiliations of being colonized and the possibilities that had been denied their people. This particular contradiction of the civilizing mission proved fatal for the colonizing powers in Africa, for it was the outrage of this Westernized élite that ultimately brought down the colonial regimes.

Students in higher education were a very important part of this élite and a very sensitive element within it. They could already see clearly their humiliation and rejection, but it was not yet cushioned by the expected material comfort of professional or commercial success. And for students in the metropolis, there was the additional fillip of the daily confrontations with racism. They could hardly avoid being in the forefront of the anti-colonial struggle.

Yet the Westernized élite who led the anti-colonial struggle in West Africa also severely curtailed its potentialities; the political independence they won has turned

out to be something of a hollow victory. Even while they struggled as the exploited under colonialism, they were already a privileged class in a situation of rapidly crystallizing class differentiation. They did all they could and managed a relatively peaceful bourgeois revolution. Because of what they were, they were necessarily interested in the inheritance of the colonial system, not in its radical transformation. Hence, those who, like Wallace-Johnson, were interested in revolutionary transformation, were few and far between and doomed to failure. Three decades into independence, their failure continues to haunt Africa, and there will be no let-up until she applies herself to this unfinished business.

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The influence of WASU in East Africa

S. I. Nyagava

Politics in British East and West Africa during the inter-war years were dominated by demands for increased participation by Africans in the government and administration of their respective territories. There were also protests at white settlement and land alienation. In Kenya in 1908, for example, the British Government granted exclusive rights of occupancy to European settlers over an undefined area of highland country assumed to be unoccupied by Africans. Subsequent Orders in Council and associated legislation precluded Africans from occupying the land as tenant farmers, forcing them to be either wage labourers or squatters.[1] White occupation swallowed up vast areas until, according to Lord Hailey,[2] about half the land in Kenya worth cultivating lay in what came to be called the 'White Highlands'. Furthermore, the report of the Land Settlement Commission or *Soldier Settlement Scheme* was published at the beginning of 1919. It recommended that land should be taken from several African areas and given to European soldier settlers for their services during the First World War.[3] This was in addition to millions of acres of African land that had been taken and handed over to settlers in 1908. There was, therefore, an immediate reaction against the soldier settlement scheme among all Africans in British East Africa, as Kenya was then known. African reaction against such a scheme led to the formation of the Kikuyu Association late in 1919.[4]

In West Africa the immediate goals were to secure opportunities for African businessmen in the colonial economy, which was increasingly dominated by expatriate companies and Lebanese merchants.[5] But, in general, the situation in which Africans found themselves in the inter-war years was essentially the same: 'deprivation of political and social liberties; exploitation of human and material resources to the benefit of alien rulers; denial of facilities and services which could contribute to the political and social upliftment of the colonized societies'.[6]

The First World War raised the hopes of the emergent educated élite all over Africa for greater opportunities of identification with the development process in their respective communities. They thus expected to be integrated and accepted by the

colonial rulers as colleagues. But as the colonial situation became more and more a reality, they found their expectations being frustrated. The realities of the post-war period, therefore, brought disillusionment and discontent to educated Africans. It is in these groups and in the years during and immediately after the First World War that we can trace the beginnings of the African nationalist movements which, after the Second World War, secured the support of the masses in their demands for independence.

Youth organizations, ethnic associations, welfare groups and/or societies and other movements dedicated to the achievement of civil liberties and the rights of man emerged to challenge the colonial administration in all the colonies, irrespective of their constitutional situation. These movements were no longer content merely to improve their position within the colonial system; they sought, rather, to change the whole structure into one that would make them masters in place of the British.[7] However, while the precursors of these youth organizations in East Africa were made up of people residing in Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika, the precursors in British West Africa were in fact the student movements in London, of which the most important was the West African Students' Union (WASU) led by Ladipo Solanke. Solanke, in the view of contemporary students, was the person doing the most for his race and country.[8] This paper attempts an assessment of the role of WASU in the political, social, cultural and economic evolution of East Africa. It gives a brief history of East African students and attempts to link their activities with those of emerging associations in East Africa through personal contacts with East Africans and the *WASU* periodical.

East African students and WASU

According to D. L. Wiedner,[9] West Africans had been studying abroad in gradually increasing numbers since the 1890s. The earliest West African students stayed only briefly at preparatory schools and training centres of small Protestant denominations. Of the few who did advanced work prior to the First World War, most remained in the United Kingdom, while a small number intending to return home after their studies in London avoided their compatriots who had decided to stay in the United Kingdom and in 1917 formed the pioneer Union for Students of African Descent (USAD).

In contrast, records show that only two Tanganyikan pupils received secondary education in England prior to the German invasion of their country.[10] The situation improved somewhat in the early mission years, and even in German times, when several Tanganyikans finished their education abroad before British occupation put an end to this. Taking East Africa as a whole, the situation was not at all encouraging. For instance, when in 1924 the Phelps-Stokes Fund published its report on education in East Africa, the colonial governments of Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika were

spending very little of their annual revenue on education. Uganda had no Director of Education until 1924. According to the report, the general picture in Kenya was difficult to assess and African education was limited to such schools as Machakos, founded in 1915, Waa (1921) and the Masai Native School financed by the Masai Trust Fund.[11] In Uganda, Makerere College had been opened in 1921 to provide technical education; it was in due course to develop into the first university college in East Africa[12] and achieved university status in the early 1950s. Its very first degree examinations were held in December 1953.[13]

One reason for developing Makerere was to prevent East Africans absorbing subversive ideas at foreign institutions.[14] For instance, only one Tanganyikan received a single term's education in Europe between the wars, yet such education remained relatively common for West Africans, who in the 1920s began to go abroad in significant numbers. Even so, students studying in the United Kingdom during the war years, according to K. Ezera,[15] numbered barely 150. Nevertheless, they constituted the greatest proportion of overseas students.[16] A considerable number also studied in the United States of America. Small clubs for men from each colony had been formed but these did not last long, with the exception of the West African Students' Union (WASU).

Wiedner has observed that the 'nation' to which the students pledged their loyalty was not always clearly defined; however, it was usually either a pan-African federation or a unified British West African republic. Yet when they returned to their homelands, individual students found that economic and political realities, reinforced by regional loyalty, had created a field for separate nationalisms in each colony. Pan-Africanism, therefore, remained primarily an ideal for students abroad rather than a practical goal for nationalists in Africa.[17] In this way returning students sometimes joined local branches of WASU and used these to spread the ideas they had brought back from the United Kingdom. Thus, when the various political movements began to develop in West Africa, it was often ex-members of WASU who became their leaders, either because they themselves were the initiators or because their help was sought on account of their education.[18] This was the case with Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana and Nnamdi Azikiwe and Obafemi Awolowo in Nigeria.

Kenya

Most of the nationalist leaders of British Africa were at one time or another associated with WASU and its hostel in London. Prominent among them was Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, who shared rooms with H. O. Davies, a Nigerian student and WASU leader who, on his return to Lagos, helped to organize the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM).[19] In the 1930s, when Kenyatta lived and studied in the United Kingdom, he kept in touch with other nationalists and discussed the various ways in which the

peoples of Africa might someday free themselves from the rule of Europeans. In 1927[20] he left his employment with the Nairobi municipal council to become General Secretary of the Kikuyu Central Association, a job he took up the following year. He also became editor of the association's paper, *Mwigwithania,* which had articulated Kikuyu rural grievances since 1924. The association was opposed to European dominance and land alienation.

Beginning with the petition and evidence of the Kikuyu Central Association to the Hilton Young Commission in 1928,[21] the Kikuyu placed their grievances at the core of their action. Kenyatta was part of the association's delegation that gave evidence before the commission, and he remained in London thereafter. Between 1929 and 1946 Kenyatta lived for all but one year in the United Kingdom, where he studied at the London School of Economics and took a degree in anthropology. In 1945 he was active with Du Bois and Nkrumah in the English branch of the pan-Africanist movement.[22] Thus Kenyatta became a world-famous African figure while still in the United Kingdom. Meanwhile, the Kikuyu Central Association carried on without him until it was banned in 1940 by the colonial government for the duration of the Second World War.[23] Soon after he came back in 1946, following his long absence, Kenyatta pressed for constitutional reforms. His precise role in the subsequent Mau Mau uprising has never been fully clarified.

Another prominent East African to come in contact with WASU was Oginga Odinga. At the beginning of 1958 the African Elected Members' Organization (AEMO) of the Kenya Legislative Council selected him to attend a course run by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in London at a time when Kenyatta and other political leaders were serving prison terms in Kenya. In London, Odinga was met by Kenyan students who felt that the main task for Kenyans was to win the release of political leaders. They also felt that this had to be said in London, which, during the Emergency, was the focal point of various acts of solidarity with the people of Kenya organized by the Kenya Campaign Committee. It is said that African students from all over the continent gathered at the WASU centre. The student bodies that convened the meeting were later to constitute the Council of African Organizations (CAO) in the United Kingdom.[24] At the gathering Odinga talked about the situation in Kenya, emphasizing that the central issue was the release of Kenyatta and his colleagues.[25]

Uganda

Present literature on Uganda clearly shows that there were direct links between West African nationalists and those of Uganda. B. Turyahikayo-Rugyema states that E. M. K. Mulira, the Uganda nationalist of the age who founded the Progressive Party in 1955, was one of those in direct touch with the West African nationalists who must have intensified their sense of nationalism and the urge for immediate self-govern-

ment by forming political parties.[26] Furthermore, some of the main leaders of the Bataka Party, which came on the scene in Buganda much earlier than any other party, had already embraced Garveyism, which was being propagated by Nkrumah and others in West Africa. It is no wonder that by the late 1940s and early 1950s Ugandan nationalists were gaining insight into the various movements that were resolved to free Africa from imperialism.[27]

The Progressive Party and the Bataka Party were not the only ones in direct touch with the nationalists in West Africa and London; the Uganda National Congress had also made contact. Turyahikayo-Rugyema informs us that the founding of the Congress was associated with the Uganda Farmers' Union, which had been created in the 1940s. Opinions differ as to the identity of the founder of the Congress. While some writers credit I. K. Musazi, who founded the Uganda Farmers' Union in the 1940s, others claim that Fenner Brockway, I. K. Musazi, George Padmore and Abu Mayanja all contributed to its foundation. Since the party was founded in London, it is possible that all these personalities were indeed involved.[28] It was Musazi, however, who gave the Uganda National Congress a cosmopolitan and socialist orientation by maintaining contacts with leaders in West Africa, South Africa and the rest of East Africa, according to these sources.[29]

Tanganyika

The situation in colonial Tanganyika was rather different during the inter-war years. The educated young men who elsewhere in East, Central and West Africa created the first political organizations, independent churches and schools (as in Kenya), and the other bodies that challenged European aspirations after 1918 were, according to J. Iliffe, still inarticulate in former German East Africa.[30] But while there appears to be no evidence of African reaction to settler gains during the period, it is possible to show that some of the pressures which elsewhere led to modern political organization were beginning to be felt in Tanganyika.[31] First, there is evidence in some areas of land shortage, the grievance that lay at the heart of political protest in Kenya. In 1912, for example, owing to shortage of land and labour, Tanganital, north and east of the River Pangani, was closed to further European settlement.[32] According to these sources, serious land deficiency was felt in West Usambara and around Korogwe in 1913. Moshi District Office reported that the Rau and Marangu chiefdoms lacked sufficient pasture, and available land was short in Rombo too. In Kibosho it is reported that the Chagga had to grow their maize on European farms because 'far too much land was granted to individual Europeans in earlier years'.[33]

The situation changed with the defeat of Germany. Because of the German defeat during the First World War, British victory took away any degree of control that had been gained by German settlers, and the Africans who benefited from the early

years of British administration were those English-speaking products of St Andrew's College at Kiungani in Zanzibar who had been excluded from power by the Germans and now owed everything to the British. Although situated in Zanzibar in British territory, Kiungani had drawn most of its students from the German-occupied mainland. It was the Central College for the Universities Mission to Central Africa that established its headquarters in Zanzibar in 1864. St Andrew's began as a primary school for freed slaves in 1869, and fifteen years later it was converted into a training college for teachers and clergy. For these reasons the students were not radicalized as many were in Kenya. Thus Tanganyikan politics, as Iliffe points out, followed a different pattern of evolution as a consequence of the ending of German colonial rule.[34]

It was, however, after the formation of the African Association that political activity began in Tanganyika. The African Association was the first major expression of the search for unity in modern political terms, as J. Iliffe has argued.[35] It was formed in late 1929 in Dar es Salaam,[36] and its history suggests that it was those who may loosely be termed 'intellectuals' – i.e. civil servants, teachers and so forth – who were the key to the political evolution of Tanzania.[37] According to the Assistant Secretary of the association, it was founded 'to safeguard the interests of Africans, not only in this territory but in the whole of Africa. . . . We found that everyone in the world now was trying to work for their own interests. We thought it would be better for us to combine to help one another.'[38] These statements suggest, as J. Iliffe has correctly observed, that by 1929 there existed in Tanzania intellectual leaders whose horizons extended far beyond their own ethnic groups.[39] It is necessary, therefore, to ask who these people were and how they managed to extend their political consciousness.

In his book *The Role of the African Association*, J. Iliffe maintains that the association appears to have been the extension of an earlier organization, the Dar es Salaam branch of the Tanganyika Territory African Civil Service Association. This organization was founded in Tanga on 24 March 1922, largely on the initiative of Martin Kayamba, and drew its members from among the Christian clerks of the Tanga administrative departments and Muslim officials of the provincial urban administration. Intended to be the nucleus of a federation of welfare associations, it quickly became a civil servants' trade union. Sometime before 1925 a branch was formed in Dar es Salaam, but this body was weakened in 1929 when many of its members joined the more broad-based African Association.[40] The association itself had been founded in Dar es Salaam late in 1929 by African civil servants and was designed to unite Africans and communicate their views to the colonial government, especially their opposition to the closer union of Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika, which was then under discussion. Its aims also included a strong anti-Asian element; it complained of exploitation by Asian traders and proposed the 'formation of an African Co-operative Syndicate of the African Association with a view to assisting African Welfare, Hospitals, Education, Civilization so as to enable the progress of the

country'.[41] These objectives are more politically conscious than was usual in this period. There was also a reference to Nigeria and to other co-operative organizations. Thus the African Association was not designed purely as a social club and trade union for clerks – it was also concerned with other forms of unity and political action in urban areas. Its reference to Nigeria reflects its awareness of what was happening elsewhere in Africa.

Gradually the association spread its branches throughout the country, enrolling some of the most progressive Tanganyikans as members and preaching the unity of Africans regardless of their ethnic affiliations or religion. Meanwhile, at Makerere in Uganda, Tanganyikan students had formed the Tanganyika African Welfare Society, which they converted into a branch of the African Association in 1943 under the presidency of Julius Nyerere.[42] When the association was transformed into the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) in 1954, the African Association provided the new nationalist movement with the framework of a territorial organization.

In the late 1930s and early 1940s one of the association's branches, in Dodoma, appears to have been ahead of other branches in its awareness of the need for African unity and its activities to encourage this. It is certain, too, that new ideas of political organization were gaining ground and would have a considerable impact on the political history of Tanzania.

The Second World War was a period of major growth, during which the association brought in new grievances concerning, among other things, wartime rationing and controls and fear for Tanganyika's future. These introduced more radical ideas into African political thought, as also did contact with wartime propaganda and left-wing literature from Europe. It is to this time that links with West African nationalists and the movements in London can be traced.

The high point of the period was the territorial conference held in Dodoma from 29 March to 3 April 1945. The object was to reinvigorate the African Association and voice a firm African opinion on the main problems facing the country as the war came to an end. According to the draft agenda, a key item was that of mass political organization. It was the first time the association had thought in such terms. A strong demand was also made for 'African representation on the Legislative Council, and other Government Committees such as the Land Settlement Committee, and all conferences of chiefs and rulers, etc'.[43] Among the resolutions of the conference were demands for compulsory education and equal pay for equal work. The delegates also insisted that Tanganyika should remain a mandated territory and that there should be no East African Federation, for they feared the power of the European settlers in Kenya, a fear that was also expressed by Ugandans.[44]

Since before the Dodoma conference, the association had been assuring the colonial government that it was not a political body; now the 1945 conference marked an important change in the organization's attitudes and objectives. This advance in

political awareness can be seen clearly in a document which the organizers of the conference sent to the government six months later. Although described as the 'minutes' of the conference, the document appears to have been a memorandum summarizing the political views of the organizers.[45] The memorandum considered the various political issues of the day, expressing considerable fear of and hostility towards white settlement, which had proved disastrous in Kenya and South Africa and appeared to be expanding in Tanganyika. Among other demands the memorandum urged improvement of labour conditions, equalization of salaries for the different races and encouragement for trade unions. There were, however, no demands for independence at this time. Yet there is no doubt that the memorandum demonstrated a more advanced state of political awareness than any previous statement made by either the association or any other organization or individual in Tanganyika. It was so sophisticated that the British authorities doubted whether the African Association could have produced it. One senior official wrote that he suspected that some of the views expressed therein, and even the language in which they were couched, originated from published literature rather than from the minds of the members of the African Association.[46] The official went on to say that even the language was at times unusual for the association, and seemed to reflect the influence of pan-African literature from London, where George Padmore, Jomo Kenyatta and Kwame Nkrumah were rekindling the pan-African movement. And, indeed, at the time the Dodoma leaders of the association branch were making contact with the new pan-Africanism. One such leader was Hassan Suleiman, who reports that he was in correspondence with George Padmore before the Dodoma conference. But according to G. G. Hajivayanis,[47] the documentary evidence suggests that the African Association first wrote to Padmore in London on 19 February 1946, following the conference, to ask for information on the Pan-African Federation and the Pan-African Congress held in Manchester in October 1945. Padmore replied in April 1946 supplying the information, and wrote again in October asking for a reply to his first letter. From this it is clear that by February 1946 the African Association was aware of pan-African developments in the United Kingdom. It is likely that the Dodoma leaders had somehow received Padmore's literature, which certainly reached other Tanzanians during the war and had been influenced by it. This may explain the tenor of the 1945 memorandum. But it is also possible that the Dodoma leaders may have been influenced not only by Padmore's pan-Africanist literature, but also by literature published in *Kwetu*.

Kwetu was a newspaper started by Erika Fiah, a Muganda shopkeeper resident in Dar es Salaam. An avid reader whose library included publications of Marcus Garvey and of the New Left Book Club, his views were much more clearly pan-Africanist. His activities introduced a wholly new note of radicalism into the politics of Dar es Salaam and the African Association, which he joined in 1934 at the same time as he founded his own organization, the Tanganyika African Welfare and

Commercial Association. Fiah was in touch with Padmore and the Garveyite movement and possessed books from both sources, together with Gandhi's works and communist literature. In March 1942 he published a feature by Ladipo Solanke, President of WASU in London.[48] It is therefore possible that the authors of the 1945 memorandum read about WASU not only in pan-African literature but also in *Kwetu:* the feature appeared not only in the March 1942 issue, but also in those of 1 May 1938 and November–December 1941.[49]

Moreover, educated Tanganyikans had access to pan-African thinking through Kenyans and Ugandans working in Tanganyika, through the 'political hothouse' at Makerere and probably through the military. It can thus be argued that the Dodoma Conference was the culmination of that influence and of the whole wartime political awakening.

Following the 1945 Dodoma Conference, the association grew quickly until 1948, with more and more branches being opened.[50] These branches are reported to have been more politically aware than before. Furthermore, the war and official economic controls stimulated territorial awareness and made Tanganyika's future an urgent issue; the debate on the subject stimulated African political consciousness.[51] Other developments of this period include the renaming of the African Association. In August 1948 the association was renamed the Tanganyika African Association (TAA), but the birth is said to have coincided with a political decline in its activities between 1948 and 1953, when it was revitalized after Julius Nyerere, future President of the United Republic of Tanzania, was elected as its President.

Nyerere's election in April 1953 checked the decline of TAA. Nyerere[52] had been the African Association's President at Makerere and an active member while teaching at Tabora in 1946. In the United Kingdom he had joined the Fabian Colonial Bureau, and had interested himself in Ghana and the Central African Federation and reportedly sat at the feet of George Padmore.[53] He returned to Tanganyika late in 1952, after which events forced him to accept political responsibility. At the TAA's first territorial meeting in Dar es Salaam on 7 July 1954, the association's name was altered to the Tanganyika African National Union. With a few exceptions, TAA's branches in the regions became TANU branches, and gave TANU a vital territorial structure. The party then turned all its efforts towards mass mobilization to win support for demands that led to the independence of Tanganyika on 9 December 1961.

Conclusion

The study of the situation in Tanzania shows that WASU had links of one kind or another with East Africa. The union not only brought together intellectuals from all over Africa but also became one of the channels through which they expressed themselves. Members of the union took an increasing interest in the political changes

that were taking place. On any topic that concerned Africa in any way they became immediately vocal. For example, when Italy attacked Ethiopia, an Ethiopian Defence Committee was formed within the union and its members took part in the many meetings held in London. Similarly, during the Emergency in Kenya, the Kenya Campaign Committee was formed. It has also been shown that some prominent East Africans, including the late Jomo Kenyatta and Oginga Odinga, were at some stage in touch with the leadership of the union. But since these men were few in number and far from home, like Kenyatta from 1929 to 1946, they did not have the opportunity to organize the local masses. In this respect the associations in East Africa stood out and were instrumental in mobilizing the masses. For instance, the Kikuyu Central Association carried on without Kenyatta until it was banned in 1940 by the colonial government.

Furthermore, WASU was not the only factor to have an impact on political, social, cultural and economic evolution in East Africa. Several other movements appear to have contributed to the process. It has been shown that almost all future nationalists, including WASU's leaders, absorbed more than one foreign influence. For instance, Garveyist, pan-Africanist, American Negro and West Indian influences interacted with impressions of American and British institutions and communist ideas. These then combined with Ethiopianism, mission impact and local situations to produce a leadership that was diverse and complex, thereby contributing to the differentiation of African nationalisms. This is why, as D. L. Wiedner argues, nationalist movements within Africa after the Second World War tended to become increasingly distinct from one another. Although pan-Africanism continued as an idealist institution, it could not work since it was quite divorced from the emerging nationalist movements. On the other hand the influence of WASU cannot be altogether brushed aside. While it may be argued that WASU's influence was largely limited to passing resolutions and making contacts in the United Kingdom, it cannot be denied that it provided a powerful training ground for most West African leaders. It may also be supposed that even those from East Africa who became associated with the union's leadership, such as J. Kenyatta, H. O. Davies and Kwame Nkrumah, or who were influenced by WASU's media (e.g. *Kwetu* in Tanganyika), benefited from the movement.

Notes

1. B. O. Oloruntimehin, 'African Politics and Nationalism, 1919–1935', in A. Adu Boahen (ed.), *General History of Africa*, Vol. VII, p. 569, Paris, UNESCO, 1985.
2. Lord Hailey, cited in O. Odinga, *Not Yet Uhuru*, p. 22, New York, Hill & Wang, 1967.
3. M. Singh, 'The East African Association, 1921–1925', *Hadith*, No. 3, 1971, p. 121.
4. Ibid.
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WASU: a reassessment

A. I. Asiwaju

The Political Officer [i.e. British Colonial Administrator] ... should give up the idea of regarding every educated element [i.e. Western-educated African] as his enemy. . . . If he wants to understand the natives properly he can only do so through the educated element. . . . *Let him embrace the educated as his brother, his co-partner in the duty of guardianship of Africa.*[1]

The analytical framework

The extensive and ever-expanding literature on nationalism in Africa has given rise to two competing models of analysis: decolonization and liberation.[2]

In the first model, the general patterns involved usually include the overwhelming majority of cases in former British and French tropical Africa. Viewed essentially as a situation in which the metropolitan power had the initiative or, at best, shared it with the local educated élites destined to take over from the colonial authorities, it is categorized as conservative. Change was peaceful and based on constitutional arrangements. Because of the dominance of the educated élite and the relative inactivity of the masses, it is dubbed as a 'clever élite/dumb masses' scenario. Independence as the goal of the movement is seen as a 'deal' between the local educated élite and the departing colonial regime; 'transfer of power' is a frequent conceptual reference; structural stability and neo-colonialism are constant results; and the informing ideology often relates to some sort of capitalism. In short, as the case of Nigeria is often cited as showing, independence was generally achieved 'on a plate'.

In the second model, exemplified by the cases of Portuguese-speaking Africa and French Algeria as well as the struggles in Namibia and apartheid South Africa, the situation is generally characterized as revolutionary. The goal is the achievement of radical change. Since, as Frantz Fanon – the leading thinker on the subject – has so clearly argued, colonialism is analytically viewed as 'violence in its natural state',[3] armed confrontation is considered not only as acceptable but as a logical and

necessary mode of action based on mass mobilization. Admirers refer to it as progressive. There is little room for compromise: the initiative is basically, if not wholly, African. Inspired by Marxist ideology, this second analytical framework enjoys such theoretical clarity that it is rendered free of internal contradictions.

While reality is generally a mixture of the features of the two models, since every known nationalist movement in Africa contains elements of both, it is the proportions that determine the main emphasis and overall character. Weighed against the two models, however, the history and overall impact of WASU would clearly tilt the balance in favour of the 'conservative' mould – hence the significance of the opening quotation, which is taken from the typescript of a book completed in 1927 by Ladipo Solanke.

But WASU, an élitist organization, drew its members chiefly from among British West African students hailing, in descending order of importance, from Nigeria, Ghana (i.e. the Gold Coast), Sierra Leone and the Gambia, and based in the United Kingdom and Ireland in general, and England and London in particular. The core of WASU membership consisted of students of law and medicine, the most élitist of all professions and, in the case of the former, the most conservative of all, the veritable 'handmaiden of colonialism'[4] in Africa.

Like the other instruments of 'decolonization', WASU was interested in the culture, history and welfare of the African masses only to the limited extent of the educated African's need for legitimacy *vis-à-vis* the European rulers of empire. European rulers were to be further intimidated by a demonstration of the acceptability of the educated African by traditional rulers, who, in the context of the British Indirect Rule policy in West Africa, were the very pivot of European hegemony. Hence the determined and generally successful efforts of WASU to associate with traditional rulers, for example Alake of Abeokuta, Ooni of Ife, the Emir of Kano, and *ashantihene* in Kumasi. Otherwise, the real context was one in which most WASU members characteristically saw themselves more as agents of the superior European metropolitan culture confronting the ignorant African masses than as real representatives of the various indigenous African peoples confronting Europeans.

As the quotation at the beginning of this article is intended to show, the relationship between the educated African élite and the European rulers of empire was, from the WASU leadership's viewpoint, essentially that of a partnership based on a brotherhood animated by a shared European culture. WASU was urban in location and orientation: the head office was in London and all the branches in West Africa were located in the territorial and regional capitals: Abeokuta (L. Solanke's birthplace), Kano and Lagos in Nigeria; Accra and Kumasi in Ghana; Freetown in Sierra Leone, and Bathurst (now Banjul) in the Gambia. The rural areas were not affected by it in any direct manner.

WASU's vision was not and could not have been radical. Not only was that vision conservatively limited to the members' own specific British West African bloc;

more significantly, the union's principles were antithetical to revolutionary ideas. The main preoccupation was with reform and particularly the need for the colonial regime to accommodate the African educated élite. The courtship with communist ideas in the immediate post-1945 years was essentially a reaction to the disappointment felt by the union with the attitude of Prime Minister Clement Attlee's Labour Party Government in the United Kingdom. But the courtship did not lead to marriage, in spite of the continued efforts of communist-inclined members such as Kwame Nkrumah to goad WASU along radical lines of development. The episode was met with WASU's official disclaimers and ultimate rejection. Indeed, in the same letter in which he admitted to the Colonial Office that there were communist influences within WASU, Solanke quickly added 'that he had secured the services of a member of Scotland Yard to drive out or prevent this influence'.

Writers on WASU[5] have invariably claimed, rather uncritically it should be said, that WASU was the incubator and nursery of the first-generation politicians and businessmen who were to play important roles in the struggle for independence and in post-independence politics in their various countries, and a good number of whom, including Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Milton Magai of Sierra Leone and Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya (an admirer of WASU), became heads of state in their respective countries. We might add that WASU members, particularly law students, won commanding positions in the judiciary (bar and bench) of their countries.

Such assessments are never based on a rigorous study of WASU *vis-à-vis* other operative factors; nor do existing assessments make any serious comparison with those who, like Obafemi Awolowo, also became leaders without having been in WASU. In any case, this author feels that most of the WASU 'products' and their like were also those who, by perpetuating the neo-colonial nexus – political domination by the élite, economic exploitation of the masses and associated social inequality and injustice – finally succeeded in ruining their countries, thereby leading to subsequent political instability and socio-economic crises on the African continent.

The structure and model of governance so established are at the root of Africa's catch-22 situation, making it virtually impossible to imagine a serious way out other than through some form of revolution. It is in opposition to this view of WASU as a self-appointed instrument of African 'decolonization' rather than of 'liberation' that we present this paper.

Achievements

The truly unique achievements of WASU should be sought less in the facilities provided by the union to enable members to study than in a systematic programming aimed at their political sensitization. This point is manifest not only in the rites and ceremonies of initiation of new members, but also in the oath to which new members

had to swear and in what came to be known as the 'African students' creed'. New members had to swear 'by all that they hold sacred here and in the hereafter' that they 'will serve their country and race in all earnestness, simplicity and sincerity and will be faithful and loyal to the cause of WASU . . .'.[6] The 'creed' was regularly recited by all as follows:

I believe in WASU Our Union of Students,
Opener of eyes and minds,
I believe in our holy cause,
Our sacred African soil,
The communion of minds,
The correction of wrongs,
And rights of humanity, Amen'.[7]

That such a creed was so manifestly patterned on the Nicene Creed of Western European Christianity is evidence of the extent of Christian influence on WASU in spite of its policy of freedom of worship. Indeed, as we will see presently, the last of the three hostels operated by WASU – at 13 Chelsea Embankment, opened in 1949 – had an Anglican chapel attached to it 'for the purpose of developing the religious side of the Union and to help in social work amongst its members'.[8] Christian doctrine and liturgy were actively used to further the cause of WASU. Four divine services were, for example, organized for the liberation of Ethiopia following the Italian conquest and occupation from 1936 to 1943.[9] This fact, more perhaps than the question of generous government scholarships and related material support – the argument usually advanced for the non-participation of the predominantly Muslim Northern Nigerian students in WASU – accounts not only for the dissociation, but also for the anti-WASU hostility of this category of British West African students in the United Kingdom.

Besides the launching of *WASU* magazine and the opening of its hostels, the WASU programme that fulfilled the union's political objective most explicitly was its schedules of public lectures and conferences and effective use of parliamentary lobbying. Throughout the history of the union, activities were organized around specific issues and developments, the most important of which may be chronologically listed to include: (a) the hostel policy, with particular reference to the opposition against Aggrey House, a hotel for African students which the Colonial Office opened in 1934 and operated in cut-throat competition with the WASU hostel; (b) the Italian invasion and occupation of Ethiopia from 1936 to 1943; (c) the West African cocoa crisis of 1937–38, and (d) the World War of 1939–45. We may illustrate the character of these activities by referring to two such episodes, opposition to Aggrey House and the impact of the Second World War.

WASU was vehemently opposed to Aggrey House, justifiably accusing Colonial Office officials of making a deliberate effort to sabotage the WASU hostel.

The accusation was made against the background of an initial proposal by the Colonial Office to co-operate with WASU; the plan fell through because of the unacceptability of the Colonial Office's conditions. The latter clearly had greater financial resources and political support; and by naming its 'hostel for African students' after Aggrey, the highly regarded African nationalist of the Gold Coast who had died shortly before, it left no one in any doubt of its intention to make its hostel outshine the WASU one.

WASU's opposition to Aggrey House was pursued within the framework of the African Hostel Defence Committee, which it had set up with the active encouragement of sympathetic individuals and groups in the United Kingdom, a good number of whom were influential liberal British colonialists, politicians, parliamentarians and intellectuals. The President, for example, was the Countess of Warwick, the Vice-Presidents were Lord Raglan, Professors Lancelot Hogben and N. N. Macmillan, and the members included Julian Huxley, J. B. S. Haldane, Dr Norman Leys, Kingsley Martin and the Bishop of Zanzibar. Gerald Kingsholt was Treasurer.[10] Other sympathetic groups included the Federation of Student Societies, the Society of Friends, the Negro Welfare Association, the League against Imperialism, the Free Speech and Assembly Committee, the International Labour Defence, the New India Political Group, and the Society for International Studies.

It was only by dint of concerted efforts – a series of protest letters, newspaper publications, organized rallies and meetings – that WASU, through its African Hostel Defence Committee, succeeded in obtaining substantial concessions from the Colonial Office. Following an initial hardline attitude, it eventually agreed to the Colonial Office's proposal for mutual coexistence between the WASU hostel and Aggrey House. It was agreed at the outset in 1936 to set up a mixed co-ordinating committee to work out details of coexistence. These came to include a joint annual dinner, four quarterly luncheons, reciprocity of membership permitting paid-up members of one hostel free use of the facilities of the other and, finally, allocation to the WASU hostel of part of the grant received from the four West African colonial governments. In addition, the Colonial Office's Committee for the Welfare of Africans launched a successful appeal for funds in support of the WASU hostel.

Not only did these efforts bail WASU out of impending bankruptcy over its hostel enterprise, but they in fact enabled the union to add a second building to the hostel – 'Africa House' at 1 South Villas, Camden Square, which was opened in 1938. However, in return for assistance from the Colonial Office, the WASU hostel was obliged to have a management board with five seats allocated to members of the Committee for the Welfare of Africans. Thus, true to the spirit and character of decolonization, WASU's independence, like that of each of the four British West African colonies later on, was compromised on the usual pretext of expediency or realism.

WASU's other activities were no less indicative of its essential disposition to fellowship with the British. The union's experience during the Second World War

illustrated, in fact, that the leadership was not critical enough to appreciate the limitations of the support that the union was given, particularly by the opposition Labour Party in the United Kingdom; the union was slow to discover, when the Labour Party was voted into power after the war, that British national interest – including, of course, interest in the colonies – was not subject to radical change, irrespective of the party in government.

The Second World War unleashed considerable political energy throughout the colonial world. In the front line stood the widely advertised propaganda of the United Kingdom and the other Allied Powers stating that the war was in defence of democracy and the liberation of lands and peoples conquered by Hitler's Germany and the associated Axis Powers. The colonized peoples of Africa wrongly believed that this objective applied to them too. Then there was the extensive use made by the Allied Powers of human and material resources from the colonies in prosecuting the war. The colonial peoples of Africa were encouraged in the belief that they were to be the beneficiaries of the stated war objectives. A large part of their political activities was therefore channelled towards attaining political independence after the war.

WASU was obviously one of the bodies whose activities during the war were based on these high expectations. The union co-operated fully with the British war effort. The members pledged their loyalty and that of their countries to the people of the United Kingdom. Although Prime Minister Winston Churchill had seen fit to underline, to the grave disappointment of WASU, that the aim of liberation would have no effect outside the circle of European nations that had been conquered by the Axis Powers, considerable consolation and encouragement came from Clement Attlee's counter-statement to the effect that the opposition Labour Party 'repudiates imperialism' and 'believes that all peoples of whatever race and colour have equal right to freedom and to an equitable share in the good things'.

WASU was fully preoccupied throughout the war with political activities involving both solidarity with the Allied Powers' war efforts and demands for political concessions for the British West African colonies. As early as November 1940 the union dispatched a memorandum to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Lloyd, demanding, *inter alia*, dominion status for each of the four colonies, adult suffrage, overhaul of the Indirect Rule system of administration to permit participation of the educated élite and ultimate replacement by modern local government, African majority rule, Africanization of bureaucracies, introduction of military education into schools, revision of the laws in the colonies in line with those in the United Kingdom, establishment of agricultural credit banks, encouragement of co-operative societies, increased rights for trade unions to the level obtainable in the United Kingdom, introduction of free and compulsory elementary education, and improvement of health and social services.[11] A follow-up letter from the Secretary-General, L. Solanke, in 1941 stressed the points made in the 1940 memorandum and went even further, proposing 1952 as the date for the establishment of 'fully fledged

Dominion status' for the West African colonies. Efforts made in the United Kingdom were reinforced by active correspondence with the educated élite in the colonies themselves, urging them to organize and make the necessary demands.

In addition to drafting memoranda and letters, WASU also held a series of meetings. Of these, the most significant was the 1942 Conference, to which several British parliamentarians were invited.[12] The opening speech, for example, was made by Reginald Sorensen, MP, who spoke on behalf of Clement Attlee, his party leader. Other speakers included Arthur Creech Jones and Dr Haden Guest, both Labour MPs. Papers on economic, educational, social and land problems were presented by such WASU stalwarts as Drs Rita Hindan, Arthur Lewis and R. B. Wellesley Cole, Rev. T. T. Solaru, F. O. Blaize, F. A. Rotimi Williams, Miss Irene Cole, Mr Ken Little, Baoku Betts and, of course, Ladipo Solanke.[13]

Not surprisingly, the resolutions were extremely far-reaching, wide-ranging and insightful. The one on educational reforms voiced the need for university institutions in each of the four colonies and Africanization of the teaching curricula, particularly the study of African languages. Similarly, the resolution calling for economic reforms recognized the danger of prioritizing export crop production and externalizing the economies generally. It impressed upon the government the need to introvert the economies, placing the accent on increased food production, industrialization and internal trade in and between the colonies. Even at that early stage concern was expressed about the high rate of interest on foreign loans. Land policy was to place emphasis on collective or community ownership and utilization. WASU's 1942 conference resolutions show that the problems that were later to face the West African subregion were not new; nor indeed were most of the solutions proposed in the 1980s. ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States), for example, may be said to have been anticipated by WASU's idea for a 'West African Commonwealth'.

But while the proposals for educational, social and economic reform necessarily involved the welfare and upliftment of the masses of the people, the details of the political programme left no reasonable person in any doubt about WASU's basic concern for African independence as a matter of 'transfer of power' by the colonial authorities to the Western-educated élite of which the union formed the core. Some of the more pertinent demands were to the effect 'that all heads of government departments be replaced by Africans', 'that a Council for the defence of West Africa be set up in which Africans are to serve as defence Ministers', and 'that more of the King's Commissions be given to qualified Africans in the Armed Forces'.

The concept of 'transfer of power', which is so important in determining the nature of the 'decolonization' process, derives to a large extent from the phenomenon of collaboration between the African educated élite and the departing colonial ruling class. Accordingly, it is important to grasp that much of WASU's effort to push through its resolutions and its demands to the British Government was made via what came to be known as the West African Parliamentary Committee, which was made

up of Labour MPs who had been associated with the WASU cause from the start. The committee was formed in 1942 following a suggestion from L. Solanke.

The committee was the vehicle for all the burning questions affecting West African colonies that were raised on the floor of the British parliament throughout the 1940s. It is quite properly regarded as 'one of the most significant achievements of the Union'.[14] But it is also one of the most enduring examples of the futility of collaboration between the Africans and the colonial powers for the purpose of achieving true independence. This became abundantly clear when the Labour Party, following its triumph at the polls in 1945, began to turn a deaf ear to WASU's demands for rapid decolonization. In an apparently scathing reference to WASU, the Labour Party now expressed itself as follows: 'The limited education facilities in the past had favoured wealthier natives who, acquiring a smattering of Western knowledge, are already dreaming of taking over power for themselves.'[15]

As G. D. Olusanya has correctly observed, it was 'this disenchantment with the Labour Party that led many in WASU to turn to Marxist theory'.[16] This change ultimately divided the WASU rank and file and marked the beginning of the end of the union.

Decline and fall

Although the final collapse was delayed till the death in 1958 of Ladipo Solanke, the co-founder and Secretary-General appointed for life, signs of decline were already in evidence in the mid-1940s. Both internal and external factors contributed to this: not only did WASU contain the seeds of its own destruction from the very beginning, the end was ultimately accelerated, if not determined, by factors strictly outside the union's orbit. The internal factors include, first and foremost, the disappointment felt by members at the failure of WASU projects, especially the hostel, as business ventures. Yet the failure was only to be expected in view of WASU's greater commitment to politics than to economic gain. Though one inquiry after another exonerated him personally, Solanke was again and again taxed with mismanagement and high-handedness. The generally pro-British posture that he adopted *vis-à-vis* the union's objectives caused many to deflect into radical politics based on a growing acceptance of Marxist doctrines.

But the more immediate explanation of WASU's decline and fall lies in the fact that attention was given increasingly to narrow considerations in preference to wider regional politics. Consequently, British West Africa and related regional structures were forced into second place by isolated territorial or even subterritorial issues focusing on individual colonial territories or their constituent ethnic groups or cultural regions. These disintegrating developments, which increasingly marked the political evolution of West Africa from the late 1930s, had adverse effects on WASU in

London. The polarization of politics along territorial lines led to the creation of a rival students' association, the Gold Coast Students' Union (GCSU), following the creation of Aggrey House by the Colonial Office. Once the Gold Coast students had set up their own body, the formation of other territorially based unions was only a matter of time.

Yet perhaps more serious still were the effects of ethnic politics. This in particular explains the decline and fall of WASU influence in Nigeria, the West African territory from which the union had drawn its chief membership and support. The North–South dichotomy in Nigerian politics, for instance, led to the situation that had earned WASU the deep-seated contempt of the northern Nigerian leadership. This was in spite of the efforts of the WASU leaders to extend the influence of the union to the entire country.

The northern Nigerian contempt for WASU came through clearly in the statements of many a political and opinion leader from the North. For Tafawa Balewa, later Prime Minister of Nigeria, the claim was that he did not know WASU when he was in London.[17] Mallam Abubakar Imam, later General Secretary of the Northern People's Congress, was reported to have bluntly observed of the mutual contempt between northern and southern Nigerians when he spoke to a WASU audience in London: 'We despise each other; we call each other ignorant; the South is proud of Western knowledge and culture; we are proud of Eastern (culture) . . . the common people of the North put more confidence in the white man than in either their black Southern brothers or the educated Northerners.'[18] But by far the most devastating for the WASU cause was the criticism that the Sultan of Sokoto made of the union over its 1942 conference resolutions: 'People who do not habitually reside in a country are in no position to know the customs and outlook of its people – much less make proposals for its government.'[19] As J. S. Coleman has added, the Sultan then concluded that 'those Southerners who desired a united Nigeria should embrace the religion of the Prophet'.[20]

Even in southern Nigeria, WASU's chances were, from the late 1930s, compromised by the emergence of the ethnic factor in politics. It was this factor, for example, that led to the break-up of the Nigerian Youth Movement (NYM) following the crisis of 1941. Although the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroon (NCNC), the political party founded by Nnamdi Azikiwe and Herbert Macaulay in 1944, was intended as a national party, its later evolution as a predominantly Igbo party was directly related to the formation of more explicitly ethnic associations such as Obafemi Awolowo's predominantly Yoruba Action Group of Nigeria (based on his Egbe Omo Oduduwa, formed in London in 1948) and Ahmadu Bello's NPC, both of which were launched in 1951.

The point is that these developments knocked the bottom out of WASU's West African regional base, rendering the union quite irrelevant to West African politics of the 1950s. In so far as Nigerian participation was concerned, WASU's place in the

United Kingdom and Ireland in the 1950s was taken over by particularistic organizations of which the most outstanding were the Ibo Students' Union, formed in 1944, and, less dramatically, Kola Balogun's Yoruba Federal Union in the United Kingdom. Not only was WASU territorially a misnomer in relation to West African politics in the late 1940s, but the union's ideological irrelevance was proved by a growing adherence of members to Marxist theories as a basis for alternative political action. The death of Ladipo Solanke in 1958 drew the final curtain on WASU's action.

Conclusion

So far as British West Africa was concerned, WASU was clearly a major influence in the evolution of nationalist politics. Existing assessments have placed sufficient emphasis on the union as a nursery that reared a large number of those who were later to play leadership roles in the politics and administration of their respective countries in West Africa.

But for reasons that Thomas Hodgkins would probably prefer to view in the light of the historical circumstances of British Colonial West Africa,[21] WASU operated essentially as a 'partner' to British hegemony. The union's concern and emphasis focused more on reform of the colonial regime than on fundamental change, more on structural adjustment than on any serious overhauling. WASU fought shy of fully embracing radical ideologies or any vision of a new foundation for political and socio-economic organization. Within the borders of its own constraints, the best that WASU could produce were developments along neo-colonial lines, such as were seen later. The extent to which the problems of development from the 1920s to the 1950s produced the crisis of the 1980s is evidence of the control that Africa's ruling élites, made in the image of WASU and its members, continued to exercise over the destiny of West Africa and the rest of the continent. This continuing failure highlights the need not only for new tactics, but, even more important, for a genuine changing of the guard.

Notes

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2. This distinction was made by Frantz Fanon, especially as analysed by Adele Jinadu in *Frantz Fanon: In Search of an African Revolution*, Enugu, The Fourth Dimension Press, 1981, and in a pertinent hint in J. D. Hargreaves, *The End of Colonial Rule in West Africa*, p. 1, New York, Barnes & Noble Books, 1979 (Essays in Contemporary History).
3. Jinadu, op. cit.

4. O. Adewoye, *The Judicial System in Southern Nigeria, 1854–1954: Law in a Dependency*, London, Longman, 1977.
5. In particular G. O. Olusanya, *The West African Students' Union and the Politics of Decolonization, 1925–1958*, Ibadan, Daystar Press, 1982, 127 pp.
6. Olusanya, op. cit., p. 12.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., p. 73.
9. Ibid., p. 40.
10. Ibid., pp. 28 et seq.
11. Ibid., pp. 48 et seq.
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14. Ibid., pp. 66 et seq.
15. Ibid., p. 84.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid., p. 72.
18. J. S. Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism*, p. 360, Berkeley/Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1958.
19. Ibid., p. 360.
20. Ibid.
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Part III

The Fédération des Étudiants d'Afrique Noire en France (FEANF)

The cultural dimensions of FEANF

B. Kotchy

Introduction

Although the colonial authorities gave the impression that they regarded cultural issues as the least of their preoccupations, they had nevertheless sharpened all the weapons needed for subjugating the colonies through state-controlled ideological devices such as the education system, religious institutions, the legal system, the media, the fine arts, literature and so on. Indeed, as E. Pujarniscle put it: 'It is no coincidence that Albert Sarraut instituted the Prize for Colonial Literature and Pierre Pasquier the Prize of the French in Asia.'[1] The idea behind these two prizes was not altogether altruistic. The colonial system always sought to alert public opinion in the home country to the need to possess and maintain colonies for France's economic well-being. Accordingly, it was important to create a particular current of opinion in the French nation and to form an image consonant with that opinion through literature and the arts.

E. Pujarniscle went on to say:

> The public is like a child: it craves pictures. It is not interested in dry-as-dust documents that only appeal to sheer intellect.... In order to create what is known as a current of opinion, documentation has to be decked out in finery, in the same way as the trees in the spring conceal the grey drabness of their branches under the mantle of their leaves and blossom. Images arouse feelings in us and feelings rule the world.

Hence, it was through images and stereotypes that the colonizers evolved a new type of culture for their colonial subjects that was to give rise to a new type of relationship and a new world-view. The whole purpose was to place black people in a situation of inferiority, culture being, in the eyes of the colonizer, the prerogative of the white race and, by the same token, synonymous with civilization. 'The inability of the black peoples to promote cultures with a solid historical basis' was purported to 'stem from their inferior racial status'. Thus the school textbooks in use in the colonial context,

such as *Mamadou et Bineta, Moussa et Giglas, Mon ami Koffi* and so on conveyed a whole series of negative images and disparaging judgements regarding the indigenous population. As a result, black people eventually ended up believing in a sort of cultural heredity and it was for that reason that a pattern of imitation started to emerge among the so-called 'advanced natives'. As Frantz Fanon put it, the colonizers begin by 'establishing their domination and overwhelmingly assert their superiority'.[2]

Following the Second World War, however, that domination, with the attendant mysteries of its economic and cultural system, came to be questioned. The concepts of civilization and culture were thereafter to be shaken to their foundations by an emerging dissident minority of young Africans who refused colonial France the right to set itself up as a yardstick of intellectual and cultural values.

It was on this basis that the Fédération des Étudiants d'Afrique Noire en France (FEANF) focused its whole attitude on cultural issues. Faced with the aggression of the colonialists and their instinctive urge to destroy the African cultural heritage, its idea was to see how Africa could be collectively reborn and rejoin the mainstream of history by bringing together, in a positive spirit, the best of its moral values, way of life and social skills, and by endeavouring to become conversant with science. What prominence did FEANF attach to culture in making its demands? It is important to see whether FEANF had a consistent cultural policy and, if so, how it defined it and situated its limits. This paper accordingly sets out to identify the importance of culture in FEANF's concerns and publications, and to describe the association's view of culture.

Importance of culture

FEANF was founded a few months after the formation of the Association des Étudiants du Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (AERDA) under Cheikh Anta Diop in 1950. It first came to the fore at its meeting in Lyons from 5 to 7 April 1950 and in Bordeaux from 28 to 30 December of the same year. From the time of its first congresses and those held thereafter, the students of Cameroon, French West Africa (AOF), French Equatorial Africa (AEF) and Togo, who had come together in the large organization under the initials FEANF, had no hesitation in using their newspaper *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire* to air the vital political, economic and social issues of the day. Paradoxically, cultural issues were not given much prominence, since the students felt that the real urgency lay in stimulating the awareness of the federation's membership, profoundly alienated by the colonial system.

The federation accordingly gave priority to the struggle for the political and economic freedom of West Africa. Since FEANF was in the forefront of the African students' movements, it unhesitatingly opted for revolutionary trade unionism. In fact, at the corporate level, FEANF was an organization fighting for the material

welfare of its members while, at the political level, it was a union that identified with the people of Africa.

For the students of the time, FEANF, as a union organization, was expected to keep watch over the material conditions of its militants and help them to obtain a solid grounding from their studies so that they could be more useful to their countries. The leaders of the federation felt that the future citizens should engage in the anti-colonialist struggle. They spoke out vehemently against those students who were labelled as being 'conventional' and beguiled by the colonial ideology, and spoke of them as follows:

As a rule, he is a future lawyer, or at least passes himself off as such. His only worry is to make sure that he passes his next examination, and hence he behaves as he ought and only leaves his room to attend lectures and take his meals. He is extremely conventional in outlook. . . . He does not go in for politics . . . which means that he does not read the newspaper nor even the literary weeklies. All he aspires to is a small-time job in Africa later on, in which he can blithely eke out a peaceful existence surrounded by his wife and children.[3]

By contrast, most of the members of FEANF fostered a nobler ideal and had a more acute perception of the future of Africa. They accordingly had to set themselves a number of eminently responsible goals. The difference was pointed up by Alexandre Biyidi, writing at the time under the pen-name of Eza Boto, a FEANF militant, who aptly described the situation:

As for us, we have to engage in both intellectual and moral innovation. In our case, as in the case of the Americans, we need efficiency. Let us take the example of education: in our case, the methods employed are loathsomely modelled on the French education system and must absolutely be reformed to make way for a specifically African culture. There is nobody better placed than us to undertake such reforms. We therefore consider that black students, more than any other class of students, have to open their eyes to the world at large. Roman law can only be an instrument for stimulating the mind. As soon as it becomes an end in itself, the mind starts to pall, and effectiveness with it.[4]

This category of students elected to become responsible and generous innovators and doers rather than people who passively and egotistically assimilated what was imparted to them. They therefore participated in their own way, through their censorious and iconoclastic journalism, in the combat which the African peoples were waging to win their freedom. However, in that struggle the most difficult offensive of all, on account of its length and complexity, was the fight for the rehabilitation of national cultures. In this regard, the most urgent task was to do away with the colonial situation. In the words of Frantz Fanon: 'There is no culture or national cultural change against the background of colonial domination – nor can there be.'[5]

It is from this standpoint that one must examine the paradoxical attitude of FEANF, which drank at the well-springs of European, African and Japanese culture

in a bid to arm itself for the struggle against colonialism, while at the same time devoting little space to cultural issues in the columns of its newspaper *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire*, and in particular to national cultures.

We have therefore examined some copies of *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire:* Nos. 16 (December 1957), 25 (April–May 1959), 30 (June–July 1960), 31 (January–February 1961), 35 (February 1962), 38–39 (April 1964), 40 (New series: December–January 1964), 42 (March–April 1965), 49 (May–June 1967), 53 (November–December 1968), 60 (first quarter 1971), and 61 (November–December 1971).

A glance at the contents of some of these numbers can be quite instructive. The special number on the Third Congress of the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (RDA) contains the following:

- *Editorial:* La lutte continue (The Struggle Goes On), by A. Dicko.
- L'économie de Bamako (Economic Issues at the Bamako Congress), by Asende Ofana.
- Le RDA et la question syndicale (The RDA and Trade-union issues), by Sadji Booker.
- Le RDA et la solidarité des peuples colonisés (RDA and Solidarity among the Colonial Peoples).
- La communauté franco-africaine (The French-African Community), by Samba N'Diaye.
- Propos sur la jeunesse de Bamako (Thoughts on Young People at the Bamako Congress), by Léopold Agboton.
- *Conclusions:* L'Unité, pourquoi faire? (What Purpose Can Unity Serve?), by Barry Mamadou and Kéké Michel.

No. 25 (April–May 1959) had the following main headings: 'Vie de la Fédération' (Federation Activities), 'Au service de l'Afrique' (In the Service of Africa), and 'Art et culture' (Art and Culture).

The first section included an article on the 'Tenth FEANF Congress', during which the major topic was the problem of winning independence. The congress solemnly 'reaffirmed the fundamental principle laid down by the Eighth and Ninth Congresses, namely, that independence has to be conquered not by piling up one bogus reform after another, but through the revolutionary struggle of the African masses'. Thus the first two numbers prior to independence made no mention of cultural issues.

No. 30 (June–July 1960) listed the following:

- From nationalism for expediency's sake to real independence.
- The economic provisions of the agreements concluded between France and Mali and the path to economic development.
- The military agreements concluded between France and Mali.
- The University of Dakar working for the community.
- Poetry: Brothers of the year 1960, let us unite.
- Imperialist plot in the Congo.

No. 31 (January–February 1961) bears the title 'Lumumba assassinated!'

In the final analysis FEANF's monthly publication was almost exclusively concerned with the burning political issues of the day, cultural-policy issues being mentioned only in resolutions put to congresses. Thus, at the Twelfth FEANF Congress from 26 to 31 December 1960, the resolution devoted to culture read as follows:

Considering that the cinema is one of the most persuasive media;
Considering the use which the colonialists make of the cinema in order to distract the attention of the African masses from real problems;
Considering that it is forbidden to show films that could contribute to arousing the awareness of the masses;
Considering the revolutionary and educational purposes for which we could use the cinema and the theatre:
[the Twelfth FEANF Congress]
Recommends all its sections to organize, if need be in collaboration with democratic organizations, projections of and discussions on films dealing with our problems;
Requests that column-space be provided in our newspaper for the criticism of films and plays;
Encourages the production of films and plays situating the main African problems in a revolutionary light.

Following its Twelfth Congress, FEANF featured in its monthly publication two other equally important resolutions concerning the status of African women and the training and Africanization of managerial personnel. These were worded as follows:

Considering that, in order to ensure the success of our revolutionary struggle, it is the duty of all those conscious of the situation to spare no effort to involve the people as a whole in the combat;
Considering that African women can and must play a part in the struggle for the emancipation of our peoples, the Twelfth FEANF Congress
Requests all its members to embark on wide-ranging action aimed at explaining the situation, especially to women.

The Twelfth Congress was convinced that if the training and Africanization of managerial personnel were carried out on the basis of competence, patriotism and honesty, this was bound to be an effective instrument of political freedom, since it would weaken the direct hold of the agents of imperialism on the activities of the countries of Africa.

Thus the Twelfth FEANF Congress was of historical importance, since it was the first of the kind to be held in the six months following the accession to independence of the former supporters of the Franco-African Community. In its resolutions, FEANF not only spelled out the future role of the cinema and theatre in the struggle for the liberation of Africa, but clearly emphasized the integration of girls into the school system so as to enable them to play an active role in the new economic system that lay ahead. Along the same lines, the students of Black Africa regarded the

training of African managers as an urgent priority, since it was part of the programme of the anti-colonialist struggle.

The Eighteenth and Twenty-second FEANF Congresses (1965 and 1969) also represented a milestone regarding this point. For the first time at its congresses, FEANF placed specific emphasis on the problem of rehabilitating African culture by using indigenous languages to spread literacy among the mass of the population. The resolutions adopted by the two congresses also laid stress on literary and artistic creativity.

The space devoted to culture in the *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire* was insignificant. FEANF engaged in virtually no theoretical exploration in regard to culture, nor did it evolve any strategies that more than scratched the surface of things.

Cultural standpoints, however, appeared in publications outside the control of FEANF. For example, in the periodical *Présence africaine* ('Les étudiants noirs parlent', 1953), Albert Franklin, future FEANF Chairman (1954–55), criticized L. S. Senghor's negritude theory,[6] and in *La voix de l'Afrique noire* (No. 1, February 1952), Cheikh Anta Diop for the very first time aired the theory of a Negro-populated Egypt that was based on the thesis of C. F. de Chambœuf, comte de Volney.[7]

Thus, in the special issue of *Présence africaine* entitled 'Les étudiants noirs parlent', only three of the fourteen key articles were devoted to African culture: 'Problème de l'élite en Afrique noire' (The Problem of the Élites in Black Africa), by Kader Fall; 'Noir africain et culture latine' (Black Africans and Latin Culture), by G. S. Tidiany; and 'La prise de conscience' (The Growth of Awareness), by Majhemout Diop. Diop's article, however, takes us to the very heart of attitudes to cultural issues at the time, since the author, having raised the fundamental question of the absolute need for independence, goes on to denounce assimilation as an impediment to restoring national culture to its proper place and gives the arguments in favour of the study of national history, languages and so on.

FEANF – a committed culture

It was Cheikh Anta Diop who was to evolve an authentic cultural strategy with his celebrated thesis *Nations nègres et culture* (Black Nations and Culture), for up to that point there had been almost total silence on the subject. This certainly does not mean that FEANF's militants took no interest in the subject. It was simply that they knew that it was virtually impossible in the colonial situation at the time for a trade union to evolve a meaningful national cultural policy. This is why FEANF continuously opposed assimilation and demanded total independence before all else. 'Assimilation is a dead-end from which there is no outlet. What is more, it is a crime against mankind. The only choice left to the colonized peoples is to fight for their independence. . . . A man is only really a man if he continues to be himself,' Majhemout Diop wrote.

The FEANF militants felt that the desired independence should contribute to banishing prejudice, releasing inhibitions and fostering greater self-expression, so that people could improve their command of their culture. In the view of FEANF's militants, 'independence' and 'national culture' were closely related; contrary to the claims of racist ideology, culture is not tied to race and hence to the biological inferiority of black people. Indeed, 'every race, including the Black race, is subject to the changing patterns of history and develops in accordance with the living conditions on which it depends'.

Accordingly, culture, as the action exerted by man on nature and himself, is not the prerogative of any particular race. Hence it becomes the way of life and being of all social groupings. It is a heritage which man takes upon himself and which he endeavours to defend, in a bid to make it more consistent and more accessible to the community as a whole. It is not an individual matter, still less a set of rigid, unchanging elements. By virtue of its dynamic dimension, it caters for the vital needs of the community and becomes a means of taking action to ensure that community's survival. This is why FEANF regarded it as a defensive weapon against the colonialists.

Thus, if culture was to play its full part in creating awareness and acting as a source of inventiveness and creativity, it was important for it to be identified, rehabilitated and restored to its true setting. A people cannot express its true identity without having cultural roots. The task of identifying the African peoples and giving them back their lost status first entailed reconciling them with their past and their mother tongues and integrating them into their own educational institutions. In other words, they had to be made ready to undergo an authentic rebirth. It is not surprising, therefore, that it was through the writings of their leading spokesmen, Cheikh Anta Diop and Joseph Ki-Zerbo, that the FEANF militants raised the fundamental question of whether 'history as the very foundation of national culture stood for a new beginning or the real beginning' (C. Wondji). That is why the teaching of African history as rewritten by Africans themselves must be the prime subject of our education, for history is the beginning and the end of all peoples.

It was important, therefore, as Cheikh Anta Diop recommended, that

> African intellectuals should make the effort to rediscover the general history of the Black world and of the African world in particular. Indeed, the discovery of that past is instrumental not only in rehabilitating Africans and reassuring them in their struggle for freedom by enabling them to acquire a knowledge of science and reinvent their own technology, but also contributes to re-creating the historical awareness influencing the roots put down by a people and situates this in relation to other peoples.

Indeed, in an article entitled 'De l'identité culturelle', Cheikh Anta had this to say: 'By the sense of togetherness it creates, historical awareness represents a people's most reliable and solid bond of cultural security. That is why all peoples aim only at

knowing and savouring their own culture and at handing it on to their offspring.'[8]

This is why the students, whose concerns are reflected in the writings of Cheikh Anta Diop, regarded and regard to this day the teaching of history as the surest way of asserting the personality of black people, by acquiring a knowledge and command of African languages as development tools suited to African living conditions.

It is no coincidence that the colonial system never countenanced the use of national languages in educational establishments or in the administrative, legal and political process. The fact is that language was one of the key factors in the resistance struggle and, as Montesquieu so rightly has it: 'A people that has not lost its language may continue to hope.' That is why the students of Black Africa were alive to the problem of using African languages in economic, political and social life. Paradoxically, this problem, with all the theoretical thinking that should have accompanied it, did not feature systematically in the columns of *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire*. Majhemout Diop and Cheikh Anta Diop did, however, go systematically into the language problem. They showed the need to use African languages in the machinery of government and had no hesitation in demolishing the specious arguments of the colonialists, who actually put forward such factors as the vast number of African languages, the inability of the latter to handle abstract concepts and their very limited vocabulary as serious impediments to the development of our means of communication.

In their bid to thwart the plans for unity nurtured by the African students, with their constant harking back to the glorious past of ancient Africa, the colonialists claimed too that the large number of languages was a considerable obstacle to territorial unity and, hence, that the only factor capable of instilling uniformity and harmony was the use of the colonialists' own 'universal' language. The black students were to answer this through the writings of Majhemout Diop and Cheikh Anta Diop, with the backing of historical arguments.

The former rightly recalled that the multilingual approach adopted in Belgium, Canada, China, the former Soviet Union and Switzerland had scarcely weakened the national unity of those countries and had never prevented them from co-operating with other countries. Cheikh Anta Diop wrote:

> Indeed, out of the six hundred-odd languages that people are wont to quote, there can be said to be not more than four important languages, since the others are only variants spoken by small groups of people, after the manner of the Basque and Gascon 'patois', among others. However, in cases where a dialect is spoken by a handful of people, it cannot form the basis for a culture, nor can it be an impediment to that culture. Hence, in the case of Africa, there are not six hundred languages, but only four languages that are likely to become a vehicle for African thought.

One *raison d'être* for the African languages was their ability to contribute effectively and rapidly to freedom from colonial domination because they were readily accessible as means of communication to the mass of the population. In this regard, Majhemout

Diop wrote: 'Everybody knows that it is easier to learn to write the alphabet and spell a language we already speak than to study a new and entirely foreign vocabulary. In a short space of time, people can therefore obtain the wherewithal to express themselves and, above all, to read and become informed.'

The colonialists also claimed that African languages were incapable of conveying abstract concepts and hence did not lend themselves to the development of abstract thinking or scientific theories; they could not therefore be used to teach science and mathematics, for instance. Posing the problem in those terms amounted to a denial of all the drive that the African peoples had effectively displayed in the past, apart from the fact that their languages were considered to be incapable of evolving. Cheikh Anta Diop rejected this argument outright. He showed not only that African languages were capable of expressing abstract ideas and systems of thought, but that they could translate symbols, build metaphors and invent riddles. In reality, the underlying problem was one of knowing whether African languages could be enriched to cope with the new technical, scientific and cultural order. In this respect, Majhemout Diop, in a reference to the writings of Cheikh Anta Diop, wrote: 'A language is only capable of being properly enriched when it can relate back to an ancient stock of knowledge.... By tracing back the Black African languages to a common origin based on Ancient Egyptian, he has also simplified the problem.'

In point of fact, Cheikh Anta Diop, who was adept at linking theory to practice, had no hesitation in translating into Wolof Einstein's theory of relativity and extracts from Corneille's *Horace*.[9] In present-day Mali physics and mathematics are taught in Bambara. All these examples go to prove that, since languages are the products of society, they are subject to the influence of historical events. The colonialists or neo-colonialists were only too aware of that fact. It is for that reason that they tackled the language problem not only as a prime issue but as a factor making for emulation in literary works.

The membership of FEANF included poets, novelists, playwrights, film-makers and so on, who all used French as the common medium of expression and were seeking the same goals, i.e. to free Africa of the chains of capitalism. The most committed writers were Ferdinand Oyono with *Une vie de boy, Le chemin d'Europe*, and *Le vieux nègre et la médaille*; and Mongo Beti, with *Ville cruelle, Le pauvre Christ de Bamba, Mission terminée* and *Mains basses sur le Cameroun*. Among the most noted poets of the period were David Diop with his *Coup de pilon*, and Keita Fodeba with *Aube africaine*. The African cinema, which was to follow the same pattern, first came into being with the films of Sembene Ousmane.

The writers and performers belonging to FEANF denounced the violence of the colonialists and Catholic missionaries and questioned racial discrimination, which even extended to churchgoing. In other instances, Muslim writers like Cheikh Hamidou Kane were quick to criticize the conservative influence of Islam, with its obscurantist practices which prevented girls from attending modern-type schools.

It should be noted that FEANF held a seminar in Paris on Negro African Francophone Literature on 5–6 July 1961, and another on Teaching in Africa in July 1962. Budding authors such as Henri Lopes, Cheikh Aliou Ndao, Stanislas S. Adotevi, Edouard Glissant, Thomas Mélone and others took part in the seminar on literature, while well-known African or French personalities like Assane Seck, Djibril Sene, Jacqueline Ki-Zerbo and Professors Jean Bernard and Charles Bettelheim sent communications to the seminar on teaching.

However, while such militant literature by FEANF writers and artists generally set very high standards of expression, there nevertheless remained the serious problem of the relationship it bore to the oppressed people to whom it was addressed. The fact was that the vast majority of those people could not even read. That was why Cheikh Anta Diop claimed that African writers were writing above all for a European public. This again raised the issue of the use of African languages in all spheres of activity:

> We consider that any literary work necessarily belongs to the language in which it is written. Hence, works written by Africans in those languages primarily come within the province of such foreign literature and cannot be regarded as monuments of African literature. The objection is likely to be raised that black people using a foreign language handle it in an original fashion and there is something specific to their race in the way they express themselves. However, unless black people stop speaking foreign languages, they can never cope with the inherent genius of their own language.[10]

Cheikh Anta Diop, Bakary Traoré and many other black students of the period loathed the plays put on at the theatre of the William Ponty School because they had no bearing on African drama from the standpoint of their language, structure and staging, and because they misrepresented the historical subjects they borrowed as their theme. The plays never dealt with problems of concern to Africans. Yet African dramatic art at this period was to be in the forefront of the struggle for freedom, and it was in that light that Frantz Fanon hailed the work of Keita Fodeba, although it was written in French, saying that Fodeba's art appealed to a deep-rooted tradition while creating a new dramatic style which brought together elements of the tales recited on the occasion of wakes, epic narratives, music and dancing, all of which were instrumental in arousing people's awareness. Fanon said of Keita Fodeba:

> From the revolutionary standpoint, he has reinterpreted all the images. In his little-known poetical work, it is possible to see his constant concern for identifying the historical moment of the struggle and for marking out the terrain on which the action will take place and the ideas round which the will of the people will come to be crystallized.

By combining a variety of Afro-American musical instruments to produce the illusion of reality and by delving into the past, while at the same time projecting his heroes – the Manding champions – into the future, Keita Fodeba gave expression to a poetic

vision that had nothing in common with a Western-style recital. His ballet was distinguished not only by its 'folkiness', which appealed to both eye and ear, but even more by its capacity to rouse the awareness of the oppressed, alienated and misinformed people of Africa.

In broaching the problem of art, Cheikh Anta Diop also wished to refute the colonialist view which maintained that Africa was barely capable of producing authentic art and had only a kind of coarse, ill-shaped sculpture lacking any proper geometrical lines. What the colonialists failed to grasp was that art in Africa always achieves beauty through utility. In Africa, in fact, art for art's sake is only a theoretical concept. African art has always had a social function and responds to the concerns of the moment.

It was from this standpoint that the students of Black Africa called on African artists involved in modern art, and especially in the cinema, not to cut themselves off from the needs of their peoples. Sembene Ousmane, the Senegalese pioneer of the African cinema, has not disappointed their hopes. Films such as *Le mandat*, *Borom charrette*, *Xala* and *Vehi-ciozane* are all realistic works that have made Africans alive to their everyday problems. African films, in fact, were expected to contribute to the growing awareness of the masses and to their education in the same way as poetry, music and drama. In the words of Frantz Fanon:

> By carving figures and faces that are full of life, and by taking as his theme a group fixed on the same pedestal, the artist invites participation in an organized movement. . . . The colours, of which formerly there were but a few and which obeyed the traditional rules of harmony, increase in number and are influenced by the repercussion of the rising revolution. . . . On the whole, such changes are condemned in the name of a rigid code of artistic style and a cultural life taking shape at the heart of the colonial system.[11]

Moreover, if the issue of religion was not often addressed by the FEANF members, out of mutual respect, the fact remains that African priests, Muslim students and followers of traditional religion did raise questions. Majhemout Diop wrote that 'The diversity of religions, like the diversity of languages, has never been an obstacle to a country's unification. . . . The religious question is of interest only in so far as it is a factor that has to be adapted to the cultural needs of independence.'

In the colonial period, culture was primarily a weapon to be used in the liberation struggle and a factor through which black people could discover their identity and regain their lost status.

When the militants of FEANF (dissolved in 1980) returned home and came face to face with the realities of their own countries, they took it upon themselves to trace out the main lines of their national culture in order to achieve a genuine cultural renaissance. This entailed breaking with the alienating culture of the colonialists. Indeed, as Pathé Diagne wrote: 'The renaissance is based not so much on the realities of a background of experience that is becoming increasingly widespread as on the

ability to create means of expression that confer their full power of self-expression on a culture and on a body of thinking or written work.' However, if a people was to be reborn and rediscover itself through its own language, modes of thinking and art, and was to become aware of its own history and have its own integrated educational system, it first of all had to win its freedom. It was for this reason that FEANF demanded total independence for Black Africa and the building of nations.

According to Christophe Wondji, the creation of a new world has to rely on the memory of the past while rejecting the outmoded heritage of the old world. For the African peoples, without any tradition of writing, this involves grappling with the robust heritage left by their ancestors through patient, stubborn and carefully thought out research, the findings of which must then be widely disseminated. African intellectuals will then be called upon to give theoretical form to that body of knowledge with the aim of developing a new synthesis that takes due account of the changes in African societies. The break with European domination will enable us to reclaim our identity before embracing the positive features of present-day foreign cultures.

The students of Black Africa, therefore, demanded total independence, so that the politicians could perform their role as nation-builders to the full; for, as Wondji rightly says:

> Young people and intellectuals can only propose a partial synthesis within the framework of a strategy aimed at offering incentives and eliciting ideas. They can give voice to aspirations and point the way forward. However, the real synthesis which is required to form the new man comes within the scope of the overall strategy for society. In other words, it lies in the hands of the politicians who are in touch with the masses and are responsible for the overall future of society.[12]

Yet the students of Black Africa, given their position as union militants in FEANF, did not have any direct influence over society. Furthermore, FEANF had to content itself with adopting resolutions, for it had no means of realizing its ideas in the countries themselves.

Conclusion

Even if FEANF did not give pride of place to the question of culture, it did not disregard it altogether, a fact that is borne out by the resolutions that it adopted at its congresses. However, matters of culture were dealt with in the articles written and research work done by experienced militants such as Majhemout Diop, Cheikh Anta Diop, J. Ki-Zerbo and Christophe Wondji. Here they posed the vital questions concerning culture, such as the problem of historical awareness (Egypt as the cradle of civilization), the need to rehabilitate African languages as essential tools for the

development of the black peoples and the partial rejection of negritude as the starting-point for the cultural renaissance of the Black African world (in so far as the theory is based on 'patriotism that was completely alien to Africa and had, moreover, hitherto been used to assimilate and alienate the dominated peoples').[13]

On returning home, some of the former FEANF militants were reassured by the experiments going on in their countries and set about writing synoptic studies for a genuine cultural renaissance that would tie in with the economic programmes of the African countries – since, in the final analysis, there can be no real social progress or economic development without a cultural substratum.

Notes

1. E. Pujarniscle, *Philoxène ou de la littérature coloniale*, Paris, Firmin-Didot, 1931.
2. F. Fanon, 'Racisme et culture', *Présence africaine*, Special Issue, Paris, 1958, pp. 19–22.
3. A. Biyidi, 'Les étudiants noirs parlent', *Présence africaine*, Special Issue, Paris, 1953, p. 26.
4. Ibid., p. 28.
5. F. Fanon, 'Second Congress of Black Writers, Rome, 26 March–1 April 1959', *Présence africaine*, Special Issue, May 1959.
6. A. Franklin, 'Réflexions sur "Orphée noire"', *Présence africaine*, 1953.
7. C. A. Diop, 'Vers une idéologie politique africaine', *La Voix de l'Afrique noire*, No. 1, February 1952.
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FEANF and the colonial authorities

J.-R. de Benoist

It soon became clear that young Africans on scholarships, who were the most privileged of all those studying in France, were also those most intent on grouping to vent their demands, whereas their fellow students without scholarships and who were therefore less well provided for and had to cope with financial difficulties, were less inclined to draw attention to themselves.

Almost from the very first page, the hefty report on the Fédération des Étudiants d'Afrique Noire en France (FEANF) compiled in March 1959[1] by the Renseignements Généraux (RG), the security branch of the French police, sets a tone that was indicative of the attitude of the French authorities towards the leading African student organization in France.

Yet when FEANF was created, it was regarded with favour on account of the personal qualities of its Chairman and the guiding principles laid down in its Statutes.

A favourable predisposition

Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, a Senegalese student working for his history degree,[2] held a position of special authority among his fellow students. Born in 1921, A.-M. M'Bow was older than most of them and his rather unusual educational background afforded him the sort of experience that few of his contemporaries could claim to have. The French authorities considered[3] that he belonged to the tendency known as the Indépendants d'Outre-Mer (IOM) and were understandably pleased at his election in 1950 as Chairman of the Association Générale des Étudiants Africains de Paris (AGEAP), founded in June 1946 with African independence as its primary goal. Some months later, Sylvain Monod, responsible for African students' problems in France for the Office of the Governor-General of French West Africa (AOF), wrote:

Mr M'Bow, the new Chairman of AGEAP, is pursuing the task he undertook last summer and has transformed the Association into a purely friendly and cultural group. Under the manage-

ment of its previous Bureau, the Association became a body with leanings towards the RDA,[4] contrary to the wishes of most of its members. Some supporters of the old Bureau have tried to force a split in the Association's ranks, but their schemes have ended in failure and the new Bureau now seems to have firmly established its authority. In fact, Mr M'Bow has just been re-elected Chairman. This state of affairs should give cause for satisfaction. At the present time it is possible to have useful discussions with AGEAP in an atmosphere of understanding, which was not the case with the old Bureau. These results are largely due to the personal action of Mr M'Bow, whose efforts deserve to be encouraged.

It was with this in mind that S. Monod ardently supported A.-M. M'Bow's request for a subsidy of 100,000 CFA francs, plus a special grant of 175,000 CFA francs to pay off the bills left by the former Bureau.[5]

Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, with Louis Atayi from Togo, who was also a member of AGEAP, played a decisive role in the formation of FEANF in Bordeaux on 31 December 1950. Article 5 of the Statutes adopted on that occasion states: 'The Federation shall not join any political party nor take part in any event organized by a political grouping.' Eight years later, the French authorities noted that

this provision was regarded as a declaration made purely for form's sake and was never respected. Indeed, all of FEANF's activities were geared to becoming increasingly involved in politics. The Federation's members at their annual congresses constantly placed their trust in those of their fellow students who displayed the greatest determination to take such a course.[6]

This trend was apparent from the time of the federation's First Ordinary Congress (Paris, 21–22 March 1951).

A clear political trend

A.-M. M'Bow was elected Secretary-General of FEANF, the chairmanship going to Solange Faladé, a medical student from Dahomey. Writing at the time, Sylvain Monod noted: 'This decision may be regarded as a political choice.'[7]

The first Executive Committee was soon considered too 'moderate'. The Chairwoman sought in vain to bring together the seemingly most level-headed members in a new grouping known as the Groupement Africain de Recherches Économiques et Politiques (GAREP), which never obtained legal status as an association. In March 1952 its membership was virtually non-existent. It should be noted that S. Faladé, a GAREP member, had always been an ardent nationalist; in 1955 she was appointed as principal private secretary to Hubert Maga, the Secretary of State for Labour in the government of Edgar Faure.[8]

In addition to S. Faladé and A.-M. M'Bow – who obtained his history degree a few months later and returned to Africa, to be posted from there to the lycée in Rosso (Mauritania) – two other members of the Executive Committee gave the authorities cause for concern:

Two students with strong political leanings have been appointed to the new Bureau. These are Abdou Moumouni, who has been awarded a scholarship by the Office of the Governor-General to study at the Faculty of Science of Poitiers, but who has not reported to the university nor collected his grant;[9] and N'Ki Traoré, a former scholarship-holder from Guinea who completed his studies last year[10] and is Secretary-General of the RDA students' association. The RDA supporters in the Paris association are apparently trying to infiltrate the Federation in a bid to steer it in a pro-communist direction.[11]

Another report of the same period gave a similar opinion of N. Traoré and A. Moumouni, but showed that the authorities still held out hopes of seeing FEANF continuing in the direction laid down by its founder members:

Traoré N'Ki and Abdou Moumouni are well known for their progressive political views and, indeed, they represent the pro-communist fringe among the RDA students.... It would be difficult to remove students who are too 'committed' from the Association. There is no point in concealing the fact that a large number of students are coming increasingly to support the ideas of the RDA and that the creation of the new Federation, in which some moderate elements may be counted upon, is probably the lesser of two evils'.[12]

The RDA students' association represented by A. Moumouni on the Executive Committee of FEANF did not agree to the change of direction decided by the RDA leadership.

The break with the RDA

It may be useful to recall that it was at this time that the RDA students broke with the leaders of the movement, since they did not agree with the latter's decision of 17 October 1950 to sever links with the communist group in the National Assembly. Seven years later, in September 1957, at the RDA's Third Inter-territorial Congress in Bamako, when the FEANF leaders were said to have done their utmost to disrupt the proceedings,[13] RDA's supreme body voiced its bitterness at the break:

In 1950, when the Co-ordinating Committee majority was going through a difficult time, the Rassemblement de la Jeunesse Démocratique Africaine (RJDA), which was the brightest emanation of the RDA, severed its links with the movement. Many young people, encouraged as they were by our opponents or simply by politicians with designs other than our emancipation, stood aloof, so much so that they played into the hands of those seeking to disparage us.... We witnessed attempts to pervert African intellectuals in perfect emulation of Hitler or Mussolini.... In 1951, when, in the true interests of the peasant population and of all that we are endeavouring to achieve, we changed the form of our demands by launching slogans, the young generation staggered about in a daze, as though their hamstrings had been cut.... The young people's assemblies are no longer the good-natured and joyous events they used to be. They have become focal points for complaints and their associations now use the tone and language of trade-union protest.[14]

The students were quick to point out that the colonial authorities were likely to use the declarations of the RDA leaders against them:

Mr Ouezzin Coulibaly, the elected representative of Côte d'Ivoire and Vice-Chairman of the Government Council of Upper Volta, has strongly condemned the 'sterile action of the students' to the utter delight of the colonialists. Indeed, if only Mr Ouezzin Coulibaly's action were as fruitless as our own, how fortunate it would be for the territory he leads, which has twelve ministers, but does not have twelve secondary-school teachers, nor twelve engineers, nor twelve doctors, nor twelve vets.[15]

At the same period, however, Modibo Keita was seeking to form closer ties with the students:

Ever since our alliance with the communists came to an end and the movement took a new direction, contacts have been broken off and both sides have indulged in comments that have sometimes been unfair and regrettable. . . . If students look at African problems from an uncompromising idealistic standpoint, since they are cut off from the masses on account of the environment in which they live and the books they read, then it is the duty of those of us who are in contact with the masses, who are capable of gauging their ability to resist oppression and the extent of their political education, and who are compelled to take all those overriding factors into account – it is, I repeat, our duty – to maintain constant relations with our students in Metropolitan France. Such contacts, which are useful to them and us alike, will help them to know Africa better.[16]

The position adopted by Keita was less controversial than that of Coulibaly. It is true that, according to the Renseignements Généraux,[17] Coulibaly had been in the front line of the confrontation with the RDA students who had addressed a very harsh open letter to Félix Houphouët-Boigny in September 1951. It was Coulibaly who replied to the RDA student leaders in Paris and Montpellier on 13 October 1951, asking them who 'the imbecile was who dared make such incredible insinuations' and asserting that most African students in France did not share the views of those who had written the letter. Konan Banny in Montpellier and A. Moumouni and N. Traoré in Paris replied to Coulibaly on 26 October 1951 as follows: 'We have learnt to think along communist lines. Not so long ago, you held the same views as us. Would it be the fact that the French Communist Party is no longer in power that has caused you to backtrack?'

Shortly afterwards, Coulibaly is said to have confided to a close friend:

Mr d'Arboussier has not been idle. More than 30 per cent of African students, especially in the provinces, now share his communist opinions. It will be a difficult job to take the Federation in hand. Miss Faladé does not show much drive and she is a woman. A.-M. M'Bow, the Secretary-General, who was loyal to us, is about to return to Africa. We shall therefore find ourselves facing a fresh burst of activity by extreme left-wing elements.[18]

It is clear that what the RDA leadership feared most was the prospect of a take-over of FEANF by African communist students.

The spectre of communism

As its name indicated, FEANF grouped some fourteen federated associations established on the basis of the home territories of their members and a multitude of academic sectors. When the federation came into being, the police services in those territories took an interest in the influence of progressive ideas and of the French Communist Party (PCF) itself on those organizations.

For instance the Association des Étudiants de Côte d'Ivoire en France (AECI), a section of the Union Générale des Étudiants de Côte d'Ivoire (UGECI), was described as having 'a majority with communist leanings'.[19] In the case of the Association des Étudiants Dahoméens en France (AEDF), a section of the Union Générale des Étudiants et Élèves du Dahomey (UGEED), it was felt that 'although these young intellectuals do not subscribe completely to the thinking of the French Communist Party, they do not reject it altogether and the views they hold are, as a rule, highly progressive in outlook and of a pronounced pan-Negro character'. They were 'in favour of *self-government*, but of proceeding with caution'.[20]

According to Espitalier, one of the heads of the CID in Guinea, 'only para- or crypto-communist groups hold out a helping hand to the Guinean students in France', whose Association des Étudiants Guinéens en France (AEGF) was also a section of the Union Générale des Étudiants et Élèves de Guinée.[21]

The students from Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso), whose Association des Étudiants de la Haute-Volta en France (AEHVF) appeared to be independent of schoolchildren's organizations in their country, were regarded as having a 'proper attitude' in spite of certain 'progressive tendencies'.[22]

Senegalese nationals played an important role in AGEAP, as can be seen from the membership of its Bureau for 1951–52: Chairman: Amadou Samb, Senegalese (Arts); Vice-Chairman: Khalilou Sall, Senegalese (Electrical Engineering); Secretary: Joseph Etoundi, Cameroonian (Posts and Telecommunications); Treasurer: Amady Sy, Senegalese (Law), and two Alternates: Sekou Camara, Guinean, and Benoit Balla, Cameroonian (Law).

A. Thomas reported:

> This Bureau is merely a front. . . . The real organizer is allegedly Cheikh Anta Diop, well known for his progressive ideas. . . . At general assemblies at which the Bureau is elected, the candidates recruit the petty black criminals hanging around the Place Pigalle and get them to vote, although they are not students. Many genuine students are frightened by these underworld characters and prefer to abstain.

A. Thomas contemplated the possibility of setting up a parallel association and noted: 'There can be no doubt that our students are constantly being pressed by the PCF to join its ranks; it takes every opportunity to excite their bitterness and draw attention to the oversights or mistakes of which they are victims.' Finally, the reporter concluded by hazarding a prediction:

African students will be the spokesmen with whom the administration will have to deal, the successors to whom it will one day have to hand over authority and the reins of power. If France's accomplishments are to continue and be sustained, it is vital to ensure that the élites we have trained will have fond memories of our concern for them and will continue to be our grateful friends.[23]

However, within a few years of being created, FEANF was to become increasingly progressive.

An increasingly progressive trend

According to the French security services, FEANF's 'progressive' outlook from the time of its First Ordinary Congress onwards became more marked over the years. Among the successive members of its Executive Committee in the period from 1951 to 1959, ten were described as 'members of the French Communist Party', seven were presumed to be members of the Parti Africain de l'Indépendance (PAI) which was founded in 1957, four were members of the 'communist-inclined' RDA students' association, while four belonged to the Union des Populations du Cameroun (UPC), the Cameroon section of the RDA that refused to break with the French Communist Party.

The authorities also detected this 'progressive' trend in FEANF's congresses and activities:

With its membership of about one thousand at the end of the year (1951), this association soon gave rise to a marked tendency among some of its members to dabble in politics. At the Second Congress in Paris on 14–15 April 1952, the FEANF leadership was taken over by a number of nationalists affiliated to the RDA. . . . At the instigation of these officers, close relations were established between the Federation and the International Union of Students (IUS) which had its headquarters in Prague.

The same extremist tendency was borne out at the Federation's Third Congress on 8 April 1953. . . . The members of the new Executive Committee had one thing in common, in that, over the previous two years, they had all attended the various congresses organized by IUS in Berlin, Warsaw and Prague. The vast majority of the young people (the members of the steering committee elected at the Federation's Fourth Congress in Toulouse on 26–27 December 1953) were RDA militants and focused the Federation's action even more firmly on stepping up the struggle against colonialism.

The Federation's Fifth Congress was held in Paris from 27 to 30 December 1954.

Leopold S. Senghor, the representative for Senegal, who had come merely to recommend the creation of a legislative assembly for each territory, was given a hostile reception by the black students, who made it plain that they preferred the speech by Jacques Vergès, the communist, advocating the struggle for complete independence. The Federation's Sixth Congress, held at the Salle des Sociétés Savantes in Paris from 27 to 30 December 1955, resulted in the election of an Executive Committee whose members were distinctly more outspoken than their predecessors and all of whom were prompted by an 'unconquerable desire to consent to live only at the price of total independence for their native land', to borrow the terms of one of the resolutions considered on that occasion.

The Federation's Seventh Congress, held from 27 to 31 December 1956 at the Salle des Sociétés Savantes in Paris, now its traditional venue, was marked by the participation of delegates from the Union Générale des Étudiants Musulmans d'Algérie (UGEMA) and by the unambiguous stand on the Algerian uprising taken at the decisive instigation of Ogo Kane Diallo, Vice-Chairman of the Federation, who was described as 'a member of the Communist Party' and 'responsible for acts of violence and assault'. In the course of 1957, the officers elected at the Congress were notably instrumental 'in strengthening the ties already existing between the Federation, the IUS and the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY)'. In particular, they made it possible for a large number of young Africans to attend the Sixth World Festival of Young People and Students held in Moscow. They did their utmost to disrupt the proceedings at the RDA Congress in Bamako in September 1957.

The Eighth Congress, held in Paris from 27 to 31 December 1957, created a greater commotion than earlier congresses and led to the adoption of more sensational resolutions. For instance, the Congress solemnly decided that 'having regard to the specific nature of French colonialism, independence has to be gained not so much by the piling-up of illusory reforms as by the revolutionary struggle of the African masses'. The Executive Committee deemed it necessary to convene an Extraordinary Congress in Paris from 21 to 23 June 1958 for the purpose of deciding on the Federation's attitude to the events that had occurred in May and had led to a change in the constitutional structure of France.

An even more extremist attitude was adopted at the Tenth Congress in Paris from 27 to 31 December 1958.[24]

Such stances, clearly voiced by FEANF at its Congress in December 1953, led to confrontation with the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (RDA) and with General Charles de Gaulle.

FEANF in its dealings with the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (RDA) and General de Gaulle

Reference has been made to two events that led FEANF to make its position known, in view of the prominence its declarations were given in the press and on the radio. The publicity given to students' demands increased their impact on public opinion and on the authorities' attitude towards FEANF.

We have already spoken of the break between the RDA students and the parent

movement, following the latter's decision to sever links with the communist group in the National Assembly, and of the judgement passed on this split by O. Coulibaly and M. Keita at the movement's Third Inter-territorial Congress in Bamako in September 1957.

FEANF agreed to attend the Bamako Congress on three conditions, namely:

1. Its delegation should be a large one; in any event, FEANF could not be represented by only one person.
2. There could be no question of our attending the Congress without being allowed to speak. That requirement proved to be all the more important, since the local press and radio had already reported that FEANF would be attending even before our delegation arrived. In the eyes of the people, we would be presumed to have endorsed everything adopted by the Congress, were we to confine ourselves to an ambiguous silence.
3. In view of our extremely parlous financial situation, we asked RDA to provide us with the means with which to attend the Congress.

The three conditions were fulfilled, even though the second gave rise to many objections. Accordingly, Emmanuel Batiebo, FEANF's secretary for international relations, together with Baïdi Tidiane Ly of the Union Générale des Étudiants d'Afrique Occidentale (UGEAO) and Ali Bocar Kane of the Conseil Fédéral de la Jeunesse d'Afrique Occidentale, was able to use the platform at the Congress to make the position of students and young people known.[25]

In his editorial in the special number of *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire*, Amadou A. Dicko wrote: 'This Congress was intended for the consumption of the colonial power.' FEANF accordingly knew what impact, for better or for worse, the stand taken at Bamako would have on French public opinion. The French press had sent special correspondents to report on an event that was graced by the presence of such leading French politicians as Edgar Faure, Pierre Mendès-France and François Mitterrand. Newspapers that did not send a special correspondent were kept informed by the Agence France Presse (AFP), which wrote *inter alia:*

The delegates of the Black African students in France ... spoke out sharply and forcibly in favour of 'the liberation of the oppressed peoples of Black Africa'. Some said that the RDA had for some years past disappointed African hopes by assuming the defence of a French-African community which, in their opinion, was nothing more than a lure.[26]

When his plane landed back in Paris, Mr François Mitterrand was questioned on the proceedings of the RDA Congress and in particular on his impressions of the tendency which some newspapers had reported among the young people of French West Africa in their demand for total independence for the continent. Mr Mitterrand said that no such statement had been made at the Congress: only two student delegates who, like himself, had been invited as guests, had spoken to that effect, but they were well known for their sympathy towards communism.[27]

The students from Dakar and France took advantage of their stay in Bamako to hold a meeting with the representatives of the youth movement of French Sudan, following which the Front de la Jeunesse Africaine launched an appeal on 26 September 1957:

Our situation as dependent peoples has made us profoundly anti-colonialist. Those of us who are not afraid of taking our ideas to their logical extreme will come up with demands not only for autonomy and self-determination but for the total independence of our countries and the unqualified support of all peoples struggling for their independence.[28]

Some months later, on the occasion of the Extraordinary Congress convened following General de Gaulle's return to power, 'the FEANF Executive Committee prevailed on the Federation to adopt a hostile attitude to the new head of government and to decide that black students should participate in the referendum by casting a negative vote. This stand was a clearer indication of FEANF's readiness to take its cue from the Communist Party.'[29]

Even before the Congress began, the FEANF Executive Committee had issued two press releases. The first of these criticized the African parliamentarians for their attitude on the occasion of the vote on the investiture of General de Gaulle: 'Whereas most of you took refuge in a cowardly abstention, some of you gave your votes to the dictatorship and participated in the new government. . . . African parliamentarians, you have betrayed our people and the office entrusted to you. You have become the accomplices of the most abject reaction against the French people.'[30]

The second press release, addressed to all Africans, denounced the 'Fascists' and 'colonialists' who had brought General de Gaulle to power: 'General de Gaulle is the man who openly declared in Brazzaville: "Self-government in the colonies, even in the remote future, should be ruled out." This is the man who thus rejected and is continuing to reject the demands of the colonized peoples for independence.'[31]

These stances may have played some part in the development of General de Gaulle's policy towards the territories of the former French Union, since he was subsequently to write: 'A large proportion of the educated members of the population, who had been more or less indoctrinated by totalitarian overbidding, dreamt of emancipation as being not so much the culmination of a process as a defeat which the colonized peoples would inflict on their colonizers.'[32]

As part of its fight to emancipate Africa, FEANF attached tremendous importance to its publications and to international relations.

Publications and international relations

From January 1954 onwards FEANF published a monthly review under the title of *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire* which was seized on at least two occasions on the orders of the Prefect of Toulouse, where it was printed. The first time was in December 1956 for its criticism of the government's action and of the line adopted by the RDA and its Chairman, Félix Houphouët-Boigny, the then Minister-Delegate in the office of the Prime Minister responsible for constitutional reform, and the second was in February 1958 for its report of the congress in December 1957 when it was decided 'to maintain

the monthly's revolutionary line and firmness of style and tone'. In the eyes of the authorities, this was reflected in the violence of tone adopted in its anti-French articles, which contained 'undisguised calls to revolt'.[33]

Issue No. 23 of June 1958 was seized because of a 'particularly scandalous article that was liable to lead to a serious reaction in African circles'.[34] The article in question, entitled 'Nazism and Attila in Kamerun' was, according to its authors, 'the sad and black picture of Nazism as practised by the French authorities and their lackeys in Kamerun'.

In 1958, FEANF published a sixty-page work entitled *Le sang de Bandoeng* (The Blood of Bandung) in an edition of 10,000 copies; it had been written by four lawyers who were former militants in the student movements: Khar Ndofène Diouf from Senegal, E. Razafindralambo from Madagascar, Raymond Fardin from Guadeloupe, and Jacques Vergès from Réunion. The very name of Vergès, the young lawyer of the Algerian FLN and a notorious progressive, would warrant a whole chapter to itself. *Le sang de Bandoeng* is devoted exclusively to the Algerian war and in particular to denouncing the 'atrocities committed by the French army . . .'. FEANF was clearly attempting to confront the French authorities with a real challenge in a bid to rekindle the enthusiasm of its members, while showing that they felt sure of their impunity.[35]

The French authorities considered that, in addition to the action which FEANF was conducting directly through the press, it was collaborating with a large number of African, French and international organizations in consistently pursuing two of the main goals laid down by the Eighth Congress in December 1957. These were 'the revolutionary struggle for the immediate conquest of independence, and the unification of the African continent in a vast federation in the form of a United States of Africa'. In short,

> the young militants of the FEANF who have had the good fortune to be able to pursue their studies in Europe are quite simply aiming at forming an African bloc powerful enough to ensure that the two leading powers that are currently vying for world hegemony will have to reckon with the black world in the future. The ambitious designs of these young people are unlikely to be inhibited by the fact that only a very small proportion of them – compared with the vast size of the continent – have so far been able to follow a course of higher education or even assimilate modern technology to some degree, any more than by the economic underdevelopment of their countries with their in-built geographical and climatic constraints.[36]

FEANF collaborated mainly with the International Union of Students (IUS), an associate member of the World Federation of Democratic Youth (WFDY). This development was bound to be a source of concern to the French authorities, which branded IUS as 'a Soviet propaganda organization'.[37]

In practical terms the ideological links between FEANF and IUS meant that the latter provided finances to enable the FEANF leaders to attend international meetings

especially, but not exclusively, for those held in Eastern bloc countries. In the course of 1958, the French police noted that the FEANF leaders made some thirty-five trips outside the French frontiers, in addition to which thirteen study fellowships were awarded directly or indirectly by IUS.

The French authorities, concerned at the ever-closer relations between FEANF and organizations with communist sympathies, actually considered its dissolution.

A dissolution that would solve nothing

In a confidential report of 1954, Bernard Cornut-Gentille, High Commissioner and Governor-General of French West Africa, made a fairly lucid assessment of French policy towards the African students and FEANF in particular:

Student circles are the object of constant solicitude on the part of the French Communist Party. Its efforts will bear fruit in the future and the harvest will be a bitter one if the authorities, too caught up in day-to-day problems, do not give their best attention to the select band of intellectuals who are the essential spearhead of evolution. . . . There are 4,000 young African students in France. Most of them are members of federations, notably FEANF. They have all thrown in their lot with the communists because, in practical terms, too little has been done to prevent this. This problem will not be solved through welfare measures or circulars, still less by indulging in benevolent paternalism. It will only be solved with time and, even then, only in so far as the drive imparted by the general thrust of our policy cushions the reflexes and complexes of young people who indeed must have a goal and a set of beliefs. It is to this that we have not given sufficient thought. . . . What is needed is a considerable effort of understanding and (moral) support on the part of public opinion in France. It should be remembered that these young Africans epitomize the hopes of a people whose modern history is now beginning. The age of African medical orderlies and shipping clerks is fast coming to an end, but this is something that people in France have not yet realized. . . . Young Africans are demanding their 'place in the sun': the Africanization of managerial posts and the immigration of poor white settlers are creating an acute problem.[38]

Some four years later, the dissolution of FEANF was considered:

In the first place, FEANF's activities are not in conformity with the aims expressed in the Association's Statutes. . . . Secondly, it is quite clear that FEANF, especially through its international relations, is engaging in activities that are undeniably subversive as regards both Metropolitan France and Africa. In view of these findings, the eventuality of dissolving FEANF should be envisaged.[39]

However, the authors of this analysis were not under any illusions. FEANF's leaders had foreseen such an eventuality and taken the precaution of: (a) providing for a significant increase in the number of union or corporative organizations which, although seemingly independent of one another, were in fact secretly linked to a

central body; (b) planning to link all the territorial organizations to associations with their main offices in the African territories; and (c) envisaging steps to have *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire* printed in Dakar. 'Accordingly, one should not disguise the fact that the activities of FEANF's leaders would go underground if the Federation were dissolved.'[40]

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is clear that the French administration thought favourably of FEANF's first Executive Committee, which was chaired by two 'moderates': A.-M. M'Bow and S. Faladé. However, when it became clear that a large number of the federation's officers were members of the RDA students' association and the French Communist Party, it began to consider dissolving FEANF as long ago as 1959, although it did not actually do so until 1980.

Notes

1. This document will be quoted a number of times under reference 'RG'.
2. And not a law degree, as incorrectly stated in RG, p. 9.
3. They were mistaken. A.-M. M'Bow had in fact been introduced as a member of the Groupe Africain de Recherches Économiques et Politiques (GAREP), an unofficial unit run by a secret political party, i.e. the Organisation Collective et Égalitaire de l'Afrique Noire (OCEAN), led by Abdoulaye Ly, a history student.
4. Until 17 October 1950, the RDA (Rassemblement Démocratique Africain) was allied with the French Communist Party (PCF) in the National Assembly and, even after it severed those links, the French authorities continued to regard it as being strongly influenced by the communists.
5. Report No. 764 of 8 February 1951, National Archives of Senegal (ANS/17.9.269, deposit 111).
6. RG, p. 8.
7. Report No. 1533 of 16 April 1951, ANS/17.9.269, deposit 111.
8. RG, p. 9.
9. In RG, p. 9, he is described as a science student from French Sudan (in fact, he was from Niger) and editor of the *Étudiants anti-colonialistes* paper.
10. In RG, p. 2, he is reported as being a student at the 'Ecole Scienta'.
11. Report No. 1533 by Sylvain Monod of 16 April 1951, ANS/17.9.269, deposit 111.
12. Note No. 695 INT/AP/R by M. A. Thomas, Political Affairs, Department of the Interior, Office of the High Commissioner, ibid.
13. RG, p. 14.
14. RDA Third Inter-territorial Congress, Bamako, September 1957. Report on Youth Issues, by Ouezzin Coulibaly.
15. Amadou A. Dicko, *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire*, No. 14, October 1957.
16. RDA Third International Congress, Bamako, September 1957. Report on the Organization, by Modibo Keita.
17. Note of 5 November 1951, ANS/17.9.274, deposit 111.
18. Ibid.

19. Paper on the attitude of African students, No. 3959/558/PS/R/C, 24 August 1951, ANS/21.9.209, deposit 118.
20. Note 1898/PS/C of 21 August 1951 from the police service of Dahomey on the political demands and activities of Dahomean students.
21. Police service of Dahomey, Note No. 1294, 21 August 1951.
22. Ibid., Note on Voltaic students, No. 1145/SU/C, 9 September 1951.
23. Ibid., Report of 26 February 1952.
24. RG, pp. 9–17, passim.
25. *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire*, No. 14, Special Number, October 1957.
26. Agence France Presse, *Spécial outre-mer* (overseas bulletin), No. 3361, 26 September 1957.
27. Ibid., No. 3363, 28 September 1957.
28. *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire*, op. cit.
29. RG, p. 17.
30. *Le Monde*, Paris, 15 June 1958.
31. Ibid.
32. Charles de Gaulle, *Mémoires d'espoir*, Vol. I, *Le renouveau, 1958–1962*, p. 43, Paris, Plon, 1970.
33. RG, p. 94.
34. Ibid., p. 98.
35. Ibid., pp. 88–9.
36. Ibid., pp. 111–12.
37. Ibid., p. 189.
38. Bernard Cornut-Gentille, *Les problèmes politiques de l'AOF*, Address to the opening session of the Grand Conseil de l'Afrique Occidentale Française, Dakar, Rufisque, 1955.
39. RG, p. 228.
40. Ibid., p. 229.

Part IV

National student movements in Africa

The Union Nationale des Étudiants du Kamerun (UNEK) and the National Liberation Movement

A. Eyinga

As individuals, African students would have counted for nothing during the fifteen vital years (1945–60) that formed the Africa of today had they not formed organizations – unions, associations, federations and other groupings – that enabled them to raise the real issues and contribute to finding solutions. In this respect there is nothing particularly special about the case of the Cameroonian students, if not the late date of the creation of the Union Nationale des Étudiants du Kamerun (UNEK). However, this lateness is characteristic of the associative movements of students throughout the French colonial empire.

In this field as in many others, London was in advance of Paris. The fact is that the birth of the first association of colonial students, the West African Students' Union (WASU), was registered in the British capital in 1925,[1] while the grouping of students under French colonial rule did not see the light of day in Paris until 1933. This was the Association des Étudiants Ouest-africains (AEOA), of which L. S. Senghor was President. Two years later, the Association des Étudiants Noirs en France (AENF) was set up by Léon Damas, Aimé Césaire, L. S. Senghor and other students.

With its magazine, *L'étudiant noir*, an occasional publication if ever there was one, the existence of this association, looked down upon by the authorities, was more symbolic than real, although the Foyer des Étudiants Coloniaux (colonial students' hostel) at 184 boulevard Saint-Germain in the sixth *arrondissement* in Paris was to become a major centre for meetings and discussions during the war (1940–44).

Immediately after the world conflict, increasingly large intakes of young Africans began to arrive at French universities and the number of colonial students increased by leaps and bounds. At the same time, there were greater opportunities for these young knowledge-hungry expatriates to group together. It is therefore no surprise that, as early as 1946, African student associations sprang up in the academic regions of Bordeaux, Grenoble, Lyon, Montpellier and Toulouse. That of the Paris region was founded on 21 June 1946 and was given the title Association Générale des Étudiants Africains de Paris (AGEAP).[2]

As the initial framework for the association of colonial students, the academic regions were quickly overtaken by the appearance of 'territorial' associations, based on the country (or colony) of origin of their members. Students from Cameroon, Dahomey and Togo seem to have been the first to form associations of this type, but this was by no means the end of associative experiments for overseas students.

In addition to academic affiliation and territorial allegiance, a third factor for association, political this time, was soon to demand the attention of young African students arriving in France. Suffice it here to mention the unprecedented congress in Bamako (French Sudan) which ended on 21 October 1946 with the creation of the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (RDA). Allowing for the different circumstances, this event had the same impact in the different territories of French West and East Africa as in African circles in France. In African student circles this political effervescence resulted in the creation of the Association des Étudiants du RDA,[3] with its information journal *La voix d'Afrique noire.*

The circle was to be completed on the night of 31 December 1950, which saw the birth of the Fédération des Étudiants d'Afrique Noire en France (FEANF). Its aim was to group at the summit all students from French West Africa, French Equatorial Africa, Togo and Cameroon who were studying in France.[4] To achieve this, it was linked on the one hand to the fourteen existing territorial associations and, on the other, to the twenty academic associations that existed in 1959: Aix-Marseilles, Besançon, Bordeaux, Caen, Clermont-Ferrand, Dijon, Grenoble, Le Havre, Lille, Lyon, Montpellier, Nancy, Nice, Poitiers, Reims, Rennes, Rouen, Strasbourg, Toulouse and Tours.

At the Sixth Annual FEANF Congress in Paris from 27 to 30 December 1955, a Cameroonian, Benoît Balla, former president of the territorial association of Cameroonian students, was elected President.[5]

From the Association des Étudiants Camerounais de France (AECF) to the Union Nationale des Étudiants du Kamerun (UNEK)

Of the fifteen or so young pioneers who participated in the creation of the Association des Étudiants Camerounais de France (AECF) in Paris in July 1946, we shall only mention two medical students: Eyidi Bebey, who became the first AECF President, and Nzogo Massi.

Between the symbolic gesture of founding the AECF and the beginning of its effective functioning, a two-year period of growth was necessary leading up to the General Assembly in summer 1949, where the main business was to present and discuss the association's Statutes; these were not finally adopted until the following year at a summer camp in Saint-Germain.

The AECF Statutes had scarcely been adopted when they were modified for the first time in 1951 to take account of the vast movement launched in Cameroon in favour of the reunification of the country, which had been divided into 'French Cameroon' and 'British Cameroon' following the First World War. The students therefore decided to open the AECF to their compatriots from the United Kingdom. Hence the new name for the organization: Association des Étudiants Camerounais (AEC).

The transformation of AEC into UNEK was to take place under virtually the same conditions, except that this time the Cameroonians from the other side of the Channel were to play a particularly important role. Following the decision of the 1956 Congress to change the status of the AEC to the Union Nationale des Étudiants Camerounais (UNEC with a 'C'), the British delegation (National Union of Kamerunian Students) to UNEC at the Ninth UNEC Congress in Paris in 1958, which was led by Bernard Fonlon, proposed to the meeting that the 'C' of UNEC should be changed to a 'K'. The proposal was adopted enthusiastically.

In terms of its structure, UNEK was not significantly different from the other student organizations of the 1950s and 1960s, in particular FEANF.

At the summit of the structure was the Congress, the supreme authority of the Association. It held its annual general meeting in Paris in December each year. If need be, an extraordinary meeting of Congress could be called.[6] All UNEK members were entitled to participate in its work. Congress designated an Executive Committee from which the President of the association was chosen. Among the militants who have exercised this function, mention should be made of Eyidi Bebey (1946), Benoît Balla (several times), Samuel Kondo (election disputed), Théodore Koulé, Victor Kanga, Kouoh Sengat (1956), Tchinaye Vroumsia, Joseph Sack, Massaga Woungly (1960), Elie Nsangou, Hayatou Bobbo (1965) and others.

With the single exception of Samuel Kondo in 1951, all past presidents of UNEK were known above all for their militant nationalism and unreserved adherence to the ideas of the Cameroon National Liberation Movement (CNLM).

The Union Nationale des Étudiants du Kamerun (UNEK) and the anti-colonial struggle

UNEK's anti-colonial action, aimed at the liberation of Cameroon and of Africa as a whole, operated simultaneously on two levels, national and continental.

Action at national level

Legally constituted in the form of a trade union, that is, an association intended to devote itself to the corporate concerns of its members, UNEK deliberately chose from

its very creation to participate also, in its fashion, in the Cameroonian liberation struggle. Its first president, the late Dr Eyidi Bebey, recalled this emphatically during his speech to the Pan-Cameroon Student Conference in Yaoundé in August 1959. The trend was institutionalized in December 1960 in the UNEK Charter, which definitively committed the former AECF to the path of 'revolutionary trade unionism'.

As UNEK and its members saw it, only independence and the accession to power of true patriots at the head of a progressive government could work towards a solution of the country's real problems, including those of students. It was therefore to the advantage of the latter to mobilize themselves to hasten the advent of such a government.

This political mobilization of UNEK consisted, on the one hand, of adopting, disseminating and applying the orders issued by patriotic organizations, and, on the other, of defining and implementing initiatives of its own. Each of these two attitudes earned for UNEK the disapproval of the colonial and neo-colonial authorities.

UNEK as a relay for Cameroon nationalist organizations

By nationalist organizations, we mean here essentially the different patriotic groups that were struggling for Cameroon's reunification and independence, and with which UNEK finally constituted an anti-imperialist United Front in 1960.

In the 1950s and later, UNEK acted with the full approval of the majority of its members, as a branch of the UPC (Union des Populations du Cameroun, the nationalist party most committed to the anti-imperialist struggle) in France. This is no doubt the reason why students who were not of a patriotic stamp were suspicious of it, when they did not actually engage in centrifugal operations aimed at destabilizing their union. The abortive attempts at secession that punctuated the history of UNEK will be discussed below.

In 1954, in the great hall of the Sociétés Savantes in Paris (28 rue Serpente in the Latin Quarter), a big meeting was organized by the AECF at which the main speaker was Ruben Um Nyobé, UPC General Secretary. He had just returned from New York where he had presented a petition to the Fourth Commission of the United Nations General Assembly. The aim of the meeting was to report on his mission to the United Nations. In Cameroon the various sections of the UPC were accustomed to organizing similar meetings whenever the General Secretary returned from mission abroad.

It has to be admitted, however, that UNEK showed far more imagination and a greater sense of responsibility as an organization when it came to generating its own decisions and initiatives.

UNEK as a centre for independent decisions and initiatives

In this area, UNEK initiatives were of infinite variety: approaching the authorities, fighting for grants for its members, carrying out various missions to foreign countries,[7] taking a stand on specific issues, launching publicity campaigns among young people and participating in United Nations debates as a petitioner.

Three times, in 1957, 1958 and 1959, i.e. when the debates on the future of Cameroon had reached their greatest intensity at the United Nations, UNEK sent delegations to New York to make the views of the students heard.[8] Here we should give details of the address made there on 26 February 1959 before the Fourth Commission of the General Assembly by the spokesman for the Cameroonian students in France, Jean-Martin Tchaptchet, and the representative of the Cameroonian students in the United Kingdom, Fongum Gorji-Dinka:

Mr F. Gorji-Dinka (National Union of Kamerunian Students) said that the Cameroonian students and graduates represented by his organization were disinterestedly devoted to their country and could therefore claim to speak with objectivity. They had instructed him and his fellow delegates to state that they would resist any attempt to take away any part of their country. The juridical personality of the Cameroons, as established through peaceful treaties with Germany, had in no way been prejudiced by the accession to independence. The Cameroons had hitherto been administered without a central authority for the whole country, so that the problem before the United Nations was to help the people of the Cameroons establish a central government before the country became independent.

The obstacles to the establishment of a central government arose from two sources. The first was the unwillingness of France and of Mr Ahidjo, the Prime Minister of the Cameroons under French administration, to delay independence even for a few months. But if France was unwilling to wait, then the trusteeship it was so anxious to terminate could be taken over immediately by Guinea; while if Mr Ahidjo was unwilling to wait because of the popular pressure for independence to which he had referred, he need only resign.

The other obstacle to unification had its source in the United Kingdom's protracted efforts to 'de-Cameroonize' the people of the United Kingdom zone by both educational and administrative means. The United Kingdom had first arbitrarily partitioned its zone into two sectors and then proceeded to isolate the administrative districts of the northern sector from each other and to link them with local centres in Nigeria. The United Kingdom claimed that that arrangement was designed to bring people of the same ethnic origin together. But approximately three-fourths of the people of the Adamawa Province lived in the Cameroons and only one-fourth in Nigeria. What the United Kingdom was therefore suggesting was that the one-fourth in Nigeria must draw the three-fourths in the Cameroons into the Commonwealth. But the entire Territory was part of the Cameroons not only by ethnic affinity but by treaty.

The administrative grip of Nigeria on the Northern Cameroons was so strong that, in its report on the Cameroons under British administration (T/1426 and Add. 1), the United Nations Visiting Mission to Trust Territories in West Africa (1958) itself had mentioned evidence of it and of the intimidation used by the majority party to suppress opinions contrary to its own. The petitioners who had come before the United Nations to argue the contrary could not claim to represent the people of the Northern Cameroons, for a democratic election under universal

adult suffrage and by secret ballot had never been held in the Northern Cameroons. It was, moreover, the stated intention of the Government of the Northern Region to continue to withhold the suffrage from women. For that reason alone, if for no other, the United Nations should not acquiesce in the separation of that zone from the rest of the Cameroons.

He would waste no time on the newly-invented and untenable argument for the continuation of a so-called modified trusteeship system for the Southern Cameroons, which the United Nations would surely reject.

In order to solve the problem of establishing a central government for the Cameroons, he would propose the following programme. General elections to a central parliament should be held throughout the country in October 1959, under the complete supervision of the United Nations. The special commission established to maintain that supervision should leave for the Cameroons immediately after the closure of the Assembly's resumed thirteenth session, and remain there for the following six months in order to ensure a free atmosphere for energetic campaigning. The central legislature resulting from the elections would then work out the details of unification, with the advice and guidance of the United Nations Commission. The people of the Cameroons would then at long last be united in freedom. . . .

Mr Jean-Martin Tchaptchet (Union Nationale des Étudiants Camerounais), presenting the views of his organization, took issue with the conclusion of the Visiting Mission as set forth in paragraph 141 of its report on the Cameroons under French administration (T/1427 and T/1434), to the effect that the present Legislative Assembly was representative and that there were insufficient grounds for holding new general elections before the termination of the trusteeship. The Mission, having spent only three weeks in the Territory, could not possibly examine all the problems relating to new elections, and its conclusion could therefore not be regarded as definitive.

The Assembly was not representative because it had emerged from the unpopular elections of 23 December 1956. Those elections should have been preceded by the promulgation and enforcement of an amnesty law. . . .

There were important reasons for holding general elections under United Nations supervision before independence. The Union Nationale des Étudiants Camerounais contested Mr Ahidjo's assertion that his Government was popular, and opinion was generally divided regarding the representative nature of existing institutions. In the circumstances, elections under United Nations supervision before independence would guarantee a full and fair consultation of the people and the establishment of a truly representative Government. If they were held after the country had attained independence, there was nothing to guarantee that they would be free and democratic and the United Nations, as the guardian of world peace and security, would be held responsible for any disorders that might ensue.

In the view of the Union Nationale des Étudiants Camerounais, independence negotiated hastily between a Cameroonian Government which had thus far been reticent regarding national aspirations, and the French Government, which had shown itself to be opposed to the right of people to self-determination, was, at the very least, suspect. The French position regarding self-determination had been demonstrated only too clearly in Indo-China, Morocco and Tunisia, and the French attitude towards newly independent Guinea was still fresh in memory. France should agree to general elections under United Nations supervision prior to independence if only to prove to the world and to public opinion in the Cameroons that its determined support of the Ahidjo Government did not mean that there were previous commitments between the two Governments. . . .

The Union Nationale des Étudiants Camerounais therefore called for a total and unconditional amnesty, repeal of the Decree of 13 July 1955, organization of a referendum on the reunification of the two Cameroons before the end of June 1959, and general elections for a constituent assembly before November 1959. The assembly thus elected would proclaim independence not later than 1 January 1960. The referendum and the elections should be supervised at all stages by a United Nations Commission which would see to it that all Cameroonian political movements were free to campaign throughout the Cameroons. . . .[9]

After French Cameroon had achieved independence in chaotic conditions, i.e. contrary to those recommended by UNEK and all the Cameroon patriotic organizations, the students' union decided to hold a 'day of mourning', on 1 January 1960, in conformity with the following Resolution passed at its most recent Congress (28 December 1959):

Motion on the Kamerun independence celebrations

The Union Nationale des Étudiants du Kamerun, meeting in Congress from 26 to 30 December 1959, in Paris;

Considering that the situation that exists in Cameroon is extremely serious, and that it requires objective and thorough examination by students;

Considering that independence for a nation is not an abstract concept but implies the consecration of a state in which the people constitute the essential and dominating element;

Considering that one of the fundamental principles of UNEK is to be always at the side of the Cameroon people to play its avant-garde role in the struggle for national liberation;

Considering that the proposals for compromise put forward by the Pan-Cameroon student conference, which demonstrated a real spirit of conciliation, have not yet been taken into consideration by the Franco-Cameroon Government;

Considering that this attitude has contributed to the deterioration of the situation in Cameroon and made it inappropriate to hold any festivities organized in these circumstances, it being understood that the proclamation of independence on 1 January 1960 remains a historic act;

Considering that if the students, by virtue of their earlier positions, cannot participate in celebrations organized by the government under the present circumstances, they should nevertheless greet the advent of independence with satisfaction.

1. *Approves* the decision of the Executive Committee calling for the boycotting of these said celebrations and making 1 January 1960 a day of mourning, it being understood that this decision of the Executive Committee does not mean breaking off with any representative of Cameroon, including the government.
2. *Assures* the Executive Committee of the unfailing support of the Congress and protests against the threats hanging over its members.
3. *Invites* the Executive Committee to hold a big information meeting on 31 December 1959 at 4 p.m. to make our position public, and to hold a meeting at the Cameroon students' hostel on 1 January 1960 at 9 p.m.
4. *Requests* all sections of UNEK to organize information meetings to this end at dates of their own choosing. *Reaffirms* its solidarity with the Cameroon people in its efforts to achieve true independence and reunification in Union, Peace and Concord.

Of those who boycotted the official celebrations of 1 January 1960, many did not have to wait very long to expiate their sins,[10] the Yaoundé authorities not having greatly appreciated the attitude of the students' union. But the union was already accustomed, since its very creation, to the active hostility of the colonial and neo-colonial authorities.

Colonial and neo-colonial repression of UNEK

Like most other African students' unions, UNEK did not arouse the hostility of the colonial authorities at the time of its creation. It would even appear that, in its earliest years, AECF collaborated loyally with those authorities.

During this brief halcyon period, the colonial government met certain major claims of the students, such as summer camps.[11] But, paradoxically, it was through these summer camps that the colonialists first showed their displeasure with regard to UNEK when it became convinced of the nationalist orientation adopted by the leaders of the association. As a reprisal against this orientation, deemed 'dangerous' (it would now be called 'subversive'), the Ministry for the French Colonies prohibited schoolgoers and college students from attending these camps in order to protect them from the virus of politicization.

The hostility of the authorities subsequently increased as UNEK became stronger and its position better defined, and as in Cameroon itself the irresistible wave of patriotic organizations began to overwhelm the colonial administration. Suspensions and withdrawal of grants[12] not proving sufficient to intimidate the UNEK militants, the colonial government resorted to a more subtle tactic, that of weakening the union from the inside by causing splits.

The first attempt in this direction, led by Nguimbous Nliba and Martin Mimbang, was made in 1955. Its protagonists said that they wanted to form another union, an apolitical one, under the name of Groupement Universitaire Camerounais (GUC). As the students did not follow them, their attempt led to nothing.

Nevertheless, two years later, shortly after the accession of the 'Outline-Law' Cameroon Government, four other candidates for secession – Adalbert Owona, Vincent Owona, Benoît Essougou and Engelbert Atangana – made another attempt and announced the formation of the Rassemblement des Étudiants Camerounais (REC). Like the GUC, the REC fizzled out in an atmosphere of general disapproval without attracting any members.

The anti-UNEK activities later orchestrated within the movement by Georges Ngango were no more successful and were sanctioned at the Nineteenth UNEK Congress in 1966 by his expulsion from the union.

While neo-colonial repression had proved fiercer than that of the colonial occupier, UNEK now held a tougher and more intransigent stance towards the problems of Africa as a whole.

UNEK's anti-colonial struggle in Africa as a whole

UNEK's action in this respect was planned and implemented within the framework of FEANF, and the position of this great federation of African students on matters such as the French Union, the Outline Law, the community in both its forms (institutional and reformed), African unity and the Algerian War is well known.[13]

In favour of any development leading to the total independence of Africa, FEANF[14] made no secret of its hostility to any intermediate status that would continue to hold Africa under colonial rule, as was the case with the French Union and the Outline Law of 1956. It explicitly condemned the latter at its Eighth Congress in 1957, describing it as 'a mystification with no other purpose than to cause confusion and hamper the historic process of our liberation'. Hence the need to 'create the concrete conditions for forming a fighting front for national unity and independence'.

As for the Franco-African Community, FEANF formally rejected it at the very moment of its creation, that is, at the stage of the constitutional referendum of 1958:

> The Fédération des Étudiants d'Afrique Noire en France, meeting in Extraordinary Congress in Paris on 21, 22 and 23 June 1958;
> *Having analysed* the events in Algiers of 13 May 1958 and the present political situation in France,
> *Considering* that our condition as colonized peoples imposes upon us the duty to adopt a clear position with regard to the change of regime resulting from the assumption of power by General de Gaulle;
>
> . . . .
>
> *Considering* that the myth of the 'man of Brazzaville' which tries to present de Gaulle as the epitome of the liberal politician in colonial matters has no basis in reality, seeing that the Brazzaville Conference of 1944 inspired by de Gaulle proclaimed that 'the constitution, even in the distant future, of self-government in the colonies is to be excluded';
> *Considering* that General de Gaulle was brought to power by the most colonialist elements who want to restore the French Colonial Empire by force and terror,
>
> 1. *Denounces* the misleading nature, for the peoples under French domination, of the referendum called for by the African parliamentarians who support de Gaulle.
> 2. *Considers* that this referendum, whose very principle is unacceptable, cannot, in any event, engage the future of our people.
> 3. *Calls upon* all African patriots, workers, young people, women, students, to demonstrate from this very moment their hostility to the referendum and to oppose it by means of petitions, meetings, lectures, demonstrations, boycotts and any other appropriate action.
> 4. *Proclaims* that neither the revision of the French Constitution, nor the referendum, nor any other project, will change in any way the determination of the African people to achieve total independence.

And when the Institutional Community of 1958 was replaced by the so-called

'Reformed' Community, FEANF, faithful to its own logic, again rejected any status tending to hamper the movement towards total independence and African unity:

The Twelfth Congress of the Fédération des Étudiants d'Afrique Noire en France, meeting in Paris from 26 to 31 December 1960:

. . . .

1. *Notes* that the reformed Community is but the concrete manifestation of neo-colonialism in its desire to hamper the struggle of the African masses for total liberation;
2. *Denounces* the mystification of the reformed Community as being a subterfuge intended to hamper movement towards total independence and African unity.

Just as FEANF denounced colonialism, neo-colonialism and their substitutes, so it approved the idea of African unity. For the students of Black Africa, independence was but one of the more effective steps contributing towards the building of a true unity of the continent based directly on the will of the people. FEANF defined the outline, content and aims of this true unity in a special study entitled *Les étudiants africains et l'unité africaine*, published in 1959.

Following the creation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963, FEANF made no secret of its satisfaction, while drawing attention to the 'existence within OAU of African heads of state allied to imperialism and wishing, in order to protect their own sordid interests, to transform OAU into a union of heads of state turned against the African peoples . . .'.

The desire to see Africa liberate itself totally in order to begin the unification process no doubt explains the constant support of FEANF for the Algerian patriots throughout the eight years of the war of independence, from 1 November 1954 to 5 July 1962. This support at first took the form of active solidarity with the Union Générale des Étudiants Musulmans Algériens (UGEMA).

Right from its creation in 1955, UGEMA sided with the patriotic forces that were waging the war of national liberation. The reaction of the colonial authorities was not long in coming, for on 28 January 1958 UGEMA was dissolved by order of the French Government. FEANF was just as prompt to demonstrate its solidarity with the Algerian students, first in organizing a big protest meeting, then in declaring a student strike, and finally in encouraging the entry of its members into FLN networks. The FEANF information journal, *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire*, for its part devoted its fifth issue (June–September) to the Algerian War.

Still acting in solidarity with the Algerian patriots at war, FEANF adopted a resolution in 1957 condemning the use of Black African soldiers (Senegalese riflemen) in Algeria:

The Seventh FEANF Congress, meeting in Paris from 27 to 31 December 1957,

Considering that the fight of the Algerian people to win back national independence is that of all the peoples of Africa:

1. *Strongly protests* against the use by the French Government of African contingents known as 'Senegalese riflemen' against their Algerian and Cameroon brothers engaged in a just and legitimate combat.
2. *Strongly condemns* this use.
3. *Calls upon* all students and young Africans to step up their campaign for the withdrawal of African soldiers from Algerian territory.
4. *Once more draws the attention* of African parliamentarians to the dishonour that their silence on such a distressing problem brings upon Black Africa.
5. *Notes* that this silence can but be interpreted as complicity with French colonialism.

It is not possible here to enumerate all the ways in which FEANF demonstrated its solidarity with the Algerian people at war. We would, however, mention the compilation of a work entitled *Le sang de Bandoeng*, devoted entirely to the denunciation of the 'atrocities inspired by Hitlerism perpetrated by the French army during the Algerian War'. The book ends with these words: 'Will the French Government finally come to understand that the dead in Africa cannot be forgotten any more than those of Oradour?'

As it came off the *Présence africaine* press, *Le sang de Bandoeng* was seized and banned by the French police, who at the same time carried out brutal searches of the homes of all the FEANF leaders, in both Paris and the provinces, with the aim of recovering not only any remaining copies of the work, but also any other subversive documents.

After all these events, it is understandable that the Fifteenth FEANF Congress should have expressed its great satisfaction at the proclamation of independence in Algeria:

The Fifteenth Congress of the Fédération des Étudiants d'Afrique Noire en France, meeting in Paris from 26 to 29 December 1962,

Considering the resounding victory that the Algerian people has achieved over French imperialism in winning its independence;

Considering that this victory is the result of the stubborn fight that the valiant Algerian people waged for over seven years;

Considering the important role of this fight in the national liberation movement in Africa;

1. *Salutes* the accession of the Algerian people to independence as a victory for all democrats the world over and of the African peoples in particular.
2. *Launches an appeal* to all Algerian patriotic forces to work in unity to consolidate independence.
3. *Invites* the Algerian people to exercise the greatest vigilance in the face of neo-colonialist manoeuvres by the imperialists.

As the Algerian War came to an end, French contingents and 'Senegalese riflemen' were continuing to perpetrate their misdeeds in Cameroon, where military repression against patriots had begun in 1955. This situation makes it easy to understand why, within FEANF, the Cameroonians were among the militants who advocated unconditional support of UGEMA and all the patriotic Algerian forces.

Conclusion

To what extent is it possible today to draw up a balance sheet of the action of the different student associations of the 1950s and 1960s, and more particularly of UNEK?

Our opinion on this subject is that a balance sheet can be envisaged provided that the appropriate reservations and explanations are attached to it, in which case the action of UNEK calls for the three observations outlined below.

First, the struggle for independence waged by UNEK was crowned with success, even if only on the level of principle. The fact is that the independence granted on 1 January 1960 did not – and still does not – have the form, content or even aims of the independence for which UNEK and other patriotic Cameroonian organizations made sacrifices. But even in this form, independence remains an achievement. This was the view of UNEK, a point of view expressed in its resolution of 30 December 1959 (see above), in which the student organization clearly recognized that, despite its shortcomings, independence 'remains a historic act'.

Secondly, this result in no way justifies the manner in which the majority of UNEK militants forgot their patriotic convictions once they returned home to Cameroon, a situation that was partly the result of opportunism. As can be seen in the item of self-criticism given below, UNEK understood quite clearly how matters stood:

> After having affirmed once more that, on the whole, UNEK has always been at the side of our valiant People, we nevertheless have to admit that despite the exemplary devotion at certain times (not to say constantly) of many of its militants and leaders, the *concrete action* of UNEK, particularly in recent years, has not always lived up to what our People was entitled (and is still entitled) to expect from its intellectual avant-garde in a period of revolutionary struggle; that UNEK's activity reveals real weaknesses that we must analyse; and lastly, and above all, that the participation of intellectuals in the actual struggle, and more particularly in the principal forms determined by the permanent avant-garde of our People, has been, to tell the truth, largely inadequate.
>
> What are the causes of this situation of which we require as perfect a knowledge as possible if we are to transform this position of weakness into one of strength? Without being able to cite all the causes, the following seem to us to be the most important:
>
> *Opportunism:* apart from the agitators of GUC and REC and a few isolated individuals that history has not felt it necessary to record, the first major manifestations of opportunism and 'fatigue' came to light with the prospect of independence. Many students and former students allowed themselves to be seduced by the prospect of the 'Africanization' of responsible positions and began to lick their lips. The opportunist gangrene was like a malignant tumour and developed very quickly, for many took their cue from others and became 'fatigued' too. Many wrong ideas, some worse than others, appeared in particular after 1960: 'Since independence has been achieved, whatever one may think of the regime, we must contribute to national construction', or 'We have to transform the regime from within', or, again, the difficulties encountered by other United Front organizations were taken as a pretext for

spreading the strongest possible defeatist current, etc. Objectively, this type of argument was frequently mere side-stepping, when it did not stem from inveterate reactionary elements.

Other forms of opportunism consist of indefinitely extending one's stay abroad for whatever pretext, while the real theatre of the struggle is in Cameroon, or in any event the decisive theatre; or again endless discussion on the appropriateness of adopting such or such a form of struggle as opposed to another, etc., and there are surely still other variants, including the lack of theoretical rigour in the application and defence of UNEK principles, which leads to practical errors . . . (*Criticism of UNEK activities and of participation of intellectuals in the struggle for national independence in the past twenty years,* 1968).

Thirdly, we may add to this the obvious shortcomings in the ideological and political training of UNEK members and Cameroonian students and 'intellectuals'. This no doubt explains the paradox that, today, former militants and leading figures in UNEK are found on the side of neo-colonialism in the service of those against whom they struggled in the past. It should not be forgotten that it was under the neo-colonial regime that the majority of militant student organizations, including UNEK and FEANF, were banned and dissolved, one after the other.[15]

In Cameroon, independence is not yet synonymous with liberty, so that the struggle against neo-colonialism is proving harder and more bitter than that waged directly against colonialism, while the slim guarantees offered by the system of international trusteeship disappeared with that system on 1 January 1960. In such a context, the need to train those who are to limit and thwart the exactions of neo-colonialism is very apparent.

Independent Cameroon needs not one UNEK but several hundred battle-hardened UNEKs and FEANFs to be able to embark upon national construction in the service of and for the benefit of the whole population. Today, more than ever, Africa needs its true 'intellectuals'.

Notes

1. Shortly afterwards, the East African Students' Union (EASU) was set up in its turn.
2. Two of the association's presidents were Cheikh Fall, first Managing Director of Air Africa, and the former Director-General of UNESCO, Amadou Mahtar-M'Bow.
3. Among the founder members were Cheikh Anta Diop, Lamine Diabaté, Tété Godwin, Jérome Kouadio, Ignace Yacé, Abdou Moumouni, Niang Babacar and others.
4. In these heroic years of the immediate post-war period, an African student could militate not only in the academic section of the association of colonial students, but also in his territorial association, without forgetting the Rassemblement des Étudiants du RDA for those who were not afraid of political commitment. The same student militant might find himself belonging to FEANF through both his territorial and his academic associations.
5. Other Cameroonians who held positions of responsibility in FEANF included: Abel Eyinga, President of AGEAP, 1954–55; Jean Nguenga, Vice-President of FEANF, 1958; Thomas Meloné, Social Affairs Secretary of FEANF, 1958; Afana Osende, Chief Treasurer of FEANF, 1958; Paul-Joachim Doumo N'Djolé, Assistant Treasurer; and Michel Ndoh, Editor of the FEANF journal, *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire,* 1959.

6. As on 25 and 26 March 1960, when the UNEK President, Massaga Woungly, and three other militants, Jean-Martin Tchaptchet, Michel Ndoh and Joseph Etoundi, were expelled from France. Until 1956, the supreme authority of the Association des Étudiants Camerounais (AEC) was called the General Assembly.
7. For example, the mission to the Soviet Union undertaken by Thomas Meloné, which resulted in the withdrawal of his grant. The same misfortune was to befall J.-M. Tchaptchet.
8. Afana Osendé was entrusted with this mission in 1957 in close collaboration with FEANF. During the extraordinary session of the General Assembly (February–March 1959) specially devoted to the Cameroonian problem, the joint student delegation was led by F. Gorji-Dinka and J.-M. Tchaptchet.
9. The text reproduced here is that of the official United Nations report in the document: Fourth Committee, 853rd meeting, 26 February 1959, A/C-4/SR.853, pp. 589–92.
10. The decision to boycott the celebrations of 1 January 1960 was not unanimous within UNEK. Among those who showed the greatest hostility were Denis Ekani, Ambroise Foalem, Philippe Tchinou, and Jean-Baptiste Yonké.
11. These camps were opened during the university holidays, in particular at Saint-Germain-en-Laye, Le Raincy, Meudon, and Rambouillet.
12. A fate that befell the following, among others, in 1955: Benoît Balla (President of UNEK), Simon Mbobda and Alexandre Moutymbo.
13. FEANF's stance on these different problems is clearly described in the short study by Sekou Traoré, *La fédération des étudiants d'Afrique noire en France (FEANF)*, pp. 19–45, Paris, l'Harmattan, 1985.
14. See, for example, the article 'L'unique issue: . . . l'indépendance totale', published in 1953 by Majemout Diop in a special issue of the journal *Présence africaine* entitled 'Les étudiants noirs parlent' (African Students Speak Out).
15. Some of these organizations were replaced by groups fostered by the neo-colonial regime and totally controlled by it, for example, the new National Union of Cameroon Students (NUCS) for those studying in the United Kingdom and Ireland.

The role of Tunisian student movements from 1900 to 1975

M. Chenoufi

Introduction

It is generally acknowledged that Tunisia, like all Arabo-Muslim countries, was already caught up in a process of European economic, political and cultural penetration on the eve of the establishment of the French Protectorate in 1881. Through a process of capitulations, France, having colonized Algeria, took the step of moving from a de facto situation of 'protection' to a novel legal status of 'Protectorate'.[1]

The thought and actions of the Tunisian reformists of the second half of the nineteenth century, led by General Khereddine and Cheikhs Kabadou, Ben Dhiaf, Bayram V and Salem Bouhajeb, had developed in the context of the *esprit nouveau* methodology they adopted, which was aimed at borrowing from the West while respecting the Arabo-Islamic cultural identity. The problem of education was at the core of the debate: the 'Nahda' (Renaissance) was first and foremost a matter for education, this view being extensively developed and defended by the Middle Eastern reformists and in particular the famous Egyptian reformist, Cheikh Mohamed Abdouh.

Shortly before the establishment of the French Protectorate in Tunisia in 1881, there had been two major reforms, in 1875 and 1876, under the impetus of General Khereddine, Grand Vizier of Sadok Bey: the creation of a modern type of secondary school, the Sadiki College[2] named after the reigning Bey, and the renovation of the traditional teaching of the Great Mosque of the Olive, the 'Zaytouna'.[3]

The passion of the Tunisian élite for education and its propagation was the dominant factor in demands all through the colonial and post-colonial eras. Despite the establishment of the Protectorate and its policy of discrimination against the 'natives', an élite of 'Sadikians' and 'Zaytounians' kept an eye open for trouble and helped spread the *esprit nouveau:* the welcome given by the Sadikians and Zaytounians to the great Egyptian reformist Cheikh Mohamed Abdouh on his two visits to Tunisia in 1855 and 1903 is an indication of this;[4] 1888 saw the appearance

of the independent weekly *Al-Hadira*, mouthpiece of a Sadikian and Zaytounian common front which stressed the urgent need for democratization and educational reform; in 1896 an annex was added to the Great Mosque of the Olive, while the Khaldouniyya modernist cultural association became the forum of the modernist ulemas; the Association des Anciens de Sadiki was created in 1905; 1907 marked the birth of the Young Tunisian Movement, headed by Ali Bach-Hamba and animated by young nationalists, including the Zaytounian Cheikh Abdelaziz Thaalbi, who was to found the Destour Party in 1919.

It should be noted that the colonial authorities never ceased to fuel and encourage division and rivalry between Sadikians and Zaytounians. Another no less important fact is that this division and rivalry tended to disappear in the heat of the national struggle and whenever there were incidents between the school population of either persuasion and the colonial authorities. The year 1910 may be considered as that in which the Tunisian school population first intervened in political life. The leaders were Zaytounians, monolingual Arabic speakers and victims of cultural segregation that left no place for them in the framework of the colonial regime. The torch of resistance was taken up and fanned by the Sadikians and other college students receiving official bilingual education, who were led by Tunisian students in France. The year 1952 saw the birth in Paris, during a period of severe repression of Tunisian nationalists, of the first Tunisian student union organization. Inspired by the Union Générale des Travailleurs Tunisiens (UGTT) and the Neo-Destour, this was the Union Générale des Étudiants de Tunisie (UGET).

With Tunisia's accession to independence in 1956 and the proclamation of the Republic in 1957, UGET worked for the unification of Tunisian education, which was achieved the following year, and the defence of students' interests. A highly politicized active minority soon came into conflict with the authorities. The Eighteenth UGET Congress, held in Korba in 1971, sounded the death knell of a UGET that wanted to dissociate itself from the central power that was continually trying to tame it.

From 1971 to the present day, the opposition resembles a mosaic, dominated on the one hand by leftist militants in favour of reviving UGET, which was banned by the authorities, and on the other by a movement of Islamic militants who want to launch a new organization, the Union Générale Tunisienne des Étudiants (UGTE).

This study sets out to examine the role of the Tunisian student movement between 1910 and 1975 and to determine its contribution to the Tunisian nationalist movement as a resistance movement against a foreign power, as a contributor to the building of the nation following independence and as one of the vital forces of contemporary Tunisia.

The Zaytounian–Sadikian school and student movement, 1910–52

The Great Mosque of the Olive was founded at the beginning of the second century of the Hegira (eighth century A.D.). Bastion of the juridico-religious school of Malekism, it was the only official secondary and higher education establishment of its kind. Like Al-Azhar in Cairo and Al-Karawiyyin in Fez, it trained thousands of pupils and students down the centuries and went through periods of grandeur and of decadence, particularly the latter when the Husseinite dynasty commenced its rule at the beginning of the eighteenth century. The reform of 1876, mentioned above, and which was simply a repeat of an earlier reform in 1842, did not succeed in shaking this august and outmoded institution from its torpor, for the conservatism of the ulemas outweighed any vague impulse for reform. The colonial epoch (1881–1956) was characterized by worsening discrimination between official and Zaytounian education, which was to be at the root of many incidents at the Great Mosque for over half a century. Five commissions mark the path of the crises there. The year 1949 saw the birth of the first student union in Tunisia, the Comité de la Voix de l'Étudiant Zaytounien (CVEZ), a radical movement which, in the space of three short years, brought the colonial authorities and nationalists to reconsider their original stance.

The first commission was set up in May 1898. In creating it, Louis Machuel, Director of Public Education since 1883, sought to obtain the right to examine the affairs of the Great Mosque of the Olive, but the conservative ulemas won out: the Great Mosque thenceforth came under the authority of the Prime Minister of the Bey.

The year 1910

The marked deterioration of the educational level and material conditions of the Zaytounians led them to create in 1907, over twenty-five years after the establishment of the Protectorate, the first Association des Élèves de la Grande Mosquée de l'Olivier (AEGMO), led by the young Cheikh Al-Khidhr Ibn Al-Hussein.[5] The liberalization of the press in 1904 and the founding in 1907 of the first Tunisian political party, the Young Tunisian Party, tolerated by the French Protectorate because of its moderate ideas, were not unconnected with the appearance of a student protest movement on the political scene.[6]

Opposition came to a head in the spring of 1910 with a student strike, demonstrations and meetings. Professor Charles-André Julien has described the period as follows:

> The movement even involved the Zitouna, encouraged by the strike of the Egyptian students at Al-Azhar in November 1909. Four months later 800 students of the Great Mosque addressed

a petition to the government requesting fixed timetables that would put an end to the absenteeism of teachers and ensure competent teaching of history and geography, the right to sit examinations after three years rather than seven, exoneration from the *mejba* and exemption from military service. Even though the government at once agreed to set up a commission of inquiry, the students stopped work on 15 March 1910 and demonstrated in the streets.

Bach-Hamba, who had at first condemned the strike, approved it on hearing that several teachers were opposed to any modification in the status quo. On 28 April the strike ended normally with the freeing of eight students and the government clearly expressed willingness to set about granting the reforms demanded. On 13 May a big meeting amounting to a rally brought together 2,000 students from different schools, where several of the best-known people in the Tunisian evolutionist movement, including Zaouche and Zmerli, spoke.

The most enthusiastically received was Thaalbi, representing Bach-Hamba, who criticized the narrow conservatism of part of the teaching body and deplored the absence of courses in philosophy, exegesis of holy texts and metaphysics. This strike of students from the Great Mosque who were receiving an inappropriate culture was symptomatic of a problem that only grew worse as time went by.[7]

The colonial authorities reacted by setting up on 15 March 1910 a second commission for the reform of Zaytounian education, which first met on 6 April 1912 and presented its findings in September that year. It was chaired by the Minister of the Pen, Taïeb Djellouli, and composed of nine teachers and a representative of the Residence-General in Tunisia. As with the first commission in 1898, the conservatism of the teacher members of the second commission overcame the impulse for reform: studies were extended by two years; the recommendation to add five annexes to the Great Mosque of the Olive throughout the Regency remained a pious hope and was not implemented until 1945, thirty years later.

The events of the Djellaz, the tramway and the Italo-Libyan war did much to enhance the political awareness of the schoolgoing masses.

Between the wars

Following the birth of the liberal constitutional (Destour) party after the First World War, Zaytounians and college students, in particular the Sadikians, took part in street demonstrations. In March 1920 a big demonstration took place in front of the Residence-General to protest against the occupation of Istanbul, seat of the Caliphat, by allied troops.[8]

On 5 April 1922, pupils from all establishments took part in a demonstration that marched to the Palais de la Marsa to protest against the abdication of Naceur Bey, father of the nationalist Bey Moncef.[9] Throughout the mandate of the Resident-General, Lucien Saint (1920–29), the confrontation between Tunisian nationalists and union members and the French colonial authorities worsened. The institution in 1919 of the *tiers colonial* (salary supplement) for French civil servants, the adoption

of the law of 20 December 1923 on naturalization, the suppression at source in 1925 of the first Tunisian union movement – M'Hammed Ali el-Hammi's CGTT – the erection of a statue of Cardinal Lavigerie in Bab el Bhar (the European quarter of Tunis) in the same year, and the promulgation in January 1926 of decrees gagging the opposition and the nationalist press – all these factors helped to heighten the political awareness of the mass of Tunisian students and pupils.

It was in this context that the third commission for reform in Zaytounian education was set up in 1924 and continued to work until 1925. Chaired by the Prime Minister and composed of twenty members from among the ulemas, the commission stressed the need to consolidate the religious and denominational nature of the teaching of the Great Mosque.

Three years later, in December 1928, there was even greater turmoil among the Zaytounians when the Bey promulgated a decree establishing a competitive examination for entry to the profession of notary, requiring a basic knowledge of the French language. Two young students from the south of the country, later to become famous, took the lead in the protest movement: the poet Aboul-Kacem Chabbi, author of the *Cahier des revendications des étudiants zaytouniens,* and Tahar Haddad, social reformer and best friend of the father of Tunisian unionism, M'Hammed Ali el-Hammi.[10] The following year, 1930, saw the formation of the fourth commission for the reform of Zaytounian education, again chaired by the Prime Minister and with more than fifteen members from among the ulemas. For the first time a minority of the commission members were in favour of radical reform, their leader being the famous reformer Cheikh Tahar Ben Achour, who became Rector of the Great Mosque in 1932. However, the conservative majority on the commission had their way in the end, and the Rector later had to resign, relinquishing his post to an extremely conservative Rector, Cheikh Salah Malki.

Two achievements are to be credited to the Zaytounian students' protest movement: the creation of the students' committee, co-chaired by A. Chabbi and T. Haddad, and the introduction, however timid, of the teaching of the exact sciences. The great turning-point of the 1930s was the radicalization of the Tunisian National Movement, one of the elements of which was school and student protest. Two types of economic crisis were to combine from that time on: those caused by climatic conditions on the one hand, and those due to capitalism on the other.

Despite the very low figures for schooling (6.66 per cent of those of schoolgoing age), the progress of education, and in particular Zaytounian education (2,000 enrolments in 1930 as against 800 in 1910), resulted in increasingly strong and better organized protest. The holding of the Eucharistic Congress in Carthage in May 1930 was regarded by Zaytounians and Sadikians alike as a cultural aggression. They began a strike that lasted until 13 May 1930, and organized rallies and demonstrations which led to arrests.[11]

The commemoration of fifty years of the French Protectorate in May the

following year and the burial of naturalized French Tunisians in Muslim cemeteries in 1933 caused the mass of the people to turn against the Protectorate and was the reason for the increasing radicalization of the pupils' and students' movement.

A first attempt to unite the student protest movement was made by North African students in France, who formed the Association des Étudiants Musulmans Nord-Africains (AEMNA) in Paris on 28 December 1927, following the Étoile Nord-Africaine, which was founded in March 1926. As a centre of cultural resistance, it organized seven annual congresses between 1931 and 1937, two of which were held in the Khaldouniyya in Tunis (April 1931 and October 1934).[12] From the start, the impact of Zaytounian protest was far from negligible in AEMNA meetings: the demands concerned the status of Arabic in education, the reform of religious education and the education of Muslim women. Yet it was only later that aspirations for Maghreb unity were voiced at AEMNA meetings. The Tunisian members included the Sadikians Salem Chadly, Chedly Khairallah, Tahar Sfar, Habib Thameur and Mongi Slim, and the Zaytounian Cheikhs Ahmed Ben Miled and Chedly Naïfar.[13]

This attempt to group the different student currents fitted into the global strategy of the nationalist movement in the 1930s, which was to isolate the Protectorate administration by means of a string of mass organizations (parties, trade unions, trade associations, farmers' associations, organizations of women, young people and intellectuals, etc.). Jeunesse Scolaire, a pupils' group formed to develop bonds of friendship among secondary-school pupils, was set up in 1932. In June 1934 another group, Les Jeunes Musulmans, was formed; its mission was to educate young people according to Islamic principles and by strengthening links with pan-Arabism.

These two movements inspired a group of young nationalists of Neo-Destourian persuasion, who founded the journal *Tounès al Fatat* (subtitled 'Organ of North African youth') on 1 April 1938[14] (it was suspended in September 1939). Associative movements of young people were consolidated with the appearance of scouting in Tunisia: 'Tunisian scouting no doubt dates from 1933, as the result of a convergence of two influences, one European and the other Middle Eastern.'[15] The Association des Éclaireurs Musulmans de Tunisie attempted to establish itself all over the country; dissolved after the events of 9 April 1938, it reappeared in 1944 and contributed a great deal to the nationalism of Tunisian youth.

It is useful at this point to recall the genesis of the Neo-Destour movement, founded in 1934. Young people played an essential part in the creation and evolution of this party, and the events of 9 April 1938 were due above all to pupils and students. Ali Belhaouane, known as the *leader des jeunes,* was able to express the hopes and fears of Tunisian youth during the 1930s. His lecture on 'Youth's Share in the Struggle', banned by the colonial authorities, led to his being arrested and charged, and hence to the bloody events of 9 April 1938.[16] School pupils and students paid heavily that day: there were about forty martyrs and hundreds of arrests.

The repression was felt above all in Zaytounian ranks. On the arrival of the new

Resident-General, Armand Guillon, an open letter was addressed to him with the signatures of more than 600 pupils, demanding that the diplomas awarded by the Great Mosque be recognized as equivalent to those of the official system. The demand had emerged from the First Zaytounian Conference, held in 1937, following a series of class interruptions.

A fifth reform commission was set up in 1938, but its work was adjourned *sine die* with the outbreak of the Second World War.

From the Second World War to 1952

While the conservatism of the ulemas, teachers at the Great Mosque of the Olive, had previously been the major obstacle to the implementation of the reforms demanded by the young Zaytounians, the post-war period was marked by a new and crucial event: the link-up of the Zaytounian movement with the unionist claims of the Zaytounian teaching body.[17] This merger was sealed in 1945, with the return of Rector Tahar Ben Achour, under pressure from the united front of Zaytounian pupils and teachers. The new Rector undertook, among other things, to set up annexes to the Great Mosque throughout the Regency (twenty-five annexes) and to introduce modern education to the Khaldouniyya Muslim Institute in 1946, so as to prepare students for higher studies in the Middle East.

However, three significant events were to hamper the evolution of this protest movement of Zaytounians among teachers and pupils alike. The movement was led by the Rector's son, Cheikh Fadhel Ben Achour, and a young teacher from the Tunisian bourgeoisie, Cheikh Chadly Ben Cadhi.

The unreserved support of these two young leaders for the creation on 20 January 1946 of the Union Générale des Travailleurs Tunisiens (UGTT) led by the great trade unionist, Farhat Hached, the holding of the Congress of the Night of Destiny on 22 August 1946 – a national congress of reconciliation of parties and union organizations – and active participation in the Palestine War in 1948, foreshadowed what were to become ever-worsening upheavals from the 1950s onwards. The post-war period was thus marked by a distinct evolution in the Zaytounian protest movement. It tended to dissociate itself from the Neo-Destour Party which, while it accepted the *fait accompli* regarding UGTT and the Night of Destiny, was satisfied with giving little more than moral support to the Palestinian cause.[18]

The year 1949 was another turning-point in the evolution of the Zaytounian movement: it saw the birth of an independent organization, the Comité de la Voix de l'Étudiant Zaytounien (CVEZ), representing more than 14,000 pupils throughout the Regency.

They constituted their organization on the basis of the broadest possible democracy. At regional level, each Zaytounian annex had to elect delegates, i.e. a representative for each class. These delegates, who together formed the general council of the annex, in turn elected a regional committee. Together, all the class delegates from the annexes and the Great Mosque of the Zaytouna formed the 'Zaytounian Parliament' which designated the National Committee, the Lajnat Sawt-at-talib or Comité de la Voix de l'Étudiant Zeitounien.[19]

At the start of the 1949–50 academic year, CVEZ presented the government with a list of sixteen demands and founded a protest weekly[20] demanding: equivalence for Zaytounian diplomas; integration of scientific disciplines into teaching; reform of the levels of study and creation of a higher education system; progressive training of competent supervisory staff; access to all administrative examinations without exception; and entitlement to write in Arabic. It might almost be said that this programme traced the broad lines of a modern national education system that would gradually take over from the system established by the Directorate of Public Education. Rebuffed by the authorities, CVEZ declared an unlimited strike as from April 1950, punctuated by hunger strikes, rallies and demonstrations.

The Neo-Destour Party, in the person of its Secretary-General, Salah Ben Youssef, continued to support the Zaytounian protest movement until Mustapha Kaâk's government fell and was replaced by that of M'Hamed Chenik, in which the aforementioned Salah Ben Youssef became Justice Minister and Mahmoud Materi, also a Neo-Destourian, Minister of State. The differences between the Zaytounians and the Neo-Destourians, nascent since the immediate post-war period, suddenly burst into the light of day in 1950. Without declaring it openly, the Zaytounian students were, to say the least, sceptical about Neo-Destour participation in the government. They were, moreover, suspicious of the Neo-Destour pro-Western strategy, if not ideology.

Despite the promises of the Chenik Government, CVEZ made a point of dissociating itself from the Neo-Destour Party and creating its own journal in Arabic *La voix de l'étudiant*, in September 1950. In response to the government's prevarication, CVEZ called for strikes of classes as a warning, followed by a hunger strike on 17 October 1950. An agreement was reached a week later. However, CVEZ was visibly moving into political opposition and into a position of distrust in regard to the Franco-Tunisian negotiations. On 22 November 1950, the CVEZ weekly published an article by the Neo-Destourian Youssef Rouissi condemning the Neo-Destour policy of compromise towards France. A confrontation took place in January 1951 when CVEZ, exasperated by government evasiveness, organized a demonstration before the Prime Minister's residence and tried to occupy the premises. Members of CVEZ were arrested, and the Neo-Destour Party reacted by creating a rival Zaytounian organization, El Kutla Ezzaytouniyya (the Zaytounian bloc), and initiating a press campaign denigrating CVEZ.

The confrontation took a particularly violent turn on the occasion of the

anniversary of the coronation on 15 May 1951. The Bey, without going so far as openly to support CVEZ, was by no means insensitive to its desire to participate conspicuously in the commemoration of his accession to the throne. Following the confrontations that had been taking place since February 1951 and in the face of Rector Tahar Ben Achour's determined efforts to organize the end-of-year examinations, the government managed to have him replaced by a Vice-Rector, Ali Neïfar. The dismissal of the Chenik Government and its replacement by the Baccouche Government in March 1952 was followed by a severe crackdown on all pupils and students, including the Zaytounian students. The Union Générale des Étudiants de Tunisie (UGET) was formed in Paris at the height of the repression and held its first constitutional congress there a year later.

The Comité de la Voix de l'Étudiant Zaytounien (CVEZ) tried to make itself heard in spite of the repression taking place all over the country. The year 1955 marked its death throes, when, taking advantage of the split within the ranks of the Neo-Destour Party between the advocates of domestic autonomy as a stage on the path to independence and the maximalists led by Salah Ben Youssef, the Comité opted for the latter's views[21] and changed its name to the Voix de l'Étudiant Musulman de Tunisie (VEMT).[22] The course of events resulted in victory for the Neo-Destour Party, which hastened to consolidate what was in its eyes the only truly representative movement, the Union Générale Éstudiantine des Étudiants de Tunisie (UGEET), founded in secret in March 1952.

Thus it can be said that the post-war period saw the radicalization of the Zaytounian protest movement which, in view of the enormous increase in its membership (14,000 in 1950) and the fact that its demands were not met either by the colonial authorities or by the Neo-Destour Party during the transition period from 1950 to 1955, gradually moved towards a suicidal policy of maximalism. Some have gone so far as to speak of a sort of 'traditionalism of despair'[23] in this respect.

History will recall that the creation in 1951 of the modern branch of the Zaytouna, which survived until 1965,[24] the decision of the First Tunisian Republic to unify the educational system, the progressive Arabization of education and administration, and, finally, the creation in 1961 of the Faculty of Theology, were all part of the fierce battle for a cultural identity that was still under threat.

The Union Générale des Étudiants de Tunisie (UGET), 1952–71

As its name suggests (and contrary to the allegations of those who claim that it was created by the Neo-Destourians to thwart CVEZ) the link-up between the student and teacher protest movements, be they Zaytounian or Sadikian, was engineered by the Union Générale des Travailleurs Tunisiens founded by Farhat Hached in 1946.

While UGTT considered it best not to become involved in the confrontation between CVEZ and the Neo-Destour Party, probably because of concern about national cohesion, it would be absurd to play down its role in the genesis of UGET. The National Teaching Federation, an important UGTT affiliate led by the trade unionists Mahmoud Messadi, Abdelaziz Harbi, Sahbi Farhat and other militant teachers, provided, as the founders of UGET themselves have admitted, the greater part of the documentation produced at UGET's first Constitutional Congress.[25] It was only much later that the Neo-Destour Party, now in power, tried with mixed success to win over or even domesticate UGET.

What is more, while the Zaytouna and the Zaytounians constituted a veritable 'sociological ghetto'[26] during the colonial period, it must be admitted that the rest of the Tunisian pupil and student community, because of its assumed or imposed bilingualism, was less inclined to revolt or despair. Nevertheless, it made a significant contribution to the resistance to colonial cultural and political aggression.

In 1952, when mass armed resistance broke out as a result of the note of 15 December 1951 bluntly refusing to consider the nationalist claims put forward by the Chenik Government, a particularly severe wave of repression was launched against the pupil and student movement (Zaytounians and college students). Lucien Paye, then Director of Public Instruction, masterminded the terrible repression during which 1,697 Tunisian pupils from the capital, 1,200 from Sfax and 300 from Sousse were expelled, and hundreds more were given prison sentences.

Habib Bourguiba, the head of the Neo-Destour Party, was imprisoned on 18 January 1952, so that Farhat Hached, Secretary-General of UGTT, was the real co-ordinator of the resistance until his assassination on 5 December by the colonial terrorist organization Main Rouge (Red Hand).

Flowering, 1952–58

The Union Générale des Étudiants de Tunisie (UGET) was founded in Tunis amid uprisings and repression on 16 March 1952. The fire of hope was kindled at the Sfax Lycée and spread quickly. Secret meetings saw the election of delegates and a provisional Executive Bureau, most of whom were swiftly arrested and imprisoned by the colonial authorities. It was therefore decided to hold the First Constitutional Congress in Paris on 10–13 July 1953, attended only by the Tunisians studying in France and a few delegates from Tunis.[27] The Congress, held under the banner of hope, had the following agenda: UGET's Statutes; education in Tunisia (qualified as anti-national); unification of education in Tunisia, and status of Arabic; material conditions of pupils and students; and external relations.

Benefiting from the experience of the Association des Étudiants Musulmans Nord-Africains (AEMNA) in Paris and the 'Comité de la Voix de l'Étudiant

Zaytounien' (CVEZ) in Tunis, the new organization, although it was an underground movement meeting outside its own country, thus prepared the ground for a long struggle. The quality of the documentation, as indicated by the proceedings of the First Congress, and the detailed analyses and firm and lucid positions taken on that occasion, contrast sharply with those of previous congresses of the Tunisian pupil and student movement.

Four recommendations emerged from the Congress: recognition of UGET by the authorities in Tunisia; formulation of a student Charter; creation of a journal; and the hope of seeing Algeria and Morocco endowed with a similar organization.

The Congress received several messages of support, in particular from well-known figures in France (Pierre Mendès-France, Robert Schuman, Alain Savary, R. Verdier, R. Blachère and Albert Camus). A significant fact, which was to recur until the Fifth Congress in 1957, was the election of Zaytounian delegates to the Executive Bureau under the chairmanship of Mustapha Abdesselem.

The Second Congress was held in secret in Tunis on 14 July 1954,[28] as the authorities refused to recognize UGET. The new movement, now 3,000 strong, did not hesitate to go a step further than the First Congress, which had called for total independence, and declared that 'Tunisian youth can only develop normally under a republican regime'.[29] The new President of UGET, Mansour Moalla, a student at the École Nationale d'Administration (ENA) in Paris, was destined to become its founding father. During his mandate, membership doubled to 8,000 pupils and students, regional unions and the Fédération de France were set up, and the movement's claims came to centre on three key items: unification, Tunisification and Arabization of education.

The Third National Congress was held from 26 to 28 July 1955 at the Cité Ez-Zaytouni and elected its Executive Bureau with Abdelmajid Chaker in the chair; at the end of his mandate, he was to be placed at the head of the Neo-Destour Political Bureau. Habib Bourguiba, President of the Neo-Destour Party, who had been appointed as the Bey's Prime Minister on 14 April 1956, closely followed the work of the Fourth Congress, which was held at Bir el Bey from 1 to 4 August 1956, and announced that UGET was to pledge allegiance to the Neo-Destour, the party in power. Thus were sown the seeds of subsequent conflict between UGET and the Neo-Destour Party in the years that followed.

As early as the Fourth Congress, two modifications were made to UGET's Statutes: the post of Chairman was abolished; thenceforth the Secretary-General headed the union; and only students or pupils in the final year of secondary school could become active members of the union.

The Fifth Congress was held from 20 to 24 August 1957 in Tunis in the republican era. It voted and approved the student charter that had been recommended at the First Congress and expressed satisfaction at the fact that there would soon be conferences of the three executives of the Maghreb student unions. On 11 August

1958, on the very eve of the Sixth Congress (12 to 16 August 1958), Mansour Moalla, the founding father, published in *Action* a forceful article on the sixth anniversary of the union entitled 'Memories . . . and regrets . . .' In his view, UGET was in danger of succumbing to careerism and of becoming subject to the authorities in power. After giving a very brief history of UGET, he went on:

> The political ray of sunshine that followed the declaration of 31 July strengthened UGET's modes of action, enabling it to step forward and be officially recognized. But already the orientation was no longer the same . . . UGET went so far as to abandon its first shock troops: the pupils of the lycées and colleges. . . . The university students found themselves alone and turned their attention to grants for restaurants, hotels, etc., things that were excellent in themselves but not primordial. . . . Intrigues also began to make their appearance. UGET had become a convenient springboard for reaching the higher echelons. . . . A lot of time was lost getting rid of this person, putting down that one, elevating another . . . all senseless quarrelling, resentment, animosity. . . . UGET was no longer for trade unionists, but had become the tool of specialized student functionaries. . . . Perhaps those men and women who wanted to do something else with it were mistaken.

Tensions and decline, 1958–71

Thus the founding father of the Union Générale des Étudiants de Tunisie (UGET) diagnosed as early as 1958 the ills that were to afflict it and, with the years, turn it into a 'puppet and subservient' organization. One might say that the rest of the story was merely a matter of twisting and turning.

This point of view, in fact, was to be shared twenty-four years later by an eminent UGET member, Khémaïs Chammari, spearhead of the Tunisian left since the 1960s and present Secretary-General of the Ligue Tunisienne des Droits de l'Homme (LTDH). According to him, the conflict between Progressists and Neo-Destourians erupted at the Sixth Congress in 1958 over the method of electing members of the Administrative Committee and the Executive Bureau: the opposition wanted proportional representation while the Neo-Destourians were in favour of fixed lists.[30]

Faced with the rise of the 'progressist' UGET members and the flow of school-leavers coming to swell the students' ranks each year, the Neo-Destour Party, in power since 1950 and nominated as State Party since the proclamation of the Republic in 1957, took care not to repeat the scenario applied that year to UGTT when it provoked a split between the latter and UTT, created *ex nihilo* for a brief period. Instead, it 'infiltrated' UGET, reputed to be a national organization like UGTT and the Union Nationale des Femmes Tunisiennes (UNFT), by creating rival bodies within the party. In addition to this policy of infiltration, it applied a strategy of repression, starting with permanent changes in UGET's Statutes and resorting to expulsions, trials and condemnations. That is a general picture of the development of UGET. We shall now look at the subsequent evolution of UGET.

February 1961

Prompted by an active minority in Paris, or a tiny group – the term used by the authorities – UGET, in collaboration with FEANF, decided in February 1961 to take to the streets to demonstrate against the assassination of Patrice Lumumba, and thus caused a dispute between FEANF and President Bourguiba, who supported American policy in the Congo. The demonstration was banned and the members of the Executive Bureau and the Administrative Committee were called to order. The Ninth Congress in Carthage in August 1961 voted in favour of an amendment, that: 'The three federal bureaux in Tunisia, Europe and the East are to be closed, the sections henceforth to maintain liaison with the Executive Bureau.' The Neo-Destour Party for its part began a policy of 'infiltration' by setting up the Comité Supérieur de la Jeunesse (CSJ). Mohamed Sayah, retiring Secretary-General of UGET, was appointed head of CSJ, and Director of the Neo-Destour Party some time later. Habib Bourguiba expressed reservations about UGET's union activities when receiving the new Executive Bureau elected at the Tenth Congress.[31]

1963

The activism of the Paris section, the plot against Habib Bourguiba in December 1962, the death of a student that month and the banning of the Tunisian Communist Party led UGET's Executive Bureau to dissolve the Paris section in April 1963 and to suspend publication of its bulletin, a decision that was later ratified by the Eleventh Congress in Kef. This Congress voted a new Charter for the Tunisian Student, in which the collaboration of UGET with the Neo-Destour Party was spelled out. The new Secretary-General, M. Zannad, claimed that 'the old Charter of 1957 was inspired to a large extent by UNEF'.[32]

Certain UGET members of the dissolved section, followed by Tunisian progressivists (communists, Trotskyites, etc.), formed a group in France called Perspectives Tunisiennes or Perspectivistes. The Neo-Destourians, for their part, embarked upon the second infiltration operation, creating in 1964 the Fédération Nationale des Étudiants Destouriens (FNED), which published a bulletin, *L'avant-garde*.

1967–68

The events of 14 December 1966 (the arrest of two students following an argument with a bus conductor), the third war between Israel and the Arab countries on 5 June 1967, and the commemoration on 17 November 1967 of the day of solidarity with the

people of Viet Nam were all occasions for large-scale demonstrations and student strikes. Anglo-Saxon and Zionist imperialism were denounced, and the British and United States embassies and the synagogue in Tunis were sacked. There were large numbers of arrests among the students on 5 June 1967, including that of Mohamed Ben Jennet (a student at the Faculty of Theology), who was later condemned to twenty years' hard labour. The repression of student opposition reached its zenith in summer 1968 with the mass trial of the Perspectivistes.[33]

Outflanked, and temporarily deserted by the left, UGET once more sided with the Parti Socialiste Destourien (PSD), as it had been known since 1964, and voted a third Student Charter at the Fifteenth Congress in Gabes in 1967, where 'it proclaimed its attachment to the "Union Tunisienne de la Jeunesse" ' (UTJ) created by PSD.[34]

1969

The Seventeenth Congress in Mahdia (5 to 10 August 1969) saw the return in force of the progressivists. It elected Aïssa Baccouche as Secretary-General and decided to meet every two years from then on.

UGET's mortal agony, or the unfinished Eighteenth Congress

The failure of the 'collectivist' economic policy that had been implemented since the beginning of the 1960s and confirmed by the Neo-Destour Congress in October 1964 led to the dismissal of Ahmed Ben Salah and the formation of a new government led by Hédi Nouira, a proponent of economic liberalism supported by the Tunisian bourgeoisie and business community. The reorganization of farming and industrial enterprises brought wholesale redundancies. The social disquiet, aggravated by steep rises in the cost of living, led to strikes and demonstrations. University agitation increased and its chosen target was American imperialism (in particular on the occasion of the visit to Tunis of Secretary of State William Rogers in February 1970).

In April 1971, Aïssa Baccouche, Secretary-General of UGET, resigned following a disagreement with the Minister of National Education on the subject of selection: 'Access to the university is a privilege,' said the Minister. 'It is a right,' replied the Secretary-General. Mohamed Sghaïer Daoud was designated by the PSD to fill the post until the next Congress, which was held in Korba, a town of Cap-Bon, from 12 to 20 August 1971. The 'progressivist' current was fairly strong and a majority coalition of its supporters and of 'moderate' Destourians carried the day against a minority of 'orthodox' Destourians. The PSD sent its Director, who managed to impose an Executive Bureau and a Secretary-General. The Congress

ended in confusion and disarray. The holding of an Eighteenth Extraordinary Congress has been the leitmotiv and principal demand of the Tunisian student movement ever since.

The open crisis that has obtained since summer 1971 has led to the appearance of several different currents in the ranks of the opposition.[35] The left, very active until the 1980s, found itself increasingly supplanted by the Mouvement de la Tendance Islamique, which tried in vain, using violence when necessary, to impose a new union, cut off from its roots and from the long history of UGET.[36] The Parti Socialiste Destourien (PSD), for its part, organized the Nineteenth and Twentieth UGET Congresses in 1975 and 1977 before realizing that it bore the responsibility for the demise of the student body.

Conclusion

The Tunisian school and student movement, with a tradition of combat since the beginning of the century, was an essential component in the struggle for national liberation in the colonial era, and has been an important elevatory force, a voice for a new legitimacy, in the name of social categories 'marginalized' by the party in power.

Admittedly, French colonialism did tremendous harm to Tunisian society, while favouring the blossoming of new social forces. The Zaytounians and Sadikians, shaken by upheavals and marginalized, can take the credit for resisting foreign cultural aggression. With independence and the rise of new generations, the struggle continued, although with a new ideology: in refusing to become subservient to the party in power, in trying to impose a new legitimacy in the name of marginalized groups, the student movement helped to call in question the hegemony of the State Party and to fight for the emergence of a pluralist and democratic society in place of a 'rigid' and 'crisis-ridden' one.

Notes

1. André Martel, *Les confins saharo-tripolitains de la Tunisie (1881–1911)*, Paris, PUF, 1965.
2. Mahmoud Abdelmoula, *L'université zaytounienne et la société tunisienne*, pp. 82–6 passim, Tunis, 1971.
3. Ahmed Abdesselem, *Sadiki et les Sadikiens (1875–1975)*, Tunis, Cérès Productions, 1975.
4. Moncef Chenoufi, 'Les deux séjours du Chaykh Mohamed Abdouh en Tunisie', *Cahiers de Tunisie*, Université de Tunis, 16th Year, Nos. 61–4, 1968, pp. 57–96.
5. Later Rector of the Egyptian Al-Azhar University from 1952 until his death.
6. Ali Zidi, [L'historique de l'expérience éducationelle de la branche moderne de la Zitouna: 1951–1965] (Ph.D. thesis), Tunis, 1986, 496 pp. (in Arabic). See in particular pp. 1–164.
7. Charles-André Julien, 'Colons français et jeunes Tunisiens (1882–1912)', *Revue française d'histoire d'Outre-Mer*, Vol. 54, 1967, pp. 146–7.

8. Zidi, op. cit., p. 62.
9. Noureddine Sraïeb, 'Les sadikiens dans le mouvement de libération nationale', *Actes du 1er séminaire sur l'histoire du mouvement national*, pp. 247–66, MESRS and CNUDST, 1983 (Publications Scientifiques Tunisiennes, HMN Series, No. 1).
10. Mokhtar Ayachi, 'Histoire de l'université musulmane de Tunisie: le mouvement zaytounien (1910–1945)', p. 129 passim, Tunis, 1987 (typescript); 'La politique coloniale et la question zaytounienne dans les années 30', *Actes du 3ème séminaire sur l'histoire du mouvement national*, pp. 817–35, MESRS and CNUDST, 1985 (Publications Scientifiques Tunisiennes, HMN Series, No. 3). See also, in the previous work, the excellent study by Hichem Abdessamad, 'La résidence face à la question de la réforme de l'enseignement zaytounien (1930–1933)', ibid., pp. 799–813.
11. Alu Mahjoubi, *Les origines du mouvement national en Tunisie (1904–1934)*, pp. 476–7, 482–3, 545, 612–24, Tunis, Université de Tunis, Faculté des Lettres, 1982.
12. Kmar Ben Dana-Mechri, 'Préliminaires pour une étude de l'AEMNA dans les années 30 à travers les archives du Quai d'Orsay', *Actes du 3ème séminaire* . . . , op. cit., pp. 317–27.
13. See the list of student periodicals on page 156.
14. See the list of student periodicals on page 156. See also Rachid Driss, 'Les mouvements de jeunesse en Tunisie entre les deux guerres', *Actes du 3ème séminaire* . . ., op. cit., pp. 697–712.
15. Habib Belaïd, 'Les mouvements scouts en Tunisie dans les années trente', ibid., p. 719.
16. Driss, op. cit., pp. 701–3.
17. Ayachi, op. cit., p. 127 et seq. Abdelmoula, op. cit., pp. 132–5.
18. Mustapha Kraïem, *La classe tunisienne et la lutte de libération nationale (1939–1952)*, Tunis, 1980. See the excellent Chapter II, 'La contestation zaytounienne', pp. 341–76. See also Zidi, op. cit., pp. 96–9.
19. Kraïem, op. cit., pp. 347–8.
20. See the list of student periodicals on page 156. The President of CVEZ was Mohamed Bédoui and the Director of Publications Adjmi Saïeb. The influential members included Abdelkrim Gamha, Abderrahman Al-Hila, Med. Sghaïer Chabbi, Abdelaziz El-Akremi, Amor Chéchia and Habib Nouira.
21. Salah Ben Youssef, Secretary-General of the Neo-Destour Party, expelled by H. Bourguiba in October 1955, founded the Secretariat-general and seceded. He was assassinated in 1961. He advocated total independence and the union of Tunisia with the progressive Arab states, in particular with Ben Bella (Algeria) and Nasser (Egypt).
22. Zidi, op. cit., pp. 84 and 163.
23. Abdessamad, op. cit., p. 802.
24. Zidi, op. cit., pp. 165–496.
25. See *Actes du 1er Congrès national de l'UGET*, Paris, PPI, n.d., 95 pp.
26. Abdessamad, op. cit., p. 799.
27. Abdelkader Zghal, 'L'UGET, six ans après', *Action*, 11 August 1958, p. 6. There is no complete study of UGET, but we were able to find a DEA dissertation presented by Tahar Chegrouche, 'Le mouvement étudiant tunisien (1961–1981): génèse d'une intelligentsia', supervised by Claude Liauzu, University of Paris VII, 60 pp., bibliog. (typescript deposited at CTDM, Charles de Gaulle Library, Tunis). On the other hand, the Centre de Documentation Nationale (CDN) in Tunis contains some twenty dossiers of press cuttings which are a primary source.
28. Shortly before the speech by Pierre Mendès-France in Carthage on 31 July 1954, in which he announced that France recognized the domestic autonomy of Tunisia.
29. *Actes du 2ème congrès*, Tunis, Centre de Documentation Nationale (CDN), p. 62.
30. See article of 7 September 1984 by Khémaïs Chammari in *Ray* (Opinion), an independent weekly.
31. See *UGET, Congrès 1953–1977*, Vol. 2, p. 247, Tunis, Centre de Documentation Nationale, 1981. Habib Bourguiba addressed the members of the executive bureau as follows: 'I agree that students should give their opinions on politics, on agriculture, etc., but they should not forget for all that that they must pursue their advanced studies. . . . Why has nobody bothered to find out the failure rate in examinations and explore the reasons for it?'

32. Ibid., p. 292 (the Charter).
33. The Parti Socialiste Destourien (PSD) brought out a White Paper (Tunis, 1968, 23 pp.).
34. See *UGET, Congrès 1953–1977,* op. cit., Vol. 3, p. 419.
35. Movement of February 1972: the 'three glorious days' (3 to 5 February) of the Eighteenth Extraordinary Congress on the campus of the University of Tunis. The 1973 Programme was sponsored by the Comité Universitaire Provisoire (CUP).
36. Mohamed El Baki Hermassi, 'La société tunisienne au miroir islamiste', *Maghreb-Machrek,* No. 103, January–March 1984, pp. 39–56.

Appendix: List of periodicals published by Tunisian student organizations

Organization	Title	Periodicity	Date	Issues	Editor	Language
AEMNA	Bulletin	Annual	1927–36	4 bulletins, 5 proceedings	AEMNA Chairman	Arabic
Zaytounian students	*Al-hilal* [The Crescent]	Monthly	1931 1938–39 1945–46	Underground	?	Arabic
Neo-Destourian students	*Tounès el-fatât* [Young Tunisia]	Monthly	1938–39	20	Rachid Driss	Arabic
Zaytounian students	*Sawt at-talib az-zaytouni* [Voice of the Zaytounian Student]	Weekly	1950–51	42	Adjimi Saïeb	Arabic
UGET	*L'étudiant tunisien*	Two-monthly (irreg.)	1952–76	40	UGET Secretary-General	French
Progressivist students	*L'espoir*	Monthly	1953–55	9	Mahmoud Seklani	French
Zaytounian students	*Sada az-zaytouna* [Zaytouna Echo]	Weekly	1954–56	34	Hédi Abdel-Moula	Arabic
UGET	*Al-waay-at-talibi* [Student Awareness]	Monthly	1955–57	4	Md Rached Hamzaoui	Arabic
Communist students	*At-tarik* [The Path]	Monthly	1955	2	?	Arabic
UGET	*At-talib at-tunisi* [Tunisian Student]	Two-monthly	1962–74	14	Secretary-General	Arabic
Neo-Destourian students	*At-talib ad-doustouri* [Neo-Destourian Student]	Two-monthly	1962	4	Hédi Baccouche	Arabic
Neo-Destourian students	*L'avant-garde*	Two-monthly	1963–74	17	FNED or BNED Secretary-General	French
Trotskyite communist students in Paris	*Perspectives tunisiennes*	Monthly	1963–70	17	Underground, in Paris	French

Acronyms AEMNA, Association des Étudiants Musulmans Nord-Africains; UGET, Union Générale des Étudiants de Tunisie; FNED, Fédération Nationale des Étudiants Néo-Destouriens; BNED, Bureau National des Étudiants Néo-Destouriens.

Class struggle or jockeying for position? A review of Ethiopian student movements from 1900 to 1975

B. Kifle Selassie

Since the subject is a topical one that must, by definition, be continually re-examined, it is difficult in 1990, even at fifteen years' remove, to make an objective study of the role of African student movements in the political and social evolution of Africa from 1900 to 1975.

One has only to consider the lively arguments provoked in France by books appearing in the late 1980s about the '1968 generation', not to mention those already published on the university and secondary-school student movements of November–December 1986, to realize that difficulties in analysing student movements are not confined to Africa.

The ways of defining these movements, telling their story and retracing their connecting thread comprise a component of dispute and debate that can hardly be imagined after the event. Here, more than elsewhere, prophesying the past inevitably leads to error. Admittedly this study's historical span of seventy-five years is long enough to avoid being the historian of live events or even claiming to be that of several generations of students in the African continent and its different nations.

As a way of distinguishing the essential from the accessory in analysing these movements, we intend to focus on one aspect of research. In our view, the essential characteristic of all student movements is that they mirror the historical, political, economic and cultural contradictions of the societies and countries in which they appear, in so far as they point up the main problems in a particular place at a particular time.

The subject of this study, the history of Ethiopian student associations in the context of the political and social evolution of Africa, and their relations with other African student movements between 1900 and 1975, is a good illustration of this. Far from being an exhaustive analysis of the subject or claiming to offer the only possible interpretation of the facts, the study aims to explore the positive and negative aspects of these movements, both within the country and abroad, in relation to the period.

No events, including those of 1974 which led up to the fall of the oldest

monarchy in the world, can ever be properly understood unless they are placed in their historical context, going back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The present situation is at least partly due to the successive actions of several generations of small number of students educated in the country and abroad, and not simply the result of an emerging political awareness, whether accelerated or not by so-called Marxist forces or groups.

The student movement during the reign of Menelik II and Iyassou, 1889–1916

The beginnings date back to the time of Menelik II, the Negusse Neguest (King of Kings or Emperor), who followed a bold policy of modernization from 1889 to 1913, as did his contemporary in Japan, Emperor Meiji-Tenno,[1] who reigned from 1868 to 1912 and was regarded as the father of Japanese industrialization and the true creator of modern Japan in politics and other fields.

One may well wonder why the former failed in his attempt at modernization in Africa while the latter succeeded in Asia. The explanation lies largely in the sequence of historical events recounted in this study, and not in any cultural or human factor that might predetermine the failure of any African country to succeed even if it has the will to make a genuine, long-term effort at modernization.

Thus Menelik II encouraged the introduction of Western ideas and techniques, including the construction of the Djibouti–Addis Ababa railway, the creation of a post and telecommunications service, the building of hospitals and a munitions factory, the training of future managers in modern-type schools and the practice of sending students abroad, and the transfer of the capital from Ankober to Addis Ababa, where there was a public water supply, the beginnings of electrification, a telephone network and various other urban infrastructures.

These measures not only led to the installation of permanent foreign embassies, but above all brought the gradual pacification of the principal warlords and their troops, who were scattered to the four corners of the empire. The result was the gradual emergence of a single, more technical and professional army and the slow transformation of the old warlords into absentee landlords of the provincial lands they had previously administered or governed.

Just as important – and uniquely symbolic – was the Emperor's abolition of slavery, which alone would justify the exceptional place that Menelik II holds in the minds and hearts of his most oppressed compatriots, whatever criticism may be levelled at other aspects of his policy.

Though opposition to the penetration of Western techniques under Menelik II and his successors was slight, the penetration of ideas, particularly through schools patterned on the Western model and with imported staff, was fiercely opposed by

Christian and Muslim religious leaders alike. Such an attempt at 'intellectual co-operation' was a threat, in the long term, to the centuries-old educational monopoly that had enabled them to train lay clerks and administrators to defend their specific interests as well as, if not better than, those of the ruling aristocracy.[2]

This traditional education, besides teaching religion and the precepts of Islam in the Koranic schools and those of Christianity in the more numerous schools controlled by the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, instilled three other tenets: respect for land and its owners; the recourse to human or, particularly, divine justice in the event of conflict; and acceptance of the principle of social hierarchy.[3] In short, it was a kind of resignation in the face of a secular and fundamentally conservative moral and social order that threatened Menelik II's modernism which opposed the desire of the servants of Allah and God to achieve spiritual and temporal domination.

The latter, realizing that they could not openly oppose the Emperor – particularly after his victory at Adowa in 1886, which effectively put an end to Italy's colonial aspirations – began an insidious long-term psychological campaign to spread the idea that modern education would lead inevitably to the rejection of traditional religions, i.e. orthodox Christianity and Islam, in favour of Catholicism and Protestantism, which were the creeds of most of the first wave of foreign teachers. The argument and disinformation were all the more effective in that some of those teachers were missionaries.

Menelik II and his successors used the same psychological weapons and a similar kind of persuasion in their counter-attack at the level of society in general. There could be no question of relying solely on a recent independent movement among young students educated in these new schools or abroad. In any case, it would have been dangerous, especially in an African country with several coexisting nationalities and religions, to separate a nation from its youth, particularly from the young people whom adults were sending to 'schools' that they were providing to meet the 'requirements' of society.

Moreover, in Ethiopia as in all African countries, children and young people are an integral part of the community and are not as distinct and specific a category as they often are in the West, with all the tensions and generation crises that such divisions cause. The Emperor, therefore, asked his own family and the families of those closest to him to set an example by sending their children to these schools.

The education of his appointed successor, Iyasu, was thus partly entrusted to a Swiss-German engineer, in addition to the traditional education he received at the court. Menelik II's cousin, Ras Makonnen, chose a French Catholic missionary, Monsignor Jarousseau, to educate his son Tafari, the future Emperor Haile Selassie I (1930–74). Moreover, the aristocrats and the Emperor's warlords sent their children to the Menelik II school in Addis Ababa. The countries to which the first Ethiopian students were sent were chosen as far as possible to allay the criticism of the distrustful religious and nationalistic elements of society.

This explains why one of the first foreign countries selected for the education of Ethiopian students was tsarist Russia, since it was a monarchic and above all orthodox Christian country. Germany, too, which had no colonies close to Ethiopia, was preferred to France with its foothold in the Afars and Issas, whilst the United Kingdom, occupying as it did Sudan, Kenya and Somaliland in a circle around Ethiopia, was as severely excluded as Italy, which had been in Somalia and Eritrea since 1889. Following the same logic, some students went to the United States.

This widespread geographic distribution was not conducive to the birth of a significant unitary movement of Ethiopian students until well after the Second World War. Furthermore, the very diversity of countries that received students meant that no foreign state could have an exclusive influence on their ideology and attitudes to the detriment of their national identity. This fear was not without justification, because the commitment of some of these students when they returned to Ethiopia was sometimes, as we shall see, influenced by the country where they had been educated. It was only natural that the political, social and above all cultural climate in a receiving country should impregnate, consciously or unconsciously, the sensitivity, if not the ideology of young minds.

On the return of the first group of students – some of whom were educated in Russia (including Bejerond Tekle Hawariat, future Minister for Defence from 1929 to 1934), but most in Germany (including Tessema Eshete, Minister of Posts and Telegraphs from 1913 to 1916, and the country's greatest poet to this day) – Ethiopia was in far too disturbed a state to allow the harmonious integration of these new élites into the existing political and administrative structures.

For one thing, Menelik II had been suffering since 1906 from partial paralysis, a condition which became general in 1911 and remained so until his death, which was officially announced in 1913.[4] During the seven long years of his illness from 1906 to 1913, and the three-year reign of his successor Iyasu from 1913 to 1916, a whole succession of plots were fomented at the court by different factions in search of power. On the one hand were those supported by the Orthodox Christian Church leaders and provincial warlords, most of whom were Christian. On the other were those backed by the spiritual leaders of Islam and the heads of provinces, who were mainly Muslim. Both sides were supported by foreign powers with opposing interests.

Two groups emerged at the end of this internal struggle, each with a sizeable army. Most of the Ethiopian students educated abroad rallied to one group or the other, through either conviction or opportunism, on their return to their country. The first group was led by Menelik II's popular war chief, the Fitaourari Habte Guiorguis, Minister of Defence, and its champion was the young Ras Tafari, who later became Crown Prince and prospered under the protection of the daughter of Menelik II, Zauditu, who became Empress in 1916 and reigned until 1930. Externally the clan had the active support of France, the United States, Russia and the United Kingdom, allies in the early days of the First World War, and internally the support of most of the

students educated in those countries, as well as that of the powerful Orthodox Church of Ethiopia.

The second group, led by Negus (King) Mikael, of the highly Islamized province of Wollo, championed the young Emperor Iyasu, who had the support of Empress Tayetu, Menelik II's wife. Externally, the group was supported by Germany and Turkey. Ethiopian students such as Tessema, educated in Germany, joined this group, whose rank and file came mainly from the Muslim population.

The armed clash between the two forces at the battle of Seguele in 1916 put an end to their ten-year confrontation and gave victory to the former.

The Ethiopian student movement from 1916 to 1960

From this point until the eve of the second war between Italy and Ethiopia (1936–41), the new regime, on the initiative of Crown Prince Ras Tafari, continued on the path of reform and modernization initiated by Menelik II and gave it greater impetus, particularly as regards education. New schools were opened (Tafari Makonnen, Medihanialem and the Alliance Française) and larger numbers of students were sent abroad, mainly to France and to a lesser degree to the United Kingdom and the United States, since Russia, after the fall of the Tsar in 1917, had become Bolshevik, and Germany had lost the war.

The twenty years from 1917 to 1936 saw the formation of four Ethiopian student movements, first in France and later in the United Kingdom and the United States, but above all in the country itself. Having learnt the lessons of the failure of direct political collaboration at the highest level of power in the preceding period, the members of these movements channelled their activities first into the areas of culture and mutual aid and then, following the Fascist aggression, towards the united struggle for the liberation of their homeland. To this end they either fought alongside the internal resistance movement or rallied round Emperor Haile Selassie, who was in exile in the United Kingdom. Very few members of this new élite, whether educated at home or abroad, collaborated with Italy, the occupying power from 1936 to 1941.

Thus it was that a vanguard Ethiopian youth movement of a specifically cultural nature was officially tolerated and even encouraged between 1925 and 1935 on the initiative of a former student of the Beaux-Arts in Paris, Aguegnehu Ingueda, and a playwright named Yoftahe Negusse. Highly popular, the movement put on plays and organized exhibitions of paintings and poetry competitions. With the threat of approaching war, a military academy was set up at Holeta in co-operation with Sweden, and young school-leavers from the new modern schools in Addis Ababa were sent to it to enable them to acquire the rudiments of modern warfare, particularly the use of anti-aircraft artillery.

In 1924, to enable Ethiopia to join the League of Nations, slavery was abolished for the second time by an imperial decree designed to meet all the formal conditions for entry required by the League.

Early in 1920, on the initiative of one of their number, Ayele Sebehat, the Ethiopian students in the Paris and French provincial universities and cadets at St Cyr military academy set up the Association Mutualiste des Étudiants Éthiopiens en France (AMEEF), whose title indicates that it was a social support service along the lines of the traditional Ethiopian *idir*[5] rather than a political body. The lack of any political direction among the Ethiopian students in France explains why they contributed nothing to awakening the conscience of the general public there when Mussolini invaded Ethiopia.

Admittedly the communist linguist and Ethiopian sympathizer Marcel Cohen endeavoured to rouse French public opinion through articles in *L'Humanité* and meetings and conferences in different parts of the country. Similarly, the leaders of the SFIO[6] group of socialist students at the Law Faculty in Paris, under Georges Beauchamp and a tiny minority of students including the young François Mitterrand, 'defended Professor Jèze whose lectures were systematically disrupted because he had dared to come out in support of Ethiopia, which had been invaded by Italy'.[7] In other words, the Ethiopian cause did not arouse much sympathy in France, to the great shame of most Ethiopian students in this country between 1920 and 1936, and in spite of the immense goodwill felt for France in Ethiopia since the reign of Menelik II.

Worse still, the second government of Pierre Laval (June 1935 to January 1936), having signed the Treaty of Rome and accepted the agreements reached with Italy at the Stresa Conference, led France first to oppose the League of Nations sanctions against the Italian aggression in Ethiopia and then to approve them by ordering an embargo on the port of Djibouti, thereby effectively preventing the arms bought by Ethiopia from reaching Haile Selassie's troops before the decisive battle against Marshal Badoglio's forces.

In the eyes of the patriots in the resistance and of the Ethiopian students in France, the triumph of the Popular Front did not make up for this disappointment, although it did enable the students to become better organized, with the object either of joining Haile Selassie in the United Kingdom, from where he was leading the external resistance, or of linking up with the resistance movement in the country itself; it also allowed them to make their country's struggle for liberation better known in France.

In the United Kingdom, around the almost mythical personality of the 'King of Kings' in exile, or in other European countries or the United States, Ethiopian students were able to organize the resistance under more favourable conditions. Public opinion and the political class, informed in particular by campaigns of information organized by the family of Mrs Pankhurst, the militant feminist who had gained for women the right to vote in 1918 and had gone on to become a Conservative

member of parliament, espoused and popularized the Ethiopian cause. Young Africans such as Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya also joined the campaign.

Similarly, in the United States, a young Ethiopian doctor, Melaku Beyane, attempted to educate the black communities of the United States and the Caribbean not just about his country's struggle for liberation but also about its history and culture. He was helped in this by the prominent figure of E. W. Du Bois (1868–1963), founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and author of *Souls of Black Folks* and *The World and Africa.* The growth of the Abyssinian Baptist Church of Harlem, New York, also dates from this period, as does the development of an Ethiopian religious and musical mystique in the Caribbean – particularly in Jamaica and Trinidad – known as Rasta (abbreviation of Ras Tafari, Haile Selassie's name prior to his coronation in 1930).

In other words, with the development of the mass media (press and radio), the Ethiopian people's resistance to the Italian occupation had, in the conscience of the peoples of Africa and of the dispersed black populations, become the symbol of their imminent emancipation.

With the quickening pace of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937 and the launching of Mahatma Gandhi's rallying cry of 'Quit India', Ethiopian resistance also became, as Mao Zedong points out, symbol of the struggle of the oppressed peoples of Asia.[8]

With the outbreak of the Second World War, Ethiopia began to enjoy the support of all the peoples and countries fighting against Fascism and Nazism. It was the first nation to be liberated in the conflict in 1941, thanks to the combined efforts of British and Commonwealth troops and also, to a lesser extent, those of General de Gaulle's Free French Forces; yet, more than anything else, it owed its freedom to the internal resistance movement.

The latter paid tribute to the heroism of Zeray Deresse, an Ethiopian of Eritrea who distinguished himself by killing two Italian soldiers with a sword in the centre of Rome to avenge his dishonoured country. Similarly, two patriots from the same region, Abreha Debotch and Mogues Asseguedom, wounded with a grenade Marshal Graziani, commander of the Italian occupation forces, during a march past at Addis Ababa on 19 February 1937. As a reprisal the same day, Fascist troops killed over 30,000 people in the Ethiopian capital alone, most of whom were women, children and old people; the majority were burned alive in their petrol-soaked dwellings. In addition there were more than a million victims in the five years of Italian occupation, including almost all the new élite, out of a total population of less than ten million.

The high price paid by the internal resistance during the many guerrilla operations it carried out in the country gave it, in its own eyes and in those of a large segment of the population, in such times of intolerable humiliation, the right to take, if not all, then at least the chief responsibility for the future of the nation once liberation was won. Forged in the brotherhood of arms, the unity in diversity in its ranks was

even more impressive than that found outside the country. This diversity even included foreign families such as the Papatakis, children of a Greek father and Ethiopian mother,[9] Armenian families like the Boghossians[10] and Russian families such as the Babichevs.[11] Noteworthy too was the presence not only of the great male and female heroes of the resistance, but also of the famous martyr Abuna (Patriarch) Petros.

In 1941, when the balance of power inclined in favour of the internal resistance, only the presence of the British and Commonwealth forces alongside the external resistance, and above all the personality of Haile Selassie, enabled the latter to move from Khartoum to Addis Ababa and reclaim his throne, but not before he had agreed to the principle of the early introduction of a constitutional monarchy, a promise he reneged on when the balance of power was reversed. Incidentally, the immediate problem for all patriotic forces following liberation was the question of how to get rid of the intrusive British ally, who clearly wanted to stay in Ethiopia against the wishes of Haile Selassie and those close to him.

Indeed, the British did establish themselves in place of the Italians in Eritrea from 1941 to 1952, only departing after a referendum organized by the United Nations and having sowed the seeds of a conflict that continues today. Although there had previously been no lasting Italian conquest of the area, the fact that the British placed the region of Ogaden under their direct administration from 1941 to 1954 explains the continuing conflict between Ethiopia and Somaliland.

Between 1941 and 1960, the Ethiopian student movement, both inside and outside the country, was once again caught up by the accelerating pace of historical change, as it had been between 1906 and 1916, a pace that did not allow it any self-criticism of its earlier behaviour or – above all – any analysis, however approximate, of the multitude of political, economic and cultural contradictions in Ethiopia, of its African environment and of the new international balance of power following the Second World War.

Admittedly, this deficiency is largely accounted for by the fact that, in the generation of 1941–60 and earlier generations educated since Menelik II, the various internal conflicts referred to above, coupled with the Italian occupation, had so thinned the ranks of the new élite that it was unable to develop a tradition of political analysis without personalizing problems. It is necessary to explain this approach, if only briefly, in order to trace the connection between the history of the Ethiopian student associations as part of the political and social evolution of Africa and their relations with other African student movements between 1900 and 1975.

In the light of the events outlined above, we might ask what the main contradiction was in Ethiopia's political situation between the beginning of the century and 1960. The two keys to an understanding of the evolution of this situation are the abolition of slavery decided on by Menelik, which was given formal confirmation during the reign of his daughter, Zauditu, and the formation of a class

of wealthy absentee landowners, particularly during the forty-four-year reign of Haile Selassie.

In theory as in practice, the abolition of slavery was an excellent thing. However, the emergence of a class of absentee landlords introduced a comparable type of serfdom that increased as time went by. The abolition of slavery did not of itself confer any right to land in the absence of the necessary finance, and the growth of serfdom, reducing the income of the peasants to the advantage of the landlords, did nothing to improve the lot of the ex-pariahs or of the farmers, and ultimately left everyone dissatisfied.

In the medium term these two measures had negative effects, in that they led to a flight from the land and created an impoverished *lumpenproletariat* seeking work, generally as servants, and schools for their children; meanwhile, particularly after 1941 and liberation, school places were becoming increasingly scarce for townspeople with low and medium incomes. All of this provided ready soil for the cultivation of revolutionary feelings and ideas.

None of the governments that were to follow, up to the official fall of the monarchy in 1975, succeeded in making the necessary changes. None managed to introduce genuine political reform to enable the new élites to perform their role and prevent the poor from feeling effectively shut out from a political and economic system that already had a strong, latifundian-type agricultural sector heavily involved in the cultivation of coffee.

It is true that, in late 1960, there were hopes that absolutism was coming to an end. On 14 December that year, a coup d'état led by General Menguistou Neway, commander of the royal guard, at the instigation of his younger brother, Guermane Neway, a former student of agricultural science in the United States, badly shook the regime.[12] Haile Selassie was deposed for three days while on a trip to Brazil, and only saved his throne with the help of the Americans after several dozen of the most prominent figures in his empire had been executed by the organizers of the putsch.

Following these events, in spite of the honesty, skill and clear thinking of individual ministers in strategic economic and social positions, the regime failed to achieve its basic objectives, including the creation of a class of modern, prosperous farmers that would provide a secure foundation for the monarchy. Development was once again paralysed by the inertia of the various parties involved, so that when a genuine revolution occurred in February 1974, the empire resembled a giant with feet of clay.

No one was satisfied with the established order, not even the privileged class who, with lofty indifference, thought it was in their interest to bring down a government that was somewhat uncouth and replace it with a more aristocratic group; at the same time the people in the street, and in the churches, mosques, trade unions and schools, and above all the army and peasantry, had been seething with discontent for months because of the famine. This resulted – even though there was no

programme or federating agent – in the effective unity of the dominated classes.

In such circumstances the catalytic role of the Ethiopian student movement, both in the country and abroad, was undeniable, particularly in the absence of organized or authorized political parties or groups. The lessons of the events of December 1960 were not lost on the students; on the contrary, this coup d'état put an end to their lethargy of the 1940s and 1950s by giving them an opportunity to join the rural population in demonstrations of support for the putschists in the streets of Addis Ababa behind banners reading: 'The land to those who work it.'

This rallying cry of the student movement rising spontaneously from its ashes grew steadily louder until the fall of Haile Selassie and the adoption of radical land reform in 1975 by the Deurg (Revolutionary Council). Indeed, the force and drive of this movement grew so much between 1960 and 1975 that the authorities were forced to recognize it officially in order to control it. When this failed, they outlawed it completely, because its influence was spreading like wildfire to secondary schools in the provincial towns and country areas.

The Ethiopian student movement from 1960 to 1975

With the assassination of Telahun Guizaw, Chairman of the Students' Union at Haile Selassie University, killed by police bullets during a demonstration in the streets of the capital in December 1969, the movement acquired its own martyr. Before the fall of Haile Selassie, nearly thirty students and schoolchildren in Addis Ababa and provincial towns were to die in similar conditions or in attempts to hijack aircraft.

Shortly after the death of Telahun Guizaw, a group of seven students succeeded in gaining control of an Ethiopian Airlines aircraft and forcing it to land in Khartoum. From there they made their way to Algiers to play a major role, as we shall see below, in the split that occurred after 1970 in the Ethiopian student movement in Europe, the United States and Ethiopia.

The establishment in Addis Ababa of the headquarters of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1964 and of many regional offices of the United Nations system was an important factor in the Ethiopian student movement's ideological awareness. The presence of representatives of several African national liberation movements, and the distribution at the many conferences involving ministers or heads of state of brochures and speeches publicizing their struggle, showed the incoherence and absurdity of a system that censored any work regarded as revolutionary.

In 1968, a senior Algerian official of OAU, invited to debate with a Ghanaian intellectual on the struggle against apartheid before an audience of thousands of students at Addis Ababa University, was carried aloft in triumph because of his forthright manner of speaking. As a result, the Ethiopian Government clumsily – and

in vain – requested that he be recalled. However, his was a political appointment and, not long before, the African heads of state – including Ethiopia – had unanimously reconfirmed the official in his post because of the overall quality of his work.

In the mid-1960s links were first forged between the student movement in Ethiopia and those in various foreign countries. For one thing, a larger number of Ethiopian students of the post-liberation generation had begun to return to their country, and this favoured personal contacts. Furthermore, militant publications in Ethiopian, English or French – *Tatek* ('Be Ready'), *Tiguelachen* ('Our Struggle'), *Challenge* and *Le réveil* – the first two of which were published by the Association of Ethiopian Students in Europe (AESE) and the others by Ethiopian student associations in North America and France, began to circulate clandestinely in student circles in Addis Ababa, Asmara, capital of Eritrea, and even in the new military academy of Harar.

The 1960 coup d'état had the same effect externally on the various Ethiopian student movements. Although the vast majority of Ethiopian students were living in the United States (which had become Ethiopia's principal ally when a major military base was installed in Asmara in 1942), and to a lesser extent in Canada, with significant numbers also in the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union, it was none the less in France, where in 1960 there were only fifty or so students scattered between Aix-en-Provence, Bordeaux, Grenoble, Lyon, Paris, Strasbourg and Toulouse, that the movement was strongest, drawing those in other countries behind it.

There are three reasons for this relative hegemony. First, there was the political situation in France at the time, and the perception that African students there had of major world problems. Secondly, there was the existence there of powerful centralized student associations – the Fédération des Étudiants d'Afrique Noire en France (FEANF), the Union Générale des Étudiants du Maghreb et d'Afrique du Nord and the important Union Nationale des Étudiants de France (UNEF) – and the links being forged by the Association des Étudiants Éthiopiens en France (AEEP) with each of them, and in particular with FEANF. Thirdly, there was the varied educational career of Ethiopian students in France (most came to France after getting their baccalaureate while others had completed their studies at Addis Ababa University as full- or part-time students), as well as their diverse origins (Amhara, Oromo, Eritrea, Gurage, etc.), and their varying experience and age (some had already worked as lawyers or in banks, the police or the army). Lastly, practically all came from the Ethiopian middle class and some from the aristocracy, i.e. most of those who were sent to the United Kingdom, or England to be more precise, whereas only four or five started out with nothing and owed their success entirely to their own efforts.

This diversity of sensitivities, together with the class cohesion, sharpened the debate and enriched militant activities. The Ethiopian students in France witnessed the reverberations there of the war in Algeria, the assassination of Patrice Lumumba, the Bay of Pigs disaster, the Viet Nam War, the start of the Sino-Soviet conflict and

– most important for African students – the process of decolonization of African countries under French rule and the liberation struggles yet to be waged in Portugal's African colonies and in South Africa. So it was perfectly natural that, at the time of the Algerian people's struggle for national liberation, which reminded them of their own country's fight for freedom against Italy, the Ethiopian students in France should become involved in these political contests.

In 1957, moreover, a group of students in France took the initiative of asking Emperor Haile Selassie, then on an official visit to the country, to help them to set up a students' association. He agreed to contribute an annual grant of US$ 5,000, though not without advising them that the association was to be of a cultural character, in the form of the traditional 'palaver', and should therefore refrain from indulging in politics. This advice was heeded, by and large, up to the time of the coup d'état in 1960. Strange as it may seem, the grant continued to come through regularly each year, even after Haile Selassie had become the main target of the association's vitriolic criticism. So it was that the first association of Ethiopian students in Europe after the liberation of 1941 was born. It was therefore only natural that the Ethiopian students in France should assume the leadership of the movement. After 1960, its changing relations with FEANF highlighted the alternating tendencies in the ranks of the Association des Étudiants Éthiopiens en France (AEEF) as part of a dialectic process of maturity-puerility.

According to one tendency in AEEF, FEANF's priority was the political liberation of African countries under French domination, whilst AEEF's struggle, although political, was directed against the regime of Haile Selassie and his American imperialist backers, and not against France. Secondly, in AEEF's struggle, the economics of the feudal system was every bit as important as politics, since this represented the concrete aspect of the regime that it condemned. Lastly, AEEF wished to collaborate not only with FEANF, but also with student movements in African countries formerly under British or Belgian domination, in Arab countries in Africa and even in those African countries still under colonial domination or the yoke of apartheid.

The second line of thinking in AEEF was that the duty of militants was to co-operate with progressive student movements as these had materialized through the process of their own specific struggles, beginning with FEANF, which in France was closest to AEEF in terms of its concerns, goals and situation. For those taking this view, therefore, it was wrong to attach too much importance to a label and to overlook contacts with the other student movements in African countries already or yet to be liberated, and even in other continents. According to this approach, which ultimately came out on top towards the end of the 1960s, the main thing was to be clear about the progressive and militant nature of each movement and not to be deceived by externals, so as to avoid forming a kind of African student OAU that would be unified in name only.

We have outlined the two opposing tendencies in AEEF in its relations with FEANF because they show clearly the excessively ideological and artificial aspects of such contentions. The selfsame dichotomy was also manifest within FEANF, between those who wanted AEEF to pass a test to prove its progressiveness before dealing with it on an equal footing, and those who accepted AEEF as it was, with its good and bad points, in order to work together wherever and whenever possible.

The supporters of the purist line in both camps seemed to forget that if the African peoples had thrilled to the cause of Ethiopian independence in the 1930s, it was not as a result of a process of thought and reasoning but rather in an intuitive, immediate and spontaneous manner. In other words, Africans had recognized Ethiopia as one of their own.

In terms of the historical process taking place in the 1960s, whenever an Ethiopian met another African, he felt subconsciously that the latter's independence would reinforce his own sense of independence. In other words, the Ethiopian recognized every African as one of his own.

But the subtleties of dialectics are such that it was difficult for a militant in any student association to accept any fact or idea without putting it through a sieve of meticulous logic that insisted on an explanation for everything, even the inexplicable. It was this kind of debate between two schools and conceptions within the Ethiopian student movement in Ethiopia, Europe, North America and all over the world that in the early 1970s destroyed the unity that had been built with such difficulty since 1960. What had caused the slow-down, and, later on, this division that led finally to total disappearance?

From the summer of 1958, the US$5,000 grant agreed by Haile Selassie had enabled Ethiopian students, particularly those in Paris and London, to meet once a year during the long holidays. Since travelling and living expenses, or at least a large part of them, were met in this way, this kind of happy-go-lucky get-together provided for exchanges on different cultural and social subjects. Thus the Emperor's advice was followed almost to the letter. One Ethiopian student of the time even described the atmosphere as one of *senebete*, which is another form of traditional Ethiopian palaver accompanied by a large meal and which may be compared – although it is far less serious – to the *idir* of the Association Mutualiste des Étudiants Éthiopiens en France (AMEEF) of the 1920s. The meeting in Paris in summer 1961 was to be the last of its kind.

The reason was that, in the meantime, the coup d'état of December 1960 had galvanized all the Ethiopian students abroad. In France, for the first time, many students made their way to Paris from the provincial university towns where they were studying: Aix-en-Provence, Grenoble, Lyon, Toulouse and so on. The students who came from the United Kingdom included several from towns other than London. Above all, many students came to the meeting from Germany, Greece, Italy, Switzerland and even Israel. A proposal for proper management, financial and

political, of the annual meetings was adopted on that occasion, as were the rules for the Association des Étudiants Éthiopiens en Europe (AEEE). This therefore was the first formal congress of AEEE in its official form.

Thereafter other cities were chosen as annual meeting places, including Berlin, Bologna, Bonn, Leeds, Obernai and Vienna. The resolutions adopted after a week of discussions and cultural activities at the Fifth AEEE Congress in Vienna in 1965 give a clear indication of the new directions being taken and progress made by the Ethiopian student movement in adjusting to changing political circumstances at home and abroad. All this was done while retaining the movement's unity in diversity and without changing its nature, i.e. that of a group of students tackling a variety of political problems with enthusiasm, high-mindedness and vastly different ways of thinking, but without ulterior motives and the calculating approach of political parties.

At Vienna, however, such a result was not a foregone conclusion. Over 300 Ethiopian students from seventeen countries in Europe, including, in addition to those already mentioned, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, the former GDR, Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, USSR and Yugoslavia, congregated there. At one moment, a theoretical debate (swiftly stifled) on 'reformism or revolution' threatened to divert the participants' attention to purely abstract and ideological problems remote from concrete and topical issues. It was concentration on the latter that kept the movement together and strengthened it. The Imperial Government had withdrawn the passports of some Ethiopian students in the United States who were to come to Vienna to represent their movement at the AEEE Congress and to see whether it was possible to form a union of Ethiopian students abroad that could merge with those inside Ethiopia. Furthermore, a few months before, at the beginning of 1965, the Ethiopian ambassador to the United States had tendered his resignation, at the same time denouncing the Haile Selassie regime. Again in 1965, Africa had seen the deposition of Nkrumah, a man who had always held a special place in the hearts of Ethiopians for standing up for them during the war against Italy, and above all for his advocacy of real governmental unity between African states at the founding of the Organization of African Unity in Addis Ababa in 1963.

Elsewhere in Africa, there were the first moves in Ian Smith's rebellion in Rhodesia and the intensification of the armed struggle in the Portuguese colonies by such men as Amilcar Cabral (Cape Verde), Agostino Neto (Angola) and Eduardo Mondlane and Marcellino Dos Santos (Mozambique). The latter had excellent personal relations with the militants of FEANF and AEEE, whom he had got to know as a student in Paris in the early 1960s. He cultivated and extended these relations with the students of Haile Selassie University whenever he came to Addis Ababa for the many OAU meetings at which African liberation movements had continually to plead their case in order to obtain material assistance from the various states.

In Asia the mid-1960s also saw the intensification of the war in Viet Nam and of American intervention there. In Africa and Latin America and throughout the Third

World sector, Che Guevara's concept of 'one, two, three, many Viet Nams' and Regis Debray's 'revolution within the revolution' had become generally accepted articles of faith. Student and progressive movements had adopted them without proper analysis of the many realities and specific features of each country.

In this context, it was not difficult for the Ethiopian participants at the Congress in Vienna and at the annual congresses that followed (Lund, Zagreb, etc.) to adopt resolutions denouncing imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism, reaction and feudalism, world capitalism and its supposed local ally in every country – i.e. the 'bourgeoisie-compradore' – and to support every revolution, the proletariat, the peasantry, etc.

An equally significant feature of the Ethiopian student movement abroad between 1961 and 1971 was its unanimous approach to the thorny problem of nationality, recognizing at the Vienna Congress the principle of the right of peoples to self-determination. Christians, Muslims, Ethiopian Jews and Amhara, Gurage, Oromo, Somali and Tigrean students all campaigned as one in the AEEE. Perhaps it was this cohesion and force of unity of the movement at both religious and ethnic levels that frightened the higher echelons of imperial power into withdrawing students' passports and the annual US$5,000 grant from AEEE following the Vienna Congress.

It is important to note that the Ethiopian student associations, as time went on and whatever country they were in, came to the annual conferences better and better prepared. At Vienna, the students arriving from France with resolutions already drafted, an effective lobbying system and, equally important, saucy songs specially composed for the occasion prompted those in other countries to hold preparatory meetings in order to hammer out their own position on complex matters of nationality, the right of self-determination, the class struggle and so forth.

In 1968, the Eighth Congress of the Association des Étudiants Éthiopiens en Europe (AEEE) in Berlin or, more precisely, the events that followed it in Hamburg put a brake for the first time on this unified advance. There, eighteen relatively seasoned students, mainly from France, the Federal Republic of Germany and the United States, meeting for a full month behind closed doors – unknown to the vast majority of members of the student movements – created MEISON (Ethiopian Pan-Socialist Movement) as the governing nucleus of a future Marxist-Leninist political party that would infiltrate Ethiopia and make itself known as soon as it was strong enough to do so.

Again, unknown to the ordinary members of the student movements, other Ethiopians in Europe and the United States, at the instigation of a group of seven Ethiopian students of Haile Selassie University who were in Algiers in 1970 following the aircraft hijacking, set up the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP), which, claiming to be Marxist-Leninist, broadcast its existence without waiting to establish itself in the country.

This party was actively encouraged by the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), a new dynamic movement (parallel to, rather than hand-in-hand with, the Eritrean Liberation Front), which was also of Marxist-Leninist persuasion and had been set up in 1968–69 by Issayas Afeworki, a former student of Haile Selassie University.

A long and murderous race, unfortunately not yet over, then began between EPRP and MEISON to win back control of the entire student movement, both at home and abroad, and to gain a foothold in the social and political milieux which were important in the battle for power, and which included the army, police, trade unions and administration. There were no depths to which the two sides were not prepared to sink in this fratricidal struggle, including the killing in New York in 1972 of Mesfin Habtu, an Ethiopian student, in circumstances as yet unexplained; each of the two parties claimed that it was the work of the other. Rumour, insinuation, false accusation and attacks on the private life, religion or supposed ethnic origin of people on the other side were all shamelessly resorted to.

In less than a year the unified Ethiopian student movement built up so patiently over a period of ten years had collapsed. As of 1972 the militants in AEEE and the Ethiopian students' associations in the various countries of Western and Eastern Europe and North America no longer regarded one another as students but as members of either MEISON or EPRP, decked out with the ideological trappings of off-the-shelf Marxism-Leninism.

In Ethiopia itself, the long revolutionary process, which lasted from late 1973 to late 1974, swept away one of the oldest empires in the world without spilling a single drop of blood until the deposition of Haile Selassie on 12 September 1974. However, the antagonism between MEISON, which came to terms with the Deurg as of 1975, and EPRP, which refused to do so, ultimately percolated down to all sectors of society: army, school, rural and city life and even villages and families. Between 1975 and 1977, during a period officially described as the 'white terror', innumerable murders were committed in broad daylight, even in the capital. As a reaction, early in 1977, a real pogrom – officially termed the 'red terror' – ravaged the capital and the country: hundreds of schoolchildren and thousands of other people perished. In both cases, those responsible were apparently MEISON or EPRP militants. It was a process in which the political, cultural and social life of Ethiopia followed the path to hell. From such a cruel conclusion, it would be wrong not to draw a number of lessons that may be applied today for the benefit of all.

Conclusion

Disguised in the ideological trappings of the 'class struggle' at the national and international levels, there is often a bitter 'struggle for position' to control political and economic power and to satisfy personal ambition. Although many students were sincere in their approval, it is clear that many others were not.

There is also a striking time-lag between the complex historical, political, sociological and economic realities of a country and the theoretical and oversimplified, albeit generous, approach to problems proposed by the student associations. Thus the Ethiopian student movements disregarded cultural factors as important as religion (Christian, Muslim, Jewish or animist).

Finally, one cannot help wondering whether student movements in general, and African ones in particular, are properly equipped to answer as precisely and categorically as they do the many questions that the populations from which they originate are asking themselves in an increasingly interdependent world. It is vital that student movements understand that, if they are to deserve the trust of the people, they must begin by discerning and pinpointing the real problems faced by their respective countries.

Notes

1. *Meiji-Tenno* ('enlightened government' in Japanese). Name given posthumously to the hundred-and-twenty-second Emperor of Japan, Mutso-Hito (born in Kyoto in 1852, died in Tokyo in 1912), who reigned from 1868 to 1912. He succeeded his father, Komei, transferred his capital to Edo, which he renamed Tokyo, abolished the shogunate, reformed the feudal institutions and adopted a modern constitution in 1899. By opening the country to Western science and technology, he favoured industrialization, which enabled him to win two wars in succession, one against China (1894–95) and the other against Russia (1904–5). His name was given to the period of his reign from 1868 to 1912. His son Taisho-Tenno succeeded him in 1912 and reigned until 1926. From 1921 onwards, he in turn involved his son Hiro-Hito (Emperor of Japan from 1926 to 1989) in the exercise of power by appointing him regent and ushering in the Showa ('shining harmony') period which, according to the Japanese, is still going on. It is possible therefore to see where the differences lie compared with Ethiopia. Emperor Menelik II, the 222nd 'descendant of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba', only came to the throne in 1889, twenty-one years later than the Meiji Emperor, and really held power only until about 1906, i.e. for a total of seventeen years compared with forty-four for the Japanese sovereign. Whereas Japan has had only three emperors (including Hiro-Hito) since 1868, succeeding one another peacefully on the throne, in Ethiopia, between the death of Tewodros (Theodore) II in 1868 and the abolition of the monarchy in 1975, seven emperors had ascended the throne, following an armed struggle in each case. Above all, whereas the Japanese monarchy accepted a modern parliamentary-type Constitution as early as 1889, the successive emperors of Ethiopia never displayed the political acumen to do so, thereby hastening their own downfall and, what is more, preventing the country from becoming really modernized.
2. See 'Autopsie de l'Empire éthiopien', in M. Duverger (ed.), *Le concept d'empire*, pp. 461–81, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France (PUF), 1980.
3. See 'African Youth and its Cultural Values (the Case of Ethiopia)', in *Young People and African*

Cultural Values, pp. 81–101, Paris, UNESCO, 1975 (Document of the Regional Conference of Abomey, Dahomey, 2–7 December 1974).

4. The precise date of Menelik II's death is one of Ethiopia's most closely guarded state secrets. There is a persistent rumour from several credible sources that his place was taken by a 'double' some months before his death was announced.
5. See Beseat Kifle, 'Some Socio-political Aspects of the Palaver in Ethiopia', *Cultures* (Paris), Vol. 4, No. 3, 1977, pp. 43–55.
6. Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière.
7. Thierry Pfister, *Les socialistes*, p. 89, Paris, Albin Michel, 1977.
8. Mao Tse-tung (now Mao Zedong), *On the Protracted War*, Beijing, Foreign Languages Press, 1954. The entire argument of the book is built around the Ethiopian internal resistance movement. According to Mao, if it continued to wage guerrilla warfare as vigorously as it had done at the outset – following the country's defeat in the decisive strategic battle against Italy – it would emerge victorious when the world situation changed. China too would emerge victorious against Japan through guerilla warfare. These prophesies were fulfilled – in 1941 in the case of Ethiopia and 1945 in the case of China.
9. The best-known member of the Papatakis family abroad is the film-maker Nico Papatakis. *Le Monde* of 15 May 1987 noted: 'He was born in Addis Ababa in 1918 of a Greek father and an Ethiopian mother.' When his latest film, *La photo,* was shown at the Cannes Film Festival, *Le Matin* of 14 May 1987 noted that 'he was a volunteer in the war between Italy and Ethiopia'.
10. There has been a large Armenian community in Ethiopia since the racial bloodbath of 1915. The Boghossians are one of the Armenian families most fully integrated into Ethiopia's cultural life and power structure. Its most internationally celebrated member, especially in the United States and Europe, is the painter Skunder Boghossian.
11. The Babichevs, Tatichevs, Leontievs and other Russian families in Ethiopia are 'White' Russians who, after the 1917 Revolution, came to settle in an Orthodox country where there was a 'poor man's monarch', reminding them of the Tsar whom they had just lost to Lenin.
12. Richard Greenfield, *Ethiopia, A Political History*, London, Pall Mall, 1965. This is the best account to date of the coup d'état of December 1960.

The Malagasy student movement from 1900 to 1975

F. Ramiandrasoa

The history of the Malagasy student movement from 1900 to 1975 may be divided into three parts, differing in importance as regards their time-span, the number of students involved and the manner in which they were organized and operated. This is only natural since, in this seventy-five-year period, the world of students, like the people from which they were drawn and the world at large, underwent far-reaching changes and had to contend with different problems. However, even more than changes in the environment – to which the students contributed – the geographical setting in which the student movement evolved contributed in large part to the specific character of each sequence of this long history.

The history of the Malagasy student movement falls naturally into distinct periods marked by the dates of major events that took place on the island: 1913–47, 1947–60 and 1960–75.

First period, 1913–47

A Malagasy student movement involved in the struggle for emancipation and national independence came into being in 1913 at the instigation of the nationalist leaders. A secret nationalist movement grew up in Antananarivo, bringing together a number of intellectuals, ministers of religion, employees of trading firms and other companies and, above all, schoolchildren and students attending the Antananarivo Medical School.

The aim of the underground movement was to develop the Malagasy personality and move towards national progress and independence. In 1914, with the outbreak of the First World War, the movement known as Vy Vato Sakelika (VVS) (Iron, Stone, Ramification), first formed in Antananarivo, grew and spread to other provinces of the island such as Fianarantsoa. Some of the movement's members considered that the time had come to take action and bring the French presence to an end, since it was quite clear that progress was being thwarted by colonialism.

The colonial administration, which had been keeping a close watch on the

activities of VVS, made the first move, however, and in 1915 uncovered a 'plot', arrested some members of VVS and dissolved the movement. The plotters were put on trial: some were sentenced to death or life imprisonment, while others were given terms ranging from five to twenty years. Among those sentenced to death in 1916 was Joseph Ravoahangy Andrianavalona, a young medical student; his fellow student Robin was condemned to hard labour for life. The death sentences were not carried out, but were commuted to life imprisonment.

Two years after the war, in 1920, a general amnesty was declared for those convicted in connection with the VVS case. The Antananarivo Medical School, which upheld its tradition as a champion of progress and emancipation, was now under political surveillance and any would-be attempts at organization were skilfully discouraged. Thus, it was virtually impossible to preach patriotism openly, although scope was found for this outside the school. Once freed, Joseph Ravoahangy Andrianavalona completed his studies and returned to politics and the struggle, only to be condemned to death a second time in 1947 following the Malagasy uprising.

This date marks the close of the first period of the Malagasy student movement, which took place entirely on the island between 1913 and 1947. It also marks the start of a new episode in the life of the movement, one which took place in France. After 1934, Malagasy students evolved in quite different conditions to those existing at home. The first Malagasy students, generally from affluent families, became aware through their expatriate status and through mingling with other colonial students that they were Malagasy nationals first and foremost.

In 1934 there were some thirty Malagasy students in Bordeaux, Montpellier and Paris, and these came together to form the Association des Étudiants d'Origine Malgache (AEOM). Its aim was to project the Malagasy personality and emancipate the Malagasy people through culture and science. AEOM, long associated with national and international affairs, commemorated its fiftieth anniversary in 1984. There were two outstanding periods in its history: 1934–45 and 1945–47.

1934–45

AEOM, founded in France, wanted to extend its activities to Madagascar by creating sections at the Antananarivo Medical School and among the pupils at the lycée and in secondary schools. It looked forward to playing an active role in cultural and intellectual organization in Madagascar by awarding annual prizes and even an annual scholarship for deserving young persons.[1] This plan was never realized, however. As soon as it was formed, AEOM was taken over by the colonial administration, which, having learnt its lesson from the precedent set by the Antananarivo Medical School, was determined to keep it under strict control while subsidizing it. As a result of pressures, threats and administrative and financial manœuvres, the Association was forced to confine its activities entirely to France.

Although founded in 1934, the Association's review *Antso* did not appear until 1938 because of lack of funds. Few copies circulated in Madagascar and hence it had little impact on the country's student body; in fact the second number did not appear, as most of the editorial team had completed their studies and returned to Madagascar. The outbreak of the Second World War put a damper on AEOM's activities.

1945–47

After the war the people of Madagascar hoped to achieve national independence at long last. They trusted in the United Nations Charter adopted in San Francisco and expected tribute to be paid for the blood that had been shed. The first legislative elections, in which three Malagasy parliamentarians were returned to the French National Assembly, gave a voice to the national liberation movement.

The terms of reference of the three elected representatives – assisted by students and former members of AEOM – were quite clear: they were to press for independence through abrogation of the Law of Annexation of 6 August 1896. The departure of Malagasy students for France picked up again slowly after 1945, while other conscripts or volunteers who had served in the French army stayed on to pursue their studies. The two lycées ('Antananarivo' and 'Madagascar') catered solely for the children of Europeans, and only a few Malagasy nationals were permitted to enter. Furthermore, in spite of the endeavours of former AEOM members who had founded private denominational or non-denominational schools or colleges in Madagascar, the right to sit the baccalaureate examination was quite arbitrary. Thus many families, well-to-do or not, made enormous sacrifices to send their children to secondary school in France. This development was to peak at the end of the 1950s and in the early 1960s.

Then in 1947 there was an insurrection in Madagascar. The demand for independence was lost in a welter of fire and blood and 90,000 people lost their lives. The ensuing summary trials of the insurgents meted out sentences of death, hard labour for life and lengthy prison sentences. The pacification and cleaning-up operations conducted by the army continued until 1950. In some regions the martial law decreed on 30 March 1947 remained in force until 1956. The Malagasy press was gagged by censorship, police raids, intimidation, and so forth.

For young Malagasies who had to remain silent for fear of their lives or who engaged in clandestine operations, leaving Madagascar meant escaping from a world of oppression and internment. Those who arrived in France after the 1947 uprising joined the ranks of AEOM. Henceforward, they became the spokesmen of the Malagasy people, publicizing the problems of Madagascar, pressing for a review of the Antananarivo trial, denouncing the appalling conditions in which political prisoners were detained, calling for their release and demanding democracy and freedom – in short, giving a new impetus to the struggle for national independence from their base in France. It is certain that the grim events of 1947 heavily influenced

the orientation of the student movement up to the time of the proclamation of independence of Madagascar in 1960.

Second period, 1947–60

The AEOM functioned like a genuine political organization. Owing to the situation in Madagascar, where all forms of freedom of association and information were suppressed, it felt that its duty lay in reporting the situation in Madagascar to the outside world, particularly since it had managed to obtain the documentation it needed through various channels. It changed its structure – establishing a Central Bureau in Paris and sections in the provinces, with an Executive Board convened once a year, except when Congress met – and so increased its moral authority among Malagasy students as a whole. Faced with an increasing number of students arriving in France without the baccalaureate, AEOM set about finding them places as boarders in lycées and secondary schools; it succeeded in having Malagasy adopted as a modern foreign language in the baccalaureate examination; it also obtained – as a member of the International Union of Students (IUS), whose headquarters were in Prague – scholarships for a number of Malagasy students living in France so that they could study in the Eastern-bloc countries.

The campaign conducted in France to publicize events in Madagascar elicited a sympathetic response in French intellectual and university circles, members of which participated in the demonstrations of 21 February 1948, 'International Day for the Struggle against Colonialism'. On 29 March of that year a day of commemoration for the uprising in Madagascar was organized in Paris and the provinces by AEOM. Other colonial students' organizations in France, such as the Fédération des Étudiants d'Afrique Noire en France (FEANF), the Union Générale des Étudiants Musulmans Algériens (UGEMA), the Union Générale des Étudiants de Tunisie (UGET), the Vietnamese students and the Union Nationale des Étudiants de France (UNEF), with which AEOM had established very firm ties, also demonstrated their active solidarity with AEOM and the Malagasy people.

As a member of IUS since 1950, and subsequently as part of this major international organization's Executive Committee, AEOM participated in all the international events organized by IUS in different parts of the world. It was present too at all the meetings at which approval and support for resolutions and motions concerning the struggle of the Malagasy people could possibly be of use. It also publicized Madagascar by means of historical and political documents and through the island's art, culture, dancing and music. It kept the Malagasy people regularly informed of its activities and aligned its positions and action with those of the patriots at home in Madagascar.

Neither the muzzling of the nationalist press and the intimidation of patriots

in Madagascar itself, nor the pressures placed on Malagasy students and the AEOM leaders in France,were able to halt the forward march of history. May 1954 saw the Vietnamese victory at Dien Bien Phu, while the armed struggle of the Algerian people began in November of that year. In 1956 the French Government was compelled to propose an Outline Law (*loi-cadre*) in a bid to stem the rising tide of African nationalism. AEOM took issue with the Outline Law, claiming that it was a masquerade of colonial power, and stepped up its informational activities at international level.

In Madagascar itself, the colonial authorities were forced to back-pedal: political parties made their appearance, some owing allegiance to the government or set up by the Church, but most reflecting popular nationalist feeling. On the international scene, the most important event was the Bandung Conference (April 1955),[2] followed by the Bandung Student Conference, which cost AEOM an enormous financial effort in order to send two of its representatives. Its presence at different international conferences – Bandung was only one of several – enabled the Central Bureau to mobilize Malagasy students at general assemblies or meetings in Paris and the provinces.

In Madagascar former AEOM members and leaders campaigned to unite all the political parties. Fourteen parties attended the Tamatave Conference, which led to the formation of the Parti du Congrès de l'Indépendance (AKFM)[3] from ten of the parties present. Four parties, including the Parti Social Démocrate (PSD), did not join. The Chairman of AKFM was a former Chairman of AEOM's Central Bureau.

In France the number of Malagasy students was constantly on the rise. In spite of intimidation, especially of scholarship students, AEOM grew in strength and the number of sections increased. Executive Committee meetings, congresses and texts of resolutions were regarded as important political matters; the motions and resolutions of AEOM congresses were awaited impatiently before being discussed and widely circulated among Malagasy students and student movements in France and other countries, and above all in Madagascar.[4] AEOM strengthened its collaboration with other colonial student associations in France, notably the Union Générale des Étudiants Musulmans Algériens (UGEMA) and the Fédération des Étudiants d'Afrique Noire en France (FEANF), which grouped the national associations of the different countries of French-speaking Black Africa. Close relations were established with the aim of adopting joint positions and taking joint action, both in France and elsewhere. The trend taken by the war in Algeria gave rise to a serious crisis in French society, and this had repercussions in the ranks of the Union Nationale des Étudiants de France (UNEF), which, although traditionally progressive in outlook, was forced to take a different stand on colonial issues. This deprived the colonial students of some of the facilities and amenities they needed for organizing meetings and other anticolonialist events on French territory. In France the Fourth Republic was toppled and General de Gaulle, who had been returned to power, organized a referendum in

September 1958. Although AKFM in Madagascar campaigned in favour of a 'No' vote, the 'Yesses' carried the day. AEOM denounced the concept of the Francophone Community as a disguised colonialist stratagem and called on the whole population to continue the struggle for independence. The government of the time was besieged with petitions and protests, and eventually had to yield to the forces of democracy: in June 1960 it negotiated independence in addition to a series of co-operation agreements.

Independence ushered in a new era during which the student movement was able to develop its activities at the recently opened Antananarivo University.

Third period, 1960–75

At its Tenth Congress in 1961, AEOM denounced the co-operation agreements as draining independence of all substance. The number of Malagasy students in France continued to grow with the arrival of a 'trainee' category in different sectors. These were to found the government-backed Union des Étudiants et Stagiaires Malgaches (UESM). Newcomers to France gave AEOM a wide berth, regarding it as a party of extremists.

In 1960 a university was opened in Antananarivo called the Fondation Nationale de l'Enseignement Supérieur – Université Charles de Gaulle. To all intents and purposes it was a French university, since it was not attached to any Malagasy ministry. Its students were generally supporters of the 'administration government'. FEANF too went through a crisis following the accession to independence of various African states. The Algerian war went on and on and France had to negotiate the Evian Agreements. The Government of Madagascar failed in its efforts to take over AEOM through some of its sections. Attempts to merge the Association des Étudiants d'Origine Malgache (AEOM) and the Union des Étudiants et Stagiaires Malgaches (UESM) through a 'liaison committee' proved unsuccessful for political reasons. The International Union of Students (IUS) and the platforms it provided were widely used for the purpose of denouncing the new type of community proposed by France.

In Madagascar, the administrative government, closely aided by the French, was unable to solve the serious economic and social problems confronting the fast-evolving Malagasy society. The opposition parties were reduced to silence by all sorts of administrative measures, censorship and even open provocation: elections were rigged and the opposition was forced to engage in virtually clandestine activities.

The former Antananarivo Medical School continued to train so-called medical assistance practitioners whose professional status was far inferior to that of qualified doctors returning from Europe. In 1971 disturbances broke out in the south of Madagascar under the direction and control of the opposition party, the Mouvement National pour l'Indépendance de Madagascar (MONIMA). The corps of medical

students called for their status and curriculum to be reviewed, but the authorities turned a deaf ear to their demands and the 'revolt' was put down. They then went on strike early in 1972. Charles de Gaulle University, founded in 1960, had some 4,000 students in 1972, grouped in associations at faculty level and participating in a joint organization, the Fédération des Associations d'Étudiants de Madagascar (FAEM). The latter took up cudgels in defence of the medical students and launched a sympathy strike. The secondary schools in Antananarivo were invited to participate and a total strike of schools and university was decided on in May 1972. The authorities endeavoured to contain the situation by organizing explanatory meetings, but this only made the students' demands more strident. Quite apart from the protests emanating from the secondary schools and the university, the government's entire policy was thenceforth in dispute. Repressive measures were taken against the strikers, and students were arrested or even banished from the country. Street demonstrations grew and were joined by the trade unions; rioting broke out and the police killed demonstrators. The population took to the streets of the capital to demand that the government resign. It did so on 15 May 1972, thereby bringing to an end the first Malagasy Republic.

In France, the AEOM leadership, largely influenced by the MONIMA party, greeted the victory of the people and planned to respond to the events taking place in Madagascar by occupying the Malagasy embassy in Paris.[5] Small groups of Malagasy students, led by AEOM and brandishing banners, were received by the ambassador in the embassy courtyard, and the latter, surrounded by his staff, informed those present that the army had protected and saved the Malagasy people during the uprising. AEOM probably realized at that point that a period during which it had played a leading role in events was drawing to a close. The latest developments showed that, from now on, a national student movement would have to be based in Madagascar itself. It should not be forgotten, however, that AEOM had been the organization representing not only Malagasy students in France but also the problems and concerns of the Malagasy people as a whole, and that it was their spokesmen at a time when they could not make their voices heard.

AEOM, too, had always jealously defended its independent line of thinking and action and had never given its allegiance to any local Malagasy or French party. Likewise, it had never attempted to impose its presence in Madagascar or to play a permanent role, in spite of the fact that its name may have been used by some of its former members as a political springboard or that it may at times have served as a catalyst for the creation of a nationwide rally (the Tamatave Conference). Doubtless it was its independence that enabled it to survive and celebrate its fiftieth anniversary in France in 1984.

The events of 1972 had far-reaching implications in that the destiny of the country was decided in Madagascar and nowhere else. In the Malagasy student movement, in particular, the Malagasy students in Madagascar, and not those of

AEOM, henceforth became the standard-bearers of the country's university movement. Through their union, FAEM, and working in close collaboration with the teachers' unions in higher education (SECES) and secondary education (SEMPA), Malagasy students participated in meetings and seminars all over the country. They were quick to learn and soon showed their ability to act on a nationwide scale.

In conclusion, we may say that as a minority among the 'cultivated' sections of the population, the students and their movement represented, at a certain point in history, the active element in the national liberation movement in Madagascar. The movement managed to tap the deep-rooted aspirations of the people, channelling them in the form of demands and transforming them into militant action, thereby winning the support of the population over the years.

Notes

1. See the review *Antso* (Paris), No. 1, January 1938. Launched as a quarterly, only one number appeared owing to the war.
2. The important Bandung Conference, which was attended by heads of state and representatives of the as yet colonized populations, was followed in Bandung by a conference of student organizations from those countries.
3. Antokon'ny Kongresin'ny Fahaleovantenan'i Madagasikara.
4. AEOM organized a 'Malagasy night' in each section at least once a year and a 'camp' at the end of each Congress.
5. One of the members of the embassy staff was Didier Ratsiraka, who was military attaché at the time.

Part V

A view of the black student press

The black student press in France from 1943 to 1960

N. Bancel and J. Devisse

The earliest examples of the black student press date back to 1943. Appearing monthly from then until 1949, *L'étudiant de la France d'outre-mer* took its cue from the Ministry of Colonies.

This monthly reflects certain concerns of the Negro movements between the two wars, in particular the cultural uprooting of black students, their hybrid personality and social malaise. Black intellectuals of the 1919–39 period had already experienced, described and analysed these phenomena, African students being even more acutely affected by them than others. Despite a profound malaise, however, the tendency to recommend assimilation prevailed over the rare critical questioning.

The few timid and isolated allusions to the cultural roots of African students that are found in *L'étudiant de la France d'outre-mer* do not constitute recognition of their own cultures. They are confined to the general principle: 'Remain ourselves while being absorbed into French culture.' A timid recognition of African identity did exist, however, as evidenced by sporadic articles on the history of the African empires (Gao, Manding) which were soon to serve as basic referents in the awakening of the black students. For recognition of one's own history may be regarded as an essential basis for awareness of one's culture, or for any national protest movement.

At a time when so many events were taking place (1943–44), one would expect political problems to be tackled, but they are seldom mentioned, and even then with extreme caution: they take the form of isolated allusions in articles not directly concerned with them. Such observations express full approval of French colonial policy. We are indeed far from any protest concerning the very legitimacy of the colonial empire. In the very first issue the tone is set by Gramont Tirolien: 'No one could seriously imagine France without a colonial empire.'[1]

It is all the more surprising, therefore, to find adumbrated problems that were to affect the following period. The first of these was the dispute between the members of the Conseil National des Étudiants Coloniaux (CNEC) and the representatives of the Union Nationale des Étudiants de France (UNEF).

CNEC was disbanded in 1941 – apparently in an authoritarian manner – by UNEF, which regarded it as a mere offshoot of itself. The colonial students, who regarded this measure as an attack on the autonomy of their organization, protested strongly in *L'étudiant de la France d'outre-mer*. They refused to join UNEF, which tended to consider them as nationals of 'greater France' and sought to assert its authority over the colonial student organizations.

In the face of this takeover by UNEF, some colonial students advocated organizing students' associations in the hostels of the Ministry of Colonies. In fact several were set up on the occasion of the Congress of Colonial Students in Aix-en-Provence in June 1943. The Aix-en-Provence, Lyon, Marseilles and Montpellier hostels were officially opened that year. Thus an embryonic form of a national organization of colonial students was approved at that time.

Delegates to the Congress were aware of the pressure brought to bear by the all-powerful Ministry of Colonies, which could have curtailed the independence of these associations. The colonial students knew perfectly well that an attempt was being made to take them over by forces that had a stake in them as future colonial administrators. There was no murmur of protest at the Aix-en-Provence Congress, but *L'étudiant de la France d'outre-mer* at the time reported the 'mixed feelings' of the colonial students' representatives. There was still a long way to go before the post-1956 student unionism, but there was already a vague desire for autonomy. Thus the project to establish an organ of the associations, *La chronique des foyers*, prefigures the appearance of another periodical, *L'étudiant noir de Côte d'Ivoire*, proving that *L'étudiant de la France d'outre-mer* was not a mere historical curiosity unconnected with the subsequent period.

From 1945 to 1949 there is a lapse of five years without a black student press, no doubt owing to the fact that there were so few African students in France at the time.

1949–54

Étudiants anticolonialistes was a monthly purporting to express the views of colonial students of all origins. In point of fact only two students from Black Africa contributed to it, Mamadou Dia and Malick Sangaret. At first glance this militant periodical, which was openly communist (it was directed by Jacques Vergès until June 1950), could be regarded as the first nationalist newspaper of the black student press, unlike *L'étudiant de la France d'outre-mer*. Despite the violence of its language and the virulence of the repeated exposure of the ill-doings of colonialism, however, it merely voiced a type of nationalism following the line taken by the Communist Party at the time. It is yet another example of the black students' powerlessness to express themselves in anything but a newspaper dealing with the colonies as a whole – *L'étudiant de la France d'outre-mer* being controlled by the Ministry of the Colonies,

and *Étudiants anticolonialistes* being of communist allegiance. In a word, the black student press in France had not yet achieved autonomy.

In 1949 the world had spent two years in a cold war, with the world divided into two political blocs; the strategy of tension applied by the two powers, and the politics of ideological combat were closely reflected in the French Communist Party line, which was bent on applying in France the combative policies laid down by the Kominform.[2] These thrusts appeared in *Étudiants anticolonialistes*. French colonial policy receded into the background behind the power allegedly in charge – the United States of America – and the problems of Black Africa were assessed in terms of 'American imperialist degeneracy':

> It takes a war to engage the six million unemployed who are a nightmare to the White House, to eliminate all the junk from American production, to contain the fast approaching crisis. . . . The hasty reconversion of war factories to peacetime use, competition from British capitalism and, to a lesser extent, Canadian and South American capitalism, the total failure of the Marshall Plan, the closing of a number of commercial outlets, such as China or Hungary and Czechoslovakia, and above all the essential inability of capitalism to produce and distribute in an orderly fashion, in short, all the internal contradictions of American capitalism, are causing its crisis and collapse as fast as it develops.[3]

The hyperbolic style typical of propagandist publications began to call Europe seriously into question, education being the first catalyst for the purpose. It received scant attention in the monthly, thereby showing once again that black students' polemical aspirations could not hope to find proper expression in an organ such as *Étudiants anticolonialistes*. This subject, which lay at the centre of the students' concerns, would be taken up again vigorously later on.

In December 1949 Mamadou Dia, in an article entitled 'Une université à Dakar?', laid the first stone of the students' claims regarding education: 'The governments have created local universities with the most basic of curricula, staff with few qualifications and scanty equipment in order to maintain the people in ignorance.'[4]

In No. 6 of *Étudiants anticolonialistes* (June 1950), A. Nicolas denounces the 'cultural destruction of Africa,[5] and ignorance of its history. This was yet another step forward on the road to African nationalism, which seemed to entail the systematic indictment of the mother country.

This reference to the loss of Africa's historical and cultural personality is reminiscent of the negritude movement. In fact, it was something quite different. It involved uttering a cry, which had to be uttered, but no more than that. The author of the article had not reached the stage of reflecting on African identity; his was a visceral reaction against any compromise with Europe.

This brutal rejection is found again in No. 8 of *Étudiants anticolonialistes* (November 1950) in extracts from Aimé Césaire's well-known 'Discours sur le

colonialisme': 'Europe is indefensible. . . . Colonialism is Nazism. An absolved Nazism perpetrated on non-Europeans. . . . Capitalist society is incapable of establishing a law of nations. . . .'[6]

Aimé Césaire also denounces the cultural destruction of Africa, disrupted societies and economic exploitation. Yet the students writing in *Étudiants anticolonialistes* give the impression that they had not yet made an equally well-constructed analysis, especially since the move towards nationalism was not a mere copy of negritude: they were seeking a form of expression peculiar to themselves, which had yet to be created.

'La voix de l'Afrique noire' and Cheikh Anta Diop

Cheikh Anta Diop is an historic figure in the black student movement and even beyond Africa. He was political editor of *La voix de l'Afrique noire* until 1954. He profoundly influenced the monthly publication of the Association des Étudiants du Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (AERDA) and laid down the guidelines for the first three issues. *La voix de l'Afrique noire* was an unusual and original phenomenon appearing in the world of the black student press in 1952. It was the first paper to be produced and managed by black students. It was also a major political milestone, for Cheikh Anta Diop's theses were to run, however subtly, through the black nationalist papers that followed *La voix de l'Afrique noire*.

In the first issue of *La voix de l'Afrique noire*, Cheikh Anta Diop set forth in a lengthy article the cultural and political structure that the paper intended to represent. He began by explaining the 'changeable nature' of the personality of Africans:

> An African's personality is no longer attached to a historical and cultural past recognized by a national conscience. . . . Blacks are unaware of the fact that their ancestors, who adapted to the material conditions of the Nile Valley, are the earliest guides of mankind on the road to civilization, that they are the ones who created the arts, religion (monotheism, in particular), literature, the first philosophical systems, writing, the exact sciences (physics, mathematics, mechanics, astronomy, the calendar, etc.), medicine, architecture, agriculture, etc., at a time when the rest of the world (Asia, Europe: Greece, Rome . . .) was plunged in barbarism.[7]

This theory staggered the black student body. What Cheikh Anta Diop had set out to do was to recover the history and culture of the black world by means of a 'Negro Egypt that had civilized the world'. The radical nature of his assertions attests to the presence of a latent need as yet almost unexpressed in the black student movement.

Cheikh Anta Diop's theory, indicating as it does a triumphant 'Africanocentrism' placing Black Africa, by way of Egypt, at the origin of all civilization, is quite different from negritude, whose fatalism it condemned: 'That is, that they [the

Negroes] have no culture comparable with that of Europe, that they are endowed with "sensibility" and not with "reason", that they are made to follow and not to guide, and so to obey and not to organize or take responsibility'.[8]

The theories of Cheikh Anta Diop represent an important stage in the awakening of the black students, and in the assertion of African identity and of its roots.

Cheikh Anta Diop's contention that the black continent had a history and that it was peopled from the Nile Valley enabled him to demolish the theory that Africa had no history. 'We are sure of the end result, however, for we are sure of having succeeded in exposing the most monstrous falsification in the history of mankind, the most shameless lie that modern historians – and Egyptologists, in particular – have sought to concoct in line with the requirements of imperialism.'[9]

History was therefore at the centre of the 'awakening of the national struggle'. Awareness of a history of Africa, even magnified in this way, is no doubt fundamental to self-recognition. The student papers, moreover, were to apply themselves to restoring the dignity of the past civilizations of Africa.

The first issue of *La voix de l'Afrique noire* may be regarded as a thrust at the prejudices of a timid leaning towards assimilation that was still alive in the black student movement at the time: 'By becoming aware of the fact that it was their ancestors who civilized and colonized the world up till the end of the Aegean epoch (twelfth century B.C.), Africans shall regain their self-confidence and acquire legitimate self-esteem (different from self-importance), which is incompatible with the idea of a foreign yoke of whatsoever form.' Independence was conditioned by the materialization of pan-Africanism. Cheikh Anta Diop made it clear that 'it is important to lay down as a principle the idea of a federation of African democratic States'.

He also made it clear that 'If the struggle is to achieve maximum effect, we must achieve co-ordination Africa-wide, despite local difficulties deliberately placed in our way.... For another thing, an independent Black Africa would not be economically and politically stable unless it extended from the Sahara to the Cape.' A prerequisite for the feasibility of African independence, therefore, is the conquest of the unity of the African continent or, more precisely, the reconquest of the unity of the African people. In Cheikh Anta Diop's view, ethnic divisions, which according to the West are a feature of Africa, were to be refuted as a product of colonization: 'By proving beyond doubt that the Wolof, Sara, Sarakole, Toucouleur and Peul are related, I hereby denounce as absurd any ethnic prejudice among thinking members of these different groups.' Independence presupposes too the unity of Africa's social forces: 'Social barriers must be abolished by hastening the disappearance of castes and merging all social classes through the deliberate efforts of the urban populations, so as to take account of the needs of industrialization.'[10]

This is the only example in the student press of thinking on the economic

aspects of post-independence. Cheikh Anta Diop's editorial above all was a nationalist 'manifesto'. The fact should be stressed, especially as very many nationalist students at the time were devoted to Marxism. This text indicates that several policy lines were to be developed for the black student press. Cheikh Anta Diop's federalist pan-Africanism, with its socialist leanings, ties up with the one to be found here and there in the black student press after 1956, which is a clear indication of the significant influence of the African leader on the black student movement.

From March 1954 onwards, with Bruno Claver as political director and Brahim Ouattara as editor-in-chief, *La voix de l'Afrique noire* followed a new line. The monthly publication of the Association des Étudiants du Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (AERDA) abandoned certain theories advanced by Cheikh Anta Diop in the first three issues and adopted positions closer to those of the communists. The tone is particularly critical, sometimes violent, but the originality inspired by Cheikh Anta Diop is partly lost.

The condemnation of the 'tactical withdrawal' of the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (RDA) is evidence of the scission between the student branch of the RDA in France (AERDA) and the new policy of the RDA, whose deputies broke with the communist group in the French National Assembly in 1950. The editorial of the third issue (April 1954) in this new series of *La voix de l'Afrique noire* made this scission definitive by directing its attacks at F. Houphouët-Boigny in particular: 'Then again, what regional chauvinism! As regards economic development, "Côte d'Ivoire . . . must be the pilot territory".'[11]

This new line, which was far from the very audacious and seemingly prophetic views of Cheikh Anta Diop, pushed the Ivorian student movement, and with it many others, into a struggle with the political leaders who were gradually to take charge of the transition to independence. More than one struggle of this kind later led to the rallying of certain individuals, or to querulous opposition, or even to would-be socialist coups d'état. Today it may fairly safely be considered that the way opened by Cheikh Anta Diop was in the mean term more effective and held more promise for the future.

By challenging Eurafrican projects and advocating the constitution of a common anti-imperialist front made up of colonial countries and communist bloc nations, *La voix de l'Afrique noire* was undoubtedly espousing the communist positions. One may wonder whether this was a purposeful political alignment or rather a measure dictated by circumstances. Whatever the answer, the periodical's new line during the cold war relegated questions of cultural identity to the background, so that its coverage of cultural matters was somewhat impoverished in 1953–54.

Even so, the initial direction taken by *La voix de l'Afrique noire* laid the foundations for genuine black nationalism.

1954–56: Ripening of nationalism

'L'étudiant de Côte d'Ivoire'

L'étudiant de Côte d'Ivoire, a two-monthly which appeared from 1954 to 1956, was the very last mouthpiece of the policy of assimilation in the black student press. The 1954–55 issues report a dispute between the Fédération des Étudiants Africains en France (FEANF), founded in 1950, and the Association des Étudiants de Côte d'Ivoire (AECI), founded the same year. The dispute arose from a disagreement concerning the organization of African student associations: FEANF considered that the black students should be grouped by regional education authority whereas AECI felt this should be by territory.

The two rival student organizations and their press organs disagreed, not only in respect of the structuring of African student groups in France, but also in regard to political choices in the short or long term. For instance, the acceptance by the Association des Étudiants de Côte d'Ivoire (AECI) of the frontiers drawn by the colonizers was in contradiction to the pan-Africanism adopted by FEANF as a matter of principle at its first congress.[12]

It is extremely interesting to observe these two conflicting tendencies in *L'étudiant de Côte d'Ivoire*, considering that the ascendancy of the one over the other in the future was to have major political consequences. The black student newspapers were faced with a choice: either to encourage micro-nationalism in view of the size of many states, or to adopt a broader pan-African outlook in an association that would not take account of the territorial origin of its members. The 'Ivorian national choice' was adumbrated at this time: 'If it [Côte d'Ivoire] was not so misguided, and if, out of a contribution of seven thousand million to the general budget, it received a mere four thousand million for its own budget in 1954, it would have more secondary schools, more grant-holders living in better conditions, and more administrators in a fairly short lapse of time.'

The concordance of these assertions with the positions taken up by the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (RDA) of Côte d'Ivoire and the statements made by Félix Houphouët-Boigny in 1955 is striking.[13] As early as 1955 *L'étudiant de Côte d'Ivoire* drew attention to the underlying contradictions opposing the choice of politicians in Côte d'Ivoire and Gabon, for instance, and the more comprehensive solutions preferred by those who were impressed by the arguments of K. Nkrumah. However, at a time when FEANF was manifesting its desire for hegemony over the other associations, *L'étudiant de Côte d'Ivoire* appeared to be obliged to display its African sentiments. One of the paper's rare feature articles, 'Les hommes ne survivent que grâce à la solidarité', sums up its positions and contradictions very well. In contrast to its official positions, *L'étudiant de Côte d'Ivoire* again and again developed the concept of African solidarity: 'Our compatriots were brothers for us . . . , in

a deep sense, because besides our skin we have a common past, present and future, similar attitudes and aspirations.... Because for us, communion with our group meant real communion with the magnificent and faraway entity known as Africa.'[14] The article condemns the regionalism of the African students, 'frequently outright contempt when they [African students] have not had the good taste to have been born in the same part of the world as us and speak other languages.... Yes, we definitely have become regionalist.'

This stand was condemned by most of the 'political', 'regionalist' and 'assimilationist' articles appearing in *L'étudiant de Côte d'Ivoire* at a time when such ideas had little audience.

AECI's financial needs, as described in issue No. 7 (March–April 1955) of *L'étudiant de Côte d'Ivoire*, probably explain nothing. The paper would appear to have displayed an attachment to assimilation at the time, which may have appeared anachronistic to many readers then as it does now. It may have been a reaction against FEANF's political options. Faced with the rise within FEANF of black nationalism impregnated with Marxist dialectics – and the AECI was known to be in conflict with it – *L'étudiant de Côte d'Ivoire* seems to have taken up the defence of black values, which, in its opinion, were crushed by the 'social nihilism and Marxist-oriented nationalism of FEANF', which represented another form of cultural alienation. On one point, however, *L'étudiant de Côte d'Ivoire* sharply attacked French policy. An unsigned article stated: 'No concrete decision has yet been taken to give satisfaction to Africans graduating from university or a *grande école* in the mother country.... Are Africans only fit to be contractual magistrates?'[15] The article cautiously advances one of the main accusations to be levelled subsequently by student unions, i.e. that the education given to colonials was not only quantitatively substandard but was also aimed chiefly at training subordinate officials.

AECI, however, seems to have been traversed by contradictory currents which found expression in the organ of the association. Yet again an unsigned article appeared to prescribe in the pages of *L'étudiant de Côte d'Ivoire* an attempt to urge Ivorian students, however unwilling they were, in a direction which may have had less appeal for them than that indicated by FEANF. A year was to elapse between the appearance of No. 8 (May–June 1955) and No. 10 (June–July 1956) – No. 9 may not have appeared – and many things happened during that time.

First of all, the newspaper had a new editor and, in an even more radical change, the Association des Étudiants de la Côte d'Ivoire en France (AECIF), being the new name of AECI since 1955, joined FEANF: 'At a time when all Black African youth in France is united and strong within a large federation (FEANF), the unification of our student youth cannot fail to appear as a necessary and timely thing.'[16] The attitude of the former AECI leadership was sharply challenged and it was accused of 'collaboration' with the government and of thus having jeopardized the unity of the association. No. 10 of *L'étudiant de Côte d'Ivoire*, the last number to

appear under this title (thereafter it was called *Kô-Moë*), indicates the sudden hardening of the newspaper's line.

The break in 1956, therefore, was of tremendous account for *L'étudiant de Côte d'Ivoire*. While the last assimilationist student newspaper lost some of its originality in the process, this reversal shows that its ambiguous or over-refined position was doomed in the militant atmosphere then prevailing in black student circles.

'Tam-Tam': an original tone

Tam-Tam, the African Catholic students' journal, is a case apart in the black student press in France. It appeared from 1952 to 1960 (and after) and lent a voice to such well-known names as Joseph Ki-Zerbo and Alioune Diop. Between 1952 and 1955, *Tam-Tam* somewhat resembled *L'étudiant de Côte d'Ivoire*. A large part of it was devoted to the problems of African students in France – situation of grants, accommodation problems and university restaurants. In this respect *Tam-Tam* conformed to the tradition of *L'étudiant de la France d'outre-mer* in that it expressed its views between 1952 and 1955 with moderation. Its originality lay in its Christian postulates. In 1956, although still using moderate language, its attitude was quite clear: 'We hope that they (the French Catholics) realize that while many French people find that the economic and social conditions of their own country pose serious obstacles to a wholly Christian life, the colonial system is proving in reality to be a far greater obstacle to the proper establishment and development of an authentic Christianity.'[17]

Unlike that of the rest of the black student press, *Tam-Tam*'s nationalism was inspired by Christianity and excluded communist concepts from its way of thinking. *Tam-Tam* repeatedly stressed its difference from the African students 'sapped' by communist doctrine. Even if *Tam-Tam* foresaw that Africa in the future would be collectivist, it rejected out of hand the socialist systems of the Eastern countries which 'raised up production as an absolute to the detriment of the human person as a whole'.[18] Although demonstrating an interest in the People's Republic of China – which was a model for certain Third World nationalisms after Bandung – *Tam-Tam* in fact was seeking a Christian 'third way' for Africa, which was organizing itself with difficulty between 1956 and 1960.

Tam-Tam's cultural project – reasserting the African arts and Africa's role in the history of mankind – was also very important.

1954–56

Two new publications appeared, *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire* (the first three issues), official organ of the Fédération des Étudiants Africains en France (FEANF), and

Kaso, 'Le journal du jeune Cameroun'. Between 1954 and 1956 the journalistic output of FEANF was rather disappointing, doubtless in view of the fact that in 1954 it did not occupy the dominant position it was to hold after 1956. Its newspaper at the time clearly alluded to its difficulties on several occasions. These were dealt with to some extent in the paper's columns. One instance of these was the need to create a 'student unionism to reflect the concerns of African workers in town and country'.[19] It should be close to the masses: 'Contact should be made and maintained between the African peasants, workers and craftsmen and ourselves. . . .' For the first time a Black African student organization operating in France proclaimed that it was not only 'corporatist', but also dedicated to awakening popular political conscience in Africa.

L'étudiant d'Afrique noire laid the basis of a theoretical itinerary:[20] strikes were admissible in difficult cases; freedom and democratization were unobtainable without the prerequisite of political independence. The newspaper emphasized economic exploitation, the falsification of history and the annihilation of local cultures and languages. The situation in Viet Nam and apartheid in South Africa were denounced while Indonesian independence provided a reference. *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire* went no further than that. It did not develop these themes in depth and maintained a certain reserve as regards the Moscow Student Council. These new tendencies of *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire* were due to the relations existing between FEANF and the International Union of Students (IUS). Thus Babacar Ba's admiration for IUS was considerable:[21] the excellent organization of the Istanbul Conference in 1954 and the anti-colonialist statements of the communist organization impressed him greatly.

L'étudiant d'Afrique noire reported the conflict between the Union Nationale des Étudiants de France (UNEF) and the Association Générale des Étudiants de Dakar (AGED). According to the FEANF organ, UNEF did not wish to recognize AGED as an independent body and even attempted to affiliate it. The conflict was an opportunity for *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire* to proclaim its solidarity with AGED.

L'étudiant d'Afrique noire also reported a conflict between FEANF and UNEF.[22] In 1954 France still had not succeeded in affiliating the other black student associations.[23] FEANF's structure was still very splintered. It had tried to have its representativeness recognized by attending the IUS Congress in Istanbul as an observer, and its desire to join this organization was very clearly expressed in the first issue of *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire.* Finally, overtures were made to AGED, the African organization most open to FEANF's influence.

Kaso, which appeared from 1954 to 1956, had more to offer than *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire*. Continuing the quest initiated in Cheikh Anta Diop's *La voix de l'Afrique noire*, *Kaso* set out to reaffirm cultural identity.

Rejection of the colonial conception of black cultures was an essential prerequisite for self-recognition and a fundamental affirmation of cultural existence. Black students were perfect potential victims of acculturation. They wanted 'to turn

us into frock-coated apes, and our first task is to break free of this constraint',[24] explained Jean Nguenga. The second step was to reject European culture. François Sengat Kuo, at the end of 1955, wrote:

> The humanism which the West makes so much of . . . proves in practice to be a restricted humanism, a humanism incapable of going beyond its own frontiers and which, all things considered, is sordidly racist. . . . Europe – why not admit it – has created a gulf between itself and the rest of the world. One day or another it will fling itself into that gulf and justice will be done. . . . For how can we accord our trust and friendship to a Europe which regards us as mere objects or instruments? . . . Which means to base its freedom and prosperity on our material and moral ruin?[25]

Rejection of European culture had never been so strongly expressed in the black student press.

This review held that recognition of the Negro contribution should stem directly from the African continent as a whole, and not merely Africa via Egypt as called for in *La voix de l'Afrique noire*: 'According to G. Dika Akwa's theory, the first black men emigrated over the whole of the globe. One branch was trapped in the ice fields of Asia (at the time of the last glaciation). In order to survive in his icy hell, this encircled man, this black man, constantly fighting tough natural conditions went through a change. Thus he became a warrior, ever on the defensive and ready to attack. . . .' There follows a description of the 'depigmentation' of this black man, who ends up as a white man. 'In the course of his wanderings (which led "depigmented" man from Asia to Europe), his individualism and egoism thrived on a stubborn soil forcing every man to live for himself and subsist by the sweat of his brow, while his love of adventure, the art of warfare affecting his whole being, his sexual complex which occurs throughout European literature, and his intense materialism, could only increase.'[26]

Contrary to Europe, Africa, guardian of the heritage of mankind, was also, according to Michel Doo Kingue, guardian of the earliest scientific spirit.[27] Lastly, *Kaso* builds its conception of nationalism around a few fundamental concepts of contemporary Marxism – for instance, the idea that the African continent should first and foremost develop its industry in order to ensure its economic independence.[28] At the same time *Kaso* advanced the theme of the mission devolving on students: 'The main role of salvaging belongs unquestionably to our doctors and to the whole African élite aware of its duties.'[29] This image of the self, which made the black students ideal judges, is doubtless not unrelated to the radicalization of theories in the black student press between 1956 and 1960. The Indo-China War and the Dien Bien Phu defeat (7 May 1954) were occasions of new awareness in the ranks of the black student movement. Indo-Chinese communism came out of the frontal, military conflict with increased stature and as the liberator of a people. The events in Morocco (the deposition of the Sultan in 1953 followed by a wave of terrorism), the outbreak of the

Algerian War in November 1954 and the granting of complete autonomy to Tunisia in July 1955 partly explain the political radicalization that can be discerned in *Kaso*. Finally, the Bandung Conference (18–24 April 1955), which gave concrete form to this 'front of the oppressed', helped to trigger off the emergence of a Third World reality as reported in an article in *Kaso*.

1956–60: Unification

The year 1956 stands out in the history of the black student press, for it was then that the black student union movement was unified around the Fédération des Étudiants d'Afrique Noire (FEANF). In 1956, at its Sixth Congress, FEANF obtained the affiliation of the student organizations of Côte d'Ivoire, Niger, Senegal, Sudan and Togo. That year also saw a political watershed in that assimilationism was definitively ruled out and replaced by a virulent and militant nationalism, which quickly spread to all the periodicals. The central idea was that the decolonization of Africa would come hard on the heels of that of Asia.

A mission

The acceleration of history and the changing of attitudes in the mother country went hand in glove with a toughening of the nationalist spirit in the black student press. African students felt that history had entrusted them with a mission: 'Our newspaper is contributing in a small way to the awakening of Black Africa. . . . We wish to put an end to a regime of exploitation condemned by common sense and by history.'[30]

Kaso and *La voix de l'Afrique noire* were committed to the nationalist cause. It was logical enough, therefore, that between 1956 and 1960, a turning-point in the history of decolonization, the tone grew sharper and militantism was stepped up. In contrast to the slow development of political awareness among the great majority of the populations of Black Africa in 1956 (despite the success of the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain), students had an important role to play. Possessed of culture and the necessary political awareness to liberate Black Africa, they regarded themselves as an avant-garde. Political radicalization between 1956 and 1960 hastened the movement and brought the hour of independence ever nearer.

Closer to the revolutionary socialists of the tsarist period than to Lenin's Bolsheviks, African students continually reaffirmed their commitment to 'go to the people' and so prepare them for revolution and independence, the two being interdependent. This was reiterated in different forms by writers up to 1960 and even much later. As early as 1956 one could read: 'It has become commonplace to say that students should play a decisive role in the awakening of African consciousness even if they are misunderstood at present.'[31] 'We have therefore opted for a "university in

the service of the country" with all the hazards and commitment that this involves, for our very condition obliges us to merge the defence of our interests with that of the interests of all.'[32]

Algeria sets an example

The Algerian War was constantly referred to in the black student press between 1956 and 1960. The struggle of the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) was championed and the image of France somewhat tainted. The shock produced in the mother country by disclosures of acts of torture by the French army in Algeria helped to expose France's duplicity to African students: on the one hand, a so-called universal humanism, and on the other, economic interests, exploitation and torture.

The Algerian War opened the columns of the black student press to the theories of the Muslim students which showed up contradictions between its progressive and secular approach and the proposals put forward by the Union Générale des Étudiants Musulmans d'Algérie (UGEMA). This indicates that the FEANF organ had the will to be in the forefront of the anti-colonialist struggle, even if it meant assuming, on the one hand, the profound ideological differences being voiced in the ranks of the anti-colonial student movements at the time and, on the other, agreeing to be closely associated with the anti-colonialist struggles of students from other parts of the world who were present in France and with whom the black students had had little contact up to that time.

The Outline Law[33]

The Deferre Outline Law (*loi-cadre*) adopted by the French Parliament on 23 June 1956 did not come into force until March 1957; this was the event relating to Black Africa in 1956 and 1957 that absorbed most of the attention of the black student press. Was it a positive step for Black Africa or not?

Some articles began by approving, if not the law itself, then at least the intentions of its authors.[34] Yet this first impression was quickly effaced and criticism of the Outline Law abounded at the outset concerning the powers that in actual fact devolved upon the territorial assemblies.[35] The role of the governor or the integrity of future representatives elected to the territorial assemblies was challenged. The same criticism had been levelled at the time of the reforms of 16 April 1955, involving Togo, the provisions of which were now being extended to French Equatorial Africa (AEF), French West Africa (AOF) and Madagascar.

The Deferre Law was accused in particular of seeking to 'balkanize Black Africa': 'In view of the fact that this policy of balkanization of Black Africa is leading to the isolation of Africans by territory, and even inside territories.'[36] Already in 1957, one could read: 'What does the Outline Law bring? I am tempted to answer: absolutely

nothing, if not an attempt to disunite Africa.... To divide the country into mini-republics so as to prevent Black Africa from becoming a political, economic and administrative entity, one and indivisible, at a time when every effort is being made to unite Europe....'[37]

In France the Outline Law was welcomed by the socialists and the anti-colonialists as an undeniable step forward. The preamble to the Bill shows in what frame of mind the ministers responsible[38] had drawn it up: 'We must not allow ourselves to be overtaken and dominated by events and yield to demands made violently. We must take appropriate measures at the proper time to avoid serious conflicts.' Anticipating events and avoiding conflict were the main concerns of left-wing opinion in France at the time: above all to avoid any possible Indo-Chinese or Algerian-type conflict by means of a timely reformist policy.[39] This proved precisely to be the sore point. The object of the reforms was to avert a violent liberation struggle in Black Africa. This was already threatening in Togo and Cameroon and had broken out in Madagascar with terrible violence and repression. Two approaches to the future of independent Black Africa, each with a number of versions, were to confront one another at once and for a long time to come. The examples of Indo-China and Algeria and the movements of armed revolt which were in preparation were to lead the most hotheaded and romantic of the Africans – including most of the students – to refuse an independence that was 'bestowed' and to dream of a war of liberation from which the future would arise. The other approach, in the name of reason, bloodshed spared and the historical links between metropolitan France and Africa, favoured negotiation. The first of these two approaches dreamed of African unity regained, reconciling all the tendencies of a single African civilization, rich from its glorious past: the African fatherland would be rebuilt as the territories were freed from the grip of the various colonial powers by an immense popular uprising. This approach gave rise to the use of increasingly stereotyped and violent language in which the accusation of balkanization replaced the noble concept of a potential political unity of decolonized Africa. The second approach might well lead to scattered negotiations in which the interests of the territories might clash and the only realistic course would be to take home the winnings ahead of the others.

The two approaches were singularly opposed on the question of the economic future of independent Africa: one was represented by the proposals made by the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (RDA) in 1945 (Bamako) and 1949 (Abidjan), showing the mid- and long-term economic limits of the immediate political exploitation of areas of contestation that attached scant importance to the long term and to heavy industrialization and concerted pan-African-type amenities, and giving preference to an initially modest but immediate improvement in the living conditions of all African peasants, whose economic role was regarded as decisive.[40] The other approach, on the other hand, without any real power and showing little inclination to acquire it by the electoral means made available by the Deferre reform, tried to implant

the idea that there can be no development without planning based on a revolutionary principle, no just planning that is not socialist, and no efficient planning that is not industrial. This type of approach, based on planning and Marxism, development and heavy industry, is part of a pattern that is violently opposed to the approach proposed by 'timid reformers', who are accused of collaborating with the colonizer. The confrontation between the two camps took the form of verbal violence and lasting opposition into the 1960s and in some cases up to the 1980s. The verbal violence of the students lost them a good deal of sympathy, as they were often accused of being, whether wittingly or not, agents of 'international communism'. Caught in the straitjacket of an opposition which condemned out of hand the 'neo-colonialist France of balkanization', its 'African accomplices', 'sham independences', 'sham states' and 'sham nations', the students took refuge in the reassuring unanimity of verbal condemnation and had no thought for the future.

The Outline Law came too late for them, it had to be fought as an insidious attempt to prevent Africans from conquering their independence: 'The master cannot collaborate with his slave.... An all-powerful administration (even under the terms of the Outline Law) stifles any hint of resistance.... All the peoples of the world are clamouring for their share of liberty, I repeat, liberty, and not LIBERALISM.'[41] The texts published from that time onwards were on the whole in line with the resolutions of FEANF congresses and were quite uncompromising, e.g.: 'Independence must be conquered, not by an aggregate of illusory reforms but by a revolutionary struggle of the African masses'.[42]

The students' only reliable allies in this struggle for freedom were the African countries already in revolt and those that concerted their action at the Bandung Conference: 'Acclaim the Afro-Asian Conference at Bandung and that of the independent countries of Africa in Accra which have solemnly declared the unanimous will of the peoples of Africa and Asia to wipe out the colonial system.'[43]

The mission which the most violent of the student journalists then set themselves was to prepare the liberation fronts of the African countries without heeding what was no more than a rearguard action on the part of French imperialism, secretly supported by American imperialism: 'Attacked at its age-old roots by the birth and development of the socialist camp, as well as by the irresistible thrust of the peoples fighting for their total and unconditional national liberation, decadent imperialism has not disarmed nevertheless and is trying desperately to consolidate its weakened positions';[44] 'Draws the attention of the African peoples to the fact that confronted with the irrepressible development of the liberation struggle backed by aid compatible with national sovereignty from the socialist countries, the imperialist powers at bay are gathering behind American imperialism which has shown itself to the African peoples as the leader of the "international reaction", that is, "the world's greatest exploiter", the "bitter enemy of the peoples of the whole world" and the "keeper of world order".'[45] This theme of the solidarity of the imperialist powers,

inevitable counterpart of the solidarity of the socialist countries among themselves and with the Third World and which grew out of Bandung, was to meet with lasting success.

From this time onwards there were regular appeals for solidarity among the struggling peoples and calls to organize a common front. Any positive achievements in Black Africa were hailed. 'After making a critical analysis of the political situation in Africa, the Eighth Congress notes with satisfaction the progress made in the anti-colonialist struggle (Algeria, Kamerun, Togo) and for the awakening of the African masses.'[46] 'Acclaims the struggle of the peoples who are waging an implacable war in Algeria, Kamerun, Uganda, Nyasaland, Ruanda-Burundi, Belgian-controlled Congo and Rhodesia against the forces of domination and exploitation.'[47] 'In Algeria, Kamerun and Congo the masses are being subjected to savage repression and are facing an unjust war of concerted aggression being waged against Africa by the imperialist powers, grouped and supported by the United Nations in their pay, and backed by the anti-African governments of the so-called "French-speaking" countries which are devoted to them.'[48]

Less known throughout the world than the Algerian War, but nevertheless followed very closely, the war waged by the Union des Populations du Cameroun (UPC) in Cameroon was also acclaimed: 'Acclaim today the heroic struggle of the people and patriots of Kamerun and undertake to do everything possible so that they will receive effective support at both African and international levels.'[49] Those who were tempted to follow the same course were encouraged: 'Considering that the struggle of the Togolese people for their independence comes within the scope of the liberation of Black Africa, follow with extreme vigilance the development of the Togolese issue.'[50] 'Urges the Mauritanian people to continue their struggle with a view to real independence and African unity; demands the breaking off of Franco-Mauritanian political, economic, military and cultural relations under the colonial domination of French imperialism.'[51] In 1961 the joint FEANF–UGEAO declaration further increased the pressure: 'More than ever conscious of their specific responsibilities, they (FEANF and UGEAO) undertake to step up their efforts to raise the political consciousness of the African masses and to struggle by their side for the total liberation of the peoples of Africa.' This involves 'rallying an anti-colonialist front grouping trade unions, youth movements, mass organizations and democratic party to the banner-cry of "Independence now".'[52]

The moral authority that the student press attributed to itself as the messianic bearer of the hope of liberation of Africa found it distributing honourable mentions and reprimands: 'Acclaims the success of the Guinean venture which has widely contributed and will further contribute to the hastening of the process of liberation of the peoples of Africa.'[53] 'Considering that the just way has been opened to the countries of Africa under foreign rule by the union effected between Guinea and Ghana to constitute the United States of Africa.'[54]

From this time onwards the main obstacle – more so than France, regarded as already out of the fight – was the 'treason' of the African politicians who did not take the students' demands seriously. Before 1960, and above all after that date, warnings rained down: 'Again draws the attention of African parliamentarians to the fact that their silence on such a distressing problem brings dishonour on Black Africa; notes that this silence cannot but be interpreted as manifest complicity with French colonialism.'[55] The older generation in particular was regarded as being incapable of understanding the new historical circumstances: 'Some of them had the courage to combat the colonial system in the past, but with their heart. Now that more intelligent methods are required . . . let us acknowledge that it would be asking too much of them.'[56]

The African representatives were often criticized and accused of misappropriating public funds. 'Our elected representatives are incapable of reasoning in global terms, terrified by the spectre of the Sovietization of Africa.'[57] The main targets were of course the representatives of the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (RDA) (with the exception of Sekou Touré), because of the positions adopted by Félix Houphouët-Boigny in 1956 and again in 1958 and 1960. The man who was to become first President of Côte d'Ivoire was continually abused, and this in a violent manner.

However, not all the organs of the black student press adopted the same violent, brusque and oversimplified language. For instance, *Tam-Tam* commented on the Toulouse resolutions as follows:

> In the first place, a concern for authenticity. Africa, whether we like it or not, is not Europe. . . . The authenticity that we are seeking is fidelity to Africa while opening up to everything human. . . . The same concern for authenticity has led us to opt, in the economic field, for personalist and community socialism. . . . A service economy in which individuals do not colonize large tracts of society for their own profit, but under which they can fit harmoniously into a community to serve and be served in their turn. . . . The danger of a confined nationalism is not the least immediate. . . . Such very confined nationalism could make us an easy prey for communism. . . . They [African Catholic students] are staking their lives for Christ and for Africa together, which entails unreserved commitment on the temporal plane.[58]

1957–60

Once the hurdle of adopting the Outline Law had been taken – after which positions were firmly set for a long time – and France had experienced a change of regime in 1958, the situation had to be properly managed pending materialization of the great hopes that had been raised. The usual problems had to be solved too, such as those of education, now to be viewed in the light of a 'new reading of history'. The demands voiced in the black student press had not changed since 1954: extension of facilities, a wider range of courses, better qualified teachers, increased recruitment in colleges,

and a critical review of education itself, being a factor of acculturation: 'The Africans had to be robbed of all patriotic feeling, human dignity and pride and reduced to the level of animals for this domination to have a firm foundation.'[59] The review *Kaso* violently rejected European culture, accusing it of making Negro cultures inferior. Though *Kaso* and *La voix de l'Afrique noire* denounced the destruction of black cultures, acculturation itself was not yet being written about. Between 1956 and 1960 there was a growing awareness of the debasement[60] of African cultures through education. The difference between genocide and debasement was fundamental in the case of the black student press.

Black students began to realize that they had been acculturated by European education. This awareness should in theory have given rise to an in-depth analysis of cultural identity along the lines of the negritude movement or the *Kaso* articles. However, quite the reverse occurred between 1956 and 1960. In student papers of the period, black identity was taken for granted and articles on the subject were quite rare. There was a growing conviction that political independence would decolonize minds too,[61] and political liberation prevailed over the quest for identity.

Concern with the past had not disappeared, however: the African students' retrieval of their history from then on consisted mainly of rehabilitating the heroes of Black Africa – Samory, El Hadj Omar, Gbehanzin – and, through them, of Negro cultures. The message regarding culture had changed too. To begin with, the flat rejection of the theories of negritude: 'Thus some of us, resigned, assert that reason is Hellenic and emotion Negro. . . .'[62] The old values sung by the negritude movement were turned upside down: there where a certain negritude could only see emotion, a step was at last taken towards recognizing the powers of abstraction of black cultures.

Growing out of the discussions sparked off by the Outline Law, a new, tougher formulation of African nationalism took a theoretical turn based on historical materialism. 'The violence that we conceive is a social fact, a consequence of man's exploitation of man.'[63] 'It therefore falls to the people to intensify the struggle in order to make final victory certain (independence).'[64]

Revolution, scientific socialism, an egalitarian society – many instances could be given of the profound changes in vocabulary and ideological analysis in relation to the claim for independence. Yet the contribution of Marxist concepts did not generate an organized theoretical structure; they are found throughout the black student papers, though in sporadic fashion. What is more, the student press was to some extent distrustful of the Communist Party and refused to align itself with the conceptions of the French Communist Party, which was often accused of being Europe-oriented and paternalist. It would also be too simple and reductionist to claim that the black student press was inspired by communism.

However, the interest in Marxist analyses meant that greater attention was paid to economic matters. Thus *L'étudiant soudanais* and *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire* explored this area from 1956 to 1960 and *L'étudiant nigérien* and *Le patriote*

kamerounais sometimes alluded to it, whereas *L'étudiant tchadien* and *L'étudiant de Haute Volta* made little mention of it. By and large the black student press continued to lay the blame for most African problems on colonization and capitalism.

This century-old poverty of the African peasantry is a heritage which capitalism is attempting at all costs to leave with us. If we evaluate this century of French assistance and civilization we find it red with blood, colossal, filthy, burdened with lies, vile deeds, prejudice and famine! And it goes on to this day – the killings, the slavery, the humiliation, the poverty, the pillage! . . . All our good land is in the hands of gigantic organizations of swindlers and pillagers such as FIDES [Fonds d'Investissement et de Développement Économique et Social], the big companies and the French administration.[65]

The students were aware of the economic importance of agriculture; however, they felt it was more difficult to mobilize the peasants than the urban proletariat, and that agricultural production could not contribute to intensive development as effectively as industrial expansion. Of course their resounding calls for the mobilization of the African working class were quite out of step with the social realities of the Black African world. Nor was this, unfortunately, the only contradiction. Another of these was expressed very clearly as follows: 'A feature of French colonization in Black Africa is the lack of encouragement for economic initiative. Hence the bureaucratic spirit that is fostered and sustained at the expense of enterprise.'

The exaltation of the spirit of enterprise and the idea that Africa was predisposed to socialism were not easy to reconcile. The black student press was not yet consistent in respect of economic and political theory.

Above all it was the violence of the language used that distinguishes the years from 1956 to 1960. Repression in Algeria, Kenya, Togo and Cameroon (the assassination of Ruben Um Noybé in 1958), the negligence of the administration, the poverty of the peasants, the exploitation of Africa's wealth, the unequal exchanges and the fear of a colonial pact extended to the six European Common Market countries were the favourite topics feeding the venom of such discourse, which focused more on making existential analyses than on actually formulating a comprehensive political and economic theory. The condemnation of 'colonialism and its servants' – i.e. the 174 elected African representatives – the increasingly extreme nature of 'missionary' nationalism, the quasi-religious belief in the salvatory Afro-Asian struggle, all of which at long last was to crush the pride and contempt of the white colonizers, often took the place of clear thinking.

Pan-Africanism met with a curious fate in the black student press at this time. There are no articles to be found on the subject. No doubt it was regarded as a foregone conclusion, yet it was no longer mentioned. On the other hand, Afro-Asianism became a subject of major interest following the Bandung Conference in 1955: 'Quite recently at the Bandung Conference was heard the cry of alarm of those who were silent peoples for so long – Asia, Africa, twenty-nine nations, 1,500 million human

beings, something like two hundred religions and five hundred languages.'[66] 'Asia has overthrown the political power of the Western bourgeoisie which prevented it from breathing.'[67]

Despite a certain attraction felt towards China or the Soviet Union and its marked preference for communism over capitalism, the black student press made it clear that it did not wish to side with any particular ideology or bloc. As a rule, it rejected the designation of 'communist' because, as it explained, the French Communist Party had voted for special funds to be allocated for the Algerian War. Nor did it acknowledge the theoretical bonds existing between workers in Western countries and those in colonized countries and it denounced the Soviet repression in Hungary in 1956 (while it underscored the hypocrisy of the condemnation by colonialist countries). However, such positions were not held unanimously throughout the black student press.

The attraction of communism was not given full play, however, for the black student press appears to have been seeking a 'third way', be it pan-Africanism, Afro-Asianism or any other 'African answer' to the problem of development.

A further theoretical question was beginning to come to the fore, i.e. that of the role of women in changing African society: 'Women are there to protect life, men are there to do business. . . . Men have always led the tribe, clan or society. Women are not the equal of men, but rather their complement. . . . Such authentic women will only be the result of a pooling of traditional aspirations and acquired values.'[68]

The African woman, as in the case of Islam, was mentioned only now and again.

Afterwards

'The future lies in the revolutionary struggle for the independence of Black Africa and in building a socialist society as soon as that is achieved.'[69] 'The colonized countries must not slavishly copy the grand stereotype of the multi-party state of the European model. . . . All forms of magic allured by the prospect of renewal and progress. . . . Influenced by the enemies of our country the bad elements will depart, while the others, the *pure* ones, will come over to us.'[70] 'We have already highlighted the basic prerequisites for the logical, meticulous and progressive planning of our economy.'[71]

The advent of a socialist society and the launching of a one-party system and appropriate planning were the proper foundations on which to build the future, just as the revitalizing revolutionary struggle would ensure the conquest of independence. However, this view of Africa's future was not arranged according to a structural development model. Rather, it was a patchwork of random borrowings, chief of which came from the Soviet or Chinese examples, although showing some concern for African originality. This approach, however optimistic, was not very realistic: 'We

have the human and natural resources to build a progressive society, able to overcome disease, poverty and ignorance and to launch artificial satellites designed by our own scientists for the conquest of space.'[72] 'I believe and want to believe in a Bassari mathematician of outer space, in the problem of laterite overcome, in the desert receding continually before the advance of green fields and leading to modern towns and villages. . . . The immediate task therefore is to put our agriculture back on its feet.'[73]

It would be historically inaccurate and unjust to tax the students of the time with naïvety and lack of foresight. Many of them were aware of Africa's particular difficulties: low demographic potential, laterization of the soil, very low technical level, industrial backwardness, education at its beginnings, economic dependence and so on. Their press was propelled by a profound faith in the future when black people would have regained their dignity. To them the future appeared bright: independence would refine any problems and set the forces of labour willingly to work. United at last, Black Africa could free itself of economic dependence on the former colonizers and its renewed identity would release the creative forces that had been imprisoned by colonialism. Throwing off the straitjacket of economic dependence on the mother country became a matter of increasing urgency.

The result was that when, in 1960, fourteen countries in French Africa achieved independence, the attitude of the black student press was one of caution: 'We cannot recommend caution sufficiently strongly. . . . The colonial forces are still heavily armed. . . . An economic agreement between a capitalist country and an underdeveloped country such as ours is utopian.'[74] Black students felt that the independence as granted was purely formal and that true independence was yet to come. Accordingly, accession to independence in 1960, although it mollified to some extent the militantism of the black student press, did not halt it. Before the end of the year, the black student press had once again taken up the battle-cry of: 'On with the fight!'

Notes

1. G. Tirolien, 'L'étudiant colonial et la culture française', *L'étudiant de la France d'outre-mer* (Paris), No. 1, July 1943.
2. See J.-P. Rioux, 1980.
3. M. Dia, 'Les lois inexorables du développement du capitalisme', *Étudiants anticolonialistes* (Gentilly), No. 9, December 1950–January 1951.
4. M. Dia, 'Une université à Dakar?', *Étudiants anticolonialistes* (Gentilly), No. 2, December 1949.
5. A. Nicolas, 'Obscurantisme et civilisation', *Étudiants anticolonialistes* (Gentilly), No. 6, June 1950.
6. A. Césaire, 'Discours sur le colonialisme', *Étudiants anticolonialistes* (Gentilly), No. 8, November 1950.
7. Cheikh Anta Diop, 'Vers une idéologie politique africaine', *La voix de l'Afrique noire* (Aulnay), No. 1, February 1952.

8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
11. Midjrato, 'Du Rassemblement Démocratique Africain aux moutons de Panurge', *La voix de l'Afrique noire* (Aulnay), No. 3, April 1954.
12. S. Traore, *La FEANF*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1985, 102 pp.
13. See G. Lisette, *Le combat du Rassemblement Démocratique Africain*, Paris, Présence Africaine, 1983.
14. Memel Fote Harris, 'Les hommes ne survivent que grâce à la solidarité', *L'étudiant de Côte d'Ivoire* (Dinard), No. 6, January–February 1955.
15. 'Africanisation des cadres en Afrique noire', *L'étudiant de Côte d'Ivoire* (Dinard), No. 7, March–April 1955 (unsigned article).
16. 'Les leçons d'une assemblée générale', *L'étudiant de Côte d'Ivoire* (Dinard), No. 7, March–April 1955 (unsigned article).
17. 'Déclaration des étudiants d'Afrique noire en France', *Tam-Tam* (Paris), April–May 1956.
18. 'Résolutions et motions', *Tam-Tam* (Paris), Nos. 5–6, 1960.
19. Editorial, *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire* (Luçon), No. 1, 1954 (unsigned).
20. 'Document sur le Conseil Étudiant de Moscou', *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire* (Luçon), No. 3, October–November 1954 (unsigned).
21. Cheikh Kane, 'Nos relations extérieures', *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire* (Luçon), No. 1, 1954.
22. A. Franklin, 'L'impérialisme de l'UNEF', *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire* (Luçon), No. 2, May–June 1954.
23. S. Traore, op. cit.
24. J. Nguenga, 'Du complexe d'infériorité', *Kaso* (Paris), No. 1, July–August 1954.
25. F. Sengat Kuo, 'L'Afrique doit regarder vers l'Asie', *Kaso* (Paris), Nos. 6–7, October–November–December 1955.
26. G. Dika Akwa, 'Panorama préhistorique', *Kaso* (Paris), No. 2, September–October 1954.
27. M. Doo Kingue, 'Peut-on parler d'une science camerounaise?' *Kaso* (Paris), No. 1, July–August 1954.
28. J. Onama, 'Structures économiques et cultures traditionnelles', *Kaso* (Paris), Nos. 4–5, March–May 1955.
29. *Kaso*, No. 2, September–October 1954, and Nos. 4–5, March–May 1955.
30. A. Tevoedjre, editorial, *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire* (Toulouse), No. 4, May 1956.
31. A. Tevoedjre, *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire* (Toulouse), No. 7, November–December 1956.
32. P. Diagne, 'Caractéristiques essentielles du syndicalisme des étudiants africains', *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire* (Toulouse), No. 13.
33. Few historical studies have been made of this subject; although the literature abounds, it is not very critical. See Mbaireh Lisette, *Le Rassemblement Démocratique Africain et la loi-cadre*, Université de Paris VIII, 1979, 341 pp.
34. Outel Bono, 'Que pouvons-nous attendre de la loi-cadre?', *L'étudiant tchadien*, No. 2, November–December 1955–January 1956; Oumar Baba Diarra, 'Le problème de l'enseignement au Soudan', *L'étudiant soudanais*, No. 1, May–June 1957.
35. A. Gaye, 'Loi-cadre! Loi-cadre! Plus cela change dans les colonies et plus c'est la même chose', *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire* (Toulouse), No. 6, October 1956.
36. 'Sectarisme', *L'étudiant tchadien*, No. 10, April–May–June 1960 (unsigned article).
37. Y. Bagayogo, 'Le Kenedougou dans l'histoire du Soudan', *L'étudiant soudanais*, No. 2, September–October 1957.
38. Guy Mollet, President of the Conseil d'État; Gaston Deferre, Minister for France Overseas; François Mitterrand, Minister of Justice.
39. The January 1956 elections, feverishly prepared following the dissolution of the National Assembly by Edgar Faure, were the scene of a confrontation between the upholders of a policy of colonialist repression and those who had been clamouring for years for a genuine policy of reform. The latter were in favour of restoring Pierre Mendès-France to power as the only person who in their opinion

could carry out such a difficult policy, which was not welcome to a public opinion badly hurt by the Dien Bien Phu disaster. They were hoping to be given Mendès-France, but instead they got Guy Mollet.

40. A speech by Sekou Traoré to the French National Assembly on 22 March 1956 (quoted by M. Lisette, op. cit., p. 69) brings out this very practical concern clearly: 'It would be enough if the peasants were organized in co-operatives for them, quite legitimately and effectively, not only to defend their occupation, but also collectively supervise the economic development of their sector of activity. Agreeing to the setting-up of co-operatives in our territories means bringing the peasants, who make up 85 per cent of the African population, the progress that we want to achieve politically but which cannot be workable unless the economy sustaining local budgets too can be organized along progressive lines.'
41. Outel Bono, op. cit.
42. Report of the general policy resolution of the FEANF Congress held in Toulouse, *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire* (Toulouse), No. 18, January 1958.
43. *L'étudiant soudanais*, No. 5, May–June 1958.
44. Joint declaration of general policy of FEANF and the Union Générale des Étudiants d'Afrique Occidentale (UGEAO), *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire* (Toulouse), No. 31, January–February 1961.
45. Report on the general policy resolution of FEANF, *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire* (Toulouse), No. 31, January–February 1961.
46. Joint declaration of the Union Générale des Travailleurs d'Afrique Noire (UGTAN), the Union Générale des Étudiants d'Afrique Occidentale (UGEAO), the Conseil à la Jeunesse d'Afrique (CJA) and FEANF, *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire* (Toulouse), No. 18, January 1958.
47. General policy resolution of the FEANF Congress, *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire* (Toulouse), No. 28, January–February 1960.
48. Resolution of the Twelfth Congress of FEANF, *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire* (Toulouse), No. 31, January–February 1961.
49. Joint declaration of UGEAN, UGEAO, CJA and FEANF, *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire* (Toulouse), No. 18, January 1958.
50. Resolution on Togo, *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire* (Toulouse), No. 18, January 1958.
51. Motion on Mauritania, *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire* (Toulouse), No. 31, January–February 1961.
52. Motion on general policy of FEANF, *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire* (Toulouse), No. 31, January–February 1961.
53. Report on the general policy resolution of FEANF, *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire* (Toulouse), No. 28, January–February 1960.
54. Ibid.
55. Resolution on the so-called Senegalese infantry, *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire* (Toulouse), No. 18, January 1958.
56. M. Traore, 'Réformisme ou révolution', *L'étudiant soudanais*, No. 4, January–February 1958.
57. F. Abdoulaye, 'La négation: théorie du colonialisme', *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire* (Toulouse), No. 8, January 1957.
58. 'Les Résolutions', *Tam-Tam* (Paris), June–July 1958.
59. Oumar Nana Diarra, 'Pourquoi nous nous battons? Que faire?', *L'étudiant soudanais*, No. 4, January–February 1958.
60. Nene Khaly, *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire* (Toulouse), No. 6.
61. At the congress of black writers and artists held at the Sorbonne in 1956, the joint declaration of the participants stated: 'The harmonious development of culture (in the colonized countries) is conditional on putting an end to those disgraces of the twentieth century, i.e. colonialism, injustice and social oppression.'
62. I. Lousome, 'Des nègres et de la négritude', *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire* (Toulouse), No. 8, January 1957.
63. Oumar Nana Diarra, op. cit.

64. J. Baraka, 'Ahidjo: le démagogue au pied du mur', *Le patriote kamerounais* (Clermont-Ferrand), No. 1, September 1958.
65. Oumar Nana Diarra, op. cit.
66. 'Qu'est-ce que le 21 février?', *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire* (Toulouse), No. 3, April 1956 (unsigned article).
67. S. Diarra, 'Pour un front de lutte soudanais', *L'étudiant soudanais*, No. 4, January–February 1958.
68. P. Badamie, 'Le rôle de la femme dans l'Afrique de demain', *L'étudiant soudanais*, No. 1, May–June 1957.
69. M. Traore, 'Renoncement et lutte', *L'étudiant soudanais*, No. 5, May–June 1958.
70. S. A. Adande, 'Du Sénégal au Dahomey', *L'étudiant d'Afrique noire* (Toulouse), No. 7, November–December 1958.
71. Editorial, *L'étudiant soudanais*, Special Issue, July–August 1959.
72. S. Diarra, op. cit.
73. K. Moussa, 'L'Afrique noire de demain', *L'étudiant soudanais*, No. 3, November–December 1957.
74. Noufa Saidou, 'Alors, et maintenant?', *L'étudiant nigérien* (Paris), No. 3, 1959–60.

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